

BS"D Soul Prayer, Class #8, December 10, 2019¹

Mikdash, Sinai, Eden Meditation

Upon entering the *Beit Knesset*, we say the following:

וְאֲנִי בְּרַב חֶסֶדְךָ אָבוּא בֵּיתְךָ אֲשֶׁתְּחַוֶּה אֶל הַיְכָל קִדְשְׁךָ בְּיְרֵאֲתָךְ:

[Hashem, I am keenly aware that] it is solely through Your great loving-kindness that I enter Your House [in the merit of our forefather Avraham who is called *ish chesed*, the embodiment of divine loving-kindness]. I prostrate myself before the sanctuary of Your holiness [in the merit of our forefather Yitzchak who was bound on the altar in the place of utmost holiness], in awe of You alone [in the merit of our forefather Yaacov who said "how awesome is this place"] (Psalm 5:8; *Zohar* 1:11a; *Shaar HaKavanot, Inyan Beit HaKeneset*, p. 3c).

- ❖ When we enter the *Beit Knesset*, we immediately bow down toward the *Aron HaKodesh* (Holy Ark) in which the Torah scrolls are stored.
- ❖ This *Aron HaKodesh* is an extension of the original *Aron HaBrit* (Ark of the Covenant) in the First *Beit HaMikdash*.
- ❖ The *Aron HaBrit* in the First *Beit HaMikdash* was an extension of the original *Aron HaBrit* in the *Mishkan* that Moshe built, which contained the original *Sefer Torah* that Moshe wrote, together with the first set of broken *Luchot HaBrit*, and the second set of whole *Luchot* that he received from Hashem on *Har Sinai* and above in *Shamayim*.
- ❖ It was at Sinai that we each received *Two Crowns of Light* through which we reconnected to the *Body of Light* that we had in *Eden*.
- ❖ It was at *Sinai* that we transcended physicality and experienced Divinity directly, as will again be the case during the Messianic Age and the Great *Shabbat* that will follow.

Thus, when we enter the *Beit Knesset* and bow down toward the *Aron HaKodesh*, we connect all the way back to the first *Beit HaMikdash*, to the *Mishkan*, to *Har Sinai*, to *Eden*, and to *Shamayim*.

Crowns of Light

We learn in the Talmud (*Shabbat* 88a):

When Israel heard Hashem speak at Sinai, each individual received two crowns, one paralleling *naaseh* and one paralleling *nishmah*. When they sinned, 1,200,000 destroying angels descended and removed both crowns off each Jew, as it is written, "From that time on, *bnei Yisrael* divested themselves of *edyam* (their crowns) [which they had received] from/at Mount Chorev" (Exodus 33:6).

In this verse, the *gematria* of the word *edyam* (*ayin, dalet, yod, mem*) is 124, the same as *Eden* (*ayin, dalet, nun*). This indicates that these crowns were the spiritual levels that had been lost by Adam in Eden.

Rabbi Yochanan said: Moshe was worthy, however, and he therefore took all 1,200,000 crowns. The fact that Moshe took them is alluded to in the next verse, "Moshe then took the *ohel* (tent) and set it up outside the camp at a distance. He called it *Ohel Moed* (the Meeting Tent). Whoever sought Hashem would go to the *Ohel Moed* outside the camp" (Exodus 33:7).

Rashi explains that the word *ohel* derives from the root *hal*, the source for the English *halo*, meaning *radiant light*. It thus covertly alludes to the *ediim* (crowns) of light mentioned in the previous verse. Moshe's face also shone with the same light when he descended from Sinai, as the concluding verse in *Ki Tissa* attests, "*Bnei Yisrael* saw that the *skin* [ohr with an *ayin*] of Moshe's face shone..." (Exodus 34:35). This indicates that Moshe succeeded in purifying and refining the

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physical matter of his body to such an incredible degree that his skin (*ohr* with an *ayin*) was transmuted into light (*ohr* with an *aleph*).

Resh Lakish added: In the future, the Holy One will restore these *ediim* (crowns) to us. It is thus written, “The redeemed of Hashem shall return and come to Tziyon with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain [the crown of] joy and [the crown of] happiness” (Isaiah 35:10; 51:11).

Soon in our days, *amen*.

Direct Experience of Divinity

At Sinai, Hashem opened the heavens and granted us a direct experience of His oneness: “*Atah horetz la'daat ki Havayah Hu HaElohim, ein od milevado*—you have been shown [i.e., you have been granted enlightened awareness] to know [i.e., experience directly and empirically] that Hashem [the Infinite One] is HaElohim [the Creator and Sustainer of the world] – there is no other besides Him” (Deuteronomy 4:35).

Rashi, in the name of the Midrash, gives us a peek at what they saw: “You have been shown.” When the Holy One gave the Torah [to Israel], He opened the seven firmaments [of the spiritual dimension]. And then, just as He tore open [the curtains of] the upper worlds, so too He tore open [the curtains of] the lower worlds. They thus saw that He is SINGULAR [above and below]. This is the meaning of, “You have been shown to know... there is no other besides Him.” (Rashi, Deuteronomy 4:35. See *Devarim Rabbah* 2:31)

Besides experiencing Hashem’s oneness visually, we also experienced it audibly. This experience was so powerful that our souls left our bodies (*Tanchuma, Yitro* 11): “Our masters taught that the *Aseret HaDibrot* (Ten Commandments) were all spoken in One Syllable. They issued forth from the mouth of the Holy One [as one] – something so difficult [to imagine] that no human mouth can utter it, nor any human ear hear it. It is therefore written, ‘*Yatza nafshi be’dabero* – my soul departed at [the sound of] His Voice’ (Song of Songs 5:6) [i.e., our soul was unable to remain in our body when we heard Gd’s voice at Sinai].”

Not once but numerous times our souls left our bodies and returned (*Shabbat* 88b): “Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi also taught: With every *dibur* (word, commandment) that emanated from the mouth of the Holy One, the souls of the *bnei Yisrael* departed [from their bodies]. This is the meaning of, ‘*Yatza nafshi be’dabero* – my soul departed at [the sound of] His voice.’ [But you might ask:] Since their souls departed at hearing the first *dibur*, how could they have received the second *dibur*? He [Hashem] brought down the dew with which He will resurrect the dead in the future [and He thus restored their souls back into their bodies each time].”

Dying (physical death) and reviving (coming back to physical life) numerous times at Sinai means that the revelation was so powerful that we (our souls) merged into the divine oneness. This is why our experience at Sinai is described as bringing us to the same level as Adam before the original sin, i.e., before the decree of death.

We became free of the *zuhamat ha'nachash* (contamination of the serpent) which had distorted mankind’s ability to grasp the truth of Gd’s existence ever since Adam had been expelled from *Eden* (*Shabbat* 146a; *Zohar Ki Tissa*, 2:188b). We overcame the angel of death (*Shemot Rabbah* 32:1).

We had to die and be revived numerous times, over and over again, so that it would become encoded into our collective psyche that this physical world is not all there is; so that we could know that we are never separated from the spiritual dimension above us; so that we could embody the highest truth of Gd’s existence even here in this lower dimension.