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

נט"ד

Wonders

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שַׁבָּת כִּי תִשָּׂא-פּוּרִים ❁ יד-טו אַדָר תשפ"ה



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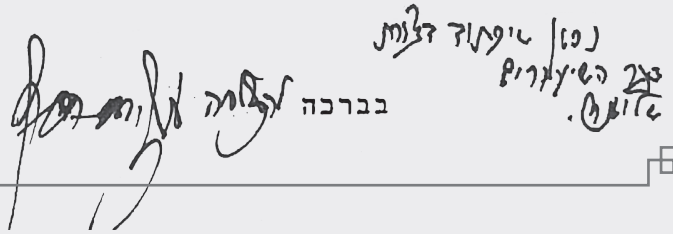
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The Lubavitcher Rebbe to Rav Ginsburgh, Elul 5741

"…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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Cover picture: David Katash

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

EXISTENTIAL ANXIETIES AND THEIR REMEDIES

ANXIETY, DREAD, AND WORRY

In Issue 139, we introduced the three existential anxieties people, and one might argue, entire cultures suffer from. We can translate "anxiety" into Hebrew as either חֲרָדָה, which we will translate as "dread," or דְּאָגָה, which we will translate back to English as "worry." The first refers to a sudden onset of acute anxiety. The second is a more permanent state.

Dread is related to the World of Chaos that shattered and broke, according to Kabbalah since it can bring about a similar shattering in the psyche. Worry, on the other hand, does not. On the contrary, worrying can be a positive force in our lives. The sages state that "the secrets of the Torah are only revealed to one whose heart worries within."[1] The Mittler Rebbe even says that existential worry can be instrumental in the revelation of the Torah's secrets. There could be all kinds of reasons to worry. One might be worried about why Mashiach has not yet come, following the *gematria* we like to mention that "worry in a man's heart"[2] (דְּאָגָה בְּלֵב אִישׁ) equals "Mashiach" (מָשִׁיחַ). There can be many different subjects for worry. Other questions might be, why is there evil in the world, why do the wicked prosper,[3] etc.

1. *Chagigah* 13a.
2. Proverbs 12:25.
3. Jeremiah 12:1.

ENTER EXISTENTIAL ANXIETY AND COLLECTIVE NEUROSES

In issue 139, we also mentioned that the three existential worries, that appeared historically in order are: death or non-being, guilt, and the meaninglessness of life. We then corresponded these three existential anxieties to the intellectual, emotional, and habitual parts of the psyche (see chart at end of article).

The most important discussion though was of how these three existential anxieties play out in contemporary Jewish life. When applying these anxieties to a collective such as the Jewish people, we might prefer to use the term neurosis, as there are collective states of neurosis. These neuroses that we suffer from as a people, particularly in the Land of Israel, are what prevent us, as a collective, from being able to fully win wars against our enemies. Let's review these and continue from there.

THE STATE OF ISRAEL AND NON-BEING

In our generation, we established a state despite the opposition of our neighbors. But we are plagued by a deep-rooted fear that everything we have built might cease to exist. The more weight and importance an individual gives to Zionism, the more they feel that the existence of our people depends on the State of Israel, or like the religious Zionist community, that the State represents the beginning of the Redemption (רֵאשִׁית צְמִיחַת גְּאֻלָּתֵנוּ), the more

precious it is in their eyes. But regardless, pretty much all the Jews that live in the Land of Israel have an existential fear that everything might be destroyed. Some even describe this possibility as the "destruction of the Third Temple" (חֻרְבַּן בַּיִת שְׁלִישִׁי), where the word for "Temple" is the same as the word for "home." This is not without foundation. Our collective memory, whether conscious or subconscious, is filled with the destruction of the first Temple and the second. These national traumas have left us with the dread that whatever we build is ultimately destroyed. Even if it takes 400 years, or more, in the end it does not last, and in the history of our people, 400 years is not very long. The fact that this already happened twice is like a *chazakah*[4]—a default state that we are always destined to return to.

JEWISH GUILT

Regarding guilt, there is something even deeper. The main source of personal guilt in the West is Christianity, which uses the burden of guilt to control its followers. For Jews, the main guilt is not so much personal guilt, but the guilt described in the liturgy as, "because of our sins we were exiled from our land."[5] This is not about personal sins but about our collective sins. Thus, we suffer from collective guilt; we have anxiety that we are "a guilty nation." Essentially, this anxiety mirrors what the nations say about us.

This collective neurosis reached its peak during the Holocaust, when many of the victims justified their oppressors by blaming themselves, by blaming us as Jews, our people. This is a well-known syndrome found in victims of severe abuse.

Just these two neuroses together already prevent us from acting as we should against our enemies; they neutralize and cancel our ability to destroy them and decisively win against them.

THE UNBEARABLE EMPTINESS OF LIFE

The third factor, the main existential anxiety of our generation, emptiness makes us feel that the effort to win is not worth it, since nothing in life is really worth it. We sense that reality is empty of meaning. This is a worry, which neutralizes the strength to go all the way, because the effort is not worth it. This is just an example of how to understand our lack of ability to win our wars because of these three existential neuroses.

FAITH, LOVE, AND RESPONSIBILITY

If we look more carefully at the two words offered as a translation for anxiety, which were dread (חֲרָדָה) and worry (דְּאָגָה), we notice that their initials in Hebrew spell **חד**. It comes to mind that if we would add the letter *alef* (**א**) before them, we would get the word for "one" (**אֶחָד**). What word might this letter alef be the initial of. Moreover, since the alef precedes the dread and the worry, we can surmise that whatever word it is the initial of could provide the remedy or sweetening of these existential anxieties.

But first we need to understand the difference between these two translations of anxiety: dread (חֲרָדָה) and worry (דְּאָגָה). Fear is mentioned with respect to Isaac:

4. Normally, a *chazakah* is established after something repeats three times. However, there is a differing opinion that is especially relevant in circumstances that involve extreme stakes, that even two repetitions are enough to establish a *chazakah*.
5. *Shabbat Mussaf*.

"Isaac dreaded a very great dread"[6] (חָרְדָה גְּדֹלָה עַד מְאֹד). There is no such phrase describing dread anywhere else in the Tanach (there is a "great dread," but no "very great dread"). Since Isaac had dread, who had worry? It was Jacob who worried his entire life. He worried about Esau, worried about Joseph. He spends his entire life worrying. After a while it became an existential worry, what would be the next calamity that would befall him. Completing the correspondence, Abraham is connected with the *alef*. As a form of worry or dread, the alef would be a "terror" (אֵימָה). Thus, the word "one" (**אֶחָד**) spells the initials of "terror, dread, and worry" (**אֵ**ימָה **חָ**רְדָה **דְּ**אָגָה).

But the *alef* does not have to follow the same pattern. It does not have to be a type of dread or worry. On the contrary, it can also be the remedy. As explained in the secret of the word "truth" (אֱמֶת), where the *alef* revives the next two letters, מֵת, which mean "dead." Here too, we need to find an *alef* that will revive and heal the dread and the worry.

In truth, it is written that Abraham is the force of healing for everyone, both for the body and for the soul. He carries a precious stone around his neck that heals anyone who looks at it. Therefore, let us think about a quality in the *alef* in Abraham that will sweeten and heal the anxieties and worries.

We have three such candidates:

Abraham is known as "the father of all believers," as it says, "He believed in God, and He counted it as righteousness." The first quality that can be proposed is faith (**אֱ**מוּנָה), which begins with an *alef*. The fundamental trait of "Abraham, My beloved" is love (**אַ**הֲבָה), which also begins with an *alef*. The third candidate for a word that can be a remedy and begins with an *alef* is related to how psychologists say that a person who has gone through a crisis can rise and recover if they take on new responsibility. As long as they are helpless, broken, and hopeless, they cannot recover. To recover, they need to feel that they have a role in life, a role that depends on them and is placed upon them, and this is called responsibility (**אַ**חֲרָיוּת). The concept of responsibility has always existed, of course, but the word "responsibility" is new. Responsibility stems from the root "*acher*" (another) and "*achar*" (after). We might say that responsibility is standing behind someone, taking responsibility for the other.

RESPONSIBILITY AND FREEDOM

Viktor Frankl strongly emphasized the role of responsibility. He said that for human freedom not to deteriorate into aimlessness—with all the dangers of emptiness involved—freedom must be transformed into responsibility. Now in English, these two words—freedom (חֵרוּת) and responsibility (אַחֲרָיוּת)—have no connection, but in Hebrew, both relate to the two-letter root, or gate, חר). Frankl even suggested that just as the Statue of Liberty stands on the east coast of the United States, so a Statue of Responsibility should be constructed on the West Coast (in Torah terms, the west represents the back – thus, the western sea is called "the last sea," which can be interpreted as the language of responsibility, as mentioned). There are those today promoting this initiative, and indeed, the hippie movement in the United

6. Genesis 27:33.

States, which the Rebbe called "a kingdom of kindness" symbolizes not only the freedom of man as a human being (while encouraging personal initiative, with all the responsibility and choices that accompany it), but also taking responsibility for the entire world.

The source for the connection between freedom and responsibility is in our tradition. The purpose of the Exodus from Egypt, "the time of our freedom," is the acceptance of the Torah at Mount Sinai, which means taking responsibility before God ("they are My servants"), before all of Israel ("all of Israel are guarantors for one another," a hint also to the west, the back, as mentioned), and for the entire world. In this last capacity, we the Jewish people are described as "a kingdom of priests" whose role is to bring all of humanity to fulfill the mission of "then I will turn to the nations a pure language, so that they all call upon the name of the God to serve Him as one."

The value of "responsibility" (**אַחְרָיוּת**) is 625, 25 squared or 5 to the 4th power. 625 is the value of the filling of Adam (**אלף דלת מם**). There is something in the word "responsibility" that points to the completeness of a human being. A human is someone who takes responsibility, feels responsible for someone else, for something else. Concerning Adam, the sages interpreted the verse, "You have formed me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me"[7] (אָחוֹר וְקֶדֶם צַרְתָּנִי) and for our purposes, it can be explained as: "Behind and before," first of all, in order to progress in life, a person must take responsibility for his friend, responsibility to advance his friend in all matters, both material and spiritual. And for this, it is said, "You have formed me" (צַרְתָּנִי), which is cognate with "troubles" (צָרוֹת), meaning that all the troubles a person faces in the world are meant for this purpose (you take a step backward to take a step forward). This is the purpose of his life. For this purpose, God has also given man the power of gentle coercion, "And You have laid Your hand upon me," the power of the one who is responsible to gently push, to stand behind his friend, and to help him move forward.

ABRAHAM AND RESPONSIBILITY

Just as our forefather Abraham is faith and love, he is also the pillar of responsibility. Abraham, "the man, the greatest among giants," takes upon himself the unfulfilled responsibility of Adam. Abraham the Hebrew stands against the entire world—the entire world is on one side, and he is on the other—but he does not isolate himself. Being "the father of many nations," from the covenant of circumcision onward, he takes responsibility for all the inhabitants of the world. He proclaims God before the whole world and knows that he is responsible for bringing everyone to their purpose. Therefore, we say that the primary figure associated with the Mashiach in the Torah, even more than Moses our teacher, is Abraham. Moses is the redeemer of all Jews, but Abraham is the redeemer of all of humanity. He excels in this with his partner, Sarah—"Abraham converts the men, and Sarah converts the women"—and together they bring the Messiah to the whole world. Abraham is the Messiah about

7. Psalms 139:5.

whom it is said, "the burden was upon his shoulders"—the clearest expression of responsibility in the Tanach.

FAITH, LOVE, AND RESPONSIBILITY

Therefore, we have three qualities of our forefather Abraham – faith, love, and responsibility. He encompasses them all. Abraham also includes Isaac and Jacob. It is written that Abraham (אַבְרָהָם) begins as *alef beit* (אָב) – the *alef* stands for Abraham himself, and the *beit*, whose value is 2, represents Isaac and Jacob. "We do not refer to as 'father' except for three," Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Therefore, it is appropriate to say that faith, love, and responsibility also correspond to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, all of whom are included within Abraham himself.

The two main and well-known pillars of Abraham's life are love and faith. These are his two essential character traits, and one might consider which is superior. We would like to argue that Abraham's essence is his faith—he is the first believer—and faith carries even more weight in him than his love. Abraham underwent ten trials, and Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk, author of *Pri Haaretz*, says that every trial was a trial of faith. Likewise, every challenge a person faces in life is meant to strengthen their faith. The word "love" first appears in the Torah at the climax of Abraham's ten trials, the binding of Isaac, where it is written, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac... and offer him there as a burnt offering." God only intended that Abraham bring Isaac up and take him down, but He knew how Abraham would interpret His words, and that he should offer him up as a sacrifice. What is the trial? His faith needs to overcome his love; the trial is meant to strengthen Abraham's faith so that it becomes so strong that it overpowers his natural and good love. Abraham's heart is his love, but his crown is his faith – and that is his most intrinsic quality, the Abraham in Abraham.

ABRAHAM'S MULTI-DIMENSIONALITY

If faith is Abraham's essence, which we can describe as the "Abraham" within Abraham, who characterizes the love in Abraham? That would be Jacob. The second love mentioned in the Torah is the love of Isaac for Rebeccah. The Torah continues to describe many more connections with love, but the person who loves the most is Jacob; he loves his wife Rachel, he loves his son Joseph, and he loves all his sons (as expressed in his words "When I am bereaved [over Joseph], I will be completely bereaved [over Benjamin and all of you]"). The greatest "love for Israel" (*Ahavat Yisrael*) is exhibited by Jacob-Israel himself. Jacob's great love is so powerful that it redeems Abraham, as the verse states, "Jacob, who redeemed Abraham." This means (as explained in chapter 32 of *Tanya*), that when love (the attribute of Abraham) for someone weakens for some reason, it is Jacob who redeems and restores it, revitalizing it. There is someone who comes to a tzaddik and says, "I have lost my sense of love for someone," and the love needs to be restored. What can the *tzaddik* do? He needs to awaken feelings of compassion (Jacob's attribute, the inner experience of beauty/tiferet) for that person. In Aramaic, love is *rachimu (*רחימו*)*, which in Hebrew means compassion (רַחֲמִים). There is even once in the Bible where the root רחם literally means to love, even in Hebrew, "I will love You Havayah, strengthen me"

(אֲרַחֲמֵךְ יְהוָה חֲזַקִי), meaning, "strengthen my love." So when the love is lost, it is compassion that can redeem it. Compassion for someone restores and revitalizes the love for them. In the Torah's stories about Jacob, we see that the Abraham within him is his love, and consequently, the Jacob within Abraham is his love as well.

We are left with Responsibility. Responsibility is the attribute of Isaac. It is he that stands behind, supports, but does not interfere. We explained once with regard to business management that a good manager is involved and interested in everything, but does not interference. On the contrary, he encourages independence; he does not want you to be dependent. Dependency is a very bad thing. In therapy too, the worst thing is for the patient to become dependent on the therapist. Dependency of that nature represents a state of utter small mindedness—the contraction of one's soul. A good responsible person stands behind you but does not interfere; he wants you to walk on your own two feet and grow with your own strength. This characteristic of responsibility is the Isaac within Abraham – Abraham takes responsibility for the entire world, but he does not convert masses like a herd of sheep; he converts each individual, personally, taking care of each individual—this is what we call a faithful shepherd.

REMEDIES FOR EXISTENTIAL ANXIETY

What we have done is seen that each of the existential anxieties—non-being, guilt, and meaninglessness—is remedied by one of the three aspects of Abraham just described: faith, love, and responsibility. They all emerged from the letter alef that serves as a remedy for anxiety and worry.

According to psychologists, especially Viktor Frankl, the main remedy is to give a person responsibility—thus they all emerge from responsibility. Many people think that the most important thing is to restore their love, and for those who are inclined toward faith, it is clear that the main thing is to strengthen their faith. Faith, love, and responsibility can completely sweeten anxiety and worry and even transform them into positive qualities, with God's help.

In particular, faith is the power that overcomes the first existential anxiety. Faith in God—from whom reality emerges—is the antidote to the worry of non-being. Love is the antidote for guilt. Feeling God's unlimited love and goodness and feeling love for Him and from Him to all creatures, sweetens and neutralizes the guilt complex, which as we said was introduced in order to subjugate people and make them feel dependent, even enslaved, to whomever promises redemption and freedom from sin. Finally, the sense of responsibility addresses the third deep anxiety of life being meaningless. Responsibility fills life with meaning, and not aimless emptiness.

part of psyche	existential anxiety	remedy
intellectual (מֻשְׂכָּל)	anxiety of meaninglessness	responsibility
emotional (מֻרְגָּשׁ)	anxiety because of guilt	love
habitual/innate (מֻטְבָּע)	anxiety of non-being (death)	faith

STORY

RABBI YOEL SIRKIS: THE TORAH PERMITS INNOVATIONS (CHADASH)

Rabbi Yoel Sirkis, known as the Bach (an acronym for Bayit Chadash, his most famous work on the Tur) was born in 5321 (1561) to his father Rabbi Shmuel. He studied Torah with his father and with Rabbis Leibush of Lublin (teacher of Rabbi Yishayah Horowitz, the holy Shelah), Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Shor of Brisk (a student of the Rabbi Moshe Isserles), and Rabbi Feivush - head of the yeshiva and chief rabbi of Krakow. The Bach served as rabbi in Pozna (Poznań, Poland) and other cities, including Libevne (Liuboml, Poland), Mezhibuzh, and Belz. In 5375 (1615), he was appointed as head of the rabbinical court and the yeshivah in Brisk, and in 5379 (1619), the Bach moved to a similar position in Krakow and its surroundings. He was one of the leaders of the illustrious Council of Four Lands and many of his students ate their meals at his house. From his lessons with his students, his book "Bayit Chadash" on the Tur was written. Among his works is a commentary on Pardes Rimonim by Rabbi Moshe Cordovero, and even in his halachic works, his connection to Kabbalah is evident. As he writes in his responsa, "for it [Kabbalah] is the source of the Torah and its essence, and it is all fear of Heaven." The Bach passed away on the 20th of Adar, 5400 (1640) and was buried in Krakow.

When the Bach completed his book on the *Tur*, he wanted to print it. But Rabbi Nathan Nata Shapira, the author of the *Megaleh Amukot*, told the printer, day after day, to delay the printing. After a year or more, when the book had still not been printed, the Bach decided to request an approbation from the *Megaleh Amukot*. He sent the manuscript with one of his students, but the *tzaddik* did not want to give the approbation.

The Bach was disheartened, and because of this, the son of the *Megaleh Amukot* fell dangerously ill. While praying for his son's recovery, Elijah came to the *Megaleh Amukot* and revealed to him that the cause for his son's ailment was the Bach's resentment towards him. He quickly went to the Bach's house to appease him, but he would not be appeased. The Bach said to him: "Why did you not want to give an approbation to my book?! If there are things in the book that are not proper, tell me!" The *Megaleh Amukot* said to him: "I heard a proclamation from Heaven that if I give the approbation, the Bach will depart from this world, and I want you to

have a long life." The Bach replied: "Why do you concern yourself with the secrets of the Holy Blessed One? My soul came to this world for the purpose of printing this book!" Only then did the *Megaleh Amukot* gave him the approbation and told the printer to print it.

Afterwards, the Bach became very weak and did not want to give rulings or judge cases that came before him. He instructed the judges to sit and judge in his house, while he lay in the inner room. One day, two people came for judgment: one man claimed he had lent six hundred gold coins to the defendant, and brought a document as proof, signed by witnesses as required by law. The defendant cried, saying it was a lie. The Bach heard the cries, called the judges, and they told him what had happened. He asked for the document and read it and said that it was entirely forged from beginning to end. The judges asked: "But according to the law, isn't the document valid? And even if you find it invalid through your Divine inspiration, the Torah is not in heaven, and we judge according to what our eyes see!"

The Bach told the lender to confess that he had forged the document, but he refused. Then he asked everyone to leave, and the lender remained in his room. He told the lender to confess, and for the sake of truth, he promised him to be in his company in the World to Come. The lender began to cry and admitted that he had indeed forged the document and hired false witnesses. The Bach called the judges to his room and said: "Rejoice, my inner parts! If your uncertainties are like this, how much more so your certainties!" And his soul departed in purity.

* * *

Despite his greatness, the Bach had his share of troubles and enemies. Even at the end of his days, he suffered bitterly from those who sought conflict. This was also the case in his earlier years. When the Bach was a rabbi in Belz, his salary was not even enough to buy candles. Every night, the Bach sat in darkness and studied Torah by heart. When the townspeople noticed that his house was dark at night, they decided to dismiss him: a rabbi who does not study at night is not worthy of being a rabbi in their town...

Before leaving Belz for Brisk, where he had found his next rabbinical position, he asked the people of Belz: Why was Sodom destroyed by its bedrock turning upside down; was there no other punishment fitting for them? He answered his own question: The people of Sodom turned the natural order upside down. Instead of providing for the rabbi's livelihood so that he could care for their studies, they concerned themselves with the rabbi's studies and imposed upon him the responsibility to support the city's poor...

* * *

One of the great Torah scholars of the generation found himself at the holy *tisch* (festive meal and gathering) of the Rabbi Chaim of Sanz, known as the *Divrei Chaim*, may his merit protect us. The *Divrei Chaim* honored him by inviting him to eat together from one plate of *kasha* (porridge) made from fine flour. The great scholar and *tzaddik*, who was the head of the rabbinical court and yeshiva in a famous city, refrained from eating the *kasha* as he was held strictly by the opinions that *chadash* (new grain) is prohibited even regarding grain produced outside the Land of Israel.

The *Divrei Chaim*, however, was completely lenient in this matter, as this was the teaching of the Ba'al Shem Tov. The holy Rabbi of Neschiz related: The Ba'al Shem Tov, of blessed memory, asked in his dream about the law of *chadash* regarding grain from non-Jews in our times outside the Land of Israel, and they answered him that after the passing of the Bach, of blessed memory (who permitted this), they cooled the fires of purgatory for forty days in his honor. In the morning, the Ba'al Shem Tov arose and ordered beer made from new grain to be brought to him, and he drank it. And he said: The Bach is authoritative and can certainly be relied upon.

In any case, when the *Divrei Chaim* saw that the guest was not eating, he whispered in his ear that if he did not immediately eat from the kasha with him, he would publicly announce that he was to be treated as "a rebellious elder" (*zaken moreh*), who transgressed the words of the heavenly court that ruled to permit it.

(*Zichronam Livrachah*)

As reflected in many stories, Rabbi Yoel Sirkis was greatly esteemed by the great Chasidic masters. It is even said that the Ba'al Shem Tov chose to settle in Mezhibuzh because the Bach had also served as rabbi in this city. The Bach's lenient ruling regarding *chadash*, which was very significant in European countries, was reinforced by many Chasidic Rebbes and *halachic* authorities such as the Seer of Lublin, the *Avnei Nezer* of Sochatchov, and others.

The connection between the Bach and Chasidut is evident in other places as well. The Lubavitcher Rebbe enthusiastically cited his words about learning Torah for its own sake, noting that they are fitting for a Chasidic Rebbe. The Alter Rebbe, in his *Shulchan Aruch HaRav*, often rules according to the Bach, and Rabbi Yoel Ba'al Shem, one of the leading hidden *tzaddikim* who preceded the Ba'al Shem Tov, was a disciple of the Bach.

There is additional depth to the Chasidic affection for the Bach, beyond his significant "power of leniency" (כֹּחַ דְּהֶתֵּירָא), his greatness in both revealed and hidden Torah, or the heritage passed from teacher to student. The title of the Bach's commentary on the Tur, *Bayit Chadash* literally means "New House," and he named it so, "because I did not gather (i.e., copy) into my house the words of the scholars of previous generations... unless I could innovate some new understanding

from them."[8] Based on the Chatam Sofer's saying, "Chadash (innovation) is forbidden by the Torah," one could say that the Bach's approach, which permits and emphasizes Torah innovations and innovations in serving God, prepared the ground for the coming of the Ba'al Shem Tov who was a total innovation in Divine service.

This affinity for renewal is also alluded to in the initials of his title, Bach: Among the letter substitutions explained in Kabbalah, such as AtBash (אתב"ש) and AlBam (אלב"ם), a place of honor is reserved for the AtBach (אטב"ח) substitution. In the section dedicated to letter substitutions in *Etz Chaim*, it is explained that AtBach belongs to the secret of the *sefirah* of kingdom, which is the *Shechinah*, the source of Jewish souls. Each pair of letters belongs to a different aspect of kingdom, and the combination *Bach* (ב"ח)—the initials of his book's name (בַּיִת חָדָשׁ)—belongs to the wisdom within kingdom, which in our context means kingdom's ability to renew itself and flow forth again and again. For those who delve deeper, we'll add that the source of wisdom in kingdom is in the sefirah of victory (*netzach*) of *Ze'ir Anpin* and the *tzaddikim* who emerge from it eternally face many opponents. So, it was in the time of the Bach, and so in the time of the Ba'al Shem Tov. Eventually, however, the opponents fade away and the innovation becomes an inseparable part of Judaism, continuing to enliven and refresh it.

8 Another explanation is that the name is based on Rabbi Sirkis's lenient opinion regarding *chadash,* which eventually became identified with him.

PARTZUF

THE THIRTEEN PRINCIPLES OF DIVINE MERCY

crown-keter כֶּתֶר
a God אֵ־ל

understanding-binah בִּינָה
and gracious וְחַנּוּן

wisdom-chochmah חָכְמָה
compassionate רַחוּם

knowledge-da'at דַּעַת

coronet of judgments עִטָּרָא דִּגְבוּרוֹת
patience אַפַּיִם

coronet of loving-kindness עִטָּרָא דַּחֲסָדִים
of lengthy אֶרֶךְ

might-gevurah גְּבוּרָה
and truth וֶאֱמֶת

loving-kindness-chessed חֶסֶד
abounding in kindness וְרַב חֶסֶד

beauty-tiferet תִּפְאֶרֶת
preserves acts of kindness for two thousand נֹצֵר חֶסֶד לָאֲלָפִים

splendor-hod הוֹד
and rebellious sins וְפֶשַׁע

victory-netzach נֶצַח
forgives premeditated sins נֹשֵׂא עָוֹן

foundation-yesod יְסוֹד
and unintentional sins וְחַטָּאָה

kingdom-malchut מַלְכוּת
and acquits וְנַקֵּה

(based on *Sod HaShem LiYirei'av*, pp. 107-112)

PARTZUF
THE ELEMENTS OF PURIM

Undoubtedly, the high point of the Scroll of Esther is the verse, "The Jews had light and joy and gladness and honor"[1] (לַיְהוּדִים הָיְתָה אוֹרָה וְשִׂמְחָה וְשָׂשׂוֹן וְיִקָר). These words celebrate the great joy of the turnaround experienced by the Jewish people in that generation, who went from being sentenced to violent to death at the hand of their enemies to a triumphant victory over them. The joy of Purim is considered the highest joy of the entire year, corresponding to the level of the singular one, or *yechidah*, in the soul. Joy this high stems from the Unknowable Head, or simple faith (**אֱמוּנָה פְּשׁוּטָה**), whose value is the same as "blessed is Mordechai" (**בָּרוּךְ מָרְדְּכַי**) and the same as "cursed is Haman" (**אָרוּר הָמָן**); the value of all three is 502.

About these words, the Talmud states,[2]

> "Light"—this refers to Torah. "Joy"—this refers to a festival (יום טוב). "Gladness"—this refers to circumcision. "Honor"—this refers to tefillin.

We can take these four concepts that correspond to the four descriptions of the joy of Purim—Torah, festival, circumcision, and *tefillin*—and correspond them in order to the four letters of *Havayah*, as follows

letter of Havayah	*sefirah*	joy of Purim	concept
yud	wisdom	light	Torah
hei	understanding	joy	festival
vav	emotive faculties	gladness	circumcision
hei	kingdom	honor	tefillin

Let us explain the parts of this correspondence. Light and Torah correspond to wisdom, as per the Zohar's statement that "Torah came out of wisdom." Wisdom is considered the place of the initial revelation of God's infinite light in every world, thus it is related to light. Since Torah comes out of wisdom, the light in this case, which is inflected in the feminine form (אורה) is actually higher than the masculine form of light (אור), as it is the source of the Torah. Indeed, on Purim the Jewish people drew down the light of Torah by reiterating their commitment to the Torah, as the verse says, "the Jews performed and accepted, upon themselves and upon their offspring"[3] (קִיְּמוּ וְקִבְּלוּ הַיְּהוּדִים עֲלֵיהֶם וְעַל זַרְעָם), which the Talmud states means that the Jews authorized that which they had already received, i.e., the Torah at Mt. Sinai. In practice, this light was then the guidance offered regarding the Oral Torah.

Joy is considered the inner experience of

the *sefirah* of understanding. In addition, on the festivals, the light of the Mother Principle, the *partzuf* that corresponds to understanding, shines. The phrase, "Joy is the festival" (**שִׂמְחָה זֶה יוֹם טוֹב**) is equal to 6 times the value of "festival" (**יוֹם טוֹב**), alluding to the six festivals described in the Torah: the first and seventh days of Passover, *Shavu'ot*, *Rosh Hashanah*, the first day of *Sukkot*, and *Shemini Atzeret*.

Gladness is intrinsically related to circumcision. For instance, on the verse "I am glad over your saying (אִמְרָתֶךָ), as one who obtains great spoils"[4] Rashi writes that "your saying" refers to circumcision. Circumcision is the first mitzvah, or commandment, that was given by God to Abraham. When addressing Abraham, God used the root "to say" (אמר). The word "I am glad" (שָׂשׂ) is spelled exactly like the word "six" (שֵׁשׁ), but pronounced differently. As such, it alludes to the six emotive faculties represented by the letter vav, whose value is six, in *Havayah*. The sixth of the emotive faculties is foundation, which is considered one and the same with the body itself, where the body corresponds to the *sefirah* of beauty (*tiferet*), the main *sefirah* in among the six emotive faculties. Of course, circumcision is performed on the male reproductive organ, which corresponds to foundation!

Tefillin, which correspond to the final *hei* of *Havayah*, are called "honor" (וִיקָר) in reference to the verse describing the effect of *tefillin*, "All the people of the earth shall see that the Name of God has been called upon you"[5] (וְרָאוּ כָל־עַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ כִּי שֵׁם יְהוָה נִקְרָא עָלֶיךָ); once the nations of the world recognize the *tefillin*, they will feel the need to honor its wearer. The notion of God's "Name" is associated with kingdom as well, as we say in the verse immediately after the *Shema*, "Blessed is the Name of His kingdom, forever and ever."

Purim is one of the best times of the year to practice gematria. Now average value of the eight words, "Torah, light, joy, festival, gladness, circumcision, honor, tefillin" (**תּוֹרָה אוֹרָה שִׂמְחָה יוֹם טוֹב שָׂשׂוֹן מִילָה יְקָר תְּפִלִּין**) is 358, the value of "Mashiach" (**מָשִׁיחַ**) whose letters permute to spell the word "will be joyful" (**יִשְׂמַח**).

THE MAIN CHARACTERS OF ESTHER

In the Scroll of Esther there are four main characters, whom we will now add as a another column to our table. These are: Esther, Haman, Mordechai, and Achashverosh. They correspond in this order to the four letters of *Havayah*, as follows:

letter of Havayah	sefirah	joy of Purim	concept	character
yud	wisdom	light	Torah	Esther
hei	understanding	joy	festival	Haman
vav	emotive faculties	gladness	circumcision	Mordechai
hei	kingdom	honor	tefillin	Achashverosh

Esther represents the power of nullification in her actions. She counters the feelings of self and being found in Vashti (וַשְׁתִּי), whose name permutes to spell "ego" (יַשּׁוּת), just as the power of self-nullification is the inner experience of wisdom.

Regarding Haman, the sages write that he is hinted to in the Torah in the question, "Have you eaten from the tree" (הֲמִן הָעֵץ). The sefirah of understanding corresponds to the question "who" (מִי) and as stated in the Zohar, "'Who' stands as a question."

Mordechai is the tzaddik, the foundation of the world, who also rectifies the covenant. The value of his name and title, "Mordechai the Jew" (**מָרְדְּכַי הַיְּהוּדִי**) is the same as that of the Name *Shakkai* (**שַׁ-דַּי**), the Name of God that corresponds to the *sefirah* of foundation.

Finally, Achashverosh is the king corresponding to the *sefirah* of kingdom and the Book of Esther uses the title "honor" to describe his greatness (at least in his own eyes).

THE FOUR COMMANDMENTS OF PURIM

It is well known that there are four commandments we are obligated to perform on Purim. They make up the final column in our correspondence as follows:

letter of Havayah	*sefirah*	joy of Purim	concept	character	*mitzvah*
yud	wisdom	light	Torah	Esther	reading the Megillah
hei	understanding	joy	festival	Haman	Purim feast
vav	emotive faculties	gladness	circumcision	Mordechai	sending portions to one another
hei	kingdom	honor	tefillin	Achashverosh	gifts for the poor

(based on *Sod HaShem LiYereiʾav*, pp. 660-671)

Notes
1. Esther 8:16.
2. *Megillah* 16b.
3. Esther 9:27.
4. Psalms 119:162.
5. Deuteronomy 28:10.

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