

**LIGHT
FROM
THE
FUTURE
PARSHAS PINCHAS**

BY

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LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE - PARSHAS PINCHAS

LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE
ESSAYS ON PARSHAS PINCHAS

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**Dedicated to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, who,
more than any Jewish leader, has prepared us
for Moshiach and the imminent Redemption**

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INTRODUCTION

The following collection of essays on *parshas Pinchas* was taken from the weekly Torah messages that I have been sending to hundreds of individuals over the past 22 years.

These messages were written in the spirit of the talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Several of them are actually based on or adaptations of his essays and discourses on the parsha.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe declared that we are living in unique times. He applied the words of the Midrash to our day:

“The time of your Redemption has arrived.”

The Rebbe stated further that the straightforward way for us to bring about the actual Redemption is by learning what the Torah says about Moshiach and Redemption. While learning Torah in general has the capacity to change our mindset, learning about Moshiach and Redemption has the capacity to alter of exile-constrained way of thinking and cultivating a liberating manner of thinking.

In this spirit, each one of these messages concludes with an application of the Torah lesson of that week to our understanding of Moshiach and Redemption, as well as to

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help us prepare for the coming of Moshiach and the imminent Redemption.

It is my fervent hope that these essays will contribute to the process of changing our *galus/exile* mindset into a Moshiach mindset, which is effected by the study of these themes in Torah.. And may this effort contribute to the imminent Redemption through our righteous Moshiach. Amen.

The parsha Pinchas is a powerful reminder of Moshiach and the final Redemption because Pinchas, the Zohar teaches us is identical with Elijah who is the prophet who will announce the coming of Moshiach and the Messianic Age.

ESSAY ONE

ARE YOU AN EXTREMIST?

Most would agree that helping the poor is good.

Devoting one's life to helping them is even better.

Helping people zealously and being extremely kind and compassionate to the extreme is obviously a virtue, not a vice.

ESSAY ONE

ARE YOU AN EXTREMIST?

Pinchas Peace Prize

This week's parsha is named after Pinchas, the zealot, whose brazen actions saved the Jewish people and for which G-d blesses him and accords him the distinction of one who is in possession of the true "Peace Prize"—G-d's "Covenant of Peace."

While one might not want to share a room with a zealot, the bad rap these zealots have received is not all that justified. There are good zealots and there are bad zealots.

In our politically correct society, being an extremist is not good. The terms "radical" "fanatic" "zealot" "extremist" are all regarded as pejoratives; and indeed, in a good many cases they ought to be classified as such. Hitler, Stalin, Mao, Pol Pot, and all the Communist leaders—and many other despotic dictators on all sides of the political spectrum—were evil extremists because they were extremely evil.

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But not all extremism is bad. In fact, this week's parsha makes it abundantly clear that Pinchas' zealotry and violence saved the day.

A Good and Bad Zealot

How do we distinguish between a good zealot and an evil one?

There is a simple answer to this question that requires us to define the terms "good" and "evil." For example, most would agree that helping the poor is good. Devoting one's life to helping them is even better. Helping people zealously and being extremely kind and compassionate to the extreme is obviously a virtue, not a vice.

Obviously, when one devotes his or her life to helping strangers and neglects his or her own family, he or she would not be a good zealot. But, simply being extreme in an area of endeavor is not an inherently negative trait. It might actually be an extraordinarily good trait.

The problem arises as to how we define the terms good and evil. When a given act is not clearly understood as being good—the grey areas of life—we tend to err on the side of moderation, but when an act is unequivocally positive, being extreme in that direction is certainly commendable.

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Vilification of Fanaticism

Why then is our society so hung up on vilifying extremism and fanaticism?

There are many reasons, the most obvious of which is the tragic history of villains that perpetrated the most heinous crimes against society who were all extremists. The problem with this reason is that there is also a rich history of people whose extreme goodness has made it possible for us to survive today.

There is another reason why extremism is so shunned by many that lies in the belief that there is nothing that is absolutely and inherently good or evil. And since these people do not believe in absolute good or evil, anyone who does, becomes their enemy and branded a dangerous extremist who must be fought—often, stridently and yes, extremely.

A Relativistic Absolutist

What happens to these relativists is that in the absence of the real concepts of good and evil they create artificial, disingenuous and hypocritical definitions of good and evil. Being a moderate is good, while being an extremist is bad. Or even worse, in the interests of denying that there are

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absolutes in this world, we find people who become extreme opponents of those who do believe in absolutes.

To illustrate this point. A colleague of mine was arguing with a college student as to whether there are absolutes. The student adamantly denied that what Hitler did could be construed as evil; although he “conceded” that he did not like what he did. The exasperated rabbi was dumbfounded and could not find any words to deal with such a horrible and degenerate denial of the existence of evil. The rabbi was even more shocked when he began eating his Shabbat, chicken dinner. When the student saw the rabbi eating chicken he couldn’t control his indignation and blurted out to the rabbi, “That’s evil!”

I actually had a similar experience when a law student was arguing against labeling anyone or anything evil, for in his eyes, evil is all relative.

About twenty minutes later, the name of an unpopular past-president came up, and the student couldn’t control his distaste for him and, you guessed it, stated to me, “He is evil!”

The Torah couldn’t be more emphatic that good—absolute good—and evil—absolute evil—do exist! And that when one pursues good to the extreme it is extremely good.

Another important lesson from this week’s glorification of Pinchas is that his extreme act was violent, but according

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to the Torah's description of what he did, it saved the lives of thousands of Jews. It was an act of self-defense. The lesson is obvious, the Torah defines good not only when one does acts of charity, but also when one uses military force to help defend the lives of other innocents. As distasteful war is—and we therefore pray daily for G-d to bring the Moshiach when there will be no more war—when it is necessary to defend the innocent, it is an act of righteous zealotry. And that is why we honor our troops who risk their lives—an extreme act—to save ours!

Pinchas' Secret Identity

It is no surprise then to find that according to the Zohar and other classical Jewish sources, Pinchas is identified as being one and the same person as Elijah the prophet who was also characterized in the Bible as a zealot. And yet it is Elijah the prophet that we all welcome into our homes every Passover Seder and who participates in every Brit-circumcision. But what is most revealing is that he is the one who heralds the coming of Moshiach.

People who are moderately good should be praised for their good and not for their moderation. Moderation is a virtue when it comes to things like eating, sleeping and other mundane activities. People, however, who take the ideals of goodness to the extreme by being obsessed with

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making the world a safer, better and holier place are to be lauded for **both** their goodness and their extremism. Indeed, that is what the Messianic Age is all about; it is an age of extremism; extreme goodness and kindness, extreme distaste for arrogance and evil; extreme devotion to all that is good and holy. It is no therefore no surprise that Elijah/Pinchas is the one who announces its arrival.

ESSAY TWO

WILL THE REAL PINCHAS STAND UP!?

The positive values of Judaism is what will eventually endure, while the fight against the negative will eventually cease with the advent of the Moshiach and the final redemption, at which time the “swords will be converted into plowshares.”

ESSAY TWO

WILL THE REAL PINCHAS STAND UP!?

Divided Story

At the end of last week's Torah portion, the Torah recounts how Pinchas committed the ultimate act of zealotry: he killed a Jewish leader and the Midianite princess with whom he was consorting. The backdrop against which this event occurred was the unleashing of Moabites women to seduce the Jews into immoral acts and idolatry. As a consequence of this tragic degeneration of the Jewish community a terrible plague ensued, killing thousands of Jews. At that point, Pinchas the zealot took the initiative and slew the most visible perpetrators. Because he was zealous for G-d, he was rewarded by G-d that he and his children forever will be priests.

Commentators question the way the story of Pinchas has been divided into two separate sections. The actual story of Pinchas' zealous act is recorded in last week's portion entitled Balak. The reward G-d had promised him, however,

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is recorded in **this** week's Torah portion entitled Pinchas. Why couldn't the entire episode be stated in either the preceding portion or in this portion. There appears to be an attempt at discussing Pinchas in two different contexts.

To further buttress the case for the “two Pinchas” theory, we could cite the way Pinchas is mentioned here: “Pinchas the son of Elazar, the son of Aaron the Priest.” Haven't we already read in the preceding portion that Pinchas was the son of Elazar and the grandson of Aaron the Priest? Why is it necessary to repeat his genealogy? From this it can be inferred that the Pinchas discussed in this week's portion is not the same spiritual Pinchas of last week's portion. How can we explain the duality of Pinchas?

Double Identity

Pinchas, to be sure, was a zealot. Pinchas did, in fact, engage in a gruesome act of violence. Had the Torah thus concluded the preceding portion with Pinchas' act and the reward he was given for it, we would have always remembered Pinchas for his zealotry, not for the peace and unity that he ultimately brought about.

Moreover, while zealousness can be a positive trait when it is performed in the interest of saving lives, it is not a trait that we want to perpetuate. We do not raise our children with the notion that they are to uproot and eradicate every

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trace of evil in the world. Fighting evil is a necessary measure to ensure the security and preservation of the good in our midst, but it has no intrinsic value. It is not a trait that we want to instill in our children.

“Covenant of Peace”

Rather, what we seek to inculcate in our children and to perpetuate for posterity is the “covenant of peace.” The positive values of Judaism is what will eventually endure, while the fight against the negative will eventually cease with the advent of the Moshiach and the final redemption, at which time the “swords will be converted into plowshares.”

By dividing Pinchas into two, the Torah drives home a crucial message that notwithstanding the need for the zealous act of Pinchas, it was not this act that characterizes him and the Torah portion named after him, but his connection to Aaron the lover of peace.

Pinchas, this week’s Torah portion declares is to be remembered as the continuation of Elazar and Aaron, the lover of peace. His killing of Zimri and Cozbi was motivated not by hatred or by a latent violent disposition. His violence, rather, was the outgrowth of his passionate love for the welfare of the Jewish people. And it is this passion that lasts forever.

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Two Approaches to Discipline

One may apply this to the subject of discipline. There are two approaches to discipline; the first is to use harsh measures, albeit motivated by love and concern for the child or student. The other method is to use overt warmth and love.

The Alter Rebbe in his classic Tanya (chapter 32) discusses these two approaches and draws a telling difference between them. If one applies harsh criticism and fails to change the other the teacher etc. is left with nothing. The result was negative and the process was essentially negative. There is no redeeming value in what was done unless it yields positive results.

Yet, when a person uses love to change the other, even if it did not yield a positive outcome, one still fulfilled the mitzvah of loving your fellow as yourself. The very method has intrinsic positive value.

The lesson for our times is obvious. We are living on the threshold of the Messianic Age when there will be no more evil to destroy. Even in the days of Pinchas, thousands of years before evil would be totally vanquished, the Torah wishes to separate Pinchas from his violent act so as to impress upon us the need to minimize the role of violence even in the fight against evil and to promote the preeminent role of goodness and peace. How much more

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so, in our day and age, as we stand so close to the ultimate era of total peace and goodness, that we must accentuate the need to promote love and unity, and minimize the emphasis on fighting the last vestiges of evil in our society.

Pinchas our sages tell us is also the prophet Elijah. And concerning Elijah, who will usher in the Messianic Age, it is stated in the Biblical book of Malachi that his role will be to restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the children to their fathers. In other words, Pinchas the zealot will morph into the greatest agent for peace and harmony.

ESSAY THREE

THE DOWN TO EARTH ZEALOT!

The true zealot is one who is able to transcend his own nature.

The true zealot must be able to control his passion for the spiritual, climb down from his celestial perch and deal with lowly affairs and even use tactics that are totally against his nature.

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ESSAY THREE

THE DOWN TO EARTH ZEALOT!

Politically Incorrect!

Zimri, the prince of the tribe of Shimon, consorted with the Midianite princess Cozby, ostensibly to justify similar acts of debauchery by many other Jews. What was G-d's response to these depraved acts? A plague that claimed 24,000 lives. Was Pinchas' lethal reaction the ultimate act of politically incorrect zealotry that it appeared to be?.

In the end of last week's parsha the Torah relates how Pinchas reacted to this colossal tragedy. He speared Zimri and Cozby to death, thereby stopping the plague from spreading further.

This week's parsha begins with the Torah praising Pinchas for this courageous act that placated G-d's anger and saved all the other Jewish lives that were threatened by this communal decadence.

When the Torah mentions Pinchas name in last week's parsha as well as in the opening verse of this week's parsha

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it refers to him as “the son of Elazar, the son of Aaron, the Kohain.”

The question has been asked why the Torah needs to identify him by his grandfather? It would have sufficed, as it usually does when the Torah names someone, to mention just his father’s name. Everyone knows that Elazar was the son of Aaron, as it was mentioned several times before. Why use grandfather Aaron’s name?

Followed in Aaron’s Footsteps

One answer is based on Rashi’s commentary (See *Likkutei Sichos* volume 5). Aaron was known for his unbounded tolerance, pursuit of peace, love and kindness. By invoking Aaron’s memory, the Torah was informing us that Pinchas did not perform his drastic act of zealotry out of cruelty. On the contrary, he was motivated by the same love shown by his grandfather Aaron and acted solely to save the Jewish people from terrible suffering and death.

Transmigration

Another mystical answer is found in the classic work of Kabbalah, the Zohar (volume 3:317a). As Pinchas approached Zimri and Cozby the souls of his departed uncles Nadav and Avihu (the two elder sons of Aaron who

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died when they brought an unauthorized offering to the Mishkan-Sanctuary) entered his body. This rectified their souls' transgressions. The Torah therefore states that he was the "son of Elazar, the **son of Aaron**," to allude to the fact that he was both the son of Elazar and also the son of Aaron, inasmuch as he now possessed the souls of Aaron's two sons.

This incredible revelation that the souls of Nadav and Avihu were transmigrated into Pinchas is explained by the 16th century Kabbalist, Rabbi Menachem Azariah da Fano (known by the acronym Rameh of Fano), in his classic work *Asarah Ma'amros*.

As mentioned, the Zohar stated that their souls were rectified when they entered Pinchas' body. Their sin, according to the Talmud, was a bit more complicated than just bringing an unauthorized offering. It was made worse by their not having first consulted with Moses, their teacher. In other words, it was the lack of respect for higher authority, particularly that of Moses. The reason they so impulsively brought this offering was that their souls were on fire and their passion for G-d blinded them from seeing the error of their ways.

The Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 82a) records two opinions about Pinchas' zealous act. According to Rav, Pinchas consulted with Moses and reminded him of the law that sanctioned

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this act of zealotry. Moses told him to carry out the execution.

The question arises, why did Pinchas have to consult with Moses if he already knew the law? Furthermore, the Talmud records Shmuel's opinion that Pinchas was **not** required to consult with Moses because in times of emergency, when G-d's very "reputation" is sullied and His name desecrated, one need not show honor to one's teacher. If that is the case (and indeed, Rav agrees with this principle in *Berachos* 19b), why did Pinchas feel compelled to consult with Moses?

The answer, Rabbi Menachem da Fano offers is that Pinchas' commitment to respecting Moses' authority was the channel through which Nadav and Avihu's souls were rectified. Because they had allowed their passion to override their obligation to honor Moses, they (whose souls were now one with Pinchas) gravitated to the opposite extreme and consulted with Moses although he/they was/were not obliged to do so in this instance.

Pinchas: Multiple Personalities

Pinchas, the Zohar informs us, is actually Elijah, the zealous prophet who never died but ascended to heaven in a fiery chariot and whose spirit is present at every Bris-Circumcision and Passover Seder. He is the same Elijah

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who will announce the coming of Moshiach and who will heal the rifts in families as a precursor to universal peace of the Messianic Era.

We must try to understand the connection between Pinchas (Nadav and Avihu) and the work of Elijah.

The first thing that comes to mind is their shared zealotry. This raises the question, how can we reconcile zealotry with Moshiach and universal peace? True, there are times when we must use strong measures, tough love and even violence, to protect the innocent and rid the world of evil and all its impediments to peace. But it seems that zealotry, with which Pinchas and Elijah are both identified, is not just a necessary evil but a direct source of peace.

The Anatomy of a True Zealot

To understand the relationship between zealotry and peace we must first dissect the anatomy of a true zealot. When we do, we find the opposite of what most people picture when they conjure up the image of a zealot.

To help us with this analysis we need to refer back to the idea that Pinchas' zealotry was a product of the transmigration of the souls of Nadav and Avihu.

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Nadav and Avihu would hardly be considered zealots in the conventional sense of the term. They had a single, obsessive concern in their lives; they wanted to get as close to G-d as possible or even “as impossible.” They were prepared to allow their souls to be ignited with unlimited love and passion for G-d even if it meant, nay, because it meant, that they would leave this materialistic and ephemeral world and become attached to the Divine.

When this passion, although not favored by G-d because it takes a person out of the very world G-d sent our souls into, is augmented with an imperative sense of responsibility for others, produces a true zealot.

This explains the fusion of Nadav and Avihu’s souls with Pinchas. They had the passion; Pinchas had the sense of responsibility for his afflicted people.

A genuine Torah zealot is a synthesis of these two opposing characteristics. It is one who has a passionate love and unquenchable thirst for G-d; whose soul pines for closeness to Him, as King David so eloquently exclaims: “G-d You are my G-d, I search for You, my soul thirsts for You, my flesh longs for You, as a parched arid land without water...” (Psalm 63) This is the Divinely inspired poetic voice of a person deeply in love with G-d, committed to His service and who desires nothing less than attachment to Him.

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However, this love has to be redirected to save the community from a calamity. The zealot must shift gears to engage the physical world. Indeed, nothing is more incongruous with love than committing acts of extreme violence.

The true zealot is one who is able to transcend his own nature. The true zealot must be able to control his passion for the spiritual, climb down from his celestial perch and deal with lowly affairs and even use tactics that are totally against his nature.

An inauthentic zealot is one who inclines to violence only. He may camouflage that proclivity by seeking out causes where he can legitimize his violent temperament in the guise of doing it for a valuable principle. The authentic zealot must have an abiding love and passion for G-d even when he cannot remain silent in the face of evil and its destructive path.

Nadav and Avihu's passion made it impossible for them to act; its rapture took them out of this world. Nadav and Avihu's souls had to be brought back and placed into Pinchas as he demonstrated tremendous discipline by consulting Moses even when Jewish law did not require it. That fusion of Nadav-and-Avihu passion with Pinchas' profound sense of discipline and responsibility was the

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winning combination that transformed him into a real “kosher” zealot.

The Messianic Synthesis

We can now understand how it is that Elijah (who is identified by the Zohar as Pinchas, who was himself a composite of Nadav and Avihu) will usher in the Messianic age of universal peace. The question was raised, how can a violent zealot be associated with ultimate peace?

The answer is that the Messianic Age is about the complete and seamless fusion of the Divine with the earthly.

We will all be filled with passion for the spiritual and Divine even as we live a full life within the framework of the physical world.

The road to that ideal is not through spiritual elitism or indifference. We must invest our passion in the pursuit of a more G-dly life by climbing to spiritual heights. At the same time, we cannot remain perched on a lofty spiritual mountain. We cannot be withdrawn from society and its needs; we must be prepared to roll up our sleeves and, if need be, fight injustice and immorality just as Pinchas and Elijah of old.

This synthesis is the hallmark of all who will pave the way for the Final Redemption. It will transform the Three

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Weeks of sadness we are presently observing in memory of the events that led to the destruction of the Bais Hamikdash into Three Weeks of joy and celebration with Elijah and Moshiach at our head!

ESSAY FOUR

THE INSTIGATORS

Moshiach is a human being.

**What makes him different is that he is the ultimate
“instigator.”**

**He will inspire and provoke us into realizing our own G-d
given potential for good.**

**Moshiach will unleash the hidden potential for good in the
entire world.**

ESSAY FOUR

THE INSTIGATORS

Digression

Counting of the Jewish people was a recurrent event when the Jewish nation sojourned in the desert. In the aftermath of a terrible plague that killed 24,000 Israelites, G-d commands Moses to count the Jewish people to show His concern for them.

In the ensuing verses, the Torah lists the twelve tribes and the major families within those tribes. Yet in two instances, the Torah digresses from listing these families to talk of certain events and personalities.

The first example of this digression is where the Torah introduces the tribe of Reuven. After listing the four major families that this tribe comprised, and the total number of Reuvenites, the Torah discusses two of the infamous descendants of Reuven: Dasan and Aviram. Not only does it give them an “honorable” mention, it continues to highlight their career of evil:

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“This is Dashan and Aviram, the distinguished members of the community who incited the people against Moses and Aaron, as part of the community of Korach when they incited rebellion against G-d. And the earth opened up and swallowed them and Korach...”

Anyone reading this narrative, even in the most cursory fashion, is struck by the focus on these two villains in a section of the Torah that is dedicated to simply listing the names of the Tribes their constituent families, and the total number of Jews in each of the tribes. Of what significance is the information here about Dasan and Aviram’s role in the rebellion of Korach?

Second, Dasan and Aviram are characterized here as the main instigators in the revolt against Moses. In the earlier narrative about this rebellion, however, the Torah makes it clear that it was Korach who started the rebellion, and who got Dasan and Aviram to join with him. How is it that Dasan and Aviram are now given the dubious distinction as being the primary instigators?

Third, why does the Torah mention first that it was a rebellion against Moses and Aaron and then adds that it was a rebellion against G-d? When one surveys the original narrative of Korach’s rebellion, there is no mention that it was directed against G-d. It seemed to have been directed

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against Moses and Aaron, claiming that they distributed leadership positions on their own. Why then does the Torah here add a new dimension of the dispute, that it was directed against G-d, as well?

Rabbi Chaim ben Atar, one of the greatest Sephardic sages (whose anniversary of passing in 1743 was observed this past week on the fifteenth of Tammuz) addresses the first two questions in his classic work *Or HaChaim*. What follows is an expanded version of his explanation:

Insidious Instigators

The Torah here wants to teach us how the ultimate blame for the terrible tragedy that occurred in the rebellion of Korach was due to the early influence of Dasan and Aviram, whose distinguished position in the Jewish community made their insinuations, subtle as they may have been, much more effective. It was their insidious influence that gave Korach the idea to rebel.

And while the Torah, in the earlier section, highlights Korach's leading role in the actual implementation of the rebellion—Korach was the man of action—it is the ideologue and instigator, the one who plants the idea, who will ultimately be held accountable for the tragic results that will ensue.

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And this explains why only here—while highlighting Dasan and Aviram’s role—it expands the scope of the rebellion, that it was also directed against G-d. Korach, personally, had nothing against G-d. Korach was not an ideologue. He simply objected to Moses and Aaron, who, in his mind, usurped the top leadership without input from G-d. Dasan and Aviram’s used Korach’s rebellion as a way of showing their scorn for G-d as well.

Looking for the Source

We can now appreciate why the Torah includes this information in this section of the Torah. As stated earlier, the counting of the Israelites came as a direct consequence of a tragedy that struck the Jewish people as retribution for the idolatrous and immoral behavior of the Israelites as they consorted with the daughters of Moab and Midian.

However, upon closer scrutiny, it becomes apparent that one of the instigators of this tragic moral aberration was none other than one important individual, Zimri, the leader of the tribe of Shimon, whose involvement was more ideological than lust.

In this narrative the Torah therefore digressed to speak of an earlier tragedy, to teach us that that we must look for the source of a problem that threatens the future of a community. It may be the instigation of one of the most

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influential members of the community. Ultimately, the people at the helm, who are corrupt and “ideologically challenged” bear responsibility for the many tragedies that follow.

If this is true in the realm of evil—it takes only one ideological instigator on top to wreak havoc—it is equally valid in the realm of goodness. One person who has influence in a community has to realize his or her role in saying the right things. Reticence that stems from false humility is what creates a vacuum in which other leaders will sow their seeds of ideological and moral decay and destruction in a community.

Moshiach is a human being. What makes him different is that he is the ultimate “instigator.” He will inspire and provoke us into realizing our own G-d given potential for good. Moshiach will unleash the hidden potential for good in the entire world.

Indeed, the only response to the insidious influences and the extraordinary evil the world has experienced in the last century is the parallel positive influences of Moshiach and all of us who Moshiach will inspire.

As we stand poised to enter into the world of Redemption, we must consider the immense responsibility those of us who have influence over others have to speak up. That seed that we plant in the minds and hearts of others might

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blossom into a force that will provide the final thrust to get us over the top and bear the fruit of Moshiach and the final Redemption.

ESSAY FIVE

CLIMBING OUT OF THE PIT

ESSAY FIVE

CLIMBING OUT OF THE PIT

In this week's parsha, Pinchas, the Torah recounts how G-d told Moses to take the census of the Jewish nation after they had suffered a loss of 24,000 people. This plague came as a result of their consorting with the daughters of Moab and the idol worship that accompanied their immoral behavior.

In presenting the numbers of the twelve tribes the Torah recounts some highlights (or more correctly: "low points") of their experience in the desert. In discussing the tribe of Reuben, the Torah states how two members of this tribe, Datan and Aviram joined the rebellion of Korach. The Torah then adds: "The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them with Korach, when that group died, when fire destroyed two hundred and fifty men. Thus they became a sign (*neis*). However, the sons of Korach did not die."

It is somewhat puzzling that the Torah digresses from its discussion of the descendants of Reuben to mention Datan

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and Aviram's tragic association with Korach and the way in which they were punished. Why does the Torah have to regurgitate this sad event? There were other rebels and other sins committed by members of the other tribes, and yet the Torah does not repeat them in the context of the census. Why does the Torah feel it necessary to introduce the sins of Datan and Aviram, Korach and his cohorts?

Second, why does the Torah mention Korach in the context of Datan and Aviram. It should have been the other way around. Datan and Aviram should have been mentioned in the context of Korach who was a descendant of the tribe of Levi, not Reuben?

Another question. What is the Torah trying to teach us when it says that the sons of Korach did not die? How does it fit in to the discussion concerning the tribe of Reuben?

To answer these questions we must address another anomaly in the Torah's description of the swallowing up of Korach and his entourage. After stating how they were punished (by the earth swallowing them and a fire that destroyed them) the Torah adds: "Thus they became a sign." What does the Torah mean with these words? Rashi states that it means that it became a sign and a reminder that no one should dare challenge the priesthood.

However a question can be raised, why the Torah uses the word *neis* for the word "sign." The word *neis* is usually

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used for a miracle or ensign. It is true that a miracle is a sign of G-d's power and an ensign is a sign that identifies the nationality of the ship that carries that ensign, nevertheless, the Torah should have employed a simpler word that expresses the idea of a sign or remembrance such as "*ot*" or "*zikaron*." In virtually all Biblical texts, the Torah uses those words to convey the idea of a sign and not the word employed here "*neis*."

The Chassidic work, *Igra d'Kallah* provides an answer based on the interpretive approach known as *remez* (hints, or allusion), whereby letters become symbols and suggest ideas that are not evident from the simple translation and understanding of the word.

The word "*neis*" consists of the two Hebrew letters "*nun*" and "*samach*." According to the Talmud and Zohar, these two letters are the initials of the words "*nofel*" (fallen) and "*somech*" (uplifting) respectively. The meaning of these two letters combined thus is that a day will come that even those who have fallen low will be uplifted by G-d. In our context this means that even Korach, who epitomized the idea of someone who has fallen, literally and figuratively, will—in the Messianic Age—be transformed, and thereby, uplifted and rehabilitated.

We can now understand why the Torah adds the words "they became a sign (*neis*). This census occurred, as was

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mentioned before, in the aftermath of the tragedy that befell the Jewish people when they “fell” to the nadir of depravity. They consorted with the Moabite and Midianite harlots and worshipped their idols. They degenerated to the moral and spiritual bottom and exhibited the ultimate drop to the lowest level of unfaithfulness to G-d.

This tragic debacle raises a serious question: Could there ever be redemption for these souls? The question is not just about the generation of Moses and Pinchas, but it can also be raised by all succeeding generations which had their share of disloyalty and degradation. Is there hope for them and us?

The answer is therefore provided in the discussion of the very first tribe, the tribe of Reuben. Even those who personify and epitomize the idea of having fallen—for few people have risen to the level of Korach in prominence, and even fewer have fallen so low—will ultimately rise and shine.

This is a powerful message to our generation in particular. In Kabbalah all of the generations of Jews from Abraham to the present have been viewed as an organic and complete structure. Abraham and Moses, and all those who lived at the genesis of our history, are likened to the head, while the final generation—living at the end of the exile—is likened to a foot.

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Another metaphor that can be used is that our Patriarchs and other greats such as Moses and Pinchas are like the highest mountains (indeed, in last week's parsha Bilam refers to the Patriarchs as mountains). The last generation of exile—our generation—can be compared to the valley. Exile—and particularly the last stage of exile—has been described metaphorically as the “fallen” structure of the Jewish people, who reside in the darkness of the “valley of the shadow of death.”

We, like Korach, have fallen very low and wonder if we can ever rise.

The Torah's powerful message to us is that even Korach, the paradigm of fallen-ness, can and will rise. Moshiach will help all of us get out of the shadows of darkness and death and instill within us true life.

One can still ask? Judaism does not subscribe to the belief that the Messianic Age is solely about what G-d and Moshiach will do for us. It is just as much about what **we** do to make the changes in the world. The question that follows the aforementioned description of G-d lifting us up out of the valley of darkness is: what do we do? What is our role in all of the above?

The Torah, we might suggest, addresses this matter as well in the next verse, where the Torah adds: “However, the sons of Korach did not die.”

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By adding on these words the Torah conveys a very powerful message to us, which we will understand by way of an introduction:

The last of the Prophets, Malachi, in the end of his Biblical book by the same name, describes what will happen prior to the coming of Moshiach. Elijah (who is identified by our Sages to be none other than Pinchas, the name and protagonist of this week's parsha) will come to "restore the hearts of the parents **through** the children."

Our children will inspire us and ignite the Messianic spark within us, enabling us to climb out of the pit we might have fallen into as individuals and the fit that we are all in that we call exile. Even if we retained a trace of the rebelliousness of Korach, our children will see to it that we will not die; they will assist us so that we will revitalize our own souls and thereby awaken the Messianic spark within. That, in turn, will reveal Moshiach, who will take us out of this exile permanently.

ESSAY SIX

**OUR TIES TO THE LAND OF
ISRAEL**

ESSAY SIX

OUR TIES TO THE LAND OF ISRAEL

In this week's reading the Torah describes the procedure for the division of the Holy Land to the twelve tribes that were poised to enter the Promised Land..

It is curious that the division of the land was accomplished through three methods: First, the Torah tells us that it was to be apportioned to each tribe based on its population. Those tribes that were more populace would get a larger share of the land. This was a logical and equitable way of dividing the land.

In addition, the land was also apportioned by way of a lottery: the names of the twelve tribes were written down and placed in one box, and the location of the twelve territories into which the land was divided was placed in a second box. Then pairs of lots, one from each box, were drawn.

And while the lottery was determining who got what, there was a Divine message communicated through the

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Breastplate of the High priest that would confirm the results of the lottery.

That three different methods were needed to determine the way Israel should be divvied up amongst the Jewish people is an obvious sign that there is a three-fold connection to the Land of Israel that we have. And in times like these, when Israel's right to exist is being challenged so severely—may G-d protect our brethren in Israel and bring them true peace and security—it is crucial that we reexamine the ties that we have to this special land.

The first connection we have to the Land of Israel that is symbolized by the logical method based on population is that it was created and designed for the Jewish people specifically. The Midrash compares the Land of Israel and its relationship to the Jewish people as a tailor made suit that fits snugly on the person for whom it was designed. Any other person, no matter how close they resemble the original owner of the garment, will simply not be able to fit comfortably into that garment.

Similarly, the Land of Israel has been designed by its Creator to fit the Jewish people exclusively. From the day we were driven out of the land, numerous nations and powers attempted to cultivate it and colonize it, but to no avail. The “land of milk and honey” produced neither; it was utterly desolate without its natural inhabitants. Only

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when Jews began to return to Israel in the last century, did the land begin to blossom again.

This logical connection is what we really mean when we say that Israel is the Jewish Homeland; it is the land that is truly and fundamentally our home given to us by G-d for all times.

But there is another dimension to the relationship that exists between the Jewish nation and the Jewish land. It is the Land of Israel's role as the Holy Land. This connection, symbolized by the prophetic affirmation as to whom the land should be apportioned, is based on the holy nature of the Jewish people. A holy land to a holy people.

There are standards demanded of its inhabitants to which no other land and nation have been subjected. But it is this standard that determines our ability to hold on to our land. And while we should fit into this land, our inability to hold on to it when we are not holy is like a person who tries to put on a silk suit on a body covered with grime and grease.

When the Jews behave as a holy nation, consistent with the G-d's charge to us at Sinai, the Holy Land provides them with an hospitable place. When, however, our holiness was lacking as it was during the period of the destruction of the two Holy Temples, it is stated in the Torah that the land would "spit then out."

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And then there is a third dimension that transcends even the one of holiness that is represented by the lottery that was used to divide the land.

A outcome of a lottery is totally beyond logic. Any rhyme or reason that could justify the outcome of a lottery suggests that someone tampered with it.

Likewise, the connection we have to Israel is one that ultimately transcends logic. How is it that a people driven out of their land for close to 2,000 years should never have lost their ties to the land? For close to two millennia, Jews have prayed three times daily towards Jerusalem about their imminent return there to rebuild their Holy Temple that was destroyed. Every wedding, at the peak of the joy, a glass would be broken to remind us that our joy is incomplete without Jerusalem and the Temple.

There is simply no parallel to this phenomenon because it is totally without any rational explanation. Even when we do not live there, and even when our holiness is wanting, every Jew has a connection to the Land of Israel.

By reinforcing the belief that our connection to Israel is on all the foregoing three levels, and by yearning for the ultimate Redemption, at which time the Temple will be rebuilt by Moshiach, we will see the fulfillment of our desires imminently!

ESSAY SEVEN

SUN RISE AND SUNSET

A leader is not a magician who with the wave of a magic wand can unite and lead the people.

The leader needs the cooperation of his people.

All of the people, despite their different interests and levels, must possess, at least, one cause that they share equally.

Even if we cannot agree on anything else, we must find one central issue and cause that unites us.

ESSAY SEVEN

SUN RISE AND SUNSET

Commanding G-d?!

In most parts of the Torah, the dialogue between G-d and Moses is where G-d addresses Moses and tells him what he should say to the Jewish people. Occasionally, Moses pleads with G-d or asks Him for guidance in obscure areas of Jewish law. In this week's parsha, however, we find Moses, more or less, suggesting/telling G-d what He ought to do.

Moses says to G-d: "Let G-d, appoint a leader over the congregation." To this request of Moses G-d replied,

"Before you demand that I act for My sons, demand that My sons act for Me".

G-d then proceeds to tell Moses about the need for the Jewish nation to bring a daily sacrifice in the Temple for G-d.

The question arises how the demand of Israel to bring daily sacrifices is an appropriate response to Moses' request for

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a leader who would take the people into Israel after his passing.

One Unifying Cause

The following answer is an adaptation of an explanation given in the Chassidic work, Shem Mishmuel.

The daily sacrifice was offered on behalf of every Jew. Moreover, every Jew personally participated in the daily offering by virtue of his contribution of a half-shekel every year. The combined shekalim funded the daily sacrifice.

This implies that the daily sacrifice was a symbol that all of Israel had one unified practice and one unified purpose.

G-d's response to Moses was thus: A leader is not a magician who with the wave of a magic wand can unite and lead the people. The leader needs the cooperation of his people. All of the people, despite their different interests and levels, must possess, at least, one cause that they share equally. Even if we cannot agree on anything else, we must find one central issue and cause that unites us.

And at that point, the people are ready for a true leader, who takes the solitary unifying element and capitalizes on it and renders it the fuel that energizes the people in all other areas of life.

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Why Two Offerings?

This explanation, however, begs another question.

Granted that the daily sacrifice was the unifying element that made them candidates for a genuine leader, why was there a need for two daily sacrifices?

The following answer can be offered:

The two daily offerings were brought, one in the morning and one in the afternoon; the time of the sun rising and setting, respectively.

For unity to be effective it must be consistent. There are two times when our unity is tested. When our national fortune is on the rise, there is always a danger that each of us will go his or her merry way, in pursuit of the better life. In times of crises, when the sun seems to be setting, we often find it to be easier to unite. The morning daily sacrifice that united us in the hours of the sun rising was the response to that challenge.

Conversely, when our national fortune is on the wane, and things seem to be deteriorating, it can also test our unity, just as marriages are often threatened in times of crisis. The afternoon daily sacrifice addresses that issue. Unity is needed and must be pursued in times of the sun setting as well.

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Paradoxical Times

We are presently living in paradoxical times. Our sun is rising and setting simultaneously. The Jewish people have risen from the ashes of Auschwitz, reclaimed their ancestral land, made the desert bloom and achieved the most in the areas of science, technology, medicine, agriculture, defense, religious observance and Jewish scholarship.

The same is true for the Jews in the Diaspora. Never before have Jews enjoyed as much freedom, prosperity and acceptance in the Western world. Indeed, even the Soviet Empire has crumbled and provides Jews with opportunities never before even dreamt of in the past.

Yet, the Jewish Homeland, the Land of Israel, has never before been threatened with terrorism and the prospects of Iran procuring nuclear weapons. Israel is also facing unprecedented international isolation and de-legitimization, although that seems to be changing now at the time of the publishing of this essay. And radical Islam with its anti-Jewish obsession is quickly spreading throughout Europe and indeed the entire world.

In the Diaspora, while Judaism is flourishing and the growth of committed Jewish communities is exponential, we are also witnessing the loss of thousands of Jews to the forces of assimilation.

We have thus been given a double challenge:

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Sun Rising and Setting

Our sun is rising and setting. It is rising because we are on the threshold of a new age, which we have been anticipating for thousands of years – the Messianic Age.

Our sun is also setting, precisely because the forces of evil recognize they are soon to be vanquished and thrust into obsolescence. This is their last stand.

As we await the imminent arrival of the ultimate Jewish leader, the Moshiach, we must learn the lesson G-d gave Moses:

When you are ready to accept a true leader, you must offer the daily sacrifice—the “unity rite”—in the paradoxical time of the sun rising and setting.

Our mission is to meet this dual challenge unique to our day and age by finding ways of uniting in spite of the differences that we cannot currently resolve.

Moshiach’s task, among other daunting challenges, will be to “gather all of the Jews back to the Land of Israel,” both physically and spiritually. Moshiach will take the existing unity and make it pervasive. (Don’t worry; we’ll still be able to argue.) All that is asked of us is to bring one common sacrifice, one gesture of love and unity, and Moshiach will change the world, once and for all.

ESSAY EIGHT

MAKE ISRAEL HERE!

The Land of Israel is the land that enables its inhabitants to gain mastery over all the natural forces in the world, that they conform with G-d's original intent in creating the world.

This intent, our sages declare, was for us to make the world into a dwelling place for G-d.

We are to “conquer” the material aspects of existence and transform them into vehicles for G-d's presence.

ESSAY EIGHT

MAKE ISRAEL HERE!

Israel the Unifier

One of the most unifying elements of the Jewish community is Israel. When events occur in Israel, all of the Jewish community feels that these events affect us.

To be sure, Jews—in spite of their intermittent squabbles—always felt a kinship that is unparalleled. And it made no difference if Jews were suffering in some remote corner of the world – we felt the pain.

This phenomenon is based on the Talmudic maxim that “all Jews are responsible for one another.” The Hebrew term for “responsible” is “*areivin*” which also means “intermingled.” Why are we responsible for one another? Because we are all connected. The Jewish nation share not only a common ancestry and a common destiny, but we also share a common soul, that unites us, particularly in times of crises, when the obstacles to this unity are incapable of blinding our true inner feelings for one another.

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But, there is a special place in our minds and hearts for Israel. From the time the Jewish people entered into the Promised Land, the preparations for which are recounted in this week's Torah portion, Israel became the focal point for the Jewish people. What happens in Israel relates directly to all Jews.

Why Did Moses Want to Go into Israel?

What is it about Israel that is so unique?

Why did Moses want to live in Israel and G-d's denial of his right to enter the Promised Land was considered to be a major punishment for Moses. What distinguishes Israel from all other places on earth?

And the final question is: If Israel is so crucial to Jews, why is it that some of the greatest Jewish leaders chose to live outside of Israel?

The complete name our Sages employ for Israel is "*Eretz Yisrael*—The Land of Israel." Our Sages observe that the word *Eretz* derives from the Hebrew word *ratzon* (will) and *ratz* (ran). "Israel is a land which wishes and runs to do G-d's will." Figuratively, this suggests that Israel is a land which cultivates the desire to do G-d's will, passionately.

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Israel is thus the land where we come closest to being what G-d had intended us to be – Jews who are passionate about fulfilling G-d's commandments.

Israel's Deeper Meaning

The word Israel also has a deeper meaning. When Jacob wrestled with an angel and the angel could not vanquish Jacob, he blessed Jacob by renaming him Israel, because it means, “mastery over G-d [given forces of nature] and people.

The Land of Israel is the land that enables its inhabitants to gain mastery over all the natural forces in the world, that they conform with G-d's original intent in creating the world. This intent, our sages declare was for us to make the world into a dwelling place for G-d. In other words, we are to “conquer” the material aspects of existence and transform them into vehicles for G-d's presence.

By giving us Israel, G-d provided us with a “sample” of what He wants us to do with ourselves and the rest of the world. Our task is to make our own bodies, our own “miniature” worlds” and our environment – wherever we live – into a land over which our Divine dimension has total mastery.

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Israel, as the “Role Model”

Israel, as the “role model” for the rest of the world, thus, serves as a major unifying force. When Israel is threatened it threatens the very destiny and soul of all of the Jewish nation and indeed the entire world. Without Israel, the entire world loses its ability to realize its purpose. Israel validates all of existence.

For the same reason, it is important for us who live in the Diaspora, to realize that our task is to emulate the role of Israel, and to make the entire world a virtual Land of Israel. Indeed, our sages tell us that one of the characteristics of the Era of Redemption is that the sanctity of Israel will spread throughout the entire world. How so?

When we do Mitzvos, study Torah and primarily by preparing ourselves and the world around us for the Age of Moshiach, we will see how the whole world will bask in the light of Israel.

ESSAY NINE

INFINITY

**Liberation means we are empowered to break out of any
box.**

ESSAY NINE

INFINITY

Multiple Doubles

There are several places in the Torah where the Holidays are discussed. This week's parsha, Pinchas, is one of them, one with its focus on the sacrificial offerings that were designated for each of the Holidays.

When the Torah speaks of the special offerings for the Sabbath it states: "On the day of the Sabbath, two lambs..." When we compare the number of offerings for the Sabbath with the other Holidays we see that there is a discrepancy between them. The Midrash (cited by the Tosfot commentary on the Torah) takes note of the fact that on the Shabbat only a "paltry" two lambs were offered whereas on all the other Holidays there were more than two. The Midrash records how the Sabbath itself complained to G-d as to why it was relegated to an inferior position vis-à-vis the other Holy Days.

According to the Midrash G-d's response was that this twin offering befits the Sabbath because all of the activities

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associated with the Sabbath involve pairs. The Midrash proceeds to enumerate four items associated with the Sabbath in which the Torah employs a repetitive expression or which require two items: the Sabbath Psalm (song), Sabbath delight, the penalty for its violation, and the double loaves of Challah that we use for each meal on the Sabbath.

The foregoing Midrash needs to be analyzed. The question as to why the Shabbat requires only two lambs as opposed to other Holidays is presumably based on the premise that the Shabbat is superior to other Holidays. And this is indeed the case. How then do we justify its diminished number of offerings by simply saying that there are other aspects of the Sabbath that consist of just two items? In addition, the Shabbat, as the **seventh** day of the week is also obviously connected to the number seven, about which the Midrash (cited below in the same Tosfot commentary) states: “All sevens are beloved.” Why not have seven offerings to highlight the beloved status of the Shabbat instead of just two?

Doubles as Harbingers of Redemption

To understand the significance and the preeminence of the twin lambs for the Sabbath sacrifice we must preface it

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with a discussion of the significance of the phenomenon of “twinning” in the Torah.

Our Sages in the Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni, Lech Lecha) state that whenever the Torah speaks of redemption it employs a double expression. The Midrash lists the five letters of the Hebrew Alphabet that come in two forms, the regular letter and the letter when it appears at the end of a word: these are the letters: *chaf*, *mem*, *nun*, *pei* and *tzadik*. The Midrash then proceeds to mention five occurrences of liberation in which these corresponding five repetitive letters are employed:

When Abraham is liberated from Ur Kasdim, the Torah introduces this event with the words “*Lech lecha*, in which the letter *chaf* is repeated. Likewise the Midrash demonstrates how each of the final letters in Hebrew is repeated in the context of various forms of liberation. The most familiar one is the double expression *pakod pakaditidi*. Translated literally it means: “Remember, I have remembered.” This double expression of remembrance G-d used when speaking to Moses to inform the Jewish people of their liberation from Egypt. The final Redemption is also indicated by the double use of the letter *tzadik* in the words describing Moshiah and his efforts to rebuild the Holy Temple in Jerusalem.

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What is it about these double letters that is indicative of liberation?

Two Definition of Double

In truth, there are two distinct ways of understanding the number two and the concept of duality. When we say there are two items, this can have the connotation that we have departed from the ideal state of unity represented by the number one and entered into the inferior state of division and fragmentation represented by the number two. The most glaring example of this is the difference between our affirmation of one G-d and the pagan notion of duality. One is holy and represents utter truth while the latter is idolatrous and false.

Indeed, the numbers one and two are the two most diametrically opposite numbers. One is truth, unity, and peace, while two is duplicitous, division, and discord. Even in English, we use the term “two” or “double” to imply something negative: **double** talk, a **double** standard; **two** faced, etc.

There is, however, a totally opposite way of understanding the significance of the number two, particularly in the context of the Torah repeating itself. A double expression can also have the connotation that what we have is a dynamic force that is constantly increasing. Double, in this

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context, does not mean just double; it can also be understood to mean exponential growth. It is a symbol for that which is infinite.

Liberation: Invitation to Infinity

Hence we find the concept of “twinning” specifically with regard to Redemption.

What differentiates between exile and Redemption? Obviously there are many things that separate them. However, if we want to capture the most salient feature of Redemption we must view exile and liberation on all of its levels. What is the common denominator of the oppressive Egyptian bondage and our lives today in the Western world where we have total freedom and opportunity to grow in our spiritual lives?

On the most basic level, exile deprives us of our independence. Exile distances us from the place we want to be as well as from the things we want to do. Exile takes out all of the joy and enthusiasm from those things that we can do.

However, in its most subtle form, exile stifles our creativity and prevents us from breaking out of our mold. An exile mentality is one that defines the person—either narrowly or broadly—and his or her potential within certain

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boundaries. Exile conditions compel us to accept those boundaries that confine us as unalterable. We discover that we cannot break out of the box we are in.

Liberation, by contrast, means we are empowered to break out of any box. No matter how good and positive those things that define us may be they are still limited and cannot, by definition, change. In addition, because exile implies that we have a limited potential we are thus subject to the law of “diminishing returns.” Nothing that is finite can last forever.

In effect, the most salient feature of exile is that we are exposed to only a finite measure of Divine energy that a) keeps us from breaking out of our mold; b) will eventually dissipate. In its most brutal form, exile deprives us of our freedom to live freely. In its most subtle form, exile conditions and the exile mentality limit our growth.

This, then, is the most dramatic aspect of the future Redemption. It will unleash an unprecedented and unlimited flow of Divine energy that will engulf the world. Whatever good we can experience today is, by definition, finite and therefore limited in scope and durability. In the future, the same positive phenomena will acquire infinite G-dly energy. The good we have now will be redefined in ways that defy our imagination today. And, because the

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energy that will be unleashed in the future is infinite, it cannot be terminated.

We can now understand why Shabbat is characterized as a day of “twos.” And, as implied by the Midrash, the two sacrifices of the Shabbat supersede the far higher number of sacrifices that were offered on other Holidays. This is so because the Sabbath, our Sages tell us, is a taste of the future. On Shabbat we come as close as we can to experience the taste of the future Redemption, which is described as the “Eternal Shabbat.”

The two lambs that were offered on Shabbat, the two challot that we eat on Shabbat—as well as all the other doublets associated with the day that is a taste of the future—represent the idea of exponential growth. Shabbat is not about two lambs and two loaves; it is about doubling and redoubling the blessings that G-d showers upon us but which exile conditions do not allow us to absorb. During Shabbat those impediments are removed.

Infinite Song, Delight, Life and Blessing

When the Midrash emphasizes the “double” phenomenon for the Sabbath it provides four examples: the Sabbath Psalm (song), Sabbath delight, the penalty for its violation, and the double Challah. In light of the foregoing analysis of the significance of doubles as symbols of infinite light we

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can discern four areas in which there will be expressions of this infinity in the future Messianic Age:

The Sabbath Psalm (song): There will be unmitigated and infinite joy as expressed through our singing. As we say in our liturgy: “And we shall sing for you a new song.” “New,” in this context, means something that is unprecedented and, as our Sages tell us, it will be an endless song never to revert to sorrow. The future Redemption will be permanent.

The Sabbath delight: The Messianic Age will usher in a time of eternal delight. This delight will far outweigh any physical or even spiritual pleasure that we can experience in exile or that we have experienced in the past.

The Sabbath penalty: Instead of the possibility of the curtailment of life—which is the penalty for some egregious examples of Sabbath desecration—we will all experience eternal life.

The Shabbat Challot: In addition to all of the spiritual blessings that will be exponentially greater than anything we have experienced in times of Galut, there will also be an abundance of material blessings that are symbolized by the Double Challah. We will enjoy—if we so desire—an infinite supply of material blessings that will parallel the unprecedented spiritual blessings. In Maimonides’ words: “And all the delights will be as abundant as the dust.”

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Preparing for Infinity

Every aspect of the future has its parallel today that actually prepares us for the future.

By observing Shabbat properly—which includes observing the “body” of the laws of Shabbat together with its “soul”, i.e., getting into the joy, delight and spirit of Shabbat—we prepare ourselves for the time when there will be a surge of infinite light that will pervade the entire cosmos and introduce true and enduring joy, delight, life and, the blessings associated with life.

In addition, whenever we break out of our mold and do not allow ourselves to be satisfied with finding a comfortable niche for our Judaism we generate some of that infinite energy that will fill the world in the future. In doing so we accomplish four things: a) We get a taste of the future now, so that our last moments of exile are uplifted; b) We hasten the Redemption process; c) We make the process of Redemption go smoother, with less pain and travail; d) We prepare ourselves for and are receptive to the Redemption. The dramatic changes that will occasion the Redemption will not overwhelm us because we have already gotten a taste of it in these last moments of Galus.

ESSAY TEN

JEWISH LEADER'S RESUME

A leader must have the capacity to deal with every individual on his or her level.

A true leader must not only be concerned for the survival of the entire nation, but also with the petty needs of every individual.

Indeed, for a genuine leader, an individual's needs cannot be considered petty.

ESSAY TEN

JEWISH LEADER'S RESUME

Doesn't G-d Know?

When Moses was informed of the fact that he would not lead the Jewish nation into the Promised Land, this week's parsha recounts how Moses requested of G-d to appoint his successor. The Torah records Moses' request in the following manner:

“And Moses said to G-d, “Let the L-rd, G-d of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation...”

Rashi explains that the way Moses described G-d as the “G-d of the spirits of all flesh” was intended to specify the most important characteristic a Jewish leader must possess. A Jewish leader must be endowed with the G-dly spirit that enables him to relate to and tolerate the varied and unique personalities that each individual possesses.

Commentators ask why Moses had to specify the type of leader he wanted. Wouldn't G-d know what characteristics a true leader must possess,,,

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Moses' Plea to G-d: Anyone but Pinchas!

One answer notes that Moses' request came at the heels of the incident that occurred with his great nephew, Pinchas. Pinchas, the Torah in last week's Parsha recounts, was incensed at the way a Jewish leader, *Zimri* shamelessly consorted with a *Midianite* princess, which resulted in G-d causing the deaths of thousands of Jews. Pinchas then took a spear and without regard for his own safety, proceeded to kill both *Zimri* and his *Midianite* consort, *Kozbi*. Nobody else, besides Pinchas, was moved to action. Neither Moses, Pinchas' father *Elazar*, or Joshua — Moses' trusted disciple — reacted the way Pinchas did. As a result of this brazen action, Pinchas was harshly criticized by virtually everyone.

Virtually everyone was displeased, with the exception of G-d Himself. This week's Parsha commences with G-d's expression of approval for what he had done to avert the unleashing of G-d's anger against the Jewish nation. The Almighty Himself testified that Pinchas' motivation was holy and that his action, though extreme and rash, was justified and for which he was blessed with G-d's eternal covenant.

After hearing the way G-d expressed enthusiastic approval for Pinchas' brazen action,, Moses thought that G-d would appoint him as his successor. After all, Pinchas did possess the qualities of love, dedication, self-sacrifice for the Jewish nation, characteristics that are crucial for a leader.

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Moses therefore pleaded to G-d to appoint someone else, because, notwithstanding Pinchas' unique qualities, he lacked another characteristic, without which one cannot be a leader of **all** the people. A leader must have the capacity to deal with every individual on his or her level. A true leader must not only be concerned for the survival of the entire nation, but also with the petty needs of every individual. Indeed, for a genuine leader, an individual's needs cannot be considered petty.

Pinchas, despite his greatness, was a man for that particular hour. He came at the right time and did the right thing, considering the circumstances. But a leader must be able to lead at all times, for all people and for all circumstances

Pinchas-Elijah and Moshiach

Our Sages tell us that Pinchas became Elijah the prophet, who will herald the coming of Moshiach. If Elijah is so great, why do we need Moshiach? Why can't Elijah accomplish everything that Moshiach is supposed to accomplish?

The answer is that Moshiach, or any great leader for that matter, is more than just a miracle worker, a great teacher or even a fearless *tzadik* who can stand up to tyrannical monarchs. Whereas Elijah is the man of the hour as he

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comes into this world at intervals to deal with special circumstances, including the announcement concerning Moshiach's arrival, Moshiach will be Moses' ultimate successor in leading the entire Jewish people and the rest of the world.

Among all the other great qualities, Moshiach is a leader who tolerates, appreciates and involves himself in the material and spiritual needs of every individual. It is thus Moshiach, not Elijah, who will become the future leader of the Jewish people.

ESSAY ELEVEN

TOLERATE OR FOLLOW?

The ability of a leader to “follow the spirit of each individual” derives from the fact that he is endowed with the spirit of each individual.

His ability to identify with each person is because he has a “piece” of each person in his own soul.

ESSAY ELEVEN

TOLERATE OR FOLLOW?

The “Spirit of all Flesh.”

This week’s parsha discusses Moses’ request of G-d to appoint a leader who will succeed him. The Torah describes his request thus:

“Let the L-rd, the G-d of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation... that the congregation of the L-rd be not as sheep which have no shepherd.”

G-d responded to Moses by saying:

“Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is spirit, and lay your hand upon him...”

Rashi comments on Moses request for a leader focusing on the way he addressed G-d as “the spirit of all flesh.” This Rashi explains was Moses’ way of describing the quality he sought in a leader. A true leader must be imbued with the spirit of G-d who is the “spirit of all flesh.” Our Sages tell us that “just as there are no two people who look alike, so too, there are no two people who think alike.” A good

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leader must be able to, in Rashi's words, "tolerate the individual spirits (i.e. temperament and opinions), of each member of the Jewish nation."

A Contrast

In G-d's response to Moses, where G-d describes Joshua as "a man in who is spirit," Rashi explains that this refers to one who can "follow the spirit of each individual."

When we compare Moses' description of the right leader and G-d's description, there seems to be a minor difference in the way this leader is presented. Moses wants a leader who can "tolerate" all of the disparate views of the people, whereas G-d describes Joshua as one who can "follow" the multitude of views. What is the difference between tolerating all these views and following them?

One basic difference is that tolerating the diverse views of the people implies simply that the true leader does not lose his composure despite the demand listening to all the views can have on him. Following the spirit of each individual, however, goes beyond that. It suggests that the true leader not only can tolerate these disparate views but he can actually relate to them as well.

This approach however demands further clarification. We can understand how a person can be tolerant of views that

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cover the full spectrum of ideas and can even be diametrically opposing views. But how does a leader actually relate to each of these views. It sounds like the rabbi who agrees with both parties to a dispute, and when questioned by his wife how that can be possible, he agrees with her as well...

Reaching Three Personality Types

The answer to this question understands the meaning of the leader “following the spirit of each individual” slightly differently. Based on the words of R. Schneur Zalman in the introduction to his classic Tanya this quality of following the spirit of each individual can be explained as a true leader’s ability to inspire each and every member of his constituency despite their differences.

The average teacher and leader can relate to a limited number of students and followers. His words will resonate with like-minded individuals, but not with those who possess a completely different way of thinking. The true leader, by contrast, can find a way into the hearts and minds of every individual.

The true leader can relate to the simple person as well as he can relate to the scholar; the poor as the rich, the aggressive as well as the docile, the cold and indifferent personality as the warm and receptive.

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In general, there are three basic personalities: The *chesed*-kind and open personality, the *gevurah*-judgmental and strict personality, the *tiferes*-well-balanced and charismatic personality. The ideal leader can find ways of entering the hearts of these diverse people and nurture their souls.

Not Necessarily a Prophet

On a deeper level it can be explained that the ability of a leader to “follow the spirit of each individual” derives from the fact that he is endowed with the spirit of each individual. This means that his ability to identify with each person is because he has a “piece” of each person in his own soul.

Kabbalah and Chassidic thought explain that all of the Jewish people can be likened to one organic body, where the leader is compared to the head and brain. Just as the brain contains the life-force and energy that animates the entire body, so too the ideal leader is endowed with the spiritual energy that characterizes each of his followers.

A leader of this caliber does not have to be a prophet in order to know the needs of his people. He senses their needs because he possesses a “piece” of each individual; their pain and sorrow is his pain. When he prays to G-d for them, he is not praying for a stranger. His life is bound up with theirs.

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Why Not Just G-d?

The Jewish belief in the Messianic Age is that a person, of flesh and blood, born to parents in the natural way, will usher in the age of universal peace and goodness. This leader, referred to as the Moshiach, has been described in the Torah, Talmud and all classical Jewish sources as a leader who will follow in the footsteps of all great Jewish leaders going back to Joshua and Moses.

There are many modern people who raise the question as to why we need a Moshiach. Why can't we just have G-d usher in the Messianic Age? Why the need for a human leader?

The partial answer to this question is that this leader, because he is connected to each of us, has the ability to bring out the best in all of us. In truth, it is we who make the world change. Moshiach is the catalyst that enables us to realize our own Messianic potential. There is a spark of all of us in Moshiach and there is, as the Ba'al Shem Tov stated, a spark of Moshiach in all of us.

ESSAY TWELVE

RETURN TO THE FUTURE

When we are afforded a glimpse into the future world of holiness and peace, we do not want to act in a manner that is contrary to this new world.

When we know that we will be promoted to a higher position, we will start acting and thinking in consonance with that new position even before we reach it.

ESSAY TWELVE

RETURN TO THE FUTURE

Rewarded with an Extra Letter too his Name

When Pinchas acted alone to kill *Zimri* and *Cozbi*, the Jewish prince and *Midianite* princess, respectively, for their breach of morality, Pinchas was rewarded by G-d. Among the rewards that are recorded in our oral tradition is that a letter *yud* was added to Pinchas' name

The name Pinchas can be written correctly two ways. One is without the *yud* and one way is with a *yud*.. Why would the addition of a *yud* be considered a reward for Pinchas and why is it important for us to know that a *yud* was added?

Joseph's Name Change

We find a similar, though not identical, situation with respect to Joseph. He too had to struggle against immoral influences. Joseph was repeatedly propositioned by

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Potiphar's wife, in whose house he was sold as a slave. In her last attempt to seduce him by holding on to his jacket, Joseph left the jacket behind and fled.

According to the Midrash, Joseph was actually about to succumb, when the image of his father Jacob appeared to him. At that point he mustered sufficient moral strength and escaped.

As a reward, the Midrash states, the letter *hei* was added onto Joseph's name. He is thus referred to in Psalms as "*Yehoseif*," not just *Yoseif*.

Here too we must understand why the addition of a Hebrew letter would constitute a reward for resisting immorality. And we must also reflect on the difference between Joseph and Pinchas (who was actually a descendent of Joseph) in the approach they took to win their respective struggles.

The Two Worlds: Past and Future

Our sages tell us that the two letters "*yud*" and "*hei*" are the two first letters of G-d's name. With the *yud* G-d created *Olam Haba*-the World to Come and with the *hei* He created *Olam Haze**h*-this physical world. (It is interesting to note that in Hebrew, when a verb is preceded by the letter *yud* it implies future tense.)

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From this we can appreciate the difference between Joseph and Pinchas. Joseph drew strength from G-d's presence in **this** world. When he saw the image of his father Jacob, he was able to resist the temptation.

Inspired by the Past

There are people who draw strength from their parents and ancestors. When they realize how the Jewish nation has survived only due to the heroic sacrifices and dedication of our ancestors, they do not want to sever their ties with their glorious past. They will tell themselves: “We have come so far, how can we undermine thousands of years of Jewish history?”

With this approach, one is inspired by the **past** and by considerations of **this** world. If we were to give up our struggle now we will have forfeited this world and all that we have accomplished therein.

Joseph was thus given the letter “*hei*” symbolizing the divine influence that exists in this world, which enables one to resist the new winds that blow and threaten our ties to Judaism and morality.

Pinchas Inspired by the Future

Pinchas, conversely, is associated with the future. “Pinchas,”

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our sages declare “is Elijah the prophet,” whose role it is to herald the coming of Moshiach. Elijah, the last prophet states, will “restore the hearts of the parents **through** the children.”

In other words, Elijah-Pinchas functions in a generation or mindset where the connection to the past has been severed. The parents are no longer capable of influencing their children, for they too have faltered and have severed their ties with the past.

Instead, the children restore the hearts of the fathers to Judaism. When we are afforded a glimpse into the future world of holiness and peace, we do not want to act in a manner that is contrary to this new world. When we know that we will be promoted to a higher position, we will start acting and thinking in consonance with that new position even before we reach it.

Pinchas was motivated in his act of zealotry against the immoral behavior of a Jewish leader not by the past. Even the most illustrious Jewish leaders, who represented the past, such as his great uncle Moses and his own father *Elazar*, did not know how to deal with the situation. Pinchas was inspired, however, by the spirit of the future.

Pinchas, however, knew that the future of the Jewish nation would be pure and holy. He was convinced that the road to that glorious future must be paved with self-sacrifice for

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the ideals of Torah and morality.

Pinchas was thus given the letter *yud* of G-d's name to underscore that the Divine energy that gave him the strength to act zealously derived from the future.

We too are living at the end of the period known as Galus-exile and are poised to enter into the future world of Geulah-Redemption. Instead of looking back for guidance and inspiration ala Joseph, we are in the best position to adopt the Pinchas mode of projecting into the future and realizing the way life will be so ideal in terms of morality and holiness. So let us behave that way now. Let us live in that future atmosphere,

The very anticipation of the future and living with it is the most powerful force that will actualize the energies of Redemption and hasten the revelation of Moshiach and the Final Redemption.

ESSAY THIRTEEN

GOOD INTENTIONS

Mere positive thoughts do not suffice to completely eradicate all the negative consequences of one's evil behavior.

As powerful as a sincere thought and of good intentions are, there is no substitute for acting in accordance with those thoughts.

Particularly, when our actions are performed in public, good intentions and thoughts of remorse will not suffice to remove the danger of others being influenced by these actions.

ESSAY THIRTEEN

GOOD INTENTIONS

Korach's Sons

When the Torah lists the names of the various families of the twelve tribes, in this week's parsha, it recounts in detail the tragic episode of *Korach* and his rebellion against Moses. The Torah relates that although the earth swallowed up *Korach* and all his followers, "The sons of *Korach* did not die."

Rashi explains that indeed, the sons of *Korach* were originally co-conspirators in the rebellion. However, during the rebellion, they had second thoughts, "They had thoughts of repentance." As a result they were spared the fate that awaited their father *Korach*.

Rashi then proceeds to explain how they were saved: "A high place materialized for them in *Gehinom* (the pit that swallowed them) and they resided there."

An obvious question has been raised. If they were spared why did they get swallowed up with their father *Korach*, only to be spared in the last moments?

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Furthermore, the fact that they were saved after having been swallowed up by the earth, was an incredible miracle. Why did G-d have to resort to this miracle when they could have been spared the entire ordeal of being swallowed up with their father *Korach*?

The Way to Gehinom is Paved with Good Intentions.

In anticipation of this question, Rashi is careful to state that they had “thoughts” of repentance. In other words they did not really do anything to demonstrate their disavowal of the rebellion; all they did was to recognize in their own minds, the error of their ways.

Had they translated their good thoughts into action and made a demonstrative move away from *Korach's* rebellion, G-d would have spared them the distress and the obvious terror they must have experienced as they were swallowed up by the earth. Because they did not publicly show their repudiation of their father's rebellion, they could not have been spared outright because no one knew that they repented. Had they been spared many would have thought that the rebellion had some merit.

Nevertheless, the fact that they entertained sincere thoughts of contrition entitled them to the miracle of being spared in the end.

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Two Lessons

Two parallel lessons emerge from Rashi's approach to this matter:

First, no matter how far a person may have strayed from the path of righteousness, it is never too late to alter one's course. Furthermore, even if one merely expressed thoughts of remorse, it will be accepted by G-d and will prevent a disaster. Moreover, the sincere thoughts of Teshuvah are so powerful that, if necessary, G-d will even perform a miracle to save the penitent from disaster.

Second, and paradoxically, the lesson from this episode is how mere positive thoughts do not suffice to completely eradicate all the negative consequences of one's evil behavior. As powerful as a sincere thought and of good intentions are, there is no substitute for acting in accordance with those thoughts. Particularly, when our actions are performed in public, good intentions and thoughts of remorse will not suffice to remove the danger of others being influenced by these actions.

Moshiach and Teshuvah

Maimonides writes that the Messianic Age will be ushered in by way of Teshuvah. Certainly, the Jewish people as a whole have accumulated enough merit to deserve to be

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redeemed. It may take just one act, or even one sincere thought of Teshuvah to tip the scales in favor of bringing about a miraculous change.

If Korach's sons, who were involved in a criminal rebellion, were saved miraculously because they merely entertained a thought of Teshuvah, how much more so, we the Jewish nation, are entitled to a miracle that will bring an end to our painful exile, and the ushering in an age of true peace, with the coming of Moshiach. Our role in bringing this about could be one more positive act, or even one more sincere thought.

ESSAY FOURTEEN

THE ULTIMATE TZEDAKAH

We were promised that Moshiach will redeem us regardless
of our worthiness.

But, who wants to be the undeserving recipient of a
tzedakah hand out?

We want Redemption to occur **because** of our efforts, not
in spite of them.

ESSAY FOURTEEN

THE ULTIMATE TZEDAKAH

The Families of Gad

G-d is always counting the Jewish people. One example is a census ordered by G-d as recorded in this week's parsha, Pinchas. This census is unique in that all of the families within each of the 12 tribes are mentioned.

Every word of Torah is measured and full of meaning. If the Torah felt it was necessary to mention the names of the various families which comprised each tribe, there must be some deeper significance to these names. Moreover, these names must also serve as a guide for us in our own lives, inasmuch as every word of Torah conveys a practical lesson. We have been taught by our Rebbe on countless occasions that Torah means instruction and that every aspect of Torah, including the narratives, must serve as a source of guidance for us in our lives as Jews.

With respect to the tribe of Gad, the Torah states: "Gad's descendants according to their families: The Tzefoni family, descended from Tzefon, the Chagi family, descended from

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Chagi, the Shuni family descended from Shuni.”

The Chassidic work Ma’or Vo’shemesh finds a beautiful and down-to-earth message inherent in the names Gad, Tzfon, Chagi and Shuni, which carries within it a teaching with respect to the giving of tzedakah/charity specifically:

Gad is Good

The word Gad comprises the two Hebrew letters Gimmel and Daled. The Talmud (Shabbos 103a) records how a child interpreted all the letters of the Hebrew Aleph Beis. Gimmel Daled, the Talmud states, means “give to the poor.” Hence the word Gad implies giving of Tzedakah. (It would not be too far-fetched to suggest that the English word “good” may have derived from these two letters.)

Now that we have established the general message of tzedakah represented by the name of the entire tribe of Gad, we will discover that the names of three of Gad’s families allude to three specific requirements which apply to the Mitzvah of giving tzedakah:

First, it must be given discreetly so that the recipient is not put to shame. This requirement is hinted in the name of the first family of Gad mentioned: Tzefoni. The word *tsafon* means hidden, implying that Gad, which represents the act of giving tzedakah, must be given in a concealed manner.

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Second, tzedakah must be given willingly and joyously. Although one who helps the poor reluctantly also fulfills the basic requirement of tzedakah, it is not the way the Mitzvah was intended. It certainly is not the ideal way of performing this Mitzvah.

The Ma'or Voshemesh states that the requirement of giving with joy explains why we do not recite a blessing before performing the Mitzvah of Tzedakah. Inasmuch as most people do not give with such enthusiasm, there is something incomplete about the performance of the Mitzvah. It therefore does not warrant a blessing which expresses one's profound gratitude for the opportunity to fulfill G-d's command. The rabbis who instituted the blessings we recite before performing other Mitzvos therefore decided not to compose and require a blessing for Tzedakah.

This requirement is alluded to in the name of the second of the tribe Gad's families. Chagi derives from the word *chag*, festival, which, as its name suggests, is a joyous occasion. When one gives tzedakah it should be a cause of celebration for the donor no less so than for the recipient. Indeed, we are taught that in giving tzedakah, the donor benefits far more than the recipient. The recipient gets a finite amount of money or other assistance, but the donor fulfills a command that connects him to the Infinite G-d. The recipient gets a material resource, the donor validates

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his entire *raison d'être*.

The third requirement is not to be content with giving only once. Our Sages looked to the repetition of “give” as used in the Torah for the Mitzvah of tzedakah, “Give, you shall give.” They construed this to mean that one should not say I have already given to this poor individual. Rather “one should give repeatedly, even a hundred times.”

This requirement is alluded to in the name of the third of Gad’s families. Shuni can be translated as repetition, and is a cognate of the word *shanah*, which means year, because every year is a cycle and repeat of the preceding year.

One may extend Ma’or Voshemesh’s exegesis to the fourth family name: Ozni. The word Ozni can also mean “my ear.”

It is not only important to give the money to the needy, one should also lend an ear to hear about his or her plight and show empathy.

Tzedakah and Redemption

Our Sages tell us that tzedakah has a special connection to the Redemption. They put it in at least two ways. In one source they state: “Israel will be redeemed only through tzedakah.” In the other source it says: “Tzedakah is great because it hastens the Redemption.”

If tzedakah is the cause and Redemption is the effect it

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stands to reason that whatever conditions apply to the cause are inherent in the effect as well.

The Redemption is compared to tzedakah. Indeed, it is the ultimate tzedakah performed by G-d. Taking us out of Golus is the equivalent of redeeming a captive which the Talmud states is the greatest form of tzedakah because a captive suffers every imaginable indignity including the possibility of being murdered by his captors.

Our Sages also teach us that every Mitzvah G-d commands us to do He performs as well. Whenever G-d redeems us from our own predicament it is G-d's form of tzedakah. That G-d cares for all of our material needs is His way of giving tzedakah. However, the ultimate expression of Divine tzedakah is when G-d takes us out of exile.

Four “Requirements” of G-d's Tzedakah

And just as there are four conditions associated with our giving of tzedakah, represented by the four families of Gad, one may suggest that these four “conditions” also apply to G-d's performance of tzedakah, particularly with respect to the ultimate Redemption.

The first requirement, of giving tzedakah discreetly, appears to be somewhat problematic if we try to apply it to G-d. Why would we want G-d to hide His giving us all

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of our needs?

One may answer this question by reflecting on the rationale for that the idea of discreet giving. It is, as stated, in order not to embarrass the recipient. This too can apply to the way G-d gives to us. When G-d provides for all of our needs even though we have done nothing to earn it leads us to experience the ultimate embarrassment. The term “bread of shame” is applied by the Talmud to one who begs for food. Chassidic literature also applied it to one who takes all that G-d gives without earning it.

This has a direct bearing on Moshiach and Redemption. We were promised that Moshiach will redeem us regardless of our worthiness. But, who wants to be the undeserving recipient of a tzedakah hand out? We want Redemption to occur **because** of our efforts, not in spite of them. Indeed, the Alter Rebbe in Tanya states that what will occur in the Messianic Age depends on our actions now and throughout our existence in exile.

G-d's Happiness

The second requirement associated with the name Chagi, joy in the performance of tzedakah, is again problematic. Why does G-d have to be happy in providing us all our needs? Stating this requirement necessarily implies that it would be possible for G-d not to be happy at giving.

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In truth, this second condition is related to the first. If we do not deserve G-d's largesse and G-d gives it to us anyhow, He is obviously not happy and provides our needs reluctantly. The reason He is not happy is that G-d, whose "nature" is to be good to others, wants to give us the most possible. To give when the recipient is embarrassed by the gift is less than ideal, hence G-d is unhappy.

On a deeper level, the idea of G-d being happy to redeem us is based on the idea that G-d is happy with our phenomenal achievements in exile. Notwithstanding that exile, with all of its attendant negatives, we remain steadfast in our commitment to Judaism. This pleases G-d. As a result, G-d might be tempted to keep us in exile a bit longer. When He finally brings the Redemption He might do so reluctantly. We therefore pray to G-d that He should redeem us with joy; the satisfaction He receives from our heroism in exile should not bar Him from taking us out of exile with joy.

When G-d takes us out begrudgingly, the Redemption occurs in an impoverished state. Moshiach is described as a poor man riding on a donkey. However, if G-d is happy with Redemption it will occur in a majestic way, consistent with the verse that describe Moshiach's coming on a cloud.

The third requirement, giving repeatedly, as it pertains to G-d is that He should not be content with His performance

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of all the great miracles of redemption in the past. We want Him to repeat the process until we are fully redeemed through the efforts of Moshiach. This message is conveyed in the biblical verse that speaks of G-d redeeming us *sheinis*, which usually means a second time, but can also be rendered “repeatedly.” For even after the Redemption there will be repeated levels of spiritual growth and development before us; each one will liberate us from the limits of the preceding level.

And finally, the name of the fourth family, Ozni, in its application to G-d’s tzedakah and Redemption is that we beseech G-d to open His ears to hear our pleas that we cannot tolerate Golus any longer. Ad Masai-How much Longer!

ESSAY FIFTEEN

THE THEORY OF QUANTITY QUALIFIED

Everyone possesses the potential for the highest quality.

When we have the critical mass of positive energy, it represents the force that can fan the little flame into a blazing fire.

Quantity generates quality.

The ultimate force is the synthesis of the two.

ESSAY FIFTEEN

THE THEORY OF QUANTITY QUALIFIED

Redundant!

Before Moses passes away, he instructed the Jews about the way they were to divide the Land of Israel. In one verse in this week's parsha, the Torah states:

“To the large tribe you shall give a larger inheritance and to a smaller tribe you shall give a smaller inheritance, each one shall be given an inheritance according to its number.”

A question has been raised about the redundancy in this verse: Once it says that a larger inheritance shall be given to a larger tribe and a smaller one to a smaller tribe, why is it necessary to add “each one shall be given an inheritance according to its number?”

Not Just the Past

To answer this question it is first necessary to establish that the Torah's discussion of the inheritance of the Land

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of Israel was not just a discussion of the past. And while we certainly believe that the narratives of the Torah are true to the most minute detail, the Torah has layers and layers of deeper meaning that are relevant and timely in the twenty first century as they were then.

Israel a Land and Experience

The Land of Israel is both a land and an experience and mindset. The word Israel, is Biblically defined as “mastery over nature.” To **live** in the Land of Israel is to attain self-mastery and mastery over the forces outside of us that seek to control us. To inherit the land is to instill this mindset and experience of Israel into one’s consciousness.

Our Sages tell us that every Jew has a share in the Land of Israel. Regardless of one’s level of observance, a Jew has an intrinsic connection to Israel—both the physical Land as well as the spiritual mindset it represents. This means, that even a Jew who has become so assimilated and influenced by the values and practices of the world around him or her, he or she, nevertheless, will always have the capacity to reverse direction.

What, then, is the difference between one individual and another with regard to their inheritance in Israel?

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Nine Moses Cannot Make a Minyan

The difference is a quantitative one. For a tribe of many constituents, the portion of Israel it receives is greater. This means that the Jew, who expresses this “Land of Israel” potential in many diverse ways, on numerous occasions, consistently and repeatedly, will obviously have a larger share of the land. He or she will be able to feel more of their Israel potential than those whose quantity of the “Land of Israel” mentality is scant.

In other words, as much as we tend to emphasize the quality of one’s actions, a case can also be made for the value of sheer quantity. Nine Moses cannot make a *minyan*. But ten simple Jews can.

The logic behind the “theory of quantity” is that deep down; everyone possesses the potential for the highest quality. When we have the critical mass of positive energy, it represents the force that can fan the little flame into a blazing fire. Quantity generates quality.

At any rate, when the Torah states, “To the large tribe you shall give a larger inheritance and to a smaller tribe you shall give a smaller inheritance,” it wishes to emphasize the value and effect of doing many “Land of Israel” oriented things. This translates into performing those aspects of Judaism that might go against the grain. The more we swim upstream, the more we discover that we have the

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ability to withstand all pressures and influences that are hostile to our soul's mission.

The Qualifier

However, the Torah qualifies this “theory of quantity” with the next part of the verse that appeared redundant: “each one shall be given an inheritance according to its number.” The Hebrew word for its number “*pikudav*” also has an alternate meaning: In some verses of the Torah the root of that word has the connotation of something that is either missing or diminished.

If we reinterpret that verse in light of this new translation it could be rendered thus: Notwithstanding the importance of quantity of “Land of Israel” related actions, there is a qualifying factor. When a person acts with self-effacing humility (*pikudav*-that which is diminished), the effect of even a few Mitzvos can be greatly magnified. Conversely, when we inflate the value of our actions, our self-importance and look condescendingly at others who do less than us, it actually detracts from the value of our actions.

To avoid the trap of counting our many good deeds so as to place ourselves on a pedestal, the Torah exhorts us to realize the importance of humility in enhancing the value of our deeds. To be sure, the lack of humility does not negate the importance of each and every Mitzvah. Rather it

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is the glue that takes the many disparate aspects of good in our lives and unifies them into one powerful force of holiness. With this force, we cannot possibly lose our connection to the Land of Israel, literally and figuratively.

The emphasis on humility with regard to our right to the Land of Israel is echoed in the statement of the Midrash that when Moshiach will announce “the time of your Redemption has arrived,” it will be prefaced by the words: “Humble ones.”

This spirit of humility enables us to acquire the greatest benefit from all of our large quantities of Mitzvos and will be the catalyst for us to truly inherit the Land of Israel for all times.

ESSAY SIXTEEN

VERBAL BRIBERY

The Lubavitcher Rebbe has constantly stressed, our role is to reverse the process of destruction by transforming the senseless hatred into “senseless love.”

This means that we should become so favorably biased about each other that we can no longer harbor any feelings of negative judgment

ESSAY SIXTEEN

VERBAL BRIBERY

“I Can’t take Your Case!”

Shortly after Rabbi Joseph Babad (author of the classic work *Minchas Chinuch*) was appointed as the rabbi of Tarnipol in Galicia, he was approached by a man who revealed to him that he was instrumental in getting him the position. Rabbi Babad expressed his gratitude to him for his assistance.

A while later, this man came to the rabbi to adjudicate a business dispute he had with another member of the Jewish community. Rabbi Babad, upon recognizing the man as the one who had told him about his support for him in the past, declined to be involved in his case.

To justify his unwillingness to be involved in his case, the rabbi cited an incident recorded in this week’s Parsha:

The daughters of the deceased Tzelafechad approached Moses and demanded that they be permitted to inherit their father’s share in the Land of Israel. They argued that their father died in the desert, and that he was not among

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those who joined Korach's rebellion against Moses. Moses did not reply to their request. Instead he approached G-d for guidance. The A-mighty agreed with the daughters of Tzelafechad that they should be given their father's share of the land.

"It always troubled me," the rabbi of Tarnipol said to his supporter, "Why did Moses not try to respond to their query himself? Why did he have to ask G-d to adjudicate this case?"

"The answer to this question has now become clear to me," Rabbi Babad continued. "When Moses heard how their father did not support Moses' adversary, the rebel Korach, he felt that this was a form of verbal bribery. He could no longer be objective in deciding whether or not they were entitled to their father's inheritance."

"Similarly, here," Rabbi Babad concluded, "When you told me how much support you've given me in the past, I can no longer be objective; I will always have a subconscious bias for you."

The obvious lesson of this story is that one has to go to extremes to maintain objectivity when called upon to render judgment about people. And, in general, one must never allow their integrity to be compromised.

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The Positive Counterpart to Bribery

But, as Chassidic thought teaches us, every negative phenomenon also contains a positive counterpart. Just as there is verbal bribery that clouds our judgment and causes us to miscarry justice, so too there can and must be verbal bribery that is positive and praiseworthy, precisely because it clouds our judgment.

When the famous prospective convert approached the Sage Hillel, asking him to teach the entire Torah while standing on one foot, Hillel's historic response was "What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow."

Commentators ask, why Hillel did not phrase this in the affirmative, "What is desirable to you, do to your fellow?"

Chassidic philosophy provides the following answer: We are all aware of our own shortcomings. Yet, self-love allows us to overlook them. The bias we have for ourselves enables us to look the other way and get on with life. We are bribed by self-love. Similarly, we should allow ourselves to be so partial to our fellow, that even when they possess flaws, we should not want to focus on them (except than when we have the ability to help them repair the shortcomings).

As the rabbi of Tarnipol could not judge that individual who expressed his involvement on behalf of the rabbi,

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because he felt some measure of partiality, so too shall we be incapable of judging our fellow human-being.

(Unless, of course, we are called upon to mediate between two people's claims. Then, we have an obligation to divest ourselves of any biases, even favorable ones, because what may be favorable to one person, could be harmful to the other.)

Reversing the Three Weeks

We are now situated in the period known as the “Three Weeks,” that commemorates the tragedies that occurred in the past, particularly the destruction of Jerusalem and the Holy Temple. Our Talmudic Sages describe the level of decay that plagued the Jewish community then that led to the catastrophe. It was *Sinas Chinam*, or senseless hatred that was the cause of their downfall.

Today, the Lubavitcher Rebbe has constantly stressed, our role is to reverse the process of destruction by transforming the senseless hatred into “senseless love.” This means that we should become so favorably biased about each other that we can no longer harbor any feelings of negative judgment (except, of course, where that judgment is directed at helping people deal with their problems).

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And just as we love ourselves, not because of any specific logical reason, so too, shall we direct our love to others in ways that transcend the boundaries of logic—Ahavat Chinam.

ESSAY SEVENTEEN

SELFLESS SELFISHNESS

We need health for our children's sake. We need to make a living for our children's sake. We need Redemption for our children's sake.

Praying for ourselves might be regarded as selfish, but praying for our children is not.

Indeed, if it is selfish, then it is the ultimate "kosher" and holy form of self-interest.

ESSAY SEVENTEEN

SELFLESS SELFISHNESS

Moses' Personal Request

When Moses was told he was not going to lead the Jewish nation into the Promised Land, Moses asked G-d to appoint a successor. Indeed, Moses, in his concern for the well-being of his people, requested a leader who would be capable and selfless.

Moses' concern for the future of his people prompted Rashi to make the following comment:

“This teaches us the praise of the righteous. When they depart from this world, they put aside their own needs and engage with the needs of the community.”

According to Rashi, Moses' instinctive reaction to the notification that he would depart from this world was to focus his attention on the welfare of his nation.

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Contradiction?!

Yet, in the very next verse, Rashi comments that when Moses heard how G-d gave the daughters of Tzelafchad their father's inheritance, he said,

“The time has come for me to demand my needs;
my son shall inherit my exalted position.”

G-d's response was that Joshua, Moses' faithful disciple, would be his successor and not his own son.

Rashi seems to be contradicting himself by first suggesting that Moses had no personal concerns and then stating that, indeed, Moses had requested a personal favor; that his son should succeed him.

Another question:

How could it be that Moses desired that his son succeed him? Would that not be an egotistical desire to have his son assume the mantle of leadership and carry on the family name and tradition? Moses, [about] whom G-d testifies was “the most humble man on the face of the earth” could not possibly be concerned with his own legacy.

Furthermore, prior to Moses' passing, he had reached the pinnacle of human development. If he ever possessed even a trace of self-interest, he certainly would have purged himself of these ambitions before his passing. At this juncture in his life, he certainly was not obsessed with his

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own legacy. Why, then, did he focus on his son succeeding him at precisely this time?

A third question: Didn't Moses know that his children were not as worthy as Joshua to serve as the leader? Why, then, would he ask for his son to succeed him at the expense of the Jewish nation who needed their leader to be the most qualified?

And one final question: In the preceding parsha of *Chukas*—where the Torah relates the passing of Aaron and how he was succeeded by his son Elazar as High Priest—Rashi observes that Moses was informed that he would not merit having his own children succeed him in the way Aaron's son had succeeded Aaron. Why, then, did he now revisit the matter that had already been decided?

Acceding to G-d's Will

The simple answer to these questions is that, in truth, Moses was not thinking of himself and his personal needs. However, when he realized that the very last words of instructions from G-d to him concerned the inheritance of a child—the daughters of Tzelafchad—he concluded that G-d was hinting to him that a family member should inherit the estate—and, by extension, the position—of his or her father.

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Thus, Moses only thought of asking for his own son's selection as his successor when he surmised that it was G-d's will to keep things in the family. Moses' concern for his own need was actually counter intuitive for him. He only thought of it when it was his impression that it was G-d's will to have a child inherit. Moses' "self-interest" was actually motivated by his devotion to carry out G-d's will even when it went counter to his own nature, which was to shun honor and selfish ambition.

And this is the hallmark of all great Jewish leaders throughout history, from Moses to Moshiach. They shunned leadership and all of its glory. Only when they were "compelled" by G-d's explicit or implicit command to them to assume the mantle of leadership, or when they realized that their service was needed, did they reluctantly agree to sacrifice their own interests and accept the role of leader.

Defining a Personal Need

On another level, one may answer all of the questions raised above by reevaluating the notion of Moses' personal needs.

To better understand Moses' desire that his son succeed him is rooted in the way Judaism views our responsibility for our children's physical and spiritual welfare. We can

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develop a better understanding of the above by the following example:

Our most important prayer—the *Shemonah Esrei* (Eighteen Benedictions, also known as the *Amidah*—the Standing Prayer)—contains the requests we make of G-d for our most important needs. They include: health, livelihood, freedom, justice and the ultimate Redemption through Moshiach. Conspicuously absent among these requests is the request for children and their well-being! This omission is even more glaring in light of the fact that the Biblical source as to how we should pray is the story of Chanah, the mother of the prophet Shmuel, who prayed fervently for a child. Yet, our most essential prayer, which is modeled after her prayer, omits any mention of our children!

One approach to resolving this matter is to suggest that, in fact, all of what we are asking of G-d is for our children. When we ask for health and other matters, we are thinking primarily of our children's health, etc. Moreover, even when we ask for ourselves we are truly asking for our children. We need health for our children's sake. We need to make a living for our children's sake. We need Redemption for our children's sake. There is no need to mention our children and their needs as one of our requests because they are implicit in **all** of our requests. Praying for ourselves might be regarded as selfish, but praying for our children is not.

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Indeed, if it is selfish, then it is the ultimate “kosher” and holy form of self-interest.

We can now better appreciate Moses’ “selfish” request for his son to succeed him as leader. Moses was not interested in his children becoming the leaders for selfish reasons. Moses had no concern for his legacy. Moreover, even if he was interested in a legacy, he was already guaranteed a place in history as the Jewish nation’s liberator, first leader, giver of the Torah, greatest prophet, etc. Moses had only his children’s interest in mind. Surely, Moses must have known that they were not as qualified as Joshua. Nevertheless, he wanted his son to assume this position because, in doing so, he would be elevated and would grow. Surely, if G-d appointed his son to a position of leadership, he would be endowed with the requisite power and inspiration to fulfill his mission. This premise is based on the Talmudic dictum that, when one is elevated to a position of leadership, his sins are forgiven.

Moses was leaving us with twin lessons as to how we must view our children’s needs. First, our children’s needs are **our** most important needs. And second, obsession with our children’s needs is not selfish.

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Why Did Moses Wait?

One can still wonder why Moses waited until this point to focus his attention on his children.

The answer is that Moses was compelled by the responsibilities of his position, imposed on him by G-d, to sacrifice everything for the sake of the entire Jewish nation. However, prior to Moses' passing, when G-d instructed him about the laws of inheritance, he took that as a cue that he now had an obligation to focus on his children's future as well. He thought that he had been given the license to pursue his "selfish" desires for his own children.

Redemption for Our Children's Sake

There are multiple reasons why we crave—and ought to crave—Redemption. First and foremost, the Redemption is for G-d's sake, for, as our Sages teach, He too "suffers" in exile with us. The fact that [] G-d's presence is so concealed is "painful" for G-d and it should be painful for us, His children.

However, there are also selfish reasons why we pray for Moshiach. Moshiach will bring peace, tranquility, prosperity, good health and all the other material blessings we are so lacking in the period of exile. To desire Moshiach for those selfish reasons is not bad, but it is not the ideal

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motivation for Redemption. However, when we ask for those very blessings for our children's sake, it changes the entire dynamic. Our concern for our children is a reflection of G-d's care for His children. Caring for our children is no less a spiritual and G-dly endeavor than praying and learning Torah. It is our way of emulating G-d and incorporating His attribute of love and attachment to His children in our own lives.

By all means, desire Moshiach for selfish reasons! But by focusing on Redemption for the benefit of our children, we transform our selfish interests into selfless and G-dly interests. That attitude, in and of itself, is what hastens the process of Redemption and makes us more receptive to the G-dly energies that will be revealed at that time—when the most powerful bond between G-d, our Father, and Israel, His children, will be cemented.

ESSAY EIGHTEEN

DIVINE BREAD

The daily sacrifice in the Temple is described by the Torah as “G-d’s bread.”

Bread—the staff of life—is what unites the soul and the body. What makes the shidduch-match between these two disparate entities? It is the food that we ingest.

For G-d—the Soul of the universe—to be wed to our material existence it was the daily sacrifice in the Temple.

It demonstrated our desire to give of ourselves to Him.

It is this gesture of love and devotion, repeated twice daily, that makes dwelling in this world appealing to G-d.

ESSAY EIGHTEEN

DIVINE BREAD

The Uniqueness of the Aleph Beis

The Hebrew alphabet is unlike any other. Kabbalah and Chassidus teach us that each letter represents a spiritual energy that corresponds to the characteristics of the individual letters. When G-d created the universe, He did so by channeling His creative powers. The channels were, and remain, the letters of the Hebrew Aleph Beis.

With this premise, we can understand why the Talmud assigns such significance to a prayer in which each verse begins with another letter of the Aleph Beis. This, the Talmud (Berachos 4b) says, is one of the reasons we recite Psalm 145 thrice daily. It also explains the uniqueness of Psalm 119, which contains 176 verses, 8 for each of the 22 letters of the Hebrew Alphabet.

What does that have to do with this week's parsha—Pinchas?

In this parsha, G-d commands the Jewish people to offer the Korban Tamid, two daily sacrifices in the Temple.

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Ollelos Efraim makes the observation that this paragraph of the parsha contains all the letters of the alphabet except for *gimmel* and *tes*. According to him, the inclusion of all the letters (save two) points to the pivotal nature of this section of the Torah.

What is so special about the Tamid offering? And why does the inclusion of virtually all the Hebrew letters in this section of the parsha indicate its importance?

G-d's "Bread"

The daily sacrifice in the Temple is described by the Torah as "G-d's bread." Chassidus explains that the term "bread" here is obviously a metaphor. Bread—the staff of life—is what unites the soul and the body. Without food the soul would return to its source—the Heavenly worlds, and the body to its origin—dust of the earth. What makes the shidduch-match between these two disparate entities? It is the food that we ingest, which contains within it spiritual energy that the soul craves. And only by staying put within the body can the soul access this elusive spiritual "fix" that it cannot get even in paradise.

In a similar vein, there must be a compelling reason for G-d—the Soul of the universe—to want to be wed to our physical and material existence. What is so enticing about our world that it provides G-d with the rationale for

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entering into our domain and thereby continuing to keep it in existence? It is the Korban Tamid, the daily sacrifice. The Korban Tamid demonstrated our desire to give of ourselves to Him. It is this gesture of love and devotion, repeated twice daily, that makes dwelling in this world appealing to G-d.

We can now understand the significance of the fact that this parsha section on the Tamid contains virtually all the letters of the alphabet. It indicates that these daily sacrifices activated all the Divine forces responsible for G-d creating and dwelling within our world.

Pinchas and the Seventeenth of Tammuz

We can now appreciate why this parsha is always read in close proximity to the Seventeenth of Tammuz. This day is a fast day. Although the primary reason is that it commemorates the breaching of the walls of Jerusalem on the way to the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash and the ensuing exile, the Talmud (Ta'anis end of 26a) lists four other tragedies that occurred on this day.

One of those tragedies was the decree that banned the offering of the Tamid. This tragedy is emblematic of the entire concept of exile, that necessitates fasting on this day until the rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdash

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The difference between exile and Redemption revolves around the degree of G-d's relationship with the world, which in turn is based on G-d getting His “bread,” as it were. When the Tamid—G-d's “bread”—was offered, the world was an appealing place for G-d. This cemented G-d's “marriage” with His world.

When, however, the daily sacrifice ceased to be brought, it indicated that our world was no longer appealing to G-d and G-d's presence was withdrawn from it. This state of separation has been Biblically likened to a divorce and it ultimately led to the breaching of the walls of Jerusalem, destruction of the Beis Hamikdash and the long exile.

Parshas Pinchas, particularly the section about the Korban Tamid, read either on the Shabbos before or the Shabbos after the 17th of Tammuz, provides the cure for the tragic results of the breaching of the walls of Jerusalem. By reading the words of the Torah about the Tamid we generate a Divine energy parallel to that of the actual Tamid sacrifice and hasten the process of our Redemption.

Response to Moses

The parsha of the daily sacrifice appears as a response to Moses' request of G-d to appoint his successor. G-d's response, in effect, was: “Before you ask me to do

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something for My children, tell My children to do something for Me.”

On its face, it is difficult to understand why G-d made this demand for the Tamid as a response to Moses’ request for the appointment of a successor. Weren’t the Jews already commanded to observe all the commandments? Why did G-d have to add a new one concerning the daily offerings? Moreover, the commandment to bring a daily offering was not really new. It was mentioned in an earlier parsha. Why did G-d mention just this one Mitzvah and not all the others as prerequisites to His choosing a new leader?

The Ultimate Shadchan

The function of a genuine leader is not just to guide and inspire. The ultimate leaders from Moses through Moshiach are conduits of G-d’s presence into the world. They serve as the matchmakers who facilitate the marriage between G-d and the Jewish people.

There is a caveat to the shadchan analogy. Whereas the shadchan merely brings bride and groom together after which he or she is out of the picture, Moses, and other leaders in his mold, are also an integral part of the marriage, for they too are members of the Jewish community wedded to G-d. Indeed, they are the ones who feel the relationship most acutely.

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The relationship of Jewish leaders to the people has been compared to the relationship of the brain to the entire body. Without our brain, we cannot interact with anything outside of ourselves. For example, without the brain we could not travel to another location to visit another person. However, the brain is not merely a map that you can leave in the car when you enter the other person's home; the brain goes along with the person and is actually more intimately connected to that location and the other person than the legs that transport the person, or the hands that shake the other's hands.

Similarly, Moses and Moshiach—and all the great leaders in between—bring G-d into the consciousness of the world. However, they are an integral part of that same world even as they are transparent souls that enable G-d's light to shine through them onto the world.

A great leader must therefore be simultaneously connected to the world that he leads and to G-d, whom he channels.

Thus, when Moses asks G-d to appoint a successor, he was asking for the ultimate “shadchan.”

[It is interesting to note that the word Shadchan has the gematria of *v'ahavta*—and you shall love. The plural form *shadchanim* has the gematria of Moshiach ben Dovid!]

In response to Moses' request, G-d shows him that before He appoints a new leader to channel G-d's energy into the

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world, the people have to do their part in creating the marriage, which is achieved by way of the Tamid offering.

The Missing Letters

The question remains, why are the letters *gimmel* and *tes* missing from this parsha of the Tamid sacrifice? If the presence of all the letters signifies the all-encompassing power of this offering—that it embodies all of the Divine instruments of speech that give existence and life to the world—why are two letters missing?

Ollelos Efraim answers that these two letters form the word *get*, which means divorce. The Talmud (Gittin 90b) states that when two people get divorced “the Altar sheds tears.” The Altar upon which the sacrifices were offered symbolizes the ultimate union between G-d and Israel and by extension the entire world. A *get*, which effects a separation between husband and wife, is a direct contradiction to the concept of the Divine union with Israel. Thus, the letters that signify separation are absent in this parsha.

Olleles Efraim adds another fascinating morsel: The very reason a bill of divorce is called a *get* is because there is no place in the entire Torah where these two letters are written together. Thus, these two letters represent the ultimate in separation.

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Reversing the Reversal

As mentioned, the entire existence of exile is a form of separation and a “taste” of divorce. In exile, there is a reversal of the Tamid dynamic which keeps the gimmel and the tes separated. In exile, the Altar sheds tears because we lack the Beis Hamikdash. Our ability to bring G-d into our collective consciousness is severely constrained.

Moshiach, like Moses and Joshua, is not just a great leader and teacher but one who channels Divine energy into the world and thereby cements the marriage between G-d and the Jewish people.

Twin Constants

In addition to our prayers that take the place of the Tamid sacrifice, there are also other aspects of the Tamid that we can do now to reverse the tragedy of exile.

The Tamid sacrifice was offered twice daily. This alludes to the two “constants” with which the Orach Chaim section of the Shulchan Aruch - Code of Jewish law - begins and ends:

It opens with the verse: “I place G-d before me tamid-constantly” and it concludes with: “a happy heart celebrates Tamid-constantly.” Moshiach’s power to remove the stigma of the get and the tears associated with Galus-separation

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requires a twined approach of constant awareness of G-d and constant joy. G-d cannot dwell in a place of sadness.

The key to revealing Moshiach and the ultimate Redemption (read: marriage) is to study and meditate on the parts of the Torah which focus on G-d's presence in our lives and dismiss all depressing thoughts from our minds. This approach is not only a way to hasten the Redemption; it is our way of beginning to experience the Redemption itself.

ESSAY NINETEEN

LEADERSHIP IN THREE DIMENSIONS

Many leaders today act as if they are leading the way, but when they come to a thorny or controversial matter, they turn around to determine which way the people want them to choose.

The leaders thus become the quintessential followers.

Moshiach will be a true leader. He will unlock the spiritual potential in all of us.

ESSAY NINETEEN

LEADERSHIP IN THREE DIMENSIONS

Repetition?

In response to being told by G-d that he will be “gathered to his people,” Moses asks G-d to appoint a successor. Moses includes among the qualifications for a new leader that he be:

“[One] who will go out before them and come in before them.” Moses then adds: “who shall take them out and bring them in...”

Why did Moses need to repeat this qualification of going before the people? First he says, “[One] who will go out before them and come in before them.” And then he adds, “[one] who shall take them out and bring them in.”

Isn't this a repeat of his earlier statement, albeit phrased in a slightly different fashion?

This question assumes great force when we consider the way the Torah economizes on its words even in matters of law, where one missed or misunderstood detail can wreak havoc. Why then would it repeat a seemingly identical

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message in a passage that appears to have no more than historical value?

Moses' request to G-d for a leader can teach an eternal lesson not only for the selection of leaders but also for each and every one of us. Moreover, these lessons are so crucial that the Torah could not have "afforded" to economize and present the lesson in an abbreviated form. Had the lesson not been presented this way as unmistakably clear, we would have risked losing a critical lesson.

Two Aspects of Leadership: Physical and Spiritual

Rashi seems to have anticipated our question. He explains that these two statements represent distinct leadership qualifications.

Rashi interprets the first phrase, "who will go out before them and come in before them," as a reference to the manner in which a leader should lead his nation into war:

Not like the kings of the [gentile] nations, who sit at home and send their armies to war, but as I did, for I fought against Sichon and Og.

Rashi then explained that the second phrase, "who shall take them out and bring them in...," means that he should take them out and bring them in "through his merits."

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In other words, the first lesson is that a leader must exhibit courage by, literally, going ahead of his soldiers into battle. This lesson relates to his role as a physical leader of the people, as one who leads them successfully in and out of battle. The second qualification describes the spiritual power of a leader who will prevail against his people's enemies because of his own worthiness.

According to Rashi, whose words are based on earlier Midrashic teachings, a leader must lead in both venues: the physical and spiritual.

The Face of a Dog!

There is another approach to this repetition of the “follow me” qualification for leadership.

The Talmud (Sotah 49b) describes the pitiful state of affairs for all people immediately before the final Redemption: “The face of the generation is like the face of a dog.”

One great 19th century sage interpreted this phrase as a bleak depiction of leadership in the last days of Galus-Exile. The phrase “face of the generation” alludes to its leaders. In what way can they be compared to dogs?

When a dog goes out walking with its master, it runs ahead and ostensibly “leads” the way. But, when it comes to a fork

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in the road, it looks back to see which way the master wants to go. The degenerate state of leadership in our “last-generation-of exile” fits that description all too well. Leaders act as if they are leading the way, but when they come to a thorny or controversial matter, they turn around to determine which way the people want them to choose. The leaders thus become the quintessential followers.

This, then, is what Moses had in mind when he asked for the type of leader who not only goes ahead of his nation but also “takes them out and brings them in.” He must be a leader who truly leads in every sense of the word. The leader makes the determination when to go out and when to come in. Simply going ahead of a nation and acting like a leader does not suffice.

Meritorious Leadership

We can now see the connection with Rashi’s commentary that the second requirement for leadership is that the leader leads because of his merits.

When a leader leads because of acquired power, whether it is through force or through a democratic process, he does not yet meet the test of leadership. The leader must have merit. Moreover, the Hebrew word for merit, *zechus*, also means refinement. If a leader is known for his righteousness and impeccable morality he will also have the

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fortitude to go against the grain and lead the people in directions that they might not want to travel. The leader who lacks those merits and is unrefined will be forced to follow the dictates of the masses and choose what is popular, not what is right.

The rationale for this is simple: When a person is not morally refined it means that his desires and animalistic needs control him. In effect, he is not a leader in his own life, rather he is being controlled by lower forces within himself. How then can he be a true leader of others?

No Basis for Disillusionment

One may question why the Talmud would inform us of the pitiful state of leadership in the last moments of Galus? That there is a paucity of true leadership in our generation is not hidden from our view. We don't need the Talmud to reveal a fact of life that is anything but secret. A similar question has been raised about other dire predictions concerning the last days of Galus-Exile that the Sages discuss at length in the Talmud and other classical Jewish sources. Why were they mentioned so often? Did the Sages wish to demoralize us?

The Rebbe provided us with an answer to this question.

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Had the pitiful state of affairs before Moshiach's coming not been foretold, some would have lost their faith in his coming. Upon witnessing the degenerate state of affairs (in leadership as well as other areas marked by a precipitous decline of morality and a frightening increase of violence and corruption) one could have concluded that the Messianic process has, G-d forbid, been aborted. People so disillusioned would have lost their faith in the promise of the Redemption and perhaps even lost faith in Judaism altogether.

To forestall this disastrous reaction to the negativity of the pre-Messianic era, our prescient sages revealed to us that this distressing scenario is actually a harbinger of the Redemption. Although we certainly should be troubled by the phenomenon of negative leadership, we should not be disheartened by it.

Many Holocaust survivors have stated that their faith was not shaken by the atrocities of the Holocaust. As one Holocaust survivor I knew put it: "I realized then that there was nothing I could rely upon; neither governments nor organizations, ideologies or politics. I then knew that the only thing I could rely on must be G-d!"

When we see the dearth of real leadership and the low level of morality popular leaders epitomize, we are compelled to conclude that the only true leader is Moshiach. The only

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way out of this morass is the final Redemption, which Moshiach ushers in and which must be imminent.

Leaders Cultivating Leaders

Returning to the subject of Moses' repetition of the qualifications for leadership, one may suggest that another dimension of leadership is alluded to by this repetition:

A leader, by definition, must be one who leads the people and is not their follower.

But even that does not suffice. A leader must also cultivate leadership qualities in the people he leads. As Rabbi Jonathan Sacks commented about the Rebbe's unique leadership: "Good leaders cultivate followers, great leaders cultivate leaders."

Thus, Moses asks G-d to appoint leaders who will go first, ahead of the people. This means that they will take the initiative and not wait for the people to wake up and do things on their own.

However, that it is but the first step of leadership. The leader must then "take them out and bring them in," suggesting that the leader must transform them into ones "who go out and come back in" because the leader has nurtured the spark of leadership which each and every Jew possesses.

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Igniting the Spark of Moshiach

This message is especially relevant to the role of Moshiach. On the one hand, Moshiach is the ultimate leader who will succeed in bringing all the Jews to the Promised Land, something even Moses was denied.

On the other hand, Moshiach is the one who ignites the spark of Moshiach within us and renders us all leaders who, in turn, have the power to reveal Moshiach's full potential. This will be the potent force that transforms the world of Galus-Exile into the world of Geulah-Redemption!

This message is particularly apt for the period of the Three Weeks into which we have now entered. It is a sad period, one in which the negative aspects of Galus are highlighted. But the Rebbe's message will not allow us to become depressed. We will know that no matter how low we have gone, the darkness of Exile will be followed by the reemergence of true leadership, when the light of Redemption will shine brightly. May that be imminently; may that be NOW!

ESSAY TWENTY

HYPOCRISY

A hypocrite is not one who may do an act at a later time that would contradict the spirit of the mitzvah he is about to fulfill.

A hypocrite is one who tries to conceal evil in a veil of righteousness. What one ate for breakfast is quite irrelevant to fulfilling the request to put on Tefillin or do another mitzvah later on that day.

ESSAY TWENTY

HYPOCRISY

A Most Insulting Word

One of the most insulting words one can use to discredit another person these days is to call him/her a hypocrite.

So intimidating can the hypocrite epithet be that many have shied away from doing a mitzvah because they fear that – since they don't keep All the Mitzvos, doing this one might cause them to be branded a hypocrite.

How many times have we heard the refrain, “If I would keep kosher at home when I don't keep kosher when I eat out, I would be a hypocrite?” Or, “I'm not really so religious, how can I put on Tefillin? I don't want to be called a hypocrite.”

True. Hypocrisy is indeed a serious character flaw – but that should in no way affect our efforts to do good. No one can change their entire way of life overnight. The key to improving one's life is to add **one mitzvah at a time**. No one can totally disavow all negative behavior immediately –

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they must grow step by step. Inconsistency is a far cry from hypocrisy and, in fact, is the road to self growth and spiritual fulfillment.

A Real Definition

We can gain some insight into what is the real definition of hypocrisy from this week's Torah portion. Pinchas, a grandson of Aaron, takes the initiative to kill two people whose immoral and idolatrous behavior was bringing misfortune upon the Jewish nation. Zimri, a leader of the tribe of Shimon was flaunting his defiance of the Torah by consorting with a Midianite princess named Kozbi. His motive was to demonstrate that this form of immorality was acceptable. As a result, the torah relates, G-d brought a plague that killed 24,000 people.

Pinchas incensed by this deviant conduct, took a spear and – without regard to his personal safety – executed the two violators. Immediately after Pinchas performs his zealous act, the plague ceases. Interestingly, our parsha relates that as a reward for his seemingly violent act, Pinchas is given G-d's "Covenant of Peace."

The Talmud describes hypocrites as those who "act like Zimri, but seek reward like Pinchas."

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Interestingly, the Talmud does not say, “One who acts like Korach and seeks a reward like Moses” nor does it contrast any other righteous and wicked person.

By referring to the hero and villain of this week’s Torah portion, Pinchas and Zimri, the Talmud sheds light on the true definition of a hypocrite. Pinchas, our sages relate, was accused of committing a heinous act by murdering Zimri. Some suggest that the Jews accused Pinchas of insincerity. Why did Pinchas come forward and not Moses, they charged? Obviously, they concluded, Pinchas was a cruel and sadistic person, who tried to cloak his desire for blood in the mantel of moral indignation. Pinchas, in their eyes, was the ultimate hypocrite.

It was also argued that Zimri was a good intentioned person. In an attempt to defend the behavior of the members of his tribe – many of whom had sunk to the depths of moral depravity – he tried to show that this act was not truly evil. Outwardly, it seemed that he was motivated by concern and love for his people.

In reality, Pinchas’s actions belied his true concern and love for the Jewish people. And Zimri’s actions reflected his contempt for the Torah and the well-being of the Jewish people.

A hypocrite is one who tries to cloak his destructive behavior in ostensibly righteous motives. Zimri made it

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appear that his act was in defense of his tribe, when in fact he had no interest other than his own self-gratification.

Pinchas, on the other hand, though he acted in a way that appeared to be destructive, was the opposite of a hypocrite, because his behavior was motivated by a genuine and deeply rooted concern and respect for his people and Judaism.

A hypocrite is not one who may do an act at a later time that would contradict the spirit of the mitzvah he is about to fulfill. A hypocrite is one who tries to conceal evil in a veil of righteousness. What one ate for breakfast is quite irrelevant to fulfilling the request to put on tefillin or do another mitzvah later on that day.

Pinchas, our sages tell us possessed the soul of Elijah the prophet. Elijah is the one who will usher in the Era of Moshiach, when hypocrisy will end because the “truth of G-d will endure forever.

ESSAY TWENTY-ONE

7 FOR 70

The Jewish people were chosen to serve as a light to the nations of the world.

Even when the Jewish people were situated on the Land of Israel, far from having direct contact with other nations except for occasional battles with their neighbors, they nevertheless had the power to generate spiritual light that emanated to the entire world.

In the days of exile we must bring this light to the world in a more direct fashion by serving as a role model and by disseminating the Seven Noahide commandments.

ESSAY TWENTY-ONE

7 FOR 70

Sukkos in the Summer!

Jewish Holidays come in their prescribed times; Passover in the spring, Sukkos in the fall. The way the Jewish calendar is set up, Pesach can never occur in any other season than the spring. Although we follow a lunar calendar in which a year has 11 days fewer than a solar year, we add a leap month 7 times in a 19-year cycle to compensate for the disparity. In this way Holidays always occur in the same season.

Chassidus teaches us that a Holiday is like a generator; it generates holiness, light and inspiration for the rest of the year until the next Holiday comes around.

However, these Holidays, fixed in their seasons, also have “satellite” Holidays at other times of the year, which allow us to receive the Holiday’s inspiration during other times of the year as well. These are the Sabbaths in which the Torah readings include discussion of the Festivals. One of them is this week’s Parsha, entitled Pinchas. It is one of the Torah

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portions which discuss the sacrifices offered in each of the Holidays.

The Festival of Sukkos, discussed in this week's Parsha, has a distinction that over its seven days, the number of sacrifices varied and declined day by day. The changes of the numbers of sacrifices, the Talmud states, indicates that each day of the Festival is a separate Holiday and deserves to be acknowledged as such. Whereas on Passover we only recite the complete Hallel (psalms of praise for the miracles G-d wrought, said on all festive Holidays) on the opening day(s) of the Holiday (first day in Israel and the first two days in the Diaspora), we recite the complete Hallel, on all seven days of Sukkos. Each day expresses another distinctive festive experience.

One can ask what significance is there in bringing a declining number of sacrifices each day, that justifies designating each day a new Holiday and warrants recitation of the complete Hallel?

If it were the reverse progression, that each day required additional sacrifices, that would understandably enhance the status of each successive day. But, why get excited about the fact that we're going downhill?

Logic dictates that the first day, when they offered the largest amount of sacrifices, should be regarded as a major

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holiday. But each successive day seems to be spiritually inferior to the day before it. Why celebrate decline?

Chanukah Parallel

It is also interesting to note that we find a similar pattern with respect to the lighting of the Menorah on Chanukah. The School of Hillel maintains that one should light one candle the first night and add on a candle each successive night, so that on the eighth night we light eight candles. The rationale for this is that in matters of holiness we always ascend and increase; never descend and decrease. Yet, the School of Shammai, who are generally stricter, maintains that one should light eight candles the first night and continue in declining order each successive night.

The Talmud explains that the School of Shammai's view is based on the pattern of Sukkos where the sacrifices were offered in declining order.

In addition, we must try to understand the significance of the different number of sacrifices every day of Sukkos, and their declining order?

At the same time, we must now try to understand, why we would want to bring the light of Chanukah into the world in declining and diminishing order.

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Diminution of Power or Enhancement of Power?

The Talmud tells us that the total tally of sacrifices over Sukkos was 70 bullocks corresponding to the 70 nations of the world. On the first day of Sukkos they would offer 13 bullocks; the second day 12 ending with seven on the seventh day.

The significance of the descending order, our Sages tell us, is that it represents the diminution of the power of these 70 nations. This relates to the Midrash that describes the status of the Jewish people, historically, vis-à-vis the other nations, as a lone sheep surrounded by 70 wolves. These 70 wolves that threaten the existence and spirituality of the Jewish people lose their power as a result of the diminishing order of the 70 offerings during the festival of Sukkos.

However, there is another Midrash that seems to suggest the very opposite. “If the nations of the world only knew how much they benefitted from the Holy Temple (as a result of these 70 sacrifices offered on their behalf) they would have surrounded the Temple with legions of soldiers to protect it.”

Which is it? Are the 70 sacrifices intended to lend support and power to the 70 nations for which they are expected to be grateful, or do these 70 sacrifices come to diminish their power?

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The answer is that these two objectives are one and the same.

A Light to the Nations

The Jewish people were chosen to serve as a light to the nations of the world. Even when the Jewish people were situated on the Land of Israel, far from having direct contact with other nations except for occasional battles with their neighbors, they nevertheless had the power to generate spiritual light that emanated to the entire world.

In the days of King Solomon, when the Bais Hamikdash-the Holy Temple was built and Jewish power and prestige was at its peak, an unprecedented amount of G-dly light shone on the nations of the world.

When the Temple was destroyed and the Jewish people dispersed throughout the world, we continued to be a light to the nations. The Judaic credo of ethical Monotheism actually influenced and informed other religions that took much of our values and beliefs, albeit watered down, and adapted and often distorted them. Nevertheless, there are some core values that our presence among the nations helped to spread that have changed the world for better.

We all know that Judaism is not and never was a proselytizing religion. G-d does not want or need all of

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humanity to convert to Judaism. However, the Torah does require that the nations of the world adhere to the Seven Noahide Commandments. Indeed, according to Maimonides, every Jew has an obligation to influence non-Jews to follow the Noahide Code.

If we had lived up to the standards expected of us in the Land of Israel and the Temple had not been destroyed, we would never have needed to go into exile to affect the rest of humanity. The holiness generated in the Temple had the power to reach every far-flung corner of the world.

Because we chose to resist the light of the Temple and drifted into idolatry and other sins during the First Temple era, the Temple was destroyed. We were compelled to spread out to the far corners of the globe to accomplish the same thing that we could have accomplished in Israel.

While our prayers ascribe our exile to our sins, the truth is that exile is not a punishment; it is “merely” transference of our mission from exercising indirect influence over the world to requiring direct contact with the world we were commissioned to refine and elevate.

Thus, when the Temple stood, the offering of the Sukkos sacrifices radiated outward to the nations of the world and removed some of the negative elements within them. The declining number of sacrifices on this Holiday brought about a commensurate decline of the negative forces of the

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world. In doing so, the nations of the world were actually strengthened by becoming more refined.

The same is true of Chanukah. The diminished number of candles each night, according to the School of Shammai is due to our success in removing the darkness the first night. The world has become more refined and the next night requires less light.

How do we Refine the World Now?

With the destruction of the Temple, and the absence of the 70 sacrifices, how do we accomplish the refinement of the Nations of the world?

There are actually several approaches:

First, the Rebbe taught, based on Maimonides' ruling, that when we come in contact with a non-Jew, we should make an effort to expose the non-Jew to the role he or she plays in preparing the world for Moshiach by observing the civilizing Divine Noahide code.

As a result of the Rebbe's encouragement in this direction many non-Jews have embraced the Noahide way of life.

Second, by observing the Festival of Sukkos, with its prayers, Torah readings and other Mitzvos, this holiday has the effect, even in times of exile, to positively influence the nations of the world.

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Third, on **this** Shabbos, the reading of the abovementioned 70 sacrifices empowers us to reduce the negative energies associated with the 70 nations.

Paving the Way to Moshiach

This effort is actually the way we prepare for the Messianic Age, when the entire world will recognize one G-d.

Now we can see why Maimonides prefaces the discussion of the Messianic Age with the laws concerning the seven Noahide commandants. He meant to teach us that we pave the way for the Messianic Age by influencing people to observe the Seven Noahide Commandments.

Macro and Micro

All lessons of the Torah can be applied on both a macro scale and micro scale.

What was said before about the refinement of the 70 nations can also be understood in terms of self-refinement.

Each of us possesses a micro version of the 70 nations. These are the seven emotional traits of our Animal Soul, with each trait broken into ten sub-traits; representing the most complete expression of our emotional makeup, which defines our character.

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In preparation for the Messianic Age, (hinted in the very name of the Parsha “Pinchas,” whom our Sages say is Elijah the Prophet, the one who announces the coming of Moshiach) we must work on refining our own internal “U.N.,” that is to say our own “70 wolves.” The light that emanates from the refinement of our own 70 emotions will spread to the entire world and finally bring an end to darkness, with the imminent arrival of Moshiach and the true and complete Redemption!

ESSAY TWENTY-TWO

CLOSE THE MEM

Torah is G-d's knowledge and cannot be tainted.

Torah, at its root and in its essence is Divine and pure.

**When it is introduced into the parameters of our physical
existence and materialistic pursuits it can become
corrupted.**

**Study of the mystical teachings preserve the Torah's
integrity under all circumstances.**

ESSAY TWENTY-TWO

CLOSE THE MEM

The Floating *Mem*

The hero of this week's parsha was Pinchas, after whom the entire parsha was named.

At the end of the preceding parsha, the Torah relates how Pinchas killed a Jewish prince and a Midianite princess who were engaged in an illicit and immoral act. The weapon he used was a spear known in Hebrew as a *romach*. The Torah, in this week's parsha, describes this rather brutal act of Pinchas as a life saver. It stopped a terrible plague that had already claimed the lives of 24,000 Jews.

The Zohar, the principal work of Kabbalah, describes the scene that confronted Pinchas in metaphoric and spiritual terms.

Pinchas saw the image of the Hebrew letter *mem* [the regular “open *mem*” that appears in the beginning or middle of a word] floating in the air. He was concerned that the letter *mem* would become attached to the two

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letters *vav* and *tav*, which would then spell the word *maves*, which means death. Indeed, these two letters of *vav* and *tav* are the first two letters of the key words employed by the Torah in the saga of Eve partaking of the forbidden Tree of Knowledge that introduced death to the world. These key words are “*va’tai’reh*-and she saw”, “*va’tikach*-and she took”, “*va’tochal*-and she ate”, “*va’titein*-and she gave”, and “*va’tipakachna*-and their [eyes] were opened.”

The Zohar continues that Pinchas took the letter *mem* and attached it to himself. Since Pinchas’ name has the numerical value of 208, which in Hebrew is represented by the two letters *reish* and *ches*, by inserting the *mem* into his name it formed the Hebrew word *romach* which means spear. And it was with this “spear” that he stopped the deadly plague that was caused by immorality.

The Zohar seems to be saying that the “open *mem*” is a letter-force that can go both ways. It depends on how and where it is channeled. If this powerful letter is attached to the letters *vav* and *tav* it can prove disastrous; if it is attached to Pinchas it will bring life in its wake.

What does all this mean in more down-to-earth terms?

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The Two *mems*; Two Dimensions of Torah

The Talmud and Kabbalists explain that the letter mem is the initial of the word *ma'amar*, which can be translated as a saying or teaching. But the letter mem comes in two forms: an “open” mem and a “closed” mem. They are said to represent two dimensions of Torah teachings: the open and accessible teachings of Torah and the closed and esoteric teachings of Torah.

The difference between these two dimensions is that the “closed mem” level of Torah deals with G-d, His attributes, His relationship with our world, spiritual worlds, our soul and the deeper meanings of Judaism.

By contrast, the “open mem” level of Torah knowledge includes Biblical and Talmudic literature that presents and analyzes the commandments and discusses their application to everyday life.

The subjects treated in the Talmud, while eminently understandable to the average mind, belie their true nature as products of the Divine Mind. For example, if one studies the laws concerning a business dispute in Talmudic literature, one could imagine oneself sitting in a law school classroom, or reading a detailed ruling of a secular judge. It is possible for one to completely forget that one is studying G-d's Torah.

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Furthermore, while the Torah—all parts of it, open or closed—is G-d's knowledge and cannot be tainted, it is nevertheless possible for a student of Torah to become degraded by his sense of importance at having mastered the Torah. One can even use the Torah knowledge for nefarious ends.

All these negative outcomes are a result of a person who studies Torah but has not worked at self-refinement. With all of the materialism and temptations that abound in our lives it is easy to see how a person imbued with much Torah knowledge can degenerate into a very low place in spite of—nay, because of his superior Torah knowledge.

And while Torah—any part of Torah—at its root and in its essence is Divine and pure, when it is introduced into the parameters of our physical existence and materialistic pursuits it can become corrupted.

In the air

We can now appreciate the imagery of the Zohar. Pinchas saw a “floating open mem.” This means allegorically that Pinchas realized that while Torah study—even the open dimension of it—when it is “in the air,” i.e. when it is in its own heavenly element it is pure and holy, for it is G-d's teaching.

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However, Pinchas was concerned that the letter mem could attach itself to the letter *vav* and *tav*. If that were to happen, the Torah knowledge that is represented by the “open mem” could be diverted and channeled into negative territory.

The reason he was concerned about the letter *tav* was because as a vertical line that extends downward from its head on top it symbolizes the process of extending the Torah downward into the parameters of our physical existence. It is not that the Torah itself is corruptible but rather the person who is unrefined can exploit it and use it for less than honorable objectives.

Down a Slippery Slope

Once that happens, it can lead down a slippery slope that ends up with the letter *tav*. According to the Talmud, it is the initial of the word that suggests the negation of life.

To avert this possibility Pinchas took the “open mem” to himself. Pinchas personified the final mem, or the “hidden” spiritual dimension of Torah that has now been preserved for us in the teachings of Kabbalah and Chassidus. He was therefore able to introduce us to the hidden dimension of Torah, represented by the final mem.

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When one accesses the mystical dimension of Torah, the level of Torah that deals with G-d and spirituality, one is uplifted and refined. Even as we are standing on the ground our minds are preoccupied with heavenly matters when we study the mystical teachings of Judaism.

Popularity of Mysticism

One of the reasons the mystical teachings of Judaism have become popular in recent times is because we are on the threshold of the Messianic Age when the wellsprings of Torah will be fully revealed; when the “closed mem” of Torah will inform the “open mem” of Torah and all aspects of our lives. As in the days of Pinchas when death was averted, in the future Messianic Age we will experience the complete removal of death and an age of eternal life will be ushered in. One way of preparing for that age is to immerse oneself in the “hidden mem.”