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

בס"ד

Wonders

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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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Wonders Staff
Editor: R' Moshe Genuth • Associate Editor: Shelli Karzen
Contributing Editor: R' Nir Menussi • Typesetting: Yoel Broderick

MAN, THE UPSIDE-DOWN TREE

Tu BiShvat, the New Year for Trees, seems to be a celebration of nature alone—a day marking the renewal of trees and their fruits. However, it is written, "*For man is like the tree of the field.*"[1] If so, *Tu BiShvat* is also a celebration of human renewal—or more precisely, the renewal of the tree within us humans—the aspect of humanity that is "tree-like."

In what way can a person be likened to a tree. Is it really possible to compare our own growth with that of a tree?

TWO DIMENSIONS OF GROWTH

At first glance, the animal kingdom seems much closer to us than the plant kingdom. Yet in one crucial respect, plants are more like humans than animals: while animals live horizontally—walking on all fours, crawling, or swimming—plants and humans both stand *vertically*, rising upwards.

Our upright posture is not a trivial aspect of our existence; it plays a profound role in shaping our consciousness and self-perception. We live by "ladders of success," "scales of growth," and "hierarchies of competence." We distinguish between "lowbrow," "middlebrow," and "highbrow" cultures. We fear "falling down" the social ladder, and aspire to "rise up" in status, achievement, or self-fulfillment. Even our language and metaphors include references to our posture: "reaching new heights," "elevating our perspective," or "climbing to the top," all these and others reflect the deep-seated vertical orientation in how we perceive the world.

These qualities, of course, do not exist in plants. But their upright form, the fact that they relentlessly strive upward, serve as an earthly, botanical reflection of these human aspirations. The tree of the field, with its patience and perseverance as it grows upward and stretches its branches outward, illustrates the human drive for constant growth.

The simple, straightforward way to compare human beings to trees is by imagining us as "growing" upwards from the ground. Like trees we are provided with physical sustenance from the earth, and like them we ascend upward to lofty realms of thought and spirituality. However, this image can and should be complemented by a parallel, second dimension of growth: envisioning a person as an *inverted tree* whose roots are in the heavens and whose branches descend downward toward the earth.

When comparing humanity to trees, it is the latter image that should be central in our mind. After all, we are more than mere trees. We are not merely trees but human beings, defined by the soul we possess and the consciousness of our minds. While the

1. Deuteronomy 20:19.

first comparison highlights our physical growth, the second illustrates our spiritual growth. We draw inspiration from a higher source and bear fruit down here on earth. This reversal of the tree metaphor thus enables us to compare humans to trees while simultaneously maintaining the essential distinction between them.

TREES AND MAN: A COMPARATIVE ANATOMY

The parts of a tree can be categorized in various ways. The Kabbalistic approach divides the tree into four primary components: roots, trunk, branches, and fruits. The *roots* are hidden beneath the ground wherefrom they draw essential nutrients; the *trunk* forms the main body of the tree and supports its upward growth; the *branches* spread out to the sides, producing leaves (which complement the tree's nourishment through photosynthesis); and finally, many trees produce edible *fruits* that provide nutrition to other life forms.

When drawing a comparison between these parts of the tree and the parts of a human being, we rely on an intermediary model. In Kabbalah, the fundamental framework for structures with four elements is the Tetragrammaton, the ineffable Four-Letter Name of God (י־הוה), referred to as *HaShem* or *Havayah*. The Tetragrammaton as a model is particularly fitting here: since humanity is described as being created in the image of God, it is appropriate to describe human anatomy in correspondence with the letters of His Name.

When employing the Tetragrammaton as a model, it is written from the top down and divided into two halves. The first two letters, *yud* and *hei* (י־ה), a holy name of God in itself, represent the higher and hidden aspect of the model, while the last two letters, *vav* and *hei* (ו־ה) represent its mundane and revealed aspect. This division reflects the verse, "The hidden things belong to *Havayah*, our God, but the revealed things belong to us and our children."[2] When combining this framework with the parts of the inverted tree mentioned earlier, the following structure emerges:

letter of Havayah	part of tree
י – *yud*	roots
ה – *hei*	trunk
ו – *vav*	branches
ה – *hei*	fruits

Let us now examine how each part of the tree corresponds to a stage in a person's spiritual growth.

ROOTS

The first and loftiest level of a person's spiritual growth is the root of their soul. Just as the tree draws its life force from the earth, so too does a person draw vitality and inspiration from their soul's spiritual source. In addition, just as the tree's roots are hidden from sight, so too the soul's root is invisible and intangible, existing beyond the realm of perception—not beneath the earth, but metaphorically planted above the heavens, in the "soil" of Godliness, as it were.

In the Tetragrammaton, the letter that

2. Deuteronomy 29:28.

corresponds to the roots is *yud* (י), the only letter in the Hebrew alphabet whose form is similar in shape to a point, and the only one that appears as though suspended in midair. These traits reflect the fact that at the level of the soul's root, a person's individuality is no more than a tiny, undeveloped seed—a kernel containing all their abilities and traits in potential form.

TRUNK

When the soul's root sprouts, grows, and thickens, it becomes the trunk. In our metaphor, the trunk represents a well-developed personality. It draws nourishment from the root but expands it in ever-widening circles—like a new ring added to the tree's trunk each year. This expansion ultimately transforms the root from a mere point-like beginning into a fully formed voluminous existence.

In the Tetragrammaton, the trunk corresponds to the first *hei* (ה). Together, the pair of letters *yud-hei* represent, respectively, the "mind" and "heart" of the entire model or, in Kabbalistic terminology, the *sefirot* of wisdom (*chochmah*) and understanding (*binah*). The root of the tree corresponds to the "mind," meaning that at this stage, the soul is still an abstract idea, a vision of a person yet to be realized. The trunk, as the "heart," introduces life and emotion into the soul's initial vision, developing it into a complex and complete being.

BRANCHES

The first two stages, primarily the root but also the trunk, reflect the inner maturation of a person in their private, hidden world. The point where the individual begins to truly manifest outwards is when they begin to extend their branches, so to speak, reaching out from their inner realm and connecting to the outside world.

Branching out is expressed through traveling to different places, experiencing various aspects of life, and forming relationships with others. The goal of branching out is primarily to take in new experiences and learn from them. Likewise, the tree's leaves, as mentioned, synthesize light into energy through photosynthesis—a process that mirrors how a human receives abundance from the material world and internalizes it into his or her personality.

This stage corresponds to the letter *vav* (ו) whose elongated shape symbolizes the linear direction of the extending branches and the soul's further descent into the material world.

FRUITS

The final stage in the soul's growth and descent into reality is producing fruit to share with the world. The fruits primarily take the form of *mitzvot* (commandments) and good deeds, which nourish and enrich society and the environment. This is the loftiest purpose of the soul: to descend to the material realm and nourish it through the metaphoric fruit it bears.

This element of the tree in the human is represented by the second *hei* (ה) of the Tetragrammaton—the same letter that previously symbolized the trunk and a fully developed personality. Indeed, a person's fruits are like concentrated capsules of their personality, through which they spread their unique spiritual

seed and inspire others. Unlike the pair of *yud* and the upper *hei*, which form a complete holy Name on their own, the connection between *vav* and the lower *hei* is looser, reflecting the ability to separate the fruits and share them with others.

In summary,

Letter	tree part	spiritual growth
י – *yud*	roots	the essence of the soul's point
ה – *hei*	trunk	expansion into a full personality
ו – *vav*	branches	self-realization through engagement with the world
ה – *hei*	fruits	*mitzvot* and good deeds shared with others

TU BISHVAT – RECONNECTING TO THE ROOT

Due to the gap between the hidden levels of the soul (the roots and trunk) and the revealed levels (the branches and fruits), we often succumb to the negative tendency to *sever the connection between them*. We extend our branches into the world, experience various encounters and activities, and produce many fruits in the form of words we utter, actions we perform, works of art we produce, and more. Yet frequently—perhaps even in most cases—these expressions lack the unique and profound vitality of the roots and trunk of our soul. In doing so, we sever our own branches and fruits from our trunk and roots.

From the human perspective, the deeper, inner purpose of *Tu BiShvat* is to replant ourselves in our spiritual soil, to infuse the hidden essence of our being into our revealed lives. This is beautifully reflected in the very date of *Tu BiShvat*—the *15th* day of the *11th* month (counting from Nissan, the first month according to the Torah). Remarkably, the number of the *day*, 15, equals to the numerical value of the pair of letters *yud* and *hei*, (**יה**), while the number of the *month*, 11, equals *vav* and *hei* (**וה**)! Thus, *Tu BiShvat* is the only date in the year whose meaning is literally *yud-hei* within *vav-hei!*

This idea signifies the *infusion of the hidden realms into the revealed ones*. On *Tu BiShvat*, we are called to restore our worthiness to be compared to the tree of the field—whose external fruits directly derive from its deepest roots.

STORY

REBBE YOSEF YITZCHAK SCHNEERSOHN: SHOWDOWN AT THE YESHIVAH

Rebbe Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn of Lubavitch (the Rayatz) was born to his father Rebbe Shalom Dov Ber (the Rashab) on the 12th of Tammuz, 5640 (1880). When he was fifteen, his father appointed him as his secretary for public affairs, and at seventeen he married his wife Rebbetzin Nechamah Dinah and became the director of the Tomchei Temimim Yeshivah, which his father had just founded. In 5680 (1920), the Rebbe Rashab passed away, shortly after the beginning of the Communist Revolution. The Rebbe Rayatz filled his place and worked extensively for Judaism in Russia. As a result, the Rebbe was arrested on the 15th of Sivan 5687 (1927) by the GPU and sentenced to death, but under international pressure, the sentence was commuted to exile in the city of Kostroma, and finally to a full release. On the 2nd of Tevet, 5700 (1939), he was rescued from Nazi-occupied Warsaw and was able to make it to the United States. After a short period of time, he acquired 770 Eastern Parkway, the famous building that was both his home and the world Chabad headquarters. Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson passed away on Shabbat Parashat Bo, the 10th of Shevat, 5710 (1950). Exactly one year later, he was succeeded by his son-in-law, Rebbe Menachem Mendel Schneersohn.

In the years 5665-5666 (1905-1906), during the Russian Revolution, Russians rebelled against the Czar and committed acts of folly. Anyone who did not agree with the rebels was sentenced to death.

In Lubavitch too, there was a group of thugs, and they caused much suffering for the Rebbe's chasidim in Lubavitch. They would ambush the yeshivah students, and set traps to convince or force them to become members of their evildoers gang. Almost all their efforts were in vain and managed to draw only one boy to their group. His name was Berel Tchernigover.

At that time, the Rebbe Rayatz was the director of the Tomchei Temimim Yeshivah. He called for the yeshivah students who were physically strong and intelligent to lie in wait for Berel as he walked in the street and bring him to him. They ambushed Berel and forcibly brought him to the Rebbe Rayatz, and locked him in the yeshivah office.

When the thugs who had enticed Berel to join them learned that the “fat fish” they had caught had escaped their trap, they came to the Rebbe Rayatz, complaining that the boy belonged to them, and how dare he take him from their company by force? They showed the Rebbe that they had weapons in their possession.

"Regarding weapons, I am not afraid of you,” said the Rebbe. “And as for your claim that the boy belongs to you, I took him from his parents under my responsibility. I am obligated to bring him back to his father, and I am responsible for both his physical and spiritual well-being. I will return him to his parents.” The bullies left with angry and empty faces, and within days Berel’s father came and took him home.

A few days later, the thugs returned, this time with pistols, and the Rebbe Rashab and his son the Rayatz locked the doors and windows of the yeshivah. The thugs fired their pistols, and thank God no one was harmed, although one or more bullets did lodge in the wall.

The yeshivah students took beams of iron that supported their beds and went out to meet the thugs. Fear fell upon the thugs, and they fled.

In their book of memories, the leaders of the group of thugs wrote that between themselves, they had sentenced the Rebbe Rayatz and a yeshivah student by the name of Shmuel Katsman, who was then studying in Lubavitch, to death. It was Shmuel Katsman who was instrumental both in capturing Berel and in chasing the thugs from the courtyard.

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The chasid Reb Menachem Mendel Axelrod, may his blood be avenged, was engaged to the daughter of the chasid Reb Yitzchak Rubinstein who lived in Moscow. The engagement ceremony took place in Moscow around 5662 (1902). The Rebbe Rayatz was also in Moscow at that time, and he attended the engagement ceremony.

The day after the engagement, the holy Rebbe said to him: "Mendel, this is your first time in Moscow, come and I'll show you the city." When they reached the large store then in Moscow, called "Muir et Myrales," the Rebbe said to him: "Here you can find anything in the world, let's go in and see." As they walked through the department store, they came to the where pocket knives were on display. The Rebbe showed the seller his pocket knife and said that he wanted to purchase another one just like it. The vendor showed him several different pocket knives, but none was exactly like the Rebbe's knife.

[From the writings of Rabbi Yehuda Chitrik]

INNER PRIDE OF OWNERSHIP

Why have we combined a simple, everyday story of a shopping trip with the tale of bravery against thugs?

The answer will become clear when we contemplate this story a bit: The Rebbe Rayatz finds special interest in showing the young groom that even in the big store, there is no knife like his. The pride one takes in owning a particular object is a sign that the individual has an inner sense of affinity to that object. Interestingly, in the Rebbe Rayatz's case, the inner sense he had was for knives, whether in the pocket or outside it. The world of weaponry was not foreign to the Rebbe Rayatz. He was not afraid of the young thugs' pistols, and later in his life, he kept his composure when faced with the pistols of the Communist secret police investigators. Given the grave danger he was in while still in Communist Russia (both from the authorities and from antisemites) it is even reported that he would sometimes carry a pistol himself. However, this story shows that there was also something beyond how he dealt with thugs or weapons.

ORNAMENTS

The subject of weaponry is dealt with in many halachic/legal contexts in the Talmud. Everything from the impurity that weapons carry to the future vision of Isaiah when those same weapons will be "beat into plowshares… and into pruning hooks."[3] One such discussion appears in the tractate of Shabbat and deals with the question of whether weapons carried by a soldier may be carried around on Shabbat or not. Rabbi Eliezer is of the opinion that it is permitted. His very interesting reason is that they are considered like ornaments for the soldier and therefore are not a burden that may not be transported around.

However, the other sages of his time rejected his view. They argue that because eventually, in the Messianic era, weapons will be "beat… into plowshares, etc.," even though a weapon may still be necessary, it should not be praised and therefore cannot be regarded as an ornament. But Rabbi Eliezer argues that because we still need to use weapons in our times, that is enough of a reason to consider it something with which one can adorn oneself. What can we learn from this debate?

DESIRES

Let us begin with the sole appearance of the word "knife" (סַכִּין) in the entire Bible: "Thrust a knife into your gullet if you are a person of spirit"[4] (וְשַׂמְתָּ שַׁכִּין בְּלֹעֶךָ אִם־בַּעַל נֶפֶשׁ אָתָּה). According to the commentaries, "a person of spirit" here refers to someone who is gluttonous, i.e., a "person of appetite," since the Hebrew word for "spirit" (also translated as "psyche") stems from the verb that also means "to desire."[5] Thus, this verse refers to the need for restraining one's appetite. Proverbs likens it to cutting off as it were one's oral cavity which continually craves more and more food. However, the plain meaning is not lost, and the verse can also be referring to a person who has an

3. Isaiah 2:4.

4. Proverbs 23:2.

5. See for instance Genesis 23:8.

overpowering need for intellectualism. Either way, this verse follows the Chabad-centric dictum that precisely in that which you desire excessively, it is there that you must exercise control, falling back upon the innate ability of the mind to control the heart's desires. Armed, so to speak, with this verse, what can we say about the inner meaning behind the debate regarding viewing a weapon as an ornament?

SUBMISSION OR TRANSFORMATION, WAR OR PEACE

Like life itself, our Divine service splits into two modes. Sometimes in life it is a time for war, and sometimes it is a time for peace (until eventually, with the Coming of Mashiach and the true and complete Redemption, there will be everlasting peace). The state of war in Divine service is the war we wage against our evil inclination. This state is known as *itkafya*—the service of submission. The Tikkunei Zohar describes it as "the other side is subdued" (אִתְכַּפְיָא סִטְרָא אַחֲרָא). The state of peace in Divine service refers to when the evil inclination has been transformed into a positive influence. The Tikkunei Zohar's description of this state is *ithapcha*, and it is described as, "Darkness is transformed into light" (אִתְהַפְכָא חֲשׁוֹכָא לִנְהוֹרָא).

In the debate between Rabbi Eliezer and the sages, the latter's focus is on the long-awaited end of days when we will experience the complete transformation of all that is evil into goodness. But Rabbi Eliezer, and similarly, the Rebbe Rayatz, though they too yearn for the Redemption, they appreciate the beauty and virtue to be found in resolutely confronting and battling the evil that continues to destroy God's world, whether this evil be our own internal inclination or our external enemies. They hold that it is precisely because holiness is not afraid to struggle to be victorious that God's glory is elevated in the eyes of many.

PARTZUF

MIRIAM THE PROPHETESS

At the end of the Song at the Sea, we encounter Moses' sister's name for the first time in the Torah: Miriam. The Torah writes, "Then Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, picked up a timbrel and all the women went out after her in dance with timbrels. Miriam chanted for them, 'Sing to *Havayah* for He has risen triumphantly; Horse and driver He has hurled into the sea.'"[1] Though this is the first time the Torah mentions Miriam's name explicitly, although the sages identify her with one of the two midwives appearing in the first chapter of Exodus, specifically with Pu'ah.[2] In addition, Miriam was mentioned anonymously in the episode of Moses' preservation by being placed in a basket on the Nile.

Miriam also plays a central role at the end of *parashat BeHa'alotcha* in the incident surrounding her leprosy and once again in *parashat Chukat* at her passing. We are going to organize a number of *partzufim* about Miriam. First, we will look at the major episodes in her life recounted by the Torah and correspond them to the seven lower *sefirot*. Next, we will look at her many names, as identified by the sages and correspond them to the full model of the Ten *Sefirot* as well.

THE LIFE OF MIRIAM

Let us focus on the major episodes in Miriam's life in their order of appearance in the Torah. Though we always prefer when possible to use an established order of the elements in our *partzuf* when corresponding them to a Kabbalistic model, this is not always possible. Sometimes, as in this case, it is clear, that the elements in the *partzuf*—in this case, the episodes of Miriam's life—do not follow the same order as the Kabbalistic model. Thus, after each episode, we will identify the *sefirah* it corresponds to.

Our first encounter with Miriam is as one of the Jewish midwives in Egypt. There, her name is Pu'ah. The Torah tells us that because the midwives feared God and saved the children from Pharaoh's decree, "He established households for them."[3] Thus, the foundation of Miriam's life and conduct is her fear of God. As King Solomon says, "A woman who fears God, she should be praised."[4] Fear of God is not just about one's feelings, it guides one's conduct. When someone fears God, they can be trusted to do the right thing, even when, like Miriam and her mother, they find themselves pushed to disobey Pharaoh and risk their own lives. Obviously, this episode and Miriam's character revealed through it correspond to the *sefirah* of might (*gevurah*) whose inner experience is one of fear or awe.

ADVICE AND PROPHECY

The next time we meet Miriam, she is apparently older. This episode is only hinted to in the Torah with the words, "A man from the house of Levi married a daughter of Levi."[5] Even though this verse

seems to tell of Moses' origins, it does not exactly fit the facts, for Moses was not this couple's firstborn; he was the younger sibling of Miriam and Aaron. The sages explain the background and context of this verse. After the midwives disobeyed him, Pharaoh decreed that the Egyptians themselves should murder every Jewish child by drowning them in the Nile. Seeing that there was no escape, Amram, Moses' future father reluctantly parted from his wife, Yocheved. As the leader of the Jewish people in Egypt, others followed his example.

Miriam came to her father and argued that his "decree," made by parting from her mother, was harsher than Pharaoh's, for Pharaoh had only decreed that boys would not survive and Amram had just decreed that even girls would not be born. What do we see? First, that Miriam has a sense for the superiority of the feminine. In Amram's mind, it seems that it had never occurred to him that there were also daughters that needed to be considered. She has to remind him of the girls. In a bit more depth, as explained in Chasidic writings, Pharaoh believed that daughters have a weaker intellect and thus could be easily integrated into Egyptian culture, which is why he did not only command the murder of the boys, but also ordered, "but let every girl live."[6] Miriam says, "Father, that's what Pharaoh thinks, but I believe that daughters have a very strong mind. On the contrary, it is they that will save the Israelites." This had never occurred to her father.

Miriam then made two more arguments: Pharaoh is wicked and there is great doubt whether people will listen to his command, but you, my father are a *tzaddik* and whatever a *tzaddik* commands is performed; everyone will leave their wives and the Israelites will cease to exist. In addition, Pharaoh's decree is limited to this world. But when your decree will prevent any children from being born, you are preventing these souls from entering both this world and the next. Amram accepted his daughter's arguments, and the verse quoted describes his re-marriage to Yocheved, after which Moses was indeed born.

Miriam here reveals her sharp intellect and her ability to serve as an advisor. Advice is associated with the *sefirot* of victory (*netzach*) and acknowledgment (*hod*), which in the body are identified primarily with the kidneys.[7] Immediately after she convinced her father to re-wed her mother, Miriam received a prophecy that their next son would be the redeemer. So now she is both an advisor and a prophetess. According to Kabbalistic principles, her prophecy is associated with victory[8] and her advice with acknowledgment. Both these episodes are only hinted to in the Torah text.

THE POWER TO EXCITE

The next time the Torah explicitly mentions Miriam is in our parashah, after the Song at the Sea when she leads the women in song. In this respect, Miriam resembles her brother Aaron who as High Priest will later be tasked with the daily lighting of the Menorah, whose 7 candles represent the 7 roots of the Jewish people's souls. In this task, Aaron is described as the "man of loving-kindness," and in exciting the souls of the women, Miriam to is likened to a woman of loving-kindness. Loving-kindness (*chesed*) is what makes

the world revolve, it is what brings people together transforming a collection of individuals into a harmonious group that can sing and play music together. Thus, we correspond this episode of Miriam's life with the *sefirah* of loving-kindness.

MIRIAM'S SPEECH ABOUT MOSES

A couple of years later, at the end of *parashat BeHa'altocha*, we find Miriam initiating a conversation about Moses her brother. Even though she meant well and never attacked Moses directly—moreover, according to the plain reading of the text, Moses was even present at the time and took no offense at her words—because of her great spiritual stature, God punished her with leprosy.

Miriam's improper conduct here is the result of Moses' having parted with his wife, Tziporah. He did this for a good reason. He was prone at any moment to receive prophecy and therefore had to always be ready for it. But once again, as she did when she was a little girl, Miriam cannot stand the break-up of the holy bond between a husband and wife. This sensitivity is related to the *sefirah* of foundation, the *sefirah* that corresponds to the procreative organs in the body.

MIRIAM'S WELL

After Miriam's passing,[9] we suddenly hear that the Israelites no longer had water to drink. What had they done until then? The juxtaposition of Miriam's passing with the lack of water reveals that while Miriam was alive, the people enjoyed an abundance of water from a miraculous well that followed them in the wilderness. It came to be known as Miriam's well.

The water from a well originates from within the earth and then gushes out. The water thus rises from below to above. In Kabbalah, this type of water is known as "feminine waters" (מַיִין נוּקְבִין), as the nature of the feminine is to rise from below to above; this in contrast with rain that falls from above to below and in Kabbalah is known as "masculine waters" (מַיִין דְכוּרִין). Normally, feminine waters are associated with the *sefirah* of kingdom (*malchut*) and masculine waters with the *sefirah* of beauty (*tiferet*). To add to the identification of Miriam's well with kingdom, we note that kingdom is described by the verse, "her feet descent unto death." Symbolically, this represents the descent of the kingdom of the World of Emanation into the three lower Worlds; every descent from one's natural place is likened in Kabbalah to "death." In our context, it was revealed that the well was in merit of Miriam after her death.

RECALLING MIRIAM

After repeating the danger of leprosy on the eve of the Israelites crossing of the Jordan, Moses says, "Remember what *Havayah* your God did to Miriam on the journey after you left Egypt."[10] This is one of the traditional six remembrances that we are called upon to recall every day. The others are recalling the Exodus from Egypt, the Giving of the Torah on Mt. Sinai, the obligation to annihilate Amalek, the sin of the Golden Calf, and the Shabbat. Clearly, Miriam is in a special category, as she is the only individual person we are required to remember every day. The story we are meant to recall with reference to Miriam is the account of her leprosy, the episode

that came as a result of what she said about Moses, which we corresponded with foundation.

The six remembrances clearly correspond to the sefirot from loving-kindness to foundation and will be treated separately at another time. The point of remembering these events is to keep them in our consciousness and thus, the origin of the act of remembering them is linked with the *sefirah* of knowledge, which is described as the soul (the living force behind) the *sefirah* of beauty. And thus, we correspond Miriam's daily remembrance with the *sefirah* of beauty.

To summarize, the full *partzuf* of Miriam's life is:

might-gevurah גְּבוּרָה
fear of God as a midwife

loving-kindness-chessed חֶסֶד
exciting the women at the Song at the sea

beauty-tiferet תִּפְאֶרֶת
remembering what happened to Miriam

splendor-hod הוֹד
Miriam's advice

victory-netzach נֶצַח
Miriam's prophecy

foundation-yesod יְסוֹד
speaking about Moses

kingdom-malchut מַלְכוּת
Miriam's well

MIRIAM'S NAMES

So far we have seen two of Miriam's many names: Miriam and Pu'ah. Where do the other names appear? In the Book of Chronicles. The names mentioned in Chronicles perplex those who are intimately familiar with the rest of the Bible; the sages regard these names as not being non-literal and rather requiring interpretation.[11]

In the Talmud, after discussing the identities of the two midwives, the sages go into a discussion of a number of verses from Chronicles, which they associate with Miriam. The first verse is discussed in the context of an opinion that the "household" given to Pu'ah, i.e., Miriam, is the house of royalty.

And the one who says houses of royalty refers to David, who also comes from Miriam, as it is written: "And Azubah died and Caleb took to him Ephrath, who bore him Hur."[12]

The next verse is "And Caleb, the son of Hezron, begot children of Azubah his wife, and of Jerioth, and these were her sons: Jesher, and Shobab, and Ardon."[13]

Two final verses are, "And Ashhur the father of Tekoa had two wives, Helah and Naarah"[14] and "And the children of Helah were Zereth [*Tzeret*] and Zohar and Ethnan."[15]

In all, we find that Miriam is associated with 8 different names in these verses from these verses. Let us explain their correspondence with the sefirot: Miriam is her "essential" name and thus we place it in the crown. Azubah means "one who is forsaken." In this case, she had forsaken herself, thereby attaining a state of self-nullification (בטול) considered the inner experience of wisdom. This is also hinted to by the fact that she is said to have died, i.e., nullified the self. Jerioth literally means drapes or curtains and alludes to the surrounding lights of Imma, the mother principle, associated with understanding (just as the Sukkah we dwell in during Sukkot drapes us and is also known as the surrounding light of the mother principle).

The two names that appear in the same verse, Helah and Na'arah correspond to loving-kindness and might, the two main emotional *sefirot*. Helah (חֶלְאָה) is a notarikon for "sick with love" (חולת אהבה) and the value of Na'arah (**נַעֲרָה**) is 325, a number associated in Kabbalah with the harsh judgments of the *sefirah* of might.[16]

Miriam's name Efrat (אֶפְרָת) is clearly related to the *sefirah* of beauty (תִּפְאֶרֶת).

The next three names appear together and correspond to the three habitual sefirot, victory, acknowledgement, and foundation. She was called Tzeret because of her beauty that was so great that other women felt she was competing against them (and winning); thus, Tzeret corresponds to victory. Her name Tzohar means that her face shined like the sun does at noon, called *tzahorayim* in Hebrew; acknowledgment (*hod*) also means splendor. The sages say that her beauty inspired men to bring gift to their wives in order to find favor in their eyes, a clear connection with foundation.

Finally, according to the opinion that Pu'ah is Miriam, we correspond this name Pu'ah with kingdom. Pu'ah literally means to coo, since Miriam would do so to the newborn children. Kingdom is associated directly with the mouth and with speech.

Our complete *partzuf* is thus,

crown-keter כֶּתֶר
Miriam

understanding-binah בִּינָה
Jerioth

wisdom-chochmah חָכְמָה
Azubah

might-gevurah גְּבוּרָה
Na'arah

loving-kindness-chessed חֶסֶד
Helah

beauty-tiferet תִּפְאֶרֶת
Efrat

victory-netzach נֶצַח
Tzeret

splendor-hod הוֹד
Tzohar

foundation-yesod יְסוֹד
Ethnan

kingdom-malchut מַלְכוּת
Pu'ah

Notes:
1. Exodus 15:20.
2. Ibid. 1:15.
3. Ibid. 1:21. Incidentally, let us mention that in every parashah in the Torah there are one or more phrases whose value is 913, the value of the Torah's first word, "In the beginning" (בראשית). Apart from being an important phenomenon, its significance lies in the understand that whatever ties to the "beginning" represents one of the purposes behind creation. In parashat Shemot there are two such phrases, and this is the first (**וַיַּעַשׂ לָהֶם בָּתִּים**). Apart from these houses representing the priesthood and the kingship, as we will discuss shortly, they also represent the "Houses of God," i.e., the First and Second Temples. The Third Temple will itself include the spirit of both the First and Second Temples and thus, it is the final iteration of the "houses" built in merit of the midwives' fear of God. Thus, the first purpose of "In the beginning" in our *parashah* is the building of the Temple.
4. Proverbs 31:30.
5. Exodus 2:1.
6. Ibid. 1:22.
7. *Berachot* 61a.
8. In addition, the inner experience of victory is confidence. Despite the dire circumstances of Moses' being placed in a basket on the Nile, she continued to have confidence in her prophecy and waited to see what would transpire. Indeed, her confidence led to the vindication and victory of her prophecy, and Moses was saved by Pharaoh's daughter.
9. Numbers 20:1-2.
10. Deuteronomy 24:9.
11. Vayikra Rabbah 1:3: "Rabbi Simon, in the name of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi, and Rabbi Hama father of Rabbi Hoshaya, in the name of Rav, said: Chronicles was given only for expounding."
12. 1 Chronicles 2:19.
13. Ibid. v. 18.
14. Ibid. 4:5.
15. Ibid. v. 7.
16. See *Eitz Chaim* 18:5.

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