

Twin Aspirations

Parshat Vayeishev

2 א"ת - פ"א - פ"א

עכשיו אנו יכולים להבין את החרדה הגדולה שחרדה המילדת לדעת מי בדיוק היה הבכור של יהודה ותמר, וגם מדוע יהודה היה זה שנתן את השם לפרץ³¹. כי הרי הבכור של זיווג זה, יהיה למעשה הבכור של יהודה, דהרי הוא יירש את מקומו של ער כהנהגת המשפחה, והוא יהיה אביו של מלכות בית דוד ומלך המשיח. לימים, כשיאמר יעקב אבינו "לא יסור שבט מיהודה ומחוקק מבין רגליו עד כי יבוא שילה" אז יהיה עלינו לדעת מי הוא יורשו של יהודה, מיהו ממשיך השושלת, ואז נסתכל בתורה ונדע. ולכן גם בדברי הימים מוכרח הספור להכתב, משום שאנו צריכים להבין מדוע מלכות בית דוד באה מפרץ, הילד הרביעי של יהודה, ולא משלה שהיה גדול ממנו.

The time came for [Tamar] to give birth, and, behold, there were twins in her womb. As she was in labor, one of them put out his hand; the midwife tied a crimson thread on it, to indicate: "This one came out first." But he withdrew his hand, and his brother came out first. "You have asserted yourself with such a bursting forth!" she said, and his name was therefore called Peretz ("bursting forth"). After that, his brother, with the crimson thread, was born, and was named Zerach ("shining forth").

Genesis 38:27-30

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Ruth ch. 3

¹⁸ Now these are the generations of Perez: Perez begot Hezron; ¹⁹ and Hezron begot Ram, and Ram begot Amminadab; ²⁰ and Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmah; ²¹ and Salman begot Boaz, and Boaz begot Obed; ²² and Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David.

4 Artscall - Ste Chumash

29. That Perez pushed ahead was part of the Divine plan. Zerah desired to emerge first but God declared: "Messiah is destined to descend from Perez; is it right, then, that Zerah should emerge first? Let Zerah return to his mother's womb, and Perez shall be born first!" (Aggadas Bereishis).

Kabbalistically, the names Perez and Zerah have great mystical significance. Zerah, literally shining or brightness, alludes to the sun, which is a source of constant light. Perez, on the other hand, means breach, alluding to the moon, whose light is sometimes whole and sometimes breached, as its light wanes and waxes. It would have been logical for the brilliant, constant Zerah to be born first, but God wanted Perez to be the firstborn, to symbolize the Davidic dynasty, which is likened to the moon, because it became diminished and finally disappeared but, like the moon, it will re-emerge and grow to fullness again. Because of this similarity between the Davidic dynasty and the moon, when the Sages sent word that the New Moon had been declared (Rosh Hashanah 25a), they used the message "David King of Israel lives and exists" (Ramban citing Sefer HaBahir).

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ויקח יד ויתן פ"א ויתן לו הכ"ה האתערותא דלעילא ואח"כ ויגדל האדם לו מסיר הכ"ה האתערותא כ"ל מטעם שזכרנו ושאר כמו מחיצה דקו"א נקרא יד אצל רשימה מועטת נשארת ואח"כ כשהאדם מודבק את עצמו בקדוּככות גדולה למעלה ולו טרץ המחיצה כ"ל וזכו ויקרא את שמו פרץ וידוע שנקב"ה קורא ישראל בשם אחים כמו שאמר הכתוב למען אחי ורעי וזכו ואחרי כן יצא אחיו ויקרא שמו זרח פ"א אח"כ ונתן לו הכ"ה זריחה גדולה מאור פניו ודוס:

4 Jivrei Hayann - I - ch. 9

³ In Jerusalem there settled some of the children of Judah, some of the children of Benjamin and some of the children of Ephraim and Manasseh: ⁴ Uthai son of Ammihud, son of Omri, son of Imri, son of Bani, of the sons of Perez son of Judah. ⁵ Of the Shilonites: * Asaiah the firstborn and his sons. ⁶ Of the sons of Zerah: Jeuel, and six hundred ninety of their brethren.

י"ח פ"א

י"ח פ"א, למה ויתן ידו ויכח כחשיו ידו וכו' ואחרי כן יצא אחיו כ"ל ויקרא שמו פרץ וכו' ויקרא שמו זרח. כנראה לנו כזה דבקה ידוע מאמר חכמינו ז"ל בשעה שהקטנוק דר בחשיו אחו נר דולק על ראשו וכו' טעם מסוף העולם ועד סופו דהיינו שהוא עדיין עומד בקדושתו כאשר היה מקודש לאמו ממקומו ואחר כך בא מלאך וספרו על פיו ולא שוכח מה שיהיה יודע עד עתה

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יד העולם או בתעורר עליו אתערותא דלעילא סתירתו ואז יוכלו בידו לרדק מחשבתו רק בעבודת השם ית' בלי שום מחיצה כלל אצל רצונו ית' בכדי שיוכל אדם לבוא לידו מסירת נפשו ונשמו לטובתו ית' על זה מסיר הכ"ה האתערותא ונשאר כמו מחיצה המבדלת ואז ניתן בידו הכחירה לכתור בקרב ולמאוס ברע.

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וכנה כשהאדם מחשב בשמחה צאמת כלל העולם כזה הוא רק כולו רע וכל האנחות הם רק למי שעה כלל ונפסד מרבה בשר מרבה רמה אלא הטוב האמתיות הוא רק בעבודתו ית' וזה עומדת לו לעולם ועד ואח"כ אף אעו"ז את הטוב ואחרי דבר מקבל אני עלי משפט שאדבק בעבודתו ית' ונמצא לו יכול להיות שיבוא אל חריגתו הראשונה דהיינו מחמת הזדככות חומרתו ולא נשאר רק כמו אשר היה מאז בלאתו מרצם והמחיצה נפסקת דהיינו שהוא פורץ את המחיצה ואז בא אליו זריחה גדולה מאור פני מלך חיים כוריתת השמש כך בא עלי זריחה גדולה וזכו ויחי צמח למה דהיינו בשעה שהשמה נולדת

But the answer is that it is not forgotten; it is driven deep into the unconscious. A person may be born with no explicit knowledge, but beneath the conscious surface, intact and rich beyond imagination, is all that one wishes to know! A lifetime of hard work learning Torah and working on one's personality will constantly release, bring to consciousness, innate wisdom.

The pathway is clear — a person is born with a lifetime of work ahead, spiritual wisdom and growth are hard-earned. But the inspiration is within; you were once there! And that inner sense of inspiration provides the motivation, the source of optimism and confidence that genuine achievement is possible, even assured, if the necessary effort is made.

(ט) ויהי כמשיב ידו. ארבע ידות בתוכים כאן כנגד ד' חרמות שמעל עכן שיצא ממנו, רמז דבר זה כאן להורות שבכבוד שיצא ממנו עכן ע"כ לא יצלה למלוכה, כי מלך במשפט יעמיד ארץ ואיש חרומות יורסנה, (משלי כט.ד) כי אם ישה אחר הבצע יבא לידי קבלת שוחד, ע"כ השיב אחור ידו כדי שלא יהיה לו הבכורה והמלוכה.

והנה מקום אתי, לפרש ד' ידות אלו שיש בהם רמז על איש חומד ממון ואינו נפטר מן העולם וחצי תאוותו בידו, יש בידו מנה מתאוה מאתים כו', והנה כל אדם יש לו שתי ידים אשר בהם עמל וטרח להשיג מלא חפנים בכוחו ועוצם ידו כפי אשר חשיג ידו, וא"כ כל אשר בכוחו מושג משתי ידיו, ואם אינו מסתפק במה שחננו אלהים מלא חפנים הרי הוא חומד עזר מלא חפנים דהיינו כדי מלאכת ד' ידים, כפל מן המושג בשתי ידיו, והוא בעצם השיעור של בעל המנה החומד מאתים, דהיינו כפל מכדי המושג לו כבר משתי ידיו וכל חומד ממון אינו בעל צדקה ע"כ לא יצלה למלוכה, לפי שארז"ל (סנהדרין מט.) שבזכות שעשה דוד משפט לזה וצדקה לזה היה יואב מנצח במלחמה.

13 ע"כ נאמר אצל יהודה (דברים לג.) ידיו רב לו, ירכבו לו מבעי ליה, כי ידיו שתיים במשמע ורב לשון יחיד, אלא שהורה שלא היה חומד ממון של שתי ידים הנוספים, כי שתי ידיו רב לו די לו, כי רב הוא משמש לשון די, כמו רב לך אל תוסף, ורמז שהיה די לו בעמל שתי ידיו, כי לא בקש עוד על שנים לפיכך עזר מצריו תהיה, כי המספקנות זה סבה אל הצדקה אשר בזכותה אויבים נופלים לפניו, וראה מיואב, וכמ"ש (תהלים קיב.) טוב איש חונן ומלוה וגו' סמוך לבו לא יירא עד אשר יראה בצריו וכן מסיק בב"ק (יז.) שהעוסק בג"ח אויביו נופלים לפניו חללים, לכך נאמר שבזכות שידיו רב לו, עמל המושג משתי ידיו רב לו ואינו מבקש מותרות ואז הוא בעל צדקה, ע"כ עזר מצריו תהיה, וזה נאמר על יהודה הבא מפרץ. אבל זרח לא היה ידיו רב לו, אלא בקש עמל ד' ידות וחמד ממון שאיננו ראוי לו כמו שנאמר אצל עכן (יהושע ז.בא) ואחזקם ואקחם. ע"כ הושב אחור ימינו כמשיב ידו, כי לא לו יהיה משפט הבכורה והמלוכה כי כל מלך צריך לנצחון האויבים והוא לאו בר הכי כאמור.

When the Almighty created human beings He made them capable of both giving and taking. The faculty of giving is a sublime power: it is one of the attributes of the blessed Creator of all things. He is the Giver par excellence. His mercy. His bounty and His goodness extend to all His creatures. His giving is pure giving for He takes nothing in return. He can take nothing for He lacks nothing, as the verse says, "...If you are righteous what do you give to Him?"

16 Our service to Him is not for His need but for our own, since we need a means of expressing our gratitude to Him.

Man has been granted this sublime power of giving, enabling him too to be merciful, to bestow happiness, to give of himself. "God created man in His own image."

האבן עזרא (שמות כ, יד) מבאר את חומרת איסורו "לא תחמוד". האין יתכן שאדם לא יחמוד דבר יפה בלבו מה שהוא נחמד לעיניו, וביאר זאת "כמו הכפרי לא יחמוד את בת המלך כי יודע שזה לא יתכן, כך כל משכיל צריך שידע כי ממון לא ימצאנו אדם בעבור חכמתו ודעתו רק כאשר חלק לו השם". ביאור הדברים: כל גברא מקבל תפקיד מיוחד בעבודת ה', והוא חלקו מתוך כלל העבודה שנמסרה לכלל ישראל, ולכל אחד נותן ה' את כל האמצעים והכלים הדרושים לו — הן בכשרונות, והן בחכונות נפש, והן ברכוש — כדי שיוכל למלא את תפקידו המיוחד לו — בשלימות, לכן אין לאדם לחמוד את חלק חברו, כי כל האמצעים והכלים שקיבל חברו, מתאימים אך ורק לחברו לאור תפקידו בעבודת ה', ואין חלק חברו מתאים לו כלל לפי חלקו שלו בעבודת ה', כמו שאין אדם חומד בגד חברו שאינו מתאים לפי גזירת מדתו. וכך יש לבאר את המשנה (אבות פ"ד מ"א) "איהו עשיר השמח בחלקו", אין הכוונה לציין רק את מעלת המסתפק במוצט, אלא מעלת "השמח בחלקו" היא כמשמעותה — שמח בחלק אותו קיבל מאת השי"ת, לפי צורך תפקידו בעבודת ה'.

17

On the other side stands the faculty of taking, by which a person aspires to draw to himself all that comes within his reach. This is what people call egotism or selfishness. It is the root of all the evils in the world.

Some people take without giving anything in return. They are robbers if they take by force, or thieves if they take by stealth, or swindlers if they are cunning enough to persuade others to give them their property of their own free will.

19

The ways of the tsaddikim among human beings are very different. Their giving is maximal and their taking minimal. And even the little that they do take is essential for them, since it enables them to maintain the giving and beneficence to which they are devoted. It follows that their taking, too, derives from a holy source—from the desire to give. They have no contact whatsoever with the evil force of taking. They are “the holy ones on this earth”⁸ who identify themselves with the attributes of their Creator in all their actions.

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The Torah writes of Hanoch, who was the seventh generation after Adam, “And Hanoch walked with God,”⁷ upon which the Rabbis say: “Hanoch was a cobbler, and with every single stitch that he made he achieved mystical unions with his Creator.”⁸ I have heard a beautiful explanation of this in the name of Rabbi Yisrael Salanter of blessed memory—an interpretation which is indeed typical of his whole approach. He said that this midrash cannot possibly mean that while he was sitting and stitching shoes for his customers his mind was engaged on mystical pursuits. This would be forbidden by the *din*. How could he divert his attention to other matters while engaged on work which he had been hired

21

There is nobody in the whole world who does not possess at least a spark of the faculty of giving. This may be seen for instance at times of family rejoicing, when people of the most grasping natures still feel the urge to involve their friends in their celebration. No one's joy is complete unless he can share it with others.

22

ment. Giving may bring about love for the same reason that a person loves what he himself has created or nurtured: he recognizes in it part of himself. Whether it is a child he has brought into the world, an animal he has reared, a plant he has tended, or even a thing he has made or a house he has built—a person is bound in love to the work of his hands, for in it he finds himself.

18

— These two powers—giving and taking—form the roots of all character-traits and of all actions. And note: there is no middle way. Every person is devoted, at the deepest level of his personality, to one or the other of the two sides, and in the innermost longing of the heart there are no compromises. It is a basic law that there is no middle path in human interest. In every act, in every word, in every thought—except perhaps those directed towards his innermost self without any connection with anything outside himself—one is always devoted either to lovingkindness and giving or to grasping and taking. We

20b

to do by others? No, says Rabbi Yisrael; the “mystical unions” which Hanoch achieved were nothing more nor less than the concentration which he lavished on each and every stitch to ensure that it would be good and strong and that the pair of shoes he was making would be a good pair, giving the maximum pleasure and benefit to whoever would wear them. In this way Hanoch achieved union with the attribute of his Creator, who lavishes his goodness and beneficence on others. This was his “mystical union”; he was united and wholehearted in his desire, his single-minded ambition, to attach himself to his Creator's attributes. Of course, as a natural consequence he was protected from any hint of evil or wrongdoing. There could be no question of his ever deceiving or over-reaching his customers, even unwittingly. His “taking” would never exceed the value of the work he was doing—the measure of his “giving.”

23

To sum up: the best relationship between husband and wife will obtain when both achieve and practice the virtue of giving. Then their love will never cease and their lives will be filled with happiness and contentment for as long as they live on this earth.

24

Everyone admires the ambitious person. People do their best to educate their children to be full of ambition and “drive.” It has even been said that ambition is life itself. But is this correct?

Ambition is hunger. A hungry person craves food and an ambitious person craves the objects of his ambition. It is therefore a great mistake to think that ambition is life. Hunger is not life. It is merely the stimulus which the Almighty has implanted in his creatures in order to remind them to do the things necessary to keep themselves alive. Similarly all ambitions are kinds of hunger. They are the emissaries of our heart's inclinations, for good or for evil.

25

If we look at the animal kingdom we shall see that hungry animals eat until they are satisfied and do not eat again until they are hungry once more. The swine is perhaps an exception, for it eats all the time and is seemingly never satisfied. The human being suffers from a similar disease. "He who loves money will never have sufficient money."¹⁸ He is eternally hungry. And it is not only the hunger for more money that dominates him continuously. It is the same with all physical desires and ambitions: the more one attempts to satisfy them, the more intense the hunger becomes.

26

But this is not the case with the man who hungers for that which his *yetzer* craves. What he yearns for is far beyond his reach. He must fight a heavy battle and expend great effort to attain even a small part of what he craves. And even if he lives many years he will never achieve even half of it, as our Rabbis say, "No man leaves this world with half his desires fulfilled."²⁰

28

These cravings to provide for the future stand in his way and prevent his making use of what he has for the needs of the moment. So even if it were possible for him to still his immediate needs at least in part, these other urges deny him this satisfaction. His life is nothing but one terrible hunger from all sides, until he dies, worn out and still hungry.

29

You may well ask, why does the craver never gain satisfaction, even when he obtains that which he craves?

Something profound and remarkable lies hidden here.

We can see that "craving" is the urge to draw to oneself that which is now outside one. In this it differs from a physiological urge such as hunger, which is merely the experience of a need to fill one's stomach. This is a clearly defined and limited goal. On the other hand, anyone who is unfortunate enough to fall into the hands of the money drive or other materialist craving is not in need of anything known or defined. He is governed by a novel and artificially-created urge to extend his domain: to obtain that which is outside himself because it is outside himself. He does not crave the object of desire because of any intrinsic value it may possess, but simply because it is perceived as something beyond his reach.

31

and so it is with other desires. To desire means to feel the lack of that which is desired.

Thus ambition and desire are forces by which a person draws to himself those things which he believes will make good the deficiency which he experiences.

Satisfaction comes when the need is fulfilled. But, as we have seen, desires which originate in the faculty of taking are never satisfied, because the deficiency to which they refer is not capable of fulfillment.

27

But the situation is far worse than that. A person is not only hungry for what he actually needs at any given time. He hungers also for what he thinks he might need in the future, and his hunger is intensified by his concern

for what may happen many years in the future—so far ahead that if the truth be told it is very unlikely he will still be in this world. His hunger extends also to the real or imagined needs of his children and grandchildren. All these accumulated hungers compel him to devote years of back-breaking toil to provide for all these eventualities, not forgetting the worries which beset him regarding the possibilities of theft, failure and loss of all that he has. Of course, the more wealth he amasses and the more he tries to provide against the future, the more his worries increase²¹ and the more his hunger grows until it becomes intolerable.

30 It follows—and this is the best indication of the truth of our analysis—that as soon as he obtains the object of his desire it is no longer of any interest to him. It no longer has the power to quench his desire. But when the person observes that his craving is not satisfied he misinterprets this and imagines he can satisfy his hunger by obtaining other things—things that are still beyond his reach. He therefore transfers his craving to them. (It is well known that "rich" people usually desire money, and are willing to sacrifice themselves for money, more than most poor people; as our Rabbis say, "He who has one hundred wants two hundred; he who has two hundred wants four hundred."²⁰) Needless to say, he is disappointed once again.

32

What of the faculty of giving? It is not a force which draws things to us from outside ourselves. It arises from fulfillment and not from deficiency. Let us consider this carefully.

There is a kind of person for whom material things hold no attraction. He is just not interested in them; he does not consider them important enough. He is happy with what he has and satisfied with whatever he gets. This ability is a blessing from Hashem; as it says, "And you will eat and be satisfied."²⁶ It is a truly great gift from Hashem (blessed be He) to man—a gift which enables him to be complete rather than deficient. And this is the purpose for which he was created.

What happened to the pieces of the tablets which Mosheh broke at the foot of the mountain? It may surprise us to learn that they were placed in the Ark, together with the new tablets (Berachot 8b). If they represented a *madregah* so high that it was no longer relevant to Israel after the sin, to what end were they preserved?

There is a great lesson to be learned from this. Whatever the person's actual spiritual status at the moment, if he is determined to rise higher he must aim for the top. Our Rabbis tell us that a person should always ask, "When will my deeds resemble the deeds of my forefathers Avraham, Yitzhak and Ya'akov?" (Tanna de-bei Eliyahu 1:25). A vision of the very highest is necessary to arouse one from his lethargy to embark on any spiritual journey.

The Torah expects of us nothing less than the attainment of both these aims: to reach beyond the self and, at the same time, make the endeavor one's own. This is the ideal expressed in the second verse of the *Shema*, which reads: "And you shall love the L-rd your G-d with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your *me'od*." The Hebrew *me'od* is usually translated as "might," but "might" is only an approximate rendition of the word. Furthermore, this translation is also inconsistent with the logic of the verse, for if we are being told to sacrifice for the sake of G-d all our desires ("with all your heart") and even our very lives ("with all your soul"), what is added by the words "and with all your might"? Indeed, what more *can* be said?

37 The precise meaning of the word "*me'od*" is "very" or "more so." Thus, Chassidic teaching understands the verse as instructing us to love G-d "with all your veryness" or "with all your beyondness"—that is, above and beyond your currently defined self. The Torah is saying: after you have attained your ultimate ("with all your heart and with all your soul") in your love of G-d, reach higher yet. Relate to Him on His terms, surmounting the finiteness of your own being.

38 The human being possesses this capacity—indeed, the quest for self-transcendence is the quintessence of our humanness. This is alluded to in the Hebrew word for human being, *adam*, which is composed of the same three letters (*alef, dalet, mem*) as *me'od*. Hence, the Torah refers to this transcendent ability as "your beyondness." This is not an injunction to annihilate the self in pursuit of a higher, supra-human existence: "your beyondness" is a deeper dimension of your own self, previously obfuscated by your self-perceived limitations. The "new you" is, in fact, the true you.

הרמח"ל חיבר את ספרו "מסלול ישרים" המיוסדת על הברייתא של רבי פנחס

בן יאיר, ומדריך אותנו בספר זה צעד אחר צעד, ממעלה אחת למעלה יותר עליונה עד למעלות העליונות: טהרה, חסידות, ענוה, רוח הקודש. ואע"פ שעדיין לא ביאר את המעלות העליונות, בכל זאת כבר בתחילת הספר בפרק הראשון פותח: "יסוד החסידות ושורש העבודה התמימה שיתכבד ויתאמת אצל האדם מה חובתו בעולמו" וממשיך להסביר בפרק זה את חובתו של האדם בעוה"ז, ומהי עבודת ה' הנדרשת ממנו "וכשתסתכל עוד בדבר תראה כי השלימות האמיתית הוא רק הדביקות בו יתברך", והרי "חסידות" ו"דביקות" הם שייכים רק למעלות העליונות, כמש"כ בסוף הספר במדרגה העליונה "כללו של דבר ענין הקדושה הוא שיהיה האדם דבק כל כך באלהיו", והרי כאן עדיין עומדים אנו בתחתית המדרגות.

35 אמנם הרמח"ל קודם שמשדר את המעלות שאדם צריך לצעוד ולעלות מעלה אחר מעלה, מבאר בפרק הראשון למה צריכה להיות שאיפתו. את המטרה והתכנית בבנין המעלות, ורק אחרי שאדם יודע את התכנית והמטרה שאליה צריכה להיות שאיפתו, והכיוון והמבט בכל בנין מעלותיו, אזי יכול הוא להתחיל ולבנות את בנינו - בנין המעלות ע"פ סדר הברייתא של רבפכ"י. כשאדם מתכנן מראשית דרכו את המטרה, יש לו גם את השאיפה להגיע אל המטרה, אזי הוא יזכה להגיע בעבודת ה' לשלימות האמיתית "דביקות בו יתברך". וכאמור ידיעה זו היא לא רק ענין של מעליות, אלא היא הכרחית שאם אין לו את היסוד והמטרה בתחילת דרכו למה צריכה להיות שאיפתו הרי זו גריעותא! כי איך יגיע אל המטרה.

Therein lies the significance of the strange birth of Tamar's twin sons, recounted above: the emergence of Zerach's hand, Peretz's "bursting forth," and finally the full birth of Zerach.

Zerach represents our "shining forth"—the yield of our life's labor to "transform darkness into light and bitterness into sweetness." Peretz is our "bursting forth" quality, the uniquely human ability to surmount one's own (seemingly) inherent limitations.

★ In a sense, Zerach was born twice: he had a partial birth before Peretz was born, but his true and complete birth followed that of Peretz. So, too, there are two levels to the *zerach* of man: he "shines forth" and accomplishes much by utilizing his natural talents and abilities, but this only represents a fraction of his true potential. He must then burst free of the confines of inclination, habit and environment to pave the way for his true and ultimate luminescence.

The third phase, and happy is the one who attains it while yet alive, is transcendence. It is a regaining of the level of the first phase, but now deserved, earned, and therefore far beyond it.

There is a statement of the Sages which describes the final transcendence, the transition from this world to the next, and it describes the angels which come to greet a person at that time. One of these angels comes to search out "Where is this person's Torah, and is it complete in his hand." The Gaon of Vilna points out, chillingly, that the higher being which asks this question is not a stranger. Suddenly one recognizes the very same angel with whom he learned Torah in the womb! And the question to be answered is: Where is that Torah which inspired you then? Have you brought it into the world and made it real? And can it now be called yours?