

Parashat Bamidbar

Excerpt from *Yishmiru Da-at*
by Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi

Numbers 4:2 talks of raising a census with the phrase, "Raise a headcount," but literally, it can be read as, "Raise the heads of the children of Israel." So what brings about the raising of our heads?

נשא את ראש בני וגו',
(במדבר ד' ב').

נשיאות
ראש, כדי שהשכל
יהיה לבוש
לנשמה השכל צריך להתפשט ולהרחיב על
ידי
(תהילים כ"ד ז')
שאו
שְׁעָרִים
ראשיכם -- (משלי ל"א כ"ג)
ונודע
בשְׁעָרִים
בעלה --
שְׁעָרִים
ההשערות
(ל')
ערות
(בשפעל)

The neshama, the divine aspect of soul, stands above the intellect. And to put the intellect in service to the soul, it needs to proliferate itself in the soul and become broad through --- (and here Zalman makes two wordplays in the Hebrew): (Psalms 24:7) "Raise up your head's imagination," and (Proverbs 31:23) "God's divinity becomes known through imagining what it is;" (These two texts from scripture are usually translated as "Gates, lift your heads" and from eishet chayil, "Her husband is known in the gates". And here is his justification for this wordplay -- SH'ARim / gates can be read as deriving from haSH'ARot / conjectures, (taking it from the word ERuT / wakefulness as active causative i.e. wake something up).

כי מה שהנשמה מרגישה מן
האור הולך
ועובר, ובלי שהשכל יכול לארוז
את השפע מתוך הַבְּנָה.
וצריך השכל
להיות יותר עדין
ומלומד בתורת הסוד
כדי לְהַכִּיל את אור
הנשפע.

For, that which the soul perceives from the intellect's light, is something ephemeral which passes, and if the intellect doesn't pack up the outflow into the understanding, it will go away. So, in order for the intellect to be able to serve the soul, and for the soul to be able to contain the light released by the intellect's mystery teachings, the intellect must be trained and refined in a particular way.

כי כל
התכונה של תורת
הסוד אינה לתת למי שהוא
חשיבות וְנִאָוָה

And indeed, one should not make the mistake of seeing one's access to mystery teachings as something that will give one a special reputation in one's community and brag,

רוא לי
רוא לי, אלא
לתת לשפע הקודש
מושגים גמישים בהם
יכולה ההארה להתלבש
בלבושי דיבור ומילים שיש
להם יחס לשורש נשמת האדם.

ובזה צריכים גם לאמונה
שתורת הסוד אמיתית
היא, אשר ממנה באה אותה
ההשערה של הנשמה
אל השכל. כי
לפעמים התורה והשפע באים
ממקור בלתי מוסכם בין עמא
דבר.

לכן מי שמתחף עם
שבטו השייך לשורש
נשמתו שהם ג"כ מאמינים
בשותפות באותם המושגים
יכול גם
להבין ע"י
נשיאת ראש באופן שההבנה תביא
אותו
גם
להרגשה
ולמעשים.

וזוהי
הלשון המשתפת של הרביים
עם החסידים שלהם שהרביים נושאים
את ראשיהם לרמה יותר גבוהה.

"Look! I have been blessed with a secret teaching! I have a secret!" Rather, the utility comes in providing concepts to the holy outflow with a soft pliability for them, allowing the enlightenment to dress itself into garments of speech and words which have connection to the root of one's soul.

And for this to happen, they also need faith that the mystery teachings have a reality to them, that the imaginal opening of the soul is coming through the intellect's belief that it is dealing with something that is real. For sometimes, the teaching and the outflow come from a source in disagreement with popular belief.

Therefore, the one who joins with like-minded souls, with a tribe of individuals who share a soul-root with him or her, who also have faith in the reality of their connection to those concepts of divinity, this person will also come to understand, with confidence, that by raising the head so the understanding brings one to something one perceives and experiences as real, he or she will feel able to get beyond just being in the head and take actions based upon them.

And this is the language of the connection of the Rebbes with their Hasidim, for the Rebbes raised the heads of the Hasidim upwards especially high.

translation by *Gabai* Seth Fishman