

## Parashat Beshalach

וַיְהִי בְשַׁלַּח פְּרַעֲהָ אֶת הָעָם...

*When Pharaoh sent the people forth...*<sup>1</sup>

ספר הליקוטים, פרשת בשלח

דרוש נאה מענין יציאת מצרים, שהוא רמז של יציאת הנשמה מן הגוף.

*Sefer HaLikutim, parashat Beshalach*

**The following is a pleasing mystical interpretation of the Exodus from Egypt, as an allusion to the departure of the soul from the body at death.**

(ויהי בשלח) פרעה את העם, הוא כשיצאה הנשמה מן הגוף שהוא פרעה מלך (מצרים, הערף) שהוא קשי עורף, והוא מולך בגוף שהוא מצרים,

*[13:17] When Pharaoh sent the Jewish people forth...*

**This refers to when the soul departs the body. Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, is the neck, for the body is stubborn. Stubbornness rules over the body, which is Egypt.**

The Hebrew word for *Pharaoh* (*pei-reish-ayin-hei*) is composed of the same letters as the word for "the neck" (*ha-oref, hei-ayin-reish-pei*), as we have explained previously. The idiom for "stubborn" in Hebrew is "stiff-necked." The body may be described as "stubborn" since it insists on imposing its gross, material perspective on the soul. "Egypt" (*mitzrayim*) means "constrictions" (*meitzarim*), an apt term for the body, since it limits the powers of the soul to those of this world, forcing it to conceive of everything in terms of time and space.

וכחות היצה"ר הולכים ורודפים (אחר בני ישראל), שהוא הנשמה הישרה, להזיקה מפני שהוא יצה"ר, והוא הולך ומססין והוא בא (ולוקח נשמתו) ואחר הולך אחריו להזיקו ולהנקם ממנו.

*[14:8] G-d hardened the heart of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he pursued the Children of Israel.*

**When the soul leaves the body, the powers of the evil inclination set out to chase the soul in order to harm it. This is because the evil inclination is also the accusing angel. After taking the soul from to body, it pursues it in order to harm it and take vengeance on it.**

As the sages have said, the evil inclination (*yetzer hara*), the angel of death (*malach hamavet*), and the accusing angel (*satan*) are all one.

ויחזק ה' את לב פרעה וירדוף אחר בני (ישראל וישג) אותם חונים על הים, הוא גהינם, שהוא הים נהר דינור.

*[14:9] He overtook them while they were camping by the sea...*

**The sea refers to Purgatory (*gehinom*), known as "the river of fire."**

1. Exodus 13:7.

When the soul leaves the body it must first be purged of the existential crust of materialism and negativity it acquired during its stay in the physical world. Only then can it proceed to experience the pure spirituality of Paradise.

וכאשר פרעה מקריב (להנתן ביד אותם) בני ההיזק והצער אשר מצערים אותו,

[14:10] *As Pharaoh drew near—*

**—to give the soul over to the agents of damage and inflictors of pain to torture them—**

ויראו מאד ויצעקו אל ה',

*the Children of Israel raised their eyes and caught sight of the Egyptians advancing at their rear, and they became very frightened. So the Children of Israel cried out to G-d.*

In order for the soul to be purified of its worldly, material crust it must be made to experience the extent to which this materialism is antithetical to truth and spirituality. This is an agonizing, torturous awakening.

ויאמרו אל (משה היצ"ט),

[14:11] *They said to Moses—*

**—i.e., to the good inclination—**

אחר שעתה נראה כל הצער הזה וההזיק, שהכחות מזיקים אותי, המבלי אין קברים (במצרים לקחתנו) למות במדבר, כלומר שרואים חיבוט הקבר המר והנאגת, אמר לא די הקבר (בחיים והצער) שהיתה הנפש נקברת בתוך הגוף, ומצר של עולם, אלא ג"כ צער הקבר, (שהוא מה שחובטים אותו בקבר לקחתנו למות במדבר), מקום החיצונים שהוא מדבר שממה, ששם עושים נקמה לגוף

**—“Was it for want of graves in Egypt that you brought us to die in the desert?—**

**—i.e., “Now that you see all this pain and suffering these powers of evil are inflicting upon me, this battering in the grave (*chibut ha-kever*), was it not enough pain that I had to be buried and suffer inside the body and constrictions of the physical world, that I must now experience as well the pain of this grave”—this refers to how the soul is battered inside the grave—“and I have been taken to die again in the desert?” i.e., in Purgatory, the desolate abode of the forces of evil. Here is where vengeance is extracted from the soul.**

The soul refers to its birth into a physical body as being “buried” inside a “grave.” Death is not seen as a cessation of existence, but rather as a descent from one spiritual level to a lower one. It is enough, the soul complains, that I had to live a full life in this grave of the body; why must I suffer further?

The image of the soul being “battered” in the grave refers to how it is existentially “shaken” of its materialistic encrustation, as above.

(מה זאת עשית לנו להוציאנו) ממצרים מן הגוף, שהוא מצרים יותר טוב היה לנו בגוף, הלא זה הדבר (אשר דברנו אליך במצרים) לאמר חדל ממנו ונעבדה את מצרים ונשתעבד תחת יצה"ר בעוה"ז, (ולא היינו סובלין אלו הדינין), כי טוב לנו עבוד את מצרים ממתנו במדבר, ובצער ובאלו המזיקים (בי דינא רבא ובי דינא) זוטא, שקשה עליו המות מפני העונש.

*“What is this that you have done to us, taking us out of Egypt? [14:12] Is this not the very thing we spoke to you about in Egypt, saying, ‘Leave us alone and let us serve the Egyptians’? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!”*

**I.e., “it was better for me in the body. I may as well have submitted to the evil inclination in the physical world; at least then I would not be suffering the pain I am suffering now.”**

By being shown the truth and the splendor of spirituality, the soul is rudely awakened to the triviality of all the things the body convinced it to be important in this world. This realization of the futility and emptiness of the material life of the physical world is more painful than any pain than can be experienced in the physical world itself.

ולחפך הצדיק מתאוה למות (בעוה"ז, ולחיות בעולם) האמיתי,

**The opposite is true of the *tzadik*; he yearns for death from this world in order to go on to live in the world of truth.**

As the sages say, “against your will you are born, and against your will you live.”

(ובזה ג"כ יכוין הגי' ימים של חשך אחר שיצאו ממצרים הם גי' ימים אחר צאת) הנשמה מן הגוף, כמו שתדע בעי"ה בין מגדול ובין פי החירות. ומשיב משה שהוא (היצ"ט, אל תראו) מן העונש הזה, מפני שהוא לטובתכם, ולהסיר מנפשותיכם המזיקים, (ולהצילם מדין) גיהנם, שכל כחות הטומאה נשארים לשם, בתוך הים שהוא נהר דינור.

*[14:13] But Moses said to the people, “Have no fear...”*

**The good inclination tells the soul, have no fear of this punishment, for it is for your own good. Through it, you will be rid of these inflictors of pain and be spared the ordeal of Purgatory. All the powers of impurity will remain there in this sea, i.e., the river of fire.**

(התיצבו וראו את ישועת) ה' אשר יעשה עמכם, שע"י לבון של גיהנם תטהרו מהעונות.

*“Stand firm and witness the deliverance that G-d will perform for you today...”*

**By means of the purification process of Purgatory you will be cleansed of your sins.**

כי אשר (ראיתם את מצרים היום) לא תוסיפו לראותם עוד עד עולם, ששם בגיהנם ישארו:

*“...for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see again.”*

**For they will remain in Purgatory.**

ויהי באשמורת (הבקר וישקף ה' אל מחנה) מצרים בעמוד אש וענן, שהוא כשירודת הנשמה לדון דין בגיהנם, (וכשנגמ' זה, אז

*[14:24] Toward the end of the night G-d looked down upon the camp of the Egyptians with the pillar of fire and cloud...*

This refers to the descent of the soul to be judged in Purgatory. When this is over—

ויהם) את מחנה מצרים, שהם הכחות של יצה"ר, אל תוך הים בים סוף, ונשארו (שם).

*...He threw the camp of the Egyptians into confusion.*

This refers to the powers of the evil inclination, who are cast into the "sea," where they remain.

והמים להם חמה), חמ"ה כתיב, שהוא חמה וזעם,

[14:29] *But the Israelites had walked on dry land in the midst of the sea, while the water formed a wall for them, on their right and on their left.*

The word for "wall" is *chomah*, which is written the same as the word for "anger" *cheimah*.

The powers of evil are angry as the soul departs Purgatory purified of its material dross.

ואחר שמוציאים הנשמה מגיהנם, ועדיין (היא וכוחותיה רעבים), ג' ימים בתענית רעבים בלא תורה, שהמזון של הנפש היא התורה, (כדי לחיות בגיהנם) קודם כניסתה לג"ע. וז"ש ויסע משה את ישראל מים סוף וילכו שלשת ימים (במדבר ולא מצאו) מים, שהיא התורה.

[15:22-23] *Moses then caused the Israelites to set out from the Sea of Reeds and they went out into the Desert of Shur. They walked for three days in the desert without finding any water. They came to Marah, but they could not drink water at Marah, for the water was bitter; that was why the place was named Marah ("bitter").*

After the soul departs Purgatory, it starves for three days, since it spends three days without learning Torah. Torah is the nourishment of the soul, enabling it to endure Purgatory before entering Paradise.

אז וילינו העם על משה לאמר מה נשתה, (היא התורה), עץ חיים היא למחזיקים בה:

[15:24] *The people complained against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?"*

I.e., "since we have not learned any Torah. The Torah is a tree of life to those who hold fast to it."

וישלך אל המים, אז מראה להם שכרם המזומן להם (לעוה"ב, שם שם לו) חק ומשפט ושם ניסהו,

*G-d showed Moses a tree; he threw it into the water and the water became sweet. It was there that He gave the people a statute and a law, and there He tested them.*

I.e., the good inclination shows the soul the reward awaiting it in the world to come.

The idiom "statute" also means "provision"; the word for "tested" also means "lifted up." As it is about to enter Paradise, G-d prepares the soul by telling that it is about to experience the true value of the *mitzvot* it performed while in the body. This sweetens the water of Torah, which it may have experienced as bitter deprivation in the physical world.

ואז מבטיח להם הקב"ה שמאחר ששמרו התורה (וקבלו דינם ועונשם) בגיהנם, וכל המחלה אשר שמתי במצרים שהוא היצה"ר וכחות הטומאה (שהיו עמך), לא אשים אליך, כי אני ה' רופאך, שכבר רפאתי אתכם בגיהנם.

*[15:26] He said, "If you diligently heed the voice of the L-rd your G-d and do what is upright in His eyes, carefully listening to all His commandments and observing all His statutes, then none of the sicknesses that I brought on Egypt will I bring upon you, for I am G-d Who heals you."*

**I.e., G-d promises the soul that since it observed the Torah during its life in the physical world and underwent its purification process in Purgatory, it will no longer experience any of the negativity and depression of evil, for it has been cured of all these.**

In other words, the future tense of the verse should be read as the past: "Since you diligently heeded the voice..." etc.

אחר כ"ז סביב (ג"ע יש י"ב) נהרות מים זכים ורוחניים, כנגד י"ב שבטי ישראל, ששם מטבילים כל שבט בנהר (שלו סביב) ג"ע, ששם מתרפאים ומתקררים מהאש של גיהנם ונגעיו: תיש ויבאו אלימה (ושם שתיים עשרה) עינות מים ושבעים תמרים ויחנו שם על המים,

*[15:27] Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water and seventy date palms, and they encamped by the water.*

**There are twelve rivers of pure, spiritual water surrounding Paradise, corresponding to the twelve tribes of Israel. Every soul of each tribe immerses in its respective river in order to be cooled from the fire of Purgatory and healed of its wounds.**

ואחר כל זה חוזרים וטובלים (ונדונין בלהט) החרב המתהפכת, שהוא מדבר סין, וישם מדברה כעדן, שבין אילים ובין סיני,

*[16:1-2] They moved on from Elim, and the entire community of Israel came to the Desert of Sinn, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth of the second month after they had left Egypt. There, in the desert, the entire community of the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron.*

**I.e., after all this, there is one more stage before the soul enters Paradise. It immerses again to be judged in "the flame of the revolving sword," referred to here as the Desert of Sinn.**

When Adam and Eve were banished from Paradise, G-d placed the flame of the revolving sword at the entrance to guard it. This purifying fire is a much more subtle one than that of Purgatory, and is necessary in order to remove the subtle materialism that still remains after the preliminary purification accomplished there.

This may be compared to the two stages of circumcision: after removing the thick foreskin, the thin mucous membrane must be peeled back as well. Neglecting to do this invalidates the circumcision. Similarly, in the "circumcision of the heart" there are two stages as well.

(ובעת שהם) באותו עונש האש הדק, צועקים ואומרים מי יתן מותנו ביד ה' בארץ מצרים בעוה"ז, (ממותנו במדבר) ברעב, כשלא יש תורה הרבה משיגים עונש גדול בדין ההוא של להט החרב. או (מקבלים עונשם),

וכאשר ישיגו המדרגה ההיא ורוצים ליכנס בג"ע, אומר להם

[16:3] *The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the hand of G-d in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread! But you have taken us out to this desert, to starve this entire congregation to death!"*

The soul complains about this more subtle punishment as well. But it undergoes it, and when it passes this stage and wants to enter Paradise, G-d tells it:

הנני ממטיר לכם (לחם מן השמים), בכאן תאכלו הרבה לחם מהתורה שעסקתם בעוה"ז שהוא מזון הנפש, שהוא (רמ"ח איברים) ושס"ה גידים, שהם כולם תרי"ג מצות התורה שהם מלבוש, והתורה עצמה הוא (מזון הנפש). ואם לא עסק אדם בתורה לשמה יומם ולילה, לא יש לו מזון לעולם הנשמות, אפילו שיש לו מלבוש שהם המצות:

[16:4] *"I am going to rain down bread for you from the sky."*

I.e., here in Paradise you will eat a lot of the bread of the Torah that you studied while you were in that world; this Torah is the nourishment of the soul. It is the 248 limbs and 365 sinews of the soul, which are the 613 *mitzvot* that form the soul's garment. The Torah itself—as distinct from the *mitzvot*—is the soul's nourishment. If someone did not occupy himself with the study of Torah day and night in the physical world, he has nothing to eat in the world of the souls, even though he may have something to wear, formed by the *mitzvot* he performed.

ואז בעולם הנשמות (שמות י"ו ה') ויצא העם ולקטו, לוקטים שכרם ומזונם דבר יום ביומו,

*"The people will go out and gather each day's portion..."*

In Paradise, the soul collects its daily reward and nourishment....

ואחר זה כשהולכת הנשמה לג"ע של מעלה, שהוא סיני, לקבל התורה מפי הקב"ה, שהיא מדרגה יותר מעלה, אז ויסעו כל עדת בני ישראל ממדבר סיני, שהיא ג"ע של מטה, ואות היו"ד להשלים סיני, הוא לעלות למעלה אל המדרגה עליונה לג"ע של מעלה.

[17:1] *The entire community of the Israelites moved on from the Desert of Sinn on their journeys, according to the word of G-d.*

I.e., after receiving its reward in the lower level of Paradise, the soul goes on to the upper level of Paradise, referred to as Sinai, in order to receive new levels of the Torah from the mouth of G-d. The letter *yud* is added to *Sinn* to give *Sinai*.

וקודם שיעלו למעלה, יש ג"כ למעלה גיהנם יותר דק דנהר דינור, לשרוף העוונות הדקים כחוט השערה של הצדיקים, שהעונות הקשים כבר נתקנו בגיהנם של מטה,

*They encamped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink....*  
[17:8] *Amalek then came and fought against Israel in Refidim.*

But before it ascends to the upper level of Paradise, there is another type of Purgatory, more subtle than the river of fire, that it must traverse, in order to burn away those "sins" of the righteous that are as tenuous as a thread of hair. The gross sins had already been rectified by the lower Purgatory.

The higher one ascends in spirituality, the more the previous levels he was on appear to be gross and crass. Thus, at a higher level, a person may come to consider a way of thinking or behaving he had previously considered “spiritual” or “good” to be egocentric or “childish.” In order to proceed to the higher perspective of reality, he must rid himself of the lower one, which he now finds embarrassing or even shameful.

This is why G-d judges the righteous “to the breadth of a string of hair”: their higher standard of being makes attitudes or actions that would be normally considered innocuous or even meritorious look depraved in context.

אבל זה הגיהנם נקרא רפידים, רומז על הצדיקים שרפו ידיהם,

**This higher Purgatory is called Refidim, which alludes to the righteous who “whose hand-grasp of the commandments was weak.”**

According to the Talmud,<sup>2</sup> the implication of the name *Refidim* is that there the Jews “loosened their hand-grip on the study of the Torah,” for the word *Refidim* is derived from the root *rafah* (*reish-peih*), which means “loose” or “weak.”

פירוש שלא עשו המצוות כתקנם, אלא עשו אותם ברפיון ידים בלי רצון המצוה עצמה, וכבר נכנסו בגי'ע של מטה, אבל ליכנס לגי'ע של מעלה צריך שתהיה המצוה מאהבה ובחפץ וברצון גדול, ועל הדקות שהוא מקבל עונשה בגיהנם של מעלה, היא עמלק, שהיא מדריגה עליונה מהטומאה, והאש הדק שתמיד עשו מלחמה עם ישראל, והוא עמלק והוא הגיהנם. וילחם בישראל ברפידים, בסיבת רפידים.

**This means that in Refidim the Jews did not perform G-d’s commandments properly, but in laziness and unwillingly. Similarly here, the soul has already gained entrance to the lower level of Paradise, but in order to enter the upper Paradise it must have performed *mitzvot* in the physical world in love, with great desire and will. It receives its punishment for not having done this in this upper Purgatory, which is synonymous with Amalek, the highest level of impurity, the subtle fire that is perennially at war with Israel. Thus, “Amalek then came and fought against Israel in Refidim” means “because of Refidim.”**

Amalek is synonymous with uninspired, unenthusiastic performance of G-d’s commandments, as it is written, “Amalek...who cooled you off on your way [to receive the Torah].<sup>3</sup>

## 2

וַיְהִי בַשְּׁלַח פְּרַעֲזָה אֶת הָעָם וְלֹא נָחַם אֱלֹהִים דֶּרֶךְ אֶרֶץ פְּלִשְׁתִּים כִּי קָרוֹב  
 הוּא כִּי אָמַר אֱלֹהִים פֶּן יִנָּחַם הָעָם בְּרֹאֲתָם מִלְחָמָה וְשָׁבוּ מִצִּיְרֵימָה. וַיִּסַּב  
 אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָעָם דֶּרֶךְ הַמִּדְבָּר יַם סוּף וְחֹמְשִׁים עָלוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ  
 מִצְרַיִם. וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה אֶת עֲצָמוֹת יוֹסֵף עִמּוֹ כִּי הִשְׁבַּע הַשָּׁבִיעַ אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
 לֵאמֹר פֶּקֶד פֶּקֶד יִפְקֹד אֱלֹהִים אֶתְכֶם וְהִעֲלִיתֶם אֶת עֲצָמוֹתַי מִזֶּה אֶתְכֶם.

*And it was, when Pharaoh sent away the people, that G-d did not lead them by way of the Land of the Philistines, for it was close. For G-d said, “Lest the*

2. *Sanhedrin* 106a.

3. Deuteronomy 25:18.

people change their mind when they see war, and return to Egypt.” So G-d led the people around by way of the desert of the Sea of Reeds, and the Israelites went out from Egypt armed. Moses took Joseph’s bones with him, for he had made the Israelites swear, saying, “G-d will certainly redeem you, so take my bones out of here with you.”<sup>4\*\*\*</sup>

לקוטי תורה, פרשת בשלח ויהי לישראל צער, ממה ששלח פרעה את העם ע"ר,		ספר הליקוטים, פרשת בשלח דע כי ויהי הוא לשון צער היה, כששלח את העם ערב רב,
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Sefer HaLikutim and Likutei Torah, parashat Beshalach

**The word for “and it was” presaged trouble for the Jewish people from the fact that “Pharaoh sent away *the people*,” that is, the mixed multitude.**

The word for “and it was” (*vayehi*) is understood by the sages to presage trouble.<sup>5</sup> When the Torah uses the term “the people” instead of the more usual “the Israelites” (*benei Yisrael*), it is often understood to refer to the mixed multitude of gentiles that Moses converted and accompanied the Jews out of Egypt. These converts were moved to convert by the miracles they saw performed for the Jews rather than by sincere devotion to G-d. Since their intentions were not pure, they proved repeatedly to be a source of trouble during the ensuing trek to the Land of Israel.

כי בעבורם לא נחם אלהים לישראל כו' כי קרוב הוא והיו נכנסין מיד לארץ אלא חשש פן ינחם העם הע"ר ושבו מצרימה.		כי בעבורם לא נחם אלהים לישראל וכו'. כי היה קרוב, והיו נכנסים מיד לארץ, אלא חשש פן ינחם העם הערב רב, ובראותם מלחמה ושבו מצרימה,
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**For it was because of them that “G-d did not lead them...,” that is, the Jews, “by way of the Land of the Philistines, for this route was close,” and they would have entered the promised land immediately had they taken it. G-d suspected that “*the people would change their mind*,” i.e., the mixed multitude, “and return to Egypt.”**

וכיון שראה משה שהיו מוכרחין לילך דרך המדבר ים סוף ויהיו צריכין לעבור הים לקח עצמות יוסף עמו לבקוע היום כענין הים ראה וינס,		וכיון שראה מרע"ה כך שהם מוכרחים לילך דרך המדבר ים סוף, והיו צריכים לעבור הים, לקח עצמות יוסף עמו לבקוע ים סוף, כענין הים ראה וינס.
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**When Moses saw that they had to travel “by way of the desert of the Sea of Reeds,” and they would have to cross the sea, he “took Joseph’s bones with him” in order to use them to split the sea, similar to the idea in the verse, “the sea saw and fled.”<sup>6</sup>**

According to the Midrash, it was Joseph’s bones that the sea saw and “fled,” i.e., retreated on either side, leaving a dry path for the Jews to use to cross. It was because Joseph fled when he was tempted by Potiphar’s wife that the sea now fled before *him*.<sup>7</sup>

Rabbi Shalom Sharabi notes that since this verse continues, “for he had made the Israelites swear, saying, ‘G-d will certainly redeem you, so take my bones out of here with you,’” we cannot say that

4. Exodus 13:17-19.

5. *Megilah* 10b.

6. Psalms 114:3.

7. *Bereishit Rabbah* 87:8.

Moses took Joseph's bones because he realized he would have to use them to split the sea, because the Jews were obligated to take his bones in any case. Rather, he says, the Arizal means that the reason Moses took Joseph's bones "with *him*," i.e., keeping them next to him, rather than putting someone else in charge of them, was for this reason.

The Arizal now explains the Kabbalistic dynamics behind this change of plans:

והנה פלשתים הם במקום השערות קווצותיו תלתלים תלתלים, כמנין עשר אלהים דקטנות, כי משם יצאו למעלה	והנה פלשתים הם במקום השערות, שכן כתיב קווצותיו תלתלים, כמנין עשר אלהים דקטנות, כי משם יצאו למעלה
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**Now, the Philistines are situated spiritually in the location of the hairs referred to in the phrase "his locks are curled."<sup>8</sup> They are alluded to by the combined numerical value of the ten Names *Elokim* of constricted consciousness, from which these hairs issued, above in the spiritual realms.**

Hair is seen as a manifestation of the brain's excess "light" (mental energy). As this excess energy passes out of the brain and metamorphoses into hair, it undergoes an extreme qualitative contraction (*tzimtzum*); hair, together with nails, is the most lifeless part of the body, since it can be cut painlessly.

The Arizal states elsewhere<sup>9</sup> that the hair on the head of *Arich Anpin* is white (or blonde), the hair on the head of *Z'eir Anpin* is black, and the hair on the head of *Nukva* is red. The verse applying to the hair of *Z'eir Anpin* is "His locks are curled, black as a raven."

He further states that there are three types of hair on *Z'eir Anpin's* head: long [side]locks (*kevutzot*), medium-length hairs (*nimin*), and short hairs (*sa'arot*). These three types of hair originate in the three parts of the brain, which in turn correspond to the three components of the intellect.

The long *kevutzot* originate in *da'at* (which is centered in the brain stem or cerebellum). *Da'at* comprises the origin of the *midot*, which, as we have seen previously, are manifest principally as five states of *chesed* and five states of *gevurah*. There are thus ten contracted states of excess mental *da'at*-energy that emerge from *da'at*. Inasmuch as the Name *Elokim* signifies contraction (*tzimtzum*), these ten contracted states are manifest as ten Names *Elokim*.

The word for "lock" is *taltal*. The numerical value of this word is 860:

*Taltal*: *tav-lamed-tav-lamed* = 400 + 30 + 400 + 30 = 860.

The numerical value of the Name *Elokim* is 86 (*alef-lamed-hei-yud-mem* = 1 + 30 + 5 + 10 + 40 = 86), and 10 x 86 = 860.

The addition two letters of the plural, "locks" (*taltalim*), are *yud-mem* (10 + 40 = 50), alluding to the 50 letters used to spell ten Names *Elokim*.

The medium-length hairs (*nimin*) come from *binah* and the short hairs (*sa'arot*) from *chochmah*. The short hairs function as the encompassing light (*or makif*) around *Z'eir Anpin* itself; the medium hairs function as the encompassing light around the *partzuf* of *Leah*, and the long hairs function as the encompassing light around the *partzuf* of *Rachel*.

8. Song of Songs 5:11.

9. *Sha'ar HaKavanot, Tzitzit* 5.

## The Hair of Z'eir Anpin

type of hair	origin	encompassing light
short hair ( <i>sa'arot</i> )	<i>chochmah</i>	of Z'eir Anpin
medium-length hair ( <i>nimin</i> )	<i>binah</i>	of Leah
long sidelocks ( <i>kevutzot</i> )	<i>da'at</i>	of Rachel

The Philistines personified over-indulgence in the sensuality of this world. This is alluded to by their name, which is derived from the root *pei-lamed-shin*, meaning “breaking through” or “overdoing it.” In the realm of holiness, the Philistines signify excessive joy in the service of G-d, breaking all boundaries of propriety. This is generally frowned upon, because there is always a danger that excessive expression of joy – even in a holy context – can degenerate into “joy for joy’s sake,” i.e., for the enjoyment of joy itself, and this is a form of self-indulgence and thus evil. (This is why Michal rebuked her husband, King David, for rejoicing excessively when he brought the Ark of the Covenant back from the Philistines.<sup>10</sup> Michal was wrong because King David was exceedingly pious, but her supposition was essentially correct.)<sup>11</sup>

Thus, inasmuch as both the Philistines and hair express the idea of excess, the Philistines are situated spiritual proximate to the location of hair. Indeed, elsewhere,<sup>12</sup> the Arizal points out that the numerical value of the word for “Philistines” (*Pelishtim*) is also 860.

*Pelishtim*: *pei-lamed-shin-tav-yud-mem* = 80 + 30 + 300 + 400 + 10 + 40 = 860.

דהוּוּ בַמְקוֹם לֵאמֹר לְמַעַלָּה, וְכִבֵּר יָדַעַת שֶׁהֵם הִיוּ | וַיְדוּעַ שֶׁהֵן הִי מִבְּחַיֵּי לֵאמֹר  
מִבְּחַיֵּי לֵאמֹר,

**It is known that the Philistines derived from the *partzuf* of Leah.**

The *partzuf* of Leah is situated opposite the upper half of Z'eir Anpin, particularly opposite his head or intellect, for Leah signifies thought, as opposed to Rachel, who signifies speech. Although both thought and speech serve and express the intellect and the emotions, thought is used more for intellect and speech more for the emotions.

As we saw above, the medium-length hair of Z'eir Anpin originates in *binah* of Z'eir Anpin and forms the encompassing light around the *partzuf* of Leah. It is evidently these hairs that serve as the thematic connection between the Philistines and Leah. The inner dimension of *binah* is joy: joy accompanies the full integration of the insight of *chochmah* into the individual’s overall worldview, revitalizing his life, and this is accomplished by *binah*. As a result of this joy, the individual can have an emotional response to his new intellect, as alluded to in the phrase, “the mother of the children is joyful,”<sup>13</sup> which can be read, “the mother [*binah*, *Ima*] of the children [the *midot*] is joy.”

וְעַכְשָׁיו הִיוּ הוֹלְכִים לְאֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל דְּהֵיִינוּ רַחֵל, | וְעַכְשָׁיו הוֹלְכִים לְאֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל דְּהֵיִינוּ רַחֵל

**But the Israelites were now proceeding toward the Land of Israel, which is associated with the *partzuf* of Rachel.**

Thus, just like a person has to think before he speaks, the Jews had to pass through the *partzuf* of Leah (manifest in the Land of the Philistines) before entering the *partzuf* of Rachel (manifest in the Land of Israel).

10. 2 Samuel 20.

11. *Or HaTorah, Beshalach*, pp. 369-370.

12. *Likutei Torah* on 1 Samuel.

13. Psalms 113:9.

וחשש שאם ילכו במקום לאה אשר שם השערות, | וחשש שאם ילכו במקום לאה כי שם השערות ישובו  
 ישובו למצרים, דשם ג"כ הוּיָא בחינת מצרים, ויתאחזו | למצרים דשם הוא ג"כ בחינת מצרים ויתאחזו שם  
 שם,

G-d feared that if they would go through the place of *Leah*, where there was hair, they would return to Egypt. For the territory of *Leah* is also a type of “Egypt,” and perhaps they would become entangled and caught there.

לכך הסבם דרך המדבר ים סוף, דהיינו רחל דהוי | לכן הסיבם דרך המדבר י"ם דהיינו רחל דהוי סופא  
 סופא דדרגין, | דדרגין

He therefore led them around “by way of the desert of the Sea of Reeds,” that is, via *Rachel*, who is the “end of the levels.”

The word for “Reeds” is *suf*, which is spelled exactly the same way as the word for “end,” *sof*. *Rachel* is the *partzuf* of *malchut*, which is the last and lowest of the ten *sefirot* and is therefore termed in the *Zohar*, “the end of all levels.” Thus, the Sea of Reeds expressed *Rachel*.

ומשה שהוא מבחינת יסוד דאבא, לא היה יכול ליכנס | ומשה שהי מבחינת יסוד דאבא לא הי יכול ליכנס  
 ברחל, אם לא ע"י יסוד דז"א שהוא יוסף, | לא"י שהוא רחל אם לא ע"י יסוד ז"א שהוא יוסף

Now Moses, who personified *yesod* of *Abba*, could only enter the Land of Israel, which expressed *Rachel*, by being channeled through *yesod* of *Z'eir Anpin*, which was personified by Joseph.

Moses personified *yesod* of *Abba*. While *yesod* of *Abba* can couple with *Leah*, for they are at the same level, it is too high to couple with *Rachel*. It therefore has to descend to the level of *Z'eir Anpin* and be vested in it in order to couple with *Rachel*. We have seen previously that Joseph—the paradigm of sexual purity—personified *yesod* of *Z'eir Anpin*.

ולכן ויקח משה את עצמות יוסף עמו. פי משה דהוי | לכן אמר ויקח משה את עצמות יוסף עמו משה דהוי  
 יסוד דאבא, נתלבש ביוסף דהיינו יסוד ז"א, ובוה הלך | יסוד דאבא נתלבש ביוסף דהיינו יסוד ז"א ובוה הלך  
 בסופא דדרגין ליכנס ברחל. | בסופא דדרגין ליכנס ברחל.

Scripture therefore states that “Moses took Joseph’s bones with him.” This means that Moses, who personified *yesod* of *Abba*, became vested in Joseph, who personified *yesod* of *Z'eir Anpin*. In this way, he was able to descend to “the end of all levels,” i.e., to enter *Rachel*.

At this point, it was still assumed that Moses would enter the Land of Israel.

### 3

וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה אֶת עֲצֵמוֹת יוֹסֵף עִמּוֹ כִּי הִשְׁבַּע הַשְּׁבִיעַ אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר  
 פֶּקֶד יִפְקֹד אֱלֹהִים אֶתְכֶם וְהֵעֲלִיתֶם אֶת עֲצֵמוֹתַי מִזֶּה אִתְּכֶם.

Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for [Joseph] had adjured the children of Israel, saying: “G-d will deliver you, and you will bring up my bones from here with you.”<sup>14</sup>

14. Exodus 13:19.

שער הפוסקים, פרשת בשלח

כבר ידעת מ"ש רז"ל בפסוק לכו אל יוסף אשר יאמר לכם תעשו, שגזר עליהם שימולו,

*Sha'ar HaPesukim, parashat Beshalach*

**As you know, our sages tell us that when Pharaoh told the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph and do whatever he tells you,"<sup>15</sup> Joseph required them to circumcise themselves.<sup>16</sup>**

After storing up food during the seven years of plenty, the Egyptians found that when the years of famine began, it had all rotted. They went to Pharaoh, who advised them to go to Joseph and ask him for food. Joseph told them that he would distribute food to them only if they circumcised themselves. Pharaoh advised the Egyptians to comply with his demand, for "he [evidently] decreed that the produce should rot; what happens if he decrees that we should die?"

וגייר כמה נפשות ומל אותם, והם הערב רב שעלו עם ישראל ממצרים.

**In so doing, he converted a number of souls and therefore circumcised them. These were the "mixed multitude" that left Egypt with the Jewish people.**

When the Jews left Egypt, "a mixed multitude also left with them."<sup>17</sup> These were converts from a number of peoples – including Egyptians.<sup>18</sup>

ומשה גם הוא רצה לקרבם ולהכניסם תחת כנפי השכינה,

**Moses also wanted to accept them and take them in under the wings of the Shechinah.<sup>19</sup>**

ולפי שיוסף התחיל במצוה זאת, והיה העיקר הראשון לגיירם, לכן לקחו משה עמו.

**Therefore, since Joseph began this deed and was the first one to convert them to Judaism, it is appropriate that Moses took him with him personally.**

In the Talmud,<sup>20</sup> the sages point out that "whereas all the [other] Jews were occupied with the spoil [of Egypt], Moses occupied himself with the commandments," i.e., with fulfilling Joseph's wish to be exhumed and taken to the holy land. The Arizal gives a thematic explanation of why this was so.

#### 4

וַיִּקַּח שֵׁשׁ מֵאוֹת רֶכֶב בְּחֹזֶר וְכָל רֶכֶב מִצְרַיִם וְשָׂלְשָׁם עַל כָּלֹ.

*Pharaoh took six hundred choice chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, manned by militia.<sup>21</sup>*

15. Genesis 41:55.

16. *Bereishit Rabbah* 91:5.

17. Exodus 12:38.

18. Rashi *ad loc.*

19. See Rashi on Exodus 32:7.

20. *Sotah* 13a.

21. Exodus 14:7.

לקוטי תורה, פרשת בשלח  
הנה שר מצרים הביא כל מרכבה שלו לקטרג

*Likutei Torah, parashat Beshalach*

Mystically, this means that **the patron angel of Egypt summoned his entire chariot to prosecute the Jewish people.**

Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, was the earthly manifestation of the “guardian angel” of Egypt, the spiritual distillation of the evil(s) embodied in Egypt. The imagery of the chariot (Hebrew: *rechev*) evokes that of the celestial chariot (*merkavah*, from the same root *reish-kaf-beit*) Ezekiel saw in his famous prophetic vision. There, the “chariot” depicts the array of spiritual forces of holiness that were departing from reality as the Divine presence was being banished from Earth with the destruction of the Temple. Here, the earthly chariots of Egypt that Pharaoh summoned represent the array of evil forces the patron angel of Egypt summoned to do battle with the Jewish people.

והתיר נגד ויק

There were **six hundred angels in order to opposed the six extremities.**

The six hundred “choice chariots” correspond to the evil angels (or forces) that opposed the six holy *midot* (i.e., *chesed* to *yesod*). These inter-include all ten *sefirot*, and these sub-*sefirot* again inter-include, giving  $6 \times 10 \times 10 = 600$  sub-sub-*sefirot*.

וכל רכב מצרים נגד המיל

**“All the chariots of Egypt” opposed *malchut*.**

“All the chariots of Egypt” means all the other, non-choice chariots.<sup>22</sup> Perhaps the words “of Egypt” are taken to mean “contracted,” indicating a lower-grade evil force. Since *malchut*, as we know, does not possess its own intrinsic content, the force evil had to muster to battle it did not need to be as intense. Still, “all the [other] chariots of Egypt” presumably numbered more than the “six hundred choice chariots,” in which case we could infer that although *malchut* embodies less qualitative intensity, it does embody more quantitative power.

ושלישים על כולו נגד ג"ר דהיינו מוחין הנחלקין לשלישים

**“Manned by militia” opposed the first three *sefirot*, i.e., the intellect, which is subdivided into thirty aspects.**

The Hebrew for “militia” (*shalishim*) can be understood to mean “thirty” (*sheloshim*).<sup>23</sup> The words for “manned by” (*al kulo*) literally mean “over all of them.” Thus, this phrase refers to the thirty that govern the *midot* and *malchut*, which are obviously the intellect. As we know, intellect comprises the three *sefirot* of *chochmah-binah-da'at*, which by virtue of their inter-inclusion comprise in turn thirty sub-*sefirot*.

We have seen previously that higher levels of inter-inclusion (by tens, hundreds, etc.) are associated with higher orders on the *sefirotic* tree. Here, the opposite is the case.

והקב"ה הסיר אופן מרכבותיו.

22. Rashi *ad loc.*

23. Especially since there is no *yud* between the *lamed* and the second *shin*, allowing the word to be vocalized as the word for “thirty.”

**But the Holy One, blessed be He, “removed the wheels of his chariots.”<sup>1</sup>**

G-d lured the Egyptians into the sea, and they were followed by the pillar of fire which boiled the sea water, causing the wheels of the Egyptian’s chariots to fall off.<sup>2</sup>



ספר הליקוטים, פרשת בשלח

פירוש, פרעה לקח שש מאות רכב, פי גרע מספר ששה ממלת רכב, ונשאר בחויר, דהיינו רייו של קדושה.

*Sefer HaLikutim, parashat Beshalach*

**Another interpretation: Pharaoh took deducted the number 6 from the numerical value of the word for “chariot” (*rechev*, 222) leaving the numerical value of the word for “choice” (*bachur*, 216) in holiness.**

The phrase “Pharaoh took six hundred choice chariots” can be read “And Pharaoh took six from the letter[s of the word] chariot, [leaving] choice.” This is because the word for “hundred” (*mei’ot*) can be read “from the letter” (*mei-ot*).

*Rechev*: *reish-chaf-beit* = 200 + 20 + 2 = 222.

*Bachur*: *beit-chet-vav-reish* = 2 + 8 + 6 + 200 = 216.

והקביה גרע לו אות אחת, וקרא בו יריה בים. וכתב ייהוה יילחם לכם,

**G-d then subtracted another 1, leaving the numerical value of “cast” (215), which became: “He cast the horse and its rider into the sea.”<sup>3</sup>**

The word for “cast” is *yarah*: *yud-reish-hei* = 10 + 200 + 5 = 215.

The phrase quoted is from the first verse of the Song of the Sea, which the Jew people sang upon seeing the miraculous destruction of the Egyptians (and the evil they embodied) at the sea. By subtracting 1 from the power Pharaoh left in holiness, G-d caused his downfall, beating him, so to speak, at his own game.

The significance of the number 216 will become apparent presently.

רית ילוי, שהוא חותם שם קדוש, אל פני שור שבמרכבה, שני של שם עיב שמות היוצאים מן ויסע ויבא ויט.

**The initials of the words for “G-d will fight for you”<sup>4</sup> are *yud-lamed-yud*. This is the holy seal of the face of the ox in the Divine chariot, the second of the 72 Names derived from the three verses “He moved...,” “He came...,” and “He stretched...”**

“G-d will fight for you”: *YKVK yilachem lachem*.

There are three consecutive verses in this *parashah* that describe G-d’s power as manifest just before He split the Sea of Reeds, which the Jewish people passed through on dry land while the Egyptians were drowned:

1. Exodus 14:25.

2. Rashi on Exodus 14:24 and 25.

3. Exodus 15:1.

4. Exodus 14:14.

וַיֵּסַע מִלֶּאךָּ הָאֱלֹהִים הַהַלֵּךְ לִפְנֵי מַחֲנֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֵּלֶךְ מֵאַחֲרֵיהֶם וַיֵּסַע עִמּוֹד  
הָעֲנַן מִפְּנֵיהֶם וַיַּעֲמֹד מֵאַחֲרֵיהֶם. וַיָּבֵא בֵּין מַחֲנֵה מִצְרַיִם וּבֵין מַחֲנֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל  
וַיְהִי הָעֲנַן וְהַחֹשֶׁךְ וַיֹּאֲרֵ אֶת הַלַּיְלָה וְלֹא קָרַב זֶה אֶל זֶה כָּל הַלַּיְלָה. וַיֵּט מֹשֶׁה  
אֶת יָדוֹ עַל הַיָּם וַיֵּלֶךְ ה' אֶת הַיָּם בְּרוּחַ קָדִים עֲזָה כָּל הַלַּיְלָה וַיִּשָּׂם אֶת הַיָּם  
לְחִרְבָּה וַיִּבְקְעוּ הַמַּיִם.

*The angel of G-d who had been going ahead of the camp of Israel now moved and went behind them, and the pillar of cloud went from in front of them and stood behind them. Thus [the pillar of cloud] came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel, making it cloud and darkness [to the Egyptians], but it gave light by night [to the Jews], so that the one came not near the other all the night. Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and G-d drove the sea back with a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land; thus the waters were divided.<sup>5</sup>*

In the *Zohar*<sup>6</sup> it is stated that these three verses refer in sequence to the Divine attributes of loving-kindness (*chesed*), severity (*gevurah*), and mercy (*tiferet*). The harmonious blending of these three principle emotive attributes forms the basic paradigm of how G-d relates to the world. Thus, they together form a composite “Name” of G-d, since a “name” is a means by which one is made known to others, i.e., manifests his attributes.

In addition, each of these three verses contains 72 letters, an obviously rare phenomenon. The letters of these three verses can be arranged as 72 triplets of letters, one letter of each triplet from each verse. We are then taught in the *Zohar* that if we reverse the order of the letters in the middle set, the 72 triplets become 72 “Names” of G-d. In this configuration, the *Zohar* states, the first verse is to be written in its proper order, since it represents G-d’s loving-kindness, or a direct revelation of G-d’s goodness. The second verse is to be written in reverse order, from the last letter to the first, since it represents G-d’s severity, which is an indirect revelation of His goodness. Although *tiferet* is a blend of both *chesed* and *gevurah*, the third verse is not to be written half in the proper order and half in reverse order, as one might expect. There are two reasons for this: (1) in *tiferet*, *chesed* dominates over *gevurah*, and (2) as the ideal blend of *chesed* and *gevurah*, *tiferet* is a direct revelation of G-d’s goodness and glory rather than an indirect one.<sup>7</sup>

The following chart is read horizontally, from the upper right to lower left corner. The first letters of every triplet are taken sequentially from the first verse, the second letters in reverse order from the second verse, and the third letters sequentially from the third verse.

5. Exodus 14:19-21.

6. 2:51b.

7. This array may be seen, *inter alia*, in the standard editions of the *Zohar*, volume 2, p. 270a.

והו	ילי	סיט	עלם	מהש	ללה	אכא	כהת
הזי	אלד	לאו	ההע	יזל	מבה	הרי	הקם
לאו	כלי	לזו	פהל	נלך	ייו	מלה	חהו
נתה	האא	ירת	שאה	ריי	אום	לכב	ושר
יחו	להח	כוק	מנד	אני	חעם	רהע	ייו
ההה	מיכ	וול	ילה	סאל	ערי	עשל	מיה
והו	דני	החש	עמם	ננא	נית	מבה	פוי
נמם	ייל	הרח	מצר	ומב	יהה	ענו	מחי
דמב	מנק	איע	חבו	ראה	יבמ	היי	מום

The Name we are concerned with is the second of the 72. It presumably is associated with *gevurah* since it is the second. The four faces of the beasts that carried the Divine throne in Ezekiel's vision were that of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle. The lion-face signified *chesed*, the ox-face *gevurah*, the eagle-face *tiferet* (and the *midot* below it), and the man-face *malchut*. Thus, this Name (*yud-lamed-yud*) and the ox-face are related by virtue of their mutual association with *gevurah*.

אלא שבפסוק זה נתעלו היודי"ן, שהם סוד החסדים, ונשארה הלמ"ד למטה, סוד אימא, דדינין מתערין מינה ללחום במצרים.

**The difference is that in the initials from this verse, the *yud*'s are ascendant. They indicate the force of *chesed*. The *lamed* is left to be last. It indicates *Ima*, the source of judgment that battles with Egypt.**

In the verse from which these initials are taken, the order of the initials is *yud-yud-lamed*. Thus, although this Name indicates *gevurah*, it is a *gevurah* motivated by *chesed*. *Yud* is associated with *chesed* because when the Name *Havayah* is spelled out with *yud*'s, its numerical value is 72, the numerical value of *chesed* (*chet-samech-dalet* = 8 + 60 + 4 = 72).

The *lamed* originally was in the middle verse (and column), which as we said, is associated with *gevurah*. The *lamed* is associated with *Ima* since in its form it towers above the other letters, just as *binah*, embodying the intellect in general – presides over the *midot*.<sup>8</sup> The intellect is the three *sefirot* of *chochmah-binah-da'at*, which inter-include to produce 30 sub-*sefirot*, as we mentioned above. 30 is the numerical value of the letter *lamed*.

ואז רחמים לישראל, כדכתיב נגוף למצרים ורפוא לישראל.

**This manifestation of *gevurah* is followed by a manifestation of mercy, as it is written, "smiting Egypt and healing Israel."<sup>9</sup>**

ואתם תחרישון, אמר שישתוקו, כי לא יאות להם לעורר פני שור, בהיותם עתידים לחטוא בהם בעגל, ששמטו אחד מטטרמילון שבמרום,

The verse continues: "...and you will be silent." G-d told them to be silent since it was not proper that they awaken the face of the ox, inasmuch as they would later sin by worshipping the Golden Calf. They thereby unhitched one of the four

8. *Tikunei Zohar* 55 (89a).

9. *Zohar* 2:36a, based on Isaiah 19:22.

**animals of the chariot.**<sup>10</sup>

It would not be proper for the Jewish people to invoke the power signified by the ox when they themselves would misuse this manifestation later on. In the zodiac, the bull (Taurus) follows the ram (Aries). The exodus took place in the month of Nisan, the zodiacal sign of which is Aries. The Passover sacrifice was a ram; by sacrificing it, the Jewish people subdued the astrological power ascendent at that time. The mixed multitude, seeing that the sign of Aires had been overcome, thought to invoke the next icon, the bull.<sup>11</sup>

By abusing the ox, the Jewish people neutralized, so to speak, its power. The Midrash uses the imagery of a four-horsed chariot, one of whose horses has been unhitched. Since they weakened G-d's power through their sin, it was not proper that they try to invoke that very power, G-d's *gevurah*, to judge the Egyptians.

אלא איהו דידיה עביד על הים ברחמי שמים, שלא נידונו ישראל אלא לפי מעשיהם של אותה שעה,

**Rather, G-d acted with mercy at the sea, and judged the Jews only according to their deeds at that time.**

והיינו דכתיב ואתם תחרישון חסר יו"ד, קרי ביה נח"ת שו"ר, כדי להשתדל בהצלחתם:

**Thus, the word for "will be silent" is written without an expected *yud*, so that it may be read, "the ox descended," i.e., in order to assist in their salvation.**

In fact, in our text of the Bible, the word for "will be silent" (*tacharishun*) is written with a *yud*. Ignoring the *yud*, however, the word can be seen as a permutation of the two words for "ox" (*shor*) and "descended" (*nachat*):

*Tacharishun*: ta-chet-reish-(yud)-shin-vav-nun.

*Shor*: shin-vav-reish.

*Nachat*: nun-chet-ta.

## ❧ 5 ❧

וַיֹּאמֶר מִצְרַיִם אָנוּסִים מִפְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי ה' גֹּלְחָם לָהֶם בְּמִצְרַיִם.

*Egypt said, "I must flee from the presence of Israel, for G-d [Havayah] is fighting for them against Egypt."*<sup>12</sup>

ספר הליקוטים, פרשת בשלח

כבר ידעת, כי פרעה כל יניקתו היה מן מוחין דקטנות שמות אלהים,

*Sefer HaLikutim, parashat Beshalach*

**As you know, Pharaoh derived sustenance entirely from immature Divine**

10. *Shemot Rabbah* 43:8.

11. The Egyptians worshipped the ram-headed god Khnum as the creator. He was also one of the gods of the Nile. There was also an Egyptian bull-god, Apis, an incarnation of the creation-god Ptah. "The priests at Memphis kept a real bull that was thought to be the god's living image. The bull lived in luxurious accommodations near the temple of Ptah, and at regular festivals the Egyptian upper classes were allowed to come and view the bull. When the bull died, it was mummified in a solemn ceremony and buried in underground catacombs" (Philip Wilkinson, *DK Illustrated Dictionary of Mythology* [London: Dorling Kindersley, 1998], pp. 31, 35).

12. Exodus 14:25.

consciousness (*mochin d'katnut*), that of the Names *Elokim*,

ובשם הוי"ה שהוא גדלות לא היה יודע, בסוד (שמות ה' ו') לא ידעתי את ה'.

While of the Name *Havayah*, which signifies expanded, mature consciousness, he knew nothing. As it is written, "I have not known G-d *Havayah*."<sup>13</sup>

והם היו סבורין כי אצבע אלהים, ולכן לא היו חוששין, כי לא יהיה להם כליה,

The Egyptians reasoned that the plagues were nothing more than the finger of *Elokim*, and therefore were not worried, because they felt that their existence was not threatened.

ועתה ראו שהנהגה הוא ע"י שם הוי"ה, אמר אנוסה וכו', כי הוא בשם הוי"ה נלחם במצרים, לכן אמר לשון הוי"ה, ולא לשון אלהים.

Now, however, at the sea, they saw that events were being conducted by the Name *Havayah*, so therefore Pharaoh said, "I must flee from the presence of Israel, for G-d *Havayah* is fighting for them against Egypt]."<sup>14</sup> G-d was fighting the Egyptians with His Name *Havayah*. This is why the Name *Havayah* is used here, and not the Name *Elokim*.

## 6

וַיִּט מֹשֶׁה אֶת יָדוֹ עַל הַיָּם

*Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea,*<sup>15</sup>

ספר הליקוטין, פרשת בשלח

דרש הרב זלה"ה כמהר"ר חיים ויטאל בענין קריעת ים סוף, ואמר,

*Sefer HaLikutim, parashat Beshalach*

**Rabbi Chaim Vital expounded on the Splitting of the Sea, and said:**

למה נקרא ים סוף, אמר בפסוק ולמקוה המים קרא ימים, ולא ים אחד.

Why was this sea called "the Sea of Reeds?" And why does Scripture describe G-d's creation of the oceans by saying "He called the gathering of water 'seas'"<sup>16</sup> and not "the sea," in the singular?

The Sea of Reeds was presumably not the only sea in the world with reeds in it, so why was it distinguished this way? In the creation story, G-d is described as gathering the water into seas by causing variations in the elevation of the continents. The water is described as being gathered together into one place, which is then called a "gathering of water," in the singular. Why, then, is this one "gathering of water" immediately called "seas," in the plural?

13. Exodus 5:2.

14. Exodus 14:25.

15. Exodus 14:21.

16. Genesis 1:10.

דע, כי מצד ה"י שבשם משם בא למקוה, ה' עילאה הנק' ים אוקיינוס,

**Know that the supernal water originates in the *yud* of the Name *Havayah*, and from there it issues to the "gathering" of water, i.e., the first, upper *hei*, which is therefore referred to as "the ocean sea."**

"Water" is mystically understood to refer to the flow of Divine energy or beneficence. The source of this is the *yud* of the Name *Havayah*, which indicates the *sefirah* of *chochmah*. The first "repository" of this "water" is the first *hei* of the Name, which indicates *binah*.

וזה הים מוציא ים אחר הנק' ים סוף, ה' תתאה,

**This sea produces a second sea, which is known as "the Sea of Reeds," i.e., the second, lower *hei*.**

The *sefirah* of *binah* produces the *sefirah* of *malchut*. Both *binah* and *malchut* are "feminine" principles, recipients of the output of the "masculine" principles of *chochmah* and the *midot*, respectively.

The words usually translated as "Red Sea" (*yam suf*) really mean "Reed Sea," and can also be read as if they were vocalized *Yam Sof*, meaning "Sea of the End." The "end" is the final *sefirah*, *malchut*, which descends into the lower worlds, i.e., the lower levels of Divine consciousness. Relative to its native environment, these lower levels of consciousness are "immature" or "constricted."

ובא לה ע"י הנחלים ההולכים אל הים וכו'.

**"Water" reaches this lower sea via "the rivers that run into the sea."<sup>17</sup>**

These are the *midot*, the six *sefirot* from *chesed* to *yesod*.

ופרעה הרשע כפר בשם ההויה, ואמר מי ה' וכו',

**Pharaoh the wicked denied the reality of the Name *Havayah*, saying "Who is G-d [*Havayah*] that I should listen to Him?"<sup>18</sup>**

Pharaoh's statement is usually understood to mean that he recognized the Name *Elokim*, i.e., the Divinity within nature, but did not wish to acknowledge transcendent Divinity as indicated by the Name *Havayah*. Here, Pharaoh's statement is taken to refer to the specifics of Divine revelation. Pharaoh denied the hierarchy of Divine forces, specifically the selflessness of *chochmah* that is prerequisite to any new influx of Divine revelation.

ורצה למלוך בכיפה ולהיותו ראש,

**He wanted to be the absolute ruler and head of everything.**

בהיות שהיה במדרגת זנב, כי מן הממלכות היא שפלה.

**In truth, however, he was on the level of the tail, for Egypt is "the lowest of the kingdoms."<sup>19</sup>**

This phrase is taken from Ezekiel's prophecy concerning the fate of the Egyptians in the period after

17. Ecclesiastes 1:7.

18. Exodus 5:2

19. par. Ezekiel 29:15

the destruction of the first Temple. In this prophecy, Egypt and its ruler, Pharaoh, are taken to task for their extreme haughtiness and assured that they will be properly humbled.

ורצה להיות ראש מצד המים, כי לי יאורי וכו',

**He wanted to be the head by virtue of his association with water, for he said, “My Nile river is mine, and I have made myself.”<sup>20</sup>**

Egypt’s idolatry was rooted in its geography. The annual flooding of the Nile gave the people the impression that nature was the source of their prosperity, and there was no need to acknowledge a G-d who demanded moral behavior in return for material reward. Both the Pharaoh of the Exodus and the Pharaoh of Ezekiel’s time exhibited this self-assurance in its extreme – the complete denial of a transcendent, moral G-d, enshrining instead the ideal of the natural rule of the strong over the helpless weak. For these Pharaoh, their own strength was their god, and they worshipped themselves.

כי היאור הוא ראש הדי נהרות היוצאים מג'ע, ובוה נתגאה ואמר בענין המים לא יוכל לי, כי אני הראש.

**He was able to delude himself this way because the Nile is the first of the four rivers that issue from the Garden of Eden. He therefore took pride in this and presumed that inasmuch as he embodied the primacy of all water, G-d would not be able to prevail over him in any matter connected with water.**

In the description of the Garden of Eden, we read: “A river issued from Eden to water the garden, and from there it divided into four heads. The name of the first was Pishon...”<sup>21</sup> The original river went underground and resurfaced in four places,<sup>22</sup> becoming the four great rivers of the ancient Near East. The first was the Pishon, which is synonymous with the Nile.<sup>23</sup>

Pharaoh knew that the Nile was the first of the four rivers that issued from the primordial river of Eden, and thus felt that G-d had given over to Egypt – and to him, as its ruler – the fountainhead of material bounty in this world. Since he was in control, he felt that he was in G-d’s stead, or that he must be a manifestation of G-d Himself.

וג'כ היה זנב, כי זנב כל הים הוא ים סוף,

**But he failed to realize that he was also the tail of the water, for the tail of all seas was the Sea of Reeds.**

He failed to understand that even if his was the most prosperous and advanced civilization in the world, this was only on the material plane. The presence of the Sea of Reeds next to the Nile was meant as a constant reminder that material bounty is only the lowest level of creation; that spirituality and Divinity are the main purposes of creation, not the abundance of creature comforts.

בסוד נחש זנבא בפומיה,

**This is the significance of the fact that the snake puts its tail in its mouth.**

In Ezekiel’s prophecy, Pharaoh is referred to as “the great serpent crouching in its river.”<sup>24</sup> Thus,

20. Ibid. 29:3.

21. Genesis 2:10-11.

22. *Hitva'aduyot* 5745, vol. 1, p. 425.

23. Rashi on Genesis 2:11.

24. Ezekiel 29:3.

Pharaoh personified the primordial snake.

The mouth should properly utter words of Divine wisdom. But when the tail, the lowest level of the body, is placed in the mouth, the mouth is misused to utter words of “immature,” constricted consciousness, i.e., awareness of Divinity only as it is expressed in creation and nature.

This elevation of material consciousness to the status properly reserved for true Divine consciousness, i.e., awareness of G-d as outside and unbound by the laws and limitations of nature, is the essence of the primordial snake.

In the *Zohar*,<sup>25</sup> the imagery of the snake putting its tail in its mouth is used to illustrate the sin of “the evil tongue,” i.e., slander, a gross misuse of the power of speech. People commit this sin when material consciousness gets the better of them. As is explained in the *Tanya*,<sup>26</sup> those who give their bodies preeminence over their souls see only the outer shell of their fellow man, which differentiates between people, and are oblivious to the inner souls. They thus fall into the sin of hatred, which leads to slander.

א"כ היה ראש וזנב, וז"ס יכרת ה' ביום ההוא ראש וזנב וכו'.

**This being the case, Pharaoh was both a head and a tail, in the idiom of the verse, “G-d will cut off from Israel both the head and the tail...on one day.”<sup>27</sup>**

Both Pharaoh and the primordial snake are metaphors for the evil inclination. The verse quoted is part of a messianic prophecy. Although contextually, the “head” and “tail” in this verse refer respectively to the people’s corrupt leaders and evildoers, they are here taken to refer to the attributes of haughtiness and gross materialism. In a deeper sense, both interpretations are the same, since haughtiness corrupts the leaders and gross materialism is the source of most misdeeds.

ורמו ג"כ ענין הנחש שמקודם היה זנב, והאדם ראש, ונתהפך ונעשה הנחש ראש והאדם זנב.

**This also alludes to the primordial snake. Originally, he was the tail and Adam was the head, but because of the primordial sin this was inverted and the snake became the head and Adam the tail.**

Adam here personifies the good inclination, or Divine consciousness. Sin consists of reversing the hierarchy between Divine and material consciousness.

וז"ס הוא ישופך ראש ואתה תשופנו עקב,

**This is the mystical meaning of the verse, “He will hit you on the head and you will bit him in the heel.”<sup>28</sup>**

Man hits the snake on the head because the snake has usurped man’s role as the leader; the snake bites the heel because by sinning man has become the heel/tail instead of the head.

ולכן הנחש עושה עיקר הזנב שנושאו על הראש, ומלחכת העפר.

**For the same reason, the snake gives preeminence to the tail, carrying it above his head, and licks the dirt.**

25. 3:205b.

26. ch. 32.

27. Isaiah 9:14.

28. Genesis 3:15.

He puts his head in the dirt instead of his tail. He thus embodies the upside down order caused by sin.

ופרעה היה דמות הנחש, שהוא התנין הגדול,

### Pharaoh was the image of the snake; he was “the great serpent.”

This idiom is found in Ezekiel’s prophecy cited above.

ולכן חרה אף ה' בפרעה, וכנגד בחינת שמו דהוי"ה שכפר בה, באותיותיו ממש נפרע ממנו, שהוא היאור, והפכו לדם.

**Therefore G-d was angry with Pharaoh, and He exacted retribution from him—i.e., from the Nile river, changing it to blood—using the very letters of the Name *Havayah* that he denied.**

מצד היו"ד, הכהו עשר מכות, והתחיל במה שנעשה ראש שהוא היאור והפכו דם.

**With the *yud* of His Name, whose numerical value is 10, He struck him with ten plagues. He began with that which made him into the head—the Nile—and changed it into blood.**

וכנגד ה' עילאה, אמר הנה יד ה', שהיא ה' אצבעות,

**Corresponding to the first *hei* of the Name *Havayah*, whose numerical value is 5, He said, “Behold, the hand of G-d is upon your cattle...”<sup>29</sup> the hand comprising five fingers.**

Pestilence was the fifth plague.

וביד אמר כמה לקו באצבע, כי האצבע עושה י' אחת, שהם עשר מכות, ועל הים לקו חמשים מכות נגד ה' עילאה.

**Regarding the hand, Rabbi Yosi the Galilean said,<sup>30</sup> “With how many plagues were the Egyptians struck by G-d’s finger? Ten plagues! Thus, you must conclude that in Egypt they were struck by ten plagues”—this is because the finger forms one *yud*, representing ten plagues—and at the sea they were struck with 50 plagues”—corresponding to the first *hei* of the Name *Havayah*.**

When the Egyptian sourcerers could not reproduce the plague of lice, they declared, “This is the finger of G-d [*Elokim*].”<sup>31</sup> This characterized the Egyptians’ awareness of G-d throughout the ten plagues. Thus, the overall effect of the ten plagues is considered that of the “finger” of G-d.

Even though the expression “Behold, the *hand* of G-d is upon your cattle...” was said with regard to the plague of pestilence, one of the ten plagues, Rabbi Chaim Vital here is interpreting it as a portent of the blow the Egyptians were to suffer at the sea. In this, he is basing himself on the above-quoted passage of the *Haggadah*, in which it is pointed out that the idiom “the hand of G-d” is used also to describe the scene at the sea: “Israel saw the great hand that G-d laid against Egypt.”<sup>32</sup>

29. Ibid. 9:3.

30. *Haggadah*, quoting *Mechilta* on Exodus 14:31, *Midrash Tehilim* 78:15, *Shemot Rabbah* 23:9.

31. Exodus 8:15.

32. Ibid. 14:31.

Since “the finger of G-d” alludes to the ten plagues, and the hand possesses five fingers, the effect of the “hand of G-d” was the equivalent of fifty plagues.

וכנגד הוי, נרמז המטה האלהים, וי תחת ה, ונחלקת ראש תוך סוף גי ווין,

**Corresponding to the *vav* of the Name *Havayah* is the staff of G-d that Moses used to begin the plagues and split the sea. The *vav* is beneath the first *hei*, which is divided into a beginning, a middle, and an end, i.e., three *vav*'s.**

The vertical line form of the *vav* signifies the downward channelling and flow of the mental content of the *hei* into the emotions. The *hei* is composed of the three lines: a top horizontal line and right and left vertical lines. These three lines can be visualized as three *vav*'s.

ועשה רמז לגי ווין, ויסע ויבא ויט, שבהם ע"ב שמות, ובקע בהם הים שהוא ים סוף ה' תתאה.

The three *vav*'s of the *hei* also form an allusion to the three consecutive verses that begin with *vav*'s, i.e., “And it traveled...,” “And it went...,” and “And he extended...,”<sup>33</sup> each of which possess 72 letters, and with which Moses split the sea, i.e., the “sea of the end,” which is the latter *hei* of the Name *Havayah*.

We have seen previously that these three verses form 72 three-letter Divine Names.

ובהיות שוי מוציאה וי אחרת, כזה, ויו, וזהו י"ב בקיעות שבקע בזה הים:

**Inasmuch as the *vav* produces another *vav* when spelled out, as *vav-vav*, it alludes to the twelve paths that appeared in the sea when Moses split it.**

The numerical value of *vav* is 6, so twice *vav* is 12. We are taught that a dry pathway through the sea appeared for each of the twelve tribes.

ומי הכה זאת הוי לעשותה גי וויין, כה הי שעל הוי משם הוייה,

**What struck this *vav* in order to transform it into three *vav*'s? The power of the *yud* of the Name *Havayah*, above the *vav*.**

The intensity of the insight-experience of *chochmah* is what serves to produce an emotional response to the intellectual abstraction of *binah*, transforming its three inherent *vav*'s into an actual *vav* of emotion.

Thus, at the sea, the entire Name *Havayah* was mobilized against the consciousness of Pharaoh.

Nonetheless, the main force that contended with the Egyptians was the first *hei* of the Name *Havayah*, the “hand” G-d. *Binah*, the main receptacle for the Divine inspiration of *chochmah*, is the most powerful weapon against idolatry, since if it processes the Divine inspiration properly and develops it into a fully mature Divine consciousness, it annihilates the erroneous way of thinking that leads to idolatry.

וזהו קריעת ים סוף שהיא ה' תתאה, ובאו בני ישראל בתוך זה הים סוף. ומפתח הגדול של ה' באו ויצאו דרך פתח קטן,

**This is the meaning of the Splitting of the Sea of Reeds, which is the lower *hei* of the Name *Havayah*. The Israelites entered into this Sea of Reeds; after entering**

33. Ibid. 14:19-21.

through the large opening of the upper *hei* they exited via the small opening of the lower *hei*.

ונקרא אם הבנים שמחה, שהגינה עליהם, וטבעו אויביהם בים סוף.

*Binah* was then called “the joyous mother of children,”<sup>34</sup> for it defended them, and their enemies drowned in the Sea of Reeds.

The fate of all materialists is to drown in their own materialism.

נמצא, שנפרע מהיאור שהוא הראש, ומהזנב בחינת ים סוף כנז"ל שהוא זנב ים אוקיינוס:

Thus, the Egyptians were punished both by the Nile, which is the head, in the plague of blood, and by the tail—the Sea of Reeds, which is the tail of the “ocean sea,” as explained above

34. Psalms 113:9.