

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



Wonders

Weekly Magazine of the Shiurim and Farbrengens
of HaRav Yitzchak Ginsburgh

Issue 213

Shabbat Ha'azinu-Yom Kippur 5787 🕍 September 18-21, 2026

שבת האזינו - יום כיפור 🕍 ז-י תשרי תשפ"ז



“ The charity he had given brought him more pleasure than anything else. The pauper's emotional words would not leave his thoughts. The exclamations of admiration from his friends gave him indescribable pleasure. ”

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*"...It would be proper
to publish your classes
in book form.
With blessings for success..."*

ברכה רבה

(כס) איפה דעם
דאס די ערשטע
בא.

An anthology from the shiurim and farbrengens
of Harav **Yitzchak Ginsburgh**

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STORY

RABBI ASHER FREUND: TESHUVAH, TRUTH, AND JOY

Rabbi Asher Freund, one of the singular tzaddikim of Jerusalem, was born to Rabbi Aryeh Mordechai and Chayah Rivkah Devorah, descendants of Rebbe Aharon HaGadol of Karlin, and married Tzivya, the daughter of Rabbi Avraham Sternberg, among the rabbis of Tzfat. From his youth he assisted the poor, the downtrodden, and the broken-hearted, and over the years established the organization "Yad Ezra." People turned to him from throughout the world to seek his counsel and blessing. He was a chasid of Rebbe Avraham Elimelech of Karlin, and after his passing, under the influence of his friend Rebbe Gedalyah Koenig, he would visit Rabbi Avraham Sternhartz, who held him in high esteem. In his younger years he studied in chavruta with Rabbi Binyamin Rabinowitz. He befriended Rabbi Avraham Elimelech Shapira of Grodzisk, Rebbe Shalom Noach Berzovsky of Slonim, and Rebbe Simchah Bunim Alter of Ger. Among his practices was the custom of hitbodedut (private, spontaneous prayer and reflection), and he was known as a "healer of souls," treating those with mental affliction through the path of faith; psychiatrists and psychologists would regularly consult with him. "The Way" was the crown jewel of Rabbi Asher's teaching, and he devoted himself greatly to bringing people to teshuvah and drawing them close to pure faith in God. He departed this world on Motza'ei Yom Kippur, 5764 (2003), having prepared his disciples for the fact that this would be the day of his passing, and was interred on Har HaMenuchot.

Rabbi Tzvi Fuchs of Haifa related: On Rosh HaShanah many years ago, as a young man, I spent time in the presence of the holy Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov, of blessed memory. The Rebbe mentioned the subject of *teshuvah* (return to God) and said: "One must return with *teshuvah*." One of the elder *chasidim* asked: "And how does one do *teshuvah*?" The Rebbe replied: "*Teshuvah* can be merited and attained through the quality of truth. One who holds fast to the level of truth can return in *teshuvah*." And he did not elaborate.

The following day, on the Fast of Gedalyah, I traveled to Meron. I ran into Rebbe Asher in the cave of the Rashbi. I went over to greet him, and Reb Asher asked me: "The Ten Days of Repentance have begun. Have you done *teshuvah*?" "How does one do *teshuvah*?" I asked. The words I had heard the previous day from the Rebbe of Lelov were still echoing in my ears. Reb Asher gave me a warm smile: "Through holding fast to the quality of truth, one can do *teshuvah*."

I was greatly stirred. This was *ru'ach hakodesh* openly revealed. The very words I had heard the night before from the Rebbe. I told Reb Asher what the Rebbe of Lelov had said and asked him what the words meant. How does one merit *teshuvah* through the quality of truth? Reb Asher explained the matter by way of a parable:

Reuven the wealthy man sat eating his evening meal in his well-stocked kitchen. Suddenly he heard knocking at the door. He went to open it and was irritated to see a gaunt pauper standing there. "Have mercy," the pauper pleaded, "give me something to eat or a little money, otherwise I will die of hunger." But Reuven pushed him away angrily and gave him nothing. The pauper, who was on the very brink of death from starvation, did indeed die shortly afterward. Reuven heard of this and felt no particular regret.

Some days later he sat with several friends, businessmen like himself. He was on the verge of signing an agreement that would yield him great profits. Just as they were about to sign, there was a knock at the door. He went to open it and saw a gaunt pauper pleading for his life. Had he been alone in the house he would have treated him as he had treated the first, but now he could not. It was not fitting. He was surrounded by friends who would think poorly of him. His reputation would suffer. With a show of generous spirit he opened his wallet, drew out a thousand dollars, and handed the money to the pauper with a magnanimous smile. The room filled with murmurs of admiration and looks of astonishment. "What a philanthropist," "What a *tzaddik*, compassionate and gracious." The pauper himself was beside himself with gratitude. "You have saved my entire family," he said with emotion. "I asked for a single coin, and you gave me a thousand dollars. How blessed are the Jewish people."

After the friends had gone and the successful transactions were signed, Reuven felt deep inner satisfaction, far greater, in fact, than the joy of the successful deal. The charity he had given brought him more pleasure than anything else. The pauper's emotional words would not leave his thoughts. The exclamations of admiration from his friends gave him indescribable pleasure. But the fact that he himself had sent someone just like this from his home when no one was watching, and had left him to die of hunger? That he no longer remembers...

Shimon the wealthy man, by contrast, went through precisely the same experience. He too had sent the first pauper away and left him to perish in hunger, and had rewarded the second generously, but only because his friends' eyes were upon him. The difference between the two wealthy men is this: in Shimon's case, after his friends had left, he recalled how a month earlier he had driven the first pauper from his home and indirectly caused his death and instead

of feeling pride, he was filled with sharp pangs of regret. "I have not changed at all," he thought to himself. "Had my friends not been watching, I would have thrown the second pauper out of my house just as I did the first. If so, the charity I gave was only because God orchestrated different circumstances—my friends that were with me. It was not I that arranged for my friends to be there and observe me and my conduct toward the poor man. How then can I take pride in something that is not mine?"

"Do you understand?" Reb Asher concluded his explanation. "*Teshuvah* means to return—to return, to give everything back to the Creator, to understand that if it were not for the circumstances He orchestrated, we would stumble into every sin in the world and would never do a single good deed. How can we take pride in our good deeds? They came about because of a set of circumstances that we cannot control. The good deed we performed is not ours!"

"Remember this," Reb Asher guided me. "You will not be able to fully grasp it now, but think about it again and again, and live with it at all times, until it becomes an inseparable part of your thinking."

A student related: I once spoke with Reb Asher about *teshuvah*, and he said to me: "Do you know what *teshuvah* is? *Teshuvah* is to be joyful. *Teshuvah* is joy." Afterward I found something almost identical to this in the *Degel Machaneh Ephraim* (at the end of the book, in the section of *Likutim*). These are his words:

"For in joy you will go forth from all the impure husks and from the exile, and if a person receives everything with joy, he thereby draws joy upon himself and upon all things and upon all the world, and all agents of iniquity will be scattered from him and his transgressions will be forgiven."

[from Reb Asher Mitalmeedav]

In Chasidic teachings and in stories of *tzaddikim*, much is spoken of *teshuvah* with joy and confession done out of joy. How is this done? The soul-reckoning that Reb Asher describes seems filled with bitterness, even dejection. Can a person in whom there appears to be nothing truly good be joyful?

The *Tanya*—the Book of the *Beinonim* (intermediate people, those that are not righteous but also not wicked)—is a book

for *ba'alei teshuvah*, for individuals who want to return to God. If the *beinoni* behaves as he should, he does *teshuvah* even before he sins, by hearing God's prohibition echoing through him and refraining from the sin in the first place. Yet the *beinoni* carries an evil inclination (*yetzer hara*) that is as fierce as that of the wicked individual, and he is prone to stumble. His mode of serving God is that of a *ba'al teshuvah*. Indeed, it is well

known that the Alter Rebbe wanted the followers of the Ba'al Shem Tov's teachings to be called *ba'alei teshuvah* rather than *chasidim*.

The pinnacle of the *Tanya* in this sense is the passage from the holy Zohar that states, "Weeping is embedded in the heart from one side and joy is embedded in the heart from the other side." Particularly in our generation—a generation of *teshuvah*, of return to God—the foundation for leading a balanced Divine service can be found in chapters 26 through 34 in the *Tanya*. These chapters, which form their own unit, speak of the relationship between joy and bitterness. In essence, these chapters teach us how bearing opposites in the heart—weeping on one side and being joyous on the other—is the inner dynamic of the *ba'al teshuvah*.

What are the sources of the weeping and the joy in the heart? On the simple level, the weeping is because of our sins and our distance from God, while the joy is because of the *teshuvah* itself—remorse for the past and resolution for the future. But there is also a deeper, existential dimension to each of these movements of the soul. As Reb Asher taught, *teshuvah* flows from the recognition of the basic lowliness inherent in the human being. We, like all humans, are flawed and lacking. We are liable at any moment to err and to sin. But to this he adds the conclusion that all the good within us flows from the constant Divine assistance we receive—assistance that speaks of great and unceasing love and compassion, forever pouring forth to the person.

When a person knows his condition and

constantly feels the loving Divine Presence, he can receive help from Heaven. His pride does not block him from acknowledging his need for help, while his faith in God's goodness, love, and assistance protects him from falling into despair and hopelessness. This perspective lends an entirely different meaning to the entire process of *teshuvah*, transforming it from an annual accounting of good deeds versus transgressions, in which one seeks to minimize losses and maximize gains, into a genuine return to God Himself. "If you return, O Israel... return to Me" (Jeremiah 4:1).

It is told that when the Alter Rebbe was in the Russian prison, a senior official came to interrogate him, though he presented himself as a simple clerk. Realizing the Alter Rebbe's great stature and character, the official—who was himself a cultured man, well-versed in the Bible—first asked the Rebbe whether he might pose a question. Rabbi Shneur Zalman agreed, and the officer asked: "Can you explain God's call to Adam '*Ayekah*,' meaning, 'Where are you?' after Adam had sinned and was hiding between the trees of the garden. For how is it possible that the Almighty did not know where Adam was?"

The Rebbe replied with a question of his own: "Do you believe that the Torah is eternal and applies in every generation, in every place, and to every person?" "Yes, I believe this," said the officer. The Rebbe then said: "This is the meaning of God's question: every day the Almighty calls out to every person and asks him '*Ayekah*'—'Where are you' in the world?" And in Yiddish the Rebbe said: "*Vu halstu in der welt?*"—"Where do you stand in the world?"

"A person's time is limited," the Rebbe continued. "A finite number of days and years is given to him in which to do good with his God and with his fellow human beings. It is for this reason that God asks him '*Ayekah*,' meaning take heed and reflect upon where you stand in your world, how long you have been in this world, and what have you done with all those days and years." The Rebbe then turned and looked at the officer and continued: "Take yourself, for instance. You have lived such-and-such a number of years. What have you done with them? Have you done good for anyone?" The officer was deeply moved by the interpretation and by the fact that the Rebbe seemed to know his exact age. He placed his hand on the Rebbe's shoulder and exclaimed "*Bravo!*" Afterward, when he met with the Czar, he spoke in the Rebbe's defense and praised him highly.

God asked Adam '*Ayekah*' on Rosh HaShanah—the birthday and the day of the sin of Adam. Each Rosh HaShanah this question reverberates through the expanse of the world, and God calls out to each and every one of us: *Ayekah*? What have you done this year, and in all your years? Taken to heart, this question stirs in us trembling, weeping, and remorse. Yet the sensitive ear hears that God is asking it out of compassion, out of His longing (see Job 14:15) that each and every one of us live our lives to their fullest potential. God is

asking us to return to Him, to understand that only through our connection with and mimicking of God's goodness can we indeed live our lives fully.

The encounter between human lowliness and Divine compassion is what is known in Kabbalah and Chasidut as a "unification" (חִנּוּף). Divine compassion can enter where the human being feels He is lacking. Unification implies the restoration of a face-to-face relationship between God and man. When I feel myself to be wanting, to be lacking, to be needful of all the goodness that God represents, His compassion for me is awakened and He greets me with compassion and love. Moreover, the unification runs both ways. Just as we need God and our connection to Him, God, as it were, "needs" us and our devotion. God did not have to create the world. But when He did, in His love, He chose to reveal Himself to us as King and chose the Jewish people as His consort, for "a king without a queen is neither a king nor is he great" (*Zohar* 3:5a) Recognizing this transforms *teshuvah* into joy, for the sorrow over our shortcomings arises from a sense of rejection, from the fear that we may not be worthy of love. But when we feel God as a loving King, and ourselves—individually and collectively—as the beloved queen cherished despite all her imperfections, the weeping is suffused with great joy.

(From HaRav Ginsburgh's classes of the 18th–20th of Elul, 5781)

YOM KIPPUR

INSIGHTS INTO YOM KIPPUR

As part of the religious decorations in many synagogues around the world one often finds the verse, “I place *Havayah* before me at all times,”¹ usually in its Hebrew form:

שְׁיִתִּי יִהְיֶה לְפָנֶיךָ יְיָ

The plain meaning of these words is that we should be ever aware of God’s Presence, not only in the world in general but in our daily lives.

But beyond its normative meaning, in Kabbalah, this verse is interpreted more literally to indicate that God’s essential four-letter Name—יְהוָה, which may not be pronounced but is connoted *Havayah*²—should constantly be placed before our eyes. In a more non-literal approach, it invites us to seek *Havayah*, God’s essential Name, in the form and processes of every aspect of reality.³ We are therefore instructed to use this holy Name of four letters as a constant model and paradigm through which we may come to understand the Divine as it

manifests in all areas of reality.

For example, the four letters of God’s essential Name, *Havayah*, make up the three primary Hebrew words used to describe the passage of time: the past “was” (הָיָה), the present “is” (הוּא), and the future “will be” (יִהְיֶה). This reveals that God’s signature can be found in every moment of time.

Similarly, many aspects of space and material reality are based on the number four—the number of letters in the essential Name, which is why it is also known as the Tetragrammaton. Thus, they too bear an imprint of the four-part structure of God’s essential Name. For instance, the four cardinal directions (North, South, East, and West), the four basic elements of matter in antiquity (fire, earth, water, and air), the four basic forces of nature according to modern physics (gravity, electromagnetism, the weak nuclear force, and the strong nuclear force), the four states of matter (solid, liquid, gas, and active combustion), the four parts or levels of Creation (inanimate, vegetable, animal, and human), and so on.⁴

In addition to the physical universe, the four letters of God’s Name—*yud* (י), *hei* (ה), *vav* (ו), and *hei* (ה)—manifest throughout the spiritual worlds as well. In Kabbalah, we are taught that there are four worlds simultaneously expressing and

1. Psalms 16:8.

2. *Havayah* is the word formed when the letters of God’s essential Name are permuted. In modern Hebrew, this has come to be understood as a word meaning “being” (הִיְוָה).

3. HaRav Ginsburgh’s first published book, *Sod Hashem Lireiav*, is based on this idea. In it, he goes through hundreds of examples that demonstrate how the four letters of God’s essential Name, *Havayah*, serve as a model for analyzing every part of reality, from the physical to the spiritual. Since publishing this book, many of HaRav’s Ginsburgh’s teachings continue to use this paradigm.

4. *The Hebrew Letters*, the letter *dalet*.

encompassing all levels of created reality, from the spiritual to the physical: the World of Emanation (*Atzilut*) corresponds to the *yud*; the World of Creation (*Beriah*) corresponds to the *hei*; the World of Formation (*Yetzirah*) corresponds to the *vav*; and, the World of Action (*Assiyah*) corresponds to the final *hei*.⁵

YUD: TEN AND YOM KIPPUR

A beautiful allusion to the four letters of God's Name is also found within four major components of the holiday of Yom Kippur. The *yud*, the first letter of God's Name, numerically equals 10, corresponding to the date of Yom Kippur, the tenth of *Tishrei*, the culmination of the Ten Days of Repentance. It was on the tenth of *Tishrei* that Moses descended from Mt. Sinai with the Decalogue inscribed on the second Tablets of the Covenant. The second tablets were a sign from God that He had forgiven the people for the disastrous Sin of the Golden Calf, which caused the first tablets to be broken. Thus, Yom Kippur is forever linked to that moment of forgiveness and atonement.

The letter *yud* in God's Name is associated with the *sefirah* of wisdom (*chochmah*).⁶ Torah, in Kabbalah, is considered to come from wisdom.⁷ The fact that the Decalogue engraved on the two tablets was given to the people on Yom Kippur, the tenth day of *Tishrei* and the culmination of the Ten Days of Repentance, all reveal on a deep level the

Torah's source in wisdom.

Another deep connection between the number ten and Yom Kippur relates to how at the time of the holy Temple in Jerusalem, the High Priest would pronounce the Ineffable four-letter Name of God ten times on Yom Kippur.⁸ Despite their being a lack of physical space to move, when the people heard the Name being pronounced all would instinctually bow down. Miraculously there was room for everyone. This was in fact one of ten miracles that occurred in the Temple.⁹

The letter *yud*, the smallest of the letters, is referred to as the "little that holds much."¹⁰ That people who were standing with no room to move were able to all find room to bow down is a manifestation of the power of the *yud*, the "little that holds much."

HEI: THE FIRST NUMBER FIVE AND YOM KIPPUR

The value of the second letter of God's essential Name, the *hei*, is 5, corresponding to the five prayer services of Yom Kippur. We pray three prayer services daily (*Shacharit*, *Minchah*, and *Aravit*) and add a fourth (*Mussaf*) on Shabbat and festivals. The only time of the year we conduct a fifth prayer service (*Ne'ilah*) is on Yom Kippur. Each prayer relates to one of the five levels of soul (*nefesh*, *ru'ach*, *neshamah*, *chayah* and *yechidah*),¹¹ of which the fifth, super-conscious level of soul, the *yechidah*, is considered more

5. *Sod Hashem Liyerei'av*, *Arba'ah Olamot*.

6. *Sod Hashem Liyerei'av*, *Klalut Eser Sefirot*.

7. *Zohar* 2:121a. This idea is echoed in the *midrash* that states, "The low-hanging fruit of supernal wisdom is Torah" (*Bereishit Rabbah* 44:17).

8. *The Hebrew Letters*, the letter *yud*.

9. *Avot* 5:5.

10. *The Hebrew Letters*, *loc. cit.*

11. *Bereishit Rabbah* 14:9.

accessible on Yom Kippur than any other time of the year. This exalted level of soul relates to the last prayer of Yom Kippur, *Ne'ilah*.

The first, or upper *hei* in God's essential Name is associated with the *sefirah* of understanding (*binah*).¹² The inner experience of understanding is joy.¹³ Despite Yom Kippur being a very serious day, it is also considered one of the most joyous of the year due to the atonement and forgiveness of the day.¹⁴ The *sefirah* of understanding also relates to the joy that is born from contemplation. The Hebrew word for contemplation is *hitbonenut*, which stems from the same root as understanding. Yom Kippur is dedicated to deep reflection on our unique relationship with God and on His compassion. Ultimately Yom Kippur is a day of great joy as we draw close to God in prayer and soul elevation.

Understanding is also associated with the concept of purity, an important image reflected in various verses included in the prayers throughout the day.¹⁵ The High Priest would immerse in a *mikveh* five times during the Yom Kippur service in the Temple.

VAV: SIX AND YOM KIPPUR

The value of the third letter in God's essential Name, *vav*, is 6, corresponding to the six divisions, or *aliyot*, of the Torah reading on Yom Kippur. Significantly, this is the only day of the

year when the Torah reading is divided into 6 parts.

According to Kabbalah, the letter *vav* is related to the *sefirah* of foundation (*yesod*) and thus to the procreative marital energy.¹⁶ This is reflected in the fact that the afternoon Torah reading service of Yom Kippur deals exclusively with the topic of forbidden marital relations.¹⁷

Furthermore, in Kabbalah, the number six and the letter *vav* in God's Name relates to the six cardinal emotional attributes or *sefirot* that exist within each person, referred to in Kabbalah as *Zeir Anpin*.¹⁸ On Yom Kippur, we attempt to rectify our relationship with God, as He manifests through these six emotional faculties by seeking forgiveness from our family, friends, and others whom we have wronged over the past year, taking upon ourselves to change our behavior towards others in the future. This is one of the reasons that we are prohibited from eating and drinking or conducting business and working, etc., so that, as the Sages formulated in the Yom Kippur liturgy, it will be a day free of jealousy, bickering, etc. and set the best possible stage for restoring connections and communication.

HEI: THE SECOND NUMBER FIVE AND YOM KIPPUR

The last letter of God's four-letter Name is another *hei*, whose value, again is five. It corresponds to the five prohibitions of the day: eating and drinking, bathing, anointing with oil, wearing leather shoes,

12. *Sod HaShem Liyerei'av*, loc. cit.

13. *Ibid*.

14. *Tàanit* 30b.

15. For example, Ezekiel 36:25.

16. *Sod HaShem Liyerei'av*, loc. cit.

17. Leviticus 18:1-30.

18. *Sod HaShem Liyerei'av*, loc. cit.

and marital relations.¹⁹

The final *hei* of God's essential Name is associated with the *sefirah* of kingdom (*malchut*), which is considered a feminine energy.²⁰ This helps explain the following verse regarding the service of the High Priest on Yom Kippur: "With this shall Aaron come into the Sanctuary: with a young bullock for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering."²¹ The word meaning "with this" (בְּזֶאת) is written in the feminine form even though it clearly refers to the bullock and the ram mentioned later in the verse, which are both masculine. From this linguistic anomaly the Sages learn that the feminine form is used to allude to the fact that the High Priest must be married to perform the Yom Kippur service ("with this" alludes to marriage).²²

The requirement that the High Priest be married confirms the importance of the unification of masculine and feminine energies in general and especially the foundation of marriage in Jewish life. A wife is many times called "the house/home" and relates to the feminine aspect of kingdom.²³

Yom Kippur is the concluding day of

the Ten Days of Teshuvah. In the *Zohar*,²⁴ *teshuvah* (תְּשׁוּבָה) is analyzed as a composite word that stands for, "return the [letter] *hei*" (תְּשׁוּבָה הֵי). The implication is that *teshuvah*, which means "return," reunites the final *hei* of God's Name with the first three letters. This detachment symbolizes personal and national exile and disposition in great need of rectification and healing by returning the feminine energy of kingdom and reconnecting it with its source (but in a face-to-face relationship, as expounded in length elsewhere).²⁵

TOWARDS THE FUTURE

The above connections between the four-letter Name of God and Yom Kippur are but one example of the almost infinite number of ways we can see the letters of God's essential and ineffable Name sealed into reality and Jewish tradition. The more we learn to recognize these correspondences, the more we come to appreciate the deeper meaning of the phrase from Psalms quoted at the beginning of this article: "I place *Havayah* before me at all times."

19. *Yoma* 73b.

20. *Sod HaShem Liyerei'av*, loc. cit.

21. *Leviticus* 16:3.

22. *Yoma* 2a, 13a. For a more expansive understanding see *Amudeha Shivah, Aharei*, 1.

23. *Shabbat* 118b.

24. *Zohar* 3:122a.

25. *Mivchar Shiurei Hitbonenut*, vol. 7, *Tu B'Av*. See also *Sha'ashuim Yom Yom, Ki Teitzei*. See also last week's issue on the *Nesirah*.

ROSH HASHANAH 5787

SECRETS OF 5787 – PART II

Every year, HaRav Ginsburgh reviews the most important numerical and linguistic allusions related to the ordinal number of the year. This year is 5787 years since the creation of Adam and Eve. In Hebrew, it is referred to as תשפ"ז, or 787, which is the hundreds-tens-units part of 5787. These allusions are all related to this form.

We here present a second set of allusions. See our Rosh HaShanah issue for the first set.

THE YEAR OF TRUTH

7 87 is the value of three central idioms related to truth: “true desire” (רצון אמת), “His Name is true” (שמו אמת), and “true story” (ספור אמת). What this means is that what a person truly desires is his or her true name and this is the true story of their life, the story of the *tzaddik* within every Jew, as the prophet says, “And your people are all *tzaddikim*.”¹

Our new year is uniquely suited to discovering what each of us truly desires in our innermost point, the point of the *tzaddik* within each of us. Doing so aligns us with “His Name is Truth”—the ultimate Divine desire and reason for Creation, which was to create a dwelling place for God,² here, below in the physical world. When we reveal the point of the *tzaddik* in us, we also discover and subsequently fulfill our true essence and life’s mission. In the past,³ we have explained that it is essential for every person to know his “true story,” i.e., what his inner truth is,

even when it contradicts the story expected of him from his surroundings. This is one of the reasons that it is a good idea to travel to pray at the resting place of true *tzaddikim*. The true *tzaddik* prompts us to ask ourselves: “What is my true story?”⁴

THE YEAR OF GIVING BIRTH

5 787 is connected to childbirth. The words God’s angel spoke to Hagar regarding Ishmael’s birth were, “Behold, you are with a child and shall bear a son”⁵ (הִנֵּךְ הָרָה וְיִלְדֶתְכִי בֵן). The same words were subsequently spoken twice⁶ to Tzelalphonit, the wife of Mano’ach and Samson’s mother, regarding Samson’s impending birth. Incidentally, the value of Tzelalphonit (צִלְלָפוֹנִית) is the same as Samson (שִׁמְשׁוֹן), 696.

In this phrase, the ratio of the values of “and shall bear” (וְיִלְדֶתְכִי), 450 and “behold, you” (הִנֵּךְ), 75 is 6 to 1, meaning that “and you shall bear” is equal to the six possible permutations of “behold, you,” whose

1. Isaiah 60:21.

2. Tanchuma Naso 16. See *Wisdom* issue 123 (Sukkot-Bereishit 5785), p. 14ff.

3. Class from the 3rd of Shevat, 5785.

4. See also the class from the 24th of Tevet, 5767 regarding the value of repeating true stories about true *tzaddikim*.

5. Genesis 16:11.

6. Judges 13:5 and 7.

primary permutation is “priest” (כהן), the man of kindness, pointing to the Jewish people’s destiny as a “kingdom of priests.”⁷

There is a Torah principle that “darkness precedes light,”⁸ or “chaos precedes order.” In line with this principle, we first find this phrase used in reference to Ishmael’s birth. However, it is subsequently rectified when it is spoken to Samson’s mother. Samson was a leader and a judge who fought the Jewish people’s enemies, the Philistines, to the point of self-sacrifice.⁹ That the phrase appears twice with reference to Samson follows the principle that “the good is of greater measure than the evil”¹⁰ (מדה טובה). Once the light appears after the darkness, it has the power to rectify and sweeten the darkness too. In this case, Hagar’s rectification comes through Isaac, alluded to by their identical value: Isaac (יצחק) equals Hagar (הגר). This made it possible for Abraham, in his old age, to remarry Hagar under her new name Keturah. The value of Mano’ach (מנוח), 104 is half of Isaac and Hagar, 208.

This year directly continues 5786, whose acronym was “May it be a year of being fruitful and multiplying” (תהא שנת פְּרוּרְבו). Thus, the blessing was received in 5786, and its realization arrives in 5787. This reflects the principle that when a woman conceives first, she gives birth to a male child. The ultimate rectification comes when conception and birth unite to bring about the birth of Mashiah (משיח) whose letters can spell “there is warmth” (ישחם), referring

to sanctified warmth between husband and wife.

THE YEAR OF THE SUSPENDED GUILT OFFERING

One of the special types of sacrifices brought to the Temple was a Suspended Guilt-Offering (אשם תלוי), whose value is 787. This type of offering was brought in cases of uncertainty regarding an offense carrying spiritual excision (*karet*), holding judgment in suspension until the truth is clarified. Though we cannot bring sacrifices without a Temple in Jerusalem, the Torah continues to be eternal and a suspended guilt offering parallels a subconscious existential doubt we harbor in our psyche.

Particularly, just as the suspended guilt offering is brought in cases where one’s very spiritual existence is in doubt, so the type of doubt it corresponds to is the existential doubt of “Do I truly exist?” The suspended state is resolved by forging a renewed covenant with God who is described as, “He who suspends the earth over nothingness”¹¹ (תלה ארץ על בלימה), and whose value is “In the beginning” (בראשית), hinting at the spiritual and psychological work we can perform at the beginning of the year.¹² The sweetening of the existential doubt is to recognize that all of Creation depends on it. I exist precisely because I can doubt my existence, because I realize that my existence cannot be taken for granted at all, as it is entirely God’s will. In fact, all of Creation exists because at its root it is entirely dependent and conditional on God’s true will (as above).

Thus, 5787 holds the potential for the

7. Exodus 19:6.

8. *Shabbat* 77b.

9. It is not by chance that the contemporary genocidal enemies of the Jewish people have named themselves after the Philistines.

10. *Ibid.* 76a.

11. Job 26:7.

12. The value of the words meaning, “nothingness” (בלימה), is 87, the value of “gold” (זָהָב), the two last letter of this year, “May it be a golden year” (תשפז).

subconscious to surface into conscious clarity, resolving our existential doubt about ourselves. Rectification occurs by acknowledging that “God is all and I am truly nothing.”

THE YEAR OF RECTIFYING LOVE AND RELATIONSHIPS

There is another type of conditional in our lives that relates to 5787. This is the conditional love between Amnon and Tamar, two of David’s children (not from the same mother).¹³ Amnon (אֲמֹנֹן) and Tamar (תָּמָר) equal 787. Conditional love means love that is dependent on some external condition; when the condition ceases, the love ceases.¹⁴ Amnon fell in love with Tamar, but it was not his true will, it was not true love, it was not his true story.

Though sometimes love begins because of an external motivation, a condition, if a man and woman have chosen to join in holy matrimony, that is a sign from above that there is great potential to discover their true will in their marriage. For this reason, many marriages reach a certain breaking point that is meant to separate the external condition out and force the couple to search for their deeper bond. In other words, conditional marriages seem at first to be based on unshakeable pillars and foundations. However, as the condition weakens and disappears, the covenant of marriage must be replaced with a renewed covenant between the partners that recognizes that everything in this world truly depends on God’s will.

In the deepest sense, every marriage, every bond, every covenant must be dependent on a recognition that it is God that holds

it together through His will and that our will can only reflect His. This is the deep meaning behind Rabbi Akiva’s statement that when a husband and wife merit it, the Divine Presence is between them¹⁵—they come to feel that it is God Himself, in a Creation-like act, that brings them together. May this year indeed be the year in which we renew our covenant with each other (in love of our fellows), with our spouses and families (recognizing the Eternal One who binds us together), with the Torah, and with the Land of Israel.

SLOW TO ANGER, PATIENT IN SPIRIT

S 787 is a year encapsulating compassion from the Almighty. Two related connotations for God are “Slow to Anger”¹⁶ (אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם) and “Patient in Spirit”¹⁷ (אֶרֶךְ רוּחַ). Their sum is 787. In Kabbalistic terms the first is the essence of God’s 13 Attributes of Compassion, revealed after the Sin of the Golden Calf and thus corresponds to the 13 Rectifications of the Beard of *Arich Anpin*, the lower part of the *sefirah* of crown. The Sages relate that when Moses fell on his face before God when He taught him these 13 Attributes of Compassion, it was specifically because of this attribute “slow to anger.” Moses in a sense embodied this attribute from then on and it became the source of his humility and lowliness, as the Torah writes, “And the man Moses was extremely humble.”¹⁸

The second attribute “patient in spirit” corresponds to *Ze’er Anpin*, the small

13. 2 Samuel ch. 13.
14. Avot 5:16.

15. Sotah 17a.

16. Exodus 34:6.

17. Ecclesiastes 7:8. The full verse reads, “Better is the end of a thing than its beginning and the patient in spirit is better than the proud of spirit” (טוב (אֶחָרִית דְּבַר מְרֻאשִׁיתוֹ טוֹב אֶרֶךְ רוּחַ מִגִּבְהַ רוּחַ).

18. Numbers 13:3.

countenance and to the 9 Attributes of Compassion, which Moses repeated when asking God for forgiveness for the Sin of the Spies through humility and patience.¹⁹

The sum of the values of the two complete verses in which these attributes appear (ויעבר יִהוּה עַל־פְּנֵיו וַיִּקְרָא יִהוּה אֶל רַחוּם וְחַנּוּן אֶרֶךְ טוֹב אַחֲרִית דְּבַר מְרַשִּׁיתוֹ and אֲפִים וְרַב חֶסֶד וְאַמֶּת (טוב ארך רוח מגבה רוח) is 4928, which is the product of 22 and 224. 22 is the total number of Divine Attributes of Compassion 22 (13 plus 9, as well as the 22 letters of the Torah, alluding to the word “in You” (בְּךָ) appearing in the verse, “and I will trust in You”²⁰). 224 is the value of “way” (דֶּרֶךְ) indicating that one should be an expert in the ways of “run and return” of the soul—the pulse of the soul’s life—which was formulated in Chasidut as the phrase, “God is all and all is God.”

A YEAR OF SUPERNAL LIGHTS (REVELATIONS)

7 87 is the sum of five of the most important numbers discussed in

19. For an in-depth treatment of the 13 and 9 Attributes of Compassion, see our series beginning with *Wonders* 198 (for *parashat Shelach* 5786).

20. Psalms 55:24.

Kabbalah and Chasidut. They are the numbers most often associated with the first five supernal *sefirot*: the 620 Pillars of Light (תָּרַךְ עַמּוּדֵי אֹר) that descend from crown to kingdom, the 13 Rectifications of the Beard in *Arich* (יג תְּקוּנֵי דִיקְנָא) the lower part of the crown, the 32 Pathways of Wisdom (לִב נְתִיבוֹת) (תְּקִנָּה), the 50 Gates of Understanding (נִשְׁעָרִי) (בִּינָה), and the 72 Bridges of Lovingkindness (עַב גְּשָׁרִים) that are rooted in the coronet of loving-kindness in knowledge.²¹

The year 5787 brings a general and individualized revelation of all these Supernal Lights. Incredibly, the sum of “pillar” (עַמּוּד), “rectification” (תְּקִנָּה), “pathway” (נְתִיב), “gate” (שַׁעַר), and “bridge” (גֶּשֶׁר) together with their number (620, 13, 32, 50, and 72, i.e. 787) is 3210, the exact numerical value of the full text of the 13 Attributes of Divine Compassion, that correspond to the 13 Rectifications of the Beard (discussed in the previous allusion), providing another connection to God’s compassion in the year 5787.

21. For more on these see *What You Need to Know About Kabbalah*, part 3.

PREPARATION FOR SUKKOT THE JOY OF TZEDAKAH

Though we have a double-sized issue of Wonders coming for Sukkot, we are including this short piece in preparation for “the season of our joy.” In the Arizal’s teachings, the eve of Sukkot provides us with a special type of joy, the topic of this short article, an excerpt from Simchat Beit HaSho’eivah of 5773, part of which included an in-depth discussion of Rebbe Nachman of Breslov’s advice on attaining joy as taken from his Sefer HaMiddot.



REBBE NACHMAN AND JOY

Rebbe Nachman taught us and the entire Jewish people that, “It is a great *mitzvah* to always be joyous”¹ (מְצִוָּה גְּדוּלָה לְהִיּוֹת בְּשִׂמְחָה תָּמִיד), like King David, from whom Maimonides also learns that joy is a necessary ingredient in serving God during Sukkot.² Rebbe Nachman also writes that whomever is from David’s progeny is prone to weep from sorrow, but like the Almighty Himself who carries the opposites of “boldness and delight in His place”³ (עָזָה וְחֵדוּהַ בְּמַקְוֵהוּ)—“in his innermost chambers [He cries], in the outer chambers [He exhibits joy].”⁴ Following the Sages, Rebbe Nachman writes that the weeping sorrow is because of the grace (חֵן) that has been taken from the Jewish people and must be returned to them. This is a thread that runs through all his teachings, beginning with the first teaching in *Likkutei Moharan*.

How does one merit to be joyous? Rebbe Nachman offers many anecdotal pieces of advice in his book, *Sefer HaMiddot*. We can arrange these as they correspond to the

sefirot. The advice he gives that belongs to the *sefirah* of loving-kindness (*chesed*) is to give *tzedakah*—charity⁵ (עַל יְדֵי צְדָקָה בְּלֵב) (שְׁלֵם בָּא לִידֵי שִׂמְחָה). One who gives charity to the poor merits joy.

GOD'S TZEDAKAH

The Tanya writes⁶ that *tzedakah* is the all-inclusive prescriptive commandment of the Torah, and the entire Torah is *tzedakah*. The commandment of giving *tzedakah* is described by the verse, “Your commandment is very wide indeed.”⁷ It is the *mitzvah* that God Himself performs at every moment, bringing into being all of Creation including all creatures. Creation is the greatest act of loving-kindness. A Jew who sustains another person is similarly bringing them in a sense into being and there is no greater joy. The world is sustained by loving-kindness.⁸

We can now better understand the Arizal’s statement that the most auspicious day of the year to give *tzedakah*, to give a great deal of *tzedakah*, is the eve of Sukkot, the eve of “the season of our joy.” You want to feel the joy the moment the festival begins, you want to dance joyfully in *Simchat Beit HaSho’eivah*—the nightly celebrations during Sukkot? Give copious amount of *tzedakah* before the holiday begins.

1. The value of this phrase in Hebrew is 7 times 207, 7 times “light” (אור), or 63 times 23, the value of “delight” (חֵדוּהַ). The entire phrase consists of “delight” (חֵדוּהַ), 23 letters. 63 is the filling of God’s essential Name, *Havayah* (יְהוָה) that corresponds with the *sefirah* of understanding and the mother principle; the inner experience of understanding is joy.

2. *Hilchot Lulav* 8:12.

3. 1 Chronicles 16:27.

4. *Chagigah* 5b.

5. *Sefer HaMiddot, Simchah*, 1:4.

6. Ch. 37.

7. Psalms 119:96.

8. Ibid. 89:3.



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