

Erev Shabbos Kodesh Parshas B'shalach 5770

D'ei Chochmah L'nafshechah

“Let your soul know wisdom”

Parshas B'shalach

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

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Shalosh Seudos¹ of Parshas B'shalach 5768

**“וַיִּרְא יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת-הַיָּד הַגְּדֹלָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה ה' בְּמִצְרַיִם, וַיִּירָאוּ הָעַם אֶת-ה'”
וַיֶּאֱמִינוּ ה' וּבְמֹשֶׁה עַבְדּוֹ.”**

**“And Yisrael saw the great work which Hashem did upon the Egyptians,
and the people feared Hashem and they believed in Hashem and in His
servant Moshe.”²**

The Splitting of the Sea

Even though the Jewish people demonstrated faith in Hashem prior to their release from Egypt, as the verse says, “And the people believed,” nevertheless we know that they achieved an even higher level of faith in Hashem and in Moshe at the splitting of the sea. “And they believed in Hashem and in His servant Moshe.” It is well known the sea split by virtue of the 72-Name, which emerges from the verses “ויסע” “ויבא” “ויט” —“And he traveled,” “and he came,” “and he stretched forth”³—that describe the events that immediately preceded the splitting of the *Yam Suf*.⁴ Yet we also know that the splitting of the sea was a manifestation of the breaking of the barrier between the world of

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

² *Shemos* 14:31

³ *Ibid.*, 14:19-21

⁴ *Sefer Halikutim, B'shalach*

Atzilus and the world of *Beriyah*.⁵ Since the barrier between *Atzilus* and *Beriyah* is associated with the 42-Name,⁶ which is an expression of the Name אהיה יה"ו which has a total numerical value of forty-two,⁷ one wonders how the 72-Name is relevant here.

When that barrier was broken, all of the Jewish people saw Hashem's glory so clearly that each and every one of them was able to literally point his finger and say, "This is my G-d and I will exalt Him." The sea split in the merit of Nachshon ben Aminadav, which is associated with the 42-Name, because that *shem* is the spiritual root of all self-sacrifice in Hashem's service. On the other hand, the sea split through the intercession of Moshe Rabbeinu, who extended his hand over the water and meditated upon the 72-Name. In the words of the Rebbe Rashab⁸, the Jewish people crossed the sea in a state of *dveikus* that was a "holy fire," while Moshe Rabbeinu crossed in a state of "cool" *dveikus*.

The Inner Meaning of the Human Form

The human form comprises two basic parts: the head, and the body. Within the head itself there are seven vertebrae which correspond to the seven lower *sefiros* within the level of *Atik* that are encloded within the "head of *Arich*."⁹ Within the body itself there are eighteen vertebrae in the spine, and the sages established the eighteen blessings of the *Shemonah Esrei* to correspond to

⁵ *Sefer HaDei'ah* II:5:2:8

⁶ *Emek HaMelech*, 17:1

⁷ *Zohar* III:33a

⁸ Rabbi Shalom Dov Ber of Lubavitch

⁹ *Sefer Yetzirah* and the commentary of the Vilna Gaon there.

them.¹⁰ This is because the ultimate purpose of prayer is to submit oneself completely before Hashem, and this submission finds expression in bowing down. The nineteenth blessing regarding heretics was established to parallel the smallest bone of the [lower] spine, the sacrum.

The eighteen spinal vertebrae are analogues of *Ze'ir Anpin* whose purpose is the revelation of Hashem's light within the world.¹¹ The sacrum parallels *Ateres HaYesod* [the corona] which is the point of faith in the Creator, and this is why the nineteenth blessing is where we beg Hashem that the "slanderers have no hope." We ask that all of those who deny faith in Hashem be denied hope in an ultimate future and that they be quickly destroyed. Because the *Ateres HaYesod* is known as the "crown of *Malchus*," which itself parallels the letter *hei* [which equals five], we find that the sacrum is formed of five fused bones. Beneath it are another two small vertebrae that parallel *Chochmah* and *Binah* within *Nukvah*, and beneath them are another three small vertebrae that parallel *CHaGaT* within *Nukvah*. However, the point of *Malchus* within *Malchus* is utterly hidden, just as Esther HaMalkah was "the hidden queen."¹² [The name Esther itself means hidden.] She hides herself in the uppermost place of the very first spinal vertebra, which is the one that divides the head from the body. It was of this exact point that the verse says: "The path that no bird of prey knows," because it is utterly hidden. Esther HaMalkah is the holy *Shechinah* that descends and hides in the world of *Beriyah*, but then it ascends secretly and connects the aspects of the body and the head, between *Beriyah* and *Atzilus*.

¹⁰ *Berachos* 28b

¹¹ *Kavanos Ha'Yud-Ches Berachos*

¹² *Likutei Torah, Melachim* 1:11

“He Transformed the Sea to Dry Land; They Crossed the River on Foot”

At the splitting of the sea, therefore, there were two levels of *avodah*: the more external *avodah* of Nachshon ben Aminadav and the self-sacrifice of the 42-Name, and the inner *avodah* of Moshe Rabbeinu and the 72-Name and breaking down the barrier between the “head of *Arich*” and the body. It is within the “head of *Arich*” that we find the seven lower *sefiros* of *Atik*. And it is to this two-stage *avodah* that the verse alludes: “He transformed the sea to dry land; they crossed the river on foot.”¹³ When Moshiach arrives, the main form of *avodah* will be that of breaking the barrier that exists between the three upper *sefiros* of *Atik* and its lower seven *sefiros*. This is symbolized by the splitting of the Euphrates into seven distinct rivers that correspond to the lower seven *sefiros* of *Atik*. And this was the *avodah* of Moshe Rabbeinu when he meditated upon the 72-Name at the splitting of the sea, because the 72-Name is the spiritual root of *Atik*.

This is why the song at the sea begins, “Then Moshe *will sing*,” rather than, “Moshe *sang*,” because Moshe Rabbeinu already laid down the path for Moshiach who will ultimate come to break through the barrier between the “head” and the “body” of *Arich*. It was not only the self-sacrifice of Nachshon ben Aminadav that catalyzed the splitting of the sea—it was also the *avodah* of Moshe Rabbeinu, and it was his higher level of *avodah* that opened the pathway so that the Jewish people merited [and will merit in the future] to witness the highest level of revelation of Hashem’s glory. This is the main *avodah* of the true *tzaddik*; to reveal the Torah of *Atikah Sesima’ah* so that one actually comes

¹³ *Tehillim* 66:6

to know and feel that Hashem both fills and surrounds all worlds. This is the “new Torah” that will be revealed in the ultimate future.¹⁴ “For Torah will go forth from Me...”¹⁵ The glimmer of this Torah that can be accessed even now, before the final redemption, is also very precious to Hashem.

This is why the verse attests that the Jewish people's faith in Hashem and Moshe Rabbeinu was so much stronger at the sea. At the *Yam Suf*, they achieved a much greater level of submission before Hashem in the merit of the *avodah* of Moshe Rabbeinu, because the real *avodah* of submission and self-sacrifice is only to be found among the true *tzaddikim*. Nachshon ben Aminadav himself only achieved the *mesirus nefesh* that he did in the merit of the breaking of the barriers between the “head” and “body” of *Arich* that had first been accomplished by Moshe Rabbeinu. And this is equally true of all of us; through the *avodah* of the *tzaddikim* we receive a greater revelation of Hashem's absolute presence both within and around all worlds as well as through the entire *hishtalshelus* of all the worlds. Then we are able to sense how all of us and all the worlds are all bound together with a single connection to the place of the true and ultimate *yichud*, which is the place of the upper three *sefiros* within *Atik* and the aspect of Hashem “surrounding all worlds.”

When we learn that Esther HaMalkah, the holy *Shechinah* and the point of *emunah*, “hides in the chamber of the liver” which is the lowest part of the body, it is to teach us a deeper lesson. The *tzaddik* refines the entirety of his body and dedicates it to Hashem's service. He, like Moshe Rabbeinu, is a “man of G-

¹⁴ *Vayikra Rabbah* 13:3

¹⁵ *Yeshayah* 51:4

d”—from the waist down he is a man, but from the waist up he is all G-dliness. This awareness of Hashem penetrates down until the entirety of his body is fully dedicated to Hashem's service, and this is why the Maharshal teaches that the word for man, אִישׁ, is an acronym of the phrase, אֱמֵן יְהִי שֵׁם רַבּוֹ—“Amen, may His Great Name [be blessed]...” Although simpler people can achieve very lofty states of self-sacrifice, they cannot compare with the *mesirus nefesh* of the true *tzaddik* who is a “loyal servant,” like Moshe Rabbeinu. Even though Nachshon ben Aminadav was willing to throw himself into the sea for the sake of sanctifying Hashem's Name, the true “loyal servant” will also fling himself into any *avodah* that the King demands of him, even if it seems to be simple and doesn't provide him with the personal satisfaction of achieving a revealed revelation of G-dliness. He must be willing to descend even to the lowest kind of service, to “refine and cleanse all of the lower places” just like the liver, and this form of self-sacrifice is what enables him to break all of the barriers between *Atik* and *Arich*. He must be willing to be like a simply *baal habayis* who extends himself to do whatever is required of him, no matter how unpleasant or difficult the task.

The Shechinah in Hiding

When “Esther HaMalkah,” the *Shechinah*, is in a hidden state within the world of *Beriyah*, that is when Mordechai HaTzaddik who is the paradigm of the true *tzaddik*, “takes her for his daughter/wife.” This means that he does not allow his attention to veer from her for even a moment. He doesn't only focus on her when she is in the *hei*-state, where she is revealed within the world of *Atzilus*.

Rather, even when he is utterly hidden within with the world of *Beriyah*, he makes her the focus of his attentions and values her. When the *Shechinah* is in the hidden state, she is called, “A prayer of the poor man,”¹⁶ and it is precisely then that the true *tzaddik* who is a reflection of, “A prayer of Moshe, the man of G-d”¹⁷ shows how much he values her. Then he is able to break through the barriers between the upper seven vertebrae and the lower eighteen and join together both the lower and the upper aspects in Hashem’s service.

This is why anyone who really longs to serve his Father in heaven in the manner of, “A prayer of the poor man,” is willing to be completely simple before his Creator and fulfill any *avodah* that is required of him. And this is why the Jewish people had to go into exile, so that we would come to serve Hashem in the way of simplicity, in the most difficult circumstances. We know this from countless stories of how our ancestors had to act with great self-sacrifice to fulfill *mitzvos* like putting on *tefillin* and keeping Shabos throughout the ages. All of their self-sacrifice was inspired by their pure intention to simply serve Hashem as loyal servants, beyond all reasoning or knowledge.

The Name of Hashem upon the Head of Every Tzaddik

The deeper works explain that the *Shem HaVaYaH* rests upon the head of each and every *tzaddik*. As we say in the bedtime *Shema*: “At my right the angel Michael, at my left the angel Gavriel...and upon my head, Hashem’s *Shechinah*. The Rashash writes that the “line” that draws down illumination into all the worlds from the *Ohr Ein Sof* shines in two ways: through the “length” and

¹⁶ *Tehillim* 102:1

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 90:1

through the “breadth.” The length parallels the spinal cord that transmits vitality throughout the human frame, just as the line runs straight down through all of the descending hierarchy of the worlds in the manner of *m'malei kol almin*, or “filling all worlds.” However, even throughout this descent there is a lateral linkage of all of the *sefiros* in all of their manifestations through every level, and this is called the “line illuminating through the breadth,” just as the light of the Name *HaVaYaH* rests upon the “skull” or head [which is round and indicates this holographic lateral linkage]. The Kabbalistic works explain that the head has “620 pores” which parallel the 613 Biblical commandments and the seven rabbinic ones, and they are the spiritual root of the level called *soveiv kol almin*, that Hashem’s light “surrounds all worlds.” [The aspect of “filling” is linear, while the aspect of “surrounding” is lateral/circular.] The *tzaddik* is able to combine both of these levels, that of the spine and that of the head, and so the light of *HaVaYaH* shines upon him laterally, as if the Name is written out from right to left. Along the spinal cord, the Name is laid out vertically, so to speak, with one letter beneath the other. According to the Talmud Bavli, this sort of arrangement of the *Shem HaVaYaH* does not have intrinsic holiness, while the Yerushalmi differs. The higher level of the “head” is really where the main element of *avodah* lies, and that is expressed in the simple pathway of being absolutely dedicated to Hashem’s service through the “620 pores” of all of the commandments.

Only the *tzaddik* who is like Moshe Rabbeinu can link together both of these lower and higher aspects of *avodah* to complete his Divine service and uplift the *Shechinah* from the seven chambers of *Beriyah* to the place of the

“head.” This is also how the *tzaddik* is able to fulfill another of his functions—he promotes the bond of love that exists among Jews. Just as “the matter depends upon mutual love” [as explained by Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai], so too does “the matter depend upon *Atikah*.” The *tzaddik* is filled with a powerful love and compassion for every single Jew even if he has fallen into low places, G-d forbid. In fact, when a Jew sins it is a reflection of the descent of the *Shechinah* and the obscuring of Hashem’s glory, and just as the *tzaddik* does not lose sight of the *Shechinah* in her “hiding,” he likewise keeps every Jew in his heart and mind no matter how far he falls. The uplifting of the *Shechinah*, therefore, depends on the binding together of all Jewish souls into a single unit, “like one man with one heart,” and this is accomplished by the *tzaddik* when he joins up the line of the “length” with that of the “breadth.”

The Avodah of Tu B'Shevat

As we approach the “Rosh Hashanah of the Tree,” we must return to the *avodah* of uniting the Divine Names *HaVaYaH* and *ADNI*, for their combined numerical value is equal to that of אילן or “tree.” [26 + 65 = 91] It is upon this “tree” that all of the fruits through which Eretz Yisrael is praised grow, and the last of them is the date which alludes to the *Shechinah* that is hidden within the lowest level of the world of *Beriyah* and needs to be uplifted. Amalek sought to uproot the tree, meaning they sought to interrupt our ability to make this *yichud*. They were willing to leave us to study Torah as long as we abandoned the true purpose of Torah study, which is to connect to the Creator. Amalek’s object is to “darken the face of the Torah,” but the *tzaddik* continues his seeking after

Hashem's presence without interruption, so that Hashem should rule alone over all of His creation in a revealed way, immediately. The *tzaddik* devotes himself to rescuing the Torah from her imprisonment by revealing its secrets and light to the world as a whole. Even though every form of self-sacrifice is very precious to Hashem, the highest form of *mesirus nefesh* is that which is on behalf of the Torah itself, that all of its parts and secrets should be revealed. The great self-sacrifice of Nachshon ben Aminadav for the sake of the Torah is precious, but it only can happen by virtue of the self-sacrifice of Moshe Rabbeinu who devoted himself to the Torah's secrets, who "split the sea of wisdom."

Self-sacrifice for the sake of the Torah's secrets does not mean, as some might believe, for "Kabbalah." Rather, it means absolute devotion to the simple meaning of the Torah as well, each person in accordance with the root of his own soul, to the aspect of the Torah that is "hidden" from him because he has not yet penetrated it. Each concept that is still a secret for a person is called "the Torah's secrets," because no one has ever really sacrificed himself to the utmost extent for the Torah, in accordance with her worth. As the Baal Shem Tov taught, "'Hashem's Torah is pure'—she is still pure and whole, no one has yet so much as touched her."¹⁸ This is a reflection of the teaching of the *Zohar*, that one must break through the *besulim* and the hidden aspect of the Torah. The Torah anxiously awaits the *tzaddik* who will come and break through the barriers so that her light can be revealed throughout all the world. This is why the exile goes on; because the Torah is hidden among the *klippas*, but to the degree to which each person works to release her from her exile, so too will he merit to see the

¹⁸ *Baal Shem Tov Al HaTorah, Bereishis 34*

light of Hashem that rests upon the head of each and every *tzaddik*. Then he too will be able to devote himself completely to the Torah as well, so that the barrier between *Atzilus* and *Beriyah* will be split and Hashem's glory will be revealed everywhere.

The Bones of Yosef

A person must never say that since he manages to devote part of his time to Torah study he is doing enough. This kind of complacent attitude is not characteristic of the person described in the verse, “Those who diligently pursue Me [who darken themselves with effort and who wake early to study] will find Me.”¹⁹ [The root word שחך indicates all of these things.] A person must “darken himself” for the sake of the Torah and dedicate himself body and soul above all reasoning and understanding. We can see the difference between the former attitude and the latter manner of the *tzaddik* when we examine what happened when the Jewish people left Egypt. The Jewish people busied themselves gathering up the wealth of Egypt—gold and silver represent the emotive attributes of fear and love of G-d—but Moshe Rabbeinu was only preoccupied with gathering the bones of Yosef to bring them out of Egypt. The bones of Yosef represent the essence and ultimate truth of Divine service [עצמות = עצם], which is unifying Hashem's Name and revealing His glory throughout the world. Moshe Rabbeinu was like the simple *baal habayis* who spends all day at work and grabs whatever time he can at night to learn so that he can have some connection with the holy Torah beyond all reasoning and understanding. This is

¹⁹ *Mishlei* 8:17

the inner meaning of Moshe marrying “the Cushite woman.” He “darkened himself” for the sake of bonding with the *Shechinah* who is hidden in dark and deep places, and in return he merited to reach the level of *Reisha d'Lo Isyadah*, of “the head that is not known,” the highest awareness of Hashem that transcends all knowledge and understanding. This is the *Shem HaVaYaH* that rests upon the head of each and every *tzaddik*. May Hashem help us to magnify the glory of His Name, and may we merit to uplift the *Shechinah* from the depths of her imprisonment and dress her in garments of honor and glory, until we merit to see “eye to eye, Hashem’s return to Tzion.” Speedily and in our days, Amen.

Translated and Adapted by Rav Micha Golshevsky.

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