

The Amazing Revelation from the Great Rabbi of Riminov

Every Jew Has a Name from the Domain of Kedushah and a Name from the Domain of Tumah

Seeing as we find ourselves in the month of teshuvah, “chodesh Elul,” it is fitting that we examine the opening passuk of this week’s parsha, Ki Seitzei, (Devarim 21, 10): **כי תצא למלחמה על אויביך ונתנו ה' אלקיך בידך ושבת שביו—when you will go out to war against your enemies, and Hashem, your G-d, will deliver him in your hand, and you will capture its people as captives.** According to all of our sacred sources, in this passuk, HKB”H is alluding to the formidable battle a Jew wages against the yetzer hara. This is the foe that constantly attempts to trap us in its net and persuade us to commit aveiros.

The Likutei Harim presents the incredible words of the great author of the Chiddushei HaRim, who cites Rabbi Bunim of Peshischa, zy”a: **It is known that the Torah is interpreted based on the methodology of PaRDeS. Formerly, this passuk referred to Yisrael’s war with the goyim; while the interpretation based on “remez” referred to the war with the yetzer. Now, however (in galut), the “psbat” (simple meaning of the passuk) no longer applies, because we have no actual wars. Thus, the simple interpretation of the passuk remains as a reference to the war with the yetzer.**

Hence, it is with great pleasure that we initiate our journey with the sacred words of the Chatam Sofer, zy”a, in Torat Moshe. For, they provide tremendous moral support for every Jew, who sincerely desires to overcome his yetzer hara, but feels that he is incapable of doing so. The Chatam Sofer teaches us that it suffices to merely engage the yetzer hara in this life-and-death battle. This is the message and promise inherent in our passuk: **“כי תצא למלחמה על אויביך”—if you choose to wage war against the yetzer hara and its forces; “ונתנו ה' אלקיך בידך ושבת שביו”—Hashem guarantees that you will be victorious.**

The Word **שבי** Is an Acronym for: **ו'אלה ש'מות ב'ני י'שראל**

In this essay, we intend to examine the holy words of the great Rabbi Naftali Tzvi of Ropshitz, zy”a, in Zera Kodesh, addressing the passuk: **כי תצא למלחמה על אויביך ונתנו ה' אלקיך בידך ושבת שביו**. He presents an amazing chiddush in the name of the great Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Riminov, zy”a. He states that every Jew has two names—one emanating from the domain of kedushah and one from the side of tumah and the force of evil. It is incumbent upon a Jew to pray to Hashem to reveal to him his name from the domain of tumah, so that he can transform it into a name of kedushah. Here are his holy words:

“והרב הקדוש [רבי מנחם מנדל] מרימנאב זצ”ל אמר, שיש לכל אדם שם בקדושה ולהבדיל כו' שמו בטומאה וסטרא אחרא, וצריך הצדיק לעבוד על זה, ויבקש מהש"ת שיודיע לו איזה שם שיש לו בסטרא אחרא, ויחזור גם זה השם לקדושה. ויש לומר על דרך זה, ושבת שביו ראשי תיבות (שמות א-א) ו'אלה ש'מות ב'ני י'שראל, שהשם שיש לך בקליפה גם כן תחזיר לקדושה.”

Interpreting our passuk, the Zera Kodesh teaches us that it is not enough to engage the yetzer hara and its forces of tumah and to defeat them. In addition: **“ושבת שביו”—the passuk states that you are obligated to free the captive it took from you. To identify the captive it is referring to, he presents the following allusion: The word **שבי**--“its captive”--is an acronym for **ו'אלה ש'מות ב'ני י'שראל**—and these are the names of Bnei Yisrael. These words appear at the beginning of sefer Shemot and are followed by the words: **“הבאים מצרימה”—who came to Mitzrayim**, the bastion of tumah. In other words, we must extract the Jewish names that are held captive in the domain of tumah and under the control of the force of evil. The passuk instructs us to free them and transform them into names of kedushah.**

In truth, the sacred words of the great Rabbi of Riminov, zy”a, deserve further explanation. What does it mean that every Jew also has a name from the domain of tumah? How can simple Jews like us reveal these names? What avodah is required to transform a particular name into a positive and virtuous name? I have accepted the challenge of clarifying these issues and thereby illuminating this tzaddik’s intent. I pray that the Almighty will guide me along the path of truth!

The Rabbi of Riminov’s Notion Is Based on the Teachings of the Arizal

We will begin to shed some light on these issues by revealing the great Rabbi of Riminov’s source. His notion is based on the immaculate teachings of our master, the Arizal, in Sha’ar HaGilgulim (Intro. 23). There, he explains at length a statement from our blessed sages in Masechet Chibut HaKever (Chapter 2):

”שאלו את רבי אליעזר כיצד דין הקבר, אמר להם, בזמן שנפטר אדם מן העולם, בא מלאך המות ויושב על קברו, ומכה אותו בידו ואומר לו, קום הגידה לי שמך, אומר לו, גלוי וידוע לפני מי שאמר והיה העולם שאיני יודע מה שמי, מיד מכניס רוח ונשמה בגופו ומעמידו ומחייבו בדין.”

Rabbi Eliezer is questioned about the process of death and matters of the grave. He responds: When a person departs from the world, the Malach HaMaves comes and sits on his gravesite. It strikes the deceased on his hands and says to him, “Come and tell me your name.” He says to it, “It is apparent to He Who created the universe that I don’t know my name.” Immediately, it introduces a spirit and soul in his body, stands him up and finds him guilty.

The Arizal is perplexed by this passage. What is the purpose of this question? Why does the deceased forget his own name? Why does this question influence his punishment? To answer these questions, the Arizal first explains the matter of “chibut hakever”—literally, “beating of the grave.” It is designed to rid a person’s neshamah of the dust of the klipos that clings to it. Here is the enlightening passage from the Arizal:

”ובזה תבין ענין חיבוט הקבר מה ענינו... לפי שהקליפה היא דבוקה עדיין וקשורה עם הגפוש ועם הגוף ואיננה נפרדת מהם. ולכן צריך שיחזירו נפשו בגופו ביחד, ואז המלאכים הנזכרים אווזים בו כל אחד מקצה, ומנערים אותו וחובטים אותו במקלות של אש, כדרך שאווזים בטלית בשתי קצוותיה ומנערים אותה מן האבק הנדבק בה, עד שנפרדה מהם הקליפה ההיא לגמרי, ולכן נקרא חיבוט הקבר כאדם שחובט טליתו ומנערה...”

ואמנם לא כל האנשים שוים בזה, הצדיקים אשר בחייהם נדבקו ביצר הטוב ונתרחקו מן היצר הרע, והיו מכניעים עצמם וחובטים עצמם ביסורין הבאים עליהם, וגם על ידי [עסק] התורה המתשת כוחו של אדם, עד שנמצא שכשהגיע

זמנם ליפטר מן העולם ולקבל חיבוט הקבר אין צריכים צער גדול, כי בחבטה כל שהיא מספיק להם להפרידה מהם, מה שאין כן ברשעים שאדרבה על ידי תענוגיהם בעולם הזה, הם מקשרים ומחזקים יותר את הקליפה בגופם ובנפשם... וכל אחד ואחד הוא סובל עונשו כפי מדרגת קליפתו וכפי עוצם דבקותה.”

The klipah is still attached to the soul and body; it does not separate from them. Therefore, it is necessary for them to return the soul to the body to be reunited. Than the aforementioned malachim hold on to him—each one from their respective side; they shake him out and flog him with fiery sticks--just as a garment is held from its two sides, and the dust attached to it is shaken off. They do so until the klipah is completely removed from them. Hence, it is called “chibut hakever,” like a person who beats his garment and shakes it out . . .

In truth, this does not apply equally to all people. Tzaddikim—who clung to the yetzer hatov during their lifetimes, and distanced themselves from the yetzer hara, and subjugated themselves and beat themselves with the troubles that befell them, and due to Torah-study that depletes a man’s strength—when their time comes to depart from the world and be subjected to “chibut hakever,” they do not require much suffering. For, even a minimal beating suffices to separate it from them. This is not the case with regards to reshaim. On the contrary, due to the pleasures they indulged in in Olam HaZeh, they bind and fortify the bond of the klipah even more so to their bodies and souls . . . Thus, each individual endures his punishment according to the level of his klipah and according to the strength of its attachment.

“Chibut HaKever” Is Aimed at Separating the Name from the Domain of the Klipah

After this introduction, the Arizal explains why the Malach HaMaves asks the deceased individual his name and why it subjects him to a harsher beating if he does not know his name:

This explains why reshaim forget their names, as mentioned above. For a neshamah does not exist in this world that is not tainted to some degree by the klipah, originating from the contamination of the nachash. That klipah is the essence of the yetzer hara that enters a person on the day he is born . . . to the point the the two of them—the neshamah and the klipah—become like one dough, thoroughly mixed together . . . and just like the holy neshamot, each one has its own distinct name . . . likewise every single spark of the klipah has its own distinct name. Thus, it turns out that one person’s yetzer hara is unlike another person’s yetzer hara.

So, when a person is born, and his parents give him a name of their choosing, it is not by mere coincidence. It is HKB”H placing the name in their mouths that is dictated by that neshamah . . . Now, G-d created man with equal and opposite counterparts. So, just as the holy neshamah in a person has a specific name—the name his father and mother give him when he is circumcised, as we know; so, too, does the spark of the klipah—the yetzer hara that enters a person at birth—have a specific name. Thus, every person has two names—one from the domain of kedushah and one from the domain of the klipah.

Now, if a person while alive in Olam HaZeh could ascertain and know the name of the klipah attached to his being . . . and thereby would be aware of the location of the defect and the nature of the necessary tikun, he could then correct the defect easily. In this manner, that klipah would be separated from him during his lifetime easily, and it would not be necessary to remove it from him by means of “chibut hakever,” at all.

Therefore, when a tzaddik passes away, they do not ask him what his name is from the force of evil; because during their lifetimes they made an effort and endured the suffering necessary to separate the klipah from their beings, as described above. So, the separation is accomplished with great ease by means of “chibut hakever.” The rasha, however, who on the contrary caused it to bind to him with greater intensity, requires flogging and extreme punishments to separate it from his being at the time of “chibut hakever.” Had he been aware of his name from the force of evil during his lifetime, he could have remedied the situation with great ease while alive. Therefore, they strike them forceful blows for not knowing that name, as explained, and for not striving to know it during their lifetimes; for they did not want to make the effort as the tzaddikim bothered to do.

Knowing the Name of the Klipah Teaches Us How to Combat the Yetzer HaRa

Following this exalted line of reasoning, let us elaborate further on the words of the Arizal. He taught us that every Jew has a name from the domain of kedushah—the name given him by his parents. On the other hand, he has a name from the domain of the klipah. It is incumbent upon a person to ascertain this latter name. Regarding this subject, we have learned in the Mishnah (Avos 4, 1): “איזהו גיבור, הכובש את יצרו”— **who is a mighty hero? He who conquers his yetzer.** Here is the commentary on this Mishnah from the holy Maggid of Kozhnitz, zy”a, in Avodas Yisrael:

“איזהו גיבור הכובש את יצרו, רצונו לומר 'יצרו' המיוחד לו, שלכל אדם יש יצר מיוחד המומר לדבר אחד, ולזה צריך כל אחד לעשות לעצמו גדרים וסייגים בדברים שרואה שיצרו תוקף עליו להכשילו בו, כי כל אחד בגלל כן נברא. וזהו שמצינו בגמרא (שבת קיח:) שכל אחד מהאמוראים היה זהיר טפי בדבר אחד.”

The Mishnah is referring to his specific yetzer. For, every human being has a particular yetzer associated with a single transgression. Therefore, every individual must establish safeguards for himself regarding the matters that he sees his yetzer focusing on and assailing him with, attempting to bring about his failure. For, every individual was created for this specific purpose. We find this described in the Gemara; every one of the Amoraim was especially careful with regards to one particular matter.

It is worthwhile interjecting what the holy Admor, the Maharid of Belz, zy”a, explains, based on the commentary of the Avodas Yisrael, regarding the opening passuk of this week’s parsha: “כי תצא למלחמה על אויבך”. If you choose to go to war against “אויבך”—your specific foe, that you were born into this world to defeat; “ונתנו ה' אלקיך בידך ושבת שבי”—you should be confident and rest assured that HKB”H will assist you in defeating him. This concludes his holy remarks.

Now, we are all familiar with Chazal’s statement (Succah 52a): “שבעה שמות יש לו ליצר הרע”—the yetzer hara has seven names. In Toras HaOlah (Part 2, Chapter 26), the Rama explains the significance of this statement: “כי היצר הרע יש לו שבעה שמות כמדורשם ז”ל, והם מדרגות היצר הרע זה למעלה מזה, הנקשרים בחומר ונופלים תחת מספר השבעה ימים, והם מביאים את האדם למטה.” What he is saying is that the yetzer hara has seven levels associated with the material world. It attempts to overpower a person and cause his downfall by means of the seven negative midot that oppose the seven midot of kedushah: חסד, גבורה, תפארת, נצח, הוד, יסוד, מלכות. Thus, it states (Mishlei 24, 16): “כי שבע יפול— **for though the tzaddik may fall seven times, he will arise.**

This then is what the Arizal is teaching us. Every individual must strive to identify his name in the klipah. In other words, he should pray to Hashem that he be able to discern the area and midah the yetzer hara is employing to persuade him to commit an aveirah. Thus, he will be aware of his name in the klipah. It might be associated with inappropriate food cravings, or lust for money, or arrogance and false-pride, or anger and the like. In any event, when he goes to war against his specific, unique yetzer, he is guaranteed: “ונתנו ה' אלקיך בידך ושבת שבי”.

With this understanding, we can explain the chiddush we learned from the great Rabbi of Riminov, zy”a, as brought down by the Zera Kodesh above: **Every Jew has two names-- one emanating from the domain of kedushah**

and in contrast one emanating from the domain of tumah and the force of evil. The tzaddik must work on this by beseeching the Blessed One to reveal to him the name he has with the force of evil, so that he may return this name, too, to the domain of kedushah. This differs somewhat from the teaching of the Arizal. He stated that a person must free his name from the klipah, thereby nullifying that name. The great Rabbi of Riminov, however, adds that it is a person's duty to return the name of the klipah back to the domain of kedushah.

This coincides very nicely with the elucidation in the Mishnah (Berachos 54a) related to the passuk (Devarim 6, 5): "ואהבת את ה' אלקיך בכל לבבך, בשני יצריך, ביצר טוב וביצר הרע"---**"you shall love Hashem, your G-d, with all of your heart": This means with both of your yetzers, your yetzer tov and your yetzer hara.** In other words, we are obligated to transform the yetzer hara into a force for good with which to better serve Hashem. That is we should serve Hashem with the simchah of mitzvah as opposed to the simchah of rowdiness and depravity. For example, we should eat and drink "I'shem shamayim," in keeping with the dictum of (Mishlei 3, 6): **"בכל -- in all your ways, know Him.** For this very same reason, it is vital to transform the name of the klipah, the name associated with the yetzer hara, to a name of kedushah with which to serve Hashem.

In truth, this agrees wonderfully with what we learned in the Mishnah above: **"איזהו גיבור, הכובש את יצרו"**. As brought down in the sefer Ba'al Shem Tov (Bereishis 158), the holy Ba'al Shem Tov, zy" a, notes that the Tanna specifically uses the term **"הכובש"** rather than **"הדוחה"**. This teaches us that is not enough to merely ward off the yetzer hara, one must actually conquer it and then use it for matters of kedushah. This is also implied by the words of the Avodas Yisrael: One must conquer the yetzer hara one was born with; in other words, conquer it and transform it into a force for good.

Our Minhag to Recite a Passuk Beginning and Ending with the Letters of One's Name

It now behooves us to justify the prevalent Jewish minhag to recite a passuk at the conclusion of Shemoneh Esreh that begins with the first letter of one's name and ends with the last letter of one's name. The source for this practice is the Eliyahu Rabbah (122, 3): **"טוב לומר פסוק אחד מן התורה או מנביאים או --the passuk may be from the Torah, from Neviim or from Ketuvim.** This practice is discussed at greater length in the sefer Kitzur Shela; it states that this practice is a segulah so that a person does not forget his name when questioned about it after death:

"הרשעים אינם יודעים שמם בקבר, ומכין אותן מכות אכזריות, ומי שאומר בחייו פסוק אחד המתחיל בתחילת אות משמו ומסיים בסוף אות משמו, דהיינו אותו השם העולה עמו לספר תורה שהוא שם הקודש... ומכל שכן למי ששמו נמצא בפסוק עצמו כגון שלום או דן או ראובן, שאין צריך לסיים בסוף שמו, ומי שאומר פסוק כנ"ל הוא סגולה שלא לשכוח שמו, ויאמר אותו בשמונה עשרה קודם יהיו לרצון בסוף התפלה."

The reshaim do not know their name in the grave. Hence, they are struck vicious blows. Yet, a person who recites during his lifetime a single passuk that begins with the first letter of his name and ends with the last letter of his name—referring to the holy name with which he is called up to the Torah . . . this holds true even more so if his name actually appears in the passuk, such as Shalom or Dan or Reuven; in such a case, the passuk need not end with the last letter of his name. Whoever recites such a passuk, it is a segulah not to forget his name. He should recite it in Shemoneh Esreh prior to the words "יהיו לרצון" at the conclusion of the tefilah.

This, however, raises the following question. We learned explicitly from the Arizal that after a person's death, he is asked if he knows his name from the klipah. They are checking to see if he made an effort to identify that name in order to subdue it and abolish it. According to the great Rabbi of Riminov, they want to know if he successfully returned it to the domain of kedushah. This seems to contradict our minhag of reciting a passuk that begins and ends with the corresponding letters of the name we were given from the domain of kedushah, in order to prevent the likelihood of not knowing one's name when questioned after death.

I was struck by a wonderful idea that I would like to present to our esteemed audience. With the help of HKB"H, I found a tremendous chiddush regarding this subject in the Agra D'Kallah (Lech Lecha). He states that the name of the klipah is actually the same name as the name of kedushah, except that it is a different permutation with negative effects. Here are his sacred words:

"והנה לכל אדם יש לו שם, הוא השם של הנשמה הקדושה שמומין השי"ת כפי אביו ואמו, ולעומת זה יש לו שם של נפש הבהמית דסטרא אחרא על ידי חילופים שונים וצירופים אחרים, כגון מש"ה בקדושה, שמ"ה בסטרא אחרא, ע"ר בקדושה, ר"ע בסטרא אחרא. והנה כשהאדם נמשך אחר נפש הקדושה, אזי זה השם עיקר השם שלו לא יתפרד ממנו גם לאחר פטירתו, ובהיפוך כשאדם נמשך ח"ו אחר נפש הבהמית, אז עיקר השם שלו הוא השם דסטרא אחרא."

והנה בעודו בחיים זוכר השם הקדוש שקראו לו אביו ואמו, אבל לאחר פטירתו שוכח השם הנכבד, על כן מקובל לרבותינו ז"ל ששואלין לרשע את שמו, והוא שוכח ואינו יודע שום שם, שהשם הקדוש נשכח ממנו, והשם דסטרא אחרא לא שמע מעולם, ולכן אינו יודע להשיב, והוא הסוד שאמרו רז"ל (ויק"ר לב-ה) שבמצרים לא שינו את שמם.

ושמתי מחסום לפי מהנהוג בזמנינו [לשנות את השם להיקרא בכינוי של גוים] והוא עצת הס"מ, והמשכיל על דבר יירא ויפחד לנפשו היקרה, אשרי מי שלא שינה את שמו הנכבד. והנה הצדיקים הגדולים שמהפכין מר למתוק, ונפש הבהמיית גם כן יתהפך לטוב גמור, אזי גם השני נתהפך לטוב גמור."

Every person has a name—the name of the holy neshamah that the Blessed One place in the mouths of his father and mother. In contrast, he has a name related to his animalistic being associated with the force of evil, involving various letter exchanges and different permutations. For example, the name מ"ש associated with kedushah and the name ש"מ associated with the force of evil; ע"ר on the side of kedushah and ר"ע on the side of evil. When a person follows his side of kedushah, then this name, his essential name, will not leave him even after his demise. Conversely, when a person follows, chas v'shalom, his animalistic side, then his primary name is the name associated with the force of evil.

Now, while he is still alive, he remembers the holy name that his parents called him. After his demise, however, he forgets this prestigious name. Therefore, it was accepted by our blessed Rabbis that a rasha is asked his name; he forgets it, and doesn't recall any name. For, he has forgotten his holy name, and the name associated with the force of evil, he never knew. Therefore, he is unable to respond. This is the deeper meaning of Razal's statement that in Mitzrayim, they did not alter their names.

Hence, I kept quiet about the prevalent practice these days (to use a name used by the goyim), because it

is the suggestion of the "samech-mem." A person who understands what is at stake, will fear for his precious soul. Praiseworthy is the person who did not alter his noble, prestigious name. Now, the great tzaddikim who transform bitter into sweet, and the animalistic being will also be transformed into total good; ultimately, the second name will also be transformed into total good.

We can now rejoice for we have shed some light on the subject and have reconciled all of the contradictions with regards to a person's name. Now, we learned from Yisrael's great luminary, the father and teacher of the kabbalists, the Arizal, that after a person passes away, he is asked if he knows his name from the side of tumah. In other words, did he make an effort to identify his own personal yetzer hara, for which he was sent down into Olam HaZeh. It was his mission to transform it into a force for good, consistent with the notion of: "איזהו גיבור, הכובש את יצרו".

Now, we learned from the Agra D'Kallah that the name of the klipah contains all of the same letters as the name of kedushah, but they are simply rearranged. Therefore, it is a segulah to recite a passuk that begins with the first letter of a person's name and ends with the last letter of his name. By reciting this passuk, he will successfully transform the negative permutation of his name into his name of kedushah. Thus, his name will appear in the proper order from the first letter to the last; and everything will be in perfect harmony. May Hashem illuminate His Torah for us!



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