

סֵפֶר וְטֵמְאִים בְּיַד טְהוֹרִים

Sefer uTemai'im beyad Tehorim

We are blessed here to offer our fifth workbook for the Holy days of Hanukah.

Our title comes from the *Al HaNissim* prayer which we recite several times daily during the Holiday:

מְסַרְתָּ גְבוּרִים בְּיַד חַלְשִׁים. וְרַבִּים בְּיַד מְעַטְטִים. וְרַשְׁעִים בְּיַד צְדִיקִים. וְטֵמְאִים בְּיַד טְהוֹרִים. וְזָדִים בְּיַד עוֹסְקֵי תוֹרָתְךָ.

You [Hashem] delivered the strong into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of the few, the wicked into the hands of the righteous, the “impure” into the hands of the “pure,” and the wanton into the hands of the diligent students of Your Torah.

This “impure” to “pure” distinction will be discussed in detail later. Hanukah which involves a review of differences and revolves around the mitzvah of lighting candles is thus similar to the weekly Havdalah ceremony around a candle, using words of distinction:

הַמְבַדֵּיל בֵּין קֹדֶשׁ לְחֹל וּבֵין אֹר לְחֹשֶׁךְ וּבֵין יִשְׂרָאֵל לְעַמִּים וּבֵין יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְשֵׁשֶׁת יְמֵי הַמַּעֲשֶׂה.

[Hashem] Who separates between holy and secular, between light and darkness, between Israel and the nations, and between the seventh day and the six days of labor.

We recognize such distinctions as necessary, harkening us back to the second day of Creation:

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים, יְהִי רָקִיעַ בְּתוֹךְ הַמַּיִם, וַיְהִי מְבַדֵּיל, בֵּין מַיִם לְמַיִם

And G-d said: 'Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.'

וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים, אֶת-הַרְקִיעַ, וַיַּבְדֵּל בֵּין הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר מִתַּחַת לְרָקִיעַ, וּבֵין הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר מֵעַל לְרָקִיעַ; וַיְהִי-כֵן.

And G-d made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so.

The Written Torah itself makes distinctions, as we noted in the Havdalah ceremony, and designated certain days as **"holy" (kodesh)**, during which various forms of activity are forbidden. It also designated certain places as holy, such as the Temple and walled cities, from which various kinds of impurity must be excluded. The Oral Torah called the Mishnah systematically applies the dichotomy between the **"holy" (kodesh)** and the "profane" (*hol*) in order to constitute an elaborate hierarchy of holy times and holy places. The holiest times were defined by the most rigorous and most comprehensive set of prohibitions, and lesser degrees of holiness by more lenient and less comprehensive sets of prohibitions. ¹Similarly, the Mishnah defines ten ascending levels of holy space (Kel. 1:6–9), each defined by stricter and stricter rules of purity.

The *MiShNaH*, having the same letters as the word for higher soul/*NeShaMaH*, is uniquely suited for purification and elevation of the soul. As we gaze on the eight / *SheMoNaH* Hanukah nights at candles fueled by oil/*HaSheMeN* rise toward heaven *ShaMayiM* [יָרַיְהוּה, נִשְׁמַת אָדָם], we recall the fight of the *HaShMoNayim* as they warred to preserve sacred Mishnaic distinctions.

These distinctions that follow form the basis of our halakhah, our Jewish law, in determining differences through the close examination of some dimension of ordinary human life or experience, and the careful categorization of certain aspects of that experience in line with a limited number of formal dichotomies.

The most obvious – and familiar – halakhic dichotomy is the one between **"forbidden" (asur)** and **"permitted" (mutar)**. This dichotomy is most regularly applied to human behavior. For example, the Mishnah may categorize sexual relations between two individuals under certain circumstances as permitted, and under other circumstances as forbidden. While eating on the Day of Atonement is certainly forbidden, Mishnaic halakhah lists certain exceptions to this rule and even requires children under a certain age to eat. Similarly, the halakhah permits heating food on the Sabbath under certain circumstances and forbids it under other circumstances.

A related dichotomy – applying also to a large extent to behavior – is the one between "liable" for punishment or some other formal sanction (*hayyav*) and 'exempt' from such sanctions (*patur*). This dichotomy is generally applicable to actions which have already been categorized as forbidden. For example, Mishnaic halakhah forbids the carrying of an object in the public domain on the Sabbath. In order for the transgressor to be considered "liable" for sanctions, however, the act of carrying must conform to a number of different conditions. If any one of these conditions is not

¹ Note that in the *hanerot hallalu* prayer said after lighting we mention the holiness of Hanukah candles:

These lights do we kindle about the miracles and the wonders, about the salvations and the wars that You did for our fathers in those days and that time, by the hands of Your Holy "priests" (Kohanim). All the eight days of Hanukah these lights are holy. And we do not have permission to use them, but only to look at them.

met, the transgressor is considered "exempt" from sanctions. Similarly, the halakhah forbids baking bread on a holiday for use the following day. One who transgresses this rule is, however, not necessarily liable for punishment. It is forbidden to steal. Under certain circumstances the thief will be liable to pay double indemnity, while under other circumstances he will be exempt from this additional payment. Although a person can be liable for the indirect or inadvertent consequences of his or her actions (or inaction), it is not always possible to categorize these actions as forbidden.

The dichotomy between *ḥayyav* and *patur* may also be applied to human behavior in another way – with regard to positive commandments, such as the eating of matzah on Passover. Here *ḥayyav* should be translated as "obligated [to fulfill the commandment]" and *patur* as "exempt [from fulfilling it]." The halakhah categorizes eating matzah on the first night of Passover as an "**obligation**" (*ḥovah*), and on the remaining days of Passover as "**optional**" (*reshut*). The Mishnah states that properly prepared matzah "may be used in order to fulfill one's obligation" (*yosin bo*). When prepared improperly, the Mishnah states: "it may not be used in order to fulfill the obligation" (*ein yosin bo*). The Mishnah uses the dichotomy between "**fit**" (*kasher*) and "**unfit**" (*pasul*) in a similar fashion, in order to determine whether various ritual objects – a shofar or a lulav, for example – may be used to fulfill one's obligation in performing these commandments.

The most highly developed area of Mishnaic halakhah is to be found in its system of ritual purity. Seder Toharot applies the dichotomy between **ritually pure** (*tahor*) and **ritually impure** (*tame*) to virtually every aspect of ordinary life. These terms can signify either that an object is susceptible to becoming impure, or that it is actually impure and capable of transmitting this impurity to something else. Certain tractates define the purity or impurity of tools, garments, vessels, and places of residence. Others define the purity or impurity of foods and drinks. Others categorize certain individuals as themselves being sources of ritual impurity, and other individuals as impure as a result of contact with other sources of ritual impurity. This area of halakhah seems to have played a decisive role in the life of the Mishnaic sages, even among non-priestly families, and with no obvious connection to the Temple.

Now back to Hanukah. In our *Al HaNissim* prayer, we will in every *Amidah* and every After-blessing for Bread mention the distinctions listed above.

It came to me with the help of Heaven, that we while gazing upon the Hanukah lights lit during the darkest time of year, we have an ready-made opportunity to meditate on the power of distinguishing, in particular the eight categories listed above: Mutar and Asur, Patur and Chayav, Kasher and Pasul, Tamei and Tahor.

It moreover occurred to me with the help of Heaven, that these terms also have strong correspondence to the mystic energies that flow on Hanukah during the 8 days, related to the 8 Sefirot, in the following order and pages:

Night 1: Chesed and Mutar: page 5

Night 2: Gevurah and Asur: page 8

Night 3: Tiferet and Patur: page 11

Night 4: Netzach and Kasher: page 14

Night 5: Hod and Pasul: page 17

Night 6: Yesod and Chayav: page 20

Night 7: Malchut and Tamei: page 24

Night 8: Binah and Tahor: page 27

While the candles are burning, it is an important mystic practice to contemplate the lights as well as one's self.

It is humbly submitted that during this time when we make daily distinctions, in the *Al HaNissim* prayer to personalize these themes based on traditional halachic dichotomy can only bring us closer to ourselves, to return in *teshuvah* as it were. And since *Zot Hanukah* on the 8th night is viewed as the end of the process of return begun on *Rosh Hashanah*, 8 days of meditation which lead to action can only facilitate this movement. May these distinctions make a difference.

Blessings for a Joyous *Hanukah*,

Rahmiel Hayyim Drizin,
Kislev 5773



First Night: Saturday Night, December 8th: *Chesed and Mutar* מוֹתֵר



Tonight right after we do the *Havdalah* ceremony honoring distinctions, according to Sefardi Kabbalists, say the first blessing, then light the first *Hanukah* candle, then say the remaining two blessings.

So, it would seem that with all of the distinctions listed above in the *Al HaNissim* for *Hanukah*, said earlier for the first time in our *Modim* prayer of Arabit, plus the *Havdalah* ceremony, we are all primed to begin our work during the next 8 days to focus on differences in our lives, and how to recognize them and make them meaningful.

Tonight according to some systems represents **Hesed/lovingkindness**, or expansion. [Note our color choices. In the news last month we read “With one day left in the campaign, a basic difference between the two parties is in depressing evidence: **Democrats seek to expand** the franchise, while **Republicans seek to restrict it.**’ So much for **blue** and **red** States!]

Accordingly, we correlate it to a concept called **מותר Mutar** or permissible.

It corresponds to “Yes Saying”, which Rabbi Yitzchak Schwartz of Jerusalem lists:

1. ACTUALIZE OUR CALLING
2. OPEN UP OUR EMOTIONAL POWERS
3. SHARE OUR LOVE WITH HASHEM AND THE WORLD AND OURSELVES
4. BECOME A MASTER GIVER
5. CONNECT WITH MANY OTHER PEOPLE THAN WE KNOW NOW
6. OPEN UP MANY NEW DOORS OF OPPORTUNITY AND ABUNDANCE
7. IMPROVE OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH OUR SPOUSE [PRESENT ONE OR FUTURE ONE]
8. FULFILL NUMEROUS INTERPERSONAL MITZVOT
9. MAXIMIZE OUR ATTRACTIVENESS TO OTHERS AND THEIRS TO US
- 10.HELP BUILD A WORLD OF CHESED
- 11.EMULATE G-D'S TRAIT OF GIVING AND BENEVOLENCE
- 12.SWEETEN AND MINIMIZE HARSH DECREES AND HARSH JUDGEMENTALISM
- 13.EXPAND CONSTRICTED CONSCIOUSNESS
- 14.EMULATE THE WAYS OF THE PATRIARCHS AND MATRIARCHS
- 15.PERPETUATE 'YES' SAYING IN THE WORLD [WITH ALL OF THESE POWERFUL IMPACTS]
- 16.LEAD A LIFE FULL OF INSPIRATION
- 17.LIVE THE LIFE YOU LOVE AND LOVE THE LIFE YOU LIVE
- 18.EMPOWER YOURSELF TO CARRY OUT ANYTHING THAT YOU INTEND
- 19.EMPOWER OTHERS TO ACTUALIZE THEIR INTENDED GOALS
- 20.BECOME A BEACON OF LOVE, LIGHT, GOODNESS AND POSITIVITY

See, **mutar** means “Yes Saying” to a particular behavior, saying “yes” that it is permissible.

It is the magic word to a halachic question in which one seeks a resolution to a query involving Jewish law.

Once you ask a Sage and he says “**Mutar**”, you then have a halachic basis to rely on to then do this behavior.

So on this very first day of the Holy day, when all 8 days are open up to us, we say “Yes!”, and imagine a world of expansion without boundaries.

Once one enters the halachic world, often one will seek a “**heter**”--permissive approval. It is not considered good behavior to go “**heter shopping**”, meaning to go from one Rabbi to another until one gets his or her desired answer.

Just because one obtains a *heter*, however, does not mean that the behavior is praiseworthy.

The Ramban, in a famous argument with Rashi, says that the verse "*You shall be Kedoshim*" has nothing to do with illicit sexual acts. Rather, *Kedoshim Tihyu* [You shall be holy] is referring to perfectly permissible activities. The concept is "sanctify yourself by withdrawing from that which is permissible to you" (*kadesh et atzmecha b'mutar lach*). Without such self-limitation, the Ramban declares, a person can be a '*naval b'rshust haTorah*' [a glutton 'sanctioned' by the Torah]. The level of sanctity required by this *pasuk* [verse] is that achieved by restraining oneself somewhat from even those physical pleasures that the Torah permits.

There are times in our life when a "NO" voice fills our minds when we want to say Yes.

The following list suggested by R. Yitzchak would be well to contemplate while the candles are burning:

--Identify the 'NO'/ prohibited voice that fills your mind when you want to say YES/permitted

--Ask yourself why the NO is there---What is it's purpose?

--How is it coming to help you?

--Give thanks to Hashem for your inner NO

--Acknowledge it's benefit and it's role in helping you out

--Now ask yourself how it would be possible to derive this same benefit by saying yes and not saying no [ie...saying Yes in a safe harmless way]

--When you are convinced of a safe way of saying YES, say it and follow through, and carry on with another YES, processing it in the same way [and another and another, etc...]

Second Night: Sunday, December 9th, Gevurah and Asur אָסוּר



Bound and Unbound

Jewish mysticism explains a reality called '*Klipah*' or 'husk'. This husk conceals the G-dly spark that gives life to every creature. The husk renders the spark inaccessible. This is what we call evil. The inherent G-dliness is trapped in the vestments of the *klipah* and is unable to express itself and rise to a higher level.

The Hebrew word for forbidden is אָסוּר '*Asur*' which literally means bound up. The energy or soul of food that is not kosher is bound to the husks and cannot be elevated. Since the point of eating is to elevate the food, and non-kosher food cannot be elevated, it is forbidden to eat it. [so for example, kosher animals must chew their cud--bringing up the food/sparks of holiness from being "bound" in the stomach--and have split hooves--allowing for "escape" of energies/sparks of holiness.]

Certainly, non-kosher foods have a G-dly spark in them as well. Indeed, their energy is metabolized. However, since the G-dly spark is bound up with the husk, it cannot be elevated through ingestion. This spark remains trapped in the physical without the possibility of ascent. (There are other ways to elevate a non-kosher animal, such as riding on it. In the latter case, the undesirable energy does not enter the body.) In contrast, '*Mutar*', the Hebrew word for permissible, literally means unbound. The energy of permissible foods is not bound to the *klipah* and thus can be elevated through having the proper intentions and using the energy for a G-dly purpose.

Eating non-kosher food results in another problem. The unprocessed spark in the non-kosher food acts like any foreign element in the body. Energy was meant to be metabolized, and this applies to spiritual energy as well. Since the spark cannot be processed by elevation, it causes a spiritual blockage that retards our ability to relate to holiness.

Certainly, one can become accustomed to a low level of sensitivity. But, for example, if we eat only healthy food, we will feel the effect of a small measure of unhealthy food. This reaction does not mean that we are unhealthy, but on the contrary, that we have a heightened sensitivity. Similarly, through eating non-kosher food, we build a level of tolerance to it. But if we alter our diet to kosher food, the sensitivity slowly returns.

Every morning we bless Hashem for **Matir Asurim**.--"Who frees the imprisoned./bound"

מַתִּיר אֲסוּרִים, בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם

The gemara in *Berakhot 60a* indicates that "**matir asurim**" is said when one sits up in bed. The *Avudraham* explains that this is because one is stretching his limbs, which have been "bound" during the night. In our morning service we repeat "**matir asurim**" in our Psalm praises **מַתִּיר אֲסוּרִים** , as well in the *Amidah* we say thrice daily: in the prayer called *Gevurot*:

וְרוּפֵא חוּלָיִם. וּמַתִּיר אֲסוּרִים. וּמְקַיֵּם אֱמוּנָתוֹ לִישְׁנֵי עָפָר

Binding hints to *Akeidat Yitzchak*, the binding of our forefather Isaac, who was tied to the altar. *Yitzchak* stands for the force called **Gevurah**, literally "strength", but hinting to severity, restriction, limitation, "**Just say No.**"

Rabbi *Yitzchak* Schwartz again assists our efforts here, and discusses the power of **אָסוּר** "Asur", prohibiting in general, and saying No in particular:

*****Gevurah IS "SAYING NO"**

Let's take a step backwards

Let's examine a list of descriptive terms that describe the Sefira Gevurah [drawn from a variety of sources]. Our goal is to see how SAYING NO is [at least one] theme that is central to all these terms;

- 1. restraint**
- 2. discipline**
- 3. judgement**
- 4. justice [DIN]**
- 5. boundaries**
- 6. fear [of losing something good]**
- 7. rejection**
- 8. strength**
- 9. rebuke**
- 10. constrict [conceal]**

When we examine these terms, we can see that the functional feature at work--the inner voice common to all the terms is SAYING NO . Whether we restrain, we fear, we are repulsed or repulse others, we exercise restraint or we display strength we activate the inner directive of SAYING NO

*****EMPOWERED NO SAYING FROM THE PAST**

Let's now take a look at a possible list of empowered no sayings that we may have experienced in the past....let's try to discover from the list the factors or tools that empowered us, so that we can derive these tools or meditations for facillitating future empowered no sayings:

1. refusing to say yes if there's a strong INNER NO
2. refusing to say yes when it contradicts my inner lower self
3. saying no to worry
4. saying no being in need of finding favor in the eyes of others
5. saying no to commitments that do not represent my total self expression
6. saying no to in authenticity
7. saying no to lack of total utilization of my resources
8. saying no to a situation where I find myself being used, abused, controlled, intruded upon, taken advantage of or enslaved by others
9. saying no to wasting time
10. saying no to surviving rather than thriving
11. saying no to settling for less than the best for my beloved ones
12. saying no to senselessly just doing what everyone else is doing
13. saying no to being overwhelmed and overextended
14. saying no to danger
15. saying no to risky , doubtful commitments
16. saying no to non-holistic partial conclusions

While the candles are burning brightly, think of a Holy *Asur*, a holy prohibition which is sorely need in your life, to add more light. Similarly, contemplate an *Asur/prohibition* in your life which needs revision:

--Allow a whole new way of coping or way of being enter your mind and go with it.

--Create or Co-create or project a brand new way of coping or a brand new set of circumstances

Third Night: Monday, December 10th, Tiferet and *Patur* פטור [aval אסור *asur*]



Tonight when we light three candles we move to a different plain, that of missing the mark in our deeds, words, and actions, and how to “fix” these miss-takes. In Mishnaic language, if one screws up unintentionally, he or she could be liable to offer a *KoRBan*/sacrifice *lehaKRiV*/to bring oneself “close” to Hashem, after the “distance” caused by the miss-take. There are certain actions where are *patur*/exempt from bringing the offerings.

It came to me with the help of Heaven that *Patur* has a bit of a Tiferet/bridging feel. Note that each word shares consonantal similarities with a “T”, “P/F”, and “R” sound:

רתִּפְתָּא and פְּטוּר

Patur like *Tiferet* seems to bridge between *Mutar* (permitted from Day One) and *Asur* (forbidden from Day Two)

The rabbis of the Talmud had an amazing ability to come up with ways around strict yes or no answers. You would think that behavior would simply be defined as “do this” or “don’t do that,” but the rabbis are very creative in refining these categories. For example in Tractate Shabbat 47,

the rabbis consider the case of assembling a bed –the sockets for the legs or the legs themselves should not be inserted, but if they are inserted the individual is not liable for a sin offering. But it is still forbidden to do it! This concept of *patur aval asur* [exempt but forbidden] runs the risk of becoming a rule without any penalties other than “I’d be very disappointed in you.” Yet it also provides for shadings of grey in behavior – something could be forbidden and liable for punishment, or forbidden but exempt, or permitted. And this is independent of considering whether an action was intentional or not!

This to me feels like “Tiferet” analysis, bridging between *Hesed* and *Gevurah*. Rabbi Yitzchak Schwartz writes about bridging:

TIFERET IS THE BRIDGE-ING OR RESOLUTION OF CONTRASTING ELEMENTS INTO A NEW HARMONIOUS WHOLE WHEN WE EXERCISE TIFERET, WE BRIDGE:

1. OUR YESES AND OUR NO’S

2. CERTAIN TYPES OF PEOPLE WITH DIFFERENT TYPES

3. CERTAIN PARTS OF OUR PERSONALITIES WITH OTHER PARTS

4. OUR WEAKNESSES WITH OUR STRENGTHS

5. WHAT WE FEEL WITH WHAT WE EXPRESS

6. WHAT WE ARE MEANT TO DO IN LIFE WITH WHAT WE ACTUALLY DO

7. THE PARTS WITH THE GREATER WHOLE

R. Yitzchak discusses each of the above in detail [I can send you the original if you’d like!]. For our purposes, *Patur aval asur*, exempt although prohibited seems like bridging our *Mutar Yes* with our *Asur No*.

While the candles on this Third Night of **Bridging**, meditate on your experiences involving:

--When you feel like saying yes, but you know you should say no

--when you feel like you're attracted , but you know that you better reject that feeling

--when you feel like expanding, but you're scared to go beyond your normal limitations

--when you feel like you'd like to give, but a voice inside says you'd better take

--when you feel like understand one side of the picture, but you also know that the other side is correct too..

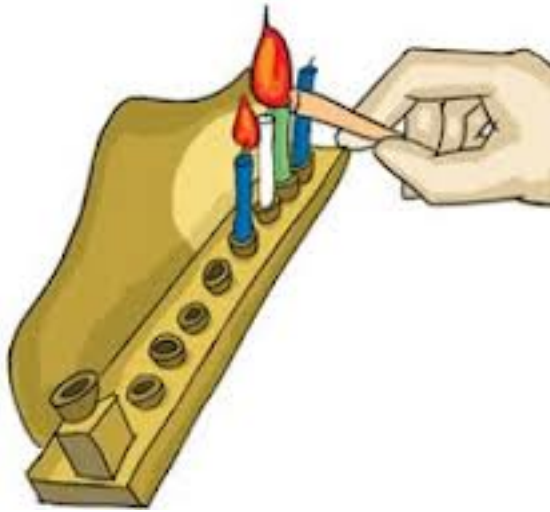
BECOME a master of people **bridging** by:

(1) recognizing the differences just as they are---no need to change them - just accept them;

(2) put yourself in their places---see the world as they see it [put on their life spectacles]---do this even if you are **bridging** many people at once [a charismatic teacher or performer can do this simultaneously with many people at the same time]; **and**

(3) to really be able to **bridge** properly-- communicate to both or all sides [or sometimes just to yourself] what the other side needs and desires and negotiate a win win or a bliss bliss deal that satisfies everyone.

Fourth Night: Tuesday, December 11th: *Netzach* and *Kasher* כָּשֵׁר



“*Kasher*” or “*Kosher*” in Yiddish is one of the more familiar Hebrew terms. It tends to have two related meanings:

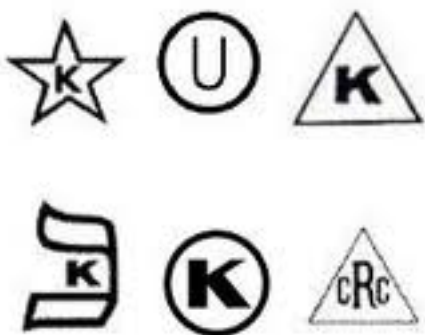
1. With food, it means prepared in accordance with Jewish religious practices.

*Well, if I had known it was a **kosher** deli, I certainly would not have ordered a ham and cheese on rye.*

2. And figuratively, by extension, it means in accordance with standards or usual practice.

*Is what I have done **kosher** with Mr. Smith?*

Here are the more familiar *Kosher* symbols:



It seems to me that *Kasher/Kosher* relates well to the 4th Sefira on this 4th Night of Hanukah, called **Netzach**, which means victory, eternity, and persistence, and hints to overcoming. It connotes enthusiasm and technology, both of which are important for the *Kasher* process.

If you've ever "koshered" a kitchen for Pesach/Passover, you know what I'm talking about!

One must be **persistently** focused on details and with supreme energy remove all semblance of chametz/leavened products from one's house. The spiritual process is to **overcome** all "inflated ego", to get rid of it for the one week of the Holiday. It is a temporary **"victory"** over chametz, a parable for destroying one's *yetzer hara*, or inclination toward evil.

In terms of the Mishnaic model we are following, there the most relevant such concept is a law of purity and impurity known as "*hachshara*". [note the root of kosher] Basically, food which touches an impure object does not itself become impure. But if the food comes in contact with water (or certain other liquids), the food is "made susceptible" ("*muchshar*") to impurity. From then on, if the food touches an impure object, it DOES become impure.

This impurity is called *machshirin*, as it becomes susceptible to impurity **forever**, the third definition of **Netzach**.

Hanukah itself concerns a **victory** of the Hashmonean Jews over the Syrian Greeks, when the small **overcame** the many. Rabbi Yitzchak offers an exercise which we submit would work well while gazing at the candles on this Fourth Night:

Netzach involves transcending all limits.

This means **overcoming** the assumption that you are a person who has limited capabilities and capacities, and open yourself up to the magnificent possibility of **overcoming** as many barriers as possible and transcending as many limits as possible and living in an above-nature extraordinary way.

Identify an area of your life that you feel are limiting your capacities and capabilities.

Now look closer, as if you were to project extending and expanding your limits.

if you were to ask Hashem to help make it happen for you, if you were to enlist all of your powers and all of your friends powers and all of your innovative tools, wouldn't you feel like you could go beyond your present limits?!

Now , **just do it**--do it in this one area of your life and another and another and see how many of the present walls of your life come tumbling down.<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jTmg4WEqM7Y&feature=related>

Now as the walls come down, make sure that when you burst through your actions, words, and thoughts all are *Kosher*/ appropriate.

Fifth Night: Wednesday, December 12: Hod and Pasul פסול



One our Fifth Night of Hanukah we deal with the concept of **Pasul** and the Sefirah **Hod**. **Pasul** is the “opposite” of **Kasher**: as **Kasher** means “fit” for ritual use, **pasul** means “unfit” for ritual use.

“**Pasul**” seems like an appropriate concept to contemplate in these days, for in our famous Hanukah story, the wicked Greeks desecrated our Temple, rendering all oil save one sealed container **pasul**, unfit for the Menorah.

There are also many laws concerning how to appropriately light the Menorah, the main mitzvah/commandment of the holiday, which oils, which wicks, where to place the Menorah, what time to light, etc. Those who are following the *Daf Yomi* Talmud cycle were treated in late October 2012 with the Gemara account of these laws.

Hod to me seems to have a unique relationship to **Pasul**.

Hod means splendor, confession, acknowledgment, and thanksgiving, all part and parcel of the Hanukah holiday. Moreover the word **Hod** is found specifically in the *Al HaNissim* prayer:

וְקִבְעוּ שְׁמוֹנֶת יָמֵי תְּנִיפָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּהַלֵּל וּבְהוֹדִיאָהּ.

“*And they established these 8 days of Hanukah to express praise and thanks...*”

In fact, according to Kabbalists, Hanukah is specifically connected with the Sefirah **Hod**, as as Pesach is with **Chesed**, Shavuot is with **Tiferet**, etc.

Hod and **Netzach** work together as the two legs, **Hod** on the left, with **Netzach** on the right. **Netzach** is externally actively expressed, while **Hod** is internally passively expressed.

Does it come as no surprise that **Pasul**, which we are holding is the “negative” of **Hod**, has the gematria of *Chai Netzach*, the internal part of **Netzach**?

פסול = נצח חיי

Just as we avoid **Pasul** oils and wicks during Hanukah, this holiday also has a concept concerning “beautifying” the mitzvah of lighting. The universal practice of Jews to perform the rabbinic commandment to light the Hanukah lights for 8 days is performed *mehadrin min hamehadrin*, in the most glorious manner.

The minimal mitzvah, explains the Talmud, is to kindle 1 light each night per household. A more embellished manner (termed *mehadrin*) is for each member of the household to light 1 candle per night. But the most embellished method (called *mehadrin min hamehadrin*) is to add 1 light per night. According to the accepted view of Beit Hillel, this means lighting 1 candle on the first night, 2 candles on the second, and an additional light every night, culminating in the last night when a total of 8 candles are lit (Shabbos 21b).

Hod and **Hadar** are virtual synonyms, meaning to beautify, and **Hadar** is the root of *meHaDRin*. Here on Hanukah we take extra measures to move away from **Pasul /unfitness** and towards beauty.

Rabbi Yitzchak suggests that **Hod** implies empowering. **Hod** is on the left side of the Sefirotic setup---opposite the Sefira **Netzach**. These 2 are like 2 sides of a coin The **Netzach** dynamic of dominant competitive conquering and overcoming of all obstacles that stand in it’s way. Therefore , **Netzach** is in need of support---a support system. This need spurs **Hod** into responding by becoming **Netzach**’s chief enabler or empowerer. In terms of relationships, this means that the **Hod** partner is awakened to be of service to their partner, since their prime goal is to

enable their partner to become empowered and succeed. Rabbi Yitzchak suggests the following empowering meditation, which we have tailored to work well in the light of the candles:

First: Acknowledge an area of your life which seems *Pasul/unfit* for service with Hashem. Perhaps you are not praying with intent, you are giving charity for selfish reasons, you are learning Torah to impress others, etc. Take the light of the candles and bathe this area, coming up with solutions to beautify your behavior, and **empower** yourself to add glory to the area.

Next: bring to mind an experience or situation in your life. Ask yourself how **empowered** or powerless you are on a scale of 1 to 10,. How would you rate the experience. Extend this to another experience and another until you begin to develop a sense of the level of **empowerment** that you are holding by presently in most all situations that you find yourself

Then: begin to **reempower** yourself by re-focusing on all the powerless experiences of your life. Find something in or around the experience that you feel to be positive and that has redeeming value for you [including the realization that ultimately this experience is G-d sent and ultimately for your best] Focus on this to the exclusion of all the other negative aspects of the experience. If you still feel disempowered, then give it over to Hashem, expressing your need for Hashem to take over control [until ultimately you will be **reempowered**]. Do this [and any other type of **reempowering** tool that comes to you] for another challenge in your life , and another and another, until you feel that you are beginning to experience a shift in your life.

Now: **reempower** others, and begin to shift the focus of attention in your **reempowerings** from yourself to others, repeating all that you've done in the previous steps for yourself, and to do it instead for others.

Finally, **reempower** the past and future. Begin to extend your empowerings to your past, by simply saying thank you for all of the **empowerings** that you have been given and that you have been allowed to give to others by the ONE ABOVE. Keep repeating the thank yous and let the memories come to mind, one by one. See how often that your and others powerlessness was replaced by **empowerment**, and be thankful for that, and for how often you and others you have helped, have been bestowed with **empowerment** in your life. With this awareness, project a future of **empowerment** ---a level of **empowerment** that is beyond any level that you have ever experienced.



On the Third Night of Hanukah, we lit three candles representing *Tiferet* and *Patur*/exempt. Tonight as the Sixth Night corresponds to **Yesod/Foundation** and to **Chayyav/Liable**.

Chayyav means liable for a sanction or punishment. It is taught that there is no *tzaddik*/righteous person who does not sin on earth.

כִּי אָדָם, אֵין צְדִיק בְּאֶרֶץ--אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה-טוֹב, וְלֹא יִחָטָא

And we know from the *Iggeret Hakodesh* of the Ramban that the two areas we must be wary are (1) our eating and (2) our sex life. Those areas are in the province of the Sefirah **Yesod**, the Sixth emanation that is located in the genital or lower stomach area, and is the place of passion. <http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/iggeret-ha-kodesh>

It is interesting to look at the word *chayyav*/liable. The mystical classic *Sefer Yetzirah*/Book of Formation notes an analogy of a scale:

כַּף זְכוּת.

וְכַף חוּבָה וְלִשׁוֹן חָק מְכַרְיעַ בֵּינֵיהֶם

“a pan of of merit, *a pan of liability* and the tongue of decree deciding between them.”

We are most liable in areas related to the **Yesod**, which is why work on it tonight is valuable for the final *teshuvah* process which began in the Summer. The word **חַיִּיב** moreover contains within it the word **חַי** *Chai*/life, related to **Yesod**, the place where life springs forth. One must be careful not to forfeit one's life due to blemishes in the **Yesod** area, for we know that eating poorly contributes to many diseases and lack of healthy living. And unfortunately we have learned how dangerous unprotected relations can be, leading to life-long illness and sometimes even death (AIDS, etc).

On this night we should reflect on how we may have missed the mark in our eating and sexual behaviors. Let the lights of the candles illuminate the nooks and crannies of your consciousness, showing you places where spiritual “chametz” has been left in these areas. Now let's turn to a “*asay tov*”, doing good, focus.

Rabbi Yitzchak Schwartz correlates **Yesod** with “**Allness**”. That is because:

(1) The **Yesod** is the harmonious and fully expressed communicator of all the Sefirot [thus it is the only Sefira that corresponds to reproduction]

(2) The way that this is expressed in the consciousness of the **Yesod** person, is **Allness**

(3) Whatever they think, feel, speak or do is an expression of **Allness**

(4) They constantly seek to engage more of life, more fully lived and expressed, more unified, more impactful, more abundant, more experienced

(5) They therefore make all decisions in life, based on **allness**---to the extent that what they choose will empower their **allness**, to that extent they are prepared to jump in [and so too, the opposite]

How do we achieve this allness? Rabbi Yitzchak offers the following meditation, which we suggest is done in front of the 6 candles:

Review your day:

-- What were the activities/experiences that you had?

--Measure the **ALLNESS** level of your daily activities.

--How fully expressed and alive and pleasurable were they?

--Try to experience how the more that they were activities expressing your **ALLNESS**, the more inspired you were—in all ways.

Now Project your upcoming day:

--How can you change your day completely, by injecting **ALLNESS** ?

--See the anticipated activities /experiences of your day without **ALLNESS**, then see them with it

Inspire your day with **ALLNESS:**

1. Reframe an upcoming **interaction** with someone as being an opportunity to bond with that person in a totally unique and creative and

meaningful way [that will elicits from them their bonding **ALLNESS** in return]

2. Reframe an upcoming errand that you need to run as being an opportunity to accomplish your goal with as much expression of your inner powers as you can enlist---your power of creativity and feeling and love and innovation and sensitivity

3. Reframe an upcoming spiritual experience [prayer, study , meditation, etc] as being an opportunity to express yourself in a way that you never have before, nor will you ever be able to again See that your experience will resonate for Eternity. See that your experience will have the power to effect, not only yourself and those around you, but the entire world. See that your experience will be one that will perpetuate similar experiences in your life in what will be an upward spiral of spiritual power and bliss.

Seventh Night: Friday/Shabbat, December 14th--*Malkhut* and *Tum'ah* טְמֵאָה



Noted Talmud teacher Judith Abrams of the Maqom learning center has illuminated our understanding of *tumah* and *taharah*, the final distinctions we will examine on these last two nights of Hanukah. She relates:

If the priests who performed the sacrifices in the Temple were ritually unclean (*tamei*), they were not permitted to eat the *terumah* until they had taken a bath and the sun had set. (*Terumah* means literally "that which is lifted or separated" and was an offering to be given to the priest. There were two types of *terumah*: the regular offering which the Israelites had to separate from their own crops and give to the priest, and the *terumat ma'aser*, the tithe offering, which the Levites had to separate for the priests from the tithes they received) By the time the Talmud was completed, ritual purity was not as crucial a category as it had been when the Temple stood. How can we understand the concepts of ritual purity and impurity today? First of all, get out of your mind that this has anything to do with dirtiness or negativity. Such concepts result from the inability to accurately translate the words *taharah* (purity) and *tum'ah* (impurity) into English. What this really has to do with is boundaries between life and death and helping us deal with times, places and things which involve ambiguity in those boundaries.

Think about the following, real-life, modern example. A woman's father was in the hospital in the process of dying from cancer. He had to be moved to a new room. The last occupant had died in the room to which he was to be moved. The nurse found this information important enough that she asked the woman if she

minded if her father was put in a room in which the last occupant had died. There was probably nothing objective about the room which caused the death. Yet, our intuition tells us that something about the death happening there had changed the room. It is as if, in passing out of this world, a bit of "**disembodied soul residue**" was left in the room. This feeling, this concept, this is what ritual impurity is about. Anything that is connected with death is in some way impure, i.e., is touched with "**disembodied soul residue**". So, for example, blood that is flowing unstaunchably (e.g., menstrual blood) is considered impure because it is normally related to death: if a wound bleeds uncontrollably, death is the inevitable result. Only whole, complete items (obviously, defined by cultural norms) can become impure. Incomplete or broken items cannot become impure; cannot receive the "**disembodied soul residue**". So, for example, a piece of pottery could become ritually impure but the shards of a broken piece of pottery could not.

Paradoxically, touching the Torah can make your hands impure. Why? Because something that is holy has "**disembodied soul residue**" in it. That's part of what makes it holy. All the people who have reverently read a given Torah scroll before you leave an essence of their soul in that scroll. You might try opening a Torah scroll to see if you can sense this. This will be especially evident if you can compare an old scroll with a new one. The sensation is indescribable but definitely there. This also hints at a deep mystical truth: the most life-intensifying thing in our faith (Torah) is reminiscent of death, too. (Spiritual development involves paradox. Really living means living now and after you die and understanding how that works. Death doesn't necessarily have to refer only to physical death. It can also denote the death-by-degrees that comes from not actually living your life.) When you read in the Talmud about ritual purity and impurity, think about it as a discussion of embodiment, the soul and wholeness rather than about it as one on dirt or defilement.

Some Torah commentators and *poskim* advocate the keeping of prespecified nuances of *tum'ah* and *taharah* even in the absence of the temple in Jerusalem and even in the diaspora. The advocated sub-divisions of *tum'ah* and *taharah* include *tumath ochlin v'mashkin* (consuming food and drink that did not become *tamei*) and abstaining from the *midras* of a *niddah*. The Lubavitcher Rebbe Menachem Schneerson, in his *Igrot Kodesh*, discouraged abstaining from any object made impure by a menstruating woman in modern times, with the exception for unique

individuals.

Why is a meditation on *tumah* valuable today?

See we live in a world of *tumah*, where the **disembodied death residue** is present all over in our *Olam Ha-Asiyah*, the World of Action.

This World of Action correlates precisely to the Sefirah **Malkhut** of today--*Shabbat Kodesh*--and to the 7th day of Hanukah. Our world is full of *gashmiut*/ physicality, and accordingly, life and death are mixed together. For our world receives from all--both good and bad, alive and dead, etc.

It is this quality of reception--**Receiving**-- that most characterizes the Sefirah **Malkhut**, which receives from the 9 Sefirot above it. Perhaps our job is to receive all--from the Sixth Day meditation above on page 22.--and to clarify it.

Recognize those aspects of ourself which are dead, lifeless, stuck, and to invigorate them, inspire those areas with new life, as it were. R. Yitzchak Schwartz offers a meditation, which we suggest be done while the Hanukah candles are aflame. Now this year, since it is Shabbat and we need to light the Menorah first before the Shabbat candles, perhaps the meditation might work best after finishing the Evening prayers:

Be totally open to receive.

Receive the voices from inside yourself

Receive the information from outside of yourself.

Receive the messages that come to you with every interpersonal encounter.

Receive the people that you encounter, not only as you perceive them, rather put yourself in their place and see things the way that they see things

Be receptive to the birth process that you are going through---your active role in the birth process, as well as your passive role in birthing---by watching Hashem make it all happen.

Bridge your active role in the birth process with your passive role.

See how, despite all of YOUR efforts to bring the birth to it's fruition and actualization, actually it's really all being orchestrated by THE ONE ABOVE in His own way and in His own time.

See how that which you are giving birth to in life, directly corresponds to what you receive and how you receive it.

Notice that the more that you see the birth process coming to its actualization, the more you see its beauty and it's wonder and how this birth process is

perpetuating other related birth processes---some insignificant and others, very profound.

Eighth Night: *Motzai-Shabbat*/Saturday Night, December 15th: *Binah* and *Taharah* טְהוּרָה



Some claim that the meaning of *tum'ah* is "entombed," meaning the person or item that is in the טָמֵא² *tamei* state is blocked and not in a state of receiving holy transmission. *Tahor*, by contrast, is defined as "pure" in the sense that the person or object is in a clear state and can/may potentially serve as a conduit for Divine and G-dly manifestation. Although *tumah and taharah* is sometimes translated as *unclean and clean*, it is more a spiritual state than a physical one. It is therefore notable that on the last day of Hanukah, the 8th day which transcends the physical nature of the 7 days of Creation, that we contemplate *Tahor* and *Binah*, the Sefirah involving our *mochin*/brains, more "spiritual" than the physical body and emotions of the previous 7 days.

² Note that the gematria of טָמֵא *tamei* is 50 which parallels the *tahor* 50 gates of Binah, for as we know ""G-d has made one thing opposite the other" (Kohelet 7:14). On paradox and the 50 gates, see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kgnuSMx-aH0&feature=youtu.be>

Tonight is **Zot Hanukah**.

The significance of the number eight is that it transcends the realm of this mundane and physical world and alludes to the exalted and holy. In the natural world, time is based on a seven-day week and all occurrences are controlled by *sheva kochavei lechet* - the seven orbital planets. Hashem transcends all this, and therefore the number eight represents His lofty Holiness.

In the era of the Messiah named *Mashiach* we will merit a higher revelation of G-dliness, and therefore *Mashiach's* harp will consist of eight strings, one more than the seven-stringed harp of the *Beit Hamikdash* (*Arachin* 13b).

Hanukah is a preparation for the forthcoming Messianic era. These days are called "*Hanukah*" because they are a *Hinuch* - education/preparation - accustoming us to the final redemption. During the candle lighting we are treated to a resemblance of the illumination of the *Or Haganuz* - hidden primordial light - which will radiate in full glory in the days of *Mashiach*.

The candles and light of *Hanukah* are analogous to Torah and *mitzvot* as King Shlomo said, "*For a mitzvah is a candle and Torah is light*" (Proverbs 6:23). During *Hanukah* an increase in Torah study is preferred since through the *Ohr Hadash* - new light of Torah that we add in the world we will accomplish the purpose of creation and merit the revelation of the new light which transcends our mundane world - the light of *Mashiach*.

The correlation of *Hanukah* and *Mashiach* is most evident on day eight, because the number eight represents that which is above the chain of creation. Similarly, the Messianic era will usher in a new order which will also transcend the chain of creation.

With the 8 lights plus the *Shamesh*, the pure new light helps to cleanse our souls, in a way perhaps similar to *Yom HaKippurim*, the day of at-one-ment. According to some schools of Kabbalah, *Yom HaKippurim* is related to **Binah**, as both are the place of *Teshuvah*/return. And we are told that this night is the end of the *Teshuvah* process begun in Elul: we have until **Zot Hanukah** to get it right!

Aharon the Kohen during the Yom Kippur service went into the Holy of Holies with **Zot**, the incense. This **Zot** has gematria of 407, the total of *Tzom*/fasting, *Mamon*/money for charity, and *Kol*/voice for prayer. By gazing into the 8 lights on **Zot Hanukah**, we too have the ability to do *teshuva shleimah*/complete return,

much in the way we did nearly three months earlier in Tishre. This meditation if done sincerely, can in a way “sprinkle pure waters” on you, removing the **disembodied death residue** of being stuck in inappropriate behaviors and mind-trains.

According to Rabbi Schwartz, *Binah/understanding*, the Sefirah for today, involves package-ing, namely compartmentalizing the your inner wisdom, and synchronizing it, and planing to put it into practice. *Teshuvah* is the return to one’s roots and self. As you contemplate where you are spiritually and what you need to do to really do teshuvah, he suggests:

**SEE TO IT THAT THE WISDOM THAT YOU ARE NURTURING, IS
ALLIGNED WITH G-D’S WISDOM AS WELL AS YOUR OWN**

IF NOT, THAN REALIGN.

**KEEP SYNCHRONIZING, REFINING AND ALIGNING THIS WISDOM
UNTIL IT IS STABLE ENOUGH TO STAND THE TEST OF TIME IN
THIS WORLD AND ON TO ‘THE WORLD TO COME’ [another Binah term]**