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

בס"ד

Wonders

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Both the Left and the Right have a "Thou" they embrace and an "Other" they shun. How can this help heal the political divide?

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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**

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THE THOU AND THE OTHER: HEALING THE POLITICAL DIVIDE

It is commonly said that during times of war, our divisive disagreements fade, hearts unite against a common enemy, and we remember that "we are all brothers."

To an extent this is true. But conflict has a flipside: It also exposes and emphasizes our differences. Sometimes, coming closer together only makes us more aware of how sharply our elbows jab at each other.

AN ANCIENT DIVIDE

The Jewish political left-right divide was not born yesterday. Its roots trace to the ancient Biblical split into the kingdoms of Judah and Israel. Of the two, Judah was more "traditional," more faithful to Torah law, while Israel was more influenced by the surrounding nations and their idol worship. The kingdom of *Judah* can thus be seen as the archetypal forefather of today's Jewish *right wing*, which is more religious and nationalistic, while *Israel* can be seen as the archetypal forefather of today's *left wing*, which is more secular and seeks to be "a people like all nations."

The correspondence between current political divides and the ancient kingdoms appears in both their names and locations. The modern right's closeness to traditional *Judaism* echoes the name "*Judah*," while the modern left's self-identification as primarily "*Israeli*" echoes the name "*Israel*." Additionally, since ancient maps were drawn with East at top (hence "orientation," meaning East-based navigation), Judah, being the southern kingdom, was literally located on the right side of the map, while Israel, the northern kingdom, was literally on the left!

The left-right divide thus represents an eternal inner struggle within the Jewish people. Healing it will rectify a rift dating back to Biblical times.

MY THOU IS YOUR OTHER

Can this rift ever be healed? Let us suggest one way in which this Messianic goal can be attained.

We'll begin with a simple yet profound insight. Everywhere in the world, both the right wing and the left wing can be said to have two types of people which exist outside of their immediate circle: the *Other*—a group from whom they feel estranged, view from afar, and tend to turn into a "straw man" (i.e. see in simplistic, easily countered terms); and the *Thou*—a group they see as potential allies, eagerly engage with, and judge favorably. Each group sees its Other as a faceless "object" and turn away from it, and its Thou as a well-meaning "subject" whose face they seek.

Broadly speaking, for the right wing, the Other is the *foreigner*—people belonging to other nations or countries. The right tends toward patriotism and nationalism,

and views people from other nations as lying outside their sphere of camaraderie and responsibility. For the Jewish right, especially its more religious subset, the Other is the *goy*, the non-Jew and, but more specifically, the Muslim, Arab, or so-called "Palestinian." These are seen as actual or potential threats who at the very least should be treated with suspicion.

What about the right wing's Thou? These are their fellow compatriots who sit at the other side of the aisle—the leftists. The leftists don't share any of the rightists' values, but because they both belong to the same people, the rightists wish to win their hearts, to get them to see they're on one side. For the religious right especially, left wing Jews may have distanced themselves from traditional Judaism, but they remain something like family with whom one should have *shlom bayit*, domestic peace. This explains the various national "bridging," "dialogue," and "reconciliation" initiatives prevalent in the religious right.

So much for the Other and Thou of the right. What about those of the left? This is where it gets fascinating. It turns out that when we cross the political aisle the situation completely reverses: *The right's Other becomes the left's Thou, and vice versa*.

To elaborate, the left's Thou are the foreigners—the gentile in general and the Arab in particular. In other words, the exact ones who serve as the right's Other. For the Jewish Left, the Arabs who call themselves Palestinian aren't just regional neighbors with whom we must live in peace, but an indigenous nation we've wronged and owe a moral debt to. Hence the Left's eagerness for Arab-Jewish encounters and other endeavors aimed at overcoming national borders and racial prejudices.

The left's Other is likewise an iteration of the right's Thou: It is the Jews sitting across the aisle, which in this case are the rightists themselves, especially the religious ones. Whether it's the national religious community harboring "lunatic" Messianic aspirations, the "parasitic" non-military-serving Haredis, or any of their political enablers, from the left's perspective they are the main rivals. The left isn't just appalled by the rightists' views (that goes in the other direction too), but it's *ashamed* of it. It feels that it if it weren't for the right wing, all of Israel's problems would have been solved.

One telling way in which the Other/Thou dynamic manifests is in how each side *reacts to harsh statements about their respective groups*. Each finds it relatively easy to hear and even utter harsh words about their Other but is distraught at hearing their Thou denigrated. For example, a Jewish religious rightist might not take much offense at hateful statements made about Arabs, but would object to denigrating fellow Jews. Conversely, many leftists have little issue with harsh statements made about, say, religious settlers, but are horrified by even hints of racist speech about Arabs.

Such generalizations tend toward oversimplification and miss many exceptions or nuances.[1] But as

1 In particular, we've ignored here the tendency on parts of the right to "otherize" and denigrate the left in exactly the same way left "others" them. Another

generalizations go, we believe this one identifies an important pattern.

ALL ARE THOU, NONE ARE OTHER

How can we reconcile such mutually opposed worldviews? How can two systems that divide the world so differently find common ground?

The key lies in aspiring to *ultimately view everyone as a Thou*. Every person, whether near or far, Jew or non-Jew, friend or even foe, should be seen as bearing the mark of having been created in God's image, possessing a soul, and deserving dignity and respect.

In fact, the concept of the "Other," in Hebrew *acher*, stems from the Kabbalistic concept of *sitra achra*, the "Other Side"—a term for the realm of evil. To see someone as an Other means casting them into the realm of absolute, faceless evil. The true servant of God would avoid doing this to any person. The Other is only the *sitra achra* itself, while people, even wicked ones, remain human beings who at most have fallen under evil influence. What about enemies we have to fight or even annihilate, like the ancient Amalekites? Even then we should believe they *could* have chosen good, and indeed may still do so.[2]

Another Torah concept connected to seeing people as Others is *elokim acherim*—"other gods" or foreign idols. When we mark someone as an Other we turn them into a non-person, denying their Divine image. This suggests God didn't create them, implying someone or something else did, this resembles worshipping a false idol.

THOUING THE OTHER, ONE CIRCLE AT A TIME

The idea that we can view all people as Thous suggests a third path between the polar worldviews of the left and the right, one that sees both different Jews and non-Jews, including enemies, as fully human subjects. But how?

The key lies in recognizing that as embodied beings existing in space and time, we cannot regard all people as Thous in one breath. We need *gradation*—stages of growth enabling expansion from one sphere of identification to another. In other words, it's not enough to merely declare that both left and right possess elements of truth, or even to identify these elements; we must determine which worldview should precede the other.

The answer isn't difficult to discern. We exist within concentric rings of identity radiating outward from our immediate family. When advancing from ourselves to wider groups, the sequence becomes obvious: *Different members of our own nation should be regarded as a Thou before extending this view to other nations*. In other words, we should first follow the route of the right wing, and only then expand it to include the left.

This understanding of identity as concentric circles reveals the strengths

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detail we haven't addressed is that often, the left's depiction of the foreigner is a Thou conceals a hidden perception of them as primitive Others whose misdoings should be ignored or forgiven (a phenomenon known as the "soft bigotry of low expectations").

2 Maimonides ruled the Amalekites can repent and convert to Judaism (*Hilchot Issurei Biah* 12:17), and it is said that the descendants of Haman indeed did so and studied Torah in Bnei Brak (*Sanhedrin* 96b).

and weaknesses of both political outlooks. The right, it appears, better grasps the first circle of in-group loyalty, but tends to err in remaining there rather than advancing to the universal circle. The left is the opposite: It feels at home in the universal circle, but undervalues the closer, national circle of identity.

Judaism offers two terms which encapsulate these stages of expanding love. First comes *ahavat Yisrael*, the love of Israel—the ideal of loving every Jew indiscriminately, a special kind of love reserved only for fellow Jews. Then comes *ahavat ha-beriyot*—love of all human beings regardless of origin, a more basic love extending to all peoples.

THE ALL-ARE-OTHER TRAP

We mentioned above that aspiring to view every person as a Thou is the mark of the true Chasid. Ideally, the Jewish sector that would embody this approach would be the Haredis, the ultra-Orthodox, a great many of whom define themselves as Chasidim. Unfortunately, that is not quite the case.

While the true Chasid would indeed ultimately consider everyone as a Thou, there is also the type of the detached, insulated Haredi, who sadly tends to hold the opposite view—that everyone outside their circle is an Other. They may certainly treat fellow community members as Thous, even performing extraordinary charitable acts for them; but everyone on the outside, both non-Jews and different Jews, becomes an Other to avoid.

This approach has unfortunately permeated much of the Jewish world. Instead of carrying the torch of the All-Are-Thou revolution, the people touched by it paint themselves into an All-Are-Other corner. Here's hoping this mentality will dissolve and evolve into the vision of seeing all human beings as reflecting the One Divine Thou who created us all.

STORY

REBBE SHNEUR ZALMAN OF LIADI

Rabbi Shneur Zalman Boruchovitch of Liadi, author of the Tanya and the Shulchan Aruch HaRav, was born on the 18th of Elul 5505 (1745) to his father, Rabbi Baruch and his mother, Rivkah. Even in his childhood, he was known as a prodigy. In 5524 (1764), he became completely devoted to the Maggid of Mezritch, and after the Maggid's passing, was a disciple/colleague of Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk. When Rabbi Menachem Mendel made aliyah to the Land of Israel, in 1777, at his instruction, the Alter Rebbe became the leader of the chasidim in Russia and White Russia. He wrote the Tanya—one of the most foundational works of Chasidut in general—which in Chabad is described as the "Written Torah" of Chasidut. Following denunciations by his opponents, he was imprisoned twice, and the day of his first release, the 19th of Kislev 5559 (1798), was established as a holiday and Rosh HaShanah for Chasidut. On the 24th of Tevet 5573 (1813), while fleeing from Napolean's advancing armies, he passed away and was buried in the small Ukranian town of Haditch.

Once, the holy Maggid said to his disciples: "In heaven, there are complaints that you are not engaging enough in the revealed aspects of Torah." When the disciples heard these words, each took upon himself to increase his study of the Torah's revealed dimension. The holy author of the *Hafla'ah*, Rebbe Pinchas of Horowitz, may his merit protect us, took upon himself to write novellae on Talmudic topics and wrote the book *HaMakneh* on Tractate *Kiddushin*. The holy author of the *Tanya*, the Rebbe Shneur Zalman of Liadi, who was among the younger disciples took upon himself to write a composition on all four parts of the *Shulchan Aruch*. In the end, what we have published today is primarily from the first part, *Orach Chaim*. Most of what he wrote on *Yoreh De'ah, Choshen Mishpat* and *Even HaEzer* was lost in a fire. Finally, the holy Rabbi Avraham Kalisker, who had a great mind, and in his youth was a friend of the Vilna Gaon, of blessed memory took upon himself to answer anyone who had difficulty with any matter, whatever it may be.

Once, the *Ba'al HaTanya* approached Rabbi Avraham with a very deep and difficult question he had once heard from a great scholar. Rabbi Avraham immediately resolved his question with clarity and knowledge. When Rabbi Avraham finished speaking to the *Ba'al HaTanya*, he began to feel ill and weak until he did not have the strength to stand on his feet and needed to be laid in bed.

The holy Maggid went to visit him and asked: "Do you know why you fell ill?" Rabbi Avraham replied: "Because when I answered the *Ba'al HaTanya*'s deep question with clarity and knowledge, a thought of the subtlest pride passed through my mind, and for this I was punished from heaven." And by the power of confessing the Maggid that he knew and recognized his sin, his strength was restored and he rose from his bed.

(*Avodat Avodah, Vayishlach*)

After the collapse of Communism, a precious treasure was discovered in Russia: the original investigation file of the Alter Rebbe, from the time of his first imprisonment. The file documents twenty-three questions, with answers in Hebrew in the Rebbe's own handwriting.

Many details of the story were revealed then for the first time: the Czar's personal involvement in the case, instructions he gave to the team of investigators, and even the name of the informer, Hirsch ben David. One of the most interesting details is the content of the denunciation: contrary to the assumption that prevailed until the file was exposed, the accusation was not only about the Rebbe's connections with the Ottoman government. The Rebbe was indeed required to explain why he sent charity funds to the Land of Israel, but the most significant claim of the informer was actually about France: according to that informer, the Alter Rebbe, and the Chasidic movement in general, supported the French Revolution.

The revolution caused shockwaves throughout all the regimes in Europe, and the Czar himself dealt in his instructions only with this section. He ordered that he be notified immediately if the suspicion was confirmed. If that had happened, they would have, God forbid, immediately sentenced the Alter Rebbe to death. In point of fact, Rebbe Shneur Zalman abhorred the *kelipah* (impure husk) of French heresy, and even passed away fourteen years later while fleeing Napoleon; but since this was the informer's claim, there must be something to it. Let us also recall the Lubavitcher Rebbe's statement that the primary rectification leading to the Redemption is the rectification of France; its Hebrew name (**צָרְפַת**) permutes to spell "you will spread out"[3] (**פָּרַצְתָּ**).

3. Genesis 28:14.

Among the questions that dealt with this subject, was also one that focused on the *chasidim* traveling to the Rebbe. At that time, the Alter Rebbe had about eighteen thousand. He was asked by the interrogators: "Why do so many people come to you? Doesn't this indicate preparations for a rebellion, or for crowning you as their king?" To this, the Alter Rebbe replied, using the type of arguments the interrogators could relate to: "From all the people who travel to me, I receive no *nachas* (i.e.,

satisfaction). All the money they give is for charity, and even the purpose of their coming is not related to me personally, it is not meant to honor me. I receive them, because in our religion there is an obligation on one who knows to teach those who do not."

How is this related to our story? The obligation to teach is illustrated through the way the students chose to remove the accusation made in Heaven regarding the lack of engagement with the Torah's revealed dimension. They did so by writing compositions and answering questions. Their personal Torah learning was sufficient, and this was not the flaw that the Maggid sensed. The study of the revealed Torah that was requested from Heaven was a call to spread and reveal their learning so that others could make use of it as well.

The Alter Rebbe took another mission upon himself: clarifying the text of the Siddur. The text of our prayers is a complex and tumultuous subject. The Alter Rebbe chose to base the Siddur he wrote on the excurses and *kavanot* (intentions) of the Arizal, Rabbi Isaac Luria, the great Kabbalist of the 16th century.

The Mitteler Rebbe once asked his father: What is the reason for his special regard for the Arizal to the extent that he composed his Siddur specifically based on the Arizal's teachings and even subtitled it "according to the Arizal's Nusach [Formulation]?" The Alter Rebbe answered him: "Because I merited to see the Arizal while awake." The Mitteler Rebbe asked: "How, when, and where did this take place?" But the Alter Rebbe did not respond.

The Mitteler Rebbe very much wanted to know about this, and the question stayed with him. On various occasions, he asked his father to tell him where and when he saw the Arizal, but each time he evaded the question. A few years passed, and the Alter Rebbe asked his son to arrange something for him. The Mitteler Rebbe answered that if he would answer his question about the Arizal, he would do what he asked of him. The Alter Rebbe promised him, and after the matter was arranged, the Alter Rebbe related the following story to his son:

Once the group of the disciples of the Maggid of Mezritch was sitting at the Maggid's table. The Maggid asked them to start singing *chasidic* melodies so that afterwards he would say words of Torah. The Alter Rebbe was one of the youngest students, and sat at the end of the table. The Maggid sat at the head of the table. His chair was wide, and two people could sit on either side of him—but of course, none of the students sat in the Maggid's chair. After they sang a few melodies, silence fell, and they waited for the Maggid to begin saying Torah. And behold, the door opened, and a young man entered with an exceptionally majestic countenance, whose face radiated light. He immediately went to the head of the table, sat next

to the Maggid on his chair, and then the Maggid began to speak Torah. The entire time, the guest looked at the Maggid's face and listened intently. When the Maggid finished speaking, the man stood up with a joyful face and they saw that he agreed with the Maggid's words. He then exited the room.

Afterwards, the students began to sing until the Maggid also left. When the students began to leave, the Alter Rebbe approached them one by one and asked them if they knew who the man was. Each of the students answered him that they had not seen anyone enter or leave and had not noticed anything out of the ordinary. When the Alter Rebbe heard this, he decided to ask the Maggid himself about it. "Since only you saw," said the Maggid, "I will tell you that it was the Arizal himself in all his glory."

(From *Zichronam Livrachah*, the Maggid of Mezritch)

PARTZUF

FOUR AND SEVEN IDIOMS OF REDEMPTION

One of the foundations of the Seder are the four Idioms of Redemption (לשונות של גאולה): "I will free you… I will save you… I will redeem you… I will take you"[1] (וְהוֹצֵאתִי וְהִצַּלְתִּי וְגָאַלְתִּי וְלָקַחְתִּי). These four idioms are all verbs and are represented by the four cups of wine we drink during the Seder. There is an opinion in the Talmud that there is a fifth idiom, "I will bring you to the land"[2] (וְהֵבֵאתִי), which was reason for the *Maharal* (and others) to drink a fifth cup of wine at the Seder.

When only 4 or 5 Idioms of Redemption are identified (we will soon see that there are actually a couple more), they are corresponded to the letters of *Havayah* from below to above, as follows:[3]

letter of Havayah	Idiom of Redemption	World	
tip of yud	"I will bring" (וְהֵבֵאתִי)	Primordial Man (אָדָם קַדְמוֹן)	קוֹצוֹ שֶׁל י
yud	"I will take" (וְלָקַחְתִּי)	Emanation (אֲצִילוּת)	י
hei	"I will redeem" (וְגָאַלְתִּי)	Creation (בְּרִיאָה)	ה
vav	"I will save" (וְהִצַּלְתִּי)	Formation (יְצִירָה)	ו
hei	"I will free" (וְהוֹצֵאתִי)	Action (עֲשִׂיָּה)	ה

One way of explaining this correspondence is to note that the first three idioms appear together in the same verse (v. 6), while the fourth and the fifth idioms are in two separate verses (7 and 8). This exactly parallels the structure of the Worlds as described in the Kabbalah.

But in the fourth idiom's verse, there appear two additional verbs related to the goal of the Exodus: "I will be your God" (וְהָיִיתִי לָכֶם לֵא-לֹהִים) and "You shall know that I am *Havayah* your God" (וִידַעְתֶּם כִּי אֲנִי הוי' אֱ-לֹהֵיכֶם). The most important goal appears in the final verse of this group: "I will give it [the land] to you as a heritage, I am God" (**וְנָתַתִּי אֹתָהּ לָכֶם לְמוֹרָשָׁה אֲנִי הוי**'). Incidentally, the value of these words is exactly 2000, alluding to the Torah's first letter—a large

letter *beit*—whose value is said to be 2000, indicating that the purpose of creation is giving the Land of Israel to the Jewish people.[4]

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

The *Ra'aya Mehemna*, the part of the Zohar that focuses on the Torah's commandments, learns from this that the first commandment we received, even before leaving Egypt, is to know God, "You shall know that I am *Havayah* your God."[5] The Zohar explains that there are two aspects to knowing God, knowing God in general and knowing God specifically.[6] Without knowing God in a general manner, i.e., knowing that God is supreme above all creation and controls all, there is no point for Moses to perform miracles, because one might think that it is either a natural phenomenon or an act of sorcery.

This is very relevant in our age, because even though we have experienced so many miracles in the Land of Israel, as the Lubavitcher Rebbe would say, literally a miracle every moment, still they have not made the impact they should because they are not recognized as miracles. We are lacking even this general knowledge of God.

Still, the final goal is to know God not in this general sense, but in a particular and specific manner. The *Zohar* says that this last stage of knowing God was only attained at the end of the 40 years in the wilderness, when God gave us a knowing heart.[7] It learns this from the verse, "You shall know today and insert into your heart that *Havayah* is God in the heavens above and on the earth below, there is none other."[8] Bringing knowledge of God into the heart in this manner constitutes the particular aspect of the commandment to know God. The purpose of the entire Torah and the commandments is to bring a person to this particular knowledge.

KNOWING GOD ACCORDING TO THE RAMBAM

In his commentary on the Zohar, the Rebbe's father, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneersohn, writes that this verse we are studying, "You shall know that I am *Havayah* your God" constitutes a nearly explicit source for the Rambam's understanding of Torah. The Rambam begins his book with the words, "The foundation of all foundations and the pillar of wisdom is to know that there is a Primary Being who brought into being all existence."[9] This, as we said, is the commandment to have general knowledge of God. Then comes the entire *Mishneh Torah*, his central corpus detailing all the Torah's laws. But it all leads up to the closing words describing the Messianic era:

> In that era, there will be neither famine or war, envy, or competition for good will flow in abundance and all the delights will be freely available as dust. The occupation of the entire world will be solely to know God.
>
> Therefore, the Jews will be great sages and know the hidden matters, grasping the knowledge of their Creator according to the full extent of human potential, as Isaiah 11:9 states: "The world will be filled with the knowledge of God as the waters cover the ocean bed."[10]

The description he ends with is knowledge of God in the particular manner. The book begins with knowledge and ends with knowledge, but the opening refers to the *mitzvot* in the book are in between these two aspects of knowing God.

Rebbe Levik dwells on the following point. The *Raaya Meheimna* says a few words about what it means to know God in general and from these words we can understand some of what it means to know God in the particular. Just as in the *Rambam* after the first chapter where he acknowledges the need-to-know God in general he adds a few words about the workings of nature, which is still in a general manner, but allows us to understand how God appears in some of the particulars.

SEVEN IDIOMS OF REDEMPTION

Now, returning to the verses we have been discussing from the first reading of *Va'eira*, since they contain altogether 7 verbs or "idioms" of redemption, we can say that there are 7 stages to the redemption (not just 4 or 5, as normally enumerated). When only 4 or 5 stages are identified, they are corresponded to the letters of *Havayah* from below to above.[11] But now if we consider 7 stages of redemption, we should correspond them to the emotive powers, from above to below:

might-gevurah גְּבוּרָה
"I will save" (**וְהִצַּלְתִּי**)

loving-kindness-chessed חֶסֶד
"I will free" (**וְהוֹצֵאתִי**)

beauty-tiferet תִּפְאֶרֶת
"I will redeem" (**וְגָאַלְתִּי**)

acknowledgment-hod הוֹד
"I will be" (**וְהָיִיתִי**)

victory-netzach נֶצַח
"I will take" (**וְלָקַחְתִּי**)

foundation-yesod יְסוֹד
"You will know" (**וִידַעְתֶּם**)

kingdom-malchut מַלְכוּת
"I will bring" (**וְהֵבֵאתִי**)

Let us spend a few moments explaining this model. "I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians" is the essence of the Exodus and demonstrates God's loving-kindness towards us. God says "I will save you"—"with an outstretched arm and with great chastisements" clearly demonstrate a rectified power of might. Next, "I will redeem you," which corresponds to the *sefirah* of beauty (*tiferet*) exemplifies the principle that the mother principle, i.e., the *sefirah* of understanding associated with redemption, extends (through its foundation) down to beauty and is there revealed.

The next two idioms both describe the relationship that will form between the Almighty and the people and thus correspond nicely to victory and acknowledgement which are considered

two sides of one body. "I will take you" is the active verb, thus corresponding to victory (*netzach*) and "I will be you God," which is passive, corresponds to acknowledgment (*hod*).

The idiom, "You shall know that I am *Havayah* your God" corresponds to the *sefirah* of foundation. Foundation is known as the "general principle"[12] (כל). This beautifully corresponds with the Zohar's explanation that these words refer to the general principle of faith in God. Finally, the correspondence between "I will bring you to the land [of Israel]" and kingdom is very clear since the land is always associated with the *sefirah* of kingdom.

(from a class given on the 22nd of Tevet 5772)

1. Exodus 6:6-7.
2. Ibid. v. 8.
3. See in depth in *Sod HaShem LiYerei'av*, pp. 296ff.
4. Additionally, the filling of the filling of the word "earth" (אֶרֶץ) **אלף למד פא ריש יוד שין צדיק דלת יוד קוף**, also equals 2000.
5. The Zohar's words are:

"I will take you to be My people and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am *Havayah* your God." This commandment, the first of all commandments, the initial first of all commandments, [is] to know the Holy, blessed one in general. What does in general mean? To know that there is a supreme sovereign, who is the Master of the world, who created all worlds, the heavens and the earth and all their hosts. And that is in general. But the goal of all is the particular, to know him particularly.

6. See in length *Derech Mitzvotecha*, *Mitzvat Ha'amanat Elokut*, introduction.
7. Deuteronomy 29:3.
8. Ibid. 4:39.
9. *Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah* 1:1.
10. *Hilchot Melachim* 12:5
11. "I will bring" (וְהֵבֵאתִי) to the tip of the *yud*, "I will take" (וְלָקַחְתִּי) to the *yud*, "I will redeem" (וְגָאַלְתִּי) to the first *hei*, "I will save" (וְהִצַּלְתִּי) to the *vav*, and "I will free" (וְהוֹצֵאתִי) to the final *hei*. See in depth in *Sod HaShem LiYerei'av*, pp. 296ff.
12. 1 Chronicles 29:11. Foundation is described as "for all in the heavens and the earth" (כִּי כֹל בַּשָּׁמַיִם וּבָאָרֶץ), the value of the first two words "for all" (**כִּי כֹל**) is the same as "foundation" (**יְסוֹד**). The *tzaddik*—the foundation of the world (וְצַדִּיק יְסוֹד עוֹלָם, Proverbs 10:25)— is known as the one who unites the heavens and the earth.

PARTZUF

THE SEVEN LIQUIDS

The first of the Ten Plagues is blood. The water in the Nile and around it was transformed into blood. Of all the plagues this one is the most miraculous in that it involves the transformation of one material into another. And for that matter, it was the transformation of a non-organic element—water—into an organic mixture—blood.

To better appreciate what this transformation involved spiritually, let us introduce one of the most basic and useful *partzufim* (models). The Mishnah states, "There are seven liquids: dew, water, wine, oil, blood, milk and bees' honey." These seven liquids prepare an object, particularly a seed, for receiving impurity (*tum'ah*). Since there are seven liquids, it stands to reason that we should correspond them to the seven lower sefirot, from loving-kindness through kingdom.

The complete correspondence is as follows:

might-gevurah גְּבוּרָה
wine

loving-kindness-chessed חֶסֶד
water

beauty-tiferet תִּפְאֶרֶת
dew

acknowledgment-hod הוֹד
blood

victory-netzach נֶצַח
milk

foundation-yesod יְסוֹד
oil

kingdom-malchut מַלְכוּת
honey

Let us explore this *partzuf*:

Water corresponds to loving-kindness a clear connection that appears numerous times in the Torah's inner dimension. Abraham is the archetypal soul of loving-kindness and its inner driver of love. Given that loving-kindness corresponds to both love and water, we learn that just as plant life grows with water, so people grow with love. Indeed, Abraham himself is associated with water in the liturgical prayer for rain, "Remember the father [Abraham] who was drawn after You [God], like water."

Wine is normally associated with the *sefirah* of understanding, which is situated above might on the left axis, since wine brings joy (when consumed properly). The wine that brings joy is the red wine and the *sefirah* of might is associated with red as well.

Dew is particularly connected with Torah, as the sages say, "He who engages with the

words of Torah, the dew of Torah enlivens him." It is well known that the pillar of Torah is the middle axis of the *sefirot*, and that the Torah itself specifically corresponds wo the *sefirah* of beauty (*tiferet*).

Milk is associated with infants. In Torah it is the most important nutrient for a growing baby. The greatest growth spurt occurs during the first two years of life, a time that the sages describe as best for nursing milk. Just as water, situated above milk, is a catalyst for growth, so milk is the best food for the infant's growth.

Blood, like wine, is red and therefore belongs on the left axis, just below wine.

In Kabbalah, oil is associated with the foundation of the father principle (Abba) and so we correspond it to foundation.

Finally, honey corresponds to the *sefirah* of kingdom. One of the beautiful allusions to this correspondence is that the initials of "honey" (דְּבַשׁ) in Hebrew spell the names of David and Batsheba (דָּוִד בַּת שָׁבַע), with David the archetypal soul of the kingdom.

FROM WATER TO BLOOD

Now we can use our correspondence and note that transforming water into blood means moving from the *sefirah* of loving-kindness into the *sefirah* of thanksgiving (הוד). This represents the resounding echo of gratitude and acquiesence, which one should feel upon being the recipient of an act of lovingkindness. This is alluded to by the initial of the word "blood," which is the letter *dalet* (spelled דָּלֶת), which is explained elsewhere to be an acronym for "know how to give thanks" (דַּע לוֹמַר תּוֹדָה).

In life there are particularly extreme cases when a person is required to acknowledge the ultimate benevolence of God in face of personal disaster. Such was the position of Aaron when two of his sons, Nadav and Avihu, were killed while serving in the Tabernacle because they introduced a foreign source of fire to the altar. The Torah describes Aaron's reaction as: "Aaron remained silent." Aaron clearly acknowledged that for all his love for his sons, God was just and benevolent. But the Hebrew word for "remained silent" (וַיִּדֹּם), which is grammatically related to blood.

When God commanded Moshe and Aaron to transform the Egyptian waters into blood, he instructed that it be Aaron who actually perform the transformation. The sages explain that Moshe could not smite the waters himself, as he was the recipient of their kindness when as a babe he was floated down the Nile in a small ark. So, in a certain sense even the fact that the plague was inflicted by Aaron and not by Moshe reflects the sincerity of water turned into blood, or thanks being given in return to kindness.

When kindness is above and beyond measure, people sometimes say "I owe you my life." This idiom also expresses how blood, and owing blood, symbolic of lifeforce and vitality, or becoming "blood brothers," is considered an appropriate due in return for kindness.

1. Mishnah *Machshirin* 6:4.
2. *Yalkut Shimoni Devarim* §824.


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