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LIKKUTEI SICHOS

INSIGHTS INTO THE WEEKLY PARSHA

BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

Dedicated to

Emmanuel (Mendel) Karp

1905 - 1989

son of Bernard (Berl) and Rose (Rezele)

Manny Karp was the first of his family born in the United States, in 1905. His first language was Yiddish. Losing his mother to the Spanish Flu shaped his resilience and commitment to helping others, ultimately leading to a career as a guidance counselor in Philadelphia public schools. He also served many years as the director of Camp Akiba in the Poconos.

Karp's legacy is characterized by his optimism and unwavering dedication to learning and mentorship. Emmanuel Karp died in 1989.

BAMIDBAR I | במדבר א

Adapted from a *sichah* delivered on *Shabbos Parshas Bamidbar,* 5714 (1954)

Introduction

In our lives, we often face a tension between quantity and quality. Should a business prioritize reaching more customers or providing exceptional service to fewer? Should education focus on teaching more students or delivering deeper learning experiences to fewer? Such an apparent conflict can arise in spiritual life as well.

The Book of *Bamidbar* – called "Numbers" in English and *Pekudim,* meaning "Countings," in the Gemara[1] – begins with a seemingly mundane activity: the counting of the Jewish people. Yet this count becomes so significant that it gives the entire book its name. This presents a paradox: How can counting – an action that treats each person as merely an identical unit, disregarding his or her unique qualities – be the foundational *mitzvah* of an entire book of Torah? Counting, by its nature, emphasizes quantity over quality, focusing on how many, rather than who or what.

In the *sichah* to follow, the Rebbe unravels this paradox by exploring how Jewish thought establishes equilibrium between quantity and quality. What appears external can sometimes reflect what is most essential. In certain sacred contexts, the number itself – the simple fact of presence – carries profound spiritual significance that transcends individual qualities.

This teaching holds particular relevance today, when Jewish communities worldwide must decide where to focus limited resources: Should we prioritize breadth of outreach or depth of engagement? The Rebbe's analysis suggests that these approaches are not necessarily contradictory but can complement each other in furthering G-d's goal of us creating a dwelling for Him in the lower realms.

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1. *Sotah* 36b.

When Numbers Matter: The Balance Between Quality and Quantity

What Counts? The Inside or the Outside

1. The first *mitzvah* in the Book of *Bamidbar* – "Take a census of the entire congregation of the Children of Israel"[1] – is to count the Jews. Accordingly, this entire book of the Torah is referred to in the Gemara[2] by the name *Pekudim* ("Countings").[3]

Counting is neither connected to, nor indicative of, the content of the articles being counted. On the contrary, **when counting, everything is counted equally, with no distinction** being made **between something greater or lesser in quantity or quality. A greater entity is reckoned no more than one unit in the count, and a lesser entity no less than one unit. Counting reveals nothing about the** inherent **importance of the entity** being counted.

Also, the criterion of "twenty years old" – the requirement **that all those who were included in the census had to be** at least **twenty years of age – is not something that comes through effort and Divine service. It is not connected to a person's inner character but comes automatically with the passage of time.** As such – to refer to a *halachic* principle,[4] ***mechusar zman lav mechusar maaseh*** – something that is merely **awaiting** the passage of **time** to meet the required criteria **is not** considered incomplete in the same sense **as something requiring action** to complete it. After all, even if the person does nothing at all, with the passage of time, the required criteria will be met.

א. דִי עֶרְשְׁטֶע מִצְוָה פוּן סֵפֶר בַּמִדְבָּר אִיז: שְׂאוּ אֶת רֹאשׁ כָּל עֲדַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, מֶען זָאל צֵיילְן דִי אִידְן. אוּן צוּלִיבּ דֶעם וֶוערְט דֶער גַאנְצֶער חוּמָשׁ אָנְגֶערוּפְן אִין גְמָרָא[א] מִיטְן נָאמֶען פְּקוּדִים.

מִנְיָן (צָאל) אִיז אַ זַאךְ וָואס אִיז נִיט פַאְרבּוּנְדְן אוּן וַוייְזְט אִינְגַאנְצְן נִיט אָן אוֹיף דֶעם תּוֹכֶן פוּן דֶער זַאךְ וָואס וֶוערְט גֶעצֵיילְט, וָוארוּם אִין מִנְיָן צֵיילְט מֶען אַלֶעמֶען גְלַייךְ, אָן קֵיין אוּנְטֶערְשֵׁייד פוּן אַ גְרֶעסֶערְן מִיט אַ קְלֶענֶערְן אִין כַּמוּת אָדֶער אִין אֵיכוּת. דֶער גְרֶעסֶערֶער פַארְנֶעמְט אִין מִנְיָן נִיט מֶער וִוי אֵיין צָאל, אוּן דֶער קְלֶענֶערֶער נִיט וֵוייִנִיקֶער וִוי אֵיין צָאל. מִנְיָן וַוייְזְט גָאר נִיט אָן אוֹיף דֶער חֲשִׁיבוּת פוּן דֶער זַאךְ.

אוֹיךְ דֶער תְּנַאי פוּן בֶּן עֶשְׂרִים, וָואס דִי אַלֶע וועלְכֶע זַייְנֶען אַרַיין אִין דֶעם מִנְיָן הָאבְּן גֶעמוּזְט אַלְט זַיין צְווַאנְצִיק יָאר, אִיז נִיט קֵיין עִנְיָן וָואס קוּמְט דוּרְךְ הִשְׁתַּדְלוּת אוּן עֲבוֹדָה, דָאס אִיז נִיט פַארְבּוּנְדְן מִיטְן מַהוּת פוּן מֶענְטשְׁן אוּן קוּמְט מִמֵילָא מִיט דֶער צַייִט, וּמְחוּסַר זְמַן לַאו כִּמְחוּסַר מַעֲשֶׂה.

1. *Bamidbar* 1:2.

2. *Sotah* 36b.

3. This parallels the English term for the book, Numbers.

4. See *Yoma* 62b; *Tosafos, Zevachim* 111b; *et al.*

In this light, **since** counting **is an external matter that has nothing to do with** an entity's **content or importance, how is it appropriate that this should be the first and fundamental *mitzvah* of this book of the Torah, to the extent that the entire book is called *Sefer HaPekudim*** ("The Book of Countings")?

הַיְינְט וויִבַּאלְד אַז דָאס אִיז אַן אוֹיסֶערְלֶעכֶע זַאךְ, וואָס הָאט גָאר נִיט צוּ טָאן מִיט תּוֹכֶן אוּן חֲשִׁיבוּת, אִיז נִיט פַּארְשְׁטַאנְדִיק, ווִי קוּמְט עֶס טַאקֶע אַז דָאס זָאל זַיְין דִי עֶרְשְׁטֶע אוּן גְרוּנְט מִצְוָה פוּן דֶעם חוּמָשׁ, בִּיז, אַז דֶער גַאנְצֶער חוּמָשׁ ווֶערְט אָנְגֶערוּפְן סֵפֶר הַפִּקוּדִים?

Counting: Sign or Source of Significance?

2. There is a *halachic* principle,[5] *davar shebiminyan lo batel,* "an item that is counted is not nullified [in a mixture]."[6] **The rationale is that** the fact **that an object** is sold or reckoned individually – "**is counted**" in *halachic* terminology – **indicates its importance, thus distinguishing objects of this kind** and causing them to be placed in a special category. **Therefore, although counting does not express the content and importance of a given individual entity in relation to another entity** being counted, **it does express the importance of the entire category** of items that are being counted and distinguishes them as different **in relation to other categories.** Consequently, by commanding the Jews to be counted, G-d accorded them significance.

Nevertheless, **at first glance, this explanation is not sufficient. True, counting indicates the importance of the entire category** that is being counted. **However, the importance** of that category **does not come about because of the counting.** Instead, **the counting is merely a sign, indicating** that the particular category contains entities of **inherent importance,** but the counting itself does nothing to bring about this importance.

On this basis, it is possible to understand the distinction between two Talmudic expressions:

ב. דֶער דִין אִיז, אַז דָבָר שֶׁבְּמִנְיָן לֹא בָטֵל[ב]. ווַיְיל ווֶען מֶען צֵיילְט אַ זַאךְ, ווַיְיזְט עֶס אוֹיף דֶער חֲשִׁיבוּת פוּן אִיר מִין. מִצַד דֶער חֲשִׁיבוּת פוּן דֶעם מִין צֵיילְט מֶען יֶעדְן אֵיינְצְלְנֶעם בַּאזוּנְדֶער. קוּמְט אוֹיס, אַז כָאטשׁ מִנְיָן דְרִיקְט נִיט אוֹיס דֶעם תּוֹכֶן אוּן חֲשִׁיבוּת פוּן יֶעדְן פְּרַט לְגַבֵּי דֶעם צְווֵייטְן פְּרַט, דְרִיקְט עֶר אָבֶּער אוֹיס דִי חֲשִׁיבוּת פוּן דֶעם גַאנְצְן מִין לְגַבֵּי אַנְדֶערֶע מִינִים.

אִין פְּלוּג אִיז אָבֶּער דִי דֶערְקְלֶערוּנְג נָאךְ נִיט גֶענוּג. אֱמֶת טַאקֶע אַז פוּן דֶעם מִנְיָן פַארְשְׁטֵייעֶן מִיר דִי חֲשִׁיבוּת פוּן דֶעם גַאנְצְן מִין, דֶער מִנְיָן דָא אִיז דָאךְ אָבֶּער נִיט מֶער ווִי אַ סִימָן אוּן הוֹרָאָה אוֹיף דֶער חֲשִׁיבוּת אוּן נִיט אַ סִיבָּה - נִיט אַז מִצַד דֶעם מִנְיָן ווֶערְט דִי חֲשִׁיבוּת.

דֶערְמִיט אִיז אוֹיךְ פַארְשְׁטַאנְדִיק דֶער חִילוּק[ג] פוּן אֶת שֶׁדַרְכּוֹ לִמָּנוֹת (אַ

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5. ***Orlah* 3:7; *Beitzah* 3b (note the sources cited there), *Tur* and *Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah,* sec. 110.**

6. To explain: If a forbidden entity that is sold by count becomes mixed with a permitted entity, even if there are a thousand times more of the permitted entity than the forbidden one, the forbidden entity is not nullified (as it would be had the entity not been counted).

es shedarko limanos ("an item [always] sold by count") **and** *kol shedarko limanos* ("an item that **is [at times] sold by count,"** implying that it is sold in this manner on occasion, **but not always).**[7] **If the advantage of a** *davar shebiminyan* **were merely the fact that it is counted, there would be no difference between** *es* **and** *kol***. What difference does it make how it is always** sold? If, **at the time** in question, **the item was** sold by **count, it should not be nullified. Therefore, this is proof that the virtue is intrinsic to the object itself. It is inherently important; the** fact that it was sold by **count is merely a sign of its importance.**

This is why, when an item is sometimes counted and sometimes not, Rabbi Yochanan[6] **maintains that it can be nullified, because the item itself does not have sufficient importance.**

According to Rabbi Yochanan's view (**and this is the established** *halachah*), **it appears that counting as a whole is merely an external matter.** Therefore, the original question remains: **Why is the commandment of counting** regarded as **so fundamental to the extent that the entire book is named after it:** *Sefer HaPekudim*?

זַאךְ וואָס ווֶערְט שְׁטֶענְדִיק פַּארְקוֹיפְט אוֹיפְן צָאל) און כָּל שֶׁדַּרְכּוֹ לִמָּנוֹת (אַ זַאךְ וואָס ווֶערְט פַּארְקוֹיפְט אוֹיפְן צָאל, אָבֶּער נִיט אַלֶעמָאל). אוֹיבּ דִי מַעֲלָה אִין דָבָר שֶׁבְּמִנְיָן וואָלְט גֶעווֶען דָאס אַלֵיין וואָס מֶען צֵיילְט עֶס, דַארְף דָאךְ נִיט זַיְין קֵיין נַפְקָא מִינָּהּ פוּן "אֶת" און "כָּל". וואָס אִיז נוֹגֵעַ ווִי עֶס אִיז אַלֶעמָאל, דֶעם מָאל הָאט מֶען דָאךְ דִי זַאךְ גֶעצֵיילְט, דַארְף זִי נִיט בָּטֵל ווֶערְן. אִיז דָאךְ אַ רַאְיָה אַז דִי מַעֲלָה אִיז אִין דֶער זַאךְ וואָס זִי אִיז בְּעֶצֶם אַ דָבָר חָשׁוּב, און דֶער מִנְיָן אִיז מֶער נִיט ווִי אַ סִימָן אוֹיף חֲשִׁיבוּת. דֶערְפַאר, בְּשַׁעַת אַ זַאךְ ווֶערְט אַמָאל גֶעצֵיילְט און אַמָאל נִיט, הַאלְט רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן (און אַזוֹי אִיז דִי הֲלָכָה) אַז דָאס ווֶערְט יָא בָּטֵל, ווַיְיל דִי זַאךְ אַלֵיין הָאט נִיט גֶענוּג חֲשִׁיבוּת.

קוּמְט דָאךְ אוֹיס, אַז דֶער גַאנְצֶער עִנְיָן פוּן מִנְיָן, אִיז אַן עִנְיָן חִיצוֹנִי בִּלְבַד, הַיְינְט ווִי קוּמְט עֶס אַז מִצְוַת הַמִּנְיָן אִיז אַזוֹי יְסוֹדוֹת'דִיק, בִּיז אַז דֶער גַאנְצֶער סֵפֶר הֵייסְט עַל שֵׁם הַמִּנְיָן - חוּמַּשׁ הַפִּקוּדִים?

When Counting Acquires Importance

3. All matters, especially elements associated with the **Torah and** ***mitzvos*****, are not results of happenstance (G-d forbid), but** occur through ***Hashgachah Pratis*** **("specific Divine Providence"). As such, we must say that even a** mere **sign** associated with **an entity is** not an entirely extrinsic factor, but is intrinsically **related to the entity itself.**[8]

This also applies regarding counting. The very fact that counting serves as a sign of importance indicates that counting itself reflects importance.

ג. אַלֶע עִנְיָנִים, וּבִפְרַט תּוֹרָה וּמִצְווֹת, זַיְינֶען נִיט קֵיין צוּפֶעלִיקֶע חַס וְשָׁלוֹם, נָאר בְּהַשְׁגָּחָה פְּרָטִית. וואָס דֶערְפוּן אִיז מוּכְרָח אַז אוֹיךְ אַ סִימָן פוּן אַ זַאךְ, הָאט אַ שַׁיְיכוּת צוּ דֶער זַאךְ אַלֵיין[ז].

און אַזוֹי אִיז אוֹיךְ אִין מִנְיָן. פוּן דֶעם גוּפָא וואָס מִנְיָן אִיז אַ סִימָן אוֹיף חֲשִׁיבוּת, מוּז מֶען זָאגְן, אַז אוֹיךְ עֶר אַלֵיין אִיז אַן עִנְיָן פוּן חֲשִׁיבוּת.

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7. *Beitzah,* loc. cit., and the sources mentioned there.

8. See *Likkutei Sichos,* Vol. 1, p. 222ff.

The previous statement – that counting does not indicate inherent **importance – refers to counting in and of itself, when it is not connected to something important. When, by contrast, counting is connected to an important entity, the inherent importance of the entity also extends to** and affects **the counting, causing the importance of the entity to be** imparted **to the counting. That said, the importance** of an entity that is reflected **in its being counted is merely an external** manifestation of its inner significance.

דָאס וָואס מֶען הָאט גֶערֶעדט פְּרִיעֶר אַז מִנְיָן אִיז נִיט קֵיין עִנְיָן פוּן חֲשִׁיבוּת, דָאס אִיז וִוי מִצַּד עַצְמוֹ, ווֶען עֶר אִיז נִיט פַארְבּוּנְדְן מִיט אַ דָבָר חָשׁוּב, בְּשַׁעַת אָבֶּער דֶער מִנְיָן אִיז פַארְבּוּנְדְן מִיט אַ דָבָר חָשׁוּב, ווֶערְט דִי חֲשִׁיבוּת פוּן דֶער זַאךְ בְּעֶצֶם נִמְשָׁךְ אוֹיךְ אִין דֶעם מִנְיָן, אַז אִין מִנְיָן גֶעפִינְט זִיךְ דִי חֲשִׁיבוּת פוּן דֶער זַאךְ. נָאר וִוי דִי חֲשִׁיבוּת קוּמְט אִין דֶעם מִנְיָן, אִיז דִי חֲשִׁיבוּת נִיט מֶער וִוי אַ חִיצוֹנִיוּת'דִיקֶע.

Bearing this in mind, we can understand why the entire Book of *Bamidbar* is called *Sefer HaPekudim*. True, counting in and of itself is not important. However, since the counting expresses the importance of the thing being counted – in this instance, the Jewish people – **it is appropriate that the entire book is called after this counting: *Sefer HaPekudim*.**

לוֹיט דֶעם ווֶעט מֶען פַארְשְׁטֵיין וָואס גַאנְץ סֵפֶר בַּמִדְבָּר ווֶערְט אָנְגֶערוּפְן חוּמָשׁ הַפְּקוּדִים, ווַיְיל כָאטשׁ אַז מִצַּד עַצְמוֹ אִיז מִנְיָן נִיט קֵיין חֲשִׁיבוּת, ווִיבַּאלְד אָבֶּער אַז אִין דֶעם מִנְיָן דְרִיקְט זִיךְ אוֹיס דִי חֲשִׁיבוּת פוּן דֶער זַאךְ, אִיז שׁוֹין רֶעכְט וָואס דֶער גַאנְצֶער סֵפֶר ווֶערְט גֶערוּפְן עַל שֵׁם הַמִּנְיָן, חוּמָשׁ הַפְּקוּדִים.

Beyond Duality – Uniting the Physical and the Spiritual

4. This concept – that the importance of the entity counted endows the counting with significance – **requires clarification: Since counting in and of itself is an external matter entirely unconnected with the content of the entity being counted, how does it become a medium through which** the **significance and** the **importance** of the entity being counted **are expressed?**

ד. דָאס גוּפָא דַארְף מֶען אָבֶּער פַארְשְׁטֵיין: ווִיבַּאלְד אַז מִנְיָן מִצַּד עַצְמוֹ אִיז אַן עִנְיָן חִיצוֹנִי וָואס אִיז אִינְגַאנְצְן נִיט פַארְבּוּנְדְן מִיטְן תּוֹכֶן פוּן דֶער זַאךְ, אִיז מִיט וָואס אִיז עֶר אַ כְּלִי, אַז אִין אִים זָאל זִיךְ אוֹיסְדְרִיקְן תּוֹכֶן אוּן חֲשִׁיבוּת?

However, this **question would only be valid if quantity (*kamus*) and quality (*eichus*) were two separate things. Then, importance (*eichus,* quality) could not be expressed by counting (quantity, *kamus*). However, here we are discussing the Jewish people and matters associated with them.** They are different than any other entity; **they are "one nation in the world."[9] The Alter Rebbe[10]**

דָאס וָואלְט גֶעווֶען אַ קַשְׁיָא, ווֶען כַּמוּת אוּן אֵיכוּת וָואלְטְן גֶעווֶען צְווֵיי בַּאזוּנְדֶערֶע זַאכְן. דֶעמָאלְט קֶען חֲשִׁיבוּת (אֵיכוּת) זִיךְ נִיט אוֹיסְדְרִיקְן אִין מִנְיָן (כַּמוּת). דָא רֶעדט זִיךְ אָבֶּער ווֶעגְן אִידְן אוּן זֵייעֶרֶע עִנְיָנִים - וָואס זֵיי זַיְינֶען גּוֹי אֶחָד בָּאָרֶץ, כְּפֵירוּשׁ כְּבוֹד קְדֻשַּׁת אַדְמוּ"ר הַזָּקֵן נִשְׁמָתוֹ עֵדֶן, אַז

9. *I Divrei HaYamim* 17:21; *II Shmuel* 7:23.

10. Quoted in ***Hayom Yom,*** **entry 27 Elul. See also *Tanya, Iggeres HaKodesh,* Epistle 9.**

interprets that phrase to mean **that they** possess the unique ability to **create oneness even "in the world" – in matters of the world, in physical and material things,** i.e., their mission is to fuse *kamus* (quantity, entities' material dimension) with *eichus* (their spiritual quality). As such, **for** the Jews, ***kamus*** **and** ***eichus*** are not separate things. They are **connected** to the extent that ***eichus*** (their inherent, qualitative spiritual power) **is also expressed in** ***kamus*** (quantitative counting).

אוֹיךְ בָּאָרֶץ, אִין עִנְיָנִים אַרְצִיִּים, דְּבָרִים גַּשְׁמִיִּים וְחוּמְרִים, מַאכְן זֵיי אֶחָד, זֵיי פַאַרְבִּינְדְן כַּמּוּת מִיט אֵיכוּת, קֶען זִיךְ בַּיי זֵיי אוֹיסְדְרִיקְן אֵיכוּת אוֹיךְ אִין כַּמּוּת.

Holy Mathematics: The Spiritual Power of Numbers

5. Because of the connection between ***kamus*** **and** ***eichus*****, we see that an increase in** ***kamus*** **can also produce an increase in** ***eichus*****.**[11]

A **law** that exemplifies the interrelation between *kamus* and *eichus*: **When there are ten Jews present – it makes no difference on what the spiritual level these ten are; as long as quantitatively they are ten – the Divine Presence rests** among them, as our Sages state, **"On every assembly of ten [Jews], the Divine Presence rests."**[12] As a consequence, prayers that are described as ***devarim shebekedushah,*** **"matters of holiness,"** e.g., *Kaddish, Kedushah, Borchu,* and the like, **can** then **be recited.**[13] Thus, the presence of "*kamus*" – ten Jews – leads to **an increase in** ***eichus*****.**

This concept extends to other areas of Jewish practice as well. For example, **the law is that a** ***zimmun,*** **the invitation to recite Grace after Meals,** cannot be recited unless at least **three Jews** ate together. **When ten are present, they must mention** ***Elokeinu,*** **"our G-d,"** when reciting the *zimmun*. **There are also opinions in the Mishnah**[14]

ה. מִצַּד דֶער שַׁיְיכוּת פוּן כַּמּוּת מִיט אֵיכוּת זֶעעֶן מִיר אוֹיךְ, אַז בְּשַׁעַת עֶס קוּמְט צוּ אִין כַּמּוּת, קֶען אוֹיךְ צוּקוּמֶען דוּרְךְ דֶעם אִין אֵיכוּת[י].

דֶער דִין אִיז, וֶוען עֶס זַיְינֶען פַאַרַאן עֲשָׂרָה מִיִשְׂרָאֵל, אִיז קֵיין נַפְקָא מִינָּהּ נִיט וָואס דִי אֵיכוּת פוּן דִי צֶען אִיז, אוֹיבּ נָאר אִין כַּמּוּת זַיְינֶען זֵיי צֶען, אִיז דָארְט שׁוֹרֶה דִי שְׁכִינָה, אַכָּל בֵּי עֲשָׂרָה שְׁכִינְתָּא שַׁרְיָא[ז] אוּן מֶען קֶען זָאגְן אַ דָבָר שֶׁבִּקְדוּשָּׁה, וָואס דָאס אִיז אַ הוֹסָפָה אִין אֵיכוּת.

עֶנְלֶעךְ דֶערְצוּ אִיז דֶער דִין לְגַבֵּי זִימּוּן, בְּשַׁעַת עֶס זַיְינֶען פַאַרַאן דְרַיי אִידְן זַיְינֶען זֵיי מְחוּיָּב בְּזִימּוּן. בְּשַׁעַת עֶס זַיְינֶען פַאַרַאן צֶען, דַארְף מֶען זָאגְן אֱלֹקֵינוּ. אוּן עֶס זַיְינֶען אוֹיךְ דָא דֵיעוֹת אִין מִשְׁנָה[ח], אַז בַּיי

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11. This concept **can be understood** more clearly **from an example** in *halachah:* **According to Scriptural Law, it is forbidden** to partake of even the slightest amount of a prohibited substance. Although one is liable for punishment or must bring a sacrifice only when one consumes a specific measure – for example, an olive-sized portion (*k'zayis*) of forbidden meat – eating even a smaller amount (***chatzi shi'ur,*** in Talmudic parlance) is also forbidden. **The reason is that,** were more of that forbidden meat substance to be added to it, **the** two **would be combined** to reach the amount for which one is liable (***Yoma*** **74a**). The implication is that the fact that adding more of the forbidden substance would cause one to be liable (a factor pointing to *eichus*) indicates that the original quantity (*kamus*) possesses a dimension of *eichus* as well. **This is not the place** for further discussion of the matter.

12. ***Sanhedrin*** **39a.**

13. See *Rambam, Hilchos Tefilah* 8:6.

14. ***Berachos*** **49b.** The *halachah* does not follow these opinions.

that when 100 Jews dine together, **they should say "G-d our L-rd"** during *zimmun,* **and there are** further additions as the number of participants increases. The motivating principle behind these practices is that **the change in *kamus* leads to a change in *eichus*. The two are interrelated** since ***kamus*** itself **embodies *eichus*.**

הוּנְדֶערְט זָאל מֶען זָאגְן ה׳ אֱלֹקֵינוּ, וכו׳. מִצַד דֶעם שִׁינוּי אִין כַּמוּת - וֶוערְט נִשְׁתַּנֶה אוֹיךְ דִי אֵיכוּת. וַוייל כַּמוּת מִיט אֵיכוּת זַיינֶען פַארְבּוּנְדְן, אוּן אִין כַּמוּת שְׁטֵייט אֵיכוּת.

The Paradox of Priority

6. A fundamental principle underlying the importance of *kamus* is that all are equal. No one is counted more than another. However, since among the Jewish people *eichus* and *kamus* are interrelated, the essential *eichus* possessed by the Jewish people as a whole is present within every individual Jew.

A similar concept applies regarding the fulfillment of *mitzvos*. "[A person] who is engaged in [the observance of] one *mitzvah* is exempt from [performing another] *mitzvah*."[15] No matter what the *mitzvah* in which he is engaged is – even if it appears slight in *eichus* – involvement in it **exempts the person even from** what appears to be **a greater *mitzvah*,** to borrow **wording used by** our Sages,[16] **"The lightest of the light and the weightiest of the weighty are equal."**

Moreover, a person who is engaged in the observance of **a *mitzvah* is exempt even from Torah study at that time.** Now, **Torah study is considered** far superior to the observance of ***mitzvos*** to the extent that the relationship between them is described as comparable to **the body in relation to the soul,**[17] **and like the limbs in relation to the blood, "which is the soul of the limbs."**[18] (Thus, the relationship between the Torah and the *mitzvos* **resembles** that **between *eichos* and *kamus*.**) **Nevertheless, when one is engaged even in a minor *mitzvah*, he is exempt from Torah study at that time because, as stated, *kamus* itself embodies *eichus*.**

ו. אַזוֹי אִיז אוֹיךְ בְּעִנְיַן קִיוּם הַמִצְוֹות. הָעוֹסֵק בְּמִצְוָה פָּטוּר מִן הַמִצְוָה[ט], אוֹיבּ עֶר אִיז זִיךְ עוֹסֵק אִין וועֶלְכֶע מִצְוָה עֶס זָאל נִיט זַיין אִיז עֶר פָּטוּר אֲפִילוּ פוּן אַ גְרוֹיסֶער מִצְוָה, ווִי דֶער לָשׁוֹן: קַלוֹת שֶׁבְּקַלוֹת וַחֲמוּרוֹת שֶׁבַּחֲמוּרוֹת שָׁוִין.

נָאךְ מֶער: הָעוֹסֵק בְּמִצְוָה אִיז פָּטוּר בְּשַׁעַת מַעֲשֶׂה אוֹיךְ פוּן תַּלְמוּד תּוֹרָה, הֲגַם אַז מִצְוֹות לְגַבֵּי תּוֹרָה זַיינֶען כְּגוּף לְגַבֵּי נֶפֶשׁ[יא], אוּן ווִי אֵבָרִים לְגַבֵּי הַדָם הוּא הַנֶפֶשׁ שֶׁבָּאֵבָרִים[יב], וואָס דָאס אִיז בְּדוּגְמַת כַּמוּת לְגַבֵּי אֵיכוּת, פוּנְדֶעסְטְווֶעגְן בְּשַׁעַת עֶר אִיז עוֹסֵק אֲפִילוּ בְּמִצְוָה קַלָה, פַּטֶר׳ט דָאס אִים בְּשַׁעַת מַעֲשֶׂה פוּן תַּלְמוּד תּוֹרָה, וַוייל ווִי גֶעזָאגְט, אִין כַּמוּת אַלֵיין שְׁטֵייט אֵיכוּת.

15. *Sukkah* 25a; *Sotah* 44b.

16. *Yalkut Shimoni, Nach,* sec. 937.

17. See *Tanya,* ch. 23.

18. *Likkutei Torah, Bamidbar,* p. 13a.

When Every Individual Is Necessary

7. A similar concept applies regarding the Giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai – all **600,000** Jews who represented the 600,000 Jewish root souls[19] **had to be present. Even if only one had been missing – even if that one would have been the least significant** member **of the tribe of Dan, G-d would not have given the Torah (Heaven forbid).[20] Even the greatest of the great** would not have received the Torah **because** the absence of one Jew, even the least worthy, **would have** caused **a deficiency in the** required **total of 600,000. This resembles** the law that **the blessing** praising G-d as *Chacham Harazim,* **"Knower of Secrets," can be recited only when 600,000** Jews are present.[21] This demonstrates how a *kamus* can lead to a higher dimension of *eichus* to be manifest.

ז. אַזוֹי גֶעפִינֶען מִיר אוֹיךְ בַּיי מַתַּן תּוֹרָה, בַּיי מַתַּן תּוֹרָה הָאבְּן גֶעמוּזְט זַיְין שִׁשִּׁים רִבּוֹא. אוֹיבּ עֶס וואָלְט גֶעווֶען חָסֵר אֶחָד, אֲפִילוּ ווֶען דֶער אֶחָד וואָלְט גֶעווֶען דֶער פָּחוּת פוּן שֵׁבֶט דָּן, וואָלְט דֶער אוֹיבֶּערְשְׁטֶער חַס וְשָׁלוֹם דִי תּוֹרָה צוּ אִידְן נִיט גֶעגֶעבְּן[י"ג] אֲפִילוּ צוּ דֶעם גָּדוֹל שֶׁבִּגְדוֹלִים, ווַיְיל עֶס וואָלְט גֶעפֶעלְט אִין דֶער כַּמּוּת פוּן שִׁשִּׁים רִבּוֹא. וְעַל דֶּרֶךְ בִּרְכַּת חֲכַם הָרָזִים צוּ ווֶעלְכֶער עֶס מוּז זַיְין דִי כַּמּוּת פוּן שִׁשִּׁים רִבּוֹא דַוְקָא[י"ד].

Mirroring the Angels: The Heavenly Pattern of the *Degalim*

8. The censuses described in the Book of *Bamidbar* **are also connected with the** ***degalim,***[22] the encampments of each of the tribes of Israel that were identified by distinctive pennants. **Concerning the** ***degalim***, **the Midrash[23] relates that at the time of the Giving of the Torah, the Jews saw the Divine chariot and the camps of angels, arranged in** ***degalim*** **upon** ***degalim***. **They began to desire** ***degalim*** for themselves. Responsive to their wishes, **G-d instructed Moshe, "Go make** ***degalim*** **for them as they desire."**

ח. דֶער עִנְיָן פוּן פְּקוּדִים אִין סֵפֶר בַּמִּדְבָּר, אִיז דָאךְ אוֹיךְ פַארְבּוּנְדְן מִיט דֶעם עִנְיָן פוּן דִי דְגָלִים. ווֶעגְן דְגָלִים דֶערְצֵיילְט דֶער מִדְרָשׁ[ט"ו] אַז בְּשַׁעַת מַתַּן תּוֹרָה, הָאבְּן דִי אִידְן גֶעזֶען דִי מֶרְכָּבָה אוּן מַחֲנוֹת הַמַּלְאָכִים, עֲשׂוּיִים דְּגָלִים דְּגָלִים, הִתְחִילוּ מִתְאַוִּים לִדְגָלִים, הָאט דֶער אוֹיבֶּערְשְׁטֶער גֶעזָאגְט צוּ מֹשֶׁה'ן, לֵךְ עֲשֵׂה אוֹתָם דְּגָלִים כְּמוֹ שֶׁנִּתְאַוּוּ.

Just as at the Giving of the Torah, there had to be the specific number of 600,000 Jews, **so too with the** ***degalim***, **which derived from the Giving of the**

אִיז אַזוֹי ווִי בַּיי מַתַּן תּוֹרָה הָאט גֶעמוּזְט זַיְין דֶער מִסְפָּר פוּן שִׁשִּׁים רִבּוֹא דַוְקָא, אַזוֹי אוֹיךְ בַּיי דִי דְגָלִים, וואָס הָאבְּן זִיךְ

19. The number 600,000 represents the men between the ages of 20 and 60. As explained in various sources, there are 600,000 root-souls of the Jewish people. From these root souls, all other souls (of the Jews throughout the generations) emerge. These were manifest in the 600,000 men aged between 20 and 60 at the time of the Giving of the Torah.

20. ***Mechilta, Yisro,*** **ch. 3;** ***Yalkut Shimoni, Shmos,*** **sec. 280.**

21. ***Berachos*** **58a. See** ***Rashi's*** **commentary there.**

22. The term *degel* literally means "flag" or "pennant." The tribes were instructed to camp in a specific formation and each of the tribes had its own pennant. Sometimes, the term *degel* is used to refer to the pennant itself and sometimes to the camp formations that were distinguished by them.

23. ***Bamidbar Rabbah*** **2:3.**

Torah, a specific number was required. As our Sages state,[24] the number of Jews in **the encampment of the tribe of Yehudah corresponded to the number of angels in the camp of Michael, and so too,** regarding the other encampments. Thus, **specifically, through the *kamus,*** the quantity of Jews, **the *eichos,*** the spiritual quality represented by their encampments, **was achieved.**

גֶענוּמֶען פוּן מַתַּן תּוֹרָה, הָאט גֶעמוּזְט זַיְין דֶער מִסְפָּר ווֶעלְכְן מֶען הָאט דֶערְבַּיי גֶעדַארְפְט הָאבְּן, וּכְמַאֲמַר רַזַ"לטז אַז דֶער מִסְפָּר פוּן דֶגֶל מַחֲנֵה יְהוּדָה אִיז ווִי דֶער מִסְפַּר הַמַּלְאָכִים שֶׁבְּמַחֲנֵה מִיכָאֵל וכו'. אוּן דוּרְךְ דֶער כַּמּוּת דַּוְקָא - הָאט זִיךְ אוֹיפְגֶעטָאן דִי אֵיכוּת.

The Priority of Our Times: Expanding the Camp of Israel

9. The lesson from the above is: Now is a time when quantity (*kamus*) is more important than quality (*eichos*). Consequently, our mission **is to bring as many Jews as possible – regardless of their status in terms of *eichos* – into "the encampments of Israel." The increase in *kamus* will ultimately also lead to an increase in *eichos*.**

At the outset, it is not so important how deeply one will influence the *eichos* of those who are brought **in**to "the camp of Israel" – how the quality of their Jewish life will be upgraded. **What is primarily important is bringing Jews into the "camp of Israel."**

In this vein, **the Alter Rebbe explains[25] the statement of our Sages, "Wherever there are ten [Jews], the Divine Presence rests,"** as follows: **Even when they are not engaged in matters of Torah, since ten Jews are present, "the Divine Presence rests"** among them. **Similarly, regarding** bringing Jews into the "camp of Israel," **the very fact that there will be a greater number of people in the "camp of Israel" (*kamus*) will also bring about** an increase **in *eichos,*** leading to **the fulfillment of** G-d's **intent,** as stated in *Tanya,*[26] **"The Holy One, blessed be He, desired to have a dwelling place in the lower realms."**

ט. דִי הוֹרָאָה פוּן דֶעם אִיז:

עֶס אִיז אִיצְט אַ צַיְיט ווָאס דִי כַּמּוּת אִיז מֶער נוֹגֵעַ ווִי דִי אֵיכוּת. בְּמֵילָא דַארְף מֶען אִיצְטֶער זֶען אַרַיְינְבְּרֶענְגֶען ווָאס מֶער אִידְן בְּדִגְלֵי וּמַחֲנֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל, נִיט קוּקְנְדִיק אוֹיף זַייעֶר מַצָּב אִין אֵיכוּת, אוּן ווֶען עֶס ווֶעט צוּקוּמֶען אִין כַּמּוּת ווֶעט בְּמֵילָא סוֹף סוֹף צוּקוּמֶען אוֹיךְ אִין אֵיכוּת.

בִּתְחִלָּה אִיז נִיט אַזוֹי נוֹגֵעַ ווִי טִיף, אֵיכוּת'דִיק מֶען ווֶעט אִין זֵיי אוֹיפְטָאן. עֶס אִיז בְּעִיקָּר נוֹגֵעַ דֶער עֶצֶם עִנְיָן ווָאס מֶען ווֶעט אַרַיְינְבְּרֶענְגֶען אִידְן אִין מַחֲנֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל, ווִי דֶער אַלְטֶער רֶבִּי אִיז מְפָרֵשׁיז דֶעם מַאֲמַר רַזַ"ל אַכָל בֵּי עֲשָׂרָה שְׁכִינְתָּא שַׁרְיָא, אַז אוֹיךְ ווֶען זֵיי זַיְינֶען זִיךְ נִיט עוֹסֵק בְּדִבְרֵי תוֹרָה, ווִיבַּאלְד אַז עֶס גֶעפִינֶען זִיךְ עֲשָׂרָה מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל, אִיז שְׁכִינְתָּא שַׁרְיָא. אוּן אַזוֹי אוֹיךְ אִין דֶעם עִנְיָן: דָאס אַלֵיין ווָאס עֶס ווֶעט זַיְין אַ גְרֶעסֶערֶע כַּמּוּת בְּמַחֲנֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל, ווֶעט זִיךְ אוֹיפְטָאן אוֹיךְ אִין אֵיכוּת, אוּן עֶס ווֶעט זִיךְ אוֹיסְפִירְן דִי כַּוָּנָה פוּן נִתְאַוָּה הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא לִהְיוֹת לוֹ יִתְבָּרֵךְ דִּירָה בַּתַּחְתּוֹנִים.

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24. *Zohar,* Vol. III, p. 154b.

25. *Tanya, Iggeres HaKodesh,* Epistle 23.

26. *Tanya,* ch. 36.

A Dual Path of Growth

10. However, we must also bear in mind the counsel,[27] **“Do not ignore your own flesh.” Preparing for the Giving of the Torah does not only** involve **work with others but also** necessitates **working on oneself. The Midrash[28] states that at the time of the Giving of the Torah, there were no deaf, no blind, or other people with physical disabilities among them. Everyone had been healed.** Similarly, in a spiritual sense, **we must realize the need to come to the Giving of the Torah with all our limbs whole, without any disabilities.**

When it comes to others, we should not be deterred by any of their undesirable qualities. We must draw every Jew close. When describing the Jews’ encampment before **the Giving of the Torah,** the Torah states[29] ***vayichan,* using a singular form; they camped** in a spirit of unity,[30] **“all as one”[31]** – there was no differentiation between one Jew and another. **However, regarding ourselves, it is necessary to make an** honest **reckoning of where each one of us stands. If there is a blemish, we must correct it;** this includes the use of our **sense of sight,** our **sense of hearing, and the like.**

י. מֶען דַארְף אָבֶּער וויסְן אַז - וּמִבְּשָׂרְךָ לֹא תִתְעַלָּם. דִי הֲכָנָה צוּ מַתַּן תּוֹרָה אִיז נִיט נָאר עֲבוֹדָה מִיט דֶעם זוּלַת נָאר אוֹיךְ עֲבוֹדָה מִיט זִיךְ. עֶס שְׁטֵייט דָאךְ אִין מִדְרָשׁ[ח] אַז בְּשַׁעַת מַתַּן תּוֹרָה לֹא הָיוּ חֵרְשִׁים וְלֹא סוּמִים אָדֶער אַנְדֶערֶע בַּעֲלֵי מוּמִים רַחֲמָנָא לִצְלַן, אַלֶע זַיְינֶען אוֹיסְגֶעהֵיילְט גֶעווָארְן. מֶען דַארְף וויסְן אַז קוּמֶען צוּ מַתַּן תּוֹרָה דַארְף מֶען מִיט אַלֶע אֵבָרִים גַאנְצֶע, אָן קֵיינֶע מוּמִים.

בְּנוֹגֵעַ דֶעם זוּלַת, דַארְף מֶען זִיךְ נִיט אָפְּשְׁרֶעקְן וועגְן דִי אֵיכוּת בִּלְתִּי רְצוּיָה. מֶען דַארְף מְקָרֵב זַיְין יֶעדְן אִידְן. ווִי עֶס אִיז גֶעוועֶן בַּיי מַתַּן תּוֹרָה, וַיִּחַן לְשׁוֹן יָחִיד כֻּלָּם כְּאֶחָד. בְּנוֹגֵעַ צוּ זִיךְ, אָבֶּער, דַארְף מֶען וויסְן דֶעם חֶשְׁבּוֹן וואוּ מֶען הַאלְט. אוֹיבּ עֶס אִיז דָא אַ פְּגַם, דַארְף מֶען אִים מְתַקֵּן זַיְין, מְתַקֵּן זַיְין דֶעם חוּשׁ הָרְאִיָּה, דֶעם חוּשׁ הַשְּׁמִיעָה וכו׳.

(משיחת ש״פ במדבר, תשי״ד)

27. *Yeshayah* 58:7.

28. *Bamidbar Rabbah* 7:1; *Mechilta, Yisro,* sec. 9 (quoted by *Rashi, Shmos* 20:15); *Yalkut Shimoni, Shmos,* sec. 300.

29. *Shmos* 19:2.

30. *Mechilta* and *Rashi* on the verse.

31. Cf. *Torah Or,* p. 122c. Obviously, among the people, there were some who possessed flaws that would have prevented the feelings of oneness had attention been paid to them. However, that was the uniqueness of the encampment before Mount Sinai – that the overriding feelings of unity that bound the Jewish people into a single entity eclipsed the awareness of any particular failing.

א) סוטה לו, ב.
ב) ערלה פרק ג משנה ז. ביצה ג, ב. ושם נסמן. יורה דעה סימן קי.
ג) דארט.
ד) ראה לקו״ש ח״א ע׳ 222 ואילך.
ה) היום יום כז אלול ה׳תש״ג. און זע אגרת הקדש סימן ט.
ו) דאס וועט זיין בעסער פארשטאנדיק על פי הענין דחצי שיעור אסור מן התורה משום דחזי לאצטרופי (יומא עד, א) ואין כאן מקומו.
ז) סנהדרין לט, א.
ח) ברכות מט, ב.
ט) סוכה כה, א. סוטה מד, ב.
י) ילקוט שמעוני נ״ך רמז תתקלז.
יא) זע תניא פרק כג.
יב) לקוטי תורה במדבר יג, א.
יג) מכילתא יתרו פ״ג. ילקוט שמעוני רמז רפ.
יד) ברכות נח, א. און דארט אין פירוש רש״י.
טו) במדבר רבה פרשה ב, ג.
טז) זהר חלק ג, קנד, א. ושם.
יז) אגרת הקדש סימן כג.
יח) במדבר רבה פ״ז, א. מכילתא יתרו פ״ט (געבראכט אין רש״י שמות כ, טו). ילקוט שמעוני יתרו רמז ש.

BAMIDBAR II | במדבר ב

Adapted from a letter written to *Neshei U'Bnos Chabad, Motza'ei Shabbos Parshas Bamidbar,* 5717 (1957)

Introduction

In this short piece, the Rebbe echoes but then transcends the typical appeals made by Jewish leaders during the post-war era. As American Jews moved beyond immigrant status into mainstream society, many were abandoning ancestral traditions in favor of assimilation into American culture. Rather than simply lamenting this spiritual decline, the Rebbe urges the Jewish community to move from the defensive to the offensive, to build schools and communities for Jewish life to flourish in America.

What distinguishes this piece is its primary focus on Jewish women as agents of transformation. This was remarkable for 1957, well before the Women's Liberation Movement gained momentum. At a time when leadership roles for women were limited, the Rebbe specifically called upon them to stand at the forefront of community building and education.

By drawing parallels between the women who eagerly contributed to the Sanctuary in the desert and contemporary Jewish women, the Rebbe recognized women's unique capacity to create sacred spaces to nurture authentic Jewish identity.

A Sanctuary in the Wilderness: The Feminine Role

A Sacred Place in a Spiritual Desert

1. One of the shared themes of the Torah readings *Bamidbar* and *Naso* is the focus on the Sanctuary in the desert and the distribution of the duties involved in transporting it from place to place.

This highlights that wherever **the Jews find themselves, even in a desert, they have the power to establish a holy place, a Sanctuary, for the Divine Presence to dwell among them,** both **collectively and within each individual Jew.**

Just as there exists a desert in the physical sense – a wilderness where extreme climatic conditions prevail and all sorts of harmful creatures roam freely, **so too, there exists a spiritual desert, where the most harmful spiritual ideas prevail. Such a** spiritual desert **can also be** found **in a country that, in a physical sense, is a flourishing garden.**

Our **holy Torah teaches us that if we find ourselves in a spiritual desert, we can – and, therefore, should and must – establish a sanctuary.** Such a sanctuary should not remain stationary. We must **carry it while proceeding forward in the footsteps of the Divine Presence until we reach** our Holy Land, **the land blessed by G-d, in the true and complete Final Redemption** led **by *Mashiach*.**

א. אֵיינֶער פוּן דִי עִנְיָנִים פוּן דִי סִדְרוֹת בַּמִדְבָּר אוּן נָשֹׂא, אִיז דֶער גֶעמֵיינְזַאמֶער עִנְיָן - וֶועגְן דֶעם מִשְׁכָּן אִין מִדְבָּר אוּן וֶועגְן דִי פְלִיכְטְן וֶועלְכֶע זַיְינֶען פַּארְטֵיילְט גֶעוָוארְן אִין צוּזַאמֶענְהַאנְג מִיטְן בְּרֶענְגֶען דֶעם מִשְׁכָּן פוּן אָרְט צוּ אָרְט.

דָאס אוּנְטֶערְשְׁטְרַייכְט, אַז אֲפִילוּ וֶוען אִידְן גֶעפִינֶען זִיךְ אִין אַ מִדְבָּר הָאבְּן זֵיי דֶעם כֹּחַ אוֹיפְצוּשְׁטֶעלְן אַ מָקוֹם קָדוֹשׁ, אַ מִשְׁכָּן, פַאר דֶער גֶ-טְלֶעכֶער שְׁכִינָה צוּ רוּעֶן צְווִישְׁן אִידְן בִּכְלַל אוּן אִין יֶעדְן אִידְן בִּפְרַט.

פוּנְקְט ווִי עֶס אִיז פַּארַאן אַ מִדְבָּר אִין אַ קֶערְפֶּערְלֶעכְן זִין - אַ ווִיסְטֶענִישׁ, וואוּ עֶס הֶערְשְׁן עֶקְסְטְרֶעמֶע קְלִימַאטִישֶׁע עֶלֶעמֶענְטְן אוּן אַלֶערְלֵיי מַזִיקִים, אַזוֹי אִיז אוֹיךְ פַּארַאן אַ גַיְיסְטִיקֶער מִדְבָּר, וואוּ עֶס הֶערְשְׁן דִי שֶׁעדְלֶעכְסְטֶע גַיְיסְטִיקֶע אִידֵייעֶן, אוּן דָאס קֶען אוֹיךְ זַיְין אִין אַ לַאנְד וָואס אִיז אִין גַשְׁמִיוּת אַ בְּלִיעֶנְדִיקֶער גָארְטְן.

לֶערְנְט אוּנְז דִי תּוֹרָה הַקְדוֹשָׁה, אַז גֶעפִינֶענְדִיק זִיךְ אִין אַ גַיְיסְטִיקְן מִדְבָּר, קֶען מֶען, וּבְמֵילָא - דַארְף מֶען אוּן מוּז מֶען אוֹיפְשְׁטֶעלְן אַ מִקְדָשׁ, טְרָאגְן עֶס אוּן גֵיין פָארְאוֹיס אִין דִי גֶ-טְלֶעכֶע שְׁכִינָה טְרִיט, בִּיז מֶען קוּמְט צוּ דֶער גָ-ט-גֶעבֶּענְטשְׁטֶער הֵיילִיקֶער לַאנְד, צוּ דֶער אֱמֶת׳עֶר אוּן פוּלֶער גְאוּלָה עַל יְדֵי מָשִׁיחַ צִדְקֵנוּ.

Building Sanctuaries and Nurturing Seeds: A Woman's Mission

2. This directive is relevant for all Jews, but

ב. דָאס אִיז אַן אָנְוַוייזוּנְג פַאר אַלֶע אִידְן,

אָבֶּער בַּאזוּנְדֶער פַאר אִידִישֶׁע פְרוֹיעֶן, וָוארוּם עֶס אִיז דָאךְ בַּאוואוּסְט, אַז בַּיְים בּוֹיעֶן דֶעם מִשְׁכָּן הָאבְּן זִיךְ דִי פְרוֹיעֶן אָפְּגֶערוּפְן דִי עֶרְשְׁטֶע, נָאךְ פְרִיעֶר פַאר דִי מֶענֶער.

אִין דֶעם גַייסְטִיקְן מִדְבָּר פוּן גֶעווִיסֶע קְרַייְזְן וָואס עֶס הֶערְשְׁט בַּיי זֵיי אַ ווִיסְטֶענִישׁ אוּן פוּסְטְקַייְט אִין אִידִישְׁקַייְט בִּכְלַל, שׁוֹין אָפְּגֶערֶעדט פוּן חֲסִידִישְׁן סֵדֶר לֶעבְּן בִּפְרַט, הָאבְּן פְרוֹיעֶן דֶעם גְרוֹיסְן אוּן אֵייבִּיקְן זְכוּת צוּ זַייְן צְווִישְׁן דִי עֶרְשְׁטֶע אִין אוֹיפְשְׁטֶעלְן אַ מִשְׁכָּן לוֹ יִתְבָּרֵךְ.

סְפֶּעצִיעֶל דַארְף מֶען גֶעדֶענְקֶען דִי נוֹיטְווֶענְדִיקַייְט אָפְּצוּגֶעבְּן זִיךְ אוֹיךְ מִיט דִי גָאר יוּנְגֶע קִינְדֶערְלֶעךְ, וָוארוּם, ווִי מֶען זֶעט בַּאשֵׁיינְפֶּערְלֶעךְ, אַז מֶען הוֹיבְּט אָן דֶערְצִיעֶן אַ קִינְד אִין אַ גֶעווִיסֶער רִיכְטוּנְג פוּן גַאנְץ פְרִי אָן - אִיז מֶען גֶעזִיכֶערְט מִיט פִיל מֶער הַצְלָחָה אוּן מִיט גְרֶעסֶערֶע אוּן בֶּעסֶערֶע פֵּירוֹת.

(אויסצוג פון א בריף צו נשי ובנות חב"ד,
מוצש"ק במדבר, תשי"ז)

especially for Jewish women. As is well known,[1] when Moshe called for donations to **build the Sanctuary, the women responded first, before the men.**

In the spiritual desert that prevails in certain circles, there exists a wilderness and emptiness regarding ***Yiddishkeit*** **in general, not to mention** the absence of a **chassidic way of life.** In such a setting, **women have the great and eternal merit to be among the first in establishing a sanctuary for G-d, blessed be He.**

Women, especially, must remember the necessity to devote themselves also to very young children. There is an obvious reason: **As can be seen clearly, when we begin to educate a child in a certain direction from a very early age, we are assured of far greater success and more manifold and superior results.**

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1. *Ramban, Shmos* 35:22.

BAMIDBAR III | במדבר ג

Adapted from the synopsis of a *sichah* delivered on *Shabbos Mevorchim Sivan,* 5713 (1953)

Introduction

When describing the Jews' encampment at Mount Sinai, the Torah shifts unexpectedly to the singular form, "Israel camped there."[1] Noting the change, our Sages[2] comment, "as one person with one heart." This unusual unity wasn't merely a moment of harmony in an otherwise tumultuous journey – it altered the entire course of spiritual history. Because the Jewish people came together in such complete oneness, G-d chose that moment to give them the Torah.

In the *sichah* that follows, the Rebbe probes the deeper nature of that unity, explaining that it did not stem from social agreement or pragmatic necessity, but from the metaphysical core of the Jewish soul.

At the heart of every Jew is a soul that is an actual part of G-d.[3] From the vantage point of that essential Divine spark, there are no barriers separating one Jew from another. Regardless of external differences – whether one is a scholar or a layperson, spiritually accomplished or still striving – the same Divine essence is shared.

When that shared essence comes to the surface, it forges the Jews into a singular, unified entity. That is what happened at Sinai and, in response, G-d gave the Jews the Torah, granting them access to His own Essence.

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1. *Shmos* 19:2.

2. *Mechilta* and *Rashi* on the verse.

3. *Tanya,* ch. 2.

One Heart, One People: Preparing for Shavuos through *Ahavas Yisrael*

The Path to Sinai

1. **Today is** ***Shabbos Mevorchim*** Sivan, the *Shabbos* on which we bless **the month of the Giving of our Torah. Consequently, the preparation for the Giving of the Torah and receiving the Torah also begins** on this *Shabbos*.

א. הַיּוֹם הוּא - שַׁבָּת מְבָרְכִים הַחֹדֶשׁ בּוֹ זְמַן מַתַּן תּוֹרָתֵנוּ, וּבְמֵילָא - גַּם הַתְחָלַת הַהֲכָנָה לְמַתַּן הַתּוֹרָה וְקַבָּלַת הַתּוֹרָה.

Peace and unity are the means to prepare for – and the conduits that make possible **– the Giving of the Torah. In the** ***Mechilta*****, quoted in** ***Rashi's*** **commentary, our Sages note** that the verse,[1] **"And Israel camped (*****vayichan*****) there** opposite the mountain," uses the singular form. This leads them to comment: They camped **"as one person, with one heart." And the** *Yalkut Shimoni* **states:**[2]

> **The Holy One, blessed be He, sought to give the Torah to Israel when they left Egypt, but [then] they were divided one against another... When they came to Sinai, they became united as one group... The Holy One, blessed be He, said, "The Torah is entirely peace. To whom shall I give it? To a nation that loves peace."**

הַהֲכָנָה וְהַכְּלִי לְמַתַּן הַתּוֹרָה - הֵם הַשָּׁלוֹם וְהָאַחְדּוּת. וְכִדְרָשַׁת רַזַ"ל בִּמְכִילְתָּא הוּבָא בְּפֵרוּשׁ רַשִׁ"י[ח*]: וַיִּחַן שָׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל, כְּאִישׁ אֶחָד בְּלֵב אֶחָד. וּבְיַלְקוּט: בִּקֵּשׁ הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא לִתֵּן תּוֹרָה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל בְּשָׁעָה שֶׁיָּצְאוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם וְהָיוּ חֲלוּקִים אֵלּוּ עַל אֵלּוּ כו׳ כְּשֶׁבָּאוּ לְסִינַי הֻשְׁווּ כֻּלָּם אֲגֻדָּה אַחַת כו׳ אָמַר הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא הַתּוֹרָה כֻּלָּהּ שָׁלוֹם וּלְמִי אֲנִי נוֹתְנָהּ לְאֻמָּה שֶׁהִיא אוֹהֶבֶת שָׁלוֹם.

The peace and unity that serve as **a preparation for the Giving of the Torah must** be motivated by and find expression in **matters of the Torah and** its *mitzvos.* This is indicated by **the verse, "And Israel camped there** opposite the mountain." **Where and for what purpose** did they camp? **"Opposite the mountain,"**[3] the mountain **whose existence**[4] is intrinsically associated with **the Torah and its** ***mitzvos*****.** This led to **the unity** highlighted by **the singular form** of the verb.

הַשָּׁלוֹם וְהָאַחְדּוּת דַּהֲכָנָה לְמַתַּן תּוֹרָה צְרִיכִים לִהְיוֹת בְּעִנְיְנֵי תּוֹרָה וּמִצְוֹת, וְכִלְשׁוֹן הַכָּתוּב: וַיִּחַן שָׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל (לְשׁוֹן יָחִיד, בְּאַחְדּוּת. וּבַמֶּה וּבִשְׁבִיל מָה -) נֶגֶד הָהָר[ט] (וְעִנְיָנוֹ[כ], הַתּוֹרָה וּמִצְוֹתֶיהָ).

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1. *Shmos* 19:2.

2. *Shmos,* sec. 273.

3. See *Rashbam* on the verse, who comments, "'opposite the mountain' – the mountain referred to previously [in the verse (*Shmos* 3:12), 'When you take the people out of Egypt,] you will serve G-d on this mountain.'"

4. See *Shmos Rabbah* 2:4 and 51:8, which explain that all the various names for Mount Sinai are associated with the Torah and its *mitzvos*.

True, peace and unity are so powerful that with them, **it is possible to accomplish whatever one desires, as** implied by **our Sages'**[5] **interpretation of the verse,**[6] **"Ephraim is attached to idols; let him be"** – that because peace and unity prevailed among Achab's soldiers, they returned from wars unscathed, even though they were idolaters. **Similarly,** it is said about the generation that built the Tower of Babel, **"Nothing they propose to do will be withheld from them."**[7] Why were they given such license? Because **they were** characterized by oneness, being **of "one language, with unified words."**[8]

Nevertheless, besides the fact **that such peace** – based on unity centering on undesirable matters – **will not endure, this is not the** proper **way to "compel" Divine munificence** to descend **from Above. This is especially** true **when what is sought is the Giving of the Torah and,** moreover, **that G-d** invest Himself in the Torah, as it were; this is alluded to by the first word of the Ten Commandments, *Anochi* (אנכי), which our Sages interpret as an acronym for the Aramaic words, **אנא נפשי כתבית יהבית,** meaning, **"I wrote down and gave over my soul."**[9] This wording clearly implies that G-d invests His **inner being** in the Torah, **not** merely the external, **encompassing** dimensions of His light.[10]

An internal relationship between the souls of the Jews and G-d **is possible only** because **their souls are rooted in G-d's Essence – as explained regarding the concept,**[11] **"With whom did He consult** regarding creation? **With the souls of the righteous." Accordingly, the unity** between the

וְאַף שֶׁעַל יְדֵי הַשָּׁלוֹם יְכוֹלִים לִפְעוֹל מַה שֶּׁרוֹצִים, וּכְמוֹ שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר חֲבוּר עֲצַבִּים אֶפְרָיִם הַנַּח לוֹ, וּכְדִבְרֵי רַזַ"ל[כא] עַל פָּסוּק זֶה, וּכְמוֹ שֶׁעַל יְדֵי שֶׁהָיָה - שָׂפָה אַחַת וּדְבָרִים אֲחָדִים, הֲרֵי - לֹא יִבָּצֵר מֵהֶם כֹּל אֲשֶׁר יָזְמוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת, הִנֵּה מִלְּבַד שֶׁאָז הַשָּׁלוֹם אֵין לוֹ קִיּוּם, הֲרֵי לֹא זוֹ הַדֶּרֶךְ לְהַכְרִיחַ, כִּבְיָכוֹל הַהַשְׁפָּעוֹת מִלְמַעְלָה, וּבִפְרָט כְּשֶׁהַמְּבֻקָּשׁ הוּא מַתַּן הַתּוֹרָה וְהַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא כִּבְיָכוֹל, אֲנָא נַפְשִׁי כְּתָבִית יְהָבִית[כב], פְּנִימִיּוּת וְלֹא מַקִּיף[כג], אֲשֶׁר זֶה אִי אֶפְשָׁר כִּי אִם עַל יְדֵי זֶה שֶׁהַנְּשָׁמוֹת מֻשְׁרָשׁוֹת בָּעַצְמוּת - וְכַמְבֹאָר בְּעִנְיַן בְּמִי נִמְלַךְ בְּנִשְׁמוֹתֵיהֶם שֶׁל צַדִּיקִים - הֲרֵי צָרִיךְ לִהְיוֹת הָאַחְדּוּת בְּעִנְיָן שֶׁל תּוֹרָה

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5. See ***Bereishis Rabbah* 38:6.**

6. *Hoshea* 4:17.

7. *Bereishis* 11:6. **See also the statements of the *Zohar* at the end of *Parshas Noach,* p.** 76b, which interpret the verse in this manner.

8. *Bereishis* 11:1.

9. ***Shabbos* 105a,** translated **according to the explanation in *Tanya,* ch. 47.**

10. **Regarding the statements in the main text, see *Tanya,* ch. 32; *Torah Or,* the end of *Parshas Noach; Toras Chayim* and *Likkutei Torah LiGimmel Parshiyos,* also at the end of *Parshas Noach; Or HaTorah, Bereishis,* Vol. 3, p. 667a, Vol. 6, p. 1065a ff.**

The two terms "inner being" and "encompassing dimensions" are being used as translation of the Hebrew terms *p'nimi* and *makkif. P'nimi* implies the involvement of a person's inner self, while *makkif* reflects an expression of a person's power that is not connected to his inner being, but rather something external.

Unity is a powerful catalyst, possessing the potential to elicit G-dly light. However, for the G-dly light that it elicits to be reflective of His inner being, that unity must be based on, and associated with, the Torah and its *mitzvos*.

11. *Bereishis Rabbah* 8:7, *Rus Rabbah* 2:3, using slightly different wording. The implication that G-d consulted with the souls of the Jewish people regarding creation implies that the Jewish souls exist on a level above creation, bonded with G-d's Essence.

Jews must be expressed through **the Torah and its *mitzvos*. This implies that one's** increased activity in ***ahavas Yisrael*** **(the love of his fellow Jews) should be expressed primarily in efforts to bring them closer to Torah.**

וּמִצְווֹת, הַיְנוּ שֶׁהַתְּנוּעָה שֶׁלּוֹ בְּאַהֲבַת יִשְׂרָאֵל תִּתְבַּטֵּא בְּיִחוּד בְּהִשְׁתַּדְּלוּתוֹ לְקָרְבָם לַתּוֹרָה.

Application, Not Theory

I am not just **speaking** in the abstract but **to bring about actual change:**

וְעַל שֶׁל פֹּעַל בָּאתִי:

The morning of the festival of Shavuos is the time when the Torah is being given for the entire year as a whole. This is in addition to the idea that the giving of the Torah takes place on each day individually, as reflected in the blessing cited before Torah study, praising G-d as ***Nosain HaTorah,*** **"the One who gives the Torah," using the present tense.**[12]

בְּהַיָּמִים אֲשֶׁר מֵעַתָּה וְעַד חַג הַשָּׁבוּעוֹת בַּבֹּקֶר - זְמַן מַתַּן תּוֹרָה דִכְלָלוּת הַשָּׁנָה (נוֹסָף עַל עִנְיַן מַתַּן הַתּוֹרָה שֶׁבְּכָל יוֹם בִּפְרָט, וְכִלְשׁוֹן הַבְּרָכָה[כד] נוֹתֵן הַתּוֹרָה - לְשׁוֹן הוֹוֶה) - וּבִפְרָט בִּזְמַן שֶׁמַּקְהִילִים קְהִלּוֹת - בִּימֵי הַשַּׁבָּת -

To prepare for this event, **in the days that remain from now until that time – particularly on *Shabbos,* a day when Jews are gathered as a community** for the purpose of Torah study[13] **– it is necessary to explain and clarify to every Jewish man and woman in one's sphere of influence that on these days in particular, it is** both **their obligation and their privilege to intensify their efforts in *ahavas Yisrael,*** **the love for one's fellow Jews. (This comes in addition to the obligation and privilege of practicing *ahavas Yisrael* each day, particularly,** as indicated by the **well-known directive of the Alter Rebbe in his *Siddur* – established for all and equally appropriate for every soul:**[14] **It is proper to say before the** Morning **Prayer, "I hereby undertake to fulfill the positive commandment, 'Love your fellow as yourself.'")**

צָרִיךְ לְהוֹדִיעַ לְבָאֵר וּלְהַסְבִּיר לָאִישׁ וְלָאִשָּׁה הַיִּשְׂרְאֵלִים שֶׁהַשְׁפָּעָתוֹ עֲלֵיהֶם, אֲשֶׁר בִּזְמַן זֶה בְּיִחוּד חוֹבָתָם וּזְכוּתָם לְהִשְׁתַּדֵּל בְּיֶתֶר שְׂאֵת וְיֶתֶר עֹז בְּהָעִנְיָן דְּאַהֲבַת יִשְׂרָאֵל (נוֹסָף עַל הַחִיּוּב וְהַזְּכוּת שֶׁבָּזֶה בְּכָל יוֹם בִּפְרָט. וְיָדוּעַ מַה שֶּׁכָּתַב רַבֵּנוּ[כה] בְּסִדּוּרוֹ, שֶׁתִּקְּנוֹ לַכֹּל, וְשָׁוֶה הוּא לְכָל נֶפֶשׁ: נָכוֹן לוֹמַר קוֹדֶם הַתְּפִלָּה הֲרֵינִי מְקַבֵּל עָלַי מִצְוַת עֲשֵׂה שֶׁל וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֲךָ כָּמוֹךָ).

At these gatherings, one should **explain how *ahavas Yisrael* is a preparation for the Giving of the Torah and receiving it.** Also, **the teaching of the Alter Rebbe** that[15] **"'Love your fellow as yourself'**[16] **is a medium [which**

לְהַסְבִּיר אֶת הַנַּ"ל אֵיךְ שֶׁאַהֲבַת יִשְׂרָאֵל הִיא הֲכָנָה לְמַתַּן תּוֹרָה וְקַבָּלָתָהּ.

וּלְהוֹדִיעַ וּלְהַסְבִּיר אֶת מַאֲמָרוֹ שֶׁל רַבֵּנוּ הַזָּקֵן "וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֲךָ

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12. *Likkutei Torah, Devarim,* p. 81c. See also p. 46b, in that source.

13. *Yalkut Shimoni,* the beginning of *Parshas Vayakhel,* quoted by the Alter Rebbe in his *Shulchan Aruch* 290:3.

14. See the wording in *Pri Eitz Chayim, Shaar Olam HaAsiyah,* ch. 1, and in the *Siddur* of the *Arizal.* *Pri Eitz Chayim* states that accepting this *mitzvah* upon oneself will enable a person's prayers to be combined with the prayers of the entire Jewish people and ascend upward, bringing about positive results.

15. Cited in *HaYom Yom,* entry 6 Tishrei. See also the entry for 12 Menachem Av in that source.

16. *Vayikra* 19:18.

makes it possible to fulfill the command,[17]**] 'Love G-d your L-rd,'" should be made known and explained.**

This teaching highlights that **the love of G-d, the love of the Torah, and the love of our fellow Jews are all one.**

It is also **necessary to publicize the interpretation by the Maggid of Mezritch**[18] of the teaching in *Pirkei Avos*,[19] **"'Know what is Above from you' – that we must know that everything that is Above** – in the lofty spiritual realms – **is from you,"** i.e., it is **dependent on** the actions of **each and every individual.** In a similar vein, **our Sages taught**[20] **that a person should see the world** as perfectly **balanced, so that through one action he can tip the scale either to the side of merit or** to the opposite side.[21] **Similarly, in the matter at hand, through one action, he can tip the balance and bring about the Giving of the Torah.**

This is particularly so when the **act is one of peace** and ***ahavas Yisrael*****, which the Baal Shem Tov established as one of the foundations of the teachings of Chassidism.**[22] **Through such** actions, **a person includes himself with others and transcends the** limitations of being merely a solitary **individual.**

This is a preparation for receiving the Torah, for "the entire Torah was given to bring about peace in the world"[23] **– in the macrocosm and in the microcosm, i.e.,** to bring peace within every **man** as an individual, and **to bring about peace between a created being and the Creator.**[24]

Everyone needs to speak about and publicize all of the above. In particular, this applies to **those who deliver public sermons and speeches during these days.**

כָּמוֹךָ הוּא כְּלִי לְוְאָהַבְתָּ אֵת הֲוָיָ' אֱלֹקֶיךָ" -

וְנִמְצְאוּ אַהֲבַת הַשֵּׁם אַהֲבַת הַתּוֹרָה וְאַהֲבַת יִשְׂרָאֵל - כּוּלָּא חַד.

צָרִיךְ לְפַרְסֵם מַאֲמַר הָרַב הַמַּגִּיד[כו] "דַּע מַה לְּמַעְלָה מִמָּךְ, פֵּרוּשׁ דַּע כָּל מַה שֶּׁלְּמַעְלָה הַכֹּל הוּא מִמָּךְ", בְּכָל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד תָּלוּי הַדָּבָר, וּכְמַאֲמַר רַזַ"ל[כז] אֲשֶׁר יִרְאֶה הָאָדָם אֶת הָעוֹלָם שָׁקוּל, וּבִפְעֻלָּה אַחַת שֶׁלּוֹ יָכוֹל לְהַכְרִיעוֹ אִם לְכַף זְכוּת אוֹ כו' - וְכֵן בְּנִדּוֹן דִּידַן, הִנֵּה בִּפְעֻלָּה אַחַת יָכוֹל לְהַכְרִיעַ וְלִפְעוֹל מַתַּן הַתּוֹרָה.

וּבִפְרָט בִּפְעֻלָּה שֶׁל שָׁלוֹם וְאַהֲבַת יִשְׂרָאֵל, אֲשֶׁר הַבַּעַל שֵׁם טוֹב קָבַע זֶה לְאֶחָד מִיסוֹדוֹת תּוֹרַת הַחֲסִידוּת[כח], שֶׁעַל יְדֵי זֶה כּוֹלְלָם הוּא עַצְמוֹ עִם הַזּוּלַת וְיוֹצֵא מִגֶּדֶר יָחִיד.

וְהוּא הֲכָנָה לְקַבָּלַת הַתּוֹרָה, שֶׁכָּל הַתּוֹרָה נִתְּנָה לַעֲשׂוֹת שָׁלוֹם בָּעוֹלָם[כט], בְּעוֹלָם גָּדוֹל וּבְעוֹלָם קָטָן - זֶה הָאָדָם, לַעֲשׂוֹת שָׁלוֹם בֵּין הַנִּבְרָא וְהַבּוֹרֵא[ל].

כָּל אֶחָד צָרִיךְ לְדַבֵּר וּלְפַרְסֵם אֶת כָּל הַנַּ"ל, וּבִפְרָט - אֵלּוּ הַדּוֹרְשִׁים וְנוֹאֲמִים בָּרַבִּים בְּמֶשֶׁךְ יָמִים הָאֵלּוּ.

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17. *Devarim* 6:5.

18. *Or Torah,* towards the end of the section on *Aggadas Chazal,* p. 112b, in the Kehos edition (p. 482 in the latest ed.). See also *Hayom Yom,* entry 13 Iyar.

19. Avos 2:1.

20. *Kiddushin* 40b; *Rambam, Hilchos Teshuvah* 3:4.

21. In his characteristic manner, in the original, the Rebbe avoided mentioning the negative possibility.

22. See *sichas Chai Elul,* 5701, and *sichas* 2 Adar, 5705.

23. *Rambam,* the conclusion of *Hilchos Chanukah.* See also *Sifri* on *Bamidbar* 6:26.

24. See *Sanhedrin* 99b; *Likkutei Torah,* the end of *Parshas Mattos.*

וְאָז יֵשׁ לִהְיוֹת בְּטוּחִים, אֲשֶׁר, בְּתוֹךְ כְּלַל יִשְׂרָאֵל, נִזְכֶּה כֻּלָּנוּ - כִּלְשׁוֹן בִּרְכַּת כְּבוֹד קְדֻשַּׁת מוֹרִי וְחָמִי אַדְמוּ"ר זצוקללה"ה נבג"מ זי"ע - לְקַבָּלַת הַתּוֹרָה בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבִפְנִימִיּוּת.

(קטע מקוצר משיחת שמבה"ח סיון, תשי"ג)

Then we can be certain that, among the Jewish people as a whole, all of us will merit – in the words of the blessing which my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, would give for the festival of Shavuos – **to receive the Torah with joy and in an internalized manner.**

יח*) יתרו יט, ב.

יט) זע רשב"ם שם: נגד ההר, הנזכר למעלה, תעבדון את האלקים על ההר הזה.

כ) זע שמות רבה פ"ב, ד. ופנ"א, ח – שמפרש כל השמות של ההר – בתורה ומצוות.

כא) בראשית רבה פל"ח, און זע אויך אין זהר סוף פרשת נח.

כב) שבת קה, א ועל פי מה שכתוב בתניא פרק מז.

כג) במה שכתוב לעיל יעויין תניא פרק לב. תורה אור סוף פרשת נח. תורת חיים ולקוטי תורה לג' פרשיות שם (אור התורה נח (כרך ג) תרסז, א. שם כרך ו, תתרסה, א ואילך).

כד) לקוטי תורה דברים פא, ג. אויך דארט מו, ב.

כה) ויעויין הלשון בפרי עץ חיים שער עולם העשיה פ"א. אין סידור האריז"ל.

כו) אור תורה – אויף אגדות חז"ל קרוב לסופו (בהוצאת קה"ת - קיב, ב).

כז) קדושין מ, ב. רמב"ם הלכות תשובה פרק ג הלכה ד.

כח) זע שיחת ח"י אלול תש"א, ושיחת ב' אדר תש"ה.

כט) רמב"ם סוף הלכות חנוכה. און זע אויך ספרי נשא ו, כו.

ל) זע סנהדרין צט, ב. לקוטי תורה סוף פרשת מטות.

BAMIDBAR IV | במדבר ד

Adapted from a *sichah* delivered on *Shabbos Mevorchim Sivan,* 5713 (1953)

Introduction

This was the early 1970s, when the *baal teshuvah* movement (secular Jews returning to their religious roots) was still in its infancy. The congregation was friendly, close-knit, welcoming to newcomers – but specifically to those who at least understood the unspoken expectation to fit in and accept community norms.

They appreciated their Rabbi. He had just come from 770, Lubavitch Headquarters; he was warm, energetic, inviting, with thought-provoking sermons. Yes, occasionally, he did radical things like bringing non-observant youth to services; still, they did not object. On the contrary, this added interest without disrupting the established patterns.

One Yom Kippur, he brought several of these young people to *shul*. Now, the opening of the ark for *Neilah*, the concluding service, represents one of the day's greatest honors, typically auctioned to the highest bidder. As usual, wealthy and prominent congregants prepared their bids mentally.

When the congregation president rose to begin the auction, the Rabbi interrupted, "This year, we're giving this honor to people who gave more than money. This is the first year these young men are fasting on Yom Kippur. The honor of opening the ark rightly belongs to them."

The congregation was stunned. These youths had been there briefly, had long hair, weren't dressed in suits – how could they merit such distinction? At the break-fast, the Rabbi explained, "When you purchase honors with money, you extend yourselves beyond the norm, but you're only giving money. These young men are giving of themselves, transforming their lives to embrace their Judaism. Don't they deserve recognition?"

This story illuminates a crucial distinction: There can be friendship and acceptance, even oneness – but often only within our familiar circles. True Jewish unity means looking beyond surface appearances – beyond someone's current level of observance, social status, or outward presentation – to recognize the Divine spark that exists within every Jewish soul, regardless of conduct or circumstance.

When we acknowledge that G-dly essence and reach out to help bring it to the surface, we create authentic unity rooted not in social compatibility but in the deepest level of Jewish identity. Calling forth this essential connection between Jewish souls then evokes the revelation of G-d's own Essence.

G-d, the Torah, and the Jewish People – Bonded Essence to Essence

What Was Necessary for the Torah to Be Given

1. To understand why ***ahavas Yisrael*****, the love of our fellow Jews, is a necessary prerequisite for receiving the Torah, another concept first needs to be clarified: Why was it necessary for all 600,000** Jews, representing the 600,000 Jewish root souls, **to be present at the Giving of the Torah?** There, they were all **alike, equal; without any distinction between one and another.**

א. דֶעם טַעַם, וָואס צוּ קַבָּלַת הַתּוֹרָה פָּאדֶערְט זִיךְ דִי הַקְדָּמָה פוּן אַהֲבַת יִשְׂרָאֵל, וֶועט מֶען פַארְשְׁטֵיין מִיט נָאךְ אַ דֶערְקְלֶערוּנְג, פַארְוָואס צוּ מַתַּן תּוֹרָה הָאט גֶעדַארְפְט זַיְין דֶער מִסְפָּר פוּן שִׁשִּׁים רִבּוֹא, אַלֶע גְלַיְיךְ, אָן אוּנְטֶערְשֵׁייד פוּן אֵיינֶעם מִיטְן צְוֵוייטְן.

This reflected an underlying truth: **The differences between one Jew and another exist only concerning their particular faculties. From the perspective of the essence of the soul, they are all the same.**

דִי פַארְשִׁידְנְקַיְיט פוּן אֵיין אִיד מִיט אַ צְוֵוייטְן, אִיז נָאר אִין כֹּחוֹת פְּרָטִים. מִצַּד עֶצֶם הַנְשָׁמָה זַיְינֶען אַלֶע גְלַיְיךְ.

At the time of the Giving of the Torah, G-d, as it were, connected His Essence – ***Anochi,*** **"I [am]"** G-d as He cannot be defined by any name or title – **with the essence of the Jews,** and with the essence of every individual Jew. Accordingly, **from the standpoint of the Jews' essence, their "souls are all [inherently] identical and have one Father."**[1] **Therefore, all 600,000 Jews were the same.**

דֶערְפַאר זַיְינֶען בְּשַׁעַת מַתַּן תּוֹרָה, וָואס דַאן הָאט דֶער אוֹיבֶּערְשְׁטֶער כִּבְיָכוֹל פַארְבּוּנְדְן זַיְין עַצְמוּת, אָנֹכִי, מִיטְן עֶצֶם פוּן אִידְן, אוּן מִצַּד הָעֶצֶם אִיז הַנְשָׁמוֹת מַתְאִימוֹת וְאָב אֶחָד לְכוּלָּנָה[לא], - דֶערְפַאר זַיְינֶען גֶעוֶוען אַלֶע שִׁשִּׁים רִבּוֹא אִידְן גְלַיְיךְ.

This concept also enables us to understand why the preparation for receiving the Torah is ***ahavas Yisrael*****. Through what means does one evoke the essence of the soul? Through** ***ahavas Yisrael*****, as will be explained further.**

לוֹיט דֶעם וֶועט מֶען אוֹיךְ פַארְשְׁטֵיין דֶעם טַעַם, וָואס דִי הֲכָנָה צוּ קַבָּלַת הַתּוֹרָה אִיז אַהֲבַת יִשְׂרָאֵל, ווַיְילֶע דוּרְךְ וָואס רוּפְט מֶען אַרוֹיס דִי עֶצֶם הַנְשָׁמָה - דוּרְךְ אַהֲבַת יִשְׂרָאֵל, ווִי וַוְיְיטֶער דֶערְקְלֶערְט.

G-d's *Tefillin*

2. My revered father-in-law, the Rebbe Rayatz,[2]

ב. כְּבוֹד קְדֻשַּׁת מוֹרִי וְחָמִי אַדְמוּ"ר

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1. ***Tanya*****, ch. 32.**

2. *Sefer HaSichos Kayitz 5700*, p. 133.

quoted a teaching of the Baal Shem Tov regarding the concept of *ahavas Yisrael* and its expression, **even toward simple people:**

"What is written in the *tefillin* of the Master of the Universe? 'Who is like Your people Israel, one nation on earth.'"[3] The Jewish people are G-d's *tefillin*. [The *mitzvah* of] *tefillin* includes [wrapping both] the arm-*tefillin* and the head-*tefillin*. Each action is a *mitzvah* and requires a blessing – whether one blessing or two, according to the different opinions.[4]

The arm-*tefillin* are put on before the head-*tefillin*. Similarly, concerning the *tefillin* of the Master of the Universe, the arm-*tefillin* – the masters of good deeds (simple people who fulfill *mitzvos*) – precede the head-*tefillin* – the masters of understanding (scholars and those knowledgeable in Torah).

This teaching has evoked *ahavas Yisrael* in many Jews; as a result, they showed such love **even toward simple people.** The reason is that this teaching has made clear that **the masters of good deeds are superior to the masters of understanding. As is explained in many sources, the simplicity of [G-d's] Essence is revealed in simple people.[5]**

הָאט אִיבֶּערְגֶעזָאגְט אַ תּוֹרָה פוּן בַּעַל שֵׁם טוֹב וֶועגְן דֶעם עִנְיָן פוּן אַהֲבַת יִשְׂרָאֵל אוֹיךְ צוּ אֲנָשִׁים פְּשׁוּטִים:

תְּפִלִּין דְּמָארֵי עָלְמָא מַאי כְּתִיב בְּהוּ, וּמִי כְּעַמְּךָ כְּיִשְׂרָאֵל גּוֹי אֶחָד בָּאָרֶץ[לב], אִידְן זַיְינֶען דֶעם אוֹיבֶּערשְׁטְנְס תְּפִלִּין. אִין תְּפִלִּין אִיז פַאראַן תְּפִלִּין שֶׁל יָד אוּן תְּפִילִּין שֶׁל רֹאשׁ. בֵּיידֶע זַיְינֶען אַ מִצְוָה אוּן מְחוּיָּב בִּבְרָכָה - צִי אֵיין בְּרָכָה צִי צְוֵויי, לוֹיט דִי פַאְרשִׁידֶענֶע דֵעוֹת - אוּן הֲנָחַת תְּפִילִּין שֶׁל יָד אִיז קוֹדֶם לַהֲנָחַת תְּפִילִּין שֶׁל רֹאשׁ. אַזוֹי אוֹיךְ אִין תְּפִילִּין דְּמָארֵי עָלְמָא, זַיְינֶען תְּפִילִּין שֶׁל יָד - מָארֵי עוּבְדִין טָבִין (אֲנָשִׁים פְּשׁוּטִים מְקַיְּמֵי מִצְוֹות) - קוֹדֶם צוּ תְּפִילִּין שֶׁל רֹאשׁ - מָארֵי הַשָּׂגָה (לוֹמְדִים וְיוֹדְעֵי תּוֹרָה).

דִי תּוֹרָה הָאט אַרוֹיסְגֶערוּפְן בַּיי אַ סַךְ אִידְן אַהֲבַת יִשְׂרָאֵל אוֹיךְ צוּ אֲנָשִׁים פְּשׁוּטִים, ווָארוּם מָארֵי עוּבְדִין טָבִין זַיְינֶען נָאךְ הֶעכֶער פוּן מָארֵי הַשָּׂגָה, ווִי עֶס ווֶערְט דֶערְקְלֶערְט אִין פִיל עֶרְטֶער, אַז אִין אֲנָשִׁים פְּשׁוּטִים ווֶערְט נִתְגַּלֶּה פְּשִׁיטוּת הָעַצְמוּת.

What the Heavenly Academy Taught

3. **The *tzadik* Rabbi Zusya related[6] to the Alter Rebbe what he had heard from his brother, the *tzadik* Rabbi Elimelech:**

The disciples of the Maggid of Mezritch would serve him in shifts. Once, during my shift –

ג. הָרַב הַצַּדִּיק ר' זוּסְיָא הָאט דֶערְצֵיילְט[לג] דֶעם אַלְטְן רֶבִּי'ן ווָאס עֶר הָאט גֶעהֶערְט פוּן זַיְין בְּרוּדֶער הָרַב הַצַּדִּיק ר' אֱלִימֶלֶךְ, אַז בַּיי דֶעם מַגִּיד זַיְינֶען גֶעווֶען מִשְׁמָרוֹת פוּן תַּלְמִידִים ווָאס הָאבְּן אִים מְשַׁמֵּשׁ גֶעווֶען. אַמָאל, אִין מַיְין מִשְׁמָרָה

3. ***Berachos* 6a,** citing *I Divrei HaYamim* 17:21.

4. Ashkenazic custom is to recite blessings for both the arm-*tefillin* and the head-*tefillin* (*Rama, Orach Chayim* 25:5). *Chabad* and Sephardic custom is to recite a blessing on the head-*tefillin* only when one makes an interruption after putting on the arm-*tefillin*, because the blessing recited over the arm *tefillin* also covers the head-*tefillin* (the *Shulchan Aruch* of Rav Yosef Caro 25:5, the Alter Rebbe's *Piskei HaSiddur*).

5. *Likkutei Dibbirim*, Vol. 3, p. 491b; *Sefer HaSichos 5706*, p. 136.

6. ***Sefer HaSichos Kayitz 5700*, p. 116.**

Rabbi Elimelech related – the Maggid called me and said, "Listen, Meilech, this is **what they are saying in the Heavenly Academy: '*Ahavas Yisrael* means to love a completely wicked person just as one loves a complete *tzadik*.'"**[7]

- דֶערְצֵיילְט ר׳ אֱלִימֶלֶךְ - הָאט מִיר גֶערוּפְן דֶער מַגִּיד אוּן גֶעזָאגְט: הֶערְסְט, מֶלֶךְ, וואָס מֶען זָאגְט אִין מְתִיבְתָּא דְרָקִיעַ, אַז אַהֲבַת יִשְׂרָאֵל אִיז, לִיבּ הָאבְּן אַ רָשָׁע גָּמוּר אַזוֹי ווִי אַ צַדִּיק גָּמוּר[לד].

This statement of the Maggid extends beyond the teaching of the Baal Shem Tov. The Baal Shem Tov spoke only about loving **simple people. The Maggid's** conception went even further – **that one must love even a completely wicked person and, moreover, that the love for a completely wicked person should be the same as for a complete *tzadik*.**

דֶער וואָרְט פוּן מַגִּיד אִיז אַן אוֹיפְּטוּ אוֹיף דֶעם וואָרְט פוּן בַּעַל שֵׁם טוֹב, דֶער בַּעַל שֵׁם טוֹב הָאט גֶערֶעדט נָאר ווֶעגְן אֲנָשִׁים פְּשׁוּטִים. דֶער מַגִּיד הָאט אוֹיפְגֶעטָאן, אַז מֶען דַארְף הָאלְט הָאבְּן אוֹיךְ אַ רָשָׁע גָּמוּר, אוּן נָאךְ מֶער, דִי אַהֲבָה צוּ אַ רָשָׁע גָּמוּר דַארְף זַיְין דִי זֶעלְבֶּע ווִי צוּ אַ צַדִּיק גָּמוּר.

"As Yourself" Actually Means "As Yourself"

4. The Alter Rebbe states that *ahavas Yisrael* extends to all Jews, **from the greatest to the smallest. It is an essential and intrinsic love, like the love that exists between actual brothers.**[8]

ד. דֶער אַלְטֶער רֶבִּי זָאגְט, אַז אַהֲבַת יִשְׂרָאֵל אִיז לְמִגָּדוֹל וְעַד קָטָן, אַן אַהֲבָה ווִי בַּיי אַחִים מַמָּשׁ, וואָס דָאס אִיז אַן אַהֲבָה עַצְמִית[לה]. אוּן דָאס מֵיינְט וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֲךָ כָּמוֹךָ - כָּמוֹךָ מַמָּשׁ. אַזוֹי ווִי כָּמוֹךָ, אַהֲבַת עַצְמוֹ, אִיז דָאךְ אַן אַהֲבָה עַצְמִית, נִיט מִצַּד חֶשְׁבּוֹנוֹת, וואָס דֶערְפַאר אִיז דָאךְ עַל כָּל פְּשָׁעִים תְּכַסֶּה אַהֲבָה, דָאס הֵייסְט אַז אֲפִילוּ בְּשַׁעַת עֶר אַלֵיין אַנֶערְקֶענְט אַז דָאס זַיְינֶען פְּשָׁעִים (וואָרוּם עֶס אִיז בְּאוֹפֶן כָּזֶה אַז אֲפִילוּ מִצַּד זַיְין אַהֲבָה קֶען עֶר זִיךְ נִיט נַארְן אוּן אַיְינְרֵיידְן אַז דָאס זַיְינֶען נִיט קֵיין פְּשָׁעִים), פוּנְדֶעסְטְוֶועגְן תְּכַסֶּה אַהֲבָה, ווַיְיל דִי אַהֲבָה דֶערְלַאנְגְט אִין אַזַא טִיפְן אָרְט אִין נֶפֶשׁ, וואָס דִי פְּשָׁעִים רִירְן נִיט אָן, אַזוֹי דַארְף זַיְין אוֹיךְ דִי אַהֲבָה לְרֵעֲךָ.

This is the meaning of the command,[9] **"Love your fellow as yourself."** The verse is to be interpreted **literally,** that you should actually love your fellow **as *yourself*.**[10] **A person's love for himself is an essential love, not based on calculations. As a result, "love covers all transgressions."**[11] **Even when a person recognizes that** he **has indeed** committed **transgressions** – transgressions so serious **that, regardless of his** self-**love, he cannot deceive himself and convince** himself **that these were not transgressions – nevertheless, "love [will] cover [them]";** he will continue loving himself regardless. **The reason is that** his self-**love reaches such a deep place in the soul that transgressions do not affect it. Such** deep and essential love **should be the love that one harbors for his fellow.**[12]

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7. Note *Tomer Devorah*, ch. 2.

8. See *Tanya*, ch. 32.

9. *Vayikra* 19:18.

10. The Rebbe is highlighting that the Alter Rebbe's understanding of the command to "love your fellow as yourself" differs from that of many Torah commentators (*Ramban, Panei'ach Raza, et al.*) who question, "How can one love another person as himself?" and interpret the command non-literally.

11. *Mishlei* 10:12.

12. See *Derech Mitzvosecha, mitzvas Ahavas Yisrael,* sec. 2.

True, as will be explained below, much **contemplation is required to bring this** degree of **love** into one's mind and actions. **Nevertheless, through contemplation, he can** call forth and express **an essential love that transcends intellect.**[13]

- בִּכְדֵי אַרוֹיסְצוּרוּפְן דִי אַהֲבָה, דַארְף מֶען טַאקֶע הָאבְּן הִתְבּוֹנְנוּת (כִּדְלְהַלָּן). אָבֶּער דוּרְךְ הִתְבּוֹנְנוּת, קוּמְט מֶען צוּ צוּ אַן אַהֲבָה עַצְמִית שֶׁלְּמַעְלָה מֵהַשֵּׂכֶל -

The Metaphysics of Jewish Unity

How can it be that the love for another should be an essential love, just like for oneself – after all, the other person is not oneself?

There are two explanations for this:

a) ***Ahavas Yisrael*****, the love of fellow Jews,** ***ahavas HaTorah,*** **the love of Torah, and** ***ahavas Hashem,*** **the love of G-d, are all one. For a Jew, the love of G-d is an essential love, for** it is written, **"You are children of the L-rd your G-d,"**[14] **and a son and his father are of one essence. Consequently,** ***ahavas Yisrael*****, which stems from love of G-d – loving what the Beloved loves**[15] **– is also an essential love.**[16]

b) On an even deeper level, all Jews are one entity. Their souls comprise **one essence that descends into each of the various parts.**[17] **Thus,** when one Jew is showing **love to another,** he is loving **himself.**

ווי אַזוֹי קֶען דָאס זַיין, אַז דִי אַהֲבָה צוּ אַ צְווייטְן זָאל זַיין אַן אַהֲבָה עַצְמִית ווי צוּ זִיךְ אַליין - יֶענֶער אִיז דָאךְ פָּארְט נִיט עֶר?

זַיינֶען אִין דֶעם פַּארַאן צְווֵיי הַסְבָּרוֹת:

א) אַהֲבַת יִשְׂרָאֵל, אַהֲבַת הַתּוֹרָה אוּן אַהֲבַת ה' זַיינֶען כּוּלָּא חַד. אַהֲבַת ה', בַּיי אִידְן, אִיז דָאךְ אַן אַהֲבָה עַצְמִית, ווָארוּם בָּנִים אַתֶּם לַה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם, אוּן אַ זוּן מִיט זַיין פָאטֶער זַיינֶען אֵיין עֶצֶם, בְּמֵילָא אִיז אוֹיךְ אַהֲבַת יִשְׂרָאֵל, ווָאס קוּמְט מִצַּד אַהֲבַת ה', אוֹהֵב מַה שֶׁהָאָהוּב אוֹהֵב, אַן אַהֲבָה עַצְמִית[טו].

ב) נָאךְ טִיפֶער: אַלֶע אִידְן זַיינֶען אֵיין זַאךְ. עֶס אִיז אֵיין עֶצֶם ווָאס קוּמְט אַרָאפּ אִין יֶעדְן פוּן דִי פַארְשִׁידֶענֶע חֲלָקִים[טז], אִיז דָאךְ דָאס נִיט קֵיין אַהֲבָה צוּ יֶענֶעם נָאר צוּ זִיךְ אַליין.

When All Distinctions Fall Away

5. It can possibly be said that the statement of the Alter Rebbe – that the love of one's fellow Jew resembles the love of brothers – **constitutes a** further **extension,** expanding the range of *ahavas*

ה. קֶען מֶען זָאגְן בְּדֶרֶךְ אֶפְשַׁר אַז אִין דֶעם ווָארְט פוּן אַלְטְן רֶבִּי'ן אִיז דָא אַן

13. The Rebbe's statements seem somewhat paradoxical: By definition, a feeling that arises out of contemplation is not essential to a person. It is not fundamental to who he is, but the result of his contemplation. Nevertheless, in this instance, there is no contradiction: The oneness of the Jewish people lies at the core of our souls. However, the core of our souls is often covered by various levels of consciousness, and we require contemplation to bring us into contact with that inner core.

14. *Devarim* 14:1.

15. *See Hayom Yom, entry 28 Nissan.*

16. ***Kobetz Michtavim al Devar Amiras Tehillim,*** **p. 192; the** ***Igros Kodesh*** **of the Rebbe Rayatz, Vol. 2, p. 524.**

17. See ***Likkutei Sichos,*** **Vol. 2, p. 435ff.**

Yisrael **beyond the teaching of the Maggid** – that **one should love a completely wicked person just as** one loves **a completely** ***tzadik*****.**

The Maggid's **teaching still operates on the basis of understanding and measurement. The proof is the very fact that** it acknowledges **distinctions between levels, and** that when speaking of **love, it notes that** there are differences between a wicked person and **a** ***tzadik*****.**

However, love that is "as yourself" has no measure or limits whatsoever. Loving another **the way a person loves himself points to a** love sourced in **his** very **essence,** and thus has no bounds. This love is unconditional, without being dependent upon any qualities or attributes. **Such is also the love between actual brothers.**

הוֹסָפָה אוֹיף דֶעם וָוארְט פוּן מַגִּיד. דֶער וָוארְט אַז מֶען דַארְף לִיבּ הָאבְּן אַ רָשָׁע גָּמוּר אַזוֹי וִוי אַ צַדִּיק גָּמוּר, אִיז נָאךְ אַלְץ מִצַּד פַארְשְׁטַאנְד אוּן אָפְּגֶעמָאסְטְנְקַיְיט.

אוּן דִי רַאְיָה אִיז פוּן דֶעם אַלֵיין וָואס מֶען גֵייט אַרַיְין אִין חִלּוּקֵי דַרְגּוֹת אוּן מֶען זָאגְט אַז מֶען דַארְף לִיבּ הָאבְּן אַזוֹי וִוי אַ צַדִּיק גָּמוּר.

אַהֲבַת כָּמוֹךְ אָבֶּער אִיז נִיט קֵיין אָפְּגֶעמָאסְטֶענֶע, דָאס הָאט עֶר לִיבּ זִיךְ אַלֵיין, זַיְין עֶצֶם. אוּן אַזוֹי אִיז אוֹיךְ דִי אַהֲבָה פוּן אַחִים מַמָּשׁ.

Essence to Essence

6. Based on the above, we can understand the connection between ***ahavas Yisrael*** **and the Giving of the Torah.** By demonstrating ***ahavas Yisrael*** **while** "**camp[ing] as one person**"[18] **without division, the Jews elicited** an expression of **the essence of the soul (since all Jews constitute one essence, as mentioned).** This, in turn, **elicited – and made it possible to receive – the Essence of G-d,** *Anochi* (אנכי), which our Sages interpret as an acronym for the Aramaic words, **אנא נפשי כתבית יהבית**, meaning, "**I** wrote down and gave over **My soul.**"[19] **Through the Torah,** G-d gave over His Essence **to the essence of Jews.**

ו. לוֹיט דֶעם אִיז פַארְשְׁטַאנְדִיק דִי שַׁיְיכוּת פוּן אַהֲבַת יִשְׂרָאֵל צוּ מַתַּן תּוֹרָה, וַוייל דוּרְךְ אַהֲבַת יִשְׂרָאֵל, וַיִּחַן כְּאִישׁ אֶחָד, אָן הִתְחַלְּקוּת, רוּפְט מֶען אַרוֹיס דִי עֶצֶם הַנְּשָׁמָה, (וָואס אַלֶע אִידְן זַיְינֶען אֵיין עֶצֶם כַּנַ"ל), אוּן דוּרְךְ דֶעם קֶען מֶען נֶעמֶען כִּבְיָכוֹל דֶעם אֲנָא נַפְשִׁי - עֶצֶם פוּן דֶעם אוֹיבֶּערְשְׁטְן, וָואס הָאט זִיךְ אָפְּגֶעגֶעבְּן - דוּרְךְ תּוֹרָה - צוּ דֶעם עֶצֶם פוּן אִידְן.

(משיחת חגה"ש, תשי"ג)

18. *Rashi, Shmos* 19:2.

19. *Shabbos* 105a, translated according to the explanation in *Likkutei Torah, Bamidbar,* p. 48d.

לא) תניא פרק לב.
לב) ברכות ו, א.
לג) ספר השיחות קיץ ת"ש ע' 116.
לד) להעיר מתומר דבורה פרק ב.
לה) זע תניא פרק לב.
לו) קובץ מכתבים ווען תהלים זאגן ע' 192. אגרות קודש שלו ח"ב ע' תקכד.
לז) ראה לקו"ש ח"ב ע' 435 ואילך.

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