

# CHABAD LUBAVITCH OF CHAUTAUQUA

23 Vincent Avenue Chautauqua, NY 14722 T: (716) 357 - 3467 W: www.cocweb.org E: rabbi@cocweb.org

## Historical Sketches – Week 3 – 2021

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1. **MISHNA:** ...nor may one expound by oneself the Design of the Divine Chariot, [mystical teachings], unless he is wise and understands most matters on his own.  
**GEMARA:** You said in the first clause of the mishna: Nor may one expound the Design of the Divine Chariot by oneself, which indicates that the topic may not be learned at all, and yet you subsequently said: Unless he is wise and understands most things on his own, which indicates that an individual is permitted to study the Design of the Divine Chariot?  
 This is what the mishna is saying: One may not expound the topic of forbidden sexual relations before three students, nor the act of Creation before two, nor may one teach the Divine Chariot to one, unless that student was wise and understands on his own. (Talmud, Tractate Chagiga 11:b)
2. The subject matter of the Design of the Divine Chariot should not be expounded upon - even to a single individual - unless he is wise and capable of understanding, [in which instance,] he is given fundamental points...  
 Why are they not taught publicly? Because not every person has the vast knowledge necessary to grasp the interpretation and the explanation of these matters in a complete manner.
3. Rabbi Ami said: The secrets of the Torah may be transmitted only to one who possesses the following five characteristics: *“The captain of fifty, and the man of favor, and the counselor, and the cunning charmer, and the skillful enchanter”*  
*“A captain of fifty,”* do not read it as *“sar chamishim,”* rather read it as *“sar chumashin”*; this is one who knows how to engage in discourse with regard to the five books of [*chamisha chumshei*] the Torah.  
*“The counselor”*; this is referring to one who knows how to intercalate years and determine months, due to his expertise in the phases of the moon and the calculation of the yearly cycle. *“The cunning”*; this is a student who makes his rabbis wise through his questions. *“Charmer [charashim]”*; this is referring to one so wise that when he begins speaking matters of Torah, all those listening are as though deaf [*chershin*], as they are unable to comprehend the profundity of his comments. *“The skillful”*; this is one who understands something new from something else he has learned. *“Enchanter [lachash]”*; this is referring to one who is worthy of having words of the Torah that were given in whispers [*lachash*], i.e., the secrets of the Torah, transmitted to him.
4. Rabbi Yoḥanan said to Rabbi Elazar: Come and I will teach you the Design of the Divine Chariot. Rabbi Elazar said to him: I have not yet aged sufficiently, as one must be very settled in one’s mind for these studies. When he grew old, Rabbi Yoḥanan had already passed away. Rabbi Asi said to him: Come and I will teach you the Design of the Divine Chariot. He said to him: Had I merited, I would have learned it from Rabbi Yoḥanan, your teacher. [It therefore appears that I am unworthy of studying it.] (Isaiah 3:3). (ibid, 13a-14a)
5. The matters discussed in these four chapters concerning these five mitzvot are what the Sages of the early generations termed the *Pardes*, as they related: "Four entered the *Pardes*...." Even though they were great men of Israel and great Sages, not all of them had the potential to know and comprehend all these matters in their totality.
6. I maintain that it is not proper for a person to stroll in the *Pardes* unless he has filled his belly with bread and meat. "Bread and meat" refer to the knowledge of what is permitted and what is forbidden, and similar matters concerning other mitzvot. Even though the Sages referred to these as "a small matter" - for our Sages said: "A great matter," this refers to the Design of the Divine Chariot. "A small matter," this refers to the debates of Abbaye and Ravva" - nevertheless, it is fitting for them to be given precedence, because they settle a person's mind. (Maimonides, Hilchot Yesodei Hatorah 4:11, 13)
7. Permission was not given to reveal [the secrets of the Kabbalah] only to himself and his associates. (Zohar III 127b)
8. **Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai (passed away in 160 c.e) - Zohar**  
 In the merit of the study of this book of yours which is the book of the Zohar - the Jewish People will leave the Exile in a merciful manner. (Zohar III, Raya Mehemna, *parashat Naso*, 124b)

**9. The Arizal: Rabbi Yitzchak Luria (1534-1572)**

Rabbi Yitzchak Luria, of blessed memory, stated that it is only in these latter generations that “it is permitted and obligatory to reveal this wisdom” [i.e., the Kabbalah, which illuminates the esoteric dimension of the Torah], but not in the earlier generations. (Saar Hagilgulim enf of introduction XV)

10. A person does not completely fulfill his obligation [to study Torah] by involving himself with Tanach, Mishna, *Aggada*, and the Babylonian Talmud. Rather, one is obligated to involve himself to the best of his ability in the secrets of the Torah and the Work of the Chariot, for there is no greater pleasure for G-d in all the creation than when His children below involve themselves in the secrets of Torah - to know His greatness, His beauty, and His supremacy. (Introduction to *Etz Chaim*)
11. My master, of blessed memory, used to say that regarding a person who is very sharp and quick-witted in in-depth study [of Talmud], it is good for him to study one or two hours a day and not more - in order to smash the husks [*kelipot*]. But regarding a person who has difficulty with in-depth [Talmud] learning, it is better to probe the inner aspect of the thing, i.e. the fruit, rather than the husk. [This means] in-depth study and involvement in Midrash, *Aggada*, and, in particular, the Zohar and [other] books of Kabbalah. (*Pri Etz Chaim, Shaar Hanhagat Halimud*)

**12. Rabbi Avraham Azulai (1570-1643)**

Behold, without knowing the wisdom of the Kabbalah, one is like a beast...because he performs the mitzvahs without the reason/taste of the mitzvahs, only performing the mitzvahs like "scholarly" people. And they resemble beasts who eat hay, which doesn't have the flavor of food meant for humans. And even if one is very involved in business matters and very preoccupied, he shouldn't exempt himself from occupying himself in this wisdom [Kabbalah]. You should try to carve out some time from your daily activities each day in order that time will remain for immersing in this wisdom, because it is the foundations of the Torah. You are not exempt from the Inner Torah [i.e. Kabbalah], because, without it, a person is an ox who eats straw.

I have found it written that all that has been decreed Above forbidding open involvement in the Wisdom of Truth [Kabbalah] was [only meant for] the limited time period until the year 5,250 [1490 A.D.]. From then on after is called the "Last Generation", and what was forbidden is [now] allowed. And permission is granted to occupy [ourselves] in the [study of] Zohar. And from the year 5,300 [1540 A.D.] it is most desirable that the masses, both those great and small [in Torah], should occupy themselves [in the study of Kabbalah], as it says in the *Raya M'hemna* [a section of the Zohar]. And because in this merit King Mashiach will come in the future - and not in any other merit - it is not proper to be discouraged [in the study of Kabbalah].

**13. Rabbi Eliyahu - Vilna Gaon (1720-1797)**

He that is able to understand secrets of the Torah and does not try to understand them will be judged harshly, may G-d have mercy. (*Even Shlema* 8:24)

The Redemption will only come about through learning Torah, and the essence of the Redemption depends upon learning Kabbalah. (*Even Shlema* 11:3)

All those who don't understand the secret meaning [behind something], do not grasp even the simple meaning. (commentary on Proverbs 5:18)

14. For a thousand years are in Your eyes like yesterday, which passed, and a watch in the night. (Psalms 90:4)
15. “*In the 600th year of the life of Noah, ... all the fountains of the great deep erupted and the windows of heaven were opened,*” (Genesis 7:11)
16. In the 600th year of the sixth millennium, the gates of sublime wisdom will open and the wellsprings of lower wisdom [will burst forth, to] prepare the world to enter the seventh millennium.” (Zohar I 117a)
17. ...the land shall be full of knowledge of the L-rd as water covers the sea bed. (Isaiah 11:9)
18. ...and from my flesh I see Divinity. (Job 19:26)

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