

Erev Shabbos Kodesh Parshas Bereishis 5770

# D'ei Chochmah L'nafshechah

“Let your soul know wisdom”

Parshas Bereishis

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

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**Shalosh Seudos<sup>1</sup> of Parshas Bereishis 5768****”בְּרֵאשִׁית, בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים, אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם, וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ.”****“In the beginning, Hashem created the heavens and the earth.”<sup>2</sup>**

**Rashi quotes** Rav Yitzchak, that the *Chumash* could have begun from the verse, “This month shall be unto you...,”<sup>3</sup> since *kiddush hachodesh* is the first commandment that Hashem gave to the Jewish people. The reason it begins from *Bereishis* is because, “He has declared to His people the power of His works, in giving them the heritage of the nations.”<sup>4</sup> If the non-Jews should claim that we plundered the land from the seven Canaanite nations, we can reply that Hashem created the entire world and gives it to whomever He wishes. From His own free will He gave it to them, and from His own free will He then took it from them and gave it to us.

**The Point within the Beis**

It is significant that Rashi begins his epic commentary with a remark from Rav Yitzchak. The reason for this is because Yitzchak, whose name means laughter, [יצחק = חיי קייץ] alludes to the *keitz*, the ultimate time when the

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<sup>1</sup> The lesson was delivered at the third meal of Shabbos.

<sup>2</sup> *Bereishis* 1:1

<sup>3</sup> *Shemos* 12:2

<sup>4</sup> *Tehillim* 111:6

redemption will final materialize. This is the time when, “Our mouths will be filled with laughter, and our tongues with joyous song.”<sup>5</sup>

The Vilna Gaon taught that everything that was, is, and will be is hinted at in the Torah.<sup>6</sup> In more general terms, everything is alluded to in our *parshah* and in an even more abbreviated form from the first word *Bereishis* until the end of the description of the first week of creation.<sup>7</sup> The first verse of our *parshah* “contains” everything in it in an even more succinct way, and it is even more concentrated within the six letters of the first word בראשית. In truth, everything that was, is, and will be, exists within the nucleus that is the *dagesh* within the *beis* of *Bereishis*. [The *dagesh* is the vowel which indicates that a *beis* should be pronounced *beis* and not *veis*. This is a single, super-concentrated point of information that contains within it all of the potential for the entirety the universe that bursts forth from it.]

### Revealing the Kingship of Hashem

The meaning behind this is that a person tends to work on his private goals in Divine service without realizing that every aspect of *avodah* is rooted in very high places, and one must work to attain it. The *Tikkunei Zohar* teaches that the ultimate source of everything is the “point in its palace,”<sup>8</sup> which is the *dagesh* within the *beis* of *Bereishis*. This then is the significance of the *dagesh*: connecting to the Source. One who establishes a powerful connection to the

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 126:2

<sup>6</sup> *Tzafra D'Tzniusah*, Chapter 5

<sup>7</sup> *Bereishis* 2:3

<sup>8</sup> *Tikkunei Zohar* 72b

Foundation of everything finds that every other *avodah* is easily achieved in a complete manner.

This is similar to the teaching of the Baal Shem Tov that each of us must, in our interaction with everything that exists “in the heavens and the earth,” grasp that it is purposeful and that nothing exists at random. As the Midrash teaches, Hashem wished to have a dwelling place in this lower world so that we should come to recognize His Kingship.<sup>9</sup> This is another meaning of the opening verse of the Torah: “First and foremost, one must understand that creation is purposeful—to reveal Hashem’s Kingship throughout the universe.”

The first step to achieving a connection with the Source is to stop being preoccupied with one’s personal *avodah* and work on fulfilling this purpose—to declare Hashem King. So many people learn the works of the *tzaddikim* in a superficial manner and completely miss the deeper meaning hidden in their words. The cause of such superficiality is the lack of true *emunah* and *dveikus* which is associated with the spiritual level of Eretz Yisrael. We are distant from the spiritual nature of Eretz Yisrael, so we do not grasp that we must toil on the deeper *nekudah*, the innermost point that is the true goal.

This point within the *beis* represents *Chochmah*, while the letter *beis* itself represents *Binah*. We must work hard to attain the “*nekudah* in her palace,” which means learning Torah with the goal to reveal the honor of Hashem throughout the entire expanse of creation. Struggling to find Hashem within all of creation is the way to ensure that all other *avodos* succeed. Whether one’s goal is Torah study, prayer, or binding oneself to the *tzaddikim*,

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<sup>9</sup> *Midrash Tanchuma, Parshas Naso*

through searching for the Source one attains the *dagesh*, the point which is likened to the smallest letter *yud*, which itself comprises three individual points. The point also represents the letter *alef*. [It symbolizes the higher source of creation which is *Atzilus*, signified by the letter *alef* which is before *beis*, the first letter of the Torah which represents the next world of *Beriyah*]. An *alef* also comprises three points: an upper *yud*, a lower *yud*, and a *vav* that spans the space between them. The letter *alef* embodies the purpose of creation: to connect the lower beings with Hashem through the aspects of *mayin nukvin* and *mayin duchrin*—the “feminine waters” of arousal from below, and the “masculine waters” of arousal from above [אתערותא דלעילא / אתערותא דלתתא].

The Arizal taught that when one yearns for Hashem he generates “feminine waters” [since they come from feeling of distance from Hashem in the “feminine” manner of *Malchus*, which has nothing of her own]. This “arousal from below” draws down “masculine waters”—an influx of spiritual illumination which fills the prior lack. Through yearning, one becomes a dwelling place for the Creator and draws down spiritual illumination. He then must reach another level of yearning and draw down even more illumination. This is the deeper meaning of the three points of the *yud* and the three segments that make up an *alef*: the lower beings, the Creator above, and the path of yearning that connects them.

### **The Avodah of Shabbos Bereishis**

The Yesod Ha'avodah of Slonim explains that the *avodah* of *Shabbos Bereishis* is similar to that of Rosh Hashanah. On this day as well we must

declare Hashem King, but in an even deeper manner. We began the process of declaring Hashem's Kingship on Rosh Hashanah and this *avodah* is completed on *Shemini Atzeres*. Even so, during the first three weeks of the new Torah reading cycle we repeat this process in a deeper way. On *Shabbos Bereishis* we develop the aspect of Rosh Hashanah, on *Shabbos Noach* that of Yom Kippur, and on *Shabbos Lech Lecha* that of [*Sukkos, Simchas Torah, and*] *Shemini Atzeres*.

Once, when discussing the Maggis of Kozhnitz just before *Shabbos Bereishis*, the Chozeh of Lublin told his followers that any person who does not spend time with the *tzaddik* of the generation will have to give a reckoning. When the *chassidim* heard this they travelled to Kozhnitz to spend time with the Maggid. Shortly after they arrived, the Maggid said that the *tzaddik* of the generation is hidden. For this reason, it is only possible to discern and relate to him on Shabbos, since on this day every Jew is sanctified with the holiness of Shabbos. This is especially true during the *tisch* on Shabbos, as the Baal HaSulam learns from the verse: "And Boaz said to her at mealtime, 'Come hither...'"<sup>10</sup> We see from this that one does not receive the main light of the *tzaddik* of the generation during his lectures. Instead, one is afforded a deeper connection during the *tisch* since the Torah that the *tzaddik* teaches during this time is from a much deeper source.

That week, the Maggid said to the disciples of the Chozeh of Lublin, "Since your Rebbe said that I am the *tzaddik* of the generation I must give over a Torah teaching that relates to this topic. Our sages taught that on *Shabbos*

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<sup>10</sup> *Ruth* 2:14

*Bereishis* Hashem called the angels and appointed them to oversee the world. In response, the angels said: 'הכל יודוך'—'All will praise You.'<sup>11</sup> We can understand this in the context of *Tosafos* in *Sanhedrin* 37b, who cited the *Geonim* that the custom in Eretz Yisrael was to only say *Kaddish* on *Shabbos*. They learned this practice from the verse regarding the holy angels that each have six wings.<sup>12</sup> Each day of the week one of their wings sings Hashem's praises, but on *Shabbos* the angels claim that no wing remains to sing to Him. Hashem responds that one more wing yet remains. As the verse states: 'מִכַּנְף הָאֲרֶזֶת שָׁמָעְנוּ'—'From the corner [literally 'wing'] of the earth, we heard songs...'<sup>13</sup> This means that on *Shabbos* the Jewish people praise Hashem with the praise of the angels [which is *Kaddish*], since they too have 'wings'—the 'wing of the earth.'"

The Maggid explained, "But that was later on. On the first *Shabbos* the angels must have sang. Since they were created on Monday, they began to sing to Hashem that day and they certainly had a wing with which to sing on the original *Shabbos Bereishis*. This explains how we find that the holy angels sang 'הכל יודוך' on *Shabbos*. But they were not alone. The souls of the future Jewish people joined in their song on this precious day." On *Shabbos Bereishis* the deep unity of the souls of the Jewish people is revealed when we all say, "All will thank You and all will praise You..."

### **The Kingship of the Souls of the Jewish People**

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<sup>11</sup> See *Kehilas Yaakov, Erech Shabbos*

<sup>12</sup> *Yeshayah* 6:1-3

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 24:16



The deeper meaning of this story is revealed by the teaching of *Likutei Moharan* that the true *avodah* of Rosh Hashanah is to declare Hashem's Kingship through giving the souls of the Jewish people sovereignty over the angels.<sup>14</sup> [But what does this really mean?] Every servant of Hashem is sometimes like an angel since he stands [the angels are known as "those who stand"] in Divine service before Hashem. At other times, the human servant of Hashem is on an even higher level, when he is manifesting the higher level of his *neshamah*. At such a point, his *dveikus* is so absolute that he is entirely self-nullified and subsumed in Hashem.

Every feeling that a person experiences, whether it is material or spiritual in nature, is something like an angel [or a messenger]. It is only when a person truly grasps that everything is *Elokus* and that he can always return to be one with Hashem and rectify every blemish that he has accessed the aspect of *neshamah* which is above the level of the angel. It is only when one is on the lower "angel" state, that he feels a division between himself and Hashem.

Our task on Rosh Hashanah is to truly believe that we can achieve *dveikus* and be one with Hashem at the level that is higher than angels. We must elevate the lower *yud* to the upper *yud* by uplifting all of our feelings and attaining true self-nullification before Hashem. This reveals Hashem's [presence, Kingship, and] glory in the world. This is the way of the *tzaddikim* who never forget about this essential purpose of creation. The *tzaddikim* single-mindedly focus on fulfilling this purpose all day, every day, thereby fulfilling their mission in the world. But every Jew has a specific aspect of Hashem's

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<sup>14</sup> *Likutei Moharan* II:1

glory which it is his unique task to reveal. He makes a dwelling place for Hashem among the lower beings by focusing on declaring Hashem's reign with every action.

Even when one's Divine service comes only with great difficulty and he feels that a barrier has been erected between himself and Hashem, he must focus on fulfilling this mission. Even if one is sick or experiencing great pain he must focus primarily on healing the world and changing all evil to good through reveal the light of Hashem. [This can be accomplished through one's thoughts and intentions, which are always free even when the body's ability is limited.] One must continually seek to return to Hashem through this supernal illumination. He must believe with complete faith that when one does *teshuvah* he elevates all of creation and draws Divine light into the world. This light destroys all barriers and atones for all sin. The main thing is to declare Hashem's Kingship by becoming one with Him [in all situations]—this reveals G-dliness in every place.

### **The Difference Between the *Tzaddik* and the *Beinoni***

The Vilna Gaon, the Baal HaSulam, and other great luminaries explain that the main task depends on reaching the level of *Mocha Sesima'ah*. This means practically that one must access the deepest part of himself and nullify it before Hashem so as to completely expose all of creation to Hashem's light. This is the level of the "hidden mind." However, Hashem erected a powerful barrier that blocks the path to true self-nullification: "So He drove out the man, and He placed at the east of Gan Eden the *keruvim* and the flaming sword

which turned every way to guard the way to the Tree of Life.”<sup>15</sup> This “flash of the revolving sword,” prevents one from attaining Gan Eden, to “walk in the lands of the living.” And one naturally finds himself exiled from true closeness to Hashem. [But how is one to overcome this seemingly impassable blockage?]

The Baal HaTanya famously taught that a *tzaddik* is a person who has completely nullified his *yetzer hara* and is completely good. One who still struggles with his evil inclination is merely a *beinoni*, even if he fights the evil and never submits to it.<sup>16</sup> But this seems very difficult since Rav Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk explains that Moshe Rabbeinu is an embodiment of the *Da'as* that fights against Bilaam, who personified *da'as* of *klippah*—the mental force of impurity.<sup>17</sup> It seems clear that in order to subdue the aspect of Bilaam, Moshe Rabbeinu has to undergo all the blemishes of Bilaam in his thoughts and subdue them by rejecting them. Yet the Baal HaTanya holds that a true *tzaddik* does not even entertain thoughts of evil!

The explanation is that when a *tzaddik* has a bad thought this is meaningless since he immediately elevates it to absolute *Elokus* by completely nullifying himself to Hashem. Similarly, when a *tzaddik* is struck by a thought of laziness, depression, or the three evils of jealousy, lust, or the race after honor, he immediately elevates it to Hashem through complete self-nullification before Hashem. We see that the determining factor of one's level is really how quickly he elevates everything to *Elokus*. For example, if two people are struck by a rebellious impulse, the *tzaddik* immediately discards it while the *beinoni*

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<sup>15</sup> *Bereishis* 3:24

<sup>16</sup> *Tanya*, Chapter 12

<sup>17</sup> *Pri Ha'aretz*, *Parshas Matos-Masei*

must struggle mightily with it before he can finally reject it. The more quickly one discards the bad, the more of a *tzaddik* he is.

In every world, there is a revolving sword that hurls all kinds of illicit thoughts at a person and the only way to overcome it is to immediately enter Gan Eden by subsuming his thoughts in *Elokus*. But if one does not immediately reject such thoughts he is denied entry into Hashem's garden. Even if one successfully rejects one thought, another will often immediately take its place. Again, one can either immediately reject the evil thought or be evicted himself from Gan Eden.

### **The Tree of Knowledge and the Tree of Life**

When Adam sinned, death was decreed on the world. However, the purpose of this was actually for the good, since death actually offers a great spiritual advantage. The purpose of creation is to include the lower waters in the upper waters, and this demands a degree of effort most people fail to muster during their lifetimes. How, then, is true *dveikus* to be achieved? It is achieved through death. Mortality is actually a gift because it enables us to experience a more lasting *bitul* before Hashem, since one lies in the dirt for many years. The body decays and this nullifies the material aspect of the body and it is through this breaking down that one merits to truly cleave to Hashem with complete *bitul* after the resurrection.

This is also the reason why every person must experience sleep, which is one sixtieth of death.<sup>18</sup> Through sleep, the material body is nullified and is

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<sup>18</sup> *Berachos* 57b

refreshed enough to attain a higher level of *bitul* than that which was attained the day before. Rest refreshes the body so that it can serve Hashem on the morrow with greater *zerizus*. This is why the more *zerizus* a person has, the less he needs to sleep. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananiah taught, “When we rejoiced at the *Simchas Beis HaShoeva* we did not sleep at all.”<sup>19</sup> We can understand this better in view of the teaching of the Arizal that the light of *Binah* shines during *Sukkos*.<sup>20</sup> The source of *Binah* is *Arich Anpin*, which is an aspect of *mati v'lo mati*—“touching and not touching”—which is associated with incredible swiftness [since *Binah* is expressed in the “running and returning” of *teshuvah*]. One who attains this level needs no sleep since he merits the rectifications of sleep through his lengthy *bitul*. [This explains how we find that certain *tzaddikim* require very little sleep at any time.]

A person's work in this world is to overcome the thoughts that cause him to stray from his *dveikus*, especially thoughts of depression, laziness, and other moral failings. When a person fails to reject such a thought he tastes from the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil, since it blocks his connection to Hashem even after the thought is long gone. This explains the enigmatic Midrash that records Adam HaRishon's response when Hashem confronted him with his sin: “I ate from the tree and I will eat again.”<sup>21</sup> The way to overcome this is through lengthy *dveikus* that leads to alacrity in *avodah*. Therefore, one who has fallen should pray and learn at great length until he nullifies the evil within himself. Then he can once again cleave to Hashem

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<sup>19</sup> *Sukkah* 53a

<sup>20</sup> *Pri Eitz Chaim, Sukkos, Drush #1*

<sup>21</sup> *Yalkut Shimoni, Bereishis* 3:28

with his entire being. The quicker one drives out his negative thoughts, the easier it will be to connect to Hashem. One who rejects the evil immediately will fulfill the oath he took before entering the world, “Be a *tzaddik*! Do not be a *rasha*!” He will not remain a *beinoni* who must struggle with the bad within. Instead, he will become a *tzaddik* since he clings to the Tree of Life and rejects the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil.

### **The Higher Level of *Atik***

The level above *Arich Anpin* is *Atik Yomin*, regarding which the *Zohar* teaches: “It grasps everything, but *Atik* itself cannot be grasped.”<sup>22</sup> This means that one who attains this level is completely above time. Although everything we experience comes directly from Hashem, here on our lower level we cannot possibly grasp this in an absolute sense. This is why the first of the three “heads” of *Atik* is called *Reisha d'lo Isyadah*, literally, “the head that is not known.” This means that until one accesses this level he has no inkling how in truth all of creation exists in absolute unity with the Creator. He must rely on his feeling that everything is *Elokus* even though he doesn't actually “grasp” this. But the *tzaddik*, through his continuous toil, reaches the aspect of *Reisha d'lo Isyadah* which is above time and space. At this point, he does really grasp that everything is from Hashem. Hashem alone will redeem us through the aspect of the mercy of *Atik*, as the *Zohar* teaches based on the verse, “I will gather you in great mercy.”<sup>23</sup> Such a *tzaddik* has ascended to the Tree of Life

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<sup>22</sup> *Zohar* III:225a

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* III:137b; *Yeshayah* 54:7

like, “David the king of Yisrael who is alive and exists,” because he feels a deep connection with no obscuring of Hashem’s presence at all.

### **The Avos and Yosef HaTzaddik**

Every person attains an aspect of *bitul* when he closes his eyes from the darkness of this world and cleaves to Hashem, but eventually he reverts to seeing the darkness until he again attains a state of *bitul*. However, the *tzaddik* who attains an aspect of *Atik* feels this absolute nullification even when his eyes are opened since he truly sees Hashem in every aspect of creation.

This is similar to the Baal HaTanya’s description of the *Avos* in contrast to Yosef HaTzaddik. The *Avos* chose to be shepherds to be able to close their eyes from the false sheen of this material world. By contrast, Yosef HaTzaddik was the viceroy of Egypt. Clearly a king must keep his eyes open to perceive the goings-on in his kingdom. Yosef was able to do this because his level of *dveikus* was so great that he was able to be both above with Hashem and below in the physical world at the same time. [Of course he did not achieve this alone, since he was only able to attain this level on the shoulders of the great exertions of the *Avos*.]

Although we have no understanding of the levels of the *Avos* and Yosef HaTzaddik, these aspects apply to each one of us on our own level as well. Each of us must work to elevate our negative thoughts, and the higher we go the faster we must rid ourselves of them. We must take special care not to allow any experience to shake our resolve to ascend to the holiness of Eretz Yisrael, which can be reached through cultivating the quality of patience. Our sages

taught: “What did Moshe see when he looked into the land? He saw *Erech Apayim*—the holy quality of patience.”<sup>24</sup> Even if a situation appears very bleak, we must not fear it. Instead, we should capitalize on it to reveal even greater *dveikus* with Hashem. Through transforming evil thoughts to *dveikus* we will merit the *avodah* of Rosh Hashanah—the deep pleasure of seeing *Elokus* in everything which causes the souls of the Jewish people to rule over the angels. This is the really the subject of our judgment: how much do we declare Hashem’s Kingship through what we experience, especially through that which is most challenging?

This explains why the *tzaddikim* told us not to pay attention to any signs that seem to indicate that our *avodah* during the *yomim nora'im* was less than perfect—the main *avodah* is to declare Hashem’s Kingship through the difficulties, until one reaches a place far above creation and any kind of “sign.” [This is the *avodah* of *Shabbos Bereishis*: to elevate and transform negative thoughts into *dveikus* and incorporate this *avodah* into our daily life throughout the coming year. On Yom Kippur every person is an aspect of a *tzaddik*. We deepen this *avodah* on the parallel *Shabbos Noach* since we are likened to Noach, who was called a *tzaddik*. At this level we learn to truly elevate every negative thought with such speed that it does not actually reach us. We are protected by the ark of this *avodah* which surrounds us and keeps out the turbulent floodwaters of negative thoughts.]

### **The Vav within the Alef**

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<sup>24</sup> *Sanhedrin* 111a



On *Shemini Atzeres* the upper *yud* joins the lower *yud* and together they form a *vav*, as the Arizal explains. In terms of *avodah* this means that one elevates the thoughts to *dveikus* so quickly that the upper is at one with the lower, so that one can live his life with a powerful *dveikus* like Yosef HaTzaddik who was above and below at once. As with every level, every person can attain something of this according to his level even when discussing such lofty realms as *Arich* and *Atik*.

Now we can understand how the Maggid of Kozhnitz explained the concept of the *tzaddik* of the generation. He taught that *Shabbos Bereishis* itself reflects this highest degree of *tzaddik*, since this is when the aspects of *malachim* and *neshamos*, the angels and the Jewish people, join together to praise Hashem. This means that a person truly sees that everything is *Elokus* since it is all included in the light of Hashem.

### **“All Will Praise You”**

A person can only attain the level of Yosef HaTzaddik, of the “head that is not known,” by virtue of the level of *Arich* which is associated with David HaMelech, since David and Yosef are really one. This unity is expressed in the name Dovid when it is spelled דויד, since the additional *yud* signifies Yosef. David HaMelech himself is the *Mati v'lo Mati* quality of *Arich*, or the *Binah* within *Arich*, but the *yud* of his name hints at the aspect of *Atik*, the “unknown head” of Yosef who is the ultimate *tzaddik* that is the pathway to דוד מלך ישראל חי וקים. This is what empowers a person to overcome sleep and even death since this level of *avodah* hastens the redemption. This *avodah* allows us to

enter the upper level of Gan Eden since it means that wherever we set our eyes we see only the pleasantness of Hashem. This was the aspiration of all the true *tzaddikim* and was achieved by the Baal HaTanya who said right before he died that he did not see the material world at all, only *Elokus*. Even we can attain a taste of this *avodah*, each of us according to our level.

### “Let Your Soul Know Wisdom”

This is the meaning of the phrase: “דעה חכמה לנפשך והיא כתר לראשך”—“Let your soul know (*d'ei*) wisdom (*Chochmah*), and it will be a crown (*Kesser*) for your head.”<sup>25</sup> This means that one must use the self-nullification of *Chochmah* to elevate his animal soul until he merits to become a *tzaddik* and reach the heights of *Kesser*. “Guard your holy *mitzvos*”—each of us must do his utmost to fulfill *mitzvos* with an intention to connect to Hashem and attain the innermost purpose of creation. “Guard your holy Shabbos”—at the very least on Shabbos, starting from *Shabbos Bereishis*, we must dedicate ourselves to realizing the higher level of *dveikus* and holiness manifest in Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and *Sukkos*.

May Hashem’s thirteen attributes of mercy shine upon us. The source of these attributes are the “two *peyos*” [of the thirteen *tikkunei diknah*] which represent an aspect of the *neshamos* and *malachim*. Hashem should help us continue to struggle until we rise above the level of *beinoni* and see that everything is really *Elokus*. May we grasp that everything is good and praise Hashem with our entire being until we never leave the aspect of Eretz Yisrael.

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<sup>25</sup> From the *Shabbos zemer* “*D’ror Yikrah*,” based on *Mishlei* 24:14.

Instead, we should ascend and join the lower *yud* with the upper *yud* until the holiness of Eretz Yisrael extends throughout the world through the mercy of *Atik* which shines in even the lowest places. May we see “eye to eye Hashem’s return to Tzion,” with the coming of our righteous redeemer speedily in our days. Amen!

**Translated and Adapted by Rav Micha Golshevsky.**

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