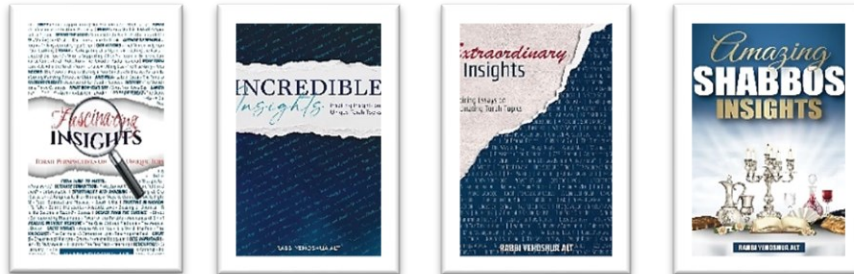


Fascinating INSIGHTS

טו' כסלו תשפ"ג
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A Potential Man

With the single exception of man, every aspect of creation is born complete. From the outset, each entity exists in a state of realized potential. Each aspect of creation exists as an entity in its final wholesome and actualized state. Nothing can grow beyond its pre-set limit.

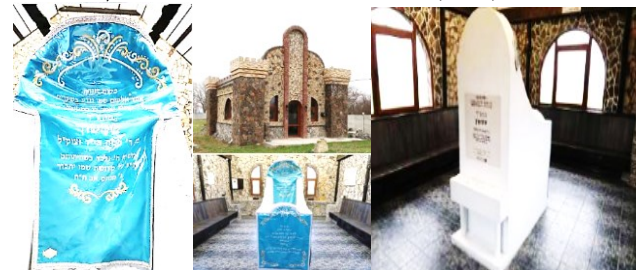
The word מה means what, and is related to the word מהות which means essence — a word used to reveal “what” a thing really is. The word בה means “within” and describes what an object already contains. The term בהמה (which contains the words בה and מה) reveals that an animal's essence — its מה — already exists within it (בה). An animal “is what it is” from the outset and it can never become anything more. From the time an animal enters the world its final state is predetermined. It has no potential to actualize in the future.

The Maharal comments that אדם is related to אדמה, the ground, since there is potential and room for growth just as with the ground which has the potential to bear fruit.

Mercury, Mars and More

The Gemara mentions seven celestial bodies: חמה, נוגה, צדק, מאדים, כוכב, לבנה, שבתאי, the sun, Venus, Mercury, moon,

Saturn, Jupiter and Mars.¹ R' Shimshon Miestripoli² brings the Rambam who states in מורה נבוכים that four of these הטובה indicate good — חמה, נוגה, כוכב, צדק — and three indicate bad — שבתאי — לבנה and מאדים, שבתאי. These three bring destruction — לבנה, לבנה, לבנה. These three bring destruction to one's Torah and money, financial loss. Rashi comments on ויבא יעקב שלם that Yaakov was intact physically (as he recovered from the injury inflicted by Esav's Malach), financially (although he gave Esav's gifts) and in his learning (as he forgot nothing while in the house of Lavan).³ Therefore, שלם are the first letters of מאדים, לבנה, שבתאי!



The Chida⁴ writes that Hashem commanded us in Chodesh, Shabbos and Mila to annul the bad three — שבתאי, מאדים, money.

¹ Shabbos 156a. This is known as תנכ"ל שצ"ם, an acronym for these seven.
² Nitzozai Shimshon, Vayishlach s.v. והנה.
³ Breishis 33:18. A hint to this is found in the word שלם as it is an acronym for מון, אברים, מון, תורה, referring to the body, money and Torah.

⁴ חודש 7, מערכת ח, דבש לפי 4.

and לבנה, and be saved from them. The Mitzva of Shabbos is under the domain of שבתאי. In fact, the first three letters of שבתאי spell שבת ראש חודש is under the domain of the לבנה as it is dependent on the moon when we determine ראש חודש. Finally, מילה is under מאדים as the Gemara⁵ says that one who is born during the hour of מאדים will be one who spills blood which can be one who is a Mohel. The Greeks wanted to abolish these three Mitzvos so that we would be under the dominion of the three bad stars.

The following are some hints to the three Mitzvos of Shabbos, Mila and Rosh Chodesh:

- 1) The miracle of Chanuka was through five חשמונים, five, forms an acronym of שבת מילה שבת.⁶
- 2) The miracle of Chanuka was with oil.⁷ Oil anoints — משה.⁸ משה forms the acronym of שבת, חודש, מילה.
- 3) In addition to the decrees on the three Mitzvos, the Greeks also wanted them להשכיחם תורתך, to forget the Torah, as we say in על הנסים.⁹ This is hinted to in שיר הנוכת הבית which we say on Chanuka, where it says ואלא שמחת אויבי לי,¹⁰ do not let my enemies rejoice over me, as שמחת is an acronym for שבת, מילה, חודש. My enemies, the Greeks were not happy because they were unsuccessful at taking these away from us as we still have Torah and Mitzvos.

Seven Heads, Seven Dead

The Gemara¹¹ tells of a story of a dangerous demon that was in the Beis Midrash of Abaye. R' Acha Bar Yaakov was in town and no one invited him thereby forcing him to sleep in this Beis Midrash. The demon appeared to him as a seven-headed snake.¹² With each of his seven bows a head fell off. We are left to wonder how he knew to bow seven times to kill the seven-headed snake.



Yitzchak gave eight brachos.¹³ The number 26 represents bracha since this is the numerical value of Hashem's name י-ה-ו-ה. If we multiply 26 by 8 (brachos) our result is 208. This is the numerical value of יצחק, alluding to the eight brachos he gave. Yaakov received seven of those brachos and Esav received one. If we multiply 26 by 7 (brachos) we arrive at 182, the same sum as יעקב¹⁴, as this is how many brachos he received.

Corresponding to Yaakov's seven levels of kedushah, Esav had seven levels of tumah.¹⁵ This is in accordance with ואלכה לנגדך, I will go alongside you¹⁶ — what Yaakov possessed in kedushah, Esav had in tumah. With each time Yaakov bowed, one level of tumah was removed from Esav.¹⁷ How many times did Yaakov bow to Esav? Seven.¹⁸

The sum of the word טמא is 50. Multiplying 7 by 50, we come to 350.¹⁹ Esav received one bracha from his father. Therefore, 350 and 26 gives us a total of 376, the same gematria as עשו. The pasuk tells us Yaakov bowed seven times עד אחיו, until he reached his brother. Another interpretation is that through these bowings, Esav was now like a brother to him, since with Yaakov bowing seven times, the seven levels of tumah of Esav were removed.²⁰ This now left Esav with that one bracha.²¹ It comes as no surprise that the gematria of אחיו is 26 (symbolizing the one bracha that remained).²² In light of this we can understand why in the next pasuk Esav ran toward Yaakov and hugged and kissed him,²³ since all that remained in Esav was love because his tumah was removed. Now we can appreciate the words שבע יפול צדיק וקם — Yaakov bowed seven times to Esav (שבע יפול צדיק) and then overcame him (וקם)!²⁴

R' Acha Bar Yaakov learned from Yaakov how to kill the seven-headed demon. He is hinted to here in ישי לי ברכ אהי,²⁵ as this is a reference to ר' אהא. Is it any coincidence that his name was יעקב בר אהא, as he learned this from Yaakov.

Rabbi Ari metzler to learn under the tutelage of R' Elonchickl Friedlander ztz"l for close to five years. He received semicha from R' Zalman Nechemia Goldberg ztz"l. Rabbi Ari has written on numerous topics for various websites and publications and is the author of four books including the recently released Amazing Shabbos Insights. 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 Avon was for 20 years [Shemot 4, 7:12]) where he studies, writes and teaches. The author is passionate about teaching Jews of all levels of observance.

⁵ Shabbos 156a.

⁶ Chida in Yosef Tehillos on Tehillim 30, 5, מזמור.

⁷ The Chassam Sofer points out that the word חשמן (as in חשמונים) when rearranged spells חן as the miracle of the oil was eight days.

⁸ The first letters of שיר הנוכת הבית spell משה. This hints to the miracle of the oil, as in המשחה, שמן המשחה, anointing oil.

⁹ On Chanuka we light candles and Torah is compared to light, as it says (Mishlei 6:23). תורה אור.

¹⁰ Tehillim 30:2.

¹¹ Kidushin 29b.

¹² The Maharsha there says that these are the seven powers of tumah that the Nachash brought to the world.

¹³ See Breishis 27:37, Rashi.

¹⁴ Moreover, Yaakov lived until 147. 147 is 7 multiplied by Hashem's name אהי-ה.

¹⁵ See Mishlei 26:25.

¹⁶ 33:12. See Chagiga 5b. This follows the concept of עשה האלהים-ים (Koheles 7:14), Hashem created each thing and its contrast.

¹⁷ See the Baal Haturim to Breishis 33:3.

¹⁸ Breishis 33:3.

¹⁹ We are taught that when Esav embraced Yaakov (Breishis 33:4), he intended to bite Yaakov. The word שן, tooth, which is with what a person bites, has a gematria of 350 (which is 7 times the gematria of טמא, 50). Also, the letters that comprise the word שן is the first and last letters of the word שנתך and נהש — that which Esav represents.

²⁰ Sefer Hamakneh, Kidushin 29b. The seventh bracha was ... הן גביר, I have made him a lord over you... (Breishis 27:37, Rashi) — malchus. With this we can grasp המלוכה בהר ציון... ועלו מושעים בהר ציון, and saviors will ascend Mount Tzion to judge the mountain of Esav, and the kingdom will be Hashem's (Ovadiah 1:21). ציון, which has a gematria of 156, is 6 multiplied by י-ה-ו-ה. Then אהי-ה — the seventh bracha, malchus.

²¹ The descendants of Yaakov and Esav meet up later in history. The gemara (Avoda Zara 8b) relates how during the epoch of the second Beis Hamikdash the Romans (the Roman Empire, Edom, stems from Esav, Admoni [see Breishis 36:43 Rashi]) were in constant battle with the Greeks and were unsuccessful at subduing them. They therefore approached the Jewish people to form a partnership and together they

were successful. The peace between the Romans and the Jews lasted for 26 years, after which there was some political upheaval. Eventually the Romans became the persecutors of the Jews and destroyed the Beis Hamikdash. Yaakov bowed to Esav and then they hugged each other (Breishis 33:3-4). Each time Yaakov bowed he activated the name of Hashem i.e., י-ה-ו-ה, which has gematria 26, inside himself to purge his brother of the impure spirit. He did this seven times, thereby transforming the seven levels of tumah in Esav. When he finished the cleansing process, the only element that remained was the 26, the hidden godliness in him and so they hugged and became one. Together there was now a total of י-ה-ו-ה eight times — one in Esav and seven in Yaakov. This demonstrated that now they were finally truly the sons of Yitzchak who embodied the י-ה-ו-ה eight times, as יצחק has a gematria of 208 (8 times 26). The treaty that lasted 26 years corresponds to the one time י-ה-ו-ה became revealed in Esav. At the conclusion of those years they reverted to being enemies. Yaakov hinted at this when he told Esav to go on his way and that they will meet up at a later point (Breishis 33:12. The gemara in Avoda Zara 8b actually cites this pasuk in the context of this story). He was indicating that the brotherly peace that was demonstrated was only a temporary one, lasting 26 years. (This follows Maaseh Avos Siman L'banim, whatever occurred to the forefathers during their lifetime was a signal of what will occur to their progeny.)

²² Including the word itself (This is known as the kollel). The reason why we can include the word itself in gematria is it is just as a product has different ingredients and once we have all those ingredients together it forms something new, the product itself. Similarly, a word is composed of letters and once we have the letters put together we have something new, the word itself (Shabbos Malkisa, p. 24).

²³ The pasuk states ויאמר הכי קרא שמו יעקב ויעקבני... it is because his name was called Yaakov that he outwitted me twice — he took away my birthright and my blessing (Breishis 27:36). The first letters of these words spell וישקהו, he kissed him (Breishis 33:4). This is because the reason Esav didn't kiss Yaakov with a full heart was due to the fact that Yaakov took the bechorah.

²⁴ Mishlei 24:16.

²⁵ Breishis 33:9.