

Erev Shabbos Kodesh Parshas Tzav-Sabbos HaGadol 5770

D'ei Chochmah L'nafshechah

“Let your soul know wisdom”

Parshas Tzav-Pesach

From the discourses of Moreinu v'Rabeinu
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Parshas Tzav-Pesach

“The Day that is neither Day nor Night”

“Days are coming, says Hashem”—the holy days of Pesach—and the main way in which we prepare for them is through renewal in Torah study. *Teshuvah* must be bound together with our Torah, and our Torah study must be enlivened by *teshuvah*. Repentance only has lasting power when it is fueled by Torah and contemplation of the *Ein Sof*, that Hashem both fills and surrounds all worlds and no place is devoid of His presence, and that every single movement is a manifestation of the Creator Himself.

This is the real meaning of the exodus of Pesach night that takes place within each and every soul, because the festival is called a “holy convocation, a memorial of the exodus from Egypt.” It is מקרא קודש—a “holy calling”—because one must summon the holiness of the festival. This itself is the way in which we leave the exile of the spirit; by summoning holiness, which is the light of the Torah. By resolving on Pesach night to immerse ourselves in the revealed and hidden parts of the Torah which parallel the *matzos* and the wine, the *mochin* of *Abba* and *Imma*, one merits true *teshuvah*. By accepting the yoke of Torah which represents Moshiach ben Yosef, one comes to attain the light of prayer and repentance which represents Moshiach ben Dovid. If we will really resolve to study Torah for its own sake, to bind Torah and prayer with *dveikus* and faith in Hashem’s constant creation of the universe, we will certainly merit to experience the *mochin* of Pesach night.

Uniting the Revealed and the Hidden

As is well known, *teshuvah* is associated with *Binah* and Torah is associated with *Chochmah*. During the *Seder*, the *mochin* of *Binah* are drawn down when we drink the four cups of wine, and the *mochin* of *Abba* are drawn down when we eat the matzah. The whole of the *Seder* is focused on joining Torah and *teshuvah*, and all of the many Kabbalistic meditations are also directed toward this goal, since they focus on the deep

inner meaning of each part of the *Seder* in the way of contemplation and study which arouses one to repentance, and which effects a *yichud* of the Holy One and His *Shechinah*. Even though all year long we tend to enrobe the secrets of the Torah so that they remain hidden, on Pesach night we are commanded to, “tell it to your son,” to reveal that which is normally hidden so that the light of faith can be passed down the generations. By binding them to the light of this *yichud*, they will be empowered to leave impurity behind and rise to a state of purity.

This is the meaning of the son’s question: “Why is this night different from all other nights?” During the rest of the nights of the year, the light of the *yichud* does not shine, not like on this unique night when the upper *yichud* illuminates all the way down to the world of *Asiyah*.

Azus D’Kedushah—“Holy Chutzpah”

When Hashem released us from Egypt, He revealed to Moshe Rabbeinu the Name *EHYH ASHER EHYH* in response to the question, “If they shall say to me, what is His Name, what shall I say to them?” The Jewish people wanted to know Hashem’s Name; from this the Ramban teaches that when one seeks Hashem out, He answers with His Name.

This question of what is His Name contains an element of *azus d’kedushah*, and the Jewish people are known as the most bold of peoples because one must be bold to enter into Divine service. This is the meaning of the name Boaz—*בֹּאֵז*—“boldness is within him.” When a person is overly abashed, he cannot work up the nerve to speak to the King, and when it comes time for him to pray and do *hisbodedus* he finds himself unable to really pour his heart out before the King of Kings. The main element of prayer is the expression of one’s innermost yearnings; even though Hashem surely knows what is in a person’s mind and heart, nevertheless He desires us to engage this holy *chutzpah* and speak it all out before Him.

Every person must know that when he merits to speak his whole heart to Hashem his prayers certainly are effective. This itself requires great *azus d’kedushah*,

since the *yetzer hara* works very hard to confuse a person so that he will doubt that his prayers are accepted on high. He begins to feel that heaven has no need of him at all, and how can he have the nerve to stand before the King after he has fallen and failed and caused so much damage? Yet this is itself what Hashem wants of us; to boldly overcome all of these doubts and “ascribe strength [יָצַו] to our G-d” with our prayers. It is this force that fires the private spiritual redemption of the person in every single matter.

Purifying Prayer

When it comes to prayer, we all know that there are times when one naturally feels a sweetness and the *Shechinah* resting upon him, and he can sense an awakening in his heart from contemplating Hashem’s greatness, love of Him and fear of Him. At such moments, one’s prayers flow smoothly and he knows intuitively that they are accepted on high. However, there is also a state known as *niddah*—הִי נִדְדָה—“the *hei* wanders.” After the sin of Adam HaRishon, the *Shechinah* was blemished and it was as though Hashem’s *Shechinah* [which is represented by the final *hei* of the *Shem HaVaYaH*] was forced to wander, G-d forbid. This is why the upper *yichud* is incomplete, “And the *tzaddik* is gone and there is no man to place it upon his heart.”¹ When *Malchus*—which is the *Shechinah*—is in this state of *niddah*, a person finds that he cannot pray with a true heart.

In truth, however, a person must have faith and trust that Hashem hears every single prayer even after the sin. We see this from the Name with which He revealed Himself to the Jewish people before the exodus: *EHYH ASHER EHYH*, “I will be with them in future exiles just as I am with them in this exile.” He will be with us throughout the generations just as He was with us when He took us out of Egypt—here with us now, today, this year and every year. If a person would really know this, and know the greatness of the power of prayer—that there is no physical or spiritual goal that cannot be achieved through prayer—he would immediately leave the state of *niddah* and

¹ *Yeshayah* 57:1

distance and would feel completely renewed in his Divine service. He would feel a fresh infusion of purity, he would never look back at the past and get bogged down, but would rather constantly begin again with every single word, with a true heart. With prayer, every descent can be transformed into an ascent.

One really needs the greatest degree of boldness when he has already invested a great deal of time and energy into prayer and has not yet seen its result. When that happens, one must really gird his loins and ignore his expectations entirely, and fill himself with confident faith that if his salvation is delayed it is only because it is for his own good, for no prayer is ever lost, G-d forbid. It is certain that his prayer has been accepted, because it is always the case that when a Jew stands before Hashem and exerts himself in prayer it is received and brings about true salvation. It may not manifest in exactly the way he planned or desired, however, and not necessarily on his time schedule. Even so, there is no worldly or heavenly situation at any time or in any place that cannot be genuinely transformed through prayer. This *azus d'kedushah* cleanses the *Shechinah* from the *niddah* state of distance and arouses an upper *yichud* that mitigates all judgment and draws down redemption from every form of exile.

The spiritual root of all obscurity and hiding of Hashem's beneficent presence is only to inspire our prayers, since Hashem longs to hear the prayers of the Jewish people. Hashem sets up obstacles in a person's *avodah*—he feels a lack of desire for Torah study, his prayers are devoid of heart—all of this is because Hashem waits for him to pray about this, to express his longing to serve Hashem in truth. If he will only keep on obstinately pouring out his prayers, it is certain that he will eventually attain his goals. And, as he waits in the interim, he must know that the waiting itself is for his good. Each and every word in the meanwhile has its positive impact in some way. This strength is the nature of Boaz—the one who redeems prayer and purifies it so that it can shine with the pure light of faith. [Boaz is the *meyabem*-redeemer of Ruth, the ancestor of Dovid who epitomized prayer.] This is also at the root of the redemption of Moshiach

ben Yosef being contingent on that of Moshiach ben Dovid.² So too does the redemption of the Torah depend on the redemption of prayer, and this is why the main goal of *avodah* is to join Yosef and Yehudah together—this is the underlying meaning of the bones of Yosef having to be brought out of Egypt, as we will soon see.

This is all a manifestation of that which we learn in the Kabbalistic works: the light of the upper *yichud* generally does not penetrate into the world of *Asiyah*. The nature of that world is the darkness of night, the impurity of *niddah*, and this is the state where it appears to the person as though his prayers are not effective. “We have not seen our signs [אותותינו]”³—we have not seen the letters [אותיות] of our prayers bear fruit in tangible ways. But this is only because the person in the *Asiyah*-state hasn't yet realized the power of *azus d'kedushah* when it is applied to prayer.

Prayer is actually the deepest thing that there is; it “stands in the heights of heaven, yet people trample upon it.”⁴ When people stand in prayer, their first impulse is to hurry and get it over with, and that is only because they have no idea of the greatness of prayer since it is in the *niddah* state. The main way in which we purify prayer is through the aspect of, “His Name is sure [ודאי], as is His praise.” The word ודאי is an acronym of the phrase, “ויברך דוד את ה'”—“And Dovid blessed Hashem”—and it was with this acronym-Name that Moshe ascended to the heavens.⁵ The fuel of his ascent was holy certainty, *azus d'kedushah*, and this is what raises prayer from its fallen, darkened, and doubt-filled state. As is well known, prayer is associated with Dovid HaMelech who said of himself, “And I am prayer.” When the person loses his confidence and trust in the power of prayer, it is as though Dovid HaMelech has died, G-d forbid. But when he raises himself out of his doubts, he enters into the state of, “Dovid Melech Yisrael is alive and exists.” The city of Dovid HaMelech is Tzion,

² *Sukkah* 52a

³ *Tehillim* 74:9

⁴ *Berachos* 6b

⁵ *Sha'ar Hakavanos*, Introduction to *Yom Kippur*

which represents Yosef who protects Dovid so that he can continue to live. [“All that happened to Yosef happened to Tzion...”⁶]

The letter *hei* comprises a *dalet* and a *yud*, and this *yud* in its full extension assumes the form of a *vav*. The inner meaning is as follows: the *dalet* signifies the fallen and impoverished [*dalah*] state of the *Shechinah* when she descends into the lower worlds of *Beriyah-Yetzirah-Asiyah* in her exile. There, the light of G-dliness does not shine in a revealed way, just as we learned before that the light of the upper *yichud* does not illuminate the world of *Asiyah*. This lack is what generates the darkness of false beliefs, idolatry, and doubt of the efficacy of prayer—which are all just different manifestations of the same ailment.⁷

It is only possible to raise the *Shechinah* up out of her exile by focusing on, “placing Hashem before you constantly,” by constantly beseeching Hashem in prayer. But one can only do this if he really knows the power of his prayer; he cannot be disconnected from prayer since this is a form of idolatry that drives the *Shechinah* deeper into exile and a *niddah*-state, G-d forbid. In truth, the *Shechinah* for her part is never far and never impure, but from the perspective of the person who is distant from prayer, it is as though there is this *niddah*-state.

Unfortunately, when a person is sunk into the impurity of Egypt he tends to slander prayer as a whole—as though it is ineffective and unnecessary, and it matters little to Hashem whether he prays with much concentration or with little. This is literally the *Shechinah* in exile, because each and every Jew is a limb of the *Shechinah*. The main weapon of Moshiach and of every Jew is prayer, and it is with this weapon that he conquers all the worlds and all levels of sanctity.⁸ However, the impurity of Egypt and the *sitra achra* weakens the souls of the Jewish people and prevents them from binding themselves to the power of prayer. As the Rebbe of Ruzhin, zy”a, taught, the main obstacle prior to the arrival of Moshiach will be to uplift the power of prayer. This is the

⁶ *Midrash Tanchuma, Parshas Vayigash* #10

⁷ *Likutei Moharan* I:108

⁸ *Likutei Moharan* I:2

main *avodah* for the final generation, as the verse says, “Let this be written for the final generation, and a new-created people will praise Hashem.”⁹

This is embodied by Leah, whose entire being was only prayer. “And Leah’s eyes were weak”—from all of her prayers and crying before Hashem. But one must be wary of the potential for falling into states of *dinim* that can drive a person away from prayer because he fails to feel its sweetness.

The Sweetness of Prayer

To feel the sweetness of prayer, one must attain a degree of personal purity in the area of *bris-Yesod*. As Rebbe Nachman of Breslov taught: “Anyone who blemishes the covenant cannot pray. As the verse says, ‘All of my bones say...’ When a person cannot incorporate every part of his body in holiness into his prayer, ‘a dog descends and devours,’ that is to say, his prayer... Yet when he repairs the blemish to the covenant, he is in the state of ‘sweet waters,’ ‘pure waters,’ and when a person is suffused by these sweet waters his words are sweet and good and are accepted. As the verse says, ‘Let your ear hear...’ When the sweet waters enter into his bones, ‘And good news [literally, ‘good hearing’] fattens the bone,’ one feels the sweetness of the words of prayer. Then, ‘All my bones will say...’ and, ‘A lion descends and devours his offering,’ because the word ‘bone’ [עצם] indicates a lion. However, a person who defiled the *bris* is in the state of ‘bitter waters,’ ‘filthy waters,’ impure seed, and he cannot pray.”¹⁰

Anyone who acts with purity will certainly merit to feel the sweetness of every letter of prayer. And if a person feels bitterness in his prayer, it is a powerful form of rebuke from heaven that he is not acting with sufficient sanctity. With prayer, a person must uplift all of the worlds; some need to uplift the lowermost world of *Asiyah* where a person might not feel anything in his prayers at all. At that level, *Malchus* is in the *dalet* aspect, it is very poor and in the opposite of the *yichud*-state, but he must uplift prayer

⁹ *Tehillim* 102:19

¹⁰ *Likutei Moharan* I:51

from the place of “bitter waters” to the place of “sweet waters.” Even so, he is still far from redeeming prayer, because throughout the entire year the light of *yichud* does not penetrate down to the world of *Asiyah*. However, on the night of the *Seder*, we engage with the mystery of *mayim shelanu* [the custom of using only water that has been specially prepared at a particular time for the use of the *shemurah matzos*]. Rav Hai Gaon explains that *mayim shelanu* represents, “the city that is bound together as one,” Dovid HaMelech who is alive and exists and who incorporates all of the worlds and uplifts prayer from *Asiyah* to *Yesod* [the *dalet* with its *yud* that extends into a *vav*, as the *vav* represents *Yesod*]. “...אכלו...”—“This [ה"א = *hei*] is the bread of our affliction/poverty which [ד"י = *dalet* and *yud* that form the *hei*] our fathers ate...” Even when prayer is in its impoverished state, we can still bind the *dalet* and the *yud* together to effect a rectification.

Illuminating the World of *Asiyah*

The sages taught: “The verse says that they sang ‘a new song [שירה],’ using the feminine noun, and that refers to the redemptions that have already happened. But when it comes time for the final redemption, they will sing ‘a new song [שיר]’ using the masculine noun.”¹¹ On the night of Pesach, the light of the masculine new song of the future shines, not the feminine song of the past.¹² The light of *yichud* does not penetrate to *Asiyah* because there is obscurity—the *Shechinah* is in the *niddah* state of נד, of wandering in exile separate. The deeper works explain that the masculine side is associated with *Da'as* and the feminine is associated with faith, and the main task for us is to become incorporated within the light of faith and from there to bind with the light of *Da'as*. This is as long as the light of *yichud* can shine. However, when one is in a low place the task is not to seek out *Da'as* but rather to enter into pure and simple faith since there is no *yichud* in the world of *Asiyah*. This is why it is forbidden to enter into philosophical discourse about matters of belief when one is in a low place, because there

¹¹ *Shemos Rabbah* 22:11

¹² *Shelah, Pesachim—Matzah Ashirah*

is no *yichud* there of *Da'as* and *emunah*—one must rely on *emunah* alone there, lest he fall into false beliefs and idolatry.

However, on the night of Pesach we are in the state of *shemurah matzah*, Leah and prayer are more protected [שמורים] through the agency of *mayim shelanu* which symbolizes the *tzaddikim*. It is the *tzaddikim* who tell us to bring “our own water,” because they are the ones who shine the Divine light outward so that the light of *emunah* will shine into the world of *Asiyah* so that the *Shechinah* will rise. This is Boaz, who redeems Ruth—he has *azus d'kedushah* and guards the matzah, and redeems and uplifts prayer and faith to such an extent that it makes the night as bright as the day.

Whenever a person has doubts about whether his prayers are effective or not, he must hold strong to pure and simple faith. In truth, the Jewish people have an innate *azus d'kedushah* because they know with certainty that their prayers act as they should to draw down Hashem's mercy and kindness because they are invigorated by their knowledge of the Torah and Hashem's Name. This is what gives us strength and courage—it makes us like Boaz, “strength is in him.”

This is the inner meaning of the children having all of their questions answered, “Here the son asks,” this is the time when all that we ask for is answered for the good. This is the night when we receive an infusion of *azus d'kedushah* from above so that we can ask for all that we require materially and spiritually, so that we can conquer every battle without getting confused on whether what we seek is *lishmah* or not. These are the tools we need to receive the light of the redemption, and each person has unique holy sparks that only he needs to repair in order to help bring the *geulah*.

From where do we get this *azus d'kedushah* so that we can redeem prayer? From the Torah itself, which is the aspect of Rachel and which shines brightly on Pesach night. It illuminates prayer, and then this confident and strong prayer empowers the person to contemplate the light of G-dliness and the Torah alone. It is forbidden for a person to allow himself to fall into doubts about the efficacy of his prayer, because that is a sure path to melancholy and sadness since one must avoid speculation and philosophizing in the world of *Asiyah* completely. If one just holds strongly to his *azus*

d'kedushah and the knowledge that every single word of prayer is precious and accepted, he will be able, in the merit of the *tzaddikim*, to draw down the light of *Da'as* and understand that his driving off the doubts was itself the holy spark that he needed to repair. This allows him to re-enter Hashem's service with freshness and energy. On Pesach night, he can sit confidently like a little child who trusts that his parents will give him all the gifts—he will know with certainty that Hashem will provide him with all of the salvation that he requires. This is how Yosef saves Yehudah/Dovid.

Shabbos HaGadol

The Chasam Sofer taught that Shabbos HaGadol is particularly auspicious for the arrival of Moshiach. The K'sav Sofer explained that even though the Arizal taught that Eliyahu HaNavi will not come on Shabbos, nevertheless Moshiach will come before Shabbos and remain hidden until he is revealed on Shabbos. This Shabbos [before Pesach] is especially suited to the revelation of the concept of, "His Name is sure"—that the Jewish people have the ability to bring the redemption provided that they do not fall into doubts about the worthiness or effectiveness of their prayers. "His Name is sure"—we certainly can bring about the required salvation. In the merit of this faith, the redemption is drawn down.

This is the meaning of the *haftarah* of Shabbos HaGadol: that Hashem derives pleasure when a person connects with the holiness of prayer and doesn't fall into the doubts of the world of *Asiyah*. Rather, the night of Pesach empowers him to attain clear and pure faith that Hashem hears our prayers. This is why the redemption really depends on achieving a *yichud* in the world of *Asiyah*, which in turn strengthens us to beg for the redemption just as they cried out in Egypt. "And we will cry out to Hashem our G-d, and Hashem will hear our voices and see our affliction."

"You Shall Open for Him"

The Kabbalistic works teach that there are two general levels in drawing down the *mochin*: from *Yisrael Sabbah u'Tevunah*, and from the higher aspects of *Abba*

v'Imma. These two levels are also known as *Netzach-Hod-Yesod* and *Chessed-Gevurah-Tiferes* respectively. In terms of *avodah*, we can understand this principle in the following manner. Whenever a person prays for some kind of *yeshuah*, he must rise from level to level in his prayer. The *Toras Chochom* explains that when he begins his prayer his is activating the level of *Malchus*, afterward he ascends to the level of *Ze'ir Anpin*, and after that he rises to *Binah*, *Chochmah*, and *Kesser*. However, the one who “doesn't know how to ask”—who doesn't know how to pray—“you open for him”—you have to open a fourfold pathway for him to pray. These are the pathways formed by the Divine Names ב"ן, מ"ה, ס"ג, ע"ב [which parallel *Chochmah*, *Binah*, *Ze'ir Anpin*, and *Malchus* respectively] and which have a total *gematria* of 232. When this 232 is multiplied by four, it has a total of 928, which is the same as אַת פתח לו with an added three for the three words of the phrase.¹³ He must be aroused to unify Hashem's Name time and time again, to present his prayer four times, to parallel the four worlds of *Atzilus*, *Beriyah*, *Yetzirah*, and *Asiyah*. Then he will be able to truly enter into holiness.

This is not only the case with prayer, this is also true of every holy endeavor. One must always enter into it again and again, to start over with a spirit of freshness and renewal. For example, if a person wants to eat in holiness, it isn't about just looking at various permutations of Divine Names as some kind of mental exercise. He has to search for and struggle to attain *dveikus* over and over again until he comes to bind with the higher light. So too with the Kabbalistic meditations prescribed for *Shemonah Esrei*. He must strive to connect with the higher light over and over again, until eventually his prayer will rise like a flame and be encompassed within Hashem's light.

Just as one must learn the Torah's teachings four times until one understands them, so too with the *yichudim* of prayer and *dveikus*: one must arouse oneself four times. Similarly, the Ramah MiPano explains that this is why we repeat *Hallel* on Pesach night. Even though all of the *mochin* have already been drawn down during *Maariv*, nevertheless we repeat the *Hallel* at the *Seder* in order to draw them down in a

¹³ Ramah MiPano, *Ma'ayan Ganim*, Chapter 3

different way. The first *Hallel* draws down the *mochin* at the level of *Yisrael Sabbah u'Tevunah* / *NHY*, but the later one draws them down at the level of *Abba v'Imma* / *CHaGaT*.

This is the pathway of the *tzaddikim*, who throw themselves into prayer time after time without entering into all sorts of calculations and doubts about whether or not their prayers are effective. They know that Hashem wants us to pray without making calculations at all, without letting up for a moment. This constancy and simplicity of faith is what brings all of the prayers into actuality. This is the message of opening the way for the child who cannot ask on his own, and this is the power of Pesach night, which shines as brightly as the day, which is “masculine” in its “new song.” [Night is feminine, day is masculine.] For this reason, it is very important to forget oneself on Pesach night, not to fall into negative thinking or melancholy over how far he is from his goals in *avodah*. In the world of *Asiyah*, one must steer clear of sadness and the melancholy that defines the darkness of Egypt. Rather, one must liberate his soul and bind himself to the Torah and the Divine Names which are expressed by the Hagadah itself and which can illuminate even the world of *Asiyah*. One may even contemplate requests that would otherwise be forbidden on *Yom Tov*—as long as one is bound to the *azus d'kedushah* of Boaz and Ruth.

Just as the first redemption came in the merit of prayer, so too will the final redemption. Prayer is uplifted and redeemed by the light of Torah—the *hei* is illuminated by the *vav* [which represents *Yesod* as well as the written Torah which was six *tefachim* cubed and the oral Torah encoded in the six orders of the Mishnah]. “Here [*hei*] is seed for you”—the final *hei* that is uplifted and rectified at the moment of *yichud* at exactly midnight. Then prayer can conquer all the battles by drawing down Hashem’s mercy and compassion, and we will merit the light of Dovid HaMelech and to the see the King in His glory. We will merit to a purity of mind and *dveikus* so that we will have the beauty and grace of Rabbi Yochanan who said, “*Halevai* that a person would pray all day long!” When one’s mind reaches this state of constant prayer, his *mochin* are active all day and all night.

“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.”¹⁴ We must purify the *nefesh*, which is associated with Leah, we must guard the *shemurah matzah* and protect the light of Dovid HaMelech-prayer with that of Yosef-Torah. Then, in an instant we will be able to attain a state of purity, because this is the nature of the Torah—to purify from all stains. Then it will be a “crown to your head.” Our re-energized and protected prayer will provide the stamina to continue constantly, without falling into doubts about whether or not our prayers are effective. This is the aspect of *Kesser*, because it means that one can delight in the King no matter what happens, under any circumstances and at all times. “Guard Your holy *mitzvos*”—this is the guarding of the Pesach offering, that its “bones should be whole,” that prayer should be in the complete state of, “All my bones shall say...” Then we will reach the level of, “Guard Your holy Shabbos”—for this Shabbos is particularly suited to usher in the final redemption. Hashem should only help that we merit to guard the *mitzvos* and bring the Pesach offering in its proper time, with the arrival of our righteous redeemer in mercy. Speedily and in our days, amen.

Translated and Adapted by Rav Micha Golshevsky.

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

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