

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 204

Pekudei | A Dwelling for G-d in Our Humble Abode



MESILOT

Pathways to the Soul

Illuminating teachings and insights on the weekly Parsha
of **Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel Zt"l**

From the weekly lessons of his son
Rabbi Yisrael Abargel Shlita

פרשת פקודי | אנגלית

...PATHWAYS TO THE SOUL...

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Parshat Pekudei

The Pure Unbridled Joy of Shabbat

Rabbi Mordechai Gerlitz related the following story:¹ On one Friday night, as the holy Baal Shem Tov was conducting his Shabbat meal surrounded by his disciples and chassidim, suddenly, in an unusual manner, he smiled to himself — a broad, meaningful smile that drew the attention of all those present.

None of the onlookers had noticed any reason that might have caused the mysterious and cryptic smile, and after some time, the Baal Shem Tov smiled once again, and before concluding his Shabbat meal, he smiled yet a third time.

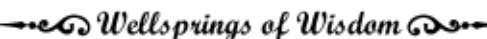
Throughout that Shabbat, the disciples discussed and deliberated among themselves the enigmatic occurrence that had occurred before their eyes.

They had been accustomed to observing with attention and

seriousness all of the movements of their holy master, the Baal Shem Tov, fulfilling the Talmudic dictum that “as for Torah, we must learn from everything,” all the more so when these actions were displayed openly, in public. They could not rest until they discovered its meaning.

They decided to impose this mission upon Rabbi Ze’ev Wolf Kitzes, the preacher of the city of Mezhibuzh, and that upon the conclusion of Shabbat, he would enter the chamber of the Baal Shem Tov and request, on behalf of them all, an explanation.

“Gladly!” responded the Baal Shem Tov with satisfaction. “Not only am I willing to reveal the mystery to you, but all of you are also invited to join me on a journey to hear the



1. ‘Emunei Am Segulah’ (Part 4, p. 223, cited with the author’s permission).

explanation directly from the very one involved.”

In no time at all, Alexei, the wagon driver, was instructed to harness the carriage to the horses, and a select group of close disciples was invited to join the nighttime journey.

After eating the Melaveh Malkah (meal of farewell upon the conclusion of Shabbat), the entourage of faithful disciples boarded the carriage, and the Baal Shem Tov directed the wagon driver to travel to the town of Apta. In the dead of night, upon reaching their destination, they stopped at the home of one of the community leaders, a faithful chassid of the Baal Shem Tov, and spent the remainder of the night under his roof.

In the morning, after the Baal Shem Tov prayed Shacharit at the break of dawn, as was his custom, he instructed the host to invite Shabtai, the aged bookbinder, along with his wife.

The community leader was surprised and felt a sense of amazement and wonder about the

purpose of the Baal Shem Tov’s special arrival — apparently just to meet with a simple Jewish elder. Yet, no explanation was offered at the time.

When the elderly Shabtai and his wife arrived, they were respectfully invited into the large and spacious reception room where the Baal Shem Tov sat at the head, surrounded by his entourage of disciples.

After they were seated, the Baal Shem Tov turned to Shabtai and asked him to recount, before all of those present, what had transpired on the previous Friday night. Surprised by the request yet unable to refuse, Shabtai began to tell his story:

“From the day of my marriage and from when G-d granted me a livelihood sufficient for my needs through my bookbinding trade, I have had a set custom every week: On Thursday, I give my wife the necessary money to prepare the necessities for Shabbat generously. Then, on Friday, I finish my work before noon, go to immerse in the

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mikveh, then head to the Beit Midrash, and sit there preparing myself spiritually in honor of the Shabbat.

Thus, I return home only after Kabbalat Shabbat and the Arvit prayer — to make Kiddush and partake in the Shabbat meal.

Recently, due to the weakness of my strength in my old age, I am no longer able to persist in my demanding work as in earlier days, and consequently, my livelihood has begun to diminish and shrink.

My financial state has reached the point that on this last Thursday, I did not have even a single coin, and I had nothing to give my wife for the necessities of Shabbat. The situation did not improve on Friday, and my house remained completely empty; not even a pinch of flour was available to bake even a small challah.

I did not wish to borrow money, for I knew not what the future would bring and whether I would be able to repay the loan. As for taking from charity, I did not even consider such a thought.

I decided, instead, to treat this Shabbat as a weekday so as not to, G-d forbid, rely on others. Before I left home on my way to the Beit Midrash, fear crept into my heart that my wife might not withstand the test of poverty. Perhaps she would be tempted to accept a donation or gift; after all, we have always honored and respected Shabbat generously as the blessing that G-d has granted us.

Therefore, standing at the threshold of the house, I asked her to promise me that no matter what, she would not reach out to accept any assistance from others. She promised to follow my wishes and do exactly as I requested, and trusting her integrity, I set out for the Beit Midrash with a calm demeanor and a worry-free heart.

Shabbat finally arrived, and after prayers, I tarried longer in the Beit Midrash; there was no reason for me to rush. Nevertheless, I took pity on my wife sitting alone in our house, and I departed slowly, walking calmly toward my home.

As I approached, my head spun, and my heart missed a beat.

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The radiant light of many festive candles shining from my home's windows filled my heart with a bitter feeling and a disappointing thought. We hadn't had the means for the basic needs of Shabbat, certainly not for such bright lights.

I was sure that my wife had not withstood the test of poverty and had broken and reneged on her promise to me; otherwise, from where did she get the money to buy candles?

Entering the house, my pride was broken even more. A fine royal Shabbat table was set before me, and it lacked nothing

at all. I was beside myself with confusion and astonishment.

'Do not be mistaken or stumble in suspecting the innocent, G-d forbid,' my wife quickly greeted me, 'let me share with you what has transpired, and you can be sure that I did not transgress your instructions, nor did I forget my promise to you:

'After you left for Beit Midrash, I began cleaning the house in honor of Shabbat. I said to myself: Even if we have no money to buy Shabbat food as we usually do, I am still not exempt from cleaning the house as I do every Friday.'²

...*~* **Wellsprings of Wisdom** *~*...

2. We quote some laws of Shabbat from the book 'Mibo'o Ve'ad Tzayto' (p. 45): 'Every Jew must arrange all of their household matters so that the home is prepared and orderly; this includes removing any cobwebs, and sweeping out dust and dirt that has gathered in the house; all this is included in the commandment of honoring the Shabbat.

One should imagine that a mortal king was coming to stay with him, and just as carefully clean the house and prepare the beds.

The Kitzur Shalah writes as follows (Masechet Shabbat, p. 148):

"The Arizal used to clean the house and remove the spider webs, and this also contains mystical secrets for those who are familiar, and it annuls the negative forces from the home." Similarly, sweeping the home from dirt and dust in honor of Shabbat has the power to annul the impure and negative forces. This is illustrated in the following story ('Rishpei Esh HaChadash -Toldotav Shel HaTzaddik', p. 9): Three tzaddikim — Rabbi Mordechai of Neschiz, Rabbi Aryeh Leib (the Saba of Shpoli), and Rabbi Mordechai (also termed 'the Zoslover Chazzan') — once went into exile together (for a mystical purpose). One Friday afternoon,

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I approached the wardrobe to tear off a piece of a worn-out garment to use as a rag, and suddenly, before my eyes, shone brightly the gold buttons that were sewn onto an old dress that had survived from my wedding days.

Without delay, I removed the buttons that no longer had any use and hurried with them to the goldsmith. To my great excitement and joy, he was willing to pay me a respectable sum for them, and with that money, I purchased all of the

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

they arrived in a certain village, where there lived a Jew who ran a tavern for his livelihood, selling hard drinks to the local villagers. The three tzaddikim asked him if they could lodge with him for Shabbat, but he refused. They had nowhere else to stay, so they pleaded with him to host them.

Seeing their insistence, he said: "Don't think I'm refusing out of a bad heart. No, G-d forbid, my reason is entirely different, I simply do not want you to suffer as I do on Shabbat." "From what do you suffer?" they asked, surprised. With tears in his eyes, the Jewish villager began to share:

"About a year ago, the non-Jews of the nearby village had some 'holiday' that fell on a Friday night, and since they had nowhere else to celebrate it, they came into my tavern, and against my will, they sat here all of Friday night — with their wives, sons, and daughters. Their wild laughter, their wild prancing and their unbecoming behavior, completely ruined my Shabbat peace."

"Since that dreadful 'holiday' celebration," he continued tearfully, every Friday night, the same thing happens. For an entire year

now, every Friday night, all of the villagers come here and destroy my Shabbat. I cannot resist them, because I depend on them for my livelihood the rest of the week.

When the tzaddikim heard this, Rabbi Mordechai of Neschiz insisted that they still wanted to be his guests for Shabbat. He instructed the owner that after midday on Friday he should sweep the area of four cubits outside his house. He did so, and on Friday at dusk, when the time of Shabbat's arrival came, the Jewish man saw groups of villagers, as had become their custom, beginning to head from the nearby village toward his home.

When the first group reached the boundary of the four cubits outside of the home that had been swept in honor of Shabbat, they began to wonder aloud among themselves: "What do we seek at this man's house? Why are we disturbing his peace?" And they turned back the way they had come. So it was with every following group that approached; upon reaching the boundary, they too returned home, and from that time and on, the whole matter ceased.

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Shabbat needs generously, just as we do every week.”

“My heart overflowed with joy,” continued Shabtai, sharing his story before the Baal Shem Tov and all the listeners.

“I could not contain within my heart the deep gratitude that I owed to the Master of all for the great kindness He had done me, providing all of my Shabbat needs from His open and abundant hand and sparing me the need to receive a gift from mankind.

I stood in place for a long time, emotionally moved and shedding tears of joy.

Finally, my legs raised me up, and I burst forth in a joyous dance in honor of G-d, the King of all Kings, who sustains and provides for every creature, from the smallest of creatures to the greatest.

Only after a long bout of dancing could I gain composure, control my surging emotions, and recite Kiddush over the wine. In the middle of eating the Shabbat meal, my excitement overcame me again, and since I could not

restrain myself, I rose and broke out into another excited dance, which also lasted for an hour.

At the end of the meal, I danced for a third time, and this time, my soul nearly departed, and I collapsed in exhaustion and expiration.

“Perhaps, Master,” Shabtai lowered his voice and hung his face in shame, “perhaps dancing on Shabbat is not permitted? After all, the Mishnah states (Beitzah 5:2): ‘One may not clap, nor beat time, nor dance on Shabbat.’ But what could I do? I could not hold myself back!

If necessary, I am ready to accept upon myself any ‘tikkun’ (rectification) and path of teshuvah that you might impose upon me.”

“Believe me,” the Baal Shem Tov addressed all those present, “The entire Heavenly entourage rejoiced and danced together with Shabtai during all three of his bouts of happiness.

We, too, at our Shabbat table on Friday night, participated and joined in the joyous laughter that enveloped and encompassed the entire Heavenly entourage.

“And now,” the Baal Shem Tov turned to the elderly Shabtai and his wife, “You have been granted from Heaven permission to be blessed with one of two blessings: Either to merit and be crowned with great wealth in your old age, or, perhaps you prefer to be granted a son after so many years of childlessness.”

“Are we not already elderly and aged?” the wife replied, speaking for her husband as well. “Our years are primarily behind us, and we are nearing the age of seventy. Having great wealth would be of limited benefit to us in our old age. We most definitely prefer a righteous and upright son, who will illuminate our eternal life in the World to Come.”

“Rejoice, my precious fellow Jews,” the Baal Shem Tov called out to them with a big smile, “for a son will be born to you in due time, and he will indeed illuminate the Garden of Eden before you and illuminate the eyes of all of the Jewish people with the splendor of the Torah and his holiness. If you will agree

and invite me, I will be honored to return and serve as the Sandek (the one honored to holds the baby) at his circumcision ceremony.”

In due time, a son was born to Shabtai and his wife, and at their invitation, the Baal Shem Tov came to Apta and served as the Sandek as the child entered into the covenant of our forefather Avraham.

The Baal Shem Tov even named the child Yisrael as his own name. The little boy would one day be renowned as the great Rabbi Yisrael, the Maggid of Kozhnitz.

Indeed, Shabtai and his wife merited that this towering son illuminated their life for all eternity.

This inspiring tale demonstrates the power of true joy of a mitzvah and the great power of the righteous.

One who reads this may wonder:

Why did Shabtai and his wife need to endure disappointment after disappointment, year after year, and only at the end of their lives, close to the old age of seventy, they merit to draw down into the world this holy

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soul? Since they possessed somewhere in their souls the power to bring such a holy soul into the world, why did they have

to wait so many long and agonizing years?

Before we answer this question, let us preface.

Finishing the Mishkan's Work

This week's Parshah, Parshat Pekudei, is very unique. It concludes both the book of Shemot and the detailed process of the building of the Mishkan (Tabernacle), which the Torah discusses in the previous Torah portions.

The Torah describes the end of the Mishkan's construction as follows: "All the work of the Mishkan, the Tent of Meeting, was finished, and the Children of Israel did everything just as G-d had commanded Moses, so they did" (Shemot 39:32).

The word used to indicate the final tasks and work related to the Mishkan is "vatechel" (בָּתְּעַל) - 'finished and came to an end.'

However, in the Tanach, we find a different term - "vatishlam" (בָּתְּשַׁלַּם) - 'completion', which is used three times in relation to building:

The first time is in the Book of Kings, regarding the building of the First Temple: "And all of the work that King Shlomo performed on the House of the L-rd was completed (בָּתְּשַׁלַּם), and Shlomo brought in the sanctified items of his father David — the silver, the gold, and the vessels — and placed them in the treasuries of the House of the L-rd." (I Kings 7:51)

The second time the term is used is in Nechemiah: "The wall was completed (בָּתְּשַׁלַּם) on the twenty-fifth of Elul, over fifty-two days." (Nechemiah 6:15)

The third time is in Divrei Hayamim (Chronicles): "And all of the work that Shlomo performed for the House of the L-rd was completed (בָּתְּשַׁלַּם), and Shlomo brought in the sanctified items of his father David — the silver, the gold, and all the vessels — and placed them in the treasuries

Parshat Pekudei - Finishing the Mishkan's Work

of the House of G-d." (II Chronicles 5:1)

We must understand: Why here in our Parshah, at the conclusion of building the Mishkan, does the Torah use the term "vatechel",

being that in connection with the Temple, the term more commonly used is "vatishlam"?³

To understand the meaning behind this term, we must first begin with another question.

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

3. Rabbi Yoram Abargel explained the verse as follows (Imrei Noam, Pekudei – Ma'amar 1):

At the completion of the artisans' work in making the Mishkan and its vessels, the Torah states: "All the work of the Mishkan, the Tent of Meeting, was finished, and the Children of Israel did everything just as G-d had commanded Moses, so they did." (Shemot 39:32).

Aside from the straightforward meaning of the word "vatechel" (וַתֵּכֵל) - 'finished and came to an end' — that the work of constructing the Mishkan and its vessels had come to an end — it can also be interpreted as an expression of yearning and longing, as in the verse: "My soul longs (נכספה), indeed it yearns" (Tehillim 84:3).

According to this interpretation, this sense of longing can be applied both to the artisans who performed the work as well as the entire nation of Israel who donated the materials necessary for its construction.

Thus, the Torah's intention is that all the craftsmanship of the artisans, as well as the donations of the Jewish people to carry out the work, were all performed with

great desire and intense longing to build a dwelling place for G-d and to serve Him.

In addition, this can also be applied to the finished products themselves — the boards, curtains, and all the sacred vessels — were filled with a yearning and longing to finally merit to serve G-d.

Accordingly, the Torah's intention in saying "ותכל כל עבודת משכן אוהל מועד" is that the very product of the "work of the Mishkan, the Tent of Meeting" was imbued with desire and longing to serve G-d.

Indeed, these two explanations depend upon each other, for it is a known principle that "the power of the maker is imprinted into the product."

That is, the thoughts and feelings that filled the artisan's mind and heart at the time of creating the vessel became embedded into the innermost essence of the finished product.

Thus, the holy desire that burned in the hearts of the artisans who made the various parts of the Mishkan and the sacred vessels became imprinted in the products of their labor, until the very boards, curtains, and

Everlasting Abode

In the Talmud (Sotah 9a), the following is stated:

Rabbi Chinana bar Papa expounded: What is the meaning of the verse: "Sing joyfully, the righteous, to G-d; for the upright, praise is fitting" (Tehillim 33:1)?

Do not read it as "praise is fitting" (גאוה תהילה), but rather as "an abode of praise" (נוה תהילה)

— the righteous and upright praise G-d, for having merited to build an abode for His honor. This verse refers to Moses and King David, whose work did not fall into the hands of their enemies.

Regarding King David, about the first Temple, it is written: "Her gates sank into the earth"

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all the vessels of the Mishkan were filled with desire and longing to serve G-d.

And just as the Children of Israel built the Mishkan for G-d with wondrous enthusiasm and good will, so too did G-d come to dwell and rest His Presence among them with great desire and longing.

As our Parshah continues to relate, once Moses had fully erected the Mishkan and placed every sacred vessel in its proper place, immediately: "The cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of G-d filled the Mishkan. Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud rested upon it, and the glory of G-d filled the Mishkan." (Shemot 40:34-35).

This means that G-d rested His Presence in the Mishkan with great desire and remarkable longing, and consequently, His Presence above the Mishkan was

abundant, like someone giving generously and in surplus.

Thus, the Mishkan was filled and overflowing with the Shechinah's presence, so much so that even Moses was unable to enter it.

This is also the interpretation of the verse: "The heavens and the earth and all their hosts were completed (ויכולו)" (Bereishit 2:1), and immediately afterward the Torah states: "And Elokim completed (ויכל)" (ibid. 2:2).

This hints that when creation yearns and longs ("ויכולו" — from the language of desire and yearning) to draw close to G-d and serve Him wholeheartedly and willingly, G-d longs as well ("ויכל אלהים"), and desires to rest His Presence upon it, together with offering His blessing, generously and abundantly, as does one who gives out of abundant desire and good will.

Parshat Pekudei - Everlasting Abode

(Eichah 2:9),⁴ and since they sank, the enemies could not gain control over them.

Similarly, regarding Moses, as it was taught:

“Once the First Temple was built, the Ohel Moed (the Mishkan) was hidden away, together with its boards, hooks, bars, pillars, and sockets.

Where was the Mishkan concealed? Rav Chisda said in the name of Avimi: Under the

tunnels of the Heichal (the sanctuary) of the First Temple.”

The question arises: Why, indeed, did the enemies of the Jewish people have no power over Moses’s handiwork?

In other words, Why were the Mishkan of Shiloh and the Second Temples destroyed, while the Mishkan that Moses built and King David’s Temple remained intact forever?

Let us ask even further:

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4. While his son, King Solomon, built the first Temple, King David prepared for it and built the gates that would surround the Temple (Rashi, Lamentations 2:9) including the Western Wall.

As Bach writes (Orach Chaim, 561:4): “The Western Wall is the wall that was built by David the king, peace upon him.” During the destruction of the first Temple, the gates sank into the ground, as in the verse: “Her gates have sunk into the ground” (Lamentations 2:9). However, the Western Wall remains standing until this very day, and the Shechinah has never departed from it. In the words of the Midrash (Shemot Rabbah, 2:2): Rabbi Acha said, “The Shechinah never departs from the Western Wall,” as it is said: “Behold, He stands behind our wall”

(Song of Songs 2:9). In this connection we share:

In “Shalshet HaKabbalah” (‘Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi’), the following is written: When Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi, the author of ‘the Kuzari’, was about 50 years old, he decided to leave his family, his many friends, and his great wealth, and set out on a journey toward the Land of Israel.

When he arrived in Jerusalem, he made his way toward the Western Wall, and when he finally merited to stand before the Western Wall, his eyes filled with tears, and he recited his well known poem “Zion, will you not seek?”

At that very moment, an Arab horseman passed by, and seeing Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi prostrated on the ground, he

Parshat Pekudei - The Three Stages of a Person's Life

There were two Temples that the Jewish people merited to have, in which the divine presence was revealed — the First Temple and the Second Temple — and both were destroyed. This causes us to wonder: what ultimate purpose did they serve, being that they did not endure for all eternity?

Or, in the words of the righteous Rabbi Moshe Teitelbaum:⁵

“The early sages have pondered: Were the, two Temples that were destroyed a vain effort, G-d forbid, and are gone as if they never existed? Heaven forbid to say so.”

On a similar note, let us ask yet another question.

The Three Stages of a Person's Life

Rabbi Chananya Yom Tov Lipa Teitelbaum wrote the following:⁶

“It is well known that a person's life is divided into three stages: the days of youth, midlife, and Advanced age.

Certainly, a person must gird himself with might for the study of Torah and service of G-d in one's youth, as it is written: “It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth” (Eichah 3:27). Nevertheless, due to a lack of knowledge, one may not yet

serve G-d in the most perfect and choicest manner.

In one's midlife years, when their intellect and strength for Torah have increased, still, so long that the evil inclination remains strong and powerful, it is difficult to stand firm against it, and so one might not be able to achieve perfect completeness in the divine service.

However, in one's advanced age, there are both advantages: first, the weakening of the evil

...*~* **Wellsprings of Wisdom** *~*...

trampled him with his horse, killing him. Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi thus fulfilled his own words: “Better one day on G-d's earth than a thousand in foreign lands.”

5. ‘Yismach Moshe’, Tetzaveh, “Katit LaMaor”.

6. Kedushat Yom Tov, (Parshat Pekudei, page 74b).

Parshat Pekudei - The Attribute of Malchut - The Shechinah

inclination's power, and second, the mind is settled, enabling the person to recognize the proper and illuminated path — one then is able to understand and comprehend how to reach the desired spiritual goals and how to perfect themselves in all forms of completeness of Torah and fear of G-d, and to serve Him with love.”

The Attribute of Malchut - The Shechinah

We quote the following passage from “Chelev Ha’aretz”:⁷

“It is known that in the upper divine worlds, no body of any kind or any resemblance of physical power exists, G-d forbid.

All of the imagery and depictions mentioned in the holy Zohar and in other Kabbalistic books are not a description of how it is above, G-d forbid, but rather are intended to make it possible for the human ear to fathom and attempt to understand extremely lofty and spiritual

On this teaching, we may have a similar question as above:

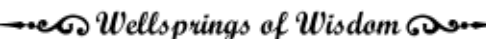
What benefit does one stand to gain from the first two stages of life?

According to the above, would it not have been better if G-d had created a person at the third stage of life, wisened and with a weakened evil inclination and a settled and understanding mind?

matters, which the human intellect cannot otherwise grasp.

We have been granted permission to speak in parables and imagery, and even the Torah uses such language: “The eyes of G-d rove throughout the earth” (Zechariah 4:10), “The eyes of G-d are toward the righteous” (Tehillim 34:16), “And G-d heard” (Bamidbar 11:1), “And G-d smelled” (Bereshit 8:21), “And G-d spoke” (Shemot 6:10), and so on.

A most poignant example is what the verse states: “And G-d created man in His image, in the



7. Part 7, page 150, see there for further details.

image of G-d He created him, male and female He created them” (Bereshit 1:27).

Thus, even though it is obvious that in the celestial attributes above and certainly with G-d Himself, there exists only extremely refined spiritual lights, with no physical form or human attributes, we nonetheless may still speak in such terms:

It is known that when it arose in G-d’s lofty and sublime will to create the world in order to bestow His goodness upon His creations, He saw that it would be impossible for the lower beings to comprehend His essential and infinite light — the “Or Ein Sof” — and He therefore emanated from his essence ten very sublime lights, which are called “Sefirot.”

These ‘sefirot’ serve as vessels and garments which enclothe His lofty light and make it possible for the lower creatures to endure

its intensity and benefit from it.

Just as one cannot gaze at the sun’s rays without a filter, so too — infinitely more so — no one can grasp the essence of G-d’s infinite light without these ten garments and coverings.

These ten Sefirot are: Keter, Chochmah, Binah, Chesed, Gevurah, Tiferet, Netzach, Hod, Yesod, Malchut.

The sefirah and attribute of Malchut is also called “the Shechinah” or Divine Presence.

The meaning of the term “Shechinah” refers to the Divine light that dwells and is invested within all worlds and which sustains and enlivens them.

There are infinite levels to this Divine light that dwells within creation, and according to the intensity and strength of the revelation of this light of Malchut, is the holiness and spiritual status of the particular created being.⁸

❧ Wellsprings of Wisdom ❧

8. To add further detail, we quote Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi (Tanya, Iggeret HaKodesh, Siman 25):

“In each of the four worlds — Atzilut, Beriah, Yetzirah, and Asiyah — there is the aspect of Shechinah, which is the

The Exile of the Divine Presence

In the Talmud (Megillah 29a) the following is stated: “It was taught in a Baraita, Rabbi Shimon ben Yochoai says: Come and see how beloved the people of Israel are before G-d; wherever they were exiled, the Shechinah was exiled with them.

They were exiled to Egypt - the Shechinah was with them; they were exiled to Babylon - the Shechinah was with them; likewise, when they are destined to be redeemed, the Shechinah will

be redeemed together with them, as it says: ‘And G-d will return (ושב) your captivity’ (Devarim 30:3) - it does not say ‘And He will bring back (והשיב),’ rather ‘And He shall return,’ teaching that G-d, so to speak, returns with them from among the exiles.”

This passage emphasizes the concept of “Galut HaShechinah,” the exile of the Divine Presence, which, simply put, means as follows:

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

attribute of Malchut that enlivens and generates vitality to that specific world.

The Shechinah of Atzilut enlivens and generates the great souls of Atzilut — such as the soul of Adam, the souls of the Patriarchs, the Prophets, and their like (who were all a chariot to G-d, and utterly nullified to Him). The Shechinah of Beriah enlivens and brings forth the souls and angels of the World of Beriah, whose level is unlike that of Atzilut etc., and ultimately, the Shechinah of Asiyah is the word of G-d that enlivens and creates this entire world, down to the fundamental elements of earth and water that are beneath the earth. This all is true specifically in the Land of Israel, but in the lands outside the Land of Israel,

the Shechinah is concealed by an additional ‘covering’ of the heavenly ministers that are appointed over the 70 nations of the world: A spark of the word of G-d, from the attribute of ‘Malchut of Asiyah’ descends and shines upon the heavenly ministers in an encompassing manner from above, and it does not actually enclothe itself within them. From these heavenly ministers, vitality flows to all of the nations and to the animals, beasts, and birds in each of their lands, and to the earth and the skies above.

The heavens, earth, and pure animals and birds receive from the intermediate level of “Kelipat Nogah,” while the impure beasts and fowl and the souls of the nations receive from the impure kelipot.”

Parshat Pekudei - The Shechinah shall dwell within us

As mentioned above, the Divine light brings existence and life to all creation and thus ought to be sensed, or at least recognized, by the created being.

However, when the created being is completely unaware of the Creator who brings him into being and sustains him, the Shechinah is considered to be in exile.

The exile of the Shechinah can take form in one of two general states: The first is when the

Shechinah's presence is concealed from creation as a whole, and the second is when it is concealed from a particular individual.

It is required of a person during his lifetime to redeem his personal portion of 'Shechinah' and divine presence, release it from captivity and exile, and illuminate his surroundings with faith and belief in G-d.

We shall elaborate on this further.

The Shechinah shall dwell within us

As explained, the Shechinah is the Divine light that sustains and enlivens every created being.

While all other creatures in the world receive a fixed measure of life-force without the ability to change or increase it, a Jew is different. He, too, receives life-force from the Divine light as well, yet has the power and ability to intensify and increase this light.

A Jew can ascend and elevate himself, attaining the level Malchut of Asiyah and then ascending further to Malchut of Yetzirah, and

so on, ultimately meriting the Shechinah's presence at the highest levels of its revelation.

Every Jew should aspire and yearn that the Shechinah will literally dwell within him and that the presence of G-d will be felt within his inner world.

Since a person's perception of reality stems from his inner world, if that inner world is illuminated with Divine awareness, his entire perception of reality will then be one of G-dliness.

Parshat Pekudei - The Jewish people - Compared to the Moon

One thus merits a foretaste of the future era when “The glory of G-d will be revealed, and all flesh together will see that the

mouth of G-d has spoken”
(Yeshayahu 40:5).

We add here further clarification and additional insight.

The Jewish people - Compared to the Moon

Until now, we explained that the Jew is a unique and singular creation who was given the possibility and ability to intensify and increase the revelation of the Shechinah within him.

We now add another layer of depth that explains the journey of a Jew in his divine service.

It is known from the teachings of our Sages that the Jewish people are compared to the moon.⁹

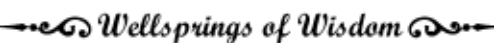
The moon undergoes a regular monthly cycle. In the first days of the month, it grows larger each day until it reaches its fullness in the middle of the month. Then, it begins to wane and diminish until finally, it disappears entirely

from view. This disappearance of the moon is called an “ibbur” (pregnancy) since the moon is then concealed like an embryo in its mother’s womb.

So, too, with the Jewish people: There are periods when a Jew feels that he is ascending and growing spiritually from moment to moment, with his soul continually becoming more elevated.

Then suddenly come the days of decline — failures and bitterness — until he may feel that his identity has vanished entirely and that he has no purposeful existence, and this cycle and feeling is what we call “ibbur” (pregnancy).¹⁰

We elaborate on this further:



9. Midrash Shochar Tov (Psalm 22, section 12).

10. We quote the words of Rabbi Eliezer Shlomo Shick (‘Asher B’Nachal,’ vol. 4, p. 323): “When a Jew begins to serve

G-d with joy and enthusiasm, engaging in Torah and prayer, he thereby unites and connects the sublime attributes of “Malchut” with “Ze’ir Anpin.”

Parshat Pekudei - The Jewish people - Compared to the Moon

Rabbi Nachman of Breslov writes:¹¹

“Know that G-d created His world as He desired, as we say in Kaddish: “May His great name be magnified and sanctified, in the world that He created according to His will.”

He created onews world of untellect with a pattern of descent (smallness) followed by ascent (greatness). Thus, before a person attains greatness, he must

first pass through a stage of smallness. And every person must evolve from smallness to greatness.”

A large and primary part of this smallness and descent is the dreadful feeling that one is unwanted and unneeded. That even though he prays, studies Torah, and strives to improve, he receives no illumination and vitality; he does not sense any Divine light.

...*~* **Wellsprings of Wisdom** *~*...

This is the mystery of the unification of G-d and His Shechinah through devoted prayer, thereby bonding with Him and clinging to Him with intense attachment. After this spiritual unification, one enters a state of ‘ibur’. During this intermediate stage, one undergoes all sorts of suffering, pains, constrictions, and bitterness.

Ultimately however, one attains an aspect of “birth,” and new spiritual faculties — revelations of G-dliness — are born and revealed within him, and they are able to taste and sense the sweetness of the infinite Divine light.

In order to attain new faculties and revelations of G-dliness, one must undergo this entire process over and over again. This process occurs constantly for anyone who seeks to enter the inner

sanctuary of holiness, and to constantly engage in prayer and secluded communion with G-d, which are forms of unification. As prrt of this, one comes afterward to the ‘ibur’ state — which include all the descents he may endure.

And if, no matter what happens, they strengthen himself, then they will merit the birth and revelation of the intellect, which is akin to the splitting of the sea of supernal wisdom.

If however, one does not strengthen himself, G-d forbid, the ‘fetus’ may fall, heaven forbid, causing one’s spiritual state to be miscarried.

This then, is the mystery of a spiritual fall from one’s level, G-d forbid.”

11. Likutei Moharan I, Torah 74.

But one must not become broken by this; instead, he must know that this is the due process, and once it is completed, suddenly the great divine light will once again shine, and he will merit revelations of spiritual greatness.

And then, once again, before ascending to the next level, one must pass through a new stage of smallness.

For this is the pattern G-d has established in His world, which He created according to His will:

Every person in the world must pass through not only ascents and successes but also descents and failures in the service of the Creator.¹²

Even a complete tzaddik (righteous one) must occasionally experience certain descents, as it is said: “For a righteous man falls seven times” (Mishlei 24:16).

However, the greatness of the tzaddik is that he does not remain fallen, but immediately stands up again — “and rises again.”

The falls that one experiences are not merely those of deed and speech but also, primarily, in unwanted desires and aspirations.

We find that often, those who become inspired and decide to improve themselves might suddenly encounter despair and helplessness. After the initial inspiration fades, they lose their enthusiasm, and the evil inclination tries to convince them that it was all futile. They find themselves back at square one, which may lead them to despair and disbelief in their abilities.

However, this feeling of despair is false.

Spiritual life means that a person continually rises to

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

12. Moreover, the creation of all of existence was preceded by a series of “breaks” which preceded it. As our Sages said (Bereshit Rabbah 3:7): Before the world was created, G-d, created worlds and destroyed them, until finally He created our present world. This is

because it so arose in His will that before the world would reach stability, endurance, and beauty, it would be preceded by breaking. This further underlines and stresses that before the illumination of light there always precedes darkness.

Parshat Pekudei - The Path to the Light

acquire new spiritual levels which he never even knew existed.

It is impossible to ascend from level to level without rising through the “stairwell,” which is the unstable transition period where one must confront various challenges and improper desires that suddenly awaken within one's heart.

Even if one becomes somewhat sullied while struggling in this process, one must not raise a white flag of surrender !

They must rather shake off the dust — “Shake yourself off from the dust; arise.” — and continue fighting,

Even when a person experiences a spiritual decline, he must not give in to despair. He must not cool, even momentarily, the energy and enthusiasm of his longing, yearning, desire, and aspiration. He must do his best to serve G-d with whatever strength he has at the time.

After the struggle ends, he will be able to ascend to the next level, and once he becomes established there as well, a new challenge will again appear.

After these introductions, let us return to answer the various questions we posed throughout our talk, all with a single-themed answer.

The Path to the Light

Let us express the answer in the following manner:

Every progressive spiritual level and attainment is concealed behind a barrier of darkness, and one who wishes to bask in the light must first break through a partition of darkness.

Each and every person has their own unique light, and

correspondingly, each person, according to the light that they are meant to reveal, must break through the corresponding darkness.

Thus, in order for the parents of the Maggid of Kozhnitz to draw down the lofty soul of their son into the world, they had to break through a terrible and

Parshat Pekudei - The Path to the Light

immense darkness of dire poverty and agonizing childlessness.¹³

This also explains why a person is not born of old age. It is impossible, under any circumstances, to skip the earlier stages of lack of knowledge and of struggle with the evil inclination.

In youth and midlife, a person may experience many spiritual and emotional struggles. These struggles create within one's inner self countless inner conflicts — between the permissible and the forbidden, between ideological ambition and lethargic inertia, and between trust and confidence and paralyzing fear.

But it is specifically from these clashes, from the struggle and the striking of these opposing feelings, that new inner understandings are born within

an individual's heart and inner world.

The power of this inner awareness is immense, and it is indeed the main source of illuminating spiritual light.

Only after one has sharpened and refined his inner world through these “clashes” can he reach the level and attainments of advanced age.

In advanced age, a Jew already lives in an entirely different realm. He has, to a large extent, emerged from the intensity of the sensations of worldly life. Although his body is still in this world, his spirit can more easily aspire for the next world, the world of eternity. His feelings and thoughts can more readily part from his physical being, and while his body may be on earth, his spirit is free to soar in heaven.

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

13. If we pay attention, it is truly wondrous: The Baal Shem Tov who served as the Sandek, named the Maggid of Kozhnitz after himself by the name of Yisrael.

The Baal Shem Tov himself was born under similar circumstances. His

parents begot him only in their old age; it was toward the very end of their days that they merited to draw down the soul of the holy Baal Shem Tov into the world.

Parshat Pekudei - The Path to the Light

He thus stands at a crossroads, with citizenship of the world to come within reach. An elder of refined character and devoted to divine service is then a representative of the upper worlds, merely a visitor to this physical world.

It is related that once the Chazon ish was asked:

“Your rulings sometimes seem to pose a contradiction to your more stringent and pious personal conduct. How can there be daylight between what you instruct others to do and what you yourself do?”

He answered simply that as for himself and his personal affairs, matters are different, ‘After all, I do not really feel that I am entirely here in this physical world and therefore, the law is applied quite differently for me.

But the advice and rulings that I offer others is for common people of this world, upon whom I cannot impose the same

exacting standards, and I guide them accordingly.’

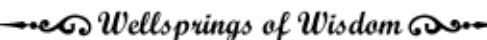
Let us continue with the next question that we posed earlier: Why were the two Temples erected only to be ultimately destroyed?

We find that Rabbi Chananya Yom Tov Lipa Teitelbaum, the ‘Kedushat Yom Tov,’ whom we cited above, wrote as follows:

“The ultimate purpose of creation is the revelation of G-d that is to be - speedily in our days - in the Third Temple in Jerusalem.¹⁴

But since G-d, in his great wisdom, beheld that this physical earth could not receive and bear the holiness of the future Third Temple that the Creator will establish on Mount Zion, He required there be erected the two previous Temples.

It is through them that the earth acquired the necessary sanctity to eventually endure and contain the holiness of the future Third Temple which we await.”



14. See at length in “Mishkanei Elyon” by the great Kabbalist Rabbi Moses

Chaim Luzzatto for further insights on this concept.

Parshat Pekudei - The Path to the Light

Hence, G-d built two Temples, and their spiritual light radiated from them and purified the earth so that at the end of days, it will have the capacity to bear the light of the Third Temple.

We finally return to discuss the question we raised on our Parshah:

The Mishkan was erected in the second year after the Exodus from Egypt, but over 400 years before that, at the “Covenant of the Parts” with Avraham, G-d informed him: “Your offspring shall be strangers in a land not theirs, and they will be subjected to servitude under them, and they will be afflicted by them for four hundred years” (Bereshit 15:13).¹⁵

Thus, from the time of the Covenant of the Parts, the process of breaking through the unholy darkness began: our ancestors endured persecutions, troubles, jealousy, hatred, bereavement, orphanhood, merciless torment, hunger, and thirst, and when they

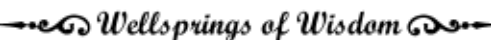
finally merited to leave Egypt, they faced a battle with Amalek, the threat of hunger and thirst, and ultimately the dreadful sin with the Golden Calf.

It was only after all of these hurdles and overcoming all of these hardships, which were both physical and spiritual, that the Jewish people merited to receive the spiritual glory of the Mishkan.

The Mishkan was the end of this process of refinement, the ultimate light that followed the preceding utter darkness, and it therefore required no further refinement, its building lasted forever and was not tampered with by the enemies of the Jewish people.

This allows us to understand the question we opened with:

The Torah describes the completion of the Mishkan’s building with the words: “All the work of the Mishkan, the Tent of Meeting, was finished and came to an end,” using the term



15. Rashi explains that the count of the 400 years mentioned in the covenant,

began from the birth of Isaac (who was born 30 years after the ‘Covenant of the Parts’).

Parshat Pekudei - The Path to the Light

“vatechel” (וַתֵּכֵל) - ‘finished and came to an end,’ and not the more common term - “vatishlam” (וַתִּשְׁלַם) - ‘completion,’ to underline and emphasize that the process of refinement - of the Mishkan built by Moses - was not only entirely completed, but that it was culminated and came to its end and blessed conclusion.

This is also the inner reason as to why no enemy could overtake and destroy the Mishkan built by Moses.

This is because by G-dly design, darkness and evil have no authority to take hold wherever the process of refinement is finished and where there is no underlying light waiting to be revealed.

May G-d grant us to very soon behold the revelation of the wondrous light that will shine forth from the immense darkness that has prevailed for thousands of years, and may we merit the redemption soon in our days; Amen !

Shabbat Shalom !



Summary and Practical Conclusions

1. The Holy One, blessed be He, emanated ten holy Sefirot (divine emanations), the last of which, the Sefirah of Malchut, is referred to by our sages as the Shechinah (Divine Presence). The meaning of “Shechinah” is the divine light that dwells and is manifest within all of the worlds and enlivens and sustains them. Within this divine light that dwells in all of the created beings, there are many levels and gradations, and according to the intensity and revelation of the light, is the stature of the particular created being.

2. The spiritual illumination that sustains all of the creatures of the world, including the celestial angels, is a fixed illumination, and they do not have the power at all to change it or increase it. However, for a Jew, it is not so. While the Jew has an illumination that sustains him as well, he also has the power and ability to enhance and intensify this illumination. Every Jew must aspire, long for, yearn, and desire that the Shechinah will truly rest within him and that the divine reality be palpable within his inner world.

A Jew is able to ascend spiritually and rises to attain and acquire the level of Malchut of Asiyah, and then ascend even further to Malchut of Yetzirah, and so forth until they merit that the

Shechinah’s presence will be revealed within them in all of its intensity.

3. Every level of light is concealed and covered by a preceding level of darkness, and therefore, one who wishes to draw upon themselves this light must first break through a partition of darkness. Each person has his own light that is attainable to them, and accordingly, each person, to the degree of light they must reveal, faces a corresponding degree of darkness that they must break through.

4. G-d created the world such that it is built upon descents and ascents. One cannot ever truly achieve greatness without first passing through a state of descent. Thus, every individual must undergo during his lifetime not only ascents and successes but also descents and falls.

Even the truly righteous must, from time to time, experience a certain degree of decline and descent, as it is stated: “For a righteous person falls seven times, and rises again.”

A person’s greatness is measured by the fact that they do not remain in their fallen state but rather succeed in overcoming it, rising from it, and returning and regaining their former strength. This distinguishes the righteous; even though they endure

Parshat Pekudei - Summary and Practical Conclusions

pain and suffering and may - on the rare occasion - err in their service of the Creator, they will always raise themselves up and stand tall and mightily like a lion once again, and return to their original lofty level.

Therefore, even though “a righteous person falls seven times,” immediately the verse’s conclusion is fulfilled:

“and rises again.” May G-d, in His great mercy, grant us to see the revelation of the wondrous light that will shine forth from within this terrible, dreadful darkness, which has reigned and darkened the world for thousands of years, and may we witness the dawn of the light of the final redemption.

Shabbat Shalom !



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Pekudei

29th of Adar, 5785



City	Candle Lighting	Shabbat Ends	Rabbeinu Tam
New York	6:59 pm	7:59 pm	8:30 pm
Miami	7:18 pm	8:11 pm	8:48 pm
Los Angeles	6:54 pm	7:50 pm	8:24 pm
Montreal	7:00 pm	8:03 pm	8:31 pm
Toronto	7:22 pm	8:24 pm	8:53 pm
London	6:09 pm	7:19 pm	7:41 pm
Jerusalem	6:40 pm	7:32 pm	8:17 pm
Tel Aviv	6:38 pm	7:29 pm	8:14 pm
Haifa	6:37 pm	7:32 pm	8:16 pm
Be'er Sheva	6:37 pm	7:31 pm	8:15 pm

Pathways to the Heart

From the Words of

HaRav Yoram Abargel zt"l

Improper thoughts can be rectified - by the power of joy.

One who is unhappy may be inundated with improper thoughts, but a pernicious and stray thought will not attack a joyous and happy person. 'Thought' (מחשבה) therefore has the same Hebrew letters as 'joyously' (בשמחה).

'Thought' (מחשבה) is also an acronym for 'forgive our bill of iniquity in your great mercy' (מחוק ברחמיך הרבים שסרי חובותינו) - because the sins of one who is joyous are not looked upon, and as a rule, those of cheerful are not harmed.



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