

## **Herbal Remedies from the Judean Hills (The Months of Tishrei/Cheshvan) Plants Connect Heaven and Earth**

### **Green Portals of Divine Healing Energy**

Lush green growth greets us as we emerge from the holiday-incubator back into the greater world. “Bar Sira said, G-d made remedies arise from the earth through which the healer heals the wounded and the pharmacist makes his herb-mixture” (*Midrash Bereishit Rabbah* 10:6). Hashem has blessed us with His Presence through the portals of gentle greens that carries His healing light into our inwards. Each and every herb has a desire and benefit for healing (Maharzav, *ibid*). Even just taking a brisk stroll in the company of these healing herbs and breathing in their scent refreshes and revitalizes our body and soul. “Hashem prepares the healing before the wound” (*Babylonian Talmud, Megillah* 13b), and the native plants that grows in our particular neighborhood are blessed with the healing that we specifically need, during the time when they mature. The vegetation of the Land of Israel that is imbued with the holiness of the Land is bursting with both physical and spiritual nutrients most suited for the Jewish people. Therefore, we will explore these plants in the sequence of their ripening, in order to glean their healing properties while tuning into to their timely spiritual messages.

### **The Heavenly Hosts Influence the Herbs of the Earth**

For every vegetable, tree, flower and herb, Hashem appointed its own spiritual force that channels Divine energy to make it grow. When we inhale the scent of the plants, gaze at their healing color, listen to the gentle song of the herbs, touch and taste them, we are infused with Divine spiritual energy. Rabbi Simon said, there is no single herb, which does not have a constellation in heaven that strikes it and says “grow!” As it states: “Do you know the ordinances of heaven? Can you establish its dominion (משטרו/*mistaro*) on earth?” *Iyov* 38:33); (*Midrash Bereishit Rabbah* 10:6). משטרו/*mistaro* is the language of ‘enforcement.’ Just as the enforcement officer (police) is appointed to enforce society to keep the law of the judge, likewise the heavenly hosts are appointed to enforce and compel the herbs to grow (Maharzav, *ibid*). The influence that each constellation has on earth determines the level of coldness, heat, moisture and dryness that affects each herb accordingly (Yafat Toar, *ibid*).

### **Allowing the Root to Illuminate the Branch**

“I will cause you to increase like the plant of the field” (*Yechezkiel* 16:7). Why are we humans compared to the plants of the field? Every plant receives its power and root above. Each star is in charge of a plant, and when the star reveals its light to the plant corresponding to it on the earth, this plant immediately becomes excited and filled with desire to cleave to its root. This is the power that motivates it to rise above and grow from the earth. The growth of people is similar. Every human being has a source and root above in the Creator of all the worlds. Therefore, we must look above and contemplate in our heart, to allow our root to illuminate its branch. It will then follow that when our soul sees the light of its root; surely we will grow and become elevated... Just as the plant of the field grows by means of the light of its root, also, we, human being will grow until we cleave to our root (*Ohev Yisrael, Parshat for Pesach*).

### **Striking the Upper Light into Each Plant**

Why is it necessary to strike the plant in order to make it grow? Wouldn't each plant naturally want to grow and express its individual properties? The striking of the herbs is intended for striking the upper light into this particular herb, by means of the angel who is

like a channel to the hidden light, in the secret of the World of Formation – the world of the angels. This way the angel can illuminate the herb by means of its designated constellation. For the constellations operate in the World of Action. They are the servants of the powers of Formation. Therefore, they sometimes attribute the growth of the herbs to an angel and sometimes to a star; it is all is part of the same intention (Rabbi Avraham Azulai, *Chesed L'Avraham* 4:30)

### **Physical Enforcement for Spiritual Roots**

Contrary to humans who are endowed with free choice, plants must follow exact directives from Above. This is illustrated by the heavenly constellations beating the respective plant under their dominion to ensure that it performs the task it must do, which is to grow. Perhaps it is also an indication of the resistance of the spiritual flow to be limited into the boundaries of growing only within the physical world. It is as if the spiritual essence of each plant needs to be stricken in order to lower itself to the confines of physical growth. Moreover, the striking of the plant reminds us of the striking of the baby at birth when it forgets all its in-vitro Torah learning. Perhaps the plants, likewise, must let go of the spiritual knowledge they possessed from their essence above in order to channel their energy into physical growth below. Inversely, when we received Torah on Sinai, we needed to channel our earthly tendencies to operate within the spiritual dimension. Perhaps this is why Hashem put the mountain as a casket over our head to force us to receive the Torah, although we had already accepted it through free will. The same process of enforcement is necessary for the redirection of both the plants – in order to grow on earth, and Israel – in order to receive the Torah of heaven. Yet the enforcement has opposite directions. The plants – whose root are in heaven – need to be forced to turn to the earth below, whereas the root of our physical body – which is in the earth – needs to turn to heaven above. Yet, the root of the Jewish soul is a part of the Divine from above. It never needs any enforcement as the soul of Israel has already accepted the Torah with the declaration, “We will do and we will hear!” (*Shemot* 24:7).

### **Unobstructed Pure Channels**

Plants do not have the capacity to choose between good and evil, because they do not have the *yetzer hara* – יֵצֵר הָרָע / *yetzer hara* – ‘negative inclination.’ They therefore become direct channels for Divine energy, without the physical, emotional and spiritual blocks that humans have due to our *yetzer hara*. Untainted by energy blocks, plants become the channels through which unobstructed Divine energy flows freely through the agents of Hashem’s messengers – the angels and stars – all the way down to the receptive earth. In this way the growing plants are the connecting links between heaven and earth. Not only do plants serve as conduits for the Divine flow emanating down to earth, they also elevate the physical towards the Divine. Rabbi Avraham Azulai explains that the soul of the herbs elevate the four elements to approach the more refined material above their level, causing the higher material to shine through them. When we sow different kinds of seeds we gather and mix the four elements and facilitate their transformation into the higher life form of plants. This way we elevate the elements to approach the upper light. What was previously under the angels appointed over the elements, emerged from their dominion and rose to draw from the influence of the higher light by means of the angel in charge of this particular herb (*Chesed L'Avraham* 4:30). Since the plants bring heaven down to earth while raising the earth towards heaven we can understand why being in Nature in the company of plants is revitalizing and conducive to become spiritually in tune with the Divine. Rambam explains that the path to love and awe of G-d is by recognizing Hashem’s great wisdom through nature (*Mishna Torah, Foundations of Torah* 2:2).

### Healing Reflections

It is impossible to gaze directly at the brilliant sun. Only the reflection of its rays can be tolerated and enjoyed by us. In the same way it is impossible to grasp the abstract concept of G-d and connect directly with His essence which has no physical manifestation. "G-d is consuming fire" (*Devarim* 4:24). However, like the rays to the sun, the plants each reflect a particular heavenly aspect. They only reflect as much Divinity as the limits of their confines can possibly contain. Perhaps this is an additional reason why they are stricken, because they cause the contraction of the Divine essence, which flows through them. Each one's ability to heal is in accordance to the particular attribute of Divinity, which is expressed through it. When we view the herbs as vehicles for the flow of Divine energy, they can become mediums through which we can relate to G-d. Let us not forget that they are not Divine themselves but only channels for Divine energy. Ultimately all healing takes place through nothing but G-d.

### Connecting Directly with the Light of Hashem

How can we receive the same healing from prayer and Torah as from herbs?

Rebbe Nachman teaches us that when we are able to release prayer from its exile there is no more need for medicine (Rabbi Avraham Greenbaum, *Wings of the Sun* p. 89). This is because all medicines are derived from plants, and every single plant receives its powers from its own particular planet or star as we have just learned. Every planet and star receives its power from the stars above it. The angels in turn receive from the root of all things – from the Word of G-d, as it is written, "Through the word of G-d the heavens were made and all their hosts by the breath of His mouth" (*Tehillim* 33:6). When we attain true prayer, we penetrate all the blocks and husks of our earthly tendencies and connect directly with the highest heaven. When our words rise and enter the heavenly gate, there is no need for medicine. The emissary facilitation of the herbs and plants become unnecessary, as long as we have the ability to connect directly with their Root, the Light of Hashem – the root of all beings. However, today it is not easy to attain the level of true prayer and receive the healing of Hashem's life-giving light directly. Therefore, herbs are great transmitters of divine energy for us. Without the energy blocks and klipot (husks) that block Hashem's life-giving energy from freely flowing within the organs, emotions and psyche of human beings, plants are much closer to the source of Hashem's healing life force. They can also help us attain the level of true prayer as Rabbi Nachman teaches, "Each and every herb has its own song...The melody of the shepherd is made from the song of the herbs (*Likutei Moharan, Mahadura Batra* 63).