

## BERESHEET - 2 - AN ELUCIDATION OF BIRKAT HALEVANA

On the fourth day of the creative process two luminaries were set in the Raqia HaShamayim. The placement of the celestial sun and moon (and their physical counterparts) as well as their movements within the spiritual heavens - determine in what capacity they fulfill their biblical role to - illuminate the (celestial) land. 1 The Torah tells us that they originally were considered to be two great luminaries - **המארת הגדלים** - Immediately afterwards the text changes course describing one of the luminaries as great - **המאור הגדול לממשלת היום** - to rule the day - and the second - now a small luminary - **המאור הקטן לממשלת הלילה** - to rule at night. 2 The Talmud details under what circumstances the moon was reduced to become a newly diminished smaller luminary - while the sun or great luminary remained unchanged. 3 Our Sages teach that the physically manifested sun and moon reflect their specific spiritual counterparts in the highest world of Asilut. 4 The Sefirot or channels that filter the divine light through this elevated world can be depicted via the four holy letters of **יהוה** - Simply put - the light cascades from the tip of the letter **י** - passing through the body of the **ה** - and towards the **ו** - which transmits it to the final **ה** - The **י** is associated with a male force - the celestial sun and is called **קודשא בריך הוא** - while the **ו** is associated with a female force - the celestial moon and is known as the **שכינה** - The **ו** occupied a spiritual position beneath **קודשא בריך הוא** - or the **י** - while receiving her share of the light solely via her male counterpart. A mystical interpretation of the Talmudic narrative relates that a diminution of the spiritual moon resulted from a request she made. Namely that she did not want to occupy a position as receiver from the **י** - but rather she aspired to stand with it side by side and nourish directly from the upper **ה** - The request reads **אפשר לשני מלכים** - The request reads **אפשר לשני מלכים** - Is it possible that I be elevated to a position of equal stature as that of the **י** - in that we both stand parallel with our crowns equally nourishing from the spiritual level associated with the upper **ה**. 5 The narrative continues and informs us that instead of granting the celestial moon her request - the final **ה** was forced into becoming diminished spiritually - As it was conveyed to her **לכי ומעטי את עצמך** - this connotes that she will be forced to give up a permanent position in the highest world - and will have to descend into the lower worlds of **עשיה** - offering her services there. 6 The Talmud teaches that each month we are to offer a blessing called **ברכת הלבנה** - which in its first part - reflects this new task of the spiritual moon or the **שכינה** in her descent below. 7 This is to primarily provide us - her children who exist in the lower worlds with the needed light she brings down from above. This is the secret found in the **אשת חיל** - concerning the **שכינה** - that **ותתן טרף לביתה** - That in her descent or diminutive state - her task is to provide spiritual nourishment to her household. This will help in granting us the wherewithal to elevate holiness that exists below back up into the highest spiritual world of Asilut. The second part of the blessing that begins with **וללבנה אמר** - reflects our hope for the future that the **שכינה** be no longer needed in this capacity - and will be granted her request to ascend from her diminished state and nourish directly from the upper **ה** - She will then stand in an elevated state together and parallel with the **ו**. 8 This is reflected in the prophecy of **ישעיה** - recited at the close of the ceremony - Namely - that the light of the moon be as the light of the sun 9 - **והיה אור הלבנה כאור החמה** -

### THE ROLE OF THE SHEHINA IN HER DIMINUTIVE STATE

R. Hayyim Vital explains that there are seven major spiritual positions that the **שכינה** takes up in the worlds above. 10 It is important to understand that the **שכינה** or Divine Presence is the spiritual reservoir for all of the **שפע** that filters down through the channels or **ספירות** of Asilut. According to her position which is by in large dependent upon our **תפלות תורה ומצוות** - we will receive and be endowed with the light of the Creator. The nature of our reception of this light is somewhat dependent upon her spiritual position she is stationed in at that time. An elevated position will grant us a more refined perception of the light allowing us to perceive more clearly the oneness of the Creator. There are times that are spiritually challenging due to the strengthening of evil forces found in the lower worlds who are intent in syphoning off the light - causing our perception of its oneness to be clouded. During these times we need the assistance of the **שכינה** to descend in accompanying us - assisting in our service of the Creator in the lower worlds. It is only when she is in this diminutive state that she can assist us in gathering 288 trapped sparks of holiness that had fallen during a previous spiritual epoch from the highest pure spiritual world of Asilut into the three lower worlds. 11 It is our task to elevate these sparks from amongst the evil forces found in the lower worlds back to their proper place in the pure world of Asilut. In order to accomplish this task we need the assistance of the **שכינה** who must become spiritually smaller to descend below to be with us in our **עבודה** - The **ברכה** begins by its recognition that the **שכינה** is **מקודשת** - to the **י** or its male counterpart **אשר**

ברכה The 'ו- to the אמר R. HaAri explains is the sanctification known in the Talmud 12 as which continues to reference how the שכינה initially descends to the level of the two כיולות of the world of בריאה called then 13 she as פיו continues to where there exist כל צבאם - the spiritual beings - A reference is then made to the lowest world of עשיה which is governed and defined by חק וזמן נתן להם - in that this level of creation is also subject to the celestial luminaries of Asilut and hence שלא ישנו את תפקידם - This שפע that is brought down to the lower worlds causes ששים ושמים לעשות רצון קוניהם - a rejoicing in doing the will of their Creator. This is all due to her state as the recipient from the 'ו which is called אמת hence this section 14 concludes שפעולתו אמת - one who activates the 'ו or the male channel of truth.

## THE PROMISE AND HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

The most elevated level that the שכינה can attain is the seventh of the spiritual positions assigned to the שכינה - In the current era she is only granted a temporary hint of this state during elevated tefilot - During this part of ברכת הלבנה - we are recognizing that she and we - will enjoy the fulfillment of her request made during the fourth day of the creative process. The ברכה notes that she will be renewed permanently as per her request to this elevated level which is known as תפארת דאמא hence שתתחדש עטרת תפארת לעמוסי בטן - namely that her עטרת or crown will be elevated to that of תפארת of the upper 'ה - Not only will the שכינה be elevated but the spirits of Israel will ascend as well שאתם עתידים להתחדש כמותה - this all to the place called פאר - the place where the 'ו stands. 15 In addition the lower worlds will also ascend via the holy name of 42 letters וילפאר ליצורם על שם כבוד מלכותו a16

## THE END PETITIONS AFTER THE BERAKHA

We then petition that the world of יצירה should illuminate and עשיה and that אצילות do the same to בריאה in the secret of בוראין ברוך קוניך ברוך עושיך ברוך יוצרך ברוך עושיך ברוך קוניך ברוך בוראין - in this manner the worlds and aspects of our souls will ascend 17 - As spiritual beings our physical movements effect the celestial worlds - hence in the minor tractate of Sofrim the Talmud rules - that we are to elevate our heels as we do when reciting קדוש דחזרה - as we announce כשם שאנחנו מרקדים - This is recited three times 18 and with each set we are to simply lift upon our heels thrice. 19 Each complete spiritual level is arranged in a balanced triad to form three columns. A set of three lifts will elevate one of the lower worlds. Starting at the bottom - the first set of three is to bring up the right column channels of עשיה - the left column channels of עשיה and finally the central channels of עשיה to the world of יצירה - The second and third sets of three to elevate יצירה and בריאה respectively upwards. 20 At the close of each set - we actively send forth a torch of fire in the form of five gevurot and declare תפל עליהם אימתה ופחד - to protect the ascending שכינה which is hidden in each of the three ascending lower worlds - 17 from any attachment by the שקליפות or negative husks כאבן - We then read the same verse in a backwards manner כאבן - to send forth these negative husks upon our spiritual enemies to cut them off from access to the celestial land. 21 Then with the permanent removal of evil - we ask that King David who is associated spiritually with the שכינה or celestial moon - remain in her place in אצילות - no longer descending to the spiritual worlds associated with death -22 דוד מלך ישראל חי וקים - We then recite the verse seven times - as each is reflective of one of the seven upper channels - כחב"ד חג"ת of the 'ו from whereby the שכינה stands now in the current era to receive - This is why our Rabbis ruled that we wait seven complete days from the Molad to recite Birkat Halevana. 23 We then declare שלום עליכם - to thrice solidify and activate peace 24 in place of the original קטרוג initiated by the לבנה - Afterwards the custom is to shake the ends of our garment to distance the outside forces 25 created as a result of the לבנה - We then recite the verses from ישעיהו that prophesies the new reality - that the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun - which we should merit to experience במהרה בימינו -

Shabbat Shalom

Victor Bibi