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

בס"ד

Wonders

Weekly Magazine of the Shiurim and Farbrengens

of HaRav **Yitzchak Ginsburgh**

Issue 202

Shabbat Pinchas 5786 ❁ July 3-4, 2026

שַׁבָּת פִּינְחָס ❁ יח-יט תַּמּוּז תשפ"ו



When Rabbi Moses Cordovero's stretcher arrived at the cemetery, they sought to prepare the Ramak's grave near the great sages of the generation. But the Arizal said to them, "This is not his place, for the pillar of cloud that moves before the coffin has passed further on and has come to rest at a different spot."

3 Fundamentals of Chasidut: The Nine Principles of Faith: God Desires a Dwelling Place Below

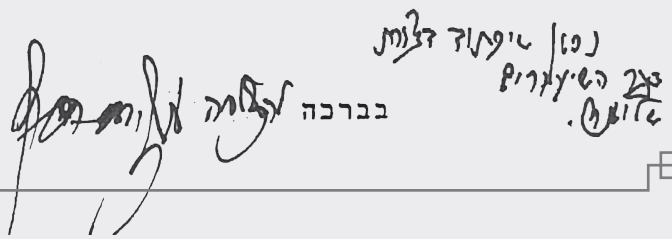
6 Story: Rabbi Moses Cordovero: What It Really Says

9 Parashat Pinchas: Insight Into the Three Weeks

13 Fundamentals of Chasidut: The Nine Principles of Faith: Decrees, Their Fulfillment, and Their Nullification

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**

Wonders is distributed weekly in Israel and North America.
For feedback and/or to receive copies for distribution in your area,
write to **mgenuth@inner.org**
Dedication opportunities available.

To see more of Harav Ginsburgh's teachings in English, and to sign up for our weekly email newsletter with updates on live classes and events, go to:

www.inner.org

Books and music are available for sale at www.inner.org/webstore

Join our daily Whatsapp group. Send a message to **+972-50-6528650**

Subscribe to our Youtube channel for hundreds of hours of in-depth study
www.youtube.com/innerorg

Click here to support Wonders (3500 copies freely distributed every week)

Scan this code to access all Wonders past issues

Wonders Staff
Editor: R' Moshe Genuth • Associate Editor: Shelli Karzen
Contributing Editor: R. Avraham Arieh Trugman • Typesetting: Yoel Broderick

FUNDAMENTALS OF CHASIDUT

THE NINE PRINCIPLES OF FAITH: GOD DESIRES A DWELLING PLACE BELOW

In various works of the Torah's inner dimension, we find four reasons for why the will arose before God to create reality,[1] from the supernal spiritual Worlds to, in particular, the lower physical World beneath, which we inhabit and is the lowest of all possible Worlds. Of the four, the deepest reason—the only reason that touches upon God's very essence—is one who origin is in the Midrash: "The Holy Blessed One desired to have a dwelling among the lower beings."[2]

"AS THE GLORY OF MAN IS TO DWELL IN A HOUSE"

Belief that God has a desire to create the world corresponds to the *sefirah* of beauty (*tiferet*), as will be explained. The inner dimension of beauty is the attribute of mercy or compassion. God's essential Name, Havayah, is known as the "Name of compassion," and thus among the Names that are sacred (i.e., may not be erased), it is the one that corresponds to the *sefirah* of beauty. Indeed, it is natural that the most essential name should reflect the principle of faith in the most essential reason for the creation of the world. The connection between beauty (*tiferet*) and Creation is further alluded to in the verse, "As the beauty of man is to dwell in a home"[3] (כְּתִפְאֶרֶת אָדָם לָשֶׁבֶת בָּיִת).

THE CENTER OF THE CENTER

The *sefirah* of beauty is situated at the central point of the central axis of the *sefirot*, thus it is the center within the center.[4] Its inner experience is one of compassion, and it mediates between loving-kindness and might. As we saw in a previous installment in this series, loving-kindness is the origin of the continuous renewal of Creation. From might originates the order of descent of the Worlds, known as *Seder Hishtalshelut*, which refers to successive levels of concealment of Godliness (the word "world" in Hebrew stems from concealment) all the way down to the physical and material world, the lowest and darkest with respect to Godliness. Each stage in this descent serves to further hide

1. We reviewed these reasons for Creation in *Wonders*, issue 123 (Sukkot 5785). See *Sod HaShem LiYereiʼav*, pp. 203-211.

2. *Tanchuma*, *Naso* 7:1, and is explained at length in the *Tanya*, ch. 36.

3. Isaiah 44:13.

4. In fact, one of the explanations of the Arizal's statement that the contraction of God's infinite revelation (or light) occurred in its central point, is that this statement refers to the sefirah of beauty (*tiferet*).

the connection between the Creator and His desire to create the world, and the coming into being of the world at the end of the process. Regarding the attribute of mercy or compassion, which lies on the central axis of the *sefirot* (and the central point within it, as above) it is said, "Then shall your light break forth like the dawn."[5] In other words, God's light, or revelation, breaks through the darkness of lower reality and reveals to all eyes His will to have His Presence dwell in the deeds of the lower beings.

"AND MAKE FOR ME A SANCTUARY"

One of the most well-known images used associated with the *sefirah* of beauty is that of the middle crossbeam that held together the walls of the Tabernacle. The middle crossbeam, and by association the *sefirah* of beauty, is described in the Torah with the words, "the middle crossbeam runs within the boards, passing from end to end."[6] The notion that beauty runs from end to end stresses that there is no friction or deviance associated with this *sefirah* and its inner aspect of compassion. Practically, this means that beauty does not lean to any side, right or left, love or awe. Unlike the two *sefirot* loving-kindness and might, which lies to its right and left, beauty and compassion do not intensify as love—the inner aspect of loving-kindness—does, nor do they recoil like awe—the inner aspect of might. It allows for the unhindered flow, as it were, between the arousal of mercy within the one exercising compassion and the actualization of compassion within the deed of kindness towards another.

As beauty functions in the interaction between souls, so it ascends to the supernal crown to draw from there the Divine will and pleasure that it will reveal in the dwelling place of holiness below, specifically in the *sefirah* of kingdom, which appears through the Land of Israel, the holy city of Jerusalem, the Temple Mount, the Holy Temple, and the Holy of Holies. Although, one cannot feign to "contain" God in any way or fashion, for as King Solomon stated at the inauguration of the First Temple, "the heavens and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You, much less this house,"[7] nonetheless, God Himself chose to dwell below—to reveal His very essence and being "in thick haze,"[8] in the house His children built for Him in this lower world specifically. God commanded the construction of the Tabernacle and subsequently the Temple when He said, "They shall make for Me a sanctuary, and I shall dwell among them."[9] Ultimately, the principle of faith that the internal and essential craving of the Holy Blessed One attributes a craving (*ta'avah*, in Hebrew) as it were to God; and when it comes to a craving, there can be no counter-arguments, or "one cannot argue with a craving."[10]

---

5. Isaiah 58:8. The Hebrew for "shall break forth" (**יִבָּקַע**) is a permutation of the letters of "Jacob" (**יַעֲקֹב**). Jacob is the patriarch considered the archetypal soul and the chariot of the *sefirah* of beauty (*tiferet*) and its inner experience, mercy
6. Exodus 26:28; see *Zohar* 1:224a and other places.
7. 1 Kings 8:27.
8. Ibid. v. 12.
9. Exodus 25:8.
10. The Alter Rebbe of Chabad was asked by a student about the reason for Creation and the difficulties they raise, because any reason or explanation for why God created reality implies that God had some sort of deficiency before

This principle of faith of the Torah's inner dimension introduces a new perspective on Maimonides' principle of reward and punishment. According to Maimonides,[11] the final reward for one's service in life will be given in the World to Come, which unlike our world—called This World—is not a physical reality, because the ultimate reward is eternal and physical existence cannot be eternal. However, according to Kabbalah, specifically following Nachmanides' view,[12] the World to Come, after the resurrection of the dead, is in this very physical world.[13] Fortunate is one who in his life in this lower physical world has prepared the ground and made ready the vessels for the dwelling of God's very essence in this place, among the lower beings.

A HOUSE OF ZEVUL

The Sages speak of seven firmaments,[14] which correspond to the emotive sefirot. The firmament corresponding to the *sefirah* of beauty is known as *Zevul*, meaning "abode", and in it is the location of the heavenly Jerusalem and the heavenly Temple. The source for this identification is in the verse, "I have surely built a house of Zevul for You, a place for You to dwell forever."[15] King Solomon constructed the Holy Temple in Jerusalem as a physical version of God's heavenly abode.

Seemingly, this would indicate that God does not need a dwelling place below, because He already has one above. However, countless sources indicate that the Almighty has sworn not to enter the Temple above—His heavenly abode, as it were—until He enters the Temple below. These sources trace their way back to Hosea's words, "For I am God, not a human; I am holy in your midst, and I will not enter the city."[16] These words are offered as part of conciliatory words the prophet relates to the Jewish people. With this in mind, the rabbis explain

> Rav Nachman said to Rabbi Yitzchak: What is the meaning of the words, "I am sacred in your midst, and I will not enter the city?" Because the sacred One is in your midst, that is a reason that He will not come into the city? He replied, "Rabbi Yochanan said as follows: the Holy Blessed One said: 'I shall not enter the heavenly Jerusalem until I enter the earthly city of Jerusalem.'"[17]

An expanded version of this explanation including more context reads,

> For from the day that the Temple was destroyed below, the Holy Blessed One says that He will not enter the heavenly Jerusalem until the Jewish people will enter the earthly Jerusalem, as it says, "I am holy in your midst, and I will not enter the city."[18]

Creation, since the reason for creation would be the fulfillment of that deficiency. The Alter Rebbe finally told him the essential reason: "the Holy Blessed One craved a dwelling place among the lower beings." The student still asked: if so, before the world was created, His craving was unfulfilled! The Alter Rebbe replied: "One cannot argue logically with a craving."

11. *Hilchot Teshuvah* 8:1-2.
12. *Sha'ar HaGemul*, ch. 5.
13. *Tanya, Iggeret HaKodesh* 17.
14. *Chagigah* 12b.
15. 1 Kings 8:13.
16. Hosea 11:9.
17. *Ta'anit* 5a.
18. *Zohar* 1:231a.

Though God could seemingly be content with His Heavenly, non-mundane abode above, He craves to dwell within the House of Zebul, the Temple constructed by His people below and even ignores the possibility of dwelling supernally so long as He does not have a dwelling place below.

STORY

RABBI MOSES CORDOVERO: WHAT IT REALLY SAYS

Rabbi Moses Cordovero was born in the year 5282 (1522) to Rabbi Yaakov. His birthplace is unknown, though his family name attests that his lineage traces to the city of Córdoba in Spain. He grew up and lived in Tzfat, studying Gemara and Jewish law under Rabbi Yosef Karo. According to one tradition, he received rabbinic ordination from Rabbi Yaakov Berav, who renewed the institution of semichah. He married the sister of Rabbi Shlomo Alkabetz, and at the age of twenty began his study of Kabbalah under the tutelage of his brother-in-law. After a few years he began to serve as head of a yeshivah in Tzfat. Among his students were Rabbi Chaim Vital and Rabbi Eliyahu de Vidas, author of Reishit Chochmah. The Ramak's work Pardes Rimonim was printed during his lifetime and became a foundational text in the study of Kabbalah, while his other works—Eilimah and Shi'ur Komah, which expound his Kabbalistic system—were printed much later. In his writings, the Ramak synthesizes the Kabbalistic approaches of the Rishonim, engaging and adjudicating among them. He likewise composed a commentary on the Zohar and the Tikkunei Zohar entitled Or Yakar, as well as a work of mussar called Tomer Devorah, grounded in the thirteen attributes of Divine mercy and the imperative of "and you shall walk in His ways." In the year 5322 (1562), at the age of forty, his son Rabbi Gedaliah was born. Rabbi Moses Cordovero departed this world on the 23rd of Tammuz, 5330 (1570), at the age of 48, and was interred in the cemetery of Tzfat.

On the day the Ramak, of blessed memory, passed from this world, his students and the other sages of the generation came to visit him. He said to them: "Know, my masters, that one man will arise after me and illuminate your eyes in the wisdom of Kabbalah. And though you may perceive him as disputing my words, this is not so—for all is one. In my days, the channels of holiness were still sealed, and I wrote my teachings in great concealment, in terms of *sefirot*. But after my

passing, those channels will be more fully revealed, and that man will expound his teachings in terms of *partzufim* (personas) and so forth. It is for this reason that he may appear to you to be departing from my words. I therefore warn you: do not dispute him, for such was the Torah received by his soul from Sinai—and all the more so, since the spark of his soul derives from Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, of blessed memory."

When his students heard these words, they pressed him to reveal the man's identity, but he declined, saying: "Since he himself does not wish to be revealed, neither do I wish to reveal him. Nevertheless, one sign I will give you: whoever merits to behold the pillar of cloud that walks before my bier—he is the man of whom God has spoken, to be a prince and guide over His people Israel."

When the bearers of the bed on which the Ramak's body lay arrived at the cemetery, they sought to prepare the Ramak's grave near the great sages of the generation. But Rabbi Isaac Luria, the Ari, said to them: "This is not his place—for the pillar of cloud that moves before the coffin has passed further on and has come to rest at a different spot." At once they understood that he was the man of whom the Ramak, of blessed memory, had spoken.

*

One night, the holy Ari was teaching Torah before the fellowship, and among those present was a student of Rabbi Moses Cordovero. This student spoke up concerning the teaching the Ari was expounding, and said that the Ramak was of a different opinion. The holy Ari turned aside and was silent. The student asked: "Why does the master remain silent?" He replied: "Know that the soul of the Ramak is seated upon a throne in this very place, listening to your words and has told you that you are speaking falsehood!" The student said: "Who can attest to this?" The master said: "Wait."

The holy Ari turned once more toward that same direction and spoke with the soul of the Ramak, then turned back to the student and said: "This is what the Ramak told me: go to his wife and ask her to give you a certain book, and open it to a certain page and column, and there you will find his reasoning in full agreement with my words." The student did so, and he found the matter written precisely as the holy Ari had said.

(*Toldot HaAri*)

Many things may be seen in this wondrous story: the humility of the Ramak, the *Ru'ach HaKodesh* of the Ari, and the vast distance between imagined disputes on the one hand and genuine mutual esteem and complementarity on the other. It is also striking that although the Ramak had written about *partzufim*—one of the hallmarks of the Ari's Kabbalah—he nonetheless did not

publish these works until the Ari came and revealed his own teachings as reflected in the story itself, where the manuscript in the possession of the Ramak's widow confirmed the Ari's words. Why did Divine guidance arrange matters so that only the Ari would reveal the full depth of the Ramak's intent?

It can only be that within the Ramak's Kabbalah, as it stands, a secret is concealed, one that remains profound and relevant even after the teachings of the Ari. To understand what this is, let us open with a Chasidic story:

> At times, when the Ba'al Shem Tov would teach Torah, the *Toldot*—Rabbi Yaakov Yosef of Polonne—would suddenly cry out: "The Ari writes otherwise!" Once, on a Shabbat night, the Ba'al Shem Tov was learning a certain discourse together with the Ari, and he roused Rebbe Ze'ev Kitzes, who was sleeping nearby, so that he might see and serve as a witness that the holy Ari had indeed learned it with him thus should the *Toldot* later cry out that it was not so written in the Ari.
>
> And so it was: the following day, when the Ba'al Shem Tov repeated the discourse, the *Toldot* cried out: "This is not what is written in the Ari!" Whereupon the Ba'al Shem Tov called upon Rebbe Zev Kitzes to testify that this is precisely what they had heard him learn together with the holy Ari.

History repeats itself. The very claim that the Ramak's students levelled against the Ari is now levelled by students of the Ari's Torah against the Ba'al Shem Tov, and in precisely the same manner that the Ari responded, so too responds the Ba'al Shem Tov.

What makes this still more astonishing is that the Ba'al Shem Tov presented himself as the direct successor of the Ramak in particular. In his own words: "The teaching that the blessed *Ein Sof*, fills all worlds and surrounds and is within, and that there is no place void of Him, even in the lowest things, this is the Kabbalistic approach of the Ramak, of blessed memory, and upon it I have built and established our own true path as well."

Who, then, is more precise: the Ari, with whom the Ramak concurred, or the Ramak, upon whose foundations the Ba'al Shem Tov's Torah was built, and who in the story received the Ari's own confirmation?

The truth, as taught by Rebbe Isaac of Homel, is that the Ramak, the Ari, and the Ba'al Shem Tov represent three stages in the evolution of Kabbalah.

The first stage is known as **Hishtalshelut** (possibly translatable as "evolution"). The Kabbalah of the Ramak, which describes the stages of Creation and the development of multiplicity from within unity. The worldview it presents resembles a chain of interlocking rings, extending from the Creator down through the lower worlds.

The second stage is known as **Hitlabshut** ("enclothment"). The Kabbalah of the Ari portrays Creation as a system of *partzufim* (personas), diverse expressions of the "Divine personality" garbed within one another as a soul within a body.

The third and final stage is **Hashra'ah**

("inspiration" or "immersion"). The Kabbalah of the Ba'al Shem Tov illuminates how finite creatures may sense themselves immersed or inspired by the Infinite, which dwells around them and flows through them. The Ari's Kabbalah is built upon the foundations of earlier Kabbalistic tradition, interpreting and expanding upon it; and the Ba'al Shem Tov's Kabbalah refines and deepens what came before him.

The apparent difference between the Ba'al Shem Tov and the Ari finds its clearest expression in the mystery of the *tzimtzum* (contraction). One who studies the writings of the Ari might conclude that the contraction is to be understood literally—that God's Infinite revelation (or light) withdrew from and is no longer present within Creation. But according to the Ba'al Shem Tov, the entire description of the contraction is a parable, rendered from our own limited perspective; and the Presence of God and His light can be sensed even within the void of contraction in which we live. Significantly, it is precisely in the Ramak's system that the concept of contraction does not appear at all; instead, there is only a continuous evolution (*Hishtalshelut*), an unbroken flowing-forth from God Himself to the furthest reaches of the created worlds. It is from this that the Ba'al Shem Tov draws his inspiration, understanding all the Ari's innovations as not to be taken in their literal sense.

The Ramak's Kabbalah is simpler and more foundational, and there are nuances and layers to which it attends less fully. Yet it is precisely by virtue of this simplicity that the Ba'al Shem Tov was able to strip the Ari's words of any material connotation and bring to completion the process begun by the Ramak and continued by the Ari. The Ari unveiled the depth of the Ramak's intent and the richness latent within the more restrained Kabbalah he had disclosed; and through the Ramak's vision—which presents the world and Divinity as a single, unbroken continuum—the Ba'al Shem Tov in turn revealed the depth of the Ari's own intent.

PARASHAT PINCHAS

INSIGHT INTO THE THREE WEEKS

This past week, we commemorated the fast day of the 17th of Tammuz, *Yud Zayin BeTammuz*, and in another three weeks, we will commemorate another fast day, the Ninth of Av, or *Tishah BeAv*. These two fast days were instituted by the prophets and the Sages to commemorate not only the destruction of the two Temples in Jerusalem, but many other negative events in Jewish history. According to the Mishnah, five calamities occurred on the 17th of *Tammuz*, and five others occurred

on *Tishah BeAv*.[1]

THE 17TH OF TAMMUZ AND THE BREAKING OF THE TABLETS

The first of the calamitous events occurring on the 17th of *Tammuz* was Moses breaking the first Tablets of the Covenant when he came down from Mount Sinai. The people had miscalculated when Moses was supposed to come down from the mountain forty days after receiving the Torah, and in their desperation, they made a golden calf to, as it were, replace Moses, as they felt a vacuum of leadership. When Moses descended with the tablets of the law, he broke them when he saw how they were dancing and celebrating around the golden calf.[2] This event mirrors the more archetypal event called the Shattering of the Vessels when the initial vessels of creation could not hold the incredibly powerful light and shattered. According to the Arizal, this world, which is known as the World of Rectification, is made up of the broken vessels of the previous world.

TISHA B'AV AND THE REPORT OF THE SPIES

The first of the events that occurred on the Ninth of Av was when the twelve spies sent by Moses to scout the Land of Israel returned after forty days with their report. Ten of them discouraged the people with an evil report saying the people there were too strong for the Israelites to vanquish. The people responded by standing at their tents crying, wanting to go back to Egypt.[3] The Talmud reports that God who had continually promised the Israelites to bring them to the land he had promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, declared: "You are crying tonight for nothing. In the future, you will have what to cry about on this night."[4] That night was *Tishah BeAv*, and as the *Midrash* predicted, over the centuries, not only five calamities occurred on this date, as the Mishnah records, but many other terrible events as well.

THE 22 DAYS AND THE HEBREW LETTERS

If we look carefully, we see that *Tishah BeAv* is the 22nd day after the fast day of the 17th of *Tammuz*. Since there are 22 Hebrew letters, there is a direct correspondence between the letters and this span of 22 days. This is the reason that Jeremiah, who composed the Book of Lamentations, *Eichah*, which is read in public on *Tishah BeAv*, wrote most of its chapters following an acrostic using the 22 letters of the Hebrew alephbet. The acrostic was meant to remind the reader that Jewish people had turned away from the Torah written in 22 letters and had thus brought the destruction upon themselves.[5] Jeremiah is also the source for the name used to designate these 22 days on the Hebrew calendar, "Days Between the Straits"[6] (ימי בֵּין הַמְּצָרִים).

ATTRIBUTES OF COMPASSION

If we look closer, we see that these 22 days divide into two groups, one with

1. Mishnah *Ta'anit* 4:6.
2. Exodus 32:15-20.
3. Numbers 13:1-14:4.
4. *Ta'anit* 29a.
5. *Sanhedrin* 104a.
6. Lamentations 1:3.

13 days, the second with 9 days. The first 13 days are all in the month of *Tammuz*—from the 17th of *Tammuz* until the end of the month. The second group of 9 days are in the month of *Av*—from *Rosh Chodesh Av* until *Tishah BeAv*—from the first day of the month until the ninth. The second group of 9 days is even referred to in *Halachah* as "the Nine Days."

The 13 Days of *Tammuz* correspond to the 13 Attributes of Divine Compassion (*Shelosh Esrei Middot HaRachamim*) revealed to Moses after the breaking of the Tablets as a path to forgiveness.[7] The 9 days of *Av* correspond to the 9 Attributes of Divine Compassion that Moses expressed to intercede for the people after the Sin of the Spies.[8] Thus, we have the two incidents that brought upon us these two days of fasting—the 17th of *Tammuz* and *Tishah BeAv*—but we also have the antidote in the form of two sets of Attributes of Compassion showing the way for doing *teshuvah* to rectify these negative events.[9]

It is stated in the *Zohar* that on the merit of learning the inner dimensions of the Torah revealed in its teachings, redemption will come to the Jewish people with compassion.[10] Here again, we see the idea of compassion being the underlying force leading to *teshuvah*, rectification and redemption. This idea, that learning the inner dimensions of the Torah is directly connected to redemption and the Messianic era has become a cardinal belief in Kabbalah and Chasidut as we will now see.

THE PILLARS OF SAFED: THE RAMAK AND THE ARIZAL

In the 16th century, there was an explosion of Kabbalistic teachings in the city of Tsfat in the Land of Israel. The two personalities most responsible for this were the *Ramak*, Rabbi Moses Cordovero (1522-1570), and the Arizal, Rabbi Isaac Luria (1534-1572). They were able to revolutionize the learning of Kabbalah, the inner dimensions of the Torah, and to this day set the foundations for the study of Kabbalah.

The Ramak and the Arizal passed away in a span of just 2 years. It is interesting to note that Rabbi Moses Cordovero, passed away on the 23rd of *Tammuz*, the seventh and middle day of the group of thirteen days from the fast of the 17th of *Tammuz* until the final day of Tammuz. The Arizal, just a few years later, passed on the 5th of *Av*, the middle fifth day of the nine days from *Rosh Chodesh Av* until *Tishah BeAv*:

Tammuz	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
Av			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		

In the Temple in Jerusalem, two pillars, referred to as *Boaz* and *Jachin*, were erected before the entrance to the Sanctuary.[11] In a symbolic way, just like these two pillars were landmarks of the Temple, the *Ramak* and the Arizal were pillars of the

7. Exodus 34:6-7.

8. Numbers 14:18. The 13 Attributes and the 9 Attributes are the basis of our ongoing series of articles on the Nine Principles of Faith of the Torah's inner dimension appearing concurrently in Wonders. This week, we focus on the fifth and sixth principles. The series began with the Shelach 5786 issue of Wonders.

9. *Yaiyn Yitzchak*, *Shelach* §6.

10. *Zohar* 3:124b.

11. 1 Kings 7:15-22.

Kabbalistic tradition. It is also interesting to note that they are buried adjacent to one another in the ancient cemetery in Tsfat, one above the other. These two "pillars of Kabbalah" symbolically represent the two *sefirot* of victory (*netzach*) and acknowledgment (*hod*), corresponding to the legs, the "pillars" of the body.

These two *sefirot* are also the source of prophecy according to the *Zohar*, which is why prophets would place their head between their knees when attaining prophecy. Thus, Rabbi Moses Cordovero and Rabbi Isaac Luria, by teaching and spreading Kabbalistic wisdom in the city of Tsfat, were like pillars supporting the return of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel, a process that was fueled by the revelations of the Torah's inner dimension.

THE WELLSPRINGS OF THE BAAL SHEM TOV

Some 150 years after the passing of these twin pillars, the eschatological teachings of Kabbalah reached even simple Jews through the teachings of the Ba'al Shem Tov, the founder of the Chasidic movement. After living as a hidden pious man (a *tzaddik*) for the first 36 years of his life, the Ba'al Shem Tov revealed his teachings and unique persona under the direction of his heavenly mentor, *Achiyah HaShiloni*. He was able to transform the teachings of the Zohar, which served as the basis for the esoteric and difficult to understand Kabbalah of the Ramak and the Arizal, into a new system and language that quickly touched upon the lives of the Jewish masses and awakened the spark of Mashiach and the yearning for the Redemption in them.

On Rosh Hashanah of 1746 (5507), the Ba'al Shem Tov had an elevation of soul during which he entered the chamber of Mashiach in heaven. When in the presence of the soul of the Mashiach, he asked him, "When is the master coming?" The soul of Mashiach, responded by quoting the verse, "When the wellsprings of your teachings reach the farthest limits."[12] Thus, the Ba'al Shem Tov, and all his subsequent followers were entrusted with the mission of spreading the inner dimensions of the Torah, all in the belief that they are a key instrument to bringing the final redemption to the Jewish people and the entire world, through compassion.

We should all endeavor to play our part in both learning and spreading the inner dimensions of the Torah to facilitate the spread of the spiritual energy and help it reach a critical mass that will bring about the long-awaited Redemption and lead us into the Messianic era.

12. From a letter the Ba'al Shem Tov sent to his brother-in-law, Rabbi Gershon of Kitov.

FUNDAMENTALS OF CHASIDUT

THE NINE PRINCIPLES OF FAITH: DECREES, THEIR FULFILLMENT, AND THEIR NULLIFICATION

DESCENDING INTO THE JEWISH EXPERIENCE

The next three principle of faith found in the Torah's inner dimension are all related and all three derive from the principle of faith that corresponds to the *sefirah* of beauty (*tiferet*) discussed above: God desires a dwelling place below. Furthermore, these next three (and in fact, four) principles take us from the realm of God, the Torah, Creation, and the Temple to the realm of the human experience, specifically the Jewish experience.

When considering the relationship between the *sefirot*, the next three after beauty are victory, acknowledgment, and foundation, which form a triplet that has its own acronym, pronounced *Nehi* in Hebrew and standing for their initials in Hebrew: *netzach*, *hod*, and *yesod* (נְצַח הוֹד יְסוֹד).[1] In this article we will look at the principles of faith that correspond to the first two of these *sefirot*: victory and acknowledgment, while leaving the principle of faith corresponding to foundation for our next installment.

However, even though foundation will be discussed separately, it is in fact the essential element of this triad of principles. To fully appreciate this statement, let us first introduce the three principles of faith associated with the *Nehi sefirot*.

Victory corresponds to: "the *tzaddik* [the righteous individual] decrees and the Almighty fulfills his bidding. Acknowledgement corresponds to: "the Almighty decrees and the *tzaddik* annuls it. Foundation corresponds to the principle of faith that all Your people are *tzaddikim*, all Jews are in fact righteous individuals. The connection and interdependence between these principles of faith should be clear. Even though it may seem that the first two principles regarding both human and Divine decrees are relevant to only a select, few righteous individuals, in fact, the principle that all Jews are righteous expands their scope to include every Jew. This is important because it would render the decree-principles theoretical for most Jews if they themselves were not considered righteous. The foundation principle—that all Jews are righteous—makes the decree-principles universally applicable and pragmatic.

TWO SIDES OF A COIN

Let us now focus on the two principles corresponding to victory and acknowledgment. These are the sixth and seventh principles of faith of the Torah's

1. Sometimes the final sefirah, kingdom (*malchut*) is added to this triad and the acronym for all four becomes *Nehim* (נְצַח הוֹד יְסוֹד מַלְכוּת). As we will see, the final principle of faith of the Torah's inner dimension also directly descends from beauty.

inner dimension.

Victory and acknowledgment are described as "two halves of a single body."[2] This image is meant to reflect the relationship between a husband and wife, described as "he shall cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh,"[3]—husband and wife[4] figuratively become one body. Likewise, victory and acknowledgment work in unison and produce offspring, or fruit, through their union. In fact, in Kabbalah, the relationship between male and female is identified with victory and acknowledgment, "He is in victory [*netzach*] and she is in [*hod*]."[5]

The inner dimensions or experiences of victory and acknowledgment are confidence (*bitachon*) and earnestness (*temimut*), the two qualities required for the groom and bride to merit a true union. The groom needs to gird himself with great confidence to dare descend from his secure solitude and commit himself in devotion to the bride, while the bride needs to fill herself with the quality of earnest sincerity and thanksgiving to give herself wholeheartedly to the groom. The same relationship exists between the principles of faith corresponding to victory and acknowledgment; they are in a sense to sides of a single coin.

"OUTSIDE THE BODY"

The sefirah of beauty out of which, as mentioned, victory and acknowledgment descend, is known as the "body" (גּוּפָא). It corresponds to the principle of faith that God craves, as it were, the very essence of His desire, is to dwell among the lower beings, among Israel in the manner of souls within bodies. This is the meaning of the verse, "[They shall make Me a Sanctuary] and I shall dwell among them."[6] It is fitting therefore that victory and acknowledgment are described as laying, "outside the body"[7] (לְבַר מִגּוּפָא). Just as the legs extend beyond the body, victory and acknowledgment, which also correspond to the two feet, direct the external expression, and are not the innermost feeling itself, as are love, awe, and mercy.

CHILDREN OF GOD

The word that means "outside" (לְבַר) also relates to "son" (בַּר). The relationship between outside and son is the secret of the Sages' statement, "The son is the leg of his father" indicating that the son tends to walk in his father's footsteps.[8] Likewise, relative to the emotive *sefirot*—loving-kindness, might, and beauty (which corresponds to the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—victory, acknowledgment, and foundation are the powers of action in the soul and are children, so to speak, of the inner feelings within the soul. Just as victory, acknowledgment, and foundation are the children of the emotions, they are also the great-grandchildren, as it were, of the intellectual *sefirot*, wisdom, understanding, and knowledge.[9]

2. Introduction to *Tikkunei Zohar* (*Patach Eliyahu*).
3. Genesis 2:24.
4. In Kabbalah, the husband and wife pair of entities are known as *Ze'er Anpin* [the Small Countenance] and *Nukva* [the Feminine].
5. *Sha'ar HaKavanot*, First Discourse of Chanukah.
6. Exodus 25:8.
7. *Zohar* 1:21b.
8. *Eiruvin* 70b; Rashi on *Ketubot* 92b, *s.v.* "*kenoshe*."
9. The Arizal's explanation of the wording of the Amidah's first blessing is that "He brings a redeemer to their children's children" refers to the

The three habitual sefirot—victory, acknowledgment, and foundation—thus correspond to God's children, the holy people of Israel, and to the three principles of faith that explicitly center on the Jewish people and their unique quality of completing and fulfilling the Almighty's desire to have a dwelling place in the lower worlds.

"THE RIGHTEOUS ONE RULES THROUGH HIS FEAR OF GOD"

In his last words, King David said: "The God of Israel has spoken, the Rock of Israel has said to me: A *tzaddik* rules over men; who rules through the fear of God?"[10] The Sages interpreted this hard to understand verse as follows: "I rule over men. Who rules Me? A *tzaddik*! For I make a decree and he can annul it."[11] And within this there are two aspects, one corresponding to the *sefirah* of victory, the other corresponding to the *sefirah* of acknowledgment (the "two halves of a body," as above): "the righteous decrees and the Holy Blessed One fulfills it" and "the Holy Blessed One makes a decree and the righteous nullifies it."

In each of these two aspects there is a decree issuing from the *sefirah* of victory and either a fulfillment or a nullification of that decree issuing from the side of acknowledgment. The reaction to the confident decree made by the *tzaddik*, the righteous individual, is acknowledgment from God. But, if acknowledgment and gratitude are not given by the *tzaddik* to God's decree, then the decree is nullified.

From a more general perspective, the concept that the *tzaddik* issues a decree and the Almighty fulfills it" corresponds to the *sefirah* of victory whose essence is the power of the righteous one, the *tzaddik*, to make a decree regarding the governance of the worlds. The Almighty fulfills the decree represents the inter-inclusion of the *sefirah* of acknowledgment within victory. Likewise, the notion that God makes a decree and the righteous individual nullifies it corresponds in general to the *sefirah* of acknowledgment, whose essence is the tzaddik's power to nullify God's decree, alluding to the positive property associated with the verse, "my *hod* [glory/acknowledgment] was transformed,[12]" not to destroy me, but to improve me. Outwardly, it seems that the *tzaddik* does not agree and therefore does not acknowledge God, but inwardly, the *tzaddik* does acknowledge Him and strives to reveal His most inner will, which is sometimes the opposite of His revealed will. Only a "son" can sense the hidden will of his father in this way.

Regarding both aspects—when the *tzaddik* annuls a Divine decree and when he issues a decree and the Almighty fulfills it above—it is said in God's name: "My children have overcome Me, My children have overcome Me"![13]

"WALK BEFORE ME"

When God made His covenant with Abraham over circumcision so that he would merit having "holy seed,

intellectual sefirot—wisdom, understanding, and knowledge—who are the grandparents of victory, acknowledgment, and foundation.

10. 2 Samuel 23:3.

11. *Mo'ed Katan* 16b.

12. Daniel 10:8.

13. *Bava Metzia* 59b.

the blessing of God"[14]—the holy people of Israel, He said to him, "Walk before Me and be earnest."[15] When describing Enoch and Noah, two great individuals who lived before Abraham, the Torah says that, "Enoch walked with God"[16] and "Noah walked with God"[17] meaning that they both walked side by side with God. But God commanded Abraham, the first Jew, to "walk *before* Me." Where Enoch and Noah for all their righteousness could only walk with God, Abraham was commanded to lead God, as it were.[18]

"MY CHILDREN HAVE OVERCOME ME"

Because the legs—i.e., the sefirot of victory and acknowledgment—lead and carry the body, when the Jewish people—God's children who are sensitive to His inner will, as above—merit to overcome their Father in Heaven, it is as if they lead God, as it were. God has entrusted them with the power to guide the world toward the fulfillment of its ultimate purpose, which is the fulfillment of God's essential intention for creating the world, which is His craving to make Himself a dwelling place below, in the mundane.

The "victory" of the children represents in fact the perpetuation of the father because by their "victory," they prepare the mundane realm to be a suitable dwelling place for the Almighty. As explained in Chasidic writings, any place worthy of being a dwelling place is where one feels at ease and is free to remove his garments and reveal his essential self. This requires that the dwelling itself resembles its occupant, thereby arousing him to reveal himself in it. By "overcoming" their father, the children reveal how similar they are to him and arouse His desire to reveal Himself through them. So, in essence, it is the Jewish people themselves that become the dwelling place for God's revelation.

This is why the *sefirot* victory and acknowledgment are also known as the "supporters of Torah"[19] (תַּמְכֵי דְאוֹרַיְתָא), because Torah is synonymous with the sefirah of beauty and they sustain beauty. God's craving is enclothed in His Torah, and it is the Jewish people that fulfill its goal.

This principle of faith, that a *tzaddik*, i.e., God's children, can overcome their father's own decrees serves as a complement to Maimonides principle of faith regarding prophecy and the prophets.[20] According to the Maimonidean principle, faith in prophecy means that a human being can be led by God, identified with, and imbued by His will. The Torah's inner dimension adds that the Jew (the sensitive son, who senses the inner will of the Father's essence) is meant to lead the Almighty, as it were, and this itself is the most inner will of God, the compassionate Father, and affords Him the greatest pleasure.

14. Isaiah 6:13; 61:9.
15. Genesis 17:1.
16. Ibid. 5:22.
17. Ibid. 6:9.
18. As explained in length in the article, "*Emunah VeBitachon*" in our volume *Lev Lada'at*.
19. *Zohar* 3:307a.
20. In fact, according to Kabbalah, the Biblical prophets prophecy through the two *sefirot* of victory and acknowledgment.