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## בלבבי משכן אבנה

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## BALAK VIEWING OTHERS WITH THE GOOD EYE

### The Different Ways To See & View

Regarding *Parshas Balak*, there is a *Mishnah* of our Sages: "The students of Avraham have a good eye...whereas the students of Bilaam have an evil eye."<sup>1</sup> One has the power to either have a "good eye" towards others, or to have an "evil eye" towards others.

The powers of "good eye" and "evil eye" are part of the soul's power to "see". There is a faculty of imaginary sight, and there is a faculty of realistic sight.

An example of imaginary sight is in the future, when Hashem will slaughter the evil inclination, where the righteous and the wicked will cry. To the righteous, the evil inclination will look like a mountain, and to the wicked, the evil inclination will look like a hair.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the evil inclination is essentially a way to "see" through the lens of imagination.

Another kind of "seeing" is [realistic sight, which is when one sees] through the intellect. This is also called the "eyes of the intellect".<sup>3</sup> As we discussed in *Parshas Shelach*, according to the spiritual level that a person is on, that is how he will see reality. Although

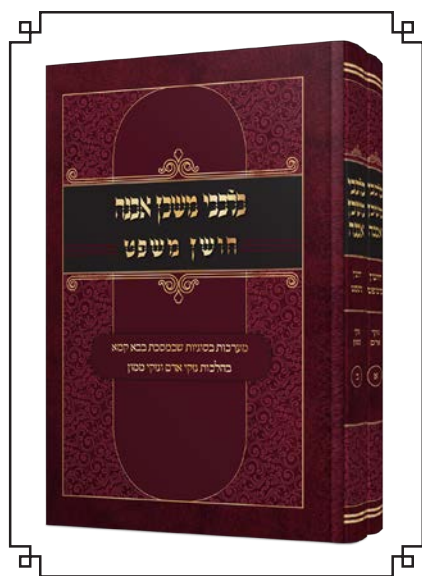
there is always one single reality, each person, depending on his current spiritual level, will see reality differently.

Getting more specific, there is a way to see from a "good eye", *ayin tovah*, and, correspondingly, a way to see from the "evil eye", *ayin ra*. What is the source of the good eye (*ayin tovah*) and bad eye (*ayin ra*)? Where do these powers of sight stem from?

### 1- The Basic Level of Ayin Tovah/ Good Eye - Becoming A More Positive Person

There are several ways of how a person can gain the view of the "good eye" (*ayin tovah*). A basic use of this power is when a person trains himself to see things in a positive light, and to see the good in everything.

Hashem testified that the universe that He created is entirely "good." The depth of this is because Hashem 'carved' out the entire Creation from His own goodness, so to speak, and since there is no such thing as evil in Hashem, the entire Creation, in its very essence, is good. Ever since Adam and Chavah ate from the *Eitz HaDaas Tov V'Ra* (the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil), everything in Creation has become a mix of good and evil. Therefore,



**חושן משפט** (ספר שטרם פורסם מהרב שליט"א)  
מערכות בסוגיות שבמסכת בבא קמא  
בהלכות נזקי אדם ונזקי ממון כרך א' 277  
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בהלכות נזקי אדם ונזקי ממון כרך ב' 567  
עמודים קי"ז תשע"ז

1 Avos 5:19  
2 Sukkah 52a  
3 A term used in sefer Chovos HaLevavos

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the world we see in front of us is a mix of good and evil. Since that is the case, how then can a person see reality with a “good eye”?

One way to gain the view of a “good eye” is as mentioned above: to train oneself to see the good in everything. A person can slowly but surely work on becoming a more positive person, by trying to discover something positive in each thing he comes across. Even when viewing something that seems to be bad, a person can train himself to start seeing the good side in it.

## The Disadvantages With Trying To See The Good In Everything

That is surely a constructive kind of self-work, and it is certainly commendable to do so. However, to remain at this level is superficial. After all, even animals can be trained to do certain things. Therefore, “training” oneself to get used to new habits and thinking patterns is only a superficial kind of growth, so we should not remain at that level. There is more inner work to be done.

There is also a stronger point to consider. On the one hand, it is wonderful to start seeing things in a positive light and to see good in everything, but on the other hand, this might cause a person to distort reality. He will come to deny that there’s anything bad in the world, and he will only see the good, ignoring the reality he encounters.

Also, even when one gets used to seeing the good in everything, he doesn’t change inwardly. He has become used to this habitually, so it is “second nature” to him. However, his

original nature hasn’t yet changed. He has simply learned how to see things differently, but in doing so, he denies reality. So while it is certainly a good thing that he has learned how to see the good in things, there is also a downside to this type of *avodah*.

Even worse, if a person gets used to only seeing the good in things and never the bad, he will train himself to deny that there is any evil in the world, and this is simply not true. Hashem created both good and evil in reality, and we must be wary of the presence of evil in this reality we live in.

If a person gets used to ignoring the evil in the world, he will become more susceptible to the evil influences in the world, because he will not be vigilant of the danger. His spiritual situation is in danger, and he will become connected with evil.

## 2 – Through Love For Others

The following is an additional method, which we can use in order to gain the quality of viewing others with a “good eye”: The more that a person develops a **love** for Hashem’s creations, the better he will be able to view them in a positive light.

Compare this to a father’s love for his child; the father loves the child and therefore he ignores the child’s faults. The love covers over the faults and allows him to see past them. This is the verse, “*Upon all sins, love conceals*”.<sup>4</sup> When there is love, the love covers and conceals any of the evil in the person, enabling you to see past the evil and to view the other in a positive light. There

is a deep force of love in our soul, which wants to see only the good in Creation, and to look past all the evil.

Love is the root of having a “good eye” towards others, and for this reason, a person who has the quality of a “good eye” is of the “students of Avraham”. Avraham Avinu personified the trait of *chessed*/kindness, which is rooted in his great love for all of the creations. Loving others enables you to view others positively. When your soul is connected to the power to love the creations, in turn, you will want to see the good in others, as an automatic byproduct of the love. Thus, a “good eye” doesn’t start with simply trying to have a “good eye” towards others; it is the result of love. What we see from this is that a “good eye” is not simply a superficial kind of training to try to view others positively, but a kind of self-work which must originate from within. The “good eye” does not become acquired merely through habitual kinds of training, but from somewhere deep inside you, from a love, which wants to see the good in Hashem’s creations.

The first method mentioned earlier, where a person tries to get used to seeing others in a positive light, is a superficial method which, if you are persistent in it, can eventually penetrate the soul and affect you internally. This is true about any kind of external self-work. But if you use the 2nd method mentioned – to reveal a love for the creations, which is the inner method – the result will be that you will develop an inner kind of “good eye” towards others.

Even more so, if you connect to the

<sup>4</sup> Mishlei 10:12

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good that is within you and focus on it, this in turn will cause you to see the good in the Creation around you. This is because the more you are connected to your own inward good, the more you will see good in the outside world.

(The same is also true vice versa – the more a person focuses on the evil parts of himself, the more negative a view he will have towards the creations around him.)

## Fighting The Evil In Ourselves While Seeing The Good In Others

This leads us to the following fundamental point.

A person contains a mixture of good and evil in him. His *avodah* is to remove the evil and reveal the good. “*The inclination of the heart of man is evil from his youth*”.<sup>5</sup> We must remove the evil from within us, but how? If there is always evil embedded into us, how do we have the power to remove it?

Simply speaking, we need to wage war with the evil inside us and to keep fighting it. However, it is too difficult for a person to fight evil at every moment of the day. A person cannot live in a state of constant fighting. If he is fighting evil all day, that means he is constantly meeting up with evil and dealing with it. That in itself makes him connected to the evil!

That is why if a person is constantly fighting the evil in himself (and he never connects to his own good), he will usually see evil in others all the time. It is because he is dealing with evil all day, so naturally, he will see the evil everywhere, in everyone he meets. In

contrast to this, if one is involved with much personal self-work, he will be able to see the good in others, and he will only notice evil/faults in himself, not in others.

The *avodah* of a person in acquiring a “good eye” towards others contains a deep contradiction in the soul: To never see evil/faults in others, only their good, and at the same time, to only notice the evil/faults in yourself.

As mentioned earlier, through getting used to only seeing the good in others and ignoring their faults, you can gain a “good eye” towards them. Or, you can use the more inner method, which is to love all creations, and then you will only see good in them. The inner method, however, requires great purity of character, in order for a person to genuinely acquire a pure love for others.

## 3 – Stop Being Judgmental

For this, we can mention the famous words of the Kotzker Rebbe, who explained that the teaching of the Sages “Do not judge your friend until you reach his place” means that you will never fully understand another person, so don’t judge him. Each person is a complete world within himself. It is impossible to see the full picture of another person. You will never fully get down to the subtleties of his character, so you cannot really judge him accurately. You just have to believe that Hashem created him in a certain way, which you will never completely understand.

### In Summary

When you get used to this idea,

you will be able to see others with the “good eye”. It will enable you to only fight the evil within yourself and not to deal with the evil in others, because you will only see the good in others, either because:

- (1) You have become used to focusing only on their positive points.
- (2) Or, because you have developed a love for others.
- (3) Or, because you have learned how to stop being judgmental towards others, since you are aware that you will never fully understand another person’s life.
- (4) Focusing On Our Good

So far, we have discussed how you battle the evil in yourself, while avoiding seeing any evil in others. But as we mentioned, this is only one side of the coin. The second part of our *avodah* is to always reveal our own inner good. A person must be able to see the good in himself.

We certainly have much evil to remove from within ourselves, such as negative character traits, personal agendas, and ulterior, self-serving motivations, which are all called “illnesses” of the soul (*choli hanefesh*). However, along with all of this, we need to mainly focus on the good that is within us. To illustrate this idea, the main *mitzvah* [for a man] is Torah study, and Torah is called “good”, for “there is no good except Torah.”<sup>6</sup> . This implies that we need to mainly immerse ourselves in a place of “good”, as opposed to involving ourselves with our various negative points.

<sup>5</sup> Beraishis 8:21

<sup>6</sup> Avodah Zarah 19b

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## What Is More Important – Torah Learning, or Avodah (Self-Work)?

There are those who feel that their main *avodah* in life is to fight the evil within them, to work on matters of personal *avodah* – with less focus on Torah learning. They learn Torah too, but they place the main emphasis on matters of personal *avodah*, with less emphasis on improving their Torah learning. Let us see how this is a mistaken attitude.

What is the main aspect of life? Is it Torah learning, or personal *avodah*?

If the main point of our life is to be spent on personal *avodah*, a person would be contending all day with evil forces. When the focus is mainly on “*avodah*” and not on Torah learning, such a person, even while he is learning Torah, is only learning it for the sake of purifying himself from his evil inclination. Although *Chazal* state that Torah learning is the remedy for the *yetzer hora* (the evil inclination),<sup>7</sup> this is not the main purpose of Torah study.

(On a subtler note, there are some souls who do have this *avodah* to mainly use Torah study as a way to overcome their *yetzer hora* [but general speaking, this is not the case]).

The truthful approach to take is that the main part of life should be spent on focusing on the “good” (Torah learning), as opposed to placing more of an emphasis on purging ourselves from the “evil” (fixing our character and purifying our inner motiva-

tions). Therefore, our main work in life is with Torah study, which is the “good” of life. That is where we need to mainly connect our souls to. “*And in His Torah he delves, day and night.*”<sup>8</sup> The Torah is referred to as the “good” in the verse, “*For a good purchase I have given to you.*”<sup>9</sup>

Even more so, the ultimate level of connecting to “good” is to connect our soul to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, Who is entirely good [Who is found through Torah study].

Thus, the main part of our life should be to connect to the “good” of life, with less of an emphasis on contending with all of the forces of evil. At the end of the day, we have a *yetzer hora* (evil inclination), and therefore we certainly have an *avodah* to remove evil. But the main emphasis of our *avodah* in this world is with focusing on the “good” that is here – which is each person’s Torah learning.

## The “Good Eye” - The Power of Moshe Rabbeinu

The Sages state the verse “*A good eye, he shall be blessed*” is referring to Moshe Rabbeinu.<sup>10</sup> Why is Moshe the epitome of the “good eye”?

There are many explanations, but along the lines of our discussion, it is because Moshe was utterly connected to the Torah, and to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, through the Torah. The Torah is epitomized as “good”, and the ulti-

mate good is *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*; since Moshe reached the highest level of connecting to the “good” of life, he epitomized the quality of the “good eye”.

The more that a person connects his soul to Torah, and to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, the more he will acquire the “good eye”, because his soul will be in a place of “good”.

From Avraham *Avinu*, who perfected the trait of *chessed* (kindness), which is also known as the power of *ahavah* (love), we received the power to love others, from the depths of the soul.

But after we were given the Torah, we received an even deeper level, which was through Moshe: to experience a dimension where everything is completely good.

Even in the current time we live in, where the world is a terribly disturbing mix of good and evil, it is still possible for us to experience a point where everything is good: being immersed in Torah study.

## In Conclusion

When one learns Torah, during that time, he is removed from this lowly, depraved world, and it is a time where he can “see” the World To Come, even as he lives in This World, as the Sages describe: “*Your world [to come] can be seen in your life.*”<sup>11</sup>

[from BILVAVI ON THE PARSHAH]

<sup>8</sup> Tehillim 1:2

<sup>9</sup> Mishlei 4:2

<sup>10</sup> Tosafos Bava Kamma 92b

<sup>11</sup> Berachos 17a



## Soul-Perception Vs. Intellectual Perception

[Now we will go a step further.] We will be much more connected to our strongest ability if we have a “soul” identification with it – when we are identifying it through the perception of our soul – as opposed to merely identifying it intellectually.

In the previous chapter, we were learning about the step of listing our abilities in order of how dominant they are. We learned how to intellectually identify our strongest ability. But this will not suffice. If we only identify our strongest ability on an intellectual level alone, we will be able to make use of it a little, but we won't be able to connect to it enough and invest our energy into it, and then we won't be getting enough vitality that we really need to be getting from our strongest point. So we also need to identify it with a “soul” perception, which is deeper than intellect.

To illustrate the difference between intellectual perception versus soul perception, when a father identifies with his children, he doesn't just intellectually identify with them, he identifies with them through his soul. He can know and feel in his soul how these are his children and that they are part of him. In the same vein, we should relate to our strongest ability as something which “Hashem has given it to me as a gift, and it is part of me.” Just as when we ask a father “Who are your children?” and he will immediately answer “These are my children”, so too if we would be asked “What is the real you?” we should immediately be able to answer, “The real me is - my strongest ability.”

When we can identify with our strongest ability through our soul's perception, we can then receive wondrous vitality from that identifying. It is also the key to the next stage, which is the stage of actualizing the potential of our stron-

gest ability. Only when our soul can identify with our strongest ability, when we can say on our strongest ability that “That is me, and I am it”, can we be able to do all that's needed to actualize the potential of our strongest ability.

Every person has a great desire to actualize and materialize his true self and find his capabilities. In more precise language, every person has a deeply rooted will to produce himself, to actualize his very self from its potential state. And a person is prepared to do all that's needed, in order to self-actualize. But what happens? Usually a person is not clear who he really is and what he really is, and what he needs to be investing himself in. As a result of that, either he loses his drive to self-actualize, or he spreads himself out over many different directions and he doesn't focus that much on one particular point, instead ‘spreading himself out too thin’ over many different points. Or, he spreads out all his efforts through all sorts of “suggestions” and programs of growth.

But when a person recognizes his unique share on this world, he will then want it and focus on it and put all his energy into it, more than anything else (no matter how good those other goals may be). After all, Chazal said “A person prefers his own one measurement, rather than having ninety measurements of his friend.”<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the more that one's soul is perceiving and identifying with our strongest ability and seeing what his true “I” is – his and no one else's – the more he will direct his will and invest all his efforts, time, and money, into this area.

## Gaining A Soul-Perception Of Our Strongest Ability – Through Thinking About It And Acknowledging It

In order to inwardly identify with our strongest ability, we need to make use of two tools: To ac-

<sup>1</sup> Talmud Bavli Bava Metzia 38a

knowledge it, and to think about it.

Firstly, we need to acknowledge that we have a strong ability and that it is part of us. There are not a small amount of people who deny their best qualities and capabilities, and this comes from a mistaken thinking that they are bad, no good, worthless, unneeded, not socially accepted enough by their friends, etc.<sup>2</sup> And as a result of this, they try to associate themselves with other abilities which they think they have. But when they do this, they bring upon themselves a 'double-whammy': They don't reveal their true capabilities, and in addition to that, they try to attach themselves with abilities that aren't true to who they are, and which they are only 'capable' of as a product of their imagination.

There are also those who don't deny their strong points, but they aren't happy with it. They have learned to 'accept' what their strongest abilities are and they would rather have different strong abilities. They feel like their strong points and capabilities were forced on them and that they didn't have a choice in the matter. This is a sickness! With such a mentality, a person cannot become connected to himself and he cannot be happy with his internal share, and he won't put effort into his strongest ability.

Therefore, when you discover what your strongest point is, you need to agree to that it's a part of you and that you're happy to have it. This is not about "accepting" yourself, it's about happily agreeing and appreciating that this is the ideal and best thing that has been given to you. Let us not wish we could switch our strongest ability for a different one.

We can reach this agreement by recognizing our qualities and capabilities, from an inner and true

look at ourselves<sup>3</sup> (and not from external, biased opinions about who we are). There is no ability in our soul which doesn't have qualities and wondrous capabilities in it! This is because every single ability of our soul, without exception, is an offshoot of the Creator's abilities, as it were. We should not 'accept' – rather, we should happily embrace with open arms - our strongest ability. And we should understand that this is what will bring us to the happiness that we desire and it will bring us to all good. It is precisely through our strongest power that we can fulfill our task on this world, and not through anything else which isn't our true "I."

Thus, when we actualize our strongest ability, we are actualizing our self. In the next step, after we have agreed and happily embraced our strongest ability, it is upon us to invest a lot of thinking into how we can nurture it and actualize it from its potential state, and in the best possible way. We should sit with ourselves and think about it a lot, and come up with ideas on how to do it. And we can also learn the sefarim and consult with friends, on what we need to do with our strongest ability and how we can open it up more. The main thing, though, is to think, in any possible way, about our strongest ability.

When we happily embrace our strongest ability and we are thinking often of how we can use it, that will bring us, with the help of Hashem, to deeply identify with it, not just being intellectually aware of it, but being deeply and inwardly aware of it through our soul's perception. That identifying will connect us to our strongest ability and give us the motivation to invest our energy into it, and in turn, that will give us a wondrous vitality - as Hashem desires.

*2 Sometimes, this denial comes from extreme negative experiences of one's past which led a person into forming certain conclusions that he is mistaken about. Each situation should be examined and judged independently.*

*3 Alternatively, we can learn the sefarim that collect the teachings of Chazal which discuss the qualities and benefits of our strongest ability.*

*Summary: In the previous chapter we explained with *siyata d'shmaya* the fourth stage of recognizing and actualizing our soul: Connecting to our strongest power. It was explained that the soul's main vitality needs to be derived from one's personally strongest power, and in order to do this, one needs to become connected to his personal strongest power by learning how to identify it, through the soul's perception. Then one can invest his efforts into this. However, it's clear that we don't get enough vitality if we are merely identifying and feeling a connection to our strongest power. We need to actualize its potential. In this chapter we shall explain, with the help of Hashem, the fifth practical stage of self-actualization – the stage of actualizing the potential of our strongest power. Through it, we can reach (as Hashem wills it) the innermost desire of our soul – our soul root, the source of our vitality.*

*Much of the points in the previous chapter will be reiterated again, but with additional insights, so that we can link the stage of connecting to our strongest power, with the stage of actualizing its potential.*

## What Does It Mean To Actualize A Potential?

Before we explain how to practically actualize the potential of our strongest power, we first need to explain the very concept of actualizing a potential. There is much to understand about this, which will affect our practical work as well and the results of what we are trying to do here.

The simple way to understanding

“actualizing a potential” is, to materialize our capabilities so that they don't just remain dormant, or to do certain actions that turn an idea into reality, etc. We may be trying to do and achieve something and then, for whatever reason (whether we wanted to or didn't want to), it doesn't materialize. We are stalled and delayed, and our actions didn't lead to anything. By contrast, if our idea or goal materializes and becomes a reality, and we got it done, we have actualized a potential.

For example, a person may want to construct a new home, but he doesn't get into debts, or he can't find property to build it on, or he doesn't have all the legal documents to go ahead with it, or it's not the right time in his life right now to do it. At this stage, building the house is merely a potential which hasn't yet come into fruition. If we remove the factors that are preventing the construction, though, he can have the house built, and how he has actualized his potential idea of building the house, turning it into a reality.

But there is also a deeper way to understand how a potential is actualized: It is when we change the inactive state of a potential and we get it to work. It can also be when we enable something to function at a higher level than before. It is about getting a potential to be working and active, even if it doesn't lead to the action that we want. A potential can be working and being actualized, even if it doesn't lead to any action.

Hashem created everything in the world with an external and internal layer to it. The external layer of

something is its active part, while the internal layer of something is its inner workings and potential – its inner world. Any potential in the internal layer of something can either be inactive or active. If it is inactive, all of its potential lays dormant and unused. A person won't be aware of the unused potential, so he doesn't experience it and doesn't use it. But if a potential is active, its capabilities are revealed, and the person can become aware of it and experience it and use it. When a potential isn't active, it's clearly not being used. But even when it's activated, it might either be working in a non-active way, or it's working in a way that's leading to something active, or it's being actualized right now.

There are very internal potential abilities which might not be active and they are very far from being practically used, but they work in a non-active manner. There are other abilities which are closer to practical and which are only meant for practical work. And then there are abilities which are so attached to the external layer, to the practical aspect, and these abilities carry out the practical, active function of something.

Here are some examples to make this more tangible. The nerves of a person may be inactive and they are not reacting as they should be. The nerves are there, but they aren't working as they should be. Or, the nerves can be active, in which case they are healthy, but they still may not be carrying out their desired function. Finally, the nerves can be active and functioning, enabling a person to carry out physical acts like lifting packages, etc.

# בלבבי משכן אבנה

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כח המים הוא כח יסודי באדם, שמעורר בו את כח התאוה. באופן טבעי כאשר האדם אינו עובד על מידותיו התאוה מתגלית אצלו כמידה רעה, אך כאשר הוא מתקן את מידת התאוה בשורשה - היא הופכת להיות מידה טובה. ספר זה עוסק בביאור פרטי מידת התאוה הרעה שבאדם, והדרכה מעשית לאופן תיקונה.

האופנים שבהם מתגלית מידת התאוה בנפש האדם רבים הם מאוד. בספר זה מובאים ט"ז האופנים היותר עיקריים והיותר בולטים, שבהם מתגלית מידת התאוה בנפש האדם.



בגאולתם של ישראל, ישנה גאולה כללית, וישנה גאולה פרטית. הגאולה הכללית - זוהי הגאולה של כלל כנסת ישראל, והגאולה הפרטית - זוהי הגאולה של כל נפש ונפש פרטית מישראל. היפוכה של הגאולה - זוהי הגלות. ועניינה של הגלות היא, כאשר הדבר איננו נמצא במקומו, אלא הוא גולה ומתגלגל למקום אחר. ומצד כך, בספר זה עסקנו בס"ד לבאר מהי הגלות הפרטית של נפש האדם, וכיצד היא הגאולה הימנה. לאמור, שביארנו מהי הגלות והגאולה בכל אחד מכוחות הנפש, מהכח התחתון ביותר בנפש - כח המעשה, עד הכח העליון ביותר בנפש - כח ההוויה. כיצד כל כח מתראה כאשר הוא איננו נמצא במקומו - בתיקונו, אלא הוא נמצא בגלות, וכיצד כל כח מתראה כאשר הוא נמצא בתיקונו - במקומו, בגאולתו.

אולם, כל עת שלא זכינו לגאולה הכללית השלמה של כלל כנסת ישראל, הרי שאין בידינו להגיע לגאולה הפרטית השלמה של כל נפש מישראל, אך להקטין את הגלות הפרטית - יכולים אנו, ולשם כך מיועד ספר זה.

וכפי שמבואר בדברי רבותינו, כאשר כל אחד ואחד מישראל יזכה לגאול את נפשו מגלותה הפרטית, אזי כל כנסת ישראל יזכו לגאולתם הכללית, במהרה בימינו, אמן.

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