

Basi L'gani 5740 - Yud Shvat

An Overview of the Ma'amar - Free Translation*

In his discourse published for the day of his passing, the Rebbe cites the interpretation of the Midrash: “My garden’ means ‘My first dwelling place.’

The Shechinah once dwelled in this lowly world. But through seven undesirable deeds it retreated to Heaven. Through the deeds of seven righteous individuals, the Shechinah was restored lower, until Moses brought G-d down the final rung onto earth. As the Midrash explains, righteous have the ability to bring G-d’s presence to dwell in the lowest spiritual place: our world.

The Shechinah’s presence was then demonstrated in a tangible way in the Tabernacle, a personal home for G-d. The supporting panel of the Tabernacle is called a *keresh*. The Hebrew letters of *keresh* also spell *sheker*, falsehood, symbolizing that the spirit of falsehood and folly was transformed and employed as a supporting panel for the Tabernacle, G-d’s personal dwelling place.

Furthermore in the concept of “G-d’s dwelling place”: The verse says, “I will dwell in them,” meaning, “within every Jew”; the Shechinah dwells in the heart of every Jew.

Torah is eternal: Every element of the exile has spiritual significance, and they are the key to our

ultimate redemption. Torah is still relevant, and so are its mitzvot, as well as its teachings about the exile and exodus from Egypt, and they teach us lessons to this very day: The Israelites slavery with bricks and mortar is reflected in Torah study: “Leveinim means clarification of the law, and chomer represents learning one matter from another.”

The Rebbe explains in the discourse “Hayoshevet Baganim,” that our experience in Egypt reflects the idea of “Hayoshevet Baganim”: Although Jews are exiled among “other gardens” - the other nations, nonetheless, “friends” - the angels and G-d Himself - “gather to hear us” as we engage in Torah study and the fulfillment of mitzvot. And just like those Jews in Egypt, we too, elevate the sparks of G-dliness around us, and then merit the true and eternal redemption.

At the exodus the verse uses a unique term when describing the Jewish people “The army – tziv’ot – of G-d left.” The question is posed in Torah Or: Why are we called “G-d’s army”? Furthermore: The pronunciation of tziv’ot indicates that it’s possessive; G-d’s army, not an independent entity.

A second notable term is also used: “Al tzivotam”: “beyond” their armies.

* Note: The Ma'amar was later edited by the Rebbe with some minor changes. This summary is to assist viewing the original ma'amar.

The lesson here is derived from the inner meaning of tziv'ot and tzva'ot: It is one of G-d's seven sacred names which may not be erased. However, Tzva'ot is unique, as the Alter Rebbe explains, because it is not mentioned in the Five Books of Moses. The first to call G-d 'Tzva'ot' was Chana the prophetess, and specifically the later prophets prophesied primarily through the name Tzva'ot.

Although the prophets are secondary to the prophecy of Moses, there is a unique law, explained in Torat Chaim of the Mitteler Rebbe: One who transgresses a prophet's words receives a punishment (indicative of the severity of the transgression) more severe than one who transgresses many commandments of Torah.

The Mitteler Rebbe explains that it is connected to the meaning of Tzva'ot: G-d is named "Tzva'ot" because "He is the Master of His army." G-d's creations are His "army," and as their Creator and Master, He also adopts the name Tzva'ot.

(In that light, there is an argument whether Tzva'ot should be counted among the "sacred names of G-d," as it is only an extension of the name of His creations called "tzivot Hashem.")

The explanation: Moshe's name means "I pulled him from the water", and the Torah - named for him - is called water. Water represents Atzilut, the most sublime spiritual world, where nothing can exist due to the intensity of G-d's presence. The world of Atzilut is a world of harmony, where everything is nullified before G-d. Therefore, Torah doesn't mention the name Tzva'ot, for it indicates the existence of all of G-d's creations, in the words of Torah Or, "armies of souls and angels who sense their own existence".

As explained in Kabbalah, Tzva'ot reflects the attributes of Netzach and Hod, which constrict and transmit G-dliness to lower worlds which cannot contain the brilliant G-dly light of Atzilut.

The prophets filled a similar task: Moses is likened to the sun, and his battles were entirely miraculous, "G-d will fight for you." After his passing, the Jewish people were led by Joshua, who is likened to the moon, and who in battle was only accompanied by an Angel of G-d. This is because Moses was from the realm of Atzilut, where G-d personally wages war with open miracles.

In later generations, prophets use the name Tzva'ot, which indicates an even lower spiritual state: where G-d's presence is less apparent, and creations sense their own existence. Unlike Atzilut, where everything is entirely nullified.

So Tzva'ot represents transformation: It's a word that originally refers to Jews, but then it becomes sacred, through the spiritual work of the Jewish people, to the extent that it is counted among G-d's seven sacred names.

The Tzemach Tzedek notes, "This concept isn't found in Etz Chaim," it is the Alter Rebbe's original teaching. For Joshua, the word "tzvaot" speaks of angels, but the later prophets (in a degenerate spiritual era, especially the era of the final prophets and onward) transform it into a name of G-d, through bringing the revelations of Atzilut even into the lowest worlds, where G-d's presence is less apparent and the creations aren't fully nullified before G-d's presence. They transform the armies of creation into something sacred, making G-d's presence tangible just like in Atzilut.

Rather than remaining a mundane world, only somewhat elevated by the Jew's Torah and mitzvot, they transform it to the highest levels of G-dliness associated with G-d's sacred names.

How do we achieve this? The Jewish people are called "al tzivotam, – beyond the armies." They come from a loftier source than any other creation, and can call forth a revelation. Through our work on this level, we bring forth a revelation of G-dliness which pierces the separation between Atzilut and the lower worlds, and the unity and oneness of Atzilut finds its way into those lower realms.

This lofty level of "Al tzivotam" is achieved by elevating the sparks in the world. The Talmud says, "Torah is concerned to preserve a Jew's money." The Baal Shem Tov explains, money belongs to a Jewish person by Divine Providence; clearly, it contains Divine sparks that are specifically associated with him, it is part of his task in this world to elevate them.

Elevating sparks is expressed regarding the Exodus: the Jews were placed in Egypt to collect its lost G-dly sparks, thereby Pharaoh assisted the Jews both by sending them out, and chasing them to the Red Sea, where he "drew the Jews near to their Father in Heaven."

The Jews attained a much higher spiritual level as a result of the scattered sparks of G-dliness which were elevated from Egypt, as explained in detail by the Rebbe Maharash.

This transformational power of Tzva'ot is the attribute of Netzach – Victory. Moments of

victory reveal the deepest levels of the soul, as explained in the discourses of Basi Legani, and further explained in the discourses of the Rebbe Rashab.

When Pharaoh chased out the Jewish nation, he established that the Jews had reached the level of "tzivos Hashem," because they had elevated the scattered sparks of Egypt, emptying the land entirely of its sparks of holiness. They thus attained a lofty spiritual level previously beyond their grasp; they rose beyond all previous limitations.

Jews are "engraved in G-d's mind"; which is how they attain "Al tzivotam." The Maggid of Mezeritch explains that through a person's efforts in this world - especially through the efforts of a Baal Teshuvah, our lower worlds are elevated far beyond their previous limitations.

Tzva'ot's Hebrew letters reflect this meaning, as explained at length in my father's discourses in his commentary on Zohar; he associates it, as above, to the attributes of Netzach and Hod.

We attain the level of Tzva'ot through elevating the lost sparks. As the Baal Shem Tov taught: by "removing" the "gold, silver and fine clothing" from "Egypt.", they become "Jewish property," because the sparks therein are associated with those specific Jews.

"As in the days of the Exodus", very soon the Jewish people will go out with an upraised arm to greet our righteous Moshiach, may it be speedily in our day.