

B"H

Tuesday, 19 Kislev, 5769

## Yud Tet Kislev 5769 (part 1)

from Harav Yitzchak Ginsburgh

*Lecha'im, Lecha'im*

*Chag same'ach*

### 1. The Magid of Mezritch and the Alter Rebbe

When he was a young man, the Alter Rebbe had to decide whether to continue his studies in Vilna, the homestead of the Vilna Ga'on and those opposed to Chassidut or to journey to Mezritch, the seat of the Magid, the successor of the Ba'al Shem Tov. He deliberated between the two but finally decided on Mezritch. His reasoning was that since in Vilna they taught how to learn Torah, and he already knew somewhat how to learn, he should go to Mezritch. Because, in Mezritch, he knew, they taught how to pray, and as he said of himself, he did not yet know at all how to pray.

Before the Magid passed away he called the Alter Rebbe and told him, "Zalman, today is our *yom tov* [holiday]." 26 years later, the Alter Rebbe indeed celebrated his day of rescue from the Czarist regime, exactly on this day. It is well known that apart from his *upshernish* (first haircut), the Alter Rebbe was never by the Ba'al Shem Tov. The *Ba'al Shem Tov* explained to Rebbe Baruch, the Alter Rebbe's father that he did not want the Alter Rebbe to be his student because he already belongs to his successor, the Magid of Mezritch. If the Alter Rebbe were to be the Ba'al Shem Tov's disciple, the Magid would simply inherit him as a student, but, said the Ba'al Shem Tov, I want the Magid to select him as his greatest disciple and him to select the Magid as his Rebbe, because then the nature of their relationship will be altogether different. Indeed, the fact that the most important day in the Alter Rebbe's life falls on the same day as his master, the Magid's, day of passing, is a sign of the special relationship they had.

In our generation, we have the same deliberation about where to go. Should we go to a place where there is only learning, or whether to go to a place where one learns the good taste of prayer, which is the way to cling to and become one with the Almighty.

### 2. The Written Torah of Chassidut

The Alter Rebbe is the pillar of the Torah of Chassidut, as we shall explain.

Before the *Tanya* there was no written text explaining what Chassidut is and how to go about reaching its spiritual heights. There were many teachings that were passed by



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word of mouth, some given to written text, but none in the form of a complete, in-depth presentation of the essence of the new light that the Ba'al Shem Tov brought to the world. Therefore, when the Tanya was published, it became known as the Written Torah of Chassidut. But, from the deliberation of the Alter Rebbe about where to go study, we learn that before one comes to the Tanya—to the Written Torah—one first has to learn how to pray. Each of us has to decide: I already know how to learn a little, better that I learn how to pray first.

### 3. Three Pillars

The fathers of Chassidut—the first three generations of its leaders—correspond to the patriarchs of our people.

The Ba'al Shem Tov is like Abraham.

The Magid is similar to Isaac. As we know, the numerical values of Isaac (יצחק) and his wife Rebecca (רבקה) together are equal to the value of “prayer” (תפילה), and the first description the Torah gives of them as a couple is that they prayed together for a child. As the Alter Rebbe said, the place where one learnt how to pray—the pillar of prayer—was in Mezritch, by the Magid.

The Alter Rebbe corresponds to Jacob, the pillar of Torah, just as the Alter Rebbe is the pillar of the Torah of Chassidut.

All three fathers of Chassidut taught Torah, just as the patriarchs taught the world the Torah needed to know God. Abraham called God the “God-world.” In his generation, this brought people closer to God and was his kindness to them. The Ba'al Shem Tov's new Torah is based in many ways on this very concept, that God is all and all is God, but still the purpose of all the Ba'al Shem Tov's teachings is to add loving-kindness to the world and the ultimate example of loving-kindness is the love of the Jewish people.

The Magid is the pillar of prayer. Though there are a great deal of Torah teachings from the Magid, and relatively speaking his teachings are overtly more intellectual than those of his teacher, the Ba'al Shem Tov, the purpose of all his teachings was to teach us how to pray. We can liken this to the relationship between the posterior brain, the part of the brain that in Kabbalah corresponds with the *sefirah* of knowledge, and the spinal column. The sages note that the 18 vertebrae of the spine correspond to the 18 blessings of the *Amidah*, the main part of every prayer service. By analogy therefore, just as the posterior brain connects with the spinal column, so all the knowledge taught by the Magid is meant to lead to prayer. We will see an example of this later.

Though the teachings of the Alter Rebbe include examples of all three pillars, in and of itself, his teachings are the Torah of Chassidut. The Torah is described as the Almighty's object of recreation (שעשועים עצמיים), or as the sages explain, God played with the Torah, he had fun and games with it, for 2000 years before the world was created. Torah is clinging to God face-to-face.

But, what we are saying is that a person should follow the order of the patriarchs and the orders of the fathers of Chassidut. First a person should learn loving-kindness—love of all Jews. Indeed, the Arizal taught us that before praying in the morning we should say, “I accept upon myself the *mitzvah* of ‘You shall love your fellow as you love yourself.’” If a person does not truly accept this *mitzvah* before prayer, all the thoughts that he has during his prayer are simply imagination. Only after having fulfilled the all-inclusive *mitzvah* of loving Israel can one pray and then go to learn Torah. And indeed, each of these pillars has its own Torah. The Torah of the Ba’al Shem Tov is the Torah of love; the Torah of the Magid is the Torah of prayer; and, the Torah of the Alter Rebbe is Torah in and of itself.

#### 4. Spreading the Light of Chassidut

We are now coming out of the 19<sup>th</sup> of *Kislev* and entering the 20<sup>th</sup> of *Kislev* (if we follow the system of day follows night; in a different context, that of sacrifices and everything that has to do with the service in the holy Temple, the night follows the day).

The 20<sup>th</sup> of *Kislev* is like the second day of *Rosh Hashanah*. Just as the two days of *Rosh Hashanah* are considered a single “long day” (יָמָא אַרִיכְתָא) so the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of *Kislev* are considered a single long day marking the redemption of the Alter Rebbe and a turning point in the history of Chassidut.

The 19<sup>th</sup> of *Kislev* was the day on which the Alter Rebbe was released from prison and acquitted of the charges against him. But, what happened on the 20<sup>th</sup> of *Kislev*? Historically, after the Alter Rebbe was released, he was taken to S. Peterburg to the house of a wealthy local Jew. It seemed all good and well, but that house was the house of one of the greatest *mitnagdim*, those who opposed the Chassidic movement and were responsible for the Alter Rebbe’s incarceration in the first place. And so, the Alter Rebbe had to stay with this Jew and his family for a few hours until he left his house on the 20<sup>th</sup> of *Kislev*.

Later, he said that the psychological suffering he experienced during those few hours in the *mitnaged’s* house, were worse than the 53 days he was in jail facing a death sentence. We have to understand this statement. The Alter Rebbe is obviously not saying these words out of some God forbid ill will towards another Jew. To understand this, we have to backtrack a few years earlier and relate something about the printing of the Tanya, which as we mentioned earlier is the Written Torah of Chassidut.

Because of his strong connection with his master, the Magid, the Alter Rebbe very much wanted that the Tanya see the light of day—meaning that the first copies be printed—on the 19<sup>th</sup> of *Kislev*. But, Divine Providence had it otherwise and because of some unexpected delays, the first copies were printed a day late, on the 20<sup>th</sup> of *Kislev*. Indeed, nothing happens without a reason, and the Ba’al Shem Tov stressed many times that whatever happens to you, you should search for the message that God is sending you. So, the fact that the Tanya was printed on the 20<sup>th</sup> of *Kislev* and not on the 19<sup>th</sup> of

*Kislev* suggests that the Alter Rebbe was not just a substitute for his master, the Magid. Like each of the patriarchs before him, the Alter Rebbe had a unique role to play in the world and a unique task that only he could perform.

This is not a simple thing to say and certainly not a simple thing to understand. Because, the connection between a *chassid* (disciple) and his Rebbe is infinitely more than the natural physical connection between a child and his father. One of the simplest things in life is that a son takes his father's place after he passes on. So, a real *chassid* has to at least take the place of his Rebbe, and the Rebbe continues to live in the *chassid*. The *chassid* in this capacity is simply the extension of his Rebbe, just as the son is an extension of his father. But, as much as the father-son connection is strong, an individual like the Alter Rebbe was being told that there was even more that he had to do. Not only did he have to take his Rebbe's place, but he was given his own task in life. Where the 19<sup>th</sup> of *Kislev* is the shared holiday of the Alter Rebbe with his Rebbe, the Magid of Mezritch, the 20<sup>th</sup> of *Kislev* represents the Alter Rebbe's special day and is symbolic of his unique task as one of the father's of Chassidut.

Above we said that the Alter Rebbe is the pillar of the Torah of Chassidut. But as we know, he was the master of both the revealed and the concealed traditions of the Torah. He wrote both the *Tanya* and a *Shulchan Aruch*, an updated compendium of all the laws of the Torah. He was also the Magid's emissary to quench the fire of opposition against Chassidut. And, this was his unique task. Only a master of both traditions could truly convince the leaders of the *mitnagdim* of the verity of the Chassidic path. And, as is well known, the Alter Rebbe went with Rebbe Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk to Vilna to see the Vilna Gaon and to do exactly that, but the Vilna Gaon would not see them and did everything in his power to avoid meeting them. So, the Alter Rebbe's special task in life was to quench the fire of opposition to Chassidut. Only the Torah of Chabad, the Torah of the branch of Chassidut established by the Alter Rebbe, is capable of doing this.

So, when the Alter Rebbe was taken to the house of the *mitnaged* in S. Petersburg, it was more difficult for him than facing death and being in a dungeon for 53 days. Because in the end, it pained him more that there were still Jewish homes, Jewish families that had not tasted from the sweet taste of Chassidut, and that still remained opposed to it. The fact that Chassidut—the Torah of the Ba'al Shem Tov—had not spread to every single Jew was the greatest spiritual pain for the Alter Rebbe, whose life task was to quench the fire of opposition to Chassidut.

## 5. Two Days of Redemption; Two Voices of Judaism

Since these two days, the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of *Kislev* are like one long day, let us look at their values:

19 Kislev (יט כסליו) = 135

20 Kislev (כ כסליו) = 136

In the Torah, we find that these are the values of two consecutive words in the Torah: “The *voice* is the *voice* of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau.”<sup>1</sup> The first word, “the voice” is spelled  $\text{קוּל}$ . The second “the voice” is spelled,  $\text{קוּל}$ . Let us then look at this verse and what it teaches us in relation to the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of *Kislev*.

Why is the word “the voice” spelled the first time without a *vav* (ו, it is normally spelled  $\text{קוּל}$ , like in the second instance), thereby bringing its value to 135? The letter *vav* represents the drawing of something from above to below. So if the *vav* is missing it means that that which is below is yearning for that which is above; it is yearning for the *vav*, which represents the effluence from above to below, signifying the connection between them, to appear. Once the yearning reaches its climax, the missing *vav* appears and the word becomes “the voice” with a *vav* ( $\text{קוּל}$ ).

But, since Isaac said this to Jacob, we learn that Jews have two voices! The first voice is the voice of prayer; the second is the voice of Torah.

Isaac said these words to Jacob who was coming to “cheat” Esau out of his blessings. So the first voice represents prayer, which as we explained earlier is Isaac’s voice, which then appears as the essential voice of Jacob, the voice of Torah. These two voices come together in order to reach the final goal: “the hands are the hands of Esau!”

Our voice of prayer rises up to God because of that which we lack. This represents the calling out to God because we are in the prison of the nations of the world—we are still in exile. This corresponds to the redemption of the 19<sup>th</sup> of *Kislev* ( $\text{קוּל}$ )—when the Alter Rebbe was released from the Czar’s prison.

But, as we just said, when he was released, he found himself in the home of a Jew who was himself still in a Jewish exile (without, of course, realizing it), and he had to enter this Jewish created exile (and experience himself in the most profound state of spiritual exile). And this exile, in the beautiful home of a fellow Jew was an even worse experience than that of the exile among the nations of the world. So, even though there was a certain level of redemption that the Alter Rebbe reached on the 19<sup>th</sup> of *Kislev*, it was not a complete redemption, because when you see that your fellow Jew is still in exile, it is even more disheartening.

Getting out of the exile between the nations is straightforward. You just have to get out. Like the exodus from Egypt, the whole point is just to get out, just leave. For this reason, all of the exiles after the Egyptian exile are named after the Egyptian exile. All that the non-Jews can do is as the Egyptians did—restrict us. As the Lubavitcher Rebbe said many times, today, the non-Jewish world is no longer opposed to Judaism, it is no longer opposed to the Almighty and to the Torah.

Instead, it is the self-inflicted Jewish exile is the main exile that we suffer from today. Getting out of this exile is very different from getting out of the exile among the nations. Using Chassidic and Kabbalistic terminology we can use the pair of terms “run” and “return” to understand the difference. The movement out of a non-Jewish exile is a

movement of “run”—you simply have to run away, get out! But, when it comes to the self-inflicted Jewish exile, the movement needed is that of “return.”

Prayer is a movement of “run”; it involves running out of your bodily existence. But, Torah is a movement of “return”; Torah returns you to reality, it demands a complete embodiment, a total immersion in the reality of life.

So redeeming Jews is not like running, like prayer, but like returning, like Torah! This is a great principle of the redemption that we are awaiting in our days; it depends on our ability to bring the light of Chassidut to every single Jew. If there is someone who still has not received the light of Chassidut, the point of the inner teachings of the Torah, we should have mercy over him and help him get it. Just as God had mercy over all of us, to bring us out of the darkness of our own self-inflicted exile, we too should have mercy and bring all of our people out of their own exile. And this will only work if we strive to spread the wellsprings of Chassidut and increase the amount of light in the world. So especially the 20<sup>th</sup> of *Kislev* is the day on which, building on the “voice of prayer” that was taught by the Magid (and which we will see an example of later), we reach the “voice of Torah,” the teachings of the Alter Rebbe and Chabad which can illuminate the darkness of the exile Jews have inflicted on themselves.

## 6. Esau’s Higher Nature

If we succeed in using both our voices, the voice of prayer and the voice of Torah, then we will also merit receiving the great lights that are called the hands of Esau in this verse.

It is well known that Jacob and especially Jacob’s Torah (the revealed aspect of the Torah) have the power to rectify the chaotic lights of Esau, lights that are the motivation behind all the great power invested in the actions of the nations of the world. This was the reason that Jacob sent emissaries to his brother Esau, to see if he was ready to be rectified and accept the yoke of Heaven. If a non-Jew is *not* ready to be rectified, then it is even dangerous to approach him. Therefore, when Jacob heard that Esau was not ready, he feared him. He realized that the encounter could end with either his or his brother’s death.

But, this was in the past. In our present day, the Lubavitcher Rebbe told us that Esau (the nations of the world) is ready to receive the light of Torah, almost unconditionally. The fact of the matter is, as we learn from this verse, that when Esau is ready, then the act of connecting the Torah with Esau happens by itself. “The hands are the hands of Esau” becomes a natural and necessary outcome of “the voice is the voice of Jacob.”

How is this? Why does a rectification process not have to take place? The answer is that Esau symbolizes two different types of powerful lights. The first are those called the lights of chaos, the lights that when the vessels of the world of Chaos were shattered fell into the impure aspects of reality.

But, Esau also represents the lights that are above the entire process of shattering and rectification (שבירה ותיקון). Esau's name means "made," or "complete." He was called by this name because he was already "made" (he was born with the hair and appearance of an adult) meaning that his name specifically refers to this second aspect of great lights that are never in a state of being unmade, unwhole, or incomplete. Under all his hair, Esau is completely formed and made, and needs nothing further.

Indeed, we have explained many times that had Esau's higher nature been revealed he would have become the fourth leg of God's chariot, together with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Because it was not revealed, eventually King David, who was also red haired, like Esau, became the rectified version of the lights of chaos. But, Esau's place remains open to a certain extent, because he also represents lights that are higher than shattering and rectification. It is the role of the Mashiach, the son of David, to reveal Esau's higher nature.

The special place Esau has can be seen numerically. Both the names of Isaac (יצחק), 208, and Jacob (יעקב), 182, are multiples of 26, the gematria of *Havayah*, God's essential Name. But, Abraham's name (אברהם), 248, is not. Abraham's name is 1 more than a multiple of 13 ( $247 = 19 \cdot 13$ ). So who completes the picture? The answer is Esau, because his name (עשו), 376 is 1 less than a multiple of 13 ( $377 = 29 \cdot 13$ ). Therefore, when we add Abraham and Esau together, we get a 624, which is a multiple of 26 ( $624 = 24 \cdot 26$ ).

There is another deep connection between Abraham and Esau. Both correspond to the pillar of action (ideally acts of loving-kindness) in this world. Indeed, because of the great expectation that Esau follow in Abraham's footsteps, five years were taken from Abraham's lifespan so that he not live to see his grandson Esau go off the path of Judaism at the age of thirteen (the age of *bar mitzvoah*, the time that one has to consciously choose to follow the path of the Torah).

Indeed, the blessings that Isaac gave to Jacob, which were meant for Esau, are the highest blessings in the entire Torah.

Furthermore, if we take the combined values of the phrases "the voice is the voice" (הקל קול) and "the hands are the hands" (והידים ידי), we get 370. In Kabbalah, 370 is the number of lights in a rectified visage, a rectified face, suggesting that when the two voices of prayer and Torah come together with Esau's hands, a perfectly rectified face is seen. 370 is also the value of the two letters שע, which together are the two-letter root of the word for "fun" or "recreation" (שעשוע), which means "recreation," as explained earlier. Recreation is based on the secret of the lights of the face, and these two letters are also the first two letters of Esau (עש).

So the secret of our redemption in this generation is to have the two voices of Jacob and then naturally and without any exertion we merit receiving the original lights of Esau, which need no rectification and are the epitome of the power to act in this world.

Let us end this part with another *gematria*. The value of “voice” (קול) and “hands” (ידיים) is 200. The value of the phrase “the hands of Esau” (ידי עשו) is 400, or  $20^2$ , so they have a 1:2 ratio between them, the secret of a whole and a half, as taught by Abulafia.

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<sup>1</sup>. Genesis 27:22.