

Erev Shabbos Kodesh Parshas Vayishlach 5770

# D'ei Chochmah L'nafshechah

“Let your soul know wisdom”

Parshas Vayishlach

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

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### *Shalosh Seudos<sup>1</sup> of Parshas Vayishlach 5768*

”וַיִּוָּתֵר יַעֲקֹב לְבָדּוֹ וַיִּאָבֵק אִישׁ עִמּוֹ עַד עֲלֹת הַשָּׁחַר. וַיֵּרָא פִּי לֹא יָכַל לוֹ, וַיִּגַע בְּכַף-יָרְכוּ; וַתִּקַּע כַּף-יָרֵךְ יַעֲקֹב בְּהֶאָבֵקוֹ עִמּוֹ.”

“And Yaakov was left alone, and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Yaakov’s thigh was strained as he wrestled with him.”<sup>2</sup>

**Rashi explains:** “‘And Yaakov remained’—he returned to retrieve some small vessels he had forgotten. ‘And there wrestled [וַיִּאָבֵק] a man’—Menachem explains this word means that Yaakov got dusty from the dirt [אֶבֶק] that got kicked up during their struggle. But I think this comes from the Aramaic word that means to bind oneself to another, since this is the way of two people when they fight. They grapple with each other, each attempting to fell his opponent. Our rabbis teach that this was Eisav’s heavenly counterpart, his “angel.”

#### **The *Tzaddik* without Arms and the *Tzaddik* without Feet**

Rebbe Nachman teaches in the “Seven Beggars,” which is the last of his remarkable tales, that there are two different types of *tzaddikim*. The first *tzaddik*

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<sup>1</sup> The lesson was delivered at the third meal of Shabbos.

<sup>2</sup> Bereishis 32:25-26

is “without hands.” [Because of the illusory nature of this world, he appears to be deficient in the attribute that he has actually perfected. This *tzaddik* actually has wondrous spiritual power in his hands.] The task of this *tzaddik* is to heal the princess [the Jewish soul, the *Shechinah*] from the arrows shot at her even after they have already inflicted harmful wounds. This *tzaddik* alludes to Moshiach ben Yosef who embodies the general level of *chayah*. [*Chayah* is equivalent to *Chochmah*; it is the intense vitality and spiritual wakefulness that is the gift of *Chochmah*.] This is the secret of the *Tikkun HaKlali*, the “general remedy” that expresses the fourfold song that will be sung in the ultimate future. This new song is described in the *Tikkunei Zohar* as a “single, double, triple, and quadruple song.”<sup>3</sup>

Rebbe Nachman did not speak at length about the second *tzaddik* “without legs,” but Rav Avraham ben Rav Nachman reveals that the beginning of the story sheds light on his task at the end. In the beginning of the story, we find that the prince fell to heresy. We see that the *tzaddik* without legs is Moshiach ben Dovid whose task will be to cure the King’s son of the ills of apostasy.

These two aspects allude to the two major *klippas* that cause Jewish souls to sin. The first attacks *Yesod* / Foundation and breaches personal purity and is symbolized by serpents. The task of Moshiach ben Yosef is to heal Jewish souls of these blemishes that are known as “snake venom.” He must inject powerful sanctity in us all to counter all such negative effects. The second aspect of Moshiach ben Dovid will rectify blemishes in *Malchus* [accepting Hashem’s

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<sup>3</sup> *Tikkunei Zohar*, pg. 21b. See *Likutei Moharan* II:24 and 92

Kingship], which are the many heresies and negative philosophies that abound. This second evil is stronger than the first and is much harder to heal.

### ***Gid Hanasheh***

The Arizal reveals that when the Eisav's "angel" hit Yaakov in the sciatic nerve during their struggles, he blemished *Netzach* of *Yaakov* (in the right leg) and *Hod* of *Rachel* (in the left leg.) It was possible to accomplish this in a single blow because *Rachel* and *Yaakov* are back-to-back and the right leg of *Yaakov* is aligned with the left leg of *Rachel*.<sup>4</sup> Since the blow to *Netzach* of *Yaakov* is the major damage, we can understand why, according to Rav Yehudah, the prohibition of *gid hanasheh* only applies to the right leg.<sup>5</sup> However, the *halachah* follows the majority opinion of the sage who held that this prohibition applies to both legs since the blemish was also in the *Hod* of *Rachel*.

In truth, the main blemish was in the *Hod* of *Rachel*, as seen in the verse: "וְהוֹדִי נִהְפָּךְ עָלַי לְמַשְׁחִית" — "And my splendor [*Hod*] was transformed upon me into a destroyer."<sup>6</sup> This is also alluded to in the verse, "וְנִתְּנִי שְׂמָמָה, כָּל-הַיּוֹם", — "He has made me desolate, suffering all the day."<sup>7</sup> The Arizal reveals that the word *דְּנָה* comprises the same letters as *הוֹד*.

The *Tikkunei Zohar* teaches that *Netzach* parallels the liver and *Hod* parallels the spleen. Just as in holiness there are masculine and feminine sides,

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<sup>4</sup> When the names of Yaakov, Rachel, and Leah are italicized, they indicate *partzuf*-aspects rather than actual persons. *Yaakov* here indicates a *partzuf* along the right side of the lower levels within *Ze'ir Anpin*, and *Rachel* here indicates the parallel to *Yaakov* on the left side. A *partzuf* is an anthropomorphized representation of an inter-relating group of *sefiros* acting in concert.

<sup>5</sup> *Chulin* 90b

<sup>6</sup> *Daniel* 10:8

<sup>7</sup> *Eichah* 1:13

the same is true within the realm of impurity. As the verse writes, "זָה לְעִמָּת-זָה" "עָשָׂה הָאֱלֹהִים" —"Hashem made one opposite the other."<sup>8</sup> The masculine aspect of evil inhabits the liver, while the feminine inhabits the spleen. Practically, this means that the masculine aspect of evil pushes a person toward defective philosophies and heresy. [Since these aspects must be rejected daily, they represent the liver which neutralizes toxins in the blood. In addition, the liver is located on the right side.] At the same time the feminine aspect continually tries to entice a person to sin in areas of personal purity. [The spleen, located on the left, is a builder of the blood, which is associated with the feminine "which contributes the red in the formation of the child."<sup>9</sup>] Our sages taught that the Jewish nation only worshipped idolatry so that they would have license to engage in illicit relations publicly.<sup>10</sup> [This shows us which sin was the means, and which was the ends.] Likewise, it is precisely when a person is careless of the purity of his mind that he is most challenged by thoughts of heresy. [The lack of inner sanctity is a vacuum that invites the worst sins.]

Every person comprises both aspects of *Rachel* and *Yaakov*. But since the aspect of *Rachel* is the outermost one, it is the most vulnerable.

### ***Olam HaMalbush***

The Arizal taught that the supernal light of Chanukah and Purim rectify both blemishes of the wound of Yaakov through the powers of Moshiach ben Yosef and Moshiach ben Dovid. Hashem gave us these holy days to remove the

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<sup>8</sup> *Koheles* 7:14

<sup>9</sup> *Niddah* 31a

<sup>10</sup> *Sanhedrin* 63b

“snakes and scorpions” that prevent us from entering the palace of the King by poisoning the *Hod* of the princess and the *Netzach* of the prince.

Since Moshiach ben Dovid is an aspect of *yechidah* which corresponds to *Atik* and *Arich Anpin*, he reveals how to do the *yichudim*, holy unifications, through which one is unified with his Creator.

When Hashem created the world, He first imbued the letters of the Hebrew alphabet with His infinite light. In this manner, the twenty-two letters became a kind of *tallis* or enfolding garment that holds the light of Hashem. At first, Hashem set the letters in their proper order. *Alef* was first, then *beis*, and so on, until the final *taf*. But then Hashem created what is known as *Olam HaMalbush*. To do this, He “folded the garment,” as it were. This caused the first eleven letters [from *alef* until *chaf*] to stand next to each corresponding letter of the remaining eleven [from *lamed* until *taf*]. This arrangement of *alef beis* was: א-ב, ב-ג, ג-ד, ד-ה, ה-ו, ו-ז, ז-ח, ח-ט, ט-י, י-כ, כ-ל, etc.

Below the *Olam HaMalbush*, He formed the worlds discussed in *Eitz Chaim: Adam Kadmon, Atzilus, Beriyah, Yetzirah, and Asiyah*. But the soul of Moshiach comes from the higher realm of the *Olam HaMalbush*, which is the source of the level of *yechidah*.

The final two sets of the letters of *Olam HaMalbush* represent the souls of the Jewish people at their source within the root-level of *Atik*. These two pairs are ו-י and כ-ת. [The general rule is that the initial letter of a holy concept serves as its root and source. For example, the letter *beis* is the source for the entire Torah, which begins with the *beis* of *Bereishis*.] The source letters for the pair י-ו are the two letters that “head” each of the two lines: א-ב. [Since ו-י receives

from the aspect of ל-א at all times, we may certainly say that in a way] י-ט climbs to its source in an aspect of *ohr chozer*, or returning light. The final set of ת-כ represents the holy oil used in the sanctuary that was כתיית למאור, crushed from the olives for the purpose of generating light. This is the source of *Arich*. As we shall presently see, both of these aspects represent the two major paths to unifying Hashem.<sup>11</sup>

### **The Avodah of “Running and Returning”**

The main *avodah* of the *tzaddik* is constant contemplation of the absolute unity of Hashem to such an extent that even while he is with other people it is as if he is always alone with Him. This is how he fulfills the verse, “*Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad.*” For him, Hashem is always One, and he is always at one with Him. Like the *Avos*, he never ceases thinking about Hashem.

When the *tzaddik* ascends to unify Hashem within his innermost self, he enters the aspect of *Arich* and *Atik*. *Arich* is associated with אִי, nothingness or complete self-nullification. *Atik* is the aspect of אִנִּי, which literally means “I.” Although this word has the same letters as אִי, since it is sourced in the nothingness of *Arich*, *Atik* is much higher. [The “I” here means that he has joined Hashem to such an extent that he only experiences Hashem’s overwhelming and absolute Self, the one and only “I.”]

First one enters *Arich*, which is the *avodah* of “running.”<sup>12</sup> At this level, one feels that he is absolutely nothing compared with the infinite Creator. Even

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<sup>11</sup> See the Ramah MiPano’s *Yonas Eilam*, chapter 1.

<sup>12</sup> *Yechezkel* 1:14



the ten *sefiros* [which represent the actions through which Hashem reveals Himself in the world] are nothing compared with His essence.

Through this contemplation, the *tzaddik* becomes so completely nullified to Hashem that he accepts being “crushed to generate light.” This signifies that he is willing to exhibit immense self-sacrifice to attain the light of serving his Creator. Through this self-sacrifice he ascends to the aspect of “returning.” He no longer needs to struggle, since he truly returns to his Source. He feels the intense pleasure of, "אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם"—“I am Hashem, your G-d”—that is afforded to those who are totally subsumed in the Primal Cause. This can only be attained through self-sacrifice, since one must completely overcome his ego.

On this level, he feels the bliss of a deep connection to Hashem associated with *ש*, since on this level we ascend to Hashem in the aspect of the *ל-א* root letters. [The Name *ל-א* is connected with *Chessed* and pleasure: *חֶסֶד*—“The *chessed* of *E-L* all the day.”<sup>13</sup>]

### **The Avodah of Chanukah: Moshiach ben Yosef**

On Chanukah our task is to gaze at the candles and contemplate that the entire creation is from Hashem, since nothing exists but Him.<sup>14</sup> We must think about this deeply until we are filled with a powerful yearning to serve Hashem through “running and returning.”

We must remember that the candles are ideally lit with olive oil that has been “crushed to give light.” This means experiencing the passionate subsuming of the self within the absoluteness of Hashem so that one becomes willing to

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<sup>13</sup> *Tehillim* 52:3

<sup>14</sup> *Devarim* 4:35

sacrifice himself to serve Hashem with holy fire. At the same time, we must ascend and be included with the Primal Cause and feel the pleasure of connection with Him.

One who follows this path will stop falling prey to his physical desires, since what is really drawing a person to indulge is the G-dliness that is trapped within physical reality. The moment that *tzaddikim* feel drawn to partake of an unnecessary physical pleasure, they transform the impulse into a vessel that receives the light of Hashem. Through self-sacrifice, they merit the deep pleasure of oneness with Hashem. And the more material and lowly the craving, the stronger the vessel forged by rejecting it with self-sacrifice. The more that evil tries to entice a person and prevent him from ascending on high, the more his fiery yearning makes a *ner tamid*, an eternal flame, that embodies both nullification of the self and taking pleasure in the Creator.

### **The Level of Yaakov and Yisrael**

Both of these levels are associated with Moshiach Ben Yosef, the level of *chayah* within *yechidah* [*Chochmah* of *Kesser*].<sup>15</sup> This level alludes to the *tzaddik* without hands, which is the *avodah* of Chanukah. They also correspond to Yaakov and Yisrael.

Yaakov struggles with Eisav. This represents the self-sacrifice of being “crushed to generate light” through which one fights off illicit desire. Through this self-sacrifice one attains the aspect of ישראל, which spells לי ראש—“I have a

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<sup>15</sup> *Bris Menuchah*

head.” This alludes to ascending on high and attaining the aspect of יא, the all-consuming “I” of the Creator.

The Rokeach explains that Hashem revealed Himself to Moshe in a burning bush for a very particular reason. It is meant to teach us that Hashem reveals Himself to every *tzaddik* through fire. But first one must contemplate the Divine Names through the vehicle of his intellect, which is an aspect of Leah. After that, one must also connect to Hashem through the *yichudim* of Rachel, through fiery self-sacrifice [associated with Yosef, her son]. In this manner, he combines the “white fire” with the “black fire” and burns away the snakes of illicit desire.

**Purim: The *Avodah* of Moshiach ben Yosef**

But this is not enough, since one must still deal with the scorpions of heresy. Although the *tzaddik* is certainly distant from even a slightly heretical thought, the heresy among the general populace prevents him from completing the *tikkun*. This is because all Jews really share a single collective soul. In other words, the blemish of heresy deprives the *tzaddik* of the spiritual feet he needs to ascend and complete his task in this world. On a deeper level, the 42-Name is not rectified, so the *avodah* lacks completion. [The 42-Name is made up of three expressions of the יד or Divine Hand which have a combined *gematria* of 42, since it represents “lifting up” our *avodah*.]

In order to rectify this, Hashem gave us the holiday of Purim, which completes what we began on Chanukah. And it follows that the light of Purim begins from Chanukah, since one completes the other.

The *tzaddik* needs to ascend to three stages while he contemplates the Divine Names. First he needs to ascend to the level of self-sacrifice. Through this he rectifies the broken and darkened vessels, and transforms the dark fire into white. The second stage is to be a *ner tamid* and feel the delight in Hashem that results from self-sacrifice. One who partakes of this spiritual pleasure is forgiven every sin, since he has attained the *Tikkun HaKlali*. The third stage is grasping the level of *Sippurei Ma'asios*, the deeply inspiring stories from “ancient days” that have never yet been revealed. This is the level of the “multiplying mirrors” of the righteous women embodied in Esther HaTzaddekes. Although the main *tikkun* is achieved through Mordechai HaTzaddik who is the extension of Moshiach ben Yosef, the completion is through Moshiach ben Dovid, the spiritual kin of Esther HaMalkah.

### **Yaakov, Yisrael, and Yeshurun**

The *avodah* of Purim is to dance and uplift *Malchus* which is associated with the feet and nullify all idolatry and heresy. This is relevant to all of us since *mitzvos* do not ascend unless they are performed with real focus. We see this in the Baal Shem Tov's teaching on the verse, "וְסַרְתֶּם, וְעַבַּדְתֶּם אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים"—“And you turn aside, and you worship foreign gods...”<sup>16</sup> [As soon as a person “turns away” from Hashem, he is already in the state of idolatry.] But when we dance on Purim, we rectify our feet which embody *Malchus*, and activate the 42-Name that lifts up our *mitzvos* and enables them to rise to the proper spiritual

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<sup>16</sup> Devarim 11:16

place. In this manner one rectifies the main blemish of the *gid hanasheh* which is in the realm of *Netzach*.

After we attain the aspect of Yaakov by fighting for holiness with self-sacrifice, we rectify the world of *Yetzirah* and the aspect of Yisrael by being one with Hashem through the struggles in an aspect of *Beriyah*. Then we must rise to the level of the third name of Yaakov, which is Yeshurun.<sup>17</sup>

The word *ישׂרן* is an acronym of *גַּשׁ שֵׁשִׁים רְבּוּא נַפְשׁוֹת*, “there are six hundred thousand [Jewish] souls,” which corresponds to the world of *Asiyah*. This alludes to the level of the *tzaddikim* who rectify the aspect of *Malchus-emunah* through the power of Dovid HaMelech, the *tzaddik* “without legs.” [Although this level seems to be lower, it requires a *tikkun* at a much higher level to be able to descend and rectify the lowest levels of all, because that is where the challenge is most difficult.]

The first step is to draw down the light of Chanukah and rectify the level of *Yetzirah*. Without accessing this, even the Divine Names will not inspire us. This is indicated by the statement of our sages that Rabbi Meir could learn from *Acher* since he related to his teacher like a *rimon*, a pomegranate, where one eats the seeds and discards the shell.<sup>18</sup> The Arizal teaches that this indicates that Rabbi Meir “ate” the middle of *רמון*—namely, the *טיט* that sits in the middle of the name of the angel *מַטְטְרוֹן*. This is the “middle of the *rimon*,” since the outer letters of *Metatron* represent the world of *Asiyah* that is overseen by an angel know as *נוריאל*, which has the same numerical value as *רמון* with the *kollel* added

<sup>17</sup> *Sefer Razah D'meheimenusa* pg. 41

<sup>18</sup> *Chagigah* 15b

[297].<sup>19</sup> This teaches that the main thing is *Yetzirah* which is rectified on Chanukah, since without this we cannot possibly rectify the aspect of *Asiyah* through Yeshurun accessed on Purim.

### **The Key of the Baal HaTanya**

It is well known that the Baal HaTanya revealed that when his soul descended to this world he removed one key from the other side, but evil kept a key to itself too. The key he took is the secret of the *yichud*; the Baal HaTanya speaks at great length and reveals how to attain *yichud* and *emunah*. He teaches us not to be satisfied with a mere intellectual *yichud* in an aspect of Leah. We must feel the bliss of connection to the Primal Cause in the manner of the *yichud* of Rachel. The Baal HaTanya spread his great light even more powerfully after he was released from prison on the nineteenth of Kislev, since his release proved that the accusing angels were finally silenced in their petition against Chassidism. This is the great light of Moshiach that shines during Chanukah through the *yichud* experienced by all those who contemplate its lights.

The second key that has not yet been taken from the other side is the aspect of Purim. However, in the merit of the lights of Chanukah, this illumination is slowly being revealed, bit by bit. The more we contemplate the menorah and attain unity with Hashem, the more the light is revealed in the world of *Asiyah* as well, since Chanukah and Purim complete one another. Regarding Chanukah the verse states, "עָרַכְתִּי נֵר לְמִשְׁיחָי"—“I have set up a lamp

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<sup>19</sup> *Sefer Halikutim, Parshas Eikev*

for My anointed.”<sup>20</sup> [The word *meshichi* can also be read as *meshichai*, plural.] This refers to both Moshiach ben Yosef and Moshiach ben Dovid. As we see from the *Zohar* regarding the verse, “וַיִּגַּשׁ אֵלָיו יְהוֹדָה” —“And Yehudah approached him”<sup>21</sup>—the worlds of Moshiach ben Yosef and Moshiach ben Dovid were drawn together and included in one another until they were an absolute unity.<sup>22</sup>

This is also the secret of why the festive meals of Chanukah are voluntary: רשות. The word *reshus* has the same numerical value as the first letters of the last stanza of the אָנָּה בָּכָה prayer that we recite when we light the candles: שְׁקוּצֵיִת [906]. This indicates that we must beseech Hashem during Chanukah to draw down the light of the festive meal of Purim into what we eat on Chanukah so that we can rectify the “feet” and complete the labor that Hashem wants done in this physical world.

This is why Yaakov was the one to establish the evening prayer.<sup>23</sup> As is well known, the evening prayer is not obligatory—it is a רשות.<sup>24</sup> The Arizal explains that it is specifically during the *Shema* of *Maariv* that we bind ourselves to the souls of the *tzaddikim*. Rav Uri of Strelisk reveals that *Maariv* is the most valuable prayer since it is with this prayer that we rectify the darkness of exile which is compared to the night.

When the *tzaddik* says *Shema*, he has three intentions: to focus on the Divine Names with self-sacrifice in an aspect of *Arich*; to ascend as one with

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<sup>20</sup> *Tehillim* 132:17

<sup>21</sup> *Bereishis* 44:18

<sup>22</sup> *Zohar* I:206

<sup>23</sup> *Berachos* 26b

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 4b

Hashem through self-sacrifice in an aspect of Chanukah; and to bind himself to the souls of the *tzaddikim* in an aspect of Purim. Through this final *yichud*, he rectifies the world of *Asiyah* since he connects to the *tzaddik* without feet.

We must understand that binding ourselves to the *tzaddikim* is a very deep *avodah*. Yet one who comes to purify himself will be granted heavenly aid through the souls of the righteous. Although the Arizal revealed many *yichudim*, the Baal Shem Tov and the Baal HaTanya explained the secret of the *yichud* at great length. The *Likutei Moharan* then began to reveal the deep secrets of binding ourselves to the souls of the *tzaddikim*.

#### **“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.”<sup>25</sup> On Chanukah we must bind ourselves to the aspect of *Chochmah*, the light of Moshiach ben Yosef. We do this through the thirty-six lights of Chanukah that are a fulfillment of the verse: “אל ה' נִצָּאֵר-לָנוּ” —“Hashem is G-d, and He will illuminate for us.”<sup>26</sup> The word לנו has a numerical value of 86, which is the same as אלקים. The light of Chanukah must bring us to contemplate the light of Hashem. We must continue to ascend until we fulfill: “And it will be a crown to your head”—we will bind ourselves to the righteous who are the unique lights of the generation, who embody the *shamash*. This is alluded to in the verse, “שָׂרָפִים עֹמְדִים מִמַּעַל לִי” —“Fiery angels stand above

<sup>25</sup> From the *Shabbos zemer* “D’ror Yikrah,” based on *Mishlei* 24:14.

<sup>26</sup> *Tehillim* 118:27



Him...”<sup>27</sup> The word לו alludes to the thirty-six candles of Chanukah, which is how we begin to draw down the light of Hashem to the world of *Asiyah*. Through their light we will merit to, “guard Your holy *mitvos*, protect Your holy Shabbos.” This means that we will feel the light imbued in the thirty-six tractates of *Shas* [which are the corpus of all the *mitzvos*] through the light of the holy Shabbos. Although we feel so far from being able to attain these levels, we must never believe that they are beyond us completely. As Hashem promised: כִּי אֲנִי “For I Hashem do not change; and you, children of Yaakov, are not consumed.”<sup>28</sup>

May Hashem help us to bind ourselves to the Baal Shem Tov and his students and to follow their path, since only this will bring the ultimate redemption. This will happen when we meditate and focus on the menorah like the *kohein gadol* did when he took the olive oil that was “crushed to generate light” and fuel the constant flame of *dveikus*. May Hashem help us to contemplate the light of the menorah, the light of *yichud*, and to draw down this illumination to the space below ten *tefachim* until we merit to see the arrival of our righteous redeemer in mercy, speedily and in our days. Amen.

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

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<sup>27</sup> *Yeshayah* 6:2

<sup>28</sup> *Malachi* 3:6

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