

Parashat Miketz

וַיִּשָׂא עֵינָיו וַיִּרְא אֶת בְּנֵימִין אָחִיו בֶּן אִמּוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר הֲזֶה אַחִיכֶם הֶקְטַן אֲשֶׁר
אָמַרְתֶּם אֵלַי וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יַחַנְךָ בְּנִי.

He looked up and saw his brother Benjamin, the son of his mother, and said, "Is this your younger brother you mentioned to me?" And he said, "May G-d favor you, my son."

In this *parashah*, we see how Joseph is reunited with his brothers. Joseph shows particular favor to his full brother, Benjamin.

ספר הליקוטים

דע כי בנימין בגימטריא נק"ב, ששם מקומו בסוד מ"ן המתחברים עם מ"ד, כי שם מקום חיבורן.

Sefer HaLikutim

Know that the numerical value of Benjamin is the same as that of the word for "hole" (*nekev*), 152, for that is his spiritual location, i.e., where "feminine water" unites with "masculine water."

Benjamini (Binyamin): $beit-nun-yud-mem-yud-nun = 2 + 50 + 10 + 40 + 50 = 152$.

Nekev: $nun-kuf-beit = 50 + 100 + 2 = 152$.

"Feminine water" and "masculine water" are the Zoharic terms for *Nukva's* "arousal from below" and *Z'eir Anpin's* "arousal from above," respectively, in preparation for their union.

The fact that the numerical value of Benjamin is the masculine form of the word *Nukva* indicates that he plays a role in this union.

לכך אמר לו יוסף לבנימין, באיזה בחינה היית, יודע אני ששום אי משני הצדדים לא נמצאו בך, לפי שאין לך פרצוף כלל, לא בסוד זכר ולא בסוד נקבה.

Therefore Joseph said to Benjamin, "What spiritual level do you personify? I know that you embody neither of the two sides who are party to the spiritual union, for you do not embody any *partzuf* whatsoever, neither masculine nor feminine."

אז השיב לו בנימין ליוסף ואמר לו, דע לך אחי, שאני הייתי בסוד זכר, שעליתי למעלה במקומך, לשאוב וליינק ממקום שהיית אתה יונק ושואב.

Benjamin then answered him, "Know, my brother, that I personify the masculine principle, and indeed, I have ascended to the same spiritual level than you did, in order to draw and suckle from the place where you drew and suckled."

Whereas the other brothers personified various aspects of the six *midot* of *Nukva*, Joseph personified the *yesod* of *Z'eir Anpin*. Benjamin also achieved this level.

1. Genesis 43:29.

לכן תמצא כי אז נקרא בנימין מלא יו"ד, שעלה ושאל הארת ה', ונקרא בנימין. ואמר לו, יוסף, תדע שאני בסוד זכר ויש לי אשה ובנים.

This is why *Benjamin* is now written fully, with the second *yud*, for this indicates how he ascended and drew into himself a radiance of the *yud*. He said to him, "Joseph, know that I now personify the masculine principle, and I have a wife and children."

The name *Benjamin* is usually spelled *beit-nun-yud-mem-nun*, as above. Sometimes, however, it is spelled *beit-nun-yud-mem-yud-nun*.

The *yud* is the principle masculine letter of the Name *Havayah*. (The other masculine letter, the *vav*, is an extension of the *yud*, as we have seen previously.)

אמר לו יוסף, מה קראת אותם,

Joseph said back to him, "What did you name them?"

א"ל בנימין קראתי אותם על שם אחי וכו'.

Benjamin answered, "I named them after you, my brother...."

The names Benjamin gave his sons all refer to some aspect of Joseph's tribulations or his relationship with his brother Benjamin.

א"כ מזה יובן, שבנימין לא שמש ערסיה למטה במקומו אלא למעלה, ומשם היה משמש ערסיה במקום אחיו, לכן קרא כל אותם הבנים על שם אחיו:

This being the case, it is understood that Benjamin did not conduct marital relations below, at his original level, but above, at the level of his brother Joseph. This is why he named all his sons after aspects of his brother's life.

ועוד ראיה, שהבנים היו עשרה, כמנין עשרה הארות שהיה יונק במקום אחיו, לזה קודם לכן היה שמו בנימין חסר י', ועתה נקרא בנימין מלא ביו"ד בסוד זכר.

A further proof of this is that he had ten sons, the number of the lights from which he suckled at his brother's level. This is also why his name was originally spelled without the second *yud*, and is here spelled with the second *yud*, indicating that he now fully personified the masculine principle.

ולפעמים תמצא נקרא ביו"ד בסוד זכר, ולפעמים בלי יו"ד בסוד נקבה, ולא נמצא בנימין מלא, כי אם ה' פעמים לסוד ידוע:

We see that sometimes his name is spelled with the second *yud*, indicating that he personifies the masculine principle, and sometimes without the second *yud*, indicating that he personifies the feminine principle. In fact, his name is spelled in the Torah with the second *yud* only five times, for a known reason.²

והנה בנימין מלא ה"פ הם בגי' תת"י, והם רמוזי לבי' מקדשים שנבנו בחלקו של בנימין, ועמדו ת"תל שנים, ולכן לא נקרא מלא כי אם ה"פ, כמו שאמרנו. (אמ"ה עדיין חסירם 7, ואולי עם אותיות המילוי של בנימין, שהם

2. In our texts, *Binyamin* appears with the second *yud* seven times (Genesis 35:18, 42:4, 43:14, 43:16, 43:29, 45:12, 49:27).

טו"ב עם הכולל לבי מקדשים, ובנימין ס"ה תת"ל.

Five times the numerical value of Benjamin spelled with the second *yud* is 810, alluding to the two Temples that were built in Benjamin's territory and stood in total 830 years. It is for this reason that his name appears with the second *yud* only five times, as we said.

Beit-nun-yud-mem-yud-nun = 2 + 50 + 10 + 40 + 10 + 50 = 162.

162 x 5 = 810.

Jersusalem was in Benjamin's territory. According to the Talmud,³ the first Temple stood for 410 years (833 BCE – 423 BCE), and the second Temple for 420 years (350 BCE – 70 CE). This gives a total of 830 years.

As to the missing 20 in this calculation, the scribe who wrote it down suggests that we add the 17 letters used in spelling out the word *Binyamin* plus the two *kolel*'s for the two Temples, this giving 19, plus another *kolel* for the word *Binyamin* itself, giving 20.

Beit-yud-tav nun-vav-nun yud-vav-dalet mem-mem yud-vav-dalet nun-vav-nun → 17 letters.

The Arizal now backtracks conceptually and lays the groundwork for the above discussion.

ודע לך, כי כל הי"ב שבטים הם תיקון השכינה, והיא חופפת ועומדת עליהם בפרצוף שלה,

Know that all the 12 progenitors of the tribes constitute a rectification of the *Shechinah*, and she therefore hovers over them with her full *partzuf*.

The *Shechinah* is *Nukva* of *Atzilut*, which constitutes a full *partzuf*, as we know.

והם, ראובן ושמעון ולוי בחגיית שלה, יששכר וזבולן ובני"ה שלה, נפתלי ואשר בארכובה הימנית, ובעקב הימנית דן, וגד בארכובה השמאלית ועקב השמאלי, יהודה במלכות, ובנימין ביסוד שלה, ויוסף ביסוד ז"א.

They are: Reuben, Simeon, and Levi, personifying her *chesed-gevurah-tiferet*; Issachar and Zebulun, personifying her *netzach-hod*, Naphtali and Asher, personifying her right knee; Dan, personifying her right heel; Gad, personifying her left knee and heel; Judah personifying her *malchut*; and Benjamin her *yesod*; while Joseph personifies the *yesod* of *Z'eir Anpin*.

The above description moves freely between the actual nomenclature of the *sefirot* and their anatomical correlates. *Chesed-gevurah-tiferet* correspond to the right arm, left arm, and torso; *netzach-hod* correspond to the right and left legs; *malchut* corresponds to the mouth; and *yesod* corresponds to the womb in the female and the reproductive organ in the male.

וזהו שנרמזו בפי מקץ, כי יוסף היה בזכר, וכל שאר השבטים היו בנקבה.

This what is alluded to in *parashat Mikeitz*, that Joseph personified the masculine principle and the others personified the feminine principle.

וכאשר ראו כולם שיוסף הוא בסוד הזכר והם כולם בסוד הנקבה, קנאו בו קנאה גדולה וכן תמצא שיוסף עולה בגי' קנא"ה,

When they all saw that Joseph personified the masculine principle and they all

3. *Yoma* 9a.

personified the feminine principle, they became very jealous of him. Thus we see that the numerical value of *Joseph* (*Yosef*) is the same as that of the word for “jealousy” (*kinah*), 156.

Yosef: *yud-vav-samech-pei* = 10 + 6 + 60 + 80 = 156.

Kinah: *kuf-nun-alef-hei* = 100 + 50 + 1 + 5 = 156.

והוא יונק משם אל קנייא ה',

Joseph suckles from the Divine Name *Kel Kana Havayah*.

The phrase *Kel Kana* (“a zealous G-d” or “a jealous G-d”) appears 6 times in the Torah.⁴ The last time is the verse, “For a zealous G-d [*Kel kana*], *Havayah* your G-d, is among you....”

שהוא יסוד עליון של ה' עילאה, שהוא הנהר היוצא מעדן.

This Name signifies the supernal *yesod* of *Ima*, signified in turn by the first *hei* of the Name *Havayah*, also known as the river that issues from Eden.

In the phrase, “And a river went out of Eden to water the garden,” “Eden” signifies *chochmah*, the “river” is *binah*, and the “garden” is *malchut*.

ועל ידי אביו נתגלגל הדבר, ששלחו ואם, לו הלא אחיך רועים בשכם, ר"ל, יש מהם שהם נאחזים בזרועות הנקבה, שהוא סוד של שכם על שכמו,

It happened that the brothers acted on their jealousy of his father, for he sent him to check on them, saying, “Are your brothers not pasturing their flocks in Shechem?”⁵ By this, he meant mystically that some of them are situated spiritually at the level of the arms of the feminine principle, which is the meaning of the word *shechem*, as in “on his shoulder.”⁶

The word *shechem* literally means “shoulder.”

וחשב יעקב להיות שמקצתם נאחזים בזרועות, לא יזיקו אותו ולא יקנאו בו בשתי סיבות, האחת שהזרועות הם יותר למעלה מן הגוף והברית, אי"כ הם יותר למעלה ממך ולא יקנאו בך,

Jacob assumed that since some of them are situated spiritually at the level of the arms of the feminine principle, they would not be jealous of him nor harm him, for two reasons: First, because the arms are higher than the torso and the procreative organ. “This being the case,” he said, “they are higher than you and will not be jealous of you.”

The arms can be raised higher than the torso, and therefore they are considered higher than it; they embody *chesed* and *gevurah*, while the body embodies *tiferet*.

Even though Joseph personified *yesod* of *Z'eir Anpin*, which is a higher level than *Nukva*, Jacob either meant that *yesod* in general is a lower *sefirah* than *chesed-gevurah-tiferet*, and in this respect, the brothers (at least Reuben, Simeon, and Levi) were higher than Joseph, or that when *Z'eir Anpin* is vested in

4. Exodus 20:5, 34:14; Deuteronomy 4:24, 5:9, 6:15.

5. Genesis 37:13.

6. Joshua 4:5, et al.

Nukva, the *yesod* of *Z'eir Anpin* is situated at the lower extreme of *tiferet* of *Nukva*.⁷

הסיבה השנית, כי בשורש שלהם יש חסדים ורחמים, וירחמו עליך ולא תפחד.

Secondly, he said, “their source includes loving-kindness and mercy, so they will have mercy on you, and you need not be afraid.”

Chesed and *tiferet* are loving-kindness and mercy, respectively.

אבל הם לא עשו כן, אלא וימצאם בדותן בדין, וסוף סוף ראובן שהוא זרוע ימין ריחם עליו, ולא הועיל לו, שהוא יחידי.

But, they did not act according to Jacob’s assumption, but instead “they found Joseph in Dotan,”⁸ i.e., related to him with the attribute of strict judgment. In the end, however, Reuben, who personified the right arm, had mercy on him,⁹ but this did not help since he was a lone voice.

Dotan is related to the word *din*, “judgment.”

וישליכו אותו הבורה, הוא סוד מדת הדין של יצחק, שעולה בגימטריא בור,

“They cast him into the pit,”¹⁰ this being the attribute of strict judgment, of Isaac, whose numerical value is the same as that of the word for “pit” (*bor*), 208.

In the context of the three patriarchs, Isaac personified *gevurah* or strict judgment, and this is seen by the fact that he devoted great energy to digging wells and pits. Whereas *chesed* and *tiferet* are characterized by downward movement—the “have” giving to the “have-not” and the “higher” having mercy on the “lower”—*gevurah* is characterized by upward movement, the “have-not” judging itself critically and aspiring to ascend to a higher level. This upward aspiration toward purification was expressed by Isaac’s well-digging, where dirt (obstructions, evil) is removed so the hidden good (the subterranean well) can be revealed.

Isaac: *Yitzchak*: *yud-tzadik-chet-kuf* = 10 + 90 + 8 + 100 = 208.

Bor: *beit-vav-reish* = 2 + 6 + 200 = 208.

בנוקביה של ז”א במדת יצחק, מקום זרוע שמאל שלה, שהיה שמעון נאחו בו,

Specifically, they cast him into the *Nukva* of *Z'eir Anpin*, the attribute of Isaac, to the location of its left arm, where Simeon was spiritually located.

As we know, the masculine principle in general is associated with the right side, that of *chesed*, while the feminine principle is associated with the left side, that of *gevurah*. Therefore, *Nukva* can be justifiably called the attribute of Isaac, since Isaac also personified the side of *gevurah*. As was noted above, Simeon personified the left arm of *Nukva*, i.e., the *gevurah* of *Nukva*, which is anyway associated with *gevurah*. Thus, the left arm of *Nukva* is doubly strict.

לזה בחכמה עשה יוסף כשנפל שמעון בידו, ויאסור אותו לעיניהם שירגישו הם. אבל הם לא הרגישו דבר:

That is why Joseph acted wisely when Simeon was under his control, and

7. Gloss of Rabbi Wolf Ashkenazi.

8. Genesis 37:17.

9. Ibid. v. 21 ff.

10. Ibid. v. 24.

imprisoned him in front of the other brothers,¹¹ so they would take the hint. But they did not get the hint.

סוף דבר, אח"כ הוציאו אותו מן הבור, ומכרו אותו, והוליכו אותו למצרים במצ"ר י"ם, היא מלכות, נוק' דז"א באחו',

In any case, they later took Joseph out of the pit and sold him, and his purchasers brought him to Egypt, the "straits of the sea," which is *malchut*—specifically, the back of *Nukva* of *Z'eir Anpin*.

The word for "Egypt," *Mitzrayim* can be read as the two words *meitzar yam*, or "the straits of the sea," and indeed, most of the settled area of Egypt is around the Nile River, a passageway into the Mediterranean Sea. Mystically, the sea is an appellation for *malchut*, since all the other *sefirot* flow into *malchut* just as everything eventually flows into the sea. The "strait" or "constriction" of *malchut* is the back of *malchut*, the side exposed to evil.

והיה בקנה מלכות בינה,

Thus, he was now on the central axis, that of *malchut* and *binah*.

Having been thrown off-center to the left side by his brothers, he returned in Egypt to the central axis, where he began (as *yesod* of *Z'eir Anpin*), albeit in a precarious position, exposed to the evil of Egypt.

There is perhaps a phonetic intimation of this in the fact that the word for "jealousy" is spelled *kuf-nun-alef*, while the word for "axis" used here (if I have understood it correctly) is spelled *kuf-nun-hei*, implying that Joseph went from being rooted in jealousy (an imbalance of forces, having suckled from *yesod* of *Ima*) to being rooted in the balanced, central axis.

והקנה הוא מצ"ר מ"י, של י"ם, שהיא מלכות.

This axis is the constriction of "who," into that of the "sea," which is *malchut*.

The word for "who" [*mi*] is the last two letters of the word for "Egypt" [*Mitzrayim*], just as is the word for "sea" [*yam*]. *Mitzrayim* can thus be understood both as "the constriction of the sea" and "the constriction of 'who.'"

But the question-word "who" is an appellation for *binah*, inasmuch as its numerical value is 50 (*mem-yud*: 40 + 10), and there are fifty "gates" of *binah*, as we have seen previously. So Egypt is the constriction of *binah* into the constriction of *malchut* (the "sea"), or the flow of the expanded consciousness of *binah* into the restricted and constricted consciousness of *malchut*. This is where Joseph wound up.

ויקנהו פוטיפר סריס פרעה,

"And Potiphar, the eunuch of Pharaoh, bought him."¹²

11. Ibid. 42:24.

12. Ibid. 37:36, 39:1.