



Lessons from the Chassidische Parsha

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

Take a break and dig a well today!

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פרשת חולדות

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Parshas Toldos describes how Yitzchak dug wells. Why do we need to know about this seemingly trivial detail? The Torah tells us about the wells that Yitzchak dug, is because there is a deeper, inner meaning behind them, that has eternal relevance in our personal spiritual service. In the Chassidische Parsha, the Alter Rebbe shares the following explanation;

At the beginning of creation, Hashem created a river which flowed from Eden to water the Garden of Eden. This river subsequently split into four primary tributaries and from it, all other rivers receive their waters. This river is the River Pras.

From there, the waters of Pras flowed underground to form the subterranean water-table, which feeds all of the natural springs around the world. At the site of a natural spring, these waters breach through the earth and fountain upwards to the surface. With a little bit of digging, one taps into the underground waters of the Pras, to reveal their waters once more.

Even though they receive their waters from the Pras, natural springs possess a quality which is superior to the waters of a river. The waters of a spring are called מיִם חַיִּים, living waters.

This description describes our daily spiritual journey.

Every morning we start off our day immersed in a reality of spirituality. Before davening we learn Chassidus and during davening we try to meditate on the greatness of Hashem and the secrets of His oneness - how all of creation is like nought before Him. Through these meditations, we arouse feelings of love and a deep desire to unite with Hashem.

How can this desire be satisfied? How can we achieve the connection with Hashem that we crave? It is through the study of Torah in which Hashem's presence is found and through which we quench our thirst for connection with Him. And so, after Davening, our sages say that we should go from the Shule to the Beis Midrash, to channel our spiritual excitement from Davening into the words of Torah.

This morning routine of spirituality flows like a river. The river is a flow of G-dliness which emanates from Hashem, who is referred to as Eden. Its flow is drawn down through our meditation during davening. Like the river which flowed from Eden to water the Garden (גן), our meditation during

davening is channelled into Torah study which is represented by the Garden (גן) has the Gematria 53 which refers to the 53 Parshios of the Torah).

But as we leave the Shule and Beis Midrash to go out into the world and our mundane daily business, our focus shifts. Instead of delving into the mysteries of G-dliness, we become immersed in our business dealings and worldly pursuits. The river which flowed so strongly in the morning disappears, buried under the dirt and rubble of physicality.

So how do we maintain our feelings of connection and spirituality throughout the day, in an environment that is far removed from the spiritual cocoon of Torah and prayer?

Throughout the day, we are presented with opportunities to fulfil Mitzvos; giving Tzedaka, doing acts of Chesed, wearing Tzitzis etc. Each Mitzvah is a mini-connection. In the middle of the workday, these Mitzvos reconnect us to the spiritual world that we experienced at the start of the day.

Even though our feelings of connection have been buried under the soil and rubble of our worldly pursuits, the Mitzvah is like a spring which bores through the rubble, to tap into the waters of G-dliness that had disappeared.

Like the waters of a spring, these Mitzvos actually possess a deeper G-dly quality than our Torah study and davening. Torah study and davening require preparation, our Kavanah and emotion. But the Mitzvah, albeit a physical action, comes from such a lofty G-dly level, that it does not require any preparation or Kavanah. The action alone suffices to draw down this revelation.

The additional quality of natural springs is their status of Mayim Chaim, sweet and nourishing waters. The sweetness comes because the water has been purified by being forced through the sediment and rubble of the earth that acts like a filter.

The rubble of the concealment of being out in the physical world in pursuit of our physical needs, leaves us thirsting for the waters of spirituality. When we take the time out to dig away the dirt and fulfil a Mitzvah, we extract the small drops of living water. Their sweet freshness will quench and nourish our thirsting souls.