

## Parashat Tavo

וְלָקַח הַכֹּהֵן הַטֹּבָא מִיָּדְךָ וְהִנִּיחוֹ לִפְנֵי מִזְבֵּחַ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ.

"The priest will take the basket from your hand, and place it before the altar of G-d, your G-d."<sup>1</sup>

In *parashat Tavo* we are given the commandment to bring the first fruits (*bikurim*) to the Temple.<sup>2</sup> The fruits are to be brought in a wicker basket, and the fruits with the basket are presented to one of the priests of the Temple. The word for "basket" in this passage is *tene*.

שער הפסוקים, פרשת תבוא

טעמי המצות, פרשת תבוא  
מצות הבכורים הוא ג"כ סוד חוזרת אורות הנקי' לחסד  
שהוא כהן כדי שלא יינקו החיצונים

*Ta'amei HaMitzvot and Sha'ar HaPesukim, parashat Tavo*

**The mystical meaning of the commandment of the first fruits is the return of the lights of the *Nukva* of *Z'eir Anpin* to *chesed*, which is embodied by the priest, in order that evil not be able to derive sustenance from the Divine beneficence elicited by our performance of the commandments.**

Whenever there is a revelation of Divine beneficence, there is the risk that the forces of evil will benefit from the overflow, i.e., whatever is not directed to proper vessels. One way of minimizing this risk is ensuring that the vessels are capacious enough to hold whatever Divine beneficence reaches them. We accomplish this by building orderly and well-functioning mental, emotional, and physical structures and contexts in our lives through which we can easily channel whatever new insights, emotions, and material wealth and well-being come our way.

The other way we minimize this risk is by taking steps to ensure that whatever would overflow if it was given is instead withheld. Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi explains<sup>3</sup> that in order for Divine beneficence to reach this world in any form, it has to be greatly contracted. This contraction process is likened to piercing small holes in a veil that shields a bright, intense light, allowing only small rays of light to penetrate it and be visible from the outside. Once this light has reached its destination, the holes must then be closed in order to prevent the light from shining elsewhere. If we allegorically consider the *sefirot* the "garment" of the Divine form or body, the veil hiding their light from the lower worlds may be conceived of as a coat of armor, which has many holes in it (for the light to issue through). These holes are covered by scales to prevent arrows entering it, or, in our analogy, prevent light from issuing where it is not wanted and thus granting power to evil.

Rabbi Shneur Zalman explains that this preventative power is part of the effect of acts of charity and kindness in this world.

Presumably, it is in this light that we are to understand the effect of giving the first fruits to the Temple. Giving the first fruits is a form of charity, since the priests are the ones who actually eat these fruits, and the commandment educates us to give the first and best fruits of our efforts to holy

1. Deuteronomy 26:4.

2. Deuteronomy 26:1-11.

3. *Igeret HaKodesh* 3 (*Tanya*, p. 104a ff).

purposes. This, in effect, indicates that *all* the fruits of our efforts are going to be directed for holy purposes, since we dedicate even our mundane lives to promulgating Divine consciousness in this world.

By ensuring that our mundane lives are dedicated and oriented to Divine purposes, we close the holes in the Divine veil, preventing G-d's beneficence from being sidetracked into evil channels through our misuse of it.

As we have also seen previously, the involvement in the material world is the feminine side of our personalities. It is thus the light of the feminine principle that must be directed upward, to the source of Divine beneficence (G-d's *chesed*). If left to its own devices, the feminine principle within us will focus obsessively on the material world, at first with the object of making the world a home for G-d, but eventually losing sight of this goal and seeing our involvement in the material world as an end in itself.

The feminine principle is alluded to by the word for "basket."

וַיִּסַּח וְלָקַח הַכֹּהֵן הַטָּהוֹר מִיַּד הַטָּהוֹר גִּי' אֲדֹנָי. | וְלָקַח הַכֹּהֵן הַטָּהוֹר. הַטָּהוֹר בְּגִימַטְרִיָּא אֲדֹנָי.

**This is the mystical meaning of the phrase, "the priest will take the basket from your hand," for the numerical value of the word for "the basket" (*ha-tene*) is the same as that of the Name *Adni*.**

*Ha-tene*: hei-tet-nun-alef = 5 + 9 + 50 + 1 = 65.

*Adni*: alef-dalet-nun-yud = 1 + 4 + 50 + 5 = 65.

The Divine Name *Adni* signifies the *sefirah* of *malchut*, the feminine principle.

Rabbi Bachya ben Asher ( ) adds the following ideas: The first fruits symbolize the first three letters of the Name *Havayah*, *yud-hei-vav*, and the basket symbolizes the fourth letter, the final *hei*, which, as we know, also signifies the *sefirah* of *malchut*. *Malchut* is the recipient of the flow of Divine insight and beneficence of the *sefirot* signified by the first three letters of the Name *Havayah*. It is therefore symbolized by the basket that holds the fruits.

The priest represents G-d in this ceremony, and he takes the fruit and the basket, symbolizing the Divine Name, and waves them in the four directions, indicating that it is G-d who runs and animates the world. The holes in the wicker basket evoke the image of G-d observing the world from His unobserved vantage point and directing the affairs of life through His Divine providence.

## 2

אֱלֹהִים יַעֲמְדוּ לְבָרֵךְ אֶת הָעָם עַל הַר גְּרִזִּים בְּעִבְרַתְכֶם אֶת הַיַּרְדֵּן שְׂמֹעוֹן וְלֵוִי  
וַיְהוֹדָה וַיִּשְׁשַׁכֵּר וַיִּוְסַף וּבְנִימֹן. וְאֵלֹהִים יַעֲמְדוּ עַל הַקְּלָלָה בְּהַר עֵיבָל רְאוּבֵן גָּד  
וְאַשֵׁר זֵבּוּלֹן דָּן וְנַפְתָּלִי.

"When you cross the Jordan, the following [tribes] will stand on Mt. Gerizim to [face the Levites when they] bless the people: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin. The following [tribes] will stand on Mt. Eval [to face the Levites when they pronounce] the curse: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali."<sup>4</sup>

4. Ibid. 27:12-13.

In the beginning of *parashat Re'eh*, the Jewish people were commanded to “place the blessing on Mt. Gerizim and the curse on Mt. Eval”<sup>5</sup> when they cross the Jordan river and enter the land of Israel. The discussion of how to do this does not take place in that passage but is rather postponed until the portion of the Torah read this week. Following the instructions quoted above, a list of the eleven curses the Levites are to pronounce is given. The blessings are not mentioned explicitly, but according to the sages they were simply the inverse of the curses.

שער הפסוקים, פרשת תבוא

כבר הודעתך, ענין י"א סימני הקטרת. וענין עשתי עשרה יריעות עזים. וענין י"א ארורים, שבפרשת כי תבא.

*Sha'ar HaPesukim, parashat Tavo*

**I have already taught you about the eleven ingredients of the incense, the eleven goat wool coverings of the Tabernacle, and the eleven curses of *parashat Tavo*.**

What is conspicuous here is the number eleven. Since the Divine energy that creates and sustains the world is organized into a structure of ten *sefirot* (and the *Sefer Yetzirah* is particular about this number: “ten and not eleven; ten and not nine”), it follows that ten as number signifies the complete, balanced, and holy order of powers. The number eleven, in contrast, is seen to indicate destructive excess, an egotistic tendency to one-up the Divine system. In the words of the sages: “whoever adds detracts.”<sup>6</sup> It therefore signifies evil and curse.

The Tabernacle was covered with three curtains: one made of ten curtains fastened together, each woven of a mixture of various materials; one made of eleven goat skins fastened together, and one of *tachash* skins (the *tachash* was an multi-colored animal does not exist nowadays).

וענינם הוא, כי כמו שיש י"א דקדושה, כן יש י"א של הקליפות.

**Their significance is that just as there are ten holy *sefirot*, there are ten *sefirot* of evil.**

Since evil is a perversion of holiness, it follows that for every shade of holiness (expressed in the ten *sefirot*), there is a corresponding shade of evil.

ועוד יש בתוכם נצוץ אחד של קדושה, המחיה אותם, בסוד ומלכותו בכל משלה.

**In addition, there is within the ten holy *sefirot* a spark of holiness that sustains them. This is the mystical meaning of the verse: “and His kingship rules over all.”<sup>7</sup>**

The common denominator of all ten *sefirot* is that they are expressions of G-d's sovereignty over creation. This is the basis for their mutual inter-inclusion and harmonious co-functioning.

אמנם יש חילוק אחד ביניהם, והוא, כי הי"א של הקדושה, הנקראים עצמות וכלים,

**The same is true for the ten evil *sefirot*, with the following difference: The ten holy *sefirot* are composed of “essences” and “vessels.”**

The essence of a *sefirah* is the Divine energy that powers it; the vessel of a *sefirah* is its identity, or the particular Divine power it manifests. The more familiar terminology for “essence” in this context is “light.” Here the light is called the “essence” since it is of course the Divine power that makes the

5. Deuteronomy 11:29.

6. *Sanhedrin* 29a.

7. Psalms 103:19.

*sefirah* into an instrument or a “useful” tool in the hand of G-d; the vessel or particular identity of the power being manifest is relatively incidental.

הנה העצמות שהוא החיות המחיה אותם, הוא מובלע ומתעלם בתוכם. וכמ”ש בהקדמת התקונין איהו וגרמיהון, איהו וחייהון, חד בהון. ולכן מספרם הם עשר בלבד, שהם עשר יריעות המשכן.

**Now, in the case of the ten holy *sefirot*, the essence—which is the life force that sustains the *sefirot*—is absorbed and hidden with them. Thus it is written in the *Zohar*: “He and that which He enlivens i.e., the ‘lights’ are one; He and that which He causes i.e., the ‘vessels’ are one.”<sup>8</sup> This why their number is only ten; they are the ten overhanging curtains of the Tabernacle.**

Holiness is characterized by submission to G-d’s will, and submission to G-d’s will enables an entity to coexist with its opposite, if it is G-d’s will that this occur. Here, although essence and expression are opposite in nature, the lights and vessels can coexist together so long as they both submit to the Divine scheme. This submission to Divine will is expressed by there being only ten *sefirot*, the number of balance and containment. The ten curtains that form the inner covering of the Tabernacle, closest to the holiness of the ark and the other vessels, express this submission.

אמנם העשר קליפות אין חיות הקדושה מובלע בתוכם, כי אין הקדש מתערב בחול, אמנם עומד למעלה מהם, ומשם מאיר ומחיה אותם מרחוק, וע”כ מספרם י”א.

**But in the case of the ten evil *sefirot*, the holy life force cannot be absorbed inside them, for the holy does not mix with the profane. Rather, it hovers above them and enlivens them from afar. Therefore their number is eleven.**

Since the evil *sefirot* express rebellion against the Divine will, there can be no reconciliation between essence and expression. Furthermore, the essence cannot enter the vessel since the essence is obeying G-d’s will (since it is only by virtue of G-d’s will that evil can exist or have any power) while the vessel is not (— as we said, the vessel is an expression of rebellion against G-d’s will).

Therefore, the life force (the “essence” or “light”), rather than being counted as the an aspect of the ten *sefirot*, is counted as an entity on its own.

וכמ”ש בזוהר בפרשת תרומה, בענין עשתי עשרה יריעות, כי כל המוסף גורע, והבן זה. גם ביארנוהו שם במקומו. וז”ס גי’ בחי” י”א שזכרנו.

**As is explained in the *Zohar* regarding the eleven goat-wool coverings, this is because “whoever adds detracts.” We have explained this idea in that context as well. This is the mystical significance of all three elevens mentioned above.**

ונבאר עתה, ענין אלו הי”א ארורים, הנה הא’ ארור האיש אשר יעשה פסל ומסכה, והוא כנגד הקליפה, הנקראת א”א דקליפה. ולכן נאמר בו, ושם בסתר, בסתרו של עולם, הוא א”א המסתתר ומתלבש תוך עולם האצילות כלו כגודע.

**We will now explain these eleven curses individually. The first, “Cursed be he who makes a graven or molten image,”<sup>9</sup> corresponds to the evil known as *Arich Anpin* of *kelipah*. Therefore it is said about this image that the one who makes it**

8. *Tikunei Zohar*, introduction (3b).

9. Deuteronomy 27:15.

that **“he puts it hiding.” This refers mystically to the hidden realms of creation, for Arich Anpin hides and is clothed within the world of Atzilut, as is known.**

*Kelipah* (“shell”) is a synonym for evil, and in the present context a particularly apt one, since evil is here described as the phenomenon of Divine energy surrounding its powers rather than entering them to fuse with them.

Idolatry is obviously the general, overall statement of rebellion against G-d, and is therefore considered the *keter* of evil. *Keter*, and specifically the *partzuf* of *Arich Anpin*, corresponds to the psychological power of will; idolatry is the expression of the will within the soul to break off “the yoke of the kingdom of heaven” in the false hope of independence. This is because idolatry is not a religion in the sense that it is the submission of the individual or community to the will of the deity; it is rather an attempt to harness and manipulate the spiritual power inherent within creation for one’s own purposes.

*Atzilut* in this context signifies the array of conscious powers of the soul (intellect, emotion, and expression). The will permeates, informs, and runs these powers in a “hidden” (subconscious) fashion, behind the scenes, as it were. Hence the importance of aligning the will with holiness rather than delusions of selfhood.

ולכן יש בזה הפסוק י"ג תיבות, עד תיבת בסתר, והם כנגד י"ג תיקוני דיקנא דעתיקא קדישא.

**For this reason there are thirteen words in this verse until and including the word “in hiding”; these correspond to the thirteen rectifications of the beard of the “holy ancient One” (*Arich Anpin*).**

The actual curse in this verse is exactly thirteen words. The number thirteen signifies the thirteen attributes of Divine mercy, the expression of G-d’s good will and willingness to forgive sin. The bodily correlate of this mercy is the beard, which is seen as a way the head can be channeled down into the lower parts of the body directly.

The normal flow of Divine beneficence into reality is patterned after the flow of a new idea or insight from the super-conscious mind (*keter*) into the conscious mind (*chochmah*, *binah*, and *da’at*) and from there, through the neck into the torso (signifying the emotions) and on out into expression (mouth, hands, feet, and sexual organs). When a person sins, however, this normal flow has been sabotaged such that there is blockage along the way, most typically in that the power of insight cannot properly affect the emotions – leaving the person frustrated and unable to grow, develop, or express himself spiritually. It is therefore necessary for the normal flow to be bypassed or overridden, and this is the dynamic of forgiveness. In such a case, a small but highly concentrated flow of inspiration emerges from the mind – not through the standard channel of orderly processing, signified by the neck, but through the hairs of the beard. As we have also explained previously, hair signifies a very diminished form of life force: it is constantly growing, but can be cut without causing pain. The beard thus signifies G-d’s attribute of mercy. Elsewhere, the Arizal describes the thirteen “rectifications” or “tufts” of the beard, and how each one corresponds to one of the thirteen attributes of mercy.

וארור מקלל אביו ואמו, כנגד או"א.

**The second curse, “Cursed be he who insults his father or his mother,”<sup>10</sup> corresponds to the two *partzufim* of *Abba* and *Ima*.**

אח"כ חמשה ארורים אחרים, כנגד חמשה ראשונות דו"א, שהם, כח"כ גדולה גבורה.

10. Ibid. 16.

**The next five curses correspond to the first five *sefirot* of *Z'eir Anpin*: *keter*, *chochmah*, *binah*, *chesed*, and *gevurah*.**

The Arizal does not explain the correspondences between these curses and *sefirot*.

אח"כ ארור שוכב עם אחותו, כנגד ת"ת דז"א, כי שם התחלת רישא דנוקבא, כנגד החזה כנודע. והנה היא אחותו דזעיר, בבחינתה שם, ולא במקום אחר, כי שם תכלית דבקותם, מה שאין כן בה' ראשונות שבה לא נמצא יותר.

**The next, "Cursed be he who has relations with his sister," corresponds to *tiferet* of *Z'eir Anpin*, for the head of *Nukva* begins at this level, opposite the chest of *Z'eir Anpin*, as is known. She in addition to being his bride is *Z'eir Anpin's* sister, but this is so only when she is situated at this level, not when she is otherwise. For it is only in this case that they can cling together consummately.**

As we have explained previously, both *Z'eir Anpin* and his feminine counterpart, *Nukva* of *Z'eir Anpin*, originate in *Ima*, and they are therefore considered "brother and sister." However, they are also intended to mate, and in this context are called "bride and groom" or "prince and princess." As we have also explained, their proper coupling occurs when the intellect (head) of *Nukva* (expression and actualization) is at the level of the chest (emotions) of *Z'eir Anpin* (inspiration and Divine idea). If *Nukva* were to be the same height as *Z'eir Anpin*, this would mean that her intellect receives directly from his intellect, and this would be counter-productive, for she personifies a totally different thrust in the Divine plan, that of disseminating the Divine idea without and throughout creation. It is thus crucial that her intellect receive from the emotions of *Z'eir Anpin*, the level at which his intellect has been over-staged by the emotion response, the desire to relate the idea of the intellect to the outside world.

To summarize:

curse	partzuf/sefirah
Cursed be he who makes a graven or molten image, abhorred by G-d, a craftsman's handiwork, and puts it in hiding.	<i>Arich Anpin</i>
Cursed be he who insults his father or mother.	<i>Abba</i> and <i>Ima</i>
Cursed be he who moves his neighbor's landmark [a form of stealing].	<i>keter</i> of <i>Z'eir Anpin</i>
Cursed be he who misdirects a blind person on his way.	<i>chochmah</i> of <i>Z'eir Anpin</i>
Cursed be he who perverts the judgement of a stranger, orphan, or widow.	<i>binah</i> of <i>Z'eir Anpin</i>
Cursed be he who has relations with his father's wife.	<i>chesed</i> of <i>Z'eir Anpin</i>
Cursed be he who has relations with any beast.	<i>gevurah</i> of <i>Z'eir Anpin</i>
Cursed be he who has relations with his sister, whether the daughter of his father or of his mother.	<i>tiferet</i> of <i>Z'eir Anpin</i>
Cursed be he who has relations with his mother-in-law.	<i>netzach</i> of <i>Z'eir Anpin</i>
Cursed be he who strikes his neighbor in secret.	<i>hod</i> of <i>Z'eir Anpin</i>
Cursed be he who accepts a bride in the case of the murder of an innocent person.	<i>yesod</i> of <i>Z'eir Anpin</i>

3

וְהָיָה אִם לֹא תִשְׁמַע בְּקוֹל ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשָׁמֹר לְעֲשׂוֹת אֶת כָּל מִצְוֹתַי וְחֻקֹּתַי  
אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי מֵצַוְךָ הַיּוֹם וּבָאוּ עָלֶיךָ כָּל הַקְּלָלוֹת הָאֵלֶּה וְהִשְׁיִגְוְךָ.

*"It will be that if you don not listen to the voice of G-d, your G-d, to keep all His commandments, and statutes that I command you today, all [the following] curses will come upon you and overtake you."<sup>11</sup>*

Moses describes the results of the people abandoning their covenant with G-d. This passage, known as the "the reproof" (*tochachah*)<sup>12</sup> consists of exactly 98 curses.

<p style="text-align: right;">ספר הלקוטים, פרשת תבוא</p> <p style="text-align: right;">הנה כל העונש הוא בשביל פגם יסוד, בסוד חרב נוקמת נקם ברית.</p>		<p style="text-align: left;">לקוטי תורה, פרשת תבוא</p> <p style="text-align: left;">הנה כל העונש הוא, בשביל מה שפגמו ביסוד, בסוד חרב נוקמת נקם ברית,</p>
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*Likutei Torah and Sefer HaLikutim, parashat Tavo*

**These curses are all a punishment for the blemish caused in the *sefirah* of *yesod*. This is the mystical meaning of the phrase "a sword avenging the vengeance of the covenant."<sup>13</sup>**

This whole passage is referred to by the Torah itself as a "covenant" (*brit*).<sup>14</sup> Simply stated, a covenant or pact is an agreement between two parties sealed by the clause that if the pact is abrogated there will be consequences. The existence of consequences cements the relationship and makes it serious (or "real") for the parties involved.

The *sefirah* of *yesod* is where all the powers of the preceding *sefirot* coalesce into a concentrated essence (the seed or semen), which is then meant to be transmitted, via *malchut/Nukva* to outer reality as the "birth" of a new reality or way of living. All these powers, from the initial insight on, are a gift of G-d that He gives us in order for us to use for positive, wholesome, and holy purposes. It is therefore crucial that this seminal message or energy be channeled through the proper medium, that of *malchut*. For *malchut*, being the personification of G-d's will "to have a home in the lower realms," is totally directed and dedicated toward using the energy of *yesod* for the holy purpose of increasing the awareness of G-d's presence in the world. If a person chooses not to direct his energy into *malchut*, but instead to divert it into non-holy channels, he is betraying his covenant with G-d. He is taking his G-d-given gifts (whether his vital seed or any other gifts, resources, or talents he possesses) and using them for self-indulgent or egocentric ends.

This explains why the commandment of circumcision specifically is called *brit*, covenant. (After all, the whole Torah is G-d's covenant with the Jewish people.) This also explains why the Arizal here says that the consequences detailed by the Torah for abrogating its observance can all be seen as the result of betraying the covenant of *yesod*. In other words, all sins are ultimately sins of misdirected sexuality, and the specific sin of misdirected sexuality in a sense contains within it all other sins.

The verse about the sword avenging the vengeance of the covenant is taken from the parallel rebuke-passage in the book of Leviticus (26:14-45).

11. Ibid. 28:15.

12. Ibid. 28:15-68.

13. Leviticus 26:28.

14. Deuteronomy 28:69.

והנה יסוד הוא קשת היורה חצים בסוד זרע היורה | והנה היסוד, הוא הקשת שיורה כחץ, בסוד זרע יורה כחץ

**Now, the organ of procreation, the physical manifestation of *yesod*, is likened to a bow that shoots arrows of semen. We see this with regard to halachic discussions regarding whether or not a particular discharge of semen can be considered potent.<sup>15</sup> The seed is not considered potent if when discharged it does not shoot like an arrow.**

The simile of ejaculation and shooting an arrow is found in Biblical verses as well.<sup>16</sup>

למטרה הוא רחל | למטרה, היא רחל.

**The target of the “arrows” of *Z’eir Anpin* is the *partzuf Rachel*.**

As we said, the only legitimate “target” for *yesod* is *malchut*, personified in the narrow sense by one’s wife or in the broader sense by the holiness of the vessel as evinced in its being a vehicle for the dissemination of the G-d-idea throughout reality.

לכן כשחטאו והפרידו חץ הקדוש כן ח”ץ פתאום הי’ | ולכן כשחטאו והפרידו החץ הקדוש, נענשו בחץ מכותם פתאום היו מכותם,

**Therefore, when the Jewish people sinned and thereby caused the holy arrows to be disassociated from their rightful “target”, the consequence was that “G-d shot them at them; a sudden arrow was their wounds.”<sup>17</sup>**

This verse applies normally to those who “have sharpened their tongue like the sword, and aimed their arrow—a bitter word—to shoot the innocent in secret.”<sup>18</sup> Here, since the community abuses their arrows, the power of *yesod*, they bring upon themselves retribution in kind.

צ”ח קללות. | צ”ח קללות.

**These are the 98 curses of this passage.**

The numerical value of the word for arrow (*cheitz, chet-tzadik*) is 98.

#### 4

יִדְבֶקֶהּ בְּיָדְךָ ה' בְּנֵי אֶת הַדְּבָר עַד פְּלִתוֹ אֶתְךָ מֵעַל הָאָדָמָה אֲשֶׁר אֵתָּה בָּא שְׂמָה לְרִשְׁתָּהּ.

“G-d will cause the pestilence to cling to you until it finishes you off of the land you are entering in order to possess.”<sup>19</sup>

This is one of the curses of “the admonition” (*tochachah*).

15. I.e., cause pregnancy. *Chagigah* 15a; *Nidah* 43a; Rashi on Deuteronomy 23:2.

16. See Rashi on Genesis 21:16, 49:24, 49:25.

17. Psalms 64:8.

18. *Ibid*, 4-5.

19. Deuteronomy 28:21.

ספר הלקוטים, פרשת תבוא  
ענין המגפה ב"מ. הסוד הוא,

Sefer HaLikutim, parashat Tavo

**The mystical concept of pestilence (may it never befall us) is as follows:**

דע, כי הכל מצד הבירורין. כי הלא כל הנשמות, הם מצד המלכים ומבירורם, כמבואר אצלנו על כל ישראל בני מלכים הם.

**Know that everything that occurs is a function of the elevation process of the sparks that fell from the world of *Tohu*. For do not all souls derive their spiritual sustenance from the fallen kings of *Tohu* and the their refinement, as we have explained regarding the statement of our sages that "all Israel are princes"<sup>20</sup>?**

וכאשר בתוך הבירורים יש פסולת, ולא הוברר, וזהו סם המות, הממית האדם בעת המגפה ב"מ.

**Now, when there remains an element of waste in the refined sparks, which was not separated out, it acts as a poison, killing the person during an outbreak of pestilence (may it never befall us).**

Refining reality, as we have explained previously, entails removing the element of ego or self-orientation from whatever aspect of reality we are working with. When this is done incompletely, i.e., the individual's motives are not pure and he therefore allows an element of self-interest to remain in the use he makes of the physical world, this admixture of impurity acts to misdirect the Divine flow that results from releasing the sparks of holiness inherent in the physical world. If not arrested or checked in some way, this misdirection of Divine energy results in disease.

גם ענין המגפה, הוא בא, כאשר אין הארבעה שמות של הוי"ה מאירים, ומסתלקים הארבעה הוי"ות, ונשארים הארבעה מלויין לבדם, שהם, מיו ל"ו י"ט כ"ו, יעלו כולם קכ"ה, ועם הארבעה כוללים והכולל, יעלו כולם כמנין נג"ף, ומזה בא הנגף ב"מ.

**Pestilence also occurs when the four Names *Havayah* do not fully shine, that is, the Names themselves are withdrawn, and all that remains is the four spellings-out. The numerical values of these four spellings-out are 46, 37, 19, and 26. Their total is 128; when to this are added the four *kolels* for the four Names and the *kolel* for the sum itself the sum total is 133, the numerical value of the word for "plague" (*negef*). This is the source of the plague (may it never befall us).**

To review the four spellings-out of the Name *Havayah* (72, 63, 45, 52):

letter	first spelling out (72)			second spelling out (63)			third spelling out (45)			fourth spelling out (52)		
<i>yud</i>	<i>vav-dalet</i>	6 + 4	10	<i>vav-dalet</i>	6 + 4	10	<i>vav-dalet</i>	6 + 4	10	<i>vav-dalet</i>	6 + 4	10
<i>hei</i>	<i>yud</i>	10	10	<i>yud</i>	10	10	<i>alef</i>	1	1	<i>hei</i>	5	5
<i>vav</i>	<i>yud-vav</i>	10 + 6	16	<i>alef-vav</i>	1 + 6	7	<i>alef-vav</i>	1 + 6	7	<i>vav</i>	6	6
<i>hei</i>	<i>yud</i>	10	10	<i>yud</i>	10	10	<i>alef</i>	1	1	<i>hei</i>	5	5
			46			37			19			26

It will be seen that subtracting 26, the value of the Name *Havayah* itself, from the four spelled-out values (72, 63, 45, 52) gives the four remainders above.

20. *Shabbat* 14:4.

*Negef*: *nun-gimel-pei* = 50 + 3 + 80 = 133.

Clearly, the withdrawal of the Name itself from its full spelling-out—leaving only the letters used to spell out the main letters—indicates a highly abnormal, defective revelation of Divinity. This defective life-force comes into the world as disease: life, but a harmful form of life.

ולכן טוב לכוין תמיד בזמן המגפה, בשם זה שהוא נג"ף, והוא שם קדוש. ותנקד אותו כפי תנועת האותיות, שור"ק חירי"ק ציר"י, כזה, נגף. ופירוש תנועת האותיות שאמר, הם, נו"ן, הרי שורק, גימל, הרי חיר"ק, פה, הרי ציר"י.

**It is therefore good to always meditate in times of pestilence on this name, i.e., the word *negef*, this being in this context a holy Name of G-d. Vocalize it as follows: a *shuruk* under the *nun*, a *chirik* under the *gimel*, and a *tzeirei* under the *fei*, as if it were pronounced *nugifei*.**

Since this word *negef* was derived from an iteration of the Name *Havayah*, it may be considered a derivative Name itself.

The Arizal does not here explain why to meditate on this word as if it were vocalized with these letters.

גם טוב לכוין בפיטום הקטורת, בבקר ובמנחה, כאשר תאמר פסוק ויאמר ה' אל משה קח לך סמים נטף ושחלת וכו'.

**It is also advisable to meditate on the formula for the incense, both in the morning before the morning prayers and before the afternoon prayers, when you recite the verses "And G-d said to Moses, 'take for yourself spices: stacte, onycha....'"<sup>21</sup>**

The incense possessed the power to ward off pestilence, as can be seen from the aftermath of the Korach rebellion, when Aaron used the incense to stop the spread of the plague.<sup>22</sup>

והוא, שתכוין במלת סמים הראשון שבפסוק, ותחליף אותו באי"ק בכ"ר, ויוצא ממנו שם אחד, והוא מתק"ו. ואמנם נקודתו איננו זוכר.

**Specifically, meditate on the first instance of the word "spices" (*samim*) in this verse, permuting it according to the system of *ayik-becher*. This will produce a specific Name of G-d, i.e., *mem-tav-kuf-vav*. I (Rabbi Chaim Vital) do not remember how the Arizal said it is to be vocalized.**

#### ***Ayik Becher***

<i>alef</i>	<i>beit</i>	<i>gimel</i>	<i>dalet</i>	<i>hei</i>	<i>vav</i>	<i>zayin</i>	<i>chet</i>	<i>tet</i>
<i>yud</i>	<i>kaf</i>	<i>lamed</i>	<i>mem</i>	<i>nun</i>	<i>samech</i>	<i>ayin</i>	<i>pei</i>	<i>tzadik</i>
<i>kuf</i>	<i>reish</i>	<i>shin</i>	<i>tav</i>	<i>final kaf</i>	<i>final mem</i>	<i>final nun</i>	<i>final pei</i>	<i>final tzadik</i>

The system takes its name from the first two letter triplets formed this way.

והנה כשאנו מוציאים שם באי"ק בכ"ר בחלוף, לעולם תקח האות ההיא שאתה רוצה, ותחליפנה באות האחרונה הסמוכה לה כיצד, אות א' תחליפנה באות יו"ד, ואות י' באות ק'. ואם היא אות ק', אז תחזור למעלה, ותחליפנה בא'. וכן עדי"ז, בשאר האלפ"א בית"א.

21. Exodus 30:34.

22. Numbers 17:9-14.

Now, whenever we produce a Divine Name through permutation using the *ayik-becher* system, we always take the letter in question and transform it into the closest letter following in the sequence. For example, an *alef* becomes a *yud*, a *yud* becomes a *kuf*, and a *kuf* becomes an *alef*. The same applies to the other letters of the alphabet.

Each of the nine triplets should thus be seen as a wheel.

וחילוף מלת סמיים, היא מתחלפת מג' מלות, שהם, דמיית, וסיים, אייק.

Thus, the word for “spices” (*samim*, *samech-mem-yud-final mem*) transforms using the 6<sup>th</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 1<sup>st</sup> of the three triplets: *vav-samech-final mem*, *dalet-mem-tav*, and *alef-yud-kuf*.

כיצד, אות סי של סמים, מתחלפת באות מי של וסיים, ואות מי של סמים, באות תי של דמיית. ואות יי של סמים, באות, קי של אייק, ואות סי אחרונה של סמים, באות וי של וסיים. כי כבר הודיעתיך, אם האות היא אות אחרונה מן אייק, תחזור למעלה ותחליפנה באי, וכן בשאר האלפ"א בית"א, וכן בכאן, אות סי אחרונה של סמים, היא מתחלפת בסי של וסיים, וחוזרת ומתחלפת בו' של וסיים.

How so?

- The *samech* of *samim* permutes to the final *mem* of the 6<sup>th</sup> triplet, *vav-samech-final mem*;
- the *mem* of *samim* permutes to the *tav* of the 4<sup>th</sup> triplet, *dalet-mem-tav*;
- the *yud* of *samim* permutes to the *kuf* of the 1<sup>st</sup> triplet, *alef-yud-kuf*;
- the final *mem* of *samim* permutes to the *vav* of the 6<sup>th</sup> triplet, *vav-samech-final mem*, for as we have said, if the letter in question is the third of the triplet, we substitute for it the first letter of the triplet.

הרי לך, כי סמים מתחלפת בשם מתקיו, מן ג' מלות, אייק בכיר, גלי"ש דמיית, הנ"ך וסיים, וכו':

Thus, the word *samim* permutes to the letter-combination *mem-tav-kuf-vav*.

- samech → mem
- mem → tav
- yud → kuf
- final mem → vav.

ועוד תכוין בזה השם של מתקיו ג"כ, שעולה ג"כ כמנין ע"ב, וכמנין שם אהי"ה דידויין, כזה, ובריבועו כזה, אליף, אליף היי, אליף היי יו"ד, אליף היי יו"ד היי, שעולה תקמ"ד. ות"ק עם מיו, שהוא מלוי שם ע"ב, הרי תקמ"ו.

Also, meditate on the fact that the numerical value of this Divine Name *mem-tav-kuf-vav* (546) is equivalent to the numerical value of the letters used to spell out the 72-Name *Havayah* (i.e., 46) plus the numerical value of the posterior of the Name *Ekyeh* when it is spelled out, i.e., 544.

$Mem-tav-kuf-vav = 40 + 400 + 100 + 6 = 546$ .

We saw above that the numerical value of the letters used to spell out the 1<sup>st</sup> spelling-out of the Name *Havayah* is 46. ( $72 - 26 = 46$ .)

The posterior (*achorayim*) of the Name *Ekyeh* (*alef-hei-yud-hei*), as we have explained previously, is given by spelling the word progressively, beginning with the first letter, then the first two letters, etc., i.e., *alef*, *alef-hei*, *alef-hei-yud*, *alef-hei-yud-hei*.

The spelling-out of the posterior of the Name *Ekyeh*, then, is as follows:

<i>alef</i>	<i>alef-lamed-pei</i>	$1 + 30 + 80$	111
<i>alef</i>	<i>alef-lamed-pei</i>	$1 + 30 + 80$	111
<i>hei</i>	<i>hei-yud</i>	$5 + 10$	15
<i>alef</i>	<i>alef-lamed-pei</i>	$1 + 30 + 80$	111
<i>hei</i>	<i>hei-yud</i>	$5 + 10$	15
<i>yud</i>	<i>yud-vav-dalet</i>	$10 + 6 + 4$	20
<i>alef</i>	<i>alef-lamed-pei</i>	$1 + 30 + 80$	111
<i>hei</i>	<i>hei-yud</i>	$5 + 10$	15
<i>yud</i>	<i>yud-vav-dalet</i>	$10 + 6 + 4$	20
<i>hei</i>	<i>hei-yud</i>	$5 + 10$	15
			544

When these values are added together, we have:

$46 + 544 = 590$ . This is obviously more than the numerical value of the Name *mem-tav-kuf-vav*, which is 546. The Arizal now explains this difference of  $590 - 546 = 44$ .

והמ"ד, הוא ריבוע ד' אותיות השורש של אהי"ה, שעולה ד"ם, כזה, א' א"ה אה"י אהי"ה.

**The extra 44 is the numerical value of the squaring of the four letters of the original Name *Ekyeh*, which is 44, as follows: *alef*, *alef-hei*, *alef-hei-yud*, *alef-hei-yud-hei*.**

$= 1 + (1 + 5) + (1 + 5 + 10) + (1 + 5 + 10 + 5) = 1 + 6 + 16 + 21 = 44$ .

It will be seen that the terms "squaring" and "posterior" refer to the same process, i.e., that of spelling out a word regressively.

It will also be noticed that the value of the letters used to spell out the posterior of the Name *Ekyeh* considered separately from the letters used to iterate the posterior itself is given by subtracting 44 from 544, i.e., is 500.

א"כ, מלוי ע"ב הוא מ"ו, ומלוי אהי"ה בריבוע לבד שהוא ת"ק,

**Thus, the numerical value of the letters used to spell out the 72-Name *Havayah* is 46, and the numerical value of the letters used to spell out the squaring of the Name *Ekyeh* is 500.**

הרי תקמ"ו, שהוא מתק"ו.

Their combined numerical value is thus 546, the numerical value of the Name

*mem-tav-kuf-vav.*

Thus, we see again that the Name associated with pestilence and plague is derived by divorcing the main letters of Divine Names from the letters used to spell them out, which, again, indicates a highly defective form of Divine revelation.