

19 Kislev 5768

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Yud Tet Kislev Farbrengen

Part 1 of 4

from Harav Yitzchak Ginsburgh

Today marks the 208th anniversary of the redemption of the Alter Rebbe, Rabbi Shne'ur Zalman of Liadi. The verse that the Alter Rebbe himself said described his redemption was "[He has] Redeemed my soul in peace," which was in the Psalms reading of the day that he was released from prison [the word "prison" in Hebrew, מאסר, is related to the word for "prohibition," איסור]. Today's Torah reading (the fifth portion of *Vayeishev*) begins with the verse: "And Joseph was taken down to Egypt; Potiphar, Pharaoh's minister... purchased him" ... ויוסף הורד מצרימה ויקנהו פוטיפר סריס פרעה.

The final letters of the first three words, הורד מצרימה ("And Joseph was taken down to Egypt"), spell the word פדה, meaning "redeemed," the first word of the verse from Psalms that we just mentioned. What does this mean? It shows us that even as Joseph was being taken down to Egypt, and seemingly all hope was lost, already God was planting the seeds of his future redemption. The continuation of the verse in Psalms is "for the many have stood with me." The sages tell us that with these words King David is telling us that the very same people who joined together to oppose him, these same people prayed for his victory. In Joseph's generation this verse applies to his brothers who initially hated him and wanted to kill him but later regretted their ways and reunited with him, thus planting the seeds for redemption. And so in our generation, we must hope and pray that the very people who stand against Joseph, against the leader of the generation, will do *teshuvah* (repent, return to God) and stand as one to help him fulfill his mission.

In addition, the average value of these three words (ויוסף הורד מצרימה), whose final letters spell פדה "redeemed," is exactly equal to עוד יוסף חי, meaning "Joseph still lives!" These are the words that his father, Jacob will exclaim twenty-two years later, when he hears that Joseph is still alive in Egypt. But already, from the moment that he enters Egypt (exile and slavery) the Torah exclaims (an exclamation concealed in the garb of *gematria*): "Joseph still lives, Joseph still lives, Joseph still lives!"

Another point to learn from Joseph is based on the fact that beginning with today's Torah reading and concluding with tomorrow's (*chaf Kislev*, the continuation and conclusion of the Alter Rebbe's redemption on *yud tet Kislev*), he is described as "successful" three times. Indeed, the third time is when he is thrown into prison. We see



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that each time that he succeeds he is thrown further down. He loses more altitude. Success seems to be his ruin until he reaches rock bottom in the prison. From this we learn that often the Divinely inspired success of a *tzadik* (Joseph is the archetypal *tzadik* of the Torah) begins a process of “descent for the sake of ascent.” The success itself (paradoxically) brings with it descent (for the sake of refining the characteristics of the *tzadik*), but ultimately the ascent will be so great that it could never have been imagined. We, the Jewish people in our generation, have already passed the stages of descent and are now ready for the wondrous ascent that is beyond our dreams, the true and complete redemption with the coming of the Mashiach. This is especially true today, *yud tet Kislev*, the holiday of redemption. Now is the time to bless the Almighty, “Blessed is He who frees prisoners.”



About the Torah of the Mashiach, the *Midrash* says: “A new Torah will come out of Me.” The Torah of Mashiach began with the teachings of the Ba’al Shem Tov and with the teachings of the Alter Rebbe. The wellsprings are flowing outward in order to reveal this new Torah, the apex of which will be with the coming of the Mashiach.

There is a strong connection between the revelation of the Torah of Mashiach, the inner secrets of the Torah, i.e., the new Torah that will be revealed by the Mashiach—as it has begun to be revealed by the Ba’al Shem Tov, the Magid of Mezritch, whose *yahrzeit* is today, and the Alter Rebbe—and the renewal of Jewish kingship in our times, here in our Holy Land. This is going to be our topic of contemplation tonight. We will be talking about this inextricable link between the two: without the revelation of the inner aspect of the Torah, the Torah of Mashiach, we cannot realize the hopes and dreams of so many generations (and, we certainly cannot merit the greatness that lies even beyond our power to dream!). The ultimate goal, for which God created the universe, is that the kingdom of the Mashiach be the final stepping stone for revealing the dominion of God over the entire world, as the verse says: “And God will be King over the entire earth. On that day God will be one and His Name will be one.”

But, we have to be aware that the opposite is also true. From this week’s *parshah* we learn that if something is empty of water, and water is a symbol for Torah, then it becomes filled with snakes and scorpions. That is the description that *Rashi* gives to the pit that Joseph was thrown into. The Torah says that “the pit was empty, it had no water.” *Rashi* says: “There is no water in it—but there are snakes and scorpions.” This is exactly the situation that we are in. When there is a vacuum, when there is a lack of the Torah of Mashiach, false Messiah’s fill it up. False Messiah’s that as we will see propose false visions of peace and harmony in the world.

Let’s take this one step further. The word “empty” (“the pit was empty”) in Hebrew is the root form for the word “bachelor,” a person who is not yet married. There are three relationships that are likened to a marital relationship: 1) the relationship between the Jewish people and their king, and 2) the relationship between the entire people

together with the king and God, and 3) the relationship between the Jewish people and the Land of Israel. The only difference is the role that we play in each relationship. In our relationship with our king, the *tzadik* of the generation, the leader of our people, we are like his wife and he is like our husband. In relation to God, all of us (together with the king) are the wife, and God is the husband. But, in relation to the Holy Land, the Land of Israel, we are likened to the husband, while the land is likened to our wife. The verse says, "For your children will be your husbands." Of course, God forbid that a husband should ever disclaim, disown, or abandon his wife to another.

Our relationship as the bride and God as our husband is the topic of the Song of Songs. In regard to the king, as the Torah commands us to appoint a king over us, he is the husband and we are the wife. So in this regard, when it says that the pit—a feminine symbol in Kabbalah—was empty, an allusion is being made to the mentality of a single woman. Her emptiness is a spiritual emptiness; she is empty of Torah content. This is a state of mind, a mentality. What is your mentality? If your mentality is not a Torah mentality then you are not married (any way of life or philosophy other than the Torah will ultimately betray you; you may think that you are married, but it is no more than an illusion). Without Torah you cannot form a real relationship with anything (for your own ego will get into the way). If you do not have a Torah mentality, then something else will fill your mentality. You will have a false mentality that will prevent you from forging the real relationships in your life. Instead you will be connected to various things that are not good for you and out of which you will see no lasting results.

Who is supposed to fill the pit, i.e., the feminine aspect in us that needs to be filled in order to create a lasting relationship? Well, it is Joseph himself. In a deeper interpretation of the Torah, Joseph was cast into the pit to teach us that that is what should ideally happen, except that it should happen with joy and with happiness that Joseph has finally arrived to fill our mentality. As the sages describe, the moment that Joseph entered the pit all the snakes and scorpions—all the false mentalities, the false Messiah's—they all backed off and disappeared, because the true master had arrived. Joseph is the masculine light, the light of the king and the new Torah that emanates from the king that fills the feminine aspect of every Jew and of our people as a whole.

Our entire generation is an empty pit today. We are filled with false mentalities and false ideas about our lives. We have to rethink things and let new water, new Torah, come in and fill our mentality; we have to fill ourselves with Joseph. The new Torah comes out of Jerusalem. There is a verse that describes the "living waters from Jerusalem," "the word of God comes from Jerusalem." These are waters that we have not yet experienced, meaning that these are not the waters of the revealed aspects of the Torah. Only these new waters, the new Torah, can both quench our thirst and fill our nation's empty pit with a healthy mentality.



The *Midrash* says that there cannot be a king without a people. Usually, the reason given for king Solomon taking a thousand wives (and thus transgressing the word of God that forbids this) is that each one was from a different nation and Solomon wanted to elevate the fallen sparks of each nation to holiness. But, the more simple reason was that he wanted to teach the people that they have to be like his wife; that is the way we explained above that the relationship between the king and the people is likened to the relationship between a husband and wife. The thousand wives were only meant as an example of the type of relationship that the king wanted to have with every one of his subjects. Let us try to understand this more deeply.

In Hebrew, the phrase “the people of the king” is written עם המלך, and is pronounced “*am hamelech*.” But, with a small change in the pronunciation it becomes “*im hamelech*,” which means “with the king.” What is the significance of this alternate reading? This is how these words appear in the Book of Chronicles in the verse: “They were the artisans who lived in Neta’im and Gederah, they sat *with the king* when he was working” (1 Chronicles 4:23). This verse is the basis of one of the most astounding and important teachings by the sages. The sages explain that it describes that before doing His work, that is, before God created the universe, there were artisans sitting with Him from whom he took counsel on whether or not to create the world. The sages say that these artisans were the souls of the Jewish people who advised God to indeed create the world for in the end that is His deepest yearning. In the terminology of Kabbalah this occurred before the initial contraction of God’s infinite light, the first *tzimtzum*.

What do we learn from this in regard to the relationship between the people and the king? We said that the people should be “with the king,” the greatness of the Jewish people is that our source, our connection with the Creator goes way back, further back than even God’s decision to create the world. To be with the King for us means to be with the King before He created the world, before the first contraction. To be with Him means to be married to Him, to be the “wife who gives wise counsel to build the house” (חכמות נשים בנתה ביתה). Our tradition is to call the Jewish king a “*nasi*,” which literally means a ruler. But, this word, *nasi*, נשיא, comes from the same verb meaning “to marry,” indicating the nature of the proper relationship between the people and the king. So to be “with the king” means to be married to him. And like any husband, everything that he does, the king asks his people. As God commanded Abraham: “Everything that Sarah tells you, listen to her” (it is even brought down that Abraham is considered the first king of Israel).

Now, it should be known that this type of relationship between the people and the king never fully happened, not even by King David. King David’s rule is only considered to be a hint at what possibly might come to fruition in a relationship between the people and the king, but the full extent of the inner meaning of the Torah’s commandment that we appoint upon us a king, has never completely happened. This is explained by the Rogochover, one of the greatest masters of the revealed tradition in the

past century, both in regard to the *mitzvah* of appointing a king as well as with regard to the *mitzvah* of building the Temple. He argues that even the first and second Temples did not exactly fit the requirements of the Torah (which is also why they could be destroyed). Both were not what God desired in commanding us to build for Him a Temple. In the Torah it first says: “The Temple of God, Your hands have founded,” and then comes the next verse: “God will be King forever and ever” **וְיְהוָה יִמְלֹךְ לְעֹלָם וָעֶד**, whose numerical value is 376, the value of “peace,” **שְׁלוֹם**. This refers to the eternal state of peace that will follow the building of the third Temple, the Temple which God’s hands, as it were, have to lay the foundation for. In addition, this verse has an intrinsic connection to the Mashiach, to the full-fledged king, with the full marital relationship with the people that we are yet destined to have, because in this verse is the 358th appearance of God’s essential Name, *Havayah* in the Torah; and 358 is the numerical value of Mashiach, **מְשִׁיחַ**. The Mashiach is the king who rebuilds the Temple and who brings true and everlasting peace to the entire world.



In any event, the future kingdom that we hope for has to be one where the people are “with the king,” and together with the king we are all in a state that is before the contraction of God’s infinite light. How can we rejoin the King, to be with Him before the first contraction [and what does this mean for our purposes, before and after the contraction?].

Before the first contraction, in the state where God takes consul from the souls of the *tzadikim*, in that state the kingship is entirely God’s. In other words, as long as we do not ascend, with our physical king to that level, the kingship is not truly God’s, we cannot truly say: “reveal the majesty of Your sovereignty over us.” This is the type of kingship that we want; without it nothing will ever change in the direction that we are hoping for. Just as we need and seek a “new” Torah so the notion of kingship is not at all what most Jews think it is, not even what *frum*, orthodox, religious Jews think a king would be like according to the Torah. Those notions are very distant from what we have in mind, because we are talking about a king, and a people that are “with the king,” and together they are the ones who give the Almighty consul, together they are the souls of the *tzadikim*. And this picture of kingship in its entirety is what the verse is talking about when it says: “And my servant David will rule [will be a *nasi*] over them forever.” This is so much higher than what people think of when they entertain the notion of a king.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe would frequently quote what is brought down in Kabbalah that the acronym hidden in the word “*nasi*” **נָשִׂיא** is “a spark from our father Jacob,” **נִיּוּצֵנוּ** **שֶׁל יַעֲקֹב אֲבִינוּ**, and Jacob’s bed was whole, meaning that none of his procreative energy ever went to waste. In Chassidut it is explained that a wife and children cannot be like subjects to their husband and father. Someone who is so close cannot be subservient, because you have to have some distance. So we have to ask: can we really be “with the king?” The answer that we give is on the contrary we have to be both with the king—as

close as can be, like a wife and children—and yet be subjects—maintain a distance. This is only possible when a person has learnt how to carry opposites, the general inner mentality of all Chassidic teachings, as explained elsewhere. Indeed, there will be a king and there will be a people, and at the same time the people will be “with the king.” For everyone to be able to attain this ability and understanding of how to carry opposites, how to be near the king and yet far from him at the same time, for this we need new Torah.

Now let’s get back to the question of what the contraction has to do with kingship. It is well known that the Arizal identifies our Torah (i.e., our understanding of the Torah) as that of Creation. Now, the Arizal does not mean the World of Creation, which is what it seems that he is saying on first reading. The Arizal is referring to Creation in the sense of “Adam of Creation.” This is a very important topic in the study of Kabbalah. In short, “Adam of Creation” together with “Adam of Emanation,” “Adam of Formation,” and “Adam of Action” is a Kabbalistic model that distinguishes between different levels in the creative process. As explained in Chassidut, “Adam of Creation” is what in parallel Kabbalistic terminology is called *Adam Kadmon* (or, Primordial Man), the first emanation emanated after the initial contraction of God’s infinite light, the first *tzimtzum*. To say that our (understanding of the) Torah is a Torah of Creation means that its scope begins after the contraction. This is one of the reasons that the Arizal himself only spoke openly about the stages that follow the contraction and not earlier. All of the revealed tradition of interpreting the Torah that we have in our hands today begins from a Kabbalistic perspective with *Adam Kadmon*, the “Adam of Creation,” i.e., immediately after the first contraction.

But, the new (interpretation and understanding of the) Torah, the Torah of the Mashiach, it is the Torah of Emanation (*Atzilut*). Not the World of Emanation, but “Adam of Emanation,” which refers to the infinite light before the contraction, the time described in the *Zohar* as “when it entered into His mind to want to create the world.” This is the state in which it is relevant to seek counsel about whether or not to create the world from the souls of the *tzadikim*; the King seeks counsel from his loyal people, from his subjects that are with him, his “wife.” They advise him to follow His yearning. They say: “It’s not going to be easy,” at first Joseph was taken down to Egypt, and the more he was successful, the lower he fell. But in the end, there will be a redemption with peace,” and it will be announced that “Joseph is still alive,” three times!

So far for our introduction this evening.