

ספר מי השילווח - חלק ראשון - פרשת לך לך

Mei Hashiloach - Vol. I - Genesis - Bereishith - Lech L'cha

ON FINDING GOD

The first Torah of this Sidra takes the standard narrative of Abraham's journey to the Land of Canaan and turns it into a personal journey. How do we think about God, where do we begin our inquiry? Which areas of thought about God are likely to be fruitful and which are sterile?

Abram came to the realization that there is an invisible, unseen God. At first he thought it might be the Sun or Moon, or any of the many gods of the ancient world, but soon realized that they were symbols or projections of gods as human constructs, simply the dark side of human fear and superstition. Abram quickly moved beyond philosophical speculation about the nature of God. He said, "God, I know that You are, although I know not *what* You are. I know what You are not. God, I know You created all and are Master of All. Please, if there is anything at all I can do for You, let me know. I am ready to serve."

The Holy Yid of P'shischa once asked the rebbe Reb Bunim, "Which Torah verse describes the core of your soul-journey?"

Reb Bunim replied, 'Lift your eyes up on high and see who created all these, who brings forth their host by number, He calls them all by name; Because of the greatness of His might and the strength of His power, not one of them is missing.' (Isa. 40:26)

"That's not an appropriate verse for a Jew," retorted the Holy Yid. "Any heathen could live off a verse like that. An appropriate verse would be, 'I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the Land of Egypt, from the house of slavery.'" (Ex. 20:2)

As is the case with any quote by the rebbe Reb Bunim, his words are still being interpreted 200 years later; we are still trying to fathom the depths of his genius. What did those two rebbes mean? What's the real difference between the two verses? Why does the Holy Yid consider the verse from Isaiah insufficient or inappropriate?

On the face of it, their argument concerns the proper point of view from which to look at God. If I look outward at Creation, the Creator is pretty obviously here. But if I lift my eyes heavenward and find God, what should my next step be? How should I respond to discovering God when the discovery itself does not dictate a response?

The Holy Yid argued that only the verse, 'I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the Land of Egypt,' can move a person beyond mere knowledge, to a state of worship. Simply knowing that there is a Creator, because you're smart enough to perceive the truth of it, is not enough. Aristotle knew there is a Creator, but that did not make him want to worship. It didn't even make him a better person. It didn't tell Aristotle anything important about himself.

But knowing that God brought me, personally, out of slavery and delivered me into freedom: now that's a personal truth, a self-referencing piece of knowledge. If I know that, then I know everything I need to know about both God and me.

This Izbicy Torah explores the Holy Yid/Reb Bunim dispute from Abraham's point of view, considering that Abraham had never been a slave in, nor been rescued from exile in Egypt.

The Torah begins with an apparent non-sequitur - a quote from Isaiah, wherein God promises to pour blessings like water on the descendants of Jacob. This is because throughout the Torah of Izbicy water is a metaphor representing longing and desire.

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

God said to Abram, 'Go to yourself, from your land.'

As I pour water upon the thirsting and rain on dry land, so will I pour out my spirit upon your children and my blessing on your descendants. (Isa. 44:3)

ויאמר ה' אל אברם לך לך מארצך וכו'. כתיב [ישעיה מ"ד ג'] כי אצק מים על צמא ונוזלים על יבשה,

Abraham was the first to develop his thirst and longing for God to the utmost. As the Izbicy goes on to describe, Abraham, or Abram as he was then known, was love-sick for God. His desire for God gave him not a moment's rest, every waking moment was a search for the divine, and his life-long desire was to see the whole world filled with knowledge of God, from end to end. Which is to say, Abram's deepest longing was for God to reveal Himself to all mankind. "Only show Yourself to people," he would plead with God. "If You just revealed Yourself to the world, I know for sure that everyone would fall over themselves to worship you," Abram insisted.

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

Abram first began searching for the source of his life in the divine, after realizing that the constant struggle for the desires of this world can hardly be called 'real life'. Worldly desires are merely ways of avoiding obstacles and stress, but once someone overcomes obstacles and achieves a stress-free life, they face the existential question, 'What is my life about? If the world was created for the sake of human life, what is the *meaning* of my life?'

כאשר התחיל אאע"ה לבקש ולחפש אחר שורש החיים שלו אחרי הבינו אשר כל חמדת עוה"ז לא יתכנו להקראות בשם חיים אמיתיים כי כל חמדת עוה"ז הוא רק להסיר טרדות והמניעות ואחרי אשר יתבטלו כל הטרדות מה יהיה גוף החיים אשר עליו נבראת העולם,

In the Kabbalist Haggadah we discussed the following quote from the AA Big Book:

If men and women didn't exert themselves to be secure in their persons, made no effort to harvest food or construct shelter there would be no survival. If they didn't reproduce, the earth wouldn't be populated. If there were no social instinct, if men cared nothing for the society of one another, there would be no society.

So these desires – for sex relations, for material and emotional security and for companionship - are perfectly necessary and right, and surely God-given. Yet these instincts, so necessary for our existence, often far exceed their proper functions. Powerfully, blindly, many times subtly, they drive us, dominate us, and insist upon ruling our lives. Our desires for sex, for material and emotional security, and for an

important place in society often tyrannize us. When thus out of joint, man's natural desires cause him great trouble, practically all the trouble there is.

Abram could see all humans being driven by instinctual desires, just like every other creature on Earth. So longing and striving for things as a result of our basic instincts, cannot be the higher function of human desire. Desire of the higher kind must be for something other than comfort, sex and status. So Abram looked beyond his crude and coarse instincts, trying to identify something higher. He was convinced that the life humans share with beasts is not real 'life'. Both human and animal life is a function of the instincts that dictate behaviors. If human 'existence' is qualitatively different from animal life, then it should manifest in longing and aspirations other than animal instincts. Abram went looking for desire, because he wanted to understand his own life.

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

God said to him, "Go to yourself." You will not find 'real-life' out there, in the world at large. Life doesn't really exist outside of yourself. The meaning of life is in this verse: 'You, rejoice in God, take pride in the Holy One of Israel.' (Isa. 41:16)

ע"ז אמר לו הש"י לך לך היינו לעצמך כי באמת כל דברי עוה"ז לא יקראו בשם חיים ועיקר החיים תמצא בך, [ישעיה מ"א ט"ז] ואתה תגיל בה' בקדוש ישראל תתהלל, זאת הוא החיים.

The verse from Isaiah seems like a non-sequitur, until we realize that the Izbicy is referring to a Midrash in which God tells Abram that just because there is a lot of stuff in the world, it isn't all equally important and that most of it can be blown away.

"Grain, straw and chaff argued with one another. This one claimed, 'It was for *my* sake the field was sown with seed,' while the other claimed, 'No, it was for *my* sake that the field was planted.'

The wheat said, 'Just wait and see what happens when we get to the barn, we'll all find out why the field was sown.'

They arrived in the barn where the owner prepared for winnowing. The chaff disappeared in the wind. The grain was thrown to the ground and the straw was burned. The wheat was heaped into a pile, and people passing by stopped to kiss the grain. That's the meaning of the verse, 'Kiss and cleave unto the grain, lest He grow angry...' (Ps. 2:12)

So it is with the nations of the world. Each claims, 'I am most important, it was for my sake the world was created.'

Israel says, 'Just wait and see, the day will arrive when we will all know why and for whose sake the world was created.' This is the meaning of the verse, 'For a day comes, burning like a furnace.' (Mal. 3:19)

And it is about them that the prophet cried, 'Winnow them - let them be carried off in the wind. Have the gale disperse them, while **You, Israel, rejoice in God, take pride in the Holy One of Israel.**' (Isa. 41:16) (Genesis Rabbah 83:5)

The Izbicy adds the verse, 'You, rejoice in God, take pride in the Holy One of Israel,' on the end of God's instruction to Abram, indicating that the meaning of 'life' has to be winnowed out from the overwhelming mass of superfluous detail just as the wheat kernels were winnowed out from the harvest.

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

The Midrash discusses God's first encounter with Abram. R. Isaac gave this parable: A traveler was walking from from place to place when he saw a castle all ablaze. 'Should I assume this castle has no governor?' he wondered. The owner of the castle glanced upon him. 'I'm the owner of this castle,' he told him. So, because Abraham began wondering, 'Should I assume this world has no governor?' God glanced upon him and said, 'I'm the owner of this world.' (Genesis Rabbah 39:1)

אמר רבי יצחק משל לאחד שהיה עובר ממקום למקום וראה בירה אחת דולקת אמר תאמר
שהבירה זו בלא מנהיג הציץ עליו בעל הבירה אמר לו אני הוא בעל הבירה כך לפי שהיה
אבינו אברהם אומר תאמר שהעולם הזה בלא מנהיג הציץ עליו הקב"ה ואמר לו אני הוא
בעל העולם

The Izbicy explains the obvious grammatical error in the text, the awkward use of the phrase, 'The owner of the castle glanced upon him,' and 'God glanced upon him'. Surely 'glanced at him' would have been much less clumsy?

How can a castle burn down and no one notice it but the passing wayfarer? If no one notices the unfolding tragedy except for a complete outsider, that should alert the outsider that he is *privileged* to see what the locals are blind to, in which case he should not be asking, 'Should I assume this castle has no governor?' He should be asking, 'How come nobody but me is sufficiently aware to notice that the place is burning to the ground? Does that mean the governor is hiding the truth from everyone else and revealing it only to me?'

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

Why does the Midrash say that the owner of the castle glanced upon him, and not that he glanced at him?

The parable of the traveller noticing the burning castle is a metaphor for Abram observing the Tower of Babel tragedy as it unfolds. He sees mankind scattering and dispersing across the planet, and is extremely perplexed. Deep within himself he asks, 'Who created all this?'

The sentence, 'the owner of the castle glanced upon him,' needs to be understood this way: God glances 'upon' the question itself, not toward the questioner, Abram. God points out to Abram that his questions and doubts should alert him to something crucial. The fact that Abram, among all the

citizens of Earth, is the only person sufficiently troubled by events to ask himself these questions, should be enough to point him toward the answer.

That all other souls are oblivious to the radical changes happening to them, proves there is a God who fills all voids and surrounds all worlds: a God who awakens your heart to wonder about all this.

This is why the Midrash says the governor's glance fell 'upon' him. It wasn't a glance at him. God was saying, 'Look to yourself. Don't you see, your question is the answer?'

וע"ז נאמר במדרש מי הוא בעל הבירה, הציץ עליו בעל הבירה וכפי הנראה היה לו לכתוב הציץ אליו ולא עליו, אך בראות אברהם אבינו ע"ה את עסק דור הפלגה זאת יקרא בשם בירה דולקת כי היה בעיניו לפלא מאד והרעים בנפשו מי ברא אלה, הציץ עליו בעל הבירה היינו שהשיב לו הקב"ה הלא תראה בעצמך כי לכל העולם לא יקשה ואין אחד מהם שם על לב לאמר מי עשה זאת ואך בעיניך יפלא, ומהרעמות לבך ותוכל לשער אשר בוודאי נמצא בורא הסובל כל עלמין וממלא כל עלמין והוא העיר לבך ונפשך לזה, וזה לשון עליו היינו על קושייתו שזה בעצמו הוא תירץ מספיק לפניו.

The lesson we can all learn from this Torah is that the answers to our questions often contain their answers embedded within. When I find myself questioning my faith, I need to remind myself why the question is even surfacing. When I ask myself, 'Where is my God?' my very question is simply God in me reminding of His presence. Why isn't Ho Chi Minh the Chinese, or Yuri Andropov the Russian asking himself, 'Where is my God?' Why am *I* the one full of questions and doubts? Because God is prodding me to question myself; because I need to wake up to my beliefs and faith.

The previous quote from the Mei Hashiloach refers to a common theme in the Zohar: 'God supports all worlds and fills all worlds'. God is both transcendent and immanent. He is outside the world of our experience because no human thought can grasp God or even fully the idea of God. On the other hand God is immanent, everywhere and in everything. In telling Abram to go to himself, God is affirming the fact of His immanence, His presence inside Abram. As much as He transcends everything, surrounding and supporting everything in existence, God also *does* everything in existence.

The Izbicy Torah does not end here. Next comes a slight variation, another lesson we can learn from this narrative and the Midrashic parable. Abram only began to question, 'Should I assume this world has no governor?' after he noticed the changes occurring all around him; the place was burning down to the ground, so to speak.

God chides him for focusing on the extraordinary.

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

Similarly: The Midrash gives the parable: a traveler was walking from from place to place when he saw a castle all ablaze. 'Should I assume this castle has no governor?' he wondered. The owner of the castle glanced upon him. 'I'm the owner of this castle,' he told him. So, because Abraham

began wondering, 'Should I assume this world has no governor?' God glanced upon him and said, 'I'm the owner of this world.'

It was only after Abram observed the Flood, and the Dispersal [of Nations] following the building of the Tower of Babel that he struggled to make sense of it all. 'Who made all this happen?' he wondered. God's response to Abram was to warn him against thinking this way. Gentiles think that way, because they only see God's hand in the extraordinary, in supernatural events. When the world is humming along on its natural path, their hearts never prompt them to stop and ask, 'Who made all this happen?' They cannot admit that nothing in the universe is automatic, that every event is happening at God's command and God's hand governs everything all the time.

עוד במדרש ראה בירה דולקת התחיל לשאול תאמר שהבירה הזאת בלי מנהיג הציץ עליו בעל הבירה יכי'. הענין בזה כי כאשר התחיל אברהם אבינו להתבונן בהשינוים אשר חליפות עברו על העולם בדור המבול ובדור הפלגה אז בא להרעיש בלבו להבין מי ברא אלה, והשיבו הקב"ה לא כאלה חלק יעקב כי דרך אומות העולם כשרואין איזה שינוי בהנהגה אז יתחילו לשוב מדרכם וירצו להבין, אבל כשהעולם מתנהג על פי דרך הטבע אז אין מהם שם על לב להבין, כי זאת אינם מאמינים בהש"י אשר גם דרך הטבע היא בידו בכל רגע ובלעדו אין שום דבר שולט.

In the following sentences the Izbicy specifically references Jacob and Israel and not Abram, underlining the importance he attaches to the lessons for us in this Sidra. Abram may be the protagonist of the narrative in Genesis, but God's directions are not aimed solely at him. They apply just as aptly to us.

The next paragraph opens with a rephrasing of the verse in Jeremiah, 'Unlike these is Jacob's portion for He [God] is the creator of everything.' (Jer. 10:16)

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

Jacob's portion is unlike these, for He [God] is the creator of everything. This means that we, Jews, truly believe that if not for God carrying all of Creation all the time, it would not endure for a moment. That's why, when Abram was prompted to question his relationship to the Creator only after noticing the changes happening in the world around him, God said, 'Go to yourself' - to the portion of Jacob in you, to where you recognize God's divine providence in the most ordinary and natural event.

אבל חלק יעקב לא כאלה כי יוצר הכל הוא, היינו שישראל מאמינים שלולא שהש"י סובל העולם לא נתקיימה אף רגע, וזה כשרצה אאע"ה להשיג את בוראו עפ"י שינוי הטבע אמר לו הקב"ה לך לך היינו לחלק יעקב שתכיר אף בדרך הטבע את גדולת הש"י.

Now let us see how this Torah resolves the disagreement between the Holy Yid and the rebbe Reb Bunim. The Holy Yid had said a person's relationship with God must begin with personal revelation, as in the First Commandment. Reb Bunim said that his personal revelation was sparked by the verse, 'Lift your eyes up on high and see who created all these.' This verse is subtly referenced more than once in the Izbicy Torah we have just studied. If lifting ones eyes up on high to see who created all these is simply a philosophical inquiry into the existence of God, then the Holy Yid's argument is valid.

But if, as here, the 'lifting ones eyes ...' is the trigger to ask myself: Why am I suddenly moved to lift my eyes and ask, 'Who created all these?' then the lesson has been learned in full. My impulse to inquire into the existence of God, is God's first gift to me. It is the beginning of my exodus from Egypt, my personal revelation. So the Izbicy brings this Torah in defense of his rebbe's response to the Holy Yid, without actually referencing their dispute.

THE LAND THAT I WILL SHOW YOU

The second Torah deals with two issues. First is Abram's desire to find out who he is to God, the second concerns special properties of the Holy Land. As we read in the introduction to the previous Torah, Abram said, "God, I know You created all and are Master of All. Please, if there is anything I can do for You, let me know. I am ready to serve." Abram had come to the realization that there is an invisible, unseen God, who created everything and continues managing it all. In God's Creation, according to Abram, everything has to have a purpose - why else would it exist? What Abram could not discern for himself, was his own importance or function in the whole scheme, "How do I matter? What's my purpose? where am I connected within the scheme of Your plan, God?" he wondered.

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, from your birthplace and from your father's house, **to the land that I will show you.**

Abram's powerful desire was to know where his life intersected with the will of God, where would it lead?

God told him, 'To the land that I will show you,' which means Abram's soul is actually connected at a place called, 'I will show you', suggesting an infinite, constantly unfolding revelation. Abram's connection to God can only be understood in the context of Infinite Enlightenment - *Ohr-Ein-Sof*, which can only happen in the Land of Israel.

אל הארץ אשר אראך. כי אאע"ה היה גודל תשוקתו לידע מקום דבקות חיותו אצל הש"י, עד היכן מגיע, ואמר לו הש"י אל הארץ אשר אראך היינו דביקתך היה במקום הנקרא אשר אראך כי אין לו סוף בכל פעם יתרבה לך יותר ויותר הארות האין סוף ב"ה וזאת תמצא

The Izbicy says, when God uses the phrase ‘I will show you’, He is giving an open ended promise, meaning ‘I will keep on showing you more and more, forever.’

Abram is God’s first great lover, he is literally aflame with passion for God. The sheer intensity of Abram’s ardor and devotion was palpable. All he could think about was God, the unseen, God, the unknowable, God the beginning and end of All.

Abram desperately wanted to serve God in any capacity, but most of all, he wanted to spread knowledge and awareness of God throughout the world. Abram’s love was matched by the intensity of his longing and his fervent worship which never dimmed nor ebbed even into his old age. When we encounter him at the beginning of this week’s Sidra, Abram is already 75, an old man by modern measures of time, but as fresh, vigorous and active as someone a quarter his age. For him, love for God can only be expressed in desire. To avoid wasting his desire on ‘other gods’ Abram is super careful to question his feelings, to check his wishes, appetites and urges for foreign influence.

Although Abram was known as a charitable, compassionate and generous man, every time he did someone a favor he examined his own motives meticulously against a checklist of unwanted influences. If he found that his motive for doing someone a favor contained traces of pleasure or satisfaction he checked himself immediately. He mistrusted any kind of love or passion that was not directed solely towards God. As was discussed in the introduction to the previous Torah, Abram considered motives of pleasure, comfort or status to be nothing more than instincts; not spiritual, devotional or worshipful traits at all. As he matures, Abram’s love and longing only grow stronger. “Show me,” he begs God. “Only show me what You want of me.”

God’s response is measure for measure. As Abram’s love is boundless and growing, so God’s ‘showing’ is boundless and growing. This is what the Izbicy means when he chooses the phrase ‘I will show you’ to teach this lesson. Because Abram is completely without boundaries in respect to God, God promises to be completely without boundaries in return.

For Abram to contain the promised revelation, to be able to live in a state of constant enlightenment, he needs to be in the right place. There is only one place in the physical world where this sort of life is possible; the Land of Israel.

According to Izbicy, Israel is the place where even the most mundane act, such as a farmer picking stones up out of his field, is the spiritual equivalent of a Cohen - priest performing his solemn duty on the altar within the precincts of the Holy Temple. The Land of Israel is only partly in this world, it also shares space in the World to Come. Abram needed to make his home in Israel because here it is possible to experience infinity and boundlessness, and to receive the gift God wanted to give him.

The Third Torah

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

God said, “I am God who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldees to give you this land a possession.”

“O Lord, God,” replied Abraham, “How can I know that I will inherit it?”

After all the trials he'd been through before succeeding in bring the revelation of the divine, the *Shechinah* into this world, Abraham wanted to know that it would be forever fixed in his own heart. That the Shechina would dwell in him forever.

ויאמר במה אדע כי ארישנה. כי אברהם בקש מהש"י אחר כל הברורין שנתגלה שכינה על ידו בעולם אך במה אדע היינו שיקבע בלבי מבלי שום הפסק,

God said, "Bring me a prime heifer, a prime goat etc." What God was telling Abraham was that he would need the Book of Leviticus. Because it is only through acts of worship that the divine is fixed upon the heart forever. That fixing upon the heart is called inheritance.

וע"ז השיב לו קחה לי עגלה משולשת היינו לזה תצטרך לספר תורת כהנים היינו ע"י עבודה יקבע בלבך בכל פעם יותר עד שיהיה נקבע לעולם וזה יקרא לשון ירושה.

Abram built an altar there and called upon the Name of God.

Abram's first trial was the command to leave his birthplace and go to Canaan, which is to say, to endure poverty and constriction. Because it is in these areas that everyone must first go through a process of refinement; not to have complaints or resentments against God. Nevertheless a person should pray that God not test him with the sort of feeling of deprived penury that may lead a person to question God's mind. And the main cause of the feeling of deprivation is the inability to enjoy what one has and the desire for more. So a person needs to pray to God to be relieved of the desire for more.

ויבן שם אברם מזבח ויקרא בשם ה', נסיון הראשון של א"א הי' לך לך, היינו עניות וצימצם, כי בזה צריך האדם להתברר תחילה שלא יתרעם על הש"י ח"ו, אך שיבקש מהש"י שלא יבא ח"ו לדקדוקי עניות שמעבירין את האדם ע"ד קונו. ועיקר דיקדוקי עניות היינו מי שאינו שמח בחלקו ורוצה במותרות וע"ז צריך לבקש מהש"י שלא יתאוה למותרות.

As it is written of Jacob, (Genesis 25:27) And Jacob was a simple man. Meaning, he was whole in his soul without any desires for more than he had. He wanted only to receive with love what God had in store for him. This then was the prayer of Abram at his first trial when he asked to be happy with his lot without feelings of deprivation.

כמ"ש ביעקב [בראשית כ"ה כ"ז] ויעקב איש תם היינו שהי' שלם בנפשו מבלי שום תאוה למותרות רק כפי רצון הבורא ית' כן יקבל באהבה. וכן הי' תפלות אאע"ה בנסיון הראשון שיהי' שמח בחלקו ולא יהי' לו דקדוקי עניות,

This is the meaning if the phrase, And [he] called upon the Name of God. Meaning, he prayed that the poverty not cause him to abandon, God forbid, his Creator. And that's why upon his return from Egypt the verse tells us, And Abram was very heavy [with wealth]. Meaning, after he was completely and thoroughly tested with poverty in his first trial, the expression the Torah uses to describe his great wealth is, Heaviness. Because he feared for his soul from the wealth he now had. just as King Solomon prayed (Proverbs 30:8) Give me neither wealth nor poverty.

וזה פירוש ויקרא בשם ה' היינו שהעניות לא יעבירונו ח"ו ע"ד קונו, וע"כ כשחזר ממצרים נאמר ואברהם כבד מאד, היינו אחר שנתברר בעניות בכירר גמור בנסיון הראשון נאמר כבד מאד לשון כבידות שהי' ירא לנפשו מפני העשירות כתפלות שהע"ה [משלי ל' ח'] רש ועושר אל תתן לי,

Lot, on the other hand, is not described as being heavy with wealth. The text merely says, And also to Lot who traveled with Abram there was...

Now the Hebrew word *Haya* - Was is always a signifier of great joy, because there was nothing in wealth to be afraid of, for Lot. Which was not the case with Abram who was afraid of his wealth. That's why the text says, He went on his way, and Abram called there upon the Name of God. For here Abram was also afraid of wealth as above. And this he was assayed in all respects.

ובלוט לא נאמר לשון כבוד רק נאמר וגם ללוט ההולך את אברם הי' כו' ואין והי' אלא לשון שמחה כי לא הי' בו שום יראה כלל, משא"כ באברהם כתיב כבוד מפני היראה ע"כ כתיב וילך למסעיו ויקרא שם אברהם כו' כי גם עתה הי' מתירא מהעשירות כנ"ל וכן בירר בכל ענינים.

And Malki Zedek, King of Salem took out bread and wine, and he was priest of God the Most High.

It is written (Proverbs 8:15) With me kings reign. Now if the meaning were to be simply understood, then the order of the words might better have been, With me is the reign of kings. What this hints at however, is that God does not appoint someone king until they have achieved rulership over themselves. Such a person is appointed a king also over others. As the Mishna (Avoth 4:1) says, Who is mighty, he who vanquishes his will. This is the meaning of the verse, With me kings reign. That it is only someone who is already a king by nature over himself, whose mind governs his desires who is fit to rule others. For then he need not pay attention to the opposition he receives since his every *Kavana* - Intent is for the sake of heaven

ומלכי צדק מלך שלם הוציא לחם ויין והוא כהן כו'. כתיב [משלי ח' ט"ו] בי מלכים ימלוכו, והנה כפי הפשט הי' לכתוב בי ימלוכו מלכים, אך רמז בזה שאין הקב"ה ממנה למלך רק מי שיוכל למלוך תחילה על עצמו אותו ממנה גם על אחרים כענין שנאמר [אבות ד' א'] איזהו גבור הכובש את יצרו, וזהו בי מלכים ימלוכו היינו מי שמולך על עצמו ושכלו מושל על תאוותו אז ימלוכו היינו יהי' מלך על כל ואין צריך להשגיח על המתנגד לו, אחר שכל כוונתו לש"ש.

This is why the text says, And *Malki* (King of) *Zedek* (Righteousness), King of Salem, first he was a righteous king because he ruled over himself in his righteousness. And then he was king of Salem which is Jerusalem. This is why the month of Nisan is the benchmark for the reign of kings and not the month of Sivan, although Sivan might have been considered more appropriate as the Torah was given to Israel in that month. And it is with the Torah that the king reigns as the verse from Proverbs above stated, With me kings reign.

וזה שכתוב ומלכי צדק מלך שלם, היינו שהי' בתחלה מלך צדק שמלך על עצמו בצדקו ואח"כ מלך שלם הוא ירושלים, וזה הטעם שחודש ניסן הוא ר"ה למלכים, ומהראוי להיות בר"ח סיוון כי בו נתנה תורה לישראל שכתוב בה בי מלכים כו'

However, the verse says first, With me kings, and only then, do they reign, meaning that first they have to reign over themselves, and this happen in the month of Nisan when the Jew constricts himself, eating poor man's bread. He takes on himself the yoke of the Creator, to eat his daily bread of a dry and tasteless loaf rather than enjoy delicacies but have to suffer the yoke of a flesh and blood king. Because the truth is, in Egypt they had plenty of everything physical, as they complained (Exodus 16:3) ... in the Land of Egypt when we sat by the meat pots.

This is the meaning of the end of the phrase, They reign, i.e. reign overall, because Nisan is followed by the month of Sivan when the Torah was given.

אך לאשר שנאמר תחילה בי מלכים ואח"כ ימלוכו היינו שיהי' מלך ע"ע וזהו בחודש ניסן שישראל מצומצמין באכילת לחם עוני ומקבל עליו עול הבורא ית' ולאכול מדו פת יבש בלי טעם ולא מעדנים תחת עול בשר ודם כי באמת במצרים הי' להם רב טוב כמ"ש [שמות ט"ז ג] בשבתנו כ' עי"ז ימלוכו היינו על כל העולם וזהו בחודש סיון ע"י שנתנה בו תורה.

This is why the text here says, And Malki Zedek, King of Salem. And this is why he was called King of Salem, because he was actually Shem, son of Noah, and he was always concerned with the welfare of Jerusalem. Now, when he saw that his disciple Abraham went to the rescue of Lot, which was in his considered judgment an inexplicable act, he was taken aback. For in his opinion Lot should not have been rescued, for it was from him that Amon and Moab who are known (Sanhedrin 96b) as the "Evil Neighbors of Jerusalem". And also God hates them since he commanded us against allowing them to marry into the congregation. So how could Abraham have risked his life to save Lot?

וזה שנאמר כאן ומלכי צדק מלך שלם, וע"ז יקרא מלך שלם כי שם בן נח הי' דורש וחפץ מאד בטובת ירושלים, ולכן כאשר ראה שאברהם תלמידו הלך להציל את לוט אשר כפי משפט דעתו והבנתו לא נודע לו מה זאת, הלא אדרבה מהראוי הי' שלא לעזור כי יצמח מאתו עמוץ ומואב אשר המה שיכבי בישא דירושלים [סנהדרין צ"ו:] וגם ה' שונא אותם כי הזהיר עליהם שלא יבאו בקהל ואיך מסר אאע"ה את נפשו עליו להצילו.

It was only however because Malki Zedek knew his disciple Abraham so well, he was aware of his great saintliness and assumed therefore that no stumbling block could result from his actions, that he prayed to God to be have his eyes opened to be given to understand the reasons behind Abraham's actions.

אך לפי שידע את אברהם תלמידו והכיר אותו לצדיק גמור ומסתמא לא יאונה לו שום מכשול, התפלל להש"י שיאור עיניו בזה להודיע לו סיבת מעשה אאע"ה,

So, the verse says, **And he was Priest of God the Most High**, meaning that while he bringing Abraham the bread and wine he was acting as priest, serving and praying that God enlighten him, so that he be given to understand events properly, for they were obviously beyond his comprehension.

ולזאת נאמר והוא כהן לאל עליון היינו בשעת הוצאות הלחם והיין אז הי' כהן עובד להש"י ומתפלל אליו שיאיר עיניו למען ידע הדברים על מכונם אשר המה למעלה משכלו והשגתו,

Only then did God show him what was really happening; that God forbid, nothing Abraham did could ever be in done vain. For although it was true Lot, from whom Amon and Moab were to spring, about whom it is written (Lamentations 1:10) About whom You said, Let them not come into the congregation to you, nevertheless, that was only applicable to the men of Amon and Moab. The women were permitted to marry into the congregation immediately upon becoming Jewish. And, to the contrary, the royal line of David and Solomon which is the mainstay of *Malkhut* - Sovereignty, of Jerusalem and Israel, it all flows from them.

ואח"ז האיר הש"י את עיניו להראות לו כי ח"ו לא נעשה ע"י אאע"ה שום דבר לבטלה, כי אף אמנם שמלוט יצאו עמוץ ומואב שנאמר עליהם [איכה א' י'] לא יבואו כו'. רק זאת הוא הזכרים אבל נקבותיהם מותרות מיד, ואדרבה מזה נצמח מלכות בית דוד ושלמה אשר הם עיקר קיום מלכות א"י וירושלים,

That is why he exclaimed, 'Blessed is Abraham to God, the Most High. He put the blessing of Abraham first, for even Abraham had transcended himself with his action. And it was clear to Malki Zedek that God had stirred Abraham's heart, that he was divinely inspired into risking his life for Lot. And because it was only in the merit of Abraham that Malki Zedek was the recipient of this insight he named Abraham first in the blessing. And thus the priesthood was taken from Malki Zedek and was given to Abraham. (Nedarim 32b) He admitted that Abraham was the greater. As it is written (Psalms 110:4) God has sworn, and will not repent: 'you are a priest for ever, because I spoke to Malki Zedek.' meaning, I enlightened Malki Zedek's eyes so that he see that Abraham is the greater than him, and so Malki Zedek admitted of his own accord.

ולזאת אמר ברוך אברהם לאל עליון. והקדים ברכות אברהם, כי גם אברהם עשה פעולה למעלה מהשגתו רק הש"י העיר לבו לזה והוא מסר את נפשו, ולפי שע"י נודע לו זאת לפיכך הקדים ברכתו, ועי"ז נטלה ממנו הכהונה וניתנה לאברהם [נדרים ל"ב], כי הודה שאברהם גדול ממנו, וכמ"ש [תהילים ק"י ד'] אתה כהן לעולם על דברתי מלכי צדק, היינו שאני הארתי עיניו של מלכי צדק שיראה שאברהם גדול ממנו והודה מעצמו.

I have raised my hand to God, etc...

The reason Abraham did not want to profit from the King of Sodom, although we find that he took gifts from Pharaoh and Abimelech, was because his going was to save Lot, an act requiring clarification. Because Lot contained a potential good, as it was from him that Naama the Ammonite princess who married King Solomon, and Ruth the Moabite princess, great-grandmother of King David were descended. But as for the rest of him he was bad. And it was from him that the nations of Ammon and Moab were born, as has been explained. So Abraham felt the need to make sure, in himself, that he had no other intention at the deepest level, but to save the two good souls known as the two doves (*Bava Kama*, 38b).

הרימתי ידי אל ה' כו', הענין שלא רצה אברהם אע"ה להנות ממלך סדום אף שמצינו שקבל מפרעה ומאבימלך, יען כי הליכתו להציל את לוט הי' צריך בירור, כי בלוט הי' נמצא כח טוב לפי שנולדו ממנו נעמי העמונית ורות המואביה, והיתר היה רע, כי נולדו ממנו עמון ומואב כמו שנתבאר. והוצרך לברר א"ע שכל כוונתו לא היתה בעומק רק להציל השתי פרידות טובות. [בבא קמא לה:]

Everywhere that a person feels he needs to clarify his actions, as to whether his intention is pure, then the best advice for him is to make sure there is no bias on his part and to remove any possibility of his receiving benefit, profit or pleasure from the act. And then, for His part, God will ensure that even those parts of the act that were against the law will also be proved to have been good. For as we learn (Psalm 119: 126) "A time to do for God, they have overturned Your Torah."

ובכל מקום שהאדם צריך לבירורין אז העצה היעוצה לו לסלק ולהסיר תחילה את כל נגיעותיו להנאתו, ואז יברר הש"י שאף מה שעשה נגד המשפט גם זה היה טוב, כי עת לעשות לה' הפרו תורתך.

And this is hinted at in the Talmud (*Kettuboth* 66a), "a wife's findings belong to her husband". Wife is a metaphor suggesting the voice inside a person, counseling him to act, and urging him to listen, as was explained with Adam and Eve.

שנתבאר בפ' בראשית,

Adam said, "The woman You put with me, she gave me to eat." Really, the mistake Adam made that led to his sin grew out of this. God had said, "I will make him a helpmeet." When he was forbidden to eat from the Tree of Knowledge he grew very afraid. He assumed it was because of some profound spiritual flaw inherent in himself that he was forbidden, by God, from eating it. Once God created Eve, however, and she was given to Adam as a helpmeet, as guide for him to follow; (similar to Abraham who was told, "Everything Sarah tell you to do, listen to her.") thereupon Adams fears were stilled and his mind was at peace. That's why he responded to God saying, "The woman You put with me, she gave me to eat." He assumed he was permitted to eat as she instructed him.

[ד"ה ויאמר האדם האשה אשר נתת עמדי הוא נתנה לי וכו'. כי באמת טעות אדם הראשון בחטאו נצמח מזה, כי הש"י אמר אעשה לו עזר כנגדו ביען כי כאשר נאסר לאדם לאכול מעץ הדעת פחד מאד כי אמר בוודאי לא אסר לי הש"י רק מפני שיודע שיש בי חסרון, אך כאשר ברא לו הש"י את חוה וניתנה לו לעזר היינו שילך אחר דעתה, כמו שנאמר לאאע"ה כל אשר תאמר אליך שרה שמע בקולה ואז נתקרה דעתו, וזה שטען האדם, האשה אשר נתת עמדי, היינו שהיה מותר לאכול עפ"י דיבורה].

She was given him to assist him, for him to listen to her voice. And there, Adam did not sin by listening, but rather by absorbing the desire that was not of her counseling but which came from the seduction of the serpent. This, then, is the meaning "the findings of the wife belong to the husband", for in such circumstances where a man is acting against the law of the Torah, but because of the rule "a time to do for God", at such time it is forbidden for him to benefit or have pleasure. Why R. Akiba (ibid.) says "the woman can keep her findings for herself", meaning that it is even permissible to take benefit, profit and pleasure in these circumstances.

וזה נרמז בגמ' (כתובות ס"ו.) מציאת האשה לבעלה, כי אשה רומזת לעזר לאדם במקום שיצרך לשמוע לדבריה אז עת לעשות, כמו שנתבאר באדם וחווה, שניתנה לו לעזר לשמוע לדבריה ושם לא חטא, רק מה שהחשק לא היה מצדה רק מצד הסתת הנחש, וזה פירוש מציאת אשה לבעלה היינו במקום שהאדם מתנהג א"ע נגד משפט התורה ע"פי עת לעשות לה' אז אסור לו להנות, ור"ע אמר לעצמה היינו שמותר להנות גם במקום הזה,

Now, Abraham was unsure at the time he was acting about the exact nature of his own deepest intentions, therefore he did not want to benefit from the act. Similarly we find with King David, who went with Achish King of Gath, I Samuel, 30, "he refused to benefit from the spoils of war". Because in that case King David was also acting against the law, for although he was not going with the same intention as they were, his intention was to act on God's behalf, nonetheless it is written (Proverbs 1:15) "Do not walk on a path with them". Meaning, even though you are not going in the same direction as them, nevertheless you should still avoid them, so that they not make the mistake of thinking that you are going with them. That is why Amalek attacked King David immediately after that. Because Amalek is the true foe and enemy of the Jew, and the true foe and enemy always and immediately feels one's weakness and vulnerability, as is explained in Genesis when the serpent spoke to Eve.

ולפי שהיה נעלם מאברהם אע"ה בשעת מעשה עומק הכוונה לפיכך לא רצה להנות, וכן הוא הענין בדוד המלך ע"ה שהלך עם אכיש מלך גת, שלא רצה להנות מהשלל, כי גם זאת היה נגד המשפט כי אף שלא הלך בכוונתם כי כוונתו הי' לש"ש, אך נאמר אל תלך בדרך אתם היינו אף שאין אתה הולך עמם מ"מ תמנע מהם באופן שלא יוכלו לטעות עליך שאתה הולך אתם, ולכן בא עליו עמלק, כי עמלק הוא שונא ישראל בעומק, וכל שונא בעומק מרגיש תיכף בחסרון חבירו כמבואר בפ' בראשית,

This is the *Nukba* - feminine (negative) of the serpent. For in all things there exist the *Dachar* - Masculine (positive) and *Nukba* - feminine (negative). So long as a person remembers that his actions are not proper then although he is doing what is against the Will of God, nevertheless, since there remains in him a little *Da'at* - Knowledge, he does not commit the act with his entire will and desire. This is referred to as (*Zachar* - Masculine - Memory) *Dachar* - Masculine (positive) and leaves the path open to him to make an easy fixing.

If, however, a person loses sight of his free will, of his options and choices, that is referred to as *Nukba* - feminine (negative), and this can lead a person into wrongly thinking he is doing the right thing. What happens during the punishment is that the memory is opened up and the power and potential of (*Zachar* - Masculine - Memory) *Dachar* - Masculine (positive) is awakened. For so long as the power of *Nukba* - feminine (negative) prevails it is written (Proverbs 5:3) For the lips of heresy drip with honey and her palette is smoother than oil. But the punishment comes from the power and potential of *Zachar* - Masculine - Memory) *Dachar* - Masculine (positive), because cosmically the sin and the punishment are identical, they are on and the same thing, for the sin itself is the punishment, for when it overwhelms the person he disappears.

גליון מי השילוח בראשית: וזאת היתה נוקבא דנחש, כי בכל ענינים נמצא דכר ונוקבא, כי בעוד שהאדם זוכר שמעשיו לא יתוכנו אף שעושה שלא כפי רצון השי"ת, אכן מכל מקום לפי שעוד יש בו מעט דעת אינו עושה ברצון שלם, וזה נקרא דכר ומהמיקל לבוא לתיקון. אבל באם נסתר כח הבחירה נקרא נוקבא וזאת תוכל להטעות את האדם כי יוכל לדמות לו שהולך נכוחה, ובעת העונש חוזר ומתעורר כח הדכר כי בעוד הנוקבא שולטת עליו נאמר (משלי ה') כי נפת תטפנה שפתי זרה וחלק משמן חכה, והעונש חוזר ובא מכח הדכר, כי למעלה החטא והעונש אחד הם כי החטא עצמו הוא העונש בהתגברו על האדם יאפס.

And that's why King David didn't want to benefit from the spoils and rejected it. It was only later, when he was victorious in his war with Amalek, that it is written, (I Samuel, 30:19) "nothing was withheld". Because an act like this required divine assistance and protection. And so the text tells us that nothing was withheld, because it was a divine victory and the Amalekites could not accuse him of any wrongdoing. Because Amalek always accuses wherever the Jewish people err, as it is written (Numbers, 21:1),

"When the Canaanite king of Arad, who lived in the Negev heard that the Israelites had come by way of Atarim he attacked them and took some captives. The Israelites made a vow to God, and said, "If You give this nation into our hands we will declare their cities Charam - Taboo." God heard Israel's voice and he allowed them to defeat the Canaanites. They declared them and their cities Charam - Taboo, and the place is therefore named Charma - Taboo".

ולכן שלח את השלל ולא רצה להנות ממנו, וע"כ כאשר נצח מלחמות העמלקים נאמר ולא נעדר דבר כי דבר כזה צריך סיעתא דשמיא ושמירה, ולכן נאמר ולא נעדר כי הי' ישועות ה' בזה ולא יכלו העמלקים לקטרג עליו כי עמלק מקטרג בכל מקום שישראל טועין, כמ"ש וישמע הכנעני כי בא ישראל דרך האתרים,

Atarim means mistakes. Because it happened after the death of Aaron and the Children of Israel were traveling away from the Land of Israel and they had come by way of the *Atarim*, like

someone blundering on the road and coming upon a place they were not commanded to go by the word of God. Which is why immediately, Amalek came to make war. (Amalek in that instance was called the Canaanite - as Rashi explains, because they disguised themselves by speaking the Cannanite language). The truth is, that the Jewish hearts were always intent on doing the will of God, and therefore when they were victorious over them they swore an earth to destroy their cities. Because they did not want to have any benefit or pleasure, because it had happened that they had gone against the will of God. And they had only done so because they had judged it to be a time to do for God.

כי אתרים היינו טעות כי אז נצטוו בני ישראל שלא לילך עוד לא"י והם באו דרך האתרים, כאדם טועה בדרך עד אשר הלכו למקום שלא הורשו מפי הש"י, ולכן תיכף בא עמלק כי הכנענים האלו הי' עמלק כמו שפירש"י ז"ל, ובאמת הי' לבם לשמים ולכן כאשר נצחו אותם נדרו להחרים את עריהם, היינו שלא רצו להנות מפני שהי' נגד המשפט והי' נידון לעת לעשות:
