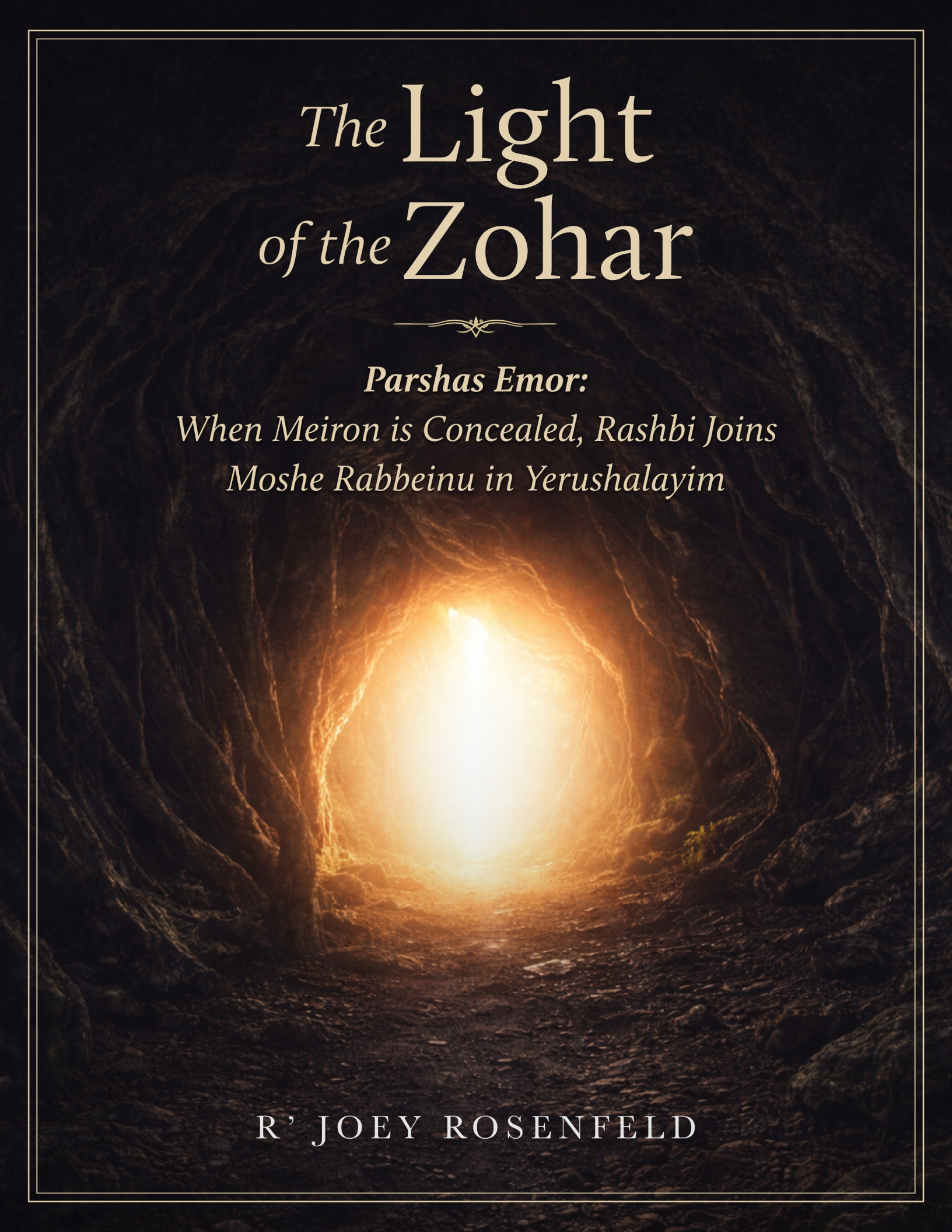




The Light *of the* Zohar



Parshas Emor:

*When Meiron is Concealed, Rashbi Joins
Moshe Rabbeinu in Yerushalayim*

R' JOEY ROSENFELD

— *The Light of the Zohar* —

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Entering the Light: Moshe Through Rashbi, Rashbi Through Moshe

B'Ezras Hashem, we return once again to our attempt at entering into the light of the Zohar HaKadosh, not as observers but as those attempting to live within its illumination. The intention is not only to understand the teachings of Rebbe Shimon bar Yochai, but to illuminate them through the Torah of Moshe Rabbeinu, the faithful shepherd (רעיא מדימנא). At the very same time, we attempt the opposite movement as well, to illuminate the Torah of Moshe Rabbeinu through the light of Rebbe Shimon, the holy lamp (בוצינא דנהורא). This double movement is essential, because each one alone remains incomplete. Moshe represents a level of Torah that is rooted in simplicity, while Rebbe Shimon represents a level that unfolds specifically within complexity. Without Rebbe Shimon, the Torah of Moshe remains too transcendent to be fully lived. Without Moshe, the Torah of Rebbe Shimon risks losing its anchoring in absolute unity. Therefore, the work is to hold both simultaneously. To draw Moshe downward and to lift Rebbe

Shimon upward. And in that meeting, a deeper revelation begins to form.

The Burial That Cannot Be Known: Moshe's Absolute Hiddenness

The Torah tells us something astonishing about Moshe Rabbeinu, that “no man knows his burial place” (לא ידע איש את קבורתו). This is not simply a historical detail, but a profound spiritual principle. Moshe is buried in a place that is fundamentally unknowable, inaccessible not only physically but conceptually. His burial place represents a level of spiritual reality that cannot be grasped, cannot be pointed to, cannot be contained within knowledge. Even the greatest understanding cannot reach it. This hiddenness is not a deficiency, rather it is the highest expression of Moshe's essence. Because Moshe is rooted in higher knowledge (דעת עליון) which itself emerges from a place beyond knowledge, his burial reflects that origin. A place that precedes the beginning of knowing. A place that cannot be reduced to comprehension, and therefore, Moshe remains eternally present precisely through being hidden.

The Place That Is Known: Rebbe Shimon in Meron

In contrast, Rebbe Shimon bar Yochai is buried in Meron (מירון), a place that is fully known, fully identified, and physically accessible. People travel, touch, pray, and gather around his burial place, especially on Lag BaOmer. It appears, at first glance, that Rebbe Shimon represents revelation, accessibility, and presence. Unlike Moshe, whose burial is hidden, Rebbe Shimon's burial is openly known. Yet this accessibility itself contains a deeper concealment. Because what is accessed externally does not yet mean it is grasped internally. One can arrive physically and remain distant existentially. One can touch the place and still not touch its inner dimension. And therefore, the known place begins to reveal itself as not fully known at all. The accessibility becomes a form of concealment. And the revelation begins to turn back into mystery.

"Who is it that Comes with Joy": The Secret Hidden Within Meron

Rebbe Nachman reveals that the word Meron (מירון) can be read as "who is it that brings joyous greatness?" (מי רון). This reading transforms Meron from a geographical location into an existential question. The place that appears most known becomes the place that asks the deepest question. "Who is it?" is not a question that can be answered. It is a question that opens. It reveals that the source of revelation is itself concealed. That even when something is present, its origin remains hidden. Meron becomes the intersection of knowing and not knowing. A place where revelation points back to mystery. Where presence awakens questioning, and where every answer opens into a deeper lack of answer. This is not confusion, but rather it is depth. It is the beginning of entering into the path of Rebbe Shimon.

When the Known Meets the Unknown

At this point, something extraordinary begins to happen. The known burial place of Rebbe Shimon becomes infused with the unknowability of Moshe Rabbeinu. And the unknowable burial place of Moshe begins to find expression through the accessibility of Rebbe Shimon. Each one begins to complete the other. The hidden finds a place of expression. The revealed finds a place of depth. The known becomes less certain, and the unknown becomes more present. And in that merging, a new type of knowledge begins to emerge. A *daas* that includes not knowing within it. A knowing that does not erase mystery. This is the beginning of true interiority, and it is here that the work truly begins.

The Awakening of Longing: When the Tzaddik Is Hidden

When the known burial place of Rebbe Shimon becomes infused with the unknowability of Moshe Rabbeinu, something begins to awaken that did not exist before, a deep movement of longing and yearning. This longing is not simply emotional desire, but an

existential pull toward something that cannot yet be reached. The hiddenness of Moshe does not remain static; it generates motion. And the accessibility of Rebbe Shimon does not satisfy; it intensifies that motion. The result is that both become charged with yearning. The known is no longer enough, and the unknown is no longer distant, it becomes present as lack. This lack is not emptiness in the negative sense, but a vessel that pulls the soul forward. The burial itself becomes a place of awakening rather than closure. The tzaddik is not gone, he is concealed in a way that creates relationship. And that relationship is built on longing.

The Secret of Kivrei Tzaddikim: A Hiddenness That Pulls Upward

The kever of a tzaddik is not a place of ending, but a place of concealment that draws the world upward. Both Moshe Rabbeinu and Rebbe Shimon bar Yochai are in a state of hiddenness, yet their hiddenness functions differently. Moshe's concealment is absolute, unknown, unreachable, beyond grasp. Rebbe Shimon's concealment is partial, known, visited, yet still not understood.

When these two forms of concealment meet, they generate a dynamic tension. The known grave of Rebbe Shimon begins to reach upward toward the unknowable grave of Moshe. The hidden *kever* of Moshe begins to descend into the experiential accessibility of Rebbe Shimon. Each one becomes incomplete without the other. Each one begins to move, and that movement is not toward itself, it is toward Yerushalayim, the place where concealment and revelation meet fully. The *kevarim* begin to yearn. And through them, we begin to yearn.

Yerushalayim: The Place Where All Longing Yearns Towards

Yerushalayim is not merely a geographical location, but the place where longing finds its resolution. It is the place where hiddenness becomes revealed, where distance becomes closeness, where the unknown becomes known without losing its depth. The longing of Moshe Rabbeinu and Rebbe Shimon is directed toward this place. The burial places, though rooted in concealment, are oriented toward revelation. This is the secret of the return of the true Tzaddikim to

Yerushalayim. They are not static figures of the past, they are part of an ongoing movement toward redemption. The *kever* becomes a point of departure rather than arrival. It becomes the beginning of ascent. The longing itself becomes directional. It points toward a place where the tension between known and unknown can be held in unity, and that place is Yerushalayim.

The Holy of Holies: Drawing the Tzaddikim Back In

The ultimate destination of this movement is not even Yerushalayim as a city, but the Kodesh HaKodashim, the inner chamber where the deepest revelation occurs. This is the place where the tzaddikim are drawn back into their source. The concealment of burial gives way to the revelation of presence. The separation between above and below begins to dissolve. The tzaddik is no longer experienced as distant, but as integrated within the deepest point of reality. This is not a return in time, but a revelation in consciousness. The inner chamber represents the place of absolute unity. It is the place where Moshe and Rebbe

Shimon are no longer separate figures, but one light. The drawing back into the Kodesh HaKodashim is the drawing back into unity. And that unity becomes accessible through the work of yearning and longing.

From Between the Two Keruvim: The Place of Paradoxical Revelation

The Torah tells us that the Divine voice emerges from between the cherubs (מִבֵּין הַכְּרוּבִים). Chazal reveal that the initials of this phrase form the name Moshe (מֹשֶׁה), indicating that this space is the place of Moshe's revelation. But this is not a simple revelation, it is paradoxical. The *keruvim* themselves face each other, representing relationship, yet they also represent tension. The space between them is not empty, rather it is filled with potential. It is the place where opposites meet, where concealment and revelation coexist. Where distance and closeness are both present. From this place, the Torah emerges. Not as a clear statement, but as a living voice that must be interpreted, entered, and experienced. This is the true place of knowledge that includes not knowing. A knowledge that

does not eliminate mystery, but deepens it. And from that place, the voice of redemption begins to be heard.

Daas Shel Shalom: The Knowledge of Mashiach

This level of knowledge is called the knowledge of peace (דעת של שלום), and it is the knowledge that will be fully revealed through the arrival of Mashiach . It is not knowledge that resolves contradiction by eliminating one side, but knowledge that holds both sides together in paradoxical unity. It is the knowing within not knowing, and the not knowing within knowing. This is the secret of true knowledge. It is not informational, but rather it is relational. It emerges only when a person can hold tension without collapsing it. When one can live within paradox without forcing resolution. This is the *daas* that Moshe Rabbeinu embodies, and that Rebbe Shimon reveals. It is the *daas* that emerges from between the *keruvim*. And it is the knowledge that brings redemption. Because redemption is not the removal of complexity, it is the illumination of it, the full revelation that

everything is always already held within unity.

“Moshe, You Have Spoken Well”: The Emergence of the Inner Moshe

When Chazal say to one another “Moshe, you have spoken well” (משה שפיר) (קאמרט), it is not only referring to Moshe Rabbeinu historically. It is referring to the revelation of Moshe within each person. There is an inner point of Moshe within every individual, a point of clarity, truth, and inner knowing. When a person accesses that point, they begin to speak from a deeper place. A place that is not reactive, but rooted, one that holds complexity without being overwhelmed. This is the emergence of inner Moshe. And it is activated through the process we are describing. Through the longing and yearning that emerge from within the concealment itself. The mind of Moshe is activated through paradox, by way of entering the space between the *keruvim*. And when that point is activated, the voice of Torah begins to emerge from within the individual themselves. Not as something external, but as something lived.

“A Redeemer Shall Come to Zion”: The Birth of Redemption

From this place of integrated *daas*, the *passuk* becomes alive: “and a redeemer shall come to Zion” (ובא לציון גואל). Redemption is not something that arrives from outside, rather it is born from within this process itself. It emerges from the integration of known and unknown, through the holding of the paradox and from the awakening of longing. From the drawing of the *tzaddikim* back into the inner chamber. This is the beginning of redemption. Not as a sudden event, but as a gradual unfolding of consciousness, the revelation of unity within complexity and the emergence of light from within concealment. And this process continues, it deepens, it expands, and It draws us further inward, toward the place where everything is one.

The Kohen, Death, and the Vision Beyond Concealment

In Parshas Emor, the Torah introduces the work of the Kohanim, but this is not merely a set of halachic restrictions, it is a revelation of a different mode of perception. The Kohen is commanded not to become impure through contact with the dead (טומאת מת), and at first glance this appears to be a law of separation. But in truth, it is a law of vision. The Kohen is not avoiding death because death does not exist; he is avoiding it because he is called to see beyond it. His work is to live within a consciousness that penetrates the surface of reality. As the Rambam explains, this is not limited to a biological lineage, any person can enter this place of Kehuna in consciousness. It is the level of higher knowledge (דעת עליון), where the external form does not define the internal truth. The Kohen sees the world differently. He does not deny what is visible, but he refuses to stop there. And through that refusal, he remains connected to the deeper light.

The Crown of Kehuna: Living Above the Surface

This level is called the crown of priesthood (כתר כהונה), and it represents a consciousness that lives above fragmentation without escaping it. The Kohen walks within the world, but he is not defined by its concealments. He encounters the same realities, loss, limitation, death- but he interprets them differently. His knowledge is rooted in a place that precedes these categories. This is not denial; it is transcendence. The Kohen knows that what appears as an end is not truly an end. He lives with an awareness of continuity beneath interruption. This awareness allows him to remain undefiled, not because he is separate from the world, but because he sees through it. The crown here is not a position of dominance, but a position of clarity. It sits above the mind, guiding it without being limited by it. And through this clarity, the Kohen becomes a vessel for the hidden light.

Aharon HaKohen the Lover of Peace: Entering Concealment to Reveal Truth

Aharon, the archetypal Kohen, is described as one who loves peace and pursues peace (אוהב שלום ורודף שלום). But Chazal reveal something deeper, Aharon would sometimes enter into situations that were not entirely truthful in order to create reconciliation. He would bend the surface of truth in order to reveal a deeper truth. This is not falsehood, rather it is the revelation of truth within concealment itself. It is the secret of the truth of truth (אמת לאמיתו). Aharon understands that peace is not achieved through rigid adherence to surface reality, but through accessing the deeper unity beneath it. He enters into the complexity of human relationships, into the place of apparent separation, and from within that place he reveals connection. This is Kohen's work, to enter concealment not to be lost, but to reveal. To move through complexity without losing clarity. And to bring unity where there appears to be division.

Tiveria: The Place of Doubt and the Challenge of Death

Rebbe Shimon bar Yochai enters the city of Tiveria (טבריה), a place described as filled with impurity and doubt, saturated with the presence of death (טומאת מת). Tiveria represents a state of uncertainty, where the boundaries between life and death, purity and impurity, become blurred. It is a place where clarity is lost. After exiting the cave, and entering into this place, Rebbe Shimon asks a radical question: "what can I fix?". This question is not technical, it is existential. It reflects a willingness to take responsibility for the entire situation. Rebbe Shimon does not step back from the impurity, he steps into it. He enters the place of doubt and brings with him the light of certainty. This is the work of the tzaddik. Not to avoid the place of confusion, but to enter it with clarity. And from within that place to begin the process of rectification.

Purifying the Town of Tiveria: The Revelation of Certainty Within Doubt

Rebbe Shimon declares, “I will purify the city of Tiveria” (טהיר עיר טבריה), and through this declaration, something shifts in the structure of reality. This is not symbolic, it is ontological. He is not merely removing impurity; he is revealing that the impurity itself is not absolute. The doubt that defines Tiveria begins to dissolve in the presence of certainty. The world responds with disbelief, can death itself be undone? Can impurity be reversed? But Rebbe Shimon operates from a place where death is not final. From the perspective of the hidden light (אור הגנוז), death is only a concealment of life that forces life to reveal more of its strength. As the Chazon Ish teaches, one who sees the light of lights (אור האורות) no longer experiences sadness in the same way. The external reality remains, but its interpretation changes. Rebbe Shimon teaches us to look again, to not accept the first appearance as final. And in that second look, to uncover the flow of vitality and life within what appears to be death.

The Cave and the Wounds: The Body as the Vessel of Light

The story of Rebbe Shimon in the cave reveals another layer of this process. Hidden for years, immersed in Torah, his body becomes covered in wounds, a physical manifestation of the intensity of his experience. When he emerges, Rebbe Pinchas ben Yair sees his condition and weeps. But Rebbe Shimon responds that without these wounds, he would not be who he is. The wounds are not damage, rather they are the stages of transformation. They are the marks of a body that has become a vessel for light. The descent into concealment, isolation, and discomfort, has produced a deeper revelation. This is the secret of passing through death-like states in order to access life. The body itself becomes part of the process. The physical is not rejected, rather it is refined and elevated. And through that refinement, it becomes capable of holding the light.

The Hidden Light: The Trace of a Presence That Never Leaves

The Zohar reveals that the hidden light is never absent, rather it is concealed within every moment. It is the light that was present at the beginning of creation, and it continues to sustain existence from within. If it were to be removed even for a moment, the entire world would cease. Yet it is hidden and concealed, because its full revelation would overwhelm the structure of reality. This creates a paradox: the light is fully present and fully concealed at the same time. It is revealed through its hiddenness. This is the meaning of “there is no removal of consciousness whatsoever” (אין סילוק מוחין כלל). The light never leaves. The concealment is only in perception. And therefore, the work is not to bring in new light, but to reveal what is always already there.

The Danger of the Hidden Light: When Keter Becomes Karet

But this light must be approached with care. If a person accesses it without proper grounding, it can lead to distortion. If one assumes that

everything is already known, already unified, already complete, it can lead to a collapse of responsibility. This is the transformation of crown (כתר) into excision (כרת). The highest truth becomes the source of the deepest fall. Therefore, the light must remain hidden. It is revealed only through spiritual work, through effort, and through humility. The concealment protects the person from misusing the light. It ensures that the light is integrated rather than overwhelming. And only through this integration can the light become life-giving and revitalizing.

The World that is Perpetually Arriving: Drawing the Future into the Present

The Zohar describes this light as belonging to the world to come (עלמא), but this does not refer to a distant future. It refers to a mode of consciousness that can be accessed now. Through knowledge (דעת), through faith (תורה), through Torah and prayer (אמונה), and through unifications (יחודים), a person can draw that future into the present. This is the meaning of “you should see your world in your lifetime”

(עולמך תראה בחיך). The hidden becomes revealed. The future becomes present. The concealed light becomes experiential. And through this, the boundaries of time and separation begin to dissolve.

Death as Transition, Choice from Doubt, and the Unity of Opposites

The concept of death within the teachings of the Zohar is not limited to physical cessation, but refers to a deeper process that unfolds within every moment of choice. Every decision a person makes requires the letting go of a previous state, a severing from what was, in order to enter into what will be. This is a form of death. Not destruction, but transition. The Arizal explains that death represents the removal of constriction, the shedding of limitation that allows for a higher level of life to emerge. When a person chooses truth, they must allow something false to fall away and die. When they choose growth, they must release a previous identity. This process is painful because it involves loss, but it is also the gateway to expansion. Every moment of authentic choosing contains within it a

death and a birth. And through this cycle, the person continuously renews themselves.

The Sword That Separates: The Necessity of Cutting Away

The Zohar describes this process through the image of the sword, an instrument that separates and divides. The sword represents the power of discernment, the ability to distinguish between levels, between truths, between states of being. Without this cutting, there can be no transition. A person would remain stuck within their previous identity. The sword is therefore both frightening and necessary. It introduces rupture, but that rupture is what allows for growth and the emergence of new bonds. It is the moment of severance that creates space for transformation. The tzaddikim do not avoid the sword, they harness its power and they use it. They understand that every ascent requires a cut. Every elevation requires a release. And through this process, the person becomes capable of receiving higher light. The separation is not a loss, it is a preparation.

Amalek and Safek: The War Against Certainty

At the deepest level, this process is challenged by Amalek (עמלק), who represents doubt (ספק). Amalek does not deny the truth outright, he introduces a deep level of uncertainty into it. He weakens clarity, he cools certainty, and he causes the pillars of faith to weaken. The numerical value of Amalek is equal to that of doubt, revealing that his entire power is rooted in destabilizing perception. When a person stands at the threshold of transformation, Amalek appears. He whispers: maybe this is not real. Maybe this is not true, maybe this is not worth it. This doubt interrupts the process of choosing. It prevents the necessary “death” from occurring. And therefore, the work is not only to choose, but to choose with clarity and confidence. To confront doubt and move through it without being bothered or weakened. To not allow uncertainty to paralyze movement. And in doing so, to weaken the grip of Amalek and erase them from the moment.

Purim and Lag BaOmer: Two Paths of Overcoming Doubt

The rectification of Amalek unfolds through two unique gateways in the calendar, Purim and Lag BaOmer. Purim represents the transformation of doubt through hiddenness. The name Esther itself reflects concealment, and the miracle unfolds without open revelation. It is through entering concealment that clarity emerges. The confusion itself becomes the place of transformation. Lag BaOmer, by contrast, represents the revelation of light within that concealment. It is the day of Rebbe Shimon bar Yochai, whose Torah reveals the inner light of reality. Where Purim works through hiddenness, Lag BaOmer works through illumination. Together, they form a complete rectification. One erases the doubt from outside, while the other reveals the certainty within it. One works from below. The other reveals from above. And through both, Amalek is weakened and ultimately erased.

R' Moshe Isserles (Rama) and the Clarification of Doubt

This process is also reflected in the figure of the Rama (רמ"א), whose role in halacha is to clarify doubt and bring practical certainty into lived reality. The Rama represents the movement of clarification of doubts, transforming uncertainty into actionable knowledge. He does not eliminate complexity, he navigates it through the razor sharp sword of choice. He enters into the place of doubt and extracts clarity. This is the same work described throughout. To not avoid confusion, but to work within it. To not be overwhelmed by multiplicity, but to organize it. The halachic process becomes a mirror of the spiritual process. Through clarification, the person gains direction. Through *psak* (פסק), the person gains grounding. And through this, the abstract clarity of Hashem's light becomes a lived experience. It may be for this reason the Yahrtzeit of the Ramah is Lag Ba'Omer, almost always falling out around parshas Emor which is the same letter as Ramah. Even more, the numerical value of Ramah is 241, one degree above the doubt of Amalek which remains 240,

representing the power of *psak* to overcome *safek*.

The Unity of Day and Night: Holding Opposites Together

The Zohar teaches that there is no day without night and no night without day (לית יום בלא לילה ולית לילה בלא יום). This is not a poetic statement, it is a structural truth. Light and darkness are not opposites to be eliminated, but partners to be integrated. One without the other is not called one (דא בלא דא לא איקרי אחד). True unity (אחד) emerges only when both are held together. Light alone is incomplete. Darkness alone is incomplete. The world is not to escape darkness, but to include it within the light of faith. To see the light within the darkness. To recognize that concealment itself is part of revelation. And through this integration, a deeper unity emerges.

Exile and Return: The Absence of Full Unity

Exile is defined by the absence of this full unity. It is the state where light and darkness are experienced as separate, where concealment is perceived as absence rather than presence. This creates fragmentation, confusion, and distance. The return to Eretz Yisrael represents the restoration of unity. It is the place where the hidden light becomes more accessible, where the integration of opposites becomes possible. The physical return mirrors the inner return. A return to wholeness. A return to clarity. A return to connection. And through this return, the process of redemption deepens.

The Final Integration: Light Within Darkness, Darkness Within Light

Ultimately, the Zohar leads us to a place where all opposites are integrated. Where death is seen as life. Where doubt becomes a vessel for certainty. Where concealment becomes revelation. This is the concealed light, the hidden light that contains all opposites within unity. It is the light of Rebbe Shimon bar Yochai. It

is the light that emerges from the cave, from the wound, from the concealment. It is the light that reveals that everything- absolutely everything- is part of the oneness of Hashem. And through this revelation, the world begins to transform. Slowly. Gradually. Inevitably. Toward the final redemption.