

T'ruma

Mi Yitencha K'ach Li

A synopsis of the Maamar found in Torah Or

AFTER HAVING redeemed us from Egypt and given us the Torah on Mount Sinai, G-d makes an inconceivable announcement in this week's Torah portion: He is going to come and live with us. This mind-boggling idea is expressed by the verse (Exodus 25:8), "They shall make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them." There follow detailed specifications for that sanctuary, including the dimensions and materials of all its components and the ritual artifacts to be used in Divine service there. The centerpiece of all this is the *aron*, the Holy Ark of the Covenant, repository of the G-d - given Tablets on which the Ten Commandments were engraved. The Ark was adorned by two *k'ruvim* – cherubs – and it was from between these that the Voice of G-d would speak to the Jewish People.

Needless to say, the precise details of the sanctuary and its artifacts were not arbitrary. Nor, however, were they symbolic, in the sense that a symbol is but a suggestion of something else. In the sanctuary, each specific detail was the very "incarnation" of the spiritual, a tangible manifestation of G-dly concepts. To appreciate the significance of the *k'ruvim*, let us first become familiar with their description (see Exodus 25:17-21):

“And you shall make a covering (*kapores* in Hebrew) of pure gold ... and you shall make two cherubs (*k’ruvim*) of gold – of beaten work shall you make them – at the two ends of the *kapores*. Make one *k’ruv* (cherub) at one end and one *k’ruv* at the other end; of the *kapores* [itself – i.e., fashioned of the selfsame block of gold and thus a single unit with the *kapores*] shall you make the *k’ruvim* at its two ends. The *k’ruvim* should extend their wings upward, covering over the *kapores* with their wings, and their faces should be toward one another; the faces of the *k’ruvim* should be toward the *kapores*. And you shall put the *kapores* over the Ark (*aron*) from above, and into the Ark you shall place the Testimony [the Tablets of the Ten Commandments] that I will give you.”

These holy items traveled with the Jews during their wanderings in the desert, and later came to rest in the first Holy Temple in Jerusalem. Unfortunately, there came a time when the First Temple was destroyed, and the *k’ruvim* were lost. In Song of Songs, which is an allegorical love song between the Jewish People and G-d, we exiled Jews yearn for this lost closeness with our Beloved [G-d], saying (Song of Songs 8:1-2), “If only You were as my brother, that nurtures from the breasts of my mother! [Then,] when I should find You outside I would kiss you, and none would scorn me. I would lead You and bring You into the house of my mother that You might teach me; I would cause You to drink of spiced wine, of the juice of my pomegranate.”

While the Temple stood, the Jews were called “brothers” with G-d, as it says (Psalms 122:8-9), “For the sake of my brothers and companions...,” juxtaposed with “For the sake of the house of G-d, our L-rd.” Now that the “house of G-d” – the Holy Temple – is no longer standing, however, we lament, “If only You were as my brother.” The relevance of the rest of the above passage to the *k’ruvim* will become apparent after a discussion of the mystical significance of the latter.

The prophet Ezekiel had a vision of heavenly creatures (*chayos*), each of which had four faces (see Ezekiel 1:10 and 10:14). These are described in Ezekiel 10:14 as including the faces of a *k'ruv*, a man, a lion and an eagle. The Talmud (*Chagigah* 13b) states that the word *k'ruv*, “cherub,” means that the face was that of a child, and goes on to ask what, in that case, is the difference in Ezekiel’s vision between the “face of a cherub” and the “face of a man”? The Talmud clarifies that the expression “face of a man” refers to that of a grown man, whereas the “face of a cherub” means that of a child.

Ezekiel’s prophecy goes on to state that above the *chayos* was something of the likeness of a firmament, above which (Ezekiel 1:26) “was the likeness of a throne which appeared like sapphire stone, and on the likeness of the throne was a likeness of the appearance of a Man upon it from above.” This is a reference to G-d.

Yet such references need explanation, for how can G-d be described – even with all the qualifying words like “likeness” and “appearance” – as a Man? It certainly does not mean that G-d “looks like” a man (G-d forbid), for He has no appearance or body at all. What does such a description actually refer to?

The answer is to be understood in accordance with the principle that G-d created mankind in His image – meaning that He deliberately created us in such a way that our human attributes and qualities reflect certain spiritual concepts. In this way, through Torah-guided contemplation of our own make-up – which, of course, is something we can relate to – we are able to attain some comprehension of G-d.

Specifically, the Torah itself is called “man,” as expounded from the verses (Numbers 19:14), “This is the Torah: man”; and (II Samuel 7:19), “This is the Torah of man.” One explanation of this is as our sages have taught (*Zohar*

II:124a; introduction to Ramban's commentary on the Torah), "the entire Torah is [comprised of] the names of G-d." We also find that the ten principle means of Divine manifestation, referred to in mystical literature as the Ten *Sefiros*, are described by the *Zohar* as "the secret of the Holy Name." In other words, the Torah bears a similar relationship to G-d (in a manner of speaking) as a person's name does to that person.

In isolation, one is not called by name. They are who they are; a name is of no meaning to a person as they know themselves. Instead, a name is merely a device to identify the person to others. In doing so, however, although one's name represents the person – and in fact, refers to that person in their entirety – it is not in any way a part of, connected to, or physically reminiscent of the person. In a similar fashion, G-d makes himself known to the world through the ten principle means of manifestation we call the ten *Sefiros*, which include the three so-called "intellectual" faculties (*chochmah*, *bina* and *da'as*, which are often loosely translated as "wisdom, understanding and knowledge"), and seven "emotional" attributes grouped around G-d's "kindness" (*chesed*) and "might" (*gevurah*). The point is that, just as a person's name is not at all of that person and serves merely to let others know him or her, so are G-d's so-called "attributes," the *Sefiros*, utterly unconnected to G-d's actual "Self," so to speak – a level which is completely unknowable.

Now, in a person, the soul is utterly unknowable. It expresses itself through its own ten principle means of manifestation – created, as noted above, parallel to G-d's ten *Sefiros* – from the highest level of intellect (*chochmah*, the faculty to conceive new ideas seemingly out of nowhere) through the gamut of human emotions. Yet the primary manifestation of the soul is in the intellect. Consciousness itself is the first glimmer of life, and it is from the brain that all the body's life and energy flows to the appropriate limbs and organs. The same is true,

allegorically speaking, with respect to G-d's "transition" from utterly unknowable to manifest within the universe: G-d first reveals Himself through the spiritual faculty, or *Sefirah*, we refer to as *chochmah*, from which point all else flows. This is alluded to by the verse (Proverbs 3:19), "G-d founded the earth with wisdom (*chochmah*).” The Hebrew name used for G-d in this verse is the Tetragrammaton (pronounced *Havaye* outside the context of prayer or public Torah reading), which in this context signifies G-d's deliberately "compressing" Himself (as if such a thing were possible) and expressing Himself within the universe. The Hebrew wording of the verse begins *Havaye b'chochmah*, which can be understood to mean that the initial manifestation of *Havaye* – G-dly revelation within creation, His "name," as it were (as it says (Isaiah 42:8), "I am *Havaye*, that is My name") – is in the aspect of *chochmah*, G-d's "wisdom," so to speak.

For the above reason, the *Sefirah* of *chochmah* – initial focus of all G-dly manifestation, as the brain is the "kernel" within which the sum total of a person is first contained – is called "man." It is referred to in mystical sources as "the first man" (*adam barishon* or *adam kadma'a*), in accordance with the verse (Psalms 111:10), "the beginning of wisdom," which can also be read as "*chochmah* (wisdom) is the beginning, the first." And, just as in man, all further G-dly revelation proceeds from *chochmah*.

The Torah is G-d's revelation to the universe, and indeed, derives from the *Sefirah* of *chochmah* – G-d's "wisdom" – as it is taught (*Zohar* II:121a), "The Torah derives from *chochmah*." Appropriately, the Torah is therefore also called "man," as quoted above.

(An interesting point along these lines is made in the *Zohar* at the beginning of the Torah portion *Toldos* (134b), and the work, *Hadras Melech* (79b). It is stated there that – in accordance with the teaching that the 248 positive commandments of the Torah parallel the 248 limbs (*ewarim*) of

the human body and the 365 negative injunctions in the Torah parallel the body's 365 sinews (*gidim*) – the Talmudic teaching (*Kidushin* 40b) that “study is greater [than practice], because study leads to practice” may be interpreted as follows: just as the brain directs all the body's life-force to each of its limbs and sinews, so is study of Torah, which is a function of *chochmah*, superior to practice of the Torah's positive and negative commandments, since it is only from *chochmah* that the spiritual life-force flows into and brings to life these “limbs and sinews” in the “man” of Torah.)

The above concept – that G-d manifests Himself initially in the *Sefirah* of *chochmah*, spiritual source of the Torah – is what is meant by the saying (*Zohar* III:73a), “The Torah is bound up with G-d.” However, on this exalted plane, the point at which G-d first manifests Himself out of utter inscrutability, we are not talking about the Torah as we know it. We mortals relate to the Torah because G-d, in His mercy upon us, expressed His wisdom therein through physical, earthly matters. For example, the Torah teaches us that if A argues with B over property, the resolution should be in accordance with certain principles. Or, the Torah tells us to spin wool and form it into *tzitzis*, or to set aside a portion of the dough when baking bread. Yet behind these things lie the deepest mysteries and spiritual secrets of creation. We cannot relate to the Torah on that high a plane, though, so G-d “veiled” the inconceivable spirituality of the Torah in physical form for us.

The “natural” state of the Torah, so to speak, its unconcealed G-dliness, is what we have been discussing until now. This derives, as explained, from the supernal attribute of *chochmah*, which is infinite; with respect to the Torah on this level it is stated that “to His understanding there is no searching” (see Isaiah 40:28). As taught elsewhere, G-d is both the Knower and the One Who knows. This level of the Torah – the manifestation of His essential “Self,” the “face” G-d shows to

the universe – is known as the greater Man (*adam bagadol*) and “great face” (*api ravrevi*).

However, for the Torah to reach our level, in the spiritual realm of *Beriah* and below, it was necessary, as stated above, for G-d to “compress” His wisdom further and express it in worldly terms. This is the meaning of the Midrashic comment (Exodus *Rabba* 26), “The Holy One, may He be blessed, compressed his Presence between the poles of the Ark [by which it was carried; see Exodus 25:13-14].” This refers to the fact that it was from here, between the two cherubs, that G-d spoke to Moshe (Moses).

As contrasted with that of a mature person, the intellect of a child is not fully developed; he or she possesses only a limited ability to comprehend what would be perfectly plain to an adult. That is the symbolism of the cherubs, *k'ruvim*, a word which indicates “the face of a child.” That is, this is the “face” G-d shows to us mortals: a level of manifestation referred to as “small face” (*api zutri*) and the lesser Man (*adam bakatan*).

In sum, the Torah is called “man” because it derives from G-d’s wisdom, which is the “kernel” containing the sum total of G-d’s expression to the universe and the source of that expression throughout the allegorical “body” of the rest of the *Sefiros*. This is the “great face” G-d shows to the highest spiritual realms. However, for the spirituality of the Torah to reach a level accessible to us mortals, G-d “compressed” His wisdom into a form even we limited creatures could understand, just as a child’s mind needs an idea to be brought down to its level. This is the “lesser face” G-d shows us, and is symbolized by the *k'ruvim*, whose faces were those of children. It was only from within these confines – “between the *k'ruvim*” – that it was possible for G-d to “speak” to the Jews.

Indeed, the symbolism of the two *k'ruvim* goes further than that. The two cherubs were arranged “one *k'ruv* at one end and one *k'ruv* at the other end.” The first *k'ruv* – at the “end” alluded to by the verse which speaks of the sun (itself a reference to Torah, as explained in the *Zohar* on the Torah portion *T'rumah*) as (Psalms 19:7) “going forth from the end of heaven” – represents transmission from above downwards, to become the source of G-d's “light” into the lower realms of *Beriah* and below. The second *k'ruv* – at our end, so to speak – represents our eliciting this revelation of G-dliness upon us through our own sincere efforts at worshiping G-d.

Specifically, this is accomplished by a person contemplating the unity of G-d as expressed in the *Shema* prayer (Deuteronomy 6:4), “Hear, O Israel, *Havaye* is our G-d, *Havaye* is One.” One should reflect upon how creating the universe did not change G-d's perfect and all-encompassing unity in any way (as it says (*Malachi* 3:6), “I, *Havaye*, have not changed”); how G-d merely “spoke” – something utterly separate from the speaker, as a person's words are not at all a part of him or her – and the entire universe came into being (as it says (Psalms 148:5), “for He [merely] commanded and they were created”; and how all is considered as nothing before Him. This meditation should bring one to a state of yearning for G-d alone – that is, for G-d Himself, as opposed to any form, no matter how sublime, of mere “manifestation” of G-d whatsoever – a yearning so strong that one would, if one only could, break loose of one's physical bounds and be absorbed in G-d's all-encompassing unity, even at the cost of losing one's independent existence thereby. Because we have this ability to pine so purely for G-d alone, the Community of Jewish Souls (*k'nesses Yisrael*, the spiritual collective body of the Jewish People) is referred to as G-d's “bride,” the Hebrew word for which – *kallah* – connotes *k'los hanefesh*, the type of longing and pining for G-d Himself just described.

This yearning for G-d, which extends from below upward, as it were, is what elicits G-d in turn to respond “from above downward” and bestow His light upon us, a relationship represented by the two cherubs at either end of the *kapores*. Yet the *k’ruvim* were both “of the *kapores*”; the *kapores* was itself the very material out of which the *k’ruvim* were fashioned as a single solid piece. Thus, both *k’ruvim* – the one representing G-d’s transmission of His light from above upon us and the one symbolizing our yearning to reach out to G-d from below upwards – sprang from the same source. This symbolizes the fact that both spiritual levels, the “great face” of G-d’s manifestation above and the “small face” of G-d’s manifestation below, are insignificant compared to their source in that transcendent level of G-d Himself (*Sovev kol Almin*) which is to any manifestation as a person’s self is to their name.

“The *k’ruvim* should extend their wings upward, covering over the *kapores* with their wings, and their faces should be toward one another.” It is written in the *Zohar* (on the Torah portions of *Acharei Mos* (59a) and *Vayechi* (228b)) that “three times a day ... [the *k’ruvim*] spread their wings by themselves.” This is explained to mean at the times of the three daily prayers, when the *k’ruvim* rise up and reach the higher level of “great face” discussed above.

This will be understood in light of the teaching that love of G-d and fear of G-d are like wings, in that the love and fear of G-d which motivate a person to study Torah and perform mitzvos serve to elevate those activities to a higher spiritual plane. To be sure, it is praiseworthy to serve G-d in any event, but the greater a person’s love and fear when doing so, the higher that service “soars.” The wings of the *k’ruvim* represent this ability to reach the level of “greater Man” and “great face,” since they elevate the Jewish worship out of the realms of *Beriah*,

Yetzirah and *Assiyah* (explained elsewhere) and into the realm of *Atzilus*, in which G-d's manifestation, through *chochmah* and the other *Sefiros*, is so thorough that all is united with Him. We can attain this level during the three daily prayers, which is why the Hebrew word for "prayer," *t'filah*, implies "connection" with G-d.

That is why it is written that "their faces should be toward one another." When the *k'ruvim* have extended their wings on high – when Jewish love and fear of G-d have elevated our worship up to the spiritual level of *Atzilus* – they are described as face to face, an indication of unity. Likewise, we find this expression as an indication of the closeness between the Jews and G-d during the Decalogue at Mount Sinai, as it says (Deuteronomy 5:4), "Face to face G-d spoke to you." It is on this level that the Jews are referred to by the term "brothers," because from their elevated place in the realm of *Atzilus* they receive their spiritual life-force directly from the supernal *chochmah* and *bina* – the same source which provides this life-force to the Torah, as explained above. Like two brothers which nurture from a common source, the Jews are the "brothers" of the G-dliness expressed in Torah. This was the situation when the Holy Temple stood, and the direct revelations we enjoyed from the supernal levels of *chochmah* and *bina* explains why great scholarship, prophecy and Divine inspiration were then common among the Jews.

However, after the destruction of the Temple and the disappearance of the *k'ruvim*, we cry "If only You were like my brother [again]." Nevertheless, we can still reach that exalted level – this is possible through Torah study, as the Talmud states (*Brachos* 8a), "Once the Temple was destroyed, the Holy One, may He be blessed, has no [place in which to manifest His Presence] but the four cubits of *halacha* [Jewish law]."

This is the meaning of the phrase "that nurtures from the breasts of my mother." First, because "my mother" is a reference to the Oral Torah, in which the wisdom and will of G-d are revealed openly in the form of practical *halachos* (the specific requirements of Jewish law). *Halachos* are nothing but the pure and simple will of G-d, in that no reason exists for the requirement that the law be carried out one way instead of another except that it is G-d's will. One who knows *halacha* so thoroughly that his knowledge is truly a part of him has thus united with the wisdom and will of G-d Himself – which, as explained above, is the same source that nurtures his "brother," the Torah generally.

Second, because the Torah is called “milk,” as it says referring to the Torah (Isaiah 55:1), “Go buy wine and milk.” As explained in detail in the synopsis of the discourse *Chachlili Einayim Miyayin* on the Torah portion *Vayechi*, just as milk nourishes the body and promotes growth, the spiritual qualities of the Torah “nourish” the soul and promote the development of one’s spiritual attributes. Before being born into this world, the soul was in a relatively undeveloped state, similar to that of a fetus; on being born, the soul needs to engage in Torah study – the milk that promotes its spiritual growth. That is why, when the soul ascends back on high at the appointed time, it is said of it (*P’sachim* 50a), “Happy is the one who has arrived here with their study in hand,” i.e., because they have profitably used their time on earth to grow spiritually.

Now, Torah study does more than simply raise our souls up; it actually elicits from G-d the desire to manifest Himself within the Torah in the first place. For, as noted, G-d Himself transcends all manifestation, even through Torah, and it is a form of “descent” for Him to “compress” Himself into even the heavenly spiritual form of the Torah. However, the ability to bring about this inconceivable result is not limited to Torah scholars. Even sincere but unlearned Jews can accomplish it, and that is the significance of the phrase, “I would find You outside”: “outside” refers to working people who are unable to devote all their time to Torah study.

G-d’s conduct of the world may be compared to a commercial transaction, a purchase, and we find Him referred to (Genesis 14:19) as “possessor of [literally “who purchases or acquires”] heaven and earth.” This is because G-d’s creation of the world in six days is a metaphor for His having invested within it a different *Sefirah* – one of the six “emotional” *Sefiros* for each day of creation – each day. The statement that “on the seventh day He rested” alludes to the fact that the seventh *Sefirah*, that of *malchus* (G-d’s attribute of sovereignty) was manifest after the first six *Sefiros*, and elevated them all – and everything that had been created with them – back up to their spiritual source within G-d. (This is called “rest” because it is comparable to the feeling of satisfaction one gets after having concentrated one’s mind on something to the point of thorough preoccupation, and then finishing that task. It is though one’s attention has been “liberated” from investment within the concept and is free to return to a state of repose.) The same dynamic occurs on an ongoing basis each week: during the first six days, G-d channels His life-force into the universe

through the six *Sefiros* (technically, these are the *Sefiros* from *chesed* through *yesod*), and then on the seventh day, Shabbos, they and everything in the universe are elevated up to their spiritual source. This is compared to “acquisition,” since when purchases something, one first “puts out” money and thereafter is able to “pick up” the object and make it one’s own.

Those who work for a living do something similar, spiritually. All week long they toil and invest their energy into worldly affairs. However, the result is that by doing so they are enabled to provide sustenance for themselves and their families, who then use the life and energy gained from that food and sustenance to pray and yearn for true union with G-d. Furthermore, on Shabbos, the labor ceases and all the energy one was compelled to invest in work during the week – which was all for the sake of serving G-d – is elevated up to its spiritual source in holiness, as are all the prayers of the week elevated through the prayers of Shabbos.

The sincere longing to unite with none other than G-d Himself which comes about through the labor of working people rises to the level of “brothers,” just as does the service of Torah scholars. As a matter of fact, it is an even higher form of service, and is referred to by the phrase “I would kiss You.” A kiss represents an expression of love which is so profound it cannot be expressed in words; for that reason the breath which would otherwise have formed words is simply transmitted directly to the person kissed.

Indeed, the degree to which working people are “brothers” of G-dliness is also higher than the degree to which Torah scholars attain this distinction. This is because, as explained above, Torah study – study of *halachos* in particular – raises one up to the level at which one is united with the very wisdom and will of G-d, the level which is the source of the rest of the Torah. However, working people achieve something higher than this: through their involvement with physical reality and its transformation into holiness at their hands, they achieve the restoration of the state of G-dliness prior to creation. At that time (all allegorically speaking, of course), there was “nothing” but G-d Himself; G-d then created the world, bringing into being “something” from “nothing.” When someone works with the physical “something” of the world and uses it for G-dly purposes, they reconvert it back into the “nothing” that was pure G-dliness without anything else. This is a higher level than even the supernal wisdom, and by rising to that spiritual level, the service of working people is on the same plane, nurturing from the same source, as – “brothers” with – not the

Torah generally, but the very source of the Torah (the supernal wisdom) itself.

“I would lead You and bring You into the house of my mother”: we said above that “my mother” is a reference to the Oral Torah, and this quote refers to the times set aside by working people to engage in Torah study – for, although they cannot devote their full time to Torah, everyone is obligated to set aside at least some time each day for Torah study. That explains why, in discussing the level of Torah scholars, the verse uses the present tense (“nurtures”) – for Torah scholars must spend all their available time in study. The service of working people, on the other hand, is referred to as something not occurring constantly (“I would...”).

“I would cause You to drink of spiced wine”: continuing the praises of those who serve G-d within the context of the need to work for a livelihood, “wine” refers to Torah (as pointed out above with respect to wine and milk). This aspect of the Torah is said to “gladden G-d,” in which phrase the name of G-d is *Elokim*. This Divine name represents G-d’s concealment, and the concept of “drinking wine,” in our verse, means that Torah study is so precious that it gladdens *Elokim*, i.e., brings about revelation of what had previously been concealed.

“Spiced wine,” however, goes even further than that. Wine is a drink, and as such, it enters within the person; indeed, Torah study generally is compared to “nourishment.” By contrast, spiced wine has the additional characteristic of fragrance, which symbolizes a level so lofty that it cannot be contained within. Scent is a transcendent level which encompasses one from above. Thus, spiced wine is used as an allegory for the Torah study of workers in particular, for whom such study may be especially difficult, because by their self-sacrifice in subjugating themselves and engaging in study despite the hardships, they elicit a revelation from the transcendent level of “fragrance” – in addition to “nourishment.”

“The juice of my pomegranate”: there are those for whom, unfortunately, it is not possible to study any Torah at all. Such people, who are sincere and good Jews despite this handicap, also delight G-d by their mitzvah observance – for, it goes without saying that, although unlearned, they perform all the mitzvos they know to the best of their ability. These people are compared to pomegranates, fruits literally filled with seeds, since every single Jew, no matter what their background, is simply overflowing with mitzvos like a pomegranate with seeds, as stated in the Talmud (*Erwin*

19a). (This is also a reason why the robe of the high priest, worn while ministering to G-d as an advocate of the Jewish People (see Exodus 28:33-35), was hemmed about with ornamental pomegranates.)

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