

# מתוקים מדבש



*Dei'ah, Binah and Haskel on the weekly parashah*

RABBI MICHA BERGER

## Bemachashavah Techilah

Judaism sees man as a synthesis of two opposite concepts. On the one hand, man is a physical animal; on the other, he carries “the spark of the Divine.” As the Torah describes it: “Then G-d formed man, dust of the ground and breathed into his countenance the breath of life” (Be-reishis 2:7).

Each of his parts pulls man in its direction. The physical man shares many of the needs of creatures. He feels hunger and has sexual urges; he desires comfort and wants heat when he is cold. He longs to satisfy his nerve endings.

We should be clear that the physical is not inherently evil. Shabbos would not be complete without three meals. The Torah defines *Simchas Yom Tov*, the joy of the holiday, as eating – at the holiday meal and partaking of the Yom Tov sacrifices.

The spiritual man craves G-d and spirituality. He wants to be more than mere animal. Just as the physical man is not inherently evil, the spiritual man is not inherently good. Cult members, too, are striving to speak to G-d, to experience Him. As the Pesach *Haggadah* states, “In the beginning our ancestors were idol worshippers.” We take pride that they searched for G-d even though they reached the wrong conclusion.

While we are tempted to think of these two parts of our mind as complete opposites, they have one thing in common. They describe man as a

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creature, as a passive being pushed by the forces around it.

Every person is torn between these poles. We find ourselves pulled by the physical and spiritual parts of our minds. The fact that there is a “self,” the one feeling this pulling, gives us a third piece to the human puzzle. There is a part of man that must do the deciding, that is endowed with the G-d-given free will to choose his actions.

Since it is the “I” who is getting pulled by these two forces, the part involved with free-will must also be the seat of awareness. When we describe man as being “in the image of G-d”, we are describing this element of him: aware, a decider of his fate, a creator.

R' Samson Raphael Hirsch understands many aspects of the mitzvos to be *osos*, symbols that Hashem uses to convey certain

concepts and priorities to the core of each Jew. Rav Hirsch finds the role and function of each of these components of the human condition alluded to in the mitzvah of *tzitzis* in two different ways: in the color of the strings in the *tzitzis*, and in their number. Rav Hirsch writes:

*We find only three terms to encompass the colors of the spectrum: adom for red, yarok for yellow and green, and techeiles for blue and violet....*

*Red is the least refracted ray; it is the closest to the unbroken ray of light that is directly absorbed by matter. Red is light in its first fusion with the terrestrial element: adom, related to adamah [footstool, earth as man's footstool – M.B.]. Is this not again man, the image of G-d as reflected in physical, earthly matter: “vatechasreihu me'at me-Elokim” (Tehillim 8:6).*

*The next part of the spectrum is yellow-green: yarok.*

*Blue-violet is at the end of the spectrum: techeiles.*

*The spectrum visible to our eye ends with the violet ray, techeiles, but additional magnitudes of light radiate unseen beyond the visible spectrum. Likewise, the blue expanse of the sky forms the end of the earth that is visible to us. And so techeiles is simply the bridge that leads thinking man from the visible, physical sphere*

of the terrestrial world, into the unseen sphere of heaven beyond...

Techeiles is the basic color of the sanctuary and of the High Priest's vestments; the color blue-violet representing heaven and the things of heaven that were revealed to Israel... no other color was as appropriate as techeiles to signify G-d's special relationship with Israel. A thread of techeiles color on our garments conferred upon all of us the insignia of our high-priestly calling, proclaiming all of us: "Anshei kodesh tiyun li – And you shall be holy men to Me" (Shemos 19:6).

If we now turn our attention to the p'sil techeiles on our tzitzis, we will note that it was precisely this thread of techeiles color that formed the krichos [widings], the g'dil [chord], the thread wound around the other threads to make a cord. In other words, the vocation of the Jew, the Jewish awareness awakened by the Sanctuary, that power which is to prevail within us, must act to unite all our kindred forces within the bond of the Sanctuary of G-d's law.<sup>1</sup>

By wrapping a blue thread around the others we are demonstrating a fundamental principle. Physicality and mental exploration have great value, but only as tools. The end must be to strive to go beyond the spectrum, to reach to be closer to Hashem than we are today.

Elsewhere, R' Hirsch explains the concepts symbolized by the numbers 6, 7, and 8. Dr. Isaac Levy includes this explanation in his English translation of Hirsch's commentary to this week's parashah:

*The origin of this meaning is to be found in the work of the Creation. The visible material world created in six days received with the seventh day*

*a day of remembrance of, and bond with its invisible L-rd and Creator, and thereby its completed consummation. Similarly the symbolism of the number seven in the Menorah in the Temple, in the Mussaf offerings, in the sprinklings of the blood on Yom Kippur, in the Festivals of Pesach and Succos, in Shabbos, Shemitah, Tumah etc. etc. The*

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*symbolism of the number eight: starting afresh on a higher level, an octave higher. The eighth day for Milah, Shemini Atzeres and Israel as the eighth of G-d's Creations. With the creation of Israel G-d laid the groundwork for a fresh, higher mankind and a fresh higher world, for that shamayim chadashim and the eretz chadashah for which Israel and its mission is to be the beginning and instrument (Yishayahu 65:17).*

*So that there are three elements in us. (a) our material sensuous bodies, like the rest of the created visible world = 6; (b) the breath of free will, invisible, coming from the Invisible One = 7; (c) the calling of Jew, coming from the historical choice of Israel = 8.<sup>2</sup>*

This, too, parallels the understanding of man that we have outlined. The six is physical, the seven represents free will, and the eight is man's striving to be something more. Tzitzis, worn so that "you shall remember and do all My commandments", is explained in this light.

*These are the three elements out of which the tzitzis threads are woven. All these three elements are given to us, are woven into our being and are to be realized in completing our calling. But in these three energies two are to be the directing and ruling ones; the "six" in us is to subordinate itself to the seventh and eighth which are also given as part of us, and is to allow itself to be overcome, wound round, by the firm restraining bonds of duty.... Once the bodily sensuality has submitted itself to the bonds of duty through the Divine and Jewish elements, it becomes completely equal to its brother-energies, and like them, is to expand in free development within the limits of Jewish human duty.*

*The physical man finds expression, but only after he has been channeled and guided by G-d-like free-will and a drive to surpass nature. This is the essence of Hirsch's vision of Torah Im Derech Eretz – Torah with the way of the world. Man's goal is not to strive for spirituality to the exclusion of the physical, but rather to use the physical drives as tools for human growth.*

In Hirschian thought, the complete human masters the art of six and seven, the physical and the mental. Notice that Hirsch calls the seven divine, not the eight of the spiritual creature. It is the free-will that makes man like G-d, merely being a passive resident of heaven pales by comparison.

According to the Rambam, it is the *eighth* string which is the *techeiles*. In this way the *tzitzis* instructs each Jew that he has the tools to strive for something beyond mere human. He must take his physical resources and divine intellect and apply it to the spiritual realm.

<sup>2</sup> Commentary to Bamidbar 16:41

<sup>1</sup> Collected Writings, vol. III p. 126

## RABBI GIL STUDENT

## Bakeish Shalom

*[All of you together] in a hodgepodge (irbuvyva). But later, he [Moshe] said, "You approached me, all the leaders of your tribes and your elders, and you said, 'Look, etc.' " That approach was proper – the young people showed respect for the elders, letting them go ahead of them, and the elders showed respect for the leaders, letting them go ahead of them; but here you approached me, all of you, in a hodgepodge – the young pushing aside the elders, and the elders pushing aside the leaders.<sup>5</sup>*

A significant part of the sin of the spies was the attendant lack of faith in G-d. The people were so worried that they all ran to Moshe, pushing and shoving, ignoring proper protocol, generally panic-stricken. In a normal situation, when calmness reigns, youngsters allow elders to proceed first and the leaders go even before them. But when alarm overcomes people, as in the case of the spies, etiquette is ignored not long after rational thinking is set aside. This panic that led to the *irbuvyva* is a fundamental aspect of what went wrong in the episode of the spies.

Reb Ya'akov points out that this can be seen among the spies themselves as well. The Torah starts listing the spies by the age order of their tribe's namesake. First came Reuven, then Shimon, then Yehudah (Levi had no spy), and then Yissachar. Based on age order, Zevulun should have been listed after Yissachar but he is not. Why not? Reb Ya'akov suggests that, at this point, panic struck even

When the spies came before Moshe, all twelve of them princes of the various tribes – with the notable exception of the tribe of Levi that did not send a spy, Moshe singled out Hoshei'a bin Nun. Moshe changed his name to Yehoshua, thereby blessing that "May G-d save you from the counsel of the spies."<sup>1</sup> Why, of all the spies, did Moshe single out Yehoshua to give a blessing? Is it merely because Yehoshua was Moshe's protégé or is there another reason for this behavior? It would seem that Moshe should have blessed all of the spies, or at least the first one.

We have commented before on the messages that can be found in the order in which the Torah lists things.<sup>2</sup> There is always a reason to the order of a list and, frequently, the explanation can offer a significant lesson. When listing the spies whom Moshe sent to Israel, the Torah gives their names in a puzzling sequence (Bamidbar 13:4-15):

1. Reuven (Shamua ben Zakur)
2. Shimon (Shafat ben Chori)
3. Yehudah (Kalev ben Yefuneh)
4. Yissachar (Yigal ben Yosef)
5. Ephraim (Hoshei'a ben Nun)
6. Binyamin (Palti ben Rafu)
7. Zevulun (Gadiel ben Sodi)
8. Menashe (Gadi ben Susi)
9. Dan (Amiel ben Gadi)
10. Ashur (Sesur ben Michael)
11. Naphtali (Nachbi ben Vafsi)
12. Gad (Geuel ben Machi)

<sup>1</sup> Bamidbar 13:16 and in Rashi

<sup>2</sup> See Bakeish Shalom, Terumah 5764 <<http://www.aishdas.org/mesukim/5764/terumah.pdf>>

The Ramban, who is consistently attuned to the order of lists throughout his commentary on the Torah, notes the puzzling order of these spies. It does not list the tribes according to their place of encamp-

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ment in the desert, nor in the order of size, nor in the order of the birth of their namesake. Randomness in the order is not an option in the Torah. Therefore, the Ramban asks, what is the order of this list? The Ramban suggests that the order is that of the importance and respectability of the leader. Thus, Shamua ben Zakur was the most respected of the group while Geuel ben Machi was the least.<sup>3</sup>

R' Ya'akov Kamenetsky suggests another possible explanation.<sup>4</sup> In Devarim, when the story is retold of how the people came to Moshe to ask for spies, the Torah quotes Moshe as saying, "You approached me, all of you, and said, 'Let us send men ahead of us to spy out the land for us...'" (Devarim 1:22). This is in stark contrast to a later verse "You approached me – all the leaders of your tribes and your elders" (Devarim 5:19). In the latter case, first went the leaders of the tribes and then the elders. Presumably, after the elders came younger members. In the former case, everyone came together. As Rashi describes it:

<sup>3</sup> Ramban, Commentary to Bamidbar 13:4

<sup>4</sup> Emes LeYa'akov, Bamidbar 13:4

<sup>5</sup> Rashi, Devarim 5:22 (Metsudah translation)

the spies and they started rushing towards Moshe in an *irbuvya* as well. That is why the order breaks down and the rest of the spies are listed seemingly randomly. The randomness is not merely the Torah not desiring to take time to properly order the names. Rather, it is telling us about the mindset of the spies and, presumably, the influence that this had on the rest of the nation. If the most respected leaders of the tribes were panic-stricken and rushing towards Moshe, then this attitude certainly affected the people's mind-set and drove them to fear.

***Hashem will support the believer who stays steadfast in his belief during the days of kinos so that, in the future, he will merit basking in the days of tikun.***

This also explains why Moshe only blessed Yehoshua. The breakdown in the order of the spies, and thus their loss of control, came after the tribe of Yissachar. The next spy

listed was that of the tribe of Ephraim, Hoshei'a bin Nun. Evidently, in the madness he was pushed to the front and Moshe, after seeing the breakdown in

discipline, blessed the first spy to come to him.

Calmness is not just a virtue, it is a requirement. When one loses control and gives in to passion over protocol, one's judgement becomes clouded and one is liable to make grave mistakes. The terrible outcome of the episode of the spies can be traced back to the overwhelming of worry over composure. Had the spies only maintained their *menuchas hanefesh* then, perhaps, they would not have misjudged the situation in Israel and given the misguided advice that later led to such an unfortunate end.

**RABBI MICHA BERGER**

## Sefasai Tiftach

Rav Nachman of Breslov notes that when the Gemara cannot resolve a question and leaves the question until Eliyahu will come and answer it, the word the Gemara uses is "*teiku*". The word *teiku* is spelled like "*tikkun*", meaning "repair" or the striving for perfection, but lacks the final *nun* at the end of the word.

Ashrei<sup>1</sup> also lacks the letter *nun*. Each *pasuk* follows an alphabetic acrostic except for the omission of this one letter. David skips the *nun* because it brings to mind the notion of falling, as in the verse "*Naflah, lo sosif kum besulas Yisrael* – She is fallen, not to rise up anymore, the maiden of Israel." (Amos 5:2)<sup>2</sup> However, David consoles Israel in the next line "*Someich Hashem lechol hanofelim* – Hashem supports all of the fallen."

Rav Nachman continues explaining the word "*tikun*". It is composed of the same letters as the

word "*kinos*", lamentations, as in the mournful poems we say on Tish'ah beAv. In the future, when our *kinos* are repaired, Hashem will restore the spelling to *tikun* and complete all the "*teiku*"s.

Rav Nachman Burnstein, when teaching this lesson of Rav Nachman, asked what is the difference between the *nun* of "*tikun*" and the *nun* of "*kinos*"? In "*tikun*", the *nun* is at the end of the word, and is therefore written as a straight line. In "*kinos*" it appears in the middle of the word, and is written *kafuf*, bent. This is hinted at by the end of the *pasuk* "*Someich...*", "*vezokeif lechol hakefufim* – and He straightens those who are bent." The bent over *nun* of "*kinos*" is straightened into the *nun* of "*tikun*".

When my friend, Reb Moshe Schorr, generously shared all of the above, it brought to mind a Gemara that provides lessons hinted at by the letters of the *alef-beis*.<sup>3</sup> The two forms of the letter *nun* represent the

"*ne'eman kafuf* – the bent-over believer" and the "*ne'eman pashut* – the straight or simple believer." Rashi there writes that those who bend their wills to Hashem's in this world, will be straightened and stand tall in the messianic era.

In line with our thought, Hashem will support the believer who stays steadfast in his belief during the days of *kinos* so that, in the future, he will merit basking in the days of *tikun*.

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<sup>1</sup> Tehillim ch. 145

<sup>2</sup> Berachos 4b

<sup>3</sup> Shabbos 104a