

The Month of Adar:

Adar Alef. The Power of the Pregnant Month

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Introduction

Adar is the month of good fortune, and now we have the double good fortune to have two months of *Adar*. The Lubavitcher Rebbe teaches that just as it takes a ratio of 1/60 to annul a mixture of un-kosher and kosher food, the sixty days of the two *Adars* in a leap year allude to the nullification of all undesirable things! It is the most opportune time to increase in a double measure of *simcha* (happiness) for a full sixty days.

Last week I wrote you about reconciliation between the sun and moon that takes place during the Jewish leap year when we adjust the lunar to the solar calendar. I want to add a beautiful idea from “*The Light of the Moon*” by Orah Rivkah Weingurt.¹ The sun with its constant stable light is compared to the intellect, while the moon with its mood shifts is compared to the emotions. We also learn this idea from the fact that sun is called חמה/*chama* from the language of heat, whereas the moon is called לבנה/*levana* from its white color. The word חמה/*chama* includes the letters of מוח/*moach* which means brain, while the word לבנה/*levana* includes the letters of the word לב/*lev* which means heart. The month of *Adar Alef* is the time to connect and unify our mind and heart, integrating our intellectual understanding with our emotions. I often feel a gap between my *sechel* (intellect) and emotions. In our time we learn multiple ideas at the speed of lightening without necessarily absorbing the lessons gleaned into our gut and incorporating them into our lives and actions. I know intellectually to be happy with whatever happens in life. However, when someone hurts me or things are difficult at the Midrasha, I still get upset, even though I know that it’s all for the best.

Our grandmothers and great grandmothers where not privileged to learn even a fraction of our deep Torah learning today, yet did this detract from their connection with Hashem and their devotion to Torah life? In the past people would learn less but integrate their learning much more into their actions. Many would not learn any new ideas until they had mastered to make their previous learning part of their life. They kept Ramban’s directive: “Study the Torah regularly so that you be able to fulfill its mitzvot. As soon as you have completed studying any book of Torah think about what you have studied; whether there is something in your lesson that you would be able to fulfill.”² Often when I prepare class I get a flash that really all these nice ideas are less important than the simple *Yirat Shamayim* of wanting to keep Hashem’s mitzvot which I hope to instill in myself and my students. However, in our time we need all the exciting deep mystical Torah to motivate ourselves to turn off our computers and iPhones before the last minute of Shabbat candlelight time. Sometimes I long for a past before my time when things were simple and pure, and when my heart would be open to apply every little kernel of truth that I knew.

¹ Much of this article is based on this beautiful book in Hebrew אור הלבנה, בינה נשית במעגלי העיתים
אורה רבקה וינגורט

² *Iggeret HaRamban*, p. 6.

Spiritual Cholesterol

Why is it so hard to apply the learning of our intellect into our heart and actions? We are all concerned about lowering cholesterol and keeping our arteries unblocked, but what about unblocking the pathways to the emotions in our heart? The concept of a blocked heart is called *timtum lev* in the Torah.³ Most of us have various degrees of spiritual cholesterol that blocks the pathway between our mind and heart. We pray together with King David: *לב טהור ברא לי אלהים* / *Lev tahor b'ra li Elokim* – “Create for me a pure heart oh G-d!”⁴ The usual *mussar* approach to purifying the heart is by means of working on our *midot* (character traits) and conquering our desires for extras. Without detracting from this approach, it may be even more effective to really learn the concepts we want to integrate in such a deep way that it becomes totally clear to us without a speck of doubt. Once a concept has become clear as the blue sky on a summer day, its message will automatically spill over into our heart and unblock it. For example when we know clearly that if we don't get up by a certain time in the morning we will miss our flight and lose a lot of money, then we will surely jump out of bed at the very first alarm. Likewise, if we only understood the power of prayer, how would we ever miss *mincha* (afternoon prayer) even once!

Contemplating in our Heart

Unblocking our spiritual and emotional cholesterol by making the new concepts we learn crystal clear to ourselves, to the extent that we have absolutely no doubt about them is the work of the month of *Adar*. This is the time when we especially have the mitzvah to obliterate the memory of Amalek who shares the numerical value of the Hebrew word *ספק/safek* – doubt. Moshe, our teachers reminds us of the importance to think deeply about what we learn with the following words:

וידעת היום והשבת אל לבבך כי השם הוא האלהים בשמים ממעל ועל הארץ מתחת אין עוד

“Know today and contemplate in your heart that Hashem is G-d in heaven above and in the earth below there is no other.”⁵ From here we learn that integrating mind and heart begins in the mind and spreads to the heart through deep contemplation. It is interesting that the word used for “Know” is *v'yadata* from the Hebrew root *yada* which also means connection as in “Adam **knew** his wife Chava.”⁶

Where Mind and Heart Meet

שמשא וסיהרא משמשין כחדא ולא מתפרשין לעלמין,

“The sun and the moon must serve as one and never ever separate.”⁷ Some people are naturally more emotional types and others are intellectuals yet the month of *Adar Alef* is most opportune for balancing ourselves, integrating our sun/intellect and moon/emotions. Rav Kook teaches: “Whoever learns Torah *l'shema* (for its own sake) is blessed with complete and perfect unity between the intellect and the emotions, in a way that each one will widen the boundary of the other, as they are one beloved couple which never separates.”⁸ I remember many years ago that some people mistakenly considered Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin to be not such intellectual place of learning since we emphasize spirituality and creativity. That's when we started to add terms such as ‘text based,’ ‘serious textual study’ etc. to all of

³ See for example Rabbeinu Bachaya, *Vayikra* 11:33.

⁴ *Tehillim* 51:12.

⁵ *Devarim* 4:19.

⁶ *Bereishit* 4:1.

⁷ *Zohar*, Part 2, 168b.

⁸ *Orot HaKodesh* 1:75.

our promotional materials. It is difficult for people to understand that emphasizing the emotional and spiritual facets doesn't necessarily detract from the intellectual level. On the contrary, Rav Kook's *chidush* (new idea) is that when we learn for the right reason our heart and mind can mutually enhance one another. Balancing our emotions and developing good character traits are the vessels for containing our intellectual learning. For example it is known that when a person gets angry he forgets his Torah learning.⁹ Likewise, intellectual Torah learning with deep contemplation facilitates purifying our heart and developing good *midot* (character traits). At Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin we strive to integrate mind and heart, allowing each to enhance and strengthen the other.

The Sound of Silence

Achieving the perfect balance between intellect and emotions can also be understood as balancing between speech and silence. Rachel mastered the art of silence passed it on to all of her descendants. Leah mastered the art of expressing thanks and passed it on to all of her descendants.¹⁰ Rachel remained silent and did not tell Ya'acov when her sister was given to him in marriage. Leah praised Hashem when she named her fourth son Yehuda, realizing that all her suffering was worthwhile to accomplish giving birth to the ancestor of Mashiach. Both the power of speech and silence together build the Jewish nation. The balance between them is called חשמל/*Chashmal*,¹¹ which incidentally means electricity in modern Hebrew. It is interesting to note that also electricity consist of the perfect balance between + and -. It is a real art to know when to speak and when to remain silent; both are equally needed at the appropriate times. Speech becomes empty without inner content. In order to express our power of speech we need to relearn to listen to our inner voice which has been blocked by the incessant, deafening noise of modern technology. The noise of our technically devised internet-Walkman- mp3-world makes us turn to the silence of meditation. Rachel and her children teach us how to keep secrets. We too even if we feel we need to speak about everything, do we really need to speak about everything with everyone?

Yosef's Secret Covering

Yehuda sanctified Hashem in a revealed way, whereas Yosef sanctified Hashem in secret.¹² Yosef never revealed to his father that his brothers had sold him into slavery, as this would have been considered *lashon hara* (evil speech) since there was no longer any purpose for letting Ya'acov know, as the deed could not be undone.¹³ Think about how incredible hard it must have been for Yosef to keep silent and not tell his father about all the suffering he went through because of the hatred of his brothers who desired to kill him, and in the end sold him as a tender youth of 17 to the most loathsome society of Egypt. The extent of Yosef's incredible self-discipline is also enacted during his encounter with Potiphar's wife. Since Yosef covered up for his brothers and sanctified Hashem's name in secret, extending his mother Rachel's art of silence he and his descendants is covered and protected from the evil eye. Also Yosef's blessing to his sons Efraim and Menashe was in secret saying "may they multiply fishlike within the land."¹⁴ Just as the fish are covered so is his descendants covered. Therefore, he merited that *Ayin*

⁹ *Babylonian Talmud, Nedarim 22b.*

¹⁰ *Midrash Bereishit Rabbah 78:5.*

¹¹ *Yechezkiel 1:27.* 'Chash' means silence whereas 'mal' is related to the Hebrew word for 'word.'

¹² *Babylonian Talmud, Sotah 36b.*

¹³ *Ramban, Bereishit 45:27.*

¹⁴ *Bereishit 48:16.*

Hara does not rule his children.¹⁵ The constellation of the month of *Adar* is Pisces, and corresponds to the tribe of Yosef. Therefore it seems that the entire month is opportune for connecting with the world that is 'hidden from the eye' by means of silence.

The Two Fish of Pisces

The twelve months of the Jewish year correspond to the twelve signs of the zodiac, and the month of *Adar* corresponds to *dagim* (Pisces).¹⁶ *Adar* corresponds to *Dagim* because during this month we are able to avoid the harmful effects of the *Ayin Hara*.

Rav Tzadok Hakohen of Lublin notes that Yosef was unique among Ya'acov's sons in that his two sons each formed a separate tribe.¹⁷ Accordingly, in a leap year, the two months of *Adar* correspond to the two sons of Yosef, Menashe and Efraim. "Since the main reading of the *Megillah* and obliterating Amalek are in *Adar Beit*, it follows that this month corresponds to Efraim. Likewise Yehoshua from the tribe of Efraim was the first eradicate Amalek. *Adar Alef* corresponds to Menashe."¹⁸

Yosef named his first born son Menashe for G-d has made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house."¹⁹ The word Menashe comes from the word *nasha*, which indicates the action taken in order to make ourselves forget. In order for Yosef to be able to remain silent and not tell his father what his brothers had done to him he needed to first make himself forget it. When someone harbors negative feelings it is close to impossible that these feelings won't leak out, at some point, in negative speech. Yosef was able to completely forget what his brothers did to him in his heart. This inner soul work is the essence of the name Menashe and the work of *Adar Alef*.

Connecting the Silence of *Adar Alef* with Rectified Expression of *Adar Beit*

During a leap year everything takes place in the second *Adar*: The Fast of Esther, Purim and Shushan Purim. *Adar Beit* is the month of expression – of reading the *megillah* and making lots of noise with our groggers. *Adar Alef* stands in shade of its colorful expressive partner. Everything in *Adar Alef* is smaller, instead of Purim we have *Purim Katan* (which means 'Small Purim.'). Yet it is actually through the power of the 'smallness' of silence that we achieve rectified speech – the ability to make our few well-thought words effective. This is the power of Esther who kept silent and "didn't tell of her people and her descent."²⁰ Until Mordechai spurred her on by imploring her: "If you remain silent at this time...you and your father's house shall perish."²¹ Only then did Esther dress up in *malchut* (the royalty of speech), and brought about the salvation of her people through rectified speech. If we work on practicing silence in the hidden realm during the first month of *Adar*, with Hashem's help we will be able to achieve rectified speech in the second month of *Adar*, and reveal the hidden miracles in our lives!

¹⁵ Maharal, *Chidushei Aggadot, Sotah* p. 43.

¹⁶ *Sefer Yetzirah* 5:2.

¹⁷ "Efraim U' Menashe K' Reuven V' Shimon Yiheyu Li" – (*Bereishit* 48:5).

¹⁸ Rav Tzaddok HaKohen, *P'ri Tzaddik, for R" C Adar, Ot* 10.

¹⁹ *Bereishit* 41:51.

²⁰ *Esther* 2:10; 2:20.

²¹ *Esther* 4:14.