

CHAYUS

A Shabbos Stimulus

THE EDA AND DAVID SCHOTTENSTEIN EDITION

In Loving Memory of *Itta bas Yosef Mordechai* ע"ה And *Tzvi Daniel ben* ע"ה *David Ainsworth* ש"י

Dedicated by David & Eda Schottenstein

Erev Shabbos Parshas Vayeishev, 5782 – November 26, 2021

ערב שבת פרשת וישב, כ"ב כסלו, ה'תשפ"ב

כתר שם טוב

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Don't Become A 'Know It All'

The prophet Yirmiyahu states (14:22), *Atah Hu Hashem Elokeinu* (אתה הוא ה' אלקינו). The word *Atah* means "you," in the second person, whereas *Hu* means "He," in the third person. So, the verse literally reads, "You [are] He [who is] the L-rd our G-d."

When we address G-d directly, in the second person, we imply that we are in His presence and are close to Him. Conversely, by referring to Him as

we do when discussing a third party, we imply that we are distant from Him.

This gives rise to a deeper implication of the verse: *Atah*—when one is convinced that he is already close to G-d; *Hu* – he is in fact far from Him.

The reverse is also true: *Hu*—when one considers himself distant from G-d [and is therefore desperate to draw closer]; *Atah* – he is thereby close to Him.

גאולה

GEULAH

Yalkut Moshiach uGeulah al HaTorah

Translated by Yaakov Paley

A Single Spark

Rashi quotes a parable of a flax dealer who led his camels into a town. A blacksmith asked, "Where will all this flax go?" One clever fellow answered him, "One spark will come out of your bellows and burn it all." Similarly, Yaakov saw all the chieftains of Esav mentioned at the end of the last *parshah*. He wondered, "Who can conquer them all?" To this the Torah replies at the start of our *parshah*, "These are the generations of Yaakov: Yosef..." (Vayeishev 37:2), for it is written, "The house of Yaakov will be fire, and the house of Yosef a flame, and the house of Esav will become stubble" (Ovadiah 1:18). One spark will emerge from Yosef, which will destroy and consume them all.

This teaches an important truth: The rectified world of redemption can occur only after the work of refining materiality has been completed, when G-d is King over the entire earth and all of the Jews have attained perfection. Yaakov saw this and was dismayed. "Who can conquer them all?!" It will take an incredible amount of effort and righteousness to achieve the redemption!

To this G-d responded, "In truth, that's not what it takes to bring the redemption. Even one spark can consume them all! The redemption can be triggered with even one good deed, one perfect desire for good!"

Ezor Eliyahu

True Tranquility

The Rashi:

Yaakov settled in the land of his father's sojournings, in the land of Canaan (Vayeishev 37:1)—Yaakov sought to dwell in peace, but the troubles of Yosef leapt upon him. Similarly, the righteous seek to dwell in peace. But G-d says: "Is that which is prepared for the righteous in the World to Come insufficient for them, that they also seek to dwell in peace in this world?"

The Question:

Commentaries explain that Yaakov's desire for peace in this world was misplaced, for this world is but the antechamber to our destination—the World to Come.

But Rashi's wording and the context of the story imply otherwise:

- 1) It is unlikely that a consummately righteous person such as Yaakov would desire mere material tranquility in this transitory world.
- 2) After the episode of Yosef, Yaakov *did* enjoy seventeen years of tranquility in Egypt. If desiring tranquility is inappropriate, why was it eventually granted?
- 3) The wording of Rashi—"Is that which is prepared for the righteous in the World to Come insufficient for them"—implies that the desire for peace in this world is not inherently inappropriate, it is only that they should be satisfied with the peace allotted to them in the World to Come.

The Seed of the Explanation:

We must, therefore, understand Yaakov's desire as a longing for spiritual peace. Yet, the degree of tranquility he sought could not have been obtained in this world, under normal circumstances, unless he experienced the troubles of Yosef. Once having passed through that painful chapter, he was granted the peace he sought, for the last seventeen years of his life in Egypt.

The Preface to the Explanation:

There is a paradox at the heart of a *mitzvah*. On the one hand, the origin of a *mitzvah* is G-d's in-

scrutable desire. We fulfill it simply because He desires it to be performed. On the other hand, there are intelligible reasons for *mitzvos*. Similarly, the "reward for a *mitzvah* is the *mitzvah* itself." Meaning, the connection with G-d created by a *mitzvah* is the objective of the *mitzvah*. On the other hand, there are rewards and tangible benefits for observing *mitzvos*. Is a *mitzvah* G-d's unknowable desire that serves as a bridge to connect with G-d Himself? Or is it intended for the enlightenment and betterment of human beings?

The deepest satisfaction a *mitzvah* can bring is that it establishes a connection with the essence of goodness, G-d Himself. But G-d desired that *mitzvos* be experienced as pleasurable to every person at any level of spiritual development. He, therefore, applied attractive reasons and rewards to *mitzvos* so that every person would want to fulfill *mitzvos*—even those who cannot yet appreciate a relationship with G-d Himself. In the World to Come, however, when the Divine reality will be revealed, every person will appreciate the Divine will within *mitzvos*.

But the righteous can experience the innermost delight of *mitzvos*—the connection they establish with G-d—even in this world. To attain this level of perception, two criteria must be met: a) a person must eliminate any personal, self-conscious desire, even a spiritual desire. Even seeking spiritual illumination is a personal desire. The entire objective must be to fulfill G-d's will. b) The desire to fulfill G-d's will cannot be extraneous to him, i.e. he cannot simply succumb to the Divine will. But rather, fulfilling G-d's will must become his own personal desire. His own desire is vacated, and it is then replaced with G-d's desire.

The Explanation:

We can now re-examine Yaakov's desire to dwell in peace: Yaakov desired to reveal the essence of *mitzvos*—the Divine delight that is its core—within the world. This is the ultimate "tranquility," for it resolves the tension between the reality of Divine unity and the facade of an autonomous world.

To do so, Yaakov had to descend to the darkest plane of existence and unleash the Divine po-

tential there, revealing how G-d was present even there.

This was why Yaakov spent time with Lavan and then encountered Eisav—he was extracting the Divine sparks from the places in which they were “imprisoned.” Yet, during these encounters, he did not reach the consummate level of self-transcendence. He still retained power in his relationships with Lavan and Eisav. And so his personal spiritual desires were not yet eliminated.

Yosef was an extension of Yaakov. The “troubles

of Yosef”—Yosef’s descent into Egypt—brought Yaakov to the darkest corner of the world. Yosef had no power in his relationships. Even as viceroy, his power was contingent on Pharaoh’s good will. Here, Yaakov (represented by Yosef) was stripped of power and relinquished all conscious spiritual desire. Yosef elevated the Divine sparks in Egypt with a sense of total abnegation to the Divine will. Thus, Yaakov was finally allowed to experience “tranquility”—the revelation of G-d’s innermost desire in the lowest plane of existence.

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סיפור חסידי

ONCE UPON A CHASID

By Yanki Tauber

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And he was youth-like (Vayeishev 37:2)

Joseph would engage in youthful follies, curling his hair and making-up his eyes (Rashi’s Commentary).

Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Horodok was once asked: “You are forever extolling the trait of humility. So why do you dress in such handsome clothes?”

Said Rabbi Mendel: “The surest place in which to conceal a chest of treasure is a pit of mud and slime...”

When the third rebbe and leader of Chabad chasidism, Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch, passed away in 1866, he was survived by a number of scholarly and pious sons. Each had a following of disciples who wished to see their mentor assume his father’s place.

Rabbi Grunem Estherman, one of the great *mashpi'im*¹ in the annals of Lubavitch, was a young man at the time, and undecided as to which of the Rebbe’s sons to turn for leadership and guidance. When he discussed his dilemma with the famed disciple Rabbi Shmuel Ber of Barisov, the latter said to him: “Listen, Grunem. They are all children of the Rebbe’s. ‘They are all beloved, they are all mighty, they are all holy.’² But let me tell you of one incident, and then you do as you see fit.

“During one of my visits to Lubavitch, there was something in our late Rebbe’s discourse which I found difficult to understand—it seemed to contradict a certain passage in the kabbalistic work of *Eitz Chayim*.³ None of the elder disciples were able to provide an answer satisfactory to me, so that night I made my rounds among the Rebbe’s sons. I visited Rabbi Yehudah Leib,

Rabbi Chaim Schneur Zalman, and the others. Each offered an explanation, but, again, none of their ideas satisfied my mind.

“By now it was fairly late at night. I was headed for my lodgings when I noticed a light burning in Rabbi Shmuel’s window. I had not considered asking him—he is the youngest of the sons and, as you know, his behavior is that of a rather ordinary and indistinct individual. However, I was curious to know what he is up to at such a late hour. So I pulled myself up on to his windowsill and looked in. What did I see, but Rabbi Shmuel immersed in the very section of *Eitz Chayim* where my difficulty lay?! So I figured I had best go in and discuss it with him.

“I went round to the door and knocked. ‘Just a minute’ he called out. After a rather long minute the door opened. I took in the scene: newspapers were laid out on the table, German papers, Russian papers. Of the *Eitz Chayim* not a trace.

“‘Reb Shmuel Ber! Rather late, isn’t it?’ he said. ‘How can I help you?’ I told him of my problem with the discourse the Rebbe had delivered that day and the passage in *Eitz Chayim*. ‘Ah, Reb Shmuel Ber’ he said ‘they say you are a smart Jew. Nu, I ask you, you come to me with a question in *Eitz Chayim*...?’

“‘Listen, my friend,’ I said, ‘your game is up. Five minutes ago I saw you with the *Eitz Chayim*. Now either you tell me how you understand it, or else tomorrow the entire Lubavitch will hear about the interesting tricks you pull with your German papers.’

“We sat and discussed the matter till morning,”

1. A mashpia is a spiritual guide and mentor

2. A phrase from the daily morning prayers.

3. A collection of the kabbalistic teachings of Rabbi Issac Luria (the ‘Ari’ 1534-1572) compiled by his disciple, Rabbi Chaim Vital.

Rabbi Shmuel Ber concluded his story, “and I came away thoroughly impressed with the extent and depth

of his knowledge. This is what I can tell you, Grunem, now you do as you see fit...”

Recognize, please, to whom these belong... (Vayeishev 38:25)

The arrival of a letter, adorned with official-looking stamps and seals, was quite an event at the small wayside tavern somewhere in the backwoods of White Russia. The simple tavern-keeper, who had never quite mastered the written word, ran to find the melamed he kept to teach his children.

As the teacher read the letter, the tavern-keeper turned white, uttered a small cry, and collapsed in a dead faint. For the letter contained most shocking and tragic news for this simple, good-hearted Jew: his beloved father had passed away.

Said the mashpiah, Reb Michael of Aptask:

An outside observer witnessing the events described above may wonder: why does the tavern-keeper react so dramatically to the letter while the teacher is relatively unmoved? Who among the two better grasps and comprehends its contents if not the learned teacher? The other cannot even read and write!

Obviously, this is a ridiculous question.

What if the teacher has a better appreciation of the vocabulary, sentence structure, and artful calligraphy with which the letter is composed? What if he better understands the background, the circumstances, the nuances of the event described? It is not his father who died!

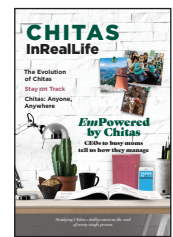
True, Reb Michael would conclude, it is important to learn, to study, to comprehend. And the more one understands, the deeper one delves into the nature of his own existence, the world around him, and his relationship with his Creator, the better equipped he is to fulfill his mission in life. But objective knowledge alone is worthless. Unless one sees himself in the picture, the most profound of theories will yield no meaningful results. Unless one sees the subject matter as ‘his father’, a lifetime of study and discovery will have little bearing on life itself.

מורה שיעור לחת"ת ורמב"ם לשבת

SHABBOS CHITAS / RAMBAM GUIDE

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Tehillim*	Chapters 108 – 112
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Rambam – Sefer Hamitzvos*	Positive Mitzvah #43, #44, #45, #46, #47, #48, #50 and #51
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Rambam – Three Chapters**	Sefer Avoda – Hilchos Temidin U'Musofin Chapters 6 – 8

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