

Luminous and Illuminating

Parshas Tetzaveh 668

במדרש מה שמן מאיר. כך ביהמ"ק מאיר לעולם. לכן נקראו ישראל זית רענן שהם מאירים לכל. השמן הוא מאיר שעל ידו האור נאחז בפתילה. וכמו כן ע"י ביהמ"ק ה' האור נאחז בנפשות בני"י. דכ' ועשו לי מקדש ושכנתי בתוכם. ובוזה"ק נר מצוה ותורה אור דבעי עובדין דמצות לאתקנא שרגא ובעי אורייתא לאנהרא שרגא. ומצות מתקנין אברי הגוף להיות כלי לקבל הארת הנשמה וע"י התורה מאיר הנשמה. ובשב"ק מאיר הנשמה שזה רמז הדלקת נר בשבת. ובימי מעשה לאתקנא שרגא. ויום השבת לאנהרא שרגא. וכבר כ' במ"א מה שלפעמים נאמר אתה תאיר נרי ולפעמים אתה נרי. וכענין שכ' בזה"ק דיש שמן למאור. ויש שמן המאור שהוא מדריגה גבוהה. דיש נשמות שהם כלים לקבל האור. ויש נשמות גבוהות שהם בעצמם האור כמ"ש חלק ה' עמו. וזהו בחי' משה רבינו כי טוב הוא אין טוב אלא תורה. וז"ש ויקחו אליך שמן זית כו' למאור. שהוא שמן המאור עצם האור. לכן כתיב ואתה תצוה שהתורה מתפשטת לרמ"ה ושס"ה מצות. ומרע"ה שר התורה הוא מחבר כל נשמות בני"י שיקחו אליו שמן למאור. ומש"ה "שמן" המאור. ובשבת מתגלה הארת מרע"ה בכל איש ישראל. כי הנשמות שלמטה הם שמן למאור. ושורש הנשמה שלמעלה שמן המאור. ובשבת קודש יש התגלות נשמה יתירה ועל זה נאמר אתה נרי:

the week we prepare the candle, which are our body and our lives. On Shabbos we light these candles (both figuratively and literally) and our souls shine.

(The Sefas Emes now continues to explain how this concept works. He begins with a brief introduction.) Sometimes we say that Hashem is our candle, but other times we say that Hashem lights our candle. (This is comparable to the Zohar 2:157b that says there is luminescent oil, and there is oil for illumination. Luminescent oil is a higher level, as its light comes from within.) What is the difference? There are those souls which are vessels to be illuminated by Hashem's light. There is another level of soul as well. These souls, are themselves luminescent with Hashem's light.

Moshe Rabenu had a soul of the second type. The Pasuk describes Moshe Rabenu as being good. (Shemos 2:2) The Gemara expresses that the meaning of the word good is synonymous with Torah. The Pasuk (Shemos 27:20) says that Moshe should

In this week's Parsha we learn how Hashem commanded Moshe to gather oil from the Jewish people. The Midrash explains the nature of oil. It says (in Shemos Rabah 36:1), "Just like oil illuminates a darkness, so too the Beis Hamikdash illuminates the world." Therefore, the Jewish people are called the oil (Shemen Raanan) because they bring Hashem's light (influence) to the entire world.

Oil is what connects fire to a wick (without it a wick would burn up.) In the same way the Beis Hamikdash connects Hashem to the Jewish people, as the Pasuk says, "build me a Mishkan so that I will dwell amongst you." (Shemos 25:8)

The Zohar explains how a mitzvah is a candle and Torah is light; to do a mitzvah is to prepare a candle and to do a mitzvah is to light it. A mitzvah prepares the body to receive the light of the Neshama. Learning Torah causes the Neshama's light to shine.

On Shabbos, the soul shines, therefore we light candles in honor of Shabbos. The days of the

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*A translation and explanation of The Sefas Emes by Rabbi Reuven Boshnack.
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Liului Nishmas Yuta bas Sara, my wife's grandmother*

command the Jewish people to take pure olive oil, to light. The Sefas Emes says that this is luminescent oil- the oil itself is the light. (The Pasuk uses the word command, as the Torah encompasses 365 negative Mitzvos and 248 positive Mitzvos.) Moshe was called the “prince of Torah” as he attached all of the souls of the Jewish people to the higher “luminescent oil”, the Torah, in order to light up their lives.

On Shabbos, the Moshe Rabenu within all of us is awakened, which attaches us to the upper kind of Neshama. In fact, these two types of Neshama are really two parts to the Neshama, the Neshama above and Neshama below. The Neshama which is below within us is the oil for illumination. The Neshama above, which is the Neshama in its source, is the luminous oil. On Shabbos this higher soul is revealed, into our the lower part, into our lives.

Practical Advice

On Shabbos, we receive a Neshama Yeseirah- an extra soul portion. It is something new and different, and oddly enough, it is very familiar. This is because it is a deeper part of yourself. Daven at the end of Shabbos, “Hashem, allow me to bring this deeper part of my self into my everyday life.”