

Erev Shabbos Kodesh Parshas Mikeitz 5770

D'ei Chochmah L'nafshechah

“Let your soul know wisdom”

Parshas Mikeitz

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

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Shalosh Seudos¹ of Parshas Mikeitz 5768

”וַיְהִי מִקֵּץ שְׁנַתִּים יָמִים וּפְרָעָה חָלַם וְהָיָה עֹמֵד עַל-הַיָּאֵר.”

**“And it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed:
and, behold, he stood by the river.”²**

Desire and Pleasure within the Soul

Every person has two spiritual strengths: his *ratzon* or desire, and his capacity for experiencing *ta'anug* or pleasure. In the deeper works these two correlate to the respective levels of *Arich Anpin* and *Atik*. On the surface it appears as though *ratzon* is a more powerful force. If a person has a very powerful desire for a level in holiness and holds onto it despite many obstacles, he will surely win through and attain what he desires. Through his longing he will overcome all distractions and desires that originate in the physical world and avoid ensnarement in its traps. He will slowly ascend the spiritual ladder of closeness to Hashem and get exactly what he yearned for.

The reason why holy desire is so powerful is because the will of every Jew is sourced in Hashem's desire to create the world. When a Jew strengthens himself with holy longing he is able to overcome the evil that seeks to destroy him [physically and spiritually]. Even when things are difficult this person will

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

² *Bereishis* 41:1

constantly say to himself, “I want to serve Hashem!” He will petition Hashem for help since his true desire is to be good, and he will always do his utmost to overcome all temptations. Even though at first he will fall, if he is persistent in reigniting his holy longing, in time he will overcome the temptation of physical indulgence.

The Spiritual Source of *Ratzon* and *Ta'anug*

We must examine how it is that holy *ratzon*, which is rooted in *Arich Anpin*, can outweigh the strength of pleasure which stems from the seven lower *sefiros* of *Atik* which are the inner life-force of *Arich*? The answer is that when one continuously works on *ratzon* he accesses the upper three *mochin* of *Atik*. In this place, the desire and the pleasure are one. [At this level, both are holy since one has overcome the element in the pleasure experience that might have mislead him and caused him to forget Hashem.] But one who has only accessed what emerges from the lower aspects of *Atik* is still at the level where he encounters sparks of *Elokus* that give taste and pleasure to this world. [Although it is possible to sanctify such experiences, it is all too easy to fall away as a result of them.] Therefore, through *ratzon* one can overcome even the fallen pleasure of this world that can entice a person away from Hashem. Even if this fleeting pleasure is his greatest delight at that moment, if he keeps yearning he will eventually access the upper three *mochin* of *Atik*—the source, where pleasure and yearning are one and can only be holy.

A Child's Greatest Pleasure

This can be better understood through a parable. Think of the average child. We all understand that a child naturally wishes to do his father's will and give him pleasure. This is because the child stems from the *mochin* (upper faculties of G-dly awareness) and *ratzon* (desire) of his father. [The father's thoughts and intentions during conception have an effect on the child. In addition, a child is most often the expression of his father's true desires and interests.³]

It follows that the father's desire is really the son's too. We see this when young children are playing. Even if a child is very involved with his fantasy world that gives him pleasure in a manner that has nothing to do with his father's desire and may even be in contradiction to it, the moment the child sees his father he feels a deep inner yearning and rushes to him. He immediately abandons the insignificant playing that had so absorbed him just a moment earlier. When the child touches upon the source at the level of *ratzon*, he also accesses the source of pleasure, since at the source they are really one.⁴

The same is true regarding the Jewish people. We all have one Father and our deepest aspiration is to do His will by overcoming all the alluring enticements of this world that distract us from Him. Even if we fall and indulge in physical pleasures it is still possible through yearning to connect to our Father and let go of all empty frivolities. Like a young child we will abandon them because the pleasure we feel in our Father makes all others pale in comparison.

³ *Ramban* and Rav Tzaddok HaKohein of Lublin

⁴ *Likutei Moharan* I:4

However, this demands real effort over an extended period of time. We must keep working to overcome each desire that pushes us down. Every day we must petition Hashem to help us overcome our base urges until we are finally victorious in the bitter struggle. [We accomplish this by focusing on transcending one illicit desire at a time.⁵]

Pharaoh's Dream

This is the meaning of the verse, וַיִּהְיֶה מִקֵּץ שְׁנַתִּים יָמִים וַיִּפְרָעָה חֲלֹם וְהִנֵּה "וַיִּהְיֶה מִקֵּץ שְׁנַתִּים יָמִים וַיִּפְרָעָה חֲלֹם וְהִנֵּה" —"עַל־הַיָּאָר."—“And it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed: and behold, he stood by the river.”⁶ Rebbe Nachman points out that the word *mikeitz* [“at the end of”] is an anagram of the word *kamatz*, which the *Zohar* teaches is related to the level of *Kesser*.⁷ It is well known that the level of *Kesser* is associated with the will, the *ratzon* that is rooted in the aspect of *Arich Anpin*.⁸ The Torah teaches us here that Yosef, the paradigm of *Chochmah*, is included within the aspect of Yehudah, *Kesser*. Yosef represents holy pleasure, while Yehudah represents *ratzon*. We need to lift all pleasure up to the Source through an unquenchable yearning for Hashem which is the light of Yehudah and *Kesser*. The verses indicate to us that Yosef was only able to ascend to power when he reached the level of *mikeitz*, of *kamatz-Kesser*.

Even when a person seeks *dveikus* [Yosef] with all of his might, he still requires the level of Dovid-Yehudah [desire] to complete his Divine service. Although Yosef was *kodesh kodashim*, all the while that he was separate from

⁵ Ibid., I:52

⁶ Bereishis 41:1

⁷ See *Likutei Moharan* I:54

⁸ *Tikkunei Zohar* 129b

Yehudah's aspect he could not leave his imprisonment. Even when a person seeks the spiritual pleasures of the level of *Chochmah*, he still must be filled with yearning to access true closeness to Hashem. Avshalom is an example of a person who accessed the level of *Chochmah* without yearning for further improvement and closeness to Hashem. He had a "bad eye," or a negative attitude that tainted his imagination. This made him unworthy of ascension to the throne of Dovid-Yehudah.⁹ Clearly, we too must take care to always work on strengthening our yearning for holiness. Without its force, we run the risk of remaining fools who wander around spiritually without ever really achieving anything lasting.

Every desire for holiness is a form of prayer before Hashem. This is how Rav Pinchas of Koretz explains the folk adage of his day: "If a person's house burns down, he'll become wealthy." This is because when people see how miserable he is, their hearts go out to him. They then feel a strong desire that he recover from his personal catastrophe. These desires act as petitions before Hashem, and sometimes they are so abundant that they transform the sufferer into a wealthy man.

Rebbe Nachman teaches a similar concept, but he explains that the desire is much more powerful when one expresses it in words, since it actually assumes the character of prayer. After a Jew reaches the aspect of *mikeitz-kamatz*, he arrives at the next level: "And Pharaoh dreamed." This means that he accessed the positive aspect of the imaginative faculty which is the *avodah* of Yosef who

⁹ *Likutei Moharan*, loc cit.

was called, “master of dreams.”¹⁰ At this level, one is able to make *yichudim*, holy unifications, in his thoughts. This is reflected in the biblical praise of Yosef HaTzaddik, “*Ben Porat Yosef*.” The phrase includes a crucial word, פורת, which has a numerical value of 687 when its *kollel* s included. This sum is the total *gematria* of the full range of permutations of the Divine Name: עיב, סיג, מ״ה, עיב, סיג, מ״ה, קמ״א, קמ״ג, קמ״א, בי״ן [72+63+45+52+161+143+151=687]. All of these Names are the stuff of mystical contemplation and *yichudim*.

Practically, this means that the *tzaddik* has the ability derive tremendous pleasure from communion with Hashem through constantly making holy *yichudim* in his thoughts. However, this *avodah* must be joined with the yearning of Yehudah which is an aspect of *kamatz*, which literally means to limit. This indicates closing oneself off from involvement in the physical pleasures of this world, and this is a prerequisite to completing his mission and attaining the *Kesser Meluchah*, the “crown of kingship.” One on this level sees holy visions even during the day. This person understands the Divine signals that are conveyed by each and every human experience.

This is the meaning of the verse, “וַיִּהְיֶה עִמָּד עַל-הַיָּאֵר” —“And, behold, he stood by the river.” This is the Nile, which is also called the *Nahar Pishon*. This river parallels the person who is *shoneh halachos*, who learns and reviews the *halachah*.¹¹ [The name *Pishon* is a conjunction of the *peh* and *shon*, the “mouth” that “learns and reviews.”] This is associated with Dovid HaMelech, since the

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ See *Likutei Moharan*, Ibid.

halachah always follows goes in accordance with his opinion.¹² In this manner, the spiritual grace and beauty of Yosef is revealed. This is greater than Dovid's, since Dovid is associated with *Arich Anpin*, while Yosef is associated with the lower aspects of *Atik*.

The Hair of Yosef HaTzaddik

Every spiritual level has its counterpart in the realm of unholiness. Just as Yosef represents holy imagination, there is an “equal and opposite” level where a person's mind is filled with thousands of misleading images and visions. These delusions of grandeur are the hallmark of the person in the state of Avshalom in rebellion against the rule of his father Dovid HaMelech, who personified the yearning for holiness. Through this longing the righteous purify their physicality for Hashem's honor, in the way of the *kamatz*. In the Avshalom state, a person does not work hard enough to purify his material desires to clarify his imagination.

This state is a corruption of Yosef's *avodah*. The verse says that he would “curl his hair.”¹³ Of course, Yosef himself was absolutely pure. His indulgence merely represents lifting up even the lower levels, which is symbolized by his efforts to reach out to the handmaids' children. However, those who [are weaker souls and] are like the maidservants' children must be careful not to believe they are on his level and use the light of *Chochmah* that Yosef draws down to them for their own purposes [of self aggrandizement and the like]. The only person who can make use of the light of *Chochmah* is one

¹² *Bamidbar Rabbah*, 13:10

¹³ See *Rashi* on *Bereishis*, 39:6

who is truly purified and acts in a very refined manner, exhibiting holiness and great disinterest in material indulgences.

This was Avshalom's error. He figured that he too could curl his hair just like Yosef. He was unaware that Yosef had a "good eye," since he was completely immersed in his great *dveikus* in Hashem. Even when Yosef was curling his hair or doing whatever else was necessary as administrator of a big estate, the prison, and later all of Egypt, he never left the world of *Atzilus* for an instant. He managed this since the innermost aspect of every level is *Atzilus-Adam Kadmon*, which makes it possible to be connected with Hashem at the highest level even when immersed in the earthiest endeavor.

This is the deeper reason why Yosef was cast into prison. This was to lift up the seven lower levels of the pleasures of this world [which can be like a spiritual prison] which correspond to the seven lower aspects of *Atik*. Through maintaining his great level even in a place of such spiritual deprivation, he showed that all of his physical acts, including making up his hair, was done for the sake of heaven.

This parallels the tests that the *Shechinah* imposes on *tzaddikim* to determine if they will stand strong through their powerful longing, prayers, and continuous *teshuvah*, in the face of great temptation. Even when the *Shechinah* hides from them and they no longer feel connected, they keep strengthening their desire until they merit the level of *mikeitz-kamatz*. At this point they come to the level of "Pharoah dreaming on the Nile." He represents the seven lower aspects of *Atik* encased within *Arich Anpin*, until he reaches the level of the upper three

mochin of *Atik*, where *ratzon* and *ta'anug* are one. A person who reaches this height demonstrates that his entire desire is to do Hashem's will.

The verse continues: "וַיִּהְיֶה מִן־הַיָּאֵר עֶלְת שֶׁבַע פָּרוֹת יְפוֹת מְרֻאָה וּבְרִיאוֹת בְּשָׂר, וַתִּרְעֶינָה בְּאַחוּ. וַיִּהְיֶה שֶׁבַע פָּרוֹת אַחֲרוֹת עֲלוֹת אַחֲרֵיהֶן מִן־הַיָּאֵר רְעוֹת מְרֻאָה וְדַקּוֹת בְּשָׂר, וַתַּעֲמִדְנָה אֶצֶל הַפָּרוֹת עַל־שֵׁפֶת הַיָּאֵר. וַתֹּאכְלֶנָּה הַפָּרוֹת רְעוֹת הַמְרֻאָה וְדַקּוֹת הַבְּשָׂר אֶת שֶׁבַע הַפָּרוֹת יְפוֹת הַמְרֻאָה וְהַבְּרִיאוֹת, וַיִּיקַץ פַּרְעֹה." And, behold, there came up out of the river seven cows, well-favored and fat-fleshed, and they fed in the reed-grass. And, behold, seven other cows came up after them out of the river, ill-favored and lean-fleshed, and stood by the other cows upon the brink of the river. And the ill-favored and lean-fleshed cows did eat up the seven well-favored and fat cows. And Pharaoh awoke."¹⁴

The seven fat cows represent the seven lower aspects of *Atik*, which after a myriads of gradual declensions, slowly becomes a mixture of good covered with a sheen of evil that conceals its source. Eventually the evil becomes so strong that the good is "devoured" by the evil, represented by the seven devouring lean cows. Yosef HaTzaddik repairs this apparent absence of holiness. This is reflected in the verse that describes his naming: The rectification for this seeming absence of holiness is Yosef *hatzaddik*, in an aspect of the verse, "אָסַף" —"G-d has gathered up my shame."¹⁵ This teaches that Yosef gathers and rectifies the seven years of famine which correspond to the seven *middos* in their negative manifestations. He does this since he is a, "man in whom the spirit of G-d is to be found,"¹⁶ who understands that the ephemeral

¹⁴ Bereishis 41:2-4

¹⁵ Bereishis 30:23

¹⁶ Ibid., 41:38

desires of this world have nothing to offer to one who has tasted the eternal pleasure of connection to Hashem. Although initially it appears as though pleasure is a physical phenomenon which is a contradiction to holiness, Yosef access the highest levels of *Atik* where the *ta'anug* and *ratzon* one.

Although our sages teach that *mitzvos* were not given for pleasure since they are decrees of the King which must be carried out to give Him pleasure, this is not a contradiction. Hashem's pleasure is that we should have pleasure.¹⁷ This is the deeper meaning of the verse, "כִּי נֵר מְצִנָּה, וְתוֹרָה אֹרֵר"—“A mitzvah is a candle, and the Torah is light.”¹⁸ [This means that we are afforded spiritual illumination of various degrees through our Torah and *mitzvos*.] This also is why the six hundred and thirteen commandments are called “*pikudin*.” The word פִּקֻּדִים also means deposited. This teaches that every mitzvah is a unique repository of Hashem's infinite light. It is for this reason that there are six hundred and thirteen Torah commandments and six main rabbinic *mitzvos*. This adds up to six hundred and twenty, the numerical equivalent of *Kesser* [20+400+300].¹⁹ Torah and *mitzvos* are imbued with a supernal bliss which is infinitely more intense than any physical pleasure. It is our task through physical pleasures to seek pleasure in their holy Source, through Torah and *mitzvos*. Only in this manner can we connect to the lasting pleasure of *dveikus* with the Primal Cause.

Like Yosef, we all must overcome many obstacles and distractions when we lose touch with the pleasure in our Divine service. This is really a test from the *Shechinah* to see if we are truly committed. Its purpose is to enable us to lift

¹⁷ *Rosh Hashanah* 25 and Rashi, there.

¹⁸ *Mishlei* 6:23

¹⁹ Ramchal in *Adir Bamarom*, and other sources.

up the sparks connected to other people who are under our spiritual responsibility. Through yearning to serve Hashem despite the hardships we are bound to the aspect of Dovid HaMelech, whose source is in *Arich Anpin*.

Even when confronted with the sevenfold pleasures of this world, he elevates them to their holy source in the seven lower aspects of *Atik*. In this manner he reaches the true pleasure of binding his soul to Hashem's Essence.

The Holy Candle

The main *avodah* of Chanukah is to draw down the light of Hashem into our every limb, in the manner of the *yichud* of *ner*. This *yichud* is composed of combining each of the Divine Names *EHYH*, *ELHIM*, and *ADNI* with the *Sheim HaVaYaH*. The first combination with אהייה represents *CHaBaD*; the second with אלהיים alludes to *CHaGaT*; and the third with אדניי to *NH"Y*. These six Names have a total numerical value of 250, the same as that of ניר, or candle. [יהויה = 26; 3 x 26 = 72; אהייה = 21; אלהיים = 86; אדניי = 65; the total including another 6 for the *kollel* of each of the six *sheimos* = 250] This is the *yichud* that we make by lighting the Chanukah candles.²⁰

Practically, this means that through the lights of Chanukah we purify ourselves from our desire for food which corresponds to *CHaBaD*, for money which corresponds to *CHaGaT*, and from our base urges which correspond to *NH"Y*. [On a simple level, this is because one eats with his mouth which is in his head which is the seat of the mentalities of *CHaBaD*, one does business transactions with his hands which is in the realm of the torso of *CHaGaT*, and

²⁰ *Pri Eitz Chaim, Chanukah*

the baser urges are sourced in the lower realm from the waist down.] Our task when we light the menorah is to beg Hashem to bless us with true purity in these areas. We must take pleasure in Hashem and also feel a powerful yearning to increase in holiness, just as we light another candle each night of Chanukah.

“Let Your Soul Know Wisdom”

This is the meaning of: "דעה חכמה לנפשך והיא כתר לראשך"—“Let your soul (*nefesh*) know (*d'ei*) wisdom (*Chochmah*) and it will be a crown (*Kesser*) for your head.”²¹ The *nefesh* indicates *ratzon*. We must arouse our inner longing to do Hashem’s will and give Him pleasure. In this way, we will be willing to keep *mitzvos* even when we don’t yet feel the deep pleasure of their fulfillment. Just as our sages teach regarding *shofar*, “We blow because Hashem commanded us to.”²² Similarly, we must be willing to do all the *mitzvos* for this reason, even if we feel nothing at all. We should never think of ourselves when performing *mitzvos*. We must light the Chanukah lights simply because it is our duty, in an aspect of *Arich Anpin*. Nevertheless, since Hashem wants us to take pleasure in His *mitzvos*, we should work to cleave to Him through the *mitzvos* because this is His will. This then is the element of *Chochmah* within the *mitzvos*: to understand that Hashem wants us to cleave to Him through the light of *Ein Sof* in Torah and *mitzvos*, which is the bliss of *Chochmah*.

This is the ultimate joining of Yosef and Yehudah. Although at first it appears that they take divergent paths in Divine service, in the end they are one. The twelve holy tribes mistook Yosef because he curled his hair, failing to

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

²² *Rosh Hashanah* 16

understand that he was only searching for Hashem. They saw that those of lower stature can misuse the light the *tzaddik* accesses to inspire them to draw near to Hashem. They failed to see that Yosef's only interest was to serve Hashem and they sold him as a slave, causing him to endure the seven different tests which parallel the seven lower aspects of *Atik*. But when after two years Yosef reached the aspect of *Arich Anpin*, this proved that his every action was indeed for the sake of heaven. Yosef shows that the aspect of *ratzon* and *ta'anug* are really one and in this manner all tests are easily endured. When one understands that he can access through Torah and *mitzvos* a deep bliss compared with which all physical pleasure pales, why would he indulge in unnecessary physicality? It is only when one does not truly grasp that pleasure and his inner longing for Hashem are one that he can be enticed to indulge in physical pleasures.

This is the meaning of, "And it will be a crown for your head." When one ascends to the aspect of the upper three mentalities of *Atik-Kesser*, he finally sees how the *ta'anug* and *ratzon* are one and physicality loses its appeal. "Guard Your holy *mitzvos*, guard Your holy Shabbos." We must not lose sight of fulfilling the *mitzvos* simply because Hashem commanded this—not for any other reason. Then we can draw down the pleasure of the light of *yichud* because that is the King's will until we merit, "the day that is entirely Shabbos and rest for eternity," speedily in our days. Amen!

Translated and Adapted by Rav Micha Golshevsky.

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