

BILVAVI

REALITY

Yaakov *Avinu* is mourning Yosef for 22 years, thinking that all is lost, while in reality, Yosef is really being saved and his redemption is underway. Hashem was preparing the *yeshuah* (salvation) the whole time.

When a person hears about the idea of *yeshuah* (salvation), he tends to think of it as a nice thought, but not as something that is practically relevant in their life. He thinks that the *yeshuah* for him will eventually come sometime in the future, as we hope, but as of right now, can it really be that Hashem is growing the *yeshuah*...? However, we say every day in *Shemoneh Esrei* that Hashem is מצמיח ישועה, that He is constantly "growing" the salvation, the *Geulah* (Redemption and coming of Mashiach). When a person plants a seed in the ground, the growth process is of no use to him unless the ripe crop emerges. When Hashem constantly plants the *yeshuah*, though, even the planting is already a kind of *yeshuah*. We are able to have some degree of *yeshuah* even if the total *yeshuah* (the arrival of Mashiach) hasn't come yet. When Mashiach comes, it will be the *geulah shelaimah*, the complete redemption, but we can still have a degree of the *Geulah*, even if it's not complete.

On the outer layer of reality, there doesn't appear to be any salvation happening. But on the inner layer of reality, the salvation is always growing and progressing. When someone lives superficially, all he sees is the external layer of the reality in front of him. He does not see any *yeshuah* taking place. At best, he might long for the *Geulah*, but as far as he's concerned, "Moshiach isn't here." But when someone lives an inner kind of life of *pnimiyus*, although he lives here on this earth just like anyone else, he lives in a world of inner solitude, within the depths of his *nefesh* (soul). In that inner place, he can always see how the *yeshuah* is really in the process of growing. He sees the ongoing *yeshuah* as something that not only exists in potential, but as something that is actually revealed, as a reality that he lives with.

When someone lives superficially, without being receptive to any kind of inner dimension of *ruchniyus* (spirituality), then he just follows the crowd and goes along with the rest of the generation. He

doesn't see a deeper meaning to the reality in front of him. If someone is aware of the inner layer of reality and lives with it, he sees how there is always "salvation" occurring. He sees how the light of Hashem is constantly shining. The *Maharal* says that in the era preceding Mashiach, there will be a "growth" of a salvation that we will first go through, before the complete salvation when Mashiach arrives.

Even before we see the complete *Geulah* which will be the complete *yeshuah*, we can at least have a degree of salvation by disconnecting ourselves from the false lifestyle of this generation. Then we will see the salvation that is growing and happening all the time. We will see it in the inner layer of reality that is beneath the physical surface of reality in front of us. This will be a partial degree of the *Geulah*. If we get even this, we can then be *zocheh* to the fulfillment of "*The salvation of Hashem can come in the blink of an eye.*"

תפילה 044 ומצמיח ישועה

THE LIGHT OF CHANUKAH – THE TORAH

Chanukah was a time in which the Jewish people showed *mesirus nefesh* (self-sacrifice). They went to go to war even though they were totally outnumbered. They were willing to get killed by going to war. Their efforts resulted in the lighting of the *Menorah*, which represents the Torah. Their war was fought with *mesirus nefesh*, and the results of the war revealed a new revelation of the Torah. In other words, the "light" of Chanukah is really the "light" of the Torah which became revealed on Chanukah.

The *menorah* in the *Beis HaMikdash* had 7 branches, while the *Menorah* we light on Chanukah has 8 lights. What is the depth of this? The *mesirus nefesh* that was revealed on Chanukah revealed an even greater level of "light" of the actual *Menorah* in the *Beis HaMikdash* when it was in its full purity. Their *mesirus nefesh* revealed the "light" of Torah, the level of 8, which is a higher level than 7.

The war with the Greeks was "a few, fighting the majority." They were fighting beyond their capabilities, beyond their human strength. That is the power in the soul called *mesirus nefesh*. Each person has abilities in his soul, but all of these abilities are limited. *Mesirus nefesh*, though, enables a person to go beyond his limits. With true *mesirus nefesh*, one can touch upon the unlimited. He touches the root of his soul and becomes connected to it and thus is able to do what seemed impossible.

From that place comes true understanding in Torah. *Chazal* say that when one makes himself into "*ayin*" (nothing)- when he nullifies himself to the Source that he comes from, he receives the true wisdom of Torah. True understanding in Torah doesn't come from one's own mind. There is a concept that one learns Torah from within himself ("Avraham learned Torah from himself"). But, there is also a source of Torah which comes from higher than one's own self- when one's

Torah learning is coming from that Source which is higher than the soul. This higher source of Torah understanding can be accessed through the power of *mesirus nefesh*, which enables one to go above his normal abilities. There is our soul, and there a source, a root, of our soul. When a person wants understanding in Torah, there are two sources where he can get it from. One source can be reached on Shavuot, through the ability of accepting the yoke of learning Torah. The other source can be reached on Chanukah, where one can acquire the power of *mesirus nefesh* in order to understand the Torah. Chanukah is, therefore, an opportunity for us to understand how *mesirus nefesh* is a source to access understanding in our Torah learning.

When a person has *mesirus nefesh* in his Torah learning and perseveres beyond his capabilities in order to understand it, he goes higher than his own *nefesh*. He can touch the light of Chanukah, the light of the Torah, which enables him to understand the Torah from that higher source, where his understanding in Torah will become much deeper. Understanding the Torah can only come from putting in effort and exertion, using our normal capabilities, but it also requires one to exert himself a little bit beyond his normal capabilities. If a person spends his whole life learning Torah using only his natural capabilities, or if he doesn't try as much as he can (which is usually the case), he won't be able to see true success in Torah learning. But if someone uncovers his ability of *mesirus nefesh*, he can go above his own abilities, and from there, he can connect to the Source where Torah is derived from.

The Ramchal says, "The way of the wise is to always be thinking." He is not referring to being an intellectual, but to the ability of thinking all the day about Torah, the true wisdom. How indeed can a person "think in learning" all day? Most people think about themselves all day, consumed in their own lives and in whatever's on their mind which is human nature. But when a person uncovers his ability of *mesirus nefesh*, he can go above this nature, and acquires a new nature, where he will be able to think all the time about Torah. This is the true kind connection to the Torah which can be uncovered.

This doesn't mean "forcing yourself to think in learning." Perhaps, that would be a good way to get started but it would have to be done sensibly. However, when one uncovers his ability of *mesirus nefesh* for the Torah, he becomes connected to the source of the Torah, and he will get his understanding from that deeper place, the *ayin* (root) which is the source of *chochmah* (Torah wisdom).

Just like a person is naturally thinking about himself all day or about things that are interesting to them, so can a person who uncovers his power of *mesirus nefesh* have a natural ability to think all day about the Torah he's learning. And if he takes this ability further, he can go even deeper and think all the time about *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* [in the back of his mind]. As long as one has not reached the point where he is *naturally* thinking about what he is learning throughout the day, he hasn't reached his ability of *mesirus nefesh* for Torah.

This is the deep place in the soul which one needs to connect to in order to access the light of the Torah. The Rambam describes that exertion in Torah learning requires one to "kill himself in the tents of Torah." One has to 'kill' his own *ani*, his "I", in the sense of going above his own abilities. When one penetrates deep into himself by uncovering the power of *mesirus nefesh*, he goes above himself, he goes above his own soul, and his understanding in Torah will come from a higher source. It will be a kind of Torah wisdom that is unlimited and endless.

If a person connects to Torah only from within his limited abilities, his understanding in Torah will be limited to what he can comprehend, because human comprehension is very limited. But when a person is in touch with his power of *mesirus nefesh* and uses it to learn Torah, he goes above his normal abilities in order to learn Torah. This is not about "how much time" one spends in learning. It is rather about how one dedicates his entire being to the Torah and the quality of his connection to his learning.

All of us have the power of *mesirus nefesh* in our own souls. We can all give up our whole being to the Torah. Is a person ready to give himself up for the Torah? This is not a question a person can answer in one second, but a person can certainly reach the point where he is prepared to completely give himself up for Hashem. On Chanukah, the Jewish people showed *mesirus nefesh* by putting their lives at risk. But since they were really fighting for the Torah, their *mesirus nefesh* went even deeper. They were revealing a semblance of *Olam HaBa* (the Next World) **in** this world, in which we are divested of our body and we live as a *neshamah*. The *mesirus nefesh* revealed on Chanukah is to give up our very being in order to understand Torah.

If a person decides that he is ready each day to completely give himself up for the Torah, and approaches his learning in this manner, then he will be guided to understand the Torah through the *ohr*, the light of Chanukah/Torah/*mesirus nefesh*. His connection to his learning will be endless and unlimited, because he won't be able to ever part from the Torah. He has nullified his "being" to the Torah. He becomes *miskalel* (integrated) with the Torah, because he is ready to have *mesirus nefesh* for it.

If one thinks about this and really wants it, and decides that he is ready all the time to have *mesirus nefesh* for his Torah learning, then he will decide daily to learn that he is willing to have complete *mesirus nefesh* for the Torah. Then he will be *zocheh* to the true *ohr* (light) of Chanukah, the power of *mesirus nefesh* for the Torah which reveals an entirely new level of understanding in Torah to a person.

MACHLOKES BETWEEN TZADDIKIM

QUESTION It is brought in *Chazal* that when Yosef was sold, the *Shevatim* made a *Beis Din* to decide, and they included the *Shechinah* in their ruling to sell Yosef. Why did the *Shechinah* agree to them? And why were the *Shevatim* punished for the sale of Yosef, if their ruling in *Beis Din* had the consent of the *Shechinah*? **ANSWER** Because of the rule בדרך שאדם רוצה לילך מוליכין אותו “In the way a person wants to go in, he is led.”

QUESTION Why did Rabbi Yishmael Kohen Gadol have to undergo such torture when he was killed by the Romans? **ANSWER** (1) Because, as is well-known, all of the ten martyrs were a result of the ten drops of seed that escaped Yosef’s body when he was trying to get away from Potiphar’s wife. *Shaar HaGilgulim* says that Rabbi Yishmael Kohen Gadol was tortured the most of all the ten martyrs because he was a reincarnation of Yosef himself. According to another view, however, the ten martyrs were an atonement for the sale of Yosef. (2) *Rabbeinu Bechaye (Vayei-shev 38:1)* says that Yosef caused his own sale and therefore he is included in the ten brothers who sold Yosef. Thus there had to be ten martyrs to atone for the ten brothers who took part in Yosef’s sale. (3) And, on a deeper level, it was because Yosef was the “root” of the brothers, therefore he was punished more than all the other brothers. That is why Rabbi Yishmael Kohen Gadol, who was a reincarnation of Yosef, was tortured the most of all the ten martyrs.

QUESTION In the *Kinnos*, we cry over the ten holy martyrs who were killed *al kiddush Hashem* by the Romans, but astoundingly there is a novel interpretation from *Rabbeinu Bechaye (parshas Mikeitz 44:17)* who says that a miracle happened and their bodies were switched with *goyim* who were killed instead of them – and in addition they didn’t even suffer any pain! Also, the

sefer Arvei Nachal (parshas Masei) says that he has a tradition that anyone killed *al kiddush Hashem* doesn’t feel any pain. So, according to *Rabbeinu Bechayeh*, these sages were not killed, nor did they suffer any physical pain. According to his novel interpretation, why then do we need to cry over them during *Kinnos* if really they weren’t killed because their bodies were miraculously switched for *goyim* instead of them? **ANSWER** There is the “mode of nature” (*teva*), and in that mode of nature there, was a decree of death on them, and therefore we cry over the destruction that was unleashed on them in the form of the harsh decree on them. Those sages rose from the mode of nature and went above it, through a miracle. But the decree remained in the natural world and it wasn’t annulled. So the crying over them is not about the results of the decree (if they would be sentenced to die or not). Rather our crying over them was about the very decree itself, the destruction that had descended onto the world and which was dominating then, regardless of what the results of it would be.

QUESTION Whenever the *tzaddikim* disagreed with each other’s views, was it because they each had a clear knowledge that the other *tzaddik* was presenting a view according to his unique soul root (*shoresh neshamah*)? Or was it instead that each *tzaddik* held that the other *tzaddik* was totally wrong? **ANSWER** It depended on the situation. Usually, a *tzaddik* whose soul root was in *ohr pnimi* (internal light) did not recognize this concept [of validating the other *tzaddik*’s view], whereas a *tzaddik* whose soul was rooted in *ohr makif* (surrounding light) was more aware of this concept [of validating the other *tzaddik*’s view in spite of their disagreement].

QUESTION It is said that the Gra accused the Chassidic movement of being followers of Shabsai Tzvi. What was this fundamental *machlokes* all about? **ANSWER** Much ink and paper has been written on this, and it is an elaborate

subject. Briefly, the Gra’s Torah teachings were rooted in the light of the first 6000 years of the world, whereas the root of *Chassidus* is to draw forth the light of Mashiach and usher in the days of Mashiach, to draw the illumination of Mashiach into the current dimension. That is the root of the entire argument and differences between the Gra and *Chassidus*.

QUESTION How it is possible that a *tzaddik* should say that someone needs to attach himself only to his Torah teachings and to no one else’s? Aren’t there many ways to serve Hashem, as we see from the 12 different tribes, who are called the “12 tribes of Hashem”, who each represent a different path of serving Hashem? **ANSWER** Each *tzaddik* held that his particular approach was the *shaar hakolel*, the all-inclusive “gateway”, which contains all 12 general paths in serving the Creator (as explained in *sefer Igra D’Kallah*). This is well-known. Therefore, each *tzaddik* held that anyone who didn’t become attached to his all-inclusive “gateway” would merit only a “diffused” light (*ohr prat*), without a “collective” light (*ohr kolel*).

QUESTION Which way of serving Hashem is the right one, the *Litvish* way or the way of *Chassidus*? And can both of them be right? **ANSWER** There are many ways in serving Hashem, and all of them are *emes* (truth). In my upbringing, in the beginning of my years when my mind began to open up and mature, I learned in Yeshivas Pachad Yitzchok, by my teacher, HaGaon Rabbi Yonasan David, shlit”a. From him, I received an inner way of looking at the Torah, in his *beis midrash (Pachad Yitzchok)* which was founded by Rav Yitzchok Hutner *zt”l*, who said on himself, “To the Litvish, I am too Chassidish, and to the Chassidish, I am too Litvish.” It was there where an atmosphere of *pnimiyus* took hold, where all parts of Torah are gathered together and fused together, though it was not always openly recognizable there. After that, I learned from the Rosh Yeshivah

[of Ponovezh], HaGaon Rav Gershon Edelstein *shlit"á*. I spoke with him at length about general topics, as well as this topic in particular [fusing *Chassidus* into the *Litvish* way of serving Hashem]. I asked him: "When teaching many others, should I also bring *Chassidus* in?" He answered me, "I already received certain concepts from Rav Dessler *zt"l*, and you can see that Rav Dessler often quotes Chassidic concepts, in *sefer Michtav M'Eliahu*." He also said to me, "Do not be fazed by people who will oppose you because of this."

QUESTION How do we know if someone is a *Gadol* or a *tzaddik*? Is it only if other *Gedolim* or *tzaddikim* recognize this person's greatness and they testify that he is a *Gadol*? **ANSWER** Usually we cannot know for sure, because a person only sees another with his eyes, and only Hashem can see what lies in a person's heart. There are certain external credentials that we first need to research: How great is he in Torah? In his deeds? In his *middos*? In his devotion to Hashem? And there are other areas as well. One needs to feel the other out with an inner sense in his heart, along with *davening* to Hashem, in order to be *zocheh* to recognize the truth.

QUESTION What is the attitude to have about a big *machlokes* (dissension) that has been enveloping a big, prestigious *yeshiva* in *Eretz Yisrael* for several years already? **ANSWER** In the final generation, the concept of *ra* (evil) is unleashed from its potential and becomes fully activated, as the *Daas Tevunos* speaks about at length. It becomes released everywhere, and this heavy amount of evil counters & prevents all the holiness [when *Mashiach* arrives] so that there can be an equal counterbalance between good and evil. However, *machlokes* (dissension) is rooted in *kedushah* (holiness). At the root, there is "one Torah" for the entire Jewish people, but in our world, the "one Torah" extends into two parts, the Written To-

rah and the Oral Torah. That division is the root of all *machlokes* within Torah. This division extends further, where there can be 2 aspects within 1 matter: "2 *dinim*", 2 different *halachos*, for each matter of the Torah. The division goes even further and then becomes either a *safek* (doubt) or a *machlokes* (argument), beginning with the very first *machlokes* in *Klal Yisrael*, which was about doing *semichah* on *korbonos*. All of that is the root and the extension of *machlokes*, where it all stays within *kedushah*. But when *machlokes* extends into the lower worlds, which are less spiritually refined than the higher worlds, it becomes an active argument and can turn into a heated divisiveness between people, and it draws its strength from the concept of *machlokes* that exists in Torah, in *kedushah* [because the *kelipos*, the side of evil, nurses its vitality from *kedushah*]. *Chazal* said that at first there is disagreement between Torah scholars when they argue about Torah together, and they become enemies to each other, but eventually they come to love each other. However, that is only when they are *zocheh* (meritorious), but when they are not *zocheh*, they remain enemies with each other. And this becomes manifest in their physical worlds, in the form of bad *middos* and unleashing their unrestrained aspects of character at each other. When *machlokes* gets ugly like this, it is really rooted in the *machlokes* of the brothers versus *Yosef*. The brothers were so divided against *Yosef* that they couldn't talk to him and they threw him into the pit lined with snakes and scorpions [to let him be killed there]. It is this kind of *machlokes* between people that prevents *Mashiach ben Yosef* and *Mashiach ben Dovid* from becoming connected with each other, which delays the *Geulah*. However, at its deepest root, even a *machlokes* like this is still rooted in a *machlokes l'sheim shomayim*, for the sake of Heaven. At its root, it is pure, but the *machlokes* "branches" [down into the lower worlds. It

becomes turned] into the opposite of *l'sheim shomayim*, where it nurses its vitality from the *alma d'piruda*, the "disparate world" that we live in, which are the lower worlds of Creation [where something that is rooted in *kedushah* can become twisted around for evil uses].

QUESTION How should we view a *machlokes* between *Gedolim*? Do we need to understand both sides of the matter, or should we not involve ourselves at all in this matter? And, how should we react to a person who shows disrespect to a known *Gadol*? **ANSWER** Don't be involved with this at all. Instead, just be aware that the world today is surrounded by the *shaar haNun d'tumah* ("50TH Gate of Defilement"), and that is why so many different forms of *tumah* and errors are dominant, affecting all of the actions, emotions, and thoughts of the generation, both in external reality as well as the internal reality of souls. Everything today has all become one giant mixture of every influence, and this is because of the *tumah* of the *Erev Rav*, which means *taaruvos rabbah*, "great mixture", a confusing situation which dominates the final days. We need to scream out to Hashem, with *mesirus nefesh*, for the complete *Geulah*. However, wherever you live, you still need to know how you should go about this practically. In order to voice any protests against another person [who speaks disrespectfully about any of the *Gedolim*], you first need to clarify well the details involved [i.e. what exactly the person said, etc.]. Instead of protesting against the person, you should simply suggest to him that he shouldn't involve himself in these matters, because he might get "burned" by others. An exception to this would be if the person in question is fighting *l'sheim shomayim* (for the sake of Heaven and not for his own sake).