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Inner Bonfire

Growth In Soul, Time, and Place

Generally speaking, there are three ways to grow spiritually: through one's soul, through certain time periods, or through certain physical locations.¹

- 1) **Soul** - If a person grows spiritually through the soul, it means that he has succeeded in inspiring himself to receive new levels of spiritual growth. This can happen either through directly inspiring his own soul, or if he hears others who inspire him.
- 2) **Time** - When a person receives spiritual growth based on certain time periods, it is because there are special spiritual gifts contained in those times that allow for growth such as Shabbos and Yom Tov. Time-based growth can affect a person and help him grow spiritually, even if the person hasn't yet managed to elevate his soul to the point that he can attain this growth independently.
- 3) **Place** - A person can also receive a spiritual boost by being exposed to a certain place – for example, by going to a holy place, such as *Eretz Yisrael*, or a holy burial site of a *tzaddik*².

The Advantage of Growth In Soul Vs. Growth Through Time and Place

However, there is a fundamental difference between receiving growth from one's soul [which is more direct], and with receiving growth from time or a holy place [which are external factors].

When a person attains growth from his own soul, he has reached the new level on his own, resulting in a more permanent change.

Of course, even when a person attains growth via his soul, he can still have ups and downs, but it will only be a temporary fall, for he has ultimately achieved a new level, via his inner exertion to get there. It will become easier for him to get back to that newly attained level, because he still has [embedded] within him the root to get there, since he acquired it within himself.

1 Everything exists in three dimensions: place, time, and soul as explained in Sefer Yetzirah, III. This is based on the concept of "Olam, Shanah, Nefesh"

2 The sefarim hakedoshim mention that a tzaddik's grave is as holy as if it were in Eretz Yisrael, even if it is outside Eretz Yisrael".

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In contrast, any spiritual growth based on a certain time or holy place is external only, and it will be dependent on the holiness of the time or place. It is also temporary and therefore it does not retain the same permanence as soul-based growth.

Though people may feel temporarily elated after visiting holy places, they often soon resume their routine life [and sink back to their previous spiritual level]. When a time of growth is over – for example, when Shabbos or Yom Tov ends – or when a person leaves a holy place, the actual spiritual effects of the holiness fade. He is only left with a certain impression of the previous growth, a shadow or reminder of what he once reached and what he could yet achieve. We can see it clearly: People go to holy places and feel spiritually elevated but then they return to their routine life and all of the inspiration is forgotten.

When spiritual growth comes from a certain time or place, it is similar to when a person becomes spiritually uplifted by another person. Since the other person's inspiration is external, the effect is more likely to be temporary unless a person works hard to integrate it into his own soul. When the other person leaves, the spiritual effect often dissipates.

Tools To Maintain Inspiration

Thus, a person's inner task is two-fold. He can reach higher levels of internal spiritual growth by working hard on himself and using tools that can assist with permanent change. He can also realize that any lasting benefits of growth dependent on external holiness (time, place or person) may be fleeting and merely provide a temporary impression unless he works hard to integrate it through corresponding internal spiritual work.

There are pros and cons to being inspired by external factors such as holy people, times or places. The advantages are that a person is able to receive a much higher spiritual boost than his current level. One can still receive those great levels, relatively quickly, without working hard to elevate one's soul. On the other hand, the disadvantage of external spiritual elevation is that a person will struggle to maintain the high level after the holy time or place or person has disappeared. One may become frustrated when recalling his temporary boost and at his failing to maintain it afterwards.

This is a very subtle but important point. Misconception could result if one is unaware of it. A person may experience great elation on a certain Shabbos and feel that he has ascended spiritually. However, what happens on Sunday? He remembers how he felt on Shabbos, and then he tries to relive the spiritual high. However, since his spiritual growth in this instance was sourced purely from a holy day [and it wasn't matched with corresponding internal growth], the effects will dissipate with time; trying to recreate Shabbos on Sunday when we have not grown internally is like living in a fantasy world.

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Certainly it is possible for us to feel the spirituality of Shabbos even on Sunday, but only if one has worked on himself to a point where he is able to reach the levels independently, and by acquiring the inner tools that would enable him to maintain the level of Shabbos. Without either of these two factors, one is only left with a faint “imprint” of Shabbos after Shabbos. This ‘imprint’ can certainly instill in him a burning desire to return to those moments of elation, but one will still need to implement these two points in order for the spiritual growth to stay with him.

When a person is aware that all the levels he has reached were only through his mental capacities, then he views these levels as something delightful which Hashem has given to him. Why? He is aware that his mental capacities were all temporary moments of elation, but that they were not yet etched into his soul. He also views them as an ‘indicator’ that shows he has grown spiritually. But if a person is always thinking about these levels, but really hasn’t yet acquired them, then he is just imagining things. Usually, this problem occurs when people become very inspired from reading a *sefer* or hearing a Torah lecture.

When it comes to growth we receive from times or places, the danger [of self-delusion] is greater. This is because at the time that the person felt the spiritual growth – such as Shabbos – there was a true feeling, and it is hard for one to free himself from the intensity of the feelings he remembers. Yesterday, the feeling was there, but today, the feeling is gone.

We can give a simple example that helps us understand this idea very well. On Sukkos, a person shakes his *lulav* and *esrog*. If someone comes to shul on Chanukah with his *lulav* and *esrog*, he would be a laughingstock. Everything has its time and place. Yet, those who have yet to internalize and maintain the spiritual growth of the holy days throughout the rest of the year are dependent on the spiritual boost of the external, physical *mitzvos*. Their spiritual level is reliant on these physical times, places and actions so that they yearn to connect this way all year or at inappropriate times.

Heart Matters Are Not Understood Every Day

On *Lag BaOmer*, the day’s spiritual gifts are in the realm of “the gates of wisdom are opened.” This essentially means that one’s soul can receive levels which one normally can’t absorb. But we must understand that the levels we can attain on this day are temporary and only last for the day of *Lag BaOmer*.

At first glance, this may sound strange. One might say, “If I have already comprehended it, how can it be that I will lose my comprehension of it?! If you told me yesterday that two plus one is three, then why would I forget about this the next day?!”

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But that is the mistake. The soul's wisdom does not refer to intellectual matters; rather, it refers to words that come alive in the inner world of the soul. Intellect and understanding are not the same thing. Intellect is referred to as *seichel*, while understanding, *havanah*, is known as "*avanta d'liba* (*"understanding of the heart"*).³ There are many smart people in the world, but knowing something with your brain is not the same thing as absorbing something in your heart. There is a very big difference between the mind's intellectual knowledge and the heart's knowledge of understanding.

Thus, if a person is aware in advance that whatever he reaches on *Lag BaOmer* will not last when *Lag BaOmer* ends, then he will know how to receive the spirituality of this day properly. He will be less likely to "lose heart" when the levels he has attained on this day inevitably disappear, and less likely to pressure himself that it was supposed to remain permanently. Instead, one will simply have an inner push to return to these levels and internalize them [by doing the soul work that is involved].

This is possibly the meaning of the statement in *Chazal* that "*Every day, the words of Torah should be to you like new.*"⁴ What does this mean? A lot of ink has been spent on explaining this. But it appears to mean that even if you understood something yesterday, that doesn't necessarily mean that you will understand it tomorrow. A matter may have entered your intellect, but has not yet been solidified in your heart. Sometimes the next day brings additional understanding deeper than the previous day's level, if one has managed to purify oneself in the interim.

We are referring to deep, subtle matters which must be **lived**, in order to be understood and internalized. We are often familiar with only an intellectual understanding of a matter, which is usually permanently retained. In contrast, heart understanding is unique in that it is not anchored in the heart in the same way as intellectual knowledge is anchored in the brain. Thus, with heart understanding, there is a risk that its gain will merely be temporary and ephemeral (unless we do constant, inner *avodah* to maintain it).

This distinction is crucial to understanding the wisdom of the Creator. Our intellect is cold, simple, and rational. In contrast, "heart" matters - such as searching for Godliness - are like a "burning fire." Only the heart can understand Godly matters, not the intellect. And the heart is accessed through *avanta d'liba*, an inner understanding, which can only be accessed during certain times such as *Lag BaOmer*.

³ *Rashi, Chagigah 13b*

⁴ *Sifrei, Va'eschanan 8*

The Mystery of Remembering Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai

We will speak a little about what is relevant for *Lag BaOmer*, but as we said before, we should remember that it's only relevant for *Lag BaOmer*. After this day passes, we are left with nothing but an 'impression.' Therefore, a person should not attempt to grow further from this 'impression' after *Lag BaOmer* ends. If he does, he should be warned in the same way that the people were warned not to ascend Har Sinai when Moshe was receiving the Torah!

It is somewhat of a mystery. Throughout all the generations, there were many *Gedolim* and *tzaddikim* who are not remembered so much on their *yahrtzeit*. People remember the *yahrtzeit* of Dovid *HaMelech* [on Shavuot], but there is almost no one who knows what day of the year the *yahrtzeit* of our own *Avos* are. There are all kinds of traditions that state which days of the year they died on, but for some reason, there is no clarity in this matter. Only one *tzaddik*, who came much later than the *Avos* – the Sage, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai – is remembered. Everyone goes to his grave on this day of *Lag BaOmer*. Why does he get so much attention, more than all the other *tzaddikim*?

We should think about this. If we are rejoicing in something and we don't know what to rejoice about, then such rejoicing is superficial. Our happiness has to come from our soul, or else it is just by rote and will not amount to anything. So we must know what we are rejoicing about on *Lag BaOmer*.

The Special Time of Lag BaOmer

It is written in the *Midrash* "For every time."⁵ *Chazal* explain that there was a time for Adam to enter *Gan Eden*, and there was a time for him to leave *Gan Eden*; there was a time for Noach to enter the Ark, and there was a time for him to leave the Ark. There was a time for Avraham to be circumcised, and there was a time for him to circumcise his children."

We can learn from this *Midrash* that long before Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai passed away on *Lag BaOmer*, this day was already sanctified. Thus, our outlook on this day doesn't have to begin with Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai who definitely brought the meaning of this special time into the dimension of the soul as well, because long before he lived, this day was already precious. It was a day that inherently contained spiritual gifts.

What is the inner meaning of this day?

⁵ *Kohel* 3:1

Lag BaOmer and Amalek

Lag BaOmer is on the 18th day of the month of Iyar. The *gematria* of the word “*Iyar*,” together with the number 18, is equal to the word “*Amalek*.”⁶ In other words, there is a connection between Amalek and this day.

Whenever a person is sad, this really comes from the fact that he isn't connected to a root. He is like a branch disconnected from its root. The root has a 'root' as well to it: the lack of connection between the person and Hashem. By contrast, happiness is when there is connection to our Source.

It is written, “*With hardship shall you bear children.*”⁷ The pain of child labor is called “*etzev*,” which can also mean “sadness.” Birth is a separation of the baby from its mother; when the baby was in its mother, it is considered part of the mother. Now, it has disconnected from its mother – this is the “*etzev*”/sadness of giving birth.

Childbirth, and the *etzev* which follows it, reflects the concept that a person has to be integrated with his Source. The purpose of man is to integrate himself with his root, and keep connecting himself to his roots until he arrives at the root of all roots, the Creator.

On Yom Tov we have a *mitzvah* to be happy. Yom Tov is “*moed*,” which comes from the word “*vaad*” – a meeting. When there is a meeting, there is connection, and thus there is happiness.

The Meaning Behind the Bonfires

There is a *minhag* on *Lag BaOmer* to light bonfires. We don't just light small fires like we light for Shabbos and Yom Tov. We light big fires – bonfires, which are called “*lehavah*” in Hebrew.

The inner meaning of this is to show us that we need to have a big “fire,” a *lehavah*, in our hearts, for Hashem. If a person has this inner fire, he is inwardly connected to *Lag BaOmer*. If a person is just lighting physical bonfires, but his soul is cold inside, he is not truly celebrating *Lag BaOmer*.

It is written, “*The house of Yaakov will be a fire, and the house of Yosef will be a big flame.*”⁸ This is referring to the inner layer of a Jew's soul, the burning desire for Hashem. At first there is a small fire, and then it becomes a huge flame, a *lehavah*. When

⁶ Numerical value of *Iyar* is $221 + 18 = 239$. The word “*Amalek*” is equal to 240. (As is well-known, in the system of *Gematria*, the word itself counts as one. Thus, $Amalek/240$ is equal to $Iyar/239$, and therefore there is a parallel between these two concepts).

⁷ *Beraishis* 3:16

⁸ *Ovadyah* 1: 18-21

a person increases his inner fire for Hashem until it is a big flame, then he can integrate with Hashem.

In other words, bonfires on this day are not just superficial acts of lighting big fires. They are meant to remind us of our innermost point of the soul, which is like a great, fiery desire to be connected with Hashem.

Countering The 'Separation' Caused By Amalek: Connecting To Hashem

It is well-known that the evil force of "Amalek" causes disparity in Creation. Amalek attacked us in "*Refidim*," and *Chazal* explain that "*Refidim*" is from the words "*rafu y'deiheim b'Torah*" "their hands were weak in Torah," implying a lack of connection to the Torah. When a person's hands become weak, he loses connection to what he is holding. Our hands were weak then in "holding" the Torah - there was a weakening in our connection to Torah; and that enabled Amalek to attack us.

Of Torah it is written, "*Are My words not like fire, so says Hashem?*"⁹ - the Torah is like a 'fire', and it gives the person the power to enlarge its fire. Then, on our own, we must turn it into a big flame - a "*lehavah*." This is referring to the concept of becoming totally integrated with Hashem.¹⁰

The power that is inherent in the day of *Lag BaOmer* is essentially the power to become connected to the Creator – the opposite of Amalek's agenda, who wants to cause us to be separate from the Creator. This is also the inner meaning of what it means to "erase Amalek" from our midst, and thereby remove its evil. The "great flame" that can be reached on this day – integrating one's self with Hashem – is what can prevent Amalek from coming to weaken us.

Amalek weakened our "hands" in Torah. When our hands became weak, we lost our connection to what we were holding; thus there was a weakening in our connection to Torah. But why is this part of the body chosen to symbolize our connection to Torah? Don't we learn Torah with our mouths and minds, not our hands?

The answer to this is that there are two points contained here. On one level, a person can only connect to something with his "hands" – in other words, when he is holding onto it. You use your hands to hold onto something, such as a person who is drowning and catches a piece of wood to hold onto. Thus the "weakened hands" in Torah meant a lack of connection to Torah.

Another point to be emphasized is, as the *Zohar* states, that if one learns Torah without feelings of love and awe of Hashem, such Torah learning does not ascend to

⁹ *Yirmiyahu* 23:29

¹⁰ "*hiskalelus*" – integrating with Hashem; see the end of "*Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh*" vol. I.

Heaven. In other words, a person can be learning Torah, but he hasn't yet gotten to the "fire" of Torah; his "hands are weakened in Torah" – he is missing the "hands" that can raise him higher.

When Amalek attacked, the generation had certainly been learning Torah, but they were lacking a certain connection to it on their level. They weren't riding the "fire" of the Torah that ascends to the root; they weren't using the power of the Torah which elevates man. Man is really a part of the Torah's essence, and the Torah is what connects a person to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*.

The Power Contained In Lag BaOmer: Overcoming Doubt

The power contained in the day of *Lag BaOmer* is essentially the ability for a person to remove himself from all the obstacles that hold him back from closeness to the Creator.

The main obstacle which holds us back from being close to Hashem is the force of Amalek, as is well-known. Amalek's power thrives on *safek* (doubt). When a person has doubts about something, he cannot connect to it.

To illustrate, consider a person who comes to a crossroads and is faced with the choice of following one of two paths. If this person chooses one path but lacks certainty and thinks in his heart the whole time: "I'm not sure about what I'm doing...", he cannot be properly connected to the path he is taking. Even if he made the right choice, his doubt and uncertainty block him from connecting to it.

We can learn from this that one's very power of *bechirah* (free choice), which enables him to see different options and paths in front of him, is actually the point of doubt. As long as a person has doubts, he is not able to genuinely connect himself to the inner point.

What, indeed, is the way, for a person to leave the point of doubt, and to enter inward? The answer lies in the words of the *Zohar*: "In this sefer, one leaves exile."¹¹ The *gematria* of the word "*Zohar*" is equal to the Hebrew word "*bari*" ("definite").¹² The power which we can draw forth from Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai is the ability to leave doubts behind – the doubts which cause "weakening of the hands" in Torah; and to instead receive the ability to be "definite" (*bari*).

¹¹ *Zohar parshas Naso*

¹² *The letters of the word "Zohar" are 7+5+200, which equals 212; the word "bari" is 2+200+10, which also equals 212.*

How can a person truly gain this ability to feel absolutely certain from within? The way to get there is very clear, and when a person understands it, he leaves behind all doubts.

Hashem Is Here, There, and Everywhere

Compare this to a person who wants to get from Jerusalem to Bnei Brak. He doesn't know if he should go right or left or straight ahead. Whichever way he takes, he is doubtful, because he has no idea if he will end up in Bnei Brak. But once a person is in Bnei Brak, he has no doubts about where to go – because he is there. This is because if you're **there**, you don't have doubts about where you are.

A person must realize that all of the paths in the world only lead to one point: the *Ribono shel Olam!* There is no such thing as a path that doesn't bring you to Hashem. It doesn't matter if a person is happy, sad, or suffering; all of these are situations that, in the end, can bring you closer to Hashem. So what are people not sure about? A person knows that Hashem is at the end of the path, but he's not sure if he's taking the right path. He may be thinking, "Who says it's the right path for me...?"

The deep perspective is for a person to realize that Hashem is found everywhere, in every situation, and therefore, he has nothing to be doubtful about. He doesn't doubt the 'path' he is taking which will lead him to the truth, because he is secure in the knowledge that all paths lead to the Creator, for the goal is always to reach closeness with the Creator.

Above The Perspective of 'Pesach Sheini'

Lag BaOmer often falls out within the seven days of the time period known as "*Pesach Sheini*" (observed on the 14th day of *Iyar*). When we had the *Beis HaMikdash* and we were able to bring *korbonos*, there was a *mitzvah* of *Pesach Sheini*, for those who were ritually impure on Pesach and couldn't bring the *korbon pesach* on the 14th of Nissan or for those who didn't make it to Jerusalem on time for Yom Tov. Those who didn't make it were held back due to the 'place' they were in, whereas those who were impure were held back due to the level of their soul – they were distant from Hashem, thus couldn't come.

But there is an inner point in which one can know, and feel in his soul, that Hashem resides inside him, always - even when he is in a state of impurity. Such a person had no need for *Pesach Sheini*. In the physical world, a person needed *Pesach Sheini* if he was ritually impure, but in the inner world of the soul, once a person comes to the recognition of feeling Hashem in his soul, he doesn't need "*Pesach Sheini*." Just like

there are seven days of the first Pesach, so there is a concept that there are seven days of the second Pesach. The fact that *Lag BaOmer* always falls out within the “seven days of *Pesach Sheini*” reveals a certain heavenly light – that Hashem is found within a person, even amidst a state of impurity.

“There Is No Place That Is Empty From Him”

When a person is aware that Hashem is found even in the lowest place, he doesn't need any “hands” to lift himself up.

If a person thinks simply that “Hashem is Heaven, but I live on this earth,” and that he must try to somehow ‘ascend’ to Heaven – then he will need his “hands” to lift himself upwards and he won't be able to get there. But when a person knows clearly that Hashem is found in any place – for “There is no place empty from Him” – then even when he has fallen low, he can still arrive at a point of clarity in which he sees how Hashem is there at any place, time or situation. There is no amount of spiritual impurity that will be able to get him to have **any doubts** about this.

We rectify the evil of Amalek in Creation, essentially, by realizing how Hashem is with us **even** when we are in a lowly situation. Hashem is found within us even as we are amongst the lowest levels of impurity – even Amalek.

Thus, practically speaking, in order to gain from this day of *Lag BaOmer*, we need to search for the Creator – and because He is everywhere, we can find Him at any moment, place, and time.

May we merit to arrive at the innermost point – the “*lehavah*,” the “great flame” that is within us, represented by the bonfires we light, which can remind us of a burning desire for Hashem; and may we speedily merit the Redemption,

The Secrets of Torah

Even The Past Is Hidden From Us

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai stated that for all of his life, he was utterly bound up with Hashem. This is the most perfected state of a human being – to be totally connected to Hashem.

It is well-known that Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai had the same soul as Moshe Rabbeinu, for Rav Chaim Vital writes in the name of his Rebbi, the *Arizal*, that whatever Moshe Rabbeinu did not comprehend in his lifetime, he understood in his second lifetime, which was when he was reincarnated as Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai.

Moshe was the first redeemer of the Jewish people, and he will also be the final redeemer. It is written, 'מה שהיה, הוא שיהי' - “*Whatever was, will be*”¹³. In this verse we see a great, hidden point: even something which “was” seemingly revealed to us in the past, is still unknown to us - because it “will be” [in other words, only in the future will we understand what we know].

The secrets of Torah are mainly revealed in the *Sefer Zohar* (authored by Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai). Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai wrote in the *Zohar* that he was given permission to reveal now what wasn't revealed in previous generations. In the future, when Moshiach comes, it will be revealed that what “was” is still hidden from us. The more secrets we reveal in Torah, the more we arrive at understanding Torah, until we come to the very limits of what can possibly be revealed. When we finally reach the limit of all that can be revealed, it is then that the apex of the “revealed Torah” is reached.

It is at that endpoint that we will reveal the true secret, which is the ultimate connection we will have with the *Ein Sof* (Endlessness) of Hashem.

The Endpoint Will Reveal The Endless Point

The *Zohar* states that when one studies its teachings, the Jewish people will merit to be redeemed from exile. The secrets of Torah are the root of all revelation; it is said that the more it is revealed until even children are fluent in it, the closer we come to the End of Days.

We are looking forward all this time to reach the End of Days, but when the end comes, a point in time will be revealed in which there will be no ‘end’.

¹³ *Koheles 1:9*

When we are still in exile, we are limited; thus we look forward and hope for the end of our limited state. The exile and the End of Days are really one matter. The fact that there can be an end is actually what enables the exile. But in the future times of Moshiach, it will be revealed “endless worlds”, and then it will be revealed that the redemption is really a revelation of “endless” days [the end will reveal that there is no end, and that will be the “endless days” of the future era, where endlessness will be revealed].

That is why learning the *Zohar* will merit us to have the redemption: because it will reveal the end, and when a person reaches the endpoint of all that can be revealed, he comes to the end of his limits – and he is then able to unify with the point that is above his limits [which is the state of the redemption, in which man will enter the unlimited].

This is the depth behind why Yaakov Avinu wanted to reveal the end, but it was concealed from him. Yaakov Avinu represents the time right before Moshiach comes, which is the revelation of the End of Days. He wanted to reveal where the limits will end. But, this was held back from him, because if he would have revealed the end, that means that he would have also revealed the point that is beyond the end, which is the point that is endless. The endless point has to be concealed and hidden from us, for the time being. It is a point which has no limits, and something which has no limits is essentially the point that must be hidden and concealed.

The secret that the *Zohar* comes to reveal is that it reveals all the secrets of the design of the human being, from the most perfected state of man until the lowliest level (actions). When we arrive at the ultimate secret, which is the complete revelation – it will then be revealed the ‘endless point’.

Revealing One's Unique Part In Torah

It is well-known that the *Arizal* revealed much detail about everything in the universe. The *Arizal* said that if he would live another two years, he would have finished revealing everything, and then Moshiach would have come.

The depth of this matter is that if he would have decided to reveal all of the secrets of Torah, he would have reached the end of all revelations, and then the endless point would have been revealed. This means that had he decided to complete all that is revealed in the Torah, the unlimited point would have been revealed, and this point is endless.

This is why throughout all the generations, a matter is only revealed in small amounts as time goes on. This is because ever since Moshe Rabbeinu hit the rock and made drops of water come out of it, we only understand something in small drops¹⁴.

If something would be entirely understood at once, then our exile would end immediately, because it would come to the 'endless point'. But because we have not been worthy yet, the words of the *Zohar* and the *Arizal* are only revealed to us drop by drop. The 'drops' have to all be collected together until we reveal all the secrets of Torah, and this will be when even children can understand these matters.

In other words, when we will reach the very end of our limits, we will then be able to enter into the 'endless worlds'.

At first, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai did not want to reveal what he revealed, but then he decided to reveal them. What is the meaning behind this? Before he revealed the secrets of the *Zohar*, the limits of the world had not yet reached its end. But when he revealed what was known to him, he essentially came out of his own limits by revealing these matters - and since he came out of his own limits, he was able to reveal hidden matters.

When he was alive, he was revealed. When he died, he became hidden. His death was essentially when he connected to the point that is above comprehension.

In every generation, our task is to utilize the potential power of the Torah and bring it out to a state of revelation. We have to reveal the written Torah into the Oral Torah, and when this is complete, a person reaches his soul's limit in the Torah, and he then enters the hidden point in it.

A person must learn all the parts of Torah, as the *Arizal* writes that one must know all of "*Pardes*" (*Pshat*, *Derush*, *Remez* and *Sod*). The meaning of this is because when a person knows all of *Pardes*, he has revealed the potential of every matter, and he has revealed his end. When the end point of a person is revealed, he enters the endless.

This is the depth of how Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai was always close to Hashem, every day of his life. He learned Torah all his life and revealed every aspect of Torah of his soul, and through this he merited to reach the revelation of the endless. He brought out his end point from being hidden to being revealed.

A Way To Reach The Hidden Point

This is the secret behind the matter of one's personal redemption of the soul, and the general soul redemption of the Jewish people. Every soul, when it completes its part in

¹⁴ Also said in the name of the *Vilna Gaon*

Torah, comes to its end. The same goes for the world as a whole. When all the parts of Torah are revealed in this 6,000 year world, the Torah reaches the end, and then Moshiach comes.

This is why a person must exert himself in learning Torah and reveal more and more parts of Torah, so that he can complete the revelation process. Every person who reveals more and more parts of Torah is bringing the redemption closer, because he is revealing what is concealed. When all that is hidden becomes revealed, the most Hidden One of all is then revealed.

Thus, learning the secrets of Torah is not the goal. It is only a means to bring a person to the 'hidden point'.

That is why the secret areas of Torah are called "*sod*", "secret." The purpose of a secret is to bring a person to the root of the matter. When a person only has the first three parts of Torah – *pshat* (the simple meaning), *derush* (the expounded interpretation) and *remez* (the hinted meaning) – he has still not completed his revelations. But when a person learns the part of Torah that is "*sod*", the "*sod*" brings him to the hidden point, and this reveals all.

The secret parts of Torah are called "*sod*" not because they are concealed and they need to be revealed, but because they are only a path to get one to enter the hidden point. "*Sod*" is like the "entranceway" to get to the "palace." It is the secret of "*ra'ava d'raavon*" – "desire of desires".¹⁵ It is the secret of the 'hidden point'.

In the Future, The Voice of Hashem Will Be Heard

This is the meaning of the verse, "*What was, will be.*" What "was" is the Torah of Moshe Rabbeinu, who has revealed to us the Torah. But what "will be" is the hidden Torah, which we must come to.

At Har Sinai, the Jewish people wanted to speak with Moshe, not with Hashem. The meaning of this was that they wanted revelation, not hidden matters. Hashem is hidden, but Moshe was revealed, and they were only interested in what was revealed.

But the truth is that even what Moshe Rabbeinu said to us is hidden. When that will be revealed to all, there will be a return to the root – Hashem. Then, people will be able to hear the voice of Hashem. The voice of Hashem, which is hidden, will become revealed.

¹⁵ Editor's Note: The meal of *Shalosh Seudos* (the third meal of Shabbos) is called the time of *raava d'raavon*, "desire of desires", a time of great spiritual yearning of the soul and revelation for the soul.

“*What was, will be.*” In the future, it will be revealed, *retroactively*, that whatever we thought we understood is really very hidden, because something that “was” is really “what will be”, which is hidden.

This is the depth of why a secret is called “*sod*”. When a person completes the secret - which is when he completes all of the *pardes* - it is revealed to him that all of *pardes* is really a secret, and it isn't revealed. When a person doesn't learn *sod* and only learns *pshat*, *derush* and *remez*, he is only holding onto what is revealed. But when he enters *sod*, it appears that only *sod* is *sod*, while the other three parts are revealed and not a “*sod*”. This is the perspective of one who hasn't completed “*sod*”. But when one completes “*sod*”, he sees that really all of *pardes* is actually “*sod*”!

Thus, the secrets of Torah are called “*sod*”, because they show how everything is all really a secret. It doesn't only reveal that *sod* is a secret - it reveals that **all** of the *pardes* of Torah is a secret.

This is the depth of the redemption. It is to reveal the unknown. It will be a total revelation of “*What was, will be.*” It will show that really all is hidden, because ultimately, everything is unified with Hashem, Who is hidden.

Q&A – Tragedy In Meron of Lag B'Omer 5781

1) I write this question with tears and pain over the unspeakable tragedy that happened to *Klal Yisrael* at the holy site of the Rashbi. There were a couple of eerie points in the tragedy. (1) There is a *Gemara* that “It is proper to rely on Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai’s view *b’shaas hadechak*, when we are “pushed” into having no choice, and the 45 *korbonos* this year at Kever Rashbi were killed by being pushed. (2) And 45 is equal in *gematria* to one of the names of Hashem, which is known as the *Shem Ma”h*, the name of Hashem that equals the number 45. What can the Rav tell us to console us about the tragedy? Also, when we take accounting of our actions, what was the implication of the tragedy with regards to the *tikkun* that we need. What is it that we especially need to fix? Also, what is the connection between this tragedy and the *Galus* and the *Geulah*, both on a collective level as well as on a personal and inner level?

2) Although the government of Israel is not a real *malchus*, I felt as if the involvement of Chareidi politicians were to blame, for lack of organizing the event properly, for lack of responsibility, and just letting the oversized crowd to run it, etc....it seems to me that had the government been running it, this tragedy wouldn’t have occurred, because they know how to organize things well and they are better equipped for events like this [i.e. large crowds]. So how should we handle this matter?

3) What can you say and respond to a youngster (bachur) who was there and saw the disaster in front of him?

Thank you.

ANSWER

1) Everything in Creation has a *chitzoniyus* (outer level) and a *pnimiyus* (inner level) to it. It is the same when it comes to this matter as well.

Of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai it is said נעשה אדם בעבורך “*Man was made because of you.*” The *gematria* of the word for man, “*adam*,” is 45. *Chazal* said that in the future, “The *tzaddikim* will be called by the name of their Creator,” and a degree of this already took place on This World, with Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, whom the *Zohar* compares to Hashem: “The face of the master Hashem – *da Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai.*” This revelation, this *ohr*, is mainly in the End of Days, where the level called “*Keser*” (crown) is revealed. The *Keser* is the bridge between human beings and Hashem, as it were. The *ohr*, the revelations, in the End of Days are shining strongly now and it “shines” especially stronger on the *yahrtzeit* of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. There has been an ascent in this world in which there are souls who rose to the ideal level of the human being, called “*adam.*” These 45 *neshamos* rose to the level of “*adam.*” They rose together with Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, and they were *zocheh* to enter into the *mesivta d’Rashbi*, in the higher world. And it was a realization of בקרובי אקדש “*With My close ones, I am*

sanctified," such as what took place at the inauguration of the Mishkan [with the deaths of Nadav and Avihu]. And here as well, this Lag B'Omer, there has been a day of special ascent for the soul of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, an ascent to the level of "*adam*," the ideal level of man along with 45 *neshamos* were very, very worthy of ascending together with Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai. They are praiseworthy in their portion. That is all with regards to the *pnimiyus*, to the inner level of this event.

But in the *chitzoniyus*, in the outer level of this event, the 50th level of *tumah*, which counters the 50th level of *kedushah* was active. Whereas, the highest levels of *kedushah* bring a person above the normal human level, the lowest levels of *tumah* are able to bring a person beneath the normal human level, below the level of the *adam*. That is where the world has fallen into today. And, G-d forbid, even in a *makom kadosh*, a holy place such as Meron, these impure devices of the 50th level of *tumah* enter there daily. Even on the holy day of Lag B'Omer, in a place where *chassidus* is guarded so carefully, it is now filled with these impure devices, which were used to take pictures of the tragedy, etc..

So, on the one hand, the great exalted light of the 50th level of *kedushah* shines, but at the same time, its opposite, which is the 50th level of *tumah*, counters it's its radiance, G-d forbid. As is known, every year on Lag B'Omer Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai's soul becomes elevated again. Additionally, on the one hand, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai ascends to his high place above at his burial place, but at the same time, on the world down below, the "heads of the *Erev Rav*" take control of this place because of the 50th level of *tumah* which runs rampant today.

2) At the *levayah* of Rebbi Shimon bar Yochai it was already like this. The *Idra Zuta* brings a story that the people of Tzipuri got into an argument with the people of Meiron about where Rebbi Shimon bar Yochai should be buried. Until this day, the fighting concerning Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai's burial place continues in different forms. Part of the fighting is done with good intentions. Part of the fighting is coming from personal, ulterior motivations. And part of the fighting is coming from the "Erev Rav." It is not for us to ever be involved with the "Erev Rav," whether it is an individual, or a leader, or the government of the "Erev Rav." And certainly we should not be involved with them when it comes to a holy place. Hashem, in His goodness, will do as He sees fit.

3) Every person who has experienced and seen this disaster needs to clarify this according to their own individual soul, and it is impossible to give guidelines on how each individual should act, and how to act with him.



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