

Special Shiur

5 Kislev 5773

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(Notes taken from a recording. Not reviewed by Harav Ginsburgh)

Israel is currently under the tension of a war in the Gaza strip (which belongs to Greater Israel). It is always good to talk about peace but at this moment especially we must talk about peace, true peace (the ultimate objective of fighting our wars). According to the Torah, when we want to understand a concept properly, we must look at its source in the Hebrew language, Lashon Hakodesh, the Holy Tongue. We believe that the world was created with the Holy Tongue and everything was created by its Hebrew name. One special thing about Hebrew is that every word has a root, which usually includes three letters.

The word that we are currently meditating on is the word “peace” (שלום), which is the same in all semitic languages, *shalom*, *salam* etc. The three-lettered root of this word is *shin-lamed-mem* (שלם). The Radak, Rabbi David Kimchi, one of the greatest medieval grammarians, writes in his In Book of Roots, that the root *shin-lamed-mem* (שלם) has three different meanings. He makes no attempt to find the connection between them, but he shows where they appear in the Bible. When we arrange them in ascending order (as he does, without explaining this particular order) the three meanings of שלם are:

3. “peace” (שלום; *shalom*)
2. “completeness” (שלם; the opposite of which is a broken or partial reality)
1. “payment” (תשלום)

Our goal is to understand the significance of these different meanings in the soul and in order to do so, we must understand the relationship between them.

The relationship between the two upper levels, “peace” and “completeness” is easier to understand than their relationship with the lowest level, “payment.” A state of peace between two people reflects a state of harmonious completion between them, without any disputes. But the main idea is that we can only achieve peace if it is based on completeness, as we will explain. The Lubavitcher Rebbe, whose chassidim we all are, said that peace in Israel is possible only if Land of Israel is complete. According to the Torah we speak about three different things that must be complete, a complete country, a complete people and a complete Torah.

We believe that the Jewish people and the Land of Israel are the heart of the world. If the heart is whole then completeness spreads throughout all of the limbs of the body and the body is whole too. In our context, if Judaism is whole then the world is whole. If the Land of Israel is complete then all the countries in the world will be safe and whole; if the Jewish people are complete then all nations, all the righteous gentiles all over the world, will be whole; and from the most profound perspective, if the Torah is complete, meaning that the Jewish people observe the Torah completely and non-Jews also observe those parts of the Torah that are relevant to them, then all the wisdoms of the world will also be complete.

One example of this last relationship: today science views the world as being divided. Scientists speak of four forces of nature, but no scientist has ever come up with a theory that unifies them all, even Einstein, who devoted his entire life to that end. Everyone wants to find a theory that unifies all the knowledge that we are familiar with in the universe. Once the Torah is complete it will be possible to achieve a unified knowledge of physics; a general unified theory. This is an example of the fact that if the Torah was complete then all the wisdom of the world would be complete. This is also true for all countries and the righteous individuals of all nations. Everything depends on the three “wholenesses” that the Rebbe spoke of.

This all sounds well and good, but sometimes it appears to be counter-intuitive. For instance, the Israeli government today assumes that in order to reach peace we must divide things up – for instance by dividing the land of Israel, God forbid, and giving parts of it away to our enemies for the sake of artificial peace.

We need to understand the significance of completeness. We intuitively understand the connection between peace and completeness and we now realize that sometimes this connection is counter-intuitive because it appears that the enemy will not agree to peace if the “completeness” is not divided. Now we need to understand the connection between these two concepts and the third meaning of *shalom*, “payment.”

There is a biological concept that in order for any organism to survive it needs to adapt itself to its surroundings in a balanced way. If it is hot outside, the body needs to cool down (by sweat); if it is cold outside, the body needs to warm up (by shivering). This is an important biological concept called, “homeostasis.”

What does payment refer to? If you sold me something – I need to pay you for it from my own money. In Hebrew payment (תשלום) also refers to reward and punishment. One of the important things that we learn about God’s management of the world is that it is “measure for measure.” Fair play amongst people means that there is a mutual understanding that I don’t take something without paying and I don’t give anything away without receiving payment (unless the giver explicitly states that he is giving his friend a gratis gift. But, even regarding a gratis gift Reuben would not in general give Shimon a gift unless Shimon had afforded him a kindness or pleased him in some way). This is a definitive, fundamental principle in any healthy human society.

Let’s now take all this information and see how it is expressed in the soul:

We speak of three levels of consciousness: natural (behavioristic, instinctive), emotional, and intellectual (referring to the mind.) When the Bible speaks of the messianic vision of peace on earth it refers to knowledge of God that spreads throughout the world like the waters of the sea, “The earth will be filled with knowledge of God, as the waters cover the ocean.” Peace is not only peace between people and nations, but when there is peace human knowledge itself will be elevated. This is the significance of peace – the elevation of the intellect (which is why many verses in the Bible connect peace with Torah study – broadening our horizons of Divine knowledge). Payment belongs to the behavioristic level of mankind – I shouldn’t need to think twice about paying for something that I have purchased, neither is it something emotional; it is our simple instinctive nature. This is called the “feedback mechanism,” which should be

automatic. If this was how people behaved we wouldn't need police at all, we would all have and manifest an instinctive sense of justice.

The heart is the seat of the emotions and the Torah often uses the idiom of "whole-heartedness," or a "whole heart." Sometimes the heart can be "broken." The most counter-intuitive idea regarding a heart is that "there is nothing more whole than a broken heart." Nevertheless, the concept of completeness refers in particular to a heart and to the emotional plane of the soul.

As we mentioned before, these are three levels of consciousness: payment belongs to the instinctive plane, completeness belongs to the emotional plane and peace belongs to the intellectual plane; we need "peace of mind." As we said above, once peace exists in the world then, "the world is full of knowledge of God, as the waters cover the ocean."

Let's return to the three types of completeness that the Lubavitcher Rebbe spoke of: there are three basic emotions of the heart, love, fear, and compassion. The completeness of the nation depends on love amongst people. When I love every Jew and every human being, this is the completion of loving-kindness in the heart, the first of the three principal emotions. In the Torah these three emotions correspond to the three Patriarchs, Abraham, whose attribute was love, Isaac, whose attribute was fear of God, and Jacob whose attribute was compassion. The completeness of the Jewish people depends on Abraham, whose attribute is love.

Of all three Patriarchs, the one who was most connected to the land of Israel was Isaac, who never left the land of Israel, he was born here and never left (while Abraham came from abroad and both he and Jacob had to leave the country at certain stages in their lives). Our power to guard our country is through courage and the attribute of fear [of losing our beloved homeland], as we can see today in Israel that in order to retain our ownership of all the country we need to be courageous and strong. The problem is that there is currently no political consensus that we need to keep the land whole, nonetheless the attribute that we need to make use of in order to keep our country whole is courage.

The third attribute, compassion, belongs to the completeness of the Torah. Compassion is the harmonious combination of love and fear. Compassion means giving those in need what they are in need of. This is the completeness of the Torah and its injunctions – there are limits to which we can be compassionate towards our enemies.

In order to act correctly in the current situation, we need all parts of this completeness. Put simply, we need a love of Jews that will spread out to all creatures and we need the understanding that the Land of Israel was Divinely ordained for the Jewish people, for the benefit of the entire world. As we mentioned above, if we have what rightly belongs to us it would benefit the entire world.

First we need a love of all Jews and we therefore need to guard all our Divinely-promised territories. The second thing we need is security. The current problem is that when it is unclear whether or not something belongs to me it is very difficult for me to fight for it. If our presence in certain parts of our land is considered by some "illegal" it is difficult to go to war. The first thing we need to understand is that it is our legitimate right to live here. This is the result of our love of our people. The second thing is that it

is our legitimate right to defend our country, for the benefit of Jews and non-Jews alike. The third thing is that we need a true and authentic legal system – the completeness of the Torah. This is completeness at the three levels of the emotions.

Not everyone is aware that the Torah has the most sophisticated and well-developed legal system. We are not talking now about “religious” laws but rather about civil law, the type of law and order that is necessary to organize any social structure between man and his fellowman. Torah law must become the accepted legal system here in Israel.

Let’s complete one of the things we mentioned according to Kabbalah and Chassidut: in the Garden of Eden, immediately after the world was created, there were three characters: Adam, Eve and the serpent. The serpent seduced the woman to eat from the Tree of Knowledge and to give it to Adam as well. These three correspond to the three abovementioned planes of the soul: Adam corresponds to the mind (the intellectual faculties of the soul), Eve corresponds to the heart (the emotive powers of the soul) and, so we are taught, had the serpent not brought about Adam’s sin and subsequent downfall, it would have become a “great servant” (the instinctive powers of the soul). There is something about the serpent, while he still had legs to walk on, that represents how technology serves mankind. In the future it will become this way – the rectification of our behavior, which will be naturally rectified social behavior (when everyone naturally pays what he owes), is the rectification of the serpent. This is the rectification of the three characters in the account of the primordial Garden of Eden.

Questions and Answers:

Question: What would have happened to man had he not sinned?

Answer: Abraham was the first of the Patriarchs because he withstood ten trials. Adam did not withstand the trial. If he had, he would have become the Mashiach.

Before the class here, we gave a class to kindergarten children. We spoke with very young children about the month that we are in now, the month of Kislev. The first book of Kabbalah is the Book of Formation, in which it is explained that there is a particular letter with which God created each month. For example, your month, the month of Tishrei was created with the letter *lamed* (ל) and Nisan was created with a *hei* (ה), Elul was created with a *yud* (י) and Cheshvan was created with the letter *nun* (נ). This month, the month of Kislev was created with the letter *samech* (ס). The letter *samech* is round, like a circle. At the end of the month is the festival of Chanukah when Jews light candles and praise and thank God for the miraculous victory over the Greek Hellenists. The victory was not only a physical victory, but a spiritual one too. The Greeks were renowned for their wisdom and our victory over them is the victory of Torah wisdom. In particular, the Greeks excelled at mathematics and one of the important concepts in mathematics is pi (π), the relationship (ratio) between the circumference of a circle and its diameter. Until about 150 years ago, nobody knew the difference or the definition of rational, irrational and transcendental numbers (like pi and *e*). Pi was calculated approximately. Obviously, the closest approximation in whole integers is 3. The Greeks came to a close approximation (such as $\frac{22}{7}$). The Chinese also reached a close approximation. The closest approximation in fractions (less than one thousand) – is accurate to six decimal places

(which is most unlikely and therefore amazing). We have a book that speaks about this number and shows how it appears in the Torah. The number is $355/113$, which equals 3.1415929 (whereas $\pi = 3.14159265$)!

In the Torah there are many phenomena that relate to this mysterious number. One of them is particularly relevant to the month of Kislev. The name of this month appears twice in the Bible. In this month we must draw a circle [the letter samech (ס), the letter of Kislev] and in it we will find the secret of pi. There are two books in the Bible in which the name of this month appears, Nechemiah and Zachariah. Nechemiah lived after the first exile from the Land of Israel in the beginning of the second Temple period. He built the defensive wall around Jerusalem. His book describes how as one of the ministers of the king of Persia, he asked him to allow him to come back to the Land of Israel to help the Jewish community there. The first verse relates that this was in the month of Kislev. This is one mention of Kislev in the Bible. The second mention of Kislev is in Zachariah, a prophet who lived in the same era, the first years of the second Temple. In the seventh chapter there is a prophecy that he received in Kislev. In Nechemiah no mention is made of the exact date but in Zachariah it is on the 4th of Kislev – today. In this prophecy the people of Babylonia ask whether they should fast on the day that the first Temple was destroyed. Nechemiah replied very clearly that if you act as you should, by behaving kindly to your fellows, you will never have to fast again and the second Temple will be eternal. This was a prophecy that was said today and it is very relevant to our situation today.

Every calculation in the Torah begins with a simple gematria (the numerical value of the letters that construct the word or the words that we are meditating on – in the Holy Tongue every letter has a number), but there are deeper, more sophisticated mathematical insights that appear and develop as we continue to contemplate a specific phenomenon in the Torah. Kislev appears in two books, Nechemiah (נחמיה) and Zachariah (זכריה) whose numerical values are 113 and 242, respectively. Thus, the sum of Nechemiah and Zarcharia is 355, the numerator of the fraction that we mentioned above for pi ($355/113$). But, the denominator in this fraction is the value of just Nechemiah. So pi is equal to the sum of Nechemiah plus Zachariah, divided by the value of Nechemiah!

In the Torah there is a rule that we need “two witnesses to confirm a testimony,” meaning that we need at least two appearances of the same phenomenon in order to prove it. What is even more surprising is that at the beginning of the chapter of Zachariah in which the prophecy was received on the 4th of Kislev, the word “Kislev” is written כסלו. However, in Nechemiah in some versions of the Bible it is written כסלוי, but pronounced כסלוי, with an additional letter *yud*. Whenever a word in the Bible is written one way but read in another way, there is always hidden meaning to it. Indeed, Kislev (כסלו) without a *yud* is 116 and with a *yud* is 126. This difference only appears at the beginning of the book of Nechemiah, but not in Zachariah. The sum of both these numbers 116 plus 126 equals 242, the numerical value of Zachariah (זכריה). This means that the beginning of Nechemiah is alluding to Zachariah (obviously, Nechemiah plus Kislev with a *yud* and Kislev without a *yud* divided by Nechemiah is $355/113$, as before)!

The cycle of time is the yearly cycle. We mentioned the sun and the moon, there is a solar year and a lunar year and in order to match them, we add a month to the year 7 times every 19 years. The word "year" (שנה) equals 355 (355 is actually one of the possible number of days in the Hebrew year). The word "day" (יום) – another cycle of time – is also often used in the Bible in the context of a year. When we fill the three letters of the word "day" (יוד וואו מם), the numerical value is 113. This means that 355/113 is equal to "year" (שנה) divided by "day" (יוד וואו מם)!

So we have seen three different phenomena for pi as 355/113 from the Torah. In addition, pi is a messianic phenomenon as alluded to by the fact that כסלו-כסליו-כסלו (the two forms of Kislev that appear in Nechemiah and the one form that appears in Zachariah) equals 358, the numerical value of Mashiach (משיח)!

Blessing: be successful and may G-d gift you with many children and grandchildren, both physically and spiritually.