

# AND NOW, A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR

*by Rabbi Pinchas Winston*

## Friday Night:

*According to the word of G-d would they encamp, and according to the word of G-d they would journey.*  
(Bamidbar 9:23)

During the 40 years of wandering in the desert, this is the way it worked for the Jewish people. If the accompanying cloud would linger over the Mishkan, the Jewish people knew that they were to set up camp in that location. If the cloud lifted, then they knew that it was a message from Heaven that it was time to move on, and once again they would pack up the Mishkan and all of its implements, and their own personal belongings as well, and head out again into the desert.

Had it not been for the sin of the spies, this process would have lasted for only two years. They were led by the cloud to Har Sinai, where they camped from Rosh Chodesh Sivan 2448, until they left the following year on Iyar 20, 2449. From there, ideally, it was supposed to have been an 11-day journey to Eretz Yisroel, but thanks to the spies, it became a 39-year journey instead.

This, of course, was the tikun for the sin of the spies, whom we are told left the camp of their own volition, and not by the word of G-d. G-d had not forbid the spies to enter Eretz Yisroel early, but neither had He commanded them to do so, and therein lay the risk of their entire mission. Indeed, therein lies the risk of any mission, that is, of the life of any Jew.

Isn't that what history is all about, in the end, about the synchronization of man with G-d? Exile is really just the Jewish people dancing to the beat of a different drummer. Shechinah b'Golus-the exiled Divine Presence-is the concept of the element of G-d that accompanies the Jewish people wherever we go, having to act in accordance with the will of others.

It is not because G-d has no other choice, but because G-d chooses no other thing. He made rules for creation, rules that promote a specific reality that allows mankind to use its ability of free-will to earn reward in the World-to-Come. The giving of the World-to-Come is so important to G-d that He granted man the use of free-will, and therefore, the use of free-will is so important that He obeys the rules of creation that He created.

Below the surface, it is always all G-d. Indeed, the only difference between exile and redemption is the extent to which G-d's involvement is clear to the onlooker, and the degree of difficulty is

determined by how many veils G-d creates to hide His hand in the affairs of man. But that makes all the difference in the world, for those veils are composed in such a way as to appear like anything but G-dly, including counter-spirituality concepts such as immorality and the suffering of the righteous. Just look at how much doubt in G-d's existence there is today.

This is true for the nation as a whole, and it is true for the individual as well, as we will now see, b'ezeras Hashem.

## **Shabbos Day:**

*May only goodness and kindness pursue me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the House of G-d for long days. (Tehillim 23:6)*

These words are from the psalm that we recite often, in advance of each meal on Shabbos. King David composed them as a request from G-d and from himself. For, as he wrote elsewhere:

One thing I asked of G-d, that I shall seek-that I dwell in the House of G-d all the days of my life, to behold the sweetness of G-d and to contemplate in His sanctuary. (Tehillim 27:4)

We say these words from Rosh Chodesh Elul until Shemini Atzeres each year, because that is the main time of synchronization with the Creator of the Universe. That is what Rosh Hashanah is for, to allow us to see how we are out of step with the word of G-d, how we travel alone from day-to-day, in order to once again get in step-the essence of being righteous.

If you'll forgive the analogy, learning Torah is like going for a wheel alignment. Tires out of alignment do not go precisely in the direction the driver wants to head. Aligning the tires means making sure that the tires are as perfectly responsive as they can get to the "wheel" of the driver.

Torah acts as a spiritual mirror to reflect back to the person learning it, where exactly he is holding. It is amazing how many people who are left alone without any Torah instruction, are perfectly happy with themselves, as if G-d spoke to them and told them they are doing all that is expected of them. That is why so many people are afraid to learn Torah; they fear they will find out otherwise.

However, you can't simply ignore Torah if you know it is truly the word of G-d. What good would that do, except push off the inevitable? Therefore, instead, many people convince themselves that Torah is not the word of G-d, and therefore they can go on believing what they believe is a clear conscience that G-d expects no more from them than they do from themselves.

Sometimes the situation becomes so desperate that they latch onto ideas and theories that claim to disprove Torah, and do so in the name of, of all things, "intellectual honesty." Yet, I've been there when the strongest intellectual argument in favor of Torah has been presented, and 95 percent of the people present have been "forced" (by their own intellect) to agree that the argument is in favor of Torah from Sinai, and still someone gets up and says, "That's what you say, but I'm sure that

someone else would interpret the argument differently."

If the issue had been money, something people hate to part with unnecessarily, if at all, and we had been talking stock investments, the person would probably have laid down his personal investment without hesitation-so strong was the argument. However, money comes and money goes, but it doesn't necessarily mean you will have to pray to G-d three times a day, put on Tefillin, or keep Shabbos. Accepting Torah as the word of G-d does.

Such is the power of the yetzer hara. You can fool yourself some of the time, and sometimes even an entire lifetime. But, you can't fool G-d any of the time, and according to the Zohar, just before one dies, the Divine Presence pays the person a visit with the Prosecuting Angel, and then the real alignment takes place. Or, at least it BEGINS to take place...

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### **SEUDAH SHLISHIS:**

*These are the journeys of the Children of Israel, who left Egypt as a na-tion under the leadership of Moshe and Aharon. (Bamidbar 33:1)*

When we stand in the cemetery and say good-bye to a departed loved one, we don't see what is happening on the other side of the burial, so-to-speak. We know from tradition that there is going to be a judgment, perhaps a little purging of past sins, and then, eventually, the World-to-Come. However, beyond that, we don't give it much thought, and therefore, we take little mussar from the "send-off."

However, the Arizal provided a sobering overview of the process of death and rectification, and the price we pay for not having "journeyed" and "camped" at the word of G-d. For, as the Pri Tzaddik writes (Massey), the 42 encampments correspond to the 42-letter Name of G-d that each person must achieve in his lifetime to merit his portion in the World-to-Come. The comparison of our personal lives to the journey of the entire nation in the desert is not a forced one, but an exact one.

The Arizal taught:

After a person dies and is buried in the dust of the earth, four angels immediately arrive and deepen his grave to the height of the man, as it says in Meseches Perek Chibut HaKever. Then, they return his soul to his body as it was during his lifetime since the k'lipah (spiritual impurity) remains attached to both necessitating that the soul be returned to the body. Then, these angels take him by the "corners" and they shake and beat him with fire, just like a garment is held from the ends and shaken to remove dust, until the k'lipah leaves him completely. This is called "Chibut HaKever," which is like the beating and shaking of a garment. They deepen the grave in order to create an area within which to shake and beat him. However, the judgment is not the same for everyone. Righteous people distance themselves from the yetzer hara during their lifetimes, humble themselves and use their

suffering as self-affliction. Torah and mitzvos also weaken them until the day comes for them to die. Such righteous people do not need much suffering, just a minor "beating" to separate the yetzer hara from them. It is just the opposite for evil people. Through indulging in the pleasures of this world they become even more strongly attached to the k'lipah of their bodies and souls. This is the sod of why a person is not saved from Chibut HaKever, as mentioned in Perek Chibut HaKever. (Sha'ar HaGilgulim, Chapter 23)

Thus, to the far right of the scale there are the righteous people, whose lives moved in synch with the word of G-d. To the far left, there are the evil people of history, who did whatever they wanted whenever they wanted, in any way they could get away with. The angels have a great time with them in the grave.

Then there are the "beinonim," those of us who are neither righteous nor evil, but some shade of either, depending upon which side of the center we are on the scale of righteousness. We range from those whose lives incorporate a significant amount of the word of G-d in our lives to those for whom the word of G-d has only a little influence. And, depending upon where we are with respect to this, that's how much work the angels will have cut out for themselves after we descend to the proverbial six feet under, and all those who have survived us have gone back home.

As we said regarding those people who died only because of the "bite of the snake," there is no other way to remove and rectify other than through death and Chibut HaKever. The only exception is for those people mentioned in Perek Chibut HaKever, who performed certain mitzvos that accomplish this. However, the rest require Chibut HaKever and it is only a question of how much will be necessary. Each person receives what he needs based upon the level of his k'lipah and the extent to which it adheres to him.

However, even for those people who do not require Chibut HaKever, having performed specific mitzvos that remove the k'lipah without the need for suffering after death, death is still inevitable, as we mentioned before regarding those who died from the "bite of the snake."

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## MELAVE MALKAH:

It gets even more interesting. Rabbi Chaim Vital, writing down the teachings of the Rav, continued:

After someone is born and named by his father and mother it is not by chance, for The Holy One, Blessed is He, places in his mouth the name that suits that soul, as it says, "names in the land," based upon the limb within the "Upper Man" from which it was taken. This name itself is imprinted Above on the Holy Throne, as it is known. Thus, this is why Chazal say what they do regarding the names of converts (Brochos 7b), and why Rebi Yehoshua ben Korchah and Rebi Meir used to check names. G-d created a corresponding reality with respect to this as well, and therefore just as there is a pre-

determined name from the side of holiness for a person, given to him by his father and mother at the time of Bris Milah, likewise there is an established name from the side of the K'lipos-the yetzer hara that enters the person at birth. Hence, every person possesses two names, one from the side of holiness and one from the side of k'lipah. If a person, while living in this world, is able to ascertain and know the name of the k'lipah within him, then he can know from which level within Adam Bli'al it was taken. In this way, he can understand his blemish and the tikun he requires. This would then make rectification simpler and separation from the k'lipah possible during his lifetime as opposed to after death through Chibut HaKever. (Sha'ar HaGilgulim, Chapter 23)

In simple layman terms, everyone is born with spiritual strengths and weaknesses. Unfortunately, many assume that it is their strengths that make them who they are, and their weaknesses are only a part of being human. "It's one of my weaknesses, but what can I do? When the Creator made me, he left that thing out. But, everyone has his weakness, no?"

Often, such words mean that G-d can't expect me to do that which I was born incapable of achieving without tremendous effort, can He? Surprise! The strengths, with which we were born, are gifts from G-d, tools in our possession to rectify our weaknesses. That's right, we're not here to perfect that which we do well, but to use it to rectify that which we do wrong.

Continues Rabbi Vital:

Therefore, when a righteous person dies there is no need to ask him his name from the Sitra Achra since during his lifetime he worked hard and withstood suffering to separate the k'lipah from himself. This made the separation through Chibut HaKever easier. (Ibid.)

In other words, the righteous person gets with the program. He spends his life using his strengths to rectify his weaknesses, doing the job of the angels after death during his lifetime. Any angels who show up in his grave do so merely to say, "Shalom aleichem!" Not so for the evil person:

However, an evil person accomplishes just the opposite, instead causing the k'lipah to bond with him, necessitating much beating and great punishment to carry out separation through Chibut HaKever. If he had come to know the name from the Sitra Achra during his lifetime, he could have easily rectified it then. Instead, he must receive intense beatings for not having come to know the name during his lifetime, for not bothering to investigate what it was during his lifetime. He didn't care to work hard as the righteous person did. (Ibid.)

My computer has a function that allows me to synchronize over the Internet my computer's internal clock with a main system that is accurate to the second. With the touch of a button, instantly the clock is updated to the most accurate time available.

Wouldn't it be nice if life worked the same way, that with the touch of a button, we would get in synch with G-d? But if we could do that, what would we do with the rest of our 120 years yet to be lived? Whatever you just answered, it doesn't matter because, apparently, G-d feels that it is better if

we take our entire lifetime-or lifetimes-or a good portion of them, to learn to "travel" with the word of G-d-just as long as we are working on it, to the best of our ability.

Now where's that cloud again...

Have a great Shabbos,

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