

Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl
Me'or Einayim
Parshas Shemos

"These are the names of the children of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob; each man and his household came." It is already known from our previous teachings elsewhere that the concept of "living beings running and returning" (from Ezekiel 1:14) implies that every person must sometimes descend from their spiritual level. The reason for this is to elevate fallen souls. For example, if a person is standing on a roof and a precious stone lies on the ground, he cannot pick it up unless he descends to where it is, takes it, and then lifts it up.

[NOTE See below in Parashat Yitro, in the commentary beginning with *However, the truth is:*

"The reason one must fall from their spiritual level is as follows: There are fallen souls—some fell from the time of the six days of creation, and some fall in each generation and are reincarnated. These souls wander, unable to connect to the Holy One, Blessed be He, because they lack the means to approach Him. During their lifetimes, they occupied themselves with the vanities of this world and accomplished nothing. When a righteous person falls from their spiritual level and then rises again, as it is written (Proverbs 24:16), '*A righteous person falls seven times and rises,*' upon their ascent to God, they elevate those aforementioned souls along with them.

However, the righteous person can only elevate souls that are rooted in their own spiritual source. Therefore, every person must occasionally descend from their level in order to elevate the souls that share their root."

See *Degel Machaneh Ephraim*, Parashat Vayeitzei, in the commentary beginning with "*Vayeitzei*":

"There is here a secret of greatness and smallness, as is known from my master and grandfather of blessed memory (the Baal Shem Tov, may his merit protect us), for the vitality of the soul is in a state of *ratzoh v'shov* ('running and returning'), and it is impossible to remain always on the same level. Instead, one ascends and descends, and the descent is for the purpose of ascent.

When one takes this to heart, knowing and feeling that they are in a state of smallness, they pray to God, as it says (Deuteronomy 4:29), '*And you will seek the Lord your God from there, and you will find Him.*' The meaning of '*from there*' is from the very place where one finds oneself, as my master and grandfather of blessed memory taught."

END NOTE]

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The righteous are called "messengers of the Divine Presence" because they are emissaries of the Shechinah (Divine Presence) and are sent to the places where they are needed, even if that means descending to lower levels. This is also the intention behind the words of the Sages: "These priests are messengers of God," because a priest is one who serves God, as the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel at the giving of the Torah: "You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests" (Exodus 19:6). Similarly, it is said that "a teacher is referred to as a priest."

This principle applies to every person, even those who are at the level of *beinoni* (the intermediate person) – excluding the wicked. But for everyone else, it is necessary at times to descend from their level in order to elevate the souls beneath them. May the Merciful One save us, for those souls are at a lower level than themselves.

(Behold, the Israelite person is filled with holy names. The skull corresponds to the Divine Name *Havayah* (Y-H-V-H) with the vowelization of *kamatz*. The brain corresponds to *Havayah* with the vowelization of *patach*. The heart corresponds to *Havayah* with the vowelization of *tzeirei*. The right arm corresponds to *Havayah* with the vowelization of *segol*. The left arm corresponds to *Havayah* with the vowelization of *sheva*. The torso corresponds to *Havayah* with the vowelization of *cholam*. The right thigh corresponds to *Havayah* with the vowelization of *chirik*. The left thigh corresponds to *Havayah* with the vowelization of *kubutz*. The covenant (the organ of procreation) corresponds to *Havayah* with the vowelization of *shuruk* in the *vav*. Its crown corresponds to *Havayah* without vowelization because it encompasses the reception of all the vowelizations.

Thus, the Israelite person is filled with the holy names. This is the meaning of "These are the names of the children of Israel" (Exodus 1:1) – that they are filled with the holy names, as mentioned above. Even "those who came to Egypt" – that is, even at the time they descend from their spiritual level and enter the realm of the *kelipot* (spiritual shells or impurities), they remain connected to "Jacob." This refers to "Yud-Akev" ('עקב), meaning that the *Yud*, which symbolizes the highest thought, descends to the level of the *akev* (heel) so that "each man and his household came" – meaning they elevate all the souls beneath them, as explained above.)

"And a new king arose over Egypt..." (Exodus 1:8). Rav and Shmuel disagreed: one said it was truly a new king, and the other said his decrees were made new.

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Now, this is a general principle for us throughout the Torah: *"These and those are the words of the living God."* However, this will not be fully understood until the arrival of our Messiah, speedily in our days. To understand how both views can be true in this case—where they seem to disagree about the reality of the situation—it raises the question: how is it possible for both to be correct?

It is known that the secret of the exile in Egypt lies in the fact that *da'at* (awareness or knowledge) was in exile, as it is written (I Chronicles 28:9), *"Know the God of your father and serve Him."* One must know that there is a Creator, blessed be He. However, they (the Israelites in Egypt) did not have proper knowledge of the Creator, blessed be He. Therefore, at the sea, there was a prosecutorial claim: "These worship idols, and those worship idols," etc.

Heaven forbid to say that the Israelites at that time were idol worshipers, for if that were the case, the Blessed Name would not have performed such great miracles for them. For the Holy One, blessed be He, does not perform miracles for falsehood, Heaven forbid. Rather, it is as the Sages have said: "Anyone who resides in the Land of Israel is as if they have a God, and anyone who resides outside the Land is as if they do not have a God."

For it was frequently stated by the holy Baal Shem Tov, may his soul rest in the hidden chambers of heaven and may his merit protect us, regarding the verse (Deuteronomy 11:16): *"You will turn aside and serve other gods"* – that immediately upon turning away from God, one is considered to be serving other gods. This is because the essence of knowledge (*da'at*) is to know that all of one's powers and vitality come from the Creator, blessed be He, who is omnipotent, the Master of all abilities and powers. He, blessed be He, animates all forces. The moment one deviates from this understanding, they effectively serve other gods—forces other than the Creator, blessed be He—because they lack the knowledge that all their powers come from the Creator.

This is the meaning of *"Anyone who resides in the Land of Israel..."* It implies that a person's materiality (*artziyut*) is aligned with their spiritual identity as Israel, as is fitting for a Jewish individual, possessing the aforementioned knowledge. Such a person is considered as if they have a God. Conversely, one who resides outside the Land of Israel—beyond the boundaries of holiness—lacks this knowledge and is therefore considered as if they have no God.

This is why, in Egypt, where knowledge was in exile, there was a claim against the Israelites: *"These worship idols, and those worship idols."* However, God forbid, they did

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not actually worship idols. Rather, because knowledge (*da'at*) was in exile, creation itself was incomplete, for the primary purpose of creation is *so that they may know Him*, to recognize the Creator, blessed be He. When knowledge was in exile, creation was effectively non-existent, and the world was in a state of chaos and void (*tohu va'vohu*), as the Sages taught: *"The world exists for six thousand years: two thousand years of chaos, two thousand years of Torah..."*

The first two thousand years, before the Torah was given, were a time of chaos, as it says (Genesis 2:4): *"These are the generations of the heavens and the earth"* – the initials of this phrase spell *tohu* (chaos), because until Abraham, the world was in a state of *tohu va'vohu*. From Abraham onward began the two thousand years of Torah, as it says (Genesis 26:5): *"Because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge..."* The Sages teach that Abraham, our father, may peace be upon him, fulfilled the entire Torah even before it was given. However, the Patriarchs themselves were the chariot (to the Divine), and they fulfilled the Torah as it existed prior to its revelation, grasping it in its source. They attained a higher divine knowledge (*da'at elyon*), but this *da'at* that draws knowledge to us had not yet been revealed until the Exodus from Egypt, when *da'at* emerged from exile. Only then was the Torah received.

Thus, the Exodus from Egypt signifies the renewal of creation. It is, in essence, a new creation, because as long as *da'at* was in exile, creation was effectively null and void—a state of *tohu va'vohu*. Since the purpose of creation is *so that they may know Him*, when *da'at* emerged from exile at the Exodus, it marked a true renewal of the world.

This is the meaning of *"A new king arose over Egypt"*—that the kingship of the Blessed One was renewed. Because the *da'at* (knowledge) emerged from exile, it was as if the world was renewed. This is why it says "new" in the literal sense. And the opinion that says "his decrees were made new" is not in conflict with this. Rather, it explains further.

A minor (child) lacks *da'at* for all matters until they are thirteen years and one day old. Before that time, their transactions are not valid, their sales are not binding, and if they betroth a woman, the betrothal is not valid—even if the child is wise, sharp, learned, and a prodigy. Nonetheless, they are still considered a minor until thirteen years and one day, because they lack the higher point (*nekudah elyonah*) of *da'at*, which only becomes present at that time.

In the *da'at* of our cherished Torah, there are 248 positive commandments and 365 negative commandments. The positive commandments are called *chasadim* (acts of kindness), representing the kindness of the Creator, Blessed be He, in giving us His

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commandments. There is no reward for a mitzvah in this world because the reward is so immense that the world cannot contain it. The negative commandments are called *gevurot* (acts of severity), because there is no punishment for neglecting a positive commandment except during a time of Divine anger, whereas for transgressing a negative commandment, there are various punishments, Heaven forbid.

This *da'at* is comprised of *chasadim* and *gevurot*. A minor cannot comprehend the magnitude of the punishments of the Blessed One. True fear is not about fearing punishment but rather about recognizing that God is great and sovereign, and thus one fears Him due to His greatness.

This is the meaning of "*his decrees were made new*": when *da'at* emerged from exile, the understanding of the greatness of God's decrees became apparent. By contrast, before this, when they were in a state of smallness (*katnut*), such comprehension was lacking. Understand this well.