

Lessons from the Chassidische Parsha

The teachings of the Alter Rebbe in Torah Ohr and Likkutei Torah

The power of the negative Mitzvos

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פרשת פקודי
Pekudei 5782

The Mitzvos of the Torah are divided into two categories; 248 positive Mitzvos and 365 negative Mitzvos. The positive Mitzvos are action-based, where the Mitzvah is effected by us doing something; for example blowing a Shofar or eating Matzah. The negative Mitzvos are fulfilled not through action, but by refraining from doing that which is against Hashem's will.

At the Burning Bush, Moshe asked Hashem what he should tell the Jewish people when they ask for His name. Hashem revealed to Moshe His essential name יהוה-וה-י and said *זֶה שְׁמִי לְעַלְמֵי נֹזְחָה*, *"This is my name (שמי) forever and this is my remembrance (זכרי) for all generations"*.

The Tikkunei Zohar teaches that the word שמי combined with the יה of Hashem's name, has the Gematria 365, reflecting the 365 negative Mitzvos. The word זכרי combined with the וה of Hashem's name has the Gematria of 248, reflecting the 248 positive Mitzvos.

Chassidus explains that the four letters of the Name יהוה-וה-י represent the order of descent of Hashem's light through the Ten Sefiros. The first two letters represent the higher "intellectual" Sefiros of Chochma (י) and Binah (ה). The letters יה-י form one of the names of Hashem in their own right. In contrast, the last two letters represent the lower "emotional" Sefiros - the six emotions (ו) and Malchus (ה).

The Tikkunei Zohar's teaching seems counter-intuitive. One would think that the positive Mitzvos, where one is actively engaged in fulfilling Hashem's will, should be superior to the negative Mitzvos where one does nothing. So why are the negative Mitzvos the ones associated with the higher two letters of Hashem's name?

The positive Mitzvos are vessels that draw down G-dly light. The Zohar describes the 248 positive Mitzvos as the "limbs of the King". Just like the limbs of the body draw down the vitality of the Neshama, the Mitzvos draw down G-dly light into the worlds.

However, the positive Mitzvos can only draw down the light reflected by the letters וי, which is the G-dliness that is relatable to and can be revealed within the worlds. These are the 'revealed' levels of G-dliness (הנגלות). Since this level of light is related to the worlds, it lends itself to be drawn down through the Keilim created by actions that we do within our world i.e. the positive Mitzvos.

In contrast, the יה of Hashem's name represent the hidden levels of G-dliness (הנסתרות) that are completely beyond our grasp. This transcendent level is alluded to in the Posuk *ישת חושך סתרו*, *"He places His concealment in darkness"*. It is described as darkness because it is beyond revelation. No finite

action that we could do in this world would be able to elicit and actively grasp these hidden levels of G-dliness.

It is specifically the negation of action of the negative Mitzvos, that can access these levels, by pushing away the forces that conceal G-dliness (i.e. that which is against Hashem's will).

In Tehillim it says *שָׁשָׁם עָלוּ שְׁבֵטֵיהֶם שְׁבֵטֵי־הָעֵדוּת לְיִשְׂרָאֵל*, *"There ascended the tribes, the tribes of יה-י, testimony to Israel"*. This verse is a continuation of the previous one *יְרוּשָׁלַם הַבְּנוּיָה*, *"Yerushalaim built up, a city joined together within itself."*

The Gemara explains that the "city joined together" refers to the two levels of Yerushalaim; the supernal Yerushalaim (ירושלים) and the lower Yerushalaim (ירושלים של מטה). The lower Yerushalaim is the union of ו-ה, the supernal Yerushalaim is the union of יה-י.

When discussing the elevation to the hidden world of the supernal Yerushalaim, the tribes are described as *שְׁבֵטֵי־יְהוָה*, reaching the levels of יה-י. They are referred to as a "testimony", since testimony is only necessary for something that is hidden and would otherwise be unknown, like the G-dly levels of יה-י.

Parshas Pekudei opens with the verse;

אֵלֶּה פְּקוּדֵי הַמִּשְׁכָּן מִשְׁכַּן הָעֵדוּת אֲשֶׁר פָּקַד עַל־פִּי מֹשֶׁה עֲבַדְתָּ הַלְוִיִּם בְּיַד אִיתָמָר בֶּן־אֶהֱרֹן הַכֹּהֵן

"These are the countings of the Mishkan, the Mishkan of the Testimony, which were counted at Moshe's command - the work of the Leviim under the direction of Itamar son of Aaron Hakohen"

The Mishkan represents the drawing down of G-dly light to rest within the worlds. The repetition of the word *מִשְׁכַּן* in the Posuk alludes to the levels of the Mishkan in the two realms of the lower Yerushalaim and the supernal Yerushalaim.

The first reference alludes to the lower levels of G-dliness (ויה) that can be drawn down to unite within the world, through the observance of the positive Mitzvos.

The second reference is to the "Mishkan of Testimony", representing the "testimony" on the Hidden levels of יה-י, that are accessed through the negative Mitzvos. This Mishkan is through the command of Moshe, the embodiment of the quality of Bittul.

The positive Mitzvos that we do draw down G-dliness, but their active nature is an expression of self. The Bittul (surrender) of observing the negative Mitzvos, to push away our desires, builds a Mishkan where the deepest, hidden levels of G-dliness can manifest. This message should give us a new-found appreciation of the power of the Torah's "don'ts" over its "dos".