

Sheva Berachot Shapira

1 Shevat 5774 – Chabad House, Kiryat Arba

(Notes taken during class, not reviewed nor edited by Harav Ginsburgh)

Lechaim lechaim. Mazal tov and a good month. The month of Shevat is the month whose sense is eating, and so one should eat the way a Jew eats. It's both Rosh Chodesh and the New Year for Trees according to Beit Shamai, whose ruling we will follow in the future, which begins now.

Also Mazal tov to the beautiful Beit Chabad here. It should be a house of Torah, prayer and good-deeds, as the Rebbe says.

In the Book of Formation, apart from the fact that every month has a sense it also has a tribe, and Shevat's is Asher, מאשר שמנה לחמו והוא יתן מעדני מלך, a verse that connects Asher with the sense of eating explicitly. There is also a letter, one of the 12 simple letters. The month of Shevat is tzadik (צ). The connection between the tzadik and the sense of eating is the verse, צדיק אוכל לשובע נפשו, in contradistinction to the continuation of the verse, ובטן רשעים תחסר. It says that a tzadik eats with the consciousness of אלה כל, that the Aibeshter is all, אוכל. Tzadik equals 204, and since it has 4 letters, the average value of every letter is אוכל. This is the essential consciousness that he has and with which he elevates all the 288 sparks of holiness that fell with the shattering of the vessels, and rectifies them.

In the Talmud it says that the tzadik has two forms, a simple tzadik and a bent tzadik. The Talmud explains that these allude to two types of tzadikim, the straight tzadik in the World to Come (without any barriers, without the need to bend before anyone) and the bent tzadik in this World. We have to live with Mashiach and to bring the Mashiach and we are in a generation of redemption so that everything should begin to come to fruition now. It should manifest through our will and through our actions as we approach the redemption. There is another such letter, with two forms, one bent and one simple, the nun (נ). He two is in this World and in the World to Come. The children in the cheider explained the meaning of these two letters. Children like to play with the letters and enjoy them. The children were those who explained the meaning of these two letters: the bent nun is the one who is trusted (נאמן), referring to Moshe Rabbeinu. The tzadik refers to Yosef. And about both of them it says that there is one that is bent and one that is simple (outstretched). They are the letters of Cheshvan and Shevat, between Moshe and Yosef (and in the Torah, it is Moshe that takes Yosef's bones with him in his tent).

In addition to its two forms, the tzadik also can be written in two different forms. The tzadik is made out of two letters: a nun and a yud. The yud is connected to the nun from its back. The two opinions are whether the yud's face should face backwards (like the Arizal) or front, towards the nun (like the Beit Yosef's opinion). Of course both are divrei Elokim Chayim. So altogether we have two different tzadiks, the outstretched and the bent, and in each there are two possibilities about how to write them. The yud too is one

of the 12 simple letters which are הווחטילנסעצק, the first six are in order from hei to yud, so yud is the letter of the month of Elul. Then Tishrei is lamed, and so on, and today we are moving from the ayin of Tevet to the tzadik of Shevat. The ayin and tzadik together form the simple word "tree" (עץ), giving a strong support for Beit Shamai's opinion that the first day of Shevat (the day that connects the ayin with the tzadik) is the New Year for trees. Finally, kuf is the final simple letter, the letter of Adar.

So what we've added is that Shevat connects Elul and Cheshvan, the letters yud and nun. Elul is the month of teshuvah and Shevat connects it with the month of Cheshvan whose sense is smell, the sense that only the soul enjoys and the Mashiach's strongest sense. It is fitting then to meditate on this interesting connection.

Something more about the tzadik. It is also one of the final letters, the מנצפך letters, which correspond to the five origins of speech. Before the letters divide into 22, there are the five origins of speech in the mouth. The sages say that these are all letters of redemption. They note that there are 5 redemptions: Abraham's, Isaac's, Yaakov's, the redemption from Egypt, and the final and complete future redemption by the Mashiach, which we are now trying to bring about. The order of the redemptions is in the order of the final letters. Abraham's redemption was with the words, לך לך. The double final letter ך is his redemption since it took him out of Charan and brought him to the land of Israel. The second redemption is Isaac's who servants say מצאנו מים, "we have found water." Water is a treasure in the earth. This already occurs in the land of Israel where Isaac was born and where he lived his entire life. His task was to dig deep into the land and find this treasure. Then Yaakov's redemption is with the words, הצילני נא. Here Yaakov is the "trusted one" (נאמן). He says this when he is facing Esau who wants to kill him, he prays to God that God save him and his family.

So the order here is to first exit the physical exile, then find all kinds of treasures in our holy land, and then there is some existential danger that we need to pray to God to save us from.

The fourth redemption is the one from Egypt and it's verse is פקד יפקד, like a man who comes upon his wife, especially when the woman awakens from below, the man has a special mitzvah to come to his wife.

Finally the fifth redemption is the Mashiach's redemption that we are now waiting for every moment. Meaning that the month of Shevat is particularly related to the coming of Mashiach. The verse is צמח צדיק. He is also called גואל צדק, and he is called משיח צדקנו. Everything with the Mashiach is related to the letter tzadik. As a king, the word king equals 90, the value of the tzadik. He is the one who will make God our King above (שום לעילא) as he is the king below (שום לתתא).

So let's return to meditate on the 4 forms of the tzadik. Apparently we have to go through all four stages of the tzadik to merit the final redemption. About the letter nun, the sages say that it represents falling (נפילה). The strongest such phenomenon is in relation to the missing verse that begins with nun in Ashrei. The verse that begins with samech begins with the word support, since the nun falls. There is something wondrous (נפלא) in this fall, because the Mashiach himself is called someone who falls. Apart from the fact that we should want and act to bring about God's sovereignty and the

Mashiach's kingdom, it behooves every Jew to act to bring about justice in our land. Justice is Jewish law, not what the state of Israel uses today. Just as the tzadik falls he also gets up. Just as he eats, he falls, *שבע יפול צדיק וקם*. A few days ago we talked about this verse in Kever Rochel and now we are near the Cave of the Patriarchs so we should connect them together. The nun in the letter tzadik is what allows the tzadik to get up, as the verse says, *גם כי יפול לא יוטל כי ה' סומך ידו*. God supports the tzadik so that even when he falls down he is not cast aside.

So in the months, the month of Cheshvan whose sense is smell, is one that has a tendency to fall (its letter is the letter nun). So we all fall during Cheshvan—why, because Tishrei is a month with a high (its letter is also the lamed, the highest of all the letters). But, in Cheshvan, there is nothing special. When the Mashiach comes and we understand the greatness of falling down, then the month of Cheshvan will be the greatest of all the months. We need to take the yud of Elul, which either looks at the nun (down), or backwards (up). When the yud looks at the nun, it is looking down—staring at the fall, wondering about how this great trustworthy individual fell down. But, when the yud looks up it looks at God. It is like the yud of Elul, where we turn to Hashem to have mercy over us. When the yud looks at the nun, it is looking at my falls, at my failures. The month to look at our failures and half faith that we can fix them is the month of Elul. This is for someone who is in complete despair and is afraid that he will never be able to fix it.

Now let's go back. The nun is the reality of the fall, the failure. The yud represents the Divine soul—God gave every Jew a Divine soul so that it conquer and lift up the animal soul. In this world the tzadik falls seven times and gets up. Simple as that: there are falls (they are failures and falls relative to the tzadik—a beinoni would not even feel them). The tzadik falls and regular people fall. Because this is the world of separation from God, there are falls. Especially in this particular part of the year, called the Shovavim—the weeks of Shemot through Mishpatim—we can rectify the falls related to the blemish of the covenant. Most of the Shovavim are during the month of Shevat. How should a young man relate to the blemishes of the covenant? The Rebbe explains as a general rule that in our generation, one should not think at all about this blemish, not make any account of how much negativity has come about from his actions. Instead, one should ignore it, not think about it (that is one of the reasons that the Shovavim are not talked about too much in Chabad). The only thing one should do is increase one's good actions. The Lubavitcher writes to all the young men to ignore this, to spend all their strength in doing good. Someday it will be the right time to think about it. Why do we mention this now (apart from the fact that it is relevant to most of us here)? Because these are the two forms of the tzadik. The yud lifts the nun that has fallen, the tzadik who is fallen. But, there are two ways to do it. The yud can look up, at God, doing only good actions, spreading Chassidut, doing acts of kindness. In this way it by the way lifts the nun, without even looking at the fall itself, like we said the Lubavitcher Rebbe says we should ignore these falls. Likewise the nun that looks down is supporting the fall, the blemish of the covenant, by thinking about it. But, as the Rebbe said, in our generation, one can sink into the thoughts about this blemish, and lose oneself in despair. Still, there

is such an opinion that this is how the tzadik should be written. According to the Rebbe these types of thoughts, where I was and what I did, they are appropriate for the age of 70 (if you're a scribe). There is a tendency for people to think about their falls, about their failures when it's not yet the time for this. There is already submission just in knowing that I have fallen. That a person knows in general that he is not rectified, that is the basis for serving God—submission. But, separation in this case means, just focusing on good things and repressing these negative thoughts. Only when you reach the ripe age of 70 can you begin to sweeten these falls. When Rebbe Elimelech was an old man, he started doing teshuvah on all kinds of things that no one knew about (for instance that when suckling, he once bit his mother). These rectifications are sweetening.

This is a general principle. So we've now explained the two forms of the bent tzadik, both forms of which are ways of serving God in this world. But, what about the outstretched, the simple tzadik? That is in the World to Come where there is no longer an evil inclination. It says that in the future, we will say the verse, **אֲדַרְךָ הוֹי כִּי אֲנַפְתָּ בִּי**, I thank you God for rebuking me. In the future we will be able to thank God for all the difficulties we went through in life.

The Rebbe related that from the time he was a young child he was anticipating the day on which he could say, I thank you God for rebuking me, for all the difficulties that the Jewish people went through (including my own person problems, but they are like nothing relative to the people as a whole). In any case, even in the future there will be an impression left by all the falls, all the hardships that we went through in life. Now the question is how the yud looks at these hardships. There is a phrase, descent is for the purpose of ascent: every descent I experience (be it my action, or the Almighty's punishment), will, once I do teshuvah, become transformed into a positive thing. Not that God forbid one should intentionally do something wrong (because one who says I will sin and return, he is not given time to return... evne though the Tanya stresses that if he is adamant he can do teshuvah even in such cases). But, there is another saying, the end of all descent is ascent. Meaning that the purpose of descent is itself an ascent. The descent itself is part of the ascent, and not only that it is the purpose of the ascent.

This is a little similar to the 2 different kavanot we have about eating. The first is that I eat in order to serve God. The sages say and the Rambam quotes, All your actions should be for the sake of heaven. To be healthy, one must eat. But, for someone whose entire life is learning, the time spent eating is a descent—so for him the descent is needed for the ascent. But, there is another person for whom **בְּכֹל דְּרַבְנִיךְ דַּעְהוּ**, Know Him with all your ways. And for him, eating itself is a form of serving God.

Now someone who served God his entire life will be an outstretched tzadik. If his yud looks up, he is constantly thinking about how his actions in the end led to an ascent. But, the one who is able to know God in all his ways, that tzadik is the oneh whose yud looks back at him. Taking the hei—reality—and connecting it with the vav—gives us **דַּעְהוּ**. Again, eating is the sense of Shevat, and one should look at the food and understand that **“כִּי לֹא עַל הַלֶּחֶם לִבְדוֹ יַחִיָּה הָאָדָם אֲלָא עַל כָּל מוֹצֵא פִי הוֹי יַחִיָּה הָאָדָם”** One who has served God in this manner, in the future he will be a tzadik with his yud

facing down. In the future all the tzadikim will look at the evil inclination to assess how difficult it was to overcome it.

How does one meditate on all the difficulties we've experienced through the exile. The Rebbe writes that one should meditate on even the most difficult time, like the Shoah, one should see that even the worst suffering they endured is in the end like nothing compared to eternity. It is like anything that is finite, which is like nothing compared to the infinite. The soul lasts forever and all suffering is just *רגע באפי*. May God have mercy on every single Jew and that no Jew should suffer anything. But, still there is the need to thank God for all the suffering. Just like there is regarding food mixtures, there is a way in which everything is null in the general, like 1 in 60 etc. As much as we may have transgressed a great deal in our lives, it was all a mistake, it was not who we really are, and in the end it is nothing next to the infinite. This is the simple tzadik with the yud looking up. All that is negative is like nothing compared to all the infinite good in the world. But, the yud facing down is as we said when the descent is the purpose of the ascent—in this case, what comforts a person is that he will learn for a long time and spend only a few minutes eating. If he could shorten the time spent on food and lengthen that spent on Torah, he would be even happier.

But, if the descent is the purpose of the ascent, then the negative suddenly seems very small. This perspective was gained by many tzadikim when they passed from the world. When they were alive they shared the hardships of life, but when they entered Gan Eden, they suddenly saw things from a different perspective, feeling that in essence everything was actually good down here, because all descents are in actuality for the purpose of an ascent. This was even true of great tzadikim like the Ba'al Shem Tov as is known from the famous story. That is why we want a tzadik who is alive, one who sees how difficult the world is and life is. But, there is an even greater tzadik who even in this world can look at the reality and see that everything is essentially good. This type of tzadik is the one who, in the future to come, will be the yud facing down in the form of the letter tzadik.

All this is in honor of *ועמך בלם צדיקים*. The two tzadikim are the tzadik who eats and the tzadik who falls. Let's take a break.

Lechaim lechaim. Rosh Chodesh Shevat is the best for connecting with the tzadik of the generation and the tzadikim of all the generations. There are many tzadikim related to the month of Shevat. IN chabad it is of course the previous Rebbe, the Rayatz whose yearzeit is on the 10th of Shevat, which is also the first day of the Rebbe's nesiut. That same day is the yearzeit of the Rashash, the greatest Kabbalist after the Arizal, which means that these two tzadikim have a special connection. On the 2nd of Shevat is the yearziet of Rebbe Zusha and on the 5th of Shevat the Sefat Emet. On the 4th of Shevat is

the Baba Sali. The 22nd of Shevat is yarhzeit of the Kotzker and the Rebbetzin. There is probably some strong connection between all these tzadikim. Now tonight we will speak about the Sefat Emet, the yarhzeit of hei shevat, the fifth of shevat. There was a strong personal relationship between him and the Rebbe Rashab. The Rebbe Rayatz also visited him when he was young, he gave him his hand and said with great excitement, this is a holy hand (about the Rebbe Rayatz's hand). The Sefat Emet passed away at the age of 58, relatively young.

The Rebbe writes in the final installment of Bati Legani that in a moment we are entering the 10th generation from the BST, the generation of redemption. The Sefat Emet himself is the 10th generation from the BST. In the Gur dynasty the generations are generally very short. The Sefat Emet passed away in 5665, which was 15 years before the Rebbe Rashab. He was born in 5607, 14 years before the Rebbe Rashab. The order of the generations in Gur begins with the BST and the Magid, then Rebbe Elimelech, then the Seer of Lublin, and in his lifetime the Helige Yid, then Rebbe Bunim, then the Kotzker, then the Chidushei Harim, and then there were Chassidim who wanted the Sefat Emet (who was 19 at the time), but he refused, and so the Rebbe Henich of Alexander was made the Rebbe for a very short time (about 4 years) and then the Sefat Emet agreed to be the Rebbe. So if you can count from 1 to 10 (this is a good exercise for counting), you can see that there were 10 generations here. But in Chabad, 10 generations is 104 years longer. But, since the Sefat Emet is the 10th generation in Gur he has a connection with our generation (which in Chabad is the 10th from the BST).

The entire Sefat Emet on the Torah he said he took from two sources: his grandfather, the Chidushei Harim and from one book, the Likutei Torah of the Alter Rebbe. All this is an introduction. We'd like to talk about one of his favorite subjects, which is connected especially to the parashah of the week, Bo, which includes the very first mitzvah that the Jewish people were given. The verse is **לכם ראש חודשים ראשון הוא לכם לחודשי השנה**. The subject is "renewal." The idea is that all through one's service of God there should be renewal, **התחדשות**.

Let's add that one of the reasons he is called the Sefat Emet is because this term, the edge of truth, is related to the sefirah of malchut, kingdom. This type of truth is what is related to the service of the beinoni in the Tanya.

Returning to renewal, which is one of his main topics, and the source is in the first mitzvah in our parashah. If we want a single word that equals renewal by the Sefat Emet in particular and in general in Chassidut... His book consists of what he said on Shabbat, and he himself would later write what he said (like the books of the Seer of Lublin). The Sefat Emet was very organized, and he said about himself that he knows exactly what he will do 2 years from now). Indeed, before he passed away he said that he regretted only 2 things: that he hadn't eaten more and hadn't slept less.

In any case, for every parashah he has many different things he said over the many years. This is also the tradition in Parshischa, to base the Chassidut taught on Midrash Rabbah. And the same midrash he will explain in different ways, each year. So the word he mentions in relation to renewal is lifeforce – **חיות**. One who is renewing is alive, one who is not renewing is dead. One must always renew in one's service of God. How

much does **לכם** **החדש הזה** equal? 424, which is equal to life-force, **חיות**. 424 is also the value of Mashiach son of David (**משיח בן דוד**), which means that life-force is what picks the Mashiach all the time, making him **חי וקים**.

What is the main verse in the Tanach related to life-force? **והחיות רצוא ושוב**, and the chayot would run and return. The sages say, don't read the word Chayot (angels), but chayut (life-force). This is the difference between "head" and "first." The lifeforce runs and return. The fact that he is the first month (**ראש חדשים**) means that he is running up. But, that he is drawn down that is how he is the first of the months of the year, the first in a sequence (**ראשון הוא לכם לחדשי השנה**). So we can say there is some submission, some **חש** in the lifeforce, the **חיות** of the first three words, **החדש הזה לכם**.

We know that this is an all inclusive mitzvah, since Rashi mentions it in his first commentary on the Torah as the very first mitzvah that the Torah gives. So much so that Rabbi Yitzchak says, the Torah should have started with this verse, and not with "In the beginning."

One of the explanations of parashat Bo is that it is the connection between the Ten Utterances of creation and the 10 Commandments given at Mt. Sinai. The Ten utterances begin with **beit** of **בראשית**, and the Ten Commandments begin with the **alef** of **אנכי**. So **Bo**, **בא**, is the connection between the two. Creation is the general form of renewal, but the renewal of the Jewish people begins with the exodus from Egypt. The Jewish people are like a form within the form of the world. And in parashat Bo the beginning of our form begins to show amidst the general form of creation.

Now Sefat Emet on the Torah is a book about serving God. Every Lubavitcher, who enjoys serving God, should add this book to his leisure reading. The service that one learns from it is very Chabad in its nature.

When one reads the Sefat Emet in a cursory manner, it seems like he says the same thing in each year. But, here we will show that there are different ideas there. We will now explain in short a full partzuf of ideas related to renewal.

He says that every day when a Jew says the Shema, and these things shall be today... the sages say that "today" means that these things should be new every day. So, when one comes to the word "today" one should meditate on renewal. All renewal begins with the mitzvah of **החדש הזה לכם ראש חדשים**. According to the Rambam, there is only one mitzvah of the 613 here. The Rambam though says that there are 2 mitzvot here: the first is to sanctify the new moon and the second is the adding of a 13th month to a year. If we return to the initial way in which the Gaonim counted the 613 mitzvot the Rasag is of the Rambam's opinion while the Behag says like the Ramban. Regarding Shema itself, the Ramban says that there are 2 mitzvot—once in the morning one in the evening. In any case, let's leave this topic for the moment. Notice another thing, that this mitzvah was given to Moshe Rabbeinu as a fact: **החדש הזה לכם ראש חדשים**. It doesn't say, it doesn't command to do something. Is there another such mitzvah which is stated as a fact? There is another special form for a mitzvah, **ונקדשתי בתוך בני ישראל**. This we've talked about many times—a mitzvah given in the passive form—indicating that a Jew has self-sacrifice naturally. Now there is also a connection between sanctifying the new moon, **קדש**, and the word month, **חדש**. In the time of the Temple when the moon was sanctified

by a court, there was a blessing recited at the time of the sanctification. There are three different opinions about what this blessing was, *מקדש ישראל*, *מקדש חדשים*, *מחדש חדשים*. The idea here is that the holiness of the Jewish people comes from the fact that we are constantly renewing. The two letters that exchange between *חדש* and *קדש* is *חק*, the *netzach* of *partzuf Albam*.

Now returning to the Shema, the third verse contains the word *היום*, which should lead to an experience of renewal. What is the merit of feeling this? The Sefat Emet says that it comes from the word *מאדך*, the self-sacrifice of the Jewish people during the Egyptian exile specifically. Today this is attained through giving *tzedakah*. The word “today” *היום* is also related to the coming of *Mashiach*—as related regarding Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi whom the *Mashiach* told he is coming today. So since the Sefat Emet connects today with renewal, we can say that this is what the *Mashiach* meant. The *Maharal* says that *Eliyahu* who explained what the *Mashiach* meant doesn’t really understand the *Mashiach*’s logic, but he knows how to relate between Rabbi Yehoshua’s understanding and the *Mashiach*’s understanding—*Eliyahu*’s mind is like the intermediary between the *Mashiach* and Rabbi Yehoshua’s. That is why we give ourselves license to explain this verse, that *Mashiach* will come when you attain a state of renewal yourself. About the *Mashiach* it says, *תורה חדשה מאתי תצא*, a new Torah will come from me, which doesn’t mean that the Torah will change, but that the Torah will constantly renew. It will renew your life, the dew of Torah is what brings the dead back to life. How can we see that this is a true understanding of the word “today.” Because it connects what the *Mashiach* said to Rabbi Yehoshua and what he said to the *BST*. More important than all the teachings that the *BST* taught is that he introduced life-force, simply life, into the lives of the Jews that lived in his generation. That is the real essence of your wellsprings will spread forth.

All this is the crown, the *keter* of life-force, *חיות* of renewal among the teachings of the Sefat Emet on renewal. By sacrificing ourselves, we merit life-force, the renewal. About the revelation of the *keter*, the verse says about *Mashiach*, *הנה ישביל עבדי*. We have 10 more *sefirot* to explain but the couple have to get back home, and we have to go home too, so the *keter* which is called the *כליל*, because it includes everything will have to be enough for now.