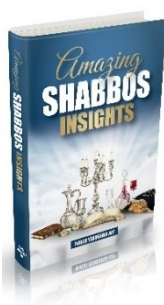


Fascinating INSIGHTS

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Jewish Journey

Man enters into a new state of existence with each moment in this world. Every moment provides another opportunity for spiritual development. His true identity is revealed only after life in this world had ended. Death marks his fully formed state of existence and this final state will exist for eternity in the next world.

The term מציאות, existence, is derived from יציאה, coming out, hinting at the continuous transformation in

life from potential to actual.¹ The journey of life which involves journeying from one place to another is about living life in a continuous state of revelation. This is shown to us in the 42 journeys² during the 40 years from the desert to Eretz Yisrael. The nation's journey of self-revelation is specifically described using the term מוציאהם, going forth,³ a variation of the term יציאה, coming out. Just as we undertook trips in the desert until we reached our homeland, similarly, we are destined to undertake

¹ See Leshem Shvo V'achlama, Hakdamos U'shearim, 1:2.

² Bamidbar 33:1-49.

³ Bamidbar 33:2.

many journeys in the “wilderness of the nations” following later exiles, until the final return to our homeland.

The journey to our homeland is a metaphor for the passage of the barren wasteland of this world en route to the next. The end of life sees one’s arrival to the Heavenly land and Yerushalayim Shel Maalah, Yerushalayim’s Heavenly counterpart above.⁴

The 42 journeys find their parallel in the 42 journeys of a person that begin from birth (the exodus is symbolic of the birth of the Jewish nation) and continue until his arrival to his final destination and eternal inheritance which is symbolized by the entry to the Holy Land.⁵

The mystical 42-letter name of Hashem is the שם שב"ב (ש"ב has a gematria of 42).⁶ This name is connected with creation, which is an expression of Hashem’s oneness.⁷ The genesis of the universe unfolded during the 6 days of creation climaxing on Shabbos, the 7th day. 6 is symbolic of the completed physical realm which in turn is directed towards the holiness of 7. Their interplay links to the full revelation of 42 as is hinted to when 6 and 7 are multiplied, where the result is 42.

The 6 days of creation as the weekly journey toward reaching Shabbos, the 7th day corresponds to the 6 millennia of existence in this world as the antechamber leading to the next world, which is like the day of Shabbos.⁸

The 42 journeys in the wilderness parallel the 42-letter name of Hashem and the ascent from level to level in the preparation from the 6 days of the week to Shabbos.⁹ Each journey corresponds to another letter of the 42-letter name. The goal is to elevate ourselves to the spiritual energy of that specific letter.

The revelation of creation as a journey towards a higher ideal finds its expression within the 42-word formulation of shema. The declaration of Hashem’s oneness is continued within the opening 6 words of Shema. The oneness of Hashem’s holy name must spread out to permeate all of creation which is connected to the 42-letter name of Hashem. So, the ensuing paragraph of shema following the first pasuk has 42 words.¹⁰ With these words he pledges to devote his 42 trips in the physical

world to the service of Hashem and elevating higher and higher.

Profiting from a Prophet

There were a total of 48 neviim, prophets,¹¹ whose prophecies are recorded for posterity within Tanach.¹² Every prophetic revelation was a continuation of Torah as the word of Hashem. The primary function of a navi was to serve as the spokesperson of Hashem. This is derived from the words שפתיים גיב, speech of the lips,¹³ depicted a navi as the mouthpiece publicly broadcasting the word of Hashem.¹⁴

One of the main tasks entrusted to the 48 neviim was issuing admonitions to inspire the wicked to repent.¹⁵ There is a parallel between the 48 neviim and the 48 cities of refuge.¹⁶ The Levites didn’t receive a regional portion in Eretz Yisrael. Instead, they were allocated 48 cities—6 refuge cities and 42 other towns.¹⁷

The 6 cities had Levite residents but also played an additional role. They were the cities to which the inadvertent killer could flee in the bid to seek refuge from the vengeful relative of the victim. The killer was required to dwell within the borders of the city for an indefinite time and only upon the death of the kohen gadol was he free to leave.¹⁸ By causing another to lose his life, the killer ‘forfeited’ his own life. He lost his right to a connection to his own life force. This is why the victim’s relatives were allowed to kill him if he left the city of refuge. His only option was to remain in one of the cities of refuge and live—הוא ינום אל אחת הערים האלה וחי.¹⁹ The emphasis וחי indicates that this offers the refugee his chance to reattached himself to an alternative life force which is of the Levites living with these 48 cities. He resides among the exalted Levites, who are set apart from the mundane world to devote their lives to serve Hashem and to study and teach Torah. The everlasting connection that man has with Hashem as his eternal life force has its allusion in shema where the opening pasuk has 6 words and the rest has 42 bringing a total of 48.²⁰

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 four books including the recently released Amazing Shabbos 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.

⁴ Rema Mipano, Asara Maamaros, Chikur Hadin, 3:22.

⁵ Degel Machaneh Efraim, Parshas Masei. There is the revelation of Hashem in the universe through the 42-letter Divine name. Every stage of the journey serves to spread the unity of Hashem throughout creation. There is also the revelation of man as manifest through his 42 stages of life, represented by Yetzias Mitzrayim through the desert in Eretz Yisrael and the passage from this world to the next. These revelations are interconnected as the true revelation of “who man is” works in concert with the revelation of “who Hashem is.” Man was created to use his free will to reveal Hashem and by revealing Hashem, man is revealing the true essence of his being, namely the godliness of his Divine soul.

⁶ See Kidushin 71a. This name is derived from the 42-letter sequence between the first letter of the Torah which is the Beis of בראשית until the Beis of ותהו ובהו, without form and void (Tosafos to Chagiga 11b).

⁷ מ"ב is an acronym for מעשה בראשית. Also, Hashem created the world with Torah. The Written Torah begins with בראשית while the Oral Torah starts with the word באימת (Brachos 2a). The initials of these two words are מ"ב.

⁸ Mishnayos Tamid 7:4, Rus Rabba 3:3.

⁹ Pri Tzadik, Behaloscha, 1 and Masei, 1.

¹⁰ See Shem Mishmuel, Masei, 5675 in the name of the Arizal.

¹¹ Parenthetically, neviim, prophets referred to themselves in third person. One example is shown by Yaakov in, “gather and listen children of Yaakov, and listen to Yisrael your father” (Breishis 49:2). This was because a prophet’s mind was lifted above their body and they saw themselves as a different person.

¹² Megila 14a.

¹³ Yeshaya 57:19. See Rashi to Shemos 7:1.

¹⁴ Devarim 18:18.

¹⁵ See Rambam, Hilchos Teshuva 4:2.

¹⁶ Tanna Dvei Elyahu, 16.

¹⁷ Bamidbar 35:7, Yehoshua 21:39.

¹⁸ Bamidbar 35:28.

¹⁹ Devarim 19:5.

²⁰ See Shem Mishmuel, Masei 5675.