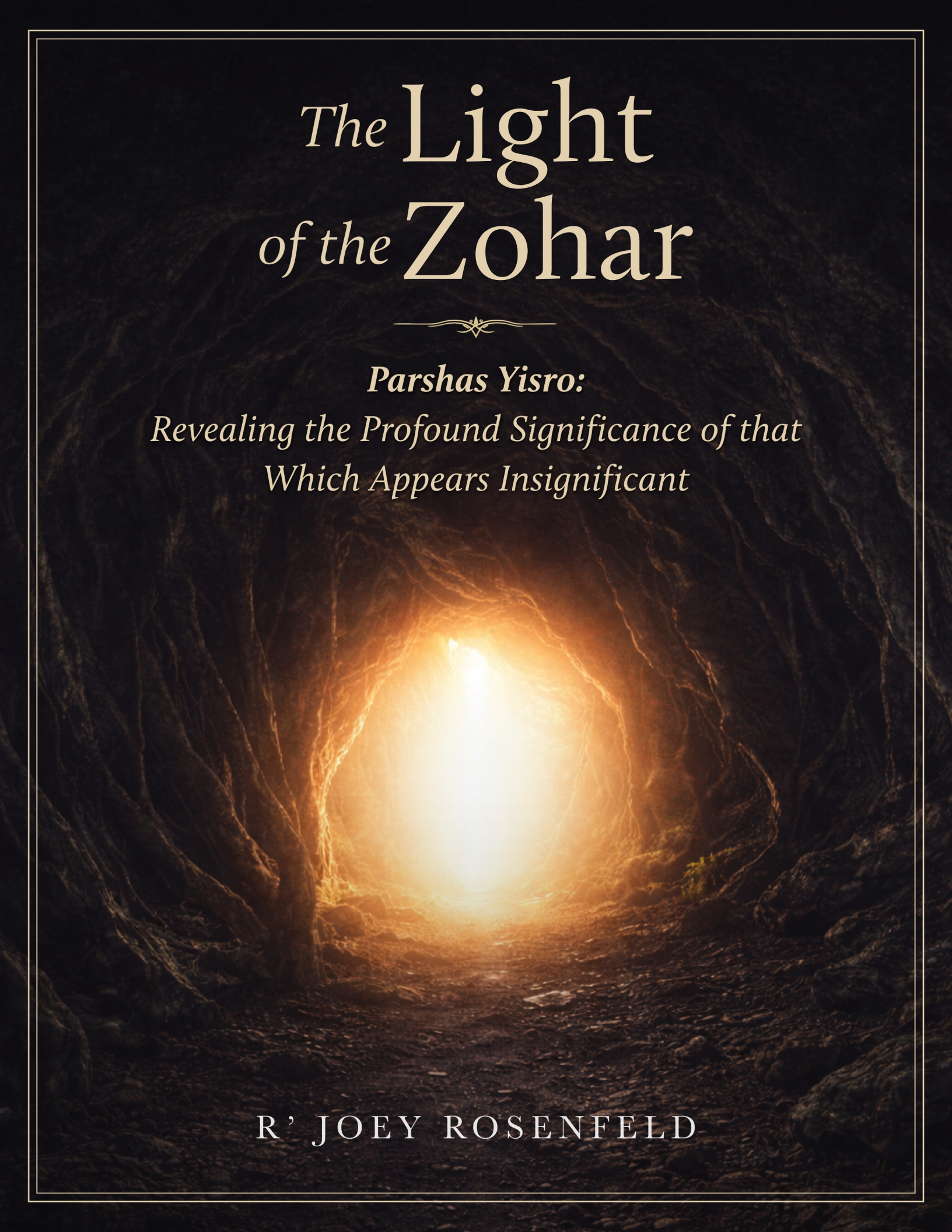


The background of the entire cover is a photograph of a dark, cavernous tunnel. The walls are rough and textured, and a bright, glowing light emanates from the far end of the tunnel, creating a strong sense of depth and hope. The light is a warm, golden-yellow color, contrasting sharply with the dark surroundings.

The Light *of the* Zohar



Parshas Yisro:

*Revealing the Profound Significance of that
Which Appears Insignificant*

R' JOEY ROSENFELD

— *The Light of the Zohar* —

Parshas Yisro:
**Revealing the Profound Significance of
that Which Appears Insignificant**



R' JOEY ROSENFELD

וַיִּשְׁמַע יִתְרוֹ וְגו', וְכִי יִתְרוֹ שָׁמַע, וְכָל עַלְמָא לֹא שָׁמְעוּ, וְהָא בְּתִיב, (שמות ט"ו:י"ד) שָׁמְעוּ עַמִּים יַרְגִּזוּן. אֵלָּא, כָּל עַלְמָא שָׁמְעוּ, וְלֹא אֶתְבָּרוּ, וְאִיהוּ שָׁמַע וְאֶתְבָּר, וְאֶתְכַפִּיָּא מִקְמִיהָ דְקוּדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא, וְאֶתְקָרַב לְדַחֲלִיתָהּ.

רַבִּי אָבָא אָמַר, בְּכַמְהָ אֶתְר תַּגִּינוּ, דְקוּדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא, כָּל מָה דְעֵבֵד לְעִילָא וְתַתָּא כֹּלָא אִיהוּ קוֹשׁוּט, וְעוֹבְדָא דְקוֹשׁוּט. וְלִית לֵהּ מְלָה בְּעַלְמָא דְבַעֲי בַר נֶשׁ לְדַחֲיָא לִיה מַנִּיה, וְלֹאֲנַהֲגָא בֵּיה קוֹלָנָא, דְהָא בְּלָחוּ עוֹבְדָא דְקוֹשׁוּט אִינוּן, וְכֹלָא אֶצְטְרִיךְ בְּעַלְמָא.

דְּהָא זִמְנָא תַּדָּא, הָוָה ר' אֶלְעָזָר אָזִיל בְּאַרְחָא, וְהָוָה אָזִיל עֲמִיה ר' חֲזַקְנָה, תַּמּוּ תַּד חוּנָּא, קָם ר' חֲזַקְנָה לְמַקְטִילָהּ. אָמַר לִיה ר' אֶלְעָזָר, שְׂבִיק לִיה לֹא תַקְטִילֶנָּה. אָמַר לִיה, וְהָא מְלָה בִּישָׁא אִיהוּ, דְקָטִיל בְּנֵי גִנְשָׁא. אָמַר לִיה לְר' חֲזַקְנָה, וְהָא בְּתִיב (קהלת י"א) אִם יִשׁוּף תִּנָּחֹשׁ בְּלֹא לְחֹשׁ. לֹא גִשִּׁיף חוּנָּא לְבַר נֶשׁ, עַד דְלַחֲשִׁין לִיה מְלַעֲיָלָא, וְאֶמְרִי לִיה זִיל קָטִיל לִיה לְפִלְגִיָּא.

וְלִזְמָנִין כַּמָּה דְעֵבֵיד תַּאי, תְּכִי גַמִּי שְׂזִיב לְבַר נֶשׁ, מְמַלִּין אֶתְרֵינוּ, וְעַל יְדוֹי אֶרְחִישׁ קוּדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא גִיטָא לְבְנֵי גִנְשָׁא, וְכֹלָא בִידָא דְקוּדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא תַלְיָא, וְכֹלָא אִיהוּ עוֹבְדֵי יְדוֹי, וְאֶצְטְרִיךְ עַלְמָא לְהוּ, וְאִי לֹא דְאִיצְטְרִיךְ לִוְן עַלְמָא, לֹא עֵבֵד לִוְן קוּדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא. וְעַל דָּא לֹא בַעֲי בַר נֶשׁ לֹאֲנַהֲגָא בְּהוּ קוֹלָנָא בְּמַלִּי דְעַלְמָא. בְּמַלּוֹי וּבְעוֹבְדֵי דְקוּדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא עַל אַחַת כַּמָּה וְכַמָּה.

פֶּתַח וְאָמַר, (בראשית א':ל"א) וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וְהִנֵּה טוֹב מְאֹד. וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים: דָּא אֱלֹהִים תַּיִם. וַיֵּרָא: דְאֶסְתַּכַּל לֹאֲנַהֲרָא לִוְן, וְלֹאֲשַׁנְגָּתָא לִוְן. אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה כֹּלָא בְּכָלְלָא תַּדָּא, עִילָא וְתַתָּא. וְהִנֵּה טוֹב: דָּא סְטָרָא דִּמְיָנָא. מְאֹד: דָּא סְטָרָא דְשִׁמְעָלָא, וְהָא אוּקְמוּהָ, טוֹב: דָּא מְלֶאכֶּה תַּיִם מְאֹד: דָּא מְלֶאכֶּה הַמְּנוּת. וְכֹלָא רַזָּא תַּדָּא. רַזָּא הוּא, לֹאֲיָנוּן דְמַסְתַּכְלִי בְּרַזָּא דְחַכְמָתָא.

“And Yitro heard...”

Now did Yitro hear, while the whole world did not hear? But doesn't the verse say, “The nations heard and trembled”?

Rather, the whole world heard—but they were not broken. He heard and he was broken. He humbled himself before the Holy One, blessed be He, and drew close in awe of Him.

Rabbi Abba said: We have learned in many places that everything the Holy One, blessed be He, does—above and below—is all truth, and all is an act of truth. There is nothing in the world that a person should push away or treat with contempt, for all of them are acts of truth, and everything is necessary in the world.

For once Rabbi Elazar was walking on the road, and Rabbi Hizkiyah was with him. They saw a snake. Rabbi Hizkiyah rose to kill it. Rabbi Elazar said to him, “Leave it. Do not kill it.”

He said to him, “But it is an evil thing—it kills people.”

Rabbi Elazar said to Rabbi Hizkiyah: But it is written, “If the snake bites without enchantment.” A snake does not bite a person unless it is whispered to from Above and told: Go and kill so-and-so.

And sometimes, just as it brings harm, so too it saves a person from other things. And through it the Holy One, blessed be He, performs miracles for human beings. Everything depends on the hand of the Holy One, blessed be He. All of it is the work of His hands, and the world needs them. And if the world did not need them, the Holy One, blessed be He, would not have created them. Therefore a person should not conduct himself with contempt toward matters of the world—how much more so with the words and deeds of the Holy One, blessed be He.

Moshe and Rashbi as a Single Lens

B'ezras Hashem, we are continuing with our weekly series of shiurim on the Zohar Hakadosh: illuminating the Torah of Moshe Rabbeinu through the lens of Rebbe Shimon bar Yochai, and illuminating the lens of Rebbe Shimon bar Yochai through the Torah of Moshe Rabbeinu. As we've said in nearly every shiur, the unification between Moshe and Rashbi is the unification between *Chochma* and *Binah*, between the *klal* and the *prat*, light and darkness, utter revelation and the experience of concealment. The light of Moshe represents *giluy*; the vessels of Rebbe Shimon represent *he'elam*.

The unity between the two is the secret of the Zohar itself: Moshe and Rashbi as one movement, one system of perception. It's the ability to hold the whole without losing the part, and to hold the part without severing it from the whole. Not a compromise between opposites, but a revelation that opposites are capable of becoming one without flattening into sameness.

Moshe, Rashbi and the Question of "Eimasai Ka'asi Mar"

The Zohar's unity between Moshe and Rashbi is Roshei Teivos Ma"r, the secret of *Eimasai ka'asi Mar*—when will Moshiach arrive? When there is a unification between the Torah of Moshe and the Torah of Rashbi. Meaning: to take the light of Moshe, the wholeness of *Chochma*, and to draw it down into the concealment of Rebbe Shimon's vessels, so that it can survive and sustain itself there, and not only that but the descent allows the light to magnified in a way that could not be revealed any other way.

This is the deepest pattern of creation: *klal* and *prat*, a holistic principle and a particularized principle. The Jewish people represent the whole, associated with *Chochma*. While Moshe Rabbeinu represents *Chochma*. The nations represent separation, division, multiplicity. At first glance, our assumption would be that unity reveals itself only where unity already exists in a revealed way, and that the territory of disunity would not be conducive to the revelation of light.

The Zohar's Chiddush: Unity Revealed in Its Opposite

But the Zohar Hakadosh teaches us a profound principle here regarding the revelation of Hashem's unity and it gives a specific teaching that comes out in Parshas Yisro: the light of unity expresses itself most intensely when it reveals itself in its opposite. When Yisro- - the outside, the *Kohen Midyan*, the symbol of division and multiplicity- - draws close, the *kavod* of Hakadosh Baruch Hu is revealed in a new way. Because Hashem's glory revealed through Moshe and Klal Yisrael in the light of clarity is not such a novelty. That's the natural setting of revelation.

The novelty and *chiddush novelty* is when the light descends into a vessel that appears to stand against it, and it still illuminates. Then we see a light that is not only strong enough to shine, but strong enough to shine where it should not be able to shine. That is a new appreciation of light: not simply illumination, but victorious illumination over its opposite.

Yisro as the Vessel That Forces the Light to Intensify

This is the story of Yisro. Yisro is the "outside vessel" that looks like opposition to Moshe's light. But when the light enters that vessel, the vessel itself forces the light to reveal itself with more intensity. And then we understand: the light is so lofty that it contains the vessel within itself as well. The "outside" is not truly outside, rather - it is a hidden corridor through which the inside is revealed more deeply.

This is what Moshe Rabbeinu understood when he ran to Midyan out of Mitzrayim. Moshe was born in Pharoah's Pharaoh's house; he knew the *klippa* of Pharoah Pharaoh from within. And yet he also knew that the goal of unity is not to ignore disunity, but to drag and *schlep* disunity into the light of unity, so that disunity itself reveals unity with new intensity, - revealing that disunity was always, at its root, a deeper revelation of unity.

Midyan, Tzipporah, and the Redemption of Separation

Moshe had to flee Pharaoh, but where did he run? He ran to Midyan. And he married the daughter of Yisro -Tzipporah- the secret of *Isha Kushis lakach*, the secret of Malchus which appears as: division, separation, and multiplicity in its furthest expression. It is specifically there that Moshe wanted to reinclude separation back into unity, in the secret of a deep *chibbur* to Leah's neshamah, in that *Alma d'Iskasya* where concealment is drawn back into oneness.

Yisro sees that Moshe has expanded the boundaries of holiness, and as such he begins to learn the message: that light needs to be revealed specifically through vessels that seemed outside the light. And as Yisro draws close, concealment and "outsideness" are shown to be the incubator where unity is revealed with new intensity. This is the secret of Yisro coming to Matan Torah after hearing about *Yetzias Mitzrayim*: not a Jew affirming what he was raised on, but the outsider forced into acknowledgment, and therefore the

acknowledgment becomes a deeper illumination.

Yeser: The Spiritual Threat of "Extra"

Yisro also represents what appears to be extra—*yeser*, surplus, exceeding what is necessary. And in spirituality this is almost impossible to tolerate. There is no "extra" in reality. There are no *mutaros* in existence. Everything is of utmost significance; everything is filled with precise significance. Everything Hakadosh Baruch Hu made has a purpose; nothing is purposeless.

And that means: anything that can be conceived as purposeless becomes a real question posed against infinite unity. For infinite unity is either all significance or no significance. If something is significant on the most general level, then it must be significant even on the lowest level. There is nothing extra in *metzius*. Each thing screams *tachlis* and purpose. Each thing demands that we uncover the specific purpose for which it exists—*tachlis* and *tachlis* to a *tachlis*.

Adding a Parsha in the Torah: Adding From Within the Notion of Surplus

The very name Yisro awakens the question: how could there possibly be something in addition to the infinite light of Hashem, for everything is contained thereby. How can it be that there appears something “extra” from the infinite light of Hashem? Ultimately this is the secret of *mosif parsha ahas*: Yisro introduces the possibility of “addition”, adding onto a framework that is already complete. For when Yisro joins the circle of emunah, he reveals that it’s specifically from within the notion of extra itself that the greatest revelation emerges.

Because when I walk around in this world and I see surplus—experiences that feel meaningless, people who do things that feel random, moments that seem devoid of a unifying kernel—I fall into multiplicity. I fall into difference and separation and hopelessness. For if it’s not all connected to one source, then everything is scattered. Yisro comes to show that the “extra” is actually contained within hyper-significance of the essence. It’s another way that

essentiality reveals itself: the essential revealed specifically through what looked inessential.

Ikkar VeTafel Without Denying the Tafel

This is the secret of *Ikkar veTafel*. There is an Ikkar, an essential point, and there is *tafel*, a secondary expression. But it is not, *chas v’shalom*, to deny the hyper-significance of the *tafel*. It is to reveal that hyper-significance can express itself even through what appears inessential—thereby revealing that all that appears inessential is also saturated with meaning.

This is exactly what the Mitteler Rebbe teaches in Parshas Vayechi about Yosef HaTzadik’s ability to interpret dreams. Dreams are *mutaros hasechel*—the extra of the mind, and even the extra of the extra. They look like noise. But the job of the tzaddik like Moshe, is to increase, to show that even the *mutaros* are hyper-essential, even when they appear inessential.

Moshe and the Atzmos Yosef

This is why Moshe Rabbeinu runs to pick up the *atzmos* of Yosef. The *atzmos* of Yosef could have seemed inessential at that moment, a detail, a burden, something secondary compared to the cosmic drama of redemption. But Moshe knows the *daas* of the tzaddik: to run back to what looks inessential and drag it into the framework where everything shines.

The reinclusion of insignificance within the circle of signification does not mean everything is an *Ikkar*. It just means that the *tafel* is no longer seen as the opposite of *Ikkar*. *Tafel* is also an aspect of *Ikkar* to the degree that it reveals itself through the form of inessentiality. And that is what Yisro is doing: taking what appeared extra, insignificant, surplus, meaningless, and bringing it into the circle of faith, revealing it as included within the directionality of a life with Hashem.

The Tafel as the Place Where the Ikkar Expands Beyond Itself

This is the secret of Yisro coming close to *Har Sinai* and joining the circle of

Klal Yisrael. The *tafel*—the deviation, the incidental, the outside—does not exist to negate the *ikkar*. It exists to deepen the *ikkar* by revealing that the *ikkar* is not fragile. The essential *ikkar* can include what lies beyond it within itself. The *ikkar* can illuminate what seems outside it. And therefore the *tafel* itself becomes a new teacher of unity.

With this we can now enter the words of the Zohar Hakadosh, encountering the secret of unity revealed through what appears incidental, what appears outside. The Zohar we will be examining is found on *Daf Samech Ches Amud Beis*, the gematria of *Chaim*, because the depth of *Chaim* is not only *Chaim* within the *klal*, but *Chayei DeChaim*: the extension of life revealed when the *klal* extends beyond its limit into the territory of surplus.

A Shiur That Begins With Listening

The particular text we will be studying opens a practical path for how to function a little bit better in this world. The Zohar begins with the most basic phrase—*Vayishma Yisro*, “Yisro heard.” And immediately the Zohar presses the

question: did Yisro hear something that the rest of the world did not hear? *Ve'chi Yisro shama ve'chol alma lo sham'u?* Was he the only one who received news, the only one who perceived the sound?

Rav Leibele Eiger in *Toras Emes*—in the same spirit as the *Sfas Emes* regarding Avraham Avinu in Parshas Lech Lecha—teaches that the “voice” was not a private message. In truth the voice came out to everyone. The *chiddush* of Avraham, and the *chiddush* of Yisro, is not that they possessed information unavailable to others; it is that they listened. *Vayishma* means they bent their ears. They attuned themselves to a call that was already reverberating through the fabric of existence, a call that was also rising from within their heart, and they allowed themselves to be moved by it.

The Movement That Makes a Person Responsible

It's specifically the ability to be vulnerable to the point of being moved that enables response. Responsibility begins only where there is hearing. The perpetual call that comes forth from *Har*

Chorev—the *hirhurei teshuvah*, the summons to return that each person experiences in day-to-day life—does not become “mine” until I actively stop and listen.

Without listening, there is no response; without hearing, there is no responsibility. The Zohar's question is not academic. It's a description of how a person lives: either I register the call as background noise that has no impact, or I allow it to become a directive that reorganizes my inner world.

The World Heard, But It Didn't Break Open

And yet the Zohar itself points out that the nations did hear something. *Shamu amim yirgazu*—they heard and they trembled, they got upset, frightened, stirred. They ran to Bilaam asking whether another flood was happening, as Rashi describes. So clearly they heard. So the question returns sharper: what was unique about Yisro's hearing that made it as if he were the only one that truly heard?

The Zohar answers with a sentence that diagnoses a whole human condition: *Ela*

kol alma shamu ve'lo isbaru—the whole world heard, but they weren't moved. They didn't break open. They didn't contemplate what was being encountered. The sound waves of experience struck them and passed through them, and they could not free themselves from their stupor. They might have felt something for a moment, and then returned to their own ways—"v'it-tebar v'hafcha...ve'iskareiv ledachaltai"—but the movement did not become a transformation.

Beyond the "Big Moments"

If we assume the bond to Hashem is built only on massive events—*Kriyas Yam Suf, Milchemes Amalek, Matan Torah*—then we will come close in the big moments and drift away into the distance a moment afterwards. Because you have created an artificial division: essential moments and inessential lags. And a person living that way cannot maintain a steadfast connection, because life is not only loud revelation. There must be inner quietude that rests within silence as well.

So what did Yisro hear? He heard the big thing—and then he heard something deeper: that Hashem is found not only in the noise, but also in the "inessential," in the places that look far from revelation. Those too are revelatory of essence, even if their external casing is secondary. That is what creates independent connection: not a bond dependent on loud noise, but a bond that survives the quiet.

"Everything That Exists Is True"

Then Rebbe Abba enters and states a principle that reorients the entire world: *Kudsha brich hu kol ma de'avid le'eila vetata kula ihu kshot*—everything that takes place above and below is rooted in truth. The deepest truth is that it took place. There is no truth other than reality as it is, because reality is the arena of Hashem's light. If it exists, it participates in the unfolding form of Hashem's truest truth.

From this comes the radical consequence: *Ve'lais lach mila be'alma...de'ha kula uvda de'kshot inun*—there is nothing in the world a person can truly reject as "outside," as

surplus, as useless. If it exists, it is not extra. If it exists, it is necessary. *Ve-kula itztarach be-alma*—the world needs all of it. And therefore there is nothing that should be treated with hatred as though it is wholly irredeemable, because there is always an innermost point of emes concealed within it.

Everything Exists Only Through Continuous Divine Speech

When we say everything is true, we mean everything is hyper-significant. Hashem created and upholds the world. Every ounce of existence is sustained by the utterance of God at each moment, to the degree that existence without that animating vitality cannot even be conceived for even the slightest duration. If it exists, it is saturated by the light of Hashem; therefore it is true.

Uncovering the Spark of Truth Hidden Within all Things

This is the secret of *tikach emes mikol adam*, one can learn truth from every person, because a spark of truth is present even where you least expect it. Once existence itself is understood as

emerging from within truth itself, then pure negation of anything becomes a spiritual mistake: the mistake is not seeing the innermost point, not believing there is a point.

This affirmation is already a profound act of calmness. The mind relaxes when it no longer needs to panic that it has fallen into “meaningless territory.” The Zohar is teaching us that there is no such territory. There are no meaningless places, there are only places where the *nekudah* of Emes is hidden and must be uncovered.

The Birthplace of Anxiety: Imagining “Surplus”

Already here the Zohar gives a penetrating insight into the birthplace of so much anxiety. Anxiety thrives on the suspicion that something is meaningless, that there are corners of life devoid of an inner point, that there are circumstances in which no kernel of significance can be found.

The assumption that there is an “innermost point,” and then there are “peripheries” empty of that point, creates the fantasy of surplus, a

gnawing sense that things don't matter, things that are devalued because they are supposedly outside the center. Torah and *halacha* teach the opposite: if it exists, it contains a *nekudah* of *metzius*, a point of existence, and that *nekudah* is the very thing that makes it essential.

Understanding Ikkar and Tafel Without Making Life Hollow

Everything can be split into two categories, there is *ikkar* and there is *tafel*. There are gradients of essential and secondary. The world tends to focus primarily on the essential while denying the value of the incidental, but the revelation that everything has value means that even the encounter with “*tafel*” is not a wasteland—it is an arena in which meaning can be uncovered in a singularly unique way.

Even grappling with meaninglessness becomes meaningful, because that grappling is itself the opening through which the spark of light is found, meaningfulness concealed under the garment of meaninglessness. This is hyper-essentiality: the ability to find

meaning even in the loss of meaning itself.

Finding Hashem in Everything: Bechol Derachecha Da'eihu

If I imagine only one sturdy set point of meaning, then everything that is not the point will feel empty and meaningless. But if I understand that there is a light of significance that saturates all things, then every pathway becomes a place where I can encounter the *ikkar*. This is the secret of *yesod*, the point of connection to the *nekudah pnimi*, the covenantal relationship that links all things: the attentional focus that becomes *dveikus*, *daas*, and an inner connection.

With *daas* I uncover the innermost point of light inherent in the thing, and then I awaken the possibility of *bechol derachecha da'eihu*—I can find Hashem wherever I find myself. This includes the places I previously stamped as meaningless, because there is always a kernel of significance waiting to be revealed.

The Zohar's Story: The Snake on the Road

The Zohar now brings a story to make this principle concrete: *Deha zimna chada...* Once upon a time Rebbe Elazar, the son of Rebbe Shimon, was walking on a path with Rav Chizkiya. Along the road they saw a snake—*chad chivya*. Rav Chizkiya moved to kill it. Rebbe Elazar stopped him: *shivik lei, lo katlinan lei*—leave it; don't kill it.

Rav Chizkiya objects with the obvious moral clarity: isn't it a "bad thing," a creature that kills human beings? But Rebbe Elazar answers from the pasuk: *im yishach hanachash belo lachash*—a snake does not bite "for no reason." It bites when something has called it, when the conditions have summoned it. There is a causality, a placement, an orchestration.

When the Snake Protects

Beyond refusing to let the snake be killed, Rebbe Elazar adds an even more destabilizing point: sometimes the snake also protects, sometimes it is the instrument that attacks something else that needs to be attacked. Its value is

not inherent in our immediate disgust; its value is contingent upon its role in the moment. And then the Zohar returns to the principle: *v'khula uvdei yadei... v'itztarech alma l'hu*—all of this is the handiwork of Hashem, and the world needs all of it. If it were not needed, Hashem would not have created it.

Not Looking at the World With Eyes of Insignificance

From here the Zohar derives a directive: a person should not relate to the world with eyes of insignificance. Do not train your gaze to dismiss. Do not form a life-habit of seeing "extras," because *b'milei v'uvdei d'Kudsha Brich Hu al achas kama v'kama*—all the more so regarding the works of Hashem.

Even that which appears destructive is not purposeless. The snake is not a random interruption; it is a message in the language of hashgacha. If something crosses the threshold of my mind and my experience, and Hashem placed me here, then there is something significant within it for me.

The Baal Shem Tov's Mirror

The Baal Shem Tov Hakadosh teaches the mirror principle: when a person sees something in another person, it is a reflection of something within themselves. The Lubavitcher Rebbe asks: what's the source for such a radical claim? Why must I assume that "external" matters should bear upon my essence? Why burden myself with that?

And the Rebbe's answer is not psychological, rather it is theological: *hashgacha pratis*. Because we believe that everything we encounter is from Hashem, we believe it is not surplus or meaningless. Therefore I must choose to experience reality as if it is speaking to me. All of the things that feel insignificant, dreams, imagination, waste, all of it is ultimately going to be revealed to have been holding the deepest light of Hashem's hyperessential expression.

The Nachash Before the Descent

Prior to the *cheit* of Adam HaRishon, the *nachash* was meant to handle what appears "wasteful," to take out the waste and find diamonds. The human being

was meant to live in a world of Torah, a world of hypersignificance, *Torah lishmah*, the mind's connection to the *aleph-beis* of existence, the twenty-two letters composing reality.

The *nachash* would deal with the processes that appear devoid of spiritual value: dreams, body, eating, waste. Then the *cheit* occurs, which the language of Chazal the secret of "*milsa agav orcha kamashma lan*": the momentary deviation away from meaning into meaninglessness, which comes to reveal that even that which appears meaningless is in truth filled with an immeasurable light.

Yeridah as the Place of Revelation

It is precisely through the detour into what appears meaningless that we learn the deeper secret: in the meanderings of human life, we can also uncover the infinite unity of Hashem. Through *yeridah* we learn *aliyah*. The *nachash* becomes an internalized concept, encountered within ourselves, and the whole struggle becomes whether we will declare parts of life "outside" of Hashem, or will we insist

that Hashem is present even there, specifically there.

And this is why Rav Chizkiya and Rebbe Elazar encountering the snake is not just a side story to the main content of the Zohar. It is the *sugya* itself: the clarification of negativity, *gevuros*, of what seems destructive, and the radical insistence that if it exists then it contains a message and a *nekudah* of truth waiting to be revealed.

Severity, Dinim and the Lie of "Something Extra"

This is the secret of Moshe entering the house of Pharaoh, the place of the *dinim*, a taste of the mindset of *kol hamosif goreia*. This is the dark inversion of how we relate to that which appears insignificant: the *shoresh* of *din* is to imply that there is something extra and therefore outside of the realm of Hashem's *hashgacha*. The language of "yud-aleph instead of yud", as if to say: there is surplus, extra things that bear no significance as if to imply that there is a place where Hashem is not.

Once we allow our minds to entertain the notion that meaninglessness exists,

then everything can become meaningless very quickly. Against this treacherous path of thinking, the Zohar insists: everything, even what looks like it is completely "without meaning", is in truth saturated with meaning merely because it exists. Existence itself is evidence of meaningful presence.

Yisro as Yeser

This is why this topic belongs in Parshas Yisro. Yisro is *yeser*- what appears to be added on, outside, surplus and as such insignificant. Not within the body of *Klal Yisrael*, excluded from the circle of significance. Yisro was the expert in foreign wisdoms, foreign religions, foreign techniques, the world of *makifim*, supplemental lights, things that at first glance appear to be "extras."

And suddenly it is specifically Yisro who becomes part of *kedushah*, an addition that gets reabsorbed back into the original unity. More than that: he merits a *parsha* in the Torah. The Torah itself expands to include the one who seemed to stand beyond its boundaries.

The Secret of the Geirim

Yisro becomes the emblem of the capacity to transform what appears insignificant into significance. The secret of *geirim* included within the Torah itself. The secret of Yisro, is also the secret of Rus, and as such the letters of their names reflect one another. Not merely finding value in the “outside,” but allowing it to enter the essence of the inside.

This is the revelation: what we once called surplus can now become Torah. What we once called peripheral can become the very location of *hosafah*, an addition that reveals the saturation of *kedushah* rather than the absence of it.

Hosafa: The Secret of Adding From Within Saturation

This is the deepest form of addition: an addition not based on deficiency, but on saturation. The logic of supplement usually assumes something missing; *hosafa* in holiness reveals the opposite, that the reality is so filled with meaning that it can reveal meaning even in what looked like the supplement and extra.

This is the *daas* of Moshe: *yamim al yemei melech tosif*—the tzaddik adds one more day. Moshe says we could receive the Torah on the fifth of Sivan, but *ani rotzeh lehiyot mosif yom echad mida’ati* I want to add one more day, to reveal that what seems “extra” is also meaningful and filled with light.

Yisro, Kayin, and Fixing the Sense of Insignificance

Yisro is the rectification of Kayin, because Kayin sees *hevel* as extra. If something is insignificant, it can be destroyed. Murder is the declaration: “this should not be here.” Yisro reveals the opposite: there is nothing extra in this world; therefore nothing is fundamentally “meant to be gotten rid of” in the simplistic way the ego imagines. The entire struggle in our minds is against the assumption that anything could exist outside of Hashem’s light, as the *passuk* expresses “*ein od milvado*”.

Amalek and the Meaning of Erasure

Even “amalek”, as Rav Tzaddok explains, cannot exist for a moment devoid of Hashem’s light. The erasure of

“amalek” is ultimately the recognition that in truth there is no such reality as “amalek” as an independent surplus outside of Hashem. They represent “a nonexistent existence” in the language of R’ Tzadok, a real-lie that appears to exist in spite of the nonexistence at its core. When we come to realize that it doesn't truly exist, the name of “amalek” is erased, and divine unity is everywhere revealed.

The battle against “amlaek” is against the idea of there being something devoid of Hashem’s light itself. The destruction of “amalek” comes about when we realize that there can be no actual existence devoid of Hashem’s infinite light. The deeper victory is to see: everything is hyper-essential, a vessel that holds the light of the *nekudah hapnimi*, the innermost point at the heart of all things.

Yosef and Yehuda

This is ultimately the spiritual dispute between Yosef and Yehuda. Yosef says: there is a point of significance in everything, the *nekudah* of *yesod*. There is significance and insignificance, and the real spiritual work is to be *mekushar*

to the innerpoint, not to be trapped in the place of insignificance, where *pgam habris*, “missing the point,” and wastefulness emerges, the essence of transgression which is missing the bullseye of experience.

Yehuda answers: there is no singular point of significance, because everything is significant. Wherever I find myself is where the *ratzon Hashem* has brought me, and my job is uncover the light of Hashem’s presence through teshuvah right there, specifically there, in order to reveal the significance of deviations, meanderings, the snake on the road, the *chivya* on the path.

From Lost Time to Retroactive Meaning

This is the *avodah* of the week emerging from the power of Yisro. The wondrous capacity of adding kedushah to what originally appeared to be devoid of kedushah, the secret fact that a person can transform the “meaningless” into the secret of meaningfulness. When we discover this, then a person can transform mistakes, deviations, lost time, lost possibility- all of the

experiences that weigh down the heart with sadness and regret- by retroactively infusing them with meaning. Not by denying that they were painful or distorted, but by recognizing that they brought me to where I am right now. Everything is filled with purpose and meaning.

Chivya Al Haderech and the Light of Mashiach

The Zohar's story of the *chivya* on the *derech*, the snake encountered in the place of wandering, becomes the place where the most potent light is found. The *Nachash* is the gematria of

Mashiach, and the revelation comes about when a person internalizes that there is absolutely nothing extra or insignificant, everything is hyper-significant, and Hashem is present in each and every *nekudah* of existence.

That is when the lights of Mashiach ben Yosef and Mashiach ben David begin to appear, not as fantasy, but as the lived recognition that reality itself, even the places we called meaningless, is saturated with the presence of Hashem. *And b'ezras Hashem, through this clarity, to be zocheh to geulah shleimah.*