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A collection of Torah thoughts produced by Kollel Menachem

אין בית המדרש בלא **חידוש** Chiddush

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The most powerful 3 words ever said

The greatest G-dly revelation to have taken place in history is the giving of the Torah on Har Sinai.

At Matan Torah, Hashem revealed Himself to the entire Jewish people, speaking to them 'face-to-face', in an open, present and direct revelation. This was experienced not only by those who were physically present, but by all of the Neshamos of all Jews who would ever exist.

This revelation was similar to the ultimate revelation of G-dliness that will take place in the Messianic age when Hashem's essence will be revealed and no longer hidden.

The Aseres Hadibros are the essence of the Torah, incorporating within them the entirety of Torah. And all of the Aseres Hadibros are contained within the opening Commandment - *Anochi Hashem Elokecha*, I am the Lord your G-d.

Anochi - I - refers to Hashem's essential Being beyond all names. A person's name is not their essence. It is a way that others can relate to them and call them. If one were to live alone, they would have no need for a name. But when a person refers to themselves in the first person, using the pronoun I, they are referring to their very self.

The same is true with regards to the names by which we refer to Hashem. They do not refer to Hashem's essence but to the ways in which His presence is manifest and experienced. Hashem's essence is reflected when Hashem is referred to as Anochi.

Hashem's essential Being transcends all existence. It is beyond the grasp of the mind.

This is in contrast to the levels of G-dliness which are manifest within creation. We are capable of relating to and understanding that there is a Divine creative force and energy within creation. These are the contracted levels of G-dliness that are reflected by the names that we use to refer to Hashem.

But Hashem's essence - Anochi - is beyond our grasp.

But there is one way through which we can connect to Anochi, to Hashem's essential Being that is completely beyond everything. And that is through Torah and Mitzvos. This is because Hashem has placed His very essence within them.

The Gemara teaches that the word אנכי is an

acronym for the phrase כתבית יהבית. Literally this means that I, Myself have written and given (the Torah). On a deeper level, this statement can be read as I have written and given Myself.

Hashem places His very essence into the Torah, writing them as it were, into the words of the Torah. And He gives the Torah, which contains His very essence, all the way down to our lowly worldly reality, to be studied by Neshamos within the confines of a physical body and Yetzer Hara.

This is the significance of the opening 3 words of the Aseres Hadibros when the Torah was given to the world - אנכי הו'י אלקיך.

The name יהוה is the conduit through which G-dly revelation is brought down into the world. The Kabbalists explain that each of the 4 letters of the Name יהוה represents a different phase of this Divine process of this downward channelling. In the Torah, Hashem 'writes' and enclothes His essence - Anochi - into this channel of יהוה.

The Tzemach Tzedek explains we see this process in the very act of writing a Sefer Torah which involves all of the four letters of the Divine Name;

The drop of ink reflects the letter Yud. The five fingers of the hand of the Sofer represent the first Hey (which has the gematria of 5). The quill alludes to the letter Vov and finally the surface of the parchment alludes to the surface, the breadth and length of the final Hey.

Through this process, Anochi is channelled downwards through the name of Havayah until it becomes Elokecha. This is when the Torah is 'given'.

The name Elokim refers to the created reality of our world. Elokim also means strength.

Elokecha - your G-d - means that through learning Torah in which Hashem's essence is enlothed (via the name Havayah), the Anochi becomes our vitality and strength; We are able to connect with and internalise Hashem's essence as it is found within Torah, so that it affects us in an inner, personal way. Not just for our G-dly soul, but also for our body and animalistic soul as well, down here in the created world.

Matan Torah, Anochi Hashem Elokecha, is how every Jew is able to connect to the essence of Hashem.

The weekly Halacha analysis

Preparing the home for Shabbos

Rabbi Yonason Johnson

Two accompanying angels

As young children we are taught that two angels escort each person home from Shul on Friday evening, one good and one bad. If the house is prepared for Shabbos with candles lit, the table set and beds arranged, the good angel gives a blessing that it should be the same next Shabbos. The bad angel is forced to answer amen. If the house is not prepared for Shabbos, the bad angel wishes that it should be the same next week and the good angel is forced to answer amen.

These are the angels that we greet when saying the *Piyut Shalom Aleichem Malachei Hashareis*.

The source of this account is a teaching of Rabbi Yossi bar Yehuda found in the Gemara¹.

The Maharsha explains that every Mitzvah in the Torah is associated with two angels. The angel on the right side (the side associated with holiness) is a good angel. This angel serves as a defender in the merit of the Mitzvah when it is fulfilled. The angel on the left side serves as a prosecuting angel if a person fails to keep that Mitzvah.

The Perisha² explains that there is no such thing as a bad angel. Rather, the two angels reflect the two Koichos within a person; the intellectual dimension which is connected to spiritual form (Tzurah) and the dimension of desires which is connected to physical substance of the body (Chomer). This is the terminology used in works of Chakira. Chaza"l refer to these two dimensions as the Yetzer Tov and Yetzer Hora.

When a person resolves to serve Hashem and remembers Shabbos which is equated to all of the Mitzvos of the Torah, the Yetzer Hora begins starts to become accustomed to appreciating holiness. The Yetzer Tov becomes strengthened and prevails over the Yetzer Hora which becomes weaker and weaker, ultimately answering amen and conceding.

Preparing and cleaning for Shabbos

This Aggadic teaching is applied as Halacha in Shulchan Aruch³ which rules that a person should prepare their table, spread their beds and prepare all of the things in their house so that they are ready when they come home from Shul.

The Alter Rebbe⁴ explains that this is part of *Kovod Shabbos* (honouring Shabbos).

The beds mentioned in the Gemara and Shulchan Aruch refers to beds on which one sits i.e. couches⁵. Other Acharonim explain that it includes beds for sleeping as well⁶.

The Magen Avraham⁷ writes that one should clean the cobwebs from the home before Shabbos. This includes cleaning the home in general as well⁸.

Keeping the floor clean

The Magen Avraham quotes Darkei Moshe that on Shabbos one should be careful not to throw food or crumbs etc. off of the table and onto the floor. Doing this drives away the good angel who does not appreciate the dirtied house.

Even though this is praiseworthy, we are not careful in this regard and rely on sweeping the floor after the evening meal in manner which is permitted on Shabbos⁹. If one will not sweep the floor after the meal, care should be taken to avoid things falling onto the floor while eating.

The same applies during and after the Shabbos day meal¹⁰.

(This Darkei Moshe suggests that the two angels remain for the duration of Shabbos. Tosefes Shabbos questions that this does not fit with what we say in *Shalom Aleichem*, 'Tzeischem Leshalom', may you leave in peace, which suggests that the angels leave straight away¹¹.

Machatzis Hashekel¹² explains that the blessing Tzeischem Leshalom does not mean that the angels leave then, but rather it is a blessing that when they leave (at the end of Shabbos) they should do so in peace.)

Tablecloths

The Gemara and Shulchan Aruch write that the table should be prepared before Shabbos. The Poskim explain that this refers to them being covered with a tablecloth.

The Ram"o adds that the table should remain covered for the entire Shabbos until after Havdalah¹³. This is the Minhag Ashkenaz as recorded in the Tur¹⁴.

It is customary to use white tablecloths. Where it is customary to eat with tablecloths during the week as well, one should have special tablecloths for Shabbos.

Two tablecloths

Magen Avraham¹⁵ records that Maharsha"l would cover his table with two cloths so that

when he would remove the top cloth to shake out the crumbs, the table would remain covered.

Based on this, pious individuals take care that the table should not be uncovered even momentarily on Shabbos. The Chozeh of Lublin would say that an uncovered table on Shabbos is (forbidden) like the uncovered hair of a married woman.

Which tables?

The tables in the room where one will be eating should be covered. *Biur Halacha*¹⁶ quotes Elya Rabbah that it is preferable to cover the tables in other rooms as well. It is also customary to cover the tables in Shul and in the Beis Midrash.

Setting the table before Shabbos

In addition to laying the tablecloth before Shabbos, which is required *min hadin*, it is preferable to also have the covered Challahs on the table from before Shabbos¹⁷. This also has Halachic bearing when the candles are lit on the table. The presence of the Challahs prevents the table from becoming *Muktza* itself as a *Bosis* - a base to the *Muktzah* candles.

It is also praiseworthy to have the table fully set with wine, cutlery, plates, cups etc. from before Shabbos¹⁸. It is also customary to place flowers and fragrant plants on the table¹⁹.

Shabbos is referred to as a *Shabbos Hamalka*, the Shabbos queen. We should prepare for and welcome Shabbos into our homes the same way we would for honoured guests. In this merit, may we greet the *Yom Shekulo* Shabbos, the day which will be like one long Shabbos, with the immediate coming of *Moshiach*.

1. Shabbos 119b
2. OC 262
3. OC 262:1
4. OC 282:1
5. Magen Avraham 289:1 writes that it refers to couches as does the Alter Rebbe.
6. Bach as quoted in Pri Megadim Eshel Avraham explains that *Mitos* which is written in plural, refers to beds for sitting and for sleeping.
7. Beginning of OC 289, based on Reishis Chochma
8. Shulchan Aruch Harav 262:2
9. For Halachos of sweeping on Shabbos see Chiddush volume 75, Eikev 5766
10. Mishna Berura 262:1
11. See Shaarei Teshuvah that because of this question, one Gadol wanted to remove the final stanza Tzeischem Leshalom.
12. OC 282:1 וכתב ד"
13. Mishna Berura 262:4
14. OC 289
15. ibid
16. 282 יסדר ד"
17. As implied by Tosfos Pesachim 100b
18. Siddur Yaavetz, Aruch Hashulchan 262:1
19. Siddur Yaavetz