

Fascinating INSIGHTS

י"ז טבת תשפ"ד

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Some of the questions discussed in this book are the following.

What is the ultimate way to elevate the soul of one's parents?

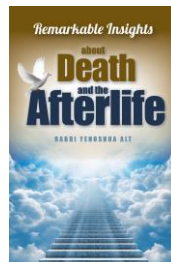
How does the death process rectify a person's soul?

What profound life lessons can we learn from gravestones?

In what ways can the concept of reincarnation help us better understand life?

What is the idea behind davening at gravesites?

What will happen at the Resurrection of the Dead?



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A Dual World

Rashi¹ quotes the Gemara that Yocheved—the mother of Moshe—was born החומות בין, 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).²

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 לרב³, 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.

¹ Breishis 46:15.

² For this reason, Moshe, the son of Yocheved—who was born בין החומות—has this power, as it says אנכי עמד בין ה' וביניכם (Devarim 5:5), as he was the mediator between us and Hashem (being part of two worlds). Similarly,

the Midrash (Devarim Raba 11:4, see Siduro Shel Shabbos 4:2:9) says that Moshe was half manlike, half godlike.

³ Breishis 48:16.

This idea is exemplified by a tzadik. The seven sefiros, midos⁴ are mentioned in the pasuk הגדלה לך ה' הממלכה והגבורה והתפארת והנצח וההוד כי כל בשמים ובארץ לך ה' הממלכה והגבורה והתפארת והנצח וההוד, 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.⁵ 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.

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.⁶ 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,⁷ 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:

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The Rambam (1135-1204) became a doctor at age 31 and at 39 became the personal doctor of the sultan and the royal court.⁸ Yet we know that he also authored many well-known sefarim, among them פירוש המשניות, משנה תורה, ספר המצות, מורה נבוכים, איגרת הרמב"ם, ספר המצות, מורה נבוכים.

The holy kabbalist the Arizal¹⁰ (1534-1572) was also a pepper merchant.¹¹

The great commentator Abarbanel (1437-1508) was a treasurer to King Alfonso V of Portugal and later to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella.¹²



⁴ They are Chessed, Gevura, Tiferes, Netzach, Hod, Yesod and Malchus.

⁵ Divrei Hayamim 1, 29:11.

⁶ Mishlei 12:7.

⁷ The seven shepherds are Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov, Moshe, Aharon, Yosef and Dovid.

⁸ His 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).

⁹ As a side note, he started פירוש המשניות at age 23 and it took him seven years to complete it. Mishna Torah he began 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 Limelech, Ohr Someach, and Mirkeves Hamishna.

¹⁰ In the Sefer Shaar Ruach Hakodesh (Drush א), R' Chaim Vital testified about the wisdom of the Arizal: I saw with my eyes wondrous things... He (Arizal) understood אותיות המצח, 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 (גזלי אש). He would see the Malachim that make all the announcements in the world as is known and he would speak

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.

Handshakes

It is commonplace to have agreements and pledges among other things done with a handshake. But do we see any places involving a handshake in the Torah? In five places, Yaakov's name is written full, with the letter ו (יעקוב), while Eliyahu is spelled missing a ו in five places (אליה). Yaakov took a letter from Eliyahu's name as security so that Eliyahu will come and herald the redemption of Yaakov's children.¹³ The Maharal¹⁴ explains that the giving of a security was sealed by a handshake.¹⁵ The letter ו resembles a finger, so five of them represent the hand, which finalizes the giving of security. By taking the ו from Eliyahu five times, Yaakov took his "hand" as a security to ensure that he would redeem his children. This is also alluded to through the fact that the numerical value of ו is six and five multiplied by six is 30. This leads us to the Mishna¹⁶ that says that the hand is composed of thirty segments.

Where do we find in the Torah a source for shaking a person's hand when you greet them? R' Dessler¹⁷ (1892-1953) once explained that greeting and blessing someone (when you greet a person with shalom, it is a form of bracha) with a handshake is sourced in the Torah. Why did Yaakov need to put his hands on Efraim and Menashe when giving them a bracha?¹⁸ The answer is that when there is a connection between the one giving the bracha and the one receiving it, through the hands, at the time of the giving of the bracha, the bracha has a stronger effect.¹⁹ Similarly, the Tiferes Shlomo²⁰ (1801-1866) says that the hands serve as the conduit for the bracha. This is why people greet each other with a handshake.



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 six books including the recently released Dazzling Money 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 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.

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 won't believe it.

¹¹ 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 shake.

¹² 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 10th of Cheshvon in 1484 and finished it on the 26th of that month (16 days later)! His commentary on Shoftim he began Rosh Chodesh Kislev and finished it by the 25th of Kislev, while his commentary on Shmuel, which is longer, took from the first of Teves until the 13th of Adar.

¹³ Vayikra 26:42, Rashi.

¹⁴ Gur Aryeh, Vayikra 26:42.

¹⁵ See Mishlei 6:1,3.

¹⁶ Ohalos 1:8.

¹⁷ Sefer Zikaron to Michtav M'Eliyahu, 2.

¹⁸ Breishis 48:14.

¹⁹ See Drashos Ha'ran in Drush Ha'sheini.

²⁰ Tiferes Shlomo, Moadim, Shemini Atzeres, s.v. shivas. See also Rimzei Pesach, s.v. mipnei. Also Cited in Shalom Rav, p. 72.