

Parashat Nitzavim

In the portion of the Torah read this week, Moses addresses the Jewish people, exhorting them to follow G-d's commandments. The following ten verses of this address are a section by themselves, and in them, the Name *Havayah* (here indicated by the word "*G-d*" in italics) occurs fourteen times. The text of these verses seems to be redundant in places, but the Arizal will demonstrate that this is not so.

"And it will be, when all these things come upon you—the blessing and the curse which I have placed before you—and you return in your heart while amongst the peoples to whom *G-d* your G-d has exiled you, and you return to *G-d* your G-d and hearken to His voice in accordance with all that I have commanded you today—you and your children—with all your heart and soul, then *G-d* your G-d will return your exiles and have mercy upon you, and He will turn to gather you from amongst all these peoples whence *G-d* your G-d has scattered you. [Even] if the scattered among you be at the ends of the heavens, *G-d* your G-d will gather you and take you from there. And *G-d* your G-d will bring you to the land that your fathers inherited, and you will inherit it, and He will do better to you and multiply you more than your fathers. And *G-d* your G-d will circumcise your heart and the heart of your children, so that you may love *G-d* your G-d with all your heart and soul, for the sake of your life. And *G-d* your G-d will visit all these curses upon your enemies and those who hate you, who pursued you. But you will return and listen to the voice of *G-d*, and do all His commandments, which I have commanded you today. And *G-d* your G-d will multiply the work of your hands, the fruit of your womb, the fruit of your animals, and the fruit of your land, for *G-d* will again rejoice in you as He rejoiced in your fathers. If you will listen to the voice of *G-d* your G-d, to keep all His commandments and statutes written in this *sefer Torah*; if you return to *G-d* your G-d with all your heart and soul."¹

This section consists of ten verses, each of which contains the Name *Havayah*. Some verses contain this name twice, such that this Name occurs 14 times in all. The numerical value of this Name is 26; thus, the numerical value of all 14 Names is 364. We are thus lacking the number 6 if we wish to reach the sum 370.

370 is the number of "lights" that shine from the face of *Arich Anpin*, as discussed previously (on *parashot Bamidbar-Naso*). These verses discuss G-d's forgiveness, which originates in the *partzuf* of *Arich Anpin* (G-d's will to create and sustain creation in general and the Jewish people in particular), so it is to be expected that the number 370 be "encoded" in them.

The missing six are derived as follows:

In the phrase, "And *G-d* your G-d will multiply the work of your hands, the fruit of your womb, the fruit of your animals, and the fruit of your land," the expression "the fruit of" occurs three times. There are three *yuds* in these expressions.

The word for "the fruit of" (*peri*) is spelled *pei-reish-yud*. The letter *yud* is the sign of the construct form. The threefold expression of G-d's blessing is taken as an emphatic statement of the forgiveness these verses describe.

These three *yuds* form one of the 72 Names [of G-d].

In the story of the exodus from Egypt, three consecutive verses describe G-d's power as manifest just before He split the Sea of Reeds, which the Jewish people passed through on dry land while the Egyptians were drowned:

¹ Deuteronomy 30:1-10.

“And the angel of G-d who had been going ahead of the camp of Israel now moved and went behind them, and the pillar of cloud went from in front of them and stood behind them. Thus [the pillar of cloud] came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel, making it cloud and darkness [to the Egyptians], but it gave light by night [to the Jews], so that the one came not near the other all the night. Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and G-d drove the sea back with a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land; thus the waters were divided.”²

In Hebrew, these three verses each contain 72 letters. In the *Zohar*³ it is stated that these three verses refer in sequence to the Divine attributes of loving-kindness (*chesed*), severity (*gevurah*), and mercy (*tiferet*). The harmonious blending of these three principle emotive attributes forms the basic paradigm of how G-d relates to the world. Thus, they together form a composite “Name” of G-d, since a “name” is a means by which one is made known to others, i.e., manifests his attributes.

The fact that each verse contains 72 letters means that they can be aligned in parallel, forming 72 triplets of letters. In this configuration, the *Zohar* states, the first verse is to be written in its proper order, since it represents G-d’s loving-kindness, or a direct revelation of G-d’s goodness. The second verse is to be written in reverse order, from the last letter to the first, since it represents G-d’s severity, which is an indirect revelation of His goodness. Although *tiferet* is a blend of both *chesed* and *gevurah*, the third verse is not to be written half in the proper order and half in reverse order, as one might expect. There are two reasons for this: (1) in *tiferet*, *chesed* dominates over *gevurah*, and (2) as the ideal blend of *chesed* and *gevurah*, *tiferet* is a direct revelation of G-d’s goodness and glory rather than an indirect one.⁴

When the three 72-letter verses are aligned in the described manner, the 22nd triplet, or “Name,” is *yud-yud-yud*, three *yuds* in a row.

The verse also alludes to the “Name” *yud-lamed-yud*, inasmuch as these letters are the initials of the words for “G-d will again rejoice” [*yashuv y-k-v-k lasus*].

This is the 2nd of the 72 triplets in this array.

These two “names” together possess six letters, bringing the total number associated with the Names of G-d in this passage to 370, the number of lights a penitent individual merits to elicit upon himself from above.

These lights are the 370 lights that shine from the face of *Arich Anpin*, in accordance with the mystical meaning of “He will again have mercy on us,”⁵ the two cheeks, as is stated in the *Zohar*.

The Thirteen Attributes of Divine Mercy appear in two forms in the Bible: the more prevalent form is that given fully in Exodus 34:6-7: “Mighty, merciful, and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in kindness and truth, storing kindness to thousands, bearing iniquity, transgression, and sin, acquitting.” This form is repeated in abbreviation several other times. The second form is that given in Micah 7:18-20: “Who is a G-d like You, who pardons iniquity, and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He does not maintain His anger forever, because He delights in kindness. He will again have mercy upon us; He will suppress our iniquities. You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea; You will show truth to Jacob, kindness to Abraham, as You have sworn to our fathers from days of old.”

As we explained previously, the Divine attribute of forgiveness and mercy is indicated in Kabbalah by the beard. These thirteen attributes of mercy, then, correspond to the thirteen parts of the beard. The correspondence between both versions and the beard is as follows:

² Exodus 14:19-21.

³ 2:51b.

⁴ This array may be seen, *inter alia*, in the standard editions of the *Zohar*, volume 2, p. 270a.

⁵ Micah 7:19.

	Exodus 34	Micah 7	beard
1	mighty	Who is a G-d like You	sideburns
2	merciful	who pardons iniquity	mustache
3	and gracious	and forgives the transgression	the lack of hair in the middle of the mustache
4	long-	of the remnant of his heritage	the hair under the lower lip
5	suffering	He does not maintain His anger forever	the lack of hair in the middle of the hair under the lower lip
6	abundant in kindness	because He delights in kindness	the hair of the jaw bone
7	and truth	He will again have mercy upon us	the lack of hair on the cheeks
8	storing kindness	He will suppress our iniquities	the upper layer of the beard
9	to thousands	You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea	the short hairs between the upper and lower layers of the beard
10	bearing iniquity	You will show truth to Jacob	the small hairs near the throat
11	and transgression	kindness to Abraham	the fact that these small hairs are all of equal size
12	and sin	as You have sworn to our fathers	the lack of hair in the mouth
13	and acquits	from days of old	the lower layer of the beard

What concerns us here is the seventh attribute/part of the beard. At least in the Micah-version, this is the specific attribute of mercy. It is associated with the “part of the beard” that is actually not part of the beard, i.e., the lack of beard-hair on the cheeks.

As we have explained, the overall meaning of hair is a highly concentrated but contracted form of life-force, as evinced by the dual fact that hair is constantly growing but can be cut without causing pain. The beard overall, thus, is a contraction of life-force flowing from the head or mind into the body bypassing the usual channel of the throat, etc. It thus signifies G-d’s great mercy in bypassing the usual “rules” He has set up for creation and granting us mercy and forgiving us.

Within the general context of the beard, which basically covers the entire face, there are the two cheeks. If we consider them part of the beard as well, they signify the revelation within the occultation, so to speak. The “light” or glow or expression shining from the face is obstructed by the beard, except for this part of the visage that is free of hair. In the cheeks, then, all the emotion expressed in the face but covered by the beard can be seen. As we said, the “light” shining from the face is the good will of forgiveness. This must be largely transmuted into the contracted form of hair in order to be able to reach the sinner in a form he can assimilate, but the exception is the cheek, the one part of the face that remains uncovered in order to express most fully G-d’s unmitigated good will.

—translated from *Sefer HaLikutim*

Parashat Nitzavim [second installment]

In the course of exhorting the Jewish people to perform G-d's commandments, Moses tells them, "For this commandment that I command you this day is not too wondrous for you, or too far away."¹ The Arizal discusses the mystical dynamics of performing the commandments.

There are two types of [spiritual] coupling that we effect by performing G-d's commandments. These are the coupling of *Abba* and *Ima* and the coupling of *Z'eir Anpin* and *Nukva*.

There are also two [corresponding] types of commandment: active commandments and passive commandments.

These are generally known as positive commandments ("do's") and negative commandments ("don'ts").

As you know, our sages point² out that the numerical value of "My Name" plus that of the letters *yud-hei* equals 365, while the numerical value of "My Remembrance" plus that of the two letters *vav-hei* equals 248.

There are 613 commandments in the Torah, 365 of which are passive and 248 of which are active.

When Moses was experiencing his first revelation of G-d in the burning bush, G-d told him, "Thus shall you say to the Israelites: 'G-d [*Havayah*], the G-d of your fathers, the G-d of Abraham, the G-d of Isaac, and the G-d of Jacob sent me to you.' This is My Name forever, and this is My Remembrance for all generations."³ G-d thus refers to the Name *Havayah* as "My Name" and "My Remembrance."

The word for "My Name" is *shemi*, and the word for "My Remembrance" is *zichri*:

Shemi: $shin-mem-yud = 300 + 40 + 10 = 350$.

Zichri: $zayin-chaf-reish-yud = 7 + 20 + 200 + 10 = 237$.

The numerical value of the first two letters of the Name *Havayah* (*yud-hei*: 10 + 5) is 15; when this is added to the numerical value of the word for "My Name" (350), the sum is 365, the number of passive commandments.

The letters *yud-hei*, in addition to being the first two letters of the Name *Havayah*, are themselves a Name of G-d (*Kah*), so the word "My Name" plus *yud-hei* can be read as the phrase "My Name *Kah*."

The numerical value of the second two letters of the Name *Havayah* (*vav-hei*: 6 + 5) is 11; when this is added to the numerical value of the word for "My Remembrance" (237), the sum is 248, the number of active commandments.

The letters *vav-hei* are not a Name of G-d, just a "remembrance" of the Name *Havayah*. The word for "My Remembrance" plus the letters *vav-hei* can thus be seen as the phrase "My Remembrance, *vav-hei*."

Thus, the active commandments are associated with the second half of the Name *Havayah* and the passive commandments with the first half.

By this they meant that the passive commandments are dependent upon the two letters *yud-hei*, which indicate *Abba* and *Ima*, and the active commandments

¹ Deuteronomy 30:11.

² *Zohar* 3:275b; *Tikunei Zohar*, introduction (4b) and 2 (18a).

³ Exodus 3:15.

[are dependent] upon the two letters *vav-hei*, which indicate *Z'eir Anpin* and *Nukva*.

Thus, when a person performs a commandment, he effects both types of coupling. This is because the first two letters of the word for “commandment” [*mitzvah*, *mem-tzadik*] transform via *atbash* to *yud-hei*, which signifies the coupling of *Abba* and *Ima*.

Atbash is the most common of the various methods used in Kabbalah (and elsewhere in the Torah, as well) to relate concepts by substituting the letters of a word with other letters according to a specific algorithm. In *atbash*, the first letter of the alphabet (*alef*) is replaced by the last letter (*tav*), the second letter (*beit*) by the penultimate letter (*shin*), and so on. (These two, first pairs of substitutions form the word *at-bash*). *Mem* pairs with *yud*, and *tzadik* pairs with *hei*.

In general, transforming a word (or set of letters) to another via a substitution algorithm indicates that in the resulting word (or set of letters), the idea represented by the first word is hidden or less intense; hence, to reach it, the letters have to be “decoded.” In this case, the idea of *yud-hei* (the union of *Abba* and *Ima*) is hidden in the first two letters of the word *mitzvah*. The second two letters of both the Name *Havayah* and the word *mitzvah* are the same (*vav-hei*).

This coupling is accomplished by observing the passive commandments, as alluded to by the fact that the numerical value of the word for “My Name” plus that of the two letters *yud-hei* equals 365, as stated.

To explain this:

The numerical value of the word for “My Name” is [also] that of the progressive iteration of the spelling-out of Name *Havayah* when spelled out to equal 72—which corresponds to *Abba* and the letter *yud* [of the Name *Havayah*]—plus the progressive iteration of the spelling-out of the Name *Havayah* when spelled to equal 63—which corresponds to *Ima* and the letter *hei* [of the Name *Havayah*].

As we have explained previous, the Name *Havayah* is spelled out in Kabbalah in four basic ways, such that it equals 72, 63, 45, and 52. These four numerical equivalents themselves correspond to the four letters of the Name *Havayah*, and thus to the four basic *partzufim*, the *sefirot*, etc. In the following chart, the letters that are varied in order to produce the different values are indicated in bold:

				total	letter	partzuf
the <i>yud</i> -filling	<i>yud</i>	<i>yud-vav-dalet</i>	$10 + 6 + 4 = 20$	72	<i>yud</i>	<i>Abba</i>
	<i>hei</i>	<i>hei-yud</i>	$5 + 10 = 15$			
	<i>vav</i>	<i>vav-yud-vav</i>	$6 + 10 + 6 = 22$			
	<i>hei</i>	<i>hei-yud</i>	$5 + 10 = 15$			
the combined filling	<i>yud</i>	<i>yud-vav-dalet</i>	$10 + 6 + 4 = 20$	63	<i>hei</i>	<i>Ima</i>
	<i>hei</i>	<i>hei-yud</i>	$5 + 10 = 15$			
	<i>vav</i>	<i>vav-alef-vav</i>	$6 + 1 + 6 = 13$			
	<i>hei</i>	<i>hei-yud</i>	$5 + 10 = 15$			
the <i>alef</i> -filling	<i>yud</i>	<i>yud-vav-dalet</i>	$10 + 6 + 4 = 20$	45	<i>vav</i>	<i>Z'eir Anpin</i>
	<i>hei</i>	<i>hei-alef</i>	$5 + 1 = 6$			
	<i>vav</i>	<i>vav-alef-vav</i>	$6 + 1 + 6 = 13$			
	<i>hei</i>	<i>hei-alef</i>	$5 + 1 = 6$			
the <i>hei</i> -filling	<i>yud</i>	<i>yud-vav-dalet</i>	$10 + 6 + 4 = 20$	52	<i>hei</i>	<i>Nukva</i>
	<i>hei</i>	<i>hei-hei</i>	$5 + 5 = 10$			
	<i>vav</i>	<i>vav-vav</i>	$6 + 6 = 12$			
	<i>hei</i>	<i>hei-hei</i>	$5 + 5 = 10$			

As we have also explained previously, the progressive iteration of a Name is produced by considering first the first letter of the Name, then the first two letters, then the first three letters, and so on until the whole Name is spelled out. For the 72-Name, this iteration yields:

step			
1	<i>yud:</i>	<i>yud-vav-dalet</i>	10
2	<i>yud:</i>	<i>yud-vav-dalet</i>	10
	<i>hei:</i>	<i>hei-yud</i>	5
3	<i>yud:</i>	<i>yud-vav-dalet</i>	10
	<i>hei:</i>	<i>hei-yud</i>	5
	<i>vav:</i>	<i>vav-yud-vav</i>	6
4	<i>yud:</i>	<i>yud-vav-dalet</i>	10
	<i>hei:</i>	<i>hei-yud</i>	5
	<i>vav:</i>	<i>vav-yud-vav</i>	6
	<i>hei:</i>	<i>hei-yud</i>	5
total			

For the 63-Name, this iteration yields:

step				
1	yud:	yud-vav-dalet	10	
2	yud:	yud-vav-dalet	10	
	hei:	hei-yud	5	
3	yud:	yud-vav-dalet	10	
	hei:	hei-yud	5	
	vav:	vav-alef-vav	6	
4	yud:	yud-vav-dalet	10	
	hei:	hei-yud	5	
	vav:	vav-alef-vav	6	
	hei:	hei-yud	5	
			total	

184 + 166 = 350, the numerical value of “My Name” (*shemi*).

When we combine this value with that of the letters *yud-hei*, which is the source of these two Names [i.e., iterations], the total is 365, the number of passive commandments.

The technical term for “progressive iteration” is *achorayim*, which means “backs.” This is because this operation on a Name indicates how the Divine effulgence represented by this Name is progressively withdrawn from reality. We are to visualize how first the first letter retreats, then the first two letters, then the first three letters, etc., as if we are watching the Name disappear into its source head-first, leaving us with progressively less and less of its “end” or “back.”

In contrast, the basic letters of a Name indicate its direct revelation into reality.

This leads to the following idea:

This indicates that by observing the passive commandments, the individual causes “My Name,” which is equivalent to the backs of *Abba* and *Ima*, to join with their fronts, which are indicated by the letters *yud-hei*. The total [of this union] is then 365.

Thus, by observing passive commandments, we ensure that whatever withholding of Divine blessing is necessary for the world to operate properly is accomplished together with, permeated by, and for the sake of direct revelation.

It appears to me, Chaim [Vital], that [the above phenomenon] occurs because the coupling of *Abba* and *Ima* is the higher and more hidden [of the two types of coupling]. Therefore, since passive commandments are [an expression of] judgment, they cause [the letters indicating the coupling they effect] to be transformed [via an algorithm]. Thus, [the *yud-hei*] are transformed and hidden in the two letters *mem-tzadik* of *mitzvah* through *atbash*.

In general, the love between *Abba* and *Ima* is relatively mature, settled, consistent, and modest, like that between a mature couple, as opposed to that between *Z'eir Anpin* and *Nukva*, which is relatively impetuous, volatile, arduous, and uninhibited, like that between a young couple. Despite the fireworks of young love, the settled passion of maturity is more consistent and enduring, despite it being more subdued.

Similarly, the love for G-d we express by refraining from what He opposes (i.e., observing passive commandments) is less outwardly expressive and colorful than fulfilling His directives (by performing active commandments), but reflects a deeper, more mature level of relationship. The ability to exercise self-control and restraint strikes deeper than the ability to demonstrate love actively. Both are necessary, but passivity causes the greater union.

As a practical example, as a husband and wife mature, they (hopefully) realize that they can enhance their marriage more by refraining from negative acts than by doing positive ones. Refraining from negative acts would include avoiding anger, criticism, name-calling (*à la* blasphemy), and arguments, as well as avoiding negative habits that make one a less-attractive or less-functional partner (overeating, under-sleeping, surrendering to animal drives, etc.). Positive acts would include active demonstrations of consideration and love, such as giving complements or gifts, helping each out, etc. Both are necessary, but it is harder—and therefore calls for more devotion—to resist a second helping of chocolate cake or a chance for a cutting criticism than it is to give a complement.

When a person performs an active commandment, he causes the coupling of *Z'eir Anpin* and *Nukva*, which are indicated by the *vav-hei* of the Name *Havayah* and of the word *mitzvah*. For the letters of the Name *Havayah* are the same as the word *mitzvah*, except that the first two letters [of each] are transformed [into each other] via *atbash*, as stated. Then, the numerical value of the *vav-hei* is added to that of the word for “My Remembrance” to give the 248 active commandments.

Thus, in performing active commandments, there is no need to transform the letters that indicate these commandments (*vav-hei*) in producing the word *mitzvah*, since the union they effect (that of *Z'eir Anpin* and *Nukva*) is not hidden as is that effected by observing passive commandments (i.e., that of *Abba* and *Ima*).

Earlier in this *parashah*, Moses says, “The hidden things are to G-d, our God, but the revealed things are to us and our children forever, to do everything in this Torah.”⁴ It is explained that “the hidden things” refers to the first two letters of the Name *Havayah*, *yud-hei*, which indicate *Abba* and *Ima*, here alluded to by the words “G-d, our G-d.” The word for “but the revealed things” (*ve-ha-niglot*) begins with the letters *vav-hei*, and can thus be read, “*Vav-hei* [are] revealed,” alluding to the union of *vav-hei*, *Z'eir Anpin* and *Nukva*, the “children” of *Abba* and *Ima*.

—translated from *Sefer HaLikutim*

⁴ Deuteronomy 29:28.

