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## BaChodesh HaShelishi: Shavuos - Section V

From the teachings of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi; adapted by Eli Touger

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The Additions of The Tzemach Tzedek

**וזהו** [On the basis of the above, we can understand the verse:] “In the third month after the exodus of the Jewish people from the land of Egypt, on *this day*...”

*In the beginning of the maamar, it was asked: Why was the term “on this day” used to connote Rosh Chodesh?*

When the Jewish people left Egypt, they began counting the Omer,

*The actual mitzvah of Counting the Omer was given afterwards, but the Jews counted the days until the Giving of the Torah with anxious expectation, anticipating — and performing the spiritual counterpart of — that mitzvah. See the gloss of RabbeinuNissim, the conclusion of tractate Pesachim.*

as it is written:<sup>1</sup> “And you shall count seven weeks for yourselves.”

*As explained in the maamar entitled U’Sfartem (translated in this series), the Counting of the Omer involves a process of self-refinement, internalizing the approach of bittul until it resonates through all of the dimensions of our personalities.*

*Through this Divine service, a person redefines his character, attaining a higher level of personal fulfillment. Not only does he express bittul, the nullification of self, but that bittul enables him to reorient his personality and express his personal qualities in a higher and more perfect manner. Since he is directed toward the fulfillment of G-d’s purpose and not his individual goals — be they material or spiritual — he is not restricted by any constraints whatsoever (Sefer Maamarim Melukat, Vol. 4, pp. 260-261).*

These [days] serve as the preparation for receiving the Torah on Shavuos, enabling there to be a revelation of G-d’s infinite light on this physical plane as it is [revealed] above. [As a result of this preparation, the Jews reached] a state of *bittul*. This enabled them to repeat [the Torah] as it was said by [G-d, as it were, making it possible] that their Torah study would be “the word of G-d.”

*As explained in sec. 22 above.*

**ובשבו** On the third day of the seventh week,

*The day of Rosh Chodesh Sivan.*

it was as if [the spiritual service associated with] the entire week [of counting] had [been carried out]

*For the seven days of the week correspond to the seven emotional qualities. Within these seven, the first three correspond to the three qualities of Chesed, Gevurah, and Tiferes.*

*These are the primary emotional qualities and include the other four. Hence after the third day of the seventh week, it is as if the entire endeavor of refining the emotional attributes were completed (Hosafos to Torah Or, p. 109c).*

and the Jewish people were prepared to receive this state of *bittul*.

*The Alter Rebbe refers to them as “receive[ing] this state of bittul” because, in essence, it is a level above ordinary, mortal experience that man cannot achieve on his own.*

At that time, the moon was renewed, representing the revelation of G-d’s infinite light following this *bittul*.

**ולכן** Therefore

*I.e., to emphasize that the goal of the bittul was to call forth revelation.*

[Rosh Chodesh] was described simply as “this day.”

*As the Tzemach Tzedek emphasizes in his additions to the maamar (endnote 1), “this” (זה) is associated with direct revelation (see Shir HaShirim Rabbah 2:3). Thus “this day” refers to the direct revelation of G-dliness associated with the sublime unity.*

[In general,] “day” is synonymous with light and revelation, as it is written:<sup>2</sup> “And G-d called the light ‘day.’”

[In our Divine service,] it corresponds to the revelation and love [that stem from] *bittul* to G-d.<sup>1</sup> [The connection to love is reflected by the fact that] ואהבת, “And you shall love,” is twice the numerical equivalent of אור,

*אהבת is numerically equivalent to 414, and אור, to 207.*

“light.”

*Hence, Rosh Chodesh Sivan is referred to as “this day” to indicate that there was a powerful revelation of Divine light that aroused an intensification of the Jews’ love for G-d.*

**ואז** At the time of this [revelation, the Jewish people] “came to the Sinai desert.” [Our Sages note the

phonetic relationship between Sinai and *sin'ah*, meaning “hatred,” and comment:<sup>3</sup> ] “[It is the mountain upon which] hatred to the nations of the world descended.” This relates to the concept of תושיה [explained above,]

Secs. 2-3.

[that Torah study] weakens the power of the *sitra achra*.

*For in an environment of revealed G-dliness, evil has difficulty establishing a foothold.*

**ומדבר** *Midbar*, Hebrew for “desert,” shares the same root letters as the term *dibbur*, “speech,” as in the phrase:<sup>4</sup> “And your speech (*u'midbereich*) is attractive.” The term *midbar*, “desert,” includes the addition of a *mem*, because a *mem* is one of the letters ו,י,ו,ג,ת,א,ה which [in Hebrew grammar] reduce the power of the root.

*I.e., these letters serve as either prefixes or suffixes that limit the application of the root word.*

*For example, the term מהדבר, “from the entity,” implies not the entity itself, but something from it.*

In this context, [the use of that letter] implies that [the focus is] not on speech as an independent [power], but something that has already been said; i.e., one’s speech is *batel* to the word of G-d that is being spoken by the person.<sup>ii</sup>

*The “reduction” implied is that the person is in a state of bittul. He is not speaking his own words, but the word of G-d, as explained above.*

**ואדי** After [these rungs are achieved, then, as the verse continues]: “They journeyed from Refidim (רפידים),” which figuratively means “a weakening of the hands (רפיון ידים),” as our Sages commented: “Why was it called ‘Refidim’? [Because they weakened their hands from the Torah,]” i.e., [to a certain] degree, the power of the soul was weakened. [From that place, they journeyed to Sinai where]

*As a result of the Giving of the Torah,*

strength and reinforcement was given to the G-dly soul and the *sitra achra* was weakened.

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FOOTNOTES

1. *Devarim* 16:9.
2. *Bereishis* 1:5; see *Bereishis Rabbah* 3:6 as cited in the notes to *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5708, p. 239.
3. *Shabbos* 89a.
4. *Shir HaShirim* 4:3. Our translation follows *Rashi's* commentary.

**FROM THE TEACHINGS OF RABBI SCHNEUR ZALMAN OF LIADI; ADAPTED BY ELI TOUGER**

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Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi (18 Elul 1745-24 Tevet 1812), known as "the Alter Rebbe," was one of the main disciples of the Maggid of Mezritch, and the founder of the Chabad Chassidism. He is the author of *Shulchan Aruch HaRav* and *Tanya* as well as many other major works in both Jewish law and the mystical teachings.

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