

# NEFESH SHIMSHON

DIVREI TORAH ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA AND HOLIDAYS FROM THE TEACHINGS OF RABBEINU SHIMSHON DOVID PINCUS ZT"L

THIS PUBLICATION IS DEDICATED TO THE HATZLACHAH AND ZECHUS OF נחמה בן רחל נחמה ויעקב בן רחל נחמה. MAY THEY GROW TO BE TALMIDEI CHACHAMIM AND OVDEI HASHEM.

## SPECIAL TOPIC

## Aseres Yemei Teshuvah and Yom Kippur

### The Root Above

It is written:

ה' בְּחָכְמָה יָסַד אֶרֶץ כּוֹנֵן שָׁמַיִם בְּתַבּוּנָה. – בְּדַעְתּוֹ תִּהְיוּמוֹת גְּבֻקְעוֹ וּשְׁחָקִים יִרְעֲפוּ טָל – *Hashem* established the earth with wisdom; He set up the heavens with understanding. With His knowledge, the depths broke forth and the upper heavens bestow dew.<sup>1</sup>

These verses mention the three basic parts of the world, and they are earth, heavens and depths. The verses also mention the three basic forces, which are *chochmah*, *binah* and *daas*. But there is another force,

<sup>1</sup> Mishlei 3:19-20.

a hidden force, which is mentioned here as well: “The upper heavens bestow dew.”

This additional force is different from the other three, which, although they themselves are hidden, create the visible, tangible world. This additional force is even more hidden. It is called *shechakim*, “the upper heavens,” because it is concealed from sight like the upper heavens are. That which comes down from it is the dew.

There is a difference between dew and rain. Life in this world comes mainly from the rain. But this is true only of that which is visible to the eye. On a deeper level, dew is the greatest life-giving force. *Chazal* say that the dew never ceases<sup>2</sup> because it is the essence of life and it emanates from the infinite *chesed* that never stops.

<sup>2</sup> Taanis 3.

גַּמְרָה וְחֵסֶד מְטַהֵר



In early Torah sources, this force is called *keser*. Above *chochmah* there is a hidden force, which is *keser*. The difference between them is that *chochmah*, *binah* and *daas*, although they themselves are hidden and profound, are considered part of the world as a whole. In the human being, they exist within cavities in the head [as described in Kabbalistic sources], and they act invisibly from there. Yet, they are basically a part of the world.

*Keser*, however, is described figuratively as being above the body and outside it. This signifies that it is a very high and lofty force that is far above everything else. It is the force of *Hashem*. It is the true and hidden root that comes from outside the world to create everything, and everything is as nothing compared to it. It is always there and grants life to all. It is like the soul of the soul.

On *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, when everything is created anew, it is not the forces of *chochmah* and *binah*, with their vast, awesome mercy, that come to re-create the entire world. Rather, the force of *keser* itself shines anew, and through it, a deep and awesome *chesed* appears in the world. This supremely hidden force is beyond our conception.

The full force of *keser's* awesome and infinite power comes mainly at the end of *chazaras hashatz* of *Ne'ilah*. This will be explained later. However, throughout *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* there is a very great illumination coming from *keser*. This is mainly through the *Yud Gimel Midos Shel Rachamim*. They are called the *midos* of *keser*. It is also in *shofar*. When forces of the supernal root of all come to grant life to the entire world, the forces of *keser* come as well.

*Keser* is a trait of very, very great mercy. Through our prayers we can attain *Hashem's* grace in a wondrous and awesome way. This is the peak and crown of the *Yamim Noraim*.

We will now explain a bit about drawing down the

force of *keser*, in order to add awesome power to our *tefilos* and *teshuvah*, and to derive true and profound benefit from *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*.

On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur we work with spiritual tools that are not really ours; they are beyond us. The *shofar* on Rosh Hashanah moves the *Kisei Hakavod*. Is that something we have the power to do?! It happens because we are utilizing spiritual tools that are above and beyond our level. This is the nature of *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*. They are days of the *Yud Gimel Midos Shel Rachamim*, [which, as we explained, belong to *keser*]. This is what *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* are.

## Before and After

The *Yud Gimel Midos Shel Rachamim* begin with the words "*Hashem, Hashem.*" Chazal explain this to mean that He is *Hashem* before a person sins and He is the same *Hashem* after a person sins.<sup>3</sup>

The world we live in is so full of *chesed*! Millions upon millions of items of *chesed*. And the Divine trait that built this world of *chesed* is the first Name of *Hashem*: "*He is Hashem before a person sins.*" This Divine Name encompasses tremendous *chesed*. However, it is all only "*before a person sins.*" Because the moment a person sins, all this *chesed* is not enough, so to speak, to counteract a single sin. Even the slightest sin, such as putting on the left shoe before the right shoe. All the *chesed* of all of Creation doesn't have what it takes to wipe away this sin.

Why can't all the *chesed* in the world remove even the smallest of sins?

Because the world as a whole has a *neshamah*, which is *Hashem's* Oneness. And *Hashem's* Oneness is by definition whole and complete. 99.999% is not the same as 100%. It is not One.

When a person sins, it negates *Hashem's* rulership

<sup>3</sup> Rosh Hashanah 17b.



at that moment. When a person transgresses *Hashem's* Will, he is negating His Oneness. And if there is no Oneness, there is nothing. It destroys the entire world because it negates the essential nature of the world. Consequently, all the *chesed* that created the entire world is not enough to wipe away one sin.

Now, there are two worlds: this world and *Olam Haba*. They are both worlds of *chesed*. However, the *chesed* of this world is limited. There is an end to it. So all the *chesed* of this world is not enough to wipe out a sin. But the *chesed* of *Olam Haba* is infinite and unlimited. It is a world that *עין לא ראתה אלקים זולתך* – “No eye has seen it other than G-d’s<sup>4</sup>.”<sup>5</sup> In an unbounded world like this, there is no such thing as “not enough.” There is no limit on the *chesed* that is there. So the *chesed* of *Olam Haba* can wipe away sin.

When the Jewish people sinned and made the *Eigel Hazahav*, it was necessary to get rid of this sin in order for the world to continue to exist. And there was not enough in all of this world to do it. So *Hashem* in His great mercy created channels of *chesed* from *Olam Haba* to this world, bringing boundless, infinite *chesed*. These channels, these *tzinoros*, are the *Yud Gimel Midos Shel Rachamim*.

## Thirteen Worlds

Only a little bit is drawn down from the infinite *chesed* of *Olam Haba* into this world. But it is like a microscopic drop of pure gold. As small as it may be, it is still pure gold. Similarly, if you have a drop of infinity, no matter how small the drop is, it still has the quality of infinity. And since this drop of *chesed* has the power of infinity, it can counteract sin. The drops of infinity that are drawn down from *Olam Haba* into this world are like microscopic drops as compared to the power of *Olam Haba* itself, but they still have the nature of infiniteness, so they are capable of atoning for sin.

We will mention parenthetically another aspect of reciting the *Yud Gimel Midos Shel Rachamim*. When we recite them, we are simultaneously praising *Hashem*

and making a request of Him.

This may be compared to a pauper dressed in rags who needs a new set of clothing. He pays a visit to a wealthy man, and the whole time he is there, he doesn't actually ask for anything at all. He just recounts the praises of the wealthy man. “You are a multi-millionaire, you have a million dollars in your pocket and many times that in the bank. And you have such a good heart! You give to everyone. You feel very well what a wonderful thing is it to clothe people who lack garments.”

After all these praises, does the pauper need to ask for anything? He already said it all. So it is with prayer, and this is what we are saying to *Hashem* when we recite the *Yud Gimel Midos*. We say, “You are *El* – You are a powerhouse of *chesed*. You are *Rachum* – you care about everything that pains me. And lest one think that there is a limit to it, You are *Chanun* – there is no limit to it.

In this way, even though we are praising *Hashem*, it is in fact a prayer, a request.

There is also another point here. The power of *Tefilah* depends largely on who is leading the prayers, who the *chazan* is. This applies to our subject as follows: who is the *chazan* and *shaliach tzibbur* in the *shul* for *Selichos* prayers?

Right before we recite the *Yud Gimel Midos*, we say the verse *ויעבור ה' על פניו ויקרא* – “Hashem passed before him and called out...”<sup>6</sup> *Chazal* interpret this in a most surprising manner.

This teaches that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* wrapped Himself [in a *tallis*] like a *shaliach tzibbur* and showed Moshe the order of *Tefilah*.<sup>7</sup>

In other words, *Hashem* served as *shaliach tzibbur* for the recitation of *Yud Gimel Midos*.

Once, when there was a drought in *Eretz Yisrael*, R. Yehudah Hanasi appointed R. Chiya and his sons to lead the prayers. R. Chiya recited the words *mashiv haruach*, and the wind started blowing. He said the words *morid hageshem*, and it started raining.<sup>8</sup>

R. Chiya did not yet request wind or rain. The place for that is later on, in the blessing of *Bareich aleinu*. All

4 *Yeshayahu* 64:3.

5 *Berachos* 34b.

6 *Shemos* 34:6.

7 *Rosh Hashanah* 17b.

8 *Bava Metzia* 85b.

he did was praise *Hashem* for making the wind blow and the rain fall, and that's what happened. The wind blew and the rain fell.

R. Chiya was about to continue *davening* and say the words *Mechayeh hameisim* – *Hashem* resurrects the dead – and the world started shaking. At that point, *Eliyahu Hanavi* came and disturbed their *tefilah*.<sup>9</sup>

Let's say we could bring in a *chazan* like R. Chiya. How powerful would the *tefilah* be? Yet, *Chazal* tell us that when it comes to reciting *Yud Gimel Midos* in *Selichos*, it is actually *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* Himself Who puts on a *tallis* and serves as our *shaliach tzibbur*. “Whenever they follow this order of prayer before Me, I will have mercy on My children and I will answer them.”<sup>10</sup>

When we recite the Name *El*, the power of *chesed* is unleashed. And so it is with the other words of *Yud Gimel Midos*. They are all tremendously powerful prayers. These prayers have kept the Jewish people going since the beginning. This is why we are alive.

## The Meaning of Each Midah

[This would be the right place for the full explanation of the *Yud Gimel Midos*. We included it in the Yom Kippur publication two years ago.

Here is the abridged version:]

*El* – A tremendously powerful flood of *chesed*.

*Rachum* – Closeness, caring, compassion, feeling pain for everything that pains us.

*Chanun* – Infiniteness.

*Erech Apayim* – The wonder of Divine patience and forbearance.

*Rav chesed* – A tremendous embrace of *chesed*.

*V'emes* – That which He truly wishes to grant us.

*Notzer chesed* – Actualizing the *chesed*.

*La'alafim* – The evil-doer is outside, the sin is outside, the sins go to the depths of the sea.

*Noseh avon* etc – What about the iniquity? *Hashem* bears it. What about the offence? What about the shortcomings? He bears them!

*Venakeh* – What is the general principle of the *Yud Gimel Midos*? What is the sum result? Altogether, it

adds up to *Venakeh*. *Hashem* cleanses us of sin.

As we explained earlier, all our troubles started with sin. Without sin, *Adam Harishon* was in an ideal state in *Gan Eden*; the angels were pouring him wine and roasting for him meat. Without the existence of a sin, a person enjoys infinite *chesed*. The whole problem is sin.

The *Yud Gimel Midos* produce *Venakeh*. They remove and purify our sins. We come out cleansed and free of sin, and this is the ultimate goal.

## There is Nothing Like It

As we mentioned earlier, there is nothing like the *Yud Gimel Midos Shel Rachamim* in this world. They are the power of *chesed* coming from *Olam Haba*. *Hashem* channels some drops of this unlimited *chesed* down into our world.

And this applies to time, as well. This world is separated from *Olam Haba* in time, but there is a time of year in this world that is actually from *Olam Haba*. It is the time of *Yud Gimel Midos*, the time of *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*.

These are days of *chanun* in the sense of a freewill gift. It is a tremendous power of *chesed*. It is *Olam Haba* entering the realm of physical matters. And certainly it is true of spiritual matters; there are no limits. You can get everything, you can go all the way, at this time of year. Everything spiritual can be attained in *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*.

The Vilna Gaon says that the lunar year has 355 days, and the solar year has 365, so the solar year is ten days longer. And *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* make up those ten days.

What does this mean? Why do we need to make up those days, and how does *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* do that?

The moon is an analogy for this world. The moon is born, grows, wanes and then disappears. This represents all the troubles in the world. The sun is an analogy for *Olam Haba*. It is always powerful and in full strength; it doesn't wax and wane. This is why the nations of the world follow the solar calendar. They are already at their destination. They are not waiting for something to come. Right now is their “*Olam Haba*.”

But the Jewish people are holding at *Erev Shabbos*, so

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>10</sup> See *Rosh Hashanah ibid*.

to speak. We are still in this world, we are waiting for what comes next, so we follow the lunar calendar. The Vilna Gaon is saying that after the 355 days of the lunar year finish, there are still another ten days left to go from the solar year, and they are *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*. These days are different because they are “solar” days. Days of *Olam Haba*. Days of the *Yud Gimel Midos Shel Rachamim*.

What do we gain from all this? What do we take away?

When we recite the *Yud Gimel Midos*, each word is a world. And the special time for them is *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* in general, and Yom Kippur in particular.

What are these *Yud Gimel Midos*, really? Where did they come from? They come from אחד, One. The *gematriya* of אחד is thirteen. In other words, the Thirteen Divine Traits of Mercy are *Olam Haba*, because in *Olam Haba*, everything returns to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* and falls under the control of His Oneness.

We learn in *Bava Kama* that it makes no difference whether someone brings the haystack to the fire, or he brings the fire to the haystack. (He is liable for the damage either way.) Along these lines, it makes no difference whether everything returns to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, as in *Olam Haba*, or whether He comes close to us, as in *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*. Because this is the time of דרשו ה' קרוב בהמצאו קראוהו בהיותו קרוב – “Seek out *Hashem* when He is present, call out to Him when He is close.”

In *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, *Hashem* comes to us. These are days of *Hashem's* control, of *Hashem's* Oneness, when *Hashem* is King of the World. When *Hashem* rules, there is Oneness, אחד, and אחד is the *Yud Gimel Midos*, as we explained.

The *Selichos* are at their full beauty in *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, and the *Yud Gimel Midos* are in their full power on fast days, and at their real peak in *Ne'ilah* of Yom Kippur. However, *Hashem's* Oneness is not just during *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*. It expresses itself every day, when we recite *Shema Yisrael... Hashem echad*, at which

time we are touching on the אחד of the *Yud Gimel Midos*.

## In Short

*Hashem, Hashem* – These words are not counted in the thirteen. They are the introduction and the root of the *Yud Gimel Midos*. The first *Hashem* refers to before a person sins, and the second *Hashem* refers to after he sins.

*El* – Tremendous power of *chesed*.

*Rachum* – *Hashem* feels for us and is involved in everything that happens to us.

*Vechanun* – An unbounded freewill gift.

*Erech* – He shows patience and forbearance and separates between the sin and the punishment.

*Apayim* – He is patient again and again. Together with *Erech* it is three times, and when something is tripled, this signifies that it is eternal.

*Verav chesed* – Expansiveness of *chesed* that encompasses everyone, even those who are not deserving.

*Ve'emes* – The tremendous power of *chesed* that *Hashem* truly wants to shower on us, and this is באור פני מלך – חיים.

*Notzer chesed* – *Notzer* refers to a channel, צנור. It expresses *chesed* as it is actually poured out and flows (נוזל – מזל) down to us.

*La'alafim* – The trait of *rachamim* that limits the *chesed*, because otherwise the world would fall apart.

*Noseh avon* – *Hashem* bears our rebellion and betrayal.

*Vafesha* – *Hashem* bears the intentional sins we commit.

*Vachata'ah* – *Hashem* bears our unintentional sins, even though it doesn't occur to us that something needs to be corrected.

*Venakeh* – This is the sum total of all the *Yud Gimel Midos*. *Hashem* cleanses and purifies us from sin. ●