

FROM THE TEACHINGS OF OUR REBBE
THE GAON AND TZADDIK
REBBE YITZCHOK MYER MORGENSTERN SHLIT"A

SEA OF WISDOM

D'ei Chochmah L'Nafshechah

אלה תולדת נח נח איש צדיק תמים היה בדורותיו את האלקים התהלך נח.

The path to true *menuchas hanefesh*, to ultimately reach the level that when confronted with the aspect of *Elokim*, with Hashem's strict judgment, we will get right up and start again with a freshness and joy.

"These are the chronicles of Noah: Noah was a righteous man, faultless in his generation. Noah walked with Hashem."

The Chronicles of Noah - Attaining Holy Tranquility

Tzaddikim explain that the word אלה - *these* - that opens our parshah is an acronym for the phrase אתה הראת לדעת וכו' - *You are the ones who have been shown, so that you will know that Hashem is G-d, there is none beside Him.*

This phrase alludes to the holy days of Tishrei, which we so recently celebrated, and the beginning of Cheshvan, when we begin to feel that the Tishrei experience has gifted us with a new path of spiritual understanding. This is how we have "been shown, so that we know that Hashem is G-d." The outcome of this new understanding is a new level of avodah. This new outlook is an aspect of נח נח, the name Noah repeated in the opening *pasuk*. As the Midrash explains: Noah / tranquility for the *elyonim* [literally, those who dwell on high], and Noah for the *tachtonim* [literally, those who dwell in the lower worlds].

This signifies an aspect of holy tranquility where one doesn't lose track of his avodas Hashem whether he is experiencing a spiritual ascent (*elyonim*) or descent (*tachtonim*.) In this manner, one attains the aspect of צדיק תמים, next outlined in our parshah: *A righteous, faultless man*. It is to this aspect specifically that the Rama alludes in the beginning of Shulchan Aruch: "I place Hashem before me always...this is the level of the righteous who walk before G-d..." The Vilna Gaon comments that the source for this is in our *parshah*: את וזה כל מעלות הצדיקים - *Noah walked with G-d*. He concludes: *This is the sum total of the great levels of the righteous.*

Until a person attains the level of, "you have been shown, so that you will know," he has no *menuchah*, inner peace, since he is still in a state of conflict and transition: "Sometimes pure, sometimes defiled. At times kosher, at others unfit." This indicates that he sometimes ascends [meaning, he maintains a positive attitude which is the most important element of succeeding in *avodas Hashem*], and at other times he descends [or falls into a negative, depressed, angry, or rebellious state which causes him to give up on his high spiritual ideals]. **Only through the deep understanding received during Tishrei and actualized during Cheshvan can one attain this dual aspect of Noah, so that one never falls from his hope that Hashem will still enable him to achieve his big spiritual goals, no matter what spiritual descent he is experiencing, *chas v'shalom*.**

The Bris Menuchah explains that the Name ו-ה-ה-י (which is the *tziruf* of the four letters of the Divine Name *HaVaYaH* for the month of Cheshvan) brings one to an aspect of *Bris Menuchah*, a "covenant of tranquility." This is a pact that Hashem makes with His people that enables us to reach the holy *menuchah* of Noah, which is the spiritual tranquility of the Shabbos itself.

More specifically: the Bris Menuchah explains that there are four ascending levels upon which the soul ascends. Of course, he is discussing ascending to the

supernal worlds, and this only relates to a handful of unique tzaddikim in each generation. Even so, there are microcosms of these worlds that relate to every individual's journey to Hashem. These levels are referred to as מתנה / Gift, המלה ים, / Sea of Salt, מצפה / Outlook, and רמה / Height. Rav Menachem Mendel of Shklov - a very great student of the Vilna Gaon - explains how each of these levels relate to the Name ו-ה-ה-י.

The Gift of Torah

The first level of "Gift" refers to Torah, which Chazal said (*Eruvin* 54a) is given as a gift. This teaches that the first step to spiritual ascent is Torah study. One must make a fresh start in Torah each new year and each new day. The foundation of every ascent is to accept upon oneself the yoke of Torah and to learn with diligence. Torah is symbolized by the letter vav ו - we see the connection between the letter *vav* and the Torah from the words of Chazal (*Bava Basra* 14a): "The *Luchos* received at Sinai were *vav* / six *tefachim* high and six *tefachim* wide."

The Sea of Salt

One who learns Torah properly - that is, with the express purpose of drawing near to Hashem - progresses to the next letter of the month's permutation: hei ה. But there is a world of difference between one who learns Torah and one who does not. One who does not learn often fails to feel any bitterness over his wrongdoings. He can even fail to understand the damage that sin can cause; he certainly lacks an awareness of the seriousness of even the smallest blemish. One who has been privileged to learn a lot of Torah merits to feel the bitterness of every action that distances him from Hashem, even if it's not an outright sin.

The reason for this is because the soul of one who has merited to receive the light of the Torah is embodied within him in a revealed way. Because of this soul-presence, he is sensitive to that which distances him from Hashem. As the Zohar states: "Torah shows one his sins."

Such feelings of bitterness are the beginning of the rectification of one's sins, since they are a taste of the pain of the *Gehinom* that one would have had to undergo if not for *teshuvah*. To paraphrase the Tanya: This world is built on kindness, since with a little pain in this world one cleanses a lot of pain in the next. And even though all the pain of this world doesn't add up to the suffering of one "hour" in *Gehinom* ... all of the difficult punishments discussed regarding the next world only apply to one who has not merited the light of Torah. If he doesn't cleanse himself from sin in this world through genuine regret, he must undergo a more difficult cleansing process in the next.

The First Plateau of the מצפה / Outlook: Sukkos

Since Hashem wishes to only give good to His creations, and certainly on His children the Jewish people, He wants us to use the feelings of regret and pain, a lower form of *teshuvah*, to immediately move on to the third stage of מצפה / Outlook." The third stage has two aspects to it; the first is סוכות - *Booths* - which symbolizes the next hei ה of the Divine Name. This level is the source of a more elevated aspect of *teshuvah*. In one's personal *avodas Hashem*, this means transforming the feeling of bitterness and regret into a force that enhances one's faith and trust that Hashem is still with him no matter what - it is just that His presence is temporarily hidden. **Even though one feels even more distanced**

Likutei Yam HaChochmah

The Divine Name of Cheshvan - Attaining True Tranquility

It is well known - and brought in many sources - that the spiritual work of each month of the year is symbolized by a different *tziruf* or permutation of the four letters of the Divine Name *HaVaYaH*. [Four letters form twelve unique permutations. We meditate on a different one each month when we say Hashem's name in the blessing of *mekadesh Yisrael v'roshei chodashim*, "He who sanctifies the Jewish people and the new months." Each combination is formed from either the initial or final letters of four adjacent words in scripture.]

The combination for Cheshvan is found in the connected phrase: וְדַבֵּשׁ הָאֵלֹהִים הַיּוֹם - *The land flowing with milk and honey; This day, Hashem your G-d is commanding you to obey all these rules and laws (Devarim 26:15-16)*. The acronym formed by the initials of these four words forms the Name וְדַבֵּשׁ.

Since each combination of any Divine Name represents a different path in *avodas Hashem*, and since the *avodah* of Cheshvan is to actualize the new aspect of Divine awareness that we attained during Tishrei, we still must understand just how this is represented in the permutation וְדַבֵּשׁ.

The *sefer* Bris Menuchah explains that the Name וְדַבֵּשׁ brings one to an aspect of *Bris Menuchah*, a "covenant of tranquility." This is a pact that Hashem makes with His people that enables us to reach a level of holy *menuchah* (tranquility), which is the spiritual tranquility of Shabbos itself.

One who comes to experience this promised tranquility knows that he need not remain with any sin; if [his sin] makes him feel bad, he can always turn it into yearning to find Hashem. Every Jew is actually a "portion of G-d above," as it were, and none of us can really stand the burden of even one sin. But, we all have the strength to achieve the highest levels, if only our sins didn't continually hamper our progress.

This is illustrated by a certain man who approached the Maggid of Kozhnitz and asked, "We have been friends since our youth, and have both struggled to draw near to Hashem. How did you merit your exalted level, while I remained a regular Jew?"

The Maggid replied, "I always worked on doing *teshuvah*, never leaving a sin - which blocks spiritual progress - to fester on my conscience. You, on the other hand, always searched for elevation but didn't always work on *teshuvah*."

There is no other way. One must toil mightily in Torah, especially in this month of Marcheshvan, when the "lips are whispering" words of Torah as a result of the holy mitzvos of Tishrei. If one learns with the proper intentions, this alone atones for all his sins. As the Vilna Gaon taught, one who learns with yearning and diligence for three hours straight, especially at night, atones for all his sins [since the Torah will show him what to do and how to do complete his *teshuvah*].

We must believe that Hashem wants us to change all bad to good, and

to receive strength for doing so from the holy Torah. The Torah itself is called עוֹז - *power*. In this way, we will merit the tranquility mentioned in the Bris Menuchah and fulfill the *pasuk*: שִׁבְעָה יָפֹל צַדִּיק וְקָם - *A tzaddik falls seven times and rises*. One can keep rising even if he has fallen. Even when confronted with the aspect of *Elokim* - with Hashem's strict judgment - we will get right up and start again with a freshness and joy. These are the direct results of true *menuchas hanefesh*, tranquility of spirit.



The Month of Cheshvan Following the Path of Avraham Avinu

During the month of Cheshvan which corresponds to Avraham Avinu we should be extra vigilant to follow in his path. This is why (in Eretz Yisroel) we start to say *v'sein tal u'matar l'vracha*, "and send dew and rain for blessing," during this month. Rain is the connection between heaven and earth; we ask Hashem that the upper worlds should shower down on the earth until we become nullified in them.

One should not absolve himself from these *avodos*, these pathways in serving Hashem, with the claim that such elevated ways only relate to tzaddikim. The reason why one should not rule themselves out is because we are spiritually in the situation mentioned of "And there was a famine in the land." The Malchus, embodied in those declaring the kingship of Hashem, have fallen down to the ground - this is called famine. This is the fiftieth gate of impurity, and the way to overcome it is by taking the path of the fiftieth gate of purity, the *yichudim*. We definitely need the aspect of *Magen Avraham*, by entering the *avodah* of *yichudim* while *davening* and learning. *Tefillah* is an aspect of Yitzchak, while learning Torah is an aspect of Yaakov. They are the *Magen Avraham*, the shield of Avraham, which is the light of various *yichudim* that bring to a greater connection to Hashem. And Torah study and *Tefillah* protect the state of *dveykus* that is attained through all the various types of *yichudim*. This is indicated in the writings of the Arizal, where he says that מִגֶּן - *magen* (93) has the same numerical value as three times אֶל - *E-l* (31) - each one corresponding to each of the *Avos*.

The truth is that a Jewish soul naturally yearns for this kind of spirituality and closeness to Hashem. A Jew has no true pleasure in life, no real vitality, unless he has the supernal sight - seeing the light of Hashem in everything. With such vision, the material form of things will not deter him from *dveykus*. This is the meaning of complete *teshuvah* - to cleave to that which is above us, the upper worlds. The *geulah* depends on this caliber of *teshuvah*, as we find that Hashem tells Avraham, "With you they will be *chosem*, they will close." The end and closure of the exile depends on our following in the way of Avraham.

Collection of Teachings

Transforming Pain to Crowns

On Simchas Torah, the Rebbe said over in the name of the Kohznitzer Maagid that the letters written in the Sefer Torah are written with *Taagim* - crowns. Another word used for these crowns on the letters is *Koitzim* - which literally means thorns, but can also mean apex, or points. Thorns cause pain and suffering to a person; the *Avodah* of a Yid is to transform all *Koitzim* - pain and suffering - into *Taagim* - crowns above the letters written in the Sefer Torah. All pain and suffering a person suffers in life brings a person to a place of greater understanding and comprehension of the Torah and the Oneness of Hashem together with an abundance of *Shefa*.

On this note, a Chossid related to us how he was once hospitalized for a week. While there, he had spoken to the Rebbe, and he told him that when a person goes through any suffering in life - especially an illness and hospitalization, which is painful - it brings them to a greater comprehension in Torah and *Elokus*. The Chossid told us that the day he left the hospital, he began to receive new insights and greater understandings in Torah which he never had before, which in turn brought him to higher levels of *dveykus* and closer to Hashem. May Hashem help that we all receive greater insights in Torah and higher levels of *dveykus* with the coming of Moshiach with mercy and kindness speedily in our days.

(From a talk on Simchas Torah 5783)



The Reason for a Seudas Hodaah

The Rebbe explained the reason for having a *seudas hodaah* after recovering from an illness as follows: Why do we make a celebration with a *seudas hodaah* after recovering from an illness and a person going back to their original state of health, (it would have been better off for a person never to have gotten sick in the

first place)? However, the truth is that the celebration and thanksgiving to Hashem after recovering from an illness isn't because a person now goes back to their original state of health - rather, a person, through their illness, is elevated to a much higher level than originally at before the illness, and that is what the *seudas hodaah* is for.

(From a talk on Beis Cheshvan 5783)



Reviewing the Avodah of Tishrei - Dancing with the Torah

On Simchas Torah, there were some who would dance the entire time during the *hakafos* without pausing at all, and there were those who took breaks, and stood on the side for a bit. This can be explained based on the words of the Chiddushei HaRim, who said there are those who dance with the Torah they already learned this past year, and there are those who dance with the Torah they will learn the coming year. Meaning, there are those who reason that the happiness on Simchas Torah is about the completing of the Torah; however, the truth is that the happiness is really from the fact that on Simchas Torah, we begin the Torah anew. Those who dance with the Torah they already learned are limited to how much they can dance for to as much as they learned the past year. However, those who dance with the intention of dancing with the Torah they will learn the coming year are not limited by what they learned at all! Rather, they transcend the limitation, for the true will of a Yid is to learn each and every second! Therefore, they don't stop to dance with the Torah on Simchas Torah at all.

(From a talk on Simchas Torah 5783)

D'ei Chochmah L'Nafshechah

as a result of his slip, he must realize and focus on the fact that there is no end to Hashem's mercy and love for His holy children.

This seeking is represented by the *sukkos*, the "Booths", which are the walls of true *emunah* that surround a person like the *anaanei hakavod* - clouds of glory that surrounded the Jewish people in the desert. **Just as those clouds protected us from all harm, in the "great and terrifying desert, the place of the snake, the fiery serpent, and the scorpion," so too do the surrounding clouds of faith uplifts a person's despondency at his own failings. He is protected by the walls of Noach's *Teivah* and rises above the bitter waters of the "Sea of Salt."**

The Baal HaTanya writes that there are two elements to *teshuvah*: the first is that which is famously discussed in the Rambam, in which one attains atonement so that he need not suffer any punishment for his sins. This element itself encompasses four stages: 1) regret; 2) ceasing to sin; 3) verbally confessing the sin; and 4) resolving not to return to the sin in the future. The second aspect of *teshuvah* is to completely eradicate the sin so that one is in Hashem's favor at least as much as he was before the sin. The earlier authorities advocated fasting and other forms of self-mortification in order to reach this second level. However, the path of the students of the Baal Shem Tov is completely different; it is the way of the future redemption, which already shines into our times and enables us all to do *teshuvah* from love prior to the ultimate redemption. This is a revelation of the great kindness and love that Hashem has for us.

The Rambam writes that the Torah promises that at the end of our exile, we will repent and then immediately be redeemed. We can learn that this *teshuvah* is from love from the *pasuk* (*Devarim* 30:6), "And Hashem your G-d will circumcise your heart and the heart of your children...to love [Him] with all your heart and soul..." In earlier times this was not yet possible, since the light of the end of days was not yet shining strongly enough.

The Second Plateau of the מצפה / Outlook: Mitzpeh

This *teshuvah* - of contemplating that Hashem is right here with me, and can still be accessed despite my sin - has many aspects. It begins with *Binah*: if one continues to contemplate deeply that Hashem is everywhere, and truly breaks down the barriers and attains a consciousness of His omnipresence, one comes to the level of *Chochmah* / Wisdom. This level is the perfection of *Binah*, where one has broken through to a place where he is truly surrounded by *emunah*. At this level, he is saved from the "waters of the flood" - all forms of turbulence and insecurity. Whether it is financial insecurity, or doubts about whether one's flaws have made him undeserving of Hashem's love, this level protects a person from inner turbulence and fills him instead with security and peace. **He has entered the ark and is protected from all harm.**

This is the completion of the third level discussed by the Bris Menuchah, the world of the "מצפה / Outlook." The word *mitzpeh* means to see, or spy out, and it alludes to one who has attained such a complete level of *Binah* / Understanding that he truly sees G-dliness in everything. G-dliness fills his world with light, much as lightning lights up a darkened night sky. This perfection of *Binah* and the rise to *Chochmah* is alluded to in the very word *הכמה* - it bears the same letters as the phrase *מה כח* - the power of what or "the power of naught." In this state, one sees that he himself is nothing, since everything is from Hashem, and only He has the power to accomplish anything. Someone who truly lives on the level of *Chochmah* comes to manifest the dictum of Chazal: "Who is wise? He who can see what is to be." **The Baal HaTanya explains that one who attains this level sees everything as being continually renewed every second of every day.**

The "Heights" of Kesser

Noach was saved in the *Teivah* in the merit of his attaining this level of *Chochmah*. Despite his greatness, the Zohar calls him, רעיא שטיא - foolish

leader, since he had too little faith; he lacked the higher level of the applied faith of *Kesser* / Crown. This high level is the completion of repentance, when one's sins are transformed into merits. We can see this from the word *Kesser* itself; the word *כתר* can be transposed as *כרת* - *spiritual annihilation*.

Moshe Rabbeinu, the "faithful shepherd," far surpassed Noach as a leader since he revealed the aspect of *Daas* / Knowledge which is the external facet of *Kesser*. Moshe could even atone for the sin of the golden calf. By saying, *מחני נא מספרך* - please erase me from Your book [if You do not forgive them], Moshe Rabbeinu displayed the ultimate level of self-sacrifice. This is an aspect of *yechidah*, the highest level of the soul which corresponds to *Kesser*. The very word *מחני* - erase me - is a conjunction of the phrase *מי נח* - the waters of Noach. Moshe rectified Noach's error. He elevated the entire nation to the level of, *ויאמר ה' סלחתי כד* - *And Hashem said: I have forgiven you in accordance with your words*. The initials of the phrase form the acronym *כוסי רייה*, as in, *כוסי רייה* - my cup overflows - which symbolizes the connection of *Kesser* where one merits to be so filled with love that he is "drunk" on the joy and vitality in Hashem. It is this level that causes all sin to revert to merit. It was then that Hashem revealed the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy and the light of the forgiveness of Yom Kippur, which was to be a unique day for all generations.

This level of *Kesser* is the fourth aspect of *רמה* - the Heights. The word *רמה* has a numerical value of 245, the same as that of Adam Kadmon, the fifth and highest world that is associated with *yechidah*. On this level, one can turn the worst sin into a merit through the bitterness of the level of the "Sea of Salt." This process of turning the bitter into the bounty of *Kesser* is alluded to in the very word for the highest level; *רמה* can be reconfigured as *מררה* - bitterness.

Connecting to These Levels

Although we are discussing the highest levels, spiritual attainments that are really beyond our grasp, the truth is that everyone is connected with some aspect of *Chochmah* and *Kesser*, according to their individual level. One who attains the height of *dveykus* according to his level has achieved his personal *Kesser*. It is regarding the relative and subjective levels that we speak here, not the towering heights of the actual sefirah of *Chochmah* or *Kesser*.

One who comes to experience the promised tranquility knows that he need not remain with any sin; if that sin makes him feel bad, he can always turn it into yearning to find Hashem. Every Jew is actually a "portion of G-d above," as it were, and none of us can really stand the burden of even one sin. But we all have the strength to achieve the highest levels, if only our sins didn't continually hamper our progress.

We must believe that Hashem wants us to change all bad into good, and to receive strength for this from the holy Torah. The Torah itself is called *עוז* - power. In this way, we will traverse all the four supernal worlds mentioned in the Bris Menuchah and fulfill the verse: *שבע יפול צדיק וקם* - *A tzaddik falls seven times and rises*. One can keep on moving up even if he has fallen. **This is the deeper meaning of the *pasuk*, "And Noach walked with Elokim [G-d]." Even when confronted with the aspect of Elokim, with Hashem's strict judgment, we will get right up and start again with a freshness and joy. These are the direct results of true *menuchas hanefesh*, tranquility of spirit.**

This will lead you to the deep contemplation of *Binah*, which culminates in the holy vision of *Chochmah*. And then continue growing until you reach the *Kesser* aspect *teshuvah* from love, which can transform even a sin of *kareis* to the good. Through this *teshuvah* from love, we draw nearer the ultimate redemption, which is an aspect of *yechidah* / *Kesser*, with the advent of our righteous Moshiach, in love and mercy, speedily and in our days, Amen.

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