

Erev Shabbos Kodesh Parshas Emor 5770

D'ei Chochmah L'nafshechah

“Let your soul know wisdom”

Parshas Emor

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

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Shalosh Seudos of Parshas Emor 5768

”וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה אָמַר אֶל-הַכֹּהֲנִים בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם לִנְפֹשׁ לֹא-יִטְמָא בְּעַמִּי
 כִּי מ-לְשָׂאָרוֹ הִקְרַב אֵלָיו לְאִמּוֹ וּלְאָבִיו וּלְבָנוֹ וּלְבִתּוֹ וּלְאָחִיו וּלְאָחִתּוֹ הַבְּתוּלָה הַקְּרוּבָה אֵלָיו
 אֲשֶׁר לֹא-הִיְתָה לְאִישׁ לָהּ יִטְמָא. לֹא יִטְמָא בְּעַל בְּעַמִּי לְהַחֲלוֹ.”

“And Hashem said to Moshe: Speak to the *kohanim* the sons of Aharon and say to them: None shall defile himself for the dead among his people except for his kin that is near to him; for his mother, and for his father, and for his son, and for his daughter, and for his brother; and for his unmarried sister that is near to him that has had no husband, for her may he defile himself. He shall not defile himself, being a chief man among his people, to profane himself.”¹

The Holiness of the *Kohanim*

Hashem sanctified the *kohanim* with an added measure of holiness, beyond that of the rest of the Jewish people, and also provided them with additional restrictions to safeguard their sanctity. It is impossible to advance and rise in one’s Divine service without developing extra precautions to guarantee the holiness and purity of one’s mind and actions. One must seek to add more *kedushah* and Divine awareness every single day, more careful avoidance of negative behavior—“to steer from evil”—and to enhance holiness—“and do good.”

This is the purpose of the *Sefirah* period, when we count the days after leaving Egypt, so that we can advance and rise and become fitting vessels to receive the Torah.

¹ *Vayikra* 21:1-4

And we accomplish this mainly by adding more and more safeguards to ensure our purity and holiness.

The Torah says, “And you shall count *for yourselves*”—we must do it for ourselves because each and every person has his own unique *avodah* to do during *Sefirah*, his own way in which he needs to enhance the safeguards of his *kedushah*. In this, each person is unique and has to develop his own unique method. Just as we find in Rebbe Nachman’s story, “The Sophisticate and the Simpleton.” The simpleton always says, “This is my story, and that is his story”—every person has to think about his own story and how to safeguard his own *kedushah*.²

² Reb Nosson of Breslov explains in *Hilchos Pesach* 4:22: “This is the meaning of the commandment, ‘Count *for yourselves*’—each person must count *Sefiras Ha’omer* for himself, meaning he must encourage himself in the state that he is at that time and must not allow himself to be discouraged by imagining that his contemporaries are so much better than him. Even though humility is a positive quality and it is good to consider others as being better than oneself, nevertheless if such thoughts make a person feel discouraged, G-d forbid, this is not true humility at all. It is an inverse form of pride, because he really feels that it isn’t betting for him to serve Hashem in some [small] way when he is so far from Him and his friends have achieved so much. One cannot second-guess Hashem; who knows what his spiritual source really is and from what places he has been drawn down due to his own unique deeds? For no two people are the same. When a person wants to leave his impure state, this is the aspect of counting *Sefirah* for it is, ‘that they should be purified.’ And one must count the days for himself, and not allow considerations of [the level of] his friend discourage him... As we find in the story of “The Sophisticate and the Simpleton.” The simpleton was a cobbler, but he was unable to master his craft completely and all of his shoes came out triangular in shape. Even so, he would praise the finished products very highly and say, ‘How lovely this shoe is...’ When his wife would retort, ‘If so, then why do other craftsmen receive three rubles for a pair of shoes, but you only earn one and a half rubles per pair?’ he would answer, ‘What has this to do with me? That is his story, and this is my story! And what’s more, why should we speak of others? Let us first consider just how much profit I make on this shoe in ready money. The leather costs so and so much...’ We must understand this very well, because everyone learns profound lessons that touch upon their Divine service from this story. One must act with simplicity and always be happy, even when poverty prevails and one’s prayer and Divine service is incomplete. One must be happy with his lot in any case and not pay any attention to others whose livelihoods are so much more secure... They may have much in a worldly sense and still suffer constant worry over what they lack. And even when others far surpass a person in their Divine service, in their Torah study and prayer, nevertheless one must not be discouraged at all but must instead rejoice in his lot. One must be just like the Simpleton who could taste the flavor of every food in his simple bread... That shoe that he slaved over and which turned out so imperfect and barely brought him a profit was nevertheless precious to him, and he praised it highly and paid no attention to others at all... Rebbe Nachman himself hinted that the metaphor of cobbling represents prayer and *avodas Hashem*, as he explained obliquely at the end of the story. ‘Even if prayer is imperfect, it is like a triangular shoe...’ We must act with utter simplicity, just like the Simpleton, and learn deep lessons from every single word and act of his in the story so that we can follow his path and rejoice constantly...in every single good point that he ‘profits’ in his prayer and Divine service, however he is.”

The Fiftieth Gate

The overall purpose of *Sefirah* is to tread the path that leads to the fiftieth day so that we can receive the holiness of the fiftieth gate. This gate is different from the other forty-nine; instead of it being an aspect of “mitzvah,” the fiftieth is an aspect of “*metzaveh*”—“the One who commands.” While there is level after level of holiness to which one can aspire and endless *avodos*, the overarching level that transcends and includes them all is that of faith itself. When a person experiences a single moment of *emunah*, it encompasses everything in the world. That is the fiftieth gate; when a person knows that there is a Creator. This knowledge rectifies all flaws and includes all of the Torah.

This higher level is embodied in the twelve showbreads that were laid on the holy table and which remained hot and fresh the whole week long.³ They were like the holiness of Shabbos itself, which is imbued with constantly fresh faith in the existence of the Creator. It is from this wellspring of faith that the soul is revived every single week; this point of faith is the pinnacle of holiness. It has to be kept warm and fresh, “Because it is not befitting the King’s honor to eat stale bread.” This is why the Shabbos *avodah* in the *Beis Hamikdash* involved the showbread specifically, because the “bread” of holy *emunah* has to be as warm and fresh as if it just came from the oven when it is replaced, “from Shabbos to Shabbos.” The twelve breads represent the twelve *Partzufim* of the world of *Atzilus*, the experience of absolute closeness to Hashem that is never static or stale.

Faith cannot be considered pure and true if it is stale and lifeless, if a person feels as though he has heard it all before and he know whatever there is to know about *emunah*. He needs to feel, instead, the heat of fresh enthusiasm filling him constantly, “Because it is not befitting the King’s honor to eat stale bread.” This renewal is the light of the fiftieth gate that shines on Shabbos, and it is the pinnacle of *yichud* that is the source of all forms of sanctity. And this is why the *tzaddikim* always sought out the

³ *Shmuel* I:21:7; *Yerushalmi, Shekalim* 6:3

light of the *yichud* of faith itself, because it rectifies everything and encompasses all of the Torah and all that is holy.

”דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם מוֹעֲדֵי ה' אֲשֶׁר תִּקְרְאוּ אֹתָם מִקְרְאֵי קֹדֶשׁ אֵלֶּה הֵם מוֹעֲדֵי: שְׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲשֶׂה מְלָאכָה וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שַׁבַּת שַׁבְּתוֹן מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ כָּל מְלָאכָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ שַׁבַּת הוּא לֵה' בְּכָל מוֹשְׁבֵיכֶם. אֵלֶּה מוֹעֲדֵי ה' מִקְרְאֵי קֹדֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר תִּקְרְאוּ אֹתָם בְּמוֹעֲדָם.”

“Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: The appointed seasons of Hashem which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are My appointed seasons: Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day is a Shabbos of solemn rest, a holy convocation; you shall do no manner of work; it is a Shabbos to Hashem in all your dwellings. These are the appointed seasons of Hashem, even holy convocations, which you shall proclaim in their appointed season.”⁴

The Light of Shabbos and the Light of *Yom Tov*

The verses quoted above present an obvious question: why does the Torah first mention the festivals, then Shabbos, and only afterward continues with the order of the festivals?

In *Koheles* we find: “On a good day, be in the good.”⁵ There are days when goodness is revealed to a greater extent than usual, and when those days come one must be sure to enter into that good which includes all of the levels and spiritual lights. There are levels of *dveikus* that a person can reach through the light of Shabbos, and there are other levels of *dveikus* that a person can experience through the light of the festivals, the “good days.” In order to reach the special *bitul* and delight of Shabbos which is the light of *Ein Sof*, one must first attain the deep contemplation exemplified

⁴ *Vayikra* 23:2-4

⁵ *Koheles* 7:14

by the festivals which parallels the receiving of the Torah. This contemplation is the aspect of *Imma / Binah*. As the Arizal taught, the initials of the verse, "אלה מועדי" יהויה—“These are the festivals of Hashem”—spell out אמִי, “my mother.”

In the *Kerem Shlomo* we find that even though the holiness of Shabbos is of the ultimate light of the *Ein Sof* and is of the highest possible level of a “fiery *yichud*,” nevertheless the sanctity of *Yom Tov* influences Shabbos, and this is especially true of the holiness of Shavuos, which derives from the fiftieth gate. The words of Torah, the source of the souls of the Jewish people which is *emunah* itself, cannot be defiled—their holiness is absolute and unwavering and their purity surpasses that of any *mikveh*. All of the days of *Sefiras Ha'omer* are a preparation for the *yichud* of the fiftieth gate, just as immersion in an actual *mikveh* is only preparation for *yichud*—it is not *yichud* itself. The ultimate *yichud* is that which exists perpetually between Hashem and the Jewish people, since their intrinsic bond is something that cannot be defiled or abrogated—it transcends all concepts of purity/impurity and levels. And when the *tzaddik* adds further safeguards to his personal holiness every day, this parallels the holiness of the festivals which prepares him for the higher *kedushah* of the *yichud* of Shabbos. The lofty level of *emunah* that is revealed on Shabbos exposes the innermost holiness that animates the festivals at their heart, which is the fiftieth gate—the apprehension of G-dliness itself. This is called, “entering into thirteen methods through which the Torah is interpreted” [which parallels Hashem’s thirteen attributes of mercy] and uplifts a person to the ultimate level of *kedushah* where everything is rectified in a moment.

This dual nature of innermost meaning and the outer means or vessels that contain this *yichud* also exists within the Torah and *mitzvos* themselves. The Torah’s commandments and its teachings, are like an external garment of holiness that contains a much higher form of *yichud*. The higher *yichud* is that of *emunah* and the Torah’s essence, which is the unwavering bond that exists between Hashem and His people. When a person immerses himself in this higher *yichud*, he finds that all of the elements

of the vessels of the lower *yichud*—every word of Torah, every mitzvah, every festival—shine with a powerful light that derives from this higher *yichud*. As the Tzemach Tzedek taught on the verse, “In justice I will gaze upon Your countenance; I will be sated by Your image while awake.” The Divine image is delineated through the details of Torah and mitzvah; gazing upon Hashem’s countenance is the deeper experience of *yichud* and *dveikus*. When a person feels the light of the higher *yichud*, the essence of the Torah and the festivals embodied in the light of Shabbos, he returns to his study of the particulars of Torah and mitzvah and prayer and those vessels are illuminated. He is then “sated” even when seeing the “image,” and not the “countenance” itself.

The Baal HaSulam taught that when a person walks aimlessly, it is certain that he will never get anywhere. So too, when it comes to Divine serve one must know that the festivals are a pathway toward something—the holiness of Shabbos. And if a person doesn’t realize that his goal is the *yichud* and *emunah* of Shabbos, how will he get anywhere at all? The sages taught that in the ultimate future, the *mitzvos* will be nullified. The Baal HaTanya explained that this should not be understood literally. Rather, the aspect of “mitzvah”—“command”—will be nullified, and instead we will remain with the innermost nature of the mitzvah, which is that it is a means to join [צוותא—“be one with”] with the “*metzavah*”—the “One who commands.”

Now we can better understand the progression of the verses in our *parshah*: first the mention of the festivals, then that of Shabbos, and then the festivals again. The aspect of the festivals which is like the body and details of the Torah and its commandments is a means to reach the higher *yichud* of Shabbos. Then the path continues, and the light of Shabbos influences our experience of the details—the “good days”—so that they are illuminated too with a higher light.

And this is the main task of the *tzaddikim*: to reveal the innermost point of *emunah* even though it is obscured by many veils. “And there shall be one day that

shall be known as Hashem's..."⁶ There is one day of the year, Shavuot, when we are able to apprehend *Arich Anpin* through *Binah*-type contemplation so that we can begin to know what Shabbos really is. The *tzaddik*, however, is always bound to Hashem in the manner of Shavuot because he is always in the *Sefirah*-process of self-refinement. Filled with the light of *emunah*, he struggles to make this higher *yichud* known to all. When we make our own efforts to reach the light of *emunah* by sanctifying ourselves on our own level, from where we are, Hashem reciprocates by opening up our minds so that we can see ourselves how all of the details of *mitzvah* and *avodah* are vessels that contain the *yichud* of *emunah*. This is the inner meaning of the fresh showbreads, the "face bread," that was always before Hashem in the sanctuary. They embody a living faith and the experience of "gazing at Your countenance" that is ever fresh and warm.

”וַיֵּצֵא בֶן אִשָּׁה יִשְׂרָאֵלִית וְהוּא בֶן אִישׁ מִצְרַיִם בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֵּצֵא בְּמַחֲנֶה בֶן הַיִּשְׂרָאֵלִית
וְאִישׁ הַיִּשְׂרָאֵלִי וַיִּקְבַּב בֶּן הָאִשָּׁה הַיִּשְׂרָאֵלִית אֶת הַשֵּׁם וַיִּקְלַל וַיְבַיְאוּ אֹתוֹ אֶל-מֹשֶׁה. וַיִּשֶׂם
אִמּוֹ שְׁלֹמִית בֵּת דִּבְרִי לְמִטָּה דָן.”

“And the son of an Israelite woman, whose father was an Egyptian, went out among the children of Israel; and the son of the Israelite woman and a man of Israel strove together in the camp. And the son of the Israelite woman blasphemed the Name, and cursed; and they brought him to Moshe. And his mother’s name was Shlomis, the daughter of Divri, of the tribe of Dan.”⁷

The Son of Shlomis bas Divri

The Arizal taught: “This son of the Israelite woman was the son of the Egyptian that Moshe Rabbeinu had killed, as described in *Parshas Shemos*. You already know that this Egyptian was a reincarnation of the latent evil within Kayin the son of Adam, and this son was drawn from the nature of his father, who was himself

⁶ *Zechariah* 14:7

⁷ *Vayikra* 24:10-11

drawn from the evil that was within Kayin. This is why the verse links him to his father, the Egyptian, and that is why he blasphemed the Name. (Note: It seems to me that since, as we know, Moshe Rabbeinu killed his father through the uttering of the Divine Name, he too cursed the Name.)

“And in the *Sefer HaZohar* it says that he did it, ‘To defend [protect, literally “shield”] his mother.’ [The Israelite man was the son of Shlomis bas Divri’s Jewish husband who had sent her away after realizing that she was with child by the Egyptian. This son revealed to his step-brother, the son of Shlomis and the Egyptian, his origins, and the conflict arose from the latter’s desire to defend his mother’s honor.] The term for blasphemed is ויקב, which literally means to pierce. He pierced the screen that exists between *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah* so that the higher worlds of *Atzilus*, *Beriyah*, and *Yetzirah* could shine into her. This is why his punishment was stoning at the hands of ‘all the congregation’—this means the members of the Sanhedrin and the Torah scholars—because the *talmidei chachamim* are able to receive illumination from the additional level of Shabbos even during the week. This is the deeper meaning of the son of the Egyptian cursing [literally, ‘piercing’] in order to ‘shield his mother,’ which represents the world of *Asiyah* and *Malchus* and the final *hei* of the Divine Name. With this you will better understand why this incident is juxtaposed with the laws of Shabbos. [The piercing was meant to draw down a higher state of holiness than is normally revealed in the world of *Asiyah*, the place of negativity where Shlomis fell into sin and shaming. Her son hoped that a higher revelation would cleanse the lower place and ‘protect his mother’s honor,’ however the attempt to inappropriately draw down influence from the ‘Shabbos consciousness’ of the higher worlds not only failed, but could only be rectified by those who truly sustain such holy awareness even outside of Shabbos—the Torah sages.]

“For this reason, the permutation of the Divine Name in the form of אהויה is alluded to in the verse: הַיִּשְׂרָאֵלִית אֶת הַשֵּׁם וַיִּקְלַל, which is the same as that which is

formed by the phrase, אֶל-הָאֲבֹת וְאֶל-הַיְדֹעָנִים⁸—‘to the ghosts and familiar spirits’—as well as that of, וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ, אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם—‘the heavens and the earth’⁹—which alludes to *Malchus*. Through the force of this Divine Name, the son of the Egyptian pierced a hole between *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*. He was the son of the Egyptian that Moshe Rabbeinu had killed. Because he was an aspect of Kayin who had been jealous of Hevel’s second twin sister [and this was one reason why Kayin killed his brother], the Egyptian was jealous of the Israelite woman who was a reincarnation of that twin. Moshe Rabbeinu, a reincarnation of Hevel, killed the Egyptian, and it was the Israelite woman’s son who came to defend his mother. The name Kayin [קין = 160 + *kollel* (1)] has the same numerical value as that of the Divine Name *EHYH* when written fully articulated by *yuds*. [אל"ף י"ד הי"י = 161] The single digit difference between the two *gematrios* represents the extra twin of Hevel that Kayin lacked, just as the *yud*-articulation of the Name *EHYH* only has a single *alef* [a single digit], while Hevel had two twin sisters.”¹⁰

The deeper works explain that the son of Shlomis bas Divri “pierced the Name” because he was brokenhearted over the fact that the tribe of Dan had rejected him because his father was an Egyptian. In truth, the unique quality of the tribe of Dan is its nature of ingathering, that it brought up the rear of all the tribes and shone the light of holiness into even those that the clouds of glory had ejected. Its function was to encourage the spiritual stragglers so that they would know that there was no reason to despair since everything can be rectified. This light of hope is the power of *emunah* and Shabbos, which shines on and on without any limitation or conditions. The redemption depends on this light of Shabbos shining clearly, because it is the point of the *Ein Sof* which is the ultimate source of all holiness—the “showbread” that is ever fresh.

⁸ Ibid., 20:6

⁹ *Bereishis* 1:1

¹⁰ *Sha'ar Hapesukim, Parshas Emor* 24:10-11

Yet the tribe of Dan drove the son of Shlomis bas Divri away because his father was not Jewish. He only had a connection with the light of *Imma / Binah*, with contemplation, but not with *Abba / Chochmah*, which represents self-nullification. All of the contemplation in the world is only meant to serve as a vessel to receive the light of *emunah* and self-nullification before Hashem. Although the blasphemer had a connection with *Binah*, he was not on the pathway to reveal the higher light of *Chochmah* and *bitul*.

Walking the Path toward Holiness

In the first of Rebbe Nachman of Breslov's long stories, "The Lost Princess," we learn that the king had six sons and one daughter who went lost, and the viceroy was inspired to go and search for her. This story is really about the point of *emunah* that is lost to each and every one of us, and we have to wake ourselves up every single day to go and search for it. When describing the long search, Rebbe Nachman relates that the viceroy went through deserts where he met astounding "giants" who tried to turn him back from his cause by claiming that it was hopeless. One was in charge of the beasts, the second was in charge of the birds, and the third was in charge of the winds. After sending out their agents, all of them told him that there was no such place as a golden mountain and a pearl castle where the princess was to be found. It was only when the one wind that had been whisking the princess there returned to make its report that it became clear that the search was not in vain. And in the end, the viceroy did liberate her.

The viceroy went to three different types of *tzaddikim*: one was "in charge of the beasts"—his path of *avodah* is that of the *Chayos HaKodesh*, the "holy life-filled angels" associated with *Binah*; the second *tzaddik* who was "in charge of the birds" is a master of the purity of his mind which "flies like a bird" and is associated with *Chochmah*; he then went to the *tzaddik* who is "in charge of the winds"—who exists in a perpetual state of *dveikus* through the light of *Da'as*. "Know [יָדַע] the G-d of your

father and serve Him.”¹¹ [In this verse, Dovid HaMelech exhorts his son Shlomo to continue the path of *avodah* to *dveikus* through *Da'as*.] The purpose of the *avodos* of *Binah* and *Chochmah*, of struggle and *bitul*, is only to attain the aspect of *Da'as*, to connect with the *Shechinah* and release her from her exile. Each of the *avodos* of *Binah* and *Chochmah* are like the two legs without which a person cannot walk at all. Of course, we all must practice “turning aside from evil, and doing good,” but without the forward goal of *dveikus* and *Da'as*, a person will not really get anywhere at all. This is the “wind” which also means direction, the “spirit/wind of G-d that hovers over the waters.”

A person must ascertain that his direction is pure, because the Torah leads a person to wherever he directs himself. If he is focused on making a name for himself, on being a “wonderworker” rabbi, he will get there if his “feet” of *avodah* are moving. The Torah testifies that its words are like rain, and the rain causes whatever it falls upon to flourish. If a person directs himself toward a selfish goal, he can get there. If he wants to get money through the Torah, he will. If he wants to be a leader through the Torah, he will. And if he wants to achieve spiritual goals and to be able to work miracles, he will. The Torah can provide a person with anything as long as his two legs of struggle (*Binah*) and *bitul* (*Chochmah*) are active. If he works toward his goals, he will eventually reach them.

This is why it is so important to choose your direction carefully. We see in the story that the “giants” in charge of the beasts and birds could not provide the viceroy with access to the *Shechinah*—only the one who was in charge of the winds could [and even that was only after some challenge]. A person needs to refine his will so that all he really wants is the light of Shabbos, the Torah of *Atika Sesima'ah*, and to “sate himself on the shining lights of his soul”—on connecting with the One who commands. When a person’s goal is so defined, then all of his *avodos* in *Binah* and

¹¹ *Divrei HaYamim* I:28:9

Chochmah will become vessels to contain the higher light of *yichud*—the “crown of a good name that transcends them all.”¹²

Piercing the Screen between *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*

The son of Shlomis bas Divri sought to pierce to screen between *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah* so that light from the higher worlds could shine down below. The holiness of the world of *Asiyah* is symbolized by the mountain of gold and the pearl castle of Rebbe Nachman’s story. It is there that the lost princess, the *Shechinah*, is to be found and it is there that the redemption takes place. However, one must take care not to “pierce the Name.” Moshe Rabbeinu killed the Egyptian through the power of the Name after looking, “here and there [כה וכה] and seeing that there was no man [that the Egyptian would have no righteous descendant].”¹³ Moshe Rabbeinu smote him with the Name, which was the power of the כ"ה or twenty-five letters of the *yichud* of *emunah* [the *Shema*]. When the light of faith is revealed, the *klippos* cannot continue to exist.

The root of Moshe’s destruction of the Egyptian is Kayin’s murder of Hevel. Kayin is associated with the *avodah* of *Binah*, while Hevel is associated with the *avodah* of *Chochmah*. The spiritual root of *Chochmah* is in the upper three levels of *Atik*, which is also the source of *Malchus*. Kayin, rooted in *Binah* that rises only to *Arich Anpin*, was jealous of the “extra twin sister”—the aspect of *Malchus* / *Shechinah* that is rooted in the highest places.

There is a place in the upper worlds where the levels of *avodah* diverge. The *dveikus* of *Chochmah* is symbolized by the *levyoson*, the root of which is *leviyah* or accompanying. The efforts of *Binah* is symbolized by the *shor habar*, the “wild ox,” because the ox bears a yoke to carry a burden. Even though it appears as though these two aspects are distinct, nevertheless the *tzaddikim* know how to channel all of the effort of *Binah* into their *Chochmah-dveikus* so that both aspects of *avodah* are united

¹² *Avos* 4:17

¹³ *Shemos* 2:12

in the pursuit of the *Shechinah* at her highest and most hidden place. This higher synthesized *avodah* is the *tikkun hakelali*, the general remedy, that can achieve all of the needed rectifications. Both the *levyoson* and the *shor habar* will be part of the feast of the ultimate future, to be held within the “skin of the *levyoson*.” It is a lofty form of *dveikus* that draws down the light of Shabbos so that *Elokus* is revealed within all of the twelve *Partzufim* of *Atzilus*. To accomplish this, however, his goal and focus must be pure. He must perform the “gift of service” and seek out the *Shechinah* without self-interest; that way, all of his efforts in both *bitul* and self-restraint and *kedushah* will lead him to his goal.

If a person sees that he is not changing as he hoped—as though his two legs are pinned in place and he cannot walk the path toward Hashem—he has to know that he can rise above the mire by focusing on *emunas hayichud*, total faith in Hashem’s unity. He must rely on Hashem providing him with the power to uplift all of the “images” of this world so that he will, indeed, be able to “gaze upon the countenance.”

Now we can better understand the Arizal’s fusing of the three verses that have the initials אהויה: one relates to the blasphemer, one to occult practices, and the last to the creation of the heavens and earth. The piercing of the veil between *Atzilus* and *Asiyah* was meant to draw higher power down to the lower world, which is exactly what those who engage in occult practices seek to accomplish. They seek to turn all the pursuits of the “heavens and the earth” into a physical enterprise alone. This dynamic can be seen among all of the various ne’er-do-wells who try to make use of all kinds of spiritual forces and unclean meditation practices to provide their “clients” with worldly guidance. In contrast, the *tzaddikim* uplift all of physical existence to its spiritual root so that it all becomes a vessel to contain the light of G-dliness. Through holy contemplation, everything in the universe is illuminated by Hashem’s presence; it is as if the physical universe is completely nullified.

This is, then, the *avodah* of the *Sefirah* period: to struggle for higher and higher levels of purity in the way of preparation of *Binah*, and to complement this by

expanding one's *Chochmah* and *bitul* through the study of the Torah's secrets. When these *avodos* are united, one must focus strongly on the ultimate goal, to experience the light of *yichud* and *emunah*.

The Message of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai

This is why we must, “go up and gather together to celebrate the *hilula* of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai.” We must go up, as we go up for the festivals, to see “the countenance of Hashem,” which can be discerned in the face of the *tzaddik*, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai.¹⁴ This is the message that Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai bequeathed to all future generations, that one should constantly seek out Hashem's face and that this is the essence and purpose of all *avodah*. If a person's focus is on something else, he has not arrived in the same place at all. If we only ask for, “one thing: to gaze on the pleasantness of Hashem and visit His chambers,” we will certainly attain all of our goals in Torah study, to have the light of *emunah* shine into all of its myriad details. This is why the *tzaddikim* value every single detail of Torah and every single *halachah*, because the more the Torah ramifies off into details, the more extensively is Hashem's *yichud* revealed.

“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.”¹⁵ The *nefesh* is the aspect of *Nukvah*, the “piercing” that the blasphemer sought to make in the veil between *Asiyah* and *Yetzirah*. The *Malchus*-level within *Yetzirah* [which is lowermost] is associated with the letter *dalet*, and it is well known that the only distinction between the *dalet* and the *reish* [of *Echad* of *yichud* or *Acher*, G-d forbid, of idolatry] is the apex on the upper right corner of the *dalet* which turns back

¹⁴ *Zohar* II:38a

¹⁵ From the *Shabbos zemer* “*D'ror Yikrah*,” based on *Mishlei* 24:14.

toward the *gimmel*, which represents *gemilus chassadim* or charitable acts. All idolatry is willful failure to recognize that little point at the apex of the *dalet*.

Yet the Jewish people have the power of this point, and it is what binds them to the aspect of the *gimmel*—of *Ze'ir Anpin* bestowing its abundance upon *Malchus*. They are bound to the *yichud* of the *Shema*: “Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is one.” The Jewish people are bound to *dveikus* in Hashem’s absolute existence and presence, and so all of their *avodah* of both “turning from evil” and “doing good,” of *Binah* and *Chochmah*, are all focused on the real goal: *emunas hayichud*.

The *Zohar* teaches that the seven weeks of *Sefiras Ha'Omer* are an expansion and parallel of the seven days that the *eishis chayil* checks herself to make sure she has no stain prior to cleansing and subsequent *yichud*. The *Zohar* explains that, during this time, the Jewish people are “checked” to ensure that what they really seek is G-dliness alone, nothing else. All external *avodos* of this period must be vessels for the inner and more essential *avodah*, which is to want Hashem alone. One must not be like a wayward woman, G-d forbid, who harbors longing for some other husband—one must be completely faithful to Hashem alone.

Then it will be, “a crown to your head.” All *avodos* will be illuminated with the light of *Kesser*, the light of Shabbos. “Guard Your holy *mitzvos*, guard Your holy Shabbos.” This light then shines into all of the details of the *mitzvos* and they all become vessels for *yichud*. Then he will taste the “showbread”—“the taste of the Torah will be revealed in it.” The deeper works teach that in the ultimate future each and every person will be tested, his hands will be opened and all of his Torah will be seen in his hands. He will be “checked” to determine how bound up he was in the Torah’s meaning and essence, did he taste the twelve showbreads, the twelve *Partzufim* of *Atzilus*, in the Torah that he studied. The Jewish people pointed their fingers and exclaimed at the splitting of the sea, “This is my G-d and I will exalt Him!” We must be able to “point” at each and every detail of Torah and creation and cry out,

“Here He is!” Then, when our hands are opened, they will be filled with Torah—every detail of Torah that we ever learned.

May Hashem help us during these holy days to seek out the light of the Torah and sanctify ourselves completely and purify our minds, and especially to focus on the holiness of *emunah* and *yichud*. This is why we travel to Rabbi Shimon—not only to ask for our physical needs, but to ask for the “one thing,” which is to see the face of the Master, Hashem. And even though we are very far from this, we must at least seek it out to the best of our ability. If we do, Hashem will certainly help us to see, “eye to eye, Hashem’s return to Tzion,” with the arrival of our righteous redeemer in mercy.

Translated and Adapted by Rav Micha Golshevsky.