

BSD



Torah Healing: Advice from the Noam Elimelech

During this time of isolation, Rabbi Ginsburgh has begun to teach a short audio lesson daily. In this first lesson, on the day of passing of Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhansk, we will learn a short teaching from Rebbe Elimelech's book, 'Noam Elimelech' on the very pertinent topic of drawing down God's healing by praising Him in general and in particular, learning His Torah.

The 169th Day of the Year

Today is the 21st of Adar, the day of passing of Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhansk, may his merit protect us and all of Israel. What is special about this day is that in a regular year, like this year, it is the 169th day of the year, which is 13 squared. This is a special *segulah* for awakening great compassion. 13 represents the 13 Attributes of Mercy and when a number is squared it represents interinclusion, in which every attribute includes all the attributes in the group. 13 is the numerical value of *ahavah* (love) and *echad* (one). In 169 it is squared and interincluded. So today is the complete interinclusion of all the mercy and all the love.

There are a number of important words that equal 169. For our discussion, the most important word is *te'amim* (cantillation notes). The Torah is written with *Tant"o*: *T'eamim* (cantillation notes), *nekudot* (vowel symbols) *tagim* (scribal crowns) *otiot* (letters), parallel to the letters of God's Name, Havayah.¹ The highest level, corresponding to the *yud* of Havayah, are the cantillation notes, which are the song of the Torah, "Write for you this song, teach it to the Children of Israel, put it in their mouths."² It is written that Mashiach will come to reveal the *te'amim* of the Torah³, which are both the inner reasons

¹ ע"ח ש"ח (דרושי נקודות) פ"א; מ"ח מסכת בריאת א"ק פ"ב משניות ג-ו; בגדי קדש אשר לאהרן (פיריה), א"ב דכללים

² Deuteronomy 31:19

³ See Rashi on Song of Songs 1:1.

(*te'amim* in Hebrew) for the commandments and the song of the Torah, as well. The entire Torah is a song, which is connected to Rebbe Elimelech's teaching that we are about to learn. The *Ba'alei Hamesorah* say that there are 13 main cantillation notes.⁴ This dovetails with the allusion that the word *te'amim* equals 169, 13 squared.

Rectification of "Ketzeif"

The teaching that we will learn is at the beginning of the "*Likutei Shoshanah*," which appears at the end of the *Noam Elimelech*. He explains a verse in Psalms 111, which is written according to the *alef-beit*. This verse speaks of the praise of God and the Torah:

פְּדוֹת שְׁלַח לְעַמּוֹ צוּה לְעוֹלָם בְּרִיתוֹ קְדוֹשׁ וְנֹרָא
שְׁמוֹ⁵

(He has sent redemption to his nation, He has commanded His covenant for eternity, holy and awesome is His Name).

The entire verse contains three phrases beginning with the letters *pei*, *tzaddik* and *kuf*, according to the order of the *alef-beit*. If we reverse those letters, we get the word *ketzeif* (wrath). This is an allusion to the sweetening of the judgments by means of the *ketoret* (incense):

And Moses said to Aaron: 'Take the fire-pan, and put fire therein from the altar, and lay incense thereon, and carry it quickly unto the congregation, and make atonement for them; for there is wrath gone out from God: the plague is begun.'⁶

Aaron did as Moses instructed, and the *ketoret* stopped the plague. This is the *segulah* to say the *Pitum Haketoret* with focus when a plague, an epidemic is taking place. The *ketoret* stops the epidemic.

In the verse above, the plague is referred to as *ketzeif*. In our verse from Psalms, we have the letters for *ketzeif* in reverse. *Ketzeif* is the reverse order, the hind side of the word, which represents judgment. The forward face represents compassion.

In these days of epidemic, we must turn the *ketzeif* into "He has sent redemption to his nation, He has commanded His covenant for eternity, holy

⁴ Commentary of the Vilna Gaon on the Zohar in a number of places.

⁵ Psalms 111:9

⁶ Numbers 17:11.

and awesome is His Name” which is the forward, compassion order of these letters.

The Remedy: Praise of God

The Noam Elimelech begins his explanation: “For the Creator, blessed be He sends the remedy before the blow.” This is a major rule. God always prefaces the remedy to the blow. The good will always precede what seems to be not good. Whoever understands this can already see the good in what seems to be not-good. By seeing the good he sweetens the seeming not-good and everything turns into visible good, which is the remedy.

What is the remedy that God brings before the blow to the collective or the individual? This is the Noam Elimelech’s main idea here: **What is the remedy? These are the praises and exaltations that we praise and exalt His great Name.** When we praise and glorify God, this in itself is the remedy. In Psalms 22:4 it is written that God “sits on the praises of Israel.” As the Ba’al Shem Tov explains⁷, by means of our praises, God is drawn down – “sits.” Havayah is God’s Name of compassion. He is all good, the quintessential good. The more that we praise, exalt and beautify God, the more that we draw Him to us – we draw down God’s mercy to heal every blow in the world.

The main word here is *tehillah*, praise. Afterwards, the Noam Elimelech adds the words *shevach* (exaltation) and *pe’er* (beauty). It is written that *tehillah*, *shevach*, *pe’er* parallel the sefirot whose acronym is *chede”r*: *chesed*, *din* and *tiferet* (lovingkindness, judgement and compassion). *Tehillah* parallels *chesed*, lovingkindness, like *hallel*, which alludes to light⁸, or “Abraham (whose *sefirah* is lovingkindness) began to illuminate.”⁹ *Shevach*, is associated with might and *pe’er* is from the word *tiferet*, beauty. Pe’er (פּוּר) is also a permutation of *rapoh* (פּוּר), to heal. In *tiferet*, the healing is revealed and sure.

Every Verse in the Torah is Exaltation of God and Torah

The Noam Elimelech adds something that is perhaps the main part of his new teaching: He connects between praise of God and the essence of the Torah, of learning the holy Torah. He says something that is written in additional places in Chassidut: That the very act of learning Torah, (“If not for my covenant day and night, if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and

⁷ Liku”sh part 7 p. 135. And see Rabbi Ginsburgh’s book, ‘Or Yisrael’ part 1 p. 91.

⁸ As in the expression, “*or ki yahel*” (light when it shines), Job31:26.

⁹ *Shemot Rabbah*, 15:20.

earth"¹⁰) is exaltation and praise of God, the Giver of the Torah. With every word of Torah that we utter, we exalt God.

“The Torah and the Holy One, Blessed Be He are one”¹¹. All is one and every verse of the Torah that we read – as we have said that this epidemic period is a good time to increase our study of the Written Torah¹² - is actually an act of praise of God. This even includes a verse that does not seem meaningful in our eyes: For example, as the Rambam writes¹³ that the verse, “And the sister of Lotan was Timna,”¹⁴ is equal to the verse, “*Shema Yisrael* (Hear Israel, God is our God, God is One)”¹⁵. The intention of the Rambam is that the verse has holiness, it reflects God’s essence. But we can learn from this that every verse is praise and exaltation of God. Just as it is clear that “Hear Israel, God is our God, God is One” is praise of God, so is the verse “And the sister of Lotan was Timna” praise of God. It is truly wondrous that God writes in His Torah “And the sister of Lotan was Timna!”

The Torah is praise and exaltation of God. Thus we have to learn Torah as much as possible and in addition, simply praise and exalt God. “And You are holy (as in the end of our verse, ‘holy and awesome is His Name’) sitting on the praises of Israel,” as per the famous explanation of the Ba’al Shem Tov, above.

To be continued...

¹⁰ Jeremiah 33:25.

¹¹ Zohar I 24a; Zohar II 60a; and more.

¹² https://www.inner.org/torah_and_science/torah-healing/corona-chassidic-health-guidelines See the section on Binah (Understanding)

¹³ Rambam *Perush Hamishnayot*, Sanhedrin ch.10, mishnah a, yesod 8 (see Sanhedrin 99b).

¹⁴ Genesis 36:22.

¹⁵ Deuteronomy 6:4.