# *Balak 5785*

**Daily Teaching #16 for 3 Tammuz 5785 (June 29, 2025)**
More on Faith, Dedication, Care, and Responsibility

We have seen that the four character traits we should try to emulate from the Lubavitcher Rebbe are faith, dedication, care, and responsibility, and that they correspond to the four letters of God's essential Name, *Havayah*.[1] Let us now examine this model in more detail.

## Faith in Four Things

When we speak of faith, we are really speaking of belief in four different things: (1) in the Creator, (2) in the Torah—His word, His teaching to mankind—(3) in the Jewish people, God's chosen people who are chosen to convey God's word to humanity, and, (4) we also believe that the core of mankind is good. This fourth element of faith is based on the understanding that because God is good, all that He created is good. In fact, even if we do not see the good, the good is there, but concealed, in a potential state that currently is unable to manifest itself openly.

These four aspects of faith themselves correspond to the four letters of God's essential Name, *Havayah*. Let's explain this correspondence:

> God Himself is known as "the true one" (אֱמֶת תְּאֱמֶת) and can only be revealed through the *sefirah* of wisdom of the World of Emanation, which is in a total state of self-nullification.[2] The *sefirah* of wisdom corresponds to the *yud* of *Havayah*.
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> Torah is the vessel that contains God's light. In the beginning of Creation, it is stated that God said, "'Let there be light,' and there was light. God saw the light to be good."[3] In addition, God saw that the light of Creation was good to sequester or conceal in a state of potential and therefore hid that light within a vessel, within the Torah itself. That hidden light is the one we are all waiting to receive with the redemption and the coming of Mashiach. In other words, the light of God is already here. It is hidden within the Torah, the vessel that contains the Divine light. We are waiting for the light to reveal itself, for the potential to be actualized. This corresponds to the *hei* of *Havayah*, which represents the Torah.
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> We also have faith in the Jewish people. We do not see every Jew presently acting as a conscious messenger of God, aiming to bring God's light as

1. Daily Teaching #15 for 3 Tammuz 5785.
2. *Tanya*, ch. 35.
3. Genesis 1:3-4.

contained and concealed within the Torah to all of humanity. Still, that is exactly the meaning of the phrase "chosen people." Every Jew is chosen to be the emissary of God for bringing the light of God that is within the Torah, to all of humanity. Faith in the Jewish people corresponds to the *vav* of *Havayah*.

We also believe in the potential of humanity to manifest the core of good in its essence. Belief in humanity corresponds to the *sefirah* of kingdom and the final *hei* of *Havayah*.

| Letter of *Havayah* | Belief in |
|---|---|
| *Yud* | God's goodness |
| *Hei* | The goodness concealed in the Torah |
| *Vav* | The goodness of the Jewish people |
| *Hei* | The goodness of humanity |

## Belief Focuses on the Potential

Let us now go deeper into this concept of the good in all four levels by first explaining that there are two types or levels of potential. In general, to have faith, to believe in something, is to believe in its potential. Despite the well-known saying that "seeing is believing," in truth, the moment I see something, I no longer need to believe in its existence, because I now know for a fact that it exists. Thus, faith goes beyond what can be seen. I believe something exists, even though I do not see it. In other words, I believe in a hidden potential and, by definition, I also believe that the potential will ultimately become actualized and realized in visible reality.

Now, when we speak of potential versus actualization, there are two distinct types of potential, which are referred to as either visible versus invisible potential or close versus far potential.

As said, if I see something, I don't have to believe in it because I have seen it. It is already there, I know it. Faith does not apply to something that I can know directly. But once one has faith, one can draw down one's belief into a state of conscious recognition. Recognition (הַכָּרָה) is the inner essence of the *sefirah* of knowledge.[4] So, though I can eventually come to know what I initially only had faith in, I first must have faith in what I cannot perceive directly with my eyes. This principle holds for all four aspects of faith: faith in God, faith in the Torah, faith in Israel, and faith in humanity. The faith that I can know is the faith in the 'visible' or 'close' potential of God.

When I sense God's infinite potential to bring His Creation to its culmination, i.e., to bring Mashiach to the world, I also sense that only God can do that and that He will do it. I feel in my heart God's infinite potential to redeem us and reveal His essential goodness to the world. I believe that this will happen, for I believe that this accords with the ultimate will and desire of God in creating the world. The potential of God to

4. See Ruth 2:10, as well as our Hebrew volumes on "natural consciousness," *Muda'ut Tivit* and *HaTeva HaYehudi*.

bring the world to its ultimate purpose, already relates to the second attribute we would like to learn from the Lubavitcher Rebbe—dedication.

God is also dedicated. He is committed to His ultimate purpose, which is to bring redemption and Mashiach to the world. Now, before the revelation of Mashiach, redemption and Mashiach are in a state of potential. There is, however, a bridge between seeing and believing. The bridge is contemplating God's continuous recreation of the world. Because the world we experience is deceitful (עֹלָמָא דְּשִׁקְרָא) and does not reveal its inner essence to us, the result is that not everyone sees recreation occurring every split second. But there are those who through contemplation and prayer have refined their vision (זְכוּת הַרְאִיָּה) and can directly experience the recreation and the renewal of the world around us, and renewal of one's own self, every split second. In such a state, with every breath that a person breathes, he or she experiences God blowing the breath of life into their nostrils, just as He blew the living soul into Adam's nostrils. So, it is definitely possible to experience God's Presence and Providence in this very moment. But to believe in God's not yet realized potential is to believe in His ability to bring redemption and Mashiach to the world.

The same is true of the Torah. When one clings to the Torah, its light and its truth, one comes to sense the inner potential of the Torah—its latent potential to enlighten all of humanity, and thereby to bring peace and blessing to the world. To believe in the Torah is to believe in its potential.

These were two examples of potential that are visible or 'near' potential. The term in Hebrew for this type of potential is "potential that exists within reality" (הֶעְדֵּם שֶׁיֵּשְׁנוֹ בִּמְצִיאוּת). The potential is there, but it remains concealed. But it can be found and revealed. How? If we work hard. If we toil, we will find it. We will "help" God (and the Torah), as it were, to reveal His potential! This is potential that can be found and revealed. It exists but is not yet visible to our physical eyes. Still, my mind and my heart can experience this potential right now.

But there is another type of potential which is absolutely invisible potential, or as we said before, it is 'distant' potential, unlike the visible, or close potential. The potential Torah has to bring light to all of humanity, to all minds and all hearts drawing us close to God, to the Creator, is visible or close potential. It can be found and revealed. However, this second type of potential does not exist, so to speak. It is not there to be found at all. It is therefore known as "potential that does not exist within reality" (הֶעְדֵּם שֶׁאֵינוֹ בִּמְצִיאוּת).

## Examples of Close or Visible Potential

One example of the close potential is those things that a scientist can discover. But there are certainly things about nature that are impossible for a scientist to discover. Though they certainly exist in the 'mind of God,' we cannot find them, at least not right now, for us they are non-existent.

When we turn to the next two levels of faith—belief in the Jewish people and belief in all of humanity—we find that relative to one another the first is close potential and the second is far, or distant potential. The chosen people are meant to bring God's light to

the world. They are God's emissaries for this task, His messengers. Not every Jew realizes this potential within.

Humanity also has concealed potential, even the most wicked people. In fact, even our enemies have potential for good. We are taught for instance that even an enemy has something to teach us; there is some good lesson that we can learn from even our worst enemies, as the verse says, "teach me from my enemies."[5] That good thing that I can learn from my enemy, even from my archenemy, Amalek, is the holy spark concealed within him, without which he could not exist.

Since even the worst part of humanity has a Divine spark in it, how much the more so a Jew, even one who seems to be distant. The sages relate that even those of Israel who are empty of good deeds, at least visibly, and appear on the surface to have no manifest good, even they are full of goodness, just like a pomegranate is full of seeds. This is learned from a verse in the Song of Songs, "Like a pomegranate full of seeds, so your brow is behind your veil."[6] A pomegranate full of seeds is an illustration of visible or close potential. We merely need to open the pomegranate and see that there are (traditionally) 613 seeds within—like the number of commandments in the Torah. So, it is with every Jew. So, a Jew's potential is much closer than that of at least some of the non-Jewish world. The potential of those that hate and harm is so far away and so invisible that only God, as it were, can reveal their concealed spark of good. But it is there.

## Three Types of Faith

Instead of using the model of the four aspects of faith—in God, the Torah, in Israel, and in humanity—we can limit our model to only God, Israel, and the nations, because the Torah is one with God, and Torah is the essential vessel that contains the light of God. Israel is distinct, because the people of Israel have free choice, thus they are not identical with God in our present world order. The non-Jewish world is even further away and more distinct from God and Israel.

Each of these three aspects of faith—God, Israel, and the nations—has three levels. First is its present state of being. Second is its close or visible potential (הֶעְלֵם שֶׁיְּשְׁנוֹ בְּמֻצְיאוּת). And third is its distant or invisible potential (הֶעְלֵם שֶׁאֵינוֹ בְּמֻצְיאוּת).

God, as He reveals His "present" state, consists of His continual recreation of all reality at every moment and His Providence over all that he creates. His near potential is to bring the Mashiach and redemption to the world. His distant potential is to bring the world to a state known as the Resurrection of the Dead, where a physical body can totally and absolutely defy entropy and therefore live forever. A similar state was the actual "present" state of God before the primordial sin of Adam. But the Resurrection is far more, because before the primordial sin, there was still the possibility of death as a result of sin, as God said to Adam, "For on the day that you eat from it [the Tree

5. Psalms 119:98.

6. Songs of Songs 4:3.

of Knowledge], you will certainly die."[7] Adam did in fact sin, and that is why death came to the world. The Resurrection of the Dead represents a distant potential state that is infinitely greater than the state of Adam before the sin as it allows for a physical body in our realm to merit obtaining eternal existence without the need for death as a cleanser or exhumer of sin. This is a concept that the Rebbe discussed frequently with great enthusiasm, and it is considered the ultimate manifestation of God's distant or invisible potential.

Another way of thinking about the difference between close potential and far potential is that close potential is like God working a miracle. Nature is the state of actuality or realized potential of God since God creates nature anew every split second. Nature is God's actualization, here and now, His revelation. But the fact that God can work miracles which negate or transcend the laws of nature, that is His close potential. Still, a miracle, even the miracle of the Splitting of the Red Sea as well as all the other miracles recorded in the Torah, are miraculous only when compared to Nature. Taken by themselves, they are not intrinsically illogical.

What would constitute something that is inherently illogical. The example in the Torah of something of this sort is the Holy Ark in the Holy of Holies in the Temple—it was at one and the same time, both located in the Holy of Holies, yet illogically, did not take up any space. How so? Measure from one wall of the Holy of Holies to the Ark and then measure from the ark to the wall facing the first. Then measure the distance between the two walls without the Ark. You would discover that the distance from wall to wall would be the same in both instances, impossible since in the first series of measurements, the ark was also there. This is a true logical impossibility, which is far more than a physical or natural impossibility would be. A logical impossibility represents God's distant (or far) potential. We have no way to describe it or draw it in our minds. Picturing a scenario where the Red Sea could be split is possible. Meaning that it is findable in our consciousness. But that miracle of the Ark in the Holy of Holies—with the Ark there and not there simultaneously—that represents a logically impossible reality. And yet, we believe that God can do it because God is above logic; He can create a reality based on a completely different logic than the one we know.

We believe in God as He creates reality right now. But we also must believe in His near potential to bring Mashiach to the world. And we must further believe in the distant potential of logical opposites (דָּבָר וְהִפּוּכוֹ), whereby God can make something, and its opposite exist simultaneously. In point of fact, that is the state of the Resurrection of the Dead, which is the distant potential state that will be after the coming of Mashiach.

The same is true of the Torah. Just as God has a near and distant potential, even more so regarding the Torah, and how much the more so regarding Israel. The same goes regarding all of humanity.

Regarding Torah the present state compared to the Torah's near potential is described by the sages' statement that, "the Torah one learns in our present reality is like vapor

[7]. Genesis 2:17.

relative to the Torah of Mashiach"[8] (תּוֹרָה שֶׁאָדָם לָמֵד בָּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה, הֶבֶל הִיא לִפְנֵי תּוֹרָתוֹ שֶׁל מָשִׁיחַ). This is because in the time of Mashiach, the secrets of the Torah will be revealed; these future secrets are not included in the concealed dimension of Torah that has been revealed even now. Yet, despite all that will be revealed in the Messianic era, the Torah of the Resurrection of the Dead, is distant potential, as it will be based on paradox, just as the Resurrection of the Dead is a paradoxical state.[9] We can connote these three states of Torah as: 1) Torah of this World, 2) Torah of the Mashiach, and 3) Torah of *Havayah*.

Regarding the Jewish people, in our present state, we are not able to positively influence the nations of the world with Torah. As a result, the Torah itself describes us as, "a people that dwells apart, not reckoned among the nations"[10] (הֶן עָם לְבָדָד יִשְׁכֹּן וּבַגּוֹיִם לֹא יִתְחַשָּׁב). In the (near) future, when the animosity against the Jewish people disappears, we will be able to actualize our close potential and illuminate all of humanity. We will become what the prophet describes as, "a covenant nation, a light unto the nations"[11] (לִבְרִית עָם לְאוֹר גּוֹיִם). Finally, our distant potential will be revealed with the Resurrection of the Dead, when the "eternal of Israel"[12] (נֵצַח יִשְׂרָאֵל) is revealed and the Zohar's statement that "Israel and the Almighty are one"[13] will be obvious to all.

Turning to humanity, the present revelation of goodness can be found in individuals and groups who support the Jewish people and Torah. They are known as "righteous gentiles" "righteous non-Jews" (חֲסִידֵי אוּמּוֹת הָעוֹלָם). In the time of Mashiach the close potential of humanity will be revealed as spoken by the prophet, "For then I will transform the language of the nations into a clear speech so that they all invoke Havayah's Name and serve Him shoulder to shoulder"[14] (כִּי אָז אֶהְפֹּךְ אֶל עַמִּים שָׂפָה בְרוּרָה לִקְרֹא כֻלָּם בְּשֵׁם יְ־הוה לְעָבְדוֹ שְׁכֶם אֶחָד). Finally, humanity's latent and distant potential will be revealed in the time of the Resurrection of the Dead, when all of reality is elevated, including the World of Chaos and its shattered vessels. The inherently pure and perfect state of existence, known as the bone of the Luz will form the backbone of all reality, revealing a pristine state of Godliness throughout.

So now we see the complexity of faith. Faith is simple. We call it simple faith. But it has many, many dimensions to it.

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8. *Kohelet Rabbah* 11:8.

9. Elsewhere we have discussed how this state of paradox is captured in the only commandment described in the Torah using a reflexive verb—"I will be sanctified" (Leviticus 22:32)—indicating that the commandment to sanctify God depends and does not depend, simultaneously, on our actions.

10. Numbers 23:7.

11. Isaiah 42:6.

12. 1 Samuel 15:26.

13. *Zohar* 3:73a.

14. Zephaniah 3:9.

## Dedication

We now turn to the second attribute, dedication. Dedication also has two levels. Let us use the example of a doctor. A doctor is dedicated to his profession, which is to heal. He is dedicated to waking up early, coming to his clinic or to the hospital, and to treating, to the best of his ability, every patient that comes to his door. But there is a second level to the doctor's dedication. A doctor wants to heal. Everyone! Not just those particular patients that come to him in the present moment.

A doctor who clings to the ultimate purpose of his profession, which is to heal humanity, in general, such a doctor will invest his mind and his soul in discovering new medical innovations that will help heal not just tens and hundreds of his patients, but thousands, millions, and even billions of people on earth. This is the difference between being dedicated to one's work, which is one's personal mission, and clinging to the purpose and the end of one's mission.

The first type of dedication—dedication to one's personal mission—comes from within. It does not involve taking upon oneself a yoke. It is a self-motivation involving what one wants to become and accomplish in life. This type of dedication to one's profession—getting up every morning and going to work and doing it to the best of one's ability—that corresponds to the *sefirah* of understanding (*binah*). It entails understanding one's purpose. Everyone has an individual purpose. This is the source for doing what one is supposed to do, what one is meant to do in life, not just because one is told to, but because that is what one feels. Every person needs to choose a profession that suits him. Being devoted and dedicated to doing it properly comes from understanding oneself.

But clinging to the end, i.e., to the purpose of one's profession, that stems from the *sefirah* of knowledge (*da'at*), which we have termed, "focusing on the goal" (דְּבֵקוּת בַּמַּטָּרָה). The person that clings to the purpose, the ultimate purpose of his own profession, may very well be blessed by God to make new discoveries that advance his entire profession and thereby all of humanity.

The first person to make this kind of discovery was the Biblical Noah. Before he was commanded by God to build the ark that saved him, his family, and life during the flood, he invented the plow. This was an invention that totally changed humanity. A discovery of this magnitude is the product of being dedicated to the ultimate goal of your work and purpose in life. It is a discovery akin to realizing your near potential, which allows you to reach millions of people in a way that just being dedicated to your work cannot. Again, a physician cannot treat millions of people single-handedly, but if he works hard and dedicates himself to medicine, he may certainly invent something that will ultimately help millions of people around the world.

## Care

We have already explained that there are two levels of care. There is caring in the heart, which corresponds to the first three emotions of the heart. And there is practical care for someone, actually taking care of someone, which corresponds to the second threesome of the heart's faculties.

## Responsibility

Responsibility refers to experiencing duty (חוֹבָה) and accepting a Divine order from above and corresponds to the *sefirah* of kingdom (*malchut*). Here too, there are two different levels of responsibility, like the two different levels of dedication. The first level of responsibility is similar to the responsibility of a soldier. A soldier must fulfill his task. He will eventually have to give a reckoning to his commander, and he will be held accountable for how he performed his duty.

But there is a saying in Chasidic tradition that a soldier who remains with the rank of a private until he retires from the army is not worth much. A soldier must strive to advance in rank. Though he could be very responsible as a private, he might be doing his thing correctly, but if he does not want to advance in rank, he is not valuable even as a private. Every soldier should at least want to become an officer, otherwise he is not doing his very best and meeting his potential.

To advance in the army, one needs to feel responsible for more and more people. A private is responsible only for himself. A non-commissioned officer might be responsible for a small group of soldiers. To become an officer, one has to be willing to assume even more responsibility. Every higher rank requires more and more responsibility for more people. The ultimate responsibility is attained when I feel myself responsible for the whole world.

How can a simple Jew or a simple man feel that he or she is responsible for the entire world? The sages teach us that the whole world is continuously hanging in balance. Seemingly, the good and the merit are on one side of the scales and the evil and the faults on the other, and they just balance out. In this situation, if I perform just one good deed, I tip the scales of the entire world toward the good, to the merit. The Torah tells us that this is how we should feel regarding everything we do—that we are constantly responsible for the state of the entire world. To restate this idea in simple language: the two levels of responsibility are taking on the yoke of responsibility for myself and my conduct and taking on the yoke of responsibility for my community; from the individual to the community, all the way to the community of all mankind.

Since this corresponds to the *sefirah* of kingdom, the corollary is that by assuming responsibility for our personal conduct and for the entire world, we are bringing God's kingdom to the world. Through responsibility, God will be King over the whole world. All as a result of my sense of responsibility. I am the one responsible for making God King over the whole world. And I accomplish this by performing even a single good deed with this sense of responsibility in mind, that I have the power to tip the scales of the whole world to good.

## Summary

So now to summarize, we explained that there are many levels of faith. In fact, the simpler the attribute (in this case, faith), the more dimensions of manifestation it has. The three other character traits—dedication, care, and responsibility—we divided into two each. Our complete model of the Lubavitcher Rebbe's character traits that we should seek to emulate is,

| Letter of Havayah | Sefirah | Character trait and its manifestations | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| י | Wisdom | Yud | Faith in God | Present state | Nature |
| | | | | Near potential | Miracles |
| | | | | Distant potential | Resurrection of the Dead |
| | | Hei | Faith in Torah | Present state | Torah of this World |
| | | | | Near potential | Torah of Mashiach |
| | | | | Distant potential | Torah of *Havayah* |
| | | Vav | Faith in Israel | Present state | Uninfluenced by the nations, but unable to influence them |
| | | | | Near potential | A light unto the nations |
| | | | | Distant potential | Israel and God are one |
| | | Hei | Faith in humanity | Present state | Righteous individuals |
| | | | | Near potential | Nations serve God together |
| | | | | Distant potential | Rectification of all reality |
| Hei | Understanding | Dedication to one's personal mission in life | | | |
| | Knowledge | Dedication to the universal goal of one's mission—clinging to the goal | | | |
| Vav | Loving-kindness, might, and beauty | Care about others | | | |
| | Victory, Acknowledgment, and Foundation | Taking care of others | | | |
| Hei | Kingdom | Responsibility for one's personal duty | | | |
| | | Responsibility for one's community and the entire world—to bring Mashiach and make God King over the world | | | |

## Natural Justice

We'll conclude with one more important insight that explains why the Jewish people are the emissaries to bring the light of God as contained in the Torah to the world.

There is a verse that reads, "Listen to Me, you who care for justice, O' people who have my Torah in their heart"[15] (שִׁמְעוּ אֵלַי יוֹדְעֵי צֶדֶק עַם תּוֹרָתִי בִלְבָּם). In this verse, Isaiah first describes humanity, telling us that every human being has an innate knowledge of what justice is—they do not need to be taught, they intuit justice, the difference between good and evil. That is the core of the good latent in every human being. The prophet then proceeds to describe the Jewish people and says that a Jewish soul not only learns Torah and grows from day to day, develops, and makes progress in understanding the Torah. Rather, a Jewish soul is implanted from birth with the Torah in its heart.

In other words, the innate recognition of justice that exists in all people is seen prominently in the Jewish people and then manifests even further so that the entire Torah is innately found in the heart of a Jew. That is what makes it possible for a Jew to bring Torah to the world. The fact that a Jew intuits justice is something that he or she has in common with non-Jews allowing them to relate with non-Jews. The ability to form a relationship and bring the light of the Torah to the whole world is based on Jews and non-Jews having a common sense of justice, a sense of what is right. When I can connect to the nations and feel a certain brotherhood, then I can manifest my innate Torah, which God implanted in my heart when He chose the Jewish people to be his emissaries to bring that light of the Torah to the whole world.

## God is My Brother, Torah My Sister

There is another important saying that relates to faith. Sometimes we refer to God as our Father, our Father in heaven. Sometimes we refer to God as our King. At times we refer to God as our Beloved.[16] God Himself sees us as His brothers and companions.[17] Indeed, Kabbalah explains that there are certain souls that experience God not only as a Father, as a King, or as a Beloved one. These souls experience God like a brother. They feel like they have a big brother.

A big brother is a good partner, and you feel that He is going to help you. It may seem at times that our Father is old. One might feel that his father no longer has the power to save us and help us. But a big brother is a symbol of a certain will and ability to help us in every situation; to partner with us and help us succeed in everything that we do. I have a big brother. This is a very beautiful recognition that not everyone is aware of: that one can feel kinship to God in the sense of God being our brother, as it were.

What about the Torah? The Torah is God's wisdom and there is a verse that reads, "Say to wisdom, you are my sister."[18] That is a very beautiful description of the Torah. So now, the Torah is my sister. And God is my brother. Everyone should have a brother and a sister.

We can come to experience God as our brother and the Torah as our sister through faith. Faith is the deepest connection at the super-conscious level of the soul. As we

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15. Isaiah 51:7.

16. Particularly in the Song of Songs.

17. Psalms 122:8. These words are spoken by King David through *Ru'ach HaKodesh*.

18. Proverbs 7:4.

saw earlier, faith has multiple dimensions to it. One of the expressions of faith is the ability to experience God, not only as a father figure, as a kingly figure, or as beloved, but also as a brother.

There is one time in the Bible that the word "one" (אֶחָד), like "God is one"[19] is written just with the first two letters of the word *Echad*, which are *Ach* (אח), implying that to experience God's oneness begins with the experience of God as my big brother.

The Torah as we said is called my sister. The word sister is *Achot* (אָחוֹת), which is written with the exact same letters that spell *Achat* (אַחַת), the feminine form of the word one. It follows that this dual experience of God as my brother and the Torah as my sister is the experience of the masculine oneness and the feminine oneness of God Himself. There is more to study in relation to the masculine and feminine aspects of oneness, but for now let us leave it as a call to have faith that thank God, I have the best big brother, and the best big sister.

In fact, when the Torah commands us to honor our father and our mother,[20] the verse includes an additional word "*et*" (אֶת), which is untranslatable. That additional word, *et*, means to include in the commandment to honor one's parents also one's big brother and one's big sister.[21] Thus, the big brother and the big sister, which are God and the Torah, are all included within honoring one's father and mother. The brother and the sister are my siblings, and we all come from the same mother and the same father.

We must all experience every single Jew and every single human being as our brother, this is all a reflection of God and my sister is a reflection of the Torah in each one of us. What it all boils down to is that we are all brothers and sisters and we are all expressions and reflections of Godliness. That recognition itself is the redemption that the Lubavitcher Rebbe devoted his life to and felt the responsibility to fulfill.

## Story

### Rabbi Chaim ben Attar, the holy Or HaChaim: Chillul HaShem

*Rabbi Chaim ben Attar, known for his Torah commentary as the holy Or HaChaim, was born in 5456 (1696) in Salé, Morocco, to his father Rabbi Moshe, and learned Torah from his grandfather, Rabbi Chaim ben Attar 'the Elder'. He married his relative Fatzunia and headed the yeshiva in Salé. He became known as a holy man of God, regularly lectured to the public, and was a charity treasurer. Since his wife did not bear him children, he took a second wife, Esther, and both his wives lived with him until the end of his days in Jerusalem. After a series of disputes and persecutions against him, he made aliyah to the Land of Israel, passing through Livorno, Italy on the way. In Livorno he printed his famous commentary on the Torah and raised financial support for his aliyah and for the sustenance of the yeshivah he planned to*

[19]. Deuteronomy 6:4.
[20]. Exodus 20:
[21]. See *Zohar* 3:83a.

*establish. At the end of 5501 (1741), he arrived with his students in Acre, where the yeshivah was initially established. The invitation of the Jews of Tiberias to settle in their city did not work out well, and after a short period of settlement in Peki'in, they moved to Jerusalem at the end of 5502 (1742), where his yeshivah Midrash Knesset Yisrael was established. Less than a year later, he departed to his eternal resting place on the 15th of Tammuz 5503 (1743) and is buried on the Mount of Olives.*

> The holy Or HaChaim had a great and very important wife named Fatzunia. She was wise, learned, and God-fearing, and even laid *tefillin* and wrapped herself in a prayer shawl. Once, a guest came to stay at the Or HaChaims' house, and Fatzunia recognized that he was an important person who should be honored. On her own initiative, she took the few coins that were in the house, went to the market, and bought the most expensive and fat fish.
>
> She brought the fish home, and her husband, the holy Or HaChaim understood that it had cost a fortune, and said to her an expression, which needs to be understood in this context, that it was a "desecration of God's Name" to spend so much money on a fish. Fatzunia was silent, not overly impressed, and went to cook the fish. This fish had a special liver, from which a delicious delicacy is made, and she prepared this delicacy as well.
>
> Everyone sat down at the table to dine. At the head of the table was her righteous husband, next to him the important guest, as well all the family members and perhaps other guests and she served the special fish liver delicacy. Usually, the food is served first to the head of the family, but Fatzunia distributed the liver to everyone, and finally came to her husband's place and did not give him any. Then she said: "Where there is desecration of God's Name one should not give liver to the Rabbi." This was a humorous pun based on the saying of the sages, "Where there is desecration of God's Name one should not give honor (*kavod*) to the Rabbi."[22] Fatzunia replaced the word for 'honor' (*kavod*) with the word for 'liver' (*kaved*)].

This story presents an interesting reversal of a well-known motif in chasidic tales. Usually, we encounter stories of wives who are stingy with guests, trying to restrain their husbands from performing the important *mitzvah* of hospitality. Here, we have a couple who are both supreme *tzaddikim* but it is the husband who criticizes his wife's generous hospitality.

As is known, the holy Or HaChaim was a Messianic figure and even hinted at this in his Torah commentary. But from this story and others, it appears that his wife was also a Messianic figure. She was truly "a woman of valor" who is "her husband's crown." First, she is a wise woman who recognizes the stature of her guests and knows how to employ the appropriate Torah expression for the occasion. This is also the source of the fact that she remained unflustered in the face of her righteous husband's strictness and waited for the right moment to smooth things over in her own way. Second, she

22. Sanhedrin 82a.

is independent in her thinking and follows in the footsteps of Sarah our matriarch who was greater than Abraham in prophecy and guided him.

It is interesting to note that in most years, the Or Hachim's day of passing falls in the Torah portion of Pinchas who applied the principle that Rebbetzin Fatzunia quoted. What is, according to the inner dimension of the Torah, a "place where there is desecration of God's Name," and how is the wit employed by the righteous Fatzunia related to Pinchas's act?

Rabbi Chaim and his wife, who were both very wise and learned, represent the *partzufim* of Abba (Father) and Imma (Mother)—the *sefirot* of *chochmah* (wisdom) and *binah* (understanding). Life is connected to *chochmah*, of which it is said, "Wisdom gives life to those who possess it," and "they die, but not [when] with wisdom."[23] *Binah* is the mother, and with it is associated Rebbetzin Fatzunia, who resembled Sarah our matriarch. Incidentally, the Or Hachaim's second wife, Esther, who lived with a rare degree of harmony with Fatzunia, represents the aspect of *malchut* [kingdom], the daughter. From the exterior of *binah* judgments emerge, like those that were aroused when Rabbi Chaim saw his wife's unusual extravagance and these judgments were rectified with a Pinchas-like act of zealotry to sweeten the judgments at their root. Pinchas himself, who saw the judgments that were aroused as a result of the sin, adopted the aspect of judgment and focused it on the sinners instead of the entire people.

But Fatzunia used a slightly different form of "judgment." She indeed did not give her husband the fish liver, which is an act of judgment, but she did so with Torah humor that took the energy of strictness and turned it into lightheartedness. When a tzaddik like the Or HaChaim utters the expression "desecration of God's Name," it certainly makes an impression. But in her wisdom, Fatzunia surely brought a smile to her husband's face and with the tzaddik's good humor, the judgment was sweetened.

> Once, the Baal Shem Tov said about Rabbi Chaim ben Attar: "When I ascend to the upper chamber, I see him already on his way back from there." When asked, "If so, is he greater than you?" He answered: "He is certainly quicker than me!"

Alacrity is a quality associated with *chesed* (loving-kindness), the personality of Abraham. A person of *chesed* runs joyfully towards the object of his kindness. Abraham was quick to fulfill God's commandments as evident from verses like "Abraham rose early in the morning,"[24] "Abraham ran to the cattle,"[25] and others. The priests who exhibited alacrity in their service in the Temple, are also associated with the attribute of *chesed*.

The holy Or HaChaim had both spiritual and physical alacrity. He also completed his life's rectification swiftly and passed away at the age of 47. Normally, we associate a

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23. Job 4:21.

24. Genesis 19:27, 21:14, and 22:3.

25. Ibid. 18:7.

full life with 70 or 80 years, as in the verse, "the days of our years are in them seventy years and if with might, eighty years."[26] But the word "in them" (בָּהֶם) has a *gematria* of 47, indicating that this is also considered a complete lifespan. Interestingly, the metal associated with *chesed*, according to Kabbalah, is silver whose atomic number is 47! The Or Hachaim's connection to money-silver explains his hesitation for lavish spending in the previous story. Just as in his guarding of the attribute of *yesod* (foundation), whose corresponding metal is mercury (whose atomic number is 80, the same as the value of "foundation" [יְסוֹד]), so too with money-*chesed*—he is extremely careful that it should not be scattered to an unworthy place. However, in this story, by Divine Providence, his wife the "woman of valor who is her husband's crown"[27] refined him.

## Partzuf
### Balaam's Blessings and Prophecy

| letter of Havayah | Balaam's Words | Part of Speech | letter of Havayah |
|---|---|---|---|
| *yud* | How can I curse whom God has not cursed? How can I invoke God's wrath against those whom God has not been angered? For from their beginning, I see them as sturdy as mountain peaks, and I behold them as sturdy as hills; they are a nation that dwells alone, they are not reckoned among all the other nations. Who can count the descendants of Jacob or can count the conceptions in Israel? May my soul die the death of the upright and let my end be like theirs! | First blessings | י |
| *hei* | I have taken a blessing [for them]; He has blessed them, and I cannot retract it. He sees no fault in Jacob nor any perversity in Israel; Havayah, their God, is with them and the King's herald is in them. God took them out of Egypt with the strength of His loftiness. There are no diviners in Jacob and no magi in Israel; it will be said to Jacob and Israel 'What has God wrought?' | Second blessings | ה |
| *vav* | How good are your tents, Jacob; how good are your Sanctuaries, Israel. Like streams they extend, like gardens by the river, like tents that Havayah has pitched, like cedars that grow by the water. Water will flow from your wells; your seed will have abundant water.... | Third blessings | ו |

[26]. Psalms 90:10.

[27]. Proverbs 12:4.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *hei* | a star will shoot forth from Jacob; a tribe/staff will arise from Israel.... | End of Days Prophecy | ה |

In *parashat Balak*, Balaam makes four speeches. The first three were attempts to curse the Israelites and the fourth was a prophecy. These four speeches correspond to the four letters of God's essential Name, *Havayah*. Let us see how, in short.[28]

When Moses recounts the events of this week's parashah, he says,

> …the Moabites hired Balaam, the son of Be'or, from *Petor* in *Aram Naharayim* against you, to curse you. But *Havayah*, your God, did not want to listen to Balaam, so *Havayah* your God transformed the curse into a blessing for you, because *Havayah* your God loves you.[29]

Although Balaam tried to curse the Israelites three times, the verse mentions the transformation of the curse in the singular form. Indeed, we find that Rabbi Yochanan[30] implies that only the third blessing was transformed from a curse into a blessing. What about the first two blessings? Reading the Torah carefully, we will notice that God placed a blessing in Balaam's mouth,[31] preventing him from even thinking about cursing. Thus, the first two blessings were not transformed from a curse and as such are set apart. This is one of the most important features of God's Name *Havayah*: the first two letters (*yud* and *hei*) represent a concealed state, and the final two letters (*vav* and *hei*) represent a revealed state, following the verse, "the concealed are for *Havayah* our God, and the revealed are for us and for our children."[32] Balaam's relationship with the Israelites seems to be one of love and hate. As he states at the end of his first blessings, "May my end be like theirs [the Israelites]." In fact, he is jealous of the closeness between the people and God and wishes that his lot was like theirs. However, falsely convinced that he can never join them, he fills his heart with their hatred. Still, in the first two blessings, his hatred is completely concealed and God does not need to transform it into love, because He simply forces Balaam to say words he does not mean. But in the third blessing, where Balaam's feelings are transformed from hate to love, reveals the Divine capacity to transform the negative into positive, etc.

The first blessing, related to wisdom and sight begins with the image of Israel in solitude from the rest of the world. This is the nature of the *sefirah* of wisdom, which is always associated with holiness, which in turn is described as solitary: "holiness, is a thing to itself." The conceptions, or seed of Israel, mentioned in this blessing are an allusion to the seed to which the letter *yud* is likened both because of its shape (and size, *yud* is the smallest letter in the Hebrew *alephbet*) and because of its origin in the father—the *partzuf* of Abba, which is another connotation for the *yud* in *Havayah*.

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28. Based on *Sod HaShem LiYerei'av*, pp. 418ff.

29. Deuteronomy 23:5-6.

30. *Sanhedrin* 105b.

31. Regarding the first blessings see Numbers 23:5, "God placed His message into Balaam's mouth." Regarding the second blessing see Ibid. v. 16, "God communicated reluctantly with Balaam and placed a message into his mouth."

32. Deuteronomy 29:28.

The second blessing corresponds to the sefirah of understanding (binah) about which the sages say, "from it, harsh judgments emerge." Thus, one would expect God to judge the Israelites for their sins. However, the blessing prevents that, "He sees no fault in Jacob nor any perversity in Israel." Even when punishment is due, God chooses to glance over our iniquities. At times understanding and knowledge appear together.[33] Divine knowledge is falsely acquired by the nations through divination and magic. However, the second blessing states that the Israelites have no need for these false methods, as they know God directly, through either Ru'ach HaKodesh (knowledge[34]) or through the study of Torah (understanding).

The third blessing begins with Balaam's transformation from hatred to adoration, hinting to the fact that true transformation in a person normally only occurs in the faculties of the heart, which correspond to the letter *vav* of *Havayah*. The blessing includes the famous idiom, "How good are your tents," and the first word in Hebrew is מה, the filling of Havayah (יוד הא ואו הא) whose value is 45 and which corresponds to the letter *vav*. The six faculties of the heart (to which the letter *vav* alludes), when inter-included, total 36, the value of the word "tent" (אֹהֶל) appearing prominently in the third blessing. Water is referenced repeatedly in the third blessing, and water corresponds to the *sefirah* of loving-kindness, the first *sefirah* or faculty of the heart, and the most important one, as many times the other five faculties act as mediators for loving-kindness.

Finally, the fourth speech is actually a prophecy, whose central topic is the rise of the Israelite king referring both to King David and to his descendant, the Mashiach, as expounded upon the Maimonides at the end of his laws of kings.

33. See also the main article in this issue.

34. See Rashi on Exodus 31:3.