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Meditative Potential In the Land

The imagination of the Land of Israel is pure and clear and suited for the appearance of the divine truth…The imagination that is in the Lands of the Nations is murky, mixed with darkness, with shadows of impurity and pollution. (Eretz Chefetz 4:5)

Perhaps Rav Kook's words above can be best elucidated by spotlighting the life of one of Rav Kook's closest colleagues. The legendary figure of Jerusalem, Rabbi David Cohen, famously known as '*the Nazir*' of Jerusalem.

Rabbi Cohen first met Rav Kook in Switzerland and then reconnected with his spiritual master in the Land of Israel. Upon his arrival to the Land of Israel, Rav Cohen adopted ascetic practices, crowned by a Nazarite vow - a lifelong abstention from all grape products and from cutting his hair. He also became a vegetarian, did not wear leather shoes, and maintained a *ta'anit dibbur* (refraining from speaking) for forty days from the beginning of the month of *Elul* to after Yom Kippur.

In his classic volume *Kol ha-Nevuah* (Jerusalem 1969) the Nazir sets out to present a path towards achieving prophecy. He advocates for *hitbodedut* in the hills surrounding Jerusalem, emulating the spiritual wanderings of the biblical prophets. To the Nazir, the text-less *hitbodedut* in nature reflects the return to the prophetic culture of Israel. (See "The Nazir in New York," The Seforim Blog, Josh Rosenfeld)

The Nazir would often quote the call of Rav Kook: "To the wellsprings of Prophecy we are called." The Nazir believed that the salvation of Israel would not be actualized without a spirit of holiness that ushers in the attainment of prophecy. ('The Legacy of the Nazir,' Rechnitz Edition, p.16)

The Nazir's son, Rabbi Shaar Yashuv Cohen, described an unusual and somewhat mysterious episode that took place between his father, the Nazir, and Rav Kook:

"Once I was told by one of the Torah greats of Israel, that he once entered the house of Rav Kook in the time of the month of *Elul*, and found Rav Kook and my father intensely involved in the particularities of blowing the *shofar*. My father blew the *shofar* and then Rav Kook blew the shofar. They were blowing the shofar in accordance with secretive mystical intentions - the *kavanot* of *B'nei Hachalah* (Members of the Sanctuary who long to see the glow of the Miniature Presence)." Apparently,

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their intentions were to bring closer the final redemption. Although this episode is a mystery, in some form, they were blowing the shofar, which symbolizes the *shofar* of Mashiach, alerting the world to his arrival.

The Nazir collaborated with Rav Kook on organizing his worldview in the books "Orot HaKodesh."

In chapter 138 (Vol. One) of that work which elaborates on the topic of holiness, Rav Kook writes: "The branches of prophecy grow and the children of prophets wake, the spirit of prophecy goes and travels through the Land...and the special higher quality of Israel, knows the spirit of God that will be revealed only in His Land." (Ibid. p.17)

The Nazir's Silence, A Path to Prophecy

The Nazir was known to take periods of time when he refrained from speaking. It

is well known that his custom during the 40 day span from the first of the month of Elul through Yom Kippur was to practice silence. It seems that the Nazir utilized this as a method towards attaining a heightened awareness of self and being more conscious of his thoughts and a higher dimension that could potentially be accessed.

Rav Kook in his Orot Hakodesh (III, p. 274) considers the immense power of "The Higher Silence" :

"Silence will be sought from the depths of a soul which is regularly devoted to higher contemplation that transcend man's capacity for verbal articulation. When a person with a sublime soul pursues his exalted silence, many worlds are fashioned, noble songs rise with their holy tribute [to God], and a higher force with holy delight is raised over all spheres of the spiritual.

Silence, which abounds with life, gathers within itself the majesty of wisdom. The spiritual and practical worlds, with all their well-defined particularities, in their most precise formulations, reveal themselves with mighty force to the wise person of higher stature whose vineyard is fenced in with a fence of silence, which is appropriate for the wise. This is the higher silence that rises above the wind, the tumult, the fire, "It is a still small voice" (1 Kings 19:12), and behold God is passing" (ibid., 19:11) (translation from "The Essential Writings of Abraham Isaac Kook, Bokser, p. 187)

Again in *Orot Hakodesh,* Rav Kook emphasizes the role of 'silence' in attaining clearer Comprehension and a higher intuition (*Orot Hakodesh* vol. 3, p. 273). Here, to our surprise, Rav Kook suggests that the Matzah is symbolic of silence. Perhaps Rav Kook is alluding to the idea that the Matzah's contents consist of only the very essential ingredients, without any preservatives or additives. In the meditative state of silence, one disconnects from any interferences and diversions and is able to focus more alertly, more naturally.

The following is Rav's Kook's unique description of meditative silence with which he sees symbolized by the Matzah:

"*The Special Quality of Silence:* The special quality of silence and the spirit of holiness that attaches itself to you via silence emerges from an inner bursting forth. The bursting forth emerges from the midst of the wellspring of your soul, which seeks a great arena in which to spread out and broaden, without constriction…Matzah silences all superficial uproar, all movement and self-elevation in the framework of life. It mutes the superficial currents. This comes as a twin to the revelation of God's presence and a great fear that descends to the depth of the secret of silence. It expresses itself in a glorious voice to which silence attaches itself. 'The Pesach sacrifice that one eats is the size of an olive. Yet one's Hallel resounds as though the roof would burst forth' (Pesachim 88b)." (*Orot Hakodesh 3, p. 273*) ■

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