



יִיחוד, בִּרְכָה וְקִדּוּשָׁה

The Three Stages of Spiritual Development

■ Miracle and Nature

During the period of the Chanukah miracles, the “inner spiritual point” became very strong, and its influence crossed physical boundaries:

...לֹא בְחֵיל וְלֹא בִכְחַ כִּי אִם בְּרוּחִי אֶמַר ה' צְבָאוֹת.

*“Not by military force and not by physical strength,
but by My spirit,” says the Lord of Hosts. (Zechariah 4,6)*

It is not the amount of weaponry or its firepower that determines the victor on the battlefield, but rather the power of the inner spirit. The victory of the few Hasmonean priests and their followers over the many Greek armies stemmed from their burning faith in Hashem the G-d of Israel.

A similar phenomenon happened in the Beit Hamikdash, when the inner light overcame the boundaries of the amount of oil. The lamps of the Menorah in the Holy Temple burned much longer than expected, because the flame drew its strength not from the external oil, but from the inner light.

But the Chanukah miracle of the flask of oil was not the first of its kind. Two similar miracles preceded it, during the times of the Prophets Eliyahu and Elisha. Eliyahu stood in a widow's home and proclaimed in G-d's Name:

כִּי כֹה אָמַר ה' אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, כִּדְ הַקֶּמַח לֹא תִכָּלָה
וְצִפְחַת הַשֶּׁמֶן לֹא תִחָסֵר עַד...

*For thus said G-d: ‘The pitcher of flour shall not end nor will
the flask of oil be diminished until...’*

וַתֵּלֶךְ וַתַּעֲשֶׂה כְּדִבְרֵי אֱלִיהוּ ...
 כִּד הַקֶּמַח לֹא כָלְתָה וְצִפְחַת הַשֶּׁמֶן לֹא חָסַר כְּדִבְרֵי ה' ...
*She went and did as Eliyahu had said... The [supply]
 of flour did not cease, and neither did the flask of oil diminish,
 as G-d had said...* (Kings I 17,14-16)

And under Prophet Elisha, Eliyahu's student, a poor widow begged Elisha for redress, and he said, "What shall I do for you? Tell me what you have in the house." She replied:

...אֵין לִשְפָחָתְךָ כֵּל בְּבֵית כִּי אִם אֶסוּף שֶׁמֶן.
*"Your maidservant has nothing at all in
 the house except a jug of oil..."*
 וַיֹּאמֶר לְכִי שְׂאֲלִי לָךְ בָּלִים מִן הַחוּץ מֵאֵת כָּל שְׁכֵנֶיךָ בָּלִים יָקִים,
 אֵל תִּמְעִיטִי... וַיֵּצֵקֶת עַל כָּל הַכֵּלִים הָאֵלֶּה...
*Elisha said to her, "Go borrow vessels from all your neighbors;
 don't be sparing. And pour upon all these vessels..."*
 וַתֵּלֶךְ מֵאֵתוֹ וַתִּסְגֹּר הַדֶּלֶת בְּעַדָּהּ וּבְעַד בָּנֶיהָ
 הֵם מְגִשִּׁים אֵלֶיהָ וְהִיא מוֹצֵקֶת.
*She left him and closed the door about herself and about her
 sons; they brought [vessels] to her and she poured.* (Kings II 4,2-5)

We see here two examples of the phenomenon of **eternity**. The secret of eternity was discovered by Israel while they were yet wandering in the desert after the Exodus. Their clothing and shoes came away unravaged by the wheels of time:

וְאוֹלָךְ אֶתְכֶם אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה בַּמִּדְבָּר,
 לֹא בָלוּ שְׁלִמְתֵיכֶם מֵעֲלִיכֶם וְנִעְלָה לֹא בָלְתָה מֵעַל רַגְלְךָ.
*I led you for forty years in the desert;
 your clothes did not wear out upon you,
 and your shoes on your feet did not become tattered.* (D'varim 29,4)

Even simple material like clothing or shoes was able to draw strength and become indestructible from the hidden inner Divine point within it.

The Torah similarly says about Moshe Rabbeinu:

וּמֹשֶׁה בֶּן מֵאָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה בָּמָתוֹ לֹא כָהָתָה עֵינָיו וְלֹא נָס לִחָה.
*Moshe was one hundred and twenty years old at his death;
 his eyes had not dimmed,
 nor had his [natural] freshness been lost.* (D'varim 34,7)

The inner Divine light that shone from his face preserved his physical body. These are two further examples of the power of the inner spiritual light that bursts outward past the borders of the material world.

There is a blatant difference, however, between the miracle of the flask of oil during the period of the Maccabees, and the other, similar miracles we noted above. The latter miracles lasted only as long as necessary; whenever nature could step in and do the job, it did.

For instance, when the Nation of Israel arrived in Eretz Yisrael and began consuming wheat that grew from the ground, this marked the end of the wondrous manna that fell from the Heavens. Similarly, when they then began wearing flax or cotton clothing, their old clothing and shoes that had survived the 40 years in the desert began to wear out.

The Torah emphasizes:

וַיִּשְׁבֹּת הַמָּן מִמָּחֳרַת בְּאַכְלָם מֵעֵבוֹר הָאָרֶץ
וְלֹא הָיָה עוֹד לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן וַיֹּאכְלוּ מִתְּבוּאֹת אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן בַּשָּׁנָה הַהִיא.
*And the manna ceased the next day, when they ate of the grain
of the land; there was no more manna for the children of Israel,
and they ate of the produce of the land
of Canaan that year.* (Yehoshua 5,12)

A similar phenomenon occurred during the above-noted miracle of Eliyahu HaNavi. He declared that the miraculous supply of flour and oil would cease on the day G-d would bring rain upon the earth:

כִּי כֹה אָמַר ה' אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּד הִקְמַח לֹא תִכָּלָה
וְצִפְחַת הַשֶּׁמֶן לֹא תִחָסֵר עַד יוֹם תֵּת ה' גֶּשֶׁם עַל פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה.
*For thus said G-d: 'The pitcher of flour shall not end
nor will the flask of oil be diminished until the day that G-d
brings rain upon the earth.'* (Kings I 17,14)

Similarly, Elisha's miracle of the non-ending supply of oil actually did end when no more containers could be collected from the neighbors. It was a "limited time only" miracle: The amount of oil collected that day was assumedly enough to support the widow and her sons for quite a while, and they did not seek to collect additional containers. Elisha also indicated the limitation when he told her to collect from all her "neighbors" and not from all her "acquaintances."

This was not the case during the times of the Hashmonaim, however. Here there was no shortage of natural oil, and in fact there were plenty of flasks of oil, ready to light. The lack was of oil that was *ritually pure*. And the impure oil available in abundance was not even Biblically impure; it was merely forbidden by Rabbinic decree because the Greek idol-worshippers had touched it.

This gives us pause: Hashem sent His blessing upon the one remaining flask of pure oil, even when the problem was not a physical lack, but rather just a Halakhic problem. This is the greatness of the Chanukah lights, showing that Hashem is willing to change natural law simply in order to enable the People of Israel to fulfill a mitzvah in the proper way.

■ Reduction or Enhancement?

The Sages of the Talmud debated whether one may light one Chanukah candle from another. Those who forbid it give two reasons: One is because it is “degrading” to the mitzvah, that is, to the candle from which the fire is taken. The second reason is “shrinkage” of the mitzvah, in that it appears the mitzvah candle from which the fire is shared is being quashed and reduced.

The Gemara notes (Shabbat 22a) that if one lights directly from candle to candle, without an intermediary, the problem of “degradation” of the mitzvah is avoided, because both candles are holy. One of the proofs brought in the Gemara for this approach is that in the Holy Temple, the priest would light the Menorah lamps directly from the Western Lamp that burned miraculously all day long. We can assume that, to enable this, the lamps had very long wicks.

This practice appears to negate the opinion that the prohibition is because of “reducing” the mitzvah – for even with long wicks, is the Western Lamp not “reduced” with each lighting? The Gemara did not consider this an absolute negation, however, apparently because the whole point of the Western Lamp is to disseminate the miraculous Divine light from candle to candle, every day of the year, throughout the generations.

Let us elaborate. The Western Lamp had the same amount of oil as the others, yet burned miraculously throughout the day, well after the other ones had burned out. During the evening, the other candles would be kindled from the Western Lamp, which would then be extinguished,

its lamp cleaned, and rekindled again from the other candles. The daily procedure thus involved taking from the miraculous light and giving to the other lamps, rendering them miraculous as well, and then taking back from them and giving to the Western Lamp, which would once again burn miraculously throughout the day.

Thus, not only is there no reduction of the mitzvah, but on the contrary: The miraculous light becomes a source for the dissemination of the Divine Light both far away and close by.

To what can this be compared? To a Torah scholar who teaches many students. Could it possibly be assumed that the students lessen his knowledge?! Quite the contrary; teaching is his job, and he even learns from them!

The same is true with the story of the widow's oil that multiplied in the merit of Elisha's prayer. Did the empty containers that became filled with oil reduce the miracle? Not at all; it was in the very merit of the empty containers themselves that the miraculous oil multiplied. And the proof is in the fact that when there were no containers left, the miracle stopped.

This is precisely how the process of nursing a baby works. The more the baby nurses, the more milk is produced. When the baby stops nursing, the milk supply is not renewed.

When we nourish and take from a mitzvah, we thus increase its strength – and that is its aspect of “blessing.” The blessing grows from within the mitzvah, for as long as empty “vessels” still remain from which to become nourished. When we do *pirsumei nisa* on Chanukah, i.e., “publicize the miracle,” we are copying the inner point of G-d's miracles to other places. Throughout the generations, and during the darkest and most difficult periods of our history, such as the Spanish Inquisition and the Chmelnitzki pogroms – the light of the Chanukah candles never flickered and never faltered from declaring to the world that Am Yisrael lives and thrives, and נצח ישראל לא ישקר, “*the Eternity of Israel will neither deceive nor relent.*” (Shmuel I 15,29)

The Chanukah candles stand forever for the “point of the primary source” that can never be lacking. Let us expand on this idea of growing and disseminating from the center outward, and that of reduction inward towards the middle, in terms of the following three fundamentals: *Yichud*, Blessing, and Holiness.

■ The Blessing and Holiness of the Sabbath

We find that these three elements are integrated on the Sabbath day. In the Ten Commandments we read:

כִּי שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים עָשָׂה ה' אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ...
וַיִּנַּח בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי, עַל כֵּן בֵּרַךְ ה' אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת וַיְקַדְּשֶׁהוּ.

*For in six days Hashem created the heavens and the earth...
and He rested on the seventh day,
and therefore Hashem blessed the Sabbath day
and sanctified it.* (Sh'mot 20,11)

Let us note the highlighted words. The phrase “*He rested on the seventh day*” uses the same word as in “*the spirit of Eliyahu rested on Elisha*” (Kings II 2,15) – both referring to the dwelling of a spirit. In the case of the Sabbath, it means that the Divine Presence came upon the world on the Sabbath day. It is manifest in that G-d “designates” or “singles out” His Name upon the world on that day. This is the first of the three elements, known as *yichud*.

The second element is that of blessing, abundance. It does not refer to an external addition, but rather something that grows from within and outward, as in *yafutzu ma'yenotekha chutzah, your wellsprings shall burst forth* (Proverbs 5,16). Hashem planted the Sabbath day smack in the middle of the weekdays – three on each side of it – in order that it would bless and shine light on them.

Finally, the element of *k'dushah*, holiness, is the opposite: It indicates reduction and convergence towards the middle. To be holy unto G-d means to be designated solely towards the service of G-d, to separate from all mundane, secular matters and concentrate only on the word of G-d.

Accordingly, that which we work and accomplish throughout the week is for the Sabbath, when we do not work. As the Gemara (Betzah 16a) sums up Beit Shammai's opinion, we are to anticipate and prepare for the Sabbath from as early as Sunday. How? “Whenever one sees a nice food portion, he should set it aside and say, “This is for Shabbat.”

We now ask: What comes first, blessing or *k'dushah*? The above-quoted verse mentions blessing first, which tells us that G-d first set aside the Sabbath day as the foundation of blessing going outward from within. Only afterwards begins the element of “becoming holy,” converging from outside towards the inside. That is, since the blessing that we receive during the week stems from the Sabbath day, it is appropriate that we gather the produce of the blessing for the Sabbath, and then rest.

Let us see another verse that deals with the Shabbat:

וַיְכַל אֱלֹהִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה
וַיִּשְׁבֹּת בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מִכָּל מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה.

*G-d completed on the seventh day His work that He did,
and He abstained on the seventh day from all His
work that He did.* (B'reshit 2,2)

Why does it repeat itself? If He completed His work, then certainly He stopped and rested from working!

The explanation is that the word וַיִּשְׁבֹּת doesn't only mean "abstained," but also indicates that He "sat in place" (as in Sh'mot 21,19, which mandates payment for *shevet*, "the idleness" of one who is injured by another). That is, Hashem brought His Divine Presence to dwell in the world on the seventh day, which was chosen from all that He had made for the purpose of blessing and sanctity.

Immediately afterwards,

וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וַיְקַדְּשֵׁהוּ אֹתוֹ ...

G-d blessed the seventh day and sanctified it... (verse 3)

The order is thus clear: 1) *Yichud*, 2) Blessing, 3) *K'dushah*. Or, in other words: 1) Divine Presence, 2) Influence, 3) Reduction.

■ Priorities

Shabbat candles, Chanukah candles, and wine for Shabbat Kiddush are necessary for three important mitzvot. If we have enough money only for one of them, which one should we choose? For Rav in the Talmud (Shabbat 23b), this was barely a question; he said it is obvious that Shabbat candles take priority. However, when it comes to a choice between Chanukah candles and Kiddush wine, Rava was originally not sure – until he finally determined: Chanukah comes first, because it involves the publicizing of a miracle, *pirsumei nisa*.

We explained above that *pirsumei nisa* is part of the world of "blessing," that which goes outward from within and can shape that which is outside. However, *k'dushah*, expressed in the Sabbath Kiddush, is rooted in reduction of the secular world into one spot. By choosing the former over the latter, Rava was teaching an important principle:

Blessing comes before sanctity. We must first impact outwardly, and only

afterwards, converge inwardly for our own spiritual needs. Accordingly, a Torah scholar must first seek to disseminate G-d's Torah, and only when he gets older should he dedicate himself totally to service of G-d via separation and holiness.

However, even before he seeks to teach others, we remember that Shabbat candles come first – that is, he must first strengthen and fortify his own home and domestic life. Rashi (to Shabbat 23b) explains the connection by citing the verse *“My soul is far removed from peace”* (Eichah 3,17): “This refers to the lighting of Shabbat candles, for the members of his household are troubled when they must sit in the dark.”

A different Gemara passage cites a *kal vachomer* (an *a-fortiori* argument) on this topic:

To restore peace between a man and wife, the Torah allows G-d's Name to be erased [when checking a suspected adulteress] – how much more so, then, should this be permitted in order to restore peace between Israel and its Father in Heaven! (Sukkah 53b)

Why, actually, are we permitted to erase the holy Divine and Awesome Name of G-d for the sake of domestic harmony? The answer is that if we in fact succeed in thereby bringing peace, the Name of G-d was not actually erased at all, but was rather transformed: It was originally written on parchment, and then it became “written” in the form of the shining of G-d's Name – *Shalom*, Peace – in a home at peace.

First, then, one must stabilize and ensure the cohesiveness of the inner core, before he goes outward. Peace in one's home strengthens the inner nucleus, which is the Name of G-d, *yud* and *heh*, and this is part of the concept of “*yichud*” – upon which we will now elaborate by looking at two sources in the Torah.

■ Dramatic Meetings

The first deals with the very charged and dramatic reunion between Yosef and his brothers in the royal palace in Egypt:

... וְלֹא עָמַד אִישׁ אִתּוֹ בְּהַתְּדַע יוֹסֵף אֶל אֶחָיו.
*No one stood with him when Yosef made himself
 known to his brothers.* (B'reshit 45,1)

This was a time not only of great emotions at the unbelievable disclosure

that the #2 man in Egypt - and the person responsible for their hardships over the past two years - was none other than their little, long-lost brother Yosef whom they had sold into slavery. It was also a time for deep and intense clarification: What exactly was their role and responsibility in this story, and what was Yosef's?

The purpose of this *yichud*, seclusion between the brothers, was to unite and reconnect, from within, the nucleus of brotherhood of the sons of Yaakov. But it is impossible to reunite without clarifying what exactly brought about the original jealousy, hatred and estrangement that ultimately led to the sale and near-death of Yosef. The nucleus can be reassembled only after each part is "cleaned."

During these moments of hard work, of *yichud* between the two parties, no one else may be present. They must be secluded together.

The second such episode is one that occurs each year, when the High Priest enters the Holy of Holies on the holiest day of the year, the Day of Atonement:

וְכָל אָדָם לֹא יִהְיֶה בְּאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד בָּבֹאוּ לְכַפֵּר בַּקֹּדֶשׁ עַד צֵאתוֹ׃

*No one shall be in the Tent of Meeting
from when he enters to atone for the holy,
until he leaves...* (Vayikra 16,17)

This is an hour of *yichud*, of seclusion between the High Priest and the Holy One, Blessed be He; no one else may enter.

The above verse is preceded by this description:

וְכַפֵּר עַל הַקֹּדֶשׁ מִטְמֵאוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמִפְשְׁעֵיהֶם לְכָל חַטָּאתָם׃

*He will atone for the holy from the defilements
of Israel and from all their iniquities...* (verse 16)

What is meant by *He will atone for the holy*? All of Israel, including the priests, require atonement for their iniquities – but what atonement does "the holy" require? The Gemara answers:

"And one he-goat as a sin-offering to G-d" (Bamidbar 28,15): Hashem said, "Bring atonement for Me for having reduced the size of the moon."

This is also what R. Shimon ben Lakish said: "Why is the he-goat offering of Rosh Chodesh different than others in that it is *"to G-d"*?

Because Hashem said that it would be an atonement for Him for having reduced the size of the moon.”

Consider a teacher who wishes only to be the best educator he can. His main problem is one pupil who does everything he can to disrupt the lesson, until finally the teacher has no choice but to punish him, against his own will. By doing so, the teacher is hurt: the situation forced him to go against his grain and punish the wayward student. The student thus did two wrongs: He disrupted the lessons, and caused the teacher, in effect, to punish himself.

When the Children of Israel sin to Hashem, they similarly perpetrate a double crime: They first stray from the path set by G-d, and second, they force G-d to punish them, against His own will and contrary to His attributes of Mercy and Compassion. So states the Medrash:

Jerusalem sinned in double, as written (Eichah 1,8): “*Jerusalem sinned a sin.*” (Medrash Eichah Rabbati 1,57)

Men’s sins, then, cause Hashem to “violate” His own attributes - and for this, they require atonement. This is the meaning of **וּכְפַר אֶת מִקְדָּשׁ הַקֹּדֶשׁ**, “[*The High Priest*] shall atone for the Sanctuary of holiness” (Vayikra 16,33): atonement is required for the nation for causing Hashem to punish them, because of the **“defilements of Israel and from all their iniquities...”** (verse 16)

On the other hand, Israel also has a claim of sorts against Hashem: “Master of the Universe, You created the *yetzer hara*, our urge to sin. You also gave us the wherewithal to sin.” As Eliyahu HaNavi protested to Hashem, **“You have turned their hearts backwards.”** (Kings I 18,37)

To this claim, Hashem answers back: “You perpetrated the sins, and forced Me to punish you against My will.” As Isaiah prophesied in G-d’s Name, **“you have wearied Me with your iniquities”** (Yeshayahu 43,24). In what way did Israel “tire out G-d”? Does Hashem tire or lose His strength? The answer is as we have said: Israel caused G-d to do things He did not want to do, things that are unnecessary, such as rectify the wrongs they did by abusing their Free Will. As the Gemara states:

“For the judgment is unto G-d” (D’varim 1,17): R. Chama son of R. Chanina said: “G-d said, it is not enough that the wicked take money illicitly from each other, but they trouble Me to return it to its rightful owners.” (Sanhedrin 8a)

And thus, a pointed clarification takes place between G-d and Israel – and it must happen behind closed doors, in the Holy of Holies, between the High Priest and Hashem. The negotiations are very delicate, on an innermost level, and can be clarified only at the highest echelons. No one else may be present during this very personal, once-yearly *yichud*, which ultimately helps strengthen the bonds between Hashem and Israel at their most delicate points.

It was in a similar emotional place that Yosef and his brothers met. Here, as well, no one else was permitted to be present. This is the point of “domestic harmony,” *sh’lom bayit*, that we have spoken of, represented by the all-important Shabbat candles. Only after the innermost spots are illuminated can we think of shining outward.

In sum: The first point is *yichud*, the second is blessing, and the third is *k’dushah*. The first is the primary construction, the first-level links that enable cohesion and unity of the nucleus. The next stage, blessing, is the taking of the light that has begun to develop and allowing it to burst outward. Finally, *k’dushah* is the stage at which we separate ourselves and walk only with Hashem.

