



HOW TO SHECHT A NEFESH HA'BAHAMIS

BY ARYEH GUREWITZ



In the columns of the last two weeks, it was explained that in the time of Geulah, we will experience a new type of deep emotional relationship with Hashem, in which we will fully appreciate Him and the pleasure of connecting to Him through His Torah and mitzvos. We will be so completely engrossed in this relationship with Him that we will not even miss the basic pleasures of our lifestyle in Golus, like entertainment, enjoying our material possessions, joking around with friends, going to work, and taking pride in our achievements. Rather, we will be completely content to live a life completely dedicated to serving Hashem, as our נפש הבהמית will be fully transformed, to the point that it itself will agree with the desires of the האלוקית נפש. However, the question remains: how exactly will this come about? What will be the trigger that will suddenly cause the נה"ב to transform?



The simplest way to answer this question may be with a story.

When Reb Yekusiel Liepler, one of the first great Chabad Chassidim, first came to the Alter Rebbe, he was a very simple man. He heard the Alter Rebbe say a maamar explaining that the נפש אלוקית rests in the right side of the heart and the נפש הבהמית in the left side.¹ Reb Yekusiel climbed up to the window of a room where the Alter Rebbe was and called out, "Rebbe! Cut off my left side. I cannot deal with him!" The Alter Rebbe responded by saying to Hashem: "Master of the world, it is written, 'And you give life to all.'"² The Rebbe Maharash explains that the Alter Rebbe "shined" אור into Reb Yekusiel, such that he could see Elokus the way that he could see physicality. This gave him a new joy and excitement in his עבודת ה', to the point that he would sometimes dance in the street from his tremendous simcha. The Friedieker Rebbe adds that this revelation later helped him develop a profound understanding of Chassidus, to the point that the Mittlerer Rebbe wrote אמרי בינה just for him.³

One teaching of Chassidus that we see reflected in this story is that a Rebbe's greatness is not limited to his own lofty level of עבודת ה' or even his ability to teach and guide others through natural means. Rather, a Rebbe is on such a level that Hashem grants him the ability to be a channel for the revelation of אור to a regular, simple Yid. We find a similar idea—that connecting to a Tzaddik helps us access the deeper aspects of our נשמה—explained in many places in Chassidus.⁴ Along the same lines, Melech HaMoshiach will be

granted this same type of ability, except that in his case, Hashem will allow him to use this ability to the fullest extent possible.

This ability of Melech HaMoshiach is referred to in the prophecy, "Behold, My servant will prosper. He will be exalted and lifted up, and he will be very high. הנה ישכיל עבדי ירום ונשא וגבה מאד." The Targum, the Medrash Tanchuma, and the Zohar explain that this refers to the greatness of Melech HaMoshiach, and how he will be even greater than the Avos, Moshe Rabbeinu, and Adam HaRishon. Rashi and other commentaries on Tanach, however, explain that it is talking about the spiritual greatness that every Jew will reach לעתיד. The Rebbe puts the two explanations together.⁵ It is through Melech HaMoshiach's incredible greatness in his עבודת ה' that every Jew will reach a similar level, for Moshiach will have the ability to spiritually influence every Jew by revealing a part of us which is so intensely aware of the truth of אהדות that it not only overpowers and suppresses the נה"ב, but rather transforms the נה"ב to a state where it, too, wants nothing other than to connect to Hashem (as described in the columns of the last two weeks and the question above). This aspect of our soul that Moshiach will reveal is called the יחידה, and it is specifically this level that facilitates the transformation (not only subjugation)⁷ of the נה"ב and the fulfillment of the prophecy,⁸ "The spirit of impurity, I will remove from the land. ואת רוח הטומאה אעביר מן הארץ". In a general sense, this is the same concept as the Alter Rebbe cutting off the "left side" of Yekusiel Liepler's heart, or our Rebbe helping us access our potential for מסירת נפש for Torah and mitzvos (or the like), except that what Moshiach will do is far greater in quality (as well as quantity, since he will do this for every single one of us).⁹

So, to summarize, the answer to the question is that Hashem will grant Melech HaMoshiach the ultimate revelation of the נפש אלוקית, as well as the ability to transmit that revelation of the נה"א to all of us, which will have the effect of not only overpowering the נפש הבהמית, but actually transforming it. This is how we will be able to live the life of the true Geulah.

Can this insight help us at all in our עבודה today? Perhaps we can suggest that this is one aspect of what the Rebbe was asking of us when he told us that we need to be משיח צדקינו בפועל ממש. Perhaps he is waiting for us to tell him sincerely that we're ready to have our left side cut off—that, just like Yekusiel Liepler was, we're ready to be free from our yetzer hara forever, and we're ready to live the life of the אלוקית נפש. At least from one angle, that's what Geulah is really all about.

In next week's column (אם ח"ו משיח יתעכב) we hope to address why Hashem's plan is for this to be done specifically by Melech HaMoshiach, and not directly by Hashem Himself.

1 See also תניא פרק ט'.

2 In the original: "רבנו של עולם, ואתה את כולם חתוב".

3 The details of the story presented here are from a combination of Sefer HaToldos Admu'r Maharash, pg. 70, and Sichas 19 Kislev 5693, ois 18.

4 See, for example: תניא פרק ב', תוי"א פ' משפטים, ד"ה וקבל היהודים; תניא פרק ט', ד"ה ואתה תצוה תשמ"א.

5 ישעיה נב"י.

6 ד"ה והנה ישכיל עבדי תשי"ז.

7 Regarding this point, see ד"ה פרה בשלום of the Mittlerer Rebbe, regarding the difference between the revelation of הית, which only suppresses the נה"ב, and that of יחידה, which transforms it. See also ד"ה פרה פדה טו, ד"ה תורת החסידות אות יט, ד"ה פרה בשלום תשמ"ו (הא).

8 זכריה ג"ב. Regarding the connection of this prophecy to the revelation of the יחידה, see ד"ה פרה בשלום תשמ"ו (הב).

9 This idea—that the transformation of our נה"ב results

from a revelation of an aspect of our own soul—is not a contradiction to the idea that the cause of our transformation will be the ability to see Elokus. In ד"ה והנה ישכיל עבדי תשי"ז (cited above in footnote 6), the Rebbe connects the two concepts, explaining that one of the results of the יחידה גילוי יחידה will be the ability to see Elokus. The Rebbe compares this to the way the Arizal saw Elokus during his famous dream, in which he learned things that would have taken him 80 years to explain verbally. See there.

