

Erev Shabbos Kodesh Parshas Yisro 5777

D'ei Chochmah L'nafshechah

“Let your soul know wisdom”

Parshas Yisro

From the discourses of Moreinu v'Rabeinu
the Gaon and Tzaddik Shlit'a

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”זָכוֹר אֶת-יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ. שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲבֹד, וַעֲשִׂיתָ כָּל-מְלַאכְתֶּךָ. וַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שַׁבָּת
לַה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ: לֹא-תַעֲשֶׂה כָּל-מְלַאכָה אֲתָה וּבִנְךָ וּבִתֶּךָ, עַבְדְּךָ וְאִמָּתְךָ וּבְהֵמָתְךָ, וְגֵרְךָ אֲשֶׁר
בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ. כִּי שֵׁשֶׁת-יָמִים עָשָׂה ה' אֶת-הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת-הָאָרֶץ אֶת-הַיָּם וְאֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר-בָּם, וַיִּנַּח
בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי, עַל-כֵּן בֵּרַךְ ה' אֶת-יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת וַיְקַדְּשֶׁהוּ.”

“Remember the Shabbos day to keep it holy. Six days shall you labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is Shabbos unto Hashem your G-d, in it you shall not do any manner of work; you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger that is within your gates. For during six days Hashem made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. It is for this that Hashem blessed the Shabbos day and hallowed it.”²

Rashi explains: “‘And do all your work’—When Shabbos arrives, it shall be in your eyes as though all of your work is done, so that you do not remain preoccupied with labor.”³

Shabbos and the Torah of the Future

Rebbe Nachman of Breslov taught that in the future, “on the day that is entirely Shabbos,” the Torah of *Atikah Sesima’ah* will be revealed.⁴ As the verse says: אֲזַי”

¹ The lesson was delivered at the third meal of Shabbos.

² *Shemos* 20:7-10

³ *Mechiltah*

⁴ *Likutei Moharan* I:49

"תתענג על הוי"ה"—“Then [in the ultimate future] you will delight in [literally ‘upon’] Hashem-*HaVaYaH*.”⁵ We will delight upon *HaVaYaH*, which is the level of *Atikah Sesima’ah*.⁶ This is the main delight of Shabbos [and this verse is part of the extended *kiddush* of the morning meal].

Reb Nosson of Breslov explains that the main element of the sanctity of Shabbos derives from the Torah of *Atikah Sesima’ah* that will be revealed and shine forth in the ultimate future. Although the Torah will never be dispensed with, G-d forbid, and one should never think that the Torah that we have now will ever be replaced, nevertheless the purpose of the arrival of Moshiach is to reveal a “new Torah”—to help us fulfill the Torah completely. Even now we can see that although Hashem commanded us to “be holy”—to sanctify ourselves to an added degree within the limits of that which is permitted to us⁷—nevertheless it is hard for us to find and follow a path that will lead us to fulfill this commandment completely. Similarly, we find ourselves falling short of fulfilling all of the Torah’s *mitzvos* perfectly, in all of their detail, without ulterior motives. And even though Hashem planted *tzaddikim* in every generation who provide us with guidance and instruction, still we feel far from genuine *avodah* because the *Soton* exerts efforts to upend all the best advice and intentions.

However, when Moshiach arrives he will be known as *Pele Yo’etz*—“wondrous advisor”—[because his advice will achieve its purpose fully].⁸ Then we will see the fruition of the promise: “Behold, days are coming, says Hashem, and I will make a new covenant with the house of Yisrael and with the house of Yehudah. It is not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to

⁵ *Yeshayah* 58:14

⁶ *Zohar* I:219

⁷ *Vayikra* 19:2 and Rashi there.

⁸ *Yeshayah* 9:5

bring them out of the land of Egypt, for they broke My covenant, although I was a master over them, says Hashem.”⁹ This means that true guidance will be revealed that cannot be “broken” by the *sitra achra* so that the Jewish people will be able to fulfill the Torah’s commandments completely, and then they will attain an everlasting redemption. This level corresponds with the holiness of the Shabbos, because Shabbos comprises the letters **וְשַׁבַּת עֲדָה אֶלְקֵינוּ: תְּשׁוּב**—“And you will repent/return to Hashem, your G-d.”¹⁰ As Rebbe Nachman expressed it, through observing the Shabbos, one draws the light of Moshiach and of repentance upon himself.¹¹

Chometz and Matzah at Home, Together

Rav Hillel of Paritsch bore a tradition stretching back to the Maggid of Mezeritch regarding how he came to truly understand the mechanism of the spiritual path of the Baal Shem Tov. He cited the Baal HaTanya, who heard from Rav Avraham HaMalach—the son of the Maggid—that his father had said that he came to understand the tactics of spiritual warfare when he saw that one of the King’s officers pretended to abandon the field of battle to lull the enemy into a false sense of security. Suddenly, however, this officer ambushed the enemy from the other side and this turned the tide of the war in his favor. Rav Avraham HaMalach said that this is the way in which we can understand the Baal Shem Tov’s battles against the *sitra achra*, and it is his Torah that is the first glimmer of the light of the Torah of redemption. This tactic is also at the root of why we have both a first and second Pesach offering.

On the first Pesach, we eliminate the *chometz* from our homes and wage an open war against the *klippas*. However, on *Pesach Sheini*, “both *chometz* and *matzah* are

⁹ *Yirmiyah* 31:30-31

¹⁰ *Devarim* 30:2

¹¹ *Sefer HaMiddos*

with him in his home.”¹² The deeper meaning of this is that, in the pathway of the Baal Shem Tov, the Jew who is not able to fully remove the “*chometz*” from himself and finds himself beset from negativity on all sides still has a way to purify himself. He can fill his mind and heart with thoughts of *emunah* and cleave to the secrets of the Torah [represented by *matzah*]. Even though this level of Torah is rooted in the higher world of *Atzilus* and this person is still enmeshed in the lower three worlds of *Beriyah-Yetzirah-Asiyah*, nevertheless a clear road lies before him so that he can rise from *Asiyah* to *Yetzirah*, and from *Yetzirah* to *Beriyah*, and from *Beriyah* to *Atzilus*. To do this, he needs to “draw out the *Echad*” of *Shema*, and this isn’t accomplished by just enunciating the word slowly and covering one’s eyes. The real way to “draw out the *Echad*” is to recite all of the parts of the prayer—from the *Korbanos* associated with the world of *Asiyah* all the way through the blessings of the *Shema* and the *Shema* itself associated with the world of *Beriyah*—with real concentration. This purifies him so that he is worthy of rising to the world of *Atzilus* during *Shemonah Esrei*, which also corresponds to the secrets of the Torah.

Yet there is an even higher level of the Torah’s secrets—that of *razin d’razin* associated with the highest level of *Adam Kadmon*—and this ultimate level is like a unifying force that extends from the uppermost level all the way through down to the world of *Asiyah*. The *tzaddikim* have already revealed that the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov are an expression of the *razin d’razin*, and they are the pathway of *Pesach Sheini*, where even though “*chometz* and *matzah* are with him in the home,” he can still achieve purity and holiness through focusing on the study of *Chassidus*. “I will envision Your face in righteousness, I will be satisfied when I wake to Your likeness.”¹³ By “envisioning His face,” by meditating on Hashem’s existence as both filling and transcending all worlds as expounded upon in the Chassidic works, one surreptitiously

¹² *Yerushalmi, Pesachim* 9:3

¹³ *Tehillim* 17:15

ambushes the *sitra achra* even in his “impure” place because he is filled with a desire to return to Hashem and mend his ways. Even though he is unable to fight the enemy outright, his stance of the false retreat actually places him in a better position.

If a person knows that he is not yet able to eat and drink in holiness and sanctify himself within the parameters of the permitted, and if his soul is still unsatisfied with its *avodah*, he must take the roundabout route and push himself to study the Torah's secrets. This will draw upon him a taste of the Torah's light—the light of *Atikah Sesima'ah* and the redemption—which has the power to heal the human soul and repair one's deeds and character. As long as a person avoids such study, he lacks true spiritual healing. It is only through the light of Shabbos which is illuminated by *Atikah Sesima'ah* that one merits to reach his ultimate rectification and holiness: “Remember the Shabbos day, to make it holy.” If a person want to “make it holy,” he must, “remember the Shabbos day.”

The Vision of Yeshayah the Prophet

In this week's *haftarah* we find: “In the year that king Uzziah died I saw Hashem sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. Above Him stood the *Seraphim*; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face and with two he covered his feet, and with two he did fly. And one called to another, and said: Holy, holy, holy, is Hashem, [L-rd of] hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory. And the posts of the door were moved at the voice of them that called, and the house was filled with smoke. Then I said: Woe is me! I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. For mine eyes have seen the King, Hashem [L-rd] of hosts.”¹⁴

¹⁴ *Yeshayah* 6:1-5

Based on what we have learned so far, we have a clearer understanding of the meaning of Yeshayah's vision. The prophet ascended to the world of *Atzilus* and saw a vision of Hashem, but at that point he feared for his life because he sensed that the lower worlds of *Beriyah-Yetzirah-Asiyah* were still not rectified. This is why he said, "Because I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips."

"...Then one of the *seraphim* flew to me with a glowing stone in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar. And he touched my mouth with it, and said: Behold this has touched your lips, and your iniquity is taken away and your sin expiated. And I heard the voice of Hashem, saying: 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' Then I said: 'Here I am. Send me.' And He said: 'Go, and tell this people: hear, but do not understand; see, but fail to perceive. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they, seeing with their eyes, and hearing with their ears, and understanding with their heart, return, and be healed.'"¹⁵ Hashem revealed to Yeshayah that if the Jewish people would allow their eyes to be illuminated by the Torah's innermost light with *dveikus*, they would merit to have their sins fall away and be forgiven. Then, as a matter of course, when they would see with their eyes and hear with their ears—when they would immerse themselves in the *dveikus* of *Atzilus* until they reached the level of *Adam Kadmon* whose "train fills the temple" because its "heels" extend all the way down to *Asiyah*—they would naturally repair the lower three worlds. In *Beriyah* [associated with *Binah* and the heart], their "hearts would understand," and "repent" within *Yetzirah*, and "be healed" in *Asiyah*.

The Perfidy of Amalek

Unfortunately, Amalek lies in wait to blind the eyes and block the hearts of the Jewish people so that they will not believe in the sanctity and exaltedness of the Torah's

¹⁵ Ibid., 6:6-10

innermost secrets. Amalek knows and understands that their study can bring a person to genuine repentance and to also comprehend the Torah's other parts completely. This because the innermost element of the Torah encompasses within it all of its other parts [in an encoded and spiritual manner, just as the DNA encompasses within it all of the information expressed in the outer body]. This is like the apex of the *yud* that represents *Adam Kadmon*; it is an integrated part of the whole *yud* that represents *Atzilus*. This is the actual meaning of Amalek's attack: "He would cut off the foreskins and throw them heavenwards."¹⁶ The *sitra achra* comes along and grabs hold of a form of Divine service that is really of much lesser value than that of the study of *razin d'razin*, and it "throws it heavenwards." It exaggerates its importance so that a person will neglect the greater holiness of the Torah's innermost secrets, because they have the power to bring the entire world closer to Hashem.

This is reflected in the words of Dovid HaMelech, who when he felt that he had no Torah, mitzvah, or merit to his name, consoled himself with the one merit he felt remained to him: "I will envision Your face in righteousness, I will be satisfied when I wake to Your likeness."¹⁷ Similarly, when he was in the bathhouse, he consoled himself with the thought that he still had the merit of *milah* to his credit.¹⁸ Meaning, he realized the greatness of being connected to the *tzaddik yesod olam*, to the aspect of *Yesod* embodied in the *tzaddik* who reveals the Torah's innermost secrets.

Hevel's Other Twin

This relates to the root of Kayin's flaw. We know that Kayin was born with a single twin who represented Leah [and *Binah*], and he himself was aligned with *Binah* and its "simple" *avodah* of struggle. He reasoned that the pathway of *avodah* through

¹⁶ *Midrash Tanchuma, Ki Teitzei* chapter 10

¹⁷ *Pesikta D'Rav Kahana* 11:14

¹⁸ *Menachos* 43b

Binah is distinct from that of Rachel and *Chochmah / Atzilus*, and that they do not mesh with one another. [Rather, he assumed that one must only ascend in a linear way, by first cleansing the blemishes in the worlds of *BY" A* through extensive effort, and only afterward enter into the *avodah* of *Chochmah* at the level of *Atzilus*.] When he saw, however, that Hevel was born with two twin sisters—one representing Leah and the other Rachel—he was distraught. He understood the significance of the event; that Hevel would be able to synthesize the *avodos* of the lower worlds of *BY" A* and *Atzilus* into a single entity.

Hevel “Gazing at the *Shechinah*”

Even so, Hevel too fell into error—he “gazed” at the *Shechinah*. Gazing is another way to indicate the finalization of a *yichud* [or achieving intimacy through thought and vision]. The *Shechinah* also dwells in the lower worlds of *BY" A*, and it is forbidden to focus overly much on the alluring vision of the lower worlds unless a person has already reached the level of *Adam Kadmon* and complete *dveikus* [where his inner desires are all focused on Hashem alone]. Anyone who does so before reaching this lofty state can fall into great error, just as gazing at the colors of the rainbow constitutes a grave error all the while that a person is in a less than fully-developed spiritual state. The rainbow’s colors are known as the “three colors of the eye and the black of the pupil.” The three colors [red, white, and green representing *CHaGaT* or the roots of *Ze'ir Anpin*] parallel the three lower worlds of *BY" A*, while the black pupil parallels the *Shechinah* in her “black” and downcast state in the lower worlds. Too much focus on the lower worlds can lead a person to lose sight of Hashem’s light as he loses himself in the transient pleasures and “colors” of this world. However, the *tzaddikim* do exist in a state of *dveikus* with the light of the future world, like the *kohein* who can enter and serve in the innermost chamber of the *Beis Hamikdash* and from there uplift all of creation.

This is what is meant by the teaching that, in the ultimate future, the rainbow will shine “with illuminated colors.” This is why, even now, the true *tzaddikim* eat and their food is like holy offerings, and their every word is consecrated to Hashem’s service. Hevel reached the levels of Leah and Rachel, but he only received their light while on the level of *Atzilus*. Without first rising to the level of *dveikus* of *Adam Kadmon*, he involved himself in the lower worlds of *BY”A* and then failed to bind them all into a single entity dedicated to Hashem’s service. Each person on his own level must make sure to achieve a state of *dveikus* and immersion in the *razin d’razin* before he can presume to involve himself in the matters of this world and expect to be able to sanctify his experiences. After having done so, however, he will be able to purify the lower levels of *BY”A* and repent fully, and to rule over the upper and lower states, just like Shlomo HaMelech.

The Baal HaTanya taught that one must always take care not to assume that he has reached the level of the *tzaddikim* unless he can follow their example in every matter. One must be wary of the flaw of Hevel, who thought that he was ready to “gaze at the *Shechinah*,” but was sorely mistaken. We must keep a respectful distance from the *tzaddikim* and accept that we are still very, very far from their level. And even if we have been privileged to taste a little of their *Da’as*, nevertheless we must never make the mistake of “gazing at the *Shechinah*” while she is still dressed in black. We must not arouse the jealousy of Kayin. Even though Hevel really does have the innate ability to unify the *avodos* of Rachel and Leah, it still takes many years of immersion in the Torah’s secrets. He must never desist from thinking about Hashem: “I will envision Your face in righteousness; I will wake to Your likeness.”

All the while that we are still far from this and can only catch the barest of glimpses of the light of *Atikah Sesima’ah*, we must dedicate ourselves to the steady upward-seeking *avodah* of Kayin, the simple *avodah* of *teshuvah* and rising from level

to level. We are not like the *tzaddikim* who can leap immediately to the *avodah* of *Atzilus* and disregard the simpler *avodos*. Rather, we receive inspiration from their Torah of *Atikah Sesima'ah* so that our simpler *avodah* of straightforward *teshuvah* is well fueled. We must not be like those who spend a little time learning *Chassidus* and feel as though they have already grasped the truth and do not need to actually change their ways for the better.

“And They Each Inquired after One Another’s Welfare”

“And Moshe went out to meet his father-in-law, and bowed down and kissed him; and they each inquired after one another’s welfare; and they came into the tent.”¹⁹ This is meant to teach us that one must respect each of these pathways and make peace between them. [The idiom to “ask after one’s welfare” is “to ask after his peace” in Hebrew.] Yisro was an extension of the soul of Kayin, while Moshe Rabbeinu was of the soul of Hevel.²⁰ Moshe Rabbeinu bowed down before Yisro to demonstrate that one must follow the path of Kayin and honor it; one must ascend along the simple ladder of gradual moral improvement. One must begin by accepting upon himself the yoke of heaven which is the *avodah* of the world of *Asiyah*; one must then arouse the emotions of Divine love and fear that are associated with the world of *Yetzirah*. After that, he must awaken the mental states of *ahavah* and *yirah*—not only while he prays, but all day long—which is the *avodah* of the world of *Beriyah*. Only then can he rise to the state of *dveikus* that characterizes the world of *Atzilus*, which is the pathway of Moshe Rabbeinu. The distinction between them is expressed in Yisro’s statement to Moshe Rabbeinu: “You will surely wear away...”²¹ If you follow the pathway of *Atzilus* exclusively, one runs the risk of falling away from *avodah* altogether. [The original

¹⁹ *Shemos* 18:7

²⁰ *Sha'ar Hagilgulim, Hakdamah* #32-33

²¹ *Shemos* 18:18

phrase is **נבל תבול**, which implies both the withering and falling away of a flower past its prime. This is echoed in the term **נובלות חכמה**, the “fallout of *Chochmah*.”]

On the other hand, Moshe Rabbeinu is the paradigm of the *tzaddik* who reveals the Torah of *Atikah Sesima'ah* that has the power to repair all of the lower worlds. So too, when one honors and sanctifies the Shabbos properly, one is energized to serve Hashem to a greater degree and fully repent his sins and personal flaws. All the while that we await the full revelation of the light of *razin d'razin*, we must capitalize on the little glow that is available to us through the *tzaddikim* and continue the path of simple *avodah* so that we can ultimately be victorious in our fight for the sake of heaven.

“Let Your Soul Know Wisdom”

This is the meaning of: **”דעה חכמה לנפשך והיא כתר לראשך”**—“Let your soul (*nefesh*) know (*d'ei*) wisdom (*Chochmah*) and it will be a crown (*Kesser*) for your head.”²² One must constantly immerse himself in Hashem’s Torah, and whenever one feels that the Torah’s meaning eludes him, he must throw himself into study and mitzvah observance with complete abandon. He must harness the lower level of *nefesh* for the higher purpose of *Chochmah*, and the Torah’s wisdom must likewise penetrate all the way down to his *nefesh*. Then he will rise to the level of *yechidah* / *Kesser* / *razin d'razin* within his own soul. Whenever a Jew expends all of his energies in Torah study, he touches upon the level of *Arich Anpin* [because such dedication requires a great deal of patience and longing] and he naturally merits full repentance through the Torah of *Atikah Sesima'ah*. [The “hidden Torah” can mean Torah that is actually a mystery, or that Torah which is still a mystery to the individual because his understanding has yet to penetrate its meaning.] Even though we are far from this, the *tzaddikim* have already shared a taste of this light of the future world with us. May we always remember how

²² From the *Shabbos zemer* “*D’ror Yikrah*,” based on *Mishlei* 24:14.

far we are from their level and how deeply we are in need of the light of the true *tzaddikim* to shine into our simple *avodah*.

May Hashem help that in the merit of this Shabbos when we read of the giving of the Torah we will truly accept the Torah upon ourselves. Just as the Torah was given in thunder and lightning to purify the lower worlds of *BY" A*, so too may we cleanse our actions practically and immerse ourselves in the Torah's secrets so that we can be sanctified with the holiness of the Shabbos. Then we will merit to see the coming of our righteous redeemer in mercy. Amen.

Translated and Adapted by Rav Micha Golshevsky.