

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



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# Wonders

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“ When they arrived, they searched a bit and found a Jewish cemetery hidden beneath the overgrowth. They searched further until they found an open plot. They dug a grave... ”

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

נברכה רחמי ורחמי

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of Harav **Yitzchak Ginsburgh**

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## STORY

# REBBE SIMCHA BUNIM OF PESHISCHA: VOICES FROM BEYOND

*Rebbe Simchah Bunim Bonhart of Peshischa was born in the year 5527 (1767) to his father Rabbi Tzvi Hirsh. He was recognized as a child prodigy and was sent to study at the yeshivah in Mattersdorf in Hungary (now: Mattersburg, Austria), and subsequently under Rabbi Mordechai Benet in the city of Nikolsburg. After returning to Poland he married Rivkah, daughter of Rabbi Moshe of Bendin. Following his marriage, he drew close to Chasidut under the influence of Rebbe Moshe Leib of Sassov and the Maggid of Kozhnitz, and became a passionate chasid of Kozhnitz. Rebbe Simchah Bunim was renowned as a man of great wisdom and learning, and supported himself through his work as a pharmacist even during the years of his leadership as a rebbe. In his youth, he engaged in commerce, managing the business affairs of the celebrated patroness Tamaril Bergson. Through this work he brought many assimilated merchants whom he encountered in Western Europe back to the path of religious observance, having befriended them and being accepted as one of their own. After his time in Kozhnitz, Rebbe Simchah Bunim became a close disciple of the Choizeh of Lublin and of the Choizeh's disciple, the Holy Yid of Peshischa. In the year 5574 (1814) the Holy Yid passed away, and Rebbe Simchah Bunim took his place in Peshischa. During his tenure the number students of the Peshischa beit midrash significantly increased. A fellowship of elevated souls gathered around him, among them the Rebbe of Kotzk, the Rebbe of Izhbitz, Rebbe Yitzchak of Vorka, and others. Yet opposition to Peshischa's intellectually demanding approach also intensified, until a reconciliation was reached at the "Great Wedding at Ustila," celebrating the marriage of the grandson of the Ohev Yisrael of Apta. Rebbe Simchah Bunim, honored with the title "the Rebbe, Reb Bunim," departed this world on the 12th of Elul, 5587 (1827), and was interred in Peshischa. Collections of his Torah teachings were printed in the works Kol Simchah and Kol Mevasser.*

Once, a group of Peshischa *chasidim* set out together to their Rebbe, as was the custom in Chabad and throughout all the Chasidic courts, to travel in fellowships. In the middle of their journey, one of the *chasidim* suddenly passed away in a desolate place bearing no trace of Jewish presence. The companions did

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not know what to do. Before them was their companion whose body now needed immediate purification and burial, yet there was no Jewish settlement nearby, and certainly no Jewish cemetery. What were they to do?

They made their way to the nearest village and knocked on one of the doors. An elderly man came out, and they asked him whether he knew of any Jewish cemetery in the area. He replied: "I know that in such-and-such a place, not far from here, there is an ancient Jewish burial ground." The *chasidim* were greatly relieved and immediately set off in the direction he had indicated.

When they arrived, they searched a bit and found a Jewish cemetery hidden beneath the overgrowth. They searched further until they found an open plot. They dug a grave, performed the purification rites and all that was required, and buried the departed with proper dignity. After completing the burial, they began to move away from the site. Suddenly they heard a great commotion from the direction of the cemetery. They looked back and saw the body of their companion cast upon the ground. Someone had removed him from the grave! Strange and frightening. Yet they were *chasidim*, courageous of heart, and not easily excited. They returned to the cemetery, buried him again, and continued on their way.

And then it happened again: they had just gone a short distance when once more they heard the noise. They looked back and saw the body cast out of the grave. Understanding that something out of the ordinary was happening, the companions returned and called out in a great voice to those who lay in the cemetery: "Here is a Jew who requires immediate burial. There is nowhere else to bury him. He must be buried in this place!"

Immediately a chorus of voices rose from the earth and answered them: "We have lain here for hundreds of years, and every one of us was slain in the sanctification of God's Name. All who rest in this plot are holy martyrs, and no creature is worthy to stand in our company. Therefore we permit no one to be buried here, not even a Jew! Every time you place him here, we will cast him out."

The Peshischa *chasidim* maintained their composure, and called back: "We are *chasidim* of Peshischa, disciples of the Rebbe Reb Bunim, and this is our companion. He too is a *chasid* of the Rebbe Reb Bunim, and he requires immediate burial. We ask with all our hearts that you permit us to bury him." They buried him once more and this time no sound was heard, and the departed remained in his grave.

The *chasidim* continued their journey and arrived in Peshischa to their Rebbe. Before they had even had the chance to knock and enter, the Rebbe came out to them and said: "You should know that it took great effort for me to persuade those holy ones to agree to accept their new neighbor among them."

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In this "frightening" story — as in the stories of many *tzaddikim* — the *tzaddik* overcomes a spiritual obstacle standing in the path of his disciples. In this story in particular, a tremendous power to overcome obstacles was required. First, the dispute here is not with forces of impurity and unholy husks, but with supernal holy martyrs. Second, those holy ones are themselves figures with the power to overcome obstacles and to confront others for the sake of their principles, for they overcame themselves and their persecutors, and sanctified the Divine Name before multitudes; an even greater strength of character is required to overcome their firm resistance.

A further detail stands out from the story: it is not only the Rebbe who participates in the debate with the departed. The *chasidim* themselves know how to stand firm, even in the face of a

mystical claim rising from the earth. The Rebbe Reb Bunim was known as a Rebbe of wisdom and discernment, and his *chasidim* were themselves discerning enough to make the right arguments and ensure their companion a Jewish burial. The Rebbe Reb Bunim's capacity to transmit courage and clear-sightedness to his disciples is bound in a particular way to the heavenly victory in this dispute: the victory is connected to the attribute of *netzach*, which means both victory and eternity. The *sefirah* of *netzach* as eternity fuels the energy required to transmit teachings and heritage to the next generation. It corresponds the right leg in the body and the leg represents inheritance and lineage as in the Talmudic dictum that "the son is the leg of his father." Through the faculty of *netzach* (eternity), the past and present perpetuates as an inheritance into future generations.

In this spirit it is told that once, a family of three generations came to the Rebbe Reb Bunim — grandfather, father, and grandson — and all three entered together. After their conversation, the Rebbe looked at the three of them and said to the grandfather: "Everything you did in your life was for the sake of your son." Then he turned to the father: "Everything you did in your life was for the sake of the grandson." And then he turned to the grandson and said: "After all that the grandfather and father have done, where are *you*? *Ayekah?*"

This is spiritual inheritance: all the toil of the parents is for the sake of the children. Our duty, as the children of our parents and grandparents is to first appreciate the inheritance we have

been given, to receive its vitality, and subsequently to apply and act upon it so that it passes down to the next generation. This is the true nature of Jewish multi-generational wealth.

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# KI TEITZEI: BUILDING A NEW HOUSE FOR THE NEW YEAR

**I**f you build a new house you should make a guardrail for your roof, in order that you not bring blood upon your house if a fallen one falls from it.”<sup>1</sup> This commandment in *parashat Ki Teitzei* seems fairly straightforward, as it joins a long list of commandments designed to ensure that property owners take all the necessary precautions to ensure that they are not responsible for injuring others. Since an open roof is a serious safety hazard, the Torah instructs the builder to construct a protective railing around it, so that no one falls off the roof. Obviously, there are also more dimensions to this commandment that touch upon deeper issues in our lives. Let us look at these.

**P**arashat Ki Teitzei is always read in the month of Elul to provide us with an important personal message. As we prepare for the New Year and strive to attain a higher level of consciousness, we are in effect figuratively building a new house and, as it were, climbing to its roof. Many of us find this experience—the month of Elul and the Holy Days of Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur—to be a dizzying one. To help us reign in our expectations, which can sometimes be likened to building castles in the air, so to speak, the Torah teaches us to make a fence around our new aspirations by protecting the roof, the new level of consciousness. Furthermore, we

must create a disciplined plan of action to put our New Year’s resolutions into effect and not squander our newly found, highly elevated ideals.

Similar to all commandments in the Torah, Chasidut teaches us to seek out deeper personal and spiritual meanings. By “going up to the roof” one gains new horizons, which can lead to new perspectives, unhampered by our current perspective on life and what are most likely its inherent limitations.

## FALLING FROM THE ROOF

**B**ased on the unusual formulation of the verse—“if a fallen one falls from it,” instead of “if someone falls from it”—*Rashi* comments that if someone falls off a roof, it is because he or she was already “a fallen one.” For some reason, they were already deserving or destined to fall from a roof.<sup>2</sup> The message that the verse is teaching us is to be careful that this individual does not fall from our roofs. Since, as *Rashi* continues, good things occur through the agency of good people and bad things come to pass through the agency of bad people, we must be careful not to let our negligence make us culpable. This is the clear reading of the verse’s plain meaning.

The inner dimension takes us deeper. Based on the Torah’s inner dimension, the interpretation becomes that we

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1. Deuteronomy 22:8.

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2. Ibid.

must realize that when we “go up to the roof,” when we go through the intensely spiritual high of the month of Elul and the High Holy Days and climb to a higher spiritual state, we should know that this state is transitional. Ultimately, when the excitement is over, we will have to come down into the hum and drum of daily life and will fall from whatever new and elevated consciousness we have reached.<sup>3</sup> The descent is unavoidable, just as the law of gravity is built into the physical nature of the world. Ascent followed by descent is built into our human psychological makeup. In Chasidut, these two states are known as “expanded mindedness” (גדלות מוחין) and “contracted mindedness” (קטנות מוחין). King David is a prime example of someone who was accustomed to going up to the roof to commune with God. Ultimately, King David “fell” because he was on the roof, as the prophet relates,

And it came to pass that one evening David arose from his bed and walked upon the roof of the king’s house, and he saw a woman bathing on the roof, and the woman was exceedingly beautiful.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, begins the saga of David and Bathsheba, an episode that haunted David for the rest of his life.

## ORCHESTRATING ONE’S OWN FALL

**I**f the fall is inevitable then perhaps it would be better (metaphorically speaking) to never go up to the roof, to never attempt to go beyond one’s comfort

zone. Chasidut claims otherwise and cites the commandment to build a guardrail as proof. The Torah does not advise people to forego building new houses or to forego going up to the roof; rather, it advises them to build guardrails to prevent people from falling off their roofs.

Yet a question remains: how does a guardrail help if it is inevitable that we fall? The guardrail spiritually symbolizes our orchestrating our own fall! How so? By adopting an attitude of lowliness and humility at the very moment that we experience the climactic peak of “being on the roof,” we are able to control the fall.<sup>5</sup> If we maintain true humility then our fall becomes purposeful and directed. True humility acts like a counterweight that balances the new heights of consciousness achieved in “the run” of the soul. We only truly fall when we have no fence, no guard against the undue pride or self-aggrandizement we experience when the actual experience of elevation overly inflates our egos. Thus, we must realize that in the act of elevation, the soul undergoes a dual movement directed both above (going up to the roof) and below (in the orchestrated, but inevitable, fall of humility). In doing so, the soul fulfills the Divine dynamic within it, which serves as its pulse of spiritual life, and is known as “run and return.”

## KING DAVID – THE FALLEN ONE

**K**ing David, and by inference the Mashiach, his descendant, is referred to in the Talmud as a miscarriage or, more literally, as a “fallen one” (*bar nafla*).<sup>6</sup>

3. *Melech BeYofyo*, pp. 245-248.

4. 2 Samuel 11:2.

5. *Melech B’Yofav, Ma’akeh L’gagecha*, pp. 245-248.

6. *Sanhedrin* 96b.

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The *Zohar* explains that David's soul had not been apportioned time in this world.<sup>7</sup> When Adam prophetically foresaw this predicament, he gave David 70 years of his own life. David in fact lived seventy years and Adam, who was supposed to live a thousand years, lived only 930 years. Chasidut explains that David was constantly aware of this gift, and of how tenuous his soul's grasp on life was.<sup>8</sup> This sensitivity gave David both an unprecedented ability to praise God for every breath of life, as well as a haunting ability to grasp the existentially precarious nature of the soul's presence in this transient world. David felt as if he was constantly being born, as he says, "God said to me: 'You are my son, today I have given birth to you.'"<sup>9</sup>

## A DEEPER DIMENSION

Since Rosh HaShanah according to Jewish tradition corresponds to the sixth day of creation, the day that humanity was created, the first day of Creation corresponds to the 25<sup>th</sup> day of Elul.<sup>10</sup> There is a Kabbalistic tradition from Rabbi Shalom Sharabi, based on earlier teachings of the Arizal, in which he explains that the World of Chaos (*Olam HaTohu*), which precedes this current world called the World of Rectification (*Olam HaTikun*), can be envisioned to parallel the 7 days that precede the 25<sup>th</sup> of Elul, i.e., the week from the 18<sup>th</sup> through the 24<sup>th</sup> of Elul.<sup>11</sup>

He further taught that spiritual worlds even before *Olam HaTohu* can be envisioned as paralleling the days that precede the 18<sup>th</sup> of Elul.<sup>12</sup> This strengthens the idea that the month of Elul is directly engaged with the creative process of constructing worlds or realities, including our own, which we will humbly inhabit on the sixth day of creation, Rosh HaShanah. From this perspective, Rosh HaShanah can then be understood as the day we move into the new house that we build during the month of Elul.

The Arizal explains that our present reality is called *Olam HaTikun* for it is made up of the previous world's broken vessels, which require our healing intervention to be rectified and brought back to wholeness. These immature vessels, the *sefirot* of that world, were not strong or flexible enough to contain the primordial light flowing into them during the initial act of creation, so they shattered in a cataclysmic event known as the "Shattering of the Vessels." Humanity, especially the Jewish people are charged with gathering these scattered sparks and redeeming the light contained within the broken vessels.

According to tradition, King David had relations with Bathsheba on the 24<sup>th</sup> of Elul, which corresponds to the last day of the breaking of the vessels in *Olam HaTohu*.<sup>13</sup> He then desperately tried to cover up his behavior. When the prophet Nathan visits David and through telling him a parable, David realizes the wrong he has done, it is without hesitation that he declares, "I have sinned!"<sup>14</sup> He then spent the rest of his life

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7. 1:168a.

8. See also *Derech Mitzvotecha, Minuy Melech*, ch. 2 for a deeper explanation of this *midrash*.

9. Psalms 2:7.

10. *Vayikra Rabbah* 29:1; also *Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer* 8:1.

11. *Mivchar Shiurei Hitbonenut*, vol. 9, p.202.

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12. *Ibid.*, p. 197.

13. *Ibid.*

14. 2 Samuel 12:13.

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in a constant state of repentance, as any sensitive reader of Psalms can attest.

Even though the Sages explain that technically David was not guilty of either adultery or murder,<sup>15</sup> his exact sin is still open to debate. Moreover, David himself certainly felt he had done something wrong, and therefore spent his entire life repenting for it. Either way, in an attempt to explain how David could have acted as he did, the Sages explain that these actions were so out of character for David that on some level these events only came to pass “in order to teach the individual how to do *teshuvah*.”<sup>16</sup> In other words, as many commentaries explain, in some mysterious way God “arranged” the entire incident, not only to provide David with a test that could lead to his spiritual development, but, should he fail (as he seems to have), to provide a model for others instructing them on how to repent and return to God’s good graces following a “fall from the roof,” so to speak.

## THE BRIDGE OF TESHUVAH

**T**he idea of God orchestrating the entire incident of David and Batsheba is in line with the teaching that the “breaking of the vessels” should not be seen as a “mistake” in God’s creative process, but rather a critical ingredient in the formation of the World of Rectification. Based on this, we can now understand better why *teshuvah* is considered to have been created even before this world, the World of Rectification.<sup>17</sup> David embodies and bridges the chaotic climax of the final day of the breaking of

the vessels, the 24<sup>th</sup> of Elul, with the healing intention and introduction of *teshuvah* even before the onset of the 25<sup>th</sup> of Elul and the Creation of our present reality. Teshuvah, a return to God based on recognition of one’s sins, is thus the foundation upon which the current World of Rectification is constructed.

Since the incident of David and Batsheba occurred on the last day of the breaking of the vessels in *Olam HaTohu* it is associated with the final *sefirah* of kingdom (*malchut*), kingdom. King David is considered the archetypal soul of the *sefirah* of kingdom. His whole life, from beginning to end, consisted of extreme challenges and heroic attempts to rectify his own shortcomings, while simultaneously leading Israel as king and uniting the tribes as never before. Thus, his life and his legacy, as chronicled in the Book of Samuel and his Book of Psalms, attest to the profound power of *teshuvah*. They also provide an blueprint for the creative dynamics that exist between the worlds of *Tohu* and *Tikun*. King David therefore paved the path of *teshuvah* and serves as the channel for each individual to access and animate God’s compassion through the primordial energy of *teshuvah*.

Kabbalah explains that the lowest *sefirah*, kingdom (*malchut*) in one world or level of consciousness descends to become the highest *sefirah*, the crown (*keter*) in the world below (or following) it. Thus, the last level of the World of *Tohu* (the 24<sup>th</sup> of Elul) itself becomes the first level in the World of *Tikun* (the 25<sup>th</sup> of Elul), illuminating the interdependence that exists between the cosmic processes of both breaking and repair. The narrow bridge between these two worlds, and the method through which the

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15. *Shabbat* 56a. The murder referred to is the death of Batsheba’s first husband in battle.

16. *Avodah Zarah* 4b.

17. *Pesachim* 54a.

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ultimate fixing may be accomplished on a personal, national and ultimately universal

level, is the *teshuvah* that we speak about so much during these final days of the year.

## THE MONTH OF ELUL

# THE THIRTEEN ATTRIBUTES OF GODLY COMPASSION IN EXODUS

**W**e are currently in the second week of the Month of Elul, the last month of the year, which serves as a preparation for the coming year (may it be a good and sweet year for us all) and particularly for the Ten Days of Teshuvah that begin with Rosh HaShanah and end with Yom Kippur. Elul is known as the month of compassion and forgiveness. This is because Moses spent his third set of forty days on Mt. Sinai during the month of Elul and the first ten days of Tishrei—the Ten Days of Repentance.<sup>1</sup>

The first time Moses ascended the mountain for forty days, he received the Tablets of the Covenant inscribed with the Decalogue on them but shattered the Tablets upon learning that the people had sinned by constructing the Golden Calf. He then ascended a second time for forty days to beg God not to destroy the people. During his third ascent for forty days, God told him that He had forgiven the people and then revealed His Thirteen Attributes of Compassion, instructing Moses to call upon these attributes whenever there seemed to be decree or harsh judgment against the Jewish people.

The Sephardic custom is to indeed recite

the Thirteen Attributes of God's compassion every day during this time period (except on Shabbat) during the Selichot. Ashkenazim join them in the final week or so before Rosh HaShanah. But even when these Thirteen Attributes are not recited vocally, they are hanging in the air of Elul and the Ten Days of Teshuvah motivating us to take a deeper look at them.<sup>2</sup>

One of the aspects of the Thirteen Attributes that is not well understood is that Kabbalah recognizes that they appear in both the Pentateuch and in the Prophets. In the Pentateuch they are enumerated in their place in Exodus. In the Prophets, Kabbalah identifies the Thirteen Attributes in a passage from the Book of Micah. We recite this passage on the first (or second) day of Rosh HaShanah during Tashlich. We will get to that but let us begin with the Thirteen Attributes as they appear in the Book of Exodus.

To gain further insight into these, we will explain the correspondence between the Thirteen Attributes and the Thirteen aspects of the soul. Regarding Creation, we usually identify 10 *sefirot* from crown to kingdom. Particularly when speaking of how the *sefirot*

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1. *Tur Orach Chaim* 581:1. See *Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer*, ch. 46. For a detailed accounting of all three ascents to Mt. Sinai see *Rashi* on Deuteronomy 9:18.

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2. See also our series on the Thirteen Attributes and the Nine Attributes of God's compassion, which began in *Wonders of parashat Shelach*, this year.

manifest through the soul, we speak of 11 sefirot, including the *sefirah* of knowledge (or *da'at*). However, the crown itself divides in the Zohar into three separate “heads,” which are identified in Chasidut with the faculties of faith, pleasure, and will. We thus have 13 faculties in total.

There are different methods for enumerating the Thirteen Attributes of Compassion from the verse in Exodus. Here we will follow the method employed by the Zohar and the Arizal:

*Havayah* passed by before him [Moses] and proclaimed: “*Havayah, Havayah* [1] [is a benevolent] God; [2] compassionate and [3] gracious; [4-5] slow to [demonstrate His] anger; [6] abounding in kindness; [7] and truth [faithfully rewarding those who obey Him]. [8] He preserves [the merit of the acts of] kindness [9] for thousands [of generations]; [10] He forgives premeditated sins, [11] as well as rebellious sins, and [12] unintentional sins; [13] And He acquits [those who repent]....<sup>3</sup>

## GOD AND FAITH

God’s Name *Kel* (לך), which is the first attribute alludes to the verse that connects this Name with the faculty of faith, “A faithful God without iniquity, righteous and upright is He.”<sup>4</sup> *Kel* is the holy Name revealed by Abraham, the archetypal soul of kindness and love, a connection appearing in many verses, among them “Loving-kindness to Abraham,” and “Abraham who loves Me.” Indeed, the Name *Kel* is also associated with kindness in the verse, “The kindness of God is all day long.”<sup>5</sup> Abraham revealed this name after his war with the Four Kings, as it is

written, “And he called there upon the Name of Havayah, *Kel*-world.” The juxtaposition of *Kel* and world negates the notion that God is separate from the world. It is meant to make public the Abrahamic faith that there is nothing that is outside of God. By proclaiming God as “*Kel*-world,” Abraham made public His pure faith in God’s absolute unity. Abraham is therefore described as the head of all believers, meaning that he draws faith into others as well. Faith itself is the highest head of the three heads of the *sefirah* of crown.

## COMPASSIONATE AND COMPASSION

There is no great surprise that the second attribute, “compassionate” corresponds to compassion (רחמים), the inner experience of the *sefirah* of beauty (*tiferet*); not much needs to be explained here. However, being that the attribute “compassionate” is grammatically part of the first genitive construction found in the Thirteen Attributes, “compassionate God”—a construction of *Kel* and *Compassionate*—we are led to look at the sum of “faith” (אמונה) and “compassion” (רחמים), which is 400, or 20 squared. When the sum of two words is a square number, this indicates an inherent connection between them. In this case, it is explained in Chasidut that God’s inherent *ousia* (the ancient Greek term for an essential essence, עצם in Hebrew) is faith and the beginning of His revelation of Himself is through compassion.

## GRACIOUS AND LOWLINESS

The third attribute of compassion relates to grace. About grace we find two complementary verses, “A woman of grace attains honor,”<sup>6</sup> and “A lowly spirit

3. Exodus 34:6-7.

4. Deuteronomy 32:4.

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will attain honor.”<sup>7</sup> When considering that both a woman and honor are expressions of the *sefirah* of kingdom (*malchut*), the second verse connects kingdom with lowliness. This is one of the main reasons for identifying the inner experience of kingdom with lowliness. Lowliness was also the essential character trait of King David, the archetypal soul of kingdom, illustrated in his words, “I will be lowly in my own eyes.”<sup>8</sup>

Finds grace in the eyes of those who see us thus depends upon being of a lowly spirit. Lowliness does not mean depression or self-deprecation. Rather it means that one is fully aware of one’s shortcomings and therefore does not condescend to others. God’s attribute of grace is thus given to those who are of a lowly spirit. Grace is one of 8 synonyms for beauty in Hebrew. These 8 synonyms correspond to the *sefirot* and grace in particular corresponds to kingdom.

*Sefer Yetzirah* enumerates seven transformations or opposites, that correspond to the seven lower *sefirot*, from loving-kindness to kingdom. The seventh, corresponding to kingdom is “The counterpart of grace is ugliness.”

The third attribute, gracious, is prefixed with a conjunctive “and” to the previous two. Indeed, it is faith—through it power to bear opposites—that forges the primary Kabbalistic spiritual union between the *sefirah* of beauty (here “compassionate”) and kingdom (here “gracious”). This is the secret of prayer, whose root is in simple faith, and whose product is the unification of beauty and kingdom, or compassion and lowliness. Put another way, when the individual praying is aware

of their lowliness—their shortcoming and transgressions—they elicit God’s compassion upon them. That is why of the ten expressions of prayer, supplication (*tachanunim*) is considered the greatest, for “supplication” (תחנונים) in Hebrew stems from the same root as grace.

## SLOW [TO ANGER] AND WILL

**T**he Hebrew word for slow (ארך) is cognate with the first word in the Kabbalistic name of the third and lowest head of the crown, Arich Anpin (אריך אנפין), which in Chasidut is identified with the faculty of will. Arich Anpin literally means “the elongated face” and idiomatically means patience, which is also the meaning of the construct made of the fourth and fifth attributes of mercy together (ארך אפים).

In Aramaic, one of the words for king (רַךְ) is cognate with the Hebrew version of this attribute of compassion.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, using the substitution alphabet known as *Atbash*, the word for “long” (ארך) permutes to spell “crown” (כתר). When there is no reference to which part of the crown one is referring to, the nonspecific reference is understood to be to the crown of Arich Anpin, hence to the faculty of will.

## ANGER (OR NOSTRILS OR COUNTENANCE) AND AWE

**T**he next attribute of compassion is the second part of the constructed idiom, “slow to anger.” The literal meaning of this word (אפים) can also be “nostrils,” or “face” (countenance). In any case, it clearly corresponds to the attribute of judgment (*din*), or awe, which is the psychological experience interior to the *sefirah* of might (*gevurah*). Why is this an attribute of

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8. 2 Samuel 6:???

9. See *Rashi* on Genesis 41:43.

compassion? Because the construct form of “slow to anger,” of course means that the judgment, the awe, the anger, are sweetened at their supernal root. This is the mystery behind the verse, “I will thank You, *Havayah*, for You were angry with me, Your wrath will turn back, and You will comfort me”<sup>10</sup> (אֲדַכֶּה (הוּא) כִּי אֲנֹכֶה בִּי יֵשֶׁב אַפָּךְ וְתַנְחֵמֶנִי).

The reason this sweetening of God’s anger (or any other source of anger) is associated with the face or countenance is because the face contains 370 lights or revelations of Godliness. These 370 lights are needed to first sweeten the judgment and cause deliverance, then the success can appear as in the verses that we say during Hallel, “Please, *Havayah*, deliverance please. Please, *Havayah*, success please.”<sup>11</sup>

## ABOUNDING IN KINDNESS AND LOVE

**F**ollowing the sweetening of harsh judgment and anger at its root, the abundance of God’s love for us is revealed. There are two possibilities for connecting our Divine spark with its source in God: either the spark draws closer to its source, or the source draws closer to the spark. Whereas, “slow to anger” represents the first possibility, “abounding in kindness” represents the second. Drawing closer to God is achieved by an awakening from below, for instance by offering a sacrifice (קרבן), whose Hebrew form stems from the verb meaning “to draw near.” God drawing Himself closer to our Divine spark represents the immense overpowering light of love and kindness that comes after the judgment is sweetened at its root.

## TRUTH AND FULFILLMENT

10. Isaiah 12:1.

11. Psalms 118:25.

**T**he previous attribute of compassion sent out a abounding love, which in Kabbalah are known as the “five aspects of loving-kindness” (ה חסדים). These five aspects of loving-kindness spread out through the emotive *sefirot* and are finally integrated into the *sefirah* of foundation, whose inner experience is truth, in the sense of fulfillment, which is then channeled to kingdom, the secret of grace, as mentioned above. In fact, when the loving-kindness is channeled from foundation to kingdom it is known as “true grace” (חן אמת), which refers to beauty (grace) that is the result of one’s sanctifying oneself.

It is here that the first verse of the two verses enumerating the thirteen attributes of compassion ends, as this is in a sense, the end of this particular movement of compassion, beginning with faith—the highest head of the crown—and descending all the way to foundation and beyond, to kingdom. Altogether, the first verse contains 7 of the 13 attributes of compassion corresponding with the principle that, “all sevenths are beloved.”

To be true is to fulfill one’s promises or vows. Thus, truth is akin to keeping one’s word, to be trustworthy. When compassion reaches its final destination, it is whole (שלם), the value of which is 370, once again alluding to the 370 lights of the face. These lights are associated with the “two holy apples”<sup>12</sup> (תרין) (תפוחין דנהירין תדירא) the two cheeks that area free of hair of the beard. Hair in general denotes a state of contraction of the light, but the 370 lights that appear there do not suffer from the contraction and thus reveal the Divine *ousia*, as above. These are, as noted above, the secret of the long countenance, the

12. *Sha’ar HaPesukim, Lech Lecha*, s.v. “Venachzor leva’er.”

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face of patience that has the power to sweeten all anger and judgment.

The connection between the lights of the face revealed by God's long countenance and the attribute of truth or fulfillment is found in a dispute between the Sages regarding the Thirteen Attributes of Compassion. After God revealed these attributes to Moses, it says, "and Moses made haste and bowed his head toward the earth and prostrated himself."<sup>13</sup> the Talmud inquires,<sup>14</sup> which of these attributes did Moses see, i.e., which of them caused him to prostrate himself? Rabbi Chanina ben Gamla says that he saw the attribute of "slow to anger" and the other Sages say that he saw the attribute of truth. The reason the two are so close that there could be a dispute is because, as stated, the seventh, "truth," encompasses all of the first seven attributes from *Kel* and onward. As a consequence of the all-encompassing nature of seventh attribute of "truth," the light that is passed forward intensifies enough to bring forth the first and last of the next six attributes through which alone the infinite light (or revelation) of Godliness is drawn down into the inner aspect of the ten *sefirot* as they are revealed in the human psyche.

## HE PRESERVES [KINDNESS] AND TRUST

**T**rue is what preserves (*notzer*) the loving-kindness of a faithful lover and in this case, the loving-kindness of God. By preserving God's loving-kindness, trust is continually strengthened and one increasingly trusts God. According to the Arizal's teachings, all the attributes of Divine compassion are associated with the so-called "rectifications of the beard" and are part of the super-conscious crown. This

attribute—"He Preserves" is the source of the first conscious *sefirah*: wisdom. This link is referred to by the Zohar's statement, "Abba suckles from the eighth mazal," i.e., from the eighth attribute of compassion.

Likewise, trust (בטחון) is the inner dimension and experience of the *sefirah* of victory or eternity (*netzach*), which corresponds to the right leg that descends and extends from a higher *partzuf* to clothe and vitalize the wisdom of the *partzuf* below it, as explained in the writings of the Arizal. Trust (בטחון) is a permutation of the phrase, "good grace" (חן טוב), which is the secret of hidden wisdom drawn from the good oil that "runs down upon the beard"<sup>15</sup> (the supernal *Mazal*) and reveals the secrets of secrets of the Torah. Another connection between wisdom and trust can be found in the verse, "For all that is alive there is trust"<sup>16</sup> meaning that all that is wise of the fact that it has received life [from God above] has trust in that life and in God's sustaining of its life.

## FOR THOUSANDS AND PLEASURE

**T**he rectification of "for thousands" (אלפים) is the secret of "I will teach you (*a'alefcha*) wisdom" (and "I will teach you understanding"), as explained in Chasidic teachings. The form of wisdom referred to here relates to the phrase that, "wisdom emerges out of nothingness (*ayin*)," alluding to the second head of the crown known as the head of nothingness or of non-being (*Reisha d'Ayin*). In Chasidut nomenclature, this head of the crown is identified with pleasure. The word for "thousand" (אלף) permutes to spell "wonder" (אפל). This attribute of compassion is uniquely connected to the rectification of the covenant, as explained in the writings of

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13. Exodus 34:8.

14. *Sanhedrin* 111a.

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15. Psalms 133:2.

16. Ecclesiastes 9:4.

the Arizal, which is the rectification of the soul's connection to its source of pleasure.

## **FORGIVES PREMEDITATED SINS AND SELF-NULLIFICATION**

**I**niquity (עון) has the same letters as “humble” (ענו). About Moses the Torah states that, “and the man Moses was very humble, more than any person on the face of the earth.”<sup>17</sup> This parallels Moses’ own statement that “And we are like naught,” where the Hebrew word for “naught” (מה) is the second syllable of wisdom (חכמה), also known as the “power of naught” (כח מה), the power to self-nullify.

Another beautiful connection between premeditated sins and self-nullification is found in the Ba’al Shem Tov’s interpretation of the verse, “Happy is the man to whom God does not impute premeditated sin.” The Hebrew wording allows the Ba’al Shem Tov to punctuate the verse so that its meaning becomes, “Happy is the person who when he does not think of God, he considers it a premeditated sin.” Premeditated sin is thus the opposite of continuous self-nullification, which allows one to constantly be aware of God. Indeed, the Hebrew word for “thought” (מחשבה) is itself a permutation of the two words, “think of what,” or “think of nothingness” (חשב מה), constantly. We can interpret the partial verse, “*Havayah* is with wisdom,” meaning that God is found through wisdom (חכמה), i.e., through the “power of naught” (כח מה).

## **REBELLIOUS SIN AND JOY**

**A** rebellious sin or transgression (פשע) permutes to spell “effluence” (שפע). Effluence is different than light (revelation). Effluence is related to the Mother principle,

which in turn is the source of joy in the soul as in the verse, “the mother of children is joyous” (light, or revelation, is related to the Father principle, the sefirah of wisdom). In the Torah, the same root as rebellious sin denotes an act of embezzlement or negligence regarding the trust put in someone to guard or safekeep an object. Such negligence is the product of laziness or sadness, the antithesis of joy—the root of alacrity and vigilance in one’s life and particularly in the service of God.

## **UNINTENTIONAL SIN AND UNIFICATION OR CONNECTION**

**T**he attribute of God’s compassion as He who acquits unintentional sin corresponds to the *sefirah* of knowledge (*da’at*), particularly as the knowledge that resides in the so-called “holy mouth” (*puma kadisha*)—the power of unification or connection sequestered in the mouth. An unwitting sin is the result of a lack of continuous bond or connection to the Divine will, where connection or unification is the inner experience of the *sefirah* of knowledge.

We have thus seen that the three attributes of compassion, “Forgives premeditated sin, rebellious sin, and unintentional sin” correspond to the inner experiences of the three intellectual *sefirot*: wisdom, understanding, and knowledge, which are self-nullification, joy, and unification. The faculties of the intellect receive instruction from the second head of the crown, pleasure. However, their true root is in faith, the first and highest head of the crown, which has the power to bear opposites: in this case, the point of wisdom and the expansive nature of understanding.

Therefore, regarding all of them, the operative “forgives” applies, as does every act of “bearing,” which implies bearing opposites,

17. Numbers 12:3.

or a paradoxical state, in the highest head of faith. According to the plain meaning, all rectification of sins is achieved through the faculties of the intellect, for “a man is praised according to his intellect,” even with regard to in the emotions of his heart and his practical actions. Therefore, as long as the intellect remains unrectified—meaning that the inner experiences of self-nullification, joy, and unification have not been cultivated enough—the individual remains a *golem*, i.e., an unformed mass.

## HE ACQUITS AND EARNESTNESS

“**H**e acquits” can also be translated as “He cleanses.” A sacrifice that is clean of all blemish and impurity fulfills the injunction that, “Only one that is unblemished may be willingly accepted.”<sup>18</sup> Likewise, a person must “Be unblemished

[i.e., earnest] with *Havayah* your God.” Earnestness is the inner experience of the *sefirah* of acknowledgment or thanksgiving (*hod*). Acknowledgment and victory are considered two halves or sides of a single body, like two sides of a coin. Just as the inner dimension of victory—trust in the sense of fulfillment—is the source for wisdom and the Father principle (making it the secret of the higher *mazal*), so too the inner dimension of acknowledgment is the source for understanding, (making it the secret of the lower *mazal*). The Zohar states that “He is in victory and she is in acknowledgment,” which here represents the union of the two *mazalot*, the root of all unions across all the *partzufim* of the World of Emanation.

Next week we will explore the Thirteen Attributes of Compassion as they appear in the Book of Micah.

18. Leviticus 22:21.



גל עיני  
המנוח לרבינו שמואל  
הורוויץ זצ"ל

**SAVE THE DATE**

וח"י בהם

The message of  
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to our generation





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Hosted by  
**Rav Shlomo Katz**

Musical Accompaniment  
**Eitan Katz**



**MONDAY, AUGUST 31**



Shirat David,  
Matityahu Hakohen 40, Efrat



Doors open 7:30 PM  
Event begins at 8:00 PM



Open to  
men and women,  
separate seating