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



נט"ד

Wonders

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of HaRav **Yitzchak Ginsburgh**

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שַׁבָּת תְּרוּמָה-שְׁקָלִים ❁ ל שְׁבַט-א טֵבֵת תשפ"ה



Though measurements are usually of physical objects, their Hebrew version is a ladder that can lift our mind and open it to abstract thinking. To strip something of its materiality is done by the inner abstraction of the thing itself... by considering its inner abstraction.

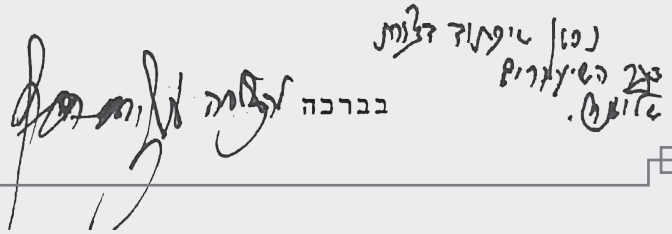
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The Lubavitcher Rebbe to Rav Ginsburgh, Elul 5741

"…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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PARTZUF
THE NAMES OF THE TEMPLE

SOLOMON'S DREAM

Parashat Terumah opens with the commandment, "They shall build me a Temple [*Mikdash*] and I will dwell among them"[1] (וְעָשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְתוֹכָם). We commonly translate the word *Mikdash* as Temple, or Holy Temple, but the title *Beit HaMikdash*, would more literally be translated as House of Holiness. In the Bible, we find that there are 10 different titles used to refer to the Temple. Let us identify them and then correspond them with the 10 *sefirot*.

We start from the First Temple built and dedicated by Solomon. After the dedication of the Temple, God appears to King Solomon in a dream and refers to the Temple he built and its future. The 11 verses of the dream begin with the verse: "*Havayah* appeared to Solomon in the night and said to him, 'I have heard your prayer, and I have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice.'"[2]

Here, the Temple is referred to by God as a "House of Sacrifice" (בֵּית זֶבַח). With the words, "I have chosen this place" (וּבָחַרְתִּי בַּמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה), this verse also hints at the title, "the House of Choice" (בֵּית הַבְּחִירָה). The plain meaning of this connotation for the Temple is that it is the location that God chose, as that is the idiom the Torah uses when referring to the future location of the Temple, "the place that God will choose,"[3] as well as, "I have chosen this place." However, the deeper meaning of these words is that the Temple is the source of our power of free will, the power to choose to fulfill all of the Torah's 613 commandments. When the location of the Temple stands desolate, this is not the case, as the power of free choice (בחירה חופשית) is weakened, and many commandments cannot be fulfilled.

Later, God says to King Solomon, "And now I have chosen, and I have sanctified this house so that My Name be there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there all the days"[4] (וְעַתָּה בָּחַרְתִּי וְהִקְדַּשְׁתִּי אֶת הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה לְהִיוֹת שְׁמִי שָׁם עַד עוֹלָם וְהָיוּ עֵינַי וְלִבִּי שָׁם כָּל הַיָּמִים). These words allude to several other titles given to the Temple: "I have chosen" once again alludes to the "House of Choice" (בֵּית הַבְּחִירָה). "I have sanctified," alludes to the House of Holiness (בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ), and finally, "that My Name be there forever alludes to two more titles, "the House of *Havayah*" (בֵּית הוי') and "forever" to "the House of Eternity" (בֵּית עוֹלָמִים).

HOUSE OF GOD

So far, we have seen five of the ten titles used to refer to the Temple as they appear in Solomon's dream. Let us now fill in the other five, while at the same time already explaining their correspondence to the *sefirot*, in order.

"House of *Havayah*," which we saw, corresponds to the *sefirah* of wisdom, following the well-known verse, "*Havayah* in wisdom [founded the earth]."[5]

There is another Name of God that is associated with the Temple. We find it used in the Book of Judges, "They maintained the sculptured image that Micah had made throughout the time that the House of *Elokim* stood at Shiloh"[6] (וַיְשִׂימוּ לָהֶם אֶת פֶּסֶל מִיכָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה כָּל יְמֵי הֱיוֹת בֵּית הָאֱ־לֹהִים בְּשִׁלֹה). God's Name, *Elokim*, is associated with the *sefirah* of understanding, as in the verse, "For what mortal has heard the voice of the living God [*Elokim*] speak out of the fire, as we did, and lived?"[7] Apart from understanding being associated with "the living God" (אֱ־לֹהִים חַיִּים), the definite article—which in Hebrew is just the letter *hei* (ה)—on *Elokim* in the verse from Judges strengthens the association with understanding, which corresponds to the first *hei* in *Havayah*. Thus, we have two connotations of the Temple that include a Name of God populating the two intellectual *sefirot*, wisdom and understanding, which are like "two companions that never part." One final point: the value of "the *Elokim*" (**הָאֱ־לֹהִים**) is 91, the value of the unification of God's essential Name, *Havayah*, with His Name, *Adni* (**אֲ־דֹנָי**). This unification, known as *Havayah Adni* (**הוי' אֲ־דֹנָי**) designates the unification of *Ze'er Anpin* (the small countenance, the *partzuf* centered around the *sefirah* of beauty-*tiferet*) and *Nukva* (its feminine counterpart, the *partzuf* centered around the *sefirah* of kingdom). Their unification is like the coming together of a bride and a groom under the wedding canopy—associated with the surrounding embrace of understanding.

KNOWLEDGE: THE SOURCE OF FREE WILL

The name "House of Choice" corresponds to the *sefirah* of knowledge (*da'at*), the primary seat of the power of choice in the psyche. From the verse, "God is a God of myriad knowledge"[8] (כִּי אֵ־ל דֵּעוֹת הוּי'), we learn that there are two distinct aspects of knowledge of reality or, stated somewhat differently, two distinct perspectives on reality. The higher perspective is God's knowledge of reality and the lower is our human perspective on reality. In relation to choice, the higher Divine perspective refers to God's choice to dwell in the Temple and the lower human perspective represents our faculty of choice with which we choose to serve God—with a complete heart and a willing soul[9]—and safeguard all 613 commandments corresponding to the 248 limbs and 365 sinews in the adult body.

LOVING-KINDNESS: DWELLING

The Temple is also called a "dwelling" (מָכוֹן), a name associated with the *sefirah* of loving-kindness. We learn this from another *partzuf*, which corresponds the seven firmaments detailed by the sages with the seven emotive faculties/*sefirot*.[10] The order is:

knowledge-da'at (דַּעַת)
skies-aravot (עֲרָבוֹת)

might-gevurah (גְּבוּרָה)
habitation-ma'on (מָעוֹן)

loving-kindness-chessed (חֶסֶד)
dwelling-machon (מָכוֹן)

beauty-tiferet (תִּפְאֶרֶת)
abode-zevul (זְבֻל)

victory-netzach (נֶצַח) and splendor-hod (הוֹד)
heights-shechakim (שְׁחָקִים)

foundation-yesod (יְסוֹד)
firmament-rakia (רָקִיעַ)

kingdom-malchut (מַלְכוּת)
curtain-vilon (וילון)

The firmament known as *Machon* thus corresponds to loving-kindness.

MIGHT: HOUSE OF ELOKIM

Corresponding to the *sefirah* of might, we find the title "House of God" (בֵּית אֱ־לֹהִים), without the definitive article but still referring to God's Name, *Elokim*. There are different Names of God that are considered sacred and the one that corresponds to might is *Elokim*. In addition, we see here the extension of the left axis from understanding to might through the Name *Elokim* shared by both.

BEAUTY: A STATELY HOUSE

The title "the Stately House" (בֵּית זְבֻל) appears in the verse, "I have now built for You a stately House, a dwelling that You may occupy forever"[11] (בָּנֹה בָנִיתִי בֵּית זְבֻל לָךְ מָכוֹן לְשִׁבְתְּךָ עוֹלָמִים). This title corresponds to beauty, as the firmament called *Zevul* (abode) corresponds to beauty also. A nice numerical allusion equates the value of the words, "I have built for You a stately House" (**בָּנִיתִי בֵּית זְבֻל לָךְ**) with the phrase, "the construction of the Temple"[12] (**בִּנְיַן בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ**).

VICTORY: HOUSE OF ETERNITY

The next title is "House of Eternity" belongs to the *sefirah* of victory, or eternity. The connection is clear. The scriptural source for this title can also be found in the verse quoted just quoted regarding the Stately House. The final words of that verse were, "a dwelling that You may occupy forever" (מָכוֹן לְשִׁבְתְּךָ עוֹלָמִים); note that "dwelling" is Mechon in Hebrew, which we identified with loving-kindness which then extends down the right axis to "eternity," which we identify with victory, the extension of loving-kindness.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT: HOUSE OF HOLINESS

We now come to the most often used name of the Temple, *Beit*

Hamikdash, or literally "the House of Holiness" (בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ). This name corresponds traditionally with the *sefirah* of acknowledgment—an identification already made by the sages, "'And *hod*'[13] [the Hebrew name of the *sefirah* of acknowledgment] refers to the Temple."[14]

FOUNDATION: HOUSE OF SACRIFICES

In the *sefirah* of foundation, we find the title from Solomon's dream, "House of Sacrifice" (בֵּית זֶבַח). We correspond this name to foundation because a sacrifice, in its general sense, refers to peace offerings (שְׁלָמִים), which among the six different types of sacrifices, correspond to foundation. It is in foundation that "the opposite (תְּמוּרָה) of peace is war" belongs. This is one of the seven pairs of opposites discussed in *Sefer Yetizrah*[15]:

The opposite of Life is Death.
The opposite of Peace is War.
The opposite of Wisdom is Ignorance.
The opposite of Wealth is Poverty.
The opposite of Beauty is Deformity.
The opposite of Fertility is Barrenness.
The opposite of Sovereignty is Slavery.

The connection between peace and the house is found in the sages' idiom, "that which makes peace in the home"[16] (מַשִּׂים שָׁלוֹם בַּבַּיִת).

Just as we saw with respect to the right and left axes, victory was an extension of loving-kindness and might was an extension of understanding, now too we see that the name in foundation is related to the name in beauty. The two titles., "Stately House" and "House of Sacrifices" are phonetically similar. Furthermore, the title "House of Choice" is also hinted to in the same verse that mentioned the "House of Choice."

KINGDOM: HOUSE OF PRAYER

In kingdom we place the title "House of Prayer" (בֵּית תְּפִלָּה). The Temple in Jerusalem is designated as a House of Prayer for all people from all nations, "My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations."[17] All nations ascend from the three lower worlds, Creation, Formation, and Action and cleave to the kingdom of the World of Emanation, where all converts connect to holiness.[18] Prayer is the essence of the sefirah of kingdom, as King David says, "And I am prayer."[19] The entire Temple is named after David,[20] and it can be said that this is its most important name. The Temple is named after David who conquered the nations he did to bring them near to God through the Temple. The Coming of Mashiach ben David depends on the completion of the conversion of all the prospective converts. The Mashiach progresses through five stages of ascent. The fifth ascent, as described by the Rambam, fulfills the goal of, "It is then that I will transform the nations, making them speak a clear language, all of them calling upon God's Name, seeking to serve Him together."[21]

Here is the complete *partzuf*/model:

understanding-binah בִּינָה
House of the Elokim (בֵּית הָאֱ-לֹהִים)

wisdom-chochmah חָכְמָה
House of Havayah (בֵּית הוי')

knowledge-da'at דָּעַת
House of Choice (בֵּית הַבְּחִירָה)

might-gevurah גְּבוּרָה
House of Elokim (בֵּית אֱ-לֹהִים)

loving-kindness-chessed חֶסֶד
dwelling (מָכוֹן)

beauty-tiferet תִּפְאֶרֶת
Stately House (בֵּית זְבֶל)

splendor-hod הוֹד
House of Holiness (בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ)

victory-netzach נֶצַח
House of Eternity (בֵּית עוֹלָמִים)

foundation-yesod יְסוֹד
House of Sacrifices (בֵּית זֶבַח)

kingdom-malchut מַלְכוּת
House of Prayer (בֵּית תְּפִלָּה)

SOME NUMERICAL DESSERT

Let us conclude with a numerical analysis. The words that accompany the titles we surveyed are, *Havayah*, *HaElokim*, choice, dwelling, *Elokim*, stately, eternity, holiness, sacrifices, and prayer (הַוי' הָאֱלֹהִים הַבְּחִירָה מָכוֹן אֱלֹהִים זְבֶל עוֹלָמִים הַמִּקְדָּשׁ זֶבַח תְּפִלָּה) and their sum is 1765, which is 5 times the value of "joy" (**שִׂמְחָה**) as well as "the secret of Havayah is for those who fear Him"[22] (**סוֹד הַוי' לִירֵאָיו**), and "eternal light" (**אוֹר עוֹלָם**). It is in the Temple that it becomes possible to, "Serve God with joy, come before Him [in the Temple] with gladness"[23] (עִבְדוּ אֶת הַוי' בְּשִׂמְחָה בֹּאוּ לְפָנָיו בְּרִנָּנָה), capturing what is known as the state of supernal *teshuvah*, which stems from the experience that God is near. But when the Temple is missing, we experience, "serve God with awe and rejoice with trembling"[24] (עִבְדוּ אֶת הַוי' בְּיִרְאָה וְגִילוּ בִּרְעָדָה), capturing the state of lower *teshuvah*, lower repentance, repentance that stems from awe and bitterness from the sense of being distant from God, "because of our sins, we were exiled from our land"[25]; our repentance is then to return and revere God.

The value of the ten titles of the Temple in full—"House of *Havayah*, House of the *Elokim*, House of choice, Dwelling, House of *Elokim*, Stately House, House of Eternity, House of Holiness, House of sacrifices, House of Prayer" (**בֵּית הַוי' בֵּית הָאֱלֹהִים בֵּית הַבְּחִירָה מָכוֹן בֵּית אֱלֹהִים בֵּית זְבֶל בֵּית עוֹלָמִים בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ בֵּית זֶבַח בֵּית תְּפִלָּה**) is 5473, or 13—the value of "one" (**אֶחָד**) and "love" (**אַהֲבָה**), and the 3rd interface number— times 421—the value of "Noach found favor in the eyes of *Havayah*"[26] (**נֹחַ מָצָא חֵן בְּעֵינֵי הַוי'**) and the 15th interface number.

(Endnotes)
1 . Exodus 25:8.
2 . 2 Chronicles 7:12.
3 . Deuteronomy 12:5 and many more.
4 . 2 Chronicles 7:16.
5 . Proverbs 3:19.
6 . Judges 18:31.

7 . Deuteronomy 5:23.
8 . 1 Samuel 2:3.
9 . 1 Chronicles 28:9, David's testament to his son, Solomon.
10 . *Chagigah* 12b and *Kehillat Ya'akov* s.*v. 7 Reki'im*.
11 . 1 Kings 8:13.
12 . *Mishnah Ta'anit* 4:8.
13 . 1 Chronicles 29:11.
14 . *Berachot* 58a.
15 . 4:1 following the Ga'on of Vilna's reading.
16 . *Shabbat* 152a.
17 . Isaiah 56:7.
18 . See *Kehilat Yaakov, s.v. Gerim*.
19 . Psalms 109:4.
20 . See 1 Kings 12:16.
21 . Tzefaniah 3:9.
22 . Psalms 25:14.
23 . Ibid. 100:2.
24 . Ibid. 2:11.
25 . *Mussaf* prayer.
26 . Genesis 6:8.

STORY

RABBI AVRAHAM IBN EZRA: A LIFE FILLED WITH PARADOX

Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra was born around 4892 (1132 CE) to his father Rabbi Meir, in Tudela, Spain. The Jewish community flourished in those days, and included distinguished figures such as Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi and others. However, from a material perspective, the situation of the Jews was complex: on the one hand, Jews held high positions in the royal courts and took an active part in commerce and city culture, but on the other hand, they occasionally suffered from outbursts of hatred from the non-Jews. In 4898 (1138 CE), Rabbi Avraham began wandering throughout the world: North Africa, Tunisia, Egypt, the Holy Land, and more. Later, he returned to Europe, and in Italy he composed his commentary on the Torah, which was completed in 4915 (1155 CE). He resided for a time in Provence, where he studied and taught, and even held discussions with Rabbeinu Tam—both in writing and face-to-face. Afterwards, he stayed in London for three years, where he composed his book 'Yesod Mora.' At the age of 75, he fell ill and applied to himself the verse: "And Avram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran": At seventy-five years old, the tzaddik departed from the wrath of the world [Haran], and passed away on the first day of the first Adar. The place and year of his passing are unknown.

Ibn Ezra's commentary gained special affection among many great Jewish scholars. The Lubavitcher Rebbe, for example, relates that in past generations, when they wanted to test a child's intellectual sharpness, they would have him study a verse with Ibn Ezra's commentary—while concealing from him later commentaries written to elucidate Ibn Ezra's own commentary—and observe how he understood the pasage. The Rebbe also writes, in the name of the *Sha'arei Teshuvah* from the Mittler Rebbe, that Ibn Ezra lived a life of great personal sacrifice, doing it all for the sanctification of God's name.

Due to the fondness for Ibn Ezra's commentary, there are many stories in which *tzaddikim* derived precise meanings from his words. Here are two of them, reflecting both the commentary itself and the Chasidic perspective through which the *tzaddikim* viewed it:

The Rebbe of Strikov once said that the Ibn Ezra's words can put a stop to the current practice of consulting doctors during illness and the fact that even many *tzaddikim* and great rebbes would use the services of a doctor. The Ramban wrote: "What place do doctors have in the house of those who do God's will?" It seems from his words that God-fearing people should not consult doctors at all, and what is said about permission being given to a doctor to heal is permission for the doctor. But the sick person need not strive to see a doctor, and prayer is preferable.

The seeming discrepancy between what the Ramban wrote and the Talmud's explanation that doctors have been given permission from on High to heal, can be resolved in another way, based on what Ibn Ezra wrote on the verse "and he shall surely heal": "Permission was given to doctors to heal wounds that are visible externally, but any illness that is internal in the body is in God's hands to heal, and so it is written 'He wounds and binds up' etc." In other words, Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra distinguishes between external wounds, which the doctor sees with his eyes and for which it is said that permission was given to heal, and internal illness, which the doctor cannot see. For those, it is better to pray and not to rely on doctors. The Rebbe of Strikov said that based on this, it is possible to say that nowadays, when doctors have the ability to see even internal illnesses through X-rays and the like, instances such as these also fall under the category of "permission given to the doctor."

* * *

Once, when Rabbi Yisrael of Husiatyn was at a health resort waiting to drink the healing waters, a modern Jew approached him and asked about why they call him "Wunder Rabbiner" [Wonder Rabbi, a term used in Germany for a miracle worker].

Rebbe Yisrael replied, "There is a Stadt Rabbiner (City Rabbi), who has authority and control over his city. There is a Kreis Rabbiner (District Rabbi), who controls an entire region. Then there is a Landes Rabbiner (Country Rabbi) who exercises dominion over an entire country. But a Wunder Rabbiner—this is a rabbi who can control himself...."

He proceeded to support his explanation with the commentary of the Ibn Ezra on the verse "When a man sets himself apart by vowing to be a Nazirite vow." To "set oneself apart" (יַפְלִיא) also means to be "wondrous." The verse is thus speaking of an act of segregating oneself from one's surroundings and at the same time being truly wondrous. How so? Everyone follows their cravings and desires. Thus, the individual who separates himself in holiness from the desires and excesses of this world is worthy of being called a "man of wonder."

The uniqueness of Ibn Ezra, in many respects, is his grasp of two opposite extremes: on the one hand, he holds by common sense, straightforward interpretation, and expert knowledge of nature and human affairs. On the other

hand, he demonstrates a truly steadfast faith in the Creator and in the traditions passed down by the sages, which he wonderfully advocates for against the Karaites [Jews who dismissed the sages] who were prevalent in his time. For this reason, they tested children's intellect specifically with his commentary, to sharpen the mind with fear of Heaven. Thus, Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra merited to manifest his own explanation of what it means to be wondrous by being "set apart." He himself was able to sustain the paradox of being in a state of "submission (*itkafya*) that leads to transformation (*ithapcha*)." Even though he coerced himself to overcome his nature, seemingly a merely external and behavioristic shift, he merited an internal and complete transformation into a "man of wonder" who has no desires.

Rabbi Avraham also wonderfully blended the contradictory emotions of love and fear. On the one hand, it is said that he gave his life for the sanctification of God's name, meaning he merited to serve God with a strong soul movement of "And you shall love... with all your soul." And, on the other hand, Rabbi Bunim of Peshischa said of him, "I don't know how one can live in the world even for five minutes while experiencing the fear of Heaven that the Ibn Ezra had."

The distinction he made between internal and external wounds, which clarifies the increasing tendency to consult doctors, also leads us to a paradoxical state of understanding. On the one hand, doctors were not meant to be consulted for any internal disease, and yet on the other hand, science has figured out how to turn the body inside-out, allowing the doctor to transform the interior into the exterior. By framing his understanding of the license given to physicians as pertaining only to the body's exterior, Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra presaged that in our messianic era, God wants even the miracles that occur inside the body, the healing that He in fact performs, to seem as if it is affected by entirely natural means. In our generation, God prefers that even miracles seem to be clothed in a cloak of natural remedies.

This paradoxical state of medicine must be accompanied by a paradoxical approach in our minds. Indeed, we should place our trust in God alone. Yet, we seek help from doctors, and at the same time we do not believe that they are the ones affecting the cure. On the contrary: when we trust in God with active faith and rely on Him to give us strength to act, we understand that everything is from God alone—even our own actions and their positive results. When we are required to do something in a natural way, we should remember this and awaken the merit of Ibn Ezra, through whose merit God will give us the strength to act in the world.

PARTZUF

WHAT ARE MEASUREMENTS?

THE IMPORTANCE OF MEASUREMENTS

In modern times, people tend to associate Godliness with spirituality and less so with materiality. Indeed, when considering the spiritual versus the material, it would seem that the spiritual, because it is harder to grasp and define, would be a better representation for the ineffable and ungraspable nature of God. However, in reality, God is no more spiritual than He is material and both dimensions of reality equally serve Him, and both equally fall short of capturing His essence. It should therefore not come as a surprise that the first instruction regarding the fabrication of the Tabernacle, the *Mishkan*, where "I may dwell among them"[1] is, "They shall make an ark of acacia wood, two and a half cubits long, a cubit and a half wide, and a cubit and a half high."[2] The movement of the heart to bring gifts for the construction of the Tabernacle is immediately translated into physical measurements, instructions that will turn pieces of wood into sanctified parts of God's dwelling place below.

But not everything can be transformed into a part of the Tabernacle. *Parashat Terumah* begins the account of the construction of the Tabernacle that the Israelites constructed in the wilderness. The description of the Tabernacle, its vessels, its uniforms, and its utensils continues into *parashat Tetzaveh* and the account of its actual construction appears in *parashot Vayakhel* and *Pekudei*. In between these two sets of two *parashot* is *parashat Ki Tissa*, which includes the description of the construction of the Golden Calf—the idol that the people were seduced to construct, and which serves as an abominable counterpoint to the sanctity of the Tabernacle. Ironically, the Tabernacle contained many elements that could be misconceived as being just as abominable as the Golden Calf, if their fabrication had not been commanded directly by God.

Still another point comes to mind. The Tabernacle and all its parts and elements were perfectly described and measured. The Golden Calf on the other hand was simply "thrown together," without design or schedule: "I hurled it into the fire and out came this calf."[3]

A PURIFYING MEASURE

Indeed, when Rabbi Moses Cordovero, the greatest Kabbalist before the Arizal, whom the Arizal considered his teacher, opens his great work *Shiur Komah* on the most difficult parts of the Zohar that seem to be full of anthropomorphism, he first sets out to clarify the nature of the Hebrew word most often translated as "measures" or "attributes." As we will see, he does so because though measurements are usually of physical objects, their Hebrew version is a ladder that can lift our mind and open it to abstract thinking. To strip something of its materiality, this is done by the inner abstraction of the thing itself! Abstraction from physicality is achieved by considering its inner abstraction! We consider the idea or the word carefully,

collecting all its meanings—the meanings of a word are known as its "tikkun" in the ancient work called *Ma'ayan HaChochmah* (Wellspring of the Wisdom). Once a word's complete tikkun has been articulated, you can begin, as it were, to play with it—just as God plays during the Creation of the world. You can take a word and recombine its letters in a different order. For example, you can take the word for "distress" (**צָרָה**) and permute its letters to spell the word for "window/opening" (**צֹהַר**)! Thus, you have transformed the source of distress into an open doorway.

RECTIFYING A WORD

So the first step is to understand the myriad meanings of a word. Rabbi Moses Cordovero writes that to properly understand the nature of the *sefirot*, one must first understand the meaning of the word "measure" (מִדָּה), in all its variants, because this word is used so often as a synonym for a *sefirah*:

> **Measures** (מִדּוֹת). This word is a commonly agreed term among all Kabbalists, both early and later, to refer to the sacred forms [i.e., the *sefirot*] within it. And since the matter is thus, it is appropriate to explore how many ways this word can be derived, and to what intention we can attribute each of these meanings.
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> Know that this word can be used in four ways:
>
> The first meaning is in the sense of "measure," as it is written, "And in his hand a measuring line"[4] (וּבְיָדוֹ חֶבֶל מִדָּה) and "You shall measure off two thousand cubits outside the town"[5] (וּמַדֹּתֶם מִחוּץ לָעִיר אֶת־פְּאַת קֵדְמָה אַלְפַּיִם בָּאַמָּה).
>
> The second meaning is in the sense of "garment," as in "…wore a garment made to measure"[6] (וְלָבַשׁ...מִדּוֹ בַד). Some commentators explain that it descends according to its measurements, beneath his garments.
>
> The third meaning is in the sense of "area," as it is written, "He spread himself over the child"[7] (וַיִּתְמַדַּד עַל הַיֶּלֶד שָׁלֹשׁ פְּעָמִים), meaning he lay on top of him.
>
> The fourth meaning refers to the traits of men: the trait of anger, the trait of mercy, and so on.

Let us now consider these four meanings of the word measure (מִדָּה), elaborate on them and then correspond them to the four letters of God's essential Name, *Havayah*.

MEASURE AS A LIMIT

The simplest meaning is a measurement, like a boundary, or limit. This is described in the Zohar as a measuring rod (קָנֶה הַמִּדָּה), the ruler used to measure everything! This meaning is the most physical. Because this is the essence of what we mean when we say that God's height, as it were, is measurable, meaning in other words that He has attributes, or measures, the Ramak begins with this meaning. Obviously, this can be a very problematic proposition. Are we really suggesting that one can take a ruler and measure God! Of course not, which is why if we are going to understand the Torah's use of anthropomorphisms, we need to fully understand what the word "measure" means.

MEASURE AS A GARMENT

The second meaning of the word translated as "measure" (מִדָּה) is a "garment." When going to the tailor,

the tailor measures you, takes your measurements and according to the measurements, he cuts the fabric and sews you a garment! He sews you a uniform, a suitable outfit. And so, here we can understand and picture the connection between measurement and a uniform. As is common knowledge, if the garment is not exactly according to your measurements and there is "excess material," it invites the external (and impure) forces to affect you. Again, a garment that is not according to your measurements becomes a big problem because it invites all kinds of evil forces that attach to what is known as "excess material." Therefore, it is very important that the tailor be an expert in his profession – and if he is not, then a specialist doctor is needed to repair what he has ruined. As mentioned, this is what is referred to by "measure" (מִדָּה) as "uniform" from the phrase "measured garment."[8]

MEASURE AS LYING DOWN OR EXPANSION

The third meaning of "measure" is lying down on (הִשְׁתַּטְּחוּת). We find this meaning used when Elijah the prophet revivifies the Zeraphite woman's child: "He lay down on the child three times"[9] (וַיִּתְמַדַּד עַל־הַיֶּלֶד שָׁלֹשׁ פְּעָמִים). In Modern Hebrew this verb means "to deal with something" (לְהִתְמוֹדֵד). This seems to be an entirely different meaning and a modern Hebrew speaker might not even recognize that the source of this word is "measure" or that in the Bible it means to lie down on something. In any case, what did the prophet do? He placed his face upon the face of the child, placed his hands upon the hands of the child, his feet upon the feet of the child, and so on. He figuratively "dressed" him, just as our tailor must make the uniform according to the measurements, and as mentioned, everything starts with taking the measurements. And so, here, Elijah the prophet is measuring the child, as it were, and hovering over him. That is, he was aligning himself, with his body, the image of God in the child's body, as it were, so that the image of God in him align exactly with the child's and in this way, he revives him. As mentioned earlier, if I were to translate the verse "He hovered over the child" into another language, I would not translate it with a word meaning "measure," but I would translate it as "he lay upon the child!"

Another point about this verse. "To lie down" is akin to the notion of expansion. This is especially so in the Temple, where one not only bows down before God, but one lies flat on their belly with hands outstretched in what is known as "expanding the hands and feet" (פְּשׁוּט יָדַיִם וְרַגְלַיִם). Elijah too expanded (his full height) upon the child! And as mentioned, it is more accurate to say that he lay upon the child. And so, "measure" is related to the concept of "area." Close to this is the verse, "its measure is longer than the earth,"[10] and another not so familiar verse, "The bed is too short for stretching out."[11] One of the most important models in Kabbalah is that of point, line, and area! Just simply measuring could refer to a ruler used to measure a line. But in the verse we quoted, "to spread out" already indicates an area that one spreads out over! To stretch out over an area.

This word, "he lay down on" (וַיִּתְמַדַּד), appears only once in the Bible. Still, this does not prevent the grammarians from arguing that the original meaning of the

word "measure" is "to lie down on" or "to stretch out." But this word also sounds like it is related to "always" (תָּמִיד). What is the connection between measure and always?

THE MEANING OF "ALWAYS"

We can start by asking what the root of the word "always" is.[12] As it turns out, it is not so simple to discover its root. A theory that would seem to utilize correct reasoning is that "always" (תָּמִיד) comes from the word "measure," in the sense of expansion. So "always" is an infinite expansion that never ends. And so, the word "always" comes from measure and reminds us of the language found in *Sefer Yetzirah*: "Ten *sefirot* [measured] that have no end."

Consider a particular *sefirah* in the world of Emanation; let us use wisdom as an example. Even in the World of Emanation, wisdom is wisdom and it is not understanding, even though there is an infinite interpenetration of understanding into wisdom (and vice versa), i.e., there is the understanding of wisdom, and the understanding within the understanding of wisdom, and so on, endlessly. Still, generally speaking, wisdom is not understanding. Therefore, wisdom is measured on its own. And yet, it is written in *Sefer Yetzirah*: "Ten *sefirot* without 'what,' ten that have no end." This means that each *sefirah* in the world of Emanation, in the world of the rectified, is eternal; therefore, each *sefirah* is considered true—an eternal thing, which never ends. It is true in the sense that it does not deceive; something that does intermittently stop is deceptive, for example a river that does not run all year long. When it is dry it becomes deceptive—the opposite of truth. And so, as explained, "always" is a measure that expands without end. There are several other good theories regarding the question of what the root of "always" is, and yet, the most original is that its root is "measure" (מדה) in the sense of to lie down!

MEASURE AS HUMAN TRAITS

The fourth meaning of "measure" refers to the traits in people. This fourth meaning is especially familiar to someone who studies Chasidut and thinks using the Chasidic mindset. For him, this is not the fourth meaning of "measure," but rather the first meaning: the traits of the soul, the characteristics of the soul! These include the trait of mercy, the trait of judgment, etc. What we call "traits," the Rambam calls *de'ot*, which could be translated as "opinions" or "proclivities."

Let us summarize the first chapter of the Ramak's *Shiur Komah*: measure can mean measurement; it can mean clothing and uniforms. Measure can also mean to lie down or stretch out; and finally, measure can be in the sense of an opinion, a mental trait, traits of the soul.

Traits do not have to be only the six emotional traits of the heart; they apply to all ten *sefirot*, meaning that every *sefirah* is a trait!

This is what the Ramak presents in the first chapter of his most important and most sensitive work on Kabbalah. There is a saying that "everything follows the inception." Apart from being the most important chapter in the sense that it sets the background, the tone and the direction for the entire work, the topic he covers in this chapter—how to understand the word "measure" (מִדָּה), the word used as a synonym for the *sefirot*—and the way in

which he presents it—dividing it into four meanings of the word measure—reveals how important it is for him to organize his thoughts based on the fourfold division that is distinctive of God's Four-Letter Name. By creating a latent correspondence between his subject matter and the four letters of God's essential Four-Letter Name, he is fulfilling the pillar of Kabbalistic writing that one should "Reveal a handsbreadth but conceals a handsbreadth."[13]

After he arranged and explained the four meanings of measure, now he must begin to explain them one by one to negate from them any physical interpretation. This is what he does in the rest of the first chapter. But to fully negate them from physical interpretation, he first needs to bring all four meanings together, which we identified earlier as the act of finding the *tikkun* (enclothement) of a word.

THE FOUR MEANINGS OF MEASURE AND HAVAYAH

Now, it is very clear that the four meanings of the word "measures" that the Ramak presents correspond to the four letters of God's essential Name, *Havayah* (*yud-hei-vav-hei*), and they are even presented in order, from below to above. Meaning that the first meaning corresponds to the last letter—the final *hei*—the second to the second from last letter—the *vav*—and so on.

Thus, measure, in the sense of measuring—using a ruler for instance to quantify length, or width, or height—corresponds to the most physical level, i.e., to the lower *hei*, which represents the *sefirah* of kingdom and the World of Action.

The second interpretation of measure, in the sense of a garment or uniform, certainly corresponds to the letter *vav* of *Havayah*. The letter *vav*, whose value is 6, represents the six emotional traits of the heart also called the six directions or extremities (ו קְצָוֹת). The verse the Ramak quotes to illustrate this meaning, as we saw earlier, is "…wore a garment made to measure" (וְלָבַשׁ... מִדּוֹ בַּד), in it the value of the word translated as "garment" (**בד**) is 6, divided into 2 and 4. Likewise, among the 6 measures of the heart, the 6 emotional traits from loving-kindness to foundation, there are two primary ones—loving-kindness and might—along with four additional traits (beauty, victory, acknowledgment, and foundation).

There is another source of support for identifying garment with the letter *vav* of *Havayah*. This comes from another central model found in the Arizal's writings known by its acronym, שנגל"ה, which stands for root (שֹׁרֶשׁ), soul (נְשָׁמָה), body (גּוּף), garment (לְבוּשׁ), and chamber (הֵיכָל). The 5 elements in this model correspond to the four letters of Havayah including the tip of the letter *yud*. Thus, the garment corresponds to the letter *vav*.

The third interpretation of measure—to lie down, to spread over—corresponds to the first *hei* of *Havayah*, which also represents the *partzuf* of *Ima*, the mother principle, as we usually translate its name into English. The most striking connection between spreading over and the mother principle appears in the image of a mother bird covering her hatchlings in her nest. What Elijah did and what brought about the revivification of the young child was to spread himself over him.

What Elijah did is akin to the

Resurrection of the Dead. Interestingly, the value of the words, "He lay over the child" (וַיִּתְמֹדֵד עַל הַיֶּלֶד) is exactly 613, which is not just the number of commandments in the Torah but also the number of organs and sinews in the body. 613 is the number that perhaps represents the human body, the form that has in it the image of God, more than any other number. It might be surprising to connect the Resurrection of the Dead with understanding rather than wisdom, because wisdom is the gateway through which the infinite revelation of God enters every reality. But we find that, "they will die, but not in wisdom."[14] In wisdom, it is as if there is no recognition of death in the first place. In understanding, in the mother principle, there is a possibility of death, but then there is also the remedy of the Resurrection.

Finally, we come to the fourth meaning of measure: a trait, a human mental or emotional trait. One might think that anything human would involve the greatest degree of personification or anthropomorphism of the Divine. But according to Chasidut, there is the least personification in this, since every soul is a "literal part of God from above." Therefore, there is no great distance, no gap, between the metaphor (human mental and emotional traits) and what it signifies (the Divine *sefirot*).

For this reason, Chasidut interprets the verse "From my flesh, I will behold God" as referring to perfected mental and emotional traits, meaning that they serve as the best metaphor or analogy for contemplating the Divine. Contrastingly, when the analogy or metaphor used is something physical, then there is a fracture between the analogy or metaphor and what it signifies! When there is a disconnect between them, it is very difficult to reconstruct the Divine analogy properly from the analogy. That is why this verse, "From my flesh, I will behold God" is interpreted as referring not to our physical flesh, to our corporeal body, but to the form in the body or the mental and emotional traits in the body and specifically these traits when they are perfected traits; not just love, but specifically love of God, not just awe, but awe of God, etc.

This fourth and final meaning of measure corresponds to the letter *yud* in *Havayah*, to the father principle and the *sefirah* of wisdom because there is no death, there is no fracture there between the metaphor and what it signifies. This is also alluded to by the simple dimensionless point-like form of the letter *yud*, which leaves no room for fracturing. The inner experience of wisdom is self-nullification. By contemplating the rectified mental and emotional traits (love of God, fear of God, etc.), we achieve a state of self-nullification which does not allow for personification and anthropomorphism.

Notes:
1 . Exodus 25:8.
2 . Ibid. v. 10.
3 . Ibid. 32:24.
4 . Zachariah 2:5.
5 . Numbers 35:5.
6 . Leviticus 6:3.
7 . 1 Kings 17:20.
8 . Leviticus 6:3.
9 . 1 Kings 17:20.
10 . Job 11:9.
11 . Isaiah 28:20.
12 . Incidentally, the first occurrence of this word in the Pentateuch is in our *parashah*, Exodus 25:30.
13 . *Nedarim* 20b.
14 . Job 4:21.