

Erev Shabbos Kodesh Parshas Bamidbar 5770

D'ei Chochmah L'nafshechah

“Let your soul know wisdom”

Parshas Bamidbar

From the discourses of Moreinu v'Rabeinu
the Gaon and Tzaddik Shlit'a

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Shalosh Seudos of Parshas Bamidbar 5766

”וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה בְּמִדְבַּר סִינַי בְּאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד. בְּאֶחָד לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁנִי בַּשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁנִית, לְצֵאתָם
מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לֵאמֹר...”¹

“And Hashem spoke to Moshe in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tent of meeting, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they came out of the land of Egypt, saying...”¹

The Wilderness and the Tent of Meeting

The verse says: “I will show him wonders as in the days of your coming out of Egypt.”² Hashem will ultimately take us out of this present exile just as He did from Egypt. The Midrash teaches that the Jewish people were only redeemed in the merit of the tent of meeting,³ and we find in the *Zohar* that the use of both terms in the opening verse of our *parshah*—“in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tent of meeting”—comes to teach us that the former alludes to the Torah [which was given at Sinai] and the latter to the *Mishkan*. “And they do not separate from one another, and travel as one.”⁴

The Baal HaTanya explained this further: The wilderness of Sinai and the tent of meeting are both aspects of *Malchus*. The wilderness embodies the raising up of feminine waters [of spiritual yearning] from below to above, while the tent of meeting embodies the drawing down of masculine waters [of holy influence] from above to

¹ *Vayikra* 25:8-13

² *Michah* 7:15

³ *Bamidbar Rabbah*, Chapter 3

⁴ *Zohar*, *Bamidbar* 117b

below.⁵ The name אהל מועד itself expresses the spiritual nature of the tent of meeting, because the word *mo'ed* is the reversed root of the word for integrated knowledge or *Da'as*—דע. The *Ohel Mo'ed* was the place where Hashem said, “And I shall meet with you [נועדתי] there...,”⁶ which can also be read as, “And I shall **be known to you** [נודעתי] there.” *Da'as* indicates connection, in the sense of, “And Adam **knew** his wife...”⁷ This “knowing” is the drawing down of the *yichud* of the *Ein Sof* from above to below, so that Hashem’s oneness should dwell in and be revealed within the *nefesh* of the person. The wilderness is a place of desolation and thirst where, “My soul thirst for the living G-d, when will I come to see the face of Hashem?”⁸ The wilderness is the place where the heart cries out, it throws off “flaming sparks”⁹ that rise from below to above. (This concept is brought out most strongly during this *parshah*, which always falls out on the bridge between the months of Iyar and Sivan, and which itself describes the counting that took place on the first of Iyar.)

The Revelation of Torah from within Obscurity

The book of *Daniel* ends with the following promise: “Happy is he that waits and comes to the thousand three hundred and thirty-five days. But go you your way till the end, and you shall rest and shall stand up to your lot at the end of the days.”¹⁰ The name Daniel [דניאל] is a conjunction of the two holy Names א"ל אדניי, which is the particular configuration associated with the world of *Asiyah*.¹¹ The Arizal taught that this “standing up to your lot” at the end of days will only happen when the “feet meet the feet”—the aspect of *raglin* touches down to its corresponding aspect of *raglin* [גרלך = רגלך] which is the lowermost extent of holiness, the world of *Asiyah*.¹² We must come

⁵ *Likutei Torah, Parshas Bamidbar*

⁶ *Shemos* 25:22

⁷ *Bereishis* 4:1

⁸ *Tehillim* 42:3

⁹ *Shir HaShirim* 8:6

¹⁰ *Daniel* 12:12-13

¹¹ *Sefer Halikutim, Shoftim*, Chapter 3

¹² *Pri Eitz Chaim, Kriyas Shema* #3; *Sha'ar Hapesukim, Iyov* 12

to grasp the Torah of the world of *Asiyah*, which is an expression of the holy Names א"ל אדני, the aspect of Daniel.

“Happy is he that waits and comes to the thousand three hundred and thirty-five days...” In truth, the year 5335 was especially auspicious for revealing the Torah of the world of *Asiyah* during the time of the Arizal, but due to our many sins he was taken from us in the year 5332 and we are still waiting for its revelation. To merit it, we must wait with a passionate longing—“happy is he that waits”—for this Torah of the year 335, which is the Torah of *Atika Sesima'ah* [the highest place] that sheds light all the way down to the world of *Asiyah*.¹³ “The lower joints of *Netzach* and *Hod* within *Atik* extend all the way down to the lowermost area of the world of *Asiyah*.”¹⁴ We must powerfully yearn for the Torah of *Atika Sesima'ah* to descend so that it can remove all of the obscurity that prevails in the world of *Asiyah*, because if we don't long for it, it cannot be revealed.

Hashem already seeks to reveal this Torah on Shavuot—the Torah of the end of days, of *Atika Sesima'ah*. As the verse says, “And you shall draw water in joy from the wellsprings of salvation”—“You will receive a new Torah”¹⁵—one that can only be revealed through the power of yearning, “until Shilo [335 = שלה] / Moshiach arrives.”¹⁶

Seeing Divine Names in the World of *Asiyah*

“There will be one day that will be known to be Hashem's...”¹⁷—this one day is the festival of Shavuot.¹⁸ To merit the level of this “one day,” we must first attain the state of the “first day of the second month,” the states of the wilderness of Sinai and the tent of meeting which represent the two main forms of *avodah* that exist in the world of *Asiyah*.

¹³ *Likutei Moharan* I:33

¹⁴ *Eitz Chaim* 1:4; *Nahar Shalom* 7a; *Toras Chochom* 149a-b

¹⁵ *Yeshayah* 12:3 and the *Targum* there.

¹⁶ *Bereishis* 49:10

¹⁷ *Zechariah* 14:7

¹⁸ *Zohar, Parshas Emor; Sfas Emes Al HaTorah, Shavuot* 5652

The *avodah* of the tent of meeting involves developing the potential within every single Jew—since each of us has a spark of Moshe Rabbeinu inside of him¹⁹—to see permutations of the Divine Names even as we look at the physical matter of the world in which we live. “Your eyes will see straight to the Presence.”²⁰ And the ability to see Hashem’s presence animating all of creation will not only be active during prayer, when one is “tuned out” to the outside world and focused on the inner state of *dveikus*, but rather when one is immersed in the mundane world itself. This is the meaning of the Name אלהים associated with the world of *Asiyah*, and even if it demands a great deal of effort, nevertheless the goal is within the reach of every single Jew in the merit of the soul-spark of Moshe Rabbeinu that inhabits him. Each of us can have his spiritual eyes inhabit his physical vision so that he can see the holy Names and fulfill the commandment to, “place *HaVaYaH* before him always.”²¹ Such focus brings about a powerful *yichud* so that the light of the *Shechinah* can shine in the lower worlds, into the realm of the “end of days.” One can then delight in Hashem’s presence even with his eyes wide open to the [permitted] sights of this world.

To attain this level, however, one must be tightly bound to the soul of Moshe Rabbeinu through learning the works that explain the Torah’s secrets. Then this world becomes a “tent of meeting”—a place where the *Shechinah* is revealed within the lower worlds.

Yet this form of *avodah* must be united with the *avodah* of the wilderness of Sinai—the place of desolation and thirst. This is the *avodah* of developing the highest aspect of the will so that one is filled with longing always for Hashem. When one does the *avodah* of seeing Hashem’s presence in the world of *Asiyah*, he must also ask the question, “Why did Hashem make all the worlds in this way, a descending spiral of ever-increasing concealment of His presence?” When one asks himself this question, he comes to realize that the purpose is to stoke the fires of yearning, because one can only

¹⁹ *Likutei Moharan* II:72

²⁰ *Mishlei* 4:25

²¹ *Tehillim* 16:8; *Shulchan Aruch*, *Orach Chayim* 1, gloss of the Rama

long for something that is far from him. Hashem created worlds upon worlds of barriers and distance so that we should be filled with longing to find Him, in the place of thirsty desolation where, “My soul thirst for You, Hashem, for the living G-d”—for the living waters of Your revealed presence.

This combined *avodah* awaits us from the moment we wake up in the morning. Even before sleep is fully banished from our eyes, we rise up thanking Hashem for His giving us another day of life to seek Him. We are still, at that point, in the lowest state of *Asiyah*—we have not yet begun the upward journey through all of the worlds that is accomplished by the ladder of the morning prayers. Even so, we wake up with a statement of thanks, with our hearts filled with longing to find Hashem, to turn this desert of a world into a tent of meeting. We begin the day without the means to achieve our goal of seeing Hashem in everything—to see His “face”—but we nevertheless have the yearning, and so we have already started the process “from the back.”²² This is the elementary pathway of first fulfilling the *mitzvos* because we accept upon ourselves the yoke of heaven. This is the initial step in the realm of *Asiyah*.

Masculine and Feminine Waters

These two forms of *avodah* correspond to the feminine waters of arousal from below and the masculine waters of influence from above. The wilderness is filled with thirst and longing, while the tent of meeting is the place where one enjoys the visions of the Divine Names illuminating all of existence and delights in Hashem’s presence and countenance. This is the aspect of Moshe Rabbeinu who is called the “groom’s escort,” who brings the groom to the bride, who draws the light of the upper *yichud* down below to the soul of the Jewish people. This is accomplished when we activate our imaginations to visualize the holy Names that are the essence of the entirety of the Torah. [As the Ramban teaches in his introduction to his commentary on Chumash; the Torah is one long series of Divine Names.] To come to this level, however, one must

²² *Eitz Chaim* 8:10

long for it—one must feel the thirst of the wilderness. This second aspect is that of Aharon HaKohein, whose task is to, “raise up the lights,” the flames of longing that are always rising upward. We light these fires by feeling deeply just how far we are from holiness, from true *dveikus*.

In reality, Hashem’s presence can be accessed through every single letter of the Torah. If we feel true longing to bond with our Creator we will be able to achieve *dveikus* with every letter that we learn, and we will feel always inspired to add to our normal learning schedules—both in terms of quantity as well as quality—because we want so much to feel the worlds of G-dliness revealed in each and every letter.

The Wilderness of Sinai

The longing of the wilderness must specifically be in the manner of “Sinai”—which is associated with the light of *Yesod* of *Atik*.²³ It must derive from the realm of pure will, the “forehead of *Arich*,” which is the place of pleasure and delight in Hashem’s presence.²⁴ There cannot be any admixture of sadness, because Hashem does not want people who yearn for the crown of Torah to also be beset by sadness when they don’t reach the levels to which they aspire. It’s as though the person feels cheated out of something that is really his by rights, and such a feeling isn’t a genuine longing for Hashem—the *sitra achra* has a certain hold there.

It is possible to feel such pleasure within the longing when we know that Hashem is right there with us, giving us support and help. We don’t have to pay any attention to external successes or lack of them in Torah study, because this isn’t what concerns us. What concerns us is building up our yearning to feel Hashem’s presence, to see the Divine Names before us at all times, to come to the tent of meeting and see Hashem and speak to Him. We can feel this longing even when we are at the lowermost point of *Asiyah*, even if we fall into sin, G-d forbid.²⁵ The powerful longing of the

²³ *Adir Bamarom*, part I, “*L’migzar Milin*”; *Beis Olamim* 134a

²⁴ *Sha’ar Ruach Hakodesh*, 17:45a; *Eitz Chaim* 13:6

²⁵ *Alos Tamid* p. 46

wilderness of Sinai that we feel at such a point can fill us with spiritual vitality which then animates our upward growth.

Then the masculine and feminine waters are joined together, since at their root they derive from the same source. The masculine waters are sourced in *Yesod* of *Atik*, while the feminine waters are sourced in the “forehead” of *Arich*—those two levels are actually interposed one with the other in the upper worlds. This interposition is expressed in the verse, “And one of ancient days [*atik yomin*] was sitting on a throne...”²⁶ The entire *Partzuf* of *Arich Anpin* [the “long face”] is a manifestation of the “beard of *Atik*” [the higher level]. On Shavuot, the Jewish people reach the pinnacle of holy yearning which is the essence of *Arich Anpin*, and to the completion of the light of the “beard of *Atik*,” more specifically the light of *Yesod* of *Atik* that is enfolded in the “forehead of *Arich*.” If one really longs for it, on Shavuot a Jew can receive the Torah of *Atika Sesima'ah* that shines all the way down to the lowermost extent of *Asiyah*, the Torah of the “three hundred and thirty-fifth year,” the Torah that can redeem a person from all exiles and obscurity so that the נחש is transformed into the חשן, and the חשן into משיח.²⁷

Rosh Chodesh Sivan

To prepare for this, we must prepare ourselves at the juncture of the months of Iyar and Sivan since this is when the two *avodos* come together, as we see from the opening verse of the *parshah*.²⁸ Rosh Chodesh Sivan is the time of preparing the throne of Dovid HaMelech, since his light begins to shine forth more and more powerfully from Rosh Chodesh until Shavuot itself [which is the time of his birthday and *yohrtzeit*]. This is the time to join together the two *avodos* of longing for Hashem and envisioning the Divine Names, and we must make efforts to do it even if it is difficult: “Happy is the one who waits [with longing] for the days of אלה שלייה”—the פלא or “wonder” of the

²⁶ *Daniel* 7:9

²⁷ *Sefer HaP'liah; Sefer Gan Na'ul; Sha'ar Hakavanos, D'rushei Pesach* #12; *Dan Yadin* #14; *Sifsei Kohen, Shemos* 30:34

²⁸ *Bnei Yissaschar, Iyar* #3

Torah of *Atika Sesima'ah* that descends all the way to *Asiyah*. Then, “as the days of your coming out of Egypt, I will show him wonders.”

We should not be discouraged because the task seems too great for us, for each and every one of us does indeed have the inner strengths to accomplish this great goal. And, furthermore, Hashem also longs to reveal Himself to us fully—it is only a trick of the *sitra achra* that we lose confidence and lay aside our task. When a person loses hope, he has no connection whatsoever with the Torah. To receive it, he must be among those who “wait,” who anticipate the good with faith and confidence in Hashem’s kindness and assistance. The time to build the vessels for receiving the Torah is now—to feel the vitality that comes with hopeful longing and waiting. “That they should be given life in their hunger...”²⁹ The vitality is born from within the longing and yearning; it doesn’t bring to despair and sadness. This vibrant longing makes us able to receive the light of “Dovid Melech Yisrael *chai v’kayam*.” The purpose of creation is to reveal that Hashem is *echad, yachid, u’meyuchad*—one, alone, and unique. “One” corresponds to the world of *Atzilus* [where one only senses Hashem’s existence and nothing else, and where the first body of the vessels of creation are formed]; “Alone” corresponds to the [even higher] world of *Akudim* [where the vessel is still in a state of “aloneness” and which parallels the level of *yechidah*]; and “Unique” [מיוחד] is an acronym of the phrase דוד מלך ישראל חי וקים. This last description parallels the uppermost world of *Adam Kadmon* [the highest point of *Atika*], whose light shines down through all of the worlds.

The Light of Shavuos and the Baal Shem Tov

The great light of the Baal Shem Tov likewise shines on Shavuos, which is also the day of his *yohrtzeit*. Rav Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk, zy”a, said of our master and teacher, that the Baal Shem Tov was utterly unique, and that there hadn’t been another of his ilk since ancient times. He said that the verse, “And you shall make a decree and it will be upheld for you,”³⁰ applied to him.

²⁹ *Tehillim* 33:19

³⁰ *Iyov* 22:25

Rav Yisrael of Ruzhin, zy"ta, wondered at this statement—were there not many *tzaddikim* throughout the ages whose deeds made an impression in heaven and whose decrees were fulfilled? What was unique in the Baal Shem Tov that made Rav Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk say that there had been no other like him? The Ruzhiner explained as follows: it is well known that the stars and constellations have an influence on all the worlds. But the Jewish people transcend all of the *mazalos*, as we find in the Gemara: “Yisrael has no [יין] *mazal*.”³¹ The Arizal taught that the inner meaning of the statement of Chazal is not that Yisrael does not have a *mazal*, but rather that the level of *ayin* [יין] is the place from which our *mazal* flows.³² *Ayin* is the level of *Kesser*, it is from there that our *mazal* descends, and not from the twelve signs of the zodiac or the planets. The Jewish people are bound to the Creator in the innermost way, not superficially, and so they have the power to override natural decrees, because *Kesser* is so far above and beyond the lower world of natural astrological influence. As Rav Yonasan Eibeschitz said, anyone who is familiar with the ways of the stars and constellations can see for himself that every single Jew is under the threat of terrible decrees, G-d forbid, because each and every Jew derives from Avraham who was destined to never have children.³³ So it is written in the stars that every single Jew will have to undergo all kinds of obstacles and darkness. Yet the Jewish people also transcend nature, and through attaining a great merit and rising to the place of *ayin* they can overturn all harsh decrees. This is especially true on Shavuos, which is when the light of *Arich Anpin* and *Kesser*—of *ayin*—is revealed.

This actually has a deeper aspect, as the Arizal explains. Within the *Partzuf* of *Ze'ir Anpin*, there are all of the situations of *gadlus* and *katnus* [spiritual states of expansion and development, or constriction and immaturity]. It is through the flux and change within the “six extremities” [of the lower six *sefiros* from *Chessed* to *Yesod*] that [most of the spiritual work we do is accomplished] and the *yichudim* are made in the

³¹ *Shabbos* 156a

³² *Pri Eitz Chaim, Sha'ar Shabbos* #23; *Emek HaMelech*

³³ *Bereishis Rabbah* 44:10

upper worlds. In general, there are two forms of *yichud*: that of the “upper three levels” [the *mochin*] from which the force of the fixed stars and planets derives, and that of the “lower six extremities” from which the force of the constellations derives. The *mazalos* are sourced in the “beard of *Arich Anpin*” [which has thirteen points of rectification, paralleling the thirteen *mazalos* of a full leap year]. On Shavuos morning, the Kabbalistic meditations are focused on the levels of *Mocha Sesima'ah* and *Galgalta*, which are the two aspects of *Arich Anpin* [upper and lower]. What this means to us is that the power of Torah, the time of which is the morning of Shavuos, can uplift each and every Jew to the heights of both aspects of *Arich Anpin* which are the fonts from which the stars/planets and *mazalos* receive their strength. At this lofty place, it is possible to overturn every single harsh decree.³⁴

Now we can better understand the uniqueness of the Baal Shem Tov. Throughout the year, it is possible for righteous Jews to change nature, but they do not necessarily have the ability to overturn every single decree. We even find that when Rav Elazar ben Pedas begged for Divine mercy, he was answered from heaven, “If so, all of creation would have to be nullified!”³⁵ However, at the level of Shavuos, it is possible to overturn any decree—and this was the level of the Baal Shem Tov at all times. On Shavuos, we too can rise to the place where, from above, we overlook the stars, where we can, “gaze upon the heavens and count the stars.” This is the light of the Baal Shem Tov, who could make decrees and they were “upheld” for him—the world could continue to exist.

“Let Your Soul Know Wisdom”

This is the meaning of: “דעה חכמה לנפשך והיא כתר לראשך”—“Let your soul (*nefesh*) know (*d'ei*) wisdom (*Chochmah*) and it will be a crown (*Kesser*) for your head.”³⁶ To merit the light of Shavuos and the Baal Shem Tov, we must bind our minds

³⁴ *Arizal, Peirush HaIdra Zuta, Sha'ar Maamarei Rashbi*

³⁵ *Ta'anis* 25a

³⁶ From the *Shabbos zemer* “*D'ror Yikrah*,” based on *Mishlei* 24:14.

to the light of *Chochmah* which is rooted in the “hidden mind of *Arich*” and draw it down to the level of *nefesh*—the world of *Asiyah*. The light of the Torah must shine down through all situations, to the “end of days.” And we can only accomplish this by joining together the two *avodos* of the “wilderness of Sinai” and the “tent of meeting.” When bound to the souls of Moshe Rabbeinu, Dovid HaMelech, and the Baal Shem Tov, we will surely transcend and overturn all harsh decrees and transform all darkness into light.

The closer we get to the time of the redemption, the more are the secrets of the Torah of the future revealed when we are bound to the souls of the true *tzaddikim*. May Hashem help us to reveal His unity throughout all of the worlds, and may all harsh decrees against the Jewish people be nullified. May the three permutations of the *Shem HaVaYaH* that form the source of all children, life, health, and abundance be drawn down upon us. And may we merit on Shavuot the light of the “one day known as Hashem’s”—that it should be known to all the world that the Jewish people have been redeemed in every way. May we merit true salvation with the arrival of our righteous redeemer in mercy. Amen.

Translated and Adapted by Rav Micha Golshevsky.