

MESIRUS NEFESH – THEN & NOW

The purpose of *yetzias Mitzrayim* (leaving Egypt) was not yet complete upon leaving Egypt. Their *Geulah* wasn't complete yet, because the Egyptians would still chase after them and they knew that they were still in danger. Only later, at *Kerias Yam Suf* (the splitting of the sea) when the water came crashing down on the Egyptians was the *galus* of Egypt finally over for them, and now their *Geulah* was complete.

The *Ohr HaChaim* (*Shemos 14:10*) says a few significant points. (1) In Egypt, the depravity of the country had reached such a low that the Jewish people were steeped in the “49th gate of impurity”, and had the Jewish people remained even one more moment in Egypt, they would have descended into the “50th gate of impurity” (*shaar haNun d'tumah*) which is impossible to come out of. (2) In the final *Galus*, the Jewish people will enter into the “50th gate of impurity” (as we can see before our own eyes today, with the abysmally low spiritual situation of the people today in the final generation). (3) The “50th gate of impurity”, which the Jewish people will enter into in the final generation, is *meenus* and *apikorsus* (beliefs that are heretical to the Torah, and denial of G-d and the Torah).

It is clear that we were able to leave the 49th gate of impurity in Egypt only because of what *Chazal* said, that we kept three things – we didn't change our names, our style of dress, and our language. However, in order to go free from the 50th gate of impurity in the final days, the *Ohr HaChaim* says that even this isn't enough. The only way, he says, is through the power of the Torah!

Truthfully, this is a very deep matter. What did the *Ohr HaChaim* mean, that only through the power of the Torah we can go out of the 50th gate of impurity? Don't we see that people can learn Torah today yet they can still be defiling themselves with the *shaar haNun d'tumah*? Although the rule is that “The words of Torah do not become *tamei*”, the Torah can never become impure, this does not necessarily mean that one who just learns Torah will free himself from all the bad influences of today...

We must know that the root of the *Geulah* was told to us at *Keriyas Yam Suf*, when Moshe entreated Hashem about what to do, and Hashem said, “Why do you scream out to me? Now, it is *b'Atika talya milsa*” (*Zohar Beshalach 52b*) – it now depends on “*Atik*” [we shall soon explain what this is]. That is the inner power that our soul can use, to be able to be redeemed, from the *shaar haNun* which we are found in today. The Torah has in it “49 reasons to declare something *tahor* (pure) and 49 reasons to make something *tamei* (defiled)”, as a hint that the Torah takes a person out of the 49 first levels of *tumah*. But what is the power of Torah that takes a person out

of the 50th level of *tumah*, which we are found in today, as the *Ohr HaChaim* wrote about? It is hidden within the depths of the Torah. If a person doesn't reveal it, though, and he lets it stay hidden in him without accessing it, then the 50th level of *tumah* will certainly be in control over him, *Rachmana Litzlan*.

The final generation is not like the previous generations. The *Meor Einayim* (*parshas Chukas*) writes that in the final generations, there will be a more inner revelation of the Torah. It is clear that this is the remedy which Hashem has made available for the spiritual diseases of our times, and only through this, will the Jewish people come out of the 50th level of *tumah* that rules over the entire world today.

What is the difference between the 49 gates of *tumah* that the people sank to in Egypt, with the 50th gate of *tumah* that we are in today? The *Mesillas Yesharim* says that the purpose of our existence is to get close to Hashem and to be *davuk* (attached) in Hashem, to break the barriers between us and Hashem, until we are drawn after Him like a magnet that is pulled towards an iron stone.

There is a rule of *Zeh l'umas zeh*, that there is an equal counterbalance between *kedushah* (holiness) and *tumah* (impurity). Just as in *kedushah* there exists an ability to be drawn after closeness with Hashem, so is there an ability in the side of *tumah* to become attached with evil, *Rachmana Litzlan*. As the Gemara (*Avodah Zarah 17a*) says, “Since he is attached (*aduk*) to the sin very much, it is like *meenus* (heretical beliefs).”

There are two equally powerful inclinations in our times – a great *yetzer tov*, a desire for closeness with Hashem, as well as a strong *yetzer hora* to become connected with evil, and the only way to separate from these magnetic attractions towards evil can only be through the power of *mesirus nefesh* (sacrificing for Hashem).

The innermost level of the *kelipah* (the power of evil) has such a strong pull that it is naturally impossible to be saved from it! There was a story where Reb Noson went to go see his *rebbe* Reb Nachman of Bresslev, and along the way, Reb Noson saw something indecent. When he came to his *rebbe*, Reb Nachman immediately said to him, “There is a very strong *kelipah* which is impossible to be saved from.” [Unless a person has *mesirus nefesh*, which will be explained soon].

That is what dominates today – it is all the darkness of the *kelipah*. A person is pulled after this *kelipah* like a magnet. And when a person is being controlled by the *kelipah* after he connects himself to it, his feelings become dulled and he doesn't even feel like he's being pulled after it, once he has already been pulled. The person has become attached to the *kelipah* [instead of *d'veykus* in Hashem, the person is having *d'veykus* in the *kelipah*, *Rachmana Litzlan*].

But Hashem provided the remedy for this already from before, through the words of the *sefarim hakedoshim* [the *Ohr HaChaim* and *Meohr Einayim* in the name of the Baal Shem Tov] which revealed to us the secret of an inner level of Torah that can take us out from all of this. It is a *pnimiyus*, an inner level of Torah, which is not only for people on a *high madreigah* (level), but something which is absolutely necessary for anyone today, if he is to survive. This is not something that depends on a person's *madreigah*. Compare this to a person who becomes a *ger* (convert) in between Pesach and Shavuot. Since Shavuot comes after Pesach, does that mean he is not obligated in Shavuot because he didn't have a Pesach yet? Of course not, because it is now the time to observe Shavuot no matter what level he is on right now. The Torah applies to a person no matter what his level is. Since we are in a time where the innermost level of the *kelipah* is out in full force, that means that we also have an equally powerful light of *kedushah* that Hashem has given us which can counter it: The *shaar haNun d'kedushah*, the 50th level of holiness.

Yes, there are different kinds of *yetzer hora* today as we there always was, there are struggles and challenges, and any *oved Hashem* today faces all kinds of hardships today when trying to serve Hashem faithfully. Sometimes there are successes and sometimes there are failures. But that was all the way things looked until now, in which we only had to deal with 49 levels of *tumah*. In the times we are in now, and as time continues, the *tumah* in our world today is a *kelipah* that one cannot naturally be saved from, and there is only one way of advice: to live with the reality of *Hashem Echad* (there is only one reality: Hashem's Presence fills all of the world), to always be thinking of this at the forefront of our minds. The *Arizal* said that when saying *Shema*, by the word *Echad*, one should have the intention that he will give up his life for Hashem. The purpose of everything is to arrive at the recognition of *Hashem Echad*, and we are now in a time where we must reveal *Hashem Echad*. The *avodah* today is, "The earlier ones were *moser nefesh* (they gave up their lives) *al kiddush Hashem*." (*Berachos 20a*). When the *kelipah* is in control as in today's times, there is no advice other than to live with *Hashem Echad* at all times.

This is not a *vort* (insight) or some nice food for thought. We must know the situation very well. Maybe a person will ask: But there are no prophets today to tell it to us! No one has to reveal it to us today, because it has already been written in the *sefarim*, and it has been received by all of *Klal Yisrael* in the words of *Raboseinu*. There is nothing new here. It has all been written about and explained already. The words have been written down in the *sefarim* for all the generations to come, and they are in the words of the *Ohr HaChaim* and *Baal Shem Tov*, and other *tzaddikim*. The *kelipah* which we are found in today is the *shaar haNun d'tumah*, and it is clear that from then onward, more than 200 years later, the *kelipah* continues to get stronger, and anyone today can see how far it has reached. But it is also clear that Hashem sent us a *kedushah* in a time where we need it, to counter the evil of the *kelipah* (as the *Meohr Einayim* said in the name of the *Baal Shem*).

It is wonderful to improve our *middos*, our *emunah*, our Torah learning, and anything else that's holy and pure. But for us, who live in the final generation, all of that advice alone will not help us. Only if we have *mesirus nefesh* for Hashem, if we are willing to give up our lives for Hashem, can we come out of the *kelipah* that is the *shaar haNun*. But if not, then *Rachmana Litzlan*, even a *ben aliyah* today faces the "*Olam HaTemuros*", the "world of exchanges", with all of its tests that are impossible to be saved from.

Now we will say this in clearer terms. The *kelipah* that is the *shaar haNun d'tumah* is an illogical kind of evil that we simply cannot simply understand it or feel it. A person is drawn after it magnetically, without even being aware of it. There is no one today who isn't pulled after it. A person might say, "I checked myself and I don't seem to have the problem", but this is only because he doesn't recognize the pull. The *shaar haNun d'tumah* pulls everyone towards it, unless a person is truly and deeply *davuk* in Hashem, in his heart.

The confusion today about basic concepts, as well as the general lack of *ruchniyus* today, has created an illusion that fools people. A person today can pass to everyone as someone who is always "immersed in learning Torah", immersed in doing the *mitzvos* and careful with *dikduk hadin*, and he seems to be a *ben aliyah* (a growing person) a *mevakesh* (someone who searches for more growth) and an *oved Hashem* (someone who serves Hashem), and all other important titles, but the truth is that if someone understands what's really going on in the *pnimiyus*, he sees that there is nothing of the sort here. Usually, not only hasn't a person completed his *avodas Hashem* yet - he hasn't even started, to enter into *pnimiyus*.

The simple, basic *pnimiyus* which a person needs is: To have a simple bond with Hashem, to live simply and earnestly with Him. At the *pnimiyus* of everything, we can find Hashem, and to the extent that one leaves his personal Egypt, he will grow closer to Hashem.

Therefore, just externally observing the Torah today, even with good intentions, is not enough today to be saved from the *tumah* of today. A person has to know the situation he is in, the time period of history that he is found in, so that he can be a counterforce to the *tumah* of today. We need to know what situation we are in, what's preventing us. The great pursuit of materialism today has caused people to forget about Hashem - not only in the sense that people don't think about Hashem enough, but mainly so in that people do not live in their hearts with Hashem, they don't really live with His Presence as an actual ongoing part of their lives. They know about Hashem, but they have forgotten Him from their hearts. "*And your hearts will grow haughty and you will forget Hashem*." And another big problem today is the many different desires of the *yetzer hora* today which people are chasing, which contains all of the world's nonsense. These factors have a pull on a person, whether he is aware of it or not. What is the advice to get out of it? It is by being willing, every moment, to leave the world of falsity (*alma d'shikra*). It is like the words of the *sefer Tzettil Kattan*, that a person should always imagine that he is being

thrown into a furnace and to sanctify his life in the name of Hashem, rather than commit an *aveirah*. This is the first, basic point which saves a person from this world of falsity. If a person cannot fathom this, it can only be because he is very attached to this world.

With just a little contemplation, anyone can know that the world of truth which awaits us is certainly better than this world of falsity that we live on. Why, then, do we resist this truth? What is holding back our hearts from immediately leaving behind this world of falsity and crossing over into the world of truth, the “world that is entirely good”? This is not an intellectual point to grapple with, it is an *inner matter* about where our soul is connected to, an issue of being willing or not to let go of the world of falsity that we are used to. If a person really wants to go free from falsity, he must be very clear of what his obligation on this world is, of what he is doing here and for what purpose he came down onto the world. When one becomes clear that the purpose of him coming to the world was to reach closeness with Hashem, it will be simple and clear to him that he should want to leave this world of falsity at all times.

When one has a desire to remain on this world, this is what's preventing him from having a real connection with Hashem. Only with simply recognizing our purpose of coming down here, along with recognizing that we are on a world of falsity, and being clear that there is only one true place for us to be in – only with this will we have the one single way that can save us from the *shaar haNun d'tumah*. If a person will say, “But this is such a high level to be on! Where will we get such an ability to think like this?”, this can only be because he has never truly entered into the inner world yet. There is an illumination of *pnimiyus* that is radiating in our times today, and if one searches for it, he will certainly find it. If he doesn't search for it, though, he will certainly fall, because we are facing today the *kelipah* that draws everyone towards it like a magnet.

These words are not *mussar* (rebuke) nor *hisorerus* (inspiration). This is an issue of our very life, a point which our very life depends on. It is about what situation we are in and where we stand.

The *sefarim hakedoshim* said that the statement of the Zohar, “*B'Atika talya milsa*” is the secret of the final *Geulah*, which reveals “*Atik*”, the deeper purpose of Creation. *Atik* means to copy – to become a copy of the higher world and reflect it into our own soul, so that we are no longer our own selves, but a “copy”, a reflection, of the upper world, of the true reality. It is when a person is not thinking about himself and he is not thinking about fulfilling his own desires, and his thoughts are focused solely on the One Individual, Who Is Hashem.

When Nachshon jumped into the sea, this was *mesirus nefesh*, and then the sea was split, leading to the *Shirah* and great revelations where even a person on the lowest level perceived more than Yechezkel HaNavi. It was where Hashem was revealed to them. All of this revelation came from the *mesirus nefesh* of Nachshon when he jumped into the sea, in which he was

willing to leave behind this world of falsity. When Nachshon jumped, did he think that he would die and just disappear? *Chas v'shalom!* He knew that he was leaving behind this world and that he would become bound with Hashem, because after a person dies, he sees Hashem. (As the *Zohar* says, “*They shall not see Me and live*” means that only in their lives they cannot see Me, but in their deaths, they can see Me.”)

There is no advice and no logic to get around what Hashem wants from us. We must become clear about what our situation is, and what the advice for it is. The advice has already been written in the words of *Raboseinu*, and they are clear. It is just that people are used to other kinds of advice which worked in the past, and because people have grown used to it they don't want to hear anything else. Is it for nothing that Hashem has revealed the *pnimiyus* in our times? It is the *pnimiyus* found in front of us, which the *Baal Shem* and *Ohr HaChaim* wrote about as being absolutely necessary for anyone's soul survival today. This is not a matter reserved for people on a high *madreigah* or for people who want to become holier (*kadosh*) or for people who are coming to purify themselves (*haba l'taher*). There is no advice today to survive, other than this.

And now we can understand the depths of the words of the *Ohr HaChaim* that in the final exile, *Klal Yisrael* will enter into the 50th level of *tumah* but they will go out from it with the power of the Torah. *Chazal* said that for every word of Torah which the people heard at Har Sinai, their souls flew out of them. This was not by chance, because it is the very way which the Torah has to be received. The simple reason why their souls left them then was because “Torah does not last with a person unless he kills himself over it.” But there is more to it. The *Ohr HaChaim* (*parshas Shemini*) said that Nadav and Avihu died through “Hashem's kiss”, meaning that they felt such an intense connection and yearning for Hashem that their souls left them from the experience, and that is how they died. The 50th level of *kedushah*, which is the inner level of the Torah, is when a person is drawn after it with a very strong pull, to the point that he is willing to give himself up to Hashem for it, just as everyone's souls flew out of their bodies for every word of Torah they heard at Har Sinai. When Hashem came down onto Har Sinai, it was this deep revelation of Torah in which a person is pulled after the Torah so strongly that he is willing to die for it.

The words here are really simple and clear, but each person needs to become clear about these words on his own. May Hashem help us that these words should go into the hearts of those who heard it, not just as inspiration which comes and goes. May it become clear to us what test we are facing today, and what one's personal obligation is in this generation. Through believing completely in the words of *Raboseinu* and using the advice which they have written, with the understanding of the *kelipah* of today and how to come out from it – this can bring the entire world to its complete *Geulah*, may it come quickly.

EMUNAH BEFORE THE GEULAH

QUESTION *Why should we be informed what the truth is, if it's going to cause us so much pain? And from where can we draw out simchah (joy) in such shaky times that we're in?*

ANSWER It says in Koheles, "An increase of knowledge is an increase of pain." The Kotzker said, "It is pitiful to the person who doesn't want to know anything truth, just because he doesn't want to have more pain." It is necessary for a person to know about the situation we are in, so that he can be saved from harm. Because if he doesn't know the situation he is in, he is like a blind person walking in the dark near the bank of a river. Knowing the truth about the situation in our world today certainly adds a lot of pain to us, and it is part of joining with the pain of the Shechinah, as Chazal speak about.

Simchah (joy) has to mainly come from becoming internally and deeply connected to the special share in *ruchniyus* that one has on this world, and more specifically, from being his unique closeness to Hashem that he can reach - from the **emunah peshutah** that Hashem is running His world, and that everything He does is all good.

QUESTION *Are we able to be calm and serene now, through having bitachon and relying on Hashem that He will send a big awakening to Klal Yisrael before Mashiach so that all of us will be deserving of Mashiach?*

ANSWER Yes. But there is also a responsibility upon each person now, according to his ability, to remove himself from today's *tumah* so that he can reveal *kedushah*.

QUESTION *If a person makes sure to live his life to do the will of Hashem, will he be saved from tragedies and hard times that befall the world?*

ANSWER The Rambam (*Moreh Nevuchim*, III, perek 51-53) discusses this a

lot, and the Rambam there explains that the more a person is *davuk* (attached) to Hashem, the more protection he gains from Hashem, and he will be saved more from tragedies, even on this world. This is called *Hashgacha Peratis* (gaining individual protection from Hashem), and it is different for each person depending on what his personal level is. And Chazal taught on the verse, ה' צלך *"Hashem is your shadow"*, כשם שאתה הווה לו כך הוא *"Just as you exist to Him, so will He exist for you"* [The more you think of Hashem and make Him real to you, the more He will protect you. See *sefer Nefesh HaChaim shaar III*].

QUESTION *Is there such a thing that if a person says "Thank you" to Hashem for his troubles and suffering, he "sweetens all the dinim" (harsh judgments) on him in those areas that he is suffering in, as well as "sweetening" all of his suffering in general?*

ANSWER Yes - if he says it from his heart. It has to be פיו ולבו שוין, his mouth and heart must be aligned [he has to really mean what he says].

QUESTION *How does a person reach the shaar haNun d'kedushah?*

ANSWER It is accessed when a person has a balance between 2 different deep abilities that we have: The ability to deeply involve our thoughts in Torah [in Torah], as well as the ability to not think at all, just having simple, unquestioning faith in Hashem [*p'shitus*, or *emunah peshutah*]. There are times when a person needs to use his mind to think deeply [such as when he's learning Torah], and at other times a person needs to leave his thinking aside and become simply, non-intellectually attached with Hashem (this is called *p'shitus*). When a person is able to do both of these and he can alternate back and forth between these two states, he has struck the balance, and this is accessing the **shaar haNun d'kedushah**.

QUESTION Up until the last few decades, people could go to great *Rabbonim* and

Mekubalim to do *tikkunim* for them, or to have them *daven* special *tefillos* for them. But today this is almost non-existent. How can we manage without this today, when in the past this had always been a central aspect?

ANSWER Chazal already said of the final generation, the *ikvesa d'meshicha*, "We will have no one to rely on except for our Father in Heaven." (*Sotah 49a*). That is the main **avodah** of the generation today - that we should primarily cast all our concerns and rely, on Hashem alone.

QUESTION How can a person achieve a *tikkun* (soul-repair) today and remove all the things that are holding him back? Of course we all know that a person needs to *daven* a lot, but many times a person can *daven* a lot and he doesn't see any changes, and we know of many stories of people who *davened* a lot and one day they go to a certain Rav who saved them in a short amount of time, or the Rav tells them what their real issue is, etc. In today's times, where we don't have this, how can a person get a *yeshuah*?

ANSWER First a person should fix whatever he knows that he personally needs to fix. After doing that properly, he will be awakened by **Shomayim** (Heaven) to fix whatever else he needs to fix.



בקרוב

בחניות הספרים

ספר נפש החיים שער ד'
עם ביאור בלבבי משכן אבנה