

Erev Shabbos Kodesh Parshas Vayeitzei 5770

D'ei Chochmah L'nafshechah

“Let your soul know wisdom”

Parshas Vayeitzei

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

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Shalosh Seudos¹ of Parshas Vayeitzei 5767

**”וַיֵּצֵא יַעֲקֹב מִבְּאֵר שֶׁבַע וַיֵּלֶךְ חָרָנָה. וַיִּפְגַּע בַּמָּקוֹם וַיֵּלֶן שָׁם כִּי-בָא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ,
וַיִּקַּח מֵאֲבָנֵי הַמָּקוֹם וַיִּשָּׂם מִרְאֲשֵׁיתוֹ; וַיִּשְׁכַּב בַּמָּקוֹם הַהוּא.”**

“And Yaakov went out from Be’er Sheva and went toward Charan. And he touched upon the place, and he tarried overnight, for the sun set suddenly. And he took from stones of that place and placed them beneath his head, and he lay down to sleep in that place.”²

Uniting the Stones

Rashi explains that Yaakov placed the stones beneath his head to form a protective barrier since he was afraid of wild animals. The stones began to bicker among themselves, since each stone wanted the exclusive honor of supporting the head of the *tzaddik*. Hashem immediately joined them together as one stone, as we see from the verse that follows: **”וַיִּקַּח אֶת-הָאֶבֶן אֲשֶׁר-שָׂם מִרְאֲשֵׁיתוֹ”**—“And he took *the stone* that he had placed beneath his head...”³

Rashi explains that the words, “And he lay down to sleep in that place,” are meant as a qualifier—Yaakov lay down to sleep in that place, but during the entire duration of his fourteen-year hiatus in the yeshiva of Shem and Ever, he did not lay down to sleep. [This means that during his time with Shem and Ever,

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

² *Bereishis* 28:10-11

³ *Ibid.*, 28:18

that time Yaakov had not understood just how much a person can grasp of Hashem while he sleeps.⁷

The Secret of the Upper and Lower Waters

The Arizal teaches that all Divine service involves elevating “feminine waters” and drawing down “masculine waters.”⁸ These two elements correspond to the lower and upper *yichud* which is alluded to in the name י-עקב. The upper *yichud* is represented by the initial *yud* of his name, and the lower *yichud* is represented by the last three letters עקב which are the “heel” or bottom of the person.

In practical terms these two *avodos* reveal Hashem from the highest to the lowest levels. The *tzaddik* first ascends on high to the upper waters of the upper *yichud* and feels that everything is *Elokus*. He sees how Hashem does everything for the good, which is associated with “white fire” and the upper waters. He afterward descends and confronts the lower reality which is associated with the “dark fire” of spiritual challenge and the lower waters that “are crying.”⁹

The more the *tzaddik* experiences Hashem’s hidden nature, the more he works to lift up these lower waters. Through clarifying the character defects of jealousy, illicit desire, the lust for honor, and the suffering Jews endure, the more the *tzaddik* understands that this “black fire” is the vessel with which one reveals the “white fire.” These negative states and painful experiences are manifestations

⁷ See the *Baal Shem Tov Al HaTorah* and the *Ohev Yisrael* on this verse.

⁸ See *Eitz Chaim, Shaar 39*

⁹ *Pesikta Rabasi, Parshah 20*

of the “broken vessels,” and they are actually what motivate us to seek to reveal Hashem. This yearning itself is an aspect of the “feminine waters,” which are the prerequisite for the flow of “masculine waters” which carry down the light of Hashem. We can only reveal the white fire through the black.¹⁰ [White fire and black fire parallel the white of the Torah’s parchment whose “light” is tempered and revealed through the overlaying of the black letters that form vessels and limitations so that the Torah’s meaning can be understood.]

When the *tzaddik* attempts to achieve the white fire of true *dveikus* by seeing that the entire world is G-dliness, a powerful pleasure is revealed to him. But, “a continuous pleasure is no pleasure.” We are enabled to continually renew our bliss through the “filter” of the black fire. When a bad character trait rears its ugly head within us or when we are confronted with pain or a challenge—which are the products of the lower worlds that separate us from Hashem—this is an opportunity to renew and strengthen our connection to the light of Hashem. [And the stronger the resistance the greater the pleasure, as Rebbe Nachman reveals. This is why the word for barriers, מניעות, forms the word for pleasantness, נעימות.]

Moshe, Yosef, and Dovid

The entire redemption depends on Moshe, Yosef, and Dovid. Yosef is an aspect of the *yichudah ila'ah*. Dovid alludes to the *yichudah tata'ah*, and Moshe symbolizes the connection between them.¹¹ Moshe is the connector since he is an

¹⁰ See *Zohar Chadash* on Shir HaShirim, *Ma'amar Beis Nehorin*, *Uchmah V'chivrah*

¹¹ See *Zohar* II:140a regarding Dovid’s relationship to the aspect of black fire.

aspect of Yaakov, the *beriach ha'tichon* or the post that holds everything together, as we find in the *Tikkunei Zohar*.¹²

The white fire parallels the *bechorah* or birthright, which is really Yosef's since he was supposed to have been Yaakov's firstborn [if his plan to marry Rachel first had not been thwarted]. This teaches that every Jew must attain the lofty and prime *avodah* of seeing the beneficent light of Hashem before him always. He must use every manifestation of the black fire to strengthen his bond with the powerful light of the white fire of Hashem's absolute goodness.

When the kings of Yehudah, who were sourced in Dovid HaMelech, are joined with the aspect of Yosef HaTzaddik, whose descendents split off into the kingdom of Yisrael, the ultimate redemption will arrive. This is the secret of the expression, "דוד מלך ישראל חי וקיים"—"Dovid *king of Yisrael* lives and exists." This indicates that the aspect of black fire will be the means through which one imbues the white fire with vitality and renewal. No matter what hardship a person confronts he will instinctively turn it into an "upper *yichud*" with no need to toil for it, so that the "the flame ascends on its own."¹³ In this manner the lower vessel and the upper are joined to reveal the beauty of Hashem in an ever-ascending cycle of turning every distancing into increasing closeness.¹⁴

The Secret of "Do You Know Lavan?"

Now we can understand why after Yaakov spent fourteen years learning the white fire of pure Torah—"יְתוּרָה אִוֵּר"—he still could not reveal the light of

¹² *Tikkunei Zohar, Tikkun #13*

¹³ *Shabbos 20a*

¹⁴ *Likutei Moharan II:48*

prophecy until he left Be'er Sheva for Charan, a place that symbolizes *charon af*, the hardship and suffering of this world that obscures the light of Hashem. In order to reach prophecy, Yaakov had to reveal Hashem in the physical world: "And he laid down *in that place*." He merited an *aliyas neshamah* so that he could reveal the Torah of *Atikah Sesima'ah*, which is the Torah of the "*Loven HaElyon*"—the supernal whiteness. [The *klippah* of Lavan blocks this revelation of absolute certainty in Hashem's kindness. Lavan means "white," and he parallels the fiftieth gate of defilement where a person abuses his Divine faculties to justify evil and "whitewash" it.¹⁵]

This explains Yaakov's question, "הֲיָדַעְתֶּם אֶת-לָבָן?"—"Do you know Lavan?"¹⁶ Yaakov asked this of the shepherds to signify that when he will act as Lavan's shepherd, he will be constantly occupied with making the deep *yichudim* of the *Loven HaElyon* through which he will merit to bring the twelve tribes into the world.

Yaakov and Yisrael

As mentioned earlier, the name Yaakov expresses the connection between the upper and lower waters. It is through this *avodah* of *yichudim* that the miracles of Chanukah and Purim were born. These miracles occurred when we were in exile, under foreign domination antithetical to the Torah. It was specifically during these trying times of "black fire" that we drew down the "white fire" of the Chanukah lights into the exile. Through this, our very exile

¹⁵ *Likutei Halachos*

¹⁶ *Bereishis* 29:5

became a vessel for redemption, since the light shined all the greater by virtue of the miracles.

But Yaakov is also called Yisrael, and this name indicates the subsuming of all of creation in the light of Hashem. Yaakov alludes to *Da'as*, and when we say the words, "וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה וְיִשְׂרָאֵל"—"and the G-d of Yaakov"—during *Shemonah Esrei* we draw down an aspect of *Da'as*.¹⁷ But the name Yisrael symbolizes the higher aspect of *Kesser* which is above *Da'as*.

The difference between the two is that although both are in the middle line of the *sefiros*, *Da'as* leans towards *Binah* [an aspect of *Gevurah* compared to *Chochmah*] while *Kesser* leans towards the right side of kindness.

Practically speaking this means that one who is first starting out, who is in the state of Yaakov, must lean towards the left side, toward the toil of *Binah* by learning an abundance of Torah and transforming all challenges into a deeper appreciation of the light of Hashem. This transformation is symbolized by the color *techeiles* [which is said to be “between black and white”], and it reveals more and more the *tachlis*, the purpose of our *avodah*. [*Techeiles* also means to destroy / לבלות since its function is to eradicate evil and reveal the light of the goodness of Hashem at all times.¹⁸] In this manner, one builds a “golden menorah,” which reveals the light of Hashem in the world. One can then ascend to the higher level of Yisrael, where the black and white fires join absolutely and one no longer needs to toil to transform any pain or challenge into an ever-deepening connection with Hashem.

¹⁷ *Sha'ar Hakavanos, Drushei Amidah # 2*

¹⁸ *Likutei Halachos*

The Ramah Mi'Pano and the Baal Shem Tov revealed that the upper waters represent *yediah*, Hashem's comprehensive knowledge, while the constrictive nature of the lower waters represent *bechirah*, our free will. This means that one who reaches the heights of *yichudah ila'ah* connects with Hashem's absolute knowledge of everything that will happen. A person who struggles with the aspect of the lower waters connects with the struggle of free will. It is our job to shine the light of *yediah* into *bechirah* to such an extent that we will reflexively chose the deep understanding that everything is from Hashem at every juncture. This last level is an expression of the highest level, of *kesser kol hakessarim*—the “Crown of Crowns.”

The Dual Union of Yaakov

The Rashash explains that there are two aspects of “inclusiveness and binding” which resulted from the rectification of the earlier breaking of the vessels. [Hashem formed the original “vessels” with a built-in deficiency so that they would break when exposed to the light of the lower *sefiros*. They were egocentric, as it were, and did not wish to work with each other, and each alone could not support the light which descended. This created the roots of free will. Hashem then formed a new light which somewhat rectified this blemish and enabled the *sefiros* to work together as a unit. The Rashash explains that there were two aspects to this breakage and a dual aspect to the rectification as well.] The two elements of the rectification were a specific union between the six *sefiros* of *Ze'ir Anpin* and *Malchus* in an aspect of *Da'as*, and a general union in an aspect of *Kesser*.

The difference between a general union and a specific one is that, in a specific union, *Ze'ir Anpin* assumes the *chassadim* within *Malchus*, and *Malchus* assumes the *gevuros* within *Ze'ir Anpin*. In this manner, *Ze'ir Anpin* is entirely composed of *chassadim* and *Malchus* contains only *gevuros*. The *yichud* comes about specifically when each component reveals and enhances the strength of the other's element.

Practically speaking, one makes this *yichud* by seeing and enhancing the strengths and good of each Jew, since every Jew is a "חלק אלוה ממעל"—“a portion of G-d from above.” [Rebbe Nachman teaches that this Divine portion is revealed within each person's good points.] But it is not enough to notice only the good within one's friend. He must also discern the good within himself. In this manner, one makes a spiritual union with every fellow Jew, and reveals the honor of Hashem in the world.

By following this path, each person's unique goodness is united with his friend's just as the twelve stones of the tribes joined together so that the head of the *tzaddik* could rest on all of them. This benefits everyone as well, since all pain is a result of a lack of unity within the Jewish people. When a person competes with others and seeks to dominate them [like the vessels that broke], he feels alone and solitary. Of course, this perception is false, since every Jew is really a letter in the same Torah. We are all meant to work together to bring about the ultimate redemption, and we can only join the black fire with the white through cooperation as one organic whole. This is only possible through mutual love and esteem and by receiving the unique good within others and ourselves. This will bring us to rejoice in one another and in ourselves. We must come to

see our own good and be glad with it without feeling superior to others, since those others possess elements of good that I lack.¹⁹ The more we focus on and discern the good in ourselves, the more we will truly grasp the good in our friends. In this manner, everyone's good becomes stronger and stronger.²⁰

The General *Yichud* of Yisrael

After this, they ascend to the aspect of Yisrael, which is a contraction of the phrase *לי ראש*—“I have a head.” In this general *yichud*, we ascend to the Primal Cause, Hashem Himself. At this level, each element is restored its own *chassadim* and *gevuros* since there is no separation between them in the simple light of Hashem at this high level.

Rav Aharon of Strashuleh, zt"l, explains that one who mistakenly attributes different levels to the *Ohr Ein Sof* has crossed the threshold of heresy. It is for this reason that Rav Chaim Vital did not speak too much about the Worlds of the *Ohr Ein Sof*, since a person could conceivably differentiate within them, as the Baal HaTanya explained. This is the deeper reason why the twelve stones become one. When they are lifted up to the Source, the specific levels all unite within the *Ohr Pashut* of Hashem.

In the very beginning of this rectification, each stone cries out that the *tzaddik*, the aspect of *Yesod* / Foundation, should rest on it. This means that each one insists that the unification of Hashem should be revealed in the world specifically through his path. But when the rectification is complete, they are all

¹⁹ *Likutei Moharan* I:34

²⁰ *Ibid.*, I:282

revealed to be absolutely one, since all are vessels to reveal the oneness of Hashem.

This means that through utilizing all evil and hardship to draw nearer to Hashem, one raises up the holy sparks hidden within the negative attributes and character defects. For example, jealousy must be capitalized upon for holiness. How can one accomplish this? By focusing on the fact that he is jealous of his friend because deep down he knows that both he and the object of his jealousy are one with Hashem. [He must come to realize that it is only because he knows instinctively that he could come as close to Hashem as his friend that he is jealous—if it was impossible for him, he would not even consider it. We understand this through the parable of the peasant who is not jealous of a prince that comes to marry the king's daughter, because she is so obviously “out of his league.”]

The same is true with desire. Its ultimate expression is: “נַפְשִׁי אֲיִתְךָ”—“My soul desires You...”²¹ This is the desire of *Malchus* to unite with Hashem [through people accepting upon themselves the kingship of Hashem]. And of course the desire for honor really has its source in the desire of *Malchus* that Hashem be given honor in the world, through His people. We have no understanding of the great honor that is afforded to every Jew who reveals Hashem's glory in this world. When a person serves Hashem, all the angels and the entire creation is moved. Our desire for honor is rooted in the honor given to the person who serves Hashem in simplicity and completely.

²¹ *Yeshayah* 26:9

The Way to Elevate Evil to its Source

This is the meaning of the verse, **וַיֵּצֵא יַעֲקֹב מִבְּעַר שֶׁוּעַר וַיֵּלֶךְ חָרָנָה...וַיִּשְׁכַּב** "וַיֵּצֵא יַעֲקֹב מִבְּעַר שֶׁוּעַר וַיֵּלֶךְ חָרָנָה...וַיִּשְׁכַּב"—“And Yaakov went out from Be'er Sheva and went toward Charan...and he lay down to sleep in that place.”²² When the *tzaddik* descends to the three lower worlds and feels spiritual and physical pain, jealousy, desire, and self seeking, he first serves Hashem in the aspect of Yaakov—י-עקב. This means that he draws the supernal light from on high into what he experiences.

When he feels jealous, he works to internalize that his friend is a “portion of Hashem from above.” It follows that every one of his friend’s distinctions is a revelation of Hashem in the world. When he is struck with a longing for honor, the *tzaddik* recalls that sparks of holiness are trapped within the honor that he desires. He will then recall how much honor he is afforded on high with every motion of sincere *avodas Hashem*. After each *tzaddik* leaves this world he will be granted “three hundred and ten worlds” [of longing for Hashem].²³ Why should he run after the ephemeral honor of this world? When a person feels drawn to an illicit desire for physicality in any form he will be aroused to elevate the holy sparks contained in what he eats and drinks. He will recall that such desires really stem from a deep yearning to be reunited with his Source. In this manner, he will mitigate the black fire into *techeiles*, since this is the means through which he will fulfill his purpose, his *tachlis*.²⁴

²² *Bereishis* 28:10-11

²³ *Sanhedrin* 100a; The *Arizal* and many other sources explain that this does not mean literally three hundred and ten worlds.

²⁴ *Likutei Moharan* I:18

After this, however, he must also lift up the entire creation to the union of Yisrael—"I have a head"—where everything connects to simple, unified light of Hashem. At this level, there are no distinctions or differentiations, only a deep abiding pleasure in the Kingship of Hashem. On this level, the black light is truly one with the white, and the unity of the light of Hashem is revealed with ever more vitality and renewal.

Akudim, Nekudim, and Verudim

In this manner we rectify the original sin of Adam HaRishon. Our sages teach that he "squeezed grapes and drank." The Hebrew word for grape, ענב, is an acronym for, עֲקוּדִים, נְקוּדִים, בְּרוּדִים—"streaked, speckled, and grizzled"—the descriptions of the coats of the flock that came to be Yaakov's.²⁵ *Akudim* refers to the ten *sefiros* when they are "bound up" as one vessel.²⁶ [*Akeidah* means binding.] *Nekudim* refers to the world where the vessels broke [since each element was its own *nekudah* or individuated point and would not work with any other]. *Verudim* alludes to the rectification.

Even though we must all descend "to Charan," to the state of *shevirah* or spiritual breakage, we must nevertheless lift this up to the world of *Verudim* or rectification in specific and in general as explained above. We then ascend to the absolute unity alluded to in the world of *Akudim*. As the Baal HaTanya explains, *Akudim* also represents the hidden *sefiros* and the supernal "pure and shining lights" of the highest levels.

²⁵ *Bereishis* 31:10

²⁶ See *Eitz Chaim, Sha'ar Akudim*

In this way we draw down all the blessings alluded to in the word ברוך said at the beginning of most *berachos*. The initial *beis* alludes to *Binah*; the *reish* to *Chochmah* as in, "ראשית חכמה"—“the beginning of Wisdom”; the *vav* represents the bridge of *Da'as*, as explained above. Then we ascend to the *chaf*, which stands for the *Kesser Elyon*, the Crown at the highest level.²⁷

“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.”²⁸ Our mission is to unify the Creator at all times, through both the upper and lower *yichudim*. The first step is to draw the light of *Chochmah* into the *nefesh*, which represents all the challenges of the lower reality. We must illuminate the exile with the light of Chanukah until the very darkness becomes a vehicle to reveal the light of the *tachlis*.

But then we must attain the level of “a crown to his head”—this is the upper *yichud* of *li rosh*, where we lift everything up to the Primal Cause and are included in Hashem. Through every barrier and darkness that we face, we form more beautiful spiritual vessels to reveal Hashem’s honor, in an even stronger way.

In this manner we fulfill, נצור מצות קדושך שמור שבת קדשך—“Guard Your holy *mitzvos*, guard Your holy Shabbos.” Through the light of Torah we will make such a powerful *yichud* that the flame will rise of its own volition and this will serve as the greatest protection to ensure the purity of the *yichud*.

²⁷ See Rashash in *Nahar Shalom*, 20b

²⁸ From the *Shabbos zemer* “*D'ror Yikrah*,” based on *Mishlei* 24:14.

May Hashem illuminate our eyes with the light of Chanukah so we can sweeten and illuminate the darkness of exile. Our very exile should become the menorah of gold, to reveal Hashem's Kingship in the world with constant renewal, in an aspect of "Moshe, Moshe, without interruption."²⁹ In this context, Moshe is an acronym for, "מה שהיה הוא שיהיה"—"That which was is what will be."³⁰ We should not have to remain in the exile where there is an interruption between the two Divine Names *HaVaYaH* that are at the beginning of the thirteen attributes of Mercy. Instead, we should draw down Hashem's mercy by repenting with such speed and energy that there is no hesitation at all. The moment one is aroused to repent of a bad character trait or remove a barrier between himself and Hashem he should do so immediately. We should all merit to see Hashem's return to Tzion with our own eyes, with the coming of our righteous redeemer speedily in our days. Amen.

**This week's *shiur* is dedicated in memory of
Mindel bas Reb Tzvi.**

Translated and Adapted by Rav Micha Golshevsky.

²⁹ *Zohar* I:120b

³⁰ *Ibid.* III:273a

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