

The Secrets of Faith and Redemption

By HaRav Ariel Bar Tzadok

Copyright © 2000, 2010 by Ariel Bar Tzadok. All rights reserved.

“And HaShem said to Moshe, why do you yell at Me, speak to the Children of Israel and they shall move forward” (Ex. 14:15).

Regarding this verse, it is written in the book Sha'ar HaPesukim that, ***“The first letters of the [Hebrew] words Mah (why) Titz'ak (do you yell) Ali (at Me) (Mem, Tav, Alef), [spell the word] Emet (truth). This is what is referred to in the Zohar that Truth is dependent upon “Atika” (the Ancient One). Also, the word Ali (to Me, Alef, Lamed, Yod) is numerically equal to 41, which is the number of the 41 letters in the simple Name Ehyeh (EHYH), and its single and double expanded forms.”***

This curious little teaching reveals to us a lesson about one of the greatest of Kabbalistic principles: the secret of Emunah (faith). In the Gemara (Macot 24), the holy Rabbis state that the entire Torah can be summed up in the one statement made by the prophet Habakkuk (2:4) that, “the righteous shall live in his faith.” In order to understand this concept and how it is so very much applicable to us personally, we will delve into the meanings of some of the baffling Kabbalistic terminologies.

The Kabbalists teach us that G-d's Presence is revealed to humanity in varying grades of revelation. Higher levels of Divine revelation bring to us greater levels of exposure to the Divine Power, Will and Way. Lower levels tend to conceal more than they reveal. These levels of Divine Presence are called in Kabbalah the Divine Faces; in Hebrew, Partzufim. It is a symbolic term and does not refer to G-d having any actual “faces” but rather to how we human beings are able to perceive G-d as He chooses to interact with His Creation. We must remember that a Face, a Partzuf, is something that is looked at by others. A Partzuf is the mask, the image or representation that one presents for others to see. Just as we humans wear our masks and cloak ourselves in our personas, so too does G-d, in His own Divine Way.

G-d in His true essence is unknowable. Because G-d exists beyond time, space and the universe, it is impossible for us here within these dimensions to possibly experience that which is outside of them. The only way we can have any understanding of G-d is by G-d revealing an aspect of Himself within the universe that He created. Yet, just as there are differences of various types and forms in time, space and the universe, so is the perception of G-d different as He is “seen” in the different realms, places and levels.

The Partzuf (Face) of G-d normally “seen” by man is what the Kabbalists call the Name Elokim. This holy Name of G-d is numerically equal to the word HaTeva, which means nature. In others words, the Partzuf of G-d experienced or “seen” by most mankind is the Force that controls and rules nature. Some refer to this merely as “nature” itself, or ascribe to nature a “guiding spirit.” While both of these understandings are correct, they nonetheless, only express the lowest form of awareness of G-d. This manifestation of G-d's lowest or “smallest” Partzuf is called Nok, the Feminine (receiving) Face, also known as the Shekhina. This Partzuf corresponds to the lowest of the ten sefirot, Malkhut.

Unknown to most is that above and beyond the natural forces which rules this universe exist what to our present state of awareness are “supernatural” forces which apparently at will can supersede and override all the forces of nature. This metaphysical reality is referred to by G-d’s Name YHVH, the Name of universal Being In Action. YHVH is the Force that manifests Justice in the universe. Justice is the essence and centralizing force within creation. Therefore, the attribute of justice and the holy Name YHVH are said to correspond to the sefirah Tiferet, which is called “the place of the center” and is the “heart” of the sefirotic pattern. Nonetheless, this Partzuf is still called G-d’s “Small Face,” Zeir Anpin in Aramaic or simply Z.A. for short.

In our present state of spiritual affairs, the Name YHVH (the Partzuf Z.A.) is manifest to us through the Partzuf or Face of Malkhut, Elokim. Thus whatever Divine justice that manifests in the world appears to us to be merely arbitrary forces of nature that erupt without intention or purpose.

In Egypt, Pharaoh was inclined to interpret all the plagues that YHVH sent down upon him as simply being freak acts of nature, sent upon him by “nature.” Pharaoh could not conceive of a spiritual reality above the forces of nature. He could not comprehend a YHVH, a metaphysical Force that at Will suspends nature and acts autonomously. Pharaoh was forced to understand that YHVH is Elokim. In other words, the metaphysical Force of Tiferet is what is manifest through and in control of the Force of nature known as Elokim. Yet, this too is not the highest level of Divine manifestations.

Elokim manifests G-d as He controls His universe through the unbending laws of nature. YHVH can manifest variations in the laws of nature in order to manifest Divine Justice. Yet, there is a Force even higher than Justice. This is G-d’s grace. Grace is the totally undeserved, altruistic bestowal of G-d’s goodness and mercy. One can never merit G-d’s grace, one can only pray for it and receive as an act of faith.

G-d decides who will receive His grace and who will not based upon one’s faith. G-d’s decision in these matters implies that faith is a cardinal principle of the universe, even higher than justice. We can never hope to fathom such profound Divine reasoning. While we may never understand it, we nevertheless do receive G-d’s grace, when He so Wills it, when we have the faith to receive it. One of these times (according to the Zohar) was the parting of the Yam Suf (Red Sea).

The parting of the Yam Suf was not an act that Israel deserved to have happen for them. Rather, it was an act of G-d’s Divine Will, His ultimate grace. This was brought about by the faith of those who were willing to walk forward into the waters up to their necks, knowing in faith that the waters would have to part. Habakkuk wisely said that the righteous will live by their faith. Wisely did our holy Rabbis say that this one saying sums up the whole Torah. For the source of faith and the source of the Torah are both the sefirah Keter. Faith is the irrational knowing and acceptance of G-d’s Will and one’s surrender to it, regardless of apparent consequences.

Faith is the expression of the sefirah Keter. The Partzuf of G-d at this Keter (crown) level is called “Atika” (the Ancient). It signifies by a reference to age that it is the “first” Partzuf, or the highest of them. It is also called Arikh Anpin, G-d’s great (or Long) Face. In the Kabbalah, the Name Ehyeh is applied to this level. The Name Ehyeh means “I Will Be,” in the future tense, to signify that the Keter level is not yet revealed.

The Hebrew word for faith, Emunah, is numerically equal to 102. When one adds the number of the ten sefirot by having complete faith in G-d and surrenders to His Will (the sefirah Keter), then Emunah (102) unites with the ten sefirot, and 102 becomes 112. The number 112 is the numerical value of the three holy Names Ehyeh (Keter), YHVH (Tiferet) and ADNY (Adonai, Malkhut). Emunah thus signifies the complete union of all the grades.

All three of these Partzuf levels of perceiving the Divine are united within one other, and “stacked” one above the other. Elokim/Adonai is on the outside (or bottom). YHVH is within (or above) it.

Ehyeh is within (or above) it. When we act without righteousness, G-d's justice is concealed within nature. G-d's grace, through our faith, however tears off the veil and manifests Divine power for what it is, a miracle.

There are also letters in the Hebrew alphabet that correspond to each level. The Keter level on top is represented by the first letter of the alphabet, Alef. The Tiferet in the middle of the sefirot is represented by the middle letter of the Hebrew alphabet, Mem. Malkhut, the final sefirah is represented by the last letter Tav. Together these three letters spell the Hebrew word for truth, "Emet."

When G-d said to Moshe, "*Mah (why) Titz'ak (do you yell) Ali (at Me) (Mem, Tav, Alef)*" He was subtly telling Moshe not to worry. All three levels and all three Names had become united through the faith of the righteous. Now was to come a manifestation of the power of the Keter in the Malkhut. Israel would perceive G-d's grace through His Keter. Egypt, on the other hand, was to perceive G-d's justice through His Tiferet YHVH.

G-d also hinted to this when He said to Moshe "Ali" (at Me), the numerical value of which is 41, which is the number of letters in the Name Ehyeh, and its single and double expanded forms. The Name Ehyeh is in Keter, its expanded form is in Tiferet and its double expanded form is in Malkhut.

The next time the Keter is to be revealed in the Malkhut is when Mashiah comes. Zecharia 14:4 states that when Mashiah comes, "G-d's Feet" are to stand on the Mt. of Olives. Of course, it is impossible to understand this verse literally. The "Feet" mentioned in the verse are a metaphor for the sefirah Malkhut. The Partzuf of G-d to be revealed here is a reference to the Long Face, the Face of Keter. "G-d's feet" touching the mountain means that Keter will again become manifest in Malkhut, this time to bring redemption to the entire Earth, symbolized here by the mountain. May this day come soon.

In conclusion, we learn from this verse the secrets of both faith and redemption. Without faith, there can be no redemption, be it on a personal or on a national level. Only by our surrender of self to G-d through the act of faith can one enable the mightiest of Divine forces to manifest here on Earth and to again change the course of history. It is by the Grace of G-d that He manifests in our lives whatever forces that are necessary to teach us how to have faith in Him. We will, therefore, individually and collectively, learn the lessons of faith necessary to bring about our redemption.

The question left for us to ask is which road shall we choose for ourselves? Will we choose the easy road and surrender to G-d thus quickening the redemption, or will we continue in our stubborn ways and force G-d to humble us, even as He humbled Pharaoh. The choice is ours. The time is short and a decision will be made, either by us, or autonomously by G-d.