

Shabbat Terumah  
5779

# VeAbita

An anthology from the shiurim and farbrengens  
of Harav **Yitzchak Ginsburgh**

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

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**Ve'abita** is a weekly anthology of Rav Yitzchak Ginsburgh shlita's recent teachings, including complete shiurim, short excerpts from shiurim, and material written specifically for the anthology.

**Ve'abita**, which takes its name from the verse (Psalms 119:18), "Open my eyes and **I will see** the wonders of Your Torah" (גַּל עֵינַי וְאֲבִיטָה נִפְלְאוֹת מִתּוֹרַתְךָ) is printed weekly by American Friends of Gal Einai, a non-profit organization dedicated to spreading knowledge of the Torah's inner dimension.

Dedicated in memory of Dinah Abrahamson a"h and Aaron Swartz z"l

# What is truth? (Part 3)

## Three levels of truth in Torah and their applications

TRANSCRIBED, EDITED, AND ANNOTATED BY MOSHE GENUTH

### Synopsis

This is the third class given on truth. The first two surveyed the theories of truth found in philosophy and connected them to certain areas of the Torah. In this lecture, Rav Ginsburgh looks at the topic of truth from a purely Torah perspective.

Chapter one introduces the three levels of truth described in Torah: the periphery of truth, truth, and truthful to His truth. Each of these is then explained to actually have inner and external dimensions, all of which have deep applications and meaning for our lives. Important concepts such as authenticity and finding one's mission in life are explored.

Chapter two is devoted to the three individuals who made the sun stand still: Moses, Joshua, and Nakdimon ben Gurion, a wealthy man who lived towards the end of the second Temple era. This chapter reveals a surprising connection between truth according to Torah and the ability to make the sun stand still.

The final chapter of this installment on what is truth delves into the manner in which truth comes down from Above as described in Kabbalah. The first topic discussed is how truth unifies two balancing powers in the psyche: selflessness and lowliness. Following some Kabbalistic and numerical considerations, we see how truth can be viewed as the inner essence of every commandment we perform through the allusion of each commandment to the union between Moses and his wife, Tziporah

### 1. Three levels of truth

In this lecture we will continue talking about truth, our topic over the past two lectures. We discussed the different theories of truth in philosophy. This time we will devote ourselves to studying truth purely

from a Torah perspective.

In the first class on this topic, we mentioned that there are three levels of truth spoken of Torah, the “periphery of truth”<sup>1</sup> (שפת אמת), which is an idiom taken from the Bible;

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1. Proverbs 12:19.

this is the border of truth. At this level things are true, but they are lacking the inner essence of truth. The second level is known simply as (אמת), which is more straightforward than the periphery of truth. Then there is the enigmatic idiom, “true to His truth”<sup>2</sup> (אמת לאמתו) implying that truth by itself (the second level) is not absolute truth yet, but rather there is something beyond it: the truth that is God’s truth—what the second word in this idiom (“to his truth”) is alluding to. To attain the third level of “true to His truth” indicates that we have succeeded in aligning our truth<sup>3</sup> with God’s truth.

These three levels of truth can be understood to correspond to the three letters of truth (אמת). The *alef* (א) corresponds to the absolute truth, being true to God’s truth. The *mem* (מ) is simply truth, to be a true individual to be of true character. The final letter, the *tav* (ת) corresponds to the periphery of truth.

The three letters of the word “truth” are very significant because they span the *alef-beit*. The *alef* is the first, the *tav* is the last letter and the *mem* is approximate-

ly in the middle. But, in the Jerusalem Talmud<sup>4</sup> and in the *Tikunei Zohar*<sup>5</sup> it says that the *mem* is the middle itself. Truth is the power to remain unified from the beginning to the end (and through the entire path in the middle). Likewise, one of the first things that *Rashi* mentions in relation to the Torah’s first word, “In the beginning” (בראשית), is the verse, “He tells the end from the beginning”<sup>6</sup> (מגיד מראשית אחרית). Again, since truth is the first, the middle, and the final letter of the *alef-beit*, it is the faculty in the psyche that allows us to see things through, beginning to the end. This is the most essential ingredient in enabling the individual to manifest his or her consummate abilities in this life.

Of course, the question that immediately presents itself is what the sages mean when they say that the *mem* is the middle of the letters. Since the *alef-beit* has 22 letters, it does not possess a middle letter (only an odd number has a midpoint). There are two letters in the middle, the 11th and the 12th, which are the *kaf* (כ) and the *lamed* (ל). But, the *mem* is the 13th letter. Yet, for some reason, the sages say

2. *Shabbat* 10a.

3. The three letters of the word “truth” (אמת) permute to spell the verb “to align” (תאם). The word “truth” (אמת) appears six times in the account of creation as the final letters of three consecutive words. The first time is in the first three words, “In the beginning, God created” (בראשית ברא א-להים). Immediately after that, the three letters appear in order, “God created [the]” (ברא א-להים את).

4. *JT Sanhedrin* 1:1.

5. *Tikkun* 63 (94b).

6. Isaiah 46:10. This phrase has 10 letters and therefore can be drawn in the form of a triangle:

		נ		
		ג	ד	
		ו	ח	א
		ת	ש	א
		ת	ר	א

that the first, thirteenth, and twenty-second<sup>7</sup> letters are the beginning middle and end of the letters.<sup>8</sup> Thus, truth according to the Torah is consistent, it does not change from the beginning to the end, it is eternal. In Hebrew, the opposite of “truth” is “unreliable” (כזב).

### The periphery of truth: Words and trust

Returning to the three levels of truth, let us begin by looking at lowest level, the periphery of truth, which can also be translated and understood as “the lip of truth” (שפת אמת). The idiom implies that in this type of truth, what a person speaks is true. It means that I never lie. Whatever comes out of my mouth is the truth.

But, if we follow this through with the two higher levels of truth, we can say that “the periphery/lip of truth” refers to keeping my word, being true to what I say. Then, “truth,” the second level, refers to

being true to myself, or what people call, “being authentic.” And, the highest level of truth, “true to His truth,” refers to being true to God. Each of the levels of truth thus implies being true to something: to my speech, to myself, and to God.

The connection between truth and speech is illustrated beautiful already with the first letter, alef. Not only is alef the first letter of the Hebrew alef-beit it is also an acronym, as taught in the midrash attributed to Rabbi Akiva, for the phrase, “Teach your mouth [to speak] the truth” (אמת למד פיך). The holy Shelah writes<sup>9</sup> that the first and most important thing that parents should educate their children to do is to speak truth. If they do this, the child will be a good person throughout his life. He will never deceive anyone, not his parents nor his friends and his upbringing will force him to always speak truth.

### Seven sabbaticals spent integrating truth

One of the great Chassidic masters, Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz, was a direct disciple of the Ba’al Shem Tov. The most important trait that Rebbe Pinchas invested in through-

7. The triangular value of a number refers to the sum of integers from 1 to that number. Thus, the triangular values of the ordinal value of the letters of “truth” (13, 1, אמת), and 22 are:  $\Delta 1 = 1$ ,  $\Delta 13 = 91$ ,  $\Delta 22 = 253$ . The sum of their triangular values is thus 345, the value of “Moses” (משה), about whom the sages say (*Midrash Tanchuma Korach 11*), “Moses is truthful and his Torah is true” (משה אמת ותורתו אמת).

8. In the fifth installment of this series (the class given for January of 2019), Rav Ginsburgh reviewed over a dozen different explanations solving the enigma behind the sages’ statement. God willing, we will publish this class in a future installment of *Ve’abita*.

9. The Shelah is an acronym for *Shnei luchot habrit*, the most famous work by Rabbi Yishayah ben Avraham Horowitz (c. 1555-1630) who was the Rav of many large and important Jewish communities in Europe, most notably Frankfurt and Prague. He spent the final years of his life in the land of Israel and is buried in Tiberias. *Sha’ar ha’otiyot* 4 (§29-30).

out his life was truth. He toiled on truth for 21 years, all to become one with truth. 21 years are three cycles of seven years each. Each seven years is known as a *shemithah* in Hebrew, or a sabbatical.

For the first seven years, the first sabbatical, he invested his efforts in knowing what truth is. It is not so obvious what truth is. As soon as he identified truth, he spent the next cycle of seven years ridding himself of falsehood. Every individual is full of lies; until you know what truth is, you cannot even identify how much you are lying to yourself, to others, and to God. Therefore, it took another seven-year cycle to rid himself of falsehood. Then he spent another seven years fully devoted to integrating truth into his heart, until he and the truth became one thing, one flesh,<sup>10</sup> just like a husband and wife. When you become one with something, your union can lead to offspring; there are fruits to your labor and the truth in you can give birth to new things.

This is a very important story. We might ask: what is the connection between 21 and truth. The value of “truth” in Hebrew (אמת) is 441, which is 21<sup>2</sup>. 21 is also the value of God’s Name, *Ekyeh* (איהיה); this is the Name that God revealed to Moses at the Burning Bush. There we find the famous description of God as, “I will be what I will be” (איהיה אשר איהיה), which because the

Name *Ekyeh* is repeated twice in it, alludes to 21 times 21. This is a possibly very deep reason for why Rebbe Pinchas had to work for 21 years to integrate truth fully.

### Two dimensions of truth at each level

Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz integrated truth at the highest levels. But, we were talking about the first level, “the periphery of truth,” truth in regard to our speech. It seems that each of the three levels of being true to something divides in two.

Being true to one’s word does not only mean speaking the truth and not lying. It also means keeping our word. Whatever I said, if I implied that I would behave or do something, I have to keep my word and fulfill it. If you promise something you have to keep it. There is an important Rashi at the beginning of *parashat Va’eira* on the words, “And my Name *Havayah* I did not reveal to them [the people].”<sup>11</sup> God is telling Moses that He did not reveal the Name *Havayah* to the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Since we find in Genesis that God did address the patriarchs with this Name, Rashi has to explain what the verse means. His explanation is that God is saying that, “I have not yet revealed my attribute of truth for which I am known as ‘*Havayah*,’ for I promised the patriarchs promises and did not fulfill them.”

10. Genesis 2:24.

11. Exodus 6:3.

God promised them the land of Israel and had not yet fulfilled His promise.

So just at this first level of the periphery of truth we have to speak the truth and to fulfill what we say, even if only implied by our words. Speaking the truth is about the past and keeping our word relates to the future. A tzaddik, it says, even if he thinks of something in his heart, he is careful to keep it, because of the verse, “he speaks truth in his heart”<sup>12</sup> (דובר אמת בלבבו). These two levels are included in the final letter of truth, the tav (ת).

### Two levels of authenticity: true self-image and true to my purpose and mission in life

The next level is truth, which is about being true to one’s self, corresponding to the letter *mem* in “truth” (אמת). Here also there are two meanings. The first dimension is that there should have no false pretenses about who you are. Do not deceive yourself in relation to yourself. This is sometimes stated as the summary of the entire *Tanya*, the basic work of Chassidut. Do not deceive yourself, to think that you are a *tzaddik* (a righteous individual) when you are not even yet a *beinoni* (an intermediate). Being a *beinoni* does not mean acting in a mediocre way. A *beinoni* is a person who acts only according to the Torah, be it in his thought, his speech, and his actions.

At the end of the night, a *beinoni* takes stock of his actions that day, takes stock of himself, and thinks about how to fix those things that need fixing, tomorrow. A *beinoni* is constantly repenting, constantly doing *teshuvah*. So a *beinoni* is always fixing his self-image, making sure that he does not perceive himself to be something that he is not. Unfortunately, we all tend to deceive ourselves about our spiritual state. The most important assessment we can do is to take an honest and truthful look at ourselves and is an assessment of the self, where am I standing? Where am I holding? Like the question that God asked Adam: *Ayekah?* “Where are you?”<sup>13</sup>

The Alter Rebbe taught this as a general teaching: every person has to be able to ask themselves, “Where are you?”<sup>14</sup> This *Ayekah* is spelled with the same letters as the first word of Lamentations, אֵיכָה, because sometimes that is where you end up, if you begin to think about where you are. But God does not want us to stay there; he wants us to correct the situation. This is the level of being true to oneself, to present myself to other people and to God as I really am. You cannot come with any false pretenses. If you come to a one-on-one meeting with the Rebbe (a *yechidut*) with pretenses, you will not gain anything from it. Rather, you must

12. Psalms 15:2.

13. Genesis 3:9.

14. In ordinal numbering, the *alef equals 1, mem*

come naked in a sense and present yourself as you are. In the same way, you should not deceive people about who you are.

The inner aspect of being true to one's self is found in the form of dedication and self-sacrifice that one has to fulfill his mission in life. To do this the right way, we have to know what one's mission in life is. Whether I know or do not know, definitely God has given me certain talents and abilities which He wants me to realize to the fullest, to realize my potential. Being true to myself, like fulfilling promises, in this case is like having an innate promise to myself to fulfill the potential that God has given me. This translates into fulfilling my mission in life. Everyone has a mission in life.

### **Two dimensions of being true to His truth: a life of Torah and a dwelling place below**

The third and highest level of truth that we saw corresponds to the absolute truth and the letter *alef* of truth. This truth is about being true to God, to God's truth. God also presents Himself in a certain way to us. He does this with the Torah. The Torah and God are one. The Torah

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*is 13, and tav is 22, and so the ordinal value of "truth" (אמת) is 36, which is 6 squared. 21, which is the root of "truth" (אמת), or 441, is also the triangle of 6 (i.e., the sum of integers from 1 to 6). So the triangle of 6 (21), when squared equals "truth" (אמת) and just the triangle of 6 is the value of truth in primordial numbering.*

is God's self-representation to us. If I keep the Torah's commandments, if I live by the Torah, then I am living by God's will.

The highest level of truth in the *sefirot* corresponds to the crown. The crown in general has two dimensions, and inner and outer. The crown's inner dimension is pleasure and its external dimension is will. The inner pleasure is called *Atik Yomin* and the external level is called *Arich Anpin*. Once again, they represent Divine pleasure or serenity and Divine will.

To be true to God's will is to keep the Torah. I am being true to the way that God wants me to represent Him in the world. He wants me to be a little image of God. For this I have 248 limbs and 365 blood vessels or sinews, and they correspond to the 248 prescriptive and 365 prohibitive commandments. So, to be true to God's representation of His will, I need to keep these commandments.

Does God have an inner dimension that goes beyond the keeping of the mitzvot? He created the world for the purpose of making the world into a dwelling place for God. The means for doing this are the mitzvot, but the goal is to make the world into a dwelling place. That is God's mission (just like I have a mission). If I have that in mind, then I am true to God's inner self. We can say it in another way: everything I do should be for the sake of

sanctifying God's Name (לקדש שם שמים). The Rambam says that if a Jew lives according to the Torah, he is doing two things: he is fulfilling God's will, but he is also making God beloved upon others who see his actions. This is the sanctification of God's Name on Earth, by doing so we fulfill God's promise to Himself.

This was an important model in and of itself of the three levels of truth, each with two dimensions.

## 2. Three truthful souls

### The sun stood still for three

Now we turn to another beautiful topic, which is based on a section from the Talmud in tractate *Ta'anit*.<sup>15</sup> The sages recount<sup>16</sup> that there were three souls that had the power to make the sun stand still. Everyone knows about how Joshua did this in the middle of his war with the five kings of the Emorite nations. In order to complete his victory, Joshua spoke out and said, "Stand still, O sun, at Gibeon, O moon, in the Valley of Ayalon!"<sup>17</sup> With the sun not setting and daylight remaining, Joshua and his army were able to rout and destroy the Emorite armies. But the sages say that apart from Joshua's well-known act of stopping the sun, there were two other individuals for whom the sun stood still.

The first is Moses. If the disciple Joshua can make it happen, it stands to reason that the master, Moses can also do the same. It is surprising though that the third individual for whom the sun stood still did not even live in Biblical times, when miracles were more common. He lived at the end of the second Temple period, just a few years before the destruction of the second Temple. We might think that the destruction of the Temple would be the time in Jewish history with the least miracles. However, there is an interesting fact that the sages note regarding the first Temple's destruction. Inside the Holy of Holies, Solomon had placed two large cherubim who were in the likeness of a male and female. These two cherubim symbolized the Almighty and the Jewish people. Just after the Temple was seized, the pagans who destroyed it brought out these two cherubim and it was seen that they were locked in an embrace. Asked about this sudden show of spontaneous closeness at a time when one would expect that God and the Jewish people would be as distant as possible (the sages liken the Temple's destruction and the ensuing exile to God "divorcing" as it were the Jewish people), the Ba'al Shem Tov explained that God forbid that one should think that the Temple's destruction and the exile meant that God had forgotten the Jewish people. Rather, the situation is like a sea-

15. 19b and following.

16. *Avodah Zarah* 25a.

17. Joshua 10:12.



farer going out on a voyage. Before he leaves, he spends his final hours ashore with his beloved wife in quiet intimacy. Likewise, even though there were far fewer miracles that occurred openly in the final years of the Temple, at the very end, God revealed His intimate love for the Jewish people, as we will see. Now, the point of going into this topic is to study the essential connection between being true on all three levels discussed earlier and being able to make the sun stand still. Only the individuals who possess absolute truth is able to do this.

Before reading the story regarding the third individual, whose name was Nakdimon ben Gurion, let us see a few numerical findings that strengthen the connection between truth and the power that makes the sun stand still. The three souls that made the sun stand still, Moses, Joshua, and Nakdimon, should correspond to the three levels of truth that we saw. Indeed, the value of their three names in Hebrew (משה נקדימון בן גוריון) is 1323, which incredibly is 3 times 441, which means that their average numerical value is 441, the value of “truth” (אמת).

A second amazing *gematria* in this respect can be found in the Book of Joshua, where the story of Joshua making the sun stand still contains the phrase, “Verily it is written in the book of the Yashar.” The book of the Yashar literally

means the Book of the Straight, alluding to the patriarchs who are described as “straight,” meaning “morally upright.” The first word of this phrase is translated as “verily” (הלא) and its value is 36, the value of truth (אמת) in ordinal numbering, as we saw earlier. But what is most interesting is that the value of the complete phrase, “Verily it is written in the Book of the Yashar”<sup>18</sup> (הלא היא כתובה על ספר הישר), is 1440. 440 is one less than “truth” (אמת), which equals 441, but the letters that make up the name *alef* (א) can also be pronounced *elef*, which means “one-thousand” (אלף), and thus many times we find that the value of the letter *alef* can be 1000. In this case, the value of “truth” (אמת), which starts with an *alef-alef* becomes equal to 1440. This is a very clear allusion to the idea that the power that Joshua had to make the sun stand still comes from his affinity to truth. We will return to look a closer look at this number, 1440, later in this article.

Joshua is a leader who is true to his word. In fact, the entire story of his war with the five Emorite kings occurs as a consequence of his keeping his word that he gave the Gibeonites. The Gibeonites were a Canaanite people that tricked Joshua into promising not to conquer them. Even though they themselves under false pretenses, in other words, they were not true to

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. v. 13.

themselves, Joshua still honored his promise to them. Throughout his life, Joshua remained true to his mission, and He was true to the Torah and to sanctifying God's Name. Everything he did, he did for the sake of sanctifying God's Name, as Rebbe Nachman says: a person should increase the honor of heaven and decrease his own honor. Moreover, truth in the sense of personal integrity is the inner experience of the *sefirah* of foundation, whose archetypal soul is Joseph, and Joshua is Joseph's progeny.

### Nakdimon and the twelve cisterns

Now let us recount the story brought in the tractate Ta'anit about Nakdimon making the sun stand still, interluding to make some observations.

Once all the Jewish people ascended for the pilgrimage to Jerusalem and there was not enough water to drink. Nakdimon ben Gurion was not a sage, but a very wealthy man. Tongue in cheek, we might suggest that if you have enough money you might be able to make the sun stand still. In any case, the three great billionaires of that generation were Nakdimon, *Calba Savu'a*, and *Tzitzis Hakeset*. There was also a woman whose name was Martha the daughter of Baytus. Elsewhere, the sages relate that with their wealth these four individuals<sup>19</sup> wanted to save

19. These four individuals correspond to the

Jerusalem during the time of the Roman siege on the city. Between them, they had enough wealth to provide for all of Jerusalem's needs for 21 years.<sup>20</sup> One of them supplied all the wheat and barley. The second supplied all the olive oil needed and all the salt, and other such commodities. The third supplied all the wood, the fuel. So, as the Roman siege began, Jerusalem was stocked well enough to hold out an almost indefinite amount of time.

Unfortunately, there was a band of zealots who did not want to simply outwait the Romans. They wanted to fight them and chase them out of the land of Israel. The sages of the generation were not against fighting, but they saw with their holy spirit that fighting the Romans would not be successful and so they opposed the zealots. However, the zealots wanted to force the people to fight and they did this by burning all the warehouses containing the 21 years' worth of supplies, causing a tremendous hunger in Jerusalem and forcing the people to fight against the Romans.

In any case, returning to our story which happened some years before the Roman siege. There was no water for the pilgrims coming to celebrate the festival in Jerusalem. In Jerusalem, there was an official

four letters of *Havayah* with Nakdimon corresponding to the *yud*, the first letter.

20. 21 is obviously significant. It is the root as we saw of the value of, "truth," whose value is 441.

of Rome who was responsible for the area. He had under his control twelve cisterns of water that would be enough to supply the people for the seven days of the festival. Nakdimon said to him, "Lend me twelve cisterns of water and if I do not repay you the water, I will have to pay you twelve talents of silver." Nakdimon and the official set a time by which Nakdimon would have to return the water or forfeit the silver.

When the time for the water to be returned had come, no rain had fallen and Nakdimon had nowhere to repay the official with water from. In the morning the official sent a message to Nakdimon, "Send me either the water or the silver that you owe me." Nakdimon replied: "I still have time as the entire day is mine to pay you back in water." At noontime, the official sent another message demanding the water or the coins. Nakdimon once again replied: "I still have time left in the day." Comes the afternoon and the same thing happens. This time, the official ridiculed him saying, the entire year rain has not fallen, what exactly do you think will happen in the remaining hour or two of the day? To pass the remaining time, the Roman official entered the bathhouse with joy. Nakdimon entered the Temple in a state of sadness. He wrapped himself in his prayer shawl and stood in prayer. Nakdimon said: "Master of the Universe, everything I did, I did not do for my honor or

for the honor of my house; I did it for your honor so that there should be water for the pilgrims." Immediately the sky filled with clouds and rain fell until the twelve cisterns were filled with water and overflowed. But, Nakdimon was not out of the woods just yet. The Roman came out of the bathhouse and was shocked to see the rainfall. But, he argued that the water had fallen after sunset, and so Nakdimon still owed him the 12 talents of silver. Nakdimon entered the Temple once again and stood in prayer and said: "Master of the Universe, let it be known that you have beloved ones in Your world." Immediately, the clouds scattered, and the sun came out. At that time, the official conceded and said that indeed, if the sun had not broken through the clouds, he could still demand the silver, but now that it was clear that the rain had fallen during the day, Nakdimon had returned the water on time.

So this is a rich Jew using his money to sanctify God's Name, this is the ultimate form of truth. We still have to explain the relationship between truth and making the sun stand still. But, the amazing thing is the third individual who lived at the end of the second Temple period (Nakdimon ben Gurion). As we will see, to be true at all these levels means that the person has the ability to make the sun stand still.

### 3. The significance of 1440

#### Unifying truth and lowliness

What we are going to say now is in the language of Kabbalah. In the writings of the Arizal, it says that the beginning of the appearance of truth is called the “foundation of father” (יסוד אבא); this is the *sefirah* of foundation within wisdom. Then that foundation extends into the *partzuf* of *Ze’er Anpin*, associated with the *sefirah* of beauty, the compassion in the heart. Finally, it appears in the inner property of kingdom, whose inner experience is lowliness. True authenticity, being true to myself, entails being lowly—knowing how I truly am.

The great tzaddik who unified truth with lowliness was Rebbe Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk. He was another of the Ba’al Shem Tov’s direct disciples and continued to be the disciple of his successor, the Maggid of Mezritch. He took a few hundred people in 1789 and moved with them from Russia to the land of Israel, an unparalleled achievement for those times. He used to sign his letters (upon which the Tanya is based) with the phrase, “the truly lowly one” (השפל באמת).

#### Kabbalistic considerations

So, the essence of truth is in the crown, but it is first revealed as a flash of lightning in the foundation of wisdom and from there it descends through beauty to kingdom.

Now, the *Arizal* explains<sup>21</sup> that in wisdom there are 10 names that equal 72. Why 72? There are four main “fillings” of God’s essential Name, *Havayah*. The filling corresponding to wisdom is יוד הי ויו הי, whose value is 72 (each of the letters is “filled” with the letter *yud*, because *yud* represents wisdom. In the full persona of wisdom, there are 10 such names, which equals 720.

Now, when the light of truth reaches all the way down to kingdom (thereby unifying the end with the beginning), there is another Name that also equals 72, which is called the “backside,” or the generative form of *Havayah*, which is י ה-י הוה-י הוה, which also equals 72. Since kingdom also has 10 *sefirot* in itself, we have a second 720. Together with the 720 from wisdom, the total is 1440. This is the origin of 1440 in relation to truth in Kabbalah, which once more is the value of the phrase describing that the miracle is written in the Torah, הלא היא כתובה על ספר הישר. And as the *Arizal* explains, it is also the value of “truth” (אמת) itself, when the first letter, the *alef* is taken to mean 1000 (אלף).

#### Numerical considerations

What else does 720 represent? It is what is known as 6 factorial (written, 6!). 6 factorial is the number of possible permutations of a

21. See *Kehilat ya’akov s.v. emet*, §8.

word with 6 different letters. The most important word whose permutations are studied in this way is the Torah's first word, "In the beginning" (בראשית), which has 6 different letters. The study of its permutations makes up the basis of the *Tikunnei Zohar*.

### Truth as the union of Moses and Tzipporah in every commandment

What else is equal to 720? Jacob is associated with truth, as we know from the verse, "You shall give truth to Jacob." Moses (משה) is considered Jacob's inner soul. Moses married Tzipporah (צפורה). The numerical values of their names are 345 and 375 and their sum is 720. This could be the basis of a "vort" spoken at their wedding. Marriage is about loving-kindness and love. The value of "loving-kindness" (חסד) is 72 and the consummation of that love is 10 times "loving-kindness" or 720.

Now, what happened to the marriage of Moshe and Tzipporah? At a certain point, after the Torah was given, God told Moshe to separate from his wife. But, He gave us the Torah with 613 commandments (the value of *Moshe Rabbeinu*,<sup>22</sup> "Moshe our master," משה רבינו). The first two letters of the word "commandment" (מצוה), are the initials of Moshe and Tzipporah. So, every time we per-

form a mitzvah, at the concealed level, we can think that there is a hidden unification of Moshe and Tzipporah.

The idea that every commandment has two dimensions to it, a revealed dimension and a concealed dimension is based on the verse, "He who has a wise heart takes commandments"<sup>23</sup> (חכם לב יקח מצוות). The Ba'al Shem Tov explains that this verse is saying that if a person has a wise heart, every mitzvah that he performs, he performs simultaneously in two dimensions: the external dimension which is the act itself, and the inner dimension that is the *kavanah*, the intent behind the mitzvah. Similarly, when we make a blessing on a *mitzvah* we always use the plural form, "who sanctified us with His commandments" (אשר אקדשנו במצותיו), alluding to the two dimensions—the two commandments, as it were—within every commandment.



23. Proverbs 10:8.

22. *Or hasechel part 2. Megaleh amukot (Va'etchanan) ofanim 58, 113, 114, and 205.*

# Daily thoughts

## for the week of parashat Terumah

SELECTIONS BY SHELLI KARZEN

### Sunday - 28 Shevat

The Previous Rebbe of Chabad, the Rebbe Rayatz, explained the difference between *pinimi*/internal and *chitzon*/external. In Chassidic terms, a person who uses his time correctly is called *pnimi*, while a person who wastes his time is called *chitzon*, the opposite. The Rebbe Rayatz said that the definition of *pnimi* – the greatest compliment one can give to a *chassid* – is that he is a person who sees time as precious, knows how to use his time well and doesn't waste it. Time is the most precious thing that you have. A person who lives with this mentality is called '*pnimi*', because he takes advantage of every moment of his time and merits *arichut yamim*/lengthy days. *Arichut yamim* doesn't only mean to live until 120, but also that every day should be long and full.

### Monday - 29 Shevat

As the month of Shevat wanes, let us take one more look at the sense of this month: the sense of taste/eating. Chassidut guides us not to fight against our bodies. We must eat and drink in a good and balanced

manner, for the good of our physical health and in order to feed our souls. On one hand, we should not adopt extreme diets and asceticism, while on the other hand, we should not allow ourselves to indulge in physical lusts. Both these extremes bring sorrow to the soul. Instead, we must strike a balance, eating and drinking in good health and joy. When we do so, we can merit the inner dimension of eating: clarification of holy sparks. On a national plane, when the leader first ensures that the people have food and drink, he can draw down from Heaven the power to rectify his country with justice (food) and charity (drink). This will bring the Nation of Israel to its destiny, which is the consumption-embracing of all the non-Jewish sparks in the world – the fourth revolution.

### Tuesday - 30 Shevat

We are now at the beginning of 60 days of the month of Adar, which are 60 days of *simchah* (joy). These 60 days have the power to nullify anything that is the opposite of *simchah*, so that everything becomes joyful. The true essence of *joy* is to

be found in the Mashiach. The letters of Mashiach (משיח) in Hebrew permute to spell the word ישמח, which means both “he will be happy” (ישמח) and “he will make others happy” (ישמחו). Mashiach is the happiest soul that makes everyone else happy. Starting from today and for the next 60 days is the ideal time to express this, because we are now in two months of *simchah*, which we may understand to correspond to the two readings of ישמח. The coming 60 days of laughter have the power to nullify and sweeten any bitter taste left over in our mouths from the preceding year.

### Wednesday - 1 Adar

Laughter, the Kabbalistic sense of this new month of Adar, is the best medicine and it has the power to turn all the pain, misery, and difficulty of the past year into goodness and joy. At the end of the year, we find ourselves still standing, thank God, and all the fears that we harbored in our souls (lest so and so happen...) are transformed and sweetened by our laughter. This transformation is alluded to in one of God’s connotations: “the Fear of Isaac,” which literally means “fear [itself] will laugh!” This is the theme of Purim, the holiday that we celebrate in Adar. On Purim we celebrate how all the fears of Haman and his planned genocide of the Jewish people were overturned. The

fear turned into laughter. Therefore the motto of the month of Adar is “abound with joy.” When there is but a little amount of joy, it tends to remain concealed in the heart. But when there is an abundance of joy, it overflows and is expressed as booming laughter.

### Thursday - 2 Adar

The Mashiach must be the most loving soul on Earth. He loves us all.

Love, *chesed*, has the power to heal. Abraham was the first soul who was able to heal through love and prayer. He had love for all humanity, even people who weren’t very nice to him like Avimelech the king of the Philistines. When he was ill (as was his entire kingdom)

because he took Sarah, Abraham prayed for him, and through his prayers Avimelech and his people were healed. This is the first time the verb, “to heal” appears in the Torah. Love is the power to heal. Mashiach comes to heal all the spiritual and physical ailments of humanity, and he does this through his power of Abraham—the power of love.

### Friday - 3 Adar

Inside the boards of the Tabernacle, discussed in this week’s Torah portion, *Terumah*, there was a middle bar (*bariach*) that connected them all, making them one.

In order to connect two items,

there must be a hollow in the middle, through which the middle bar can pass. This holds a deep secret: The Ba'al Shem Tov said that he can refute any logical Torah-learning argument. In other words, in every worldview, at every level and in every layer of reality, in any 'world' – there is always a point of vacuum – empty space, nothingness. It is specifically when we identify that point of nothingness that we can connect and weave all

the dimensions and worlds together. Each of them has a lack that seeks to be filled. On the other hand, a person who feels complete and believes that his worldview is impeccable, bears the greatest defect of all. Thus, the Ba'al Shem Tov, who strove to connect – emphasized that he could see the point of nothingness in everything, enabling him to join all layers of reality together.



# Questions and Answers

from Harav Ginsburgh's correspondence

## Question:

For a marriage counselor, will any priest do, or does it have to be a high priest, because I need a marriage counselor now.

## Rav Ginsburgh's Answer:

You have to look for someone who is like Aharon. Not easy to find. But, because God wants you to have a happy marriage, He is responsible for providing a good counselor. You have to make an effort to find the right person. A priest is not necessarily an actual person with priestly lineage today. For example, in the Torah, the priest takes the role of a doctor (in relation to leprosy), but today a doctor does not have to be a priest. Of course the doctor might not even be Jewish. But, for a mar-

riage counselor, it should be someone who has faith, one who doesn't feel that he is anything at all, one who has existential shame. God Himself is described as being like a High Priest, so you can also turn to him to seek insight for rectifying the marriage.

**Q:** How can we know that we are carrying out our mission in life and not making a mistake?

**A:** Even Aharon, one of the greatest of all souls, was able to make a mistake. So obviously, we can all make mistakes. Even Moshe Rabbeinu when he became angry, made a mistake. So if you want to not make mistakes, don't get angry. To get angry is like making a Golden Calf.





# Contributing to the Tabernacle

WRITTEN BY RABBI YOSSI PELL. TRANSLATED BY RACHEL GORDON.

BASED ON A CLASS GIVEN ON 27TH OF SHEVAT 5722

There are two commandments in the opening passage to the Torah portion of *Terumah*. The first commands the Jewish people to contribute to building the Tabernacle, and the second is to construct the Tabernacle and its vessels.

At first glance, the principal commandment is to construct the Tabernacle. Yet, the order of the verses suggests the opposite. First comes the commandment, “They shall take a contribution for Me,” followed by the details of all the materials contributed to the Tabernacle, “Gold and silver and copper...” The commandment to construct the Tabernacle, “You shall make a sanctuary for Me,” appears in a later verse. This order suggests that there is inherent significance in the contribution that the Jewish people were commanded to bring.

Both commandments use the unique phrasing, “For Me.”

## The Upward Aspiration

God is omnipotent. It is difficult to understand why He desires anything from us. The sages teach us that His purpose in creating us was, “To make a dwelling place for Him

in the lower worlds.”<sup>1</sup> This is why He commanded us to construct the Tabernacle. From our limited human perspective, we can sympathize with the idea that God wants a “home.” This is an important commandment to accomplish.

We might think that God’s commandment to bring a contribution, “for Me,” is a means to achieving the final result: to make Him a sanctuary. Without the gold, silver, and copper etc., how could we build the altar, the foundations that held the walls, or the wash-basin? Yet, commenting on the verse, “You shall take a contribution for Me,” the *Zohar*<sup>2</sup> makes a cryptic statement. “For Me” means that by giving a contribution we are taking God Himself! What can this mean?

The angels described in Ezekiel’s vision of the Divine Chariot are in a constant movement described as, “run and return” (רָצוּא וְשׁוּב).<sup>3</sup> Chasidut teaches us that “run and return” pertains to our human souls, too. The soul oscillates like an alternating electric current, in an infinite up-down movement. It runs thirstily

1 *Midrash Tanchuma, Naso* 16.

2 Quoted in *Tanya* ch. 47.

3 Ezekiel 1:14.

towards its Heavenly source in God and then returns to mundane reality, bouncing upwards and down once again, *ad infinitum*.

Raising a contribution to the Tabernacle is an example of the upward “run” of the soul. “Contribution” (תְּרוּמָה) is derived from the verb “to elevate” (לְהָרִים).<sup>4</sup> By giving away a part of our livelihood, earned by the sweat of our brows, to a worthy cause, we raise ourselves Heavenwards in self-sacrificial devotion.

While “running,” the vector force points upwards, aspiring to reach God. The soul runs and rises towards infinity. This is an elevated level that is above all created worlds and above all of God’s Holy Names; to God’s personal essence, “for Me.”

The upward run is important, as long as it begins with the intention to return to mundane reality, where we can reveal God’s purpose.

If the soul runs to the infinite, it will eventually be nullified in its source. Like a raindrop in the ocean, it can never be identified again. This is the greatest pleasure to which the soul could ever aspire! Yet, as we rise in our upward run, we “bump into” God, who has another purpose in store for the soul. He tells us, “Return to your place!”<sup>5</sup> This brings us back to the second commandment in *parashat Terumah*, “They shall make for Me a sanctuary and

I shall dwell within them.” Rising to the heights of spirituality, almost sacrificing our souls in the process, God tells us to take Him with us on the return journey. Our ultimate contribution to building the Tabernacle is God Himself.

### The Heart and the Fountain

“For Me” (לִי) is spelled with two letters, a *lamed* and a *yud*. Rebbe Nachman of Breslov<sup>6</sup> explains that *lamed* (ל) represents lower wisdom and *yud* (י) represents higher wisdom. The letter *lamed* (ל) is the tallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet. It is “a tower soaring in the air,”<sup>7</sup> that aspires to reach infinity. Yet, its feet are on the ground. Its name, *lamed* (לָמֵד), means “learning” (לְמוּדָה). The *yud* (י) is the smallest letter. It descends from above and remains hovering in the air. Its form resembles a point, symbolizing the pinpoint of inspiration that flashes into the mind from the source of wisdom.

A teacher-student relationship exemplifies these two types of wisdom. The *lamed* represents the student’s heart aspiring to internalize his teacher’s words. The *yud* represents the teacher, who must present his teachings in a way that will inspire his student with wisdom. Without the student’s aspiration, the teacher cannot hope to inspire him. The order of this relationship, between the student’s *lamed* and the

4 Exodus 35:24.

5 *Sefer Yetzirah* 1:8.

6 *Likutei Mohoran* II, 91.

7 *Sanhedrin* 106b; Rashi ad loc.

teacher's *yud*, forms the word “for Me” (יָ).<sup>8</sup>

Elsewhere in his writings,<sup>8</sup> Rebe Nachman relates the parable of “The Heart and the Fountain.” Somewhere in the world is a heart that longs to reach the fountain. The fountain also longs to reach the heart. Despite their longing for one another, making the connection is no simple matter. The heart is the student who greatly thirsts after “the fountain of wisdom.” The fountain is the teacher who wishes to bestow his wisdom upon his student. The heart and the fountain unite when the *lamed* and the *yud* form the word “for Me” (יָ).

The word, “for Me” appears twice in this passage. The first time is in the commandment “Take for Me a contribution.” The second time is in the commandment, “They shall make for Me a sanctuary.” Doubling the word “for Me” (יָ) alludes to the teaching, “Every palate that tastes it

[the wine of the Torah] says, ‘[It is] for me! [It is] for me!’”<sup>9</sup> The Torah is the fine wine that flows from the teacher and inspires the student, satisfying his yearning.

*Parashat Terumah* begins with the commandment for every generous heart to raise its contribution. Like the student's *lamed*, “lower wisdom,” we must first aspire to God by sacrificing something of ourselves. The commandment to construct the Tabernacle for the Divine Presence is the fruitful result of that aspiration. This corresponds to the teacher's *yud*, “higher wisdom” as it descends to inspire the student's heart.

“Running” towards God by giving our donation we enable our “return” to mundane reality, bringing God with us into our own sanctuary, “They shall make a sanctuary for Me, and I shall dwell amongst them”—in the heart of every individual soul.<sup>10</sup>



<sup>8</sup> *Fables of Bygone Years*, the story told by the tongue-tied beggar in the Fable of Seven Beggars.

<sup>9</sup> *Talmud Ketuvot* 111b.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in the name of the sages, *Reishit chochmah, Sha'ar ha'ahavah* ch. 6, etc.

# VeAbita

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