

The CHASSIDUS PERSPECTIVE with Reb Yoel Kahn



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Prepared by
Rabbi Yehudah Leib Altein

FATHERS AND MOTHERS

Among the *brachos* mentioned in this week's *parsha* is the following: "I see it from the head of rocks, I view it from hills; a nation that will dwell alone, and is not counted among the nations."

The Midrash explains that the "head of rocks" refer to the *avos*, and the "hills" refer to the *imahos*. According to this interpretation, the *possuk* can be explained as follows: Through being connected with the *avos* and *imahos*, the Jewish nation has the strength to endure the time of *golus*, so that they remain "alone" and do not intermingle with the other nations.

From the fact that the *possuk* mentions both "rocks" and "hills," it is obvious that both are important. There is an element in our *avodas Hashem* today that we receive from the *avos*, and there is a second element we receive from the *imahos*. What are these two elements?

THE ESSENCE AND THE DETAILS

To understand this, we must first analyze the difference between a father and mother.

The father and mother join together to form the child, but there is an important distinction between them. The father gives the essential matter from which the child is formed, while the mother's input is associated with the details: throughout the nine months of pregnancy, the fetus grows and matures until it develops into a complete child with many organs and limbs.

This is why a mother interacts with her children in a close, warm manner, while a father is typically more aloof. Since the mother was involved in fashioning the child's details, their connection is closer and more loving. The father, whose involvement was limited to the child's essence, is not as close to the child.

FROM INSPIRATION TO UNDERSTANDING

Every physical phenomenon is a reflection of an identical

phenomenon as it exists on a spiritual plane. What are the spiritual counterparts of a father and mother?

Since the mother was involved in fashioning the child's details, their connection is closer and more loving.

The Alter Rebbe explains in Tanya that emotions are the "children" of intellect, the "parents." Just as there are two parents, the father and the mother, intellect is similarly divided into two: *chochma*, the "father," and *bina*, the "mother."

Let's imagine a person delving into a *sugya*, only to be beset by a perplexing difficulty that prevents him from attaining a proper understanding of the topic. He struggles and sweats, until he is blessed with a flash of inspiration. Although he cannot explain the answer, neither to others nor to himself, he senses that the difficulty has been resolved.

This flash is *chochma*, the "father" of emotions. Just as the father provides the child's essential matter, *chochma* consists of the explanation as it is condensed in a single *nekuda*.

Next, the student must develop this initial idea, elaborating on it in a detailed way until it is fully comprehended. This detailed understanding is *bina*, the "mother" of emotions, just as a physical mother develops the details of the child's body and personality. As a result, *bina* is closer to *midos* than *chochma*.

SUPERNAL SENTIMENTS

Let's take this a step further, to "intellect" and "emotions" as they exist Above.

A person's interactions with others begin with *midos*. These interactions can be expressed in one of two ways: either through loving and being kind to another, or through being angry and distant from him. These feelings are offshoots of a person's intellect (which is divided into *chochma* and *bina*, as stated above). Either he appreciates the other's positive qualities, and therefore feels positively toward him, or he is aware of the other's negative traits, and negative sentiments are felt in kind.

Unlike emotions, intellect remains within a person, remaining beyond interpersonal relationships. However, since *bina* develops the details that result in *midos*, it follows that *bina* is

somewhat associated with others, as opposed to *chochma*.

All these ideas reflect how they exist Above. Hashem created the world in six days, demonstrating that the world was created through the six supernal *midos*. This is because the supernal *midos* are associated with Creation, as opposed to the supernal *mochin* (intellect), which remain above and beyond a relationship with created beings.

However, since *midos* are derivatives of *mochin*, and in particular—of *bina*, the supernal level of *bina* is somewhat associated with Creation, as opposed to the level of *chochma*.

HOW BATEL ARE YOU?

What does all this mean in *avodas Hashem*?

From the perspective of *chochma*, which is completely beyond Creation, the world is irrelevant and possesses no self-worth. This represents an *avodah* where a person senses how the world is utterly *bateil* to Hashem and has no value whatsoever. In Chassidus this is called *yichuda ila'ah*, a higher level of *bitul*.

Bina, on the other hand, does view Creation as possessing some sort of value. The *avodah* that this elicits is one where a person does view the world as having significance, but it must be channeled to *kedushah*, by utilizing what the world has to offer *lesheim shamayim*. This is called *yichuda tata'ah*, a lower level of *bitul*.

From where do we receive the ability to serve Hashem in these two ways? From the *avos* and *imahos*. From the *avos* we receive the ability for *yichuda ila'ah*, and from the *imahos*—for *yichuda tata'ah*.

TRANSCEND AND DESCEND

As stated above, from the fact that the *possuk* mentions both “rocks” (the *avos*) and “hills” (the *imahos*), it is obvious that both

types of *avodah* are important, and one without the another is insufficient.

Yichuda tata'ah alone is not enough, because if a person is constantly involved in worldly pursuits, even if he does them *lesheim shamayim*, he will inevitably be affected by the materialism always there before him. In order to remain focused and not stumble, it is imperative that from time to time he engages in an *avodah* in which the world is completely irrelevant.

However, *yichuda ila'ah* alone is not foolproof either. If a person views the world as totally unimportant, he may fail to notice when an undesirable element creeps in. In order to realize that a certain element is evil, there must be times when one is in touch with existence.

We see this concept with Avraham and Sarah. Avraham, who attained a higher level of *bitul*, did not see Yishmael for who he really was, and did not want to send him away. It was Sarah who sensed the evil within him and demanded that he be banished.

These two worldviews make their way into our everyday lives.

Certain parts of the day are dedicated to studying Torah and davening. During these times, we detach ourselves from the world completely, even from utilizing it *lesheim shamayim*. At other times, we are involved with worldly endeavors, and focus on doing them in the right way (for example, to follow the Torah’s directives when doing business, and using the money earned for *maaser*

and *tzedaka*). And it is through this combination that we merit to be “a nation that will dwell alone and is not counted among the nations.”

For further study see לקו"ש חלק ד' בלק.

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merkazanash.com
info@merkazanash.com
347.471.1770

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