

# ACCOUNTABLE FOR THE LIGHT

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

## FRIDAY NIGHT:

*God spoke to Moshe, saying, "On the day of the first month, on the first of the month, you shall erect the Mishkan, the Tent of Meeting." (Shemos 40:1-2)*

As mentioned before, the actual construction of the Mishkan was completed on the 25th day of Kislev, three months prior to the day that Moshe was commanded to actually erect it. As the Midrash explains, this was in honor of Yitzchak Avinu, who was born on the 15th of Nisan, 2048. (Rashi, Bereishis 21:5)

This was because the Mishkan was the place of sacrifice to G-d, and there has been no better sacrifice than Yitzchak himself. Even though Avraham was prevented by G-d from carrying out the actual sacrifice of his beloved son, it was counted as if he had gone through with it, since he would have had G-d not stopped him.

The only thing about this is that the Mishkan represented a place of mercy, a place where the Kohanim worked to atone for the mistakes of the Jewish People in order to avoid strict Heavenly judgment. Concerning the Forefathers, Yitzchak represented strict judgment, and the remedy was the Mishkan!

The point is that the answer was simple. The fact that Avraham, who represented Chesed - which is like mercy - bound Yitzchak - who represented Gevurah or judgment - and Avraham could have slaughtered him, was symbolic of the overwhelming of judgment by mercy. In this respect, Yitzchak represented the perfect symbol for the Mishkan, and hence, the deferment of its erection until Yitzchak's birthday.

This is the goal. In fact, that is the way that it all began with Ma'aseh Bereishis. As the Midrash says, in the beginning, G-d thought to make the world with Din, that is, Strict Judgment. However, when He saw that it would not last like that, He added Mercy to it as well.

On a simple level, this means that man makes mistakes. If the world was run by Din, then it would mean that judgment of mistakes would be swift and equal to the sin that was committed. Some of us wouldn't last a day past Bar or Bat Mitzvah. G-d didn't make man just to watch him perish the next day.

Enter Mercy and enter the second chance. Now, man can make mistakes and survive long enough

to regret it, repent for it, and even do things right next time. Mercy means being able to say "I'm sorry," and to make amends, and we see just how far G-d is willing to wait for us to wake up and get back on the right path.

However, there is a more Kabbalistic angle to all of this, of course, and if we don't get lost along the way, it will allow us to better understand the connection between Yitzchak Avinu and the Mishkan itself.

### **SHABBOS DAY:**

*He erected the Courtyard all around the Mishkan and the altar, and he placed the screen of the gate of the Courtyard; so Moshe completed the work. (Shemos 40:34)*

One of the greatest illusions in life is the physical world we live in and take for granted. We are told by scientists that the world is made up of molecules and atoms that stick to each other, and quite loosely, because of a magnetic force. Nothing really ever comes "undone" because nothing was really ever that together, though to the naked eye everything seems "glued" together quite tightly.

Physical life gets even spookier once we enter the world of Quantum Mechanics, where the mysteries of physical creation become quite pronounced. However, even all of that pales in terms of the hidden next to the spiritual make-up of creation, as known through Kabbalistic tradition.

For example:

The Emanator, Blessed is He, saw that the world could not last according to Din, that is, in its original state of the b'sod "Vessels," and therefore, He added the trait of Mercy, which is the rectification of the "Muchin." Then the world could last. (Da'as Elokim, p. 62)

"Emanator," of course, refers to G-d Himself, Blessed is He. But what's a "muchin?" Muchin is plural for "moach," which means "brain." However, when we are talking about the Sefiros, which we are, then it refers to the three first sefiros of Keser, Chochmah, and Binah.

This is because our bodies resemble the Sefiros (not the other way around). We have been built to resemble their set-up, which had to exist before we could even be created. They are the basis for all that exists in the physical world, as we have discussed many times in the past.

The Sefiros are therefore divided into three parts, in the same way Kabbalah divides the human body: head and its contents, body and its contents, and lower body and its contents. In the Sefiros, the contents of the head primarily include three "brains:" Keser, Chochmah, and Binah.

In life, though, the brains make up only a small fraction of the physical person, disproportionately; they dominate the person's life. We can do without many parts of our body, but we can't do without our brains. When a person, G-d forbid, is "brain-dead," then they become nothing more than a mechanical vessel devoid of any meaning, in terms of function in this world. We were created to use our free-will, and there is none for a person in such a state.

(However, in terms of other people, a person in such a tragic state can still cause others to do mitzvot by taking care of them. Furthermore, though they may lack consciousness while in this state, their soul is attached to their body and undergoing rectification because of the situation, which is what makes euthanasia and similar forms of death extremely questionable, to say the least.)

Even a baby, whose brain functions quite well, but at far less a capacity than an adult, is quite "useless" in terms of what it can contribute to the well-being of society, aside from making propagation of the species possible. Though we may desire to remain attached to our childhood, we know that life only becomes truly meaningful once we assume the role of adult, meaning that we grow up and use our brains.

It is the same with respect to the Sefiros. Without the light of Keser, Chochmah, and Binah, the lower seven sefiros - Chesed, Gevurah, Tifferes, Netzach, Hod, Yesod, and Malchus - become like empty vessels, devoid of any real light and meaning. This is the "Din" state referred to above, and the world could not survive in such a state, because it would be meaningless to G-d to create and maintain such a state.

Thus, Gevurah does not only refer to a particular sefirah, but it also describes such a state of creation, because it acts in very much the same way as Din acts. As the Kabbalists explain, it is a light whose function is to constrict G-d's light, which is what makes possible "hester panim" - hiding of G-d's face - and therefore, free-will.

However, such a state cannot be permanent. As a permanent state, it is a "dead" state, and therefore contrary to the purpose of creation. It is only a positive reality if it acts as a catalyst to bring about a state of light, and of life itself. Pain is only meaningful if it acts as a threshold to meaningful accomplishment, and a greater sense of purpose.

But how?

### **SEUDOS SHILSHIS:**

*The Glory of G-d filled the Mishkan . . . (Shemos 40:34)*

How does it work with children? It is a combination of two things which are co-dependent. The child has to grow up, and he has to be educated. In other words, his "vessel" (brain) has to increase its capacity to receive knowledge, and the knowledge has to be made available to enter his vessel.

The truth is, the child is born with the physical capacity already, that is, most of the brain is already there from birth. Likewise, the sefiros of Keser, Chochmah, and Binah, are also already there in the main system, and all replicated sub-systems (like the human body, there are sub-systems making up the larger, general system). However, at the time of "Katnus" - literally "childhood," as it is called - they are not yet activated, lacking the light as a child's brain lacks its own light, in this case, knowledge.

And, just like a child gets his knowledge from those who are older and more experienced than he is, so too do Keser, Chochmah, and Binah in any system that gets their light from sefiros in the systems above them, and as they do, they "grow up" - "Gadlus" in the language of Kabbalah - and their functionality is enhanced.

The difference between the state of Katnus and Gadlus is the difference between exile and redemption, literally. When Keser, Chochmah and Binah in any system get their proper amount of light, then evil is destroyed and good is redeemed. The more a child matures and becomes an adult, the "freer" he becomes as a human being.

Freedom, we have learned (and many have forgotten) is more a state of mind than a physical reality. Today's liberties have provided many people with much physical freedom, which has often resulted in much intellectual enslavement. The opposite is also true in some cases. This is why leaders and teachers must also be philosophers if society is to truly achieve freedom and maintain it. Without the light, creation remains in a Gevurah-like state, and society dies, G-d forbid.

Therefore, the goal is to cause the Sefiros to "grow up," that is, cause the "vessels" to receive their necessary light. We need to cause the light of Chesed to enter the light of Gevurah, as G-d Himself did at the beginning of creation, just enough to get all of this started so that we could finish the job. Just as Avraham Avinu did with the help of Yitzchak Avinu via the Akeidah.

There were two ways to view what Avraham did that day, or at least was prepared to do that day. To the naked eye, all that appeared was a human slaughter in progress. However, through the viewing piece of a spiritual "electron microscope," one would have been able to see a tremendous amount of light from the side of Chesed being drawn down into the Vessels made from the light of Gevurah. One would have seen a tremendous "tikun" being performed on the world. One would have seen the makings of redemption in progress.

For, when we learn Torah and perform mitzvos, we use our lives in the service of G-d, for which the Mishkan was solely created, we draw down the holy and sublime light of G-d. Like water rushing into an empty channel, it fills every empty space it can find, and brings life to where previously only death ruled. And, there was no better way to drive this point home than to finish the construction on the 25th day of Kislev - the future date of Chnaukah - and to assemble it on the first of Nissan, the month of Yitzchak's birthday.

### **MELAVE MALKAH:**

*He made the Choshen . . . They filled it with four rows of stone . . . the third row: leshem, shevo, and achlamah. (Shemos 39:8-12)*

This is the second reference to the Choshen Mishpat worn by the Kohen Gadol, and the four rows of stones set in it, 12 gems altogether, one to represent each of the 12 Tribes. The first reference was in Parashas Tetzaveh. (Shemos 28:19)

When Torah scholars choose the name for their Torah works, they choose the most meaningful name possible, though it is not always obvious to the reader. Often, they choose a Torah phrase that has in it allusions to their own names and their father's name, to give honor to their parent. Other times, the name may be a reflection of the material found within.

I have not yet heard a reason why Rabbi Shlomo Elyashiv, zt"l, chose the name, "Leshem Shevo v'Achlamah" - the names of the three stones of the third row of the Choshen mentioned above - for his collection of Kabbalistic works which elude description. All I personally know is that very few works have ever had as much impact on my life and way of thinking as these by the grandfather of present-day Torah leader, Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, shlita. The best I can do is say they are awesome - truly awesome.

And, true to the awesomeness of the author, whose physical countenance belied his true Torah greatness, it is amazing how his yahrzeit - 27th of Adar - often falls out when these stones are mentioned, either in Parashas Tetzaveh or Parashas Pekudei (although this year it fell out in the week of Vayakhel in Adar I, and Tazria in Adar II). He died in 1925.

It is not so easy to find his seforim, at least outside of Eretz Yisroel. In fact, many in Chutz L'Aretz probably don't recognize his name, though his grandson's name is quite well-known throughout the Torah world. From one Torah authority here, I have heard that the Chofetz Chaim, whose life overlapped with the "Leshem's," used to consult with him regarding Kabbalistic matters.

In any case, it is from the Leshem that I have drawn so many of the ideas over the last few years, whether they have been obviously Kabbalistic or not. So many times it was an insight from the Leshem that has provided an important key to unlocking an important fundamental in the parshah, or events occurring in recent history.

To say that I am personally indebted to the Leshem for his great genius and phenomenal ability to communicate complex ideas in an understandable way, is a gross understatement. All I can do is thank G-d that He has allowed such a person to live and convey such ideas, and for the opportunity to have been exposed to these holy works, and to have gleaned whatever Torah concepts I have learned from them, on whatever level I have learned.

CHAZAK!

Have a great Shabbos,  
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