

בס"ד

The Light of Ephraim

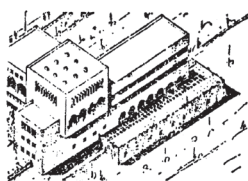
*Reclaim your lost potential
by
rectifying your past¹*

1 Dedicated to Ephraim G. ben Chana.

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Approbations



ישיבת-תורה-אור" בעיה"ק ירושלים
בנשיאות מרו הרב הגאון חיים פינחס שיינברג שליטי"א

"TORAH - ORE" SEMINARY

THE AMERICAN SEMINARY IN ISRAEL

קרית מטרסדורף - KIRYAT MATTERS DORF

טל: 02-537-3049 P.O.B. 6979 ת.ד.

טלפקס: 02-537-6612

טל תלמידים: 02-537-1400 02-537-2200

JERUSALEM 91150 ISRAEL

בס"ד

First candle of Chanukah, 5761

The Light of Ephraim is an important book addressing a central aspect of man's Divine service, based on the teachings of our Sages and *daat Torah*. The theme of the book is the flaw of the covenant and its rectification, as well as the ways in which to guard oneself from this transgression and uphold the covenant with holiness.

I bless the readers to attain a complete *teshuvah*-repentance- the higher *teshuvah*—causing pleasure and delight to the Holy One, blessed be He, by fulfilling the *mitzvot* and studying Torah for the sake of Heaven. "In the place where the repentant stands, even the perfectly righteous cannot stand." In their merit, and in the merit of the Community of Israel, we will be redeemed with the coming of the Messiah, quickly and in our time, Amen.

May it be His will that all the author's offspring be filled with the *daat*-knowledge of *Hashem*, and study Torah with the intention of causing pleasure on high.

With blessings from Jerusalem,

Chaim P. Scheinberg

Dayan Ch. Ehrentreu

ב"ה

חנוך עהרנמרייא

Rosh Beth Din

ראש בית דין

1 Highfield Gardens

דק"ק לונדון והמדינה

London NW11 9HD

Tel: (0181) 458 6322

Fax: (0181) 922 0760

מ' אלול תשס"א לפ"ק

To whom it may concern

The author of '*The Light of Ephraim*' who is personally known to me, is a deeply religious individual who is imbued with a true Torah Hashkafa.

I sincerely believe that this work can inspire its readers to raise themselves spiritually and assist them in their quest and striving to ascend the steps of Torah and Yirat Shomayim.

In particular those who are starting their spiritual journey will derive especial strength from the message of this book.

with Torah greetings,

Dayan Ch. Ehrentreu
Rosh Beth Din, London

As a Locked Garden

Midnight in Jerusalem. The *Kotel*-Western Wall is flooded with light. A young man leans against the ancient stones, his eyes tightly closed. He seems to be having a nightmare. Despite the chill, he is sweating profusely. All of a sudden, he makes a sharp movement as if pulling himself away from a firm grip. As he opens his eyes, he sees the kindly face of an older man whose weak eyes are looking at him with concern.

“Is anything wrong? May I help you?” asked the older man.

The young man shook his head and said, “Thank you. I’m all right. Something weird just happened to me...”

The older man kept looking, as if thinking that the young man appeared anything but all right. He said, “Look, I have a little room on the premises. Would you like to follow me there and talk? Maybe I can help you...” he finished, smiling.

“Thank you,” responded the young man, thinking that he had never seen such a glowing face which inspired total trust. “I guess I need that. Although I don’t know if *you* do... I mean, it might not be the best time...”

“Don’t worry about that. It is the only hour in which I could be offering time to you or anybody else. But come; we should not be talking here.”

The older man walked slowly backwards, continuing to face the *Kotel*. In a daze, the young man followed him into an alcove nearby. At the top of a flight of stairs, a bearded man seemed to be waiting by a door. The older man looked at him, shook his head, signaling that he was not available at this time, and, taking a set of keys from his pocket, unlocked the door, motioning for the young

man to come in.

“Please, have a seat,” said the older man, closing the door, and pulling one of two chairs behind a large desk. “My name is Yosef. Will you tell me about yourself?”

“I don’t know where to start... You must be thinking I am drugged or something.”

“If I were thinking that, you would not be sitting here in front of me. Why don’t you tell me what happened to you at the Kotel? Sometimes it is easier to start at the end of a story than at the beginning.”

“Yes.” The young man, who had slumped into the chair, sat up firmly and added, “My name is Adam. I came to the Kotel tonight running away from the tension at home. I was in such a state of discord that I could not even pray so I closed my eyes, trying to reach an inner space of harmony. Yet, rather than the stillness I was looking for, I felt myself caught in what seemed to be a whirlpool of evil. The movement was so gripping, it was going round and round and all my senses were forced to focus on it. I was aware that it was a space of total evil, but I was powerless to do anything. Suddenly I looked to my right, and there was a very tall woman, all dressed in black, her face completely covered by a black shawl.¹⁴ I sensed that she wanted to kill me... I was terrified, for it all seemed so real... And then you came.”

“A tall woman dressed in black, whose face was completely covered...” repeated the older man slowly. “You must have a very special soul, Adam. You have seen the Shechina, the Divine Presence.”

Adam closed his eyes tightly, as if to stop the tears from falling. Soon his shoulders were shaking with sobs. Yosef allowed Adam’s emotions to flow for some time. Then he got up, took a glass from a nearby shelf and half-filled it with water from a little sink in the corner of the room. Coming around the desk, he sat on the chair

14 There are many sources for the image of the Shechina as a woman dressed in black clothes. Rabbi Eliyahu de Vidas quotes the Midrash *Pesikta Rabati* 26 (*The Beginning of Wisdom: Gate of Love*, trans. Simchah H. Bensoyef. New Jersey: Ktav Publishers, 2001, p. 330) in an episode in which the prophet Jeremiah meets a woman dressed in black who is lamenting the loss of her children. Rabbi Daniel Frisch explains in volume 4 of the *Matok Midevash*, p. 377, Zohar, *Vayechi*, 217a, that the Shechina often takes on the appearance of an exiled widow whose black garments represent the darkness of the *klipot*-outside forces [*ke islah almanah melubeshet shechorim*].

near Adam and offered it to him.

Adam opened his eyes, took tissues from his pocket, dried his face, mumbled the words of a blessing, and drank. He said, "I am sorry. That was the last thing I expected you to say. She wanted to kill me! Tell me, does a man stand a chance, if God wants to kill him? Where can he run to, that God won't find him?"

"If God decides to kill a man, all He has to do is stop His life-force from reaching him. Suppose you were God, Adam, and a person was angering you exceedingly. What would you do?"

"If I were God?" Adam half-smiled. "I would send an angel to kill him. Why bother? The world is over-populated anyway." He paused and added wryly, "Maybe it is just as well I am not God."

"What if you did not want to kill him?" asked Yosef seriously. "What is more, what if rather than sending an angel, you decided to appear before him yourself in order to show him that you wanted to kill him?"

"What's the question?" asked Adam.

"The question is, what would you be telling him by doing that? As you said, why not kill him and be done with it?"

"Maybe I wanted to give the guy a chance to get his act together, and just wanted to warn him."

"But again, why bother giving him a chance?" challenged Yosef. "As you say, the world is over-populated anyway. You could wipe him out in the blink of an eye. Do you think the world would suffer without his presence?"

"The world?" asked Adam. "Probably not. But maybe I would."

"Do you hear what you are saying, Adam?"

The young man's eyes welled up in tears. "Please don't get me started again," he begged. "To think of an angry God is one thing. To think of a God who is affected by my state of anguish and is reaching to get me out of it is more than I can bear at this moment."

Somebody knocked at the door. Ignoring it, Yosef gently said, "Talk to me, Adam. Tell me who you are, and what your problem is. I want to help you."

"I grew up in an irreligious home," started the young man in a dull tone of voice. "Both my parents lost all their relatives in the Holocaust. They were raised in an orphanage and never quite recovered

from the experience. Their home was for me as cold and loveless as their orphanage must have been. Their passivity was unbearable to me. As a child, I reacted by constantly getting into trouble, if only to elicit their attention. As soon as I reached adolescence, I couldn't wait to leave home. I tried to find comfort in..." Adam's voice broke off, as he looked hesitatingly at the older man facing him.

"You must speak freely, Adam. In this room, I am your new friend Yosef, that's all."

The sound of knocking broke the silence again, as if belying Yosef's words.

"Thank you," said Adam. "I tried to drown myself in frenzied activities and a busy university life, but I wasn't happy. Something major was missing in my life. When I finished school, I seemed to get a break. I found a job at an excellent firm, and my parents were proud. I thought I was past caring, but it was not the case, for their approval was important to me, even if that was all they could give me.

"Then I met Rachel, a young girl who was also the product of a dysfunctional home of sorts. Her parents also were irreligious. Her father left her mother when Rachel was a few months old and never returned, not even to see his daughter. When we met, she was as hungry for a deep love bond as I was, and she immersed her entire being into our relationship. From the very beginning it seemed that we thirsted for each other. Our bond was so perfect that we were sure in Heaven we were soul mates. We nevertheless pushed off getting married, for both of us had suffered through broken relationships and did not want to get hurt again. The year that we spent together before marriage is the only happiness I have ever tasted, and the same is true of her. We seemed to complete each other. Each one of us understood the other totally, like no one else ever had.

"The very harmony that we shared inspired us to bring God into our relationship, and we became Torah-observant almost at the same time. We stopped living together and decided to rectify our bond. For that, we studied the laws of family purity and then got married.

"I have always been attracted to the Jewish mystical wisdom of Kabala," he continued, and then interrupted himself: "Why are you smiling?"

"Because that's what I do. I teach Kabala," answered Yosef simply.

Adam smiled back. “The Providence of the Almighty never ceases to amaze me,” he said. “At any rate, before we got married, we both took a course in the sixteenth-century Safed¹⁵ kabalists. One of these, Rabbi Eliyahu de Vidas, wrote a book called...” he frowned, trying to remember the name.

“*The Beginning of Wisdom*,” supplied Yosef.

“Yes, that’s right. We did not study all of it; just the *Gate of Love*. We were very moved by the way the author tried to explain God’s love. He compared Divine love to the passion between a man and a woman, a tempestuous love which is not based on reason.”

“Was the author referring to God’s love for us or to our love for Him?” asked the sage.

“To both,” replied the young man. “One should be the mirror image of the other! That is what I wanted my bond with my wife to be like, as well as the bond of each one of us with the Most High, but...”

“But...?” prompted Yosef. “You are having marital problems?”

Adam hesitated. “You could say that,” he finally said. “Our marriage seems to have brought havoc into our lives! Rachel has a kind of... mental block which prevents us from functioning as a married couple.”

“So the marriage is not working out?”

“It’s not that!” protested Adam. “I could never envisage my life other than being married to her... even if the present situation were to continue forever... God forbid,” he added. “But I am very unhappy, and so is she.”

“Are you doing something to address the problem?” asked Yosef. “I mean, did you seek counseling?”

“Rachel refuses to get therapy,” said Adam. “She claims that if we had such harmony before our marriage and all this tension afterward, it is beyond the ability of a counselor to find the solution, because the problem seems to be rooted in the very act of sanctifying our union.”

Yosef smiled. “Not a bad argument,” he said.

The knocking grew more insistent. The door opened and a bearded man poked his head inside. “Forgive me, but everyone is

15 A city in northern Israel that since the sixteenth century has been a center of Kabala study.

waiting for the class.”

Yosef said to him, “I cannot join you tonight; have Rabbi Yaakov teach instead of me. Please come in again later, when it is time for me to join you for the morning prayers.”

The man nodded and left, closing the door behind him. Adam got up. He said, “I don’t want to interrupt...”

“Sit down,” said Yosef firmly. “Allow me to decide for myself.”

Adam sat heavily on the chair. “Thank you,” he said. “After our repentance, I kept regular study sessions at a Torah academy, but now even Torah study no longer appeals to me. I feel no link whatsoever to the spiritual world. A paralyzing sadness has taken me over and prevents me from feeling. My heart has no spark of life; it is dull as a stone, as if no feeling could ever arouse it. Although I am still Torah-observant, I am spiritually numb, and when I am engaged in fulfilling the commandments I am merely going through the motions. It is as if I were locked in a spiritual prison out of which I am powerless to escape.” The young man’s voice died down and he covered his face with his hands.

“You make me think of the prison in which the Biblical Yosef ended up after escaping the clutch of *niuf*-illicit relations” said the sage.

“What do you mean? That prison was full of Egyptians, not Jews!” exclaimed Adam.

“There is a book called *Emek Hamelech*-Valley of the King, written in the seventeenth century, which discusses the evolution of souls, even before Adam, the first man, was created.¹⁶ Basing himself on the teachings of Rabbi Yitzchak Luria of sixteenth-century Safed, known as the holy Ari, the author, Rabbi Naftali Elchanan of Frankfurt, speaks of all the souls that fell into the spiritual underworld, where the level of Divine concealment is so dense that there is barely any life.”

“I’m confused. What do you call a soul?”

“In technical terms, a soul is an integrated spiritual entity composed of a certain number of sparks of holiness and enclosed in an

16 Adapted from an unpublished study by Rabbi Moshe Schatz.

ethereal garment, called *tzelem*-image.¹⁷ After death, the *tzelem* ascends on High and becomes enclosed into another spiritual garment of an even loftier nature, but only when the person completely rectified the entire number of sparks making up his own soul.

“Without going into details, the conclusion of the *Emek Hamel-ech* is that God has a profound love for each and every soul, for they are all part of His essence, and He will make sure that all souls get the rectification they need. The mystery of reincarnation is that it is impossible for a soul not to evolve; God has willed into His plan of Creation that each one will reach *shelemut*-spiritual completion with time.”

“What is the highest expression of spiritual completion?” asked Adam. “Can you give me an example?”

“The people of Israel at the Giving of the Torah,” answered the sage without hesitation.

“So according to what you said, it can happen that a Jewish soul messes up badly, and after death some of its sparks fall into the realms of the underworld where there is a dense concealment of the Divine. What happens after they fall?”

“Then, when it comes the time for these sparks to evolve, they may reincarnate as part of the soul of a person who is in a very low state of spiritual awareness.”

“So that person is *really* going to be torn between good and evil tendencies...” noted the young man.

“Sometimes the holy sparks are in such minority that it would take something major to awaken them,” sighed the sage.

“You were saying that my spiritual problems reminded you of Yosef’s prison. How so?”

“Yosef came into a world which had been destroyed by the Great Flood as a result of the *niuf*-related offenses committed by the first generations of man. Now, did the Flood rectify the situation?”

17 *Etz Chaim, Shaar Hakavanot*, 6:1. Quoted from Rabbi Daniel Frisch’s commentary on the Zohar, *Matok Midevash, Vayechi*, p. 224a. Published by Rabbi B. Dadkal, 225 Division Ave., Brooklyn N.Y., 1993-2000. [Rabbi Frisch has opened the study of the Zohar in his new multi-volume edition of *Matok Midevash*, in which the Zohar is translated into simple Hebrew and the explanations of the traditional commentaries are inserted within the translation of the Zoharic text in a different print. (Jerusalem, 1993-2000)]

“Not if you judge by the Sodomites at the time of Yaakov’s grandfather, Avraham!” noted Adam.

“You are right, it did not. In fact, Avraham became the first Jew by searching for his Maker, and the pivotal task he was asked to do was to circumcise himself. The sign of the circumcision became our holiest bond with the Most High and is the basis of His covenant with us. Do you know what a covenant is?”

“I have always understood that it is a mutual agreement between God and man,” answered Adam.

“That’s right,” said Yosef. “The medieval sage Nachmanides, known as the Ramban,¹⁸ points out the reason for the commandment of circumcision: the Holy One sealed His covenant with us in the organ of lust to remind us that it should only be used in observance of His will.”¹⁹

“We keep getting side-tracked,” complained the young man. “Let’s get back to Yosef.”

“I have to give you the background or you won’t understand what I am saying,” smiled the sage.

“I’m sorry.”

“The late contemporary Jerusalem kabalist, Rabbi Rafael Moshe Luria,²⁰ *zichrono livracha*-of blessed memory,²¹ teaches that the Divine mission Yosef was entrusted with was to instill in the Jewish nation the spiritual yearning which characterized him.”²²

“I thought that what characterized Yosef was mainly purity. He was tempted in the worst way and yet remained firm,” observed Adam.

“Spiritual yearning and purity always go hand in hand, my son,” answered the sage. “Suppose the municipality hired your services to

18 Rabbi Moses ben Nachman (1194-1270) was a leading medieval Jewish scholar.

19 Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe; quoted from Yigal Aben Danan, *Vehayitem Kedoshim: Asefat Maamarim Be’inyan Shemirat Habrit...* (Jerusalem, 1997), p. 76.

20 I will refer to Rabbi Rafael Moshe Luria as Rabbi Luria. My book *Living Kabbalah: A Guide to the Sabbath and Festivals in the Teachings of Rabbi Rafael Moshe Luria* [2nd edition: Jerusalem, Feldheim, 2006] is a compendium of his teachings.

21 Hereafter abbreviated as z”l.

22 In Hebrew, *teshuka shel kedusha*. The teachings about Yosef’s stay in prison stem from Rabbi Luria, *Beit Genazai al haTorah*, volume II, “*Yosef Bebeit haSohar*,” Jerusalem, 2000; pp. 1086-1088.

clean up a large space which had become a garbage dump because someone kept throwing refuse there. What would you do?”

“I would first try to find out who was responsible for dumping the garbage and find a way to make them stop,” said the young man.

“That is what happened in Yosef’s case, except that he didn’t go to ‘clean up’ on his own volition; the ‘heavenly municipality’ sent him to Egypt to cut evil at its source. If and when he succeeded, the ground would be prepared for the people of Israel to go to Egypt and begin ‘cleaning up,’ in other words, rectifying the state of *zenut* prevailing in the world since the generation of the Flood. *Zenut* literally means ‘prostitution,’ but I suggest we use this word as a general term alluding to any type of forbidden use of intimacy, illicit relations and the like. The Torah teaches us that words have a suggestive power of their own and so, since we are going to discuss this very private topic, let us avoid this power by alluding to it with the Biblical term.”

“Fine with me,” nodded Adam. “However, your statement elicits many questions. Let me start with the most obvious. Why Egypt?”

“The Ari z”l teaches that the inner essence of the entire realm of evil was in Egypt, but we cannot go into that now or we really will be side-tracked.”²³

“Even if I accept your analogy of a garbage dump – and that’s really stretching it – how was Yosef’s overcoming illicit temptation going to help all the others who had failed? In what way was he cleaning up the spilling that others had done?”

“There is a principle in the Torah that nothing occurs in the world without leaving a lasting impression.”

“As when you remove a box from a cushion; the impression of the box remains, just that we are talking in spiritual terms,” clarified Adam.

“Right. So when someone worked very hard to achieve a certain pattern of behavior, it is as if he left an indelible impression on the universe. After him, this behavior will be easier to attain.”

“You mean, just by conscious intention?”

“Oh no!” smiled the sage. “It is much harder than that and requires great effort. Still, the effort isn’t nearly what it would have been

23 See *Living Kabbalah*, op. cit., “The Song at the Sea.”

if the impression had not been there. Yosef's temptress, Potiphar's wife, was the female embodiment of the primordial serpent – Satan – says Rabbi Luria, and this is far, far greater than any temptation we have today! Hence, Yosef's victory left a marked imprint on the people of Israel: they maintained a state of purity in their relations during their entire bondage in Egypt."

"I thought they fell to the 49th gate of impurity," noted Adam.

"They did, through their involvement in the idolatrous activities of the Egyptians, but they did not fall into offenses of *zenut*, as is alluded to in the verse,²⁴ *As chaste as a garden locked, My sister, O bride; a spring locked up, a fountain sealed.*"

"We got side-tracked again!" said Adam with a frustrated look.

The sage smiled. "We did not. I am trying to highlight these parts of our history in order to make a point."

"But Yosef, soon the night will be over and I will be left with my problem because we will not have had the time to get into it!" cried the young man.

"If you want, I could meet with you over the next few days, starting the day after tomorrow, at the same time we met tonight, to help you deal with your problem from the perspective of Kabala, the inner dimension of the Torah."

"I would treasure each one of those meetings," murmured the young man with a grateful look. "Now I can concentrate on what you are saying without worrying that our time is running out."

"I am sure I will enjoy our meetings as well," said the sage. "So the main trait that Yosef was known for was..."

"You said it was spiritual yearning. I still don't see it, though," noted Adam.

"Be patient. More precisely, it was the yearning for holiness."

"Holiness? That is a term which has become almost obsolete. I am not even sure what it means!"

"The experience of holiness is an expanded state of consciousness which is the product of man's pulling back from the physical to attain the inner state of union with the Most High.²⁵ The yearning for inti-

24 Allegorical translation of The Song of Songs, 4:12, by Rabbi Meir Zlotowitz. (New York: Mesorah Publications, Ltd., 1977)

25 Definition of Rabbi Luria.

mate communion with God – what we call a *yichud*-unification – is imprinted into the inner makings of the Jewish soul from the time of Creation. Hence when a Jew sins, part of him is broken inside, for he instinctively knows that he is distancing himself from the Holy One, and even while sinning he does not totally sever his bond with his Father in Heaven, for his soul keeps yearning to return to its Source. But when a man commits an act of zenut, he is prevented from seeing the extent to which it is evil and has no desire to stop.”

“Evil?” interrupted Adam. “I understand that according to the Torah, intimate relations are only to be enjoyed with one’s wife at the time that she is ritually clean. So I know that zenut is a transgression, but I would not call it evil! I associate evil with something more like murder or rape.”

“In Divine terms, we call it a desecration of the covenant of circumcision, and its main consequence is that one loses his longing for his Maker and has no desire to stop the wrongdoing. Thus, spilling seed is ‘evil in God’s eyes’²⁶ because it damages the yearning for Divine closeness that the Holy One lovingly built into your soul, as a rope to get you out of the pit. And you cannot even speak of rectification until this longing to cleave to holiness begins to be restored.”

“Yeah, just like there was no point beginning to clean up till you identify the source of the mess and correct it.”

“Exactly. And as the sages say, one sin leads to another. The men who commit offenses of zenut keep falling into the same patterns of behavior until they end up convincing themselves that they are controlled by them. They then sink into an inner isolation and become like a body bereft of a soul, driven by the instincts which they have allowed to become its masters. They risk slipping over the edge of an abyss beyond which any contact with the light of the Most High would be out of reach.”

Adam frowned, saying, “You are talking about pathological cases! Most men don’t have that problem. They will indulge occasionally, but not to the extent that you are referring to.”

“What I am saying to you is that if you permit yourself to indulge, even once, it becomes very hard to say ‘never again.’ And if you do

26 Paraphrasing Genesis, 38:6, 10.

come to me for the next few nights, I will explain to you in technical terms exactly how and why this happens, and why ‘once or twice’ is enough to cause such devastating damage to man’s spiritual makeup.”

“You mean like a Pandora’s box which one can no longer close,” said Adam, as if to himself. “I feel that you are saying something of major importance, but I’m not with you yet; it is still too challenging to accept. I will reserve judgment until I hear everything though; that much I must do for myself.

“But let’s get back to Yosef and the prison. You were right, Yosef, in that we were not side-tracking. But why did he have to go to prison since he passed the test?”

“The prison was not a punishment: Far from it. It was the training that he needed to go through, and the Shechina was with him from the start. He simply could not have withstood the power of evil in there without Her luminous Presence. He had to get firsthand experience with the souls who had fallen into the underworld and had enclosed themselves in a spiritual prison of their own making. He had to try to revive the sparks of holiness within them, arousing in them the yearning for Divine closeness. He had to fan their desire to leave the depths of the pit and return to their Source of holiness.

“Hence we can understand our daily thanks to the Holy One for ‘releasing the bound,’²⁷ namely, for helping these souls out of their fallen state.”

“I would rather call it ‘reviving the dead.’ There is nothing worse than being dead while alive!” exclaimed Adam.

The sage raised his eyebrows, but made no comment.

“So did Yosef succeed in ‘releasing the bound?’” asked Adam.

“He certainly did, and when he got out of prison, the ground was ready for the people of Israel to come and begin their rectification.”

“It is not clear what you mean by ‘their rectification.’ Why did they have to suffer so much, particularly if *they* did not transgress in that way?”

“I will go into that with you another night.²⁸ Tonight, I want to continue looking at Yosef’s mission. When the Israelites got out of Egypt, the spiritual yearning they had inherited from Yosef was at

27 In Hebrew, *matir assurim*.

28 See chapters 3 and 4.

its highest. As the Holy One says to the Community of Israel,²⁹ ‘I remember how you were faithful in your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed Me in the wilderness, a land not sown.’ Such was their longing for intimate communion that they followed the Most High in the desert without worrying about food or water.

“That is why the Community of Israel is known as the remnant of the House of Yosef, and they are also known by the name of Yosef’s son, Ephraim.”

“What was special about Ephraim?”

“Ephraim represents all the people of Israel seen as a collective person who fell into acts of zenut and then was so broken at the thought of what he did, that his profound remorse caused the Holy One to refer to him as ‘the child of My delight.’³⁰ We’ll discuss all of this in detail, God willing.”

“What we need today is Yosef’s influence among us to clean up the grounds again, Yosef!” exclaimed the young man.

“More than ever, my son! Know, however, that the Messianic Redemption we are waiting for is an illumination coming from Yosef and his son Ephraim.”

“What do you mean, an illumination? I thought the Messiah was a man,” asked the young man.

“The Messianic king stemming from David – *Mashiach ben David* – whom we are expecting is certainly a man. What I mean by an illumination is a type of Divine luminous energy bringing to the world in a seemingly natural way all that Yosef stood for.”³¹

“I see. So that if all of a sudden you see in the world a prevalent preoccupation with purity, although it seems to be a natural process, it is really the effect of the Messianic light which is beginning

29 Jeremiah, 2:2.

30 The *Etz Chaim, Shaar Hearat Hamochin*, 32, perek 9, discusses the illumination of *Ephraim ben Yosef* in reference to Yesod.

31 See Rabbi Moshe Schatz, *Timeline to the Redemption*, foreword to *Reshit Chochma: Gate of Love*, trans. Benyosef. Part of Yosef’s legacy is all the forms of wisdom that an angel came to teach him before his meeting with Pharaoh that are reaching us today in the form of secular knowledge. As the contemporary kabalist, Rabbi Schatz writes, “The Messianic light connected with the *Mashiach ben Yosef* comes down camouflaged and is exiled among the nations of the world in the form of science and technology.”

to glow in concealment.”

“Exactly. Before the Mashiach ben David can come, the longing for Divine closeness has to be restored in our hearts. We have to release the bound from their prison of evil temptations and replace these with the desire for an experiential perception of God’s love.”

“I am sorry, Yosef, but that’s not only the problem of those who fall into acts of zenut,” said the young man, shaking his head. “If you peeked into the screen of consciousness of the average person today, you would have to look very hard to find a longing for Divine love!”

“You are absolutely right. Rabbi Luria writes that in the last generation, prior to the revelation of the Messianic light, the people of Israel will be enveloped by a dense spiritual fog, similar to the sky before the glow of dawn. The only pillar of light to illuminate and warm our hearts is that of the Torah, in particular that of the inner dimension of the Torah. The inner teachings of the Torah reveal the love and closeness binding the Creator and the Community of Israel, His soul companion, and when you delve into this study, a fire of love for the Most High is ignited in your heart, to the point that nothing can deter you.”³²

“Is that the answer as well for the guy who is locked in his self-made prison?” asked Adam in a low voice.

“Partly; but he also has to devote active efforts to breaking the cell of his personal prison, as I plan to explain to you. After being locked in for some time, one ends up forgetting where he is, and begins to believe that he is where he belongs and that thus it will remain. At this point, he no longer yearns to break out of his cell. He is like someone who has fallen into a pit and lost consciousness. This is when the feeling of hopelessness overcomes him, though he does not know where it is coming from.

“It is written that when it comes time for man to leave this world and present himself before the heavenly Judge, he will be asked, ‘Did you yearn for the Redemption?’ The meaning of this question is: Did you apply yourself to restore your yearning for holiness?

32 Adapted from Rabbi Luria’s introduction to his *Beit Genazai al haTorah*.