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

בס"ד

Wonders

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of HaRav **Yitzchak Ginsburgh**

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שַׁבָּת תְּרוּמָה ❁ ג-ד אַדָר תשפ"ו



Adar is about increasing our joy by drinking wine... and through giving an abundance of tzedakah.... The preparation for giving tzedakah is a LeChaim.... It is fitting to take a little drink and say LeChaim before giving charity and to continue saying LeChaim (a little more) after.

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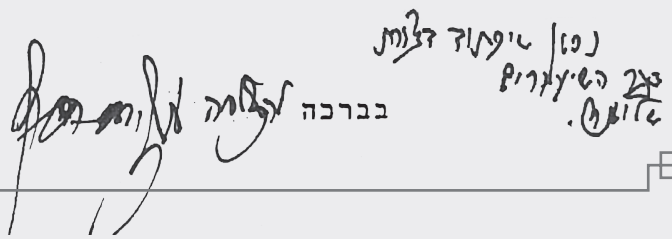
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The Lubavitcher Rebbe to Rav Ginsburgh, Elul 5741

"…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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FROM THE CHASIDIC MASTERS:
AHAVAT SHALOM ON THE TABERNACLE'S PANELS

Can saying "thank you" actually create distance in a relationship? This counter-intuitive piece explores the hidden spiritual blueprints within the Biblical Tabernacle to answer that question. By examining how the sanctuary's wooden panels were joined, we discover a radical definition of friendship: a bond so deep that we become like "twins," where formal gratitude is replaced by absolute oneness. This is the type of bond chasidim hope to achieve.

Beyond relationships, the text we look at from the Ahavat Shalom offers a practical guide to personal growth. It reveals a surprising spiritual anatomy: why "guarding" our physical actions—the "lower half" of our body—is actually the secret to protecting our peace of mind and spiritual clarity. Dive into this mystical journey to understand how ancient architecture holds the key to true love, unity, and mastering the self.

Based on a class given on Shabbat Mishpatim 5784. First published in Hebrew in Nifla'ot for parashat Terumah 5784.

CONNECTING THE PANELS

You shall make the panels for the Tabernacle… And they shall be matched (*to'amim*) at the bottom, and together they shall be perfectly matched (*tamim*) at its top by a single rectangular band; so, shall it be for both [panels] in the two corners, so it shall be.[1]

The walls of the Tabernacle were made of 1.5-cubit wide panels (also called planks) that had two notches on top and two tabs on the bottom. They were then made to stand with every panel's two bottom tabs fitted perfectly into a silver base (אֶדֶן) with a socket (figure 1) and every two adjacent panels joined together on top by a gold rectangular band (טַבַּעַת) that fit into the notches (figure 2). The sockets fit the tabs so that they would not create a gap between the panels. In this way the panels made a perfect fit above and the were perfectly flush with one another below.

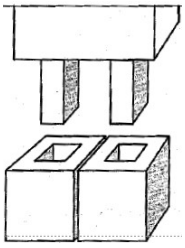


FIGURE 1

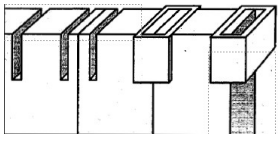


FIGURE 2

LOVE OF TWIN BROTHERS

The word for matched, which is *to'amim* (תֹּאֲמִם) is written exactly like the word for "twins," which is *te'omim* (תְּאֹמִם). In fact, the numerical value of "band" (טַבַּעַת) is the same as the value of "twins" (תְּאֹמִם). The notion that the panels are meant to be like twins

1. Exodus 26:18 and 24.

raises the possibility that the way in which the panels are united has something to teach us about relationships, particularly between people who are very close.

The Chasidic master, Rebbe Menachem Mendel Hager of Kossov (out of whom originated Vizhnitz), in his book *Ahavat Shalom*, explains that the panels that made up the walls of the Tabernacle (together with the crossbeams that ran inside the panels) represent both the relationship people have with a *tzaddik* and the relationship they have with their closest friends. He notes that the letters of "panels" (**קְרָשִׁים**) permute to spell "connections" or "relationships" (**קְשָׁרִים**). These types of relationships require that the two people involved be bound and attached to one another along their entire length—matched below and whole above. The matched/whole panels represent the true love between friends: if one's head hurts, the other's will hurt also.

DO NOT SAY "THANK YOU"

To his analysis, we may add that the words for "matched" and "twins" are cognate with the word for "earnestness" (תְּמִימוּת), the inner psychological experience associated with the *sefirah* of *hod*, translated as either thanksgiving or acknowledgment. Each panel was fitted inside a base indicating that the ability to give thanks and to acknowledge the positive in our friends is the base foundation upon which all relationships stand. Furthermore, the Hebrew word for "base" (אֶדֶן) has the same value as "to acknowledge" (מוֹדֶה) as in the short statement we say upon awaking every morning, "I give thanks before You."

However, for all the basis that acknowledgment and showing gratitude provide for a relationship, one must be careful that the base does not separate the planks, meaning that it should not create a gap between the two people. This last insight might be surprising, but gratitude can open a gap between two people. If we are strangers or distant acquaintances, we certainly must thank one another. But truly good friends do not say "thank you" all the time; their connection is closer than that.[2]

When two *chasidim farbreng* (pass the time) together, when one pours the other a *LeChaim*, the other does not say, "Thank you." Instead, he immediately says "*LeChaim*" or "*LeChaim U'Livrachah*" (to life and to blessing). If we are two separate people, I thank you greatly, but if we are two hands of a single body, there is no need to thank. On the contrary, excessive thanks is a sign of distance and cold politeness. Likewise, *chasidim* are not accustomed to asking one another for forgiveness on the eve of *Yom Kippur*, because the connection of friendship goes far beyond that and they assume that each has already forgiven the other.

While saying "thank you" is a matter of *Derech Eretz* (proper, civilized conduct) and "Derech Eretz precedes Torah," once there is Torah, which teaches that all Jews are literally like one body, then the *Derech Eretz* itself must be updated accordingly. Indeed, all that has been stated here regarding the connection between friends is even more relevant to the connection between a *chasid* and a rebbe.

2. The *sefirah* of thanksgiving corresponds to the left foot. Connection (הִתְקַשְּׁרוּת) is associated with the *sefirah* of foundation (*yesod*), which corresponds to the procreative organs. Thus, connection displays the properties of a close and intimate relationship. Stopping to praise and give thanks during an intimate act severs the connection and the bond formed between two people.

FRIENDS

The connection between friends who truly love one another is like the love of God, which is preceded by the instruction that we contemplate His oneness, "Hear O' Israel, *Havayah* is our God, *Havayah* is one. You shall love *Havayah* your God…."[3] Much has been written over the ages about the meaning of God's oneness, particularly by the Chasidic masters. When applied to the relationship between two loving friends, the word "one" (אֶחָד) can be seen as alluding to three levels of connection, in the following manner: The first letter, *aleph* (א), symbolizes absolute unity; one cannot even speak of there being two people involved. When we add the second letter, chet (ח), to the first letter, they form the word "brother" (אח), alluding to the love between twins—two who are like one. Finally, the third letter, *dalet* (ד), whose value is 4 alludes to the concept of inter-inclusion that can be attained even between two separate entities according to the principle of "two that are four."[4] Two people can find aspects of one another in themselves thereby coming to appreciate that they are more similar than they initially thought. Then they can both acknowledge one another and offer thanks[5] to one another.

However, one must include the *dalet* within the *alef* and *chet* (which spell "brother") to complete the word "one" (אֶחָד) indicating that one should strive to reach a level of oneness that transcends the need to give thanks explicitly. We do the same regarding our relationship with God. When we wake up in the morning, we begin our day by giving thanks, *Modeh Ani* ("I offer thank to You, O' living and eternal King…"), but quickly move to reach a state of self-nullification (*bitul*) so that we can state that "all is one" when reciting the *Shema*. The state in which all of existence and all being within it becomes one is God's purpose in Creation; it is the fulfillment of His desire to have a dwelling place below, in the lower worlds. Returning to *parashat Terumah*, this is the explicit purpose of making the Tabernacle: "And I [God] shall dwell among them."[6]

We have seen three levels of developing love between friends. They correspond to the three levels of love described in the verse, "You shall love *Havayah* your God [1] with all your heart, [2] with all your soul, and [3] with all your might." The love of "with all your heart" is the love between two separate people, alluded to by the double letter *beit* (ב) in "your heart" (לְבָבְךָ). The sages interpret the two letters *beit* as referring to the two inclinations—the good inclination and the evil inclination (*yetzer tov* and *yetzer hara*)—a duality in the psyche that stems from the feeling that I and God are two separate entities. At this level, one should strive to, at the very least, give thanks—the *dalet* of "one" (אחד). The second level of love, between two friends that have become one corresponds to "With all your soul." The sages explain that this means loving God even if He takes your soul, and this is the type of self-sacrifice two friends that have become one should have for one another to overcome the gap between them. This is the secret of the "brother" (**אַח**) in "one" (**אֶחָד**). The third

3. Deuteronomy 6:4-5.

4. First Mishnah of *Shabbat*, *Shavu'ot*, and elsewhere.

5. *Dalet* (ד), which is cognate with poverty, is the letter that alludes to the *sefirah* of kingdom, which "has nothing of its own," and therefore feels the constant need to give thanks. The Midrash *Otiyot DeRabbi Akiva* states that the name of the letter *dalet* (**דלת**) are the initials for the phrase, "Know how to give thanks" (דַּע **ל**וֹמַר **ת**וֹדָה).

6. Exodus 25:8.

level of love—when friends become a single, unified essence—corresponds to "With all your might." At this level there is no longer any separation between the two friends. It is love that has no limits, just as "with all your might" means without limits.

JACOB THE TWIN MAN

Let us continue with a quote from *Ahavat Shalom*:

> It is written regarding Rebeccah, "And behold, there were twins (*te'omim,* תְּאוֹמִם) in her womb,"[7] but it is written *tomim* (תוֹמִם), without the letter *aleph*. The holy Zohar explains that *tomim* refers to Jacob alone. This is because *te'omim* refers to two things that unite and become one, and for this reason, Jacob alone is called *tomim*. Jacob represents the attribute of beauty (*tiferet*), the attribute of truth, the middle axis that is comprised of the two aspects of loving-kindness (*chesed*) and might (*gevurah*). He is the aspect of the middle crossbeam that spans from one end [of the Tabernacle] to the other, as is known. However, because the wicked Esau was with him in one womb, it is written *tomim* without the *aleph*, for the wicked Esau was a "backbiter who separates the *Aluf*," meaning that he separates the Master (*Alufo*) of the world from His world.

According to the *Ahavat Shalom*, the word *tomim*, despite meaning "twins," refers only to Jacob, as if he was a single child in Rebbecah's womb! Because Esau "separates the *Aluf*"—he does not recognize the underlying unity of reality that is "God is one," alluded to by the letter *aleph*, whose value is one, and which represents the Master of the Universe, the *Alufo Shel Olam* (אַלופו שֶׁל עולָם)—he causes the word "twins" to be written without an *aleph*. The Redemption depends on the unification of Jacob and Esau. In the past Esau was not ready, so when Jacob sent angels to Esau to him, they returned with the news that Esau not only was not ready, but he was also preparing to battle Jacob. In our times, the Lubavitcher Rebbe believed that Esau is ready to unify with Jacob for the sake of the Redemption. In any case, when they were in the womb, there was no connection between them, so the twinhood was not realized and "Jacob remained alone."[8]

Jacob is the archetypal soul of beauty (*tiferet*), referred to as "the beauty of Israel," Jacob's God-given name. Internally, *tiferet* is associated with "truth" (**אֱמֶת**)—"Give truth to Jacob"[9]—whose letters can be rearranged to spell "twin" (**תְּאַם**). In reference to the panels in the Tabernacle, Jacob is symbolized by the middle crossbeam that went through all the panels. The panels have a socket below supporting them, a crossbeam in the middle, and a ring above. Corresponding this to the model of the Ten *Sefirot*, the crossbeam is thus the middle axis that joins the highest with the lowest all via the *sefirah* of knowledge (*da'at*), the attribute of Moses, whose relationship with Jacob is described as, "Moses from within, Jacob from without," meaning that Moses, and specifically his knowledge of God, i.e., the Torah, is the soul of truth that needs to be given to Jacob. Jacob and the *sefirah* of beauty also connect the right axis with the left axis of the *sefirot*, specifically loving-kindness and might; the right side is "loving-kindness to Abraham"[10] (**חֶסֶד לְאַבְרָהָם**) and the left side is "the Fear of Isaac"[11] (**פַּחַד יִצְחָק**), whose numerical sum is

7. Genesis 25:24.

8. Ibid. 32:25.
9. Micah 7:20.
10. Micah 7:20.
11. Genesis 31:42.

incredibly exactly the value of "panels" (קְרָשִׁים)!

PROTECTING THE LOWER HALF OF THE BODY

The *Ahavat Shalom* continues:

> It is known that spiritual protection should focus on the limbs from the navel down. They are instruments of action, representing Esau. The division of the body at the navel is learnt in the Talmud from the description, "Your upper half aligns with Hormiz [light], your lower half with Hormin [darkness],"[12] and from the verse "It shall be healing to your navel,"[13] as explained in the holy books. When a person protects the body's organs from the navel down, then the limbs from the navel up—meaning the mind and heart—are automatically protected.

There is a fundamental division in man—from the navel up and from the navel down known as the Golden Ratio division—similar to how Moses is described as "human from his midpoint and below; Godly, from his midpoint and above."[14] Similarly, in the secret of *Adam Kadmon* (Primordial Man), there is a primary division between above the navel and below the navel.

The main service of man is to guard the limbs from the navel down, specifically the organ of procreation (often just called "the limb"). From the navel up are the primary organs, the brain and heart; from the navel down are the organs of action, the aspect of Esau (who is called such because he was born looking "complete" (עָשׂוּי), which in Hebrew is cognate with action (עֲשִׂיָּה). This is why he favored being "a man of the field," the realm of action.

True that despite being above the navel, the hands are the primary instruments of action. However, the hands are used for action only when they descend downwards, therefore they are considered below the navel. Of course, we must guard the upper limbs as well, for example guarding our speech and our eyes; "Do not stray after your hearts and after your eyes."[15] But, when a person strays after their eyes, the eyes have become instruments of action; the eyes look at mundane reality, *down below*, from the navel down. However, the eyes in and of themselves do not need guarding. In Kabbalah, it is explained that the shattering of the World of Chaos occurred in the light of the eyes only once they had descended below the navel.

Regarding guarding our thought: While Chabad explains that thought (the intellectual *sefirot*) is primary, thought is not guarded, which might leave it empty, but rather is meant to be filled with good things; "Abstain from evil [*by means of*] doing good,"[16] contemplate Godliness until there is no room for other thoughts.

When the panels are matched at the bottom—when we guard our faculties of action—then they are perfectly matched above—the mind and heart are automatically protected!

12. *Sanhedrin* 39a.
13. Proverbs 3:8.
14. *Devarim Rabbah* 11:6. The midpoint would be a perfect division of a whole into two halves. In a human, the navel is not the body's midpoint. It is closer to being 2/3 of the way up from the feet. The Golden Ratio is approximated by the ratio of the integers in the Fibonacci (Love) series: 1, 1, 2, 3, 5,.. The first approximation is 1 to 1 (like a half to a half), the second is 1:2 (corresponds to the "Whole and a Half" principle; see more in the article on this principle later in this issue), the third is 2:3, and so on.
15. Numbers 15:39.
16. Psalms 34:15 and 37:27 as interpreted by the Chasidic masters; see *Beit Aharon* (Perlov), 146a.

A WHOLE AND A HALF

Rabbi Abraham Abulafia, the visionary and unconventional twelfth century Kabbalist, introduced a concept he called, "a whole and a half" (שָׁלֵם וְחֵצִי). At its core, this concept is mathematical, stating that we find many things in the Torah that are related to one another like a whole to a half.[1] Many times, the two things can be categorized as masculine and feminine, with the whole representing the masculine and the half representing the feminine. Examples of a whole to a half relationship abound in Torah, with one of the strongest concentrations appearing in this week's *parashah* of *Terumah*, which describes the construction of the *mishkan*, a portable Tabernacle. Many of the Tabernacle's spatial dimensions are whole and half numbers, other dimensions have a ratio of a whole to a half between them. The following are a few examples in brief.[2]

The acacia wood panels[3] were one and a half cubits wide each. Each of the panels was supported underneath by two silver sockets; thus, the relationship of sockets to panels was 2 sockets to each panel—a 2:1 ratio, which is a whole to a half.[4] The Golden Altar, on which the incense was burned, was a cubit in length and a cubit in width and two cubits in height; thus, its height relative to its width and length was 2:1, another whole to a half relationship.[5] The courtyard surrounding the Tabernacle was one hundred cubits long by fifty cubits wide, again a ratio of 1:1/2.[6] Two sets of curtains, surrounding the inner sanctuary, each containing fifty loops, were connected by fifty golden loops. Thus, one hundred loops in the curtains were connected by fifty golden hooks, a ratio of 2:1.[7]

The golden Table of Showbread, which held twelve loaves of bread, embodied a 2:1 ratio in terms of its length and width (two cubits in length and one cubit wide). Furthermore, its height was a cubit and a half. The twelve loaves were placed six on one side and six on the other; therefore, each side had half of the whole number of loaves.[8]

The Holy Ark, which housed the two tablets of the law on which were engraved the Ten Commandments, was a cubit and a half in width, a cubit and a half in height, and its length was two and a half cubits.[9] The Ark itself was made of three boxes—a box of acacia wood placed between two boxes of pure gold; thus, the two golden boxes surrounding an inner wooden box created a ratio of 2:1, a whole and a half. Two angel-like *cherubim* rested upon the Ark's cover, another instance of a 2:1 ratio. [10] The cover's dimensions were two and a half cubits in length and a cubit and a half in width.

1. See also note 12 above. The study of the Golden Ratio in Torah is the subject of many of our teachings and will God willing be published as a stand-alone volume.
2. *Ma'ayan Ganim, Terumah*.
3. See also the article based on the *Ahavat Shalom* in this issue.
4. Exodus 26:15.
5. Ibid 30:1.
6. Ibid 27:9-13.
7. Ibid 26:1-6.
8. Ibid 25:23.
9. Ibid 25:10.
10. Ibid 25:17-19.

TABLETS AND SHATTERED TABLETS

It is important to note that not only did the Ark contain the two tablets on which the Ten Commandments were inscribed but they also housed the first broken set of tablets, which Moses smashed upon seeing the people worshipping the Golden Calf. The Ark rested within the Holy of Holies, the innermost space in the Tabernacle (and later the Temple). Chasidut explains that this holy space exists within every Jew as well and the fact that it contained both the whole and broken tablets indicates the existential reality within each person of the concept of a whole and a half.[11] The whole/broken nature of our innermost heart is reflected in what is perhaps the deepest description of a Jew found in the *Zohar*, which states that "Weeping is fastened to one side of the heart, [while simultaneously] joy is fastened to the other side of the heart."[12] In Chasidic folklore, this description was at times expressed as, "there is nothing as whole as a broken heart."[13] Finally, the Talmud expresses a similar sentiment: "The secrets of the Torah are not imparted except to one who is worried in his heart."[14] All these statements reflect the psychological and existential counterparts to the concept of "a whole and a half." Our deepest, innermost space contains at one and the same time both a personal feeling of wholeness and the feeling of being shattered.

THE HALF A SHEKEL

The Tabernacle's construction and ongoing maintenance was underwritten by a series of three contributions. The first, after which this portion is named, was the people's voluntary contribution of thirteen different materials needed to build the Tabernacle. The second was a one-time contribution of half a shekel to underwrite the cost of the silver for the sockets. The third was an annual contribution of half a shekel to purchase communal offerings for the ongoing service in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple.[15]

The half shekel contribution symbolizes the fact that every human being is simultaneously both a whole—a complete world unto himself or herself—and yet merely a half, in the context of his or her relationship with the rest of the people of Israel, and ultimately with God. Each individual Jew has autonomy and is unique, but in relation to the entire people is simultaneously only a part, a "half," of a much bigger whole. This same idea applies to an individual's relationship with God, who is the ultimate "whole." The half shekel contribution underwriting the Tabernacle's construction turns the idea of a whole and a half into the very foundation on which the Tabernacle is based.

Upon further contemplation, we must recognize a great paradox underlying the concept of a whole and a half. People, in a sense, never feel more whole than when they feel close to God. Yet precisely at such moments, human beings simultaneously become aware of their great distance from God's Infinite Being. In other words, when it comes to our relationship with God, we feel most whole when we feel we are a half. This is also true between soulmates, each feeling whole and completed by the other, yet merely

11. See HaRav Ginsburgh's class from the 26/27th of Shevat, 5774.
12. *Zohar* 2:255. See also *Tanya*, ch. 34.
13. As taught by Rabbi Simchah Bunim and many other Chasidic Rebbes.
14. *Chagigah* 13a.
15. See *Rashi* on Exodus 25:2.

half of a greater whole.[16]

MORE EXAMPLES OF SHALEM VACHETZI

When delving deeper into the concept of *Shalem VaChetzi* we see it appears not only in the Tabernacle but in a wide variety of different contexts. Let us now examine some of these.

The *Shalem VaChetzi* relationship is seen in the first two words of the Torah, "In the beginning [God] created" (בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא); the first word has 6 letters, the second word has 3. As stated by the sages, "Everything follows the inception."[17] Thus, the concept of a whole and a half is encoded within the very fabric of the universe from the moment of its creation.

It is also reflected in the first two letters—*yud* and *hei*—of God's essential Name, *Havayah*; the value of *yud* is 10, the value of *hei* is 5. These two letters are also considered a Name of God in their own right.[18]

The last two words of the *Shema*, the cardinal statement of faith in Judaism are "*Havayah* is one" (**יי־הוה אֶחָד**). The value of *Havayah* (**יי־הוה**) is 26, the value of "one" (**אֶחָד**) is 13. Another example of a whole and a half.[19] Thus, the absolute oneness of God is paradoxically a prime example of "a whole and a half." As mentioned above, each individual Jew has autonomy and is unique, but in relation to God, who is the ultimate "whole," we are all but a "half." The phrase "God is one" illustrates this deep understanding, bringing it close to home.

The Ten Commandments given to Moses on Mount Sinai consisted of two tablets with five commandments written on each one. The first five commandments are about the relationship between man and God,[20] whereas the second set of five commandments are about the relationship between people. Thus, the relationship of each of the two tablets to the Ten Commandments is one of a whole and a half. From this we can learn that in Judaism the commandments between man and God and man and man are each one half of the whole picture. To truly reach a spiritual whole we must implement both sides of the equation, both tablets of the law.

Apart from the large vessels in the Tabernacle, there were also smaller instruments. Two of these were trumpets: "God spoke to Moses saying: Make yourself two silver trumpets; you shall make them [from a] beaten [form]; they shall use them to summon the congregation and to announce the movement of the camps."[21] These two silver trumpets were used by Moses during the forty years in the desert, but then hidden away. Other trumpets were made and used

16. *The Mystery of Marriage*, pp.132-133.
17. *Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer*, ch. 42.
18. Ibid p.132.
19. Ibid p.133.

20. The fifth commandment does not seem to be about the relationship between man and God. Many explanations of this seeming inconsistency have been given. One of them is that we are commanded to honor our parents regardless of whether they are honorable people, because it is the image of the third partner in our creation—the Almighty—that we honor when honoring them. Alternately, the sages state that the fifth commandment is what underwrites the intent of the first four: "Ulla the Great said: What is the meaning of that which is written 'All the kings of the earth shall acknowledge You, O Lord, for they have heard the words of Your mouth' (Psalms 138:4)? When the Holy Blessed One said: 'I am the Lord your God' (Exodus 20:2), and 'You shall have no other gods before Me,' the nations of the world said: 'He demands His own honor.' Once He said: 'Honor your father and your mother' (Exodus 20:11), they returned and conceded the truth of the first statements.
21. *Bamidbar* 10:1-2.

extensively in the Holy Temple. Whether in the desert or in the Temple, the trumpets were always blown together as a pair, while a *shofar* was always blown alone. In the Temple, the trumpets were often blown together with the *shofar* as stated in Psalms: "With trumpets and the sound of a *shofar*, raise your voices before the King, *Havayah*."[22]

This is an interesting and paradoxical example of *Shalem VaChetzi*, a 2:1 ratio, as the *shofar* is but one-half in relation to the two trumpets.[23] Adding to this paradox is the Chasidic interpretation of the phrase "two trumpets" (שְׁתֵּי חֲצֹצְרוֹת), which are read as "two half-forms" (שְׁתֵּי חֲצָאֵי צוּרוֹת).[24] This reading is based on the fact that the two trumpets were always sounded together – two instruments making one sound, thus each was considered but a half of the greater whole. The trumpets were similar to a couple who are comprised of two individuals yet form one unified entity or unit.

SHALEM V'CHETZI AND TIME

Finally, we see that *Shalem VaChetzi* applies to time as well. In fact, the entire Jewish year is divided according to this paradigm.[25] The first three months of the year, beginning in Nissan, represent an ascending energy of liberation, coming out of Egypt and receiving the Ten Commandments at Sinai. These three months are marked by Passover, Counting of the *Omer*, and *Shavu'ot*. Afterwards Moses spent forty days on Mount Sinai receiving detailed explanations of the law. On the 17th of Tammuz, the fourth month of the year, he was to have returned with the two tablets of the law written by the "finger of God." This would have been the climax of the entire process beginning with the Exodus from Egypt. 17 is the value the Hebrew word for "good" (**טוֹב**), and thus this day was to be the high point of Godly revelation.

Instead, Moses returned to the people and found them worshipping the Golden Calf, precipitating a complete change in the energy of the year to repentance and return to God (*teshuvah*) and rectification (*tikkun*). This energy is still engraved in the year: the first four months are marked by spiritual ascent followed by eight months of repentance and repair. Seen in this manner, the year manifests the model of a whole and a half, but with the "half"—the first four months of the year—preceding the "whole"—the following eight months.

22. Psalms 98:6.
23. *HaZman HaPnimi*, pp.22-33.
24. *Or Torah (Maggid of Mezritch), Beha'alotcha* 134.
25. This idea was taught by HaRav Ginsburgh in a class on July 29, 2011.

STORY

THE BEIT YISRAEL OF GUR: GOD'S COMPASSION IS GREAT

Rebbe Yisrael Alter was born in the town of Gur in Poland, on the 24th of Tishrei 5655 (1894), to his father Rebbe Avraham Mordechai Alter, the Imrei Emet of Gur. Until the age of ten, he studied under his grandfather, the author of the Sefat Emet, and was known as a prodigy and particularly strict about keeping time. At the age of thirteen, he was betrothed to Rebbetzin Chayah Sarah, the daughter of his uncle Rabbi Yaakov Meir Biderman, and married in 5670 (1910). At his father's instruction, he led groups of young married men known as "bnei aliyah" of Gur chasidim, even during his father's lifetime, and gave them guidance and instructions. During the Holocaust, he managed to escape from Poland to the Land of Israel with his father, but all his close family members were murdered by the Nazis, as were most of the chasidim living in Poland.

After his father's passing in 5708 (1948), he was appointed as his successor to lead the chasidic court and became the fourth rebbe in the Gur dynasty. In this role, he rebuilt the chasidic court in the Land of Israel after the Holocaust and was one of the prominent leaders of the entire Haredi community in the country. He married for a second time to Rebbetzin Pearl, daughter of Rabbi David Widenfeld, but they had no children. On the 2nd of Adar 5737 (1977), he passed away and was buried in the Gur burial cave on Mount of Olives. Upon his passing, his brother, Rabbi Simchah Bunim Alter, author of Lev Simchah, was appointed as the rebbe.

The venerable Rabbi Tzvi Yitzchak Abramovitz of blessed memory told me: The wife of a Torah scholar who was close to the *Beit Yisrael* (Rebbe Yisrael Alter) of blessed memory, became very ill and almost lost her mind. The Torah scholar had already decided to divorce her and re-marry, as he could not establish a Jewish home with his current wife. The rebbe was greatly pained by this.

Since Rabbi Abramovitz was close with this Torah scholar, the *Beit Yisrael* once said to him with great sorrow, "You surely know that they are already close to giving a *get*." Rabbi Abramovitz told me that he gathered courage and said aloud: "Surely the rebbe can do something, as the language of *Tosafot* in *Yevamot* states, 'for the compassion of *Shakai* (God) is abundant...'" At that moment, a great change came over the rebbe's face, and he said, "I know which *Tosafot* you mean" (see *Tosafot, s.v. Ki Ha* on *Yevamot* 65b at the end; in the name of a responsa from the Ritzba

regarding a certain difficulty in matters of marriage, they write "that she should not hasten to destroy the marriage that she built, for the compassion of *Shakai* is abundant"). The Rebbe repeated this phrase several times, "for the compassion of *Shakai* is abundant," and sent him in peace.

Rabbi Abramovitz concluded by telling me: "By virtue of that tzaddik's prayer, that woman began to recover immediately afterward, until she fully recovered from her illness, and she and her husband established a wonderful family."

Rabbi Abramovitz told me that it seemed to him that the reason the Ritzba specifically used this holy Name, *Shakai*, is because this Name is auspicious for procreation, as is found in the *Ba'al HaTurim* on the verse, "I am *Kel Shakai*, be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 35:11). I added that in that very passage (*Yevamot* 65b), this verse is indeed brought to derive that a man is commanded to procreate.

The name *Shakai*, as the story reveals, is auspicious for fertility and domestic peace. What can we learn from this?

Let us begin with the understanding that the dwelling of the Divine Presence among the Jewish people, particularly in Jewish family life, depends on the love and peace between husband and wife, hence, "Whoever marries a worthy woman, it is as if he has fulfilled the entire Torah from start to finish."[1] Love-peace is the holy fire within man and woman as is known in the teaching that "man" (**אִישׁ**) is "the fire of *yud*" (**אֵשׁ י**) and "woman" (**אִשָּׁה**) is "the fire of *hei* (**אֵשׁ ה**). If through their love and peace they merit, then the two letters *yud* and *hei* form God's Name, *Kah*, and the fire is one of holiness. If they do not merit, the fire becomes a fire of anger and lust that consumes the couple.

According to Kabbalah, the name of love and loving-kindness is *Kel*, and the name of peace is *Shakai*, the Name that corresponds to the *sefirah* of foundation (*yesod*). The initials of *Kel Shakai* (**אֵ־ל שַׁ־דָּי**) spell "fire" (**אֵשׁ**). This secret, of the importance of love and peace between husband and wife for the dwelling of the Divine Presence, is alluded to in Jacob's prayer for his sons' success when they traveled a second time to Egypt to meet with the viceroy, i.e., with Joseph, "And may *Kel Shakai* grant you compassion before the man."[2] *Kel Shakai* are the names of love and peace as mentioned, but the drawing down of love into peace (the drawing of loving-kindness into foundation) is through the attribute of compassion (beauty or *tiferet*), which is Jacob's attribute.

As explained in the holy books, the unification of Joseph and his brothers is the secret of the unification of husband and wife. Therefore, the rectification of love and peace between them is an aspect of rectifying domestic peace, which also requires compassion. Love alone, without compassion, is not sufficient to draw peace between husband and wife. This is because love tends towards perfect unity—the value of "love" (**אַהֲבָה**) is the same as "one" (**אֶחָד**)—and is therefore prone to swallow the beloved without true attention to their

1. *Ruth Zutta* (Buber) 4:11.

2. Genesis 43:14.

needs. Moreover, when unity is shaken, for whatever reason, it is difficult for love to hold its ground. When there is compassion in the relationship, attention to the other becomes more genuine and focused, and even gaps and difficulties strengthen compassion and love.

Let us add a *remez*, a numerical analysis: "*Kel Shakai* shall grant you compassion" (**אֵ־ל שַׁ־דַּי יִתֵּן לָכֶם רַחֲמִים**) has the same value as, "He who has found a wife has found goodness and obtains favor from God"[3] (**מָצָא אִשָּׁה מָצָא טוֹב וַיָּפֵק רָצוֹן מֵי־הוה**). The verb "obtains" (וַיָּפֵק) refers to drawing down abundance from God to the couple and drawing the masculine waters from the man to his wife. It also alludes to self-control (אִיפּוּק). The ability of the man or woman to restrain themselves, and to not hasten to destroy what they have built together, depends on faith that "the compassion of *Shakai* is abundant" and on the ability to identify with God's compassion towards one's spouse.

Fittingly, the initial letters of the phrase "*Kel Shakai* shall grant you compassion" (אֵ־ל שַׁ־דַּי יִתֵּן לָכֶם רַחֲמִים) spell "Israel" (**יִשְׂרָאֵל**) alluding to the secret of Israel's holiness, which depends on the love and peace between them. Rebbe Yisrael of Gur, who was very sensitive to this, succeeded in drawing down the compassion of *Shakai* to that couple and building their edifice for eternity.

3. Proverbs 18:22.

FARBRENGEN EXCERPT

CHARITY AND WINE IN ADAR

Kabbalah provides us with two options for the permutation of God's essential Name Havayah that illuminates the month of Adar. One permutation directs us to give abundant charity, the other calls for abundant wine.

Why choose one when you can do both?

In this excerpt from a very jovial post-fundraising event, HaRav Ginsburgh invites us to increase our joy in the month of Adar through both charity and farbrengens and explains the need for a superposition of both.

Excerpted from a farbrengen from the 5th of Adar, 5781.

TWO PERMUTATIONS OF GOD'S NAME FOR ADAR

Because God's essential Name, *Havayah* (י־הוה) contains 4 letters but only 3 are unique, we can permute them in 12 different ways,[1] one for each of the months of the year.[2] This is also alluded to by the word "month" (**חֹדֶשׁ**), whose value is 12 times *Havayah* (**י־הוה**), the value of all 12 permutations!

When it comes to permutations, known as *Chochmat HaTziruf*, there are two systems regarding the twelve permutations and their parallel to the months. Both systems start from the month of *Nissan*, "This month shall be unto you the head of months" and all the correspondences are identical in both except for the sixth month (*Elul*) and the twelfth (*Adar*), whose permutations are interchanged between the systems. According to the first system, the permutation corresponding to *Elul* is ההוי, whose letters are found as the final letters of the words, "And it shall be charity for us, for [we shall diligently keep all of these commandments]"[3] (וּצְדָקָה תִּהְיֶה לָּנוּ כִּי), and the permutation corresponding and illuminating the month of *Adar* is ההיו, which emerges from the final letters of the verse "…his donkey, and his foal to a choice vine"[4] (עִירֹה וְלִשֹׂרֵקָה בְּנִי אֲתֹנוֹ).

According to the second system, these two permutations are reversed: "And it shall be charity for us, for [we shall diligently keep all of these commandments]" (ההוי) belongs to *Adar* and "…his donkey, and his foal to a choice vine" (ההיו) to *Nissan*.

In practice, we follow the first system, but both are the words of the living God. And so, as we stand in the month of *Adar*, let us look at the inner meaning of both verses.

The plain meaning of the verse "And it shall be [considered] charity for us, for we shall diligently keep all of these commandments before *Havayah* our God, as He has commanded us" refers to the reward for performing the commandments. However, it describes our reward as *tzedakah* (charity); indeed *tzedakah* is used to refer to all the commandments.[5] It follows that this verse is referring to the general reward for all the commandments and refers to it as *tzedakah*, in-line with the statement that, "the reward of a *mitzvah* is a *mitzvah*."[6] The verse, "He tethers his donkey to a vine, his foal to a choice vine, he washes his garment in wine, his robe in blood of grapes" refers to the abundance of wine in the lands of the tribe of Judah.

Thus, if the permutation of *Adar* emerges from "…his donkey, and his foal to a choice vine" (ההיו) then *Adar* is about "increasing our joy" by drinking wine "until one does not know" (*ad delo yada*). However, if the permutation of *Adar* emerges from "And it shall be charity for us, for [we shall diligently keep all of these commandments]" (ההוי) then we should increase our joy through giving an abundance of charity, also "until one does not know," which is the essence of the joy of *Adar* and Purim, as ruled by Maimonides.[7]

1. For some more details, see *Wisdom* issue 179, p. 6. There is a mistake in the note prefixed with an asterisk: the bold *hei* designates the lower *hei*, not the higher *hei*.
2. *Machberet HaKodesh*, *Sha'ar Rosh Chodesh*.
3. Deuteronomy 6:25.
4. Genesis 49:11.
5. *Bava Batra* 9a.
6. Mishnah *Avot* 4:2. The Hebrew word for "reward" (שָׂכָר) can also be pronounced as "spirits" (שִׂכָּר), connecting the verse to the *mitzvah* to drink on Purim (*Megillah* 7b).
7. *Hilchot Megillah and Channukah* 2:17: It is preferable for a person to be more liberal with

LECHAIM, TZEDAKAH, AND LECHAIM

Indeed, "these and those are the words of the living God," but which should be prioritized: drinking wine, which is the joy of the body, or giving charity, which is the joy of the soul? The joy of the body is the joy of the psyche (the *nefesh*). When we give *tzedakah*, the soul resembles God—the essential Bestower.

Truthfully, even regarding the question of what to prioritize, one must first reach a state of *ad delo yada*. Nevertheless, according to the well-known Chassidic aphorism that all commandments are merely a means for a *farbrengen*—since after fulfilling a *mitzvah* we merit gathering together amidst the joy of the *mitzvah*—it is fitting to prioritize charity. When we reach the peak of achieving all the goals for which charity was intended, up to and including the main goal captured in the verse, "Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her returnees through *tzedakah*,"[8] then we should gather and say *LeChaim* until one does not know, *ad delo yada*.

Preceding a *LeChaim* to *tzedakah* is the secret of the verse "[Likewise,] *tzedakah* is to life"[9] (כֵּן צְדָקָה לְחַיִּים). The plain meaning is that *tzedakah* gives life and so *tzedakah* comes before saying *LeChaim*. However, one can also interpret these words to mean that the preparation for giving *tzedakah* is a *LeChaim*. Therefore, it is fitting to take a little drink and say *LeChaim* before giving charity, and to continue saying *LeChaim* (a little more) after.

And by way of *gematria*: *mashkeh-tzedakah-mashkeh* (**מַשְׁקֶה צְדָקָה מַשְׁקֶה**) equals "Open [my eyes…]" (33 ,(**גַּל**, squared. Through this, one merits the fulfillment of "Open my eyes so that I may see the wonders of Your Torah" (**גַּל עֵינַי וְאַבִּיטָה נִפְלָאוֹת מִתּוֹרָתֶךָ**), which also equals "the dwelling of the Divine Presence within Israel (**הַשְׁרָאַת הַשְּׁכִינָה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל**)!

his donations to the poor than to be lavish in his preparation of the Purim feast or in sending portions to his friends. For there is no greater and more splendid happiness than to gladden the hearts of the poor, the orphans, the widows, and the converts. One who brings happiness to the hearts of these unfortunate individuals resembles the Divine Presence, as it is written, "to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive those with broken hearts" (Isaiah 57:15).

8. Isaiah 1:27.
9. Proverbs 11:19.


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