

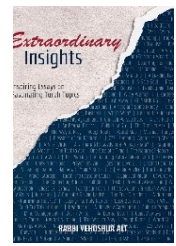
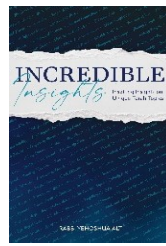
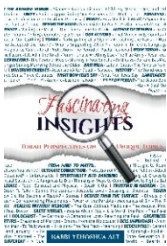
# Fascinating INSIGHTS

יו' אדר א' תשפ"ב  
February 18, 2022

פרשת כי תשא  
10<sup>th</sup> year, edition 424

**As we have arrived at the final stages before publication, this is the final opportunity for dedications for the book about our homeland, Eretz Yisrael, titled "Spectacular Insights about a Spectacular Land." Don't miss out on the Dedication Opportunities, which can be given from Maisei money. It can be L'ilui Nishmas, L'Refuah Shleima, an advertisement for a business, in honor of a special occasion or any other dedication that your heart desires. This is in addition to sharing in the merit of the Torah learned by each reader. For more information or if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at [yalt3285@gmail.com](mailto:yalt3285@gmail.com). Donations can also be given via credit card by clicking "Donate" at <https://bit.ly/32wISw3>. Any amount is welcome.**

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## Solid, Liquid and Gas

There are three states of matter: solid, liquid and gas. With heat, solids become liquids and liquids become gasses. Solids are closest to the element of earth as they fall to the earth. When a solid is heated, it is brought closer to the element of fire, the highest state of physical items. Flames rise because their root is above in the Heavenly realm. When a solid is heated, it melts into a liquid, causing it to rise to a higher form than its original solid state. With more heat, the liquid will transfer to an even higher state, as it will evaporate and become a gas.<sup>1</sup>

The world reflects the light of the Torah. The more passion you have in your avodas Hashem, the higher the level. Just as fire can raise the level of physical matter, so too a fiery, passionate observance of Judaism raises your spiritual level. Similarly, spending time with passionate Jews can raise one from a level of slothful practice to a higher level of service.<sup>2</sup>

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## To Perish for His People

Moshe Rabbeinu requests of Hashem: הראני נא את כבודך ("show me Your glory"), to which Hashem responds that one can't see Me and live.<sup>3</sup>

Didn't Moshe know this? Why did he think he would be any different?

Being a proper leader requires mastering the trait of humility, since if one is arrogant then he can't lead the people.<sup>4</sup> A מלך ("king") needs to have an attitude of לית מגרמיה כלום ("nothing at all of myself").<sup>5</sup> Consequently, the initials of this phrase spell out the word מלך.

The word מלך is also composed of the same letters as לכם ("for you"), because he is there "for you," not for himself.

Sefer Shoftim hints to this idea by repeatedly noting, "there was no king and each one did what was

<sup>1</sup> See the Rambam in Hilchos Yesodai Hatorah 4:5-6.

<sup>2</sup> The Shem Mishmuel (Shemini) says that the way to inspire those who are cold in their religious observance is to bring them into the presence of passionate Jews that are filled with burning love for Hashem.

<sup>3</sup> Shemos 33:18,20.

<sup>4</sup> On the subject of a leader having humility—the Maharam Shick, a student of the Chasam Sofer, said about his rebbe he would say Shalom Aleichem silently because he was so humble that he felt unworthy of being accompanied by malachim.

<sup>5</sup> Cited in Siduro Shel Shabbos 2,1,13 in the name of the Tikunei Zohar.

proper in his eyes.”<sup>6</sup> A dedicated king would have shown them the proper path. This is why a Jewish king can't have too many horses, gold and silver, and wives<sup>7</sup> because he has to be there for the people—he cannot be distracted by too many royal amenities.<sup>8</sup> And a king must always keep with him a Sefer Torah<sup>9</sup> so that he can teach the nation by example.

We see this by Dovid Hamelech who possessed great humility, as he said about himself איש תולעת ולא איש (“I am a worm, not a man”).<sup>10</sup> Similarly, Moshe is called “the humblest man” to have ever walked the face of the earth.<sup>11</sup>

In the secular world, the ones who become the leaders are the ones that desire to become leaders. We see how haughty a politician running for office is. This contrasts with the Jewish approach whereby the leaders are the ones who don't want to become leaders, since they don't feel worthy of the position.<sup>12</sup>

The Gemara<sup>13</sup> tells us that in the lead-up to Mashaich's arrival, פני הדור כפני הכלב (“the face of the generation will be like the face of a dog”). פני הדור refers to the leaders who are the representatives and thus the “face” of their generation.<sup>14</sup>

A leader must guide with authority, and teach right from wrong. However, in the period before Moshiach, the leaders will first check to see if their views are well-received. This resembles how a dog acts. When you see somebody walking a dog, the dog tends to walk in front, such that it appears as though the dog is leading its owner. But when it gets to an intersection, the dog looks back at its owner to see where to go.<sup>15</sup> The same is true of politicians as they pretend like they are leading the people, but in reality, they simply gauge what their constituents most want and follow those trends. There is a saying, “Once, special people were famous. Today, famous people are special.”

<sup>6</sup> Such as 17:6. This caused the unfortunate incidents of פסל מיכה and פילגש בגבעה (end of Sefer Shoftim).

<sup>7</sup> Devarim 17:16,17.

<sup>8</sup> Parenthetically, מלך is an acronym for מֵעַם לְעַם בְּעַם (“from the people, for the people, and like the people”).

<sup>9</sup> Devarim 17:18.

<sup>10</sup> Tehillim 22:7.

<sup>11</sup> Bamidbar 12:3.

<sup>12</sup> See Erubin 13b, Chullin 89b.

<sup>13</sup> Sota 49b.

<sup>14</sup> See Bereishis Rabba 79:6. See R' Elchonon Wasserman in Kuntres Ikvos Meshicha who quotes the Chofetz Chaim.

<sup>15</sup> R' Elchonon Wasserman in Kovetz Maamarim V'agados, p 285.

<sup>16</sup> R' Moshe Alshich (1508–1593), known as the Alshich Hakodosh was a student of R' Yosef Karo, author of the Shulchan Aruch, and even referred to him on occasion as “my father.” The Alshich left together with R' Yosef Karo for Eretz Yisrael, settling in Tzefas, where he was ordained by R' Karo and eventually served as a judge on R' Karo's rabbinical court. The Alshich's students include R' Chaim Vital, whom he ordained in 1590. R' Chaim Vital considered the Alshich as the greatest authority on Jewish law in the generation after the passing of R' Yosef Karo.

R' Vital wrote that the soul of the great amora Ravina—who was one of the two redactors of the Talmud Bavli—had been reincarnated in the Alshich, and at a certain point in the Alshich's life, the soul of R' Shmuel Bar Nachmeini was also infused within him.

R' Baruch Ber Liebowitz remarked that a Jewish leader needs to put his life on the line for the Jewish people. This is how the R' Moshe Alshich<sup>16</sup> interprets כי תשא את ראש בני ישראל לפקדיהם ונתנו איש כפר נפשו a leader let it be one who is moser nefesh for the people.

In the time of R' Dovid U'Moshe, one of the great tzadikim of Morrocco, there was an epidemic that had a high death rate. R' Dovid U'Moshe begged Hashem to take his own life as an atonement for the entire community, instead of the toll that the epidemic would take. As a result of his request, in 1162, he passed away.

Going back to our opening question, Moshe Rabbeinu certainly knew that one cannot see Hashem and live. However, the Gemara<sup>17</sup> informs us that the death of a tzadik atones. When Moshe asked of Hashem נא את הראני כבודך, he was essentially offering to sacrifice his life so that Hashem should “reveal His glory” and thus kill Moshe just so that the Jewish People can attain their atonement for the sin of the עגל.<sup>18</sup> Moshe was truly offering to be moser nefesh for the sake of Klal Yisrael. Hashem's response: no, because I want you to live.

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Rabbi Alt merited to learn under the tutelage of R' Mordechai Friedlander tztz"l for close to five years. He received semicha from R' Zalman Nechemia Goldberg tztz"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 Alshich was regarded as a kabbalist, and studied with the Remak, R' Moshe Cordovero. Although the Alshich learned kabbala from the Arizal, the Arizal wouldn't accept him as a full student, declaring that the Alshich came to This World in order to rectify the realm of drush (the exegetical/homiletical mode of interpreting Torah). For this reason, when the Alshich sat in on the Arizal's shiurim, he would fall asleep. In 1590, the 82-year-old Alshich left Eretz Yisrael for Turkey, Persia and Syria to raise funds for the Jewish community of Tzefas which had been impoverished due to famine. He is buried in Tzefas alongside R' Shlomo Alkabetz and R' Yosef Karo.

<sup>17</sup> Moed Katan 28a.

<sup>18</sup> The pasuk says (Shemos 34:8): וימהר משה ויקר ארצה וישתחו (“Moshe hurried to bow his head toward the ground and prostrate himself”). This pasuk comes immediately after the Torah lists Hashem's Thirteen Attributes of Mercy, which ends with Hashem saying (Shemos 34:7) that He will visit the sins of the parents on their descendants *al shilaishim v'al ribaim* (“to the third and fourth [generations]”). Moshe hurried to bow so that Hashem wouldn't continue and say על המשים (“and to the fifth [generation]”).

The Ibn Ezra (to Shemos 34:8) is bothered by this explanation, noting that if this is the case, then Moshe should be liable for death since he interrupted Hashem while He was talking? The Chasam Sofer (Al Hatorah, Korach, first s.v. boker v'yodah) brings an incredible answer from the Ramban: Indeed, Moshe did something here which should leave him deserving of the death penalty. He did this because of his ahavas yisrael. He was willing to die for the Jewish people in order to spare them from punishment one generation less!