

Erev Shabbos Kodesh Parshas Matos Masai 5770

D'ei Chochmah L'nafshechah

“Let your soul know wisdom”

Parshas Matos Masai

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

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Shalosh Seudos¹ of Parshas Matos-Masai 5768

”וּמִקְנֵה רֶבֶב הָיָה לְבְנֵי רְאוּבֵן וְלְבְנֵי גָד עֲצוּם מְאֹד, וַיִּרְאוּ אֶת אֶרֶץ יַעֲזֵר וְאֶת אֶרֶץ גִּלְעָד וְהִנֵּה
הַמָּקוֹם מְקוּם מִקְנֵה.”

“The children of Reuven and the children of Gad had a very great multitude of cattle, and when they saw the land of Yazer and the land of Gilad, that the place was a place for cattle...”²

The Two Channels in the Letter Tzaddik

We must first make an attempt to understand why the tribes of Reuven, Gad, and half of the tribe of Menashe did not want to cross into Eretz Yisrael to settle. The nature of each of these tribes is to arouse the redemption. For example, Eliyahu HaNavi is from the tribe of Gad, and he is the harbinger of the *geulah*. Reuven was the one to save Yosef HaTzaddik [whose descendent Moshiach ben Yosef is essential to the unfolding of the redemption]. And this was also true of Menashe [the son of Yosef]. This is why the verse says that they had a *מקנה רב*, a “great multitude of cattle”—they had a great *קנין* or holding in Moshe Rabbeinu, who was the aspect of *רב*, the great leader. They wanted to remain in his vicinity, and since they knew he would not be entering the land they wanted to stay with him outside.³

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

² *Bamidbar* 32:1

³ See *Likutei Moharan* I:104. There, Rebbe Nachman explains the Midrash that Moshe Rabbeinu was punished for harshly rebuking the tribes that did not want to enter the land by having his own descendant make use of an idolatrous icon. Based on the Talmudic dicta that one who falsely accuses another is punished in the same vein, and that one who dwells outside the land is considered to be without a G-d, Moshe Rabbeinu was punished for accusing the tribes of not wanting the land because they wanted to be “without a G-d.” The accusation was false, for they did indeed want to take a share in the land, and so he was punished “in the same vein.”

The Arizal explains that these tribes parallel the two channels that run from *Da'as* to *Yesod* which are symbolized by the letter *tzaddik*. One pipeline is for holy wine and the other is for *yayin nesach*, unkosher wine used for idolatrous libation.⁴ The Ramak teaches further, “Regarding the prohibition against the use of *yayin nesach*, we find in the work *Ta'amei HaMitzvos* of the author of the *Ben Parchi* that there are two apertures in the ‘covenant above;’ through the first, the flow of abundance that is known as sweet waters descends to the *Shechinah* and it is the source of numerous Torah teachings that are likened to water, for ‘there is no water but Torah.’ The second aperture gives out its flow to the forces of impurity, and it is called *yayin nesach*.”⁵

All of this has a veiled relevance to the two and a half tribes who chose not to enter the land, because each of them also were rooted in some lack in the flow of *Da'as* to the *tzaddik*. Even though Yaakov Avinu did every single thing in this world in a state of *dveikus*, nevertheless there are times when the *tzaddik* can act with some minor lack of *kavanah* unintentionally. For example, Lavan managed to hoodwink Yaakov and from that inadvertent relationship with Leah, Reuven was born. Similarly, the sages taught that Gad was born to Zilpah against Yaakov’s will, so to speak. This is also a manifestation of a lack of *Da'as*. This is why Gad’s name lacks the *alef*, as seen in the verse of his naming, גַּד אֶבְרָם—גַּד, which indicates both a betrayal and the fact of Gad’s arrival.⁶ The same lack of *Da'as* was also active in the formation of Menashe, since he was the child of Yosef HaTzaddik and Osnas the daughter of Dina. Osnas was the child of Dina’s abduction by Shechem, and the impure part of him that formed her was handed down to the first child of her union with Yosef, Menashe.⁷

Obscurity is a Vessel for Rectification

A fundamental principle of Divine service is that every lack or flaw only exists for some ultimate good. This is of course true of the period of *Bein Hameitzarim*;

⁴ *Sefer Halikutim, Parshas Matos*

⁵ *Pardes Rimonim* 7:4

⁶ *Bereishis* 30:9-11

⁷ *Sefer Halikutim, Parshas Matos*

although it is certainly a time of darkness, nevertheless all obscuring of Hashem's presence is only a vessel for the future revelation of light and rectification.

The main task of the *tzaddik* is the work of Eretz Yisrael, whose nature is *dveikus*. As the verse says, "Eye to eye, they will see Hashem's return to Tzion." The redemption is contingent on studying Torah properly, in a state of *dveikus* and focus on Hashem. All the while that a person learns but forgets about Hashem, he is caught in the trap and conditions of exile. Conversely, the more we are able to infuse every letter of Torah study with *dveikus*, the sooner the redemption will arrive. This focus is the envisioning of *Elokus*, and this is what is meant by seeing, "eye to eye." When we see "eye to eye," we will bring about, "Hashem's return to Tzion."

Rav Aharon of Strashuleh taught that the *geulah* depends on stripping away the garments that cover the Torah—meaning, that we should study Torah purely for the sake of heaven. This is what it means to really enter Eretz Yisrael, to enter into *emunah*. Each and every letter of the Torah is like a limb of the *Shechinah*, and the *tzaddik* binds himself to every single one of them because each one has the holiness of the land, the sanctity of the limbs of *Malchus*. The *tzaddik* recognizes how every letter hints to the pathways of Eretz Yisrael, to the pathways of *emunah*, and they become the roads that he takes to ascend to a state of *yichud*. Even though the *yichud* is a pure and simple light, nevertheless it has to be renewed from moment to moment. This is the real meaning of serving Hashem; to unify Hashem always, and to always do it with freshness and newness through every new word of Torah which are always revealing something new of *emunah* and G-dliness.

Even if the *tzaddik* is in a place of obscurity where he cannot actually see that every word speaks of *emunah*, nevertheless he believes completely that each word is *Elokus*. In the merit of his belief, Hashem opens his eyes so that he can see how to attain *dveikus* with every single word. The level he reaches is not that of the lower *yichud*, but he even rises to apprehend the King directly, as it were. As he learns, it is as though he is standing before the King and He is speaking to him directly—his Torah study uplifts

him to the level of the Divine chariot so that he gains an experience of G-dliness itself and enters into Eretz Yisrael.

All the while that a person learns superficially, he is like the two and a half tribes who remained outside the land. The Torah's power is great even if it is not studied for its own sake, just as the tribes were great, yet such study cannot compare with Torah *lishmah*. One should not be satisfied with studying superficially, one must constantly yearn for the redemption of the Jewish people. The Rambam taught that anyone who does not anticipate Moshiach has no portion in the G-d of the Jewish people, and so our task is to reveal that we do indeed have a portion in Him. We must start at whatever level of *lishmah* that we can even if we cannot sustain it all day long, and work upward from there. We must do what we can to remember that there is nothing but Hashem.

It is essential to bind ourselves to the *tzaddikim* who do reach the level of Eretz Yisrael when they study, since this level is really a powerful force at work within all of our souls. The verse says: "וְלָמָּה תִּנְיָאוֹן אֶת לֵב בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵעֵבֶר אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לָהֶם ה'—“And why will you turn away [תניאון] the heart of the children of Yisrael from going over into the land which Hashem has given them?”⁸ The word תניאון contains the letters תניא, which means to learn. The force of Torah *lishmah*, of תניא, is powerful or איתן within our souls, and when we are disconnected from it the innermost point of our soul is starved.

This is really what we need to cry over in our exile—the *galus* of the *Shechinah*, the worst of which is that people study Torah without connecting to its holiness and the G-dliness inherent in it. In contrast, those who do make the effort merit will rejoice with the *Shechinah* immediately. “Eye to eye, they will see Hashem's return to Tzion.” When that happens, “Your Teacher will not hide Himself any more”—you will merit to see the King Himself when you leave this world.⁹

The main building of the *Beis Hamikdash* is the building of one's *Da'as*, to attain the masculine aspect of *Da'as* during Torah study and prayer, rather than just the

⁸ *Devarim* 32:7

⁹ *Yeshayah* 30:20; *Sotah* 49a

feminine aspect. This means remembering at all times that Hashem created us for a particular purpose which is *dveikus*. When one learns Torah in this way, one afterward merits to pray with complete abandonment of the physical. And as one rises from level to level in learning, his prayers rise in accordance.

Seeing What is Missing

The Arizal finds an allusion to the names of the tribes that did not enter the land in the words מְגֵרָעוֹת נָתַן—“He made abatements [surrounding the *Beis Hamikdash*].”¹⁰ The beginning of the word מְגֵרָעוֹת forms an acronym of the names גַּד, רְאוּבֵן, מְנַשֶּׁה, who remained outside, “surrounding.” Sometimes a person suffers from a גְּרָעוֹן, a flaw, and he doesn’t even know that it plagues him. He doesn’t learn Torah *lishmah* and despairs of every achieving any state of *dveikus*. This, then, is his *avodah*: to recognize his flaws and repair them. One should not pay attention to the failings of others, G-d forbid, but should turn his gaze toward himself during the days of *Bein Hameitzarim* and ask, “When have I ever made a move to further the honor of the *Shechinah*, for the glory of the *Beis Hamikdash*?” If a person finds that he has no feeling for the *Shechinah*, then he must at least make a reckoning with himself, to force himself to be pained over the suffering of the *Shechinah*. “Did I sit and say *tikkun chatzos* at mid-day every day [during the three weeks]?”

Without the *Shechinah*, one cannot attain any level whatsoever because the *Shechinah* comprises all of the worlds and all of the levels that are attained through every form of *avodah* that exists. The pinnacle of all of them is the essence of the *Shechinah*, which is *emunah* and *dveikus*, and they open his eyes to Hashem’s light. To come to this, one must be willing to leave the level of *yayin nesach*, the superficial way of learning, and work extremely hard toward Torah *lishmah* on whatever level he can. He must sit and focus a few minutes before beginning learning and determine that he is about to study Torah *lishmah* in the way of the Baal Shem Tov, who received it from

¹⁰ *Melachim* I:6:6

teacher to student doing all the way back to Moshe Rabbeinu. This is the path that leads to the *geulah*.

Another way to understand מגרעות נתן is that when a person takes account of his failings and wants to right them, he will find that like the three tribes who remained outside the land, he “has acquired much”—has a holding in the aspect of רב, which is Moshe Rabbeinu. Rav Tzaddok HaKohen of Lublin explained that these tribes acted with self-sacrifice so that the light of מגרעות נתן could shine outside of Eretz Yisrael, that Torah can be revealed even when a person is living without complete *Da'as*, in the aspect of *yayin nesach*, as if he were a non-Jew, G-d forbid. Because when a person is living on the surface, it is as if he isn't really living at all. As the Baal Shem Tov taught, “And you shall turn aside and serve other gods”—the moment a person turns the least bit away from *dveikus* in Hashem, it is as though he is already serving idolatry. Yet if we will only regret this and change, we will certainly be able to repair all of our sins. As the *Zohar* teaches, the Torah itself shines thoughts of repentance upon a person.

Torah and Prayer

The Torah is filled with a holy fire, and when a person commits to study it *lishmah*, its fire enters into him and burns out all of the negative inside of him, all of the *klippos*, and repairs all of his sins from all of his prior incarnations. So, at the outset, one must take care to honor the Torah properly, and show the proper degree of respect for the *Shechinah* which is one with the Torah and which insists on receiving her due. If a person doesn't really believe in the greatness of Torah *lishmah*, the Torah withholds herself from him. He never penetrates her soul, and can mistake her for just some other form of wisdom, G-d forbid. This is what it means when we say that the *Shechinah* is in the dust—her significance is not recognized. To hasten the redemption, one must accord the *Shechinah* the importance that is hers, and every single person must believe that the redemption depends on him, on the degree to which he tries to study *lishmah* like the *tzaddikim*.

If a person who studies Torah not *lishmah* is outside the aspect of Eretz Yisrael and it is, “as though he has no G-d,” at the very least he needs to recognize this and feel inspired to do *teshuvah*. His failing has to serve as a vessel for rectification and redemption. This is why the Baal Shem Tov teaches that it is only “as though” he has no G-d, because he only imagines that this is so. It isn’t really true, though. He certainly has a G-d, but it hurts him that he feels so far away from Him. And it is important that it hurts, and it really needs to hurt in a genuine and deep way, not superficially. He needs to ask himself how he could have forgotten about eating with proper focus and holiness, and he needs to realize that it is all because he is not learning Torah *lishmah*, because pure Torah has the power to sanctify a person in every way and release him from all of his sins and flaws.

The Baal HaTanya explains that the deeper meaning of the sages’ statement that failure to study Torah is worse than any other sin. It means that he is not learning for Hashem’s honor, he is not learning with *dveikus*. Seen in that light, we can better understand the prayer, “May the *Beis Hamikdash* be built speedily in our days, and give us our portion in Your Torah.” The juxtaposition of the two is because Torah *lishmah* and the *Beis Hamikdash* [and its *dveikus*] are one and the same. And is it any wonder that nowadays, when people’s minds are so unfocused and they fail to think of Hashem at all while learning, that we find such terrible *yeridos* are not unusual? But if we begin with the basics—faith that every single word of Torah is *Elokus*—we will find ourselves rising from level until we do indeed merit to, “gaze upon Hashem’s countenance.”

Dovid HaMelech said, “My heart said to You [ךָ]...”¹¹ Rebbe Nachman quotes Rashi’s comment there, “to You” can also mean, “for You, on Your behalf.”¹² If a person wants to do a real *hisbodedus*, he must stand before Hashem believing fully that every word he says is from Hashem, that he is Hashem’s emissary. To come to this, one must begin by working at learning Torah *lishmah*, because it is certain that a person who learns Torah superficially will not come anywhere near to pouring his heart out

¹¹ *Tehillim* 27:8

¹² *Likutei Moharan* I:138

spontaneously before Hashem. But with both Torah and prayer infused with *dveikus*, one merits [the influence of] the upper three *sefiros* of *Atik*, whose “breath” is completely infused with *dveikus*. One merits to make *yichudim* at the level of the Divine chariot, to really feel that everything is G-dliness. This is the meaning of *Chashmal: mal* [“speaking”] indicates *ma’aseh merkavah*, and *chash* [“quiet”] indicates *ma’aseh bereishis*.

One must feel a *chiddush* in prayer just as one finds a *chiddush* in Torah, and the *tzaddikim* said that when a person merits to speak fresh words of prayer before Hashem it is a sign that his prayers are accepted on high. But to be able to pray spontaneously before Hashem, one needs purity of heart—how do we purify it? “Every thing that went in fire must pass through fire.” The fire of enthusiasm purifies the heart so that one can compose his own prayer with freshness. Rebbe Nachman of Breslov teaches further that such words are a manifestation of *ruach hakodesh*, and this is the basis of the entire book of *Tehillim*.¹³

One must yearn for these levels, and feel pained for not having reached them. And one must yearn that the Torah should be like fire within him, because, “Everything that was in fire [and became impure] should be passed through fire [to purify it].”¹⁴ As the Baal Shem Tov taught, all of the fiery sounds of *Matan Torah* can still be heard, and every person must sanctify himself so that he can catch them. Every little bit of learning must be in the fire of the *dveikus* of *Matan Torah* so that we can come to be, “directly before [נכח] the face of Hashem.” The word נכח is equal to three times the value of the *Shem HaVaYaH* [78 = יהו"ה x 3]; one must see three permutations of the *Shem HaVaYaH* before him at all times and eventually he will be able to really see that everything is *Elokus*—and this is the purpose of creation and the beginning of the redemption.

¹³ Ibid., I:156

¹⁴ *Bamidbar* 31:26

The Oath of the Exile

Through all of this we will merit to undo the oath that binds us to the exile, as the *Zohar* explains. [These are the “three oaths” in *Shir Hashirim*, as explained at the end of *Kesuvos*.] The Torah teaches that the sage, the bearer of *Chochmah*, has the power to annul a vow, and this is because the vow itself is on the level of *Binah*. We begin the fast of Yom HaKippurim with the annulment of vows in *Kol Nidrei*; this is a manifestation of the light of *Chochmah*. The exile [גולה] and the redemption [גאולה] stem from the same root—it is only that we are bound in exile because *Chochmah* manifest in completed *Da'as* represented by the *alef* [which means to teach] is absent. Yet this is repaired by anyone who seeks *Da'as* and *dveikus*, who believes that the Torah is Divine and that the Torah that he learns is the same that was given at Sinai, who feels that Hashem has planted eternal life in him now and has been chosen right now from all the nations to receive Torah as a gift from the heavens. And this is why there were many *tzaddikim* who exhorted their followers to spend time every day studying the words of the *Zohar* regarding the greatness of the Torah, or who learned section 47 in the *Bach* that discusses the blessings of the Torah time after time—to awaken their hearts to the holiness of the Torah.

The Blessings of the Torah

The destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash* was because of the Jewish people's failure to appreciate the greatness of the Torah. This was demonstrated by the fact that they did not make the blessing over the Torah before they learned. And we can also fall into this error today by not having sufficient faith in the Torah's ability to help us reach the redemption. And so the very beginning is to develop total *emunah* in the greatness and the holy power of the Torah itself, and this will empower one to devote more and more time to Torah *lishmah* so that all of the levels described above can be reached.

May Hashem have pity on His people, for in this exile we are so terribly far from Him in every possible way. Even so, in His great mercy He has given us the holy Torah and made the true *tzaddikim* known to us, and they have revealed the Torah's

greatness to inspire us to begin now on the work of Torah *lishmah*. If we will only do so, He will certainly shine His holy Name upon us and the essence of the Torah which is His Name will destroy every impure force and husk that surrounds us. And then we will immediately see Your salvation with our own eyes and rejoice over it, and merit the rebuilding of the *Beis Hamikdash* descending from the heavens.

Although the *Yerushalmi* mentions that the Jewish people will have to build the *Beis Hamikdash* before Moshiach arrives, the Rambam decides that Moshiach will do it himself. Rashi and Tosafos say that it will descend from heaven in fire. In truth, all of these approaches are compatible, because the Jewish people will take the dry letters that are like stones, and they will make them into stones of fire. In the merit of this fiery Torah *lishmah*, we will merit to have the *Beis Hamikdash* rebuilt for us in fire, in the fiery knowledge that everything is G-dliness. And this is all the more true of those who learn matters relating to the *Beis Hamikdash* itself, which causes Hashem great pleasure on high.

“Let Your Soul Know Wisdom”

This is the meaning of the phrase, "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.”¹⁵ When a person learns the words of Torah which are *Chochmah*, he must commit to studying *lishmah*, for the sake of seeing that all of the level of *nefesh*, all of *ma'aseh bereishis*, is only *Elokus*. Then, “it will be a crown to your head.” Then, he will actually merit the *ma'aseh merkavah*, to see that it is really *Elokus*, to feel that he is standing before Hashem as he learns and prays. He makes the effort in whatever way he can—this is the *yichud* that is known as *neshikin*, “kissing,” because it is small and incomplete—yet it will bring him to the greater *yichud* that is the level of *Kesser*. “Guard your holy *mitzvos*”—through this, we will come to true *teshuvah* and the final redemption which is, “the day that is entirely Shabbos. “Guard your holy Shabbos”—

¹⁵ From the *Shabbos zemer* “*D'ror Yikrah*,” based on *Mishlei* 24:14.

Torah with *dveikus* will draw down the light of the *geulah* which is the light of the Shabbos itself, may it happen immediately with the arrival of our righteous redeemer in mercy. Amen.

Translated and Adapted by Rav Micha Golshevsky.