"Open my eyes so that I may see the **wonders** of Your Torah"

נס"ד

# Wonders

Weekly Magazine of the Shiurim and Farbrengens
of HaRav **Yitzchak Ginsburgh**

**Issue 134**

**Shabbat Shemot 5785** ❁ **January 17-18, 2025**
שַׁבָּת שְׁמוֹת ❁ יז-יח טֵבֵת תשפ"ה



*Moses also appears as a spark within every Jew, and thus it is the task of every one of us to perfect and reveal all these interpretations of goodness....*

*Each interpretation can manifest itself in us and our lives:*

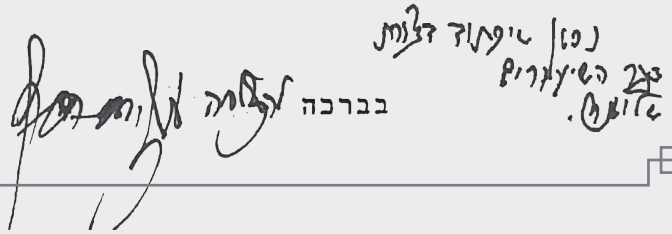
**3** **Being Human, Being Jewish**

**7** **Story:** Rebbe Tzvi Elimelech of Dinov: The Man with Two Brains

**11** **Partzuf:** "She saw that he was good"

*The Lubavitcher Rebbe to Rav Ginsburgh, Elul 5741*

*"…It would be proper to publish your classes in book form. With blessings for success…"*



# Wonders

An anthology from the shiurim and farbrengens
of Harav **Yitzchak Ginsburgh**

**Wonders** is distributed weekly in Israel and North America.
For feedback and/or to receive copies for distribution in your area,
write to **wondersanthology@gmail.com**
**Dedication opportunities available.**

To see more of Harav Ginsburgh's teachings in English, and to sign up for our weekly email newsletter with updates on live classes and events, go to:

## www.inner.org

Books and music are available for sale at www.inner.org/webstore

Join our daily Whatsapp group. Send a message to **+972-50-6528650**

Subscribe to our Youtube channel for hundreds of hours of in-depth study
**www.youtube.com/innerorg**

Click here to support Wonders (3500 copies freely distributed every week)

Scan this code to access all Wonders past issues

**Wonders Staff**
R. Moshe Genuth, Editor • Shelli Karzen , Associate Editor
Yoel Broderick, Typesetting

# BEING HUMAN, BEING JEWISH

What should the correct relationship be, according to the Torah, between our identity as human beings and our identity as Jews? How can simple humanity and respect for every person coexist with the idea of a "Chosen People"? Does the mere fact of being born Jewish grant us superiority over others, or must we work to earn and cultivate our Jewishness?

An important teaching attributed to Rabbi Akiva in the Mishnah[1] provides a thread to begin answering these questions:

> Beloved is Man for he was created in the image [of God]. Especially beloved is he for it was made known to him that he had been created in the image [of God], as it is said: "for in the image of God He made man."[2]
>
> Beloved are Israel in that they were called children to God. Especially beloved are they for it was made known to them that they are called children of God, as it is said: "you are children to Havayah your God."[3]
>
> Beloved are Israel in that a precious vessel was given to them. Especially beloved are they for it was made known to them that a precious vessel, with which the world had been created, was given to them, as it is said: "for I give you good instruction; forsake not My teaching."[4]

1. *Avot* 3:14.
2. Genesis 9:6.
3. Deuteronomy 14:1.
4. Proverbs 4:2.

At first glance, Rabbi Akiva distinguishes between two valued levels of existence: first, being a man, a human created in the Divine image; and second, being "Israel." Yet the fact that the phrase "Beloved are Israel" appears twice hints at a deeper concept: two distinct levels within being part of Israel—being Jewish itself. Thus, the Mishnah points to three overall levels: being "human," being "Israel" of one kind, and being "Israel" of another kind.

What is the relationship between "Beloved is Man" and "Beloved are Israel"? And what distinguishes the two levels of "Israel"?

## CREATED IN THE DIVINE IMAGE

The statement "Beloved is Man, for he was created in the image [of God]" highlights humanity's unique quality compared to all other creatures. While all other living beings are bound by their natural instincts, human beings were endowed at creation with the "Divine image"—an inner Godly quality that enables them to transcend personal inclinations and participate consciously in shaping and improving the world. This can be understood as a call for humans to let their intellectual and spiritual faculties govern their baser instincts and physical drives. This expectation applies to every human being, Jew or non-Jew alike. For a Jew, it aligns with the principle that "*derech eretz* [ethical conduct] precedes Torah"—basic human decency (or, as it's

colloquially called, being a *mentsch*) is a foundation and prerequisite for a life of *mitzvot*.

Is there a moment in the Jewish calendar that reflects this principle, a time when Jews are called to remember and strengthen it? It seems that this is embodied in *Rosh Hashanah*, as explained in Jewish tradition. *Rosh Hashanah* is the day on which, according to the sages, Adam, the first human, was created. In this sense, it serves as the birthday of Mankind. Moreover, it is traditionally understood that on this day, all human beings are judged. And what is the essence of this judgment? Simply put, it is whether they allowed the spiritual side of their being to guide them, or their lower, animalistic side.

## BEING CALLED "CHILDREN OF GOD"

The second level, "Beloved are Israel, for they are called children of God," focuses specifically on the Jewish people and expresses the special bond between them and God. The Jewish people are described in the Torah as "children" of God, rather than mere subjects, as it says, "You are children of *Havayah* your God."[5] The relationship between a parent and child is direct and continuous—the child is born from the parent, reflects their traits, and represents them. However, alongside the deep closeness between a parent and child comes higher expectations and demands from the parent.

Where does this elevated status of Israel originate? It is traditionally understood that this closeness stems from the patriarchs of the Jewish people: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The patriarchs were the first to rise above the idolatrous worldview of their time and discover or develop monotheism—the recognition of one transcendent Creator and the possibility of serving Him directly and personally. By serving God with total devotion, the patriarchs forged an unbreakable bond with Him, a bond passed down to their descendants. In essence, because the patriarchs took a special interest in God, He in turn takes a special interest in them and their descendants, preserving an intimate parent-child connection.

This concept is also reflected in the Jewish calendar, specifically in the festival of *Pesach* or Passover. God's willingness to intervene in history and redeem the Israelites from Egypt, "a nation from within a nation," demonstrates His special love for them and His investment in their future. Passover aligns with *Rosh Hashanah* in that it serves as the national "birthday" of the Jewish people, just as *Rosh Hashanah* is the universal birthday of humanity.

## GIVEN A PRECIOUS VESSEL

The phrase "Beloved are Israel, for they were given a precious vessel" represents the pinnacle of this teaching, pointing to an additional level of being "Israel." Here, the focus is not on an innate quality of the Jewish people or on the merit inherited from the patriarchs, but on something *acquired*: the giving of the Torah. The fact that the Torah was given to Israel—described here as a "precious vessel," something so cherished that even the angels in heaven covet it—grants them an additional level of distinction.

5. Deuteronomy 14:1.

What does this second level of "Israel" signify? Simply put, while the first "Israel" reflects an inborn trait, Jewishness as a national identity, the second "Israel" reflects an acquired trait—Jewishness as a way of life and thought, achieved through the Torah. Being born Jewish is one thing, but a person born Jewish fulfills only the first and most basic level of their Jewish identity, that of "Beloved are Israel, for they are called children of God." To realize the second level, one must embrace the precious vessel given to Israel and adhere to it—"Do not forsake My Torah."

This final element of the teaching is reflected in the Jewish calendar on *Shavu'ot*, the festival of the giving of the Torah—the day on which we received the "precious vessel through which the world was created." Unlike *Rosh Hashanah* and Passover, *Shavu'ot* does not commemorate a "birth" but rather a wedding: the sealing of a marital covenant between the congregation of Israel, represented as the bride, and God, represented as the groom (with the "precious vessel," the Torah, serving as the wedding ring). This wedding could also be seen as a kind of second birth: the Jewish people must transcend their ordinary existence and be reborn, transforming from a nation existing independently into one capable of serving as a "home" for God in this world. This is the second "Beloved are Israel."

Since the revelation at Sinai, the Torah has been our inheritance, as it says, "Moses commanded us the Torah, an inheritance of the congregation of Jacob" (Deuteronomy 33:4). Yet the fact that the Torah is our inheritance does not negate the need for every generation—and every individual—to integrate it into their lives through their own efforts. To complement this verse, the sages taught: "Prepare yourself to study Torah, for it is not an inheritance to you."[6] While the generation that received the Torah at Sinai may have passed it down to their descendants, it was passed down as a closed book, one that each individual has the choice to open or leave sealed. This second level of "Israel" remains forever an acquired status, one that must be earned through the course of one's life.

## WE ARE ALL CONVERTS

The above analysis helps us address an additional profound question tied to the revelation at Mount Sinai: Why do two figures who were not born as part of the Jewish people and were not present at the Exodus from Egypt take center stage in this pivotal moment? We are referring of course to Yitro (Jethro), after whom the Torah portion describing the Giving of the Torah and the Ten Commandments is named, and *Ruth*, whose story is read on *Shavu'ot*. Yitro and Ruth are the archetypal converts in the Bible—Yitro the convert of the Pentateuch and Ruth, the convert in the Writings.

The fact that the Jewish people accept converts, integrating them fully into the nation, is well-known, as is the commandment to love and welcome the convert. However, the prominent presence of these two converts at such an "intimate" moment between the Jewish people and God—so much so that the entire celebratory occasion seems to

6. *Avot* 2:12.

unfold in their shadow—is striking, to say the least.[7]

Understanding the revelation at Sinai as a leap from the first level of "Israel" to the second offers an answer to this puzzle. The placement of these two converts at the heart of the Sinai experience is a reminder that, when standing before the Torah, *even native Jews are considered converts*. The shift that the Torah demands—from ordinary, free lives (as opposed to the slavery of Egypt) to a life of faith and Divine service through Torah and *mitzvot*—is so profound and transformative that it effectively "resets" the distinction between someone born Jewish, for whom the Torah is a national heritage, and someone born a non-Jew, who chooses to voluntarily embrace the Torah. Indeed, a convert has an advantage over someone born Jewish: *they are entirely free of the illusion that being born Jewish absolves them of the need to actively cultivate their Jewish identity*, a misconception that prevents many Jews from fully delving into the depths of Torah.

It turns out, therefore, that the third level in the teaching, "Beloved are Israel, for they were given a precious vessel," comes full circle to the first level, "Beloved is Man, for he was created in the divine image." To fully realize our Jewishness, we must return to our shared humanity. We all stand outside the gates of Torah, as it were, and must take an active step to enter. In the face of the Torah, we are all, in essence, converts.

7 The Hebrew names Yitro (יִתְרוֹ) and Ruth (רות) are instantaneously recognizable as being very close to the word Torah (תוֹרָה), as both contain its first and main three letters (תור). Upon closer inspection we notice something even more striking: the additional letter here, Yitro's *yud* (י), equals two times *hei* (ה ה), meaning that Yitro and Ruth together equal exactly two times Torah (תורה תורה). This is apt as Yitro and Ruth are the archetypal converts of the two main pillars making up the Torah—the Written Torah and the Oral Torah (as its roots lie in the Nach, the Prophets and Writings portions of the Bible), respectively. The fact that Yitro's name contains both the Written Torah's *hei* and the Oral Torah's *hei* is symbolic of the tenet that all elements of the Oral Torah are already seeded in the Written Torah.

STORY

# REBBE TZVI ELIMELECH OF DINOV:

## The Man with Two Brains

*Rebbe Tzvi Elimelech Shapira of Dinov (Dynów, Poland) was born in 5543 (1783) to his father, Rabbi Pesach Langsam, a descendant of Rabbi Shimshon of Ostropolye, and to his mother, Rachel Mina, a niece of Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk and Rebbe Zusha of Anipoli. Rebbe Tzvi Elimelech married Rebbetzin Chana Mindel, daughter of Rabbi Shmuel of Tchitch (Czudec, Poland). He was a disciple of the Seer of Lublin and Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Rimanov, and later of the Maggid of Kozhnitz and the Ohev Yisrael (Rebbe Avraham Yehoshua Heshel) of Apta. He had close connections with the disciples of the Seer of Lublin's study hall, particularly Rebbe Naftali Tzvi of Ropshitz and Rabbi Tzvi Hirsh of Ziditchov. He served as rabbi in many towns, worked to spread the teachings of Kabbalah, and fought fiercely against the followers of the so-called Enlightenment. His renowned work is the book, Bnai Yissachar. He passed away in Dinov on the 18th of Tevet, 5601 (1841) at the age of 58, leaving three sons and three daughters. His son Rabbi David filled his place in Dinov.*

A certain woman used to come regularly to the Bnei Yissachar to pour out her troubles and ask for the tzaddik's blessing, which he would bestow upon her with abundance. After his passing, the woman began to travel to the Tzemach Tzaddik, Rebbe Menachem Mendel of Vizhnitz.

When she arrived for the first time at the Tzemach Tzaddik and presented him with her kvittel and pidyon (note with request and monetary offering), the tzaddik blessed her with all good things. The woman said, "Ah, this is not like the previous Rebbe...." The tzaddik asked her what she meant, and she told him, "With the previous Rebbe, everything I asked of him, he wrote in his notebook!"

It is known that tzaddikim said about the Bnai Yissachar that he had two brains, and therefore he could write Torah innovations while simultaneously speaking with people and listening attentively to their requests. The woman, who saw him listening attentively while writing in his notebook, was sure that he was recording her words. Once there was even an incident where a woman came to him again after a long time. She reminded him of her previous words and asked, "Would the Rebbe please look in his notebook, where he wrote when I was here last time."

***

The Rebbe of Sanz-Klausenburg related: I heard from the elders of our city (Munkatch), when the Bnei Yissachar was the head of the rabbinical court in the city and district, one of his followers brought him a prescription written for a sick person by the local doctor. The man came to the Bnai Yissachar to ask whether his relative should take the medicine. The tzaddik examined the prescription and replied, "It still lacks one of the medicinal ingredients that needs to be mixed in." The chasid told this to the doctor, and upon hearing this, the doctor remembered that indeed he had forgotten to include an essential ingredient in the prescription.

Shocked and amazed, the doctor ran to the study hall and found Rebbe Tzvi Elimelech after prayer. The doctor asked him, "Please tell me, Rebbe, how did you know that I had omitted an ingredient in the medicine?" The doctor could not understand in any way that the Bnei Yissachar knew this through Divine inspiration. In fact, Rebbe Tzvi Elimelech once related that he had studied the wisdom of human anatomy from the books of the sages based on their discussion of man's form. And when they asked him how he could prescribe medicine to the sick who came to him, he replied, "This I know from when I make the blessing *Asher Yatzar*" [recited after relieving oneself].

Why did the *tzaddik* call his book "Bnei Yissachar?" Once he asked his Rebbe, the *Choizeh* (the Seer) of Lublin, why he feels a special illumination during the days of Chanukah. The *Choizeh* answered him that the source of his soul is from the tribe of Yissachar, and as a son of the tribe of Torah scholars, he sat in the court that established the festival of Chanukah and its commandments. The sons of the tribe of Yissachar were known for their special sense for the secret of intercalation and setting the calendar, as it says in Chronicles, "And among the children of Yissachar, men that had understanding of the times."[1] The Bnai Yissachar also engaged in astronomy, and even wrote a book on this wisdom, but there is an additional layer here: the unification between the sun and the moon embodied in the Jewish calendar appears in the story in the tzaddik's ability to simultaneously grasp lofty Torah innovations, represented by the sun, and the troubles of simple Jews, represented by the moon.

In the second story too, the Bnai Yissachar is able to maintain a hold on two issues simultaneously: on the one hand, he is a tzaddik, innovating Torah insights and leading a congregation. On the other hand, he is a doctor, astronomer, and expert in anatomy. This uniqueness invites us to contemplate a challenging question once posed by the Mishnaic sage Plimo in the study hall of Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi: What is the ruling for a person with two heads? Is he obligated to put tefillin on both heads?

We will not elaborate on Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi's harsh response to the question, nor on the explanation of his dispute with

1. 1 Chronicles 12:33.

Plimo.[2] Here we will only say that the two heads represent two perspectives on reality: the first is supernal consciousness, according to which "there is nothing besides God." And the second is lower consciousness, which recognizes the world as a creation that feels itself to be separate from God but still nullifies itself to the Divine source that brings it into being, something from nothing, at every moment.

According to the Arizal, Plimo was the reincarnation of Laban, Jacob's father-in-law and Naval the Carmelite. In light of this, Plimo seeks to rectify the possessiveness and pride that characterized these two Biblical figure by insisting on the existence and importance of reality, and in his stubbornness that it is possible, and even desirable, to hold both perspectives together: to perceive reality as a significant "other" relating to its Creator from without, while at the same time maintaining an honest relationship with the Creator, one that is full of humility and self-nullification.

## DUALITY

When speaking of a double head in one person, it is impossible not to recall the Tanya, which emphasizes the battle between two souls in every person. Indeed, besides the great admiration the Bnai Yissachar held for the Tanya, he also strongly supported its words about the qualifications needed to successfully elevate "improper thoughts." Although many Polish tzaddikim (including Rebbe Tzvi Elimelech's own teachers!) did believe the elevation of such thoughts to be relevant for every individual, the Bnai Yissachar argued that the Alter Rebbe, author of the Tanya, was correct, and as long as the battle of souls is ongoing within a person, he cannot elevate his foreign thoughts.

The Bnei Yissachar also demanded a double head in Torah study: He interprets the verse "Then you will return and discern... between him who serves God and him who does not serve Him"[3] as addressing scholars of Torah. One who serves God is one who studies both the Talmud and the Zohar, while one who does not serve Him studies only the Talmud.[4]

The dualistic approach adopted by the Bnei Yissachar in these and other matters is reflected even in the pronunciation of his name. While the common custom is to pronounce his name, Yisachar, the Rebbe used to articulate both the sinn letters as, Yisaschar. By way of allusion, it is customary to interpret that one sinn belongs to this world and the other to the World to Come, which is why only one is pronounced in our present reality. But we offer an alternate interpretation: the two sinn's allude to two types of understanding known as the Supernal Mother (אימא עילאה) and Comprehension (תבונה).

The higher understanding, Supernal Mother, is included in wisdom (it is actually the understanding within wisdom), represents the ability to innovate

2. For more see our article, *Shnei Roshim* in the Hebrew volume, *Adamah, Shamayim, Tehom*.

3. Malachi 3:18.

4. Note that this agrees with the Tanya's interpretation of the verse, because one who studies the inner dimension of Torah is filled with desire and will, and consequently studies more than his habit.

deep Torah insights in Kabbalistic secrets. This is indeed an understanding more relevant to the World to Come where one rises above bodily needs. No less important, however, is the lower understanding, comprehension, which descends to the depths of the heart, to advise a person in his sorrow: "Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water, but a man of comprehension will draw it out."[5] Though this certainly pertains to our present reality, comprehension is similar to higher understanding because it too seeks to reveal that which is concealed, as it were, illuminating the present with the precious light of the depths of the heart.

5. Proverbs 20:5.

# PARTZUF
# "SHE SAW THAT HE WAS GOOD"

might-gevurah גְּבוּרָה
vitality

loving-kindness-chessed חֶסֶד
light

beauty-tiferet תִּפְאֶרֶת
beautiful

acknowledgment-hod הוֹד
redeemer

victory-netzach נֶצַח
prophet

foundation-yesod יְסוֹד
circumcised

Kingdom-malchut מַלְכוּת
name

Moses was born in the Torah portion *Shemot*, and the first thing the Torah tells us about him, which sets up the background for the rest of his life (following the dictum, "everything follows the inception") is that when his mother, Yocheved saw him, "She saw that he was good."[1] Naturally, every mother loves her child, believes he is good and beautiful, and sees him as the best gift that God has given her. When the Torah goes out of its way to note that Yocheved, Moses' mother, saw "that he was good," this has special significance; there is a special "goodness" found in Moses that pertains specifically to his pivotal role as the Giver of the Torah and the Redeemer of Israel, "He is the first redeemer, and he is the final redeemer."[2]

In the words of the *Ramban* on this verse:

> It is known that all women love their children, whether beautiful or not, and all would hide them to the best of their ability. There is no need for proof of the claim that he was good. Rather, this goodness was something new that she saw in him, and she thought a miracle would occur, and he would be saved.

Let us delve into seven interpretations of what Moses' special "goodness" might be

1. Exodus 2:2. Most of the interpretations appearing in this *partzuf* are cited in *Sotah* 12a and *Shemot Rabbah* 1:20.

2. *Shemot Rabbah* 2:4. *Zohar* 1:253a. *Sha'ar HaPesukim*, *Vayechi*. *Torah Or*, *Misphatim*, beginning of.

and explain how they correspond to one of the seven attributes of the heart, from loving-kindness to kingdom.

## LOVING-KINDNESS (*CHESED*): "THE HOUSE WAS FILLED WITH LIGHT"

Rashi quotes the words of the sages: "'That he was good'—when he was born, the entire house was filled with light." This teaching arises from a connection between the "good" mentioned regarding Moses and the first "good"[3] mentioned in the first day of Creation: "God saw the light, that it was good."

The *Kli Yakar* strengthens this connection by highlighting the second part of the verse about Moses: "She saw him, that he was good, and she hid him for three months." This echoes the teaching of the sages that the words, "God saw the light, that it was good" means that the light was "good to be sequestered for the righteous in the future," i.e., God hid the light, just as Yocheved hid Moses.

We connect this interpretation with loving-kindness, the first attribute of the heart, because the first day of Creation, referred to as "one day," corresponds to the attribute of loving-kindness. Furthermore, like the light created on the first day, which is meant to fill Creation with goodness, so the birth of Moses came to illuminate the world with the light of Torah. Illuminating reality with light is the essence of the *sefirah* of loving-kindness.

## MIGHT (*GEVURAH*): VITALITY AND ENDURANCE

Most commentators (starting with Targum Yonatan) explain that the special quality revealed by "she saw that he was good" pertains to the fact that Moses was born after an incomplete seven months of pregnancy (i.e., six months and one day from conception). Because of this, Yocheved was able to hide him for three months without the Egyptians suspecting she had already given birth.[4] Still, there was a concern that he might be a premature infant whose organs were not fully developed. Yocheved, therefore, examined him to ensure that his body was complete, his hair and nails fully formed (signs of a fully developed newborn), and she saw that "he was good"—fully developed, healthy, whole, and viable.

The *Ha'amek Davar* adds that, naturally, a child born to an elderly woman is usually weak. The wonder here was that Moses—born to his mother at the age of 130, after her youth was renewed when Amram remarried her—was robust and healthy.

This interpretation, emphasizing Moses' strength and vigor, corresponds to the *sefirah* of might.

Let us add that *Emek HaMelech* states that the phrase, "that he was good" (כִּי טוֹב הוּא) serves as a rectification for the verse, "The woman saw that the tree was good for consumption" (כִּי טוֹב הָעֵץ לְמַאֲכָל), describing Eve before she ate from the Tree of Knowledge, since both use the

3. Genesis 1:3. In the Torah's account of Creation, the word "good" appears 7 times and it would be appropriate to draw a correspondence between them and the seven interpretations regarding Moses' goodness, we will review in this model. In other words, Moses—and so too, every Jew, given that we all have a spark of Moses in us—contains all the goodness of creation.

4. Rashi on v. 3.

same idiom "that … was good." The power of Yocheved to rectify Eve's behavior is further emphasized when we note that Eve was 130 years old when she gave birth to Seth—the foundation of humanity after the death of Abel—and so too was Yocheved 130 years old when she gave birth to Moses.

Seth, who was born "instead of Abel," is the spiritual root of Moses, whose name (**מֹשֶׁה**) is an acronym for his reincarnations: *"Moses Seth Abel"* (מֹשֶׁה שֵׁת הֶבֶל). The *Arizal* goes further and states that Moses' goodness is attributed to his being a soul from the root of Abel, entirely untainted by any admixture of Cain's lineage. Furthermore, Yocheved's rejuvenation at the age of 130 resulted from the soul of Eve being impregnated within her when she reached the same age.

From this we may derive a general principle regarding the concept of the "impregnation of souls" (*ibur)* in Kabbalah: when a soul is impregnated within a person, not only does the individual identify with the new soul, but they also experience physical and spiritual rejuvenation, as if born anew.

## BEAUTY (*TIFERET*): BEAUTIFUL APPEARANCE

Many commentators interpret the adjective "good" in the context of a newborn to mean beautiful—good in form and appearance. Another example in the Torah where "good" describes physical appearance is found with Rebeccah, who is described as "very good to look upon"[5] (טוֹבַת מַרְאֶה).

Beauty, naturally, is associated with the *sefirah* of beauty, which embodies harmony, balance, and splendor.

## VICTORY (*NETZACH*): WORTHY OF PROPHECY

Though we typically refer to all six *sefirot* from loving-kindness to foundation (and sometimes even include kingdom) as the emotional attributes, strictly speaking the emotional attributes are only the first three—loving-kindness, might, and beauty. With regard to them, Moses' goodness was interpreted as some quality inherent to Moses himself—his radiance, strength, and beauty. However, regarding victory and acknowledgment, the goodness takes on a more utilitarian meaning: not just being "good" but being "good for."

One interpretation that appears in the Midrash, is that Yocheved intuitively perceived that her newborn son was "worthy of prophecy." Moses is not merely a prophet; he is the father and teacher of all prophets. His prophecy is especially clear (he uses the idiom "this is what God said"), and he is the Giver of the Torah.[6]

5. Genesis 24:16.

6. The *Ba'al HaTurim* writes that according to a tradition he received (which is not the standard practice today), the word "good" (טוֹב) in our phrase, "that he was good," has five crowns (tags) written above its letters: two on the *tet*, one on the *vav*, and two on the *beit*. These five crowns correspond to the Five Books of the Torah that Moses was destined to receive.
The form of the crowns is like small letters *vav* (vertical lines), as emphasized by the Arizal. However, the Sages refer to them as *zayinin*, i.e., miniature letters *zayin*. The question of whether each crown is a *vav* or a *zayin* becomes significant when calculating the *gematria* of the crowns. If we calculate each crown as a vav, whose value is 6, then the five crowns above the word "good" equal 30, the

This special quality is emphasized in the saying,

> Let the good come and receive the good from the Good to benefit the good.
>
> "Let the good come" refers to Moses, as it is written, "She saw that he was good."
>
> "And receive the good" refers to the Torah, as it is written, "For I have given you a good teaching."
>
> "From the Good" refers to the Holy Blessed One, as it is written, "God is good to all."
>
> "To benefit the good" refers to the people of Israel, as it is written, "God will benefit the good."[7]

This interpretation corresponds to the *sefirah* of victory considered the source of prophecy, as noted in the introduction to *Tikkunei Zohar*.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT (*HOD*): WORTHY OF REDEMPTION

Another utilitarian interpretation of "good" is that Yocheved saw Moses as fitting and destined to be the Redeemer of Israel—"the savior of the Jewish people." Miriam, Moses' sister, prophesied that "My mother is destined to give birth to a son who will save Israel."[8] Even Pharaoh's astrologers, from their impure perspective, recognized that the day of Moses' birth was auspicious for the emergence of Israel's redeemer (and this was likely widely known). When Moses was born, his mother saw that he was indeed the child worthy of this mission.

An example of a redeemer being referred to as "good" can be found in the Book of Ruth, where the relative who could potentially marry Ruth and redeem her is referred to as "Tov," "If Tov will redeem you, let him redeem."[9] A redeemer in this context is one who marries a widow, especially after her husband's passing, thereby "redeeming" her. Similarly, the Redeemer of Israel is one who elevates the Congregation of Israel (the root of all its souls). In fact, the Zohar refers to Moses as "the husband of the princess," a synonym for the Congregation of Israel.

How is all this related to the *sefirah* of acknowledgment? In Sefer Yetzirah, we find one of the most interesting and early psychological topics: the transpositions (תְּמוּרוֹת), which correspond in order to the 7 *sefirot* from loving-kindness to kingdom[10]:

> The transpose of wisdom is folly; the transpose of wealth is poverty; the transpose of seed is desolation; the transpose of life is death; the transpose of autonomy is slavery; the transpose of peace is war; the transpose of grace is ugliness.

The fifth is thus, "the transpose of autonomy is slavery," when people are not autonomous (internally as well as externally), they fall into a state of slavery. The *sefirah* of acknowledgment is sometimes regarded as the power of charisma, which in many ways is a measure of an individual or a group's autonomy and self-worth. When autonomy is lost, individuals and societies fall into a state of slavery and dependence. It was Moses'

value of the word "that" (**כִּי**), in the phrase, "that he was good" (**כִּי** טוֹב הוּא).

7. *Menachot* 53b.

8. *Megillah* 14a.

9. Ruth 3:13.

10. *Sefer Yetzirah* 4:3.

efforts as Redeemer that restored the *sefirah* of acknowledgment for the people as a group and as individuals.

## FOUNDATION (*YESOD*): BORN CIRCUMCISED

The sages interpret "she saw that he was good" to mean that Moses was born circumcised. One who is whole and perfected in the sanctity of the covenant (*brit*), corresponding to the rectification of the *sefirah* of foundation, is considered a righteous individual—a *tzaddik*—and it is said of the *tzaddik*, "Say of the righteous, that he is good."[11]

Someone born circumcised is inherently pure and good in all aspects of their soul. They possess no negative desires—neither for food nor for immorality—and all their traits and inclinations are naturally good, as it is written, "The cravings of the righteous are only good."[12]

## KINGDOM (*MALCHUT*): A GOOD NAME

Some interpret the verse "she saw that he was good" to mean that Moses' original name was either *Tov* or *Tuvia*,[13] following two opinions in the sages. All this was before he was called Moses by Pharaoh's daughter.

Names, whose essence is to reflect a person's relationship with their surroundings, corresponds to the *sefirah* of kingdom, as demonstrated for instance in the second silent verse of the Shema, "Blessed be the Name of His kingdom, forever and ever."

## REVEALING ALL THE GOOD IN EVERY JEW

The seven interpretations collectively form a complete representation of Moses' virtuous qualities. Summarizing each interpretation into a single word, we can say that they are: light (**אור**), existence-viability (**קיום**), beauty (**יפי**), prophet (**נביא**), redeemer (**גואל**), circumcised (**מהול**), name (**שם**). The sum of all seven is 987 (a love, or Fibonacci number), the product of God's Name, *Ekyeh* (**אהיה**), the Name revealed to Moses in *parashat Shemot*, and "that it is good" (**כי טוב**). Since 987 divides by 7, the average value of each

11. Isaiah 3:10.

12. Proverbs 11:23.

13. **Tov (good)** refers to *"good for others,"* emphasizing *mitzvot* between a person and their fellow human beings. But **Tuvia (**טוּבִיָה**), which literally means "the good of God"** suggests the good relative to God emphasizing *mitzvot* between a person and God. From a deeper perspective: *Tov* signifies **innate goodness**, a natural, flow of goodness, stemming from the state known as "natural consciousness"—a state of absolute self-nullification to God. This represents an innate awareness of one's inherent Divine essence. *Tuvia* however, represents **conscious goodness**, when a person acts with the awareness that all goodness in him is not innate, but a gift from God. This distinction is addressed in length in our Hebrew volumes *Lev LaDa'at* and *Muda'ut Tivit*. If we wish to combine the two, we can say that in interactions between a person and others, innate goodness (*tov*) is required. But in one's relationship with God, conscious awareness (*Tuvia*) that the good one possesses is a gift from God is essential. Thus, the two opinions presented by the sages complement one another. In addition, the sum of Tov (**טוב**) and Tuvia (**טוביה**) is 49, or 7 squared, indicating there inherent connection. 49 is also the value of "a good heart" (**לב טוב**), the internal division of the 49 days of the Counting of the Omer into 32 days until *Lag BaOmer* and 17 days from and including *Lag BaOmer* until *Shavu'ot*.

word is 141, or *mitzvah* (מִצְוָה).

These seven qualities of goodness are characteristic both of Moses, the first redeemer of Israel, and subsequently in the "extension of Moses into every generation."[14] Moses also appears as a spark within every Jew, and thus it is the task of every one of us to perfect and reveal all these interpretations of goodness.

Let us quickly review how each interpretation can manifest itself in us and our lives:

- **Filling the house with light** reflects the revelation of the Jewish soul.
- Being vigorous and full of life is expressed in our readiness to perform our life's mission. **Vitality** means that we should not put off pursuing our life's mission until we reach some imaginary perfection such as learning the entire Talmud or fully refining our character. Life simply does not wait.
- The **beauty** of every Jew lies in their unique charisma and special qualities.
- Every Jew is fit for **prophecy**, whose goal is to bring the word of God, the Torah, to the world through every means of expression.
- Every Jew is worthy of being a **redeemer**, helping others rise out of the mud they may be stuck in.
- Every Jew is **born circumcised**, meaning they are capable of being free of negative desires.

The **name** of every Jew is *good*, as every Jew deserves to be crowned with the "crown of a good name" (*keter shem tov*) and be known as "a good Jew." Though this idiom was used in the past in Yiddish (*a guter Yid*) to refer to a tzaddik, it being "a good Jew" means that we should all strive to take a leadership role in guiding our family and friends and not wait for others to take responsibility.

14. Based on *Tikkunei Zohar* 113a.

Harav Ginsburgh's
**Nefesh Academy of Torah Psychology**
www.thenefesh.org
Join the thousands who have benefitted from a
Torah path to psychological and mental well-being and prosperity