



Dear friends,

TYH Torah is thrilled to present The Nekuda Tova weekly Torah newsletter! Here we'll uncover the nekuda tova, the goodness of the inner point within Shabbos, Tefillah, and the Yomim Tovim. We'll examine the nekuda tova of every Yid, and deepen our relationship with the essence of our great tzadikim.

Packed with pnimius hatorah, we'll discover our understanding of - and passion for! - the Mitzvos and special times of year that are given to us by Hashem to connect to Him

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### THE NEKUDA TOVA

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## The Avodah of Tu B'Av

*Based on a shuir from Harav Yussie Zakutinsky Shlita*

Tu B'Av may seem like a "minor" holiday, but according to the the *gemara* in *Taanis*, the greatest two *yomim tovim* for the Jewish people are Tu B'Av and Yom Kippur! What is the *pnimius* of the significance of Tu B'Av?

The *gemara* says that on Tu B'Av, in the times of the *Beis Hamikdash*, the unmarried girls would go out and dance in a circle in the vineyards, and would call out to the young men who were there seeking a wife. Then the *gemara* then mentions another 'dance in a circle' that will happen in the future:

In the future (era of Moshiach) , the Holy One, Blessed be He, will arrange a circle dance of the righteous, and He will be sitting among them in Gan Eden, and each and every one of the righteous will point to Hashem with his finger...

In addition, Tu B'Av, which is on the 15th day of the month, has a connection to the 15th letter of the *aleph beis*, which is the letter "o" - *samach*, which is shaped like a circle.

Somehow Tu B'Av has a connection to a circle (and dancing in a circle) and the coming of Moshiach. What's going on here? Hold on - we are going to get pretty deep

SEEING THE GOOD IN EVERY JEW  
MEANS SEEING THE GOOD IN YOU!  
JUDGE YOURSELF FAVORABLY!



here, before we understand the practical and incredibly empowering message of Tu B'Av!

We experience the passage of time as a seamless movement from one moment to the next. Not much changes as the clock ticks and the minutes pass. However, a lot more is packed into the concept of 'time' than meets the eye. Earlier moments in time are considered to be broad and general - in Hebrew called *כלל / klal / general* - in relation to later moments in time, which are called *פרט / prat / specific or limited*. We can explore this spiritual lens of time by looking at the first mention of the passage of time in the Torah - the 6 days of the creation of the world. The 6 days of creation were not merely the first cycle of a week that is then repeated thousands of times as the centuries go by. Rather, within the first day of creation was the *klal* of the first thousand years of time. As the first thousand

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- 👑 Some stories of tzadikim not only highlight the greatness of these righteous individuals but also showcase the profound levels of faith and trust, the emunas chachamim, that their disciples had in them.. **Page 3**
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# THE HEART OF TEFILLAH

## What *Tefillah* Really Is

In a powerful essay on the true purpose of *davening*, the *sefer* Beyam Darkecha challenges perspectives we may have had about *davening*, and teaches us how to transform our *davening* into a heartfelt experience of closeness with Hashem.

## What *Tefillah* Is Not

One reason we may lack passion for *davening*, is that we tend to misunderstand its true purpose. If we view prayer as a means to receive physical or spiritual blessing, we may become frustrated when we don't get that for which we ask – thinking our prayer has failed. If we view the goal of prayer as *davening* with intent on every word (*kavanah*), we may also become frustrated when we lack such focus and then think our prayer is a failure.

## What *Tefillah* Really Is

The essence of *tefillah* is the time during which we connect to our Creator and feel His presence with the highest quality and depth. It is to feel that we are standing before the King; He is right here with us, and we bask and rejoice in His presence.

If we see *connection* as the goal, we will start to measure success primarily by the quality of the time we spend with Hashem. Whether my prayer was answered is no longer as important, what matters most is that I spent time in the presence of my Creator, engaging with and attaching myself to Him. Even when I fail to maintain focus on every word, if I spent time in conversation with Hashem, that is a huge success! By prioritizing attachment as the primary purpose, we will actually find *davening* easier to understand and *kavanah* easier to achieve.

When we *daven*, Hashem gifts us with a greater ability to attach ourselves to Him - an extra spiritual capacity to understand and feel, with more depth, the reality of Him in this world and that there is nothing else besides Hashem (Ein Od Milvado).

The more I see Hashem, the more I connect to Him, and the more I connect to Him, the more I see His presence in my life.

During prayer, we gain an extra capacity to internalize the Oneness of Hashem. An extremely simplified understanding of Oneness is: The ability to truly feel that Hashem runs every single detail of the world and everything is interconnected. He created everything we see; He orchestrates every event and interaction that happens, and He is the Source of everything – whether we perceive it as “good” or “bad.” Our entire human experience is merely an expression of His will, and we carry out His intention through our actions.

*Yichud Hashem*, Oneness of Hashem, can seem like a profoundly deep concept that is best left for great rabbis and Kabbalists, but that is simply not the case. Everyone has a starting point from which they can grow their understanding of Hashem's Oneness.

As an example, let's take someone who has a ‘simple’ relationship with *tefillah* - he davens

to ask Hashem for his physical or spiritual wishes. Before we label him as “simple”, let's think about what he is **really** doing. By praying for his desires, as opposed to asking his boss or doctor or someone else, he is clearly expressing his belief that Hashem is the true provider! The understanding that only Hashem can provide, and that human beings are merely the messengers who carry out His will, **is** a very holy understanding of Oneness! Now his job is to deepen this understanding by stopping and reflecting on what he is *really* doing - acknowledging that Hashem is his sole provider. The *chitzonius* (externals) of his prayer is a list of requests, but the *pnimius* (inner essence) is expressing his belief in Hashem's oneness.

Looking at prayer through this lens will deepen our *tefillah* experience. By realizing these foundational principles of *tefillah*, we will gain a taste and develop a passion for prayer. What we used to consider a “failure” in *tefillah* is actually an **opportunity** to grow and is a blessing to deepen our relationship with Him. Every time we stop to pray, we now know we are creating an opportunity to come close.

“ While we pray we are gifted with an extra capacity to experience the presence of Hashem ”

# STORIES OF TZADIKIM

## Pockets Full of Faith

The Maggid of Mezeritch, who took over the Chassidus after the passing of the Baal Shem Tov, once shared the following story with his Chassidim. He was once by the Baal Shem Tov immediately after *Havdalah* on Motzoei Shabbos, when there was a knock on the door and there stood an elderly woman, collecting *tzedakah*. Everyone was still wearing their Shabbos clothing, but the Baal Shem Tov told the Chassidim to put their hands in their pockets and take out whatever money they have to give to this lady. Miraculously, everyone who was present found money in their pocket, and when they pooled it all together it was exactly the amount of money that she needed!

The Mezeritcher Maggid then asked his Chassidim, what was the miracle about this story? One Chasid answered that the miracle was that they found money in the pockets of their Shabbos clothes. Another said it was that the amount of money they found added up to the exact amount the women needed, and so on. The Mezeritcher replied that, yes, these are miracles, but the most significant part of the story was when the Baal Shem Tov told them to take money out of their pockets, they all immediately put their hands in their pockets. Despite the fact that the Chassidim were in their Shabbos clothes, and knew they had no money on them, they all had complete faith in their Rebbe!

This is an important lesson that we need to learn when we hear stories of *tzaddikim* - not only do we learn how great the *tzadikim* were, but to have faith in *tzadikim*, to believe in them and their teachings, and the lessons we learn from them. *Emunas chachamim* is of vital importance for ourselves and our children!

## **The Avodah of Tu B'Av** *Continued from page 1*

years from creation went on, that single first day was then “unpacked”, and expanded into the specific days that were contained within it. The second day of creation held within itself the second thousand years of time, and so on. As time passes, the world unfolds in more detail, and our lives take place in the expansion of earlier moments of time into thousands of specific days. We are currently living in the *prat* of the last few minutes of the sixth day of creation, as we are only a few hundred years from the year 6000, after which it will be “Shabbos.”

In the world of *Kabbalah*, a circle represents *klal*. The best shape to represent a sense of expansiveness and openness, broadness, inclusiveness, and infinity, would be a circle. A circle can portray a day packed with a thousand years. The opposite of this expansiveness is the constriction of the future, which would be represented by a straight line, which has a clear beginning and end. As we progress through time, we move from a circle to a line. A circle-like moment is when you feel infinite. Spirituality is circle-like, and to be spiritual is to be infinite and everywhere. The more physical you are, the more you are constricted and contained.

This is the essence of *yeridas hadoros*, the spiritual decline of the generations. As time passes, we go farther from the infinite circle, into the narrowness of the progression of time, and so we relate more to the “line.” We experience that as a ‘bad’ thing, which brings us a sense of spiritual decline as the generations go on. Our *neshamos* may tend to resist this passage of time by subconsciously resisting “moving on in life,” or by wondering why we have to live in an era of such impurity and temptation, with so many obstacles to serving Hashem?!

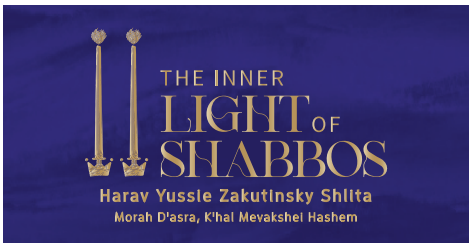
So what's the solution?

The Zohar says about the month of Av “*tuvei ganuz b'gavei* - something good is hidden within it.” The goodness which emanated from the creation of the world, the Infinite Light of Hashem, is hidden here. Where is it hidden? In the last moment of the very last “line!” Although it looks like time is descending into more constriction, and it appears as though we are headed to the abyss as the generations seem to get less and less spiritual, Tu B'Av teaches us what to expect when we reach the end of the line: the original circle! When Moshaiach comes, the world will be full of light and knowledge of Hashem, and we will experience life as an infinite circle, just as it was at the beginning of creation.

The ‘circle’ message of Tu B'Av is that we came from a circle, we are heading to a circle, and we live in a circle, even though it may feel like a line. The Jewish girls who danced in a circle were teaching the young men - don't be afraid of getting married and progressing further into the future. The circular *samach* teaches us to embrace the era we live in: we aren't headed to the end of the line and into the abyss, we are moving forward to the circle of *geula*. We are heading to the era of dancing around Hashem in a circle.

The goodness hidden within the month of Av is the knowledge that our service of Hashem, which may seem limited and constricted, is really circular and infinite! Tu B'av comforts us by teaching us that we are almost home.





## Hashem's Chossid

Chazal (*Shabbos* 111b) tell us a most amazing thing about Shabbos. The Gemara says that someone who keeps Shabbos properly, even if he worshiped *avoda zarah* (idolatry) like the generation of *Enosh*—which was the generation that originated the concept of *avoda zarah*, which means that all *avoda zarah* stems from them—nevertheless, if they keep Shabbos properly, all of their sins are forgiven.

This seems to be quite difficult to understand. Forgive him for no reason? What happened to teshuvah? What is it about Shabbos that erases *avoda zarah*?

To understand this, let us introduce an old, interesting debate among the students of the *Baal Shem Tov*, about whether it is possible to be a *chossid* of two *Rebbes*.

Some said that you can only be a *chossid* of one Rebbe.

Other *tzaddikim* said that it is possible to be a *chossid* of multiple people; you can learn different ideas and gain different *madreigos* from different people.

The *Chozeh* of Lublin had the following perspective. He said that it is entirely possible for a person to **think** they are *chassidim* of different people. So, one day a person may pick up a *sefer* and say, “Wow, I feel so connected to this—I’m a *chossid*!” And then the next day he sees a different *sefer* from a different

Rebbe, and says, “Wow, I guess I’m a *chossid* of both Rebbes!” Or perhaps he thinks to himself, “I guess I’m a little confused about who I am.”

But in truth, says the *Chozeh*, there is a certain *madreigah* in being a *chossid* to a Rebbe, that when a person reaches that level, it dawns on them that all the other relationships they had with *tzaddikim* weren’t a true connection. For there are many layers of being attached, explains the *Chozeh*. One dimension is relatively superficial: learning, drawing ideas, etc. — all of which are possible to glean from many people.

But the true definition of a *chossid*, explains the *Chozeh*, is complete and utter attachment to the Rebbe; it is total devotion of the soul. That level of attachment is only possible with one Rebbe. And so, when a person reaches that level of devotion, they begin to realize that whatever connection they thought they had, was not true attachment after all. They may have once *thought* that was the case, but now it is clear to them that there can be only one.

The second Lubavitcher Rebbe, the *Mitteler Rebbe*, had the following interesting custom to determine who was a real *chossid*. He would smell the *chossid*’s beard, and if it smelled like him, he was able to say, “That’s my *chossid*.” Now, even if he may learn some ideas from someone else, he is still my *chossid*.

What is Shabbos? It is possible for a person during the week to worship many idols, to be connected to different movements and philosophies — until the person asks themselves: Who am I? One day I believe in this “ism”, the next day the other. Am I just confused?

But then Shabbos comes along, and Hashem, *kaveyachol*, smells

our beard and asks, “But who are you *really* a *chossid* of? If we keep Shabbos properly, it is clear that we are, in fact, only connected to Hashem, and it becomes clear that any connection we had outside this relationship was meaningless; it wasn’t a true connection.

Shabbos is absolute *hiskashrus* (connectedness), and therefore any *avodah zarah* is forgiven, because that is when it becomes clear that none of it was a true bond. Any prior connection to a foreign deity was only an *acquaintance*. OK, he may still need *teshuvah*, but this certainly wasn’t an act of *avodah zarah*. True “*avodah*—service,” can only be to the *Ribono Shel Olam*.

Shabbos means to become a *chossid* of the *Ribono Shel Olam*. This doesn’t just mean going to his *tish*, but something much more profound than that: You are completely bound to the *Ribono Shel Olam* in the deepest sense. When this takes place, you can only be a *chossid* of the *Ribono Shel Olam*—everyone else is only an acquaintance.

May Hashem help us that we should be *zocheh* (merit) to keep Shabbos properly, and become *chassidim* of the *Ribono Shel Olam*, and for Him to “smell our beard” and smell the *Shechinah Hakedoshah!* Through this, we should be *zocheh* to what we say on Shabbos by *minchah*, “*Atah echad, v’shimcha echad, u’mi k’amcha goy echad b’aretz*” — there is only the *Ribono Shel Olam*; there is only one Jewish nation, and everything else in the world are just acquaintances. May we merit to experience this openly *b’einayim gluyim, b’einayim gashimi’im, with the arrival of Moshiach, b’meheirah b’yameinu, Amen!*

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