

Fourth Elul Shiur

13 Elul 5772

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(Notes taken during the shiur by Moshe Genuth. Not reviewed by Harav Ginsburgh)

Lechaim lechaim.

Today is the 13th of Elul, the ahavah (love) day of Elul. 13 is the value of love and of one. Elul in reduced numbering also equals 13. It is known that in the month of Elul there is a special revelation of the 13 measures of mercy. This awakens us to do teshuvah out of joy, as we did now a little, until the Mashiah is revealed. The word Mashiah has the same letters as "joyous" (ישמח).

The Torah's first word is Bereisheet (בראשית). This word too in reduced numbering equals 13. The final word of the account of the first day is "one" so the first day's account begins and ends with 13, alluding to Hashem being just one. The light God created on the first day was in order to reveal this.

The parashah this week is Ki Teitzei, כי תצא למלחמה על איביך... וראית בשביה אשת יפת תאר וחשקת בה. This should all be read in a positive way. The Alter Rebbe explains in Likutei Torah that the אשת יפת תאר, the beautiful woman is the soul root. In merit of going to war in order to rectify reality, we merit finding our soul root. Just as the negative side of reality has been swallowing the holy sparks of Divinity, by freeing them we reveal our own soul root, individually, and as a collective.

The holy Zohar on the parashah focuses on the mitzvah concerning he who defames a virgin. The Zohar states that the virgin of Israel בתולת ישראל is the בת ראשי, the same letters as בראשית, Bereisheet (In the beginning). This phrase, בת ראשי, refers to the Divine Presence, and it is prohibited from defaming her holiness, even if it seems that she has been defiled, she is pure in her source. What is a defamation? It is explained that it refers to not believing that there is Divine Providence upon the sefirah of malchut (kingdom). Upon all the higher sefirot there is belief that they are under Divine supervision. If a person lives his life, as if he's hovering a measure above the ground, he sees Divine Providence. The higher a person lives above the ground the more Divine Providence they see. There is a saying that the Alter Rebbe lived 2000 cubits above the ground. He said about Shlomo of Karlin that he lives just a fraction of a cubit (א טפח, tefach) above the ground, meaning that he lives in the consciousness of foundation. To live above the ground means to live in a miracle, so there it's clear that there is Divine Providence. But, what about a person who lives with his feet on the ground? There it is a great challenge to believe that everything that is happening in the realm of malchut (of kingdom) is also by Divine Providence. A person who defames, may believe that there is Divine Providence above, but when it comes to the government, to the state, he cannot see the Providence, so he doubts that maybe it doesn't exist. If he thinks this is not the case, all the more so if he expresses his doubt, that is defaming the virgin of Israel.

There are very few tzadikim who are at the ground level of malchut and can still hold on to their faith in Divine Providence. The virgin of Israel, even when God is concealed, a concealment within a concealment, is not prone to being defiled. The real tzadik can see Divine Providence even there. To walk with God in keri, "accidents"

means not to see Divine Providence. If one walks this way with God, God also shows him things in an accidental manner.

It says in the Tanya that our world is a world of tests and challenges, and God placed us here, because regardless of what happens, we can see the Divine Providence in everything. Still, if we imagine that things happen by chance, God will indeed treat us the same way. There are tzadikim that are not prone to losing their faith even the most difficult times. There is a story about Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa who walked between snakes and sorcerers and could not be hurt. What inoculates one from being hurt? Only and solely belief in Divine Providence. If you believe in it, you are inoculated from being hurt by the seeming "accidents" of the reality and you inspire others to be the same.

Ki Teitzei is the 49th parashah, and the most important phrase in this parashah according to the Zohar is "the virgin of Israel" (בתולת ישראל). The connection with the first parashah, Bereisheet, is that 1 and 49 represent the 50 gates of understanding together. Another connection between them is that in Bereisheet there are 146 verses and in Ki Teitzei there are 110. When we add them we get 256, 16 squared. Whenever two things go together, a sign is that their values sum to a perfect square. Another point, the difference between 146 and 110 is 36, also a perfect square (and a triangular number too, the triangle of 8). So these two numbers of verses complement one another. If we add the values of בראשית (913) and תצא (491) we get 1404, two times the value of "Shabbat" (as it says that if we keep two Shabbatot we will immediately be redeemed. Each Shabbat (שבת), 702 is the diamond of 26, the value of Havayah. Without going into more numbers let us see the main connection between these two parashot.

The Torah is a Torah of life, teaching us how to live life. There are 613 commandments in the Torah. The Zohar calls them "pieces of advice" (תרי"ג עיטין), advice on how to follow the path of life, life in this World, life in the World to Come. The World to Come is not something futuristic, but something that is always coming in the present moment. As the BST taught, מי זאת עולה מן המדבר, we have to connect the World to Come (מי) with the present (זאת).

The commandment in Bereisheet is to be fruitful and multiply (פרו ורבו). The Alter Rebbe explains that the inner meaning is not just to give birth to offspring, but to make another Jew. One must dedicate one's life to bringing other Jews close to God, especially in the month of Elul, as the BST said, "I came into the world on this month in order to add life to the task of Elul." How does one perform this commandment in holiness? First he has to perform another mitzvah, he has to sanctify a woman (קידושין). Where does this mitzvah appear in the Torah, to sanctify a woman in order to marry her? According to the Rambam, there is a mitzvah to sanctify a woman, to marry her, and there is another mitzvah to have offspring. They go together as a pair, but they appear in different places in the Torah. To have offspring is in Bereisheet, but to wed a woman is in our parashah. This is wondrous, because first you have to wed a woman before having offspring, and yet we have to wait 49 parashot until we come to this mitzvah. Just this, is the deepest point that connects these two parashot. According to the Rambam the mitzvah to wed a woman is in the first words of the defamer. בי יקה איש אשה ובא אליה ושנאה. "When a man weds a woman, etc." In the paragraph of the defamer there are 7 verses altogether. The

first 4 words, *בי יקה איש אשה*, seem to suggest a story, not a commandment. It doesn't say "wed a woman." It's like a story. When a man weds a woman. Still, there is no other source in the Torah that states that one must wed a woman. There are three ways to sanctify a woman as the sages say at the beginning of the tractate of Kidushin.

In fact, this phrase, *בי יקה איש אשה*, appears 3 times in the parashah, a chazakah. This phrase does not appear at all again in the entire Bible. These 4 words equal "man" times "good" (*אדם פעמים טוב*). To be a good man, one must take a woman. Each time this phrase appears, it is the beginning of another paragraph. Our parashah also contains the highest number of mitzvot (commandments) of any parashah in the Torah, almost without comparison, altogether 74 mitzvot out of which 27 are prescriptive and 47 prohibitive. 74 alludes to the verse, *עד ה' בכם* (God testifies about you). In parashat Bereisheet there is a single mitzvah (there are opinions that the mitzvah of having offspring is not learnt from Bereisheet). In any case, in our parashah, Ki Teitzei there is the greatest proliferation of "offspring" of the Torah, the greatest number of mitzvot. The Komarna Rebbe explains that being fruitful and multiplying is constantly having new interpretations and understandings in the Torah. The mitzvah that is most connected to being fruitful is of course to wed a woman.

Why does the Rambam in his codex of laws, in his original manuscript, learn the mitzvah of marrying from this verse, *בי יקה איש אשה*, as it appears regarding the defamer. He could have learnt it from the other two instances. The second time is about someone who marries and hates his wife. The third time is in regard to taking a new wife, when someone is newly married he is free from public service in the army, etc. It is interesting that the first word of this phrase, *בי יקה איש אשה*, is the same word that begins the entire parashah. The word *בי* is understood as an acronym for congregation of Israel (*בנסת ישראל*). There is no other parashah in the Torah that begins with this word. In general there is an important remez that of the 54 parashot in the Torah, the most begin with the letter vav (ו), 43 of them. 6 begin with an alef, so there are only 5 that begin with a different letter. The sign of these letters is *ברכה ש*. The first is Bereisheet, then Re'eh (ה), then Ki Teitzei (כ), Haazinu, and finally in between these there is parashat Shoftim (ש).

There is a beautiful story about Rebbe Shlomo of Karlin, a friend of the Alter Rebbe. As a young man he sat and learnt in the Beit Midrash. He was married and had young children, but he did not provide for them. Mercy on them. A wealthy man saw him and was angry with him for not providing for them. He wanted to strike him and tell him to go work. But, Rebbe Shlomo said to him, but I do have a source of income, I have two ki (*כי*). Ki in yiddish means "cows." So the wealthy individual thought that he did have a way to provide for them. Still the wealthy man, who was far from Torah observance, went to Rebbe Shlomo's wife, and wanting to help by purchasing their milk, he asked to buy some. The wife was bewildered. The wealthy man said, Your husband told me that you have two cows. She started laughing or maybe crying and said, we don't have two cows. With deep anger the wealthy man returned to Rebbe Shlomo and wanted to hit him. Rebbe Shlomo explained, that I have to Ki refers to the verse, *כי בו ישמח לבנו כי בשם קדשו*, *בטחתי*, which contains the word *כי* twice. The wealthy man was appeased and decided that he would take the family's needs on himself. When this wealthy man passed on, Rebbe

Shlomo ensured that even though he was far from Torah observance, no spiritual harm would befall him. All this was just to explain that the word כי (Ki) is very important. In Rashi on the Torah, he writes that Chi (כי) is the shape of the Greek Xi, the shape in which the king is anointed on his head. Not only is Ki Teitzei the parashah with the most mitzvot, it also contains the greatest number of parshiyot (paragraphs), 44. Out of the 110 verses 44 begin a new paragraph. So on average every 2.5 verses, a new paragraph begins. Out of these 44 paragraphs, how many begin with the word כי? 22, which is exactly one half. What gives us joy, that we trust in God, כי בשם קדשו בטחנו, that He will give us everything we need, especially in the month of Elul, before the new year. So why does the Rambam choose this negative context to learn about the mitzvah to wed a woman? If he would learn it from the second paragraph that begins with these words, that would also be negative. The negative of the first instance is in the person himself. The fault lies with him. But, in the second instance, when a person takes a woman and hates her after marrying her, even though it is not a good situation, it is because there is something wrong with her. To wed a woman and then hate her, that is a transgression, but to find a blemish in his wife, is not his transgression, but there is indeed something with her. So the context here too is negative. In the Book of Mitzvot according to most opinions, the Rambam is learning the mitzvah of sanctifying a woman from the second instance of כי יקח איש אשה. But, why doesn't he learn from the third verse that begins with כי יקח איש אשה? There is a progression here from negative wedlock to somewhat negative, and finally to the nicest of them all, When a man takes a new wife. She only has to be new for him, she could be a divorcee or a widow. If we've come to this third instance, it says, כי יקח איש אשה חדשה, When a man takes a new woman. Only a woman is described as being new (a man is nowhere described as new). This reveals that women have the power of renewal. All renewal is from chochmah (wisdom). As the Rogochover said, the mitzvah of sanctifying a woman is continual and continuous, so every day you can say Mazal tov to a couple. This is all connected with the mazal of Elul, virgo (the virgin). In our previous class we talked about the connection between the virgin of Israel (בתולה ישראל), who then appears in this verse denoting that women have the power of renewal. The word "new" (חדש) does not appear even once in Genesis. The first time it appears is at the beginning of Exodus (Shemot), A new king arose over Egypt. The next time is with the commandment of sanctifying the new month—indicating the ability of a Jew to renew like the new moon. Now we have three idioms, each has a noun and an adjective, and each has 7 letters, and they all equal the same number. They are the phrase, משפט צדק, "just laws," which alludes to the unification of God and malchut. In our parashah, it is the phrase אשה חדשה. Both equal 623. Each has 7 letters. 623 divides by 7, 7 times 89, where 89 equals "small children" (טף). The Zohar adds another phrase that equals 623, רוח הקדש, the holy spirit, which queen Esther was adorned by. Rashi explains that the meaning of da'at is Holy Spirit. The initials of these three phrases is אמר, an important acronym in Kabbalah for "light, water, and firmament," which correspond to the intellectual sefirot, here it fits that they are in the order of Chabad. Taking the first word of each phrase, we have: אשה משפט רוח, just these words equal 13 times 73, the value of Chochmah (חכמה). This also equals אהבת ישראל.

The mitzvah of kidushin (sanctifying a woman for marriage), is related to da'at (consciousness), because doing so requires the person to be aware of what he is doing. The woman also has to be aware. Even when the Torah says, "She shall be his wife, he will not be able to send her off his entire life" (לו תהיה לאשה), it is required that the woman agree to marriage, to being sanctified. How can it be that such an important mitzvah as kidushin is learnt from the first time this phrase appears, even though the context is so negative. The words of this verse are *כי יקח איש אשה ובה אליה ושנאה*, the final word, "and he shall hate her," teach us that from a state of hating another Jew, one can come to bloodshed. The foundation of the sin is that the husband is transgressing the mitzvah of loving-one's fellow Jew. If there is no love, it might come to hatred and even murder. Rashi writes that a doctor who warns you that if you don't live a healthy lifestyle you will die is much better than one who refrains from warning you. In the same way, the Rambam learns the mitzvah of getting married from this negative context like a warning. Get married out of love of your fellow Jew, otherwise you will come to hate her.

This is the place to note that the Rebbe received letters where a woman would complain that she is not attracted to her husband. If this is the case, and you let your inclination drag you, you will come to hate them and even hurt them. To defame someone is also called injuring them physically. The Rebbe writes to this woman, that just as it is not always the case that a person loves God naturally, how does one come to love God? He answers that our task is to meditate upon God and if we merit, we will experience love. I must meditate in a serious way on those things that awaken love. And if I indeed work hard, I will merit this love. This is the foundation of couplehood according to the Rebbe.

We said that the act of wedding a woman is about da'at, like the connection between Adam and Eve, which was, "And Adam knew his wife Eve." The parashah that is most filled with commandments regarding a man and woman is Ki Teitzei. The month of Elul is about rectifying the connection between husband and wife. This is especially related to tonight, the 13th day of Elul, the love of love. Right after the general rule, *כי יקח איש אשה*, the mitzvah of da'at, "He will come to her and hate her," a blemish in love of Israel, a blemish in the sefirah of loving-kindness. There are 6 sefirot and then malchut, the virgin of Israel. In the parashah this week there are after the *כי יקח איש אשה* 6 paragraphs with 17 verses. Marriage must be based on love and a person who defames cannot love his spouse. If this is the case, that the woman was defiled, she must be stoned. The person who defiled her should also be stoned. The two options, if he defamed and if he spoke the truth, correspond to loving-kindness and might. Then there is a short paragraph with only a single verse. Once again, the laws of stoning, the Rambam learns from here. So there must be something very harsh here. The Seforno says that all these sad stories to tell us that these are the things that cause the Divine Presence to leave the Jewish people in the land of Israel. The only thing that can hurt our settlement in the land of Israel, only these sad stories regarding a lack of love between couples, a lack of Shalom Bayit. What are these 6 sad stories: the first is the defamer, the husband sins. Then if she was really defiled. The next one is a married woman being with another

man. These three correspond to chesed, gevurah, and tiferet. The next pair are the betrothed girl who was either in the city or in the field. In the city she is guilty for not having yelled out, but in the field she is not (from here we learn that the Torah does not hold a person accountable for what they were coerced to do, אונס רחמנא פטריה). The reason still that she was raped in the city is because she acted promiscuously, this is a defilement of netzach. Then there is a case of foundation, of a non-betrothed woman, a single woman who was raped. There the law is that the rapist must marry her (if she agrees). This then corresponds to yesod, foundation.

The concept of money is mentioned only in the first and sixth cases. In the first, 100 silver coins are paid, and in the sixth 50, ratio of a whole to a half. What is the connection of silver to these two sefirot? Silver corresponds to loving-kindness (chesed), but there is another type of "silver" in Hebrew, which is כסף חי, or כספית, mercury, which corresponds to foundation (among the 7 metals). The amazing thing about this is that the atomic number of mercury is 80, the value of "foundation" (יסוד).

The only mitzvah in which a person has to be warned about transgressing to be guilty is learnt from the 4th case here, where it says, על דבר אשר עינה, from which we learn that he cannot be held guilty and punished by death unless the person has been told what his punishment would be. This corresponds to netzach, the beginning of the habitual sefirot. From the fifth case, הוד, we learn that in Arayot there is a ruling that a person should be killed and not transgress them.

May we merit a year of true Shalom Bayit, a good and sweet year, where in merit of the love between us, the bride, the congregation of Israel and the Almighty, we will merit to have the Mashiach come.