

Erev Shabbos Kodesh Parshas Vayakhel-Pikudei 5770

# D'ei Chochmah L'nafshechah

“Let your soul know wisdom”

Parshas Vayakhel-Pikudei

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

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***Shalosh Seudos*<sup>1</sup> of Parshas Vayakhel-Pikudei 5768**

”אלה פקודי המשכן משכן העדות, אשר פקד על-פי משה: עבדת הלויים ביד איתמר בן-אהרן הפהן... ויהי מאת כפר הכסף לצקת את אדני הקדש ואת אדני הפרכת: מאת אדנים למאת הכפר, כפר לאדן.”

“These are the accounts of the *Mishkan*, even the *Mishkan* of the testimony, as they were rendered according to the commandment of Moshe, through the service of the Leviim, by the hand of Itamar, the son of Aharon HaKohen... And the hundred talents of silver were for casting the sockets of the *Mishkan*, and the sockets of the veil: a hundred sockets for the hundred talents, a talent for a socket.”<sup>2</sup>

**Rashi explains:** “‘The sockets of the sanctuary’—[the sockets] of the forty-eight boards of the *Mishkan*, which had ninety-six sockets, together with the four sockets of the *paroches* makes a total of one hundred. The Torah says that all of the other sockets were of copper.”

**Upholding the *Mishkan***

The main support of the *Mishkan* was from the placement of the boards within their sockets, which were donated by the Jewish people through the fixed rate of the half-shekel regardless of the wealth of the individual donor. It is this that the verse describes when it lists the measure of the hundred talents of silver, one talent for each

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<sup>1</sup> The lesson was delivered at the third meal of Shabbos.

<sup>2</sup> *Shemos* 38:21,27

socket. These were the sockets that upheld the boards which formed the structure of the *Mishkan* itself.

Reb Nosson of Breslov explains why it was necessary that the silver of the sockets come equally from every Jew: “They were commanded to each bring a half-shekel to teach us that no Jew is complete on his own; he has to join together with his fellow. The main rectification is achieved when everyone is brought together in love and unity, when each one is just a half until he is united with his friend, and that friend with yet another, until all of the varieties of opinions and personhoods become one within the absolute and simple unity of Hashem Himself. This process is most precious before Hashem. This is why, ‘The wealthy shall not add and the poor shall not give less’—so that there should be no division or difference among them. It is necessary so that, ‘Each man’s wealth will atone for his soul, and the poor will not hear rebuke’<sup>3</sup>—so that the wealthy will not lord it over the poor and they will all achieve the rectification of *tzedakah*, which is to support the Torah in mutual love and respect. The main objective is to be united and subsumed within Hashem’s oneness, and this is only possible when a person is humble and self-effacing, when he nullifies his ego before his fellow Jews, when he, ‘Does not regard the wealthy above the poor.’<sup>4</sup> The giving of a uniform half-shekel demonstrates that all are equal before Hashem and everyone has a part to play in the establishment of the *Mishkan*, and through this Hashem’s absolute unity is revealed in the midst of variety and multiplicity. This is also why all the other offerings for the *Mishkan* were given in accordance with the person’s means, as Rashi explains at the beginning of *Parshas Terumah*. The unique nature of the half-shekel offering was to highlight to the wealthy that there is nothing to be prideful in their resources, because Hashem could just as easily build the *Mishkan* through the offerings of the poor, and He has the power to enrich the poor and impoverish the wealthy in any case. Although He does choose to give the merit of charity to those whom He has blessed with abundance, nevertheless the actual framework of the *Mishkan* is provided by each person equally.

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<sup>3</sup> *Mishlei* 13:8

<sup>4</sup> *Iyov* 34:19

And the wealthy have no cause for pride, 'For all is from You, and from Your hand do we give to You.'<sup>5</sup> The main act of *tzedakah* is in supporting Torah scholars who give birth to *halachos*, because this is a manifestation of the *Mishkan* built by Moshe Rabbeinu in every generation. And the main way in which we accomplish this is by revealing Hashem's absolute oneness from among a multiplicity of actions."<sup>6</sup>

This means that the basis of the integrity of the structure of the *Mishkan* derives from a relationship of equality between Torah scholars and those who support them, that they should be in a state of complete unity of the soul—that the silver sockets and the boards they support should be all of a piece. It is only when the supporters are unified with the *talmidei chachamim* and do not feel above them and the scholars do not feel superior in their scholarship that they are truly bound together and equal. Then the holiness of the boards also rests upon the sockets and the structure can stand securely, and the light of the *yichud* can shine brightly.

### The Half-Shekel Offering

The Arizal revealed the inner meaning of this *mitzvah*: "In the midline of the head there is a parting that is free of hair, and half the hair falls to one side and half the hair to the other. The two segments represent *Netzach* and *Hod*; the parting itself represents *Yesod* within *Atik*. This halfway parting is embodied in the *machatzis hashekel*, which is referred to in the verse as זה—'this'—which refers to *Yesod* [the masculine]. "זֶה יִתְּנוּ כָּל הָעֶבֶר עַל הַפְּקָדִים, מִחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל" —'This shall they give, all who pass among them that are numbered, half a shekel.'<sup>7</sup> The word for 'all' [כל] also refers to *Yesod*, which 'passes among them that are numbered,' it passes between *Netzach* and *Hod* which are the numbers of the Jewish people [like numerous hairs] that are called *Netzach* and *Hod*. This is why the value of the half-shekel translated to twenty *gerah* units, because the word גרה [with its *kollel*] has the same *gematria* as the word ארח or

<sup>5</sup> *Divrei HaYamim* I:29:14

<sup>6</sup> *Likutei Halachos, Hilchos Apotropos* #1

<sup>7</sup> *Shemos* 30:13

pathway. It is expressed as a 'half-shekel' because *Yesod* is a masculine attribute and is drawn from the right-hand side, which is *Netzach*, rather than from *Hod*. This is also related to the fact that, 'The wealthy shall not add, and the poor shall not diminish from it.' The wealthy [indicates *Tiferes*, the higher parallel of *Yesod*] comprises the aspect of *yud* [ten], and so he cannot give more than ten *gerah*, while the poor which is [the lower aspect of] *Yesod* cannot give less than ten. This is why they shall each give ten *gerah*, which is the *machatzis hashekel*.<sup>8</sup>

### Uniting the “Good Days” and the “Bad Days”

This matter is explained further in the *Idra*, where we find that in the upper worlds, in the realm known as *Arich Anpin*, there are “hairs” that lie to both sides of the “head” which parallel *Netzach* and *Hod*. They are the innermost root of two different types of Jewish souls. The concept also has relevance to all of us in the sense that we all go through situations that are better and others that are difficult. We have Jews who are privileged to learn Torah and those who do not merit to occupy themselves with Torah study but who support it instead. Sometimes a person is in the aspect of *Netzach* and other times he is in the aspect of *Hod*. Even so, there needs to be absolute unity between these two states—the boards must be one with the sockets that uphold them—and a person must not place a higher value on the “good days” over the “bad days,” on the wealthy over the poor. A person must serve Hashem with integrity no matter what his circumstances may be—he must join all of the “good” and the “bad” so that the attributes of *Netzach* and *Hod* are one.

This is what is meant by the *machatzis hashekel* expressing the pathway that runs between *Netzach* and *Hod*, like to letters *vav* to the side of a clear parting on the head. This is the, “Pathway of the righteous [that] is like a shining light,”<sup>9</sup> which derives from *Yesod* within *Atik* that animates the clear pathway along the midline of the “head” of *Arich Anpin*.

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<sup>8</sup> *Ta'amei HaMitzvos, Parshas Ki Tisa*

<sup>9</sup> *Mishlei* 4:18

It is well known that at its root *Yesod* does incline toward the left-hand side of *Hod* in order to shed light into *Malchus* [the feminine]. The *chiddush* here is that the pathway of *Yesod* is the route-ארה of גרה, of twenty, in the sense that it stands at the point of balance so that it can draw from the “ten” of the right side of *Netzach* and then later incline toward the leftward “ten” of *Hod* to bear its influence to *Malchus*.

### **The Pathway of the Baal Shem Tov**

It was the general practice of the Baal Shem Tov to focus on drawing the simpler people to Hashem. Even his greatest disciples initially had a very difficult time grasping his intention in this. On Shabbos, the Baal Shem Tov would only give *shirayim* to the simple folk at both of the main meals, and it was only during *Shalosh Seudos* that he would sit privately with his close students and focus on them. In truth, every single motion of the Baal Shem Tov was permeated with the deepest meaning, and certainly this particular practice of paying especial attention to the simple people was rooted in the highest realms. The *tzaddik ha'emes* is the expression of *Da'as* that is hidden within *Yesod* of *Atik*, and this is the pathway through which all positive influences flow down into the world. The three great aspects of blessing—children, life and good health, and sustenance—are the manifestations of the three permutations of the Divine Name *HaVaYaH* that are sourced in the high level of *Yesod* within *Atik*. Since the true *tzaddik* embodies this lofty level, he is the appropriate channel for these positive influences to enter the world [through his prayers and blessings].

This is why the Baal Shem Tov's attention was directed toward the unsophisticated and plain folk—they already have the quality necessary to receive his positive influence: humility. The scholarly require a great deal of heavenly assistance to shed the pride that their learning confers before they can reach that level of *bitul*. This is the goal of the *talmidei chachamim* who parallel the boards; the word קרש is an analogue of the word קשר, connection. They must become connected with the simpler people who parallel the sockets and then, in turn, become bound to Hashem.

*Netzach* and *Hod* are the roots of the aspects of *Ze'ir Anpin* and *Malchus*, respectively. Regarding *Ze'ir Anpin*, the verse says, "He establishes the heavens with understanding."<sup>10</sup> [*Ze'ir Anpin-Yesod* is associated with the heavens for a number of reasons; it is the accrued influence of the six lower *sefiros* which are like the multihued heavens, and is also a masculine aspect like the heavens that bestow abundance on the feminine earth below.] *Malchus*, on the other hand, is mainly rooted in *Hod* which is where *Chochmah* predominately shines. "Abba established the daughter [*Malchus*]."<sup>11</sup> Even though *Yesod* inclines toward *Hod* in order to shed its light down to *Malchus*, nevertheless at the higher level *Yesod* within *Atik* inclines toward *Netzach* which is associated with *Binah*. This side of *Netzach-Binah* is associated with Dovid HaMelech who is the comprehensive soul that expresses all of the latent powers of the fallen souls [as he was himself originally destined to be a נפל, a miscarriage, and his falling was only to teach that the individual can repent fully]. Because the fallen or simple souls do not shine with the light of Torah themselves, they must have it shine into them in order to exist. This is expressed by the statement of Dovid, the "sweet singer of Yisrael": "Sweet song in Your right hand, eternally [נצח which is to the right side]."<sup>12</sup> This is why the true *tzaddik* focuses on the simple people. Although he is illuminated by the Torah, he is influenced by the side of Dovid-*Netzach* to show his appreciation of the souls associated with Dovid HaMelech and bring about a unity between *Netzach* and *Hod*.

### **"He is Exalted over the Haughty"**

The way of the true *tzaddik* is also to demonstrate to the great that they haven't yet begun to serve Hashem at all. Even though it seems to them as though they already know the ways of Torah and *dveikus*, the *tzaddik* makes clear to them that, relative to the absolute truth, they have not even tasted of genuine *Yiddishkeit* in their lives. He can do this because he cleaves to the aspect of, "I will sing to Hashem for He is exalted over

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<sup>10</sup> *Mishlei* 3:19

<sup>11</sup> *Zohar* III:258a

<sup>12</sup> *Tehillim* 16:11



the haughty.”<sup>13</sup> Because the great scholars feel that they have already achieved something spiritually, they need to be brought down to the humility of the simple people. The true *tzaddik* accomplishes this by putting them down [somewhat] and creating some distance between himself and them. It is only then that the person of higher stature can receive the light of the *tzaddik*—he needs to be as humble as the plain folk who know just how little they know. This pathway of the *tzaddik*—the path of the *machatzis hashekel*—is the level of the “crown of crowns,” and the highest light can only penetrate to his students if they really feel that they are one with the entirety of the Jewish people and honor them all accordingly. The students must be, “of the humble of the earth,”<sup>14</sup> nullified completely before the Creator like Moshe Rabbeinu, who was, “the humblest in all the earth.”

### **The World of Delight**

The true source of humility derives from the fact that when Hashem created the universe, He first generated a *tzimtzum* that was in the form of a circle, which is like a coin. Within this circular conceptual space, He made a kind of garment; its upper half is associated with the half-shekel offering, the coin illuminated by the fire of *Binah* that Moshe Rabbeinu saw. This half-circle is like a garment, in the sense that the lower worlds of *Beriyah-Yetzirah-Asiyah* are like a garment in comparison to the world of *Igulim*. This world of the garment, the *Olam HaMalbush*, is a world of delight where the letters are rearranged from below to above.<sup>15</sup>

[When Hashem created the world, He first imbued the letters of the Hebrew alphabet with His infinite light. In this manner, the twenty-two letters became a kind of *tallis* or enfolding garment that holds the light of Hashem. At first, Hashem set the letters in their proper order. *Alef* was first, then *beis*, and so on, until the final *taf*. But then Hashem created what is known as *Olam HaMalbush*. To do this, He “folded the

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<sup>13</sup> *Shemos* 15:1

<sup>14</sup> *Tehillim* 76:10

<sup>15</sup> See *Sefer Vayakhel Moshe*

garment,” as it were. This caused the first eleven letters from *alef* until *chaf* to stand next to each corresponding letter of the remaining eleven from *lamed* until *taf*. This arrangement of *alef beis* was: ט-ד, ג-ב, מ, ל-א, etc. Below the *Olam HaMalbush*, He formed the worlds discussed in *Eitz Chaim: Adam Kadmon, Atzilus, Beriyah, Yetzirah*, and *Asiyah*. But the soul of Moshiach comes from the higher realm of the *Olam HaMalbush*, which is the source of the level of *yechidah*, of pure delight in Hashem’s existence.]

In terms of *avodah*, this deep teaching means that the *tzaddik* does not derive delight from all of the ways in which Hashem reveals Himself to him, through new Torah concepts and lofty *avodos*. Rather, he delights in the essential source in the highest realm which is the root of faith itself [which does not require demonstrations]. He delights in the existence of Hashem Himself, from the essence of the purity of the light at its source.

Even when the *tzaddik* studies Torah and prays, he is really bonded with the essential G-dly light within the letters, the light that is the source of faith. He does not receive his spiritual vitality from the many ways in which Hashem’s light is revealed in an obvious way; rather, he is enlivened by the current of Divine light accessed by simple faith which animates all holy endeavors.

The *Shechinah* aspect of *Rachel* is built up through the engagement of the imagination by way of the letters, but the essence that animates the letters is faith—the simple reality of Hashem’s existence. Within the body of the Jewish people as a whole, the *tzaddik* himself corresponds more with the outer expression of revelation—the letters—while the souls of the simple Jewish people correspond with the life-giving faith itself. Even though the *tzaddik* is outwardly an expression of the revelation of G-dliness accessible through Torah study and prayer, an articulation that is like the limbs and organs of the body, inside his true delight is found in pure and simple faith which is like the higher animating soul. This is why the greatest *tzaddikim* have a particular

kinship with the simple people and why the Baal Shem Tov focused on them to a greater degree than on his own disciples.

This can be compared to the *tzaddik* who enters into the *kodesh hakodashim* and sees the “half-coin” of the *yud* and *hei* of Hashem’s Name above the *aron hakodesh* superimposed over the cloud of smoke that hovers there. The smoke alludes to the simple people, but it is precisely there that the highest light of *emunah* is revealed to the *tzaddik*. This means that when a simple person open a Gemara and tries to learn what he can, it brings the greatest delight on high.

### **Yonasan and Shaul**

Shaul HaMelech embodied the aspect of *Yesod*, yet we learn of him that he was occupied with matters of vows and oaths.<sup>16</sup> Vows are associated with *Binah* [*teshuvah*], whose influence flows down to *Netzach* on the right side. Even though the actual verbalization of an oath reflects *Malchus*, the fact of the self-prohibition is related to *Binah*, yet it is the sage—*חכם*—who has the ability to overturn it when necessary. Shaul, an expression of *Yesod* [and *Chochmah*, since he is from the side of *Rachel-Yosef*], receives from his counterpart side, which is *Binah*.

This is why Shaul’s son Yonasan was in danger of his life, because Yonasan represents the “proper child” of the *tzaddik*—the disciple of high standing—who runs the risk of losing his life-giving connection with the *tzaddik* because his mentor lavishes so much attention on the simple people. Because the disciple cannot understand this practice, it has the potential to drive him away. He does not understand that this is the natural result of the influence of *Leah-Binah-Dovid* HaMelech as it flows down so that the light of *Yesod* can reach *Malchus*. This flow of influence from the *tzaddik* down to the lower echelons of the Jewish people is really the way in which all of the souls will be rectified, but it can be confusing for those who are already on a high level. This danger can be understood from the practice of a certain *tzaddik* who prayed every night

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<sup>16</sup> *Shmuel* I:14:24; *Midrash Tanchuma*, *Shemos* #12

for six years that he not be forcibly driven away from the light of the truth and fall into the many forms of self-deception to which countless people are prey.

Amalek constantly attempts to hide the point of truth from people, to make them forget that there are *tzaddikim* whose level transcends that of the revelations of Torah, because they are bound up with the light of *emunah* and joy in Hashem's existence itself. This is why Amalek can only fight against Yehoshua and not Moshe Rabbeinu himself; but Moshe Rabbeinu bestows his own influence on his student so that Yehoshua can go out and do battle with Amalek—he carries with him the power to reveal the absolute unity that transcends all hierarchies that divide. This level of holiness is very lofty and hidden, and it is just this type of *tzaddik* that focuses on the simple people that causes so much confusion in the heart of the *talmid chochom*. Yet this *tzaddik* receives the presence of the *Shechinah* every day, and he merits to pray in a state of total self-forgetting and *dveikus*.

To come to this within ourselves, we must learn to unify that “good days” and “bad days”—the scholar and simple person within ourselves—and constantly delight in Hashem's existence and pure *emunah* regardless of external successes or failures. In truth, all conflict that exists is a reflection of this division between “good” and “bad,” wealth and poverty, success and failure. If we could only realize that, at the source, “Hashem is good to all”—everything is good—conflict would be eliminated. As the Arizal taught, the hidden light has seventeen aspects—the *gematria* of the word טוב, good. He also taught that the 72-Name [which is the *gematria* of the word *Chessed*] actually splits into two parts: נ"ה and י"ז—55 and 17. *Nun-hei* stands for the unity of *Netzach* and *Hod*, and the result is the grasp of the seventeen lights of Hashem's pure goodness.

When we honor every situation and every person, we make it possible for the *Shechinah* to be revealed there, because the *Shechinah* can only be revealed in the place of *kavod*. We do not have to have a sense of the holiness of the situation or the person—we have to reach for that which is higher, which is faith in the essential holiness sourced

in Hashem Himself which exists unchanging regardless of the presence or absence of an observable revelation.

### **The Light of Shabbos**

This unity comes alive on Shabbos, when all of the Jewish people are joined in the simplicity of singing the Shabbos *zemiros* at the table—both the greatest scholar and the most humble person. Everyone is equal in the expression of delight in the Creator on Shabbos, and this carries through to *Motzei Shabbos*, when the light of the “bearer of good tidings,” Eliyahu HaNavi, descends to redeem us.

### **“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.”<sup>17</sup> We must unite the light of *Chochmah* to the light of simplicity which is the aspect of *nefesh* so that we can receive the spiritual vitality provided by pure and simple faith.

If a person finds himself feeling far from taking pleasure in the fact of Hashem’s existence, he should make an effort to bind himself to simple Jews—“the wealthy man and the poor man as one.” Then he will receive new insight as to how he can delight in *emunah* itself. Generally, people only enjoy spiritual light in its state of being revealed—the state of *Netzach* and *Hod*—but by valuing every Jew he will come to see and feel that every good point shines from one Jew to another because we are all really part of a single whole. This is the essence of Dovid HaMelech, and this was how, “Dovid and Yehonasan were bound together until Dovid rose to greatness.” This is the unity of the two redeemers, and when one’s “*nefesh* comes to know *Chochmah*,” it will be “a crown to your head.” Through this, one comes to even higher levels of awareness that are beyond consciousness, beyond that which one can articulate or feel, but its light shines nevertheless in an aspect of a *makif* or crown. This highest light is the animating

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<sup>17</sup> From the *Shabbos zemer* “*D’ror Yikrah*,” based on *Mishlei* 24:14.

power of *emunah* itself that transcends all revelations and expressions. The entire redemption depends on this, because both the sin of the golden calf and its origin in the initial eating of the Tree of Knowledge resulted in *Da'as* falling from place of *yichudah ila'ah* down to the place of *yichudah tata'ah*. This means that the *avodah* of *Leah-Binah* fell down to the level of the heart where pure contemplation is impossible, because the heart is sullied by unclean thoughts and desires and humanity is in an overly-material state.

The way we correct this is by raising *Da'as* back up to the level of *Kesser*, by connecting with *tzaddikim* who follow the path of Moshe Rabbeinu—the higher path of *Kesser* and delighting in the fact of Hashem's existence alone. This is the meaning of the verse, “And Moshe raised up the *Mishkan* on the eighth day”—he uplifted the aspect of *Leah-Binah* [associated with eight, since it is the eighth *sefirah* from below to above] to the higher place where *Da'as* belongs so that it could be repaired.

May Hashem help us to rise up to the place of the higher *Da'as*, not to see this world at all but only to see the simple fact of Hashem's absolute existence. When the aspect of *Kesser* is reached, negativity will lose its force and we will merit to “enter and leave in peace,” with the arrival of our righteous redeemer speedily and in our days. Amen.

**Translated and Adapted by Rav Micha Golshevsky.**

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