

# Fascinating INSIGHTS

ג' אדר א' תשפ"ב  
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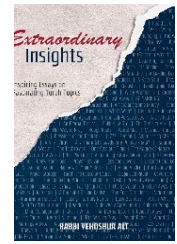
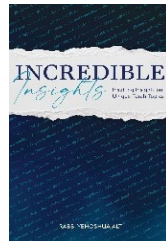
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**COMING SOON Bez"H**

**A book about Eretz Yisrael**

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לעילוי נשמת ישראל בן אברהם

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## Fiery Faith

The pasuk<sup>1</sup> commands us to remember what Amaleik did to us **בדרך בצאתכם ממצרים**, on the way when we were leaving Mitzrayim. The term **בדרך**, on the path, is referring to a special path, the first path ever mentioned in the Torah which is in the account of the first failing of man in Gan Eden. After the sin, Hashem placed Angelic Keruvim with a revolving sword to guard **עץ החיים**, the path to the tree of life.<sup>2</sup> So **בדרך** refers to this path, the path to the tree of life.

Amaleik attacked us when we left Mitzrayim and were on the way to Har Sinai to receive the Torah. The revelation at Har Sinai was a taste of the tree of life, as the gemara<sup>3</sup> tells us that the human lowliness caused by the first sin was reversed when we experienced the revelation at Sinai. At that moment we rose above the levels of

mortals and became people of eternal life. Amaleik attempted to stop us from getting to that place.

To reach the tree of life, one must toil with all his strength in Torah, that which we received at Har Sinai. The Torah scrolls we use are mounted on two pieces of wood called *atzei chaim*, trees of life. When one is called to the Torah (aliyah), the halacha<sup>4</sup> is that he should hold on to the *atzei chaim* with both of his hands. This is because to acquire it, we must devote all our strength to it.

The word **יד**, hand, has a gematria of 14. So, with two hands, we come to a total of 28. In Koheles, Shlomo Hamelech lists 14 times of blessing and 14 of misfortune, giving us a total of 28.<sup>5</sup> The right hand represents the 14 of blessing while the left symbolizes the 14 of misfortune. With both hands, we are to hold on to the tree of life, and to devote all our strength to it. The Hebrew word for strength is **כח**, which has a gematria of 28!<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Devarim 25:17.

<sup>2</sup> Breishis 3:24.

<sup>3</sup> Shabbos 146a. In fact, the Torah is called an **עץ חיים** (Mishlei 3:18).

<sup>4</sup> Orach Chaim 139:11.

<sup>5</sup> Koheles 3:2-8.

<sup>6</sup> This parallels the original 28 hours a day. The Gevul Binyomin (2:5) citing the Remak says that rather than the primordial week being 6 days of 28 hours each, Hashem rearranged the week to consist of 7 days of 24 hours. This also connects with the bracha of Birchas Hachama ("blessing of the sun") which is recited when

To truly reach the tree of life, to fully imbibe its blessings, we must be fully devoted to Hashem and hold on to Hashem with a strength that can carry us through all possible human times.

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### Pivot the Planet

Rashi<sup>7</sup> quotes the Gemara that Yocheved—the mother of Moshe—was born **בין החומות**, between the walls (Mitzrayim and Eretz Yisrael). On a deeper level, this is telling us that on the one hand we have a yetzer hara pulling us to act like those in Mitzrayim, but on the other hand we also have a pull to be holy (Eretz Yisrael).<sup>8</sup>

This also put the ability in us to be part of society but not to be negatively affected by it. We can work in a secular environment yet still be firm in our religious beliefs. This is an explanation in the bracha of **לרב לירד**,<sup>9</sup> as fish live in this world but also live separately in their own world. Similarly, we should live in this world, but remain attached to Hashem.

This idea is exemplified by a tzadik. The seven sefiros, **midos**<sup>10</sup> are mentioned in the pasuk **לך ה' הגדלה והגבורה והתפארת והנצח וההודו כי כל בשמים ובארץ לך ה' הממלכה והמתנשא לכל לראש**, Yours, Hashem, is the greatness, the strength, the splendor, the triumph, and the glory, even everything in heaven and earth. Yours, Hashem, is the kingdom, and the sovereignty over every leader.<sup>11</sup> According to this sequence, **כי כל בשמים ובארץ** is a reference to the sixth mida which is **יסוד**. In fact, this is alluded to in the gematria of **כי כל** as it is identical in gematria to **יסוד**, 80.

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Rabbi Alt merited to learn under the tutelage of R' Mordechai Friedlander ztz"l for close to five years. He received semicha from R' Zalman Nechemia Goldberg ztz"l. Rabbi Alt has written on numerous topics for various websites and publications and is the author of three books including the recently released *Extraordinary Insights*, in addition to being the host of *The Fascinating Insights Podcast*. His writings, some of which have been translated into Yiddish, Hebrew, German and French, 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 Kiryat Yearim (where the Aron was for 20 years [Shmuel 1, 7:1,2]) where he studies, writes and teaches. The author is passionate about teaching Jews of all levels of observance.

the sun completes its 28-year cycle. At this point, the sun returns to its position at the moment of its creation (Brachos 59b).

<sup>7</sup> Breishis 46:15.

<sup>8</sup> For this reason, Moshe, the son of Yocheved—who was born **בין החומות**—has this power, like it is written **וביניכם בין ה' עמד** (Devarim 5:5), as he was the mediator between us and Hashem (being part of two worlds). Similarly, the Midrash (Devarim Rabba 11:4, see Siduro Shel Shabbos 4:2:9) says that Moshe was half manlike, half godlike.

<sup>9</sup> Breishis 48:16.

<sup>10</sup> They are Chesed, Gevura, Tiferes, Netzach, Hod, Yesod and Malchus.

<sup>11</sup> Divrei Hayamim 1, 29:11.

<sup>12</sup> Mishlei 12:7.

<sup>13</sup> The seven shepherds are Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov, Moshe, Aharon, Yosef and Dovid.

<sup>14</sup> The Rambam's great son, R' Avraham Ben Harambam (1186-1237), succeeded his father in this position at age 19. (He was born to the Rambam when he was 51.)

<sup>15</sup> As a side note, he started **פירוש המשניות** at age 23 which took him seven years to complete. He began Mishna Torah around the year 1170 and spent 10 years writing it. We also see his Torah greatness in the fact that Mishna Torah alone has more than 325 commentaries, including the Kesef Mishna, Maggid Mishna, Lechem Mishna, Mishna L'melech, Ohr Someach, and Mirkeves Hamishna.

This mida of **יסוד** is the mida of a tzadik as it says **עולם צדיק יסוד עולם**, a tzadik is the foundation of the world.<sup>12</sup> A tzadik is one who is involved in the material world (**ארץ**) but still attached to Hashem (**שמים**). Yosef, who is called **יוסף הצדיק**, is the sixth of the shepherds,<sup>13</sup> corresponding to the mida of **יסוד**. He personifies this as he was in the immorally low place of Egypt and yet still remained connected to Hashem. Wherever Yosef was, he was attached to Hashem.

We have seen occurrences of this concept throughout our history. The following are just a few of the many examples:

The Rambam (1135-1204) became a doctor at age 31 and at 39 became the personal doctor of the sultan and the royal court.<sup>14</sup> Yet we know that he also authored many well-known sefarim, among them **פירוש המשניות**,<sup>15</sup> **משנה תורה**, **מורה נבוכים**, **איגרת הרמב"ם**, **ספר המצות**, **מורה נבוכים**.

The holy kabbalist the Arizal<sup>16</sup> (1534-1572) was also a pepper merchant.<sup>17</sup>

The great commentator Abarbanel<sup>18</sup> (1437-1508) was a treasurer to King Alfonso V of Portugal and later to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella.

The author of the commentary on Chumash known as the Sforno (1470-1550) was also a physician and was educated in secular subjects. He supported himself by practicing medicine while he also officiated as a dayan in the local Beis Din in Bologna.

<sup>16</sup> In the Sefer Shaar Ruach Hakodesh (Drush Alef), R' Chaim Vital testified about the wisdom of the Arizal: "I saw with my eyes wondrous things... He (Arizal) understood **אותיות המצה**, letters of the forehead; **חכמת הפרצוף**, wisdom of the face; the **אורות**, lights that are on the skin of a person; the **אורות** in hair; the chatter of birds; the speech of **דקלים**, palm trees, trees, and grass; and even the speech of inanimate objects... the speech of a flame of a candle and of coals (**גחלי אש**). He would see the malachim that make all the announcements in the world as is known and he would speak with them. He was an expert in all grass and true segulos. He knew far more like this, but I won't mention it because people wouldn't believe it."

<sup>17</sup> The Arizal didn't write down any of his Torah (although we do have his signature from his business dealings), since he had so many ideas come to him at once. His dedicated student R' Chaim Vital put his rebbe's teachings into writing, benefiting later generations. It is said that when the Gra said the name Arizal, he would tremble.

<sup>18</sup> Some of his greatness in Torah is shown in how quickly he wrote his commentaries. For example, he began his commentary on Yehoshua on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Cheshvon in 1484 and finished it on the 26<sup>th</sup> of that month (16 days later)! His commentary on Shoftim he began Rosh Chodesh Kislev and finished it by the 25<sup>th</sup> of Kislev, while his commentary on Shmuel, which is longer, took from the first of Teves until the 13<sup>th</sup> of Adar.