

Likkutei Sichos

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Clocking Return

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Considerable effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the translation while maintaining readability. As in all translations, however, the possibility of inadvertent errors exists.

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1.

THE THREE LEVELS

The *Zohar*¹ on this week's *parshah* discusses one of the advantages of *baalei teshuvah*² over (perfect) tzaddikim: The *avodah*³ of (perfect) tzaddikim entails incremental growth from day to day, from one level to the next. (As stated in our *parshah*: "Avraham was old, **advanced in days...**"⁴ and similarly in this week's *Haftorah*, "And King David was old, **advanced in days...**")⁵ Ultimately, tzaddikim, through their *avodah*, reach consummate closeness and connection with Hashem. Conversely, when it comes to *baalei teshuvah*, the *Zohar* declares that "in one hour, in one day, in one moment, they achieve closeness with the Holy One."

My father⁶ cites these words in his notes on the *Zohar*,⁷ and asks: "These durations of time seem out of order. It should have said *day, hour, moment* {in that order}, for then, each successive unit is more novel than the previous, which aligns with the methodology known as 'not only this but also this'⁸ In addition, if even one moment suffices, then why also write *hour* and *day*?"

He then explains: "We can say that three levels of *teshuvah* exist, which reach the levels of *malchus*,⁹ *z.a.*,¹⁰ and *binah*,¹¹ as discussed in *Likkutei Torah*, '*Mah Tov*,'¹² see there." [That source explains that there is a level of *teshuvah* that corresponds with "turn away from evil"¹³ {desisting from prohibitions} and reaches the level of *malchus*; there is a higher level that corresponds to "and do good"¹⁴ {the performance of positive *mitzvos*} and reaches the level of *z.a.*; and there is an even higher level that corresponds to "and seek out peace" (Torah study) and reaches the level of *binah*.] "And this is the deeper meaning {of 'in one hour, in one day, in one moment'}: 'hour' corresponds to *malchus*, which is referred to as 'hour'; 'day' corresponds to *z.a.*, which is referred to as 'day,' and 'moment' corresponds to *binah*."

¹ *Zohar*, vol. 1, 129a ff.

² {Penitents; singular, "*baal teshuvah*."}

³ {Divine service.}

⁴ *Bereishis* 24:1.

⁵ *I Melachim* 1:1; also see the commentators on the *Zohar* there.

⁶ {The Rebbe's father, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneersohn.}

⁷ *Likkutei Levi Yitzchak* (on the *Zohar*, vol. 1) p. 81.

⁸ {*Horayos* 2a — according to this methodology, each successive item in a list is more novel than the previous.}

⁹ {Lit., "kingship"; *malchus* is the last of the ten *sefiros* (divine emanations) of each spiritual world.}

¹⁰ {An abbreviation of *ze'er anpin*, lit., "the small face," the configuration of the six *sefiros* from *chessed* to *yesod* — the emotional attributes.}

¹¹ {Lit., "understanding," *binah* is the second of the ten *sefiros*.}

¹² *Likkutei Torah*, "*Balak*," 73b ff.

¹³ The wording of the verse — *Tehillim* 34:15.

¹⁴ *Ibid*.

2.

TESHUVAH AND TIME

At first glance, it seems that in his explanation, my father suggests that the three expressions “hour, day, and moment” refer (**not to literal** time units, but rather,) principally to three **levels** in *teshuvah* that are **alluded** to by the words “hour” (*malchus*), “day” (*z.a.*) and “moment” (*binah*). In light of this, the order in which the *Zohar* lists them is understandable, as the order corresponds with the order of the levels of *teshuvah*, from lowest to highest.

However, this explanation must be refined further since it now deviates from the straightforward meaning of the statement. We must, therefore, assume that these three levels of *teshuvah* — which “reach the levels of *malchus*, *z.a.*, and *binah*,” respectively — correspond to their respective time frames in a *literal* sense as well: The *teshuvah* that corresponds to “turn away from evil” that reaches the level of *malchus* is accomplished in “one hour”; the higher level, “do good,” which reaches the level of *z.a.* is accomplished in “one day”; and the highest level, “seek out peace” (Torah), which reaches the level of *binah*, is accomplished in “one moment.”

This needs to be clarified:

A *baal teshuvah* “**immediately** rises and cleaves to Hashem”¹⁵ because, in essence, *teshuvah* transcends order and structure. Before repenting, the penitent is in an undesirable state. With *teshuvah*, he leaps and bounds from one end of the spectrum to the other. (He observes Torah and mitzvos and cleaves to Hashem, whereas before, the opposite was the case.) Since the soul’s propensity prompts this radical shift, the change is unconstrained by order and structure. Likewise, it is not limited by any timeframe either; instead, he “**immediately** rises and cleaves....”

This raises the question: How can the higher level of *teshuvah*, “do good” (which results from a deeper arousal for *teshuvah*), be tied to a specific duration?

The same question applies to the Heavenly attributes: As well known,¹⁶ everything in this world is derived and evolves from (and therefore resembles) the higher worlds. (Moreover, the intent and ultimate purpose of the “higher worlds” is for “this lowly world.”)¹⁷

¹⁵ Wording of the *Zohar*, vol. 1, 129b, at the end of this segment; see also *Kiddushin* 49b: “Perhaps he had thoughts of repentance.”

¹⁶ See *Tanya*, “*Likkutei Amarim*,” beg. of ch. 3: “Whence they descend.”

¹⁷ *Tanya*, “*Likkutei Amarim*,” ch. 36; also see Introduction to *Tikkunei Zohar* 17a: “You are He who has brought forth... through which to direct worlds.” Also see *Pardes*, “*Shaar Taam HaAtzilus*,” ch. 6; “*Shaar Mehus*

Then how can it be that the higher level (*z.a.*) is referred to as “day,” and the lower level (*malchus*) as “hour,” when a day is of longer duration than an hour (and has been drawn down further into the construct of time, and further away from a state that transcends time)?

3.

SHORT AND LONG

This will be better understood by first exploring a concept’s “concise” and “elaborate” forms. Some considerations suggest that concision is a superior form of expression, while other considerations suggest that elaboration is superior:

The advantage of a concise form over a more elaborate one accords with what Rambam writes regarding the educational style of the Mishnah: It was arranged with “concision that encapsulates many points,”¹⁸ as opposed to the Gemara, which is characterized by elucidation. The same is said¹⁹ regarding the *Acharonim*²⁰ (compared with the *Rishonim*):²¹ The style of the *Acharonim* is to **elucidate**. In other **words**, a concept, as it exists in its source, is (more) concise. Elaboration of the concept comes as a result of it being extended from its source to the level of the recipient. ({This is the progression of} the Mishnah to the Gemara, and of the Gemara to the scholars and authors that followed.)

Conversely, our Sages tell us that “a person should always teach his **student** succinctly.”²² The straightforward reason behind this directive is that a student cannot grasp the concept’s lengthiness and elaborateness. He must, therefore, be taught concisely in a way that matches his intellectual capacity. Concision is necessary because of the student’s limited capacity compared with the teacher’s.

VeHanhagah,” ch. 20; *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5643, “*Tanu Rabanan Ner Chanukah*”; *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5678, “*Mishetishkah Hachamah*”; et al.

¹⁸ Rambam’s Introduction to *Commentary on Mishnah*, s.v., “*acharei chein ra’ah lehistapek*.”

¹⁹ See *Sifrei HaKlalim (Yad Malachi, “Klalei HaRambam,”* sec. 24; et al.), based on *Beis Yosef on Tur, “Yoreh Deah,”* sec. 201, s.v., “*Uma shekasav veaf im titbol*”: “He is a later sage... thus, he should have elucidated”; and other sources. See also the letter printed in the introduction to *Tosafos Rid, “Shabbos”* (Brooklyn, 5722).

²⁰ {Lit., “the first ones;” the *Rishonim* are Torah sages who lived during the 11th to 15th centuries.}

²¹ {Lit., “the latter ones;” the *Acharonim* are Torah sages who lived during the 16th century until the present day.}

²² *Pesachim* 3b; *Chullin* 63b.

4.

CONTEXT MATTERS

We can posit the following explanation: {These proofs are not contradictory; rather} it depends on the level under discussion:

When focusing on the relationship between two “worlds” — two different levels of comprehension where one level completely transcends the other, like the difference between the (authors of) the Mishnah vis-à-vis the Gemara, the Gemara vis-à-vis the *Rishonim*, and the *Rishonim* vis-à-vis the *Acharonim*, and so on — the loftier the level on which the intellect is found, the more concise its format will be. This is because, on the loftier levels, the **essence** of the idea itself is in a revealed state (the truth of the subject matter is visible).²³ {The same applies in reverse:} The lower the level, the more explanation and elaboration are needed for the same rationale to be correctly understood.

[We can propose that the same can be said regarding hearing compared with seeing. Something that can be seen “in the blink of an eye” needs an exhaustive verbal description for the same thing to be **heard**.]

Conversely, when focusing on the format of concepts in the *same* “world,” the opposite is true: A “higher” (more profound) idea requires more elaboration to express and understand its true loftiness (depth). A more straightforward idea can be understood through more concise wording. Its more uncomplicated nature means fewer words are needed to express its rationale.

The same is true in the examples cited above:

(On the level and) in the “world” of Mishnah — when compared with {the “world” of} Gemara — concepts are expressed much more succinctly (than in the Gemara). However, in the “world” of the Gemara **itself** (and similarly {within any “world”}), the more profound ideas are recorded more elaborately and the simpler ones are recorded more succinctly.

²³ Also see the letter printed in the introduction to *Tosafos Rid*, “*Shabbos*” (Brooklyn, 5722).

5.

WORLDS APART

The same applies in our context:

In general,²⁴ the three levels of *teshuvah* mentioned above can be broken down into two categories: The first two levels belong to the category of *teshuvah tataah*,²⁵ and the third level to the category of *teshuvah ilaah*.²⁶ This is also how they are understood simply: The first two levels of *teshuvah* — “turn away from evil and do good” — exist in the realm of **action** (either action or the absence of action). The third level of *teshuvah* — “seek out peace” — represents the **study** of the Torah, which exists in the realm of **intellect**.

Accordingly, the *teshuvah* connected with intellect is more concise (“in one moment”) because in this (higher) realm of intellect, the idea is in a more revealed state. Therefore, there is no need for elaboration.

In contrast, when it comes to the two levels of *teshuvah* in the realm of action, the opposite is true: The *teshuvah* of “and do good,” which is the **higher** level {of these two levels} of *teshuvah*, takes a more extended time — “one day” (like the deep concepts of the Gemara, which require more elaboration). Conversely, the lower level of *teshuvah*, “and turn away from evil,” takes no more than “one hour” (like the more straightforward concepts of the Gemara, which only require a brief explanation).

It is interesting to note that the same is true in the literal sense of these words: **Doing** (“and do”) an action requires (considerable) time, whereas not doing something does not (“turn away from evil”).

The same is true for the supernal *sefiros*:²⁷ The attribute of *binah*, which (is the realm of intellect and) transcends the lower worlds,²⁸ is referred to as “a moment.” This “moment” results from the total revelation of G-dliness in this world, which transpires in no time at all — “a moment.” However, the attributes of *z.a.* and *malchus*, which are associated with the lower

²⁴ For the following explanation, see *Likkutei Torah*, “Balak,” 73b ff.

²⁵ {Lit., “lower-level repentance,” is the return of a Jew to his status before he sinned (*Tanya*, “*Iggeres HaTeshuvah*,” ch. 8).}

²⁶ {Lit., “higher-level repentance,” is “is the return of the soul “to its source... as it was united with Him in the ultimate union before the breath of His mouth blew it forth to descend and be incorporated within the human body” (*Tanya*, “*Iggeres HaTeshuvah*,” ch. 8).}

²⁷ {*Sefiros* are Divine emanations. There are ten *sefiros*, which are various phases in the manifestation of Divinity, generally categorized by intellectual and emotional faculties.}

²⁸ See *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5708, p. 273; et al.

worlds (the world of the emotions), are referred to as “day” and “hour” (more extended periods, and not “a moment”).

However, since within **these** attributes (the world of the emotions), *z.a.* is higher than *malchus*, *z.a.* is referred to as “day,” and *malchus* as “hour,” as explained above.

6.

THE FOURTH DIMENSION

Based on my father's explanation — that the three expressions of time in the *Zohar* symbolize the three levels in *teshuvah* mentioned above — we can now shed light on *Ramak's* version of this teaching. In *Ramak's* version, this teaching contains **four** expressions and levels: “in one hour, in one day, **in one instant**, in one moment”:

In *Likkutei Torah*,²⁹ it is explained that although generally speaking there are three levels of *teshuvah*, from a more detailed view, a fourth and higher level emerges. This is a level of *teshuvah* that reaches the attribute of *chochmah*³⁰ (corresponding to the *avodah* in which a person is directed to “sanctify yourself with what is permitted to you”).³¹

Presumably, the fourth expression added in *Ramak's* version of the *Zohar*, “in one instant,” alludes to this fourth level. Although “a moment” appears to be the shortest interval of time, there is a {Talmudic} discussion regarding the **length** of a “moment” — “one fifty-eight thousand {eight hundred and eighty-eighth of an hour}”; {another opinion in the Talmud there maintains that a “moment” is the time it takes} “to say the word עִנָּה {moment},” that is, to enunciate **three** letters.³² In other words, there is a particular duration to “a moment.”³³ Conversely, “one **instant**” does not connote any time duration and only indicates time's existence.

The explanation in *Likkutei Torah* goes on to say that {there is, in fact, a fourth dimension of *teshuvah*} nevertheless, only three levels of *teshuvah* are clearly discussed in most sources. This is because *chochmah* and *binah* are like “two inseparable friends,”³⁴ and the fourth level of *teshuvah* {*chochmah*} is included within the third {*binah*}.

²⁹ *Likkutei Torah*, “Balak,” 75a ff.

³⁰ {Lit., “wisdom,” *chochmah* is the highest of the intellectual faculties and the first of the *sefiros*.}

³¹ See *Or HaTorah*, *parshas Vaeira*, p. 185, p. 2597; also see *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 19, pp. 399, ff.; et al.

³² *Berachos* 7a, and in *Tosafos* there, s.v., “*she'ilmalei*.”

³³ See *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Kiddush Hachodesh*,” beg. of ch. 10.

³⁴ See *Zohar*, vol. 3, 4a.

Given this explanation, we can now understand why the standard edition of the *Zohar* only records three expressions. This is because, as explained above, only three levels of *teshuvah* are discussed.

However, since the fourth level of *teshuvah* is mentioned on occasion, a version of the *Zohar* exists that spells out **this** fourth level of *teshuvah* — *teshuvah* in its ultimate form.

— From a talk delivered on *Motzaei Shabbos parshas Chayei Sarah*, 5739 (1978)