

BADERECH

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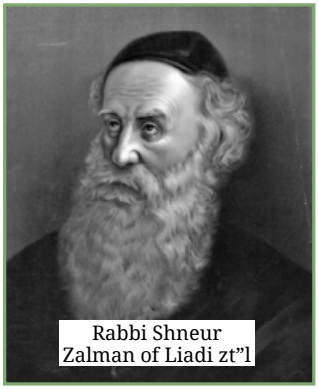
Yud Tes Kislev: Just a Drop

Rebbe Pinchas of Koretz was both a disciple and friend of the Baal Shem Tov, and was one of those most concerned with ensuring that the holy legacy of the founder of the Chasidic movement be preserved in its purity. Reb Pinchas believed that the lofty teachings of Chasidus and secrets of the Torah ought to be safeguarded, and he opposed any mainstream *Hafatza* or widespread publication. Others, including the Alter Rebbe, Reb Shneur Zalman, felt differently.



Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi zt"l

One day, while the two tzadikim were together in Mezeritch, they found notes of Chasidic teachings in the garbage. Reb Pinchas pointed at the disrespect shown to the Torah as proof that they shouldn't be so free in spreading the teachings of their beloved Rebbe to those who don't fully understand or appreciate it.

The Alter Rebbe continued to disagree:

"Once there was a great king who had an only son who fell gravely ill. All the great medical experts had given up hope for a cure. A call went out throughout the land, which was answered by a sage who knew of a miraculous remedy for the sick prince: a rare, hard-to-find gemstone containing the elements necessary to heal him. If found, the gem was to be ground into a fine powder, mixed with wine and administered to the prince to drink.

The King knew that only one of these jewels existed in all of the kingdom, and it was affixed as the centerpiece of the royal crown. Removing this gem would mean dismantling the crown, and degrading the symbol of his majesty. While some of those closest to the king were crestfallen that the royal crown would be dismantled, the king was overjoyed, and instructed that they begin to prepare the healing potion. Good news! Salvation, it seemed, was on the way.

At that moment, messengers entered and shared a heartbreaking update: the prince's condition had worsened drastically, so much so that he couldn't swallow. This development seemed to make the sacrifice of the royal gem a moot point; if the prince was in such a state, at least the royal crown ought to be preserved. Nonetheless, the king insisted that they continue preparing the potion: 'Of what value is my crown if my beloved son does not live? Grind up the gemstone and mix the potion right away! Do everything in your power that even a single drop enter his mouth, so that he be healed and live!'"

This upcoming week marks the 19th (Yud Tes) of Kislev, the celebration of the release of the Alter Rebbe, the author of *Sefer HaTanya*, from prison. More than simply a day that remembers the personal liberation of the Alter Rebbe, Yud Tes Kislev marks a turning point in Jewish history, ushering in a revolutionary revelation of the "inner soul" of Torah.

The publication of *Sefer haTanya* made many of the previously inaccessible, abstract concepts of Kabbalah and philosophy comprehensible and practically applicable, marking a new era in the spread of Chassidus. In many ways, Yud Tes Kislev is considered the "Rosh Hashanah" of Chassidus, a sort of 'birthday' for this movement of spiritual awakening and growth.

For a generation with such yearning for depth and meaning, so desperately in need of healing, the teachings of the Ba'al Shem Tov and his holy students are restorative. The study of *P'nimiyus haTorah* directs us toward attunement with our inner world. In the Alter Rebbe's parable, the Torah is the "crown" of G-d. The most precious jewel, the crown's centerpiece, is the *Sod,* the mystical secrets of the Torah. To "grind" this into a powder means to make the Sod accessible to every Jew through the teachings of Chassidus. These teachings are a potion that can revive and enliven us, even if just one drop, one small taste of this elixir of life, enters the mind and heart.

Faced with a world that is sometimes superficial and crass — even gravely ill — the Baal HaTanya did everything in his power to give us this rare medicine that would allow us to awaken and live. The cure is effective when we recognize that beneath the surface of experience, everything is sustained, filled and surrounded by the Divine: *Ein Od Milvado*, there is nothing other than Him.

Our sedra recounts the epic showdown between Yaakov Avinu and Eisav, as the conflicting worldview of the paradigmatic brothers boils to the forefront. While Eisav is concerned with accomplishments, acquisitions and 'the bottom line', Yaakov values the process, procedure and a life lived *baderech:*

יַעֲבָר־נָא אֲדֹנִי לִפְנֵי עַבְדּוֹ וַאֲנִי אֶתְנַהֲלָה לְאִטִּי לְרֶגֶל הַמְּלָאכָה אֲשֶׁר־לְפָנַי וּלְרֶגֶל הַיְלָדִים עַד אֲשֶׁר־אָבֹא אֶל־אֲדֹנִי שֵׂעִירָה:

Now, let my master go ahead before his servant, and I will move [at] my own slow pace, according to the pace of the work that is before me and according to the pace of the children, until I come to my master, to Seir."(33:14)

Rashi translates the word "לאט, slow pace," as" נחת. The very word used for the pride and joy parents hope to enjoy from their children denotes gentleness and patience: לְאַט שָׁלִי, לְשׁוֹן נַחַת, הַהוֹלְכִים לְאַט, my own slow pace, [like] "that flow gently, לְאַט" (Yeshayahu 8:6), "Deal gently (לְאַט) with the lad for my sake" (Shmuel Bet, 18:5).

Every one of us is moving along a path, evolving, developing stage by stage.

In our efforts to learn and live with the teachings and pathways of *P'nimiyus*



HaTorah, may we be blessed to move at our own pace toward 'the work that is before us... according to the pace of the children', and may Hashem (and we!) enjoy *nachas* from all of our efforts... for even one small step, one little drop of the sweetness of truth can revive and revitalize us!

Excerpt from newly released **Baderech: Along the Path of the Torah**, (Mosaica Press) ■

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לליעם יעקב ניסן בן אורה





