

# Sheva Berachot Kovikov

6 Iyar 5773

(Notes taken during class, not reviewed nor edited by Harav Ginsburgh)

It says that four entered the Pardes, Ben Azai looked and died, Ben Zoma looked and went mad, Elisha Acher became a heretic, and only Rabbi Akiva entered and exited with peace. He had the right balance in his soul between the run and return, he was a rectification of Nadav and Avihu who had a problem with this balance. Iyar is an acronym for Avraham Yitzchak Yaakov and Rachel, these are the supernal chariot, and to enter these secrets is called entering the Pardes. In the Pardes there are also 4 parts, corresponding to the four parts of the Divine chariot.

It says in the Midrash that the angels also tried to push Rabbi Akiva out, until the Almighty Himself got involved and told them to let go of this "old man" who is worthy of entering the Pardes and enjoying His luminance. If the angels of hosts did this, it means they had some reasoning that Rabbi Akiva too is not worthy. How does the Arizal explain this? This as we know is also the month in which most of the 24,000 students of Rabbi Akiva died because they did not honor one another, which is also to know the secret of the Divine chariot. Because of their lack of honor, the way they acted, conducted themselves, we conduct ourselves as if in mourning, a custom that rectifies a custom. The main thing is to act with honor towards one another, especially between those who are equal. The Alter Rebbe adds that to love your fellow is to love him exactly as you love yourself, mamash. Another important example of how much we love the word mamash, is that in the Shulchan Aruch, the Alter Rebbe adds the word mamash to the statement that the emissary of a person is just like him. Why then add "like yourself" (כמוך)? The allegory is that there is a great Rabbi that is asked what do you think of so and so? He nullifies him, saying he's not worth anything. He goes through all the great Rabbis and says that no one is worth anything, until he is the only one left. This type of person, where he is a Rosh yeshivah, there are all kinds of simple Jews (he only keeps Jewish workers, avodah ivrit) and he loves each and every one of them. So what is the idea here? That the main thing in loving your fellow is not to love simple people, but to love those that are like you exactly, those who are equal to you. If you are a Rabbi, to love those people that are in competition with you in some sense, that is the real difficulty. The sin of Rabbi Akiva's students, how was it possible? Everyone knew there was a mitzvah to love your fellow Jew, but they didn't understand that the real difficulty is in loving someone who is equal to you. It is important during these days to do teshuvah with respect to this issue.

Now again, what was the reason the angels wanted to push Rabbi Akiva out of the Pardes. Each of the 4 entered through a different gate, a different part of the intellect. There are wisdom and understanding and then the two crowns of knowledge (עיטרא דגבורה דחסדים ועיטרא דגבורה). Rabbi Akiva entered through the crown of loving-kindness that is in knowledge. Now to enter through wisdom and understanding, what that means we won't explain right now. What did the angels claim? They said that indeed it was wise of

R. Akiva to enter through the best entrance, but that is not enough. To really merit the Pardes, which includes all 4 entrances, all 4 faculties, it is necessary to simultaneously enter through all 4 gates. That is practically inhuman. The person has to be beyond it all, that is practically impossible. The fact that he chose a single gate, made him unworthy of staying in the Pardes. That is what the Arizal explains. This is related as we said to the month of Iyar and all that happened with Rabbi Akiva's students. Rashbi was the one who rectified this. He made it all depend on love and mutual respect, **אין בחביבותא תליא מלתא**.

How should we explain this in relation to what we've been speaking about alef and ayin. In some sense the angels are right. There must indeed be a single soul that is able to enter through all 4 gates at the same time, a soul that is truly worthy of seeing the Pardes and bringing its light to the entire world, it is a mitzvah to reveal this wisdom, **יפוצו מעינותיך חוצה**. They thought that this wasn't Rabbi Akiva. The one who was worthy, especially of disseminating this wisdom, is the one who can enter through all 4 gates simultaneously. Rabbi Akiva entered and exited with peace. Ben Azai died, the death of a tzadik is precious before Hashem.

The Rebbe Moharash in a ma'amar that we began explaining a few days ago says that Ben Azai like Nadav and Avihu had a problem with his run and return. Still, it is death, and not a source of life (his Torah). To almost die is what happened at the giving of the Torah, when the soul left each person and the Almighty put it back in with the dew of reincarnation. The Arizal adds that the real objective of all four who entered the Pardes was to rectify the sin of Adam fully and bring the Mashiach thence. Rabbi Akiva chose the crown of lovingkindness in knowledge, but he did not engage in the gevurot of knowledge, and therefore could not yet be Mashiach, who will enter, exit, and also disseminate. What then does it mean to be all four figures at the same time? To be R. Akiva who didn't die. And yet be like Ben Azai with tremendous run with no return, who is called a man (**איש**) by the Rebbe Moharash, he is a point who did not become a partzuf with 3 axes, all balanced, he is all fire. R. Akiva is Adam (**אדם**), which does include all 3 axes—he does include more than Ben Azai, he is a partzuf, but that is not enough say the angels. There is another dimension in the partzuf that they claimed is lacking like in the Rashash where a partzuf also has depth. It is the ability to be above time and space and enter through all four gates at the same time. If you want to be Mashiach and bring the new Torah to the whole world, you can't die, it's not good for hafatzos, you have to be alive in this world. So what does it mean to be both Ben Azai and Rabbi Akiva? It is to almost die, but not to die. Certainly R. Akiva achieved a very high level, but the angels claimed that he had not yet lost consciousness (**התעלף**). The question asked of the Mashiach is "have you lost your consciousness?" It means that for the alef, the wonder of the Almighty to be revealed to you, you have to bring it into you, which means bringing it into an ayin, which in this case is **התעלף**. This is the same as what it says that a person who is a leper is as if dead, **מצורע חשוב כמת**, clinical death.

What does it mean to also be Ben Zoma who went mad? The Zohar says that the Mashiach walks around and people throw stones at him and call him mad. If the children throw stones at him and say that he's crazy, they must be on to something.

Children are naïve. If they say someone is crazy, they must know something. The Rebbe said about this that he is crazy about Mashiach. There were people who tried so hard to bring the Mashiach (even before the Rebbe insisted that people do all they can) that they were close to going crazy. Not figuratively, but literally. To be Ben Zoma means to want to reveal Mashiach, the spark of Mashiach in themselves, that they come to the well-known gematria that "I am Mashiach" equals "Mad" (משוגע). If you see someone going into madhouses trying to heal the mad people there, then he is a very good candidate for being Mashiach.

Now what does it mean that Rabbi Akiva should have also included Elisha Acher who emerged a heretic. What does it mean to be a heretic? There is a well-known vort from Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz who said that everything can be used in Divine service. He was asked, what do you do with heresy? He answered that it's very simple, it means giving a lot of tzedakah. There is a person who sees a poor person, let's say he's young, and he says, why don't you work? Or, he might say, that if you're poor, that's how God wanted you to be, that's what good for you. This (lehavdil) is the same as many Eastern religions where, like in Sodom, it is predetermined that you should be a certain way and that is the only way for you to live. To be a heretic towards this thought, to not accept it, leads one to give tzedakah, to help the person become rich. He shouldn't remain poor. This is "heresy" in God.

We have an article titled, "Who holds the key to redemption?" Is it God that holds the key, or do we hold the key? The answer is that we hold it, and the redemption depends on us, like the Rambam paskins that at the end of the exile, the Jewish people will do teshuvah and they will immediately be redeemed. It all depends on us. What about what the Rebbe says that it all depends on the will of heaven. On the one hand he said, "Do all that you can." And yet, he also said that it all depends on the Mashiach. So who does it depend on? Maybe we can just blame the Mashiach. Certainly that is not what the Rebbe meant, rather we have to say that he meant that it depends on the Mashiach that is in me. We have to doubt, be heretics, in the belief that somehow the redemption is not dependent on each and every one of us. This is Elisha Acher's rectification. His heresy severed malchut from the higher sefirot. Likewise malchut is me, and all the higher sefirot is God. To sever them means to be a heretic like Elisha Acher. To reconnect them is to rectify him.

Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz's vort is about a poor person. But, what we mentioned about a young man who you think should go work that is from somewhere else. There is a hair-raising story about this in Chabad. The Tzemach Tzedek was named after Rebbe Mendel Vitebsker. His wife was the Mittler Rebbe's daughter, and her name was Chayah Mushkah (like our Rebbe and his wife). When their son was born, he was maimed in his hands, he had a handicap. The mother, was very adamant and strong-willed. After he was born with this handicap, the Tzemach Tzedek entered the room to wish his wife mazal tov. She wouldn't look at him. Then her father entered, the Mittler Rebbe, to wish her mazal tov. She wouldn't look at him either. She was angry at the entire world. She had a handicapped son. Then the Alter Rebbe entered the room (he was still alive) and he says mazal tov, she mumbled something in return, probably with

tears in her eyes. She was very upset. And then the Alter Rebbe said, what do you want, it's because of you! What had happened? Don't you remember that during the pregnancy a poor man came into your house, asking for tzedakah, and you saw that he was a young man with the capability of working, a young man with healthy hands, and because of what you thought, this is what happened. He had read her thoughts, and he knew the reasoning in Heaven and that's what he said. So this should have the proper impression upon us, on how terrible and forbidden it is to judge someone based on external appearances. As much as we talk about how much every Jew should work, we don't judge anyone. If someone asks for tzedakah, like on Purim, it doesn't matter who it is, we give him. Maybe he's crazy? Maybe he's Mashiach, you can't know. Maybe he's one of Rebbe Nachman's 7 bettlers. Maybe it's Rebbe Melech or Rebbe Zusha. So we certainly bless everyone with good strong hands that can work and do good things, and all good things. So this was the story about the forbidden thoughts regarding hands.

Another point to complete what we said earlier. We said that we need to have mesirut nefesh on each of the 3 aspects of wholeness that the Rebbe always talked about. The wholeness of the Jewish people, of the Torah, and of the land of Israel. The BST is the wholeness of all (שלמותא דכולא). We explained that the Magid corresponds to the wholeness of the Jewish people, Rebbe Mendel Vitebsker the wholeness of the land of Israel, and the Alter Rebbe the wholeness of the Torah. Let's talk more about this.

In regard to self-sacrifice we know that there are 3 mitzvot that a Jew must give his life for. According to the Rambam if you can avoid such a situation you have to run away from it (according to the Tosafot it is not so simple). These are Avodah Zarah (idolatry) Gilui Arayot and Murder. They correspond of course. The simplest is of course the wholeness of the Jewish people, which corresponds to murder. Not to kill another Jew. There are all kinds of way to kill someone. The media can kill someone, lashon hara kills three people. We read in the Torah about leprosy. The leper is considered dead because he spoke lashon hara. He blemished the wholeness of the people. Lashon hara is to kill, to murder.

Avodah Zarah corresponds to the self sacrifice required for the wholeness of the Torah, as the Rambam writes that the entire Torah is meant to uproot idolatry. Like it says in parashat Emor ונקדשתי בתוך בני ישראל, which means that if a person is forced to bow down to an idol, he sacrifices himself not to do so. That is the wholeness of the Torah, because that is the entire Torah. For Rabbi Akiva the entire Torah on one foot, is love your fellow as you love yourself. For the Rambam it is the second commandment, that we heard directly from God.

Gilui Arayot (improper sexual conduct) corresponds to the wholeness of the land of Israel. וארצך בעולה. The most figurative description of the Jewish people entering the land of Israel, is the relationship between a kallah and a chatan. Not allowing a non-Jew to dwell in the land, is the same as not letting one's wife be with another man. A non-Jew owning land in the land of Israel, is the same as not letting someone come into your house and sleep with your wife. The first Jew, Abraham, had covenants with God, one over the land and one of the covenant of circumcision. As the Zohar says, the reason that Ishmael's elites have some false claim to the land is because we do not keep the covenant of procreative organ, it blemishes us, and they falsely claim to be the keepers of the covenant.

of the land, the owner/procreator with the land? That is the Jewish people. With this we will end. We bless the chatan and kallah here that they know that those who merit to get married here and to live here, their marriage itself is tied in with the wholeness of the land of Israel, the mitzvah of living in the land of Israel. Clearly, this requires self-sacrifice, just as keeping the covenant of circumcision requires self-sacrifice.

It says that the first role the king has to play is to prevent murder. That is what the Rambam writes. It means enforcing the Torah over the people. The beginning of enforcement of the Torah is to prevent murder. The wholeness of the Torah is when the king uproots all idolatry from our land, so that there is none left, be it conscious or subconscious idolatry. That is the wholeness of the Torah. So this was to complete our discussion of these three types of wholeness and self-sacrifice.

May we merit the wholeness of all, שלימותא דכולא, the Ba'al Shem Tov, together with the Magid, Rebbe Mendel, and the Alter Rebbe. May we merit to אגני ד' רפאיך, the initials of which spell Iyar. And most of all, may we merit the full and complete redemption with Mashiach tzidkeinu.