

Meditations for Adar 5766

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(based on a class given on *Shvat* 28, 5766 | February 26, 2006)

On Tuesday and Wednesday of this week we celebrate the new month of Adar. The symbol of the month is Pisces, or fish. A singular fish in Hebrew is a **דג** (*dag*), a word composed of the two letters *gimel* and *dalet*, which this year refer to the third and fourth days of the week (Tuesday and Wednesday)—the two days that make up *Rosh Chodesh*, the beginning of the month.

In reverse the letters of "fish" spell the name Gad (**גד**), one of the 12 Tribes of Israel. The blessing Jacob gave to the tribe of Gad is: **גַּד גְּדוּד יִגְדְּנֵנוּ וְהוּא יִגְדַּ עֲקֵב**, or in English rendition: "Gad shall set out to war in camps, and all of his camps shall return in peace." (Genesis 49:19).

This verse is recited three times as part of the *Kriyat Shema* that we say before retiring to bed every night. In each of the three recitations, the verse is recited from beginning to end and from end to beginning, alluding to the fact that *dag*, fish, is the reverse of Gad, and that Gad's protection in war (his soldiers were the most courageous, the most attuned to the soul's infinite resources of strength, its "crown," as will be explained) derives from the hidden world, symbolized by the sea. The numerical value of the entire verse is 310, the numerical value of the word **יש**, meaning "existence." Since each time we recite the verse we say it twice (once going forwards and the second time going in reverse) the total value of each recitation is 620, or **כֶּתֶר**, "crown." As we recite the verse a total of three times (in order and in reverse), altogether we have three crowns.

Three crowns alludes to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai's statement: "There are three crowns: the crown of Torah, the crown of Priesthood, and the crown of Kingdom." In Kabbalah these three crowns are explained to correspond to the three heads of the *sefirah* of crown: the unknowable head, the head of nothingness, and the head of patience. In Chassidut, the experiential counterparts of these three heads are faith, pleasure, and will. The *sefirah* of crown represents our super-conscious being.

Every one of the twelve months has a particular sense, i.e., a particular human trait that is most strongly associated with it. The month of Adar's sense is the sense of laughter. Laughter represents our ability to transcend our rational state of consciousness, to connect with our super-conscious and our higher source in

the Divine. Usually, laughter is an expression of pleasure, the middle of the three heads of crown.

Sometimes simple faith (the highest of the three heads of the crown) and infinite willpower (the lowest of the three heads) also find expression in laughter. Just as a non-believer may laugh at one who has faith, so does the true believer laugh at a non-believer, his laugh coming from an entirely different place, from the realm of the unknowable. This laugh itself is the call to war against Haman-Amalek, Israel's archenemy, the essence of heresy that unleashes the soul's infinite willpower, before which nothing can stand.