



Likkutei Sichos

Volume 18 | Shavuos | Sichah 2

Three Kings

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1.

ALL CONNECTED

As mentioned many times,¹ (the time of) Shavuot shares a connection with: (a) **Moshe Rabbeinu**, through whom the Torah was given on Shavuot; (b) **King David**, whose passing was on Shavuot;² and (c) the **Baal Shem Tov**, whose passing was also on Shavuot.³

Since everything occurs by Divine Providence, especially when discussing events related to the Jewish people, in general, and their great luminaries and leaders, in particular, it is clear that: (a) there is a common thread {shared by all three leaders}, (as they are all linked to the same day); and (b) this common thread is related to the day's (primary) significance, namely the Festival of Shavuot – the time of the giving of our Torah.⁴

On the other hand, within the common element, each of the three leaders reflects a unique facet. Each one of them are, in the words of the Gemara, “necessary.”

2.

THREE FIRSTS

Of the common elements shared by Moshe, David, and the Baal Shem Tov, is that each of them was (not only a king and leader⁵ in Israel but) a “first” in **the form** of kingship and leadership they represented:

¹ See *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 8, p. 21 ff.; *ibid* p. 249 ff.; et al.

² *Jerusalem Talmud*, “Beitzah,” ch. 4, par. 4; *Chagigah*, ch. 2, par. 3; *Chagigah* 17a, *Tosafos*, s.v., “af atzeres.”

³ The first day of Shavuot; *Likkutei Dibburim* 32a.

⁴ See the beginning of *Midrash Tehillim* (regarding Moshe and David): Moshe gave them the five books of the Torah, and corresponding to them, David gave them the Book of Tehillim, which has in it five books.

⁵ In a manner of being a “**shepherd**”; see a lengthy explanation in *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 8, p. 250 ff.

Moshe was the first leader⁶ of all the Jews, and according to the ruling of the Rambam, “he was a king.”⁷ Moshe Rabbeinu was the first **king** of the Jewish people.

King David was the first head of the Davidic dynasty. “Once David was anointed, he merited the crown⁸ of kingship... for him and his male descendents, forever. The monarchy would never be supplanted from the progeny of David.”⁹

And the Baal Shem Tov was the first leader of the (overarching) Chassidic movement.¹⁰

On this basis, we can understand the distinct connection that each of the three kings and leaders of Israel have with the Giving of the Torah (through their common element). Of the pivotal breakthroughs achieved by the Giving of the Torah was that every Jew became a member of the “**kingdom of priests (officers)**.”¹¹ Every Jew derives the power to actualize and manifest this identity from the leaders of Israel of their generation,¹² as explained below.

⁶ And afterwards, “in each and every generation sparks from the soul of Moshe Rabbeinu descend and are en clothed into the body and *nefesh* of the wise men of the generation, the eyes of the congregation....” (*Tanya*, ch. 42).

⁷ “*Hilchos Beis Habechirah*,” ch. 6, par. 11; *Introduction to Mishnah*, “*Shevuos*,” ch. 2, par. 2; *Rabbeinu Chananel* and Rashi, *Shevuos* 15a; see *Zevachim* 102a.

⁸ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Melachim*” ch. 1, par. 7 (ff). See also *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Talmud Torah*,” ch. 3.

⁹ *Mishneh Torah*, *ibid.*; see *Midrash Tehillim*, beg.: “The most praised of the kings was David”; Tzemach Tzedek’s *Sefer Hamitzvos*, “*Mitzvas Minui Melech*,” ch. 2; see *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 25, p. 110, et al.

¹⁰ See 5696, “*Sichas Shevii Shel Pesach*” (printed in the addendum to *Kesser Shem Tov*, sec. 225): **The exaltedness of the mighty king** is nothing compared with the exaltedness of the Rebbe (the Baal Shem Tov). Note the known idea that the revelation of the Baal Shem Tov was a “taste” of the revelation of Moshiach; see *Toras Chaim*, “*Shemos*” (329b): “The inner fear of the Baal Shem Tov resembled the fear of Moshiach....”

¹¹ *Shemos* 19:6; Rashi, *loc. cit.*

¹² See Tzemach Tzedek’s *Sefer Hamitzvos*, “*Mitzvas Minui Melech*,” ch. 1 (concerning how the *bittul* that the king possesses is drawn to all the people).

3.

ROYALTY IS FREEDOM

The connection between the concept of “a kingdom of priests” and the Giving of the Torah can be understood by delving into the concept of kingship:

At the core of kingship lies the idea of exaltedness — the king’s elevated status and the king’s detachment from the entire nation to the extent that he is not allowed to do any work.¹³ All his needs must be provided for with great abundance, as it says,¹⁴ “The king in his beauty shall your eyes behold.” No one and nothing in the land can prevent the king from fulfilling his will, as our Sages say, “the king may breach a fence... and none may protest,”¹⁵ and, “If the government says... it will uproot mountains,”¹⁶ and so on.

The Giving of the Torah made a similar impact on the Jewish people. At the Giving of the Torah, “You exalted us” — Jews became elevated over other people, becoming even higher than the world itself, unfettered by natural laws.

In other words, when Jews fulfill the will of Hashem — when they act in accordance with the totality of Torah and mitzvos — not only do they receive all their needs in abundance, but more so, they do not need to plow, sow seeds, etc., as their work is done by **others**.¹⁷

With regard to the spiritual service of an individual Jew, this implies that when it comes to doing something for the sake of Torah and mitzvos, a Jew must conduct himself as a **king**. He must wholeheartedly devote himself to the

¹³ This is emphasized by the fact that a regular community leader is forbidden to do work (in front of three people) — *Kiddushin* 70a; *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Sanhedrin*,” ch. 25, par. 4; *Tur Shulchan Aruch*, “*Choshen Mishpat*,” sec. 8, par. 4; Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Hilchos Talmud Torah*,” ch. 4, par. 16.

¹⁴ *Yeshayahu* 33:17; *Rambam*, “*Hilchos Melachim*,” ch. 2, par. 5; see *Horayos* 9a, and Rashi, loc. cit.

¹⁵ *Pesachim*, 110a. {A king may breach the fence of an individual in order to form a path for himself, and none may protest.}

¹⁶ *Bava Basra* 3b. {The government doesn’t retract statements, as Rabbi Shmuel says, “If the government says it will uproot mountains, it will uproot mountains.”}

¹⁷ See *Berachos* 35b; *Mechilta* (and Rashi) on *Shemos* 16:32.

mitzvah exactly as if he has no other work or concerns¹⁸ (just as someone who is fully provided for in abundance).¹⁹

No natural calculation should prevent him from performing a mitzvah, because when it comes to Torah and mitzvos, a Jew is **master** (a king) over nature.

When a Jew approaches the observance of Torah and mitzvos with the mindset of being in “a kingdom of priests,” he doesn’t engage in a **battle** with his evil inclination and with distractions. Rather, he is **calm**: He raises himself above the world around him (conscious that he is a member of a “kingdom of priests”) such that **from the outset**, there is no cause for anxiety.

4.

OUR LEADERS ASSIST

A Jew, however, could ask:

When we are speaking about (the **inwardness** of) the soul, which is higher than (being garbed in) a body. As such, it makes sense that nothing of this material world can interfere with his connection with Hashem (by carrying out His will and fulfilling His mitzvos — mitzvos of the King of the World).

Here, however, we are discussing the Jewish soul as it is clothed within the physical body and is engaged in worldly matters that limit and disturb it. How can we demand a person to truly transcend these limitations?

The solution lies in the fact that in every generation there are leaders of Israel who possess the qualities of kingship and leadership. **They** empower

¹⁸ We could also include no concern for **another mitzvah** — see Rashi on *Sukkah* 25a, s.v., “*chasan sukkah*”; et al.; Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 38, par. 7. ff.

¹⁹ On a **similar** note, see *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 17, p. 307, regarding one for whom “Torah is his craft”; note *Torah Or*, 38d, which says that one for whom Torah is his craft has the status of **king**.

every Jew to express **openly** (at any rate, a resemblance of) the quality of “a kingdom of priests.”

5.

OUR LEADERS ARE MIRACULOUS

Since Moshe, David, and the Baal Shem Tov were all leaders and kings —

[Therefore, we find that besides being wealthy and affluent,²⁰ they also ruled over and controlled nature. In fact, their interactions exhibited elements of the supernatural:

When leading the Jews in Egypt and guiding them through the desert, Moshe Rabbeinu constantly displayed miraculous conduct.²¹

For King David, as well, Hashem performed miracles and wonders, as evident by the many prayers and songs of gratitude that King David composed in the Book of *Tehillim*.

The Baal Shem Tov was renowned for his conduct that was replete with miracles and wonders, as publicized by the stories about him and his disciples.²² Indeed, idiomatically, any fantastic incident is referred to as “a Baal Shem Tov exploit.”]

— it is from them, and through them, that the qualities of kingship will be manifest and revealed within every Jew.

²⁰ Moshe — *Nedarim* 38a.; David — see *Divrei HaYamim* 29:2, ff; Baal Shem Tov — as he is famous for the stories told of him.

²¹ See *Bereishis Rabbah* 59:5 — “Moshe, the miracle worker of Israel.”

²² See Tzemach Tzedek’s *Derech Emunah* (65a): “He was unparalleled since the time of the *Rishonim* in the revelation of miracles and wonders that transcend nature....” Also see “*Hemshech* 5666,” end of p. 227.

6.

THREE ASPECTS TO THE TORAH

To understand the unique ways in which Moshe, David, and the Baal Shem Tov influenced the Jewish people, it is necessary to first explain how the revelation at the Giving of the Torah included three facets:

- a) the **actual** revelation of G-dliness at the Giving of the Torah — “Hashem descended upon mount Sinai.” This phenomenon was entirely beyond the world’s natural order, and was only **temporary**.
- b) the impact and affect **this** revelation²³ had on the world. After “an extended blast of the shofar,”²⁴ the Divine Presence left,²⁵ and the revelation of G-dly light at the Giving of the Torah ended. However, the nature of the world had become refined, making it easier in the future to reveal a G-dly light.
- c) the **purpose** of the Giving of the Torah, which was to connect the higher worlds with the **lower world**,²⁶ or, as *Tanya*²⁷ puts it: To make from this material world, which is the absolute lowest world, a **home** for Hashem. This means that even in this world of spiritual concealment, where G-dliness is not visible (“with a doubled and redoubled darkness... full of negative forces²⁸ that literally oppose Hashem, as if to say ‘I am and there is no other’”), a Jew should draw down the revelation of G-dly light from the Giving of the Torah.

²³ {The Giving of the Torah.}

²⁴ *Shemos* 19:13.

²⁵ Rashi on *Shemos* 19:13.

²⁶ According to the wording of *Midrash Tanchuma*, “*Va’eira*,” sec. 15; *Shemos Rabbah*, ch. 12, par. 3.

²⁷ *Tanya*, “*Likkutei Amarim*,” ch. 36.

²⁸ {In the original, “קליפות וס'א”; lit., “*kelipos* and *sitra acher*.”}

THREE ERAS

These three facets are generally reflected in the three different time periods of the Jewish nation: the period of the Generation of the Desert; the era when the Jews lived in their homeland; and the period of Exile.

During their trek through the desert, the Jews who had received the Torah as souls **within bodies, openly retained** some degree of the revelation from the Giving of the Torah, even as time passed. They remained in the desert, away from worldly distractions (and lived in a state of miraculous conduct beyond the constraints of nature in all²⁹ matters) to devote themselves entirely to Torah, as our Sages say,³⁰ “The Torah was given only ... to those who ate the manna.”

In the Land of Israel, Jews had already entered an “inhabited land,” living a natural lifestyle. On the other hand, in Israel, Divine Providence was **out in the open**, as it says,³¹ “a land which Hashem your L-rd seeks out; the eyes of Hashem, your G-d, are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.” Even though the Jewish people needed to work the land, as it says, “sowing and harvesting... shall not cease,”³² still, the land also was tended to by Hashem, as it says, “absorbs water from the rains of heaven.”³³ We openly saw that Hashem was the One who provided sustenance for all. Hence, it was evident that a mortal’s efforts “in all that you do”³⁴ were simply to create a receptacle to receive the {blessing that} “Hashem your G-d shall bless you,” **from On High**.³⁵

In times of exile, however, “we don’t see our signs.”³⁶ In fact, a Jew might G-d forbid, believe that he is subject to the same laws of nature as non-Jews.

²⁹ Generally speaking: the manna, the well of Miriam and the Clouds of Glory (that laundered their clothing – *Midrash Tehillim*, 23:2; *Devarim Rabbah*, *Ki Savo*; Rashi on *Devarim* 8:4.)

³⁰ *Mechilta* on *Shemos* 13:17; 16:4.

³¹ *Devarim* 11:12; *Bachya*, loc. cit.; **et al.** (see the sources cited in *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 18, p. 2, fn. 10).

³² *Bereishis* 8:22.

³³ *Devarim* 11:11.

³⁴ *Devarim* 15:18; *Sifri*, loc. cit.

³⁵ See a lengthy explanation in 5657, “*Veyadaita*”; **et al.**

³⁶ *Tehillim* 74:9.

Consequently, it becomes imperative for us to strive to penetrate and illuminate the veil of concealment and the darkness of exile.

8.

LIVING MIRACULOUSLY IN THE LAND

The revelation at the Giving of the Torah was only temporary in its general impact on the **world**. However, the revelation **permanently established** the status of the Jewish people as “a kingdom of priests.” No matter in what situation a Jew finds himself, in the **depths of his soul, he** remains totally aloof from his surroundings, and the laws of nature do not constrain him.³⁷

Moshe, David, and the Baal Shem Tov benefitted the Jewish people by their qualities of royalty and leadership (a kingdom of priests) in a way that paralleled the aforementioned differences (and the novelty of each):

Moshe Rabbeinu, the conduit through whom the Torah was given — to the extent that the Torah “is referred to using his name”³⁸ — enabled his generation (who had received the Torah as souls within bodies, as discussed) to experience their identity as “a kingdom of priests” in a **simple, material** sense: All their needs were received from Above,³⁹ without them having to work. Every Jew became wealthy and affluent, and their everyday lives were miraculous, as discussed.

When they entered Israel, however, an inhabited land, the manna, which was bread from Heaven,⁴⁰ no longer fell, as the verse states:⁴¹ “When you enter the land... six years you shall sow...” The Jewish people were then compelled to

³⁷ As known (*Likkutei Torah*, “*Re’eh*,” beg.; et al.) the Giving of the Torah caused “*Havayah*,” a name of Hashem expressing G-dliness beyond nature, to become “*Elokecha*” (your power and your life) for every Jew.

³⁸ *Shabbos* 89a; *Midrash Tehillim* 1:2; et al.

³⁹ And the manna was given in the merit of Moshe, and later on “Both (the Clouds of Glory {which came originally in Aharon’s merit} and the water-well {which came originally in Miriam’s merit} returned in the merit of Moshe” (*Taanis* 9a).

⁴⁰ *Shemos* 16:35; *Yehoshua* 5:12.

⁴¹ *Vayikra* 25:2,3.

work, albeit in the Land of Israel, where Divine Providence was **openly revealed**, and the truth was clear that livelihood comes from **Above**.

However, when a person is busy creating a vessel, in a natural way, to receive the blessings of Hashem, it may, at times, lead to a misconception. The person may delude himself into believing that **his** own efforts impact the flow of his livelihood. So, of course, earning his livelihood could distract him from learning Torah and performing mitzvos.

This is the impact made by King David.⁴² He empowered every Jew to show that he is from a “kingdom of priests,” even in an **inhabited** land. This means that the Jew recognizes his livelihood comes entirely from **Above**. Therefore, in truth, his livelihood is also plentiful and is (at its root and essence) miraculous. What he earns is not tethered to nature. He is involved with nature only because Hashem wants his livelihood to be channeled through “all that **you do**.”⁴³

Thus, it is clear that when one is involved in Torah and mitzvos, he can do so without getting disturbed, like a **king** (as discussed in Section 3).

⁴² As our Sages say: “When the children of Israel needed livelihood, the **Sanhedrin** would go to David and say....” (*Berachos* 3b). Particularly, in his old age (at his best, when he was “complete”) it was through David that: (a) all the wars were ended, etc. — the completion of securing the **inhabited** land, and (b) all the preparations for the building of the Temple were completed (*I Divrei Hayamim* 28 ff.) — revealing G-dliness.

⁴³ See *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 18, p. 294 ff.; *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 16, p. 174, par. 4 ff.

9.

EVEN IN EXILE WE CAN TRANSCEND

As the darkness of exile set in, especially as it intensified and became darker, desperate times threw the Jewish people (not only into the regular workforce, but) into the **hardships**⁴⁴ of earning a livelihood. Thus, the Jews required a new (and loftier) spiritual energy to awaken and uncover their royal character:

A Jew may be inclined to think that in such times, when great challenges and obstacles to fulfilling Torah and mitzvos abound, it is more than sufficient to fulfill Torah and mitzvos as normal. (This itself also requires a fierce battle and tremendous exertion to overcome challenges, etc.) All the more so is this true when a Jew strains himself further to beautify a mitzvah, or to add to his Torah study beyond what is required.

How is it possible, during **such** a time, for a person to devote himself to Torah and mitzvos as a member of “a kingdom of priests,” as if all the challenges and disruptions were nonexistent?

The Baal Shem Tov teaches⁴⁵ that even amidst the darkest times of exile, a Jew can completely transcend his surroundings. He can feel how he is a member of “a kingdom of priests,” who Hashem Himself, with the acme of **Divine providence over all details**, miraculously orchestrates **every detail of his day-to-day life**.

This influence — eliciting the quality of being a “kingdom of priests” in the Jewish people during exile — is a greater novelty and quality in the concept of **kingship**⁴⁶ than was evident in the previous two time periods:

⁴⁴ The intended nuance of this word is explained in *Maamar “Mayim Rabim 5738,”* sec. 2 (*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 20, p. 276; *Sefer HaMaamarim Melukat*, vol. 1, p. 273).

⁴⁵ As known, the divulging of the Baal Shem Tov’s identity was related to the Jewish people then being in a state of faint, etc. (based on an old unattributed manuscript of Chassidus) following the decrees of 1648-49, etc.

⁴⁶ Therefore, the leadership of the Baal Shem Tov is associated with the kingship of Moshiach, as mentioned above in fn. 10.

The unbounded power of kingship in a Jew is not expressed by the fact that the Jew can transcend the natural world when he is in a desert and locked away from the world, or even when he is in (the world, but in a place where G-dliness is revealed — in) the Land of Israel. For under such circumstances, he is not really constrained by this world to begin with.

Only when a Jew conducts himself in such a way during a time of exile does it express how he can raise himself and proceed (as the famous adage puts it)⁴⁷ “**lechatchila ariber**,”⁴⁸ not in an orderly fashion, but entirely beyond measure and limitation — from the depths and darkness of exile to the loftiness of “a kingdom of priests.”

10.

FOR ALL GENERATIONS

At the same time, G-d forbid to say that the impact of Moshe, David and the Baal Shem Tov had was only in their respective generations (or only in the general era in which they lived: Moshe — the generation of the desert; David — when the Jewish people dwelled in the Land of Israel; and the Baal Shem Tov — during exile).

This is because the impact of Moshe, David, and the Baal Shem Tov is **eternal**,⁴⁹ for all Jews in all generations. [Therefore, Moshe is referred to by every Jew as Moshe **Rabbeinu (our teacher)**. In reference to king David, every Jew says,⁵⁰ “David, king of Israel **lives forever**” (even nowadays); and since the advent of Moshiach⁵¹ depends on “your wellsprings spread forth” to the

⁴⁷ The well-known adage of the Rebbe Maharash; see *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 1, p. 124; vol. 12, p. 186.

⁴⁸ {“The world says that if you cannot go under an obstacle, try to leap over it. However, I say, **leap over it in the first place!**”}

⁴⁹ Regarding Moshe and David, see *Sotah* 9a.

⁵⁰ In *Kiddush Levanah*, based on *Rosh Hashanah* 25a.

⁵¹ Only then will the whole world be perfected even more than the onset of creation (*Tanya*, “*Likkutei Amarim*,” ch. 36; *Zohar* vol. 3, 125a; *Mishneh Torah*, end of “*Hilchos Melachim*”; *Avodas Hakodesh*, vol. 2, ch. 39).

outside⁵² — {referring to the teachings of} the **Baal Shem Tov** — clearly, this is relevant to every Jew in every generation.]

However, just as their impact was, in general, **emphasized** during three distinct periods, similarly, in every generation, their impact is divided into three different categories of Jews. (And for every individual Jew, three separate categories of *avodah*.)⁵³

Avodas Hashem, in general, can be divided into three categories: Torah, *avodah* (prayer), and acts of kindness (practical mitzvos), which include the commands⁵⁴ to “know Him in all your ways” and that “all your actions should be for the sake of Heaven.” These are similar to the styles of *avodah* characteristic in the three above-mentioned periods (the desert, the Land of Israel, and times of exile.)

Torah is the **revelation** of Hashem’s wisdom. And the dynamic of Torah study works **from Above to below**, revealing Hashem’s will and wisdom in this world. Therefore, through Torah, a Jew is elevated higher than the world (like the Jews in the desert). Through Torah, one becomes a king (as our Sages say:⁵⁵ “The Rabbis are called kings), who rule over and control nature⁵⁶ (in accord with the known adages of our Sages⁵⁷ on the verse,⁵⁸ “Upon the G-d who completes {גומר} for me”).

Prayer involves petitioning for the needs⁵⁹ of the **worshiper**. He actually feels that **Hashem** provides for his needs (like we said above with respect to the

⁵² The famous letter of the Baal Shem Tov, printed at the end of *Ben Poras Yosef*; beg. of *Keser Shem Tov*; et al.

⁵³ {Divine service.}

⁵⁴ *Mishlei* 3:6; *Avos*, ch. 2, mishnah. 12; *Tur Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 231.

⁵⁵ *Gittin*, end of ch. 5.

⁵⁶ As it is known (*Likkutei Torah*, “*Tazria*,” beg. of sec. “*Ka Mifligi*”; *Sefer Maamarim* 5740, p. 116) regarding the miracles and wonders that the *Tannaim*, *Amoraim*, as well as the righteous, performed with the power of their Torah (because Torah transcends time and space). See *Derech Emunah* (65a): “Through the light that was revealed before them... which Hashem hid **in the Torah**.”

⁵⁷ {The Sages interpret the verse to mean, “Upon the G-d who decides (גומר) with me” — the courts decisions actually change nature —} *Jerusalem Talmud*, “*Nedarim*,” ch. 6, par. 8; et al.; Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Hilchos Niddah*,” sec. 189, par. 123.

⁵⁸ {*Tehillim* 57:3.}

⁵⁹ *Mishneh Torah*, beg. of “*Hilchos Tefillah*”; et al.

Land of Israel), but he is still busy with **his** needs. (He makes requests for Hashem to provide what **he** is lacking).

Nonetheless, even through prayer, a person still does not interact with physical objects in the real world. [Similar to the period when the Jewish people were living in their homeland, about which it says,⁶⁰ “each man under his vine, under his date tree,” they did not intermingle with the nations of the world.] The person’s connection with these objects is expressed solely through supplicating Hashem for **his** needs.

The practical mitzvos that involve the use of physical objects, and certainly the spiritual act of refining permitted matters, purify and transform the concealment and darkness inherent in the **physical world** so the light of holiness will shine within them. (This mirrors the time of exile when the Jewish people live amongst the nations of the world, etc.)⁶¹

11.

TO FIGHT AS A KING

This is the quality of kingship that Moshe, David, and the Baal Shem Tov transmit to (every) Jew for all generations:

Moshe, whose identity was centered around **Torah**, effected (revealed) the **essence** of the quality {of kingship}, “a kingdom of priests,” within the Jewish people in the category of “Masters of Torah.” Since learning Torah is their vocation, they are detached from the world. (Concerning these Jews, it says:⁶² “Who are the kings? The Rabbis!”)⁶³

⁶⁰*Melachim I* 5:5; *Michah* 4:4.

⁶¹ This is also the difference between the manner of refinement through Torah, prayer, and the performance of mitzvos (and the refinement of permitted matters.) (See “*Hemshech Pada BeShalom*” 5659, p. 160 ff; “*Pada BeShalom*” 5704, ch. 18 ff.): The Torah’s refinement is from Above to below, in a **peaceful** way. Prayer’s refinement is from below to Above; therefore, it entails a battle, but since it is accompanied with the revelation of light, it is a “**sword of peace**.” Working with material things, and so on, is comparable to an **actual war**, as it says, “bread will be eaten by the sword.”

⁶² {Cf. *Gittin* 62a.}

⁶³ See *Torah Or*, 38d.

[Similarly, Moshe accomplished that all Jews, when they devote time to Torah study,⁶⁴ have the power to sequester themselves from worldly things and concerns, at least while they are learning. They become as absorbed in their learning, as someone whose Torah is his vocation.]

David, who personified **prayer** (and therefore, he composed the book of Psalms),⁶⁵ achieved (with his quality of kingship) that even **this** mode of *avodah* could be carried out in a **royal** fashion: Although a person makes **requests** for his needs, these requests will be fulfilled

[in contrast to regular prayer. Because prayer originates from **below**, the person praying can encounter obstacles and hurdles that result in his requests not being fulfilled. Or at the very least, the fulfillment of his prayers may be delayed, or perhaps, not completely fulfilled, etc. Rather]

immediately, without limit or obstacles, with consummate perfection, like a request fulfilled by a **king**. This is like what was achieved through the **Torah**. As the *Zohar*⁶⁶ says, when Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai needed to bring rain, he expounded a Torah teaching on the verse,⁶⁷ “Behold, how good...,” and **immediately**, rains of blessing fell (and in the desired manner).⁶⁸

[As a result, the Book of Tehillim, which contains the prayers of David, possesses both qualities. It includes praises resembling **prayer**, and at the same time, it is one of the twenty-four books of the Written **Torah**. So its impact is similar to that of **Torah**.]

The Baal Shem Tov revealed Hashem’s unity in the **world**. (He publicized that the true reality of every creation is the word of Hashem, giving every

⁶⁴ See a lengthy explanation in *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 17, p. 307; note *Torah Or*, 67b.

⁶⁵ *Bava Basra* 14b; *Midrash Tehillim*, beg., “Although it was said... it was only fixed by David, King of Israel.”

⁶⁶ *Zohar*, vol. 3, 59b; for a discussion about this matter (and for the difference between the effects of prayer and Torah), see *Sefer Maamarim “Es’halech Liozna,”* p. 210 ff.; *Or HaTorah*, “*Vayikra*” (vol. 1) p. 254 ff.; *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5627, p. 267 ff.

⁶⁷ *Tehillim* 133:1.

⁶⁸ In contrast {to the manner in which rain fell} through prayer — see *Taanis* 23a.

creation its existence and animating it at every moment). However, he revealed this truth using **Torah** (by publicizing a commentary on a certain verse).⁶⁹

Through the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov, every Jew was empowered to navigate the realm of materialism and physicality, even during times of spiritual darkness when signs are not apparent.⁷⁰ In this ongoing **battle** to effect refinement, they can exemplify the qualities of a priestly member within the “kingdom of priests”:

When a person goes out to war, he knows that belonging to a “kingdom of priests,” he is “**on** (above) your enemies.”⁷¹ Victory, therefore, comes from **Above**, as it says,⁷² “**Hashem, your L-rd, will deliver them** into your hand.” Through this process, we “take captives”:⁷³ We free the G-dly spark held “captive” within the material aspects of exile, thereby turning darkness into light and bitterness into sweetness.

— Based on a talk delivered on the second day of Shavuos, 5737 (1977)

⁶⁹ See *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 8, p. 27, and fns.

⁷⁰ {Lit., “we do not see our signs....” (*Tehillim* 74:9).}

⁷¹ *Devarim* 21:10; see *Likkutei Torah*, “*Ki Seitzei*” (number two) and its *biur*.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*