

Erev Shabbos Kodesh Parshas Ekev 5770

# D'ei Chochmah L'nafshechah

“Let your soul know wisdom”

Parshas Ekev

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

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**Shalosh Seudos<sup>1</sup> of Parshas Ekev 5769**

” וְהָיָה עִקֵב תִּשְׁמְעוּן אֶת הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים הָאֵלֶּה וְשָׁמַרְתֶּם וַעֲשִׂיתֶם, אֲתֶם וְשָׁמַר ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם לְךָ  
אֶת הַבְּרִית וְאֶת הַחֶסֶד אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לְאַבְרָהָם.”

“And it shall come to pass, because you heed these ordinances, and keep, and do them, that Hashem your G-d shall keep with you the covenant and the mercy which He swore to your fathers.”<sup>2</sup>

**Rashi explains:** “And it shall come to pass, because you heed’—If you heed the little *mitzvos* that people tend to trample on with their heels [עקב] and do them, Hashem your G-d will keep His blessing for you, and will love you and make you numerous [which is the continuation in the next verse].”

**Hashem’s Love for the Jewish People**

The Arizal taught: “And He will love you and bless you and make you numerous’—The sages said that everything that the Jewish people eat [enjoy] in this world is from the blessing of Bilaam the wicked. But the merits of the Jewish people are kept in reserve for them for the world to come. As the verse says, ‘And Hashem your G-d will keep...’ The sages learned this from our verse here, from a parallel use of terms—here the term, ‘He will love you’ is bound to the term, ‘He will bless you.’ The verse says of Bilaam, ‘And Hashem your G-d will overturn for you the curse to a blessing, for Hashem your G-d loves you.’ In no other place in the Torah do we find blessings juxtaposed with the expression of Hashem’s love other than in connection with Bilaam.

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

<sup>2</sup> *Devarim* 7:12

If so, the promise of Hashem to love and bless and make us numerous is the blessing of Bilaam.”<sup>3</sup>

In the section detailing Bilaam’s blessings the verse says, “A star has gone forth from Yaakov, and a tribe has arisen from Yisrael.”<sup>4</sup> The star coming forth from Yaakov refers to Moshiach.<sup>5</sup> The Messianic era is one that will be characterized by the total revelation of Hashem’s love for the Jewish people even to the lowest level of the world of *Asiyah*. This is why all of the blessings uttered by Bilaam refer to all of the blessings and abundance that reach the Jewish people in the world of *Asiyah* [which we call “this world”]. Its main revelation will be when Moshiach arrives.

### **Uplifting the Heels**

The verse’s promise of Hashem’s love is really that we will merit to experience the full revelation of Hashem’s presence in the lower worlds when Moshiach arrives. But it all depends on, “If you will heed these ordinances...”—if we heed the aspect of the עקב, the heels [which is the lowermost world of *Asiyah*], then we will merit the arrival of Moshiach and the full expression of Hashem’s love for us.

The main blessing is that Bilaam’s curse should be transformed into a benediction; that the physicality of the world of *Asiyah* should be transformed into a revelation of G-dliness. Even when a person is in a lowly place and the *yetzer hara* challenges him, G-d forbid, even so he must make efforts to bind himself to the light of Hashem’s presence. This is the mission of the Jewish people, to reveal G-dliness in the lower places. In the ultimate future, Hashem will transform the *yetzer hara* into the joyful pleasure of Torah study, as the *Zohar* teaches. This is really the main joyful pleasure of Torah—to reveal Hashem’s presence in the lower worlds, because this is what rectifies all evil and creates a platform for the good.

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<sup>3</sup> *Sha’ar Hapesukim, Parshas Ekev*

<sup>4</sup> *Bamidbar 24:17*

<sup>5</sup> *Devarim Rabbah 1:20*

### Running and Returning

The sages taught that the work of *ekev* is specifically among those *mitzvos* that people “trample with their heels.” It is well known that when a person focuses on Hashem’s presence and on *dveikus*, it comprises two levels: that of running and that of returning. The *Tikkunei Zohar* teaches that “running” is associated with the angel Nuriel and “returning” is associated with the angel *MaTaT*.<sup>6</sup> When a person is in the “running” state he is filled with the fire of *dveikus*, which is like the “light-filled” angel Nuriel. And when a person’s heart is not aroused to such an extent, he is in the “returning” state associated with *MaTaT*. This cycle of enthusiasm and fervor that oscillates with a cooling-down where the light is in eclipse also applies to every other area of *avodas Hashem*, to prayer and Torah study.

How then is one to continue with his *avodah* when he doesn’t feel inspired? He must be steadfast and refuse to let up, and he must continue to search for and remember Hashem and attach himself to the Divine Names. This is the ultimate purpose of his existence: to bind himself to Hashem’s unity. It is irrelevant whether he is in the state of feeling inspired or at a simpler level where he struggles just to keep his practice going. In the “returning” phase, one really needs an extra measure of holy obstinacy. This is the way of *tzaddikim* who expend great efforts at their level—it is the meaning of *Raavah D’raavin*, the “will of wills” or the “forehead of wills” where one solidifies his innermost will to join with Hashem’s light. When he fortifies his will he draws strength to continue to contemplate the Divine Names and consider *dveikus*. The *tzaddikim* do this, and when one feels uninspired he must bind himself to them, because they have a powerful and pure will to serve Hashem. When a person does this, he also experiences a revelation of his innermost will, which is of course to also always seek *dveikus* with Hashem. Even at the level of the “heels” there is also a thirst for holiness. “Not a hunger for bread and not a thirst for water, rather to hear the words of Hashem.”<sup>7</sup> This thirst has to overwhelm him so that he is filled with longing to be obstinate in his search for

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<sup>6</sup> *Tikkunei Zohar* 109

<sup>7</sup> *Amos* 8:11

*dveikus* with Hashem even when he is in a state of *katnus*. The main way for him to stay focused and steadfast is by remembering that within the “forehead of will” is hidden *Yesod* of *Atik*, which is the level of experiencing deep pleasure with Hashem. This is the inspiration of all of creation and “fired Hashem’s will,” the “will of wills”—the pleasure of *dveikus*.

### **Building Yerushalayim in Fire**

Within each and every Jew resides the knowledge that the main way to build the *Beis Hamikdash* is through the fire of the heart’s longing and effort to serve Hashem. “In fire, You will build it in the future.” This is the fire of *Binah*, “And the house of Yaakov will be a fire and the house of Yosef a flame...”—one must be filled with the fire of holy determination to bind himself to the “forehead of the will” and the light of *Yesod d’Atik* that is encloded there and feel its delight. [*Yesod* is the aspect of Yosef.] Then Hashem’s light shines from above to below—above and below are bound together when one longs upward from the low place, and so the light flows down to the level of the “heels” and *Netzach-Hod-Yesod*.

The destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash* within the world of *Malchus* was due to the obscuring of the light of *Netzach-Hod-Yesod*, and so its rebuilding in fire is accomplished through fierce determination to hold strong in *avodah* and contemplation of the Divine Names even when in the state of “returning” which is the level of the heels and *MaTaT*. When a person holds fast in this way, he experiences a revelation of the light embodied by the final ם״ט of the name ם״ט״ט. The first *tet* is the “straight” light that descends, and the second is the “returning” light that rebounds back above to the highest places. The two letters *tet* have a combined numerical value of eighteen, which is that of ם״ח or life. This is the source of spiritual vitality that a person enjoys when he reaches the light of *Yesod*.

### Moshiach ben Yosef and Moshiach ben Dovid

When one has followed this two-fold path of *avodah*, he can merit to rise to the place of *Da'as d'Atik* within the “airspace” [of the skull]—this airspace is associated with Dovid HaMelech, and the *Da'as* within it is expressed by the extra *yud* within Dovid's name when it is written out in full: דויד. This is the “spirit of G-d that hovered over the face of the abyss” [which the Targum renders as the “spirit of Moshiach” that is in the “air”]. The *Da'as d'Atik* is where the innermost nature of the soul resides.

Just as a tree's ability to achieve height in its grown is contingent on the development of its trunk at the base, so too does one's ability to reach such lofty levels depend on the degree of effort he expends to work through the lower state of *katnus*, at the level of the heels and the ground. By building a proper foundation at the lower level, he will ultimately be able to reach up to his sources in the uppermost worlds. When the light of *Yesod d'Atik* and subsequently *Da'as d'Atik* descends to the lowest places of *Netzach-Hod-Yesod*, it unites the two redeemers—Moshiach ben Yosef associated with *Yesod*, and Moshiach ben Dovid associated with *Da'as* within the “airspace” which sines into *Binah*. When they are joined, this is the level of “דויד מלך ישראל חי וקים” —the *yud* within the name Dovid stands for Yosef.

### The End of Days

The *Emek HaMelech* explained that all of the necessary *tikkunim* prior to the redemption should have been completed in the year 5335, but we were not worthy of it. Instead, the Arizal did not complete all of the revelations that he needed to reveal and left this world before the time was ripe, in 5333.<sup>8</sup> Yet to the extent that the area of the heels and the spiritual thirst is repaired, to that extent does one merit a revelation of the end of days. The term קץ הימין is found in the book of *Daniel*, where all of the mysteries of the redemption are hidden.

Similarly, the name Daniel also alludes to this *tikkun*: it comprises the letters א"ל אדנ"י, and refers to the revelation of Hashem's presence throughout all of the world

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<sup>8</sup> *Emek HaMelech* 5:55

of *Asiyah*, and the ultimate rectification when all of the “lower” worlds will be shown to be bound up together with the lower part of *Arich Anpin*. In Daniel’s vision, he saw the four kingdoms that would rule over the Jewish people in the form of four beasts that spell out the Name *ADNI*: אריה, דב, נמר, י קרניים—the lion, the bear, the leopard, and the beast with ten horns which represents the final exile.

**“After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and exceedingly strong; and it had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces, and stamped the residue with its feet; and it was different from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots; and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things.”<sup>9</sup>**

The commentators explained that this final beast symbolizes the final exile of Edom. The deeper works, among them the *Pirkei D’Rabbi Eliezer*, explain that at the end of the exile of Edom there will be a secondary exile of Yishmael, which is represented in Daniel’s vision by the little horn with the mouth that speaks “great things.” This is Yishmael—the little horn whose mouth is filled with chutzpah that arises at the end of the exile of Edom. The main protection that the Jewish people require at the end of the exile is from this very *klippah*, because of the ten horns of Esav, the most dangerous one is the little one at the end.

Afterward, Daniel had a vision of the “Ancient of days”: I beheld till thrones were placed, and one that was ancient of days did sit: his raiment was as white snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, and its wheels were burning fire.”<sup>10</sup> This means that Daniel saw that through the light of *Atik* [the Ancient One], it is possible to subdue this final *klippah* of Yishmael.

When the Baal Shem Tov wanted to travel to Eretz Yisrael, he had a vision of the Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh who told him that if he would merit to see his feet during

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<sup>9</sup> *Daniel* 7:7-8

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 7:9



one of his trance-visions, it would mean that he would manage to reach the land. But if not, he would not succeed. Afterward, the entire story of the Baal Shem Tov's aborted journey to Eretz Yisrael took place, where he fell from all of his spiritual levels [and forgot all his Torah temporarily] until Achiya HaShiloni appeared to him and revealed the Names *EHYH-ADNI* to him.

The deeper meaning of this is as follows: When the *tzaddik* merits to contemplate the Divine Names at the lofty level of *CHaBaD* and *CHaGaT*, he is in the holy fire-aspect of Nuriel. Yet the main means through which he reaches Eretz Yisrael is by seeing the Names when he is in the "return" state of *MaTaT*—if he holds on to his determination to achieve *dveikus* even when in a decline in the depths of *Asiyah* and the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash* and the loss of his *mochin*. If he holds strong even then, it is considered as though he has perfected the level of the "feet of the *tzaddikim*"—עקב תשמעון—

### The Highest Joy

“And it will be’ [והיה]—this indicates joy.”<sup>11</sup> [The word והיה is a permutation of the *Shem HaVaYaH*.] This is the Creator's main joy—when illumination from above can penetrate to the levels all the way down below. And it is all possible through the power of *Atik*—the highest place that can rectify the lowermost extremes of the world of *Asiyah*. The “Ancient of Days” can subdue the 120 permutations of the Name אלקים of the world of *Asiyah* and all their *dinim*, as long as one continues to hold strong to *dveikus* when inspiration wanes. This is the inner meaning of *Kesser Malchus*—the highest level of *Kesser* can be bound together with the lowest level of *Malchus*.

This is the power that subdues the *klippah* of Yishmael, which is also at the lowest level, as we see from the figure of Nevuchadnezzar's dream that Daniel interpreted. When one is determined in his *avodah* no matter what, he is connected with the *Da'as d'Atik* associated with Moshiach ben Dovid: “I saw in the night visions, and,

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<sup>11</sup> *Vayikra Rabbah* 11:7

behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came even to the Ancient of days, and he was brought near before Him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.”<sup>12</sup>

### **Fighting Esav and Yishmael**

Just as Esav is rooted in the *klippah* that accosts *Binah*, Yishmael is rooted in the *klippah* that accosts *Chochmah*. [Esav is the child of Yitzchak-*gevuros*; Yishmael is the child of Avraham-*chassadim*.] They must each be neutralized by the source of their own power—to subdue Esav one must attain holy *Binah* which is the light of the “forehead of the will,” while to subdue Yishmael one requires the light of *Yesod d’Atik* and its steadfast determination to see the light penetrate all the way down to the “heels.” This is what the Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh meant to reveal to the Baal Shem Tov—that the main thing is to see the feet, to see the Divine Names even at the level of *Netzach-Hod-Yesod* and *katnus*. Through both efforts, one rises to the level of *Da’as d’Atik*, where Dovid and Yosef are bound together.

In these latter days that are so close to the end, the Jewish people feel a powerful arousal and thirst for holiness. But they also feel just as powerful a pull toward the pleasures of this world, G-d forbid. To rectify the situation, the *tzaddikim* focus their desires and wills entirely on holiness, and this has a positive effect on everyone else. The light of their *emunah* is revealed to be firm as a rock, like the precious stone that Avraham Avinu wore upon himself that had the power to heal just by being looked upon by the sick.<sup>13</sup> This was the daughter of Avraham Avinu called *Bakol* [because *emunah* contains everything], and the “stone that the builders reviled that became the foundation stone.” This is *Malchus* that is secreted within *Reisha D’lo Isyada’ah*, which is the deep pleasure and delight in simple *emunah* itself for which every soul thirsts.

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<sup>12</sup> *Daniel* 7:13-14

<sup>13</sup> *Yalkut Shimoni, Malachi* 3:193

May Hashem have pity on His people so that we will have the power to hold strong in our *avodah*—not just to achieve *hasmadah* in Torah and prayer, but to really build the *Beis HaMikdash* with the fiery yearnings of the heart. And may He help us to achieve this not only when we feel inspired, but also when we feel hardly anything and are just going through the motions “on the ground.” This is what will reveal Hashem’s Kingship throughout all the worlds, with the arrival of our righteous redeemer in mercy.

### “Let Your Soul Know Wisdom”

All that we have learned is alluded to in the verse: דעה חכמה לנפשך והיא כתר לראשך—“Let your soul (*nefesh*) know (*d’ei*) wisdom (*Chochmah*), and it will be a crown (*Kesser*) for your head.”<sup>14</sup> The *nefesh* is the will, and the soul’s main desire is to bind to the Divine wisdom. “Let your soul know wisdom”—allow your *nefesh* to fulfill its desire by focusing your mind on the Divine Names, whether you are in the state of running or returning. Then it will be “a crown to your head.” You will rise to the heights of *Kesser*, where the name Dovid is written out with its *yud*—where the *Da’as d’Atik* has the power to subdue all of the ten horns of the final exile, along with the small horn of Yishmael. You will taste of the *Malchus* at the level of the “Crown of Kingship,” where the highest spiritual delight is experienced in pure and simple *emunah*.

Rebbe Nachman expressed this highest level by saying, “My not knowing is higher than my knowing.” Knowing is the level of *Da’as d’Atik*, but “not knowing” is *Malchus* and pure faith at the higher level of, “the head that is not known.”

“Guard your holy *mitzvos*; guard your holy Shabbos.” If you avoid the pitfall of Bilaam which is impurity and “guard the *mitzvah* of holiness,” you will experience the *dveikus* and light that is embodied by the holiness of Shabbos.

May Hashem have mercy on us not to spend our time taking vacations in places that degrade our holiness and not to relax our standards of purity at all, because everyone will be examined at the end of days particularly regarding how he safeguarded

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

his personal *kedushah*. The main thing is purity, and nothing else—no matter how great—can replace it. No genuine spiritual advancement is possible without it. We must be all the more vigilant during the summer break when people tend to travel to all sorts of places and there are so many challenges to assume even firmer boundaries and safeguards. Even though the Baal Shem Tov discouraged the adoption of extra stringencies, nevertheless when it comes to modesty this is the only way and this is our tradition.

In the merit of guarding our sanctity, may we come to see the light of the Torah of *Atikah Sesima'ah*, with the immediate arrival of our righteous redeemer in mercy. Amen.

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