

Erev Shabbos Kodesh Parshas Vayeira 5770

D'ei Chochmah L'nafshechah

“Let your soul know wisdom”

Parshas Vayeira

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

- not for general circulation -



Published by the Yam Hachochmah Institute

Under the auspices of "Yeshivas Toras Chochochom"

for the study of the
revealed and hidden Torah

"YAM HACHOCHMAH"
PUBLISHING INSTITUTE
P.O BOX 5245 JERUSALEM
TEL: 057-3153884 FAX: 15325388242
E-MAIL: tc7@neto.bezeqint.net

Shalosh Seudos¹ of Parshas Vayeira 5768

”וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו ה' בְּאֵלֵי מַמְרֵא וְהוּא יָשָׁב פֶּתַח הָאֵהָל כְּחֹם הַיּוֹם.”

**“And Hashem appeared to him in Elonei Mamre, as he sat in the tent door
in the heat of the day.”²**

Rashi explains: “‘And Hashem appeared to him’—Hashem came to visit the ill.³ Rabbi Chama bar Chanina taught that it was the third (and most painful) day after Avraham’s *bris*, and Hashem came to ask after his welfare.”

Milah and Priyah—Divine Service from Below to Above

The Arizal reveals that Avraham Avinu’s spiritual source is the *sefirah* of *Chochmah*, since it is through the path of *Chochmah* that Avraham’s influence is drawn down from above to below.⁴ The *mitzvah* of *milah* breaks the three impure *klippas* that surround and block holiness. In addition, the *priyah*, which is the exposure of the corona, clarifies and elevates the good within *klippas nogah*. This is the path of our father Avraham, to elevate from below to above, and it is the inner nature of his son Yitzchak, who is from the “feminine” side and who

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

² *Bereishis* 18:1

³ *Bava Metzia* 86

⁴ See *Sha’ar Hakavanos, Drushei Amidah #2; Sefer Halikutim, Chayei Sarah*

follows that path of *Binah* that rises from below to above.⁵ [The *Zohar* writes that a male who enters the world from the side of femininity cannot have children since he has entered the world in an “unnatural” spiritual manner. This was the source of Yitzchak’s infertility.]

The Difference between the Arizal and the Baal Shem Tov

It is clear to any discerning person that the writings of the Arizal reveal the unfolding of the supernal worlds from above to below. They begin with *Olam HaMalbush* and describe the *tzimtzum* or constriction of G-dliness. They also recount the *igulim*, or the arrangement of the *sefiros* in a circular aspect, as well as the organization of *yosher*, which is the arrangement of the *sefiros* as a straight line. The Arizal then goes on to describe how the *kav* of the light of *Ein Sof*, the Infinite, entered into the “space” in which G-dliness had been constricted. Through this light, He formed all the worlds found along the *kav*: *Adam Kadmon*, *Atzilus*, *Beriyah*, *Yetzirah*, and *Asiyah*.

The Arizal discusses such lofty planes that only a person who has felt the deep self-nullification before Hashem that is the light of *Chochmah* and the world of *Atzilus* can comprehend it. His works will be a sealed book for anyone who hasn’t reached that level since their purpose is to discuss the higher realm of *Chochmah* with the *tzaddikim* who are completely nullified before Hashem. Since these *tzaddikim* see that everything in creation emerges from and connects a person to *Elokus*, they have a connection to the “*Chochmah* of truth”—the study of Kabbalah. When such *tzaddikim* learn about each world, they are able to

⁵ *Sha’ar Halikutim, Chayei Sarah*

see a deeper revelation of the light of Hashem. But when a person who has not yet experienced the absolute *Elokus* of *Chochmah* tries to learn the words of the Arizal, he feels as though he is in the dark; he cannot grasp their light at all.

This is why Hashem, in His great mercy, brought down into the world *tzaddikim* who have a connection to the aspect of *Binah*, through which the light is elevated from below to above. This is the path of the holy Baal Shem Tov, who erected a ladder which can be ascended from below to above. In truth, the source of this holy path is Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai himself. Through this path anyone can climb the ladder which leads to true connection to Hashem, step-by-step until he becomes a true servant of Hashem. This explains why the Baal Shem Tov and his students clarify the elements of *avodah* that we can apply personally from each world and level. Although it is clear there is no element of *avodah* within the world of *Atzilus* itself, the nature of that high level can still serve as a parable for our Divine service in this world. And in this manner one ascends the path to reveal Hashem in the upper worlds that correspond to whatever *avodah* one does.

The World of *Yetzirah* and Holy Visualization

When a person enters into the *avodah* of *milah* by purifying himself from all evil and then clarifies the evil of *klippas nogah* through *priyah*, he ascends from the world of *Asiyah* to *Yetzirah*, which is the world of angels. The word יצירה is from the root word ציור or image since, at this level, one is elevated from the material reality symbolized by *Asiyah*, through envisioning the angelic world. As it says in the holy works, one should picture the holy angels

being uplifted and praising Hashem when reciting the words, "והאופנים וחיות" "הקודש" in the prayers. It is incumbent on us all to see angels. Although none of us are actually ascending to heaven in our physical forms, the *tzaddikim* are elevated to higher planes through serving Hashem with love and fear. While they are in the higher planes, they attain spiritual wings which enable them to soar ever higher until they are literally a vehicle for the world of angels, the world of *Yetzirah*. At this level, they perceive the supernal love, fear, and *dveikus* of the *Seraphim*.

But ordinary people can attain a semblance of these levels by imagining the *tzaddik* when he is immersed in his deep *avodos*. This contemplation ignites their hearts with a holy fire of yearning to cleave to Hashem completely. This is one of the reasons that we describe the *avodah* of the angels during our prayers. One who contemplates it will be inspired to rise above the false allure of the material world into the higher realm of *Yetzirah*.

The earlier Torah works record a very effective visualization for attaining love and fear of Hashem.⁶ To attain love of Hashem, which is the path of Avraham, one should imagine a true *tzaddik* who has the *Shem HaVaYaH* inscribed on his forehead. If one wishes to experience the state of Divine love, the Name should have the three dots of a *segol* under each letter. To attain true fear, the Name should be vowelized with the two vertical dots of *shva*. And to attain *dveikus* one should vowelize the *Shem HaVaYaH* with a *cholem*. These vowels represent *Chessed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tiferes* respectively.

⁶ Rav Avraham Abulafia and Rav Avraham Halevi

Visualizing the Supernal Colors

Another important method for attaining a deep spiritual connection is to focus on certain colors.⁷ Although there are obviously no physical colors on high—nor is there light or physical letters—Hashem allows us to use them to connect to Him, much in the same way we are permitted to praise Him and call Him by the Divine Names even though He is completely beyond any description or name. So when one wishes to strengthen his connection to the holy *sefirah* of *Chessed*, to attain love of Hashem, it can help him to focus on the image of a white *Shem HaVaYaH* vowelized with a *segol*, since this color symbolizes *Chessed*. If he wishes to connect to *Gevurah*, fear of Hashem, he should focus on a red *Shem HaVaYaH* vowelized with a *shva*. And for *Tiferes-dveikus* he should focus on a yellow *Shem HaVaYaH* with a *cholem*. For *Malchus*, he should focus on a blue or black *Shem HaVaYaH*. It is interesting that the Hebrew names of these colors are שחור,⁸ גרוק,⁸ אדום, לבן form the acronym לא יש. This is meant to convey that there is absolutely no physicality above. Even so, focusing on these colors and letters is a very powerful technique to arouse oneself to transcend the false allure of this world and attain a deep *dveikus* with Hashem instead. The colors can help since, by comparison with what one can envision, all physical tints are truly bleak. A person who tightly closes his eyes can connect to love, fear, and *dveikus* through the colors that he sees in his mind's eye. All he has to do is focus on a *tzaddik* and see the *Shem HaVaYaH* on his

⁷ *Pardes Rimonim*, based on *Zohar* I:18b

⁸ Although in Modern Hebrew ירוק means green, in the time of the *Ramak*, it often referred to yellow.

forehead in the manner described. This will immediately inspire him to seek to emulate his exemplary *avodah* by following in his unique path to serve Hashem.

It is well known that the forehead reveals something deep about each person since the true *tzaddikim* could recognize a person's spiritual level merely by looking at his forehead. Similarly, the effort that the *tzaddik* expends to deepen and reveal how to serve Hashem is also "on his forehead," and it follows that through focusing on the *tzaddik* with the *Shem HaVaYaH* inscribed on his forehead can help him to serve Hashem like an angel of fire, with intense awe and a mighty love.

Although the purpose of the Arizal's revelations was to teach us that the *tzaddikim* are as nothing compared to Hashem who is the ultimate reality, nevertheless for one who ascends the ladder from below to above it is a very great level to contemplate the Divine service of the *tzaddikim* who stand at the pinnacle of the world.

The Three Angels

A person who truly circumcises his heart and purifies his character traits immediately merits to experience, "וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהֵי ה'"—"And Hashem appeared to him."⁹ This is because Hashem wishes to reveal Himself to every single human being. Avraham was the first person to see Hashem in an aspect of *Chochmah* and he drew down this path so that every Jew could follow it to Hashem. First one must remove the foreskin of his heart and work on deep contemplation of and *dveikus* with Hashem's holy Names for an extended time. Then he must

⁹ Bereishis 18:1

focus on the holy colors of the various paths of the *tzaddikim* and the holy angels who serve Hashem on high with love, fear, and *dveikus*.

This is the deeper meaning of the three angels who visited Avraham Avinu. Each angel revealed a different shade of *avodas Hashem*: *Chessed* / love, *Gevruah* / fear, and *Tiferes* / *dveikus*. It is only after one truly attains these three essential attributes that he merits “Hashem appearing to him,” which alludes to a much higher *dveikus* in Hashem—a bonding that transcends our ability to grasp intellectually.

The Sefer Yetzirah

Although Avraham Avinu stopped teaching his path in *avodas Hashem* when he left the world thousands of years ago, nevertheless he left us his *Sefer Yetzirah*, a very wondrous spiritual inheritance. In this succinct masterpiece he set down the path of deep contemplation of the twenty-two letters of the *Alef-Beis* with which Hashem created the world, since the letters themselves are also angels [or spiritual channels of Divine influence].

In his *Eitz Chaim*, the Arizal splits up the letters of the *Alef-Beis* into three groupings. The first three are called *אמות* or “Mothers,” and they are *שׁמ״ס*, *alef*, *mem*, and *shin*. The second group consists of the seven letters, *בגידכפר״ת*—*beis*, *gimmel*, *dalet*, *kaf*, *pei*, *reish*, and *taf*—and they correspond with the seven lower *sefiros*. The remaining twelve letters symbolize the twelve *gevuleialachson* or double-directionals that emerge from *Ze'ir Anpin* which correspond to the twelve tribes of the Jewish people. [There are six cardinal directions—

east, west, north, south, up, and down—and they are doubled because the Divine light both emerges and returns to them in “lines.”]

The letters *אמ"ש* represent *אש*, *מים*, *אוויר*—air, water, and fire—which parallel *dveikus*, love, and fear respectively. At first, one must work on relating to Hashem through the right side of *Chochmah*, until he grasps the “pure white” love of Hashem. After this, one must work on cleaving to Hashem through the ruddy fire of true fear of Hashem, which is the left side. Subsequently one can balance both of these paths and attain the yellowish element of air of true *dveikus*. It is only through these three “angels” that one is truly healed from the sick state of mind with which most people live out their lives and die.

People tend to stumble through the physical world like blind men who walk in darkness. As a result of the great impurity that pervades the physical world, we are like a *חולה*—a sick person—which itself has a numerical value of forty-nine, the forty-nine gates of impurity that affect us all in one way or another. When a person who is bound to impurity learns Torah and prays, he does this in a very dry manner, with no vitality or light. It is for this reason that Avraham Avinu commanded us to be like angels in the way we have already described until Hashem “appears to us,” “visits the sick,” and delivers us by lifting us up from the forty-nine gates of *Binah* to the fiftieth gate. This is the only way to be truly freed from the deep darkness of the physical world—by powerful contemplation of Hashem’s Name in the manner of the fiftieth gate of *Binah*.

This echoes the astonishing tradition we have, and which is described by Rav Avraham HaLevi, that a person who cleaves mightily to the *Shem HaVaYaH*

until he sees it before him in large and shining characters can endure any pain or torture. Even if this person's flesh is torn from him with combs of steel just like Rabbi Akiva, he will cry out, "I am a Jew and as a Jew I will die! No matter what I endure, a Jew I will remain!" This person won't feel the excruciating pain one would expect because the *Shem HaVaYaH* has the power to uplift a person from the mean circumstances of the physical world. No matter what the cause of a person's pain may be, the deeper solution is to focus on the Divine Name until "Hashem appears to him" and comforts him Himself.

Although this *avodah* comprises numerous levels, the first step is to picture the *Shem HaVaYaH* before one's eyes in the pulsating colors of "the rainbow" which are truly vibrant—not at all like the muted colors of the physical world. In this manner, he will bind himself on high and be spared the many tests that each of us endures at the hands of the *Soton* who attempts to destroy us. We are able to withstand these pressures only in the merit of our father Avraham who successfully overcame all ten trials with *emunah* and might.

The Blessing of the Oral Torah

Rav Tzaddok HaKohen of Lublin teaches that after Hashem appeared to Avraham in the beginning of our *parshah* he was never again alone, since Hashem's Presence accompanied him everywhere afterward. Hashem blessed Avraham with the ability to draw the revelation of *Elokus* into the oral Torah.¹⁰ It is about this blessing that our sages commented on the verse, "הוֹשִׁבֵנִי"

¹⁰ *Pri Tzaddik, Vayeira, #7*

”בְּמַחְשָׁכִים—“He has set me in dark places...”¹¹ Every Jew can follow Avraham’s legacy and perceive Hashem at all times, and especially when he is learning or praying, since Yitzchak inherited this from his father and passed it on to his son Yaakov. This is the meaning of the Midrash on the verse, ”וַיִּתֵּן-לְךָ הָאֱלֹהִים” — “‘And G-d will give you...’—He will give you *Elokus*.”¹² This indicates that Hashem enabled Yaakov and his descendants to cleave to Hashem at all times.

The Torah of Atikah Sesima’ah

The realm of thought is very extensive and it is an aspect of the Torah of *Atikah Sesima’ah*, the innermost aspect of Torah which is also known as *razin d’razin*—“secret of secrets.” But this “soul” of the Torah can only be grasped by actively seeking it out until one finally “sees Hashem.” The only hope for us in these last sickly generations before Moshiach’s arrival is through studying the deeper aspects of the Torah, as we find in Rav Yaakov Tzemach’s writings.¹³ He taught that this wisdom was revealed primarily to protect the later generations before Moshiach from the *Soton* and the formidable forces of evil that will prevail during this period.

After the Arizal, the Baal Shem Tov and his students revealed the Torah of *Atikah Sesima’ah* even more explicitly in their written works. Even so, one must still work hard to find these hidden wellsprings of *razin d’razin*, since the *mitzvah of milah* is relevant to one regardless of his level. One can always cut

¹¹ *Tehillim* 143:3

¹² *Bereishis* 27:28; *Bereishis Rabbah* loc cit

¹³ Rav Yaakov Tzemach was the main compiler of the *Eitz Chaim* and the other writings of the *Arizal*

away a bit more of the surface garment that blocks out the supernal light of Hashem from being accessed in this physical world.

The person who exerts himself will reveal the powerful and pleasurable light of *Atikah Sesima'ah*, and through this he will grasp the entire Torah since he has already accessed the *neshamah* of Torah that corresponds to the world of *Adam Kadmon*, through which Hashem gives vitality to all the worlds. The more one connects to the inner soul of the Torah, the more his soul will understand all areas of Torah.

But this level cannot be attained all at once. Instead, one must slowly eject the darkness that is within him until he escapes the upheaval of the spiritual state of Sodom. As we find in the verse, "וּמִשְׁחֵרֵי קִמְצָאֵנִי"—“Those who rise early diligently to seek Me will find Me.”¹⁴ If we truly seek the *Shechinah* we will eventually merit to find Hashem.

The Rainbow of Shining Colors

The more one labors on the paths of *avodah* that the *tzaddikim* revealed correspond to each world, the more one will ascend to the heights of holiness. He will eventually, “gaze at the pleasantness of Hashem and visit in His chamber.”¹⁵ One must never make light of these forms of contemplative *avodah* since this is the most precious form of Divine service possible. However, each of us knows in our heart that we are very distant from such lofty *avodos*. Even so, it is incumbent upon us to begin the journey from “below to above.” This path starts with explaining the deeper aspect of the entire Torah, especially how it relates to

¹⁴ *Mishlei* 8:17

¹⁵ *Tehillim* 27:4

enhancing one's Divine service in the manner of the Baal Shem Tov and his students. In this way we will merit to see the rainbow's "shining colors." Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai revealed to his son Elazar, "Do not expect to see the footsteps of Moshiach until you see the rainbow in its shining colors."¹⁶

In light of what we have learned, we can now understand that he was referring to contemplating and cleaving to Hashem's great Name. It is through such contemplation that the ultimate redemption will come. By doing this, we are considered one of the parties to Avraham's covenant with Hashem and as a result the *Shechinah* will rest upon us all.

This is the deeper meaning of the four pleas inserted at the end of *Shemonah Esrei* prayer: "Act for the sake of Your Name! Act for the sake of Your right hand! Act for the sake of Your holiness! Act for the sake of Your Torah!" These four reasons—שמך, ימינך, קדושתך, תורתך—form an acronym: קשתי—"My rainbow." This indicates that Hashem wishes for His name to shine with the deep spiritual colors of the rainbow. Now we can better comprehend the Tur's astonishing statement: "Every person who meticulously resites these four pleas is assured to merit to receive the face of the *Shechinah*."¹⁷

The Power of the Parable

We find a similar comparison brought in the *Leshem*.¹⁸ He cites the *Rokeach*, that the word החשמ"ל—"the *Chashmal*"—can be rearranged as של חמה—"of the sun." The meaning of this enigmatic statement is that from the

¹⁶ *Tikkunei Zohar, Tikkun 37*

¹⁷ *Tur in Orach Chaim, #122*

¹⁸ *Sefer HaDei'ah, I: Drush 6, Siman 2*

light of the shining sun and moon we can somewhat perceive the lofty lights of *Chashmal*. He brings in the name of Rabbi Eliezer ben Rabbeinu Yehudah, that one time the latter's teacher was standing with his father and the sun was shining directly on a jug filled with water and oil and giving off an indescribably beautiful reflection. His father pointed to the shining illumination and said, "Pay attention to this luminescence, since the light of the *Chashmal* can be experienced through this. Make a careful note of what I am telling you since I will not speak with you again on the subject."

The word חשמל itself contains within it the word משל—parable—to teach us that if a Jew stands and contemplates the various pleasing colors and shades of light he will be aroused to true *dveikus* with the Creator. One must not discount this *avodah* since it can be the means of attaining remarkable holiness and submission of the *yetzer* that prevents us from truly serving Hashem through Torah and *tefillah*. Although the main stratagem to overcome the evil within must always be through his Torah since it is the antidote to the evil within us, nevertheless our sages also taught that we can overcome the negative by reciting *Shema*.¹⁹ This refers to contemplating the unity of Hashem and the Divine Names with true *emunah* and *dveikus*. Our sages add that if this does not help, we should contemplate the day of death.²⁰ This means generating such a deep connection to the *Shem HaVaYaH* in large and brilliant letters that that we feel empowered to hold on no matter what hardship we endure. Even if we are in danger of death, we are determined to grasp this *Shem HaVaYaH* with all our

¹⁹ *Berachos* 5a

²⁰ *Ibid.*

might. This is just like Rav Elimelech of Lizhensk commanded: that we resolve to die and be burned to uphold our faith in Hashem. The more one focuses on this *avodah* and enters genuine *emunah* and unity with Hashem, the more he will be armed with a קשת, a “bow and spear,” to fight against the *yetzer*.

“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.”²¹ We must use our faculty of holy imagination which is a function of the *nefesh* by picturing the letters and colors in their higher aspect. This is alluded to in the verse, “And Hashem blessed Avraham [בכל / *bakol*] with everything.”²² Our sages commented that Avraham was blessed with a daughter named *Bakol*.²³ This daughter symbolizes the holy use of the imagination which is associated with *Malchus* and the level of *nefesh*. We must imagine the three holy angels who visited Avraham Avinu—the אמו”ש of white-*Chessed*-love, red-*Gevurah*-fear, and yellow-*Tiferes-dveikus* that emerges from mixing the white and red of *Chessed* and *Gevurah*. But all of these colors together make up the “black” of *Malchus*. [This is true spiritually, and also has its parallel physically. There are three basic cone cells of the eye that control light perception—long, medium, and short—and when they are stimulated equally by reflected light (or in the total absence of reflected light) the eye registers blackness.]

²¹ From the *Shabbos zemer* “D’ror Yikrah,” based on *Mishlei* 24:14.

²² *Bereishis* 24:1

²³ *Bava Basra* 16b

Then we ascend to the letters which represent the seven lower *sefiros*, the seven shepherds. At this level we grasp that each *tzaddik* has his own personal *avodah* like no other which he bequeathed to the world. Subsequently, we attain the twelve גבולי אלכסון or double-directionals which represent the twelve tribes of Israel and which emerge from the three letters אמ"ש, each of which symbolizes the four letters of the *Shem HaVaYaH*. Through these three Names we reveal the built-in *dveikus* to Hashem that can be accessed in every detail of creation. We will merit to contemplate fire and earth, which represent *Binah* and *Malchus*, symbolized by the first and last *hei* of the *Shem HaVaYaH* respectively. Through this deep meditation we will attain the *yud* and *vav* of the Name. This symbolizes truly seeing the light of Hashem.

These twelve letters ascend in the same order as the permutation of the Divine Name specific for the month of Elul, which represents the tribe of גד. The word גד is an acronym for גומל דלים, since the ultimate redemption depends on Hashem's vast kindness and will be announced by Eliyahu HaNavi who is from the tribe of Gad. When we attain true sight, all of the Jewish people will be as one and reach the astounding heights of *Atikah*—and it will be “a crown to your head.” This is a level of *dveikus* where one cleaves to Hashem on a much higher plane than by the Divine Names alone. Accessing this pinnacle of *avodah* slays the evil within us and allows us to truly “observe Your holy *mitzvos*,” since we will have cast down all barriers in the merit of the light of contentedness which is an aspect of Shabbos.

We find that Rabbi Chanina and Rabbi Oshaya would sit every Erev Shabbos and learn *Sefer Yetzirah* together.²⁴ Erev Shabbos alludes to the days immediately preceding the ultimate redemption. May Hashem help us truly occupy every instant of our time with the holy *avodah* of deep contemplation of holy letters and Divine Names in all of their incomparable brilliance. Then we will merit the fulfillment of the verse, “Guard Your holy Shabbos,” with the arrival of our righteous redeemer in mercy. Speedily and in our days. Amen.

Translated and Adapted by Rav Micha Golshevsky.

Please feel free to send comments, questions, and any feedback to:

tc1@nbezeqint.net

²⁴ *Sanhedrin* 65b