

SICHA SUMMARY

Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 26

Chof-Daled Teves

The Context:

The Alter Rebbe's yahrzeit on the 24th of Teves often falls out in the week of parshas Vaera. Being that all events, especially those connected to our leaders, are connected to the Torah portion of that week, what is the thematic connection between the Alter Rebbe and this parshah?

The Explanation:

The Alter Rebbe's name, Shneur, means "two lights." This alludes to his groundbreaking, illuminating work in both fields of Jewish study — in halacha, the revealed Torah, with his Shulchan Aruch Harav, and in the hidden realm of the Torah, with the Tanya and all his chassidic teaching.

The word Vaera (וְאָרֶה) also contains an allusion to these two lights. The first three letters (וְאָרֶה) are an anagram of the word "or," light; and the last letter, alef, is an acronym for "or" as well. Thus, the first letters explicitly spell the word light,

referring to the revealed light of Torah, and the last letter hints to the word light, referring to the hidden light of the inner Torah.

Beyond the letters of the word, the meaning of Vaera also resonates with the theme of light. Vaera means "I have appeared." In order to see some entity, we require light to reveal the object before us. Without light, we might still be in the presence of the thing, but we do not know it until we see it.

The Alter Rebbe's life work was to illuminate both realms of Torah, to take the obscure and make it understood, tangible, and relatable. The teachings of the Baal Shem Tov were already available, but with his pioneering work of chassidus Chabad, the Alter Rebbe distilled the teachings of chassidus into a subject which can be thoroughly understood. The Shulchan Aruch laid out the laws and behaviors a Jew must follow, but without the reasoning behind each law. The Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Aruch provided coherent explanations for each law, thus illuminating even a Jew's daily practice of halacha with the light of intellectual satisfaction.
