

Erev Shabbos Kodesh Parshas Vayikra 5770

# D'ei Chochmah L'nafshechah

“Let your soul know wisdom”

Parshas Vayikra

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

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***Shalosh Seudos<sup>1</sup> of Parshas Vayikra 5768***

”וַיִּקְרָא אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֵלָיו מֵאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד לֵאמֹר...”

**“And Hashem called to Moshe and spoke to him from the tent of meeting, saying...”<sup>2</sup>**

**The Small Alef**

The Arizal revealed that he achieved all that he did by virtue of the joy he felt in fulfilling *mitzvos*.<sup>3</sup> He was as supremely happy with every single mitzvah that he fulfilled as a person would be if he had profited by a million golden dinars. In the merit of this joy, all of the worlds opened before him and he was privileged to ascend and travel through all of them, from level to level. In this way, his soul was completely incorporated within the soul of Moshe Rabbeinu.

Similarly, the holy Baal Shem Tov—about whom Rav Mendel of Vitebesk testified that he was absolutely unique, and there had never been nor ever would be another like him—rose to all of the limitless levels that he did by virtue of being completely at one with every single Jewish soul.

These traits—joy in *mitzvos* and unity with other Jews—are both expressed by the small *alef* of the initial word of *Vayikra*. The small *alef* symbolizes being small in one's own estimation in comparison with every other Jew, no matter who he might be.

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<sup>1</sup> The lesson was delivered on Shabbos of *Parshas Zachor*, in Mezhibuzh where the holy Baal Shem Tov is buried.

<sup>2</sup> *Vayikra* 1:1

<sup>3</sup> *Mishnah Berurah* 669:10

One cannot just remember that there is a mitzvah of *ahavas Yisrael* when someone is ill or tragedy strikes, G-d forbid. Even though it is true that, at such times, the bond between Jews is sparked into life, nevertheless this is not true love of one's fellow Jew. The Baal Shem Tov achieved all that he did because he honored every single Jew with total self-nullification, and it was this that brought him to complete incorporation within the soul of Moshe Rabbeinu to whom the little *alef* of Hashem's call referred directly. He sought to embody the little *alef* absolutely. As the *Zohar* teaches, "He who is small is great [רב]"—by making oneself small before everyone, one becomes incorporated within the truly great, the true Rav.

For us this means that we must also strive to think little of ourselves in comparison with others and not to cause any kind of pain or suffering to any Jew. Quite the contrary; we must be willing to sacrifice ourselves for their sake, and this is the uppermost *yechidah* aspect of one's soul—to suffuse the soul of every single Jew you meet with joy and vitality, no matter who he is. Although, on the surface, this might appear to be a level that everyone can easily reach, it is not so simple. The *alef* means to teach<sup>4</sup>—humility demands great study and is not a simple *avodah* at all. To really intensify one's love of his fellow Jews every single day and unite with all of their souls is a very deep kind of learning, and it was this that opened all of the gateways of heaven before the Baal Shem Tov just as *simchah shel mitzvah* had for the Arizal. One must actively contemplate and delve into the good that is in every single Jew.

The Baal HaTanya teaches that all of the Torah's secrets are a manifestation of *Chochmah*, and the light of *dveikus* and experiencing delight in Hashem's presence is a manifestation of *Kesser*. We have a general principle in Kabbalah that when one reaches a higher level, one automatically attains all of the levels below it. For this reason, when a person really takes pleasure in Hashem's presence in a holy way of *dveikus*, he naturally also experiences the light of *Chochmah*. In just this way did the Baal Shem Tov attain all of the levels—by binding himself to the light of *Kesser* which is a "lover

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<sup>4</sup> *Iyov* 33:33

of all of Yisrael.” This bound him to each and every Jew, and once he was attached to the root of everything, he also merited the light of all of the other *sefiros*.

Rav Avraham b'Rav Nachman taught that this is why Moshiach is called “Prince of Peace.” Ultimately, Hashem will open all of the heavenly gates before Moshiach by virtue of his being a *tzaddik* who constantly seeks to foster peace among all Jews. The Baal Shem Tov shared a soul-root with Moshe because his main focus was also the *avodah* of the “small *alef*,” and in its merit he was privileged to hear Hashem “call to Moshe.”

### **The Dveikus of the Tzaddikim**

It is said that, as a child, the Tzemach Tzedek cried inconsolably, “Why does Hashem not appear to me as He did to Avraham Avinu?” Each and every Jew must likewise weep over the fact that he has not merited to reach the levels of the *tzaddikim* throughout the generations. One must never despair and say that such a thing is only possible for rare individuals—he must know that Hashem wants to reveal to each and every Jew all of the spiritual delights that pervade all of the upper worlds that the *tzaddikim* experienced. In his innermost self, every single Jew certainly longs to “dwell in Hashem’s house all the days of his life and visit His chamber.” However, the precondition is the state of the little *alef*—“He who is small is great.” One must contemplate and study these good qualities and advance in them every day, from hour to hour, and take stock every minute whether or not one’s self-absorption has not resulted in harm to another Jew. And certainly, one must never do anything to sow enmity among Jews, G-d forbid.

If a person only knew what heavenly gates would open before him if he only made sure to properly honor every Jew, he would certainly immediately repent any lapse. Such failings are more serious than any other sin in the Torah; even though Hashem zealously regards any sin, nevertheless any fostering of controversy or failure to properly honor one’s fellow Jew is viewed especially harshly on high.

We find in the *Zohar*: “Rabbi Chiya opened his teaching with the verse, ‘Hashem stations an angel around those who fear Him and saves them.’ Fortunate are the *tzaddikim*, for Hashem is more zealous over their honor than He is over His own. Go and see how many human beings curse and blaspheme against heaven, like Sancheriv who cursed and blasphemed and said, ‘Who among all of the gods of the lands...’ and Hashem forbore and did not demand recompense of him. However, when Sancheriv stretched forth his hand to harm Chizkiyahu, what does the verse say? ‘And an angel of G-d went out and smote among the camp of Ashur...’ Yeravam ben Nevat served idolatry, brought incense and offerings to it, and Hashem did not demand recompense of him. Yet when Ido, His prophet, came and spoke prophecy before him and Yeravam stretched forth his hands against him, what does the verse say? ‘And his hand withered...and he could not retract it.’ Pharaoh cursed and blasphemed and said, ‘Who is Hashem?’ and the Holy One did not demand recompense of him until he refused to release the Jewish people. As the verse says, ‘Do you still toy with My people? Behold, the hand of Hashem shall be among your cattle...’ So too, in every case we find that the Holy One exacted retribution for the humiliation of *tzaddikim* more than He did for His own.”<sup>5</sup>

We see from this teaching that even though the subjects served idolatry, this was not the point that aroused Hashem’s anger. Rather, it was that they dared to lay a hand upon His prophets. So too, each and every Jew has a unique point in *avodas Hashem* that belongs to him alone, and if one causes him to lose his spirits one runs the risk of destroying his unique point of Divine service. In heaven they ask, “What happened to interrupt so-and-so’s *avodah* just now?” And when it becomes clear that it was because another Jew caused him emotional pain, well, woe to the person who has to bear that judgment and humiliation.

We must therefore follow the pathway of the Baal Shem Tov, the pathway of love of our fellow Jews. The Baal Shem Tov not only merited to pray with total self-

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<sup>5</sup> *Zohar* II:64a

sacrifice on behalf of every Jew, he also merited to draw down to them an abundance of children, long and healthy lives, sustenance, and spiritual elevation. And the main thing that he accomplished was his total unity with all of the Jewish souls.

### **Crowning Your Friend as King over Yourself**

The sages taught that every person is asked on the day of judgment, “Did you crown your fellow Jew as king over yourself with ease?”<sup>6</sup> What the person is really going to be asked is, “Did you treat your fellow Jew like a king? Did you feel the importance of each and every Jew, that they were all kings? Did you take stock of your every movement, if it sufficiently honored your fellow Jew properly—and were you careful to never act disrespectfully toward any Jew at all, G-d forbid?” This awareness is the way of life that the Baal Shem Tov laid down for his disciples and all those who are bound to his path. The more lofty his teachings, the more mutual love there has to be in the heart of his students—this is the condition [תנאי] of learning the powerful and unifying [איתן] teachings of Chassidus that resonate in the highest level of the soul [איתן יחידה =]. And this is why the Baal HaTanya named his work as he did—the letters תנאי are the same as those of תנאי and איתן.

So we must know with certainty that unless we resolve to never cause pain to another Jew, we will not be able to experience the light of *dveikus* with Hashem and the light of the Baal Shem Tov. And we must be on our guard, because the *sitra achra* works very hard to convince us that conflicts with our fellow Jews are justified, even necessary. Even though, if it came to a questionable food, a person would rush to ask a Rav if it was permitted before putting it into his mouth, when it comes to this much more serious constellation of prohibitions, a person doesn't think to ask if it is permitted or not. This, despite the fact that, according to the Tosafos, publicly humiliating another Jew is just another manifestation of murder which one should rather kill himself than willingly do.

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<sup>6</sup> *Sha'arei Kedushah* II:2

### Preparing for *Yom Tov*

The main light of the festival is the light of the *tzaddik* that shines into a person's soul, and if a person wants to experience the holiness of the *Yom Tov*, he must know that it depends on his level of unity with other Jews. One prepares spiritually for the festival by destroying Amalek. Rebbe Nachman of Breslov explains that Amalek has the same *gematria* as the word אר, which means haughty.<sup>7</sup> “And your heart shall become haughty and forget...”—pride is the blemish of Amalek.

There are those who believe that they are already humble, that they know the way of true modesty. But this is false. Even though everyone begs Hashem every day that their soul should be, “like dust before all,” nevertheless they have no idea what this really means. It is only when a person constantly make a *cheshbon nefesh* to never insult another Jew and fulfills Hashem's desire to achieve a state of unity with all of the souls of the Jewish people that he can be considered to be on the path of humility. And it is not enough to refrain from insulting others; one must also completely forgive others and never hold onto little bits of resentments in his heart.

The way to destroy Amalek is by, “remembering what he did to you”—to strengthen one's memory of the other person's good points and how important it is to treat him with honor. One cannot forget himself and the importance of his words and actions, because they can have very profound effects on others. One cannot overestimate the great pleasure that Hashem derives from our efforts to achieve unity and mutual love with our fellow Jews—not superficially, but really within the depths of one's heart and soul.

We must bear in mind that every time we break down a barrier between us, we break down so many barriers in heaven. There is not a form of trouble or suffering that cannot be mitigated fully in heaven through breaking down the barriers of conflict among Jews here on earth. It is important to remember that the way of *machlokes* is the way of the *sitra achra*, and it is not the path that Hashem has chosen. “For Hashem has

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<sup>7</sup> *Likutei Moharan* I:30



chosen Tzion, He has desired it [אורה] as a habitation for Him.”<sup>8</sup> Tzion represents *Yesod*, which is the point of unity—this is what Hashem has chosen. “He has desired”—אורה—comprises the *alef* that represents Hashem’s Throne of Glory, and the rest of the word comprises the final two letters of the *Shem HaVaYaH*. Through unifying the souls of the Jewish people, Hashem’s Throne and Name is made complete and His light can shine throughout all of the lower worlds.

There are those who fulfill the mitzvah to love their fellow Jews by reaching out to some outcast soul that they meet once a year, but the main way in which we are to fulfill it is among the people with whom we live day in and day out. These are the friends that we must crown as kings over ourselves and avoid causing them anguish and disappointment.

### **Forgiveness for the Sake of the *Shechinah***

There is a story told of a certain man who once insulted the Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh very deeply, and the *tzaddik* underwent a great test not to hold it against him. However, when he thought about the pain that his resentment would cause the *Shechinah*, he immediately felt inspired to completely forgive his detractor.

The *tzaddikim* know that the greatest pain one can cause to the *Shechinah* is in failing to accord proper respect to one’s fellow Jews. This is the main reason for this exile which was due to baseless hatred, and the redemption depends on this. Even though the *geulah* requires spiritual force, nevertheless the catalyst is indeed within our hands. Hashem will certainly provide us with the strength we need to draw down the light of the redemption through unifying the souls of the Jewish people.

Every single Jew is a “piece of G-d from above” and all of the Jewish people really are a single spiritual unity. It is absolutely forbidden to focus on physical externals, because each and every Jew is uniquely precious to Hashem just like the most beautiful diamonds and pearls. Even if it seems on the surface as though there are

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<sup>8</sup> *Tehillim* 132:13

people who act against him and cause him anguish, nevertheless one must look deeper, into the person's inner nature which is entirely good and bound up with the King's crown. And by doing so, one also will be able to more clearly see how much good he also has within him.

This is the defining character of the *tzaddikim*—that they act with complete self-sacrifice on behalf of every single Jew. The son of the Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk, zy" a, testified of his father that he literally sacrificed his life for every single Jew. Even though we are far from such a level and Hashem is not a tyrant over us who demands that which we cannot give, nevertheless He does ask of each of us that we do what we can to fulfill this on our level. For us, this means making a *cheshbon nefesh* to determine if we are causing pain to others, and to completely forgive anyone who might have hurt us. This is also a form of self-sacrifice for the sake of *ahavas Yisrael*.

There is a kind of *ahavas Yisrael* that is false—when a person prays on behalf of others with a kind of smug self-righteousness, and with this he feels as though he has fulfilled his duty to others. But this can hardly be called “crowning your friend over yourself!” One must really come to unity with others, heart and soul. As the verse says, “Write this for the final generation, and a newly created people will praise Hashem.”<sup>9</sup> One must praise Hashem with this “newly created people”—the light of the *tzaddikim* must shine down to the final generation so that there will be someone to praise Hashem in the state of the “newly created people”—a nation formed of the fully united souls of the Jewish people.

### **The Descent of the *Tzaddik***

Now, as we prepare ourselves to receive the holy festival, we naturally ask Hashem to help us do so in a spirit of freshness and inspiration, in joy and with vitality. So we have to invest the energy to understand more deeply how we are to achieve our goal. The Arizal taught in his *kavanos* for the introduction to *Shemonah Esrei*, that the

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<sup>9</sup> *Tehillim* 102:19

phrase: "תהילות לא-ל עליון גואלם"—"Praises to the G-d above who is their redeemer"—is our way of preparing ourselves to enter into the world of *Atzilus* [since the four parts of the morning prayers parallel the four worlds]. The introductory phrase is the light of *Abba* of the world of *Atzilus* that descends to shine into the world of *Beriyah*. The word גואלם is a conjunction of גוי אל"ם—the light descends into the "people who are still mute" [גוי אלם] and know nothing of how to truly prepare for the festival of redemption. However, there is a redeemer, there is the light of the true *tzaddikim* that shines into us, and it is by virtue of their influence that we can prepare ourselves to receive the holiness of the festival. "Those who come to purify themselves are helped from above." The *Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer* teaches that the souls of the *tzaddikim* help us, or as the Arizal taught, they infiltrate within us in a state of gestation to give us strengths that we would not otherwise have.

Yet we can only merit to experience this kind of *ibbur* if we make a start at following the pathway of the *tzaddikim*, the pathway of concern and love for our fellow Jews, which is true love of the *Shechinah*. We have to focus, really focus, on the fact that every single Jew is a part of the *Shechinah*. *Gevalt!* Don't we want to have a connection with Hashem, to give Him *nachas*, to be a part of the *avodah* of the *tzaddikim*, and to bind with the light of the Torah and Hashem's presence? And doesn't each and every one of us want this for himself and his children, and all of the generations to come forth from him? Yet the key to all of this is so lowly, it is so despised in the eyes of the world because the *Shechinah* is herself lying in the dust. Everything connected with the *Shechinah* is likewise trod upon and no one stoops to raise it, and the matter is ignored in direct relation to its vital importance. Because if people knew where the gold and precious stones were buried, everyone would run to raise them out of the dirt. In order to maintain the structure of free will, then, the *Shechinah* is hidden and buried in the dirt and has no external importance. What is the concern of the *Shechinah*? *Emunah* and the collective souls of the Jewish people, and the awareness that every Jew is a "piece of G-d from above." Literally a piece of G-d.

But this point is buried deep; everyone knows it, yet the fact is insignificant to people and so no one reaches down to pick it up to conscious awareness and emphasis.

What is the light of the *tzaddik* that prepares us for the world of *Atzilus*, for the holiness of the festival, for the redemption itself? It is faith in the essential holiness and value of every Jew and the path of unity with every one of them. He has to be able to say of himself honestly that every single Jew is incalculably significant to him, and not to only mouth the words but to really mean them and act on them. This is called keeping one's attention on the *Shechinah* at all times; focusing on all of the limbs of the *Shechinah*, which are the Jewish people themselves.

This was expressed by Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk when he said that the *tzaddikim* maintain the light of the *Shem HaVaYaH* before their eyes at all times by virtue of crowning the Jewish people upon themselves. One must likewise judge others favorably, because the Jewish people are in exile and have suffered terrible tortures and pain, and no one can really understand what another is going through. If a person would really understand his friend's suffering in every detail he would really know his greatness, how despite it all he is still holding onto his Jewishness. Every Jew experiences new holy ideas and *chiddushim* even though he also experiences all kinds of obstacles and obscurity. If one should sometimes happen to see a Jew acting in a way that doesn't befit him, one must realize that it isn't purposeful—it is inadvertent and an error. If we would only see how each Jew is such a diamond, their innermost goodness would really come to shine out, and this is the greatest pleasure that Hashem derives from us.

All of this was taught by Rebbe Nachman of Breslov in the lesson where he discusses the teaching, "The *chazzan* sees from where the little children read."<sup>10</sup> [The children begin to read from *Vayikra*.] The *chazzan* is the *tzaddik*, and his whole purpose is to see the good in every single Jew. And by seeing that good he helps every Jew repent fully and brings about the full and eternal redemption.

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<sup>10</sup> *Likutei Moharan* I:282

The Belzer Rebbe taught that the redemption will arrive in the merit of the Baal Shem Tov who had a “good eye” sourced in *Arich Anpin*, meaning that he constantly worked to only see good among the Jewish people. It stands to reason that the Baal Shem Tov also had internal resistance and challenge to this, just as we find that Moshe Rabbeinu was tested in this area. This is the aspect of Bilaam who had an “evil eye,” and Rav Mendel of Vitebsk taught that all of the *tzaddikim* have their tests in the area of this negative viewing, but they manage to banish their resentments and inclination to argue. They refine themselves from level to level until they attain the “good eye sourced in *Atika*” which has no left-side aspect of judgment to it at all. They only see the good and this binds them constantly to the *Shechinah*.

There are those who believe that there are great *avodos* other than this, but all the while that a person has not come to this he will find endless rationalizations, all in accordance with *halachah*, for falling again and again into causing harm to others. This is the work of the *yetzer hara* which is very adept at formulating convincing justifications for wrongful behavior. As the *Chovos Halevavos* teaches, the evil inclination is an expert in all of the Talmud, and he serves a person will ample source material for the worst crimes against his fellow Jews, G-d forbid.

We have no idea what is occurring beneath the surface of times and events. Who knows if this year it is especially auspicious to arouse Hashem’s mercy for the final redemption? Rav Yaakov Koppel taught that in heaven there are “windows” and there are “cracks” [as in *Shir HaShirim*], and there are times when heaven’s windows are thrown wide open so that an abundance of blessing can descend to the world. If a person has any sense, he will push himself forward at that time to enter in the breach so that he can draw down all of the good that awaits him. If, however, he misses the opportunity, then he will be subject to a different sort of heavenly conduct. Hashem’s ways are hidden from us, but certainly there are times when the way to redemption is more open to us if we will only arouse ourselves to take advantage of the time.

The Baal Shem Tov taught that the aspect of the “Crown of Crowns,” which is *Reisha d'lo Isyada'ah*, is called יחד, “one.” When, “the tribes of Yisrael are one,” when a person enters into the state of unity with his fellow Jews by acting with self-sacrifice and struggling against the *sitra achra* and its arguments, that is where he comes into contact with the *Shechinah*. Where the fight is hardest, that is where the *Shechinah* is hidden.

Hashem rules over all, and so if a person will beg Him to illuminate his mind with the truth so that he can fulfill this duty, certainly he will receive help from above—from the hidden worlds called the *Olam HaMalbush*.

In the merit of unity may we come to feel the light of the Torah, which is the unified light of Hashem and His people—to attain the innermost desire of every Jew, which is to become one with the King. The name Yisrael is an acronym of the phrase, “there are six hundred thousand letters of the Torah” [יש ששים רבוא אותיות לתורה].<sup>11</sup> Every single Jewish soul is bound to the Torah’s letters. The name Yeshurun is an acronym of the phrase, “there are six hundred thousand souls” [יש ששים רבוא נפשות]. In the merit of binding ourselves to the souls of all the Jewish people, may we merit to feel the light of all of the letters of the Torah and to see supernatural miracles. Nature, הטבע, has the same *gematria* as the Name אלהים—nature is only a garment that covers over the *Shem HaVaYaH*. May we be redeemed with outright miracles just as we were when we left Egypt, and may we merit to see Hashem’s Kingship revealed, to see “eye to eye” Hashem’s return to Tzion. May we receive a “G-dly eye” to see the good of others, not in a theoretical way but really and truly, to see the G-dliness in others, with the arrival of our righteous redeemer in mercy. Amen.

**Translated and Adapted by Rav Micha Golshevsky.**

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<sup>11</sup> *Me'or Einayim, Vayakhel*

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