

Erev Shabbos Kodesh Parshas Ki Teitzei 5770

D'ei Chochmah L'nafshechah

“Let your soul know wisdom”

Parshas Ki Teitzei

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

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Shalosh Seudos¹ of Parshas Ki Teitzei 5768

”כִּי תִבְנֶה בַּיִת חָדָשׁ וְעָשִׂיתָ מַעֲקֵה לְגַגְךָ, וְלֹא-תָשִׂים דָּמִים בְּבֵיתְךָ כִּי-יִפֹּל הַנֶּפֶל מִמֶּנּוּ.”

“When you build a new house, then you shall make a parapet for your roof, that you bring not blood upon your house if any man should fall from there.”²

Rashi explains: “‘When you build a new house’—If you fulfilled the mitzvah of sending away the mother bird, you will ultimately [merit to] build a new house and fulfill the mitzvah of building a parapet. For one mitzvah brings another in its wake, and you will come to own a vineyard and a field and beautiful garments. This is the reason for the juxtaposition of subjects in this *parshah*. ‘Parapet’—A fence surrounding the roof. The *Targum* renders it as תִּיקָא or ‘enclosure,’ in the sense of an enclosure to protect that which is within it. ‘If any man should fall [literally, “if the one who falls should fall”]’—Even if it is fit for this person to fall, nevertheless his death should not come about through your actions. For good things come about through the innocent, and punishment is exacted through those who are themselves guilty.”

The Parapet

“When you build a new house...” Every single Jew plays a part in the building of the “new house”—the third *Beis Hamikdash*. When the verse exhorts us to make a parapet for that new house, it is telling us that the new house requires protection. One must draw down the *mochin* [high levels of G-dly awareness] that are the embodiment of,

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

² *Devarim* 22:8

“And spread upon us the *sukkah* of Your peace, and protect our comings and goings.”³ Rebbe Nachman of Breslov taught that the *sukkah* represents the drawing down of holy awareness in the aspect of *kedem*, or that which is forward-facing and in order, lacking confusion.⁴ One merits to come to such awareness by virtue of sanctifying one’s senses, the “seven candles” of the head [which are the portals of the mind]. This sanctification is what is meant by a fence and parapet which every person must erect to protect his mind and thoughts. It is through such protection that one draws down the higher light which is the root of the spiritual concept of the parapet and is associated with the level of *Yesod d’Imma* [the *Yesod* aspect within *Binah*], which is the light of Moshiach ben Dovid. He is the true guardian of the third *Beis Hamikdash*. [The parapet protects the roof, the highest part of the building, just as one must protect his mind, the highest part of himself.]

The reason why one must expend a great deal of effort to protect his mind is because everything that Hashem created is in balance; holiness and its counterpart parallel one another. Just as the mind is the seat of sanctity within a person, so too is it the focus of the efforts of the *klippas*. This is especially true during this final generation before the arrival of Moshiach, when the forces of negativity are overwhelming—one requires intense protection to be saved from their influence. Every single person is duty-bound to examine and determine what exactly he needs protection from so that the sanctity of his thoughts is not defiled. When the *sitra achra* sees that a person is making sincere efforts to begin to serve Hashem, it does all it can to make the person fall from his goal. This is why extra precautions are necessary.

The *Sefer Karnayim* explains that the term “new house” [בית חדש] has a total numerical value of 724 [תשכ"ד] which alludes to the two oversized letters of *shin* in the first verse of *Shir HaShirim*, and the *tav* of the phrase ותכתב אסתר, “And Esther wrote [together with Mordechai all of the substance of the *megillah*]...”⁵ We then remain with the כ"ד, which is the *gematria* of the Divine Name אהבה. [The *Bris Menuchah* explains

³ From the evening prayer.

⁴ *Likutei Moharan* I:21

⁵ *Esther* 9:29

that this Name emerges from the verse, "אז ישיר משה ובני ישראל את השירה הזאת לה' ויאמרו" —One can see how the combination of letters is like a code that encapsulates the verse.] The Name אבוג"ה and its value of 24 also alludes to the *Shechinah* itself, because she is adorned with her 24 “adornments of the bride”—the 24 books of *Tanach*. These two Names have the power to subdue all of the *klippos* that seek to cause the Jewish people to fall during the final period before Moshiach's arrival.⁶

The Main Form of Protection

In terms of *avodah*, the main way for a person to protect his mind and build his personal *Beis Hamikdash* is through *hisbodedus*, private and spontaneous prayer in one's own language. As Rebbe Nachman of Breslov taught: “*Hisbodedus* is a level that is greater and higher than anything else.” One cannot purify his mind unless he follows this path energetically; he must sit every single day before Hashem and pour his heart out before his Creator as he would with a good friend. This form of protection is the highest that there is, and it keeps a person safe from the grasp of the *klippos*. It keeps him from all evil always, and makes him worthy of all the good that exists in all the worlds.

One shouldn't make the mistake of thinking that this pathway is simple or self-evident, that it's a simple matter to speak openly and spontaneously with Hashem, because it is actually extremely deep. In fact, because this pathway is such a deep mystery it is hidden from just about everyone—it is actually a reflection of the light of Moshiach ben Dovid.

For this reason, anyone who wants to heal his soul and really enter into Hashem's service and build the third *Beis Hamikdash* must expend great efforts in *hisbodedus*. At the very least, he must make this precious and lofty *avodah* in some way a part of his spiritual life. In general, the light of *hisbodedus* is associated with *Shir HaShirim*—it is the expression of the created being's longing for *dveikus* with its Creator. This is the *shin*

⁶ For more on this subject, see the Introduction to *Yam HaChochmah* 5769.

of *Shir HaShirim*, and in order to protect one's mind and hasten the arrival of Moshiach ben Dovid one must bind this *shin* with the *tav* of, "And Esther wrote..."

The "Bound" and the "Speckled"

The main *klippas* that affect the Jewish people during the end of days derive from the levels known as *Akudim* ["Bound"] and *Nekudim* ["Speckled"]. The Kabbalistic works explain that the level of *Akudim* is associated with the mouth, while the level of *Nekudim* is associated with the eyes. [*Akudim* and *Nekudim* are code words to refer to the earliest development of the worlds from above to below at the beginning of creation. The level of *Akudim* indicates when all of the *sefiros* within the world of *Adam Kadmon* were "bound" together as a single entity, without any differentiation among them. Further "down," they individuated into the realm of *Nekudim* or "points." Although they were distinct, they lacked interdependence, a necessary element that only developed later on. At the level of *Nekudim*, they were only points, not interconnected to generate a positive structure with integrity. Both of these states were inherently unstable.] At this late stage preceding the redemption, the forces of negativity focus their energies on causing the Jewish people to stumble in sins that involve the mouth and the eyes. They parallel the two evil brothers Gog/Magog and Armilus [whom *Chazal* said would kill Moshiach ben Yosef and ultimately be defeated by Moshiach ben Dovid]. Our main task is to protect ourselves from their influence and attacks. Unchecked, they cause a person to follow after the desires of his eyes even against his will and to say things that are forbidden even unintentionally. To guard one's mouth and eyes requires a great deal of protection. "Make a guarding for the guarding"⁷—make a parapet for the roof to protect one's mind and soul—so that the wicked should not grab hold of them and cause one to fall.

The source of both of these "brothers," however, is their mother: the desire to know different forms of non-Jewish secular/heretical sciences and philosophies, which derive from idolatry. The "mother" is worse than her "sons" because this *klippah* affects

⁷ *Bamidbar* 3:38; *Tamid* 26a

not only the simple people who fall into actual sin with their eyes and speech, but even great Torah scholars. Its influence can be so strong so that it makes the person under its spell feel even more attracted to foreign philosophies than to Torah itself. One must take care to ensure that, “her mistress is not despised in her eyes”⁸—that the maidservant, secular philosophy, does not usurp the mistress, the Torah.

The evil brothers derive all of their force from their mother because all negative action is rooted in a degradation of the Torah’s importance. Each of the foreign philosophies and sciences is rooted in supernal chambers—they are the seven maidens—but they are null and void when compared with the holiness of the Torah which is the holiness of the *Shechinah*. How could one scorn the Torah and glorify secular studies? This is tantamount to scorning the *Shechinah* herself, and when that happens people also make light of the Torah and holiness in general.

The inverse is also true; when a person begins to despise and distance himself from foreign philosophies and honor the Torah and the *Shechinah* instead, he strips the two *klippos* of their power and finds that he can achieve purity of speech and vision.

The Two Redeemers

The *Sefer Karnayim* explains that the main task in the end of days is to do battle with these two forces, and an allusion to this is found in the verse: “מי שֵׁת בְּפִחוֹת הַקְּמָה” — “Who has placed wisdom in the inward parts?”⁹ The word שֵׁת [“placed”—our two letters *shin* and *tav* from before] is twice the numerical value of the word קרן or horn. There are two horns—that of Moshiach ben Yosef and that of Moshiach ben Dovid. [Kings were anointed with oil poured from a ram’s horn.] From each of these horns [which are also *shofaros*], a holy breath which expresses the *milui* of the Name ייג ס emerges. [The Name ייג ס is written: יייד היי ואיי היי. When only the “fill in” letters that articulate the יהויה are added together, they have a combined *gematria* of 37.] The “breath” that emerges, the הבל, also has a value of 37. When both “horns” are combined, they have a value of שש, ת

⁸ Bereishis 16:4

⁹ Iyov 38:36

and when both “breaths” are combined they have a value of עי"ד. All together, 774 is the same *gematria* as *בת שבע*, the root of the soul of Moshiach [the descendent of Dovid and Bas Sheva]. When the Jewish people merit to draw down these two shofar-blasts—that of Moshiach ben Yosef and Moshiach ben Dovid—they will activate the root of Bas Sheva and cause the soul of Moshiach to be revealed so that he can redeem the Jewish people. Then we will be able to receive an abundance of Divine wisdom, for *Chochmah* itself has 774 apertures.

At an even deeper level, *תשע"ד* is also the *gematria* of the phrase *דעת מנצפ"ך*—“knowledge of *מנצפ"ך*” [the five letters that assume a double form when they appear at the end of a word]. The five letters of *מנצפ"ך* are associated with the deep mystery that underlies the *peyos*—and the two *peyos* have to be connected, because they each represent Moshiach ben Yosef and Moshiach ben Dovid and it is only together that Gog/Magog and Armilus will be defeated along with their mother, their source.

The *avodah* of *hisbodedus* is itself a binding together of the forces of the two redeemers, since it is rooted in both *Imma/Binah* and *Abba/Chochmah*. The part of *hisbodedus* that reflects *Binah* is its contemplation of Hashem’s greatness and the many words that emerge from the depths of the heart. The *Chochmah* aspect of *hisbodedus* is the state of self-nullification one can achieve—how far one can penetrate into the heavenly chambers.

Hisbodedus is so deep, it is the ultimate purpose of all of creation. It is of the nature of Shabbos itself, the point of absolute self-nullification before Hashem and uniting with Him. Through it, we can build a “new house”—the true *בית* which is like the *beis* that encompasses the entirety of the Torah: *תוספתא*, *ירושלמי*, *בבלי*—*Bavli*, *Yerushalmi*, and *Tosefta*.

If a person is satisfied to learn Torah without combining it with the *avodah* of *hisbodedus*, he remains at a superficial level without true *dveikus* with Hashem. Such a person is more prone to “falling from the roof” because after he finishes studying he reverts immediately to his materialistic life and forgets about Hashem. However, this is

not the case when a person combines his Torah and his prayer through *hisbodedus* and contemplation. If he does, he has bound together the *Abba/Chochmah* aspect of the *tav* (“And Esther wrote...”) which is the Torah and its letters that are written down, with the *Imma/Binah* aspect of the *shin* (“*Shir HaShirim*”), which is all longing for Hashem. This joining is what will build the third *Beis Hamikdash*.

Joining Torah and Prayer

To really penetrate the depths of *hisbodedus* one must invest a great deal of time. At the beginning, one must literally be in *hisbodedus* all day long; he must pour out an abundance of words of even the simplest sort, even while he is in the middle of learning. Ultimately, Hashem will make him worthy of really joining the *shin* and the *tav* so that the roots of Torah and prayer become as one.

The Baal Shem Tov taught that Moshiach will reveal how to enter into the heavenly chambers of the Torah and make Torah into prayer, and prayer into Torah. This will allow a person to be constantly bound to Hashem. Every letter of the Torah is another heavenly chamber, and the main aspect of redemption is that we will be able to open up these chambers.

The *yetzer hara* tempts a person in many ways so that he will fail to enter into the inner sanctum of *avodah* and remain outside, only serving Hashem in a superficial way. It could be because of laziness or discouragement, or because he focuses too much on the failures of the past, or he might just despair of ever getting anywhere. Yet this is the nature of the collective and personal redemption: entering into the inner world of *avodah*. One cannot just remain outside. One must work to enter the inner realm.

How are we to do this? Through pouring out words of prayer as much as we can, because our power is only in our mouths. And even when our minds are dull and our hearts are closed like stones, we must nevertheless speak many, many prayers before Hashem simply and straightforwardly. The words themselves will bring us to contemplate Hashem’s existence and how He is everywhere, and eventually we will be drawn into the chambers of feeling love and fear of Him and the chambers of His Torah.

This sanctification of the mouth combats the *klippah* that originates in *Akudim*, and making sure to guard our eyes and only seek to see Hashem's presence and light in the world purifies our eyes and counteracts the *klippah* that originates in *Nekudim*. When one turns away from the illusory temptations of this world, Hashem opens his eyes to the wonders of the Torah so that he can experience *dveikus* and be a vehicle for Hashem's *Shechinah*.

This is the “parapet”—the מעקה—which when articulated fully spells מים עיין with its total *gematria* of 396, the same as השכינה [when you add a unit for each of the letters of the word in addition to its actual value]. With it, one is saved from the situation described as, “if the one who falls should fall from it.” [כי יפול הנפל ממנה] The phrase has the acronym כימיה, which is the name of the stone upon which the *klippah* of Armilus sits, and from which he seeks to defile the eyes and mouths of the Jewish people. To counteract his force, the true *tzaddikim* garner the holy powers of the two *sheimos* so that Torah and prayer are joined together in *dveikus*.

The Divine Name אבגיה is rooted in a very high realm, that of the *cholem*, the *chalom* [“dream”], and *Kesser*. The *Bris Menuchah* explains that the letters of the Torah are associated with the *cholem* which is suspended above the letter, just as the crown/*Kesser* is suspended above the head. [Just as a dream is “above” the person's head like a crown; it is an expression of his super-consciousness.] This is alluded to in the first two letters of the Name, א"י, which is shorthand for the “first day of the seventh month.” [א' של א'] That is the day of Rosh Hashanah, the time when we must repair the flaws rooted in the *Akudim* and *Nekudim* so that we can come to repair our “dreaming mind”—the imagination—and rectify the primordial breaking of the vessels. [The Kabbalists explain that the first day of Rosh Hashanah is a *tikkun* within the spiritual state of *durmeita*, or dormant “sleeping.”] Purifying the imagination means using this faculty that Hashem created within us for the purpose of contemplating *dveikus* and Hashem's existence. Repairing the mind is the first step toward binding Torah and prayer and building the “new house.”

“Do Not Say, ‘Water, Water’”

This is why Hashem said, “Let us make man”—so that a creature should exist that has the ability to repair the *shevirah*, the breaking of the primordial vessels [caused by the instability of the levels of *Akudim* and *Nekudim*.] All of the nonsense of this world is a reflection of the *shevirah*, and the *tzaddikim* spend their entire lives repairing this and looking past it and only seeing the reality of Hashem. Rabbi Akiva warned that when you come to the place of marble stone, do not say, “Water, water.” Do not make a distinction between the upper and the lower waters. Do not make a division between the *Yesod* of *Abba* and the *Yesod* of *Imma*. [Do not make a division between Torah and prayer, between holy vision and holy speech, between the knowledge of Hashem and one’s experience of this world.] Even the phrase, “the place of,” [מקום] has a deeper meaning. מ״י is the *milui* of the Name ע״ב [the total *gematra* of the filler letters when the *Shem HaVaYaH* is expanded with *yuds*] and ק״ם is the *milui* of the Name קס״א [the total *gematria* of the Name *EHYH* when expanded with *yuds*]. This is the ultimate purpose of our creation: to combine the forces of Torah and prayer.

This is all the more true during these days of Elul, when the only real path is to spend a great deal of time in *hisbodedus* and, in so doing, subdue the *klippas* that afflict us during the period prior to the arrival of Moshiach. The words בית חדש are equivalent to תשכ״ד—the word תש indicates that this pathway can weaken [מתיש] the forces of negativity. The Name אבוג״ה is equivalent to כ״ד, because it enables, “the downtrodden [דך] not to return ashamed.”¹⁰ In addition, the כ״ד alludes to the 24 possible permutations of the *Shem HaVaYaH* [which are revealed] when a person makes himself into a vessel [כד] before Hashem and realizes how impoverished [דך] he is and pours his heart out before Hashem to beg for mercy. As Dovid HaMelech prayed, “I only asked for one thing from Hashem...to gaze at Hashem’s pleasantness and visit in His chamber.” Dovid HaMelech taught us that the one thing we must ask for is to merit to enter into Hashem’s

¹⁰ *Tehillim* 74:21

chambers, into the letters that are chamber as the Baal Shem Tov explained. [This prayer is part of the psalm that we recite daily throughout Elul and the high holidays.] We must long to feel Hashem's essence that is revealed within the chambers of the letters. This is what it means to learn *lishmah*; to learn with an attachment to Hashem's essence revealed in the Torah, rather than superficially. When a person does this, he mitigates all of the judgments that derive from *Leah* [associated with the side of *Binah-Gevurah*] that can afflict a superficial approach to Torah study. Then Torah is illuminated then with the *dveikus* light of *Yesod d'Abba* and the threat of the "mistress being insignificant in the maidservant's eyes" is banished.

Rav Tzadok HaKohein taught that it is only when one attaches himself to Hashem's essence that he is able to hold on and maintain his *avodah*. It will save him always from being, "the falling one who falls." He will avoid the pitfall that Rabbi Akiva warned against—"Do not say, 'Water, water,'"—he will not be a liar who delves into Torah and as soon as he is finished reverts to his materialistic self and concerns. "He who speaks falsehood will not be established before My eyes."¹¹ Even though every good action is very important [such as working to support one's family], nevertheless every person must take an internal accounting to see if there is some degree of falsehood in the way in which his Torah study fails to materialize into a deeper and more constant relationship with Hashem. In truth, one is never far from Hashem—the Torah teaches that we are actually bound to Him at all times. It is only by binding Torah and prayer, however, that we can actually experience this within ourselves and this will bring us to true joy.

Repentance through Joy

The *Tikkunei Zohar* brings the verse, "And she shall cry over her father and mother a month of days."¹² It explains: "This is the month of Elul." During these days, one must repent over the way in which he has defiled his mind—his "mother and father."

¹¹ Ibid., 101:7

¹² *Devarim* 21:13

Yet one must be aware that if the tears are weighed down by sadness and melancholy, this itself is a manifestation of the *klippah*—it is just groaning and moaning. [The young woman who weeps is the *eishes yefas to'ar* who was taken in battle and is deeply entrenched in the *klippah* of her origins.] In contrast, the verse says of the Jewish people, “For in Your Name they rejoice all the day...”¹³ The Jewish people can uplift all of creation to Hashem through their joy in Him until, “groaning and moaning will flee.”¹⁴ This is why it is especially important to banish all manifestations of depression during Elul and focus on binding ourselves to our Creator with joy. And this too depends on the degree to which a person throws himself into *hisbodedus* and building his bond with Hashem through speech, through prayer.

We also must take care during Elul to strengthen not only ourselves but others, and encourage one another with the knowledge that even if we are only right now able to purify our vision and speech the least bit, every single effort is very precious before Hashem. One should never fall into passivity and despair because he cannot change a great deal—the *Yerushalmi* in *Berachos* says that even the redemption as a whole is only revealed gradually. Infinitesimal changes within ourselves are extremely significant above.

In terms of positive action, we must work to build the parapet to the roof through *hisbodedus* and holy thoughts; and if a person is not holding by contemplating *sheimos*, he should at the very least purify his mind by reviewing Mishnah by memory. Even so, all positive action must be first protected by avoiding the negative—“turn from evil and do good”—and so if one wants his efforts to bear fruit he must make sure to avoid that which is distracting and negative. The sages taught, “Anyone who is not an expert in the laws of divorce and marriage should not officiate.” The Be'er Mayim Chaim explained that this means that one can only immerse himself in the positive, which is a *yichud*, if he has mastered self-restraint—if has mastered “divorcing himself” from the negative in the sense of “turning from evil.”

¹³ *Tehillim* 89:17

¹⁴ *Yeshayah* 35:10

“If the One Who Falls Should Fall”

One of the most important things to know in *avodah* is that if a person has fallen in some way, he must not be “the falling one who falls.” He must not allow a small failure to snowball into a major catastrophe. He must stop himself as soon as he can and immediately return to protecting the sanctity of his Jewishness. Torah and prayer are an expression of the upper and lower *yud* [that form the *alef* and which are associated with the *tikkun* of Elul], and they parallel the inner and surrounding light of holiness. The *klippas* stand in wait to try and divide them, and so a person must consciously bind them together through the purposeful erection of his own personal parapet to enclose them and bind them together as one. Then he has nothing to fear from minor mishaps. His holiness that is internal and revealed is bound together with the surrounding holy potential that he has to reveal Hashem’s presence in every place. [That which is potential is known as a *makif*, a kind of light that surrounds, that is not fully integrated but is connected with the person.] This protects him from the argument of the *klippah* that if he has fallen a little he might as well fall completely, G-d forbid. Quite the contrary! Every Jew, even if he has transgressed the entire Torah four hundred times, has the potential to purify himself and be renewed as a complete *tzaddik* and receive a fresh body pure of sin from Gan Eden if he will only repent and throw himself into Torah and prayer completely and bind them together. In truth, the inner light of Torah is prayer, and the inner light of prayer is Torah. This is what is meant by the prophet, that we will see “eye to eye, Hashem’s return to Tzion,” and that a new light will shine upon Tzion.

“Let Your Soul Know Wisdom”

All that we have learned is alluded to in the verse: *ידעה 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 Although the world appreciates Torah, it remains for the greatness of the level of *nefesh*, of the outpouring of the soul in *hisbodedus*, to be

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

revealed. And there have been countless young casualties of a superficial approach to Torah, who studied with great diligence but because their Torah was divorced from prayer they fell into temptation and did not have the parapet in place to ensure that they didn't fall completely. And they have, in fact, fallen away completely, G-d forbid. This is not so of true servants of Hashem, because they know to bind *Chochmah* to the *nefesh*—and this is the goal for all of us. Then it will be a “crown to one's head.” The redemption, which is called the crown, depends on this. “Guard Your holy *mitzvos*”—if we are careful to avoid the negative, we will come to, “Guard Your holy Shabbos”—and feel the light of the *Shechinah* and *emunah*.

May Hashem have mercy on us so that we will merit together to see this new light upon Tzion, that the unification of Torah and prayer will completely materialize. Then the *alef* and *zayin* of the Name אבגכיה will join together: *alef* represent the *Alufo shel olam*, the master of the universe and the Torah, and *zayin* representing *Malchus* and prayer [since *Malchus* is the seventh of the lower *sefiros*]. When we will achieve this *yichud*, all forms of darkness and suffering will disappear. May Hashem have mercy on us so that we will be able to connect with the innermost point of the universe which is the *Shechinah* and *emunah*, and may we be forever immersed in Torah and prayer, with the immediate arrival of our righteous redeemer. Amen.

Translated and Adapted by Rav Micha Golshevsky.