

B”H

Transcripts of Harav Ginsburgh’s Lectures
Dedicated in memory of Gavriel Noach and Rivkah Holtzberg
Rosh Chodesh Av 5769 (part 1)

from Harav Yitzchak Ginsburgh

We will begin with a *siyum*.¹ The Rebbe taught us to make *siyumim* during the 9 days in order to lessen that which need to be lessened (i.e., the negative traits) out of the strength of Torah. Today we have a *siyum* of the entire order of Mishnah of *Mo’ed* in the Talmud.”



In relation to the secret of the months, one of the things we find in the *Arizal* and the *Zohar*, is that they correspond to the Name of 12 letters. The Name of 12 letters is actually just 3 iterations of the Name *Havayah*, the four-letter essential Name of God. This Name is extracted from the Priestly Blessing,² which contains 3 blessings and in each of the blessings, *Havayah* is mentioned once.

Rosh Chodesh Av, the first day of the month of *Av*, is the *yahrzeit* (the day of passing) of Aaron the High Priest. It is the only *yahrzeit* that is written explicitly in the Pentateuch. The priestly blessing is Aaron’s special commandment—blessing the Jewish people out of love. God places love in his heart and gives him the power to be a conduit for blessing. Only a person who has a great deal of love in his heart has the ability to be a conduit for blessing. Aaron has the ability to bless us even in difficult times, such as the 9 (first) days of *Av*.

The blessing is composed of three verses, which have in them 3 instances of the Name *Havayah*.³ There are various *kavanot* (Kabbalistic intentions) regarding the value of 3 times *Havayah*. *Havayah* (ייהוה) itself is equal to 26 and 3 times *Havayah* is therefore 78. Every time that we eat a meal and we say the blessing “who brings bread out of the earth,” we can have in mind that the gematria of “bread” (לֶחֶם) is 3 times the value of *Havayah*. 78 is also the value of “salt” (מֶלַח), which is one of the reasons that we dip the bread in salt prior to eating it.

The 12 letters of this Name are then יהוהיהוהיהוה and they correspond to the 12 tribes and the 12 months of the year.



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The correspondence is of course in order. The first *yud* corresponds to *Nisan*. The *hei* to *Iyar*, and so on. The first 4 months are therefore related to the first verse of the blessing which contains the first instance of *Havayah*, and so on.

<i>Nisan</i>	י	May God (יהוה) bless you and keep you
<i>Iyar</i>	ה	
<i>Sivan</i>	ו	
<i>Tamuz</i>	ה	
<i>Av</i>	י	May God (יהוה) shine His countenance upon you and give you grace
<i>Elul</i>	ה	
<i>Tishrei</i>	ו	
<i>Cheshvan</i>	ה	
<i>Kislev</i>	י	May God (יהוה) carry His countenance to you and give you peace
<i>Tevet</i>	ה	
<i>Shevat</i>	ו	
<i>Adar</i>	ה	

Thus, the first day of *Av* is the day that begins the second blessing, “May God shine His countenance...” The word “May shine” (יִאֶר) is related to *Av* because the sign of the month is the lion, which in Hebrew is also called an אֶרֶב, a permutation of the first word of the second blessing.

The second blessing thus corresponds to the 5th to 8th months, from *Av* to *Cheshvan*. And the third blessing corresponds to the 9th to 12th months, from *Kislev* to *Adar*.



Let us use continue to develop this well-known model corresponding the months with *Havayah*.

One of the most straightforward models based on the Name *Havayah* is the fulfillment of the commandment to be fruitful and multiply. In order to fulfill this commandment, the first commandment in the Torah, a person has to beget 2 children, a boy and a girl. The complete model of the family is thus a father, mother, son, and daughter and these 4 correspond to the 4 letters of *Havayah*.

father	י
mother	ה
son	ו
daughter	ה

This model allows us to extend our previous model of the months in to another interesting domain of the family, providing insight into the structure of the year as reflecting the family structure.

<i>Nisan</i>	א	father
<i>Iyar</i>	ה	mother
<i>Sivan</i>	ו	son
<i>Tamuz</i>	ז	daughter
<i>Av</i>	א	father
<i>Elul</i>	ה	mother
<i>Tishrei</i>	ו	son
<i>Cheshvan</i>	ז	daughter
<i>Kislev</i>	א	father
<i>Tevet</i>	ה	mother
<i>Shevat</i>	ו	son
<i>Adar</i>	ז	daughter

Let us see how this model plays out. The first month, *Nisan*, corresponds to the father, and it is the beginning of “spring” (בִּבְיָבֹאֵי), which in Hebrew stems from the word “father” (אָב). The month of *Av* (אָב) begins the second iteration of *Havayah*. Thus, *Av* also corresponds to the father, and that is exactly the meaning of the name of the month. We find a third example where the name of the month means what it corresponds to in this model. *Shevat* corresponds to the son, and this is also the meaning of the name.

In *Adar*, the daughter, we read the scroll of Esther, where we find the verse, “And she was to him as a daughter.”⁴

Now let’s carry the model another step further. One of the basic analyses of the Priestly Blessing is that the first blessing corresponds to Abraham, the second to Isaac, and the third to Jacob. There are many other such correspondences. One of them is that the first blessing relates to the commandments of God. It relates to our commitment to take upon ourselves the yoke of heaven. That commitment is what we took in the month of *Sivan*, when we received the Torah. So we find that the first four months from *Nisan* to *Tamuz* are the time of year when we take upon ourselves the commitment to perform the commandments. When we received the Torah we said “We will do and we will hear.” Preceding action to understanding is the greatest secret of walking in the ways of God and because we said this at Mt. Sinai we merited receiving the Torah through collective prophecy. The “We will do” is related thus to *Sivan*, the month of the giving of the Torah. But the “We will hear,” the understanding that follows subsequently is related to the month of *Tishrei*, when we received the second set of tablets on Yom Kipur.

The next blessing, which begins with “God shall shine,” referring to light, relates to the Torah, whose name also stems from the word for light. Torah is compared to light. But the end of the blessing, “And He shall give you grace” (וַיְהִי־נָתַן), particularly relates to the inner teachings of the Torah, because one of the names of the secrets of the Torah is

the wisdom of grace (חכמת הח"ן) where the word "grace" (ח"ן) is actually the acronym for "concealed wisdom."

The third blessing, which begins with the word "God shall carry" (אשׁ), relates to *teshuvah*. The same verb, to carry is used in many places in the Torah to refer to God's willingness to carry our sins and either forgive them or transform them, once we have done *teshuvah*, into positive energy. The end result of *teshuvah* is that it brings peace to a person. Rebbe Nachman of Breslov calls it "peace in myself," but this also refers to the verse that says, "Peace, peace, to he is near and he who is far" a verse that speaks of the power of *teshuvah*. This peace is so great that it can rectify even blemishes of the covenant, which are considered in some books to have no rectification. This is because peace itself corresponds to the *sefirah* of foundation, the place of the covenant.

<i>Nisan</i>	י	May God (יהוה) bless you and keep you	Abraham	<i>mitzvot</i> (commandments)
<i>Iyar</i>	ה			
<i>Sivan</i>	ו			
<i>Tamuz</i>	ה			
<i>Av</i>	י	May God (יהוה) shine His countenance upon you and give you grace	Isaac	Torah
<i>Elul</i>	ה			
<i>Tishrei</i>	ו			
<i>Cheshvan</i>	ה			
<i>Kislev</i>	י	May God (יהוה) carry His countenance to you and give you peace	Jacob	<i>teshuvah</i>
<i>Tevet</i>	ה			
<i>Shevat</i>	ו			
<i>Adar</i>	ה			

The power of *teshuvah* is truly great. The sages tell us that in the place that a *ba'al teshuvah* can stand, even a perfect *tzadik* cannot stand. When a person has transgressed the Torah he can no longer connect to God directly through the Torah. Especially, since the Torah says that in order to return he needs to bring a sacrifice (and we cannot simply do this today). So the Almighty himself says that you should simply do *teshuvah*. Why does this work? Because by *teshuvah* the person reconnects with his soul root, and then after reconnecting can go back to the Torah. So normally, we think of *teshuvah* as greater than Torah.

But, the task of the Mashiach is to turn everyone into *ba'alei teshuvah*. Of course, this means that there will be no wicked people, but the Mashiach will turn even the *tzadikim* into *ba'alei teshuvah*. Even a *tzadik* has some element of ego, and by doing *teshuvah* he annuls this too, so then the only thing left is the Torah. So, there will only be *ba'alei teshuvah* in the world. The Lubavitcher Rebbe explained on a number of occasions that after the Mashiach completes this task he will continue to rule the world. In the first

stage he does it by teaching people how to do *teshuvah*. But, after that stage is complete, the Mashiach continues as an eternal ruler by revealing in himself a state called *Raya Mehemna* (רַעְיָא מְהֵמְנָא), meaning a state of identification with Moshe Rabbeinu who is given this title in the *Zohar*. *Raya Mehemna* literally means “the faithful shepherd,” or “the shepherd of faith.” Since this is a title that belongs to Moshe Rabbeinu, the giver of the Torah. The state of *Raya Mehemna* in the Mashiach means that he continues to rule forever through his innovation in Torah, in the enlightening wonder of the Torah. So after *teshuvah*, the only thing left is the Torah itself.

In this sense, the second blessing, which is about Torah, is higher even the third blessing, which is about *teshuvah*. So there is a sense in which the middle quartet of months (from *Av* to *Cheshvan*), which corresponds to Torah is even higher than the third quartet, which corresponds to *teshuvah*. Note that the middle quartet corresponds to Isaac, while the third corresponds to Jacob. Jacob is called the “select of the father.” Still, we find that in the future, only Isaac will remain our father, as he is the only one that will be willing to take responsibility for us and our actions and not abandon us.



Today we are beginning the second blessing and the second *Havayah*. This is the *Havayah* related to Isaac, as above.

The first word of the Torah is בְּרֵאשִׁית, which permutes to the names of the first and third months of the second *Havayah*, *Tishrei* (תִּשְׁרִי) and *Av* (אָב).and. These are the father and the son of the second quartet of months.

Now, let us think about who the particular members of each family correspond to. In the first iteration, the father and the son are *Nisan* and *Sivan* and they correspond to Abraham and Isaac. But, here Isaac is not “Isaac, our father” but rather simply “Isaac, the son of Abraham.”⁵ Abraham was only a patriarch; he was never the son of a patriarch. But, Isaac was first the son of our patriarch Abraham and then he became a patriarch in his own rite. In the second iteration, Isaac becomes the father and his son, Jacob takes the place of the son (again, Jacob, the son of Isaac, not Jacob our father). It follows then that in the third iteration, the father is Jacob (and *Kislev*, the son, and all the other particular correspondence, we will discuss shortly).

<i>Nisan</i>	י	Abraham
<i>Iyar</i>	ה	
<i>Sivan</i>	ו	Isaac (son of Abraham)
<i>Tamuz</i>	ז	
<i>Av</i>	ח	Isaac
<i>Elul</i>	ט	
<i>Tishrei</i>	י	Jacob (son of Isaac)
<i>Cheshvan</i>	יא	
<i>Kislev</i>	יב	Jacob
<i>Tevet</i>	יג	
<i>Shevat</i>	יד	
<i>Adar</i>	טו	

It is well known that the festivals, Passover, *Shavu'ot* and *Sukot* correspond to the three fathers. Let us look at the three months in which the festivals are celebrated according to our model. The three months of the festivals are the first, third, and seventh (*Nisan*, *Sivan*, and *Tishrei*). According to the model we have just built they are Abraham, Isaac, the son of Abraham, and Jacob the son of Isaac. These are the first months in which the fathers first appear (even if they are only sons, still) in the year.

Nisan is the first (and only) month that corresponds to Abraham. *Sivan* is the first appearance of Isaac, and *Tishrei* is the first appearance of Jacob. It says in many places in the *Zohar* and elsewhere that the three festivals correspond to the three forefathers, so this is a beautiful addition to the idea that the festivals correspond to our patriarchs.

<i>Nisan</i>	י	Passover	Abraham
<i>Iyar</i>	ה		
<i>Sivan</i>	ו	<i>Shavu'ot</i>	Isaac (son of Abraham)
<i>Tamuz</i>	ז		
<i>Av</i>	ח		Isaac
<i>Elul</i>	ט		
<i>Tishrei</i>	י	<i>Sukot</i>	Jacob (son of Isaac)
<i>Cheshvan</i>	יא		
<i>Kislev</i>	יב		Jacob
<i>Tevet</i>	יג		
<i>Shevat</i>	יד		
<i>Adar</i>	טו		

The word "father" (אב) itself already alludes to the 3 forefathers, since this is the value of the word.



Now let us complete the correspondence and as we do so, we will explain our reasoning for choosing each figure.

Continuing our analogy with the second month, *Iyar*, we corresponds it naturally to Sarah, Abraham's wife and the mother of the first Jewish family.

Sivan as we said corresponds to Isaac. The *shofar* that was blown during the giving of the Torah was from Isaac's ram. The Torah was given from the mouth of might, the *sefirah* of Isaac.

Now, who is the daughter that corresponds to *Tamuz*? We all recall that the sages say that the verse "And God blessed Abraham with all"⁶ refers to a daughter that Abraham had in his older age. Her name was *bakol* (meaning, "all"). But elsewhere we have explained, and *Rashi* brings this as a general principle, that a son's wife is considered the father's daughter.⁷ This is particularly true in the case of Isaac, whose soul Isaac brought down in the 3 years that he was "dead" after the *Akeidah*. So Rebecca was Abraham's daughter. We could say that it was this anonymous woman by the name of *bakol*, but if we do want to identify her, she is Rebecca. When Isaac brought Rebecca to Sarah's tent, they all saw that all the miracles that were in merit of Sarah returned. So this is how we correspond the first four months:

<i>Nisan</i>	י	Abraham
<i>Iyar</i>	יז	Sarah
<i>Sivan</i>	יג	Isaac (son of Abraham)
<i>Tamuz</i>	יח	Rebecca

There is another proof that this is the right way to think about the first Jewish family. The sages say that Abraham coined a coin. A coin means that it has some image on it, otherwise it is not considered a coin. This is the sign of sovereignty. On one side there were an old man and woman and on the other side a young man and woman. The old man and woman are Abraham and Sarah. The young man and woman are Isaac and Rebecca.



Now we move on to the second quartet of months. The sense of the month of *Av* is the sense of hearing. This is alluded to in the verse, "God, I have heard Your sound and I am fearful."⁸ Shimon is the tribe of the month and as the second son of Jacob, he too represents the *sefirah* of might (the extension of understanding, the sense of hearing). Because of this might, there is a great deal of hardship in this month. But, in the future, the greatest holiday of the entire year will be in *Av*, once the harsh judgments are sweetened. All the fear of *Av* will turn into laughter (the real meaning of Isaac's name).

The month of *Elul* then corresponds to Rebecca, this time not as a daughter, but as a mother. The sign of *Elul* is the virgin. Rebecca is the only woman in the Pentateuch referred to as a virgin.⁹

The month of *Tishrei* corresponds to Jacob, as Isaac's son. The spiritual battle that goes on during the 10 days of repentance suggests the battle between Jacob and the angel of Esau. In addition if we calculate the "front and back" (פְּנִיִּם וְאַחֲרֵי) of "Jacob" (יַעֲקֹב), we get י' י' ע' י' ע' ק' ב' ק' ב' whose value is exactly that of *Tishrei* (תִּשְׁרֵי). The victory of Jacob over the angel is the same as our victory on *Yom Kipur*.

Isaac did not have a daughter. So who corresponds to the month of *Cheshvan*? We have to use the same principle we used before. There is no sign anywhere that Isaac had any daughters, so how did he perform the *mitzvah* of being fruitful and multiplying? We have to say that since he is the side of might, he follows the rulings of *Shamai's* academy, who say that to fulfill the *mitzvah* of being fruitful, you need to have two sons (not a son and daughter like *Hilel's* academy). Between them, *Shamai's* rulings are penetrating and at least externally stringent representing the *sefirah* of might, while *Hilel's* rulings are more lenient representing the *sefirah* of loving-kindness.

Nonetheless, even though they had performed the *mitzvah* of being fruitful, according to *Shamai's* academy with their twin sons, Jacob and Esau, Isaac and Rebecca were very instrumental in getting Jacob to marry, by sending him away from them to Haran to find his bride. There he married Rachel. We can't say that Leah was the daughter in this case, because she was higher than him (as explained in length in the writings of the Arizal, Leah represents the mother principle, while Jacob himself is the *Ze'er Anpin*, and therefore lower—he could not fully understand Leah and therefore did not love her). Indeed, Rachel's *yahrzeit* is on the 11th of Cheshvan (it also the 41st day of the year, Jewish mother's day). As such, Rachel is the archetypal mother figure, even though in our model she represents the daughter. The explanation for this difference is that there are four levels of elevation of the feminine part of reality (the *nukva*): from daughter, to sister, to mother. But then, after attaining the highest level of being like a mother to her male counterpart she returns to be a daughter once more, but at an even higher level than being a mother. So Rachel is the daughter of the kind that corresponds to the month of *Cheshvan*.

<i>Av</i>	י'	Isaac
<i>Elul</i>	ה'	Rebecca
<i>Tishrei</i>	ב'	Jacob
<i>Cheshvan</i>	ה'	Rachel



Finally, we come to the third quartet of months, from *Kislev* to *Adar*.

In *Kislev* the father is Jacob.

Recall that the third quartet corresponds to *teshuvah*, as we explained earlier. *Teshuvah* is par excellence the quality of the mother, of the *sefirah* of understanding. So here it is most fitting that we correspond the mother to Leah, who is herself the mother principle and *teshuvah*. So, *Tevet*, is Leah. Indeed, the Hasmoneans who fought and won the war against the Greeks were a family of priests, descendants of Levi the son of Jacob and Leah.

When we come to *Shevat*, we have a bit of difficulty, because Jacob had 12 sons. Which one corresponds to the son here? Unlike his father and grandfather, Jacob had a daughter, Dinah and she corresponds to the month of *Adar*. Dinah is called by two names in the Torah, Dinah the daughter of Jacob and Dinah the daughter of Leah, so this adds weight to our identification of *Tevet* with Leah.

So coming back to *Kislev*, since in *Tevet* we placed Leah because she is the mother of the Hasmoneans, then for the time being let us place Levi as corresponding to *Shevat*. Levi is considered the first true unification between Jacob and Leah. Reuben and Shimon were given names that resonate Leah's frustration at the incomplete relationship she had with Jacob. So Levi is the first son that came out of a rectified relationship between them, as she says, "From now on, my husband will accompany me."¹⁰

I could also put Judah here. Judah is Jacob's most important son as he is the tribe from which kingship comes. King David's lineage is from Judah. But, because of his manifestation as kingdom, to a certain degree, spiritually, Judah is more like a daughter than a son. The value of his name is also 30, alluding to the 30 vessels of kingdom in the world of Emanation as it enters the three lower worlds of Creation, Formation, and Action.

I might have thought the Joseph would be the son here, and there is some support for this in Kabbalah where Joseph has a special relationship with Leah.

In the end it seems that all three fit in some respect. But, in our complete model, like we said, there is more reason to place Levi here. So our third quartet looks like this:

<i>Kislev</i>	י	Jacob
<i>Tevet</i>	ל	Leah
<i>Shevat</i>	ל	Levi
<i>Adar</i>	ל	Dinah



Now let us look at this model numerically. The *gematria* of the first family (the family of *mitzvot*) Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and Rebecca (אֲבִרָהּ שָׂרָה יִצְחָק רִבְקָה) is 1268, or $4 \cdot 317$. Since there are 4 names here, it means that the average value of each name is 317. 317 is also the *gematria* of “Abraham our father” (אֲבִרָהּ אָבִינוּ). Just the title “our father” (אָבִינוּ) is exactly equal to Dinah (דִּינָה). If we change the order of the digits in 317 to 713, we find that this equals “Sarah Isaac” (שָׂרָה יִצְחָק).

For the second and third quartet let us add all the names together. We find that the *gematria* of “Isaac Rebecca Jacob Rachel” plus “Jacob Leah Levi Dinah” is exactly 1268! The exact same value. So the first quartet is equal to the sum of the second and third quartets. So all 3 quartets together equal 12 times “Abraham our father” (אֲבִרָהּ אָבִינוּ),

$$\text{אֲבִרָהּ אָבִינוּ} = 8 \cdot \text{אֲבִרָהּ שָׂרָה יִצְחָק רִבְקָה יִצְחָק רִבְקָה יַעֲקֹב רָחֵל יַעֲקֹב לֵאָה לְוִי דִּינָה}$$

Which of the names appear twice? Isaac, Rebecca, and Jacob! Together they equal 697, which is the value of “Israel Joseph” (יִשְׂרָאֵל יוֹסֵף) and “Embodied Essence” (עֲצָמוֹת) (בְּגוּף). But, this also means that the value of the names that appear only once (אֲבִרָהּ שָׂרָה אֲבִינוּ) (רָחֵל לֵאָה לְוִי דִּינָה) is 1839, or $3 \cdot 613$, or the full value of the verse “Open my eyes and I will behold wonders of Your Torah” (גַּל עֵינַי וְאֲבִיטָה נִפְלְאוֹת מִתּוֹרַתְךָ).

So now we have warmed up a little with this model of the 12 months. Our complete model is then,

<i>Nisan</i>	י	father	Abraham	May God (יהוה) bless you and keep you	Abraham	<i>mitzvot</i> (commandments)
<i>Iyar</i>	ה	mother	Sarah			
<i>Sivan</i>	ו	son	Isaac			
<i>Tamuz</i>	ז	daughter	Rebecca			
<i>Av</i>	י	father	Isaac	May God (יהוה) shine His countenance upon you and give you grace	Isaac	Torah
<i>Elul</i>	ה	mother	Rebecca			
<i>Tishrei</i>	ו	son	Jacob			
<i>Cheshvan</i>	ז	daughter	Rachel			
<i>Kislev</i>	י	father	Jacob	May God (יהוה) carry His countenance to you and give you peace	Jacob	<i>teshuvah</i>
<i>Tevet</i>	ה	mother	Leah			
<i>Shevat</i>	ו	son	Levi			
<i>Adar</i>	ז	daughter	Dinah			

1. A *siyum* literally means “an ending” and marks the completion of a certain order of study of the Torah. *Siyumim* (plural form of *siyum*) are generally made when a person completes the study of a tractate of Talmud or an order of Mishnah. Making a *siyum* is a special occasion usually celebrated with a gathering, eating and drinking, and more words of Torah.

². Numbers 6:24-6.

³. Incidentally, the permutation of *Havayah* that corresponds to the month of Av is the one that is read "*Havayah*" (הויה). This permutation is formed from the initial letters of the phrase (Deuteronomy 27:9) "Hearken and hear Israel, today..." (הִסְכֵּת וּשְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל הַיּוֹם).

⁴. Esther 2:7 and 2:15.

⁵. Genesis 25:19.

⁶. Ibid. 24:1.

⁷. See *Rashi* to Genesis 37:35.

⁸. Habakuk 3:2.

⁹. Genesis 24:16.

¹⁰. Ibid. 29:34.