



A collection of Torah thoughts produced by the Maor Centre, Melbourne

# המאור

Light reading  
**HaMaor**

ISSUE 1

פרשת בהעלתך סיון תשפ"ד

## The Menorah as the Secret of Jewish Unity

### TIFERES SHLOMO ON THE PARSHA

*Now the man Moshe was exceedingly humble, more than any person on the face of the earth.*

Despite his many great qualities, the only praise that we find in the Torah about Moshe's character is for his great humility.

Usually the word עניו (humble), is written with a Yud. In this verse the word is written without a Yud.

In Kabbalistic thought, the letters of the name י-ה-ו-ה represent different levels of G-dly revelation. Even though it is the smallest letter, the Yud, the first and highest letter of the Divine Name, corresponds to the loftiest of these revelations.

The Gemara teaches that in the place that you find Hashem's greatness, that is where you find His humility. So too here, the highest of level of G-dliness is alluded to in the humblest and tiniest point of the letter Yud.

Spelling the word עניו with a Yud would highlight the exceptional spiritual level that Moshe attained, suggesting that he merited to receive the level of G-dly revelation reflected by the letter Yud.

However due to his great humility, Moshe did not want to write the word עניו with a Yud, as this would magnify his greatness. And so, in deference to Moshe, the word is written in the Torah as עני, without the Yud.

But when we read this word from the Torah, we read it as though the Yud was present.

Even though Moshe in his humility shied away from his greatness, we want to show the greatness of Moshe Rabbeinu and the spiritual heights that he attained.

Dedication and sponsorship opportunities are available. Email rabbijohnson@gmail.com

The Menorah is one of the most famous symbols of the Jewish people. Its design has been used on coins, mosaics and decorative features since Biblical times. These designs are all based on the form of the Menorah, the 7-branched candelabra that stood in the Mishkan and later in the Beis Hamikdash.

As a symbol of the Jewish people, the mystics teach that the Menorah represents the collective of the Jewish people and that in its construction lies the secret to Jewish unity.

The Baal Hatanya teaches that the seven branches of the Menorah represent the different paths in the service of Hashem. Whilst each individual or each distinct group within Klal Yisrael will be different, we are all joined together in an overarching oneness. For this reason, the Menorah could not be made by welding separate parts together. It had to be beaten into shape from one single block of gold so that there is never any moment of separation.

Parshas Behaalosecha opens with a description of the Menorah; "This is the making of the Menorah, hammered out of gold, from its base (יריכה) until its flower (פרחה) it is hammered out".

This verse identifies two of the features of the Menorah, the base (or leg) and the decorative flower. The base represents people of low spiritual stature. The flower represents the Tzaddikim, the spiritually elevated individuals whose service flourishes and blooms with beauty. They are both integral parts of the same Menorah.

In a parallel to the Parshas, in the Haftorah we read the vision that was shown to the prophet Zechariah of "a Menorah made entirely of gold". The Midrash connects this vision to Hashem's description of the Jewish people in Shir Hashirim; "You are entirely beautiful My beloved, there is no blemish in you".

The Midrash teaches that there were 3 prophets who used metals as a metaphor to describe the Jewish people. Yirmiyahu referred to them as "rejected silver" and Yechezkel described them as "copper, tin, iron and lead... dross silver".

The prophets Yechezkel and Yirmiyahu who foretold of the destruction of the Temple, castigated the Jewish people for their sins, likening them to the inferior metals of silver, bronze and copper, that were filled with sediments and impurities.

But Zechariah saw the Jewish people like a "Menorah made entirely of gold". He saw the Jewish

people as pure gold, completely beautiful and free from any sediment or imperfection.

Zechariah saw the same people, but whereas Yechezkel and Yirmiyahu looked at the surface and saw their deficiencies, Zechariah looked deeper and saw the essential core of every Jew. This inner core is pure gold that cannot be tainted through sin.

How is it possible to attain such a perspective when we see deficiencies, sin and negativity in others, that make them appear so different to ourselves?

The Baal Hatanya teaches that the answer to this lies in the action of hammering that had to be employed to mould the Menorah into its shape.

Our sages teach all of the Jewish people are responsible for one another, כל ישראל ערבים זה בזה. The word ערבים can also mean mixed. All of the Jewish people are blended together to create a whole. Because of our interconnectivity on the soul-level, we are all influenced spiritually by the actions of one another.

When shaping the Menorah, the force of the hammer would move the malleable gold. The gold that was lower would be pushed upwards and the gold that was higher would be pushed down.

Like the gold being hammered, sometimes the hidden negativity from above - from a more spiritually elevated individual - is pushed down and manifests itself in the lowly sinful person, subliminally impacting them negatively. Conversely sometimes the Mitzvos and positive qualities of the spiritually lowly person are elevated and subliminally influence the spiritually loftier individual.

With this inner understanding, when we see negativity and flaws in someone who appears spiritually "lower" than ourselves, we should see their negativity as really being a reflection of our own. But we should view ourselves in the inverse. We must take ownership of our negativity, but should view our merits and positive qualities as perhaps coming from the influence of those who we saw as being spiritually lower.

In this way, we reserve judgment and fault-finding for our own personal Avodah and, like Zechariah, focus only the positive in others and their purity. With this Achdus, we create a Menorah of pure gold, that will shine and radiate the inner light and goodness of every Jewish soul.

# The Weekly Halacha Analysis

## Eating Fish on Shabbos

Rabbi Yonason Johnson

The Mitzvah of Oneg Shabbos<sup>1</sup> is to delight in Shabbos by eating enjoyable foods. The sages<sup>2</sup> teach that one who delights in Shabbos will receive an “unlimited inheritance”, be freed from servitude to the nations and will be granted all of their heart’s desires.

The Gemara<sup>3</sup> gives the example of eating large fish, garlic and cooked beets. If one cannot afford such delicacies, Rav Pappa teaches that one can even serve Kasa Deharsena – a dish made with small fish fried in oil and flour.

To illustrate the reward for delighting in Shabbos, the Gemara<sup>4</sup> tells the story of Rabbi Yossi Mokir Shabbos<sup>5</sup>. Yosef found a treasure inside of a large fish that he bought in honour of Shabbos at great expense.

The Rishonim<sup>6</sup> and Acharonim<sup>7</sup> explain that whilst the Gemara lists certain foods, these are only examples of foods which were considered delicacies in the times of the sages of the Gemara. One fulfills the Mitzvah by eating whatever is considered a delicacy in their time and locale<sup>8</sup>.

The Alter Rebbe writes that unlike on Yomtov, on Shabbos there is no obligation to eat meat and drink wine. The Shulchan Aruch<sup>9</sup> only writes that one should serve meat and wine because we assume that most people enjoy eating meat and drinking good wine. Someone who does not enjoy meat need not eat it on Shabbos<sup>10</sup>.

So therefore, whilst the sages give the example of eating fish on Shabbos, the Alter Rebbe states emphatically, that there is no Halachic basis in Niglah (the Talmudic-Halachic part of Torah) for specifically eating fish on Shabbos<sup>11</sup>.

This wording implies that whilst according to Niglah there is no basis, according to Nistar - the hidden Kabbalistic teachings, there are reasons for eating fish on Shabbos<sup>12</sup>. The Kitzur Shelah writes that eating fish at each of the three Shabbos meals is a great matter.

The Magen Avraham<sup>13</sup> quotes from Tikunei Shabbos that one should eat fish at all three of the Shabbos meals. The Mishna Berura<sup>14</sup> writes that this is a good practise.

The Alter Rebbe in his Siddur<sup>15</sup> writes that it is good to eat fish at the Shalosh Seudos meal more so than the other Shabbos meals. Kaf Hachaim<sup>16</sup> writes that this is based on the Kabbalistic teachings of the Ariza”l and that if one only has a small amount of fish, it should be

served for Shalosh Seudos and only a small amount should be eaten at the other Shabbos meals. The Ben Ish Chai also writes that it is a Mitzvah to eat at least a small amount of fish at Shalosh Seudos<sup>7</sup>.

### Reasons why we eat Fish on Shabbos

The Ariza”l teaches that the souls of Tzaddikim are reincarnated in fish.

The Bnei Yissaschar<sup>18</sup> writes that fish were blessed by Hashem on the fifth day of Creation. Man was blessed by Hashem on the 6th day of Creation. The Shabbos day was blessed by Hashem on the seventh day. When we eat fish on Shabbos, there is a threefold blessing of the three days together.

Mateh Moshe writes that the Shabbos meal is a taste of the Seudah which will be served to the Tzaddikim when Moshiach comes. At this meal we will eat from the Leviason fish.

Minchas Yaakov writes that fish do not have eyelids and so their eyes are constantly open. This alludes to the fact that Hashem’s eyes are always open to look after those who fear Him, with abundant mercy. Based on this some Tzaddikim would eat from the eyes of the fish.

The Ben Ish Chai writes that whereas the animals were created from the earth, fish were created from the water. Water is the loftiest of the four elements. Since on Shabbos we receive sustenance from the highest spiritual levels, it is better to eat fish on Shabbos than meat.

The Ben Ish Chai offers another explanation based on Parshas Behaalosecha. When the Jewish people complained that they wished to eat meat, Hashem said that He would give them meat to eat for a month of days, until they would become sickened by it. Moshe responded “if all of the sheep and cattle were slaughtered... if all of the fish of the sea were gathered would it suffice for them?”

From this we learn that whilst meat requires Shechitah, fish do not need to be slaughtered to render them kosher. Fish only require gathering. Unlike meat which requires an action of Melacha to prepare it, on Shabbos the Tikun (spiritual fixing of the world) is effected without requiring any Melacha, like fish which do not require Shechitah.

The Sefer Otzar Yad Chaim records that the custom of old was to first eat meat and afterwards to eat fish. This is alluded to in the Zemiros of Shabbos *בשר ודגים וכל מטעמים*, “to eat meat, fish and all types of delicacies”. However, based on the Ram-

bam<sup>19</sup> that one should eat more easily digested foods before heavier foods, one should eat the fish before meat.

### Response to Price Gouging

The Magen Avraham<sup>20</sup> writes that if the non-Jews deliberately raise the price of fish, the community should make a Takanah (decree) that no one should buy fish. The Alter Rebbe explains that even if only some people will not be able to afford fish, the Takanah should be made to forbid anyone from buying fish, even if they can personally afford it. This way, the merchants will be forced to lower their prices.

The Ba’er Heitev quotes Beis Hillel<sup>21</sup> that this only applies if the price is raised by more than a third. If the price gouge is a third or less, then one must still buy fish for Shabbos. This is based on the Halacha that one must spend up to a third extra for a Hiddur Mitzvah.

In Kuntres Acharon<sup>22</sup>, the Alter Rebbe writes that the Beis Hillel’s opinion is based on his view, that eating fish on Shabbos is Biblically required. The Alter Rebbe questions this as the Torah does not mention eating fish. Even Rabinically there is no source in Niglah that one must eat fish on Shabbos. Even though the Gemara mentions eating fish, this is going beyond the letter of the law and one can always fulfill the Mitzvah of Oneg Shabbos with other foods. Therefore, no comparison can be made to the requirement of spending up to a third extra for Hiddur Mitzvah.

According to the Alter Rebbe, the Takanah should be decreed even if the price increases are smaller. This is also the position of Elya Rabbah, Pri Megadim and Mishna Berura<sup>23</sup>.

Whilst there are opinions that Oneg Shabbos is Mideoraisa, it is accepted by most of the Poskim and Rishonim that Oneg Shabbos is a Mitzvah from the Neviim.

1. Whilst there are opinions that Oneg Shabbos is Mideoraisa, it is accepted by most of the Poskim and Rishonim that Oneg Shabbos is a Mitzvah from the Neviim.
2. Shabbos 118a
3. Shabbos 118b
4. Shabbos 119a
5. Shabbos 119a
6. See Rashi 118b ד”ה ראשי שומין
7. Shulchan Aruch Harav 242:2 and Mishna Berura 242:1
8. Shulchan Aruch Harav ibid quoting the Levush. See also Rambam Hilchos Shabbos 30:7
9. Orach Chaim 250
10. See also Mishna Berura ibid
11. Shulchan Aruch Harav 242 Kuntres Acharon 4
12. See Likutei Sichos Volume 31 p 192 footnote 15
13. 242:1
14. 242:2
15. See Shaar Hakollel 17:25
16. 242:10
17. Vayeira section 2, 18
18. Maamarei Shabbasos 3:16
19. Hilchos Deios
20. Orach Chaim 242:1
21. Yoreh Deah Siman 218
22. Orach Chaim 242:4
23. 242:2

MAOR CENTRE



www.Maor.com.au



www.facebook.com/maorcentre



www.youtube.com/@rabbijohnson

