

First published 2006
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 ISBN: 978-0-999-3789
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מנחם מנדל פוקס
 רב ור"מ קרית שומרי החומות, רמות
 ומו"צ בהעדה החרדית
 עיה"ק ירושלים תובב"א

כ"ג טבת תשס"ה לפ"ק

הריני מכיר את האשה החשובה מרת דבורה פסטג תחיל', וזה שנים רבות אשר היא שואלת ומתייעצת אתי על המון נושאים הקשורים לעבודת השי"ת, והנני יכול להעיד שהיא אשה יראת ד' וכל כוונותיה לשם שמים, היא אשת חיל ורחוק מפנינים מכרה, שארי וטוב חלקה.
 יה"ר שתזכה להמשיך בדרך עבודתה להגדיל תורה ולהאדירה מתוך בריאות ונחת וכט"ס.
 הכו"ח

מנחם מנדל פוקס

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ישראל הלוי בעלסקי

I have been shown a very compelling monograph titled, *The Moon's Lost Light* (by Devorah Fastag), presenting a Torah perspective on women, chiefly from a kabbalistic viewpoint and peppered with profound insights from beginning to end. The work is an attempt to explain the limited status of women in the present pre-messianic world and give, as well, a visionary depiction of women's role at a time when these limitations will be lifted. She has drawn her ideas from classical Torah sources and has come forth with many interesting suggestions and conclusions.

Those ideas are in agreement with basic Torah principles and stir the reader to deep contemplative insight from the Torah point of view.

The work is a valuable contribution and will surely enlighten the minds of those who search for the truth of Torah *hashkofoh*. May it find its way into the hearts and minds

of those whose thoughts were troubled by the confusion of worldly thinking. It will bring them and others closer to Torah *b'ezras Hashem*.

ה' שבט שנת תשע"ו לפ"ק ברוקלין

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הרב דוד גאלדוואסער
 רב דקהל בית יצחק
 ברוקלין, ניו יורק

Erev Shavuot, 5763

R. Nosson says: "A woman's faith is stronger than that of man. It was the men who said, 'Let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt' (Bamidbar 14:4). However, in contrast, the women said, Grant us a portion among our father's brothers" (Bamidbar 24:4).

When the spies returned with the discouraging report of seemingly insurmountable odds, the men despaired and were lacking in their faith. In contrast, the daughters of Tzelofchod claimed their father's inheritance in the Land of Israel. They did this even before the land had been conquered! They showed unyielding faith that Hashem's promise would be fulfilled.

I have reviewed the book written by Devorah Heshelis (Fastag). I find it to raise interesting points regarding the unique impact of women in Jewish life in general, and the Jewish home in particular. The author offers a broad spectrum of references, among them biblical, Talmudic, and rabbinic, to support her work. It is apparent that a great deal of research and study was dedicated to this project. Its goal is to enlighten the public in regard to this most important subject and to reach out to *acheinu Bnei Yisroel* to bring them close *Avihem shebaShamayim*.

I wish the author much *hatslachah*. May she be *zocheh* to be counted among the "*matzdikei harabbim shetsidkosom omedes lo'ad*." In the *zechus* of our steadfast *emunah*, may we soon see the fulfillment of the *posuk*, "*umalo ha'aretz dei'ah es Hashem k'mayim l'yam mechasim*" (Yeshayah 11:9).

Hametzapeh l'yeshuah

Rabbi Dovid Goldwasswer

RABBI ZEF LEFF – הרב זאב לף

Rabbi of Moshav Matityahu and Rosh Yeshiva Gedola Matisyahu, Modi'in, Israel

Dear Friends,

I have read the manuscript of "The Moon's Lost Light," by Mrs. (Heshelis) Fastag, and have found it fascinating. Mrs. Fastag presents a deep and comprehensive Torah view of the role of a woman. The work, although well rooted in many Torah sources, presents a novel, insightful, and refreshing approach. Mrs. Fastag explains the role of woman at creation, how it was affected by the sin of Adam and Chava, and how it will change when Moshiach comes and that sin is finally rectified. In this framework she also provides a Torah perspective of the roots of feminism, *haskalah*, Zionism, and other developments of recent history.

She masterfully develops a thesis that combines Talmudic, philosophic, Chassidic sources with the writings of the Vilna Gaon. This embodies the true comparison of a woman's knowledge to "weaving." Mrs. Fastag has in this work woven a truly impressive tapestry. This is definitely one valid Torah perspective on this complex issue.

I am especially impressed that her presentation is not apologetic or defensive of the Torah. It is rather a straightforward exposition of Torah ideas and ideals, even when these are not politically or socially "correct", based on foreign philosophies and standards. The Torah is Hashem's truth and does not need to be defended or apologized for.

Although I am not personally acquainted with the authoress, her personal credentials are impressive, and Torah personalities of stature have vouched for her being a G-d fearing *eishes chayil*.

I recommend this book to all that seek to understand the issues of feminism from a Torah perspective, and in general for those who want to enjoy the breadth and depth of Torah ideology.

May the authoress and her family be blessed with life, health, and success to be able to continue to merit the community with Torah endeavors.

Sincerely,
With Torah blessings,
Rabbi Zev Leff

RABBI MICHEL TWERSKI – יחיאל מיכל טווערסקי
Son of the tsaddik Rav Ya'akov Yisroel of Hornosteipel zt"l,

I had occasion to review the manuscript for *The Moon's Lost Light*, a book by Devorah (Heshelis) Fastag, and was delighted to find that many complex issues challenging contemporary Jewish women were being confronted and intelligently explained.

Although communal responsibilities allowed me limited time to peruse this most important work, what I saw convinced me that *The Moon's Lost Light* is well researched and that it is presented from an authentic Torah perspective.

For Jewish women of all ages, this publication should serve as a platform for insightful discussion of the deepest concerns facing our wives, mothers, and daughters.

יחיאל מיכל טרערסקי
Rabbi of Congregation Beth Yehudah, Milwaukee, WI.

DEDICATIONS:

This book is dedicated to my parents,
אסתר הינקע בת שמואל ברוך and יוסף בן יעקב יצחק,
Joseph and Esther Ende,
who gave me the life and education to be able to produce this work,

And to my in laws, עזריאל דוד בן אלימלך and חנה בת רחל
David and Chana Fastag
for all their help throughout the years.

To Rabbi Nachman Bulman who so encouraged me to share my insights with the world.

And to Sharone Chassida bas Avraham Avinu who so longingly awaited the geula.

Dedication by Dr. Avi Henoah, M.D.

When I read this work of Jewish scholarship, I thought of my grandfather, Rabbi Moshe Meir Yoskor, zt"l, a talmid and biographer of the Chafetz Chaim (see the section entitled, "The Jewish Woman", *Saint and Sage: the Hafetz Haim*, Shulsinger, 1937), who enthusiastically supported and encouraged the educational and intellectual development of Jewish women: "...the Hafetz Hayim constantly urged his people all over the world to organize and maintain schools for girls and thereby, reconstruct the Jewish home, restore Jewish idealism and rededicate Jewish life for the high task of its mission" (Ibid, Page 256).

I am grateful to the mothers in my family, who despite the many challenges of their time, have continued to strive for intellectual accomplishment. Their emphasis on the importance of Jewish study for the women as well as the men of our family, has broadened and deepened the joy of observance of the mitzvos for all of us. Yasher Kochan! (More power to them!)

Avraham Henoah, M.D.
Riverdale, N.Y.
8th of Tamuz 5760, July 4th, 2000

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

Our relationship with our Creator is the deepest and most important one that we have. It existed before we were born and will continue to exist after our deaths. Human relationships can sour; people we believe in can disappoint us, and those we love most can die. But, no matter what happens in life, the Creator is always there with us. It was this relationship with their Creator that kept Jews going through the most difficult trials. It was so strong that throughout history Jews sacrificed themselves out of loyalty to their Creator.

But what happens to a person's relationship with the Creator if one feels that His laws

are not loving and just? What happens to a woman's relationship with the Creator if she feels that women are His step children, so to speak?

Of course, we can keep the Torah out of fear alone, knowing that we have no choice because the Creator is All Knowing and All-Powerful and that he time will come when we will have to give an account before Him for all we have done. We also have a moral obligation to serve Hashem for having created us and given us life. This is the concept of *kabbalas ol malchus Shomayim*, which means that we accept whatever Hashem wants of us, unconditionally, and this is a basic tenet of Judaism.

But fear or obligation alone is not enough. Hashem wants us to serve Him with love, and, as the *Kedushas Levi* on Peach points out, our love of Hashem comes from knowing that He loves us. Similarly, He wants us to serve Him joyfully, as it says, "*ivdu es Hashem bisimcha*" – serve Hashem in joy (Tehillim 100:2)".

And that is why I think that understanding the issue of women's equality is so important. Some people don't have a problem with the women's issue; they focus on all the positive things about the Torah's attitude toward women, and they are satisfied with this. But it doesn't work that way with everyone. After all that has been said about this subject, there are still points which some women – and some men as well – find very disturbing.

That was my main reason for writing this work. People have often tried to explain the Torah's precepts according to their own way of thinking, but the reasons they give are not necessarily the Creator's. However, the major sources used for this book are from the deeper level of Torah known as "*chochmas ha'emes*" – the wisdom of truth. The root of this wisdom is in prophecy or *ru'ach hakodesh*, and so it reveals Hashem's ideas, not man's.

Of course there is much more to this matter than I am writing here, for the Torah is endless. I can only share with the reader that part which Hashem in His kindness allowed me to discover. My hope is that this will be enough to remove the *chillul Hashem* that has come about in this area and replace it with *ahavas Hashem*.

Nevertheless, this book isn't candy; it won't always taste sweet. Instead, it is a true human saga of tests, failures, and triumphs, opportunities tragically lost which will eventually be regained. But, although there is pain in this story, there is also joy, because one can see Hashem's truth and justice in it, and because in the end, evil will disappear, and with it, all external inequality. At that time we will bless Hashem for the "bad" just as we now bless Him for the good, for we will understand that it was all for the good all along.

Now, for a personal note: The *Talmud Yerushalmi (Maseches Makos, p.7b)* tells us that one is not allowed to accept honor for having studied more Torah than one actually has. Since there are a wide range of sources cited in the references, the reader might assume that I am extremely learned. This is not so. That fact that I found what I needed to write this book, and I was able to make the necessary connections, was a gift of Hashem beyond my own true level- *siyata diShmaya*. Many of the sources I quote were originally seen in other people's books, which I came across with great *hashgacha pratis*, clearly being guided by Divine assistance.

The Sfas Emes explains that the four sons of the Haggadah exist within all of us.

When speaking of the *tam*, the simple son, he says that it may sometimes happen that we receive a deep enlightenment beyond our truly level. People will ask "*Mah zohs?*" – What is this? Where did it come from, and how did it happen? The answer is "*Bechozek yad hotzianu Hashem miMitzrayim*" – Hashem took us out of Egypt with a strong hand. The Hebrew word for Egypt, *Mitzrayim* actually means a narrow, confined place. The Sfas Emes explains that the answer is that Hashem took us out of our narrow, confined thinking with a strong arm – meaning that He did it Himself, we didn't do it. It was simply a Heavenly enlightenment give as a gift from above. I found in this explanation of the Sfas Emes an accurate description of my own experience.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

With great thanks to Hashem, who in His kindness gave me the privilege of being able to share in His Torah, I wish to express my gratitude to the many people who helped me so much to put forth this book.

First, I'd like to thank my dear friend of over forty-five years, who wishes to remain anonymous. Before I dreamed of publishing a book, she encouraged me to write down my ideas on *Ikvesa DeMeshicha* (the period prior to Mashiach), and in the early stages, before either of us possessed a computer, she even copied over my writings by hand. Years later, she typed up the manuscript of *The Moon's Lost Light*.

Next, I'd like to thank Tova Weingot, head of the loving Sha'arei Bina seminary in Tzfat, and all her wonderful students, for having been my first forum for these teachings. After I taught these ideas as a guest speaker, Tova asked me to give her notes of the lecture. These notes became the basis of the present work.

Then I'd like to thank Yehudis Golshevsky, both for her own interest and practical advice, and for having given the "notes" of this work to the person who was to provide me with invaluable aid in articulating my ideas to the wider public: Gila Manolson.

A popular speaker and author, Gila was then lecturing on women's issues in Judaism. After Gila spent many intense and fascinating hours examining these ideas with me, challenging and questioning, she became not only my main support, but also a very special and dear friend.

I also wish to express my thanks to Diane Liff, my wonderful *chavrusa* in *Kol HaTor*. The shared insights heightened my understanding of this very great work.

Next, I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to Yael Levine, a writer and lecturer who specializes on women in Torah. Despite the fact that Yael and I are affiliated with different groups, she helped me immensely, without any remuneration, in putting together the many references that I could not find on my own. After receiving Yael's original list of sources, I continued calling her for months to help me locate more and more sources which I had once seen, but didn't remember where. She never refused,

she always did it happily. Without Yael's dedicated aid, this book could not be what it is.

I also wish to thank Sarah Schneider for her having introduced me to Yael and for her own contributed knowledge. It was she who sent me the teachings of the *Leshem* on the diminishment of the moon which I mentioned in the sources.

Also, special thanks to Dr. Vivian Damalin for her computer help when necessary, and to my sister-in-law Malka, who spent many, many hours giving me technical help.

Particularly, I wish to express my appreciation to Dr. Miriam Adahan, author of *Appreciating People*, for having taught me through her book about the difference between an abstract type (N) and a concrete type (S). This was one of the main links in my understanding of the different roles assigned to men and women, and in understanding the changes that had taken place in preparation for the redemption. Many years ago I had read the Malbim's commentary which speaks of these differences, but I did not understand his words until I saw the same idea explained in *Appreciating People*.

I also wish to express my thanks to all those *talmidei chachamim*, including some of the most prominent figures in the yeshiva and Chassidic circles whose excitement over this work was enormously encouraging. I also wish to thank all those rabbis whose writings I drew upon. My citing an author does not necessarily mean that we have identical views on every issue, but it does mean that I owe the author a debt of gratitude for the Torah he taught me.

I offer my heartfelt thanks to all those people who donated to have this book published including Gila Manolson, Dena Cohen Tauber, Sarah Weil and her mother Miriam, Dr. Avraham Henoch, and a number of others. This book could not have been published without their help. Afterwards, Rivkah Lambert Adler, herself a speaker and author, had the book reprinted, and now she has prepared this work to be constantly available on Amazon, all done as a favor.

And finally, I wish to thank my husband for his constant encouragement and concern. His efforts and dedication in getting this work out were in some ways beyond my own.

Sincerely,
Devorah Fastag

INTRODUCTION

There have been many good books written about the woman's role in Judaism. If the reader is uninitiated I highly recommend reading them, for they give important insights into this issue. This work, however, has a different purpose. It is meant to answer the following questions:

Why do women sometimes appear to have a secondary position in Judaism?

Why are there some rabbinical descriptions of women that don't seem to correspond to the reality we know?

Why is it that until the modern era Jewish women had more rights and respect than women in other societies, yet now the situation seems to have been reversed; Western society endorses total gender equality, while Torah society has been placed on the defensive?

The reader might find the conclusions presented here surprising and unusual, but, I hope, also truthful and inspiring. They are based on information drawn from the deeper dimension of Torah; Targum Yonasan, Kli Yakar, the Vilna Gaon, Sfas Emes, Michtav MeEliyahu, and many others. Here are found many secrets behind the changes of the modern era, the turbulent pre-messianic period known in Chazal as *ikvesa deMeshicha*.

Some people reading this book have described it as speaking of women's changing roles, but I wouldn't put it that way. Women were meant to be the *bayis*, the life and spirit of the Jewish home, and that is just as true today as it ever was. What this book speaks of is women's enriched role. As explained within, woman was created on a very high spiritual level, but she subsequently lost part of her light. That great light will return in messianic times. To get an idea of what this means, imagine Sarah *Imeinu*. Chazal tell us that she was a sage and a prophetess on a very high level, but that in no way diminished her role as wife and mother.

If this sounds complicated, well, it is somewhat. This book was not written for people who think that Hashem must give them instant gratification. It is meant to help sincere Jews who want true answers to these questions.

There is a lot of information condensed into this small work, and much of it might be new to the reader. I therefore hope you will have the patience to go through it carefully so that important points won't be missed, or worse yet, misunderstood.

What is written here is not meant to serve as a practical guide, nor does it in any way propose to influence halachah. Its purpose is to provide understanding to enable us to accept Hashem's Torah with love, as it says in the blessing before the Shma: "And give our hearts understanding to understand and to have intelligence, to hear, to learn, and to teach, to guard and to do and to uphold all the words of Your Torah with love." It is my fervent hope that the following essay will help towards that goal.

THE MOON'S LOST LIGHT

Redemption and Feminine Equality

One of the foremost issues in Jewish life today is the Torah's attitude towards women. Much has been written and said on the subject, but for many it still remains a sore

point. Throughout the generations, the Jewish woman was accorded more rights and respect than in any other society. Suddenly, the situation seems to have been reversed; general western society has declared equal rights for women while Torah society has been placed on the defensive. What is the meaning of this?

Are men and women equal according to the Torah or are they not? Some will answer an emphatic “yes”, while others will answer “no” just as emphatically. This is because there is evidence pointing in both directions.

What makes matters even more difficult for our generation to understand is that rabbinical writings often describe women in a manner which does not correspond to the reality we know. For example, most women are seen as capable of excelling in practical pursuits but incapable of abstract study.¹ Consequently, women were generally occupied with sewing, housework, practical childcare, and possibly a small business, but until the modern era most women were not involved with abstract learning of any sort. And yet, we see that women today do succeed or even excel in many areas that require abstract understanding, including the most important one, that of Torah study. How can we understand this contradiction?

Since the Torah was written for all generations, the answers to these questions must be found in the Torah itself. To reach them however, we must delve more deeply into the Torah's teachings.

Some might be bothered that there are ideas in this work that stem from *Kabbalah*. There is, however, a major difference between studying *Kabbalah* directly and studying what we call *Pninius HaTorah*, teachings taken from *Kabbalah* that have been prepared or approved by *tzaddikim* for the Jewish masses. Although only someone who has reached a very high level of purity and Torah knowledge may study *Kabbalah* directly, it is beneficial for all Jews to learn ideas whose source is in *Kabbalah* but which have been prepared for laymen.

The commentaries of the *Or HaChaim* and the *Kli Yakar*, which are printed in the standard *Mikra'os Gedolos Chumashim*, (commentaries on the five books of Moses) often take ideas from *Kabbalah*. So does the *Sfas Emes* and all other Chassidic writings. The *Gaon* of Vilna brought many ideas from *Kabbalah* into his writings for laymen. This is also true of the *Chafetz Chaim*; his classic *Shmiras HaLashon* quotes extensively from the *Zohar* and brings other *Kabbalistic* teachings, such as *gilgulim* (reincarnations). (See *Sha'ar HaZechirah*, end of Chapter 9 and Part 2: Chapter 11). These books were written not only for great Torah scholars, but also for the average Jewish reader.

With this understanding, let us begin.

Our search takes us back to the beginning of world history. There is a passage in the *Gemara* dealing with this issue, which is both poignant and startling:

Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi asked: It is written, “And God made the two big luminaries,” and (yet) it is written, “The big luminary and

¹ *Talmud Yerushalmi* on *Mishna Sotah* 3:4, *M'nachos* 1:10, Rambam on *Hilchos Talmud Torah* 1:13, and many other sources.

the small luminary?" (i.e. if they are both big, why is one later called small?)

The moon said before the Holy One Blessed is He: "Master of the world, two kings cannot share one crown."

He (God) said to her, "Go and make yourself small." She said before Him, "Because I said something proper before you, I should make myself small?" He said to her, "Go and rule by day and by night." She said to Him, "What is the advantage in this? What is the value of a candle at noon time?" He said to her, "Go, so that Israel may count the days and years through you." She said to Him, "The sun is also necessary for counting the times and the seasons as it says, "And they (both the sun and the moon) will be for signs and appointed times, etc."

"Go, that righteous ones will be called by your name: Yaakov the Small One, Shmuel the Small One, David the Small One." He saw that she was still upset. The Holy One Blessed is He said: "Bring an atonement for Me that I diminished the moon." This is what Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said: What is different about the goat offering of the new moon that the term "for God" is used regarding it? The Holy One, Blessed is He, said: This goat will be an atonement for my having diminished the moon.²

This *aggadah* obviously cannot be understood on a superficial level. God certainly does not need atonement from human beings! There is a rule, however, that passages such as these are speaking of how God's actions are perceived by humanity. A parallel in our lives would be when a nurse inoculates a baby who then cries out in anger and pain. The sympathetic nurse says to the baby "You're right, poor thing!" What she means, of course, is not that the baby is objectively right, rather that from the baby's limited understanding he is right – the nurse's action seems totally unjust. That is what this *aggadah* is telling us.

But what are we to learn from this story of the moon's diminution? Much has been written about it, but in this essay, we deal only with one aspect: women's secondary position.

The *Gemara* tells us that the sun and moon were originally created equal, but the moon was later diminished. The moon, which in Hebrew is called *levana*, contains the word *lev*, heart. The sun is called *chama* which contains the word *mo'ach* (brain). The *Michtav Me'Eliyahu* says about this, "The two great lights allude to two ways in which a person can grasp *Hashem Yisborach's* light: through the intellect, and through the heart. In the unblemished world, as *Hashem* originally wanted it to be, the intellect and the heart are equal powers, and work together, and everything which the intellect grasps, enters the heart immediately and completely."³

In other words, both of these powers are equally important, for although it is essential to know the truth intellectually, the Torah's goal is to have the truth in our hearts. The

² *Maseches Chulin* 60b.

³ *Michtav Me'Eliyahu* 4, Page 207.

Michtav Me'Elياهو goes on to say that the moon thought it should be the greater of the two because she wanted the world to respect the internal service of Hashem, the service of the heart, more than intellectual achievement.

The *Zohar* tells us that the *levana* (moon) represents women⁴ because women's main gift lies primarily in emotional understanding. Men are represented by the *chama* (sun) because generally speaking man's main gift is in his intellectual power.

This does not mean that women have no intellect or that men have no heart, of course. Obviously, both sides must have both powers. (As mentioned in the notes below, the chassidic commentary, *Tiferes Shlomo*, says that every person has both male and female personality traits.) Rather, it means that one's strongest tool to connect properly to God and life is in that particular area. Although there are exceptions to this rule, these attributes describe men and women as a whole.

The *aggadah* therefore tells us that, like the sun and moon, men and women were originally created equal, but that woman's "light" was lessened. According to the Sages, "light" refers to Torah.⁵ The *Mishna Brura* teaches that the diminution of the moon was caused by the sin of Chava.⁶ Therefore, before we can discuss the *midrash*, we must first understand Chava's sin and its ramifications throughout world history.

Adam and Chava

When man and woman were first created, they were superior to the angels with spiritual perception beyond our comprehension. Both were prophets. The Torah says, "And you shall know today and you shall place it in your heart".⁷ From here we learn that first comes knowledge and then the emotional acceptance and understanding of this knowledge which is sent to the heart. Adam and Chava (Eve) paralleled this

⁴ *Zohar* 1:338a, 2:153a, 3:161b. (This was seen in *The Hebrew Letters* by Rav Yitzchak Ginsberg.)

⁵ *Maseches Megillah* 15b states, "Ora zu Torah (light is Torah)", and *Ta'anis* 7b states, "Ein or elah Torah" (light refers only to Torah). Chassidic sources (see *Me'or V'shemesh on Parshas Bereishis*) say the *Or HaGanuz*, the light of the first day of creation, was hidden in the *Torah* and those who merit it can find it there even today. In messianic times this light will be revealed to all.

⁶ *Mishna Brura on Hilchos Kiddush Levana* 426a and the *Shnei Luchos HaBris* (Edition 1649) 74a say that Chava's sin caused the diminution of the moon. This, however, seems to contradict the *Gemara* which does not connect the moon's diminution with sin. Actually, as in many apparent contradictions in the *Torah*, both are simultaneously true. *Kabbalistic* sources explain that the diminution of the moon was actually part of *Hashem's* original plan for this world, until the coming of the redemption. The *Me'or V'Shemesh on Parshas Korach* (Page 43, Edition 5746) quotes the *midrash* on the two great lights and says, "It truly was His original desire that one would be big and one small, because it is impossible that two kings use one crown, as mentioned above, and so the world was arranged immediately, from the beginning of its creation until the future to come (e.g. until after the complete redemption) that there would not be in the world two people who are equal..." The *Leshem* on this *midrash* explains that this inequality was a necessary condition for the world, for without it there could be no existence of evil, and hence no reward for overcoming evil. Why, then, is this connected to the sin of Chava? The answer is that death, the diminution of the moon, and all the other "curses" of Adam and Chava were truly part of Hashem's original plan, for He knew that in the end it would actually bring about even greater good. Therefore, the diminution of the moon began in the upper worlds even before the sin of Chava. However, Hashem Who is absolutely just, does not bring suffering upon a person without their doing something to deserve it. Therefore, in this world *Hashem* waited until Adam and Chava sinned before implementing these painful situations. However, the *Me'or V'shemesh (Shabbos Rosh Chodesh*, Page 224) and many other *Kabbalistic* sources, say clearly that in the messianic period the sun and the moon will again be equal.

⁷ *Sefer Devarim* 4:39.

concept. He, representing *chochma*, (wisdom) had the knowledge first, and then gave it to the woman who represented *bina*, the understanding of the heart. This situation is parallel to the physical relationship between man and woman. Here, too, the man gave over the seed of wisdom to his wife, who in turn absorbed and developed it.⁸ For this reason, in *Kabbalah*, *chochma* is referred to as *Abba* (father) while *bina* is called *Ima* (mother).⁹

So although Chava was receiving from Adam, just as the moon receives from the sun, she had no less “light” than he did, just as a mother is no less a parent than a father.

And although Chava was created as a helpmate to Adam, this did not necessarily place her on a lower level. The Vilna *Gaon* in *Aderes Eliyahu*¹⁰ explains that originally the woman was assisting the man in intellectual matters. For this reason the woman was referred to as *isha*, the feminine form of *ish*, showing that they were equal.

All this however only makes our original questions stronger. If woman is truly intellectual, then why do the Talmud and later sources describe her as lacking in *da'as* and not suited for Torah study? And if man and woman are equal, why is he regarded as the leader?

In order to reach the answer, we must understand the sin of eating from the Tree of Knowledge, which so affected mankind in general, and Chava in particular.

The Sin of Eating from the Tree of Knowledge

Hashem created mankind in order to bestow goodness upon His creations. But Hashem did not want man to be a parasite or a beggar. He wanted the pleasure that man would receive to be truly his own, because he had earned it himself. Furthermore, Hashem wanted to make man a partner in his own creation by giving man the opportunity to determine, through his own free-willed choices, what would become

⁸ Rabbi Nachman of Breslov in *Likutei Moharan* 19, calls Chava an *ishah chachamah* (a wise woman) and he connects her wisdom not with practical intelligence, such as weaving (which was unnecessary before the sin when there were no clothes) but with *Ruach Hakodesh*.

The Hebrew Letters by Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh (Page 189) explains that the letter *lamed*, which means “to learn”, and has a numerical value of thirty, represents woman, who, like the moon, has a thirty-day cycle. This is because both woman and the moon are connected to the attribute of *malchus* which possesses thirty good points. The letters that compose the word “*lamed*” are *lamed*, *mem*, and *daled* (למ"ד). They mirror the initials of the phrase, “*lev meivin da'as*” (a heart which understands knowledge). This is brought down from the *Osios d'Rabbi Akiva*. This is Chava's heart. In fact, the numerical value of Chava which is 19, multiplied by the numerical value of *lev* (heart), which is 32, equals the numerical value of the phrase “*lev meivin da'as*” (6,080).

The Hebrew Letters (Page 180) also writes, “Adam and Eve, male and female, are the prototype spiritual forces of giving and receiving. The marital union and gift of male to female relates to the secret of knowledge, as it is said, ‘And Adam knew his wife Chava’ (*Sefer Bereishis* 4:1). For this reason, Adam and Eve are often seen to represent teacher and pupil (*Likutei Moharan* 2:91). The literal meaning of the letter *lamed* is to learn or teach. The seed of wisdom alluded to in the letter *yud* descends from the brain (Adam) to impregnate the full consciousness of the heart (Chava). This is the secret of the form of the letter *lamed*, the heart ascending in aspiration to conceive and comprehend the point of wisdom, the *yud* situated at the top of the letter *lamed*.”

⁹ The Hebrew word for understanding, *bina*, is connected to the root *livnot* (to build). Understanding means to absorb the wisdom and then build upon it by differentiating one thing from another.

¹⁰ *Aderes Eliyahu*, *Breishis* 3:20.

his eternal spiritual essence. Hashem therefore first put man in a world where he would need to fight against evil and overcome tests, thereby earning his reward.¹¹

Of course God created pleasure in this world as well, and we are meant to enjoy it, but it isn't our goal. One could compare this to a kind employer who offers his workers delicious food and drinks while on the job and pleasant activities during the breaks. But just as these side benefits are not the purpose of the factory, so the pleasures of this world are not its purpose either. The *Talmud* tells us, "Today to do [the *mitzvos*] and tomorrow to receive their reward."¹² In other words, this world is to accomplish and the next world is the place where we receive the true pleasure for which man was created. To reach that goal we must battle evil and overcome it.

And so even in the ideal state of the Garden of Eden, God introduced the existence of evil.

There were two trees in the Garden of Eden that stood out from all the rest: The Tree of Knowledge and the Tree of Life. Eating from the Tree of Knowledge would give an inner knowledge of good and evil that man was previously lacking, while eating from the Tree of Life would give him eternal life. *Mishlei* and the Sages explain that the Tree of Life is Torah.¹³

When man and woman were originally created, they had no desire towards evil. Man was in himself naturally good, and his body was in total harmony with his soul. The evil inclination had to come from without. The snake convinced Chava that God had forbidden eating of this tree because He wanted to hold back a great power from them.¹⁴ Were they to eat from the tree, he said, their service of God would actually be on a much higher level because to know evil and to overcome it is a greater act than to be naturally good.¹⁵

¹¹ Based on Ramchasl, Da'as Tvunos, 18 who bases it on the Zohar. (Seen in *Olam HaYahdus VihKabbalah*.)

The *Me'or V'shemesh* on *Parshas Korach* (Page 43) explains this as follows: "It was the will of the Creator to create the world in order to bestow goodness upon His creatures. And He made worlds in descending order until this physical world in order for there to be free will for mankind to go towards the right or the left (e.g. to choose good or evil) so that there would be reward and punishment."

The *Michtav Me'Eliyahu* explains the human effort in this world as follows: Whatever a person does is to reach a desired goal, and if the goal is very important to him, he will be happy to make the effort, even if it requires hard work... The purpose of all the creation, and purpose of this whole world, is *Olam Habah*. And even if a person has a very difficult time in the entry foyer, full of delays and obstacles, he goes though it willingly, for there is no other way to reach his King."

¹² *Maseches Eruvin 22a*. The Sages also said, "This world is like an entry foyer and the next world is like the banquet hall" (*Maseches Avos 4:16*). The Sages explained that the reward for keeping the mitzvos is not in this world (*Maseches Kiddushin 39b*). Why, then, does the Torah promise us a pleasant life if we keep the mitzvos? The Rambam in *Hilchos Teshuva* (Chapter 9) explains it thus: "if we will keep [the *Torah*] joyfully and with a good feeling in us, and we will constantly think in wisdom, then He will remove from us all the things that prevent us from keeping it, such as illness, hunger, etc. and will give us good things that will help us to keep the Torah". In other words, as the *Michtav Me'Eliyahu* explains, these promises are like an expense account and not the actual reward. This, however, applies only when the Jewish People as a whole keep the Torah. If, however, only individuals keep the Torah, they are promised a great reward in *Olam Habah*, but not necessarily an easy life in this world. Nevertheless, they should still serve Hashem with joy for Hashem means everything, the Mitzvos and even the hardships, for our own good.

¹³ *Mishlei 3:18, Tosefta Sotah* (Chapter 7, Halacha 7).

¹⁴ *Rashi* on *Sefer Bereishis 3:6*, based on *Bereishis Rabba*.

¹⁵ *Michtav Me'Eliyahu 2* (Pages 139-141). His discussion of the sin of Adam and Chava is based on

Chava accepted the snake's slander and ate from the tree.

Adam and Chava knew that the punishment for eating from the Tree of Knowledge was death. The snake used a ruse to convince Chava that this would not occur¹⁶, but after eating, Chava was no longer so sure. The *midrash* tells us that what caused Chava to prevail upon her husband to eat of the forbidden tree was the fear that she would now die and God would create another wife for Adam. In order to prevent this, she wanted Adam to be with her whatever would happen.¹⁷ It is most likely that Chava did not consciously admit that this was her true reason, however God, Who knows the heart of all His creatures, knew that this was the factor that motivated her feeding Adam of the forbidden tree.

Had Adam and Chava withstood the test of the Tree of Knowledge, that evening – the first Sabbath – would have started *Olam Habah*. Instead, the six days of creation turned into six thousand years of striving and suffering, to return to the ideal state that existed before the sin, with the seven thousandth year being *Olam Habah*.¹⁸ Now life took on an entirely new dimension. Nature was no longer in total harmony with mankind and mankind was no longer in harmony with himself.

The sin caused Adam and Chava to be expelled from the Garden of Eden, with death and suffering entering the world.

The Sages tell us that all future souls were contained in the souls of Adam and Chava. This is why when Adam and Chava sinned all mankind was punished. It is extremely difficult for us, with our limited material perception, to even understand what a soul is, much less to understand how multiple souls can be included in one great overall soul. But our lack of comprehension does nothing to change reality. We all die because all the souls took part in this sin, and all the souls must rectify it.¹⁹

many sources, primarily the Ramchal, the Gra, and his quotes from the *Gemara* and *midrash*.

¹⁶ Rashi on *Sefer Bereishis* 3:4.

¹⁷ Rashi on *Sefer Bereishis* 3:6. Also see *Michtav Me'Eliyahu* 4 (Page 33): “Go out and see what Chazal said of Chava, the handiwork of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* and the partner of Adam *HaRishon*, who even after her sin remained a prophetess. She gave of the Tree of Knowledge also to her husband together with her in order that she not die and he marry another, as is brought in Rashi and the *midrash*.”

¹⁸ *Sanhedrin* 97a says, “The world exists for 6,000 years”. The Ramchal in *Da'as Tevunos* (Warsaw Edition, Page 16) writes: “It would have been enough that [Adam] would have been strong in faith not to transgress *Hashem's* word, and this until the night of *Shabbos Kodesh*, as told by the *chachamim* (e.g. *mekubalim*), for then *Hashem* would have done in one day what He did in six-thousand years.” Also, see the Gra in *Likutim* on *Sifra DiTzniusa*, cited in *Michtav Me'Eliyahu* 2, which states, “The first six days included all the six thousand years.” Based on this, the *Michtav Me'Eliyahu* (Page 146) says, “And this was the entire test of Adam *HaRishon*, and if he would have stood up to it a few hours the purpose of everything would have arrived.”

¹⁹ *Me'or V'shemesh* on *Parshas Ki Tisa* (Page 240, Edition Jerusalem 5746): “For Adam *HaRishon* was the all-inclusive soul of all the souls, and in him were the souls that would in the future come into the world...and this is what the Holy One Blessed is He said to Iyov: ‘Where were you when I founded the earth?’ meaning where were you in Adam *HaRishon*. So it is (taught) in *Midrash Rabba* on *Parshas Ki Tisa*...” He goes on to explain that Adam *HaRishon* was the source of all the souls and if he had not sinned, he alone would have been able to rectify all of creation with all the souls that were in him. Therefore, it would have been unnecessary to give birth to many generations. “But when he sinned and there was breaking and falling for the souls in his sin, therefore it became necessary to give birth to many generations, that is, those souls who were within Adam *HaRishon*, in order that each soul repair its root in that part from whence it was at that time in Adam *HaRishon*”.

God created man to enjoy the greatest of all pleasures: the enjoyment of clinging to God's presence. How great this pleasure is, is unimaginable to us because the likes of it do not exist in this world. We can get some slight inkling of it by comparing it to the thrill and pleasure of a couple madly in love. This is the allegory of *Shir HaShirim*.

But the soul can only experience this relationship if it is clean of any contamination of sin. Sin damages the soul and the body as well, and this damage must be repaired before a human being can cling to God. Therefore, just as a loving parent will inflict painful medical treatment on a child if this is the only way to save him from a terrible disease, so too God brings on us punishments whose purpose is to repair the damage we have done to our souls, because this is the only way to save us. Although such punishments are curses from our point of view, which is why the Torah so names them, their true source is in God's loving kindness. (There is a rule that the Torah describes things from man's point of view.²⁰)

And so we find that these curses were not meant to last forever. When their purpose is accomplished they will disappear. This is because when the damage is corrected, the punishment is no longer necessary and the world will revert to the ideal state that existed before the sin.²¹

Also see *Michtav Me'Eliyahu* (Page 152): "The souls of all who come to this world were included in the soul of Adam HaRishon...but when he sinned all the souls that were in him separated into many individual souls, and similarly, free will choice separated into many choices, and the days separated into six thousand years." Although only Adam is mentioned here, the Torah calls both the male and female by the name Adam, as it says, (*Sefer Bereishis* 1:27) "God created Adam in His image, in the image of God he created him, male and female He created them." And, "Male and female He created them and he blessed them and He called their name Adam on the day they were created" (*Sefer Bereishis* 5:2). The Ramban comments on this: "The reason that He called their name Adam is because this is a general name for all human beings. Therefore (the verse) mentions that God called the first couple by this name, for all of them (mankind) were potentially in them." We see, then, that the female is also called Adam. Based on this we can assume that the male souls were in Adam and the female souls in Chava. This explains why men inherited Adam's curses while women inherited Chava's curses.

²⁰ *Maseches Brachos* 31b states "The Torah spoke in the language of human beings", and as the *Michtav Me'Eliyahu* 2 (Page 151) puts it, "The Torah was given to us according to our perception." He also explains the idea that punishments are for our own benefit as follows: "This entire world and all that happens to us is all in accordance with what we need to get to *Olam Habah*...If Hashem is angered at a man and punishes him harshly, it is not for Himself that he is angered at the evildoer, for we do not do Him a favor by keeping His laws, and we cannot hurt Him with our sins, as it says, 'If you have sinned, what will you do to Him...if you did good, what did you give Him?' (Iyov Chapter 35). Rather the person who keeps the command benefits himself, and if he sins, he harms himself." (*Michtav Me'Eliyahu* 1, Page 20).

²¹ The Ramban on *Devarim* 30:6 explains that in messianic times man will no longer have an evil inclination and says: "In the days of Mashiach...man will return at that time to what he was before the sin of Adam HaRishon". The Gra in *likutim* at the end of *Sifra DiTzniusa* writes "And in the end of days, that is the (period called) the future to come, all things will return to their source, and as it is written, God will purify the world in the end of days. And therefore it is called *teshuva* (to return to God) for all things return to their source". The *Michtav Me'Eliyahu* quotes these sources and states, "The *Kaballists* wrote, and this is also the meaning of the Ramban above, that in messianic times and the period of the revival of the dead, there is a return to the situation of Adam HaRishon before the sin, and from there to the perfection of *Olam Habah*". (*Michtav Me'Eliyahu* 2, Page 147). Also the *Tiferes Shlomo* on *Parshas HaChodesh* writes: "And it is known that when the world will be rectified in the time of Mashiach, may it be soon, everything will return to be as it was in the beginning, as Adam HaRishon was before the sin."

The Talmud states that both Adam and Chava received ten curses.²² Since this essay deals with women, we speak here only about the curses of Chava. In the first part of this book we discuss how this affected women throughout most of world history. In the second part we discuss the changes that have come about in the pre-messianic period.

PART 1: The Effects of Chava's Sin

Reminder: The following discussion describes the state of affairs throughout most of world history. There are differences in our times, which are discussed later on.

The Torah tells us of the curse of pain in pregnancy and childbirth, which came about as a result of the bodily changes that occurred after the sin.²³ Pain in childbirth is a physiological wonder because it defies the biological rule that when nothing needs to be corrected, natural processes are painless. Yet God changed the normal rules of nature in order to enable the rectification of Chava's sin.

The changes were not only biological. There were social and emotional changes as well. Because Chava led Adam to sin, she was punished measure for measure with "he shall rule over you".²⁴

This was a fact which became implanted in nature. Before the sin there were no economic needs. Everything was perfectly suited to mankind in the Garden of Eden. Clothes and shelter were unnecessary, and food grew ready to eat on the trees. After the sin, all that changed. Woman became dependent on man for her survival.

The Torah tells us that she became emotionally dependent on man as well, as it says, "And to your man shall your longing be".²⁵ The result was "he shall rule over you."

The difference between men and women in marriage also came about as a result of Chava's sin. The Sages say that the fact that a woman may have only one husband while a man may have many wives, was one of Chava's curses²⁶ (probably because this was what prompted her to convince Adam to sin).

Here, too, we can see this change on both the physical and social levels.

Before the sin, birth immediately followed conception²⁷ so there could be no doubt as to who the father was, but after the sin there were nine months of pregnancy. Therefore, if a man has more than one wife it is clear who both parents are, but if a woman mates with more than one man, one cannot be sure who the father is.

(It is worth noting here, that although polygamy was accepted in ancient societies around the world, Judaism discouraged it. Taking another wife, although technically

²² *Maseches Eruvin* 100b.

²³ *Sefer Bereishis* 3:16.

²⁴ Ramban, *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Maseches Eruvin* 100b.

²⁷ *Maseches Sanhedrin* 38b Also see Rashi on *Sefer Bereishis* 5:1, "On the day that God created man" – this tells that on the day man was created he begot progeny.

permissible, was considered very wrong unless there was a truly justified reason. We see the Jewish attitude towards polygamy in the words of the prophet Malachi. When rebuking the men of his times for taking a second wife the prophet says, “For God has testified between you and the wife of your youth whom you have betrayed, and she is your friend and the wife of your covenant...and guard your spirit and do not betray the wife of your youth”. The prophet also says that God will not accept sacrifices offered by priests who hurt their first wives by taking second wives. When the men answered that Abraham also took a second wife, the prophet answered that this was only because his first wife was barren.²⁸)

The sin's ramifications were not only physical and social. There were spiritual changes in woman as well. The *Zohar* says that Chava's name before the sin was Chaya.²⁹ The name Chaya has the letter *yud* in its center. The *yud* signifies the highest level of abstract wisdom.³⁰ The loss of the letter *yud* from the woman's name means that woman now lost her abstract wisdom. This is alluded to in the diminution of the moon, which was caused by Chava's sin. The moon's lost light represents woman's lost spiritual perception. Both Adam and Chava lost their very high level of spiritual perception as a result of the sin,³¹ but Chava, who initiated the sin, and convinced Adam to join her, lost more perception than Adam did.³²

Consequently, we find many descriptions of women as lacking in intellectual understanding and unsuited to Torah study. Although there always existed exceptional women, this situation was the norm. Not only in the physical or economic arena, but in the spiritual one as well, man would now be the leader.

This is because the sin changed the nature of most women from that of an abstract type to that of a concrete type.³³ Concrete types are not intellectuals, nor are they

²⁸ *Sefer Malachi* 2:14-15 with the commentaries of Targum and Rashi

²⁹ *Zohar II*: 137a.

³⁰ As *The Hebrew Letters* (Page 157) puts it: “The body and crown of the *yud* are referred to as the wisdom of God.”

³¹ *Tiferes Shlomo on Parshas HaChodesh* says: “Adam HaRishon before the sin was on the level of Moshe Rabeinu, and even more, for God spoke to him face-to-face, and he saw what was heard at the giving of the *Torah*, and after the sin he fell from this level.”

³² See *Inner Space* by Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan (Page 88): “...she wanted *da'as*. In fact, by eating it, she lost *da'as*.” This is in accordance with the rule taught in *Maseches Sotah* 9a: “Anyone who puts his eye on what is not his, what he asks for, they do not give him, and what is in his hand, they take away from him.” Since both the man and the woman wanted to gain knowledge that was not theirs, they both lost knowledge, but since the woman not only sinned herself, but also caused Adam to sin with her, it logically follows that she would have lost more wisdom than he did, as we find in the Ramban (*Sefer Bereishis* 3:13) “For she was punished for her eating and for her advice (to Adam to also eat)...and from here we can learn the punishment of someone who causes another person to sin.”

³³ The Malbim, commenting on the formation of woman, says that she was given *seichel ma'asi* (practical intelligence) so she could perform such tasks as cooking and baking and *seichel midosi* (moral intelligence) so she could choose between good and evil, but was not given *seichel iyuni* (abstract intelligence). Man, he says, possessed all three types of intelligence.

At first this seems incomprehensible. Firstly, it contradicts what we have shown previously, and secondly, before the sin there was no cooking or baking. In fact, fire didn't exist until after the sin. God showed Adam how to make fire on the first *motsei Shabbos* (night following *Shabbos*) after the sin, which is why we make the blessing on fire (“*Baruch...borei me'orei ha'esh*”) on *motsei Shabbos*. Had man not sinned there would have been no fire and no cooking. So the Malbim's words would be true in describing a potential situation that did not yet take effect and would come about only after the sin. We see other examples of this principle. The *Gemara* says in Sanhedrin 38a (brought in Rashi 2,7) that Adam was created from all the four corners (i.e. directions) of the earth so that the earth would accept

interested in metaphysical contemplation. They understand concepts on a more external level. Concrete types have capabilities and interests in concrete, physically related activities, such as cooking, sewing, carpentry, gardening, organizing the physical world, etc. Abstract types, although they may also do well in concrete activities, possess an added dimension of understanding of, and interest in, abstract ideas: they understand underlying principles behind ideas, are often interested in philosophy, the metaphysical, and the hidden working of the human psyche. Unlike concrete types, who are interested only in the practical application of knowledge, abstract types want knowledge for its own sake. Abstract types are both capable of, and really need, intellectual and “soul” activities, as reflected in deep Torah study and sometimes intense and even mystical levels of prayer. (Today, we find both types among both men and women, but this will be discussed later.)

It is important to understand that it was not Torah law that caused woman to be excluded from Torah study, but rather the changes in nature and woman herself. Were a person to lose 80% of his vision and as a result be denied a driver’s license, we would not call this unfair discrimination but a necessary law. It is not the law which causes the suffering or inconvenience, rather the person’s own limited situation. The Torah’s laws deal with these situations in the best way possible.

And so, although Jewish law makes man the leader, Jewish men are told to treat their wives better than themselves³⁴ and not to pain them, even emotionally.³⁵ A Jewish wife had many rights and was to be viewed with respect. The Sages exhort men to honor their wives for it is they who bring blessing to the home.³⁶ And although, as we said, men were generally the leaders, when a woman was truly qualified, men were expected to follow her.³⁷ Similarly, a capable woman who studies Torah is rewarded for this. And yet women were not taught Torah, because they, themselves, were usually not suited to it.³⁸

After Adam and Chava ate of the Tree of Knowledge, the entire world became a mixture of good and evil.³⁹ The woman’s job was now to repair the damage by

his body for burial in any area. Yet, had man not sinned, he would not have died. So this element of his creation was to serve a potential situation. The Vilna Gaon also describes the woman’s creation as a helpmate in the sense that she would care for man’s physical needs such as sewing clothes. But again, before the sin there were no clothes, and the same Vilna Gaon in *Aderes Eliyahu Bereishis* 3:20 says that at first the woman was assisting man in intellectual pursuits. So all these descriptions were potentially put into creation and actualized only after the sin.

³⁴ *Maseches Yevamos* 62b and Rambam, *Hilchos Ishus* 15:9.

³⁵ *Maseches Bava Metzia* 59a.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Hashem told Avraham, “Whatever Sarah tells you listen to her voice” because her prophecy was greater than Avraham’s (*Rashi, Sefer Bereishis* 21:12). Similarly, Amram listened to his daughter Miriam the Prophetess. Devorah the Prophetess was a leader over the entire Jewish People, and according to some opinions, so was Yael. Mordechai did “as Esther had commanded him” (*Esther* 4:17).

On the other hand, the Rambam, based on the *Sifri (Parshas Shoftim)* says that a woman may not be a ruler (*Hilchos Melachim* 1:5). This raises the question of how Devorah could have been a judge. The *Kesef KeMishna* says that Devorah taught or guided the judges, or, alternately, that her position was a *hora’as sha’ah* (a temporary measure permitted through prophecy). In either case, we see the principle that according to Torah law, a qualified woman may be very respected as a teacher and guide.

³⁸ Rambam, *Hilchos Talmud Torah* 1:13.

³⁹ *Sfas Emes* on *Parshas Mikeitz* 5635: “For death and evil came from the sin of *Adam HaRishon*, as is written in *Sha’ar HaKedusha*, for through this sin, good and evil became entwined throughout all of creation.” Also see, *Nefesh HaChaim Sha’ar* 1,87: “Then the forces of evil became really mixed within

removing the evil from the good, by keeping the negative (“Thou shalt not”) commandments.⁴⁰ It was also the woman’s job to put the harmony back into creation by using the physical world to attain a spiritual purpose.

This, too, is reflected in the change of woman’s name from Chaya, which has the letter *yud* at its center, to Chava, which has the letter *vav* at its center. The letter *vav*, unlike the letter *yud*, reaches the bottom of the line, signifying the notion of coming down to earth. *Vav* is a hook which connects separate things. The letter *vav* also means “and”, a simple word which connects two ideas. This reflects woman’s new role: to deal with the material world, but for the ultimate purpose of connecting earth with heaven.

Man, too, had these tasks, but in addition, he was to rectify creation by taking from the “tree of life” through studying the Torah. This is man’s greatest task.

The essential nature of man and woman usually reflected these two tasks: woman, primarily in the concrete areas, and man, although also involved in concrete activities (such as farming) had his most important role in the abstract activity of Torah study. There were exceptions among both men and women but throughout most of world history, the system generally functioned well, because each side was dealing with the area to which they were naturally drawn.

Less Important – In Whose Eyes?

Did these changes cause woman to become less important? That depends on how one defines importance. They certainly did not cause women to have less value in God’s eyes, because one’s value is not determined by one’s gifts or one’s status, but rather by how well one uses his or her abilities. The principle of equality before *Hashem* is demonstrated in the following *midrashim*.

“*U’Devorah Isha Nevia*” (and Devorah was a prophetess woman):
 What is the special nature of Devorah, who prophesied over Israel and judged them, even though Pinchas ben Elazar was still alive and functioning? (i.e. if there was a worthy man in the generation, why appoint a woman?) I call Heaven and Earth to testify, whether a gentile or an Israelite, man or a woman, whether a man-servant or a woman-servant, all according to the deeds of the human being does *ruach hakodesh* rest on him.⁴¹

And indeed, the Sages tell us, that just as there were 600,000 prophets in Israel, so too there were 600,000 prophetesses.⁴²

And in another *midrash* we read:

him...for they became joined and mixed within him and the worlds.”

⁴⁰ “For it is the *da’as* which needs sieving, for regarding this it says, ‘The knowledge of good and evil’...for knowledge is the joining of the body and the soul, the connection of the spiritual and the physical. And it is therefore a dangerous area, because the soul can draw the body towards good, (but) it can, *chas v’shalom*, be drawn after the body.” (*Sfas Emes, Naso* 5651).

⁴¹ *Yalkut Shimoni* on *Sefer Shoftim* 4:4.

⁴² *Shir HaShirim Rabba* 4:11, 27d.

“*Shomea Tefilla*” (He hears prayer): Rabbi Yehuda ben Shalom said in the name of Rabbi Elazar: “[The nature of] flesh and blood is that if a poor person comes to tell him something, he does not listen; if a rich person comes to say something, he immediately listens and accepts it. But the Holy One Blessed is He is not like that; rather all are equal before Him: women, slaves, poor people and rich people... The same language is used regarding Moshe, master of all the prophets, as is used regarding a poor person... to inform you that all are equal in prayer before God.”⁴³

The Sages also say that it was in the merit of righteous women that our forefathers were redeemed from Egypt,⁴⁴ and the future *geula* (redemption) will also be in the merit of righteous women.⁴⁵ The well which sustained the entire Jewish nation for forty years in the desert was in the merit of Miriam the Prophetess⁴⁶ and it was Hannah, the mother of Samuel the Prophet, who gave us our present form of silent prayer.⁴⁷ The holidays of *Purim* and *Chanukah* came about because of Jewish women who were ready to give their lives for the salvation of the Jewish People.⁴⁸ These are only a few examples of the high level of the righteous Jewish woman. In fact, a righteous wife is considered so important that the Sages say that when a man marries a kosher (e.g. good) woman it is as if he had kept the entire Torah from *aleph* to *tav*.⁴⁹

And yet, with all this, women were not fully equal in human eyes.⁵⁰

The *Me'or V'Shemesh*, a *Chassidic* commentary based on the teachings of the Ari z"l, explains that since the diminution of the moon, there cannot be two kings with one crown, and therefore, even if two *tzaddikim* are equal in their characters, one will be more recognized and honored in the eyes of people than the other.⁵¹

This principle is illustrated in the following story:

⁴³ *Shemos Rabba* (Vilna Edition) 21, 4, 40c.

⁴⁴ *Maseches Sotah* 11b.

⁴⁵ *Midrash Rus* 4:4, *Yalkut Shimoni Rus* 606.

⁴⁶ *Maseches Ta'anis* 9a.

⁴⁷ *Maseches Brachos* 31a,b; *Tosefta Brachos* 3,9; *Talmud Yerushalmi Maseches Brachos* (Chapter 4, Halacha 1).

⁴⁸ Esther endangered her life by going to the king uncalled, and she also believed mistakenly that she was forfeiting her life in the next world by making herself attractive to the gentile king in order to save the Jewish People, Yehudis risked her life to kill the Greek general Eliforni, Chana instructed her seven sons to allow themselves to be killed by the cruel Antiochus rather than worship idols, and many other Jewish women at the time gave their lives rather than obey the Greek decrees against Torah observance. The women's merit in the ensuing miracles is stressed in Halacha.

⁴⁹ *Midrash Rus* 4:4.

⁵⁰ The *Sifri* quotes the daughters of Tzelephchad as saying, “God's mercy is not like the mercy of flesh and blood. Flesh and blood have more mercy towards males than towards females, but *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* is not like that, rather He has [mercy] on males and females; His mercy is upon all as it says ...*Hashem* is good to all” (brought in *Yalkut Shimoni* 269a on the words “*Vatakreveno bnos Tzelephchad*”, *Sefer Bamidbar* 27,1). The *Kli Yakar* says on the death of Miriam the Prophetess (*Sefer Bamidbar* 20,2) that it was necessary to deny the people the water which had been given in Miriam's merit to make them realize her greatness.

⁵¹ *Me'or V'shemesh, Parshas Korach* (Page 43, Edition 5746). However, the *Me'or V'shemesh* does not connect the diminution of the moon with sin, but rather with a Divine plan for this world. Both opinions are true, as explained above. It was part of the original Divine plan, but Hashem implemented it only through Chava's sin.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Ilem, a great *tzaddik* and Torah scholar, was told in a dream that his place in *Olam Habah* would be shared with Nannas the butcher. Astonished, he set out to locate this man. After much searching, he found Nannas- a simple Jew who, in caring for his elderly and infirm parents, showed tremendous devotion to the mitzvah of honoring one's parents. Upon discovering this, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Ilem declared, "Fortunate am I that my share in *Olam Habah* is together with Nannas the butcher".⁵²

A person's place in *Olam Habah* is his/her true spiritual essence, based on his/her accomplishments in this world, and in this, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Ilem and Nannas the butcher were equal. But in the eyes of the world, there is no doubt that Rabbi Yehoshua ben Ilem occupied a much higher position.

For this reason, we find that the birth of a son was greeted with greater joy than the birth of a daughter. It was usually only sons who could be expected to provide material support. Although a good wife and mother is a blessing to her husband and children, a daughter was usually not able to give much in return – in terms of honor or wealth – to the parents who put so much into raising her.

For Jews, there was an additional reason for preferring a son. Only through a son could one fulfill the command of "You shall teach [the words of Torah] to your sons"⁵³. Since women are not commanded in Torah study and most women were not suited for it, the woman's merit of Torah learning was usually acquired by helping others – her husband and sons – to study Torah.⁵⁴ Therefore, parents who wished to fulfill this mitzvah preferred a son who could study Torah to a daughter who could not.

This, however, represents only the human view. The rabbis taught, "Greater is the promise that the Holy One Blessed is He made to women, than to men".⁵⁵ This is because the reward for enabling another person to do a mitzvah is greater than the reward for doing the mitzvah oneself. One reason for this is that the silent partner's efforts are not truly appreciated in this world. Specifically, because supporting a mitzvah is less prestigious than doing it oneself, it shows more selfless devotion, and therefore the reward for it is greater.⁵⁶

But human beings do not see things that way. From the human point of view, not to desire a son who could study Torah would show a disinterest in Torah study. People who respect Torah would rather be the parents of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Ilem than the

⁵² From *Seder HaDoros*, as told in *Ko Asu Chachameinu* (Part 1 Pages 56-58).

⁵³ *Sefer Devarim* 6:7.

⁵⁴ *Maseches Brachos* 17a

⁵⁵ Ibid: "The promise of reward that God has made to women is greater than that made to men, as we find, 'Upright women, listen to my voice; daughters of good faith, hearken to my word'. Rav asked Rabbi Chiya: What is the merit of women? That they take their children to the House of Study, that they wait up for their husband's return from the House of Study, and that they allow them to go away to another city to study Torah."

⁵⁶ *Shabbos Shiurim* by Rabbi M. Miller (Page 244) states: "This is the special glory of women: themselves exempt from the mitzvah of studying Torah, they yet undertake any sacrifice in order that others, their husbands and sons, may reap the benefits of this mitzvah. In this, their true worth and devotion is measured; here they can look for no selfish reward, no accumulation of mitzvos to themselves. In these actions, encouraging, guiding, facilitating the study of their menfolk, they show the sheer, glowing flame of their love for God and His Torah. In this respect, therefore, their merit is greater than that of men; more dedicated, more selfless; this is their special glory and crown of love."

parents of Nannas the butcher, even though in Hashem's eyes both are equal. Similarly, parents who love Torah study prefer a son who could do so, to a daughter who could not, even though in Hashem's eyes, to selflessly encourage and help others to study Torah is considered an even greater accomplishment.

The Men's Blessing: "...for not having created me a woman"

The Sages ordained that men say a blessing every morning for not having been created a gentile, a slave, or a woman: "Rabbi Yehuda said, "A man must recite every day...Blessed are You...who has not made me a woman...for women are not commanded in the *mitzvos* (i.e. the positive, time-bound *mitzvos*)."⁵⁷ Yet, as we have already seen, the *midrash* says, "I bear heaven and earth to witness, whether a man or woman, whether Jew or Gentile, whether man-servant or maid-servant, all according to the deed does the *ruach hakodesh* rest on him." Why, then, need one say a blessing for not having been created a woman?

Furthermore, Rabbi Meir says that a gentile can be on the level of a *Kohen Gadol* (High Priest in the Holy Temple):

"Rabbi Meir said: How do we know that even a gentile who learns Torah (e.g. the seven Noahide laws which apply to him – Rashi) is to be considered on a par with the High Priest? It is because the verse in Scripture says, 'Which a person should do and live by them'.⁵⁸ It does not say 'Cohen' or 'Levite' or 'Israelite' but rather person. This teaches us that even a gentile who learns Torah is to be considered on the same level as a High Priest."⁵⁹

Yet a *Kohen Gadol* is the highest on the hierarchy of holiness and a non-Jew is the lowest. How can we understand this apparent contradiction?

The hierarchy of human beings came into this world as a result of sin. This is true not only for the categories just mentioned, but also for the hierarchy of Temple service that was brought into being by the sin of the golden calf. Here, there are *Kohanim* who performed the Temple service, Levites who sang and helped the *Kohanim*, and Israelites (everyone else).⁶⁰

There are surely reasons for a person's being born into a particular place in the hierarchy but these reasons lie beyond the confines of our present lives and are therefore not understandable to us. Running parallel to the hierarchy, however, is the level of personal accomplishment, and it is this which gives a person his or her

⁵⁷ *Talmud Yerushalmi, i Maseches Brachos* (Chapter 6, Page 36b).

⁵⁸ *Sefer Vayikra* 18:5

⁵⁹ *Maseches Sanhedrin* 59a

⁶⁰ Before the golden calf, the first-born served as priests (See Rashi on *Sefer Shemos* 19, 22 based on *Maseches Zvachim* 115). After the sin, the position of serving Hashem in the Temple was given to the tribe of Levi who did not take part in the sin of the golden calf and who were willing to risk their own lives to punish the evildoers, even if these were their closest relatives (See Rashi on *Shmos* 32, 29). Aharon and his descendants were chosen to be the priests. However, the *Ba'al HaTurim* on the words, "You will be for me a Kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (*Sefer Shemos* 19, 6) says: "Had they merited it, all of Israel would have been high priests, and in the future this will return to them, as it says, 'And you will be called the priests of Hashem'".

ultimate standing before God. The hierarchy defines the type of service in which one is commanded, but how well one accomplishes what he or she is commanded depends on one's own free will. And it is this factor which ultimately determines a person's stature. Nannas the butcher surely had a lower (i.e. less abstractly spiritual) soul than Rabbi Yehoshua ben Ilem, but they were both equal in God's eyes. The blessings, then, are recited because of the different levels of service, while the *midrash* is telling us that despite different levels of service, God treats everyone according to their deeds.

The following passage in the *Gemara* illustrates how personal accomplishment raises one above even the highest level of the hierarchy:

“The Rabbis taught: There was once a High Priest that went out from the Temple, and all the people walked after him. (But) when they saw Shemaya and Avtalyon (who were the Torah giants of their generation) they (the people) left the High Priest and walked after Shemaya and Avtalyon. Finally, Shemaya and Avtalyon were about to depart from the High Priest. He (the High Priest) said to them, “The sons of the nations should go in peace.” (The High Priest, who was obviously jealous, meant this as a sting against Shemaya and Avtalyon, who were the sons of converts and therefore descended from the gentile nations.) They answered him: “The sons of the nations will go in peace, since they do as Aharon (the first High Priest) did, but the son of Aharon will not come in peace, because he does not do as Aharon did.”⁶¹

Shemaya and Avtalyon were descended from the gentile nations. The High Priest represents the very top of the hierarchy. Yet these converts' sons had reached, through their personal merit, a level higher than that of the High Priest, who, although born to a great lineage, unfortunately did not live up to his position.

In addition to this, for every level of holiness that a Jew cannot acquire through the hierarchy, there is a parallel way to reach that same level, or more, through a different route.

An example of this would be the High Priest and the *nazir*. A *nazir* is any Jew who takes upon himself, among other things, to abstain from wine or its derivatives. We are told that the level of holiness of the *nazir* reaches or even supersedes that of the High Priest, the very pinnacle of the hierarchy,⁶² and that route to holiness is open to any Jew – man or woman, as the Torah specifically mentions.⁶³

Therefore, although women were the least involved in the Temple service, and had a lower status in that hierarchy, they could reach the same level through a different

⁶¹ *Maseches Yoma* 71b

⁶² *Midrash Rabba* on *Parshas Naso*, 11 says, “Anyone who sanctifies himself from below, they sanctify him from above. Because this (person) abstained from wine and causes himself discomfort by not shaving his head in order to guard himself from sin, said the Holy One Blessed is He, ‘Behold he (the *nazir*) is as important before me as a *Kohen Gadol*.’”. The *Sfas Emes* on *Parshas Naso* 5655 says: “Through accepting upon himself to abstain from wine, great holiness which is equal to that of the *Kohen Gadol* and even more, rests upon him, for every Jewish person can draw upon himself holiness like that of the *Kohen Gadol*.”

Also see *Sfas Emes* 5649: “...the *Nazarite* who separates himself from the desires of this (material) world merits greater holiness than the high priest.”

⁶³ *Sefer Bamidbar* 6:2: “Be it a man or a woman, when they do wondrously to make a vow as a *Nazarite* to fulfill the task of a *nazir* to God.”

route. And although today we have neither *nazirites* nor Temple service, the principle still applies. As the *Sfas Emes* points out, taking upon oneself to abstain from the pleasures of this world places any person on a level higher than that of the *Kohen Gadol*.⁶⁴

The *Sfas Emes* helps us to further understand this issue. The Torah is called more precious than pearls,⁶⁵ which the *midrash* interprets to mean that the Torah scholar is more precious than the *Kohen Gadol* (the High Priest). Why, then, asks the *Sfas Emes*, cannot the Torah scholar enter the Holy of Holies, as the *Kohen Gadol* does?

He answers that there are two different ways that we can relate to God: as servants and as children. In the aspect of service, there are different levels, such as workers and officers. When we relate as children, however, there is no hierarchy. Here, all are equal.⁶⁶

Therefore, although the Torah scholar cannot relate on the same level of Temple service as the High Priest does, for he is not an equal in that hierarchy, he is more precious, because he relates as God's child, rather than as God's minister.

Logically, the same idea holds true for women as well. The "Woman of Valor", the righteous Jewish woman, is also called "more precious than pearls".⁶⁷ Here, too, although she cannot relate as an equal on the level of service, she can and does relate to God as a child, for we find that the Torah calls Jewish women God's daughters.⁶⁸ And so just as a parent does not love or value a child in the fifth grade more than they love or value a child in the fourth grade, so God does not value one type of child more than another.

⁶⁴ *Sfas Emes* on *Parshas Naso* 5649 and 5655, quoted above. This raises the question as to whether it is right to be ascetic. Although the Torah highly praises the *nazir* as one who has Hashem's crown (*nezer*) on his or her head, the Torah also requires a *nazir* to bring a sin offering. This is because God wants us to bring holiness into His creation by using it properly. Furthermore, abstaining from the pleasures God gave us would be like rejecting His presents.

This, however, applies only when a person is not in danger of becoming subordinate to physical desires. If the pleasures of this world might in any way lessen a person's holiness, then it is better to abstain from them until one no longer feels drawn to the physical. When one abstains from physical pleasures for such a reason, one reaches a level of holiness greater than that of the *Kohen Gadol*.

⁶⁵ *Sefer Mishlei* 3:15.

⁶⁶ *Sfas Emes* on *Parshas Naso* 5647: "The *midrash* says, 'She is more precious than pearls' (*pninim*), more than the one who enters "*lifnei vilifnim*" [The pasuk is literally speaking of the *eishis chayil*, the woman of valor, but the *midrash* says this is an allegory for a *talmid chacham*, a Torah scholar. The *midrash* is saying that the Torah scholar is more precious than the *Kohen Gadol* who enters into the *Kodesh Kodoshim*, the Holy of Holies, which is described as the inner sanctum. This comment is based on the fact that here is a similarity in Hebrew between the word for pearls and the words for inner sanctum.]...Why, then, cannot the Torah scholar enter into the *kodesh kodoshim*? For there is an aspect of children and an aspect of servants. And in the aspect of servant there are categories, servants and officers...and the servant's importance is according to his work and his function. This is not so in the aspect of children...and this is also the difference between Sabbaths and festivals...for on the holiday, one is performing service, but Shabbos is the aspect of children."

⁶⁷ *Sefer Mishlei* 31:10.

⁶⁸ *Sefer Devarim* 32:19 states, "And God saw and was angered from the anger (caused by) His sons and His daughters." This verse is speaking of the Jewish People's sins. If even at such a time Jewish women are referred to as His daughters, how much more so when they do not sin. And so we find that Hashem calls Jewish men, His sons and Jewish women, His daughters, as Yeshayahu (Isaiah) says regarding the future redemption, "Bring My sons from afar and My daughters from the end of the earth" (Yeshayahu 43:6).

This may also explain another interesting point. Although there is a general rule that women are exempt from the time-bound positive mitzvos, this rule does not apply to the positive mitzvos of shabbos. In the Ten Commandments, Hashem said the words “*shamor*” and “*zachor*” simultaneously. *Shamor*, which literally means “to guard” or “safekeep”, means to keep away from doing forbidden acts on Shabbos. *Zachor* means to remember the positive commandments of Shabbos. From the fact that both these commands were stated at the same time, the Sages learn that whoever is included in the negative commandments of Shabbos is commanded in the positive mitzvos as well. Therefore, although generally women are exempt from the positive time-bound commandments, regarding Shabbos this rule does not apply and men and women are equally commanded in all the mitzvos of Shabbos.⁶⁹

But why is Shabbos exceptional, giving men and women equality in mitzvos?

The *Me'or V'shemesh* says that on Shabbos the sun and the moon are equal as they were at the time of their creation.⁷⁰ He explains that this is not referring to the physical sun and moon but rather to the heavenly forces which they represent. We can therefore understand that if the masculine and feminine forces are equal on Shabbos, then their parallels - men and women - will have equality of mitzvos on Shabbos.

The *Sfas Emes* again helps us understand why. Whereas on the weekdays we relate to God as workers or servants as it says, “Six days you shall work”, on *Shabbos* we relate to God as children, and in this relationship there is no hierarchy; all are equal.⁷¹

Furthermore, the job of rectifying the sin of the Tree of Knowledge does not apply on Shabbos. On Shabbos all are connected to the Tree of Life, as it says, “Those who taste of her [Shabbos] have merited life”.⁷² Since it was the sin of the Tree of Knowledge that caused the difference in levels between men and women, and on Shabbos the work to rectify the sin of the Tree of Knowledge is suspended, and all are connected to the Tree of Life, therefore, regarding Shabbos, men and women have equal service.⁷³

⁶⁹ *Maseches Brachos* 20b.

⁷⁰ *Me'or V'shemesh* (5746 Edition), *Haftara* of *Shabbos* and *Rosh Chodesh* (Page 224).

⁷¹ *Sfas Emes* on *Parshas Chayei Sarah* 5643 states: “The aspect of servant (of God) is a preparation and an antechamber to the aspect of child...and it is the aspect of the weekdays...and through this one merits afterwards the aspect of Shabbos...and that is the aspect of child and the aspect of Torah.

⁷² From the *Mussaf Shemoneh Esrei* of Shabbos.

⁷³ *Sfas Emes* on *Parshas Vayigash* 5648: “And Shabbos has in it light from the Tree of Life, and that is why it says, ‘Those who taste of the her (e.g. Shabbos) have merited life’. And that is the additional soul which descends on Shabbos. Therefore *zachor* (remember) and *shamor* (guard) were said at the same time...and *zachor* is the aspect of the Tree of Life and *shamor* is the Tree of Knowledge which needs guarding...And on Shabbos when the inner gate is opened and there is no evil mixed in, therefore they become one.”

Also *Sfas Emes* on *Parshas Vayigash* 5652: “And it is brought that Shabbos is from the source of *Olam Habah*. Therefore, on Shabbos *zachor* and *shamor* were said in one utterance.” And in *Sfas Emes* on *Parshas Naso* 5651: “...for Shabbos is the aspect of the Tree of Life...and furthermore on Shabbos the Tree of Life rules over the Tree of Knowledge and even rectifies knowledge, for the aspect of Shabbos is above the Tree of Knowledge, and it is the Tree of Life”. This idea is brought in other places in the *Sfas Emes* as well.

This idea is also true regarding *Olam Habah*, the world to come. After the sins have been rectified, hierarchy will no longer exist. This is reflected in Shabbos, because Shabbos is a taste of *Olam Habah*.⁷⁴

In summary, women have a slightly lower status in the hierarchy of service because they are exempt from certain commandments, but they can still reach the same level of holiness. Additionally, in their relationship to God as children and on the level of *Olam Habah*, women are equal with men.

In that case, one may ask, why should one bless God for not having been created a woman? To answer this question, we must first understand the nuances of blessings. A blessing is said not on what the mind believes but on what the heart actually feels. The *Gemara* in *Maseches Psachim* explains this as follows:

The prophet Zechariah says “On that day Hashem will be One”.⁷⁵ On this the *Gemara* asks, “Isn’t He One now as well?!” Rabbi Acha bar Chanina said, “*Olam Habah* is not like this world. In this world, for good news one says ‘*HaTov V’Hamaytiv*’ (Blessed is the Good One who does good) and on bad news one says ‘*Baruch Dayan HaEmes*’ (Blessed is the True Judge). (But) in *Olam Habah*, for everything one will bless ‘*HaTov V’Hamaytiv*’”.⁷⁶

What the Sages are teaching is that everything that Hashem does is for our own good, both the pleasant and the bitter, and in messianic times we will truly see and feel this. But because we cannot feel that goodness now, we can only say, “Blessed are You...the true Judge”. On the other hand, when a person acquires wealth, he recites the blessing “*Hatov V’Hamaytiv*,” although we know that wealth is not always beneficial, as it says in *Koheles* (Ecclesiastes) “There is wealth kept for its owner’s detriment”.⁷⁷ Yet we say a blessing because human beings feel that wealth is good.

From here we see that blessings are made on what is felt as truth in human reality, rather than on what we know to be ultimate Heavenly truth.

We find a similar idea in the history of the blessing “*Ha’E-l Hagadol Hagibor V’Hanora*” (the great, mighty and awesome God).⁷⁸

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi asked, “Why were they called the *Anshei Knesses HaGedolah* (Men of the Great Assembly)? Because they returned the crown to its former state. Moshe came and said, “The great, the mighty and the awesome God.” Yirmiyahu (Jeremiah) came and said, ‘Foreigners are running amok in His Temple, where is His awesomeness?’ He did not say (e.g. describe God as) “awesome”. Daniel came and he said, ‘Foreigners are subjugating His sons, where is His mightiness?’ He did not say “Mighty”. These came and said, ‘It’s the other way around. This is His greatest strength, that He overcomes His will, by patiently giving time to the evil doers, and these are His awesome doings, for would it not be for the awesomeness of the Holy One Blessed is He, how could one nation exist amongst seventy nations?’”

⁷⁴ *Maseches Brachos* 57:2

⁷⁵ *Sefer Zechariah* 14:9.

⁷⁶ *Maseches Psachim* 50a.

⁷⁷ *Sefer Koheles* 5:12.

⁷⁸ *Sefer Devarim* 10:17.

“And how could these rabbis (Yirmiyahu and Daniel – Rashi) uproot something which Moshe had established? Rabbi Elazar said, ‘Because they know that the Holy One Blessed is He is truthful. Therefore they did not say false things to Him.’”⁷⁹

Moshe called Hashem the great, mighty, and awesome God but Yirmiyahu and Daniel changed this. Moshe lived at a time of great miracles and redemption, but Yirmiyahu and Daniel lived at the time of the destruction of the First Temple and the ensuing exile. There was a period when evil seemed to have the upper hand, and so God’s strength and awesomeness did not seem visible. Of course these prophets were not questioning the truth of these words, for they come straight from the Torah itself. Rather, what they meant was, that under the present circumstances of exile, they could not see or feel these aspects of God, and therefore they could not relate to them. Since a blessing must reflect the feelings in a person’s heart, they removed these words.

The *Anshei Knesses HaGedolah* later reinstated these words, saying that the fact that God overcomes His desires and patiently allows this evil is in itself a manifestation of His strength, for the greatest strength is to go against one’s own will. And the fact that one persecuted nation can exist among seventy hostile nations is proof of God’s awesomeness, for at the time of the destruction all the nations desired to destroy Israel, yet God did not allow it.⁸⁰ Through this, they reasoned, one could see Hashem’s strength and awesomeness. But had these attributes not been apparent they could not be included in a blessing, even though we know intellectually that they are true.

From this, we can understand that men say the blessing for not having been created a woman because this is the aspect of truth which is seen by people. The woman’s role, which entails exemption or exclusion from certain mitzvos including the supreme one, Torah study, is, from the human point of view, a lower level of service and is therefore, from our human view, less desirable.

This, however, is not the heavenly view. Rashi, based on the medrash, comments on the first *pasuk* of the Torah that this world was created for Torah and Yisrael (i.e. the people of Israel) both of whom are called "*reishis*".

Both men and women have a share in Torah and in building up the Jewish People, but women's main occupation, through giving birth to Jewish children and raising them, is building up "Yisrael", while men's most important occupation in the world is Torah study. Although now woman's occupation is not properly respected, after the redemption everyone will truly value the woman's mission.

Furthermore, even women who, through no fault of their own, do not have children will be properly valued, just as men like Nannas the butcher will be properly valued, although he was not a Torah scholar. The ultimate goal for everyone is simply to serve Hashem in whatever situation they find themselves. Thus Yeshayahu tells us that the converts and the childless (who think they are all dried up because they have no children) yet they keep Shabbos, will be given a place in Hashem's House which is "better than sons and daughters".⁸¹

In summary, the way we see things in this world is not heavenly truth. Although men

⁷⁹ *Maseches Yoma* 69b.

⁸⁰ Rashi, ad loc.

⁸¹ Yeshayahu 56:5

say a blessing for not having been created a woman, because it appears in this world that having more mitzvos makes men's position more desirable, this does not show a person's true spiritual worth or the ultimate good that will come from this. But blessings are said on what is felt in this world, not on objective, Heavenly truth.

The Women's Blessing: "For having created me according to His will"

Women, on the other hand, say the blessing "*She'asani Kirtzono*" (Who has made me according to His will) to affirm their belief that their role, lower in status as it may be, is both just and for their own eventual good. It also serves to remind them that there are advantages to being female.

One such advantage is that females are born without *orlah*. *Orlah* is the foreskin that is removed in circumcision and it represents a barrier between man and God that must be removed. Since everything that exists in the body reflects a corresponding attribute in the soul, this means that males are born with a spiritual barrier which must be removed.⁸² Females, however, are born without this barrier, and they therefore bless God for having been created according to God's will.

This blessing may also have to do with the fact that although women generally had lower *neshamos* (upper souls), regarding the *nefesh* (the lower aspect of the soul), the opposite is usually true. The *neshama* influences the intellectual and metaphysical interests. The *nefesh* is where the feelings and desires are felt on the ego level. Since woman was created from man, rather than directly from the earth, she is usually more refined and less earthy, while males tend to be in greater need of the Torah's refining effects.⁸³ For example, the Talmud says that women prefer to be surrounded by beauty (which shows aesthetic sense)⁸⁴ while men would prefer to eat meat (which shows animalistic tendencies).⁸⁵ Another example, which we see in life, is that girls are disgusted by bugs and rodents (which are spiritually unclean) while boys are usually not. For this higher level of natural refinement, women thank God.⁸⁶

⁸² The *midrash* calls the *orlah*, which is removed at the *bris milah*, 'a defect. (*Bereishis Rabba* on *Parshas Lech Lecha*, 46a and c.). The *Sfas Emes* on *Parshas Miketz* 5653 says: "And the *orlah* is the stone placed on the mouth of the well, and it is the stone of darkness and the shadow of death that is written about in the *midrash*. And through *milah* the mouth of the well is revealed."

⁸³ In the words of the Artscroll on *Sefer Bereishis* 3:23: "The Sages in the *midrash* ascribe all the special characteristics of woman – her delicate voice, character, and temperament, as being derived from this formation of woman from the already feeling, sensitive body of man; in contrast to man himself, who was created from the inanimate earth."

⁸⁴ *Midrash Esther Rabba*, *Parsha* 3, 2:10, *Yalkut Shimoni* on *Sefer Esther* 1049.

⁸⁵ *Maseches Psachim* 109a. Eating meat, however, is detrimental only when done by someone void of *Torah* (*Maseches Psachim* 49b) or when done for no higher purpose than to indulge one's appetite. But like all other natural instincts, when eating meat is used for a *mitzvah*, it is sanctified, and actually helps us to serve *Hashem*. Therefore, it is a *mitzvah* to eat meat on *Shabbos* and festivals. Furthermore, we find that eating meat can actually help one's understanding of *Torah* (*Maseches Bava Kama* 72a).

⁸⁶ *Michtav Me'Eliyahu* Part 4 (Pages 219-220) under the heading, "The Importance of Natural Feelings" states: "...for we have within us, subconsciously, a point of spiritual impurity which receives pleasure from the repulsive and the dirty, and when we approach one of these things, it arises to affect us with a spirit of spiritual uncleanness which distances us a bit from God." He then brings examples from the *Gemara* in *Maseches Psachim* of two *Torah* students who needed to describe an unclean thing. One described it as "not pure" and the other as "*tamei*" (a less refined word for the impure). The first became the great *Torah* scholar, Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai, while the second did not become a great *Torah* scholar, implying that this was due to his lack of

In *Kabbalah* there are very deep teachings connected with women. Women are connected to the *Kabbalistic* sphere of *malchus*.⁸⁷ The purpose of *malchus* is to represent God in this material world, so that all will come to recognize and serve Him.

Malchus is also the manifestation of the *Shechina*, the feminine aspect of God. This is the aspect of God which allows itself to be affected by people's actions. (In *Kabbalah*, male and female mean active and passive, giver and receiver.) When we sin, God's mastery of the world is less apparent, and so the *Shechina*'s state is lowered, and when we repent, or act in accordance with God's will, the status of the *Shechina* in this world rises.

The moon also represents *malchus*⁸⁸ because the moon's function of lighting up the night, symbolizes our function of bringing spiritual light into the darkness of this material world. Moreover, the moon has no light of its own; it reflects the light of the sun, and *malchus* means recognizing that we humans have no powers of our own, but only reflect Hashem's light. Since the female is a receiver, she best represents *malchus*. We see this connection even on the physical level. Because *malchus* is acquired through thirty attributes,⁸⁹ both the moon and women have a thirty day cycle.⁹⁰

Therefore, the diminishment of the moon means the lowering of the sphere of *malchus*. Consequently, God is not clearly revealed, and it seems as if nature and man are running the world on their own. This affects both the *Shechina* and women.

According to *Kabbalah*, one can understand the state of the *Shechina* by looking at the state of the righteous women of the time. For instance, when our matriarch Sarah was taken captive by Pharaoh, this meant that the angels representing the idolatrous nations were trying to get control over the *malchus*. When the righteous Esther became the unwilling queen of the idolatrous Achashverosh in the *Purim* story, this represented the state of the *Shechina* who followed the Jewish People into the Babylonian exile and was now also a queen in exile in the palace of evil forces.⁹¹ On

refinement. Then the *Gemara* (ibid) tells of a *Kohen* who described his share in the *lechem hapanim* (show bread) of the Temple as being "like the tail of a lizard". He was investigated and found lacking.

⁸⁷ *Zohar Chadash* 40a.

⁸⁸ *Tikuney Zohar* 22 (68a).

⁸⁹ *Maseches Avos* 6:6.

⁹⁰ *The Hebrew Letters* by Rabbi Yitzchak Ginzberg (Page 189).

⁹¹ A chassidic commentary on *Pirkei Avos*, *Chasdei Avos* 1:5 says the following, "and like our rabbi z"l (Rabbi Nahman of Breslav) told (us) in the days of our father Avraham, the *Shechina* was called by the name Sarah, and in the days of Yitzchak by the name Rivkah, and in the days of Yaakov by the names Rachel and Leah (See *Life of Moharan*, paragraph 563), and this is true for each and every one, that his wife is the aspect of the *Shechina*..."

Me'or V'shemesh on *Parshas Lech Lecha* on the taking of Sarah by Pharaoh says, "It is brought in the holy *Zohar* and in the *Tikunim* that the *malchus* is called Sarai (Sarah was called Sarai at the time that she was taken to Pharaoh)...and this is what it means 'and he said to Sarai his wife'...according to how we explained the verse 'and Rachel was beautiful of form and beautiful of appearance...for Rachel is another name for the *malchus* as is known, and this means that when we accept upon ourselves every day the yoke of the kingdom of heaven in the saying of *Shema Yisrael*, then we can perceive His oneness, but what can we do that the angels of the nations wish to draw the *malchus* to themselves..." *Tiferes Shlomo* on *Maseches Purim* 88b writes, "And this is what it says that Esther found favor in the eyes of all who saw her. It is an allusion to the *Shechina*." And on Page 89 "... he (Mordechai) walked before the court of the Women's House, that is the aspect of the upper Rachel and Leah..."

the other hand, at the crossing of the Reed Sea, the *Shechina* was clearly revealed, as God's kingship of the world became apparent to all. Correspondingly, Jewish women then soared to an unprecedented spiritual height as we will soon see.

This idea is further expanded in the siddur of the Ba'al HaTanya as he explains the blessings at a Jewish wedding. Under the wedding canopy we say that "there will yet be heard in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem the voice of happiness and the voice of joy, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride". However, as the Ba'al HaTanya points out, the voice of the bride is not heard at the wedding ceremony. (Although a marriage without the bride's agreement is invalid, this agreement is expressed silently as she stretches forth her finger to accept a ring.) Why, asks the Ba'al HaTanya, is the bride's voice not heard?

He answers that the Jewish bride represents the *Shechina*, who is also called "bride". In our present state of exile, the *Shechina* is also in exile and therefore the *Shechina* is silent. Only at the time of the redemption when the entire Jewish Nation will be in the Holy Land, will we then hear the voice of the bride – both the human one, and the *Shechina*, whose voice will then be heard by all.

This, continues the Ba'al HaTanya, is the reason why the *Amidah* prayer is recited in a whisper. When reciting this prayer, we stand directly before the silent *Shechina*, and so we, too, do not let our voice be heard to others. Following this train of thought, it would seem that this is also the reason why women's voices are not heard in the synagogue services. If the *Shechina*'s voice is not heard, neither is woman's.⁹²

Kabbalah says, "He is truth, she is faith."⁹³ Faith is primarily a feminine quality for one needs faith when truth and goodness are not so clearly visible. Because women represent the state of the *Shechina*, whose providence became hidden in the darkness of this material world, the true inner greatness of women is also hidden. Until the time when all will see that "God is One, and His Name is One", which is the revelation of the *Shechina*, women's true value is also not clearly revealed in this world, and they, like the *Shechina*, are in a "lowered" state. The blessing "*Sheh'asani Kirtzono*" (He has made me according to His will") may therefore also be an acknowledgement of being connected to, and representative of, the *Shechina*.

PART II – After Rectification

Until now, we have been discussing the rectification of sin through some level, even if a slight one, of suffering. But the merit of good deeds can also correct sin. For this reason, the Torah designed certain mitzvos specifically for the rectification of Chava's part in causing the death of Adam.⁹⁴ These mitzvos are:

There are many other examples of this.

⁹² The *Tiferes Shlomo* on *Shabbos Nachamu* (P. 117a) writes: It is a constant that when something needs to rise higher in status or size it first be diminished as is explained regarding everything in this world, and certainly as is known to those who know the secret of Hashem in the matter of the diminishment of the moon..." He then goes on to explain that the second *Beis HaMikdash* needed to be destroyed so to give place to the third *Beis HaMikdash* which will be much greater. Since the diminution of the moon affected everything feminine, including our perception of the *Shchinah*, the Jewish People (who the prophets called Hashem's wife) and actual women, this means that women's smaller status is to enable the feminine to rise much higher than otherwise possible.

⁹³ *Ra'ayah Mihemna* on *Sefer Bamidbar*, *Parshas Pinchas* (Page 230a)

⁹⁴ *Bereishis Rabba* end of *Parsha* 12. As explained above, causing Adam to sin was worse than her own

1) *Challah* – sanctifying a small portion of dough while baking bread, to be given to a *Kohen* (Priest). (Nowadays, when this is impossible, it is burnt.)

2) *Niddah* – keeping the family purity laws.

3) Lighting the Shabbos candles.

The first woman to practice these mitzvos was our matriarch Sarah. Hashem told Avraham that the long barren Sarah would now have a son, saying “*Ka’es chaya u l’Sarah ben*”⁹⁵. The simple translation of this is: “at this time next year Sarah will have a son.” However, this unusual form of expression has a double meaning. These words can also be read as “She is now Chaya”. The *Tiferes Shlomo* explains that the other level of meaning here is that now Sarah has reached the level of Chaya, i.e. the level of the woman before the sin, for she has rectified the sin of Chava.⁹⁶

The results were apparent in her life. Her tent had the holiness of the Temple,⁹⁷ she was wealthy, she was a sage⁹⁸ and a prophetess on a very high level⁹⁹ (so her “light” was very great) and her illustrious husband, Avraham was told by God, “Everything that Sarah says to you, listen to her voice,”¹⁰⁰ which is the opposite of “and he (your husband) shall rule over you”. Moreover, our mother Sarah was the first person after Adam and Chava to be buried in the Cave of Machpela, which the *Zohar* says is the courtyard to the Garden of Eden.¹⁰¹ And it was Avraham and Sarah who brought the world the eventual revival of the dead.¹⁰²

eating of the *Etz HaDa’as*, for it is worse to be a *machati*, someone who causes another to sin, than to be a sinner oneself. Furthermore, Chava did not hear Hashem's command directly, it was told to her by Adam, and he added on that it is forbidden to touch the tree, which was not what Hashem had said. The snake, knowing this wasn't true put Chava's hand on the tree, and when nothing happened, he used this to convince her that if she ate of the tree nothing would happen either. Therefore, Chava's own eating was a lesser sin than her causing Adam to eat, because, as mentioned above, what prompted her to feed him was her fear that she would indeed die, and that Hashem would make for Adam another wife. Her wanting him to die together with her, if necessary, was her main sin.

⁹⁵ *Sefer Bereishis* 18:14.

⁹⁶ “*Ka’es chaya u l’Sarah ben*”: The above is an allusion to the fact that our forefather Avraham was the rectification of Adam HaRishon and Sarah was the rectification of Chava...in the secret of Chaya, and this is what it says, ka'es Chaya...meaning now she is Chaya. (*Tiferes Shlomo* on *Sefer Bereishis* 18:14).

⁹⁷ Rashi on *Sefer Bereishis* 24, 67, based on *Bereishis Rabba Parsha* 10 says, “...for as long as Sarah lived there was a candle lit from the eve of Sabbath to the eve of Sabbath and blessing was found in the dough, and a cloud connected to the tent and when she died they stopped. And when Rivkah came they returned.” The *Siftei Chachamim* comments on this: “This corresponds to the three mitzvos that women are commanded in (e.g. they are especially commanded in them to rectify the sin of Chava). Corresponding to *challah*, blessing was found in her dough. Corresponding to lighting the Shabbos candles, there was a candle lit. And the cloud attached to the tent was the *Shechinah*, and this was in honor of the purity, for she was careful in her *niddah* to purify herself, for purity brings to *Ru’ach HaKodesh* (Divine Spirit).”

⁹⁸ Many sources speak of Sarah's wisdom. For example, the *Ba'al HaTurim* on *Sefer Bereishis* 12:a3 says: “Avraham and also Sarah were great in wisdom.”

⁹⁹ Rashi on *Sefer Bereishis* 21:12 based on Chazal says that Avraham was told to listen to Sarah because his prophecy was less than hers.

¹⁰⁰ *Sefer Bereishis* 12:12.

¹⁰¹ *Zohar* on *Parshas Chayei Sarah* 88.

¹⁰² *Sfas Emes* on *Parshas Chayei Sarah* 5661 writes: “The born to die, through Adam and Chava, and the dead to revive, through Avraham and Sarah.”

For the rest of the world, however, this was not the case. Women had a secondary position in both marriage and society, and their own spiritual perception was more limited than that of men. God, however, wanted to rectify the entire world. The nation of Israel was therefore given Adam's task of bringing the world to its purpose and perfection. In order to do this, they first needed to undergo the Egyptian exile.

The Egyptian exile served to instill in Jews compassion for strangers, slaves, and anyone oppressed.¹⁰³ These traits would be especially necessary in the chosen people, both because they represent God, and because they would now be given a position which placed them above others. In Judaism, being at the top of the hierarchy means helping others, not oppressing them.¹⁰⁴

Kabbalah gives an additional reason for the Egyptian exile: to rectify the sin of the Tree of Knowledge and so bring the world back to its original state.¹⁰⁵ Therefore, we find that when describing the Hebrew women, the midwives said to Pharaoh “*ki chayos heino*”. The simple meaning of this is that the Jewish women were like animals i.e. not needing midwives. But again, the *Tiferes Shlomo* explains that the deeper meaning is that they had now become “*Chayos*” i.e. the level of Chava before the sin, and so they did not need midwives, for the curse of difficulty in childbirth no longer existed for them.¹⁰⁶

Since the sin of the Tree of Knowledge had been rectified, and the curses of Chava had been suspended, one would expect that the Jewish women would reach an equal level of spiritual perception with Jewish men. And indeed, this is what happened. Had it not been for the sin of the golden calf, the Messianic era would have started then,¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ “Do not insult the convert, and do not oppress him, for you were a stranger in the land of Egypt.” (*Sefer Shemos* 22:20). And: “...so that your manservant and your maidservant rest as you do. And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt.” (*Sefer Devarim* 5: 14-15) The Torah brings this idea in other places as well.

¹⁰⁴ See Note 112.

¹⁰⁵ This is brought in many places including *Sfas Emes* 5651 “...and because of this, the children of Israel had to be in the iron refinery which is Egypt to sift out the bad from the *da'as*”.

¹⁰⁶ *Tiferes Shlomo* on *Sefer Shemos* on the words “*ki chayos heina*”.

¹⁰⁷¹⁰⁷ *Maseches Avoda Zara* 5a says: “Israel received the *Torah* only that the Angel of Death would not have power over them”. The *Tiferes Shlomo* on *Parshas Ki Tisa* (Page 71a) says, “When Moshe Rabeinu took them out of Egypt and saw them rise to the highest level, he thought to make the rectification of the future redemption immediately in his times...for he thought that the building of the future *Beis HaMikdosh* and the downfall of all evil would all happen immediately at that time.” He goes on to explain that all this was changed by the sin of the golden calf, which brought about all the ensuing suffering of the Jewish People. The question then arises, since the women did not take part in that sin (*Pirkei D'Rabi Eliezer* Chapter 45, 107a), why did the curses of Chava return? Rabbi Yeshayah Horowitz, in his book *Shnei Luchos HaBris* answers it thus: “In the future the light of the moon will be like the light of the sun (e.g. women who are represented by the moon will return to their original greatness and be equal with men)...and even though they (the Jewish women) found rectification afterwards (after the sin of Chava) because they did not sin with the golden calf...and therefore the festival of the new moon was given to women to be kept more than by men...yet, even so, the woman was the first reason that the evil inclination came into the world, and afterwards the men kept it going by the sin of the golden calf, and we have still not been purified.” (*Shnei Luchos HaBris*, Amsterdam 1649, 74a). In other words, the *Shlah* is saying that even though it was the men alone who sinned with the golden calf, yet if the woman had not brought the evil inclination into the world in the first place, it would not be here today, and so both men and women are responsible for the evil inclination within us, and both must make a rectification. Nevertheless, women did gain merit for rectification by not sinning with the golden calf, and they are therefore specially commanded in the festival of *Rosh Chodesh* (the new moon), because this symbolizes that they, like the moon, they will returned to their original greatness with

giving women once again, equality with men. Although the sin of the golden calf prevented this from happening permanently, we can gain a glimpse of what will be in the future from looking at what transpired there.

“*Nekeivah Tisovev Gever*”

After the miraculous deliverance at the Sea of Reeds, all the women, led by Miriam the Prophetess, went out with drums, singing and dancing in a circle. (There was no contradiction here to modesty, for the women "went out" separating themselves from the men.) The *Kli Yakar* (a biblical commentary) comments on the words “and Miriam called out to them”.¹⁰⁸

“It is written ‘*lahem*’ (to them) in the masculine form rather than ‘*lahen*’ in the feminine form. The reason for this is that at the Sea of Reeds the women reached the level of the men in their perception of prophecy. Therefore, it was said ‘*lahem*’ as if she were speaking to males. And so regarding the future, it says, “*nekeivah tisovev gever*”.¹⁰⁹

From the commentary of the *Kli Yakar*, we see the following:

1. Women generally had less spiritual perception than men, as previously explained.
2. When at the Reed Sea, the women did reach the same level of spiritual perception, they were referred to in the masculine, since in this respect they were considered males.
3. In the future, this situation will return and women will once again have equal spiritual perception with men.
4. Women becoming equal with men is called *nekeivah tisovev gever*.

What do the words *nekeivah tisovev gever* literally mean? These words appear in *Yirmiyahu* (Jeremiah)¹¹⁰ which speaks of the future redemption. The verse states “... for God has created a new thing upon the earth: *nekeivah*- a female; *tisovev*- will turn around; *gever*- a man”. The phrase could then be translated as “a female will encircle a man” or “a female will go around looking for a man” or “a female will turn into a man”. All these explanations are given by various commentaries and they are all simultaneously true.

The interpretation implied by the *Kli Yakar* is according to the second one mentioned by Rashi in the name of Rabbi Yehudah Hadarshan: that “a female will turn into a man” i.e. women will have male capabilities and privileges. Although Rashi explains this as an allegory for the Jewish People, it is clear that the *Kli Yakar* interprets this as actually applying to women.

the coming of the redemption when “the light of the moon (woman) will be as the light of the sun (man).” (*Yishayahu* 30, 26)

¹⁰⁸ *Shemos* 15:21.

¹⁰⁹ *Kli Yakar*, ad loc.

¹¹⁰ *Yirmiyahu* 31:21.

Particularly interesting is the explanation of these words given in the Aramaic translation of Rabbi Yonason ben Uziel. The Talmud states that his teachings were handed down to him from the last prophets, Chagai, Zechariah, and Malachi, and that he revealed hidden secrets in the prophecies he translated.¹¹¹

Rabbi Yonason ben Uziel explains the words *nekeivah tisovev gever* as “the nation of the House of Israel will study Torah”. Rashi explains that the term “the entire house of Israel”- unlike the term the “Children of Israel”- refers to both males and females, and *Midrash Rus* says that the term “House of Israel” refers specifically to women.¹¹² In other words, Rabbi Yonason ben Uziel is saying that the new thing that Hashem created in the earth is that the House of Israel (i.e. women) will be studying Torah.

Thus, according to the *Targum Yonason*, *nekeivah tisovev gever* means that a female will turn into a male, in the sense that she will study Torah, which is a male occupation.

The *Me'or V'Shemesh*, whose commentary is based on the teachings of the Ari z”l, also speaks of *nekeivah tisovev gever* in relation to Miriam’s circle dance with the women.¹¹³ He, however, interprets these words as a female will encircle a man, with “female” referring to all the righteous souls, and “man” referring to God.

He explains that at the beginning of creation, God made all equal, but afterwards He constricted the (obvious) presence of His Godliness in varying degrees making spiritual worlds of successively lower and lower levels. This was necessary in order to hide his Godliness and so enable the existence of free will. Equality is represented by a circle, where there is no beginning and no end, and where all points on the circumference are equidistant from the center point, which represents God.

Hierarchy, on the other hand, is represented by a straight line, going down like a ladder. We in this world, who stand at the bottom of this ladder, must rise level by level by improving our conduct and striving for closeness to God. As we do this, our

¹¹¹ *Maseches Megillah* 3a: “Unkelos the convert said the (Aramaic) translation of the Torah from what he heard from the mouths of Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua. And (the translation) of the prophets, Yonasan ben Uziel said from the mouths of Chagai, Zecharia and Malachi. At that time the Land of Israel shook, four hundred parsas by four hundred parsas. A heavenly voice went out and said, “Who is it that revealed my secrets to human beings?”

¹¹² Rashi, on *Devarim* 34, 8 states, “*Bnei Yisrael* are the males... all the House of Israel means males and females.” *Midrash Rus* 4, 4 says, “Rabbi Acha said, “... the generations are redeemed only in the merit of the good women of that generation, as it says, ‘He remembers His kindness and His faith to the House of Israel’ (Tehilim 98). It does not say to the sons of Israel (*Bnei Yisrael*) here, but rather to the House of Israel (*Beis Yisrael*)”. In other words, Rabbi Acha was explaining that were the verse to say “to *Bnei Yisrael*”, this would refer to the males as the dominant factor. But since the verse says “the House of Israel”, Rabbi Acha uses this as proof that scripture is referring specifically to females. From here we see that the term “House of Israel” is a reference to females, while *Bnei Yisrael* (Children of Israel) refers to the males. And “The entire house of Israel”, as Rashi says, refers to both males and females equally. Therefore, when *Targum Yonason* translates ‘for Hashem has created a new thing in the earth a female will turn (into) a man as “for Hashem has created a new thing in the earth, the nation of the House of Israel will study Torah”, he is informing us that the new thing that Hashem created in the earth is that women – the House of Israel – will be studying Torah. This is how a female will turn into a male, because until that time Torah study was for men. (Perhaps the insertion of the word “nation” before the phrase “House of Israel” is an allusion to the fact that not only women, but also the unlearned male Jews who are called *amei ha'aretz* (the nations of the Land) will also at that time study Torah.

¹¹³ *Me'or V'shemesh* on *Sefer Shemos* 15:20.

souls rise higher and higher. God did this so that we could earn our reward through our own efforts.

However, there is a difference in the starting points of different souls. Some people have souls that emanate from a higher point, while others have souls that emanate from a lower point. Those whose souls are higher must teach and influence those whose souls are lower, with these then handling down the influence to those whose souls are beneath them, etc. The influencer is called a male, while those receiving influence are called female. This is the Jewish idea of hierarchy: to give over God's teachings to those beneath and thereby raise them to a higher level.¹¹⁴

In the future, however, after all the sins are rectified and evil no longer exists, the circle situation will return. All those who served God will be equal, with no need for one to learn from the other. God's presence will be seen equally in all the worlds so there will no longer be higher souls and lower souls, and the aspect of male influencer versus the influenced female will disappear.

The *Me'or V'Shemesh* then continues: "This is the meaning of the *hakafos* (circle dances) that we do on *Hoshana Rabba* and *Shemini Atzeres*; we do circle dances according to the secret of *nekeivah tisovev gever* (a female will encircle a man) in order to draw in the upper light where there is no aspect of male and female. This was the intention of Miriam the Prophetess who took out all the women after her and instructed them in circle dances according to the secret of *nekeivah tisovev gever*, in order to draw the upper light where there is no aspect of male and female."

And so, although the commentaries quoted give slightly differing translations of the phrase "*nekeivah tisovev gever*", they all make the same statement – that in the future, men and women will possess equal spiritual perception.

The question is, at what point in the future is this to take place? The *Me'or V'Shemesh* describes a situation which will exist only after the complete rectification of the world. And the *Kli Yakar* in his commentary to the first verse of the prayer "*Az Yashir*" connects *nekeivah tisovev gever* to *t'chiyas hameisim*, the revival of the dead. It is at this point, he explains, that males and females will be equal.¹¹⁵ These commentaries are speaking of great prophetic experiences which will exist only at a further point in the future.

Although all this is surely true, Rabbi Yonason ben Uziel, whose commentary is based on the prophets' own explanations, does not connect *nekeivah tisovev gever* with prophecy, but with Torah study. Although he gives no time frame for this, the thirty-first chapter in *Yirmiyahu* where the relevant verse appears, is speaking not about *Olam Habah* nor the return to the Garden of Eden, but about the ingathering of the exiles to the Land of Israel. And Rabbi Yonason ben Uziel says that *Yeshayahu's* prophecy, "The light of the moon will be as the light of the sun" (which we have

¹¹⁴ *Sfas Emes* on *Parshas Naso* 5641: "and so there are always levels, and everyone must bless the one beneath him until all are attached to the upper root."

¹¹⁵ *Kli Yakar* 15, 1 "Our Sages say that a maidservant saw at the sea what Yechezkel (Ezekiel) did not see. (The prophet Yechezkel had a vision of God's heavenly hosts and His throne of glory, but the maid servant at the sea had a heavenly vision greater than this) ...And what is the connection of this song (e.g. *Az Yashir*) to the revival of the dead? Just as in *Olam Habah* all will be disconnected from the material, and then males and females are equal, so on the sea, a maidservant saw the light of the glory of God, an example of what will be in the future, as it says '*nekeivah tisovev gever*.'"

shown signifies feminine equality) will take place “on the day that Hashem will return the exile of His nation”.¹¹⁶

And indeed, in the period when millions of Jews have returned to live in the Land of Israel, our current reality, the scenario Rabbi Yonason ben Uziel predicted has begun to materialize as women have, in fact, begun to learn Torah. We no longer see the marked distinction between the levels of abstract spiritual perception of men and women that were described by earlier generations. Furthermore, in society and marriage, women have also become much more equal. And yet the redemption has not yet come, and ironically this Torah study is sometimes disconnected from holiness. How are we to understand this?

¹¹⁶ *Targum Yonason on Yeshayahu 30, 26*. The verse continues that the light of the sun will be seven times as great as on the seven days of creation. This raises two questions: First, does this mean that the moon’s light will be as great as the sun’s light is *now*, while the sun’s light will become even greater? If so, this implies that even after the redemption, although women will have the light of Torah, they will still have less spiritual perception than men. Second, the verse is obviously describing very miraculous events, so how can this be related to our times? As for the first question, the *Kli Yakar* and others say specifically that women will be equal with men: “Then males and females are equal.” (*Kli Yakar* 15:1, quoted above). Moreover, we have already shown that after the rectification, everything will return to be as it was before the sin, and before the sin man and woman were equal, as the *midrash* says of the sun and the moon “they were created equal”. If in the future men will have much more light than women, this is not a return to the original state. This is spoken of specifically in the *Me’or V’shemesh* (Part 1 on *Shabbos Rosh Chodesh*) who says of the eventual rectification of the moon’s diminution: “But in the future the earth will be filled with the knowledge of Hashem... the sun and the moon... will shine down to people **AND THEY WILL MERIT TO SEE THE LIGHTS EQUALLY** as they were when originally created”. This clearly shows that in messianic times the sun and the moon’s light will be equal.

(The *Me’or V’shemesh* connects this with the male and female aspects of Hashem, but this parallels man and woman, for man was created parallel to Hashem’s male aspect and woman parallel to Hashem’s female aspect as the verse says, “And Hashem created the Adam (human being) in His image and form, male and female He created them”. Furthermore, as *Likutey Halachos* discussing the *mitzvah of tzitzis* points out, whatever happens to the *Shechinah* happens to actual women. And as already quoted, the *Shlah* directly connects the verse “The light of the moon will be as great as the light of the sun” with actual women.)

Therefore, it follows logically that when the light of the sun and the moon will be seen equally, as they were at creation (as the *Me’or V’shemesh* explains) then man’s and woman’s light will also be equal. Furthermore, as already mentioned, the Ari z”l explained that *nekeivah tisovev gever* represents equality, for the circle is the symbol of equality, as explained in the *Me’or V’shemesh* quoted in the text. This, too, shows that woman will not only return to her original greatness but also that men and women will be equal. *Michtav Me’eliyahu* (Part 4, Pages 206-207) says: “In the way that Hashem originally willed it that the intellect and the heart are equal... and so it will be in the rectified world in the future, (that the power of the sun and the power of the moon will be equal) as we say, ‘May it be Your will to fill the flaw of the moon... and the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun’”. Furthermore, The *Bnei Yisaschar* on *Rosh Chodesh*, the festival of the new moon, says specifically that in the future there will be two kings with one crown. I also remember seeing, that *Rosh Chodesh* will be a true holiday with *melachos* being forbidden just as on *Shabbos*, again showing equality of female with male.) So the verse must mean that the light of the moon will become as the light of the sun after it will be increased.

As for the second question, isn’t the verse referring to miraculous, rather than natural events? The answer is yes, but the beginning of the redemptive changes are natural and then become miraculous, as explained afterwards. Since the light of the moon becoming as the light of the sun is intrinsically connected to the return of the Jews from the exile, it is understandable that both would follow the same rules. All this, however, is only if everything is done in accordance with Torah. Otherwise, even though the powers of redemption are already influencing the world, the redemption itself is further delayed. Practically, this means that when the powers of redemption are not used according to the Torah, they come out negatively and Moshiach and the true and complete miraculous salvation do not yet come.

In order to answer this question, we must first understand something about the period before the coming of the redemption called “*Ikvesa D'Meshichah*” – the heel of Moshiach.

The Dawn of Redemption

Approximately two-hundred years ago, Rabbi Hillel Shklover, student of the renowned Vilna Gaon, authored a book on the first stage of the redemption called *Kol HaTor*. The words “*kol hator*” literally mean the voice of the dove and are found in a verse in *Shir HaShirim*.¹¹⁷ According to *Kol HaTor*, these words allude to Moshiach ben Yosef who prepares the way for the main redeemer, Moshiach ben David.

According to Rabbi Hillel, the entire book is based on what the great master and *Kabbalist*, the Vilna Gaon, taught him and his other students before they embarked for the Holy Land as part of a plan to bring about the redemption.¹¹⁸ The book states that the *Gaon*, who was exceedingly righteous, received his knowledge through *Ruach Hakodesh* and that he spoke with Elijah the Prophet and our forefather Yaakov. (Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin, the *Gaon*'s most famous student, also writes this.)¹¹⁹

The *Gaon* was told that beginning in the year 5500 from creation (1740 CE), the powers of the redemption begin to enter the world. This is because this point in history parallels the dawn of the sixth day of creation, the eve of Shabbos.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ *Shir HaShirim* 2:12.

¹¹⁸ *Kol HaTor* (Page 20) Yosef Rivlin Edition: “And about all the stages of the beginning of the redemption, he (the Vilna Gaon, also known as the Gra) revealed to many of his students who promised faithfully to go up to Zion and to practically start the work of the ingathering of the exiles by arousal from below, with heavenly help.” And on Page 97, “All the students of the Gra that promised faithfully to go to our Holy Land and to devote themselves to the settling of the Holy Land, our rabbi (the Gra) revealed to them from the secrets of the ways of the beginning of the redemption according to the secret of the things to do, the times to do them, and those who should do them.”

¹¹⁹ Page 95: “I will tell a tiny bit, as much as we are allowed, about the lofty vision...that our teacher the Gra saw...he prayed very much with fasting and crying to receive clear advice from Heaven...he was answered with a great and holy vision with heavenly revelations, the revelation of Yaakov Avinu...”. The footnote also brings quotes from the introduction of Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin to the Biurei HaGra on *Sifra Ditzniusa*: “And from the time that he merited the revelation of Eliyahu z”l...” Tolidanu Edition (Page 7) and “What Yaakov Avinu a”h and Eliyahu revealed to him there (Page 27). Also Rabbi Yisrael of Shklov writes in his introduction to *Pe'as HaShulchan* “And I saw another secret that Yaakov Avinu a”h revealed to [the Gra] about what he had difficulty with in the writings of the Ari.”

¹²⁰ Page 23: “*Ikvos Meshicha* were opened in the beginning from the first hour of morning of the sixth day of the sixth (meaning) of the sixth millennia, which is the year 500 of our sixth millennia (1740 in the secular counting) ...and from the second hour (5542 which is 1782 CE) the aspect of ‘All the House of Israel’, both the group, and each individual in Israel, entered into the *p'kidah* (the time when God remembers us for redemption) of the loftiness of the first Moshiach, Moshiach son of Yosef”. Also on Page 113 “...the first *p'kidah* which began from the beginning of the light of morning of the sixth century of the sixth millennia (e.g. the year 5500 which is 1740 CE)...and from this year, meaning from 5600 (1840CE) and onwards begins the *Kol HaTor* in the light of our rabbi the Gra which grows in strength until the prepared day (of redemption)”. And in Footnote 53 brought on Page 28 of the Yosef Rivlin Edition it says, “In order that you tell the last generation” (Tehillim 48, 14), referring to the period which begins from the year 5500 until the year 5750 of the sixth millennia” (1740-1990 CE) as explained in chapter five in the source just quoted.

However, the year 5750 is not mentioned there. This footnote is from the editor, Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Rivlin, who abridged the original work of his great grandfather, Rabbi Hillel Shklover. Everything was copied by hand and some of it went lost. Apparently, what was to be explained about the year 5750 (1990 CE) was not completed. The editor, however, left a note to himself with this footnote saying “Explain the matter further”.

Everything that will be in the full redemption, he says, enters the world little by little in this period. This messianic potential will become stronger after the year 5600 (1840 CE), and between 5600 and 5750 (1840 CE – 1990 CE) it will be possible to bring the first stage of the redemption by using this potential properly.¹²¹ The Vilna Gaon was charged with this task and was instructed in how to do so. He was warned, however that the forces of evil will rise to fight this plan and will have great power, but will eventually fall before Moshiach ben Yosef.¹²²

It is amazing to read this book and to see how the major world changes that occurred in this period, whether social, political, or scientific, were connected to the missions of Moshiach ben Yosef, as foretold in *Kol HaTor*. It is also amazing to see that these powers entered the world exactly in the predicted period of time. Sadly, however, they often reached the world in a negative form, while Moshiach ben Yosef and the redemption have not yet arrived. Again, how are we to understand this?

Swallowed Powers

In *Koheles* we read “This versus that did God create”.¹²³ From here we learn that everything that was created for holiness has a negative parallel in order to create a balance between the forces of good and evil, and thereby enable free will. In *Kabbalah*, this negative parallel is known as a *klipe*.¹²⁴

¹²¹ Page 100: “These are the main ways of the beginning of the redemption, done with practical actions, by arousal from below (meaning that we arouse the heavenly redemption by doing things here on earth in connection with the redemption)...It is a great rule in *Ikvos Meshicha* that all three main foundations i.e. the tasks to do, the times to do them, and those charged with doing them, need to come as one, altogether, as a threefold thread which is not broken, meaning the deeds, the times, and the emissaries, as alluded to in the verse ‘The buds are seen’, meaning the tasks, ‘the time of the singing bird, meaning the times, *Kol HaTor* meaning the emissaries. ...meaning that the time (for redemption) comes according to the desire of Israel in the arousal from below...and it is upon us to see and to do in everything as much as is in our power of our reason with the help of the One who gives man reason according to our rabbis and according to our Rabbi the Gra, and with the holy allusions, and with all the power of our hand....” This idea is repeated constantly throughout the book.

¹²² Page 127: “In the *Ikvos Meshicha* of the Sages, that is, both in the time of *Ikvos Meshicha* and in the actions of *Ikvos Meshicha*, meaning those things which must be done in the beginning of the redemption, which are the ingathering of the exiles, the building of Jerusalem, the revelation of truth, and *kiddush Hashem* (the sanctification of God’s name) as mentioned above, then the other side (e.g. the forces of evil) will gather strength to disturb and to place obstacles by uprooting the truth and preventing the sanctification of God’s name, and about this it says “they disgraced the *Ikvos* of Your *Moshiach* (Tehillim 89)...The *sitra achra* (forces of evil) wants to uproot the truth and to bring to *Chilul Hashem* and we will fight against it by redeeming the truth and sanctifying God’s name...and we must remember that although this power comes miraculously from heaven...still, in every matter of a *mitzvah* one must begin with arousal from below (e.g. our own actions) and about this it says, ‘the truth will sprout from the earth’...”

Also on Page 32: “*Ikvos Meshicha* come with disturbances and obstacles from the side of the angel of Eisav and also through Aramilus the angel of the *erev rav*, but in the end they fall into the hand of the angel of Yosef, as it says in *Midrash Tanchuma* on *Parshas Ki Tetze*, with the help of Moshiach ben David, according to the aspect of Yehuda saving Yosef.”

¹²³ *Koheles* 7:14.

¹²⁴ The *Sfas Emes* on *Parshas Miketz* 5635 says, “For there is nothing in holiness that does not have a *klipe* and concealment opposite it”, and *ibid* 5637: “For the rule is that everything within time has a mixture of good and evil and these are the six weekdays which in every point of light of these days there is opposite it some darkness, (according to the rule of) ‘this versus that’”.

When any power or tool enters the world, it must be used for holiness. If not, it does not simply lie dormant, but falls to “the other side” i.e. the *klipos*, and then, in its perverted form, is used to aid evil.¹²⁵

The *Zohar*, cited by the *Sfas Emes*, explains Pharaoh’s dream, which was interpreted by Yosef, as follows: the seven good looking cows represent the forces of good, while the seven bad looking cows, who swallowed them, represent the forces of evil, who then come and swallow up the good forces.¹²⁶ The *Tiferes Shlomo* also cites the *Zohar* and warns at length about the possibility of the good powers being swallowed up by the bad ones. Elsewhere he emphasizes that the powers of Yosef in particular are in danger of being swallowed. This, he says, is the deeper meaning of our forefather Jacob’s words, “*chaya ra’ah achalushu*”, an evil animal has swallowed him (Yosef)”. The evil animal, says the *Tiferes Shlomo*, are the forces of evil.¹²⁷ And as we have already stated, if one is not careful to utilize the forces of good, the evil side can then come and “swallow up” any unused portion of the tools of holiness thus perverting them and using them for evil.

¹²⁵ *Likutey Moharan* (I, 69) says, “When something is incomplete, there is place for the *sitra achra* and the *klipos* to grab onto it.” And under the heading “The Secret of Our Times”, the *Michtav Me’Eliyahu* Part 4, P. 123 says: “The purpose of everything is to be a tool for holiness, and when a person uses something for its purpose, then that thing rises and becomes sanctified. When it does not reach its purpose, spiritual impurity takes hold of it. The greater the holiness, the worse the impurity”. The *Sfas Emes* on *Purim* 5640 uses this idea to explain why Mordechai told Esther that Haman had offered a very huge sum of money to the king for exterminating the Jews, although the king did not actually accept the money. “It very much disturbed the *tzaddik* Mordechai that Haman had so much ‘generosity’, which would have been impossible unless the children of Israel were in a low state, for according to their failings in generosity to the Creator, so that much (generosity) is found amongst the evil doers.”

This is also how the Gerrer Rebbe, Rabbi Simcha Bunim Alter, zt”l, explained the events of modern times. *The Jewish Observer* of June, 1980, brings the following quote in his name: “Every time God grants *Klal Yisrael* some spark of inspiration and they fail to utilize it properly, its power is exploited by other forces...”

¹²⁶ *Sfas Emes* on *Parshas Miktetz* 5637: “For the *sitra achra* [imitates] the holiness like a monkey after people, as it says in the holy *Zohar*. And this is why it says ‘and they (the bad looking cows who represent the forces of evil) stood next to the (good looking) cows’. For every place where there is an opening of the gates of holiness there is opposite this some concealment...” and *ibid* 5653: “About Pharaoh’s dream of the seven cows coming up after them (e.g., the bad ones after the good ones) ‘and they stood by, and they ate’. There are three levels. For the heavenly influence which descends (to this world), at its heavenly source is without waste matter, but there is a *klipa* coming up after it. Afterwards in the lower world, the *sitra achra* (force of evil, literally “other side”) stands equally with the forces of holiness. And in the even lower world the evil one has dominion over the *tzaddik*. This is what it means: ‘And they ate’”.

¹²⁷ *Tiferes Shlomo* on *Parshas Miktetz*, “In the holy *Zohar* it is explained that the seven good cows and the seven full sheaves allude to the seven (heavenly) halls of holiness and the seven characteristics of holiness, and the bad cows and the thin sheaves allude to the seven aspects of the *sitra achra* in the *klipa*... ‘and the bad cows ate... and the thin and bad swallowed the good’ for *chas v’shalom*, [The *klipos*] have power to overcome and swallow up the holy sparks...” And *Tiferes Shlomo* on Yom Kippur in the section on *Ne’ilah* says, “...and this is what Yaakov said, ‘an evil animal has eaten him, Yosef has been torn apart’, meaning that Yosef is the one who brings down affluence as it says, ‘he is the one who distributes food’. But Yaakov was afraid that the affluence would *chas v’shalom* go down to the evil forces and that is ‘an evil animal has eaten him’, meaning that it (the evil side) will eat up this affluence...” Similarly, the *Tiferes Shlomo* says in his commentary to *Pirkei Avos* on the words, “*Asu siyug laTorah*” (make a fence around the Torah), “For when the influences and the lights from above descend, they need to be guarded from the external (evil) forces, so that they find no way to get a hold of the domain of holiness”, and again on the words “*yiten v’iyitnu acherim, chossid*”, he says, “It is known that the work of the *tzaddikim* is to prevent the influence from going to the *sitra achra*”(other side). The idea that good powers can be taken over and used by evil forces is mentioned in *Tiferes Shlomo* in many other places as well.

With this explanation in mind, we can now understand what happened to the powers of Moshiach ben Yosef, who is an extension of the powers of Yosef himself. This period of history had in it the potential for Moshiach ben Yosef, the first stage of the redemption. And *Kol HaTor* states that everything that will be in the full redemption enters the world little by little in the preliminary stage of redemption.¹²⁸

Consequently, the forces connected to the redemption have entered the world. The Vilna Gaon, however, makes it clear that despite this potential, we receive the period of Moshiach ben Yosef only if we merit him.¹²⁹ Since we did not yet merit his coming, much of his powers were left unused for holiness. They therefore fell to the other side, the *klipos*, and were used to aid evil.

It might seem startling that human beings going to settle in the Land of Israel could start the redemption at an earlier date. It might also seem startling that the heaven-sent powers of Moshiach ben Yosef could actually be misused for destruction. Neither concept, however, is new.

The *midrash* tells us that thirty years before the Exodus from Egypt, the grandson of Ephraim said that God had appeared to him and told him to take the Jews out of Egypt and bring them to the Holy Land. One hundred thousand descendants of the tribe of Ephraim followed him, and truly reached the Land of Israel. The end of this, however, was a tragedy. When they reached the city of Gat, which is in Gaza, the Philistines killed thirty thousand and the others were sent back to Egypt.¹³⁰

Although at first sight it would seem that this “redeemer” must have been a fraud, *Kabbalah* teaches that this was not so. Gavon, the grandson of Ephraim,¹³¹ had in him the soul of Mashiach ben Yosef¹³² and this had truly been an opportunity to start the redemption earlier, in a seemingly natural way, by going to settle in the Land of Israel. Why, then did it not work?

The *Sfas Emes* on *Parshas Miketz* explains that in order to succeed they needed to overcome the test of believing that what happened in a seemingly natural way was all God’s miracles and not to attribute their success to their own efforts. But Gavon and his followers did not withstand the test; their story ended in tragedy and the redemption had to wait another thirty years.¹³³

And so once again, the Jewish People were given the possibility of starting the redemption naturally and at an earlier date, preceding the miraculous Heavenly

¹²⁸ *Kol HaTor* (Page 33).

¹²⁹ *Sifra DiTzniusa* 16:3, brought in the commentary to *Even Sheleima* 11:9.

¹³⁰ *Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer* Chapter 47; *Yalkut Shimoni* on *Sefer Shemos* 226.

¹³¹ The sources I found, write the name as Gavon, but in Hebrew the letters for Gavon appear almost identical to the letters for "Nun", the father of Yehoshua bin Nun, who was a grandson of Ephraim. The letter *gimmel* (pronounced like a “g”) and the letter nun (pronounced like an “n”) are very similar looking in Hebrew print, and the other two letters, “vav” and “nun” are the same. I therefore wonder if there was a copying mistake and the person who led them was actually Nun, a grandson of Ephraim and the father of Yehoshua bin Nun. If so, this would fit perfectly, because it was his son, the prime pupil of Moshe Rabbeinu, who actually settled the Jewish People in the Land of Israel.

¹³² *Sefer Gilguley Neshamot* by Rabbi Mnachem Azariah MiFano, 70:1

¹³³ *Sfas Emes* on *Parshas Miketz*, 5658: “And one could say that those thirty years which the sons of Ephraim left earlier from Egypt were certainly also a place for redemption. But because they relied on their own strength it became defected, and they had to wait another thirty years.”

redemption. According to *Kol HaTor*, the Vilna Gaon was informed by our forefather Yaakov of the Heavenly opportunity to hasten the redemption by settling the Land of Israel and properly utilizing the other powers of Moshiach ben Yosef. But unlike the full redemption, which comes as a heavenly gift, the redemption of Moshiach ben Yosef must be earned by overcoming tests. Tragically, in our times as well, the tests were not withstood, but the powers connected to the redemption did actually enter the world. Although some of them were utilized for their true purpose, much was not. The result was that the unused powers, not having reached their true purpose, fell into the hands of the *klipos*, the negative forces. And as the Vilna Gaon said in his commentary on *Sifra DiTzniusa*,¹³⁴ in the period of *Ikvos Meshicha*, the *klipa* form precedes the true form of what will come to be.

Let us now examine modern history and see what happened to the powers of Mashiach Ben Yosef, including *nekeivah tisovev gever*.

ZIONISM:

The prophet Yechezkel said: “And you, the mountains of Israel, give forth your branches, and carry your fruit, for my people Israel, for they are close to arriving.”¹³⁵ On this the Talmud states: “There is no more revealed end than this: when the Land (of Israel) will give forth its fruit”.¹³⁶ This statement is usually understood to mean that if the Land of Israel will once again become fruitful after years of extreme desolation, it is a sign that the redemption with the return of the Jewish People is at hand. This is because, as the Torah foretold, the Land would be barren to intruders and will be fruitful only for its own children, the Jewish People.¹³⁷

But the Vilna Gaon revealed in this another meaning. He said, that if we return to the Land of Israel and make the land fruitful, then this will bring the beginning of the redemption, the coming of Moshiach ben Yosef.¹³⁸

¹³⁴ The Vilna Gaon on *Sifra DiTzniusa*, Chapter 1, Page 11 (Rabbi Shmuel Luria Edition) says: “The beginning of the revelation of the heel, which is *Ikvos Meshicha* (literally, the heel of Moshiach), then the *klipa* comes before the fruit...” (seen in *Da'as Chaim* Page 77).

¹³⁵ Yechezkel 36:8.

¹³⁶ *Maseches Sanhedrin* 98a, *Maseches Megillah* 17b.

¹³⁷ “I will make the land so desolate and your enemies who dwell in it will be desolate” (*Vayikra* 26:32). On this the Ramban says, “Similarly, that which He stated here, ‘and your enemies that dwell therein shall be desolate in it’ constitutes a good tiding, proclaiming that during all our exiles, our land will not accept our enemies. This also is a great proof and assurance to us, for in the whole inhabited part of the world one cannot find such a good and large land which was always lived in and yet is as ruined as this, for since the time that we left it, it has not accepted any nation or people, and they all try to settle it, but they cannot.”

¹³⁸ There is no contradiction here to the three oaths mentioned in the *Gemara* (*Maseches Kesubos* 111a) and *Midrash Shir Hashirim* (*Parsha 2, Piska* 20), which are not to return to the Land of Israel as a wall, not to rebel against the nations, and not to “push” the end. This is because the injunction not to go up as a wall is explained by Rashi as “altogether and by force” and the Vilna Gaon was not saying to use force. Nor was he saying that they all return to together. *Kol HaTor* states that when the Vilna Gaon was asked if it were possible to bring back all the Jews at once if they should do so, he answered to bring 600,000 at first and this would bring the full *geula* (*Kol HaTor* Page 139). The oath not to go up as a wall applies only when the majority of Jews return together to *Eretz Yisrael*, and 600,000 is not the majority. As for the oath not to rebel against the nations, *Kol HaTor* specifically states (Page 145) that wars may be fought only in defense (but he also says there that these wars will lead to the conquering of the Land of Israel). Furthermore, *Kol HaTor* says that the preliminary stage of the redemption will begin “as in the days of Cyrus...and will be with the permission of the rulers of the nations” (Page 21). And in his commentary to *Shir*

The Vilna Gaon told his students that now that we have entered the sixth millennia, the general period of redemption, a special heavenly opportunity has been given to hasten the redemption in this way. Therefore the *Gaon* started a movement to resettle the Land of Israel, undo the desolation, and make it fruitful.¹³⁹ He called this plan *Chazon Tzion* (Vision of Zion).¹⁴⁰ The return, he taught, will be twofold: a physical return to Zion and a spiritual return - *teshuva* (repentance).¹⁴¹ The plan would have to be carried out with holiness, being careful to keep the special commandments pertaining to the Land of Israel in order to succeed.¹⁴² *Kol HaTor* quotes the verse from *Yeshayahu*: “House of Jacob go, and we will go in the light of God”.¹⁴³ Later, in chapter six, *Kol HaTor* states that if the plan is not carried out in the spirit of God, it cannot succeed.¹⁴⁴ Speaking in the Holy Tongue also hastens the redemption, he taught, especially when done in the Land of Israel.¹⁴⁵

And so, the students of the Vilna Gaon and other dedicated Jews went to settle in the Land of Israel in order to begin the redemption. They or their descendants managed to build fifty new neighborhoods in Jerusalem and start a few agricultural settlements in a land that was almost totally barren.¹⁴⁶

Hashirim 2 (Siddur HaGra Page 48), the Vilna Gaon says that not to push the end means not to go out to build the *Beis HaMikdash* on our own. This is also mentioned in *Kol HaTor* (Page 141).

¹³⁹ “...and the main actions are the building of Jerusalem, the ingathering of the exiles, and fulfilling the *mitzvos* which are dependent on the Land, according to the secret of the *Ketz Hamigulah*, (the revealed end)” (*Kol HaTor* P. 30). And, “How much and how far must one go in planting the land? Until the Holy Land is not desolate, until the Holy Land carries fruit. And the purpose of this is to erase the spirit of impurity from the land...and this is the secret of the *mitzvah* of ‘When you come to the land, you shall plant’...and this is the main secret of *Ketz Hamigulah* mentioned by the Sages” *Ibid* P. 142. And, “...the ingathering of the exiles and the building of Jerusalem, erasing the spirit of impurity from the midst of the land, based on the verse ‘And you the mountains of Israel, give forth your branches and carry your fruit for my nation Israel for they are close to arriving.’ About this verse the Gemara (Sanhedrin 98) says that this is *Ketz Hamigulah*... and the entire matter of *Ketz HaMiguleh* is the great task of Moshiach ben Yosef, and from heaven this mission was given to (be started by) arousal from below (i.e. by human efforts) by our Rabbi the Gra z”l (*ibid*. Page 138). This idea is repeated throughout the book.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*. Page 32: “Our rabbi the Gra told us to call the fundraising for the ingathering of the exiles by the name *Chazon Tzion*...” *Kol HaTor* explains that it was not called “*Shivat Tziyon*,” the return to Zion, because at that point it was still too early to publicize this. The Vilna Gaon taught that they must start the return to Zion modestly.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid* Page 22: “According to our Rabbi the Gra, the ingathering of the exiles which is in the *aschalta degeula* (the preliminary stage of the redemption)...is redemption from the subjugation of the body and from the subjugation of the soul. ‘They will return’ has a double meaning. They will return to Zion, as it says there, ‘And they will come to Zion’, and they will return in *teshuva*.”

¹⁴² *Ibid*. Page 29: “And our Rabbi writes explicitly that the ingathering of the exiles depends upon the merit of keeping the *mitzvos* which pertain to the land.”

¹⁴³ “And our rabbi gave us a wonderful allusion about this in the verse ‘House of Jacob go and we will go in the light of God’...and scripture does not leave its simple meaning, which is that everything must be in the light of God, meaning the inner soul of our Torah” (*Ibid* Page 139). The inner soul of the Torah is referring to *Kabbalah*, as explained there. But if scripture does not leave its simple meaning then “we will go in the light of God” surely means that everything must be done according to the laws of the Torah. At any rate, the two coincide, for *Kabbalah* includes (and with very great emphasis) the need to keep all the laws of the Torah.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*. Page 143: “This is what is written, ‘If God does not build a house, its builders have built in vain’, meaning that if the building is not in the spirit of God, its builders have worked in vain.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid* Page 126: “...and as brought in ‘*Sod K’doshim*’, speaking in the holy tongue gives pleasure to the One who formed *Bereishis*...And how much more so, when speaking in the holy tongue in the Land of Israel...”

¹⁴⁶ *Ha’Ish al HaChomah* Part 2, Pages 161-162 lists the names of the 45 neighborhoods built between 1860 and 1893, three years before Herzl convened the first Zionist Congress. Because the

But the movement to resettle the Land of Israel was eventually taken over by secular Zionism, which had an entirely different goal. As Ben Hecht, a secular Zionist spokesman put it, “They (the secular Zionists) were out to change the Jews from the people of the Torah to the people of [a secular] Zion – a [secular] nation.”¹⁴⁷

Secular Zionism really did succeed in building up the Land of Israel, making it fruitful, and repopulating it with millions of Jews. But *Kol HaTor* foretold that settling the Land of Israel would bring the redemption only if it was done “*b’or Hashem*”, in the light of Hashem, which, he explains, is the light of Torah.¹⁴⁸ Since the resettlement of the Land of Israel was not done in holiness, it did not bring the redemption.

And although there are beautiful religious communities today in the Land of Israel, secular Zionism outwardly succeeded in changing large numbers of Jews from the people of the Torah, just as they planned. The majority of those who came to settle were weaned away from a Torah life in a state whose laws and lifestyle often contradict the Torah's teachings. Much of the state of Israel is now suffering from the same moral and social problems as the rest of western society, whose culture it imitates.

As for the Hebrew language, its knowledge is extremely helpful for people who want to use it to study Torah or speak in a way that corresponds to its precepts. But the language is all too often used to express ideas antithetical to the purpose of the Holy Tongue.

THE SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL REVOLUTIONS, AND PSYCHOLOGY

Kol HaTor quotes the statement of the *Zohar*: “And in the 600th year of the sixth millennia (i.e. 5600 years since creation, written in Hebrew as TOR, or 1840), the gates of wisdom above and the streams of wisdom below will be opened up, and the world will prepare itself to enter the seventh millennia.” The *Zohar* then compares this to a person who prepares himself on Friday afternoon for the entering of Shabbos.¹⁴⁹ In other words, from the period of 1840 onwards, the world will receive a tremendous influx of knowledge in order to prepare itself for its perfected state after the

accomplishments of the very religious Jews who preceded the secular Zionist movement is generally not known, I would like to bring here a quote from Avraham Moshe Lunz in his work *Jerusalem in the Last Forty Years*: “When I pass through the streets of new Jerusalem and see its beautiful and glorious buildings, the large and small neighborhoods, crowded and humming with people; the synagogues, the study Houses, the elementary *yeshivot* and the advanced *yeshivot*, the benevolent societies which fill them (the neighborhoods); the bright faced and happy youth running to and fro in its streets, and the traffic of life which fills their creation – I remember how it looked forty years earlier (1869)”. (Printed in *Lu’ach Eretz Yisrael* Pages 15-19) and in *Netivot Zion V’Yerushalayim* (Pages 197-262) and brought in *Ha’Ish al HaChomah* Part 2, Page 92). It is worth noting that Lunz was associated with the secular Zionist movement, and so had no reason to exaggerate the accomplishments of the very observant Jews who were the first settlers. The same book also speaks of agricultural settlements. The first *moshav* (settlement), Petach Tikvah, was built by very religious Jews, as was Rosh Pina, Yesod HaMa’alah, Chadera, Rechovot, Rishon LeZion, and others.

¹⁴⁷ *Perfidy*, Page 11.

¹⁴⁸ See note 141.

¹⁴⁹ *Zohar on Parshas Vayera*, Page 117, brought in *Kol HaTor*, Page 116.

redemption in the seventh millennia. *Kol HaTor* states, “So our master (the Vilna Gaon) told us, these are the things that bring to the sanctification of God’s Name in *Ikvesa DeMeshicha* (the period directly prior to the coming of *Moshiach*): the building of Jerusalem, the ingathering of the exiles, the flowering of the Land of Israel, the perfection of character traits, the revelation of the codes of the Torah (the hidden messages in the Torah, including equal spacing codes) and the study of the seven forms of wisdom”.¹⁵⁰

The seven forms of wisdom are:

1. Mathematics
2. Formations and putting together (i.e. inventions)
3. Medicine and the wisdom of plants
4. Grammar, correct expression, and composition
5. Music and holiness¹⁵¹
6. The wisdom of repair and integration
7. The wisdom of how the physical connects with the spiritual; psychology¹⁵²

These forms of wisdom, says *Kol Ha’Tor*, were all made known to Yosef, who was taught by an angel before he stood before Pharaoh and they are connected to the task of his heir, Moshiach ben Yosef.¹⁵³

Science and all forms of earthly wisdom are all part of the Torah, and although they constitute its lowest level, *Kol HaTor* states that knowledge of them is necessary to reach understanding of the Torah’s highest, *kabbalistic* levels.¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, the Vilna Gaon taught, if Torah scholars will become masters of

¹⁵⁰ *Kol HaTor*, Page 116.

¹⁵¹ Through correct music, one’s soul can attach itself to holiness. The converse is also true: animalistic music arouses animalistic instincts and impurity.

¹⁵² Ibid. Page 120. Many readers might find this surprising since so many Torah leaders most strongly objected to studying “external (i.e. secular) wisdoms”. How could the Vilna Gaon be in favor of Jews studying secular wisdom? The answer, is that these wisdoms are only secular if one removes Hashem from them, as the Greeks and their modern day followers did. If, on the other hand, one learns these forms of knowledge as a part of Hashem's great wisdom, then they are a part, albeit a lower part, of Torah. Chazal called the Geek wisdom, which included much of these subjects, "*chochmos chitsoniyos*", forms of wisdom which are outside of holiness, and their attitude towards them was very negative. Studying Greek wisdom actually led to atheism and assimilation. But when one studies them as a part of Torah, then they are just that. The Gra was speaking to his students, all of whom were great Torah scholars. He was not recommending teaching this to children or unlearned Jews, only to *talmidei chachamim*.

Moreover, when the Vilna Gaon said this, the power of scientific studies had not yet fallen into the hands of the *klipos*, as will soon be explained. After they fell, their power to cause harm increased so much that virtually anyone who studied them was cooled off in their faith and Torah observance, many leaving Torah altogether. This is because once the *klipe* becomes attached to these studies, they lose their holiness and become what Chazal called them; external wisdom which leads to atheism.

¹⁵³ Ibid. Page 121: The first one to merit heavenly *bina* (understanding) and *chochma* (wisdom) was Yosef the *tsaddik* about whom it is written ‘an understanding and wise man’. And from him is drawn the great mission of Moshiach ben Yosef in all the generations, and all the more so in the end of *Ikvos Meshicha*”.

Page 125: “And so it happened that on the night before the day of Yosef’s release from prison, he attained the seventy languages through the angel Gavriel and the seven wisdoms through the angel MT”T...and that was the first basis for the revelation of the secrets of the Torah by Moshiach ben Yosef in the *Ikvos Meshicha*...”

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. Page 119: “...and in order to understand and grasp the wisdom of the Torah which is included in the upper light of wisdom, it is necessary to learn also the seven wisdoms which are hidden in the lower world of nature.”

these forms of wisdom, this will be a great sanctification of God's Name before the gentile nations, of which the Torah says: "For this is your wisdom and your understanding in the eyes of the nations."¹⁵⁵

Great scientific and technological wisdom really did enter the world in this period. The year 1740, which *Kol HaTor* designates as the beginning of the period of the powers of Moshiach Ben Yosef, saw the start of the industrial revolution in Europe. The year 1840, which the *Zohar* says is the year when "the streams of wisdom below" are opened, saw the start of the industrial revolution in America. The development of technology greatly lightened Adam's curse of "by the sweat of your nose shall you eat bread". Modern technology has helped us even spiritually, as it leaves more time for Torah study.

Yet unfortunately, what the Vilna Gaon feared was exactly what happened. Had the scientific discoveries of the modern era come about through the Torah scholars, as the Vilna Gaon urged, it would have wrought tremendous respect for God and His Torah. The world would have said: "If the Torah scholars can do such marvelous things, if they have such great wisdom, they must really have the truth." Instead, the power of scientific discovery fell to "the other side", in the form of atheistic scientists who used the credulity they thereby earned to convince the world of their theory of atheism.¹⁵⁶

And so, despite its material benefits, the misuse of science is endangering mankind's very survival by polluting the environment, by developing weapons that could destroy the world - and worst of all, by taking people even further away from God.

Psychology, too, was perverted by Freud, et al., to convince the masses that one need not exercise control over one's evil inclination.

ECONOMIC EQUALITY:

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. Page 115: "Our rabbi, the holy Gaon of Israel, our master Eliyahu, also busied himself a great deal with scientific investigations, for the purpose of grasping the wisdom of the Torah, and for the purpose of making a *kiddush Hashem* in the eyes of the nations, and for the sake of hastening the redemption. From his youth he did wondrously in all the seven wisdoms and he requested very much and even commanded of his students to learn as much as possible these seven wisdoms of the investigation of earth, both to raise the wisdom of Israel according to the wisdom of the Torah in the eyes of the nations."

Page 118: "Who can tell and who can imagine the great concern of our rabbi for raising the banner of *Torah* and its students amongst the masses of the entire house of Israel? Where is the writer and where is the one who can measure and describe his great concern for making a *kiddush Hashem* in the eyes of the nations? Many times he would say, sighing heavily, "Why should the nations say, where is the wisdom of Israel?"

Page 122: "In every generation there are individuals within [the people of] Israel from amongst the Torah scholars who have made important scientific discoveries, with great wisdom (he also says, that many discoveries which were afterwards attributed to non-Jews were actually discovered by Jewish *Torah* scholars.) But to our great sorrow, most of the *Torah* scholars have left scientific research, which is all included and encoded in the wisdom of our holy *Torah*, this despite God's desire for our *Torah* (e.g. our scientific studies done as part of *Torah*) about which it is said, 'for it is your wisdom and understanding in the eyes of the nations'".

¹⁵⁶ This is not to say that all scientists are atheists; on the contrary, there is even an organization of orthodox Jewish scientists. But the power at large fell into the hands of atheistic scientists and that is how it is usually taught in schools, universities, and even by the media.

The Talmud states: “The son of David does not come until all the measurements are equal”.¹⁵⁷ The Vilna Gaon explained this to mean that Moshiach ben David will not come until there is economic equality.¹⁵⁸ *Hishtavus* (equality) is the first of the perfected character traits that *Kol HaTor* lists as necessary to attain in order to succeed in the plan to bring the redemption.¹⁵⁹ The Vilna Gaon also interpreted the verse in *Sefer Devarim*, “You shall not have in your home a measure and a measure, big and small” to mean that in the Land of Israel, which is your home, you shall not have rich and poor.¹⁶⁰

As part of the opportunity to bring the redemption, an ideal of economic equality now entered the world. Individuals and nations woke up to the need for social aid programs and more equal distribution of wealth. Socialism went even further. This was truly a great improvement for humanity. But when this power fell to the *klipos*, it was perverted into a monster called communism, which, while claiming to bring salvation to the masses, killed, tortured, and terrorized millions upon millions of people, and set its goal to take people away from God.

WIPING OUT AMALEK

One of Moshiach ben Yosef’s tasks is to wipe out Amalek, the earthly representative of evil.¹⁶¹ Since we did not merit to bring Moshiach ben Yosef, this power then fell to Amalek who reversed it, trying to wipe us out and consequently created the Holocaust.

¹⁵⁷ *Maseches Sanhedrin* 98a.

¹⁵⁸ *Kol HaTor* Pages 34-35: “Settling our Holy Land in general, and building Jerusalem in particular, must be done with equal measurements, according to the Sages [words] ‘the son of David does not come until all the measurements are equal, the son of David does not come until all the values weigh equally’...and all this is also according to the mission of our rabbi in the verse, ‘You shall not have in your home a large and small measurement’ (*Sefer Devarim* 25, 14). And our rabbi explained that ‘in your home’ means the Land of Israel...and in order to keep thereby the meaning of the scripture ‘Every valley will be raised and every mountain will be lowered’, and according to what is written, ‘in charity you will be established’ meaning in a way which is equal for every soul, according to what is written, ‘and I placed justice for a line and charity for an equal weight’, and about the settling of Jerusalem our rabbis have already said that Jerusalem was not divided between the tribes, and ‘one does not rent out houses in Jerusalem’...and this is the main foundation for maintaining the ‘men of faith’ mentioned above, and your sign is ‘*anshei emanah*’ (men of faith) is equal numerically to ‘*kav mashve*’ (an equal line).

Page 35: “‘In *tzedakka* (charity) you will be established’; *tzedakka* has a double meaning: charity meaning equality, as in the verse ‘and charity for an equal weight’, and charity in its simple meaning, that is donations.” The *Michtav Me’Eliyahu* writes in a similar vein, “And a person is allowed to use his money for himself liberally only if he gives in the same manner to the poor. But if he has in his house ‘a large and small measure’ (*Sefer Devarim* 25, 14), meaning one standard for his own expenses and another standard for the needs of the poor, then this is certainly robbery.” (Part 4, Page 297).

¹⁵⁹ *Kol HaTor* explains that in order to bring the redemption there must be men of perfected character traits (*anshei emanah*). The first trait they must have is *hishtavus* (equality). About this it says, “Everyone must be equal with the group, not to rise above them, not to make oneself greater than others, not materially, and not in spirit. And this is the meaning of the *Gemara* in *Sanhedrin* 98, “The son of David does not come until all the measurements are equal”. (Not to rise above others in spirit obviously does not mean not to try to be as good as one can, but rather not to aggrandize oneself spiritually.)

¹⁶⁰ See Note 155.

¹⁶¹ Page 29: “Yehoshua is from the descendants of Ephraim ben Yosef and he is the one who fought against Amalek. The numerical value of the letters of Amalek written out in full is the numerical value of *sitra achra* [This means that if you take letter *ayin* (written as *ayin*, double *yud*, *nun*), the letter *mem* (written as *mem*, *mem*), the letter *lamed* (written as *lamed*, *mem*, *daled*), and the letter *kuf* (written as *kuf*, *vav*, *feh*), and figure their numerical value it will be equal to *sitra achra*, the other side, i.e. the side

Hitler proclaimed that his real enemy was not the allies, but the Jews, for they are his polar opposites with whom he has eternal war. The Jews are his enemies, he said, because they gave the world the idea of sin and “the curses” of conscience, mercy, and circumcision. He wishes to free the world of all this and to follow instead the god of nature, i.e. the freedom to follow one’s evil nature. Whoever wins in this spiritual war, he said, will control the world.¹⁶²

This was the truth, for we are truly polar opposites and the Torah calls both Amalek and Israel “*reishis*” (the first of the nations)¹⁶³ for all the other nations follow after them, for evil or for good. There is war between us in every generation for as the Torah says regarding Amalek “There is a (hostile) hand (of Amalek) on the throne of God from generation to generation”.¹⁶⁴ What Hitler feared will truly come to be, for in the time of Moshiach, when Amalek will be eradicated, the rest of the world will return to God and follow the ideology of the Jews.

But when this potential reached the world we were not ready for it. Perhaps if the ominous clouds of the approaching Holocaust would have wakened the Jewish People to mass repentance, as happened in the Purim story, we too would have had a great turnabout bringing Moshiach Ben Yosef who would have wiped out Amalek. But because this did not happen, and we could not wipe out Amalek, the power then fell to the *klipos* who reversed it against us.

TORAH CHADASHA – THE NEW TORAH

According to *Kol HaTor*, the entire thirty-first chapter of *Yirmiyahu* is talking about the coming of Moshiach ben Yosef.¹⁶⁵ We read there that God will make a new covenant with the Jewish People.¹⁶⁶ And the *midrash* tells us that God says, “a new Torah will come forth from Me”.¹⁶⁷

of evil.] The task of Yehoshua bin Nun is ‘go out, fight with Amalek’. And Yehoshua is Moshiach ben Yosef...and the purpose of our work in the ingathering of the exiles is a war for Hashem with Amalek, which was the main task of Yehoshua in his role as Moshiach ben Yosef; war with Amalek in all categories, against all the enemies of Israel and against Aramilus the prince (or angel) of the *Erev Rav*...” This idea is repeated in many places in *Kol HaTor*. On page 144, it says that the war against Amalek is also against the Amalek in the heart, i.e. the evil inclination and bad character traits, against the spiritual Amalek which is the Satan, and against Eisav, Yishmael, and the *Erev Rav*. The latter are outwardly Jewish, but actually reincarnations of the insincere Egyptian converts who accompanied the Jewish People and instigated the golden calf. In their present incarnations they fight against the Torah and do not really care for the welfare of the Jewish People.

¹⁶² Seen in the introduction to *Gal Ed LiYahadus Europa* by Rabbi Moshe Prager who quotes from *The Voice of Destruction* by H. Rauschening.

¹⁶³ “Israel is holy to God, the first (*reishis*) of His wheat” (*Yirmiyahu* 2:3). Rashi, in his commentary on the first verse in *Bereishis* quotes *Bereishis Rabba* (1:1) which says that the world was created for the Torah which is called the first (*reishis*) of His way, and for Israel which is called the first (*reishis*) of His wheat. Regarding Amalek, the arch enemy of the Jewish People the verse says, “The first (*reishis*) of nations is Amalek, and his end is to be utterly destroyed” *Bamidbar* 24:20).

¹⁶⁴ *Shemos* 17:16.

¹⁶⁵ *Kol HaTor* Page 55.

¹⁶⁶ “Behold days are coming, the word of Hashem, and I will make with the House of Israel and with the House of Yehuda a new covenant”. (*Yirmiyahu* 31: 30).

¹⁶⁷ *Vayikra Rabba* 13:3. The Radak connects this new covenant with *Torah chadasha*, a new Torah. He explains that it is the covenant to keep the Torah, not the Torah itself, which is new, bringing proof to show this. *Kabbalah*, however, explains this *midrash* to mean that there will be new meanings revealed in the words of the same Torah, that is, their *Kabbalistic* meanings. The

It is a basic principle of Jewish faith that the Torah will never be altered or exchanged for another. Yet, how can one keep such mitzvos as charity to the poor, visiting the sick, or burying the dead, after poverty, illness, and death have disappeared?

The answer is that the words and letters of the Torah will never change, but new meanings will be revealed to us within the very same words. Although some mitzvos will not apply in the same practical way as they once did, they will then be understood according to their “inner light”, their *Kabbalistic* meanings. In fact, the *Kabbalistic* meanings of all the mitzvos will be revealed. This is the “new Torah”, and it is part of the many missions of Moshiach ben Yosef to reveal it. This is called the Torah of Moshiach.¹⁶⁸

And so from this period onwards, many Torah giants started to teach the Jewish People ideas which stem from *Kabballah*. This included the Gra himself, the Sfardi greats such as the Ohr HaChaim and the Ben Ish Chai, and, of course, the Chassidic movement which sprouted in this period.

But the power of “a new Torah” was given a very different meaning in the hands of the *klipos*. Reformed Judaism is also based on the idea of “a new Torah”.

These new movements claimed that they were reinterpreting the Torah according to the times. Their interpretations, however, had nothing to do with the real ones. Yet even if they would have given the interpretations that will actually be taught after the redemption, this still would have been forbidden, for they apply to that reality, not ours. Furthermore, these interpretations will be “from Me”, i.e. from God, and not people’s own ideas. And one can only reach the inner light of the Torah which will be revealed by Moshiach, by first keeping the practical mitzvos in this world.¹⁶⁹

Yet, because the potential for “a new Torah” existed in this period, “the other side” was able to pervert it to create movements who, in claiming that the Torah must be adjusted to the times, permitted what the Torah forbids, thereby greatly damaging the holiness of the Jewish People. These movements reject the most basic tenets of the Jewish faith, including the Divine origin of the Torah, and the existence of reward and punishment after death. Even the belief in the existence of a “personal God” is not considered essential. Yet these movements claim to be genuine Judaism, and so confuse people about what Judaism really is.

Tiferes Shlomo explains it thus, “The Torah is eternal and will never change. But then, what will happen to the *tochacha* (the Torah’s warnings of the terrible things that will befall the Jewish People when they sin)? But they are certainly blessings, yet now they are enrobed (in an outward material form, as curses) as explained above. And the Rabbi Sifsei Cohen, explained all of them for the good.” He then goes on to give an example of his own of how the words of one of the curses has a *Kabbalistic* meaning which is a blessing (*Parshas Ki Savo* 135b).

¹⁶⁸ “The revelation of the codes and illusions of the *Torah* progresses together with *Ikvos Meshicha* in our Holy Land, until the revelation of all the secrets of the Torah in the last generation. And this is the Torah of Moshiach, our tzaddik. ‘For from Zion shall go forth Torah’, that is the revelation of its hidden treasures and secrets, (may it be) speedily in our days” (*Kol HaTor* Page 94).

¹⁶⁹ *Sfas Emes* on *Parshas Vayigash*, 5648: “For the mitzvos are the messengers, the aspect of the body, which is the garment...but what is inside is the light of the Torah. And similarly, all the preparations of the Jewish People in this world are that they are the messengers of mitzvah. This is what is being alluded to in the verse ‘He sent Yehudah before him’. For the children of Israel are called *Yehudim* (Jews) and they rectify the worlds, to prepare for the future, as it says, ‘A new Torah will come forth from me’”

Another perversion of the potential for “a new Torah”, is the misdirected attraction to mysticism which has drawn Jews to the Eastern mystical cults. The study of *Kabbalah* has also become culturally popular. But when this is in the hands of unqualified people, and certainly when it is removed from the context of the Torah and mitzvos, it actually aids impurity.

And now that we have seen what happened to other powers of Mashiach Ben Yosef, we can better understand what happened to *nekeivah tisovev gever*.

FEMININE EQUALITY

As already mentioned, the concept of *nekeivah tisovev gever* appears in the thirty-first chapter of Yirmiyahu, which, according to *Kol HaTor*, is talking about the coming of Moshiach ben Yosef.¹⁷⁰

Interestingly, the Vilna Gaon, who was tasked with the job of ushering in the period of Mashiach ben Yosef, said that there is an allusion to his own birth in the *Torah* in the verse “And Miriam the Prophetess, sister of Aharon, took the *tof* (timbrel) in her hand.” The Hebrew letters that make up *tof* equal in gematriya 5480 (1720CE), the year in which the Vilna Gaon was born. And the pasuk the Vilna Gaon saw as an allusion to his own birth is the same pasuk which alludes to the experience of *nekeivah tisovev gever* by Miriam and the women at the Reed Sea.¹⁷¹

And so, the power of *nekeivah tisovev gever* truly reached the world in this period. Modern society woke up to a new ideal of equality for women. In virtually every area, women were to be given equal opportunity. In today’s world, women are able to support themselves, which *Likutey Halachos* calls a manifestation of *nekeivah tisovev gever*.¹⁷² This ability made women less dependent on men, and therefore less subjugated to them.

In Jewish life as well, we see changes connected to this power, as Jewish women and girls have begun to study Torah.

There has also been a change regarding equality in marriage. Approximately one-thousand years ago, the ban of Rabbeinu Gershom forbade Ashkenazic men from taking more than one wife, or – under normal circumstances – from divorcing a wife without her consent. Nowadays, most Sfardic Jews are living in westernized countries,

¹⁷⁰ On the words “There is hope”, *Kol HaTor* (Page 55) says, “This entire chapter, especially from the verse which begins ‘Behold I bring them from the land of the north’ is said about Moshiach ben Yosef and the ingathering of the exiles. The verse which speaks of *nekeivah tisovev gever* appears in this chapter and after the above-mentioned verse, and so it is said about the coming of Moshiach ben Yosef.

¹⁷¹ *Kol Hator* (Page 91) says: “Our rabbi was born in the year 480 of the sixth millennia (in Hebrew, the letters *tav* and *peh*, which spell out “*tof*” equal 480). He saw in this a sign which is alluded to in the words ‘and Miriam...took the timbrel (*tof*) in her hand’ – against the *sitra achra*.” Miriam the Prophetess took the *tof* in her hand when she brought down the heavenly power of *nekevah tisovev gever*, which is the power of feminine equality. The thought occurred to me, that perhaps Miriam, in her prophecy, foresaw that the *sitra achra*, “the other (negative) side” would misuse the power of feminine equality, and so she used her timbrel as a spiritual force to counteract this.

¹⁷² *Likutey Halachos* on *Hilchos Rosh Chodesh*, 5:22.

so that they, too, abide by these rules. Socially, marriage in western countries is now seen as a relationship of equals.

The change in the husband-wife relationship may be hinted at in *Hoshea* where God tells the Jewish People: “Call ‘my man’ and call Me no longer ‘my owner’.”¹⁷³ According to Rashi, this allegory tells us that in the time of the redemption, the Jewish People will no longer relate to God primarily through fear, but rather through love. This, too, has already begun to happen. Nowadays, there is a greater stress on serving God with love and joy, in contrast to the approach in earlier times which stressed fear of the punishments of hell. And we see that most of those who return to observant Judaism do so out of love, rather than fear.

But since the allegory parallels a husband and wife, one can also see here an allusion to a change in the relationship between a human husband and wife. After the redemption, a wife will relate to her husband only out of love and not out of fear, for the curse of “he shall rule over you” will disappear. To a great extent, this has already happened in modern society.

And yet, as with the other powers of Moshiach Ben Yosef, it wasn’t all blessing.

The secular world did not know how to deal with this new force. Not having the Torah or its values, they interpreted equal to mean identical: in personality, in roles, and even in clothing and hairstyle.

Women in the work force resulted in an unprecedented breach in modesty (and fidelity). It also gave women less time for the family - and sometimes less interest, as well. The new goal of “self-fulfillment” too often meant being insensitive to the needs of others. And instead of marital equality expressing itself in the Jewish ideal of “love, sibling love, peace, and friendship”,¹⁷⁴ it often just meant mutual disrespect. The results were a breakdown of identity, of family, and of normal male–female relationships.

It is true that the world did not sufficiently respect women, but most feminists did not appreciate the feminine qualities either. Instead of teaching the world to value feminine virtues such as nurturing, mercy, modesty, and a direct emotional relationship with Hashem, most feminists ignored or even derided these attributes, lauding instead the more masculine qualities that most of the world respects.

Equal Is Not Identical

Nekeivah tisovev gever does not mean that women will become altogether identical with men. The sun remains the sun and the moon remains the moon, but “the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun”.¹⁷⁵ Similarly, men and women will each have primary qualities, while also having abilities on the other side. Therefore, men will remain with a stronger emphasis on the intellect, and women with a stronger emphasis on the emotions, since both kinds of natures are equally necessary and important. Although in our reality, caused by the sin of the Tree of Knowledge, an emotional approach can cause one to see things inaccurately, and is therefore less respected, after

¹⁷³ *Hoshea* 2:18.

¹⁷⁴ From the *Sheva Brachos* blessing recited at weddings.

¹⁷⁵ *Yeshayahu* 30:26.

the redemption this will no longer be a problem; women will then perceive equally with their *lev mayvin da'as*, the heart which understands knowledge.

The difference between the primarily emotional approach of attaching to God and the primarily intellectual approach exists also among the two Moshiachs: Moshiach ben Yosef and Moshiach ben Dovid.¹⁷⁶ Mashiach ben Yosef is the continuation of the powers of Yosef himself, who was a male type. He represents the power of the intellect, as it says of him “there is no man as understanding and wise as you”.¹⁷⁷

David, on the other hand, represents the very spiritual heart. He said of himself “I am prayer”,¹⁷⁸ for this was his essence – and prayer is the service of the heart. This does not mean, however, that Yosef and David each possessed only his main characteristic. David was an extremely great Torah scholar, while the story of Yosef shows overpowering emotion. So, too, both men and women will be developed on both sides – intellectual understanding and intuitive emotional attachment – but each will still have its own main characteristic.

(Note: Although as a generality this is true, not all men fall into the category of a primarily intellectual approach, and not all women fall into the category of a primarily emotional approach. *Kabbalah* speaks about this as well, but it is beyond the scope of this work.)

The Change in Women

Given what has been said about the change in womankind, we can now understand how to relate to the contradiction between statements about women appearing in traditional texts and what we see in present-day reality. The descriptions of women found in the Talmud or later writings were accurate *at that time*.

True, there have always been some abstractly gifted and learned women.¹⁷⁹ They were, however, a small minority. But when the power of *nekeivah tisovev gever* began to affect the world, women’s abstract abilities simultaneously began to change. Since that time, women have become more and more capable of all kinds of abstract pursuits, including the most important one: learning Torah.

It is important to understand that this is not a change in Torah. The Sages never meant to say that the situation they described would continue forever, for they knew the

¹⁷⁶ *Tiferes Shlomo* on Succos, Ushpizin Yosef, Page 57b: “And in each and every one of the Jewish People there is an aspect of Moshiach ben Yosef and Moshiach ben David, as is explained in the [*Kabbalistic*] books and it is the aspect of male and female as it says, ‘male and female He created them’”.

¹⁷⁷ *Breishis* 41:39. *Sfas Emes* on *Parshas Vayigash*, 5660 says that Yehudah (from whom David is descended) is the heart, while Yosef is the brain.

¹⁷⁸ *Tehillim* 109:4

¹⁷⁹ There are six hundred thousand letters in the Torah which correspond to the original six hundred thousand male souls of the Jewish People. I remember having read, however, that a few of these letters correspond to women, while a few men do not have a letter of their own and receive their share in Torah by supporting Torah learning. I no longer remember the source for this, but in *Likutey Halachos* discussing the subject of the *halachos* pertaining to *krias shema* (*Halacha* 1), I found the following: “And the rule is that every soul in Israel is from one of the seventy souls of the house of Yaakov, and they are rooted in the seventy facets of the Torah.” Since Dina and Serach the daughter of Asher, and Yocheved the daughter of Levi, are part of those seventy basic souls, this means that these women also have their own individual facets of Torah.

secret of *nekeivah tisovev gever*. They, themselves, anticipated this change as we see from the commentary of Rabbi Yonason ben Uziel. In fact, they actually prayed for this change, as we see from the prayer “*V’ha’arev nah*” which is said in the morning blessings.

The prayer says, “*Make Your words of Torah, the Lord, our God, pleasant in our mouths, and in the mouths of Your nation the House of Israel, and may we, and our progeny, and our progeny's progeny, and the progeny of all Your nation the House of Israel, all of us, be knowers of Your Name, and may we study Your Torah for Your sake. Blessed are You, God, who teaches Torah to His nation Israel.*”

As already explained, the phrase “House of Israel” refers to women¹⁸⁰. The term “the nation of the House of Israel”, then, refers to both men and women, with “nation” referring to men and “House of Israel” referring to women.¹⁸¹ This is the exact phrase used by Rabbi Yonason ben Uziel when he speaks about *nekeivah tisovev gever* – a female turning into a man – and he explains this to mean that “the nation of the House of Israel will study Torah”. And this is the phrase the Sages used when praying for the future.

The ending of the prayer, however, omits the term “house” which is a reference to women, and says only “His nation, Israel”, which does not include women. This is understandable because the ending of the prayer is written in the present tense. At that time women were not studying Torah, and therefore the term “house”, referring to women, is omitted. But when speaking of the request for the future, the Sages used the term “nation, the House of Israel”, e.g. women included. Moreover, the most unusual term *tze’atza'im* (progeny) is used here, rather than the more common term *bonim*, sons, apparently to include all progeny, both male and female, in the request that Hashem teach all of us Torah.

The Sages then were clearly not trying to discriminate against women. They were simply describing the situation as it existed throughout most of world history, before the powers of the redemption started entering the world.

Particularly regarding the generation prior to the coming of Moshiach, *Kabbalah* teaches that great changes take place in people’s mental and spiritual abilities. The *Zohar* tells us that as we get closer to the messianic era, even children will understand the hidden wisdom that will be revealed to everyone.¹⁸²

The Vilna Gaon in *Even Shleima* explains the change in the characteristics of different generations as follows: “In every generation a different attribute rules (from the attributes by which God runs the world), and it is because of this, that natures change, and all the doings of that generation, their behavior and their leaders, are all according to the nature of that attribute, and it is dependent on their free will choice, whether for good, or evil, and so also the way the Holy One Blessed is He deals with them, and all (this) is included in the Torah.”¹⁸³

¹⁸⁰ *Midrash Rus* 4:4.

¹⁸¹ We see that the term “nation” refers to men in the verse which says that Avraham returned “the women and the nation” of Sdom (*Bereishis* 14:16) after defeating the four kings.

¹⁸² *Zohar* I:118A, quoted in *Sparks of the Hidden Light* by Rabbi Moshe Schatz (Page 11).

¹⁸³ *Even Shleima* 11:9.

And so we see that every generation has its own challenges and its own role in rectifying the world, and this is accomplished in different ways. As predicted in *Kol HaTor* a new power has made itself felt in our lives. And every force that Hashem sends into the world is meant to be used for holiness. Therefore, if Hashem gave girls and women abstract abilities and interests previously lacking, it was in order that they use them to learn Torah sincerely, on whatever level and in whatever area for which they are truly suited. Moreover, as we have seen, using the powers of Moshiach ben Yosef for holiness actually brings Moshiach ben Yosef and the redemption, while not using them allows them to be swallowed up by the forces of evil. Therefore, preventing capable women from studying Torah could actually aid the *klipos*.

Most women today are still basically concrete types. We find this to be true of men as well, as the Maharal said would happen before the coming of Moshiach.¹⁸⁴ But, unlike women in previous generations, most of today's women are endowed with some abstract academic abilities, and no longer fit the earlier descriptions given of them. Even so, these women can be happy and fulfilled in the traditional *balabusta* role (a Yiddish term connoting a good homemaker) due to their concrete abilities and interests. They only need to realize the importance of what they are doing.

Women who have interests and abilities on both sides - abstract and concrete - can also be satisfied in this role if they see their role as an ideal. Although a woman may be intelligent and talented enough to do well in a lucrative and prestigious career, in most cases that is not what is most needed. Both society and her own soul would receive much more benefit from her being primarily a Jewish mother. Whatever glory or wealth she may forego is much more than compensated for by the benefits she gains both in this world and the next. Still, such women will benefit greatly from some additional abstract activities in their lives.

But for a woman with a strong abstract nature, abstract activities in her life aren't only a positive addition, they are essential. She may understand that the Jewish nation cannot exist without the Jewish home, whose strength and glory are its atmosphere of physical, emotional and spiritual nurturing. She may also understand that loyalty to Torah entails overcoming obstacles. Yet, if a woman with a strong abstract nature does not have abstract activities in her life, she is likely to experience frustration and even depression, whose source is in her unhappy and unfulfilled soul. How intense is the suffering of a person whose soul is denied its true needs is described in a passage from *Michtav Me'Eliyahu*. Speaking of Choni Hama'agel, he writes:

“He did not ask to die simply because of a lack of esteem, *chas v'shalom* (God forbid), but rather because he was not able to advance spiritually. Because he did not find anyone else who thought as he did, and he did not have students to learn from him, he did not want to live any more, for as the Rambam writes,¹⁸⁵ ‘Without *Torah*, the life of intellectual people is considered as death’”¹⁸⁶

This applies to any person with strong intellectual needs, whether male or female. Although such women are still a definite minority, they certainly do exist, and they often include the most intelligent and talented (in the abstract areas).

¹⁸⁴ *Tiferes Yisrael* 56.

¹⁸⁵ *Hilchos Rotze'ach* 7:1.

¹⁸⁶ *Michtav Me'Eliyahu* 4 (Page 209).

Often people think that one can, and should, choose a certain role at will. But whether one is oriented towards the abstract or the concrete is heavenly ordained, not a question of choice or belief. Social conditioning or ideals can be the deciding factor in the case of a person who is “in the middle” - having abilities and interests in both areas - but not where the heavenly influence is very strong and clear-cut. For as the Sages taught, a person’s basic nature is determined by his (or her) heavenly ordained destiny and is not a matter of free will.

The Vilna Gaon explained it thus: “For a human being cannot break his way, meaning his fate that he was born to, as it says in *Maseches Shabbos* ... a person born under Mars will spill blood. Rabbi Eliezer said, either a *mohel* (one who performs a circumcision) or a *shochet* (murderer), or a robber.¹⁸⁷ He mentioned these three because this is according to his fate which shows that he will spill blood, but with his free will choice he can choose from amongst these, a *mohel* who is a *tzaddik*, for he is fulfilling a positive command, a *shochet* who is medium, or a robber who is a *rasha* (wicked person)... And that is what it says, ‘Educate the youth according to his way’¹⁸⁸ meaning according to his fate and his nature... for he cannot change his fate.”¹⁸⁹

Since not every girl or woman has identical capabilities or interests, their education or “way” cannot be identical. If a woman’s mind is not oriented towards the abstract, she should not be instructed in areas that she is not required to learn. Yet for those who are capable, the Rambam says “A woman who learns Torah is rewarded”.¹⁹⁰ Furthermore, while the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer, that girls not be taught Torah, was the accepted opinion, Ben Azai held that “A man is obligated to teach his daughter *Torah*”.¹⁹¹ The Rambam explains Rabbi Eliezer’s position by saying that “most women’s minds are not attuned to being taught.”¹⁹² In that case, it follows that if a woman’s mind *is* attuned to being taught, she should be taught. (A fuller explanation of the Rambam appears in the appendix.)

And that is probably why we now have girls and women studying Torah. Torah schools for girls on a wide scale were begun in order to save Jewish daughters from the secularizing effects of public schools. But based on what we learned it seems that Hashem had a wider plan: to begin the process of *nekeivah tisovev gever*.

The Dangers of the Klipa

We have emphasized the positive effects of *nekeivah tisovev gever*, but we have also pointed out that there is a *klipa* parallel to it. Is it positive or negative, then, for Jewish women to take upon themselves male associated mitzvos?

Women are rewarded for Torah study, as one who fulfills a mitzvah without being commanded¹⁹³. This is true of nearly all the mitzvos which women take upon themselves of their own volition. The fact that women are rewarded shows that this is

¹⁸⁷ *Maseches Shabbos* 156a.

¹⁸⁸ *Sefer Mishlei* 22:10.

¹⁸⁹ Vilna Gaon quoted in *Alei Shur* Part 1 (Page 262).

¹⁹⁰ Rambam *Hilchos Talmud Torah* 1:13.

¹⁹¹ *Maseches Sotah* 21a

¹⁹² *Hilchos Talmud Torah* 1:13.

¹⁹³ *Ibid*.

positive and that Hashem is pleased with this. There is, however, a big “but” in this area, and that is the question of where the desire to do these mitzvos is coming from.

In order to understand this issue better, we can learn from Korach.

When Moshe told the Jewish People that God wanted Aharon and his children to serve as priests, Korach ridiculed Moshe and said: “The entire congregation is holy, and God is in their midst.”¹⁹⁴ Therefore, Korach claimed, there was no need for a spiritual elite to connect the people with God.

According to *Kabbalah*, Korach was implying that everyone is equal according to the principle of *nekeivah tisovev gever*. When Korach said “God is in their midst”, he was alluding to the circle dance of the righteous, where God is in the center, and where all are equidistant from Him, with no need to receive from any other human being.¹⁹⁵ Furthermore, the desire to come closer to God is positive. Where, then, was Korach’s mistake?

Firstly, he rebelled against Moshe who was God’s agent to bring His Torah into the world. By so doing, Korach rebelled against God and His Torah. If one rebels against those that impart the Torah, one undermines the entire basis of the Torah itself.

Secondly, his motives were impure. Korach presented himself as being greatly concerned with the welfare and equality of the Jewish People. The Sages tell us, however, that what was really bothering Korach was that *he* wasn’t appointed to a position of leadership!¹⁹⁶

And lastly, although *nekeivah tisovev gever* is a great principle of ultimate perfection, the time was not yet ripe for it. Before the sin of the golden calf there was no need for such a hierarchy, but sin caused a spiritual handicap which made a hierarchy necessary. God’s plans are for our own ultimate good, but we can only receive that good if we follow His instructions, and only He knows what our souls really need!

¹⁹⁴ *Sefer Bamidbar* 16:3. The *Me’or V’shemesh on Parshas Korach* (Page 43) connects Korach to a rebellion against the diminution of the moon. In it he says, “even if there are two great tzaddikim who are equal in their perception of Godliness, and their characters are also equal, it is nevertheless impossible that their good name will be equally recognized in the world, that is, that they be equal in the eyes of people”. This is what we have said above; the inequality is not in the essence, but rather in the eyes of people. However, this situation lasts only as long as the inequality between the sun and the moon lasts, i.e. until the full redemption. As explained above, in the future, all of Israel will be high priests, as Korach wanted.

¹⁹⁵ *Shem MiShmuel on Parshas Korach* 5672 quotes the verse in *Yirmiyahu* which says, “A man will no longer teach his friend (about God) for they all will know Him, from their big ones to their little ones” (*Yirmiyahu* 31:33). The *Me’or V’shemesh* quotes this verse in connection with Miriam’s circle dance and says that it is referring to *nekeivah tisovev gever*.

I also saw in the booklet *Kayin and Hevel* by Rabbi Nesanel Kassnet, I think in the name of Rabbi Tsadok HaCohen, that Korach’s words “All the nation is holy and God is in their midst” is referring to the circle dance which will take place in the future, where all those who served Hashem are in a circle and Hashem is in the center, equidistant from each of them. This, explains the *Me’or V’shemesh*, is the future manifestation of *nekeivah tisovev gever*.

¹⁹⁶ Rashi on *Sefer Bamidbar* 16:1 says, “And what caused Korach to dispute with Moshe? He was jealous of the position of Elitzafon son of Uziel whom Moshe appointed as officer over the sons of Kehas, according to what he was told by Hashem.”

There are women who, while wishing to take upon themselves more mitzvos, are actually repeating Korach's mistakes.

1. Some do not follow the generation's leading Torah authorities, and some are openly disrespectful.
2. Their motives are not necessarily pure. Otherwise, how can we explain that reform women dance with the Torah, though they do not believe in its truth, and some so-called Jewish feminists study *Gemara* although they do not respect its contents? (This is not to criticize those women who study Torah sincerely *l'sheim shamayim* – for God's sake). *Mitzvos* associated with males are sought after with great enthusiasm, while essential women's mitzvos, such as *tznius* (modesty) are not. If there is a true desire to do Hashem's will, why should this be so?

Korach thought he was serving Hashem, but actually he was serving his own ego. Similarly, if a woman wishes to take upon herself additional mitzvos *l'sheim shamayim*, then this is meritorious so long as this is done according to *Halacha* and so long as this is not at the expense of those mitzvos in which she is commanded. But if she is doing those same acts to rebel against the Torah's differentiations between men and women, then not only is this not a mitzvah, it is a rebellion against Hashem, *chas v'shalom*.

The frustration of these women is understandable. As the *Shem MiShmuel* on Korach explains,¹⁹⁷ the pain at being held back from a higher level of Hashem's service is genuine and justified. For this reason, he says, the Levites who originally sided with Korach were not punished. But these Levites listened to Moshe when he told them that they could not have this level at this time; they would have to wait until all the sins had been rectified. Korach on the other hand reacted with *chutzpah* (audacity), haughtily rebelling against Moshe, and so he was very severely punished. Similarly, even if some women feel that they are being held back from a higher level of service (which, as we showed above, is only true from a human view) they must still accept this, for one must accept Hashem's will.

Mitzvos are the way to cling to Hashem, but only if we do them to fulfill Hashem's Will. We must synchronize our will with God's and not imagine that we can synchronize God's will with ours.

There will ultimately be total equality and the process has already begun. But the actual redemption is not yet here. We must act now in the way that suits *our* reality. Certainly, many aspects of life will change after the coming of Moshiach, both physically and spiritually. For example, after the redemption, Jewish women will no longer be involved with the burdens of keeping house¹⁹⁸ and so they will be free to pursue totally spiritual activities. And just as after the redemption, we will rule according to the opinion of Shamai, rather than

¹⁹⁷ *Shem MiShmuel* on *Parshas Korach* 5672.

¹⁹⁸ *Yeshayahu* 49:23 says that the princesses of the nations will be our wet nurses. Chazal say that food will grow ready to eat (*Maseches Kesubos* 110a), and many prophecies speak of the great wealth that will be at that time. From this we see that Jewish women will have different conditions and will be free to study Torah.

Hillel,¹⁹⁹ because that is the truth that will apply at that time, so we will also see new conditions regarding women. But it is a grave mistake to do something that contradicts our reality on the basis that it will be right in the future.

In summary, the Torah warns us not to be like Korach and his followers, whose rebellion ended in catastrophe. Although it is necessary to use the powers of Moshiach ben Yosef to the best of our abilities, this must be done only in accordance with God's will.

The Difficulties of Transition

And now with the understanding we have gained, we can relate to our original question; why is it that throughout history the Jewish woman had more rights and privileges than in other societies, yet in modern times the Torah world has been placed on the defensive.

According to the commentary of Rabbi Yonason ben Uziel, Yeshayahu informs us that if the Jewish People are meritorious, they will be the ones to welcome Moshiach, who only afterwards will appear to the rest of the world. But if we do not merit it, then the gentiles will become aware of him first and inform us "Behold, your savior has come".²⁰⁰

The *Michtav Me'Elياهو* explains it thus: "This translation has informed us of a great new insight; that it may be that Moshiach will be revealed to the people of Israel first and they will inform the nations of the world, or, the other way around: it may be that he will be revealed first to the nations of the world and they will tell Israel. And the reason for this is, that if Israel is meritorious, then the Moshiach comes in their merit, but if not, Heaven forbid, the nations will bring him... Let us strengthen ourselves that we may not need for the gentiles to reveal to us that our Moshiach has come! Woe to such humiliation!"²⁰¹

Perhaps this idea is true not only of Moshiach himself, but of his powers as well. Had the Jewish People merited it, it would have been none other than the Torah scholars and their followers who would have brought the world the concept of women's equality, according to the secret of *nekeivah tisovev gever*. Instead, non-Jewish society embraced it first, distorted it with many false ideologies, and then turned with it in attack on the Torah world.

Had things happened in the ideal way, the powers of Moshiach ben Yosef would have been accompanied by moshiach himself. But, due to our many sins, these powers reached the world without Moshiach ben Yosef, causing frustration and confusion.

The prophets compare the redemption with birth. We are now in a situation similar to the transition stage of childbirth. Because the baby is so close to being born, the mother feels a very strong yearning to see her newborn baby, but because she is not totally ready, she must still wait for the right time. Similarly, because the power of

¹⁹⁹ Rabbi Zadok HaCohen in *Divrei Sofrim* (Section 5) brings this in the name of the *Kabbalists*. So does *Mar'eh Yechezkel* (Section 84) by Rabbi Yechezkel Panet, a student of Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Riminov.

²⁰⁰ *Yeshayahu* 62:11.

²⁰¹ *Michtav Me'Elياهو* 4 (Page 300) under the heading "Two Ways for Moshiach to Come".

nekeivah tisovev gevev has come into the world, there is a very strong desire and “push” for total equality. But because the redemption is not yet here, and the rectification is not yet complete, to enforce total equality now, in contradiction to our *Halacha*, is completely forbidden. This would be similar to the sin of Dovid with Batsheva. The Sages say that Dovid knew through *Ruach HaKodesh* that Batsheva was meant to be his true mate. Furthermore, this was an extremely important union for Moshiach ben David is born from it. Nevertheless David sinned by taking Batsheva before the proper time.²⁰² What may be tomorrow’s holiness can be today’s sin.

The New Moon Atonement

And now, with the information we gained, we return to the *aggadah* with which we began. The *Gemara* tells us that the New Moon offering is an “atonement for *Hashem*”. According to the Maharal this means that it will remove the complaint in people’s heart when it seems that there is something wrong in the way God created things.²⁰³

Perhaps the most difficult (and therefore the most meritorious) part of the rectification is now, close to the redemption, when Jewish women have the capability to be “big” but – like the moon – they obey God’s command to “go and make yourself small” – where *Halacha* requires it – until the rectification is complete. Closeness to God is achieved not through self-aggrandizement, but rather through utmost humility – which is why when God tells the moon that the righteous will be called “small” after her, she does not reply, for she understands the value of humility.

Nevertheless, “He saw that she was still upset” and sympathized with her pain, for although the diminishment of the moon was necessary, and there is great benefit in humility, God knows that being unequal is both painful and – ultimately – unjust.

The “atonement for God” therefore lies in the New Moon offering, because the New Moon, which is a special holiday for women, tells us that women’s inequality was never meant as the ideal, but that womankind will be renewed to her original greatness and “the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun”.²⁰⁴ That is the secret of *nekeivah tisovev gevev*.

May we merit that the powers of Moshiach ben Yosef be returned to their rightful source. May they all be utilized only for holiness. May the desecration caused by their falling into the wrong hands be repaired, and may we merit the complete redemption, very, very soon.

And...

"May it be Your will, the Lord my God and the God of my forefathers, to fill the flaw of the moon that there be no diminution in it. May the light of the moon be like the light of the sun and like the light of the seven days of creation, as it was before it was diminished, as it is said, "the two great luminaries". And may there be fulfilled upon us the verse that is written: "They shall seek the Lord their God, and David

²⁰² *Maseches Sanhedrin* 107a.

²⁰³ Maharal *Be'er Hagolah* on Shavuos (4th Be'er) brought in *Michtav Me'Eliyahu* 4 (Page 207).

²⁰⁴ *Yeshayahu* 30:26.

their king, Amen."

From the sanctification prayer for the New Moon.

EPILOGUE

There was once a rabbi who gave a long discourse on a Torah idea. When the discourse ended one of the students asked the rabbi, "What's the practical outcome of this? The rabbi answered, "The practical outcome is that you understand."

When people finish reading this book, they often ask me, "So what does this mean in practical terms? Does it mean we should do x, y, or z?"

I wish to answer: practical questions are for tsaddikim and *talmidei chachamim*. Since I am neither, I am not in a position to give practical advice. (And even if I were, practical advice needs to be given individually, because every case is different.) I didn't write this book to tell people how to run their lives; I wrote it to answer the questions brought in the beginning of the book.

There are people whose faith or love of Torah has been strained because of these questions. And there are others who, although they may not have been bothered by these issues, are filled with awe and inspiration when they see Hashem's plan for history.

So, like the rabbi in the story above, I didn't write this book to give practical instruction. I wrote this book so that people will understand.

Appendix 1: Women and Torah Study

There has been much debate over teaching women Torah. Most *poskim* have ruled that due to secular influences, it is necessary today to teach girls some Torah. The following discussion does not deal with practical questions, such as how much or what passages of Torah should be taught, but rather with the more theoretical issue of why women should or should not be taught Torah, even if there was no urgent need. The following discussion draws in part from the book *Jewish Woman in Jewish Law*.

There are two apparently contradictory opinions brought in *Maseches Sotah*²⁰⁵ as to whether a man should teach his daughter Torah. Ben Azzai said, “A man is required to teach his daughter Torah” and Rabbi Eliezer said, “Anyone who teaches his daughter Torah, it is as if he had taught her *tiflus*”. The word *tiflus* can be translated either as connoting immorality or as nonsense. We shall see that different commentaries have understood it in both ways.

There is a rule that whenever there is a disagreement among the Sages in the Talmud there is truth in both opinions. The Sages drew different conclusions not because one is right and one is wrong but because they are considering different aspects of reality. The opinion which is accepted as the law is the one which is more applicable to our reality.²⁰⁶ Consequently, the opinion of Hillel is usually followed now, and the opinion of Shammai will be followed in Moshiach’s times. This is because as the reality changes, the opinion which reflects the new reality becomes applicable. The same idea holds true for our subject. Therefore, it isn’t a question of who is right, Ben Azzai or Rabbi Eliezer, because they are both right.

First let us examine the background of these two opinions and then see how some of the *poskim* saw this issue.

The *Gemara* in *Maseches Sotah* tells us that even if a woman was actually guilty of adultery and drank the water of the *sotah*, the water would not affect her for three years if she had the merit of Torah study. Ben Azzai then said that a man must teach his daughter Torah. Most of the commentators explain that he wanted women to know the Torah dealing with the *sotah* so that if a woman sees that the waters had no effect, she would not lose her faith in their power, but would understand that it was the Torah merit that delayed their effect. Rabbi Eliezer, however, held that if a woman knows that if she has the merit of Torah the waters will not have an immediate effect, this could encourage her to commit adultery. Rabbi Eliezer's view was accepted in practice. According to this, the dispute is only about teaching one’s daughter the

²⁰⁵ *Maseches Sotah* 21b

²⁰⁶ See *Kli Yakar* on *Parshas Shoftim*.

Torah regarding the *sotah*, and not other parts of Torah. This is how Rashi understands it and indeed he taught his daughters much Torah, making them into great Torah scholars.

However, most *poskim* understood Rabbi Eliezer's injunction as meant globally. In that case, one could understand Ben Azzai as saying that if the merit of a woman's Torah could delay the effects of the *sotah* waters for three years, this shows that it is very powerful and important, and so he held that a man was required to teach his daughter Torah. Rabbi Eliezer, however, said that teaching a girl Torah would cause harm, for most women's minds are not attuned to being taught. This is the Rambam's view. He writes:

“A woman who studies Torah is rewarded, but it is not the same as the man's reward because she was not commanded (in the mitzvah) and anyone who does that which he is not commanded to do does not have the same reward as the one who was commanded, but rather less.”²⁰⁷

(Note: The Tosfos says that this is because one who is commanded must worry about fighting his evil inclination and fulfilling the command of his Creator, which is not so for someone who is not commanded.)

“Yet even though she is rewarded,” the Rambam continues, “the Sages commanded a man not to teach his daughter because most women's minds are not attuned to being taught, but use the words of Torah for insignificant things according to their poor minds. The Sages said, ‘Anyone who teaches his daughter Torah, it is as if he had taught her nonsense’. What is this referring to? The Oral Torah. But as for the Written Torah, he really should not teach her, but if he taught her it is not as one who teaches her nonsense.”²⁰⁸

Let's examine this more closely. The Rambam starts off by saying that a woman is rewarded for studying Torah. Since a person is certainly not rewarded for doing something wrong, but rather for doing something right, this clearly indicates that there is nothing wrong with a woman studying Torah, rather the contrary is true; Hashem is pleased with this.

But if Hashem is happy that women study Torah and rewards them for it, why then did the Sages command a man not to teach his daughter Torah? The Rambam immediately answers saying, “Because most women's minds are not attuned to being taught and they use the words of the Torah for nonsense according their poor minds.” (We have already explained that this was true for most women in the Rambam's times.) But in that case, how could a woman be rewarded for Torah study? Is there a reward for misusing Torah?

Let us see how some of the commentaries deal with this issue.

The *Prisha LaTur* writes as follows: “The Rambam says ‘most women's minds are not attuned to being taught’, but if she studied on her own we see that she is not like the majority [of women] and therefore he wrote that she is rewarded if she studied the

²⁰⁷ The *Kesef Mishna* on the Rambam explains this principle is brought down in *Maseches Avoda Zara* 3 and *Maseches Kiddushin* 31.

²⁰⁸ *Mada, Hilchos Talmud Torah* 1:13.

Torah properly and did not use it for insignificant things. The father is not allowed to teach her lest she use its words for nonsense for he does not know what is in her heart.²⁰⁹

So according to the *Prisha* we could say that the Rambam is dealing with two types of situations: women who study Torah properly and women who don't. The Rambam quotes Rabbi Eliezer's view as the position which is usually applicable because most women of that period were not suited to Torah study. But he starts out by saying that women are rewarded for Torah study because in a case where a woman's mind is attuned to being taught, she should study Torah.

The point here is that Torah learning is essentially good for all Jews, men and women. That is why, after Moshiach comes, women will study Torah as was shown in the text. But so long as women do not have the ability to digest Torah study properly, it should not be taught to them. Because this was the situation of most women in the Rambam's times, this was the ruling which was generally applicable. But the Rambam starts out by saying that a woman is rewarded for Torah study to tell us that if she does have the capability to digest Torah properly, she should drink of the Torah.

Furthermore, there are many who understand from the *Prisha's* words that it is only forbidden for a father to teach girls or women Torah so long as "he does not know what is in her heart", but after she has shown that she does not use the words of Torah for nonsense, it is then permitted and even praiseworthy to teach her (see the *Ma'ayan Ganim* below).

Not all opinions agree with this. Although everyone accepts that girls and women must know the basics of Judaism (faith, history, etc.) and the laws which practically apply to them, there is a view which forbids teaching women Torah directly. This, however, is a minority view. In actual fact we see that many great Torah authorities did teach their daughters Torah and in the times of Chazal there were great female Torah scholars, such as Bruria and Yalta.

In explanation of this, the Chida (Rav Yosef Chaim Azulai) says²¹⁰ that the Sages' injunction not to teach a daughter Torah is not a law but a warning given because of the unsuitability of most women to Torah study. A law has no exceptions, but since there were exceptions such as Bruria we see that it is not a law and where the woman is suited to Torah study, the warning doesn't apply.

There is also a responsa of Rabbi Yehudah Assad which says that we do not find anywhere that women are forbidden to study Torah.²¹¹ Indeed, there were female Torah scholars, such as one of the daughters of the Ba'al HaTanya, and a number of others, who were encouraged in their endeavors by their illustrious fathers.

I wish to repeat that this essay is not meant to be used for *halachic* decisions. There have been many qualified rabbis who have already written about this issue and concluded what they did. The purpose of the above explanation, and of this work in general, is just that: explanation.

²⁰⁹ *Yore De'ah* 246:6

²¹⁰ *Tuv Ayin* Part 4

²¹¹ *Yoreh De'ah* 48.

Finally, I would like to stress the importance of studying Torah *l'sheim shamayim*. In our times, intellectualism is respected as a goal of its own, but studying for intellectual achievement is not the service of Hashem. Neither is the desire to show that anything men can do women can do as well. Torah learning can only connect us to Hashem when it is done *l'sheim shamayim*. This is the greatest joy possible and the ultimate purpose of creation.

Appendix 2: Have Women Truly Changed?

Many people have argued with this book's premise that there has been a change in women. They insist that had women throughout history been given the opportunity to develop their intellectual abilities they would have been just as intellectually capable as today. Hence they conclude that it is not that women were lacking in abstract abilities, but rather that they weren't given the opportunity to develop them.

In my opinion, the above argument contradicts the basic psychological truth that nature is stronger than societal norms. Dr. Miriam Adahan writes in her book *Appreciating People* that unless a person has been emotionally destroyed, their essential nature will surface despite difficulties and adverse social conditions. Therefore, had women in earlier times been truly interested in intellectual pursuits this

would have surfaced despite social attitudes, and would, in fact, have changed the social norms. For what is society, if not people? The opportunity was not given to women to advance intellectually because not enough women demanded it. This is true for non-Jewish society as well. It stands to reason that had women truly wanted it, Queen Elizabeth I (who lived five-hundred years ago) would have established women's colleges for the daughters of the wealthy just as there were colleges for the sons of the wealthy. But the demand was missing. Women wanted jewelry and beauty enhancers, not higher education.

This is not to say that there were never capable women who were denied the ability to develop themselves intellectually. I'm sure that there were. But we are speaking here of society, not of individuals. Society didn't give the opportunity because not enough women wanted it.

On the Jewish scene this principle is all the more obvious. Chazal did not object to women studying Torah. Extremely prominent *rabbanim* went to Bruria and learned three-hundred *halachos* from her in one day. Rashi says that Chazal's statement that a man should not teach his daughter Torah applies only to the laws of the *sotah* where the statement appears, and he did, indeed, teach Torah to his daughters, who became great Torah scholars. Had there been enough capable girls and women who desired to learn Torah, Rashi's view would have been followed. And although the Rambam understands the injunction not to teach one's daughter Torah as applying to all Torah, not only the laws of Sotah, he starts out by saying that a woman who studies Torah is rewarded. In other words, it is only the father who is being told not to teach her, but she may learn on her own, and will in fact be rewarded for doing so. Obviously, then, he doesn't consider her studying Torah negative. So why did he prohibit a father teaching his daughter Torah? He answers, that most girls were not suited and would misuse what they learned. It follows, then, that if a girl or woman is suited and wants to learn on her own initiative, that's not only permitted, it's praiseworthy. That's why she is rewarded. So is this a situation of society preventing girls and women from Torah study, or is it a situation where most girls and women were really not suited?

There existed many wealthy Jewish women in history. Since Chazal respected female Torah scholars, and both Rashi and the Rambam taught that women are allowed to study Torah (and Rashi taught his daughters), why didn't those wealthy women who had free time, study Torah? Yet so few did. The only logical answer I can see is that they just weren't interested. And that is exactly what those who wrote with *Ru'ach HaKodesh* said.

Again, on the individual level, I'm sure it happened sometimes, perhaps often, that capable women were denied the opportunity to study Torah, but on the level of the *klal* (the general population), applicable to most women, it doesn't fit.

But the foremost reason that I disagree with the claim that women have not changed, is that it contradicts Chazal, *Kabbalah*, and all the writings based on these. My claim that women were different in nature than what we see today is coming from writings of *Ru'ach HaKodesh*; they were not simply people's theories or observations.

If a commentary is based on the *Zohar* or the teachings of the Ari z"l, they are in a different category than a commentary based on human logic, because these teachings were given over with *Ru'ach HaKodesh*. Much of it was taught by *Eliyahu Hanavi*

(Elijah the Prophet). Therefore, we relate to these teachings on a different level.

The Vilna Gaon, who was a great master of *Kabbalah*, writes in *Aderes Eliyahu*²¹² that before the sin of the *Etz Hada'as*, both Adam and his wife were highly intellectual. The woman was even assisting Adam in intellectual activities! But after the sin, woman was no longer attracted to the intellectual.

The Maharal, *Likutey Halachos* (Breslev), and many other sources based on *Kabbalah* write that woman is lacking in a type of *da'as* (intellectual capability). The Malbim says that men have *sechel iyuni* (abstract capabilities/intelligence), which is what the Briggs Meyer system would call being a type “N”, while women are lacking in this type of *da'as*, which would make them type “S”. This fits exactly with the *Zohar* which connects men to the *neshama* (an “N” is more connected to the *neshama's* influence) while woman is connected to the body (i.e. the material aspects of life, meaning that she is an “S”). Yet we no longer see this difference today. True, most women are essentially “S”, but so are most men. And that fits exactly with what the Maharal said about our times. He wrote in *Tiferes Yisrael*²¹³ that women are lacking in [a certain type of] *da'as* and that before Moshiach comes this would be true of men as well. He continues that this change had already occurred in his times and the men had become like women.

The Malbim does not explain why women are lacking *sechel iyuni*, and one would assume from his writings that this is how she was created, but Chazal's *aggadah* on the moon says differently. The moon, which represents all the feminine, was originally created equal to the sun. In fact, *Kabbalah* sources say that the moon originally had its own light. According to the *Magen Avraham* and brought in the *Mishna Brura*, the moon's diminution came as a result of the sin of eating from *Etz Hada'as*. Since the moon represents the feminine power and women parallel the moon, this means that they, too, lost their light. Since light represents Torah, this means that women lost their Torah study capabilities or interest, just as the Vilna Gaon wrote.

As explained in this book, there is a rule that if someone takes what he is not allowed to, he does not keep what he took, and in addition loses what was previously his. This happened to both Adam and Chava when they ate from the *Etz HaDa'as*. They both lost *da'as*. However, because Chava not only ate herself, but also convinced Adam to eat of it (which was the greater sin) she lost much more than Adam did. (Chava also ate of the tree twice, once with the snake and once with Adam.) The moon's lost light, then, is woman's lost intellectual capabilities which prevented her from learning Torah.

But it goes even deeper. Women parallel the *Shchinah*, the female aspect of *Hashem's* interaction with His creation. *Kabbalah* says that after the sin of *Etz HaDa'as*, the *Shchinah* lost Her light. Whatever happens to the *Shchinah* happens to women. When the *Shchinah* lost its light, women lost their light and became darkened as well. When the *Shchinah's* light returns, women's light will also return.

To properly understand these concepts one needs to realize that changes take place in this world in an outwardly natural form, but those natural “reasons” are only methods whereby *Hashem* brings about what He has decreed. For example, if a person is meant

²¹² *Bereishis* 3:20

²¹³ Chapter 56

to make money, his endeavors to earn it will be crowned with success. If not, he can work from dawn to dusk and more, and it won't get him anywhere. Even if he earns it he will lose it, or Hashem will create a situation where he will not be able to work, or the like.

The point is that a person receives abundance through spiritual pipelines. The natural causes that we see are merely the means by which it occurs in this world. The physical circumstances are *how* it comes about but not *why* it comes about.

To give an example: Chazal said that women (in general) cannot support themselves. They didn't mean this as a law or an ethical teaching – according to Torah it's fine for women to support themselves. It was just a fact of life that it wasn't usually possible. They explain that the word *zachar* (male) is connected to the words “*ze car*”, this one has a loaf of bread (*cicar*). The word for female, *nekeivah*, Chazal say, is connected to the word *nekiyah* (clean), meaning that she is “clean” of financial assets (i.e. she cannot earn money). This, they say, is why people preferred having sons to having daughters. A son could eventually support his parents, while a daughter could not.

In our circumstances this is no longer true. You could say that the Industrial Revolution changed this, and in a way it did. But the reason the Industrial Revolution changed this was because Hashem had decreed that in this era, when the world is preparing for the *geula*, women would get back the ability to support themselves, and so Hashem did this *through* the industrial revolution. The Industrial Revolution wasn't the cause; it was the means. Had Hashem not decreed this, the Industrial Revolution would have changed nothing.

Furthermore (for those who are not such strong believers), it should be pointed out that even amongst non-Jewish intellectuals, such as the Greeks, and later in general European society, it was accepted that women were non intellectual.

(In response to this, it has been pointed out to me that Greek mythology speaks of a very brilliant and intellectual female character. This is no contradiction. Just as Annie Oakley became a legendary figure as a sharp shooter not because it was a common role of women in the Wild West, but rather because it was so rare that it made her into a legend, so too a woman who was very intellectual and brilliant would have seemed supernatural to Greek society and so could have been considered super human and turned into an idol. The ancient idol worshippers actually turned real people whom they saw as supernatural into idols.)

Someone asked me: if the loss of abstract intelligence came from the sin of Chava, why were there exceptions? I don't know the answer to that, but the question was not taking into account that there were exceptions in every area of the curses of Adam and Chava. Why don't all men have to earn their bread by the sweat of their noses? Why do some women have easy, painless births? Obviously Hashem has reasons for the exceptions but we don't know them.

Finally, I find it illogical and even presumptuous to assume that all the wise people who lived in previous eras were wrong about the nature of the women of their times, and that we, who live in a world influenced by the powers of the *geula*, know what life was like in previous times when the influences of the *geula* were not yet present. Do people who are judging by the situation in our world know better than the previous

generations what existed in their world? We weren't there. They were. Who should know better?

Appendix 3: Devorah HaNeviah (Deborah the Prophetess)

In the *Sefer Shoftim* (Judges), we read about Devorah the Prophetess who was both a judge and a leader of her people. Her status as a prophetess is not perplexing; there were many Jewish women who were prophetesses, and indeed the entire Jewish People, women included, attained prophecy at the giving of the Torah. Furthermore, the *midrash* tells us that the *Ru'ach HaKodesh* rests on all people, men and women alike, according to the worthiness of their deeds²¹⁴. Her being a judge, however, presents a difficulty. Jews are not permitted to have a woman as a judge or leader.²¹⁵ This prohibition is based on the statement of the *Sifri*²¹⁶ that Hashem commanded us to place a king, not a queen, over ourselves. The Rambam says²¹⁷ that the prohibition of appointing a queen applies to every position of public authority, no matter how local or minute. How, then, could Devorah have been a judge and leader of her people?

Rabbi Yosef Karo, author of the *Shulchan Aruch*, wrote a commentary on the Rambam called *Kesef Mishnah*. He gives two answers to this question. The first is that possibly Devorah was not actually a judge, but rather a wise woman who advised the judges. The second answer is that if she was literally a judge, her position would normally have been forbidden, but it is possible for a Torah prohibition to become temporarily permitted through prophecy.

But why would Hashem overrule His own *Halacha* in the case of Devorah? And what are we to learn from this? Let's see how Chazal explain this perplexing question.

To understand their words, let's first try to comprehend why it became forbidden for Jewish women to hold positions of authority. According to simple logic it would appear thus: Chava, who contained within her all the female souls, used her influence over Adam to cause him to sin. This also brought about his death. After Chava misused her power to such a disastrous effect, it was decreed that she would no longer have power over man. Therefore, a Jewish woman cannot be a "queen".²¹⁸

Chava's sin also caused the blocking out of Hashem's visible presence in this world. This is called dimming the light of the *Shechinah*. As a result, her own "light" was dimmed. Since Chazal say that "light" refers to Torah knowledge, we see that women became incapable of being Torah authorities, yet there were some women who were

²¹⁴ *Midrash Tanchuma* quoted in *Yalkut Shimoni* on *Sefer Shoftim* 4:4

²¹⁵ This is not one of the Seven Noahide laws and would apparently be allowed for non-Jews.

²¹⁶ *Sefer Devarim: Parshas Shoftim*

²¹⁷ *Hilchos Malachim* 1:5

²¹⁸ Perhaps the reason this applies only to Jews is that non-Jews cannot rectify the sins of Adam and Chava. Jews must rectify these sins and they must raise up the entire world with them. Additionally, the Jewish woman represents the *Shechinah*, which is Hashem's feminine way of dealing with creation. Since the *Shechinah* is not now seen in her role of *malchus*, women also cannot have this role. But non-Jewish women do not represent the *Shechinah* and so this would not apply to them.

exceptions to this rule. Devorah was one of them. Again, why?

Let's see what Chazal tell us about this.

Tanna Dvay Eliyahu: They said, Devorah's husband was an *am ha'aretz* (unlearned in Torah). She said to him, "Come and I will make for you wicks and bring them to the *Beis Hamikdash* which is in Shiloh (this is referring to the *mishkan*). Then your share will be with the good ones amongst them and you will come to the life of *Olam Haboh*." She was making wicks and he was bringing them to the *Beis HaMikdash* (in Shiloh, i.e. the *mishkan*). She was looking into it and making thick wicks so their light would be plentiful. And *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* investigates the hearts and kidneys (from which emotions and desires stem). He said to her, "Devorah, you intended to increase My light, so I will increase your light in Judea and Jerusalem, equal to twelve tribes. Who caused Lapidus to merit that his share was with the good ones and he will come to the life of *Olam Haboh*? Devorah, his wife. About her it says, 'a woman's wisdom built her home.'²¹⁹

We see from here that Devorah corrected both of the above aspects of Chava's sin. Chava caused Adam to sin, bringing death upon him. Devorah raised her husband spiritually bringing him to the eternal life in *Olam Habah*.²²⁰

Chava blocked out the light of the *Shechinah* from the world. The *mishkan*, and later the *Beis HaMikdash*, was meant to bring back this light, spreading perception of Hashem as the kind, just and omniscient Ruler of the world.²²¹ The wicks of the *menorah* (candelabra) of the *Beis HaMikdash* were a means of spreading this spiritual light, and the thicker the wicks, the more spiritual light would be spread. That was Devorah's intention when making the wicks. When Hashem saw this, He said that Devorah's own light, her Torah knowledge and spiritual perception, would be greatly increased. This is according to the concept of *midah k'neged midah*, that Hashem both rewards and punishes measure for measure. And so Devorah became not only a great prophetess, but a great Torah authority as well. For the *menorah* in the *Beis Hamikdash* represented the light of the Oral Torah.²²² And so Devorah became a great *talmida chachama* and judge.²²³

From all this we can gain a glimpse of what will transpire after the full redemption, when the sins of Adam and Chava will be rectified. This is one of the meanings of Yirmiyahu's prophecy of the future that *nekeivah tisovev gever* – a female will turn about to become a man.

There was a fleeting experience with this situation at the Sea of Reeds, when men and women had equal spiritual perception²²⁴. According to the *Me'or V'shemesh*, at that time Miriam and the women actually experienced an even higher form of spiritual

²¹⁹ *Sefer Mishlei* 14 brought in *Yalkut Shimoni*; *Sefer Shoftim* 4:4.

²²⁰ Interestingly, there is one situation where women do have authority over males: a mother has authority over her son. This fits the idea that a woman's authority over males was forbidden because she brought them death, whereas a mother gives her son life, and so the prohibition is reversed there.

²²¹ This will be fully accomplished only with the redemption and the third *Beis HaMikdash*, but the *mishkan* and each *Beis Hamikdash* had some of this ability.

²²² See the Artscroll on *Hanukah*.

²²³ One may not judge according to prophecy, so to be a judge Devorah must have been, in addition to a prophetess, a great Torah scholar.

²²⁴ See *Kli Yakar* on *Sefer Shemos* 15:20.

perception than the men, the highest level possible. (For a fuller explanation of this, please see the text of the book.) Regarding the future, says the *Kli Yakar*, the power of *nekeivah tisovev gever* will return and at that time “males and females will be equal”.²²⁵

There is an interesting note here. According to *Kabbalah*, the soul of Tzipporah, the wife of Moshe, entered into Devorah. This is called “*ibur neshama*”. Why did this happen?

My guess is this: Tzipporah originally came along with Moshe when he went to redeem the children of Israel, but when she reached the Egyptian border, Moshe sent her back, at the urging of his brother Aharon. Aharon said to Moshe, “We are pained over the first ones, you want to add more to them?” meaning we are pained over the Israelites who are already suffering in Egypt, do not bring anyone more to suffer as well. So Moshe sent Tzipporah and their children back to her father's house.²²⁶

Later, they were reunited with Moshe and the Jewish People in the desert, but Tzipporah had lost out on the great experiences of the splitting of the Reed Sea and the women's experience of *nekeivah tisovev gever*. Therefore, it seems that Hashem gave her with what she had missed at that time by putting her *neshama* into Devorah who experienced with her people a miraculous salvation from their enemies, sang a song of praise to Hashem, and was living the prophecy of *nekeivah tisovev gever*, mirroring that which occurred for the Jewish women at the Reed Sea. (And this time she was the one leading it!).

Indeed, Devorah HaNeviah, the female Torah judge, is the embodiment of the future glory of women according to the prophecy of *nekeivah tisovev gever*.²²⁷

²²⁵ Ibid

²²⁶ Rashi on *Shemos* 18:2.

²²⁷ According to the Vlina Gaon and others, the seven prophetesses mentioned in Gemara Megillah correspond to the seven *sfiros* of kabbalah. Devorah, the third of these seven prophetesses, corresponds to the *sfira* of *Tiferes*, glory. It should be noted, however, that glory on the side of holiness is never seeking glory for oneself, only using this for Hashem.

Appendix 4: Hashem's Secret Agents

A woman once told me that in her youth she had asked the following question: Why are women given a backseat role in the functions of the *klal* (community) rather than actively participating in them? She was told that it would be against female nature. But why, she wondered, should it be against the nature of women to express their love of Torah outwardly?

One could add another question to this: why does the Torah give only Jewish men a special uniform: *tzitzis* (fringes), *tefillin* (phylacteries), and *bris milah* (circumcision)? Why doesn't the Torah also give Jewish women some special Jewish uniform? True, women have the *mitzvah* of *tznius* (modesty) which is extremely important, but non-Jews can also be modestly dressed, and in some societies they are. *Tznius* is not exclusive to the Jewish People.

This does not mean that it's fine for Jewish women to look like non-Jews. Chazal tell us that one of the factors that redeemed the Jewish People from Egypt was that they did not change their form of dress. All Jews, both men and women, dressed differently than the Egyptians, and indeed, it should ideally be that way today as well. Trying to look like the gentiles while still technically keeping *Halacha* (or imagining that one is keeping *Halacha*) is not at all proper. Jews, both males and females, should be definitely identifiable as Jews.

But our question here is why are there specific mitzvos for men, which are outward signs of their Jewish holiness, while the Torah gives no such corresponding mitzvos for women?

There are surely great reasons behind this, which are unbeknown to us. We will fully understand this after the *geula* when *Hashem* reveals to us the secrets of the Torah. Commenting on the second *pasuk* of *Shir Hashirim*, Rashi says that in the future (i.e. after the full *geula*) Hashem will appear to us again and reveal to us the reasons behind the mitzvos and the mysteries and hidden secrets of the Torah. But a little bit of Hashem's reasons He sometimes reveals to us even now, especially through Kabbalah based sources. So I would like to bring here an idea based on something I

once read.²²⁸

“According to [Chazal], our *imahos* (matriarchs), Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel and Leah had an advantage over the *avos* (i.e. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) in *Ru'ach HaKodesh*. Through her *Ru'ach HaKodesh* Sarah saw more than Avraham Avinu the danger of Yishmael's *klipa*...we have learned that Avraham was subsidiary to Sarah in prophecy, meaning that Sarah's level of prophecy was greater than Avraham's. Rivkah saw with her *Ru'ach HaKodesh* the danger of Eisav's *klipa*...Rachel saw with her *Ru'ach HaKodesh* the danger of the *klipa* of her father Lavan's *terafim* (a type of idol), which Yaakov didn't see...Why weren't these apparent to the eyes of the *avos*?...Because the *sitra achra* (the force against holiness) knew that the abundance of *Ru'ach HaKodesh* was given to the *avos* and it did everything possible to hide from their eyes the danger of the *klipos*, [but] the *sitra achra* did not know the secret of the *Ru'ach HaKodesh* that was given to the *imahos*. Therefore, the *imahos* saw through their *Ru'ach HaKodesh* the danger of the *klipos* and acted with all their *mesirus nefesh* (self sacrifice) to ward off the evil.”²²⁹

So Sarah saved us from the danger of Yishmael, Rivkah from the danger of Eisav, and Rachel from the danger of Lavan's *trafim*. (With those *trafim* Lavan practiced black magic, which he could have used to cause great harm to Yaakov's family, the foundation of *Am Yisrael*. Yaakov was not aware of their danger, but Rachel was.) Based on this, my idea is thus: Jewish men are Hashem's army in this world, while Jewish women are Hashem's undercover agents. IY”H, I'll soon explain to you what I mean by this, but first I'd like to talk a little bit more about the concept of women's hiddenness.

The physical world parallels spiritual reality. The way things appear in “nature” expresses some spiritual truth. Therefore, it is significant that even physically, the organ that represents masculinity, the organ bearing the bris, is on the outside. The organ that represents the female, the uterus, is hidden inside. Since, as mentioned, everything in the physical world corresponds to a spiritual reality, this teaches us a spiritual truth: that while the male accomplishes externally, the female accomplishes at the level of *pnimius*, (on the inside) remaining unseen.

And so, not surprisingly, again and again we come across the concept of female hiddenness.

In Judaism the woman is called the *bayis* which is easily understandable, because the woman is the essence of the home. But there is a deeper meaning to this as well. *Bayis* literally means inside, as in the phrase “*M'bayis U M'chutz*” which means inside and outside. So if the woman is the *bayis* that means she is the inner dimension, the *pnimius*.

We actually have an allusion to women's internal connection to Hashem with Rivkah *Imeinu* (our foremother). The *gematria* (numerical value) of Rivkah is 307 which is the median of 613, meaning that Rivkah is the center point of the 613 mitzvos. What is at the center is the most internal and thereby the most hidden. (I saw this in a sefer from Chabad.) In the *tefilla* (prayer), we also see the concept of the hidden central point regarding Rivkah. Before reciting the prayer of *Yishtabach* on Shabbos, there is

²²⁸ A footnote in *Kol HaTor* (Page 128, Hebrew edition of Yosef Rivlin).

²²⁹ *Midrash Shlomo*, 30 (Pages 74-75)

passage which says:

בפי ישרים תתרום
 ובשפתי צדיקים תתברך
 ובלשון חסידים תתקדש
 ובקרב קדושים תתהלל.

“In the mouth of straight ones You will be raised up, in the lips of tzaddikim You will be blessed, in the tongue of chassidim You will be sanctified, and in the midst of kedoshim (holy ones), You will be praised.”

If you take the first letters of the words describing the “doers”: *yesharim*, *tzaddikim*, *chassidim*, and *kedoshim*, the initials spell out יצהק. If you take the center point of the words describing the actions being accomplished, which are in the passive tense (representing the feminine which is passive), you will see at the center point the name רבקה. In other words, the code for יצהק is at the beginning of the words, on the outside, and therefore is seen much more easily. The code for רבקה is at the center point, hidden and internal, and therefore harder to see and identify.

In the Shabbos *tefillos* of the *nusach* (liturgy) Ashkenaz, the order of the lines is different, except on Rosh HaShono, so in *nusach* Ashkenaz, this code is seen only on Rosh HaShono. In *nusach* Sfard, which is influenced by *Kabbalistic* truths, it appears this way every Shabbos.

(It was also told to me that the first *bracha* (blessing) of the *Shemonah Esrei* prayer called *avos* actually speaks of the *imahos* as well, but in code. For example, if you reverse the order of the letters, the word ל-א-ה spells out Leah: לאה. However, I do not know the source for this.)

So now that we've seen some examples of women's hidden, internal status, let's see what I mean when I say that Jewish women are Hashem's secret agents.

We have just seen that the side of evil did all it could to blind the *avos*, but didn't bother with the *imahos*, because the *Satan* had no idea of the greatness and the power of the Jewish woman. He thought, like many still do, that men do all the important Jewish spiritual things and the Jewish women cook, wash and clean, and bear and care for children, but they don't have lofty spiritual powers such as *Ru'ach Hakodesh*. Only the men have real spiritual powers.

Wow, was he wrong!

Now, what would have happened if the *sitra achra* would have known about the *Ru'ach HaKodesh* of the *imahos*? He would have made sure to blind them as well, just as he did to the *avos*. So the *imahos* were acting as Hashem's secret agents. Nobody knew their true powers.

Interestingly, you can find a basis for this idea in the Torah itself. The Torah tells us straight out that Avraham was a *navi* (prophet) as it says, “Hashem spoke to Avraham...” and “Hashem appeared to Avraham”. Similarly, we are told that Hashem spoke to Yitzchak and Yaakov. But nowhere in the Torah does it say straight out that the *imahos* had *nevuah*. We know from Chazal that Sarah is counted as one of the 7

nevios, and that the other *imahos* also had prophecy,²³⁰ but why is this never mentioned outright in the Torah? Why do we know this only from Chazal? Why doesn't it ever say, "Hashem said to Sarah", or "Hashem told Rivkah"? There is one *pasuk* (verse) that actually says, "*Vayugad l'Rivkah*" - it was told to Rivkah (what Eisav was thinking) but the *pasuk* doesn't reveal that it was Hashem who told her.

Why?

It seems that the spiritual powers of the *imahos* had to be kept secret, for had the power of the Jewish woman been revealed in the Torah, it would not have been protected from the *sitra achra* and Jewish women could not have functioned as Hashem's secret agents.²³¹

We see this principle again in Egypt. Pharaoh ordered that all the baby boys be killed and the baby girls be left alive. He thought that all the power of the Jewish People was in the boys, and the girls would have no power. Well, once again he was dead wrong. Chazal tell us, "*biz'chus nashim tzidkoniyyos nig'alu avoseinu miMitzrayim*" - in the merit of the righteous women, our forefathers were redeemed from Egypt. Baruch Hashem, the forces of evil messed up there as well.

But there's even more to it. The *Gemara* tells us that there are two *moshichim*: Moshiach ben Yosef and Moshiach ben David. The *Sefer Kol HaTor*, based on the teachings of the Vilna Gaon, explains that in every generation there is a *tzaddik* bearing the soul of Moshiach ben Yosef and a *tzaddik* bearing the soul of Moshiach ben David. Although they cannot yet fully redeem us, they help us and protect us. In fact, their help and protection is so important that without these *tzaddikim* we could not survive in *galus* (exile). When these two *tzaddikim* unite and work together, they have awesome power to help *Am Yisrael*.

So who were the first-ever representatives of Moshiach ben Yosef and Moshiach ben David working together? *Kol HaTor*²³² says they were Shifra and Pu'ah; the Jewish midwives who defied Pharaoh and saved the baby boys from his evil decree. Their positions as the hidden forces of the united *moshichim* was so well-concealed that the forces of evil had no idea it would be these women who ultimately succeeded in saving *Am Yisrael*!

Now let's fast forward about a thousand years. It is after the destruction of the first *Beis HaMikdash* and the Jewish People are in grave danger. Their assimilation and

²³⁰ It is obvious from the midrashim and commentaries say that all the *Imahos* (mothers of the Jewish People) had prophecy, but they are not counted among the 7 prophetesses because only someone who is told to tell others their prophecy is included in the list of prophets, and only Sarah spoke in prophecy.

²³¹ The Torah does reveal that Miriam was a prophetess but this was only after the *geula* when they needed less protection from the *sitra achra*. Even so, Miriam did eventually err regarding prophecy, when she compared Moshe's prophecy to that of the other prophets. Consequently, Miriam was stricken with leprosy. Devorah and Chulda are also clearly referred to as prophetesses, as they too were not in *galus* (exile). Yet these prophetesses also erred, and Chazal said regarding them that positions of loftiness are not becoming to women. Perhaps this can be interpreted to mean that when women have lofty positions they will not be protected from the Satan and so they will stumble. On the other hand, Chana, Avigail, and Esther, although prophetesses, were not called so by the *Navi*, and were therefore protected and did not stumble. So the rule seems to be that if scripture openly reveals that a woman was a prophetess, she will eventually stumble through her prophecy. If it does not, she is protected.

²³² P. 82.

idolization of the power of human kings is causing a terrible decree in heaven - a decree of annihilation! Haman (the antagonist of the *Purim* story) wants to destroy the Jewish People and King Achashverosh gives him the green light. Only unbeknownst to them, there is a secret Jewish agent high up in the kingdom's echelons, right there in the palace where Hashem placed her. She is the queen, spiritually and physically. Esther HaMalka is the secret agent of the Jewish People, placed there by Hashem to save them. In fact, her very name, Esther, means hidden. From the start, Mordechai foresaw her role and told her not to reveal her identity. And so, once again, the Jewish People were saved by a woman: the hidden agent Esther *HaMalka*. First Esther worked to annul the heavenly decree by having the Jewish People fast, pray, and do *teshuva* for three days, and then she risked her life to save them. And she succeeded because Haman, representing the power of evil, had no idea of her true identity.

And so we see a pattern; Jewish men are Hashem's revealed army and Jewish women are His secret agents. There are times when you need to fight a war with the soldiers and there are times when you need secret agents. While the soldiers of the army wear a uniform, the secret agents never do, as it would utterly destroy their effectiveness.

So the members of Hashem's regular army, His "*eida*" are out there waging the war of Hashem for all to see, and they wear His uniform of *bris milah*, *tefillin*, and *tzitzis*. They are the actors in the public functions, while the women are sitting behind quietly as if they are not in His army, but only attached to it.

But Hashem knows the real story: the women's power needs to be hidden in order to confuse the Satan, for the coming of the *geula* will be in the merit of the righteous women of that generation. The Jewish women whose greatness is hidden have the power to overturn the whole world!

Resembling the *Shechinah*

I would like to go still deeper into the idea of Jewish woman's hiddenness based on *Kabbalah*. Some of this was already explained in the text, but here I'd like to delve into it further.

Hashem created the human being in His image. The man corresponds to Hashem's male way of dealing with His creation, called *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. The female corresponds to Hashem's feminine way of dealing with creation called the *Shechinah*. The *Shechinah* is Hashem's communication with the world in a form that human beings will be able to relate to. When people are good, the *Shechinah* shines and is revealed in this world. We see open miracles and daily *hashgacha pratis* (signs of God's direct involvement). We see how Hashem is together with us and controlling this world. But when people sin, the *Shechinah* is hidden.

When the world was first created, the *Shechinah* was very obvious. Adam and Chava saw the *Shechinah*, something we cannot even imagine, and everyone knew who was King of the world. But the sin of the *Etz HaDa'as* caused the *Shechinah* to become hidden. We don't see Hashem's presence any more and, except for rare glimpses, we don't see how He runs the world. People have so many questions of faith because we are living in a world of spiritual darkness. This is because the *Shechinah* is hidden.

When Chava sinned it caused the *Shechinah* to hide from the world, and therefore

woman, who corresponds to the *Shechinah*, became hidden as well. Only when the light of the *Shechinah* is once again revealed for all to see, with the coming of Moshiach *Tzidkeinu* (our righteous one), will women's light again be revealed. When Chava's sin is atoned for, there will once again be two equally great lights "and the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun." At that time the forces of evil will no longer endanger us, and so there will no longer be a need for secret agents. Hashem's Glory will be revealed to all, and with it, the glory of women who parallel the *Shechinah*.

May we see that great day speedily in our times, *Amen*.

Appendix 5: The Girls' Circle Dance in the Vineyards

On the fifteenth of the month of Av and on Yom Kippur Jerusalem's unmarried girls went out and did circle dances in the vineyards. The unmarried men then went and chose a wife. The *Me'or ViShemesh* connects this circle dance of the girls to the circle dance done by Miriam and the women after the splitting of the Reed Sea. At that time Miriam the prophetess and the Jewish women brought down the power of *nekeivah tisovev gever*. The dance of Jerusalem's daughters also represented *nekeivah tisovev gever*²³³.

The *Gemara*²³⁴ describes the dance of the unmarried girls thus: Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel said, "There were no days as good for Israel as the fifteenth of Av and Yom Kippur. On those days the daughters of Jerusalem would go out in borrowed white vessels (i.e. dresses) so as not to embarrass those who did not have...and the daughters of Jerusalem would go forth and make circle dances in the vineyards. And what did they say? 'Young man, lift up your eyes and see what you are choosing'...we learn that whoever did not have a wife would go there."

Amazing! This is how the singles of Jerusalem spent Yom Kippur?? Why is the sage saying that this is the epitome of good?

The *Bnei Yisaschar*²³⁵ speaking of this dance brings the teaching of Rabbi Yehoshua Heshil of Mezhibuz, explaining that the circle dance of these girls is representative of the future circle dance that the righteous will do around Hashem. (This is also mentioned by Rashi in explanation of the *Gemara*.) Like the *Me'or V'shemesh*, he says that this represents equality:

"A circle dance is where they circle around and around and there is no higher and lower, no beginning and no end. And so in the future there will be no jealousy and hatred amongst the righteous, saying this one is higher than that one...And this is truly a Yom Tov, a good day, for Israel, when there is no jealousy and hatred and competition amongst them."

²³³ *Me'or V'shemesh*, 5746 Edition, Part 1, P.178.

²³⁴ *Maseches Ta'anis* 26b

²³⁵ Month of Av, Part 4

And so what the Sage is telling us is that there are no days as good for Israel as when there is no hatred due to jealousy and competition, when there is only equality and love. And the girls in their circle dance were representing this ideal of *nekeivah tisovev gever* when all those who serve Hashem are equal.

We further see this ideal of equality in the girls' behavior. They all wore borrowed white garments "so as not to embarrass those who did not have." Again, the point is equality, in this case, between the "haves" and the "have-nots".

He goes on to explain that this took place on the fifteenth day of Av, alluding to the fifteenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet which is the letter *samech*. (Av is spelled Aleph Bet, which is an allusion to the Hebrew alphabet, so the fifteenth of Av also represents the fifteenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet.)²³⁶

As mentioned, the fifteenth letter of the Hebrew Aleph Bet is the letter *samech* which has the form of a circle. And, as explained in the text, the Ari z"l said that the circle represents equality. This is what was at the beginning of creation and what will be in the future when all the rectifications are complete.

But how is this connected to matchmaking? And why on Yom Kippur?

The *Bnei Yisaschar* explains that the ultimate purpose for which the world was created, was for the Jewish People to unite with Hashem as a husband and wife, in great love. This is the allegory of *Shir Hashirim* and every Jewish marriage represents this allegory. The *Bnei Yisaschar* goes on to give a rather complicated explanation of how this relates to the fifteenth of Av and Yom Kippur, but I would like to give a somewhat simpler one.

These two days, the fifteenth of Av and Yom Kippur, are days when Hashem forgave the Jewish People. On the fifteenth of Av, the Jews in the desert stopped dying for the sin of the spies and on Yom Kippur the Jewish People were forgiven for the sin of the golden calf. The *Kli Yakar*²³⁷ points out that the word for circle dance, *machol*, is connected to the word *machul*, which means "forgiven", signifying that when the sins are forgiven there is rejoicing and a heavenly bounty of spirituality in the form of *nekevah tisovev gever*.

Perhaps we can also say that when the Jewish People are forgiven for sinning against Hashem and there is a reconciliation between them, this is the time for matchmaking, for at this time the Jewish People are reunited with Hashem in the greatest marriage of all.

We could also add that love, peace and friendship, which we pray for in the *sheva brachos* of a Jewish marriage²³⁸, can exist only when each side is truly concerned with the other's good, and not when either or both sides wish to have an advantage over the other. This is the essence of equality – to love another as one loves oneself.

But what about modesty and holiness?

²³⁶ *Tiferes Shlomo* on Tu b'Av.

²³⁷ *Kli Yakar* on *Sefer Shemos* 15:20

²³⁸ The seven blessings recited at a Jewish Marriage, and after festive meals for seven days.

These young people had a holy purpose. They wanted to get married, and when done properly, marriage is intrinsically holy. In fact, the Jewish term for marriage, *kiddushin*, literally means holiness. The *Michtav Me'Elياهو*²³⁹ points out that the girls were all modestly dressed in white, which represents purity. (Red and other glaring colors represent raw desires.) And we can see the level of holiness of the young men from the fact that the girls had to tell them, “Lift up your eyes and see what you are choosing”. The young men didn’t look at the girls! They had their eyes cast down. The dance was not for the boys, it was done for Hashem, and the boys lifted up their eyes only after the dance, when specifically told to, in order to choose a wife. And as the *Michtav Me'Elياهو* also points out, the girls only spoke, they didn't sing, in order not to arouse immodest feelings.

And why was the dance done specifically in a vineyard?

Perhaps to symbolize that marriage is like wine. Wine should be used for holiness, like the Kiddush drunk on Shabbos, and when used properly it should bring gladness to the heart. But when wine is overdone or abused it leads to evil. Similarly, marriage, when done in accordance with the Torah is connected to holiness, and should bring joy to the heart, but when the union of man and woman is not according to Torah, it is like alcoholism, bringing only pain and destruction.

And perhaps the vineyard is connected to the rectification of the sin of Chava for according to one opinion, grapes grew on the Tree of Knowledge – “And she squeezed for him grapes”.²⁴⁰ How symbolic, then, is the vineyard where the circle dance took place, for when that sin is forgiven (*machul*), everyone will again be in a circle dance (*machol*), where *nekeivah tisovev gever* – all are equal.

²³⁹ Part 4, p. 181.

²⁴⁰ *Bereishis Rabba* 15, 7; *Bereishis Rabba* 19, 5; *Maseches Sanhedrin* 70a, and many other places.

Appendix 6: A Background of Kol HaTor

Since the book *Kol HaTor* was one of the important sources upon which this book was based, I'd like to bring here a background for this rather unknown work.

According to the tradition known to the Rivlin family, *Kol HaTor* was written by their ancestor Rabbi Hillel Shklover of blessed memory, who was one of the leaders of the *aliyah* of the Gra's students, and a cousin of the Vilna Gaon. This is mentioned in the text of the book itself.

Kol HaTor was well known and highly respected in the old *yishuv* (the original *Chareidi* settlement) of Jerusalem, but because it was a deep *Kabbalistic* work made up of notes rather than an actual book, and because it was not printed or published, it was virtually unknown to the outside world. Around 1947, Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Rivlin, the great-great-grandson of the original author, edited, abridged and simplified the original work, putting it in book form so that it could be read by people who were not advanced *Kabbalists*. He distributed it to friends and relatives, but due to a lack of funds, chapters six and seven were not included. Since then, the original notes Rav Hillel wrote, were lost. All that remains now is that printed edition, plus chapter six and a short introduction to chapter seven which were found, still in manuscript form, and published by Yosef Rivlin, the grandson of Rav Shlomo Zalman Rivlin.

About the time of the Six Day War (1967), one of the printed copies of *Kol HaTor* reached Rabbi Chaim Friedlander *zt"l*, one of the compilers of *Michtav Me'Eliyahu*, and a *mnahel ruchani* (spiritual director) in the Ponovizh Yeshiva. Rabbi Friedlander founded the *va'ad* (committee) for the dissemination of *Kol HaTor*. His booklet, however, reached only a small number of people and was not available in book stores. (I personally saw this booklet.) In 5754 (1994 CE) Yosef Rivlin published a new edition of *Kol HaTor*, including chapter six and the introduction to chapter seven. This edition also brings letters of praise for the book from rabbis who were descendants of the old *yishuv*, and includes an introduction to the book which was written by Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Rivlin but was not printed with the book. This edition also brings quotes from other sources written by the Vilna Gaon teaching some of the same ideas. In addition, Yosef Rivlin's edition includes an introduction to *Kol HaTor* written by Rabbi Chaim Friedlander, which I would like to bring here in translation. The following is that introduction:

Kol HaTor was first published by Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Rivlin *z"l* about twenty years ago (e.g. about twenty years before the Six Day War) in Jerusalem. It is hard to give an exact date because due to a lack of funds the book was printed bit by bit over a number of years. It seems that all that is left to us from that first edition are a few

copies, which were kept by the Rav's sons and a few others who were close to him. All the copies of the first edition are incomplete, because Rav Shlomo Zalman didn't have the means to finish printing them. Rav Shlomo Zalman's introduction was not included in the first edition either. We found it in manuscript form in the hands of Mr. Shmuel Rivlin, his son. We are grateful to him and to the other sons of the first publisher (e.g. Rav Shlomo Zalman Rivlin) for allowing us to copy it and to print it with the book.

Rav Shlomo Zalman's introduction did not mention anything about the biographical background of the book's author, the Gaon, Rabbi Hillel son of Rabbi Binyomin of Shklov. Perhaps the reason for this is that Rabbi Shlomo Zalman relied on his book *Chazon Tzion* which told the story of the Rivlin family and the *aliyah* of the Gra's students. At any rate, it would be a pity to read such an exalted book as this without knowing the greatness of its author. We therefore decided to fill this need, and we present here in a few lines a basic picture of the author and of his descendants who continued his teachings.

The Torah giant, Rabbi Hillel of Shklov, author of *Kol HaTor*, was born in 5518 (1758). His father, the Gaon Rabbi Binyomin Rivlin, was a cousin of the Gra and one of his outstanding students. Rabbi Binyomin Rivlin was a vivacious man who was very active in affairs of Torah and kindness. He founded an advanced yeshiva (school of Torah study) in Shklov with his own money. The studies program was designed by the Gra. Rabbi Binyomin convinced many of his wealthy acquaintances to move their homes and businesses to Shklov, so they would be support for the glorious Torah center that he had founded. Shklov had already merited to be called by the nickname 'Yavne of Raizen' and Rabbi Binyomin they called 'the builder of Shklov and its scholars'.

It is told that when Rabbi Binyomin reached the age of fifty-two, he became extremely wealthy. At that time, he had a wondrous dream about Jerusalem. Rabbi Binyomin traveled to his rabbi, the Gra, and told him of his dream and his great wealth. The Gra showed him that this dream was telling him about a heavenly mission which had been given to him and to his son Rabbi Hillel. They must go settle in *Eretz Yisrael* and also they must arouse the hearts of the House of Israel to return to *Tzion* (Zion).

Rabbi Binyomin was extremely moved by the Gra's interpretation, which explained both the mystery of the dream and of the sudden great wealth. Upon his return to Shklov he immediately set about to put his plans into action. We still have one of Rabbi Binyomin's fiery speeches from this period about gathering in the exiles which is based on the *pasuk*, 'Behold I bring them from the land of the north'.²⁴¹ According to Rabbi Binyomin, this scripture teaches us that from the land of the north – meaning from Russia which is at the extreme north of Jerusalem, and especially from Shklov – there will begin the arousal to return to Zion and to rebuild Jerusalem. Rabbi Binyomin was influential in starting a movement in Shklov for the return to Zion which the Gra named *Chazon Tzion*. Shklov merited that from its midst came out most of the new settlers of *Eretz Yisrael*, and it became a banner for all the exile. Rabbi Binyomin himself left Shklov in the year 5572 (1812) to go up to *Eretz Yisrael*, but he did not reach his destination for he died on the way.

The author of *Kol HaTor*, Rabbi Hillel the son of Rabbi Binyomin, was also one of

²⁴¹ *Yirmiyahu* 31.

the of the Gra's outstanding students. Rabbi Hillel studied under the Gra for seventeen years. In 5543 (1783 CE) when the Gra saw that it was not the Creator's will that he journey to the Land of Israel, he decided to hand over to his students the heavenly mission of gathering in the exiles and resettling *Eretz Yisrael*. Rabbi Hillel was the man whom the Gra chose and placed at the head of this lofty movement, the movement called Chazon Zion, as mentioned above. The Gra gave him all the secrets of the *aschalta degeula*, the beginning stage of the redemption, and the details of what must be done to hasten the full redemption. The teachings of the *aschalta degeula* which Rabbi Hillel received from the Gra were both extensive and very deep. It was these teachings that Rabbi Hillel gathered together and put into a great and deep book: *Kol HaTor*. The present version of *Kol HaTor* is an abridged version of the basics of that original work."

The Gra passed away in the year 5558 (1798 CE), but although he was no longer in this world, his message, the Torah of the *aschalta degeula*, remained alive and vibrant amongst his students. It was this Torah that gave them the courage to place themselves into the great dangers they would encounter during their long journey, and face the multitude of dangers awaiting them upon their arrival in the Land of Israel, which was then barren and desolate.

The first groups left Russia for the Holy Land in 1809, and reached *Tzfat* of the fifth of Elul that year, after eleven months of arduous and trouble-filled travels. The first groups were led by fourteen of the Gra's students. In Cheshvan of the year 5572 (towards the end of 1812), seven of the Gra's students headed by Rabbi Hillel moved to Jerusalem. They found there only twenty Sefardic Jews and nine Ashkenazi Jews. Immediately upon arriving in Jerusalem, Rabbi Hillel and his friends began establishing all the institutions necessary for Jewish life. They founded Torah and *chessed* institutions, improved health conditions, and established the Jewish militia known as the 'Gebardiah' without which the community could not have survived in those days even for an hour.

It required super natural dedication for Rabbi Hillel and his friends to run a community with the conditions that existed at that time. Epidemics, bandits, false charges, lack of food and water, and difficulty in communicating with the outside world were only some of the troubles which those first settlers had to face. Were it not for their amazing faith in the heavenly mission which depended on them, and were it not for the light of the teachings of the *aschalta degeula* which they received from the Gra, they could not have withstood all these trials.

When news reached Russia that Rabbi Hillel and some of the other immigrants had succeeded in settling in Jerusalem, the excitement amongst Russian Jewry mounted. Many decided to immigrate to Jerusalem.

Rabbi Hillel's son, Rabbi Moshe, became famous as an outstanding speaker when he was only fifteen years old. One time his father brought him to Vilna so that the Vilna Gaon could hear his amazing power of oratory. The Gaon praised the young Moshe and told him, "Know that with this power that *Hashem Yisborach* has given you, you must become a speaker for Zion, according to the words of the Sages²⁴² 'She is Zion, none speak out for her' – from this you see that Zion must be spoken for".

²⁴² *Maseches Rosh HaShana* 30a

He also gave him an allusion: ‘*doresh Tzion*’ (speaker for Zion) has the numerical value of Moshe ben Hillel ben Binyomin (Moshe the son of Hillel, the son of Binyomin). The Gra’s words left a deep impression on the youngster’s heart. With a fiery spirit he followed the Gra’s instructions, becoming an orator for Zion for many years till he was known as "Rabbi Moshe, the speaker for Zion".

Rabbi Moshe’s grandson was Rabbi Yosef, known as Rabbi Yusha Rivlin. Until his time, the activities on behalf of the Jewish community were centered around the settlement in the Old City and improving conditions there. Rabbi Yosef was the first one to start settlements outside the city walls. With great daring and courage, he set out to fulfill the command of the prophecy "Widen the place of your tents" according to the explanation given this by the Vilna Gaon. The first thirteen neighborhoods outside the Old City walls were all built by Rabbi Yosef, with great sacrifice and dedication. The first house he built became the basis of the neighborhood Nachalat Shiva. This historical building was completed in the month of Tamuz, 1869. At that time the area surrounding the Old City was desolate and barren, and the gates of the city were closed at nightfall. For two years and eight months Rabbi Yosef lived alone in this house, ignoring the desolation around him. His goal was to inspire his brothers who lived within the city to come and live outside the walls in order to build up Jerusalem and have it spread out according to the aspiration of the Gra and his students. In 1872 Rabbi Yosef saw the fruit of his labor, for in that year forty-five new houses were built alongside his house, and over fifty families came and settled there. Rabbi Yosef continued this pattern throughout his lifetime; whenever he built a new neighborhood he was the first to live in it until others came and the neighborhood was firmly established.

In addition to the thirteen neighborhoods that Rabbi Yosef built, which are an eternal monument to him, he also left behind many poems and articles. All his poems are based on the teachings of the *Ketz Hameguleh* of *Kol HaTor*. Its main points are also included in Rabbi Yosef’s poems and articles, many of which were publicized in booklets and journals of that period, such as *Hamagid*, *HaTzfira*, and *HaL’vanon*. Rabbi Yosef’s son, Rav Shlomo Zalman Rivlin, was the first publisher of *Kol HaTor*. It is to him that we owe a debt of gratitude for keeping the glorious teachings of the *Ketz HaMiguleh* of Rabbeinu HaGra from being completely lost to us.

Glossary of Hebrew and Aramaic Words

Abba – Father.

Aggadah – Story from the Talmud.

Ahavas Hashem – Love of Hashem.

Aishes Chayil – Woman of Valor

Aleph to Tav – From the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet to the last letter.

Amidah – Main Jewish prayer recited every morning, afternoon, and night. Amidah

literally means standing, because one must stand while reciting this prayer. It is also known as the Shemonah Esrei or the Silent Benediction.

Bayis – The house or home. In the Torah this term is often used in a spiritual as well as physical sense, as in the terms “Beis Ya’akov” and “Beis Yisroel” which literally mean the House of Jacob and the House of Israel, but are understood in the broader sense as the family or people of Jacob or Israel. The Sages say that these terms refer to the Jewish women for the woman is the home.

Bina – Understanding, sometimes referring to deeper understanding of the heart.

Me'aras HaMachpela – The double cave, which is the burial place of Adam and Eve and the patriarchs and matriarchs of the Jewish People, located in the ancient city of Hebron.

Chazal – The collective term for the Jewish Sages of the Mishnaic and Talmudic periods.

Chessed – Doing acts of kindness and voluntarily helping others .

Chilul Hashem – The desecration of God’s Name, referring to anything which lowers God’s honor in human eyes.

Chochma – Knowledge or Wisdom.

Da’as – Intellectual perception and awareness; actually feeling what one knows.

Dayan – Judge in a religious court.

Eretz Yisrael – Land of Israel.

Etz HaDa’as – The Tree of Knowledge. By eating from this tree, Adam and Chava caused good and evil to be intertwined within creation, and set in motion the punishment of expulsion from the Garden of Eden.

Erev Shabbos – Sabbath eve, Friday.

Galus – Exile.

Gaon – Torah genius.

Gemara – A section of the Talmud which explains the teachings of the oral law, the discourses surrounding them, and anecdotes (called aggados) containing historical and moral lessons. The Gemara Bavli (Babylonian Talmud) contains the teachings of the Sages of Babylon. The Gemara Yerushalmi (Jerusalem Talmud) contains the teachings of the Sages of the Land of Israel.

Gilgulim – Reincarnated souls.

Halacha – Jewish law.

Haggadah – The recitations of the Passover Seder.

Hashem – God.

Hashgacha Pratis – Divine Intervention.

Hashem Yisborach – God, may He be blessed.

Havdalah – prayer said at the end of the Sabbath to mark the separation between the Sabbath and weekdays. The prayer is said over wine, a pleasant smelling plant, and the fire of a candle with at least two burning wicks.

Hillel and Shamai – two contemporary Torah scholars who were outstanding rabbinical leaders of the Second Temple period.

Hoshana Rabba and Shemini Atzeres – Jewish festivals. Hoshana Rabba is the last day of the festival of Sukkos, which is immediately followed by Shemini Atzeres, also known as Simchas Torah, the day of rejoicing with the Torah.

Ikvesa deMeshicha – the period directly prior to the redemption (literally, heels of Moshiach).

Ima – Mother.

Kabbalah – An esoteric school of study revolving around the hidden, mystical teachings of the Torah.

Kohen Gadol – High Priest of the Holy Temple.

Kohen/Kohanim – Priest(s).

Malchus – Kingship. In Kabbalah, malchus means being God's devoted representative, recognizing and revealing Him as King of all Creation.

Maseches – Tractate of the Gemara.

Moshiach – The messiah. The moshiach is a very pious person who leads and redeems the Jewish people. The main moshiach is a descendant of King David. (According to Kabbalah he is actually a reincarnation of David himself.) There is also a precursor to Moshiach ben David called Moshiach ben Yosef, i.e. a descendent of Joseph.

According to the Gaon of Vilna, the first moshiach is responsible to bring the Jews living in the diaspora to the Land of Israel, freeing them from gentile rule, and bringing them to mass repentance. The second moshiach brings the world back to its state before the sin of Adam and Eve, bringing freedom from death.

Midrash – An ancient commentary on the Torah discussing the text and often providing background information not explicitly mentioned in the text.

Mikra'os Gedolos Chumashim – The Five Books of Moses printed together with

certain standard commentaries.

Mitzvos – The 613 commandments of the Torah.

Olam Habah – The World to Come.

Oi Malchus Shamayim – Literally, the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven, meaning to do God's will under all circumstances.

Poskim – Torah authorities who rule in matters of the practical application of Jewish law.

Rabbanim – Rabbis.

Rabbeinu – Our Rabbi.

Ruach HaKodesh – Divine Spirit, akin to prophecy but not quite as great.

Sefer – Book, or the book of.

Shabbos – The Sabbath.

Shabbos Kodesh – The Holy Sabbath.

Shechina – The feminine aspect of God's relation to His creation, also known as God's indwelling presence.

Shema – Credo of the Jewish belief: "Hear O Israel, the Lord is God, the Lord is One".

Shemaya and Avtalyon – Torah leaders of the Second Temple period who were the teachers of Hillel and Shammai.

Siyata DeShemaya – Heavenly assistance.

Talmid Chacham/Talmidei Chachamim – Torah scholars.

T'chiyas Hameisim – The revival of the dead.

Teshuva – Repentance; literally, returning (to God).

Torah – The Bible. The Torah is comprised of three sections: The Five Books of Moses, the Navi, and Writings. There are 24 books that make up the "written Torah" and they each teach us God's commandments as well as timeless lessons for us to live life as Hashem's Chosen Nation. In addition there is the oral Torah, known as the Talmud.

Tzaddik/Tzaddikim – Very righteous people.

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About the author: Devorah Fastag is a Bais Yaakov graduate who presently resides in Beitar Illit, Israel. In addition to being a wife and mother of eleven children, *Baruch Hashem* (and grandmother of many more) she has been teaching women Torah for forty years. She can be contacted at fastag.df@gmail.com.