

Fascinating INSIGHTS

כט' אלול תש"פ

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A Complete Cure

וישלח לו מהרה for sick people מי שברך הרפה רפואה שלמה מן השמים לרמ"ה אבריו וש"ה גידיו... רפואת הנפש רפואה, may Hashem hurry to send him from heaven a complete recovery to his 248 limbs and 365 sinews, among the other sick people of Israel, a healing of spirit and a healing of body... Why does it mention the soul— רפואת הנפש—if we are speaking of healing the body? Also, why does it say to send מן השמים a complete recovery?

The Gemara records that in a certain place there was an ערוך¹ that was harming people. They showed R' Chanina Ben Dosa its hole, and he placed his heel over it. When the ערוך exited and bit him, the ערוך died. He then brought it to the beis midrash and said that אין ערוך ממית אין ערוך ממת, it's not the ערוך that kills, but rather sin does.² That is to say, an ערוך or any creature is just an agent in carrying out a sentence against a person who deserves to die³ because of his sins.⁴

The Gemara⁵ says that אין אדם נוקף עצבעו מלמטה, one doesn't stub his toe down here on earth unless it is decreed from above. The Shomer Emunim⁶ explains that a קליפה, shell of impurity, comes about from the sin one commits. This קליפה gets clothed in a stone, dog, mouse, and the like that eventually afflicts the person thereby atoning for his sin.

¹ Brachos 33a. This is a crossbreed of a snake and a צב, toad.

² Bamidbar 17:13, Rashi. They then said, "Woe to the man who is met by an ערוך, but woe to the ערוך that is met by R' Chanina Ben Dosa."

³ This can be compared to a diabetic who eats sugar, as he is now a step closer to death.

⁴ See Nedarim 41a. A transgressor is punished with afflictions that correspond to his sin and affect the part of the body that performed it (See Sota 8b-9b).

⁵ Chullin 7b.

⁶ מאמר השגחה פרטית, Chapter 9.

and רפואת הגוף are not two separate entities. Rather when someone sins and he doesn't do teshuva he becomes sick⁷ and needs a *refua*. So the sin is now expressed through the body (גוף). When the soul needs rectification, the body gets sick. So to get a רפואת רפואת, one requires to first get a רפואת הנפש, by improving himself.

To answer our other question, שמים can refer to spirituality (whereas ארץ refers to physicality). מן השמים means to send a recovery to his decline in spirituality that caused the sickness. Then he can be healed physically. This fits well with the words that follow לרמ"ה אבריו וש"ה גידיו—as the 248 limbs correspond to the positive commandments (עשה) while the 365 sinews correspond to the negative commandments (לא תעשה).⁸

With this we can grasp how the Karbon Asher⁹ explains the sequence that we say in אבינו מלכנו: החזירנו בתשובה: שלמה לפניך, return us to You in perfect repentance, followed by שלח רפואה שלמה לחולי עמך Your people. Since the body gets sick because of the neshama, so first one needs to do teshuva and then he can get a complete recovery.

An Exciting Future

How many translations can we come up with for the word קץ? It can be interpreted as "end" and also "to awaken" as in וייקץ יעקב.¹⁰ This explains why אלול which is the end of the year expresses the idea of עוררו שיניים—to wake up. In fact, the first Halacha stated in Shulchan Aruch in reference to Elul is to awaken early for Selichos.¹¹

The word קץ can also refer to לעתיד לבא, ultimate future as in בקש לגלות את הקץ.¹² We herald in לעתיד לבא and תקע בשופר in Shemoneh Esrei as we say in Shofar as we say in Shemoneh Esrei and תקע בשופר גדול כדי לערוב. This gives us a deeper appreciation in השטן... in order to confuse the Satan, since ואת הצפוני ארחיק מעליכם as it says there will be no שטן as it says לעתיד לבא קץ is also related to קוץ, point, since everything is clear in לעתיד לבא and as the Gemara¹⁷ informs us that we won't accept converts in the days of Moshiach. This can be compared to one who dates a girl and rejects her. The next day she wins the lottery, and now he decides to retract his decision. It is

⁷ Or afflicted in some other way. We see this from the Gemara (Brachos 5a) that says if a person sees that afflictions are befalling him, he should investigate his deeds to determine which sin he may have committed that would cause such suffering. If he examined his actions and he didn't find that he committed a sin that would warrant such suffering, he should attribute his afflictions to neglect of Torah study...

⁸ See the Nefesh Hachaim, 4:29.

⁹ This was authored by R' Asher Anshel Yehuda Miller (1880-1961), a student of the Shevet Sofer, who was a rav in Petroşani, Romania for some fifty years. At the end of his life he moved to Eretz Yisrael where he spent his final two years. His responsa were published posthumously.

¹⁰ Breishis 28:16.

¹¹ Orach Chaim 581.

¹² Breishis, 47:28 Rashi.

¹³ Yeshaya 27:13.

¹⁴ Rosh Hashana 16b.

¹⁵ Yoel 2:20. Also Succa 52a. In the Hagada we say ואת הקב"ה ושחט למלאך המות.

¹⁶ A thorn, which is pointy, is called קוץ.

¹⁷ Avoda Zara 3b.

obviously too late. The same is with the future as all is clear then. Therefore, on Rosh Hashana we speak about the future redemption in ומכני הטאנו in Shemoneh Esrei.

We also see that Yitzchak is associated with Rosh Hashana as shown in the following:

1) The Shulchan Aruch tells us that the shofar is because of the איל of Yitzchak and Rosh Hashana is the day of the shofar—יום תרועה.

2) The Krias Hatorah of the second day of Rosh Hashana is about עקידת יצחק.¹⁸ Additionally, the shofar of Rosh Hashana is customarily made of a ram's horn to recall the merit of the עקידה since a ram was substituted for Yitzchak.¹⁹ We also eat on the night of Rosh Hashana the head of a כבש as a remembrance for the איל of Yitzchak.²⁰

This is obviously no coincidence as it is Yitzchak who is connected to the future as presented in the following:

A) In regard to the future we are told ימלא שחוק פיננו, then our mouth will be filled with laughter, and ותשחק ליום אחרון.²¹ This refers to יצחק whose name is rooted in צחוק, laughter.²²

B) יצחק is composed of the letters קץ חי. קץ חי refers to the future.

C) Although nowadays the Halacha rules in accordance with Beis Hillel, in the future, the Arizal tells us we will regulate in accordance with Beis Shamai.²⁴ Shamai personifies the attribute of Din.²⁵ This is also the trait of Yitzchak as it says פחד יצחק. So, again we see Yitzchak associated with the future. Moreover, the word יצחק is future tense (as this is what a י at the beginning of a word can do).²⁶

Choose Your Friends

The Rambam²⁷ writes it is natural for a man's character and actions²⁸ to be influenced by his friends and associates and for him to follow the local norms of behavior. Therefore, he should associate with the righteous and be constantly in the company of the wise, so as to learn from their deeds. Conversely, he should keep away from the wicked, so as not to learn from their deeds.²⁹ For this reason, we are instructed to

¹⁸ Shulchan Aruch 601:1, see Mishna Brura there. Also, see Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 129:21 how Tashlich which we say on Rosh Hashana is to remember the merit of the עקידה.

¹⁹ Also, the Tur (Hilchos Yom Kippur 605) teaches that one of the reasons why a חרנגול (rooster) is chosen over a בהמה והיה for Kapores is because in the places of the wealthy they would do an exchange (תמורה) with rams, mainly that which has horns, since it resembles the איל of Yitzchak.

²⁰ Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 583:2.

²¹ Tehillim 126:2, Mishlei 31:25.

²² Also see Baal Haturim, Breishis 25:18. The name יצחק is spelled at times with a ש (as in Tehillim 105:9). Laughter happens when the unexpected occurs. An example is if one steps on a banana peel and slips. In essence it is not funny, it is just unexpected. Similarly, in the future the unexpected will occur as now we are looked down upon and the like contrary to what will be in the future.

²³ See Vayechi 47:28, Rashi. We also find this term in the Hagada—השב הקץ. The Gur Aryeh explains it refers to the future since it is an end (קץ) to Galus.

²⁴ See also Hamaor Hagadol, p. 454.

²⁵ Bnei Yissaschar Shevat 2:4.

²⁶ The phrase נתנו נתנו (Yeshaya 40:1) has a Gematria of 208, the same as יצחק. This is because he is the one who comforts us since he is associated with the future redemption (See Chasam Sofer, Sefer Zikaron p. 71, Bnei Yissaschar Tammuz Av, 5:1:1, Meor Vashemesh, Haftoras Shabbos Nachamu.) Also see Shabbos 89b in a dialogue with Hashem and the Avos, Yitzchak is the one who gives comfort to bearing our sins.

²⁷ Hilchos Daos 6:1.

²⁸ Man's ethical makeup is a combination of character and action (See the Rambam in Sefer Hamitzvos, עשה, מצות עשה 8).

²⁹ Now we can have more Kavana when we say רע ומחבר רע ומחבר רע, distance us from an evil person and an evil companion.

distance ourselves from a bad neighbor and to not associate with the wicked.³⁰ This is just as it says ...הולך את החכמים יחכם, one who walks with the wise will become wise while one who associates with fools will suffer.³¹

Studies show that we pick up the moods and habits of the five people we spend the most time with. The energy of those that we surround ourselves with makes an enormous impact. Their positivity becomes our positivity. Their tendency to dream bigger leads to the expansion of our dreams. Their positive outlook on the world and on others becomes our perspective as well. And their encouragement and belief in us becomes the impetus for us to view ourselves in a brighter light. And when we are surrounded by the wrong people, the opposite is true. This is the intent of לא ישוב לציים, ³² praiseworthy is the one who doesn't sit in the company of scorners. Don't hang out with negative, cynical people as they drain your energy and get you down. One is influenced by the company he keeps as it says ...אם ללציים.³³

This idea is shown in the Mishna³⁴ that tells us someone asked R' Yose Ben Kisma if he would be willing to live in his locale even offering him lots of wealth. He replied that even if he was given all the wealth in the world he would dwell only in a place of Torah.³⁵

In August 2007, a boy, named Yaakov, that was visiting the Catskills stayed by a friend who had someone there that wasn't religious, named Meir. In the morning, when Yaakov arose for Shacharis, Meir decided to join him. From that morning onward, Meir continued to daven Shacharis with a Minyan for the remainder of his stay in the Catskills for the summer. Soon after, Meir attended Shor Yoshuv full time.

The word חבר rearranged spells בחר since we should choose good friends. These letters also comprise the words חרב, sword and ברה, flee, because bad friends are like a sword since we should run away from such people.

Rabbi Alt merited to learn under the tutelage of R' Mordechai Friedlander Tzt"l for close to five years. He received Semicha from R' Zalman Nechemia Goldberg. Rabbi Alt has written on numerous topics for various websites and publications and is the author of the Sefer, Fascinating Insights: Torah Perspectives on Unique Topics. His writings inspire people across the spectrum of Jewish observance to live with the vibrancy and beauty of Torah. He lives with his wife and family in a suburb of Yerushalayim where he studies, writes and teaches. The author is passionate about teaching Jews of all levels of observance.

³⁰ Avos 1:7. When the American soldiers went into combat in World War Two, 25% of them were unable to kill their enemy, since it's not easy psychologically to kill another person. The Americans hired a team of mental health professionals—psychologists, psychiatrists and social workers—to teach these soldiers how to kill, in which they were successful. Years later, during the Vietnam War, the Americans again began this program with the mental health professionals. However, this time, it was immediately canceled. This was because there was no need for this program since it was the first war fought by a generation raised on watching television. As a result, they already knew how to kill because they saw many murders on television. What can be said of today where the youth spend an immense amount of time surrounded by such violent scenes and murders in movies they watch, video games they play and the like? (This doesn't even include foul language, criminal behavior and other negativity they are exposed to from this.)

³¹ Mishlei 13:20.

³² Tehillim 1:1.

³³ Mishlei 3:34. See Rashi.

³⁴ Avos 6:9.

³⁵ In this light we can understand why the section of Nazir and Sota are juxtaposed. Anyone who sees a Sota in her state of disgrace should separate himself from wine by vowing to become a nazir since wine brought her to such a state (see Sota 2a). This is why the Mesachtos of Nazir and Sota are juxtaposed.