

PARSHAT MIKEITZ - CHANUKAH

TOP SECRET

Kabbalah and Chassidut: Wine and Oil of Torah

The secrets of the Torah are likened both to wine and to oil. The wine hints at the “secrets of Torah” (רזין) and the oil hints to the “secret secrets of Torah” (רזין דרזין). What is the difference between the two?

The secrets of the Torah refer to the teachings of the *Arizal*, Rabbi Isaac Luria, the holy Kabbalist who lived in Safed over 400 years ago. His Kabbalah describes the secrets of what took place after God contracted His infinite light (the *tzimtzum*). The secret secrets of Torah refer to the teachings of the Ba'al Shem Tov and his students, whose Chassidic teachings reach beyond the contraction and address the levels of reality that existed before it, i.e., God's infinite light as it was revealed before the contraction.

Though this explanation of the difference between the wine and the oil of Torah, between Kabbalah and Chassidut is technically correct, it is not very revealing to those who do not have the intimate knowledge of Kabbalah needed to appreciate it. Let us therefore turn to Chanukah to provide us with a more instructive explanation.

Secret and Top Secret

There are two types of secrets that people have. First, there are personal secrets. These might be events or actions that a person conceals because of shame and which should be confessed only before one departs the world. Or, they might be the good and important actions one has performed in life, or the sweet feelings that a person has in his heart—these are the love and fear that we possess, about which the Torah says that they should be “hidden for *Havayah* our God.”¹ Sometimes personal secrets are about events that occurred in childhood, so we know about them, but there are those that are from the time we were in the womb; these are concealed even from our own consciousness, all the more so secrets from previous incarnations. About all these types of personal secrets the sages say that, “When wine goes in, secrets come out.”² Personal secrets

can be revealed if we drink enough wine therefore they are likened to wine. Wine also alludes to the mother principle (פְּרִצְוִי אִמָּא) in Kabbalah.

“mind of the Mother” – with the mercy of the mother, who engages and raises, and keeps all the secrets of the child).

But, there is also a much higher grade of secret, the secret secrets, which are called “top secret.” These are military secrets. Military secrets must be guarded with all of one's strength because they involve matters of life or death. When a person knows a military secret, he has to sacrifice himself in order to keep it. But, while personal secrets are likened to wine that is meant for personal consumption, military secrets are like oil; oil is a source of energy, a part of society's infrastructure, and like all energy sources it is handled at the public level, providing fuel for all of us together.

Top Secret Secrets from the Chanukah Candles

Chanukah is the festival of light and oil and was the favorite holiday of our teacher the Ba'al Shem Tov. During Chanukah, the oil candles of our menorahs reveal top secret military secrets—the secret of how the Hasmoneans, who were few in number and weak, were victorious over the great numbers of powerful Greeks and their Hellenized supporters.

The secret of victory is of course in the spirit and carrying over to our age, the thirty-six candles that we light on Chanukah relate the stories of the thirty-six *tzadikim*, the righteous individuals, in whose merit the world exists. One might think that stories about *tzadikim* are about personal secrets, revealing how each *tzadik* exercised his attributes of love and fear in order to serve God. Actually, though, the candles are meant to reveal the *tzadik's* military secrets—his tactics for winning the war against exile and bringing the final redemption. Some *tzadikim* also have personal secrets, stories that tell us how they carried out their own personal rectification. Personal rectification relates to the soul as it exists after the contraction—a personal

secret reveals the soul's root in Primordial Man (*Adam Kadmon*). But the *tzadikim*, disciples of the Ba'al Shem Tov, dedicated their lives not to their own personal rectification, but to actions on behalf of the entire Jewish people, actions that would lead to *tikun olam* (rectifying the world) under the rule of the Almighty.

One of the military secrets passed on to us by the Chassidic masters is that we must be willing to give up our entire part in the World to Come in order to bestow kindness on even a single Jew. Devotion to acts of loving-kindness at this level is a top secret military secret used by *Tzivot Hashem*, the armies of God, who must be devoted to one another like soldiers on the battlefield.

Following the above distinction between wine and oil, personal secrets pertain to the rectification of the individual, but the secrets that come from prior to the contraction, the Torah's military secrets relate to the redemption of the entire Jewish people. Revealing these top secret secrets taught by our teacher the Ba'al Shem Tov and demonstrated by the Chassidic masters is likened to a king wasting his most valued treasures in wartime in order to force a victory.³

Military Secrets in Pharaoh's Dream

Military secrets also play an important role in this week's *parashah*, *Mikeitz*, which is always read over Chanukah. All of Pharaoh's advisors interpreted his dream as revealing a personal secret (seven daughters, etc.). Only Joseph the *tzadik*, was able to interpret it as revealing a military secret—an interpretation that affected Egypt at large, not just Pharaoh personally.

There is a well-known question regarding Joseph's apparent *chutzpah* in offering Pharaoh further advice on how to prepare for the imminent famine.⁴ Following our present discussion, the reason for this is that revealing the military secret in Pharaoh's dream required Joseph to assume a leadership role. Knowing military secrets 'elevates

the private individual to his soul's root prior to the contraction, requiring him to take responsibility and act. Furthermore, even though, according to the laws of Egypt, a slave was restricted from political power, once Joseph had revealed the military secret and became essential for Egypt's emergency plans, this restriction was cancelled.

Forget the Cup-Bearer

We can now understand in more depth why Joseph had to be forgotten by Pharaoh's cup-bearer. The cup-bearer was responsible for Pharaoh's wine, which we already know represents only personal secrets. If Joseph had been brought before Pharaoh thanks to the cup-bearer, he would have been limited to revealing only personal secrets, specifically his own personal secret as a man kidnapped from the land of the Hebrew, an innocent man placed in prison. But, he would not have been able to reveal his higher source before the contraction—the man destined to save Egypt, Pharaoh's greatest military secret. Indeed, when Joseph eventually comes before Pharaoh to interpret his dream, there is no mention of Joseph's personal secrets, they are forgotten and instead Joseph becomes the voice for God's words.

Finally, the value of "military secret" (סוד צבאי) is the same as the all important initial three words of the Ten Commandments, "I am *Havayah* your God"⁵ (אֲנֹכִי יְיָ הוֹדָה אֶל־לִהְיֶה). It also equals the words, "Open my eyes"⁶ (גַּל עֵינַי), which begin our prayer to God, "Open my eyes so that I may behold the wonders of Your Torah." May we merit revealing the top secret, military secrets of the Torah that guide us in how to influence all our Jewish brothers and sisters to return to God in preparation for the complete and final redemption.

(From the *shiur* given on the 1st night of Chanukah, 5769)

Notes: 1. Deuteronomy 29:28. 2. *Eiruv* 65a. 3. See in *Bati Legani*, c. 11. 4. See *Likutei Sichot* 15, pp. 339ff. 5. Exodus 20:2. 6. Psalms 119:18.

THE REDEMPTION GROWS NEARER...

The Torah of Mashiach reaches even that which has never been revealed as light yet—Torah innovations found in God's very essence—and reveals them.

(from *He'arot Ube'urim Bema'amarei K"k Admor Milubavitch*, p. 151)

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