Hasidic Texts of Passionate Jewish Pluralism

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**Sefer Mei haShiloach, volume I, Parshat Yitro, page 80**

**Dibur ‘Anochi haShem Elokecha’**

“I [Anochi אנכי] am the Lord your God”: It does not say I [Ani אני] for had it written I [Ani אני] it would have implied that the Holy One Blessed be He had revealed the totality of his light to Israel, thereby precluding the possibility of delving deeper and deeper into His words, for all would have been already revealed. But the letter Chaf [כ] teaches that the revelation is not complete, and it is only a shadow and an approximation of the light that the Holy One Blessed be He will reveal in the future.

To the degree that a man attains greater depth in Torah he realizes that until now he was in darkness. This is hinted at by the existence of day and night: Day – that is that God may He be blessed opens the gates of wisdom for a man, and night – that is that a man should not presume that he has attained completely all there is to know, for all that he has attained is like night compared to the day that is yet to come, and so forever. And therefore all is like night compared to the light that the Holy One blessed be He will reveal in the future.

And this is why we find juxtaposed to this verse the verse that says: “Do not fashion for yourself an idol [Pesel פסל]”. It is written in the Holy Zohar (Exodus page 87b): ”Because it is written ‘Chisel [Psol פסול] for yourself [two tablets like the first ones]’, therefore it is written ‘do not fashion for yourself an idol’”. The explanation for the matter is that the word ‘idol [Pesel פסל]’ is something chiseled and cut to exact size exactly as intended, lacking nothing. But there is no such thing except for the Torah of Moshe our teacher peace be upon him, whereas the human mind cannot grasp such a thing with complete perfection.

We find this expressed in Midrash Rut Raba, parsha 3, section 2: “The Caesar said to Rebbi Yehoshua ben Hananiah – I can also create a Torah like that of Moshe, and he promulgated a decree that no one shall light any fire for three days. During those days he saw smoke coming from the chimney of one of the houses, and the Caesar explained to him that one of the ministers was ill and that he therefore was forced to permit it to him”.

Now it is true that also by us the law according to our Holy Torah is that potential danger to life overrides the Shabat, but the difference is that he who violates the Shabat in order to save human life is not doing so as a violation of our Holy Torah. Rather, this also we have been commanded, the potential danger to life overrides the Shabat. It is the same thing in any case of ‘a time to do for God’, that is implied the command to ‘violate Your Torah’. The Torah thereby includes all the exigencies that may arise, and its light includes all the possibilities and all the developments that may develop, and this no man can do.

This is exactly what the Holy Zohar says on the verse “Don’t make for yourself an idol or any image”. “Idol’ refers to positive commandments, and ‘image’ refers to negative commandments, for nothing has been revealed to man in its entirety.

**Sefer Mei haShiloach, volume I, Parshat Vayatza, page 40**

**Dibur “HaAretz Asher Ata Yoshav Alayha Lecha Etnena”**

… “And behold I am with you” (Genesis 28:15) – it does not say I [Ani אני] for the letter Chaf [כ] is indicative of the source of life without end, as it says in Sefer Yetzira.

The Holy One, blessed be He, showed him then all the refinements through which he would have to suffer and be refined. Through all of them he promised him “and I will watch over you through all your journeys, and I will return you to this land”. ‘Return you’ is the language used concerning returning a lost object, for “no one can truly understand words of Torah without having first stumbled in them” (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Gitin, page 43b) That is to say that it is by way of the stumbling block that presents itself to a person, that the words of Torah enter into his heart with greater desire than otherwise, and this is what it means when it says ‘I will return you’, which is the language of repentance.

**Sefer Mei haShiloach, volume I, page 23**

**Parshat Lech Lecha, Dibur ‘El haAretz Asher Ereka’**

For Avraham Avinu peace be upon him, was great in his desire to experience the place of his clinging to life in the presence of God may He be blessed, to the greatest degree possible. And God may He be blessed told him: “To the land which I shall show you”. That means that his clinging to God would be in the place called “which I will show you” for it has no boundaries; at all times the illuminations of the Infinite Blessed One will be expanding for you more and more, and this you will find in the Land of Israel.

**Sefer Mei haShiloach, volume two**

**Parshat Vayishlach**

“And Ya’acov sent messengers before him” – We find the following in the midrash (Midrash Raba parsha 75): “He is there minding his own business and you go and send messengers to him!” The midrash does not mean to say that Ya’acov acted improperly. Rather the matter is to be understood on the basis of what I said on the passage in the Talmud Tractate Brachot page 7 concerning the statement that “the service of Torah is greater than its study”: The yearning and prayer for God may He be blessed is boundless, whereas study has boundaries; that is why the service of Torah is greater than its study. Therefore, even though Ya’acov understood that he would suffer from Esav, he also understood that unbounded positive things would grow from this matter in the longer run, and that is why he was unable to refrain from sending to him.

**Rabbi Yehudah Leib Alter of Ger, Sefat Emet, Leviticus, year 5655 (The Language of Truth, Art Green, pages 205 – 206)**

The midrash quotes the verse: “Death and life are in the hands of the tongue” (Proverbs 18:21). It goes on to quote Ben Sira, who told of one who found a glowing ember and blew upon it, lighting up a flame. Then he spat on it and it was extinguished.

This ember is to be found everywhere; it is the spark of Torah which is called fire. The word ember [גחלת gachelet] is numerically equivalent to the word truth [אמת emet]. Truth refers to Torah, by which everything was created. Thus the ember is to be found everywhere, in everything.

The Jew is capable of fulfilling the potential of this spark. Of this it is written: “He blew the breath of life into his nostrils, and man became a living soul” (Genesis 2:7). ‘Living soul’ is rendered by the Aramaic translation as “a speaking spirit”. We have the power in our mouths to awaken the life that lies everywhere. That is why “if you walk in my ways” (Leviticus 26:3) is read as ‘working in Torah’. This means making a real effort to find words of Torah everywhere, to seek out the stamp and imprint of Torah that is found in every place …