

Likutei Ya"m HaChochmah

Festivals & Seasonal *Avodah* Series

*Shevat*

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*Likutei Ya"m HaChochmah: Festivals and Seasonal Avodah Series: Shevat*

## **The Avodah In The Month of Shevat**

### ***The Month of Hod: Admitting That We Cannot Do Anything, While Begging For Worthiness***

The month of Shevat has the *mazal* (celestial configuration) called *dli* (lit. "pail", which is used to draw and pour water with).

Moshe explained the Torah, drawing the Torah forth and irrigating the nation with it from the Torah of his Teacher and giving to others. The *mazal* of *dli* is a degree of *Yesod*, and in terms of the ten *Sefiros*, it corresponds to *Hod*, within the *partzuf* of *Zeir Anpin*. Moshe hid his face from seeing the *Shechinah* and he admitted that a human being cannot do anything, and therefore he did not feel worthy of being the redeemer of the Jewish people. It was precisely because he hid his face from the *Shechinah*, though, that he was worthy of becoming the redeemer, revealing the light of *Yesod*. It is in the month of *Hod* in which the *tzaddik* "admits" that he cannot do anything on his own, just as Moshe nourished the people from the Torah that he learned from Hashem, from the waters of the upper "Heavenly stream" and he did not attribute any superiority to himself, recognizing that everything was from Hashem.

According to the view of Beis Shamai, the first day of the month of Shevat is the new year for trees. (*Talmud Bavli Rosh HaShanah 2a*). The school of thinking of Beis Shamai represents the *gevuros* (the judgments), the trait of Yitzchok, and the "returning light", in which a Jew is awakened that he cannot do anything, and this is the light of Yitzchok, who returns the light to above. This is the preparation for *Tu B'Shevat*, which is *Tiferes* (Yaakov), the "direct light" after the light has been returned – revealing *Yesod*, the light of *yichud*. It reveals how Hashem chose His creations to reveal His *yichud* through them, to reveal the fruits and trees which are his holy Torah. For on Tu B'Shevat, the tree sap appears – revealing the Torah of the future, *Atika Stimaah*. The Jewish people need to reach it, after they admit in the month of *Hod* that a person is nothing and that only Hashem can do anything.

At first we need to go in the "right line", to know that Hashem wants a dwelling place for Him below and gave us the Torah. Then certainly every Jew can be worthy of the light of Torah, because everyone has a portion and inheritance in the Torah. Afterwards, we need to go in the "left line", the first day of Shevat which is the new year for trees according to Beis Shamai, and to descend into the holy *ibbur* (impregnation of new levels) and *tzimtzum* (contraction of infinite light) through the way of "returning light", which is to see how we,

as created beings, cannot do anything, and therefore all we can do is give ourselves over to the Creator and becoming integrated in our Emanator.

Through this, may we be worthy of revealing the light of Tu B'Shevat, to reveal the *yichud* of the Creator, to attain the new tree sap, the tree that is the Torah, through revealing our personal portion in Torah and to reveal His *yichud* in the lower realms. We need to stand and beg the Creator a lot that we be worthy of knowing the Torah, the "king's daughter", which brings a person to complete *d'veykus* and *daas* of the Creator.

### ***Shevat Is Represented By The Letter Tzaddik***

The *avodah* in the month of Shevat corresponds to the Hebrew letter *tzaddik*. It is a hint to become a *tzaddik*, that our thoughts should be bound all day in *d'veykus* and *yichudim*.

### ***The Yearnings In The Month of Shevat***

*Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 11:4, citing R' Yehuda HaChasid)* cites a custom that some butchers are careful not to slaughter a goose in Teves and Shevat, unless they eat from the heart of the goose, since there is a tradition that there is one hour in these months where it is dangerous for the butcher to slaughter the goose unless he eats from it. And the custom is to eat from the heart of the goose [in order to avert this danger].

The meaning behind this since the months of *Teves* and *Shevat* are the darkest months of the year in which there is *tzimtzum* (contraction of Hashem's infinite light and hence more concealment of His Presence), and because of this, the Jewish people long and yearn to fly to the upper worlds, like a goose which soars above. The Jewish people yearn to fly to the upper worlds of *Chochmah*, the supernal wisdom, and as a hint, the Gemara says "One who sees a goose in a dream, can await wisdom." This yearning comes after the light of Chanukah has been accessed.

Darkness is represented by Yehudah, who felt the darkness of being demoted from his brothers when he had to descend to Egypt and they shunned him. Yehudah immediately had a longing to go higher than where he was. Even when a person sins a lot, after he does *teshuvah* and he is forgiven, he can immediately have a longing to be included with the *tzaddikim*.

Therefore, during these days, if one wants to slaughter his evil inclination and to receive *mochin*, or *chochmah*, represented by the goose, and he wants to fly to Heaven and become close to Hashem, he needs to "eat from the heart of the goose". Normally one should not eat the heart of an *animal* or bird, because it causes forgetfulness, but the custom in these months is to eat the heart of the goose when slaughtering it, hinting to how one needs to enter into the depths of *yichud*, which is called *Ga'R d'Atik* (the "three heads" of the highest

level, *Atik*), or the secret of *Radla* (the unknowable head), which is also the light of Yosef, and the secret of the olive which causes forgetfulness. By entering into the root “fiery coal”, to the point that nothing bothers you because you are so attached with Hashem, and even after eating food you can immediately connect to the G-dly spark in the food, and every word that you speak with others is focused on Heaven, even when you fall into darkness, not only can you immediately return and do *teshuvah*, but you can reveal an even deeper level of *d’veykus* there. This is all through first reciting *Shema*, which is the secret of *yichud*.

May Hashem help us slaughter the goose during these days – to slaughter the evil inclination – and to receive *mochin*, to fly to Hashem with love and fear of Him, and to long for Him, to stroll through all the parts of Torah and to be connected in His G-dliness with every letter of the Torah we learn, and to forget about everything around us, and not care about how others are doing better than us in their learning, not to care if we are understanding or not understanding or reaching or not reaching. For all of us have a share and inheritance in the Torah, and no one else can take it away from us. Let us “eat from the heart of the goose” – in the inner sense, by connecting to the light of Yosef, to know that everything is really G-dliness, and to purify every place that has been pushed away.

### ***Parshas Beshalach – Awakening The Holiness of Shvii Shel Pesach***

The **Ziditchover** said that when *Parshas Beshalach* arrives, in which we read about how the sea was split, it awakens the holiness of *Shvii Shel Pesach* (the 7<sup>th</sup> day of Pesach, in which the sea was split), where the secret of *Atik* begins to shine [when the people came to the sea, they were told, *b’Atika talya milsa*, a hint that at this point, everything depends on *Atik*], the light of the *Sefirah* of *Keser*. All heavenly blessing comes from there. But there is one condition: The sea only split when it saw the casket of Yosef. Only with doing the *avodah* of Yosef HaTzaddik (guarding our holiness) can we merit all salvation.

One should therefore make a self-accounting and wonder: “Maybe I am not guarding myself enough. Maybe I am doing things that are against the *halachah*, *chas v’shalom*.” One should wonder where his children and what they are doing and seeing. And one should also worry for his friends, because he may have good friends who don’t realize the severity of the impure devices of today. Maybe they haven’t seen the light yet and they don’t understand what the Creator wants from them when it comes to this.

We need to be strengthening each other, because each Jew is responsible for another Jew. One will not be able to excuse himself in the Next World by saying “I was a holy person on the world, I didn’t have problems with technology devices.” One must be concerned for his friends and strengthen and inspire them, and to warn his friends that as long as they don’t throw away these dangerous devices, they are mixing impurity into holiness, and the Other Side will be able to seize their holiness through this, *chas v’shalom*.

## 2 – Tu B'Shevat

### ***The Yichud On Tu B'Shevat – The Yesod, Reached Through Bittul (Self-Nullification)***

The day of Tu B'Shevat (the 15<sup>th</sup> day of Shevat) is the festival of the trait of *Yesod*, a very hidden light, a *yichud*, which cannot be revealed except through *Hod*, the corresponding *Sefirah* of the month of Shevat. It means to have total *bittul* (self-nullification) to Hashem, to admit that only "*Hashem your G-d*" is "*the One Who can take you out of the suffering of Egypt*".

To the extent that a Jew accesses *Hod*, by thanking Hashem and admitting that everything comes only from Him, especially the truth of *Ain Od Milvado* and that a person himself cannot do anything, that is how one enters into the light of *Yesod*. But the *yichud* cannot be complete through *Yesod* alone, as long as *Netzach* and *Hod* aren't assisting in the *yichud*. The *yichud* begins on Tu B'Shevat but it is completed on Chanukah and Purim, which correspond to *Hod* and *Netzach*.

The *Yesod* itself has two parts to it, a returning light which gets refracted from below on its way up, and a direct light which comes from above to below. The view of Beis Shamai (which always reflects the mode of *gevurah*/judgment) is that the new year for trees is on Rosh Chodesh Shevat, while the view of Beis Hilel (which is the view of *chesed*/kindness) is that the new year for trees is Tu B'Shevat, the day in which the *yichud* begins. The *yichud* cannot be drawn from above to below unless there is first a returning light from below, in which we thank Hashem and nullify ourselves to Him and we know that only He takes us out of our troubles.

The **Baal Shem Tov** said that the main *avodah* of a Jew is *bittul* (self-nullification), to reach complete *ayin* (negation of all sense of self), just as Mordechai did not bow to Haman and he denied every idol worship in the world, because of his *bittul* and complete *ayin* to Hashem. From *ayin*, which is *Chochmah*, a person can come to a higher level of *ayin*, which is *Arich* (lower *Keser*), and from there a person can come to an even higher level of *ayin*, which is *Atik*. Although *Atik* usually refers to the *Ani* of Hashem, it is a state of complete *bittul* to Hashem that reflects a total *bittul* to *Ani Hashem*, making it the absolute level of *ayin*. It is the secret of the *Radla* (unknowable beginning point, beyond all logic and reasoning) and any experience of the *ani* there can only be an experience of the *Ani* of Hashem Himself.

This can only be reached after the created being recognizes the *yichud* of Hashem. It is all for the purpose of entering more into *ayin*, so that one can experience “*I am Hashem your G-d*”, and the more one reveals *Hod*, the more he can reveal *Yesod*, and the redeemer, who is a revelation of *Yesod*. For the main *Geulah* is when Hashem settles His *Shechinah* on a person, and to the extent that one admits that he does not have any power to do anything and he comes to total *ayin*, Hashem settles His *Shechinah* upon him, for the main holiness is to be *ayin*, and whatever a person goes through is all so that he can more into *ayin* and thereby draw the light of *Yesod*, which is the light of *yichud*.

The *yichud* begins on Rosh Chodesh Shevat, becomes extended on Tu B'Shevat, and is completed on Purim.

### ***Searching For The Shechinah***

On the new year for trees, a *yichud* is made and new fruit are produced from it. These fruits are essentially all that a Jew does needs to do on this world, and all of one's actions need to become connected with the *Shechinah*, which raises the tree sap – or the elevation of the feminine waters from the worlds of *BiY”A* to the higher worlds of Atzilus and beyond.

Dovid said, “*One thing I sought from Hashem...that I dwell in the house of Hashem all the days of my life.*” He sought to be connected with the name of *HaVaYaH* forever, so that he could come to see the bliss of Hashem and visit His chamber, to reach all the chambers of *BiY”A* so that he could find the *Shechinah* and raise her to her root and bring the complete *Geulah*.

### ***Staying Away From Sadness***

Now we are preparing ourselves for the light of Purim, through the introduction of Tu B'Shevat, the secret of the tree's fruit, for we need to produce fruit, the *yichud*. This depends on “*I will be as I shall be*”, the name of *EHY”H*, the complete joy, and this comes from beginning to feel joy even as we are in a state of low-level consciousness (*katnus*), so that we shouldn't allow fermentation while it's still in pregnancy. That is Tu B'Shevat, the beginning of fruit and nursing, so that the trees will produce the *esrog* – the souls of the Jewish people.

It all depends on strengthening ourselves on Tu B'Shevat, when the tree sap appears, when the fruits are beginning to blossom, when the fruit begins to be nourished – when we begin to enter into holiness. If one ever feels sadness, his *avodah* is “*I will be as I shall be*”, to know that Hashem is with him.

In the Talmud Yerushalmi, the sage Rabbi Yochanan taught that one should keep repeating certain verses that describe how Hashem is always with a person. Even if you do not feel it, this is only because you are in a state of “pregnancy” [*ibbur*, or *mochin d'katnus*, low-level

spiritual consciousness] and you should at least be aware of it intellectually, so that at least your mind will know that Hashem is with you, even if your heart doesn't feel it.

In the end, the *yichud* is born. The light of *Keser* spreads, and is completed on Purim. But it all depends on the holiness of Tu B'Shevat which comes before Purim.

The *Sitra Achra* (Other Side) isn't able to produce fruits of its own, but if *chas v'shalom* we become sad, we cannot give birth to new levels of holiness, because sadness allows the *Sitra Achra* to take hold. The main point is to come to a deep *bittul* (surrender of our self to Hashem) in the innermost depths of our heart, to truly believe that Hashem is with us: "*Praiseworthy is the one who trusts in You.*" This is a fundamental of being Jewish – to hold strong throughout any situation we are in and no matter what our level is right now, knowing that Hashem is with us, and not even allowing one moment of sadness to set in, so that the S" M isn't given any power. We only need to remember that Hashem said, "*I will be as I shall be*", and with that, we will be brought to produce all new spiritual levels.

### ***Davening For An Esrog – To Become Connected To The Shechinah***

On the holy festival that is Tu B'Shevat, we *daven* for an *esrog*. The inner meaning of this is that we should want to become bound with the *Shechinah*.

[On Tu B'Shevat, there is a custom to say a special *tefillah* to get a beautiful *esrog* for the coming year]. Becoming bound with the *Shechinah* is the true "*esrog*" – to be attached to *emunah* at all times. The word *esrog* (אתרג) is an acronym for אל תביאני לידי גאווה "Do not bring me to the feet of conceitedness." If a person thinks all the time about money, he is surrounded all the time with the air of this world. If he thinks about physical lusts all the time, he is surrounded by the air of Gehinnom. And if a person longs all the time to serve Hashem and he searches for *yichud*, the air of Gan Eden is drawn around him.

That is why, at all times, one must have a pining in the soul for the undifferentiated unity of Hashem. This draws the tree's sap – the essence of the trees – meaning that one never forgets Hashem, which is the main part of serving Him. When Tu B'Shevat arrives, one needs to awaken himself to look for good fruits, and for this one needs to be attached with the essence of the tree, the *Shechinah*.

One needs to be connected to Hashem internally and with a true bond, of *emunah* and *yichud*. One should think all the time how "*The soul of my master is bound with the Rock of life*", he should only think all the time about good thoughts and *yichud Hashem*, and that is how one gets "good fruit" that fixes all sins.

May Hashem take pity on all Jewish souls, on this holy festival, in which we are already preparing for Purim, that we should become included in the inner dimension of the *Yesod*, and to fix all sins and repair all the fruits of the tree.

### ***Rosh Chodesh Shevat Is Yichud Leah, and Tu B'Shevat Is Yichud Rochel***

When the sap appears on the trees, this is the new year for trees. The tree's sap is the inner part of the tree that comes out from the inside and appears on its outside. It represents a new inner revelation of Torah, in which we can begin to feel how the Torah is entirely names of Hashem and how the Torah brings a person to a state of surrender and where G-dliness settles on him.

According to Shamaï, the new year for trees is on Rosh Chodesh Shevat, and according to Hilel it is on Tu B'Shevat. This is because Shamaï represents the *yichud* of Leah, and Hilel represents the *yichud* of Rochel.

In the path of Leah, one begins with longings that he isn't yet at a higher level. He is only there in his thoughts and longings. This is called "*yichudim* [of Yisrael] with Leah", which is all "preparation", holy thoughts to prepare for a higher level. For example, one isn't yet at the level of *bittul*, but he longs for it and he thinks about it and he wants it. This is a very important *avodah*, and it is all a preparation, the path of Leah.

Thus according to Shamaï, the new year for trees is Rosh Chodesh Shevat, and this is referring to the great *avodah* of *yichud*, "Leah", of thinking, wanting, and yearning, for every level, to enter into longings at every time. This is a degree of *yichud* of *neshikin* (kisses), which is to long for the complete *yichud*. One needs to honor every *avodah* and every longing, because they are all part of the preparation to reach the inner level of *yichud*: "Rochel".

On Tu b'Shevat, the new year for trees according to Beis Hilel, is the "*yichud* of Yaakov with Rochel". This is the level of *bittul*, entering into absolute *ayin*. This is all yet a preparation for the actual settling of the *Shechinah*, which will be the intoxication on Purim. The purpose of reaching absolute *ayin* is so that we can leave behind this world and inflame our body with holiness, where our body becomes *Chashmal* and it searches only for the *Shechinah*, to the point that the *Shechinah* even settles on our physicality and we are disgusted by all physicality.

"Those who love Hashem hate evil", and "evil" here refers even to physicality and all that's external. With love for Hashem [searching for the *Shechinah* to settle on us] we become elevated to *Chashmal*, and when the *Shechinah* truly settles on us, at the level of Rochel, then even our body becomes turned holy, and then we find the true 'sap' and 'fruits'.

But we first need Rosh Chodesh Shevat, which is the new year for trees according to Shamaï, and this is to persist with the *yichudim* of Leah. It is to have a longing at all times and do *yichud* at our own level, reaching whatever we can reach right now, even when we find ourselves in a time of concealment and we feel blocked, we should not leave

our *avodah* for a moment. Even when the *Shechinah* is hidden from us, we must run after her in every situation, because the *Shechinah* is not attained easily.

The truth is that even any small spark of this is already a high level, and at every world and every level we can find all the worlds of *Adam Kadmon*, *Atzilus*, and *BiY" A* subsumed within it. Even though we are only found at *Asiyah d'Asiyah*, the lowest level, we can still find a degree of even *Adam Kadmon* at our own level. Any spark of the *Shechinah* that settles on us, even if it is so far from even what the level of *tzaddikim* today can attain, its importance cannot be measured. For even the smallest level of G-dliness that settles on us is a fulfillment of the mitzvah of "*And in Him, you shall attach*", the mitzvah to have d'veykus in Hashem, and the purpose of the entire Torah: "*And you will know, for I am Hashem*".

Thus on Rosh Chodesh Shevat, Moshe began to explain the Torah, for there must first be the *avodah* of *yichudim* of Leah, or *CHaGa" T*. Then we need to prepare for Tu B'Shevat, which is *yichudim* of Rochel, or *NeH" Y*.

But the purpose of it all is to ascend from *NeH" Y*, which is down below at the level of *Malchus*, and to rise to the root of the *Malchus*, which is hidden in the *Radla*. That is Purim, where the *yichud* becomes complete through the secret of Queen Esther, whom Mordechai raised as a daughter – which symbolizes our ultimate goal, that we must raise *Malchus* all the way up until its root in the *Radla*, the place where *ani* and *ayin* co-exist at once, where there is entirely "direct light" (and even though the "returning light" becomes integrated there, it is still considered as entirely "direct light", because there is only a feeling of the existence of Hashem and nothing else there).

It all depends on how much our heart wants this, for "Hashem wants the heart." At all times we need to think about Torah ascend from level to level, until we reach the place of complete *yichud*.

### ***Preparing For Tu B'Shevat, The Festival of The Yesod – Through Torah***

Tu B'Shevat is like a festival that celebrates the level of *Yesod*. This is the secret of gaining new fruit, of gaining true spiritual achievements and fruits of our labor in serving Hashem – and it is by preparing for the purpose, which is Purim. We need great repairs in order to perfect our *Yesod*, and the general repair is reached through the days of *Shovavim*, and especially on Tu B'Shevat, which is a day to repair *Yesod*.

The *Yesod* is able to ascend from below to above, and it can ascend all the way up until the *Radla*. We need to begin ascending above, from the *Shechinah* (*Malchus*) which is attached with *Yesod*, and then through the holiness of *Yesod* we can begin to rise (just as the tree sap appears from the inside of the tree) and reach inner levels of connection with Hashem, just as by the giving of the Torah. This is the light of *Atika Stimaah*, when we will see the return

of Hashem to Tziyon with both of our eyes – we have a “lower eye” for the purpose of seeing *yichuda tataah*, which then reveals *yichuda ilaah* with greater intensity, and that reveals the “upper eye”.

The preparation for this is by exerting ourselves in Torah, with great dedication and sacrificing, with endless exertion in both *bekiyus* and *iyun* in all parts of Torah. This is all the secret of “visible colors”, and it enters us into the inner dimension where we can see that all of the Torah is really *d’veykus*, and this is the “invisible colors”. And the final level is to come to “Shiloh”, to “Moshe, who is Mashiach”, where we can begin to see how all of the Torah is really the settling of the *Shechinah*.

This is completed on Purim, but it begins with preparing on Tu B’Shevat, in which the level of “Rochel” is beginning to ignite and we begin to reach the “invisible colors”. This is the secret of the tree sap which appears on Tu B’Shevat. The goal is to come to “Shiloh”, where Moshe is Mashiach.

Therefore, before anything, we must increase our Torah study, simply, in both the revealed and hidden parts of Torah, learning in great holiness and endlessly increasing our diligence, whether it is learning 18 *Mishnayos* a day or learning Gemara for 5 uninterrupted hours, each person should do whatever he can do to add on to his learning. And the same goes for our *davening*, we should get used to *hisbodedus* and *davening* endlessly, not just to say the words but to think about the holy names of Hashem, so that we combine our *tefillos* (Dovid) with *yichudim* (Yosef). Then we can enter the level where the *Shechinah* can settle us, where we can receive a spark of prophecy.

To the degree that we delve into the first level of Torah, which is *yichuda tataah*, we can afterwards be worthy of getting the higher level of Torah, at the level of *yichuda ilaah*. This is the main way to erase Amalek, who wants that people shouldn’t know the Torah – namely, the level of Torah which is *d’veykus* (and the settling of the *Shechinah*). Amalek distances a person from learning the Torah, and especially from the inner dimension of the Torah (learning the Torah with *d’veykus*).

That is why we first need to be diligent in learning Torah, then deepening our learning with in-depth study, then learning *lishmah* (to give honor to Hashem) and then we can slowly reach the inner *avodah*, of seeing how the entire Torah is names of Hashem, where we can then obtain a spark of prophecy on our own level. This will cause our soul to be disgusted with pursuing materialism and physical desires.

We need to then throw away the externality of the physical body body and turn it into the holiness of *Chashmal*. This is by removing the “three impure husks”<sup>1</sup> and by repairing *klipas*

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<sup>1</sup> Editor’s Note: This is an exhaustive topic, and cannot nearly be covered in its entirety in this footnote. Nevertheless, a basic explanation is required about this. The *sefer Tanya* discusses much about the

*noga*, which subjugates the Serpent, like the staff of Moshe. We can remove the Serpent's pull, all the desires for this world, and this is all through learning Torah *lishmah*, coupled with *tefillos*, *yichudim*, and *d'veykus* in Hashem and in doing His actual *mitzvos*.

### ***Tu B'Shevat - The Hidden Festival Revealed Only To Those Who Truly Love Hashem More Than Anything Else***

Tu B'Shevat, the new year for trees, is a hidden festival, for it is in the category of *Yesod*, which is also hidden. It is only revealed to someone who agrees to give himself up for serving the Creator, and never forgetting about the "tree" – a hint to the *yichud* of *HaVaYaH* with *ADoNoY*, which has the same *gematria* as the word *ilan*, tree.

On Tu B'Shevat, the *yichud* begins, for the new tree sap emerges on the trees on this day, hinting to a revelation of a new level of Torah in the future, which will be revealed to the souls of the Jewish people and which will light the way for them to return to Hashem.

The main *yichud* is completed through having *mesirus nefesh* (giving oneself up for Hashem). The *tzaddikim* revealed that **Rav Chaim Vital** in his generation was deemed in Heaven as the most important person in the world, even though there were many *tzaddikim* in his generation who may have been greater than him, and this was because Rav Chaim Vital had the *mesirus nefesh* of being willing to forget about the world completely so that he become completely immersed in searching to get close to the Creator and attain the Torah. For this, he was deemed the most important from all the *tzaddikim*, because Hashem mainly has prestige for those who yearn and long only for Him and for nothing else.

A person cannot divide his greatest love for two different things or two people. He only has one greatest love, because love is the most genuine when all of one's love is concentrated on that one object of his love. Tu B'Shevat is called the new year *l'ilan*, for "the tree", in the singular and not in the plural, to show that our entire longing and love must be for the upper tree, which is to unify *HaVaYaH* with *ADoNoY*, to declare Hashem as the One that we love, with no desires, yearnings, or loves for This World. That is how we will be *zocheh* to see the true 'fruit' from this 'tree'.

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"three impure husks" (*kelipos*), which are impenetrable, meaning that they cannot be repaired as they are, and they must be broken in order for a Jew to achieve basic purity in his soul. These three *kelipos* are known as "fire storm" (evil fire, conceit, Esav) "violent wind" (evil wind, mockery, Amalek/Erev Rav), and "thick cloud" (evil water, lusts, Yishmael). These three evils, each of them forbidden behaviors, must be smashed. After that, we need to break permissible desires, which are of the *kelipas noga* (a husk which is a mixture of good and evil, and which can be used for either holiness or impurity) and which prevent a person from holiness. This is by channeling our permissible desires in a holy direction (i.e. minimizing permissible pleasures such and sanctifying it by thinking about Hashem as we eat). The three impure husks are easier to avoid because they are recognizably evil, but *kelipas noga* is harder to overcome because it is not forbidden behavior and harder to discern as being problematic to our spiritual growth. Nevertheless, it is our lifelong work to keep purifying ourselves from *kelipas noga* (gradually, and at our own level).

May Hashem awaken our hearts to run after Him and long for Him, to remove our mind from any thoughts about this world, and that we should not seek anything other than the “upper tree”, the *yichud* of *HaVaYaH* with *ADoNoY*, to reach the new sap which is drawn onto the tree, which really comes from the “heavenly stream that flows out from the Source of all living waters.”

### ***Our Salvation Lays In The Place Where We Are Being Attacked***

The festival of Tu B'Shevat is the festival of the light of *Yesod*, and *Yesod* is also called the “holy Serpent.” On Tu B'Shevat, we should look to see at which place the Serpent is trying to bite us and inject its poison. The Serpent knows which area will bring the salvation to the Jewish people, and therefore it will try to slither its way into that area and be ready to pounce at us there.

When we see that the nations of the world are trying to contaminate our souls in matters of *yichud Hashem*, it is a sign that Hashem wants us not to learn from them and instead to mock them. “*Those who love Hashem hate evil.*” If one loves holiness, then by default he hates evil and he will mock the *kelipos* which want to conceal the name of *HaVaYaH*. A Jew comes onto this world for one purpose alone: To reveal the essence of Hashem upon the world. When a Jew reveals the glory of Hashem, he receives great splendor and strength, by nullifying himself to Hashem and thinking of the greatness of His *yichud* (how Hashem is unified with all the worlds).

### ***Mesirus Nefesh For The Pnimiyyus of Torah – To Reach Any Part of Torah That's Hidden From Us***

If we want to attain the new year for trees, we need the *yichud* of *HaVaYaH-Adonoy*, which is equal to the world *ilan* (tree). From that “tree”, all the great “fruits” will come, the fruits that Eretz Yisrael is praised for.

The last of the Seven Species that's eaten on Tu B'Shevat is the date. The date is also a reference to the *Shechinah*. The date hangs down towards the bottom of the tree, just as the *Shechinah* currently stands at the lowest level (at the bottom of *Asiyah*) and remaining hidden in the world of *Beriah*, and we must raise the *Shechinah* back to the upper realms.

Amalek wants to uproot the “tree” – it doesn't want the Jewish people to do the *avodah* of *yichud*. Amalek is satisfied for people to learn Torah as long as they won't search to become connected with G-dliness. But we must not forget about our search to reveal the glory of Hashem upon the worlds, and therefore we must give ourselves over to the Torah, in order to take her out of the pit that imprisons her. For as long as the light of Torah and her secrets aren't shining in the world, the *Shechinah* remains imprisoned in shackles. Through Hashem has great satisfaction from all the different kinds of *avodah* and *mesirus nefesh* in

the world which Jews display, the purpose of all *mesirus nefesh* is to come to mesirus nefesh for the Torah herself, to reveal all her hidden secrets. Without this, people cannot have proper *mesirus nefesh* to fulfill the Torah either.

Nachshon ben Aminadav showed *mesirus nefesh* in fulfilling the Torah [by jumping into the sea and listening to Hashem's command]. He broke the curtain that separates *Atzilus* from *Beriah*, revealing G-dliness on the lower worlds through the 42-letter name of Hashem. And this could only happen through the power Moshe Rabbeinu giving himself up for the secrets of Torah – the “splitting of the sea” refers to penetrating into the sea of the Torah's inner wisdom.

Having *mesirus nefesh* for the secrets of Torah does not necessarily mean to the secrets of Torah which people refer to as “Kaballah.” It means even to dedicate oneself to understanding even the surface level of Torah, each person according to his own soul root. Any part of Torah that is closed and hidden from a person can be *razin d'razin* (secret of secrets) for that person, based on that person's unique soul root, and he must dedicate himself to learning it, and in this way he is giving himself up for the “secrets of Torah” at his own level.

The entire reason for our prolonged exile is because the Torah remains hidden and concealed within the *kelipos*. To the extent that one works hard to free the Torah from her pit that she is exiled to, one will become worthy of seeing the light of *HaVaYaH* that dwells on the head of every *tzaddik*, and by default he will also have *mesirus nefesh* to fulfill the Torah and penetrate the curtain that separates *Atzilus* from *Beriah*, thereby revealing the glory of Hashem. And therefore, one should not say “It's enough that I saved my own soul. I even give *shiurim* on a regular basis.” “*My blackened ones will find me*” (*Mishlei 8:17*), and only by having illogical *mesirus nefesh* for Torah learning, learning it with all of one's heart and soul and resources, only in this way does one become from the “*blackened ones*” who will “*find Me*.”

Right before leaving Egypt, every Jew was busy with taking all the silver and gold from the Egyptian homes that was owed to them. Moshe Rabbeinu, though, was not busy with seeking any silver or gold for himself (the gold and silver, on an inner level, alludes to love and fear of Hashem), but with the bones of Yosef – and the inner meaning of this is that he was only searching for the point of truth, of unifying the Creator with all the worlds and revealing His glory. Since Moshe Rabbeinu had given himself over for the Torah, like a simple layman who works hard during the day and then comes home at night and forces himself to learn a bit, with *mesirus nefesh*, so that he can feel some connection to the holy Torah – and he does this at an illogical and inconceivable level of effort, because he really has no energy left in him from all the hard work of the day – he is the one who blackens

himself for the *Shechinah*. Thus, Moshe Rabbeinu merited the level of the world of the *Radla*, or *Ga"R d'Atik*, where the name of *HaVaYaH* rests on the head of the *tzaddik*.

### ***If You Search, You Can Believe That Your Efforts Will Yield Results***

When a person searches for Hashem yet he's not seeing the fruits of his efforts yet, he should believe that there will eventually be fruit of his efforts. On Tu B'Shevat, the trees are renewed, and we don't yet see the new fruit, but we know that there will certainly be new fruit. In the meantime, all we see is the tree sap – meaning that before we see results in our search for Hashem, all we have is our yearnings until we get there. For now, we do not see the results. But in the end, if we persist with our longings for Hashem, we will certainly be worthy of revealing Hashem's Kingdom, completely.

### ***Repairing The Sin of Eating From The Eitz HaDaas***

Tu B'Shevat is the repair for the sin with the *Eitz HaDaas* (the Tree of Knowledge). Adam sinned by eating fruit, which brought all the damage. According to one view in the Sages, Adam squeezed the grapes of the tree to make a wine from it. On an inner level, this meant that Adam wanted to enter into *ayin* (nothingness, negation of all self) and he forgot that there is also a spiritual level of *ani d'kedushah* (the holy sense of self).

Noach tried to fix this when he planted the vineyards after the Flood, but he became brazen from it. The repair took place only later, when Yosef HaTzaddik dined with his brothers in Egypt and served them wine [where they all become intoxicated] and this connected together Kayin and Hevel, who represent *ani* and *ayin*. That is the complete repair, when *ani* and *ayin* are together at once. This is the secret of eating the fruits on Tu B'Shevat.

### ***The Power of Eating The Fruits On Tu B'Shevat***

The students of **Rav Chaim Vital** wrote of the custom to eat fruits on Tu B'Shevat, as a repair for the sin of Adam's damage when he ate from the *Eitz HaDaas*. There are 30 general kinds of fruit, corresponding to the 3 lower worlds *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah* which correspond respectively to the original dimensions of *Akudim*, *Nekudim*, and *Berudim*. Adam HaRishon at his ideal level is called *Adam d'Beriah*, corresponding to the highest world, *Adam Kadmon*, and the world of *Akudim*. The "breaking of the vessels" took place in the world of *Nekudim*, corresponding to the world of *Yetzirah*, and the world of repair (*Tikkun*) is generally the world of *Asiyah*.

When a Jew eats the fruit on Tu B'Shevat, he is drawing forth the light of *Arich*, which in terms of the *Sefiros* is a degree of the *Keser*. The root of Adam's sin was that he didn't draw forth the light of *Keser*. Adam wanted to bring all the repairs already on Erev Shabbos, which is at the level of *Binah*, which is *mochin d'achor* (indirect perception) and not the

complete level (*mochin d'pnim*, direct perception). He wanted to bring the *Geulah* quickly even before its preordained time, and he should have waited for Shabbos, which is the light of *Chochmah*. *Binah* without *Chochmah* is not complete. Yet, had he turned *Binah* into *Keser*, then he would have been able to reach everything even on Erev Shabbos.

Moshe Rabbeinu shined forth the name of Hashem that corresponds to *Keser* of *Zeir Anpin*, which is the name known as *AZBOG"H* (אזבוג"ה), which is generally the illumination of *Arich*. When the fruits are eaten on Tu B'Shevat, especially if they are eaten on *Minchah* of Shabbos (the time when the light of *Keser* is at its zenith) in a year when Tu B'Shevat is Shabbos, this awakens the name of *AZBOG"H*. (It is revealed at the time of *Minchah* on Shabbos, and also during *tosefes Shabbos*, any time that one adds on to Shabbos). That reveals the light of *Keser*, which awakens the repair for the sin of Adam, whose entire sin was that he awakened the light of *Binah* without *Keser*.

Thus when we eat fruit on Tu B'Shevat, especially during *Shalosh Seudos*, we draw forth the power of *AZ Yashir Moshe*, the *Keser*, the crown of the One Who lives eternally – the holy name of *AZBOG"H*. Every Jew is a part of Adam's soul and therefore we can repair his sin now, no matter what time period we are in, because time makes no difference here.

The **Arizal** said that Moshe is an acronym for *Mah shehayah, hu sheyiyeh*, "What was, will be". Moshe awakens the name of *AZBOG"H* and with this we can subjugate the *kelipah* of the wicked *Armilos* which prevents the Jewish people from serving Hashem. Moshe drew close the *Erev Rav*, but the *Erev Rav* only confused our minds. That is why it is precisely through Moshe, through Moshe's power of awakening the name *AZBOG"H*, that we can repair Moshe's mistake of drawing close the *Erev Rav* and fight against them, so that our minds should no longer become confused by them.

May we merit to know the truth, with no other elements mixed into it, and may the Jewish people merit true holiness, so that the permissible should not be made forbidden and the forbidden should not be made permissible. Only in the merit of connecting to Moshe can the Jewish people reach the light of *Keser* properly. We cannot attain the light of *Keser* on our own, and this is because the *Erev Rav* mixes us up before we can get to it. Only by believing in Hashem and in Moshe His servant, can we reach *A"Z Yashir*, the holy name *AZBOG"H*.

Although we cannot place our faith in any person, there is a light of the true *tzaddik* that is found in every generation, and through bonding with his soul we can connect to the *Shechinah*, whereupon "a spark of Moshe becomes clothed in every Torah scholar", and even when no one pious is left and we cannot place our faith in anyone, still, there is always a revelation of Moshe's soul somewhere.

The **Chozeh of Lublin** said that on Tu B'Shevat, the point of Moshe is revealed. **R' Nachman of Bresslov** said that just as on Purim, Haman became weakened, and the sin of not believing in Moshe became repaired, on Tu B'Shevat this damage is also repaired, because Moshe was all about becoming connected to the light of *yichud*, and that is the repair for every sin, by connecting to this inner point of truth.

May Hashem take pity on us, in the merit of eating the fruits, that we should awaken Heavenly mercy and to return Yerushalayim in His mercy, revealing the holy *daas*. May our hearts go free from the exile of Pharaoh who wishes to influence us even as we serve Hashem, tainting our efforts in serving Hashem with the *kelipah* of the *Erev Rav* who mixes the right with the left, creating forbidden mixtures of meat and milk and *kilayim*, so that there shouldn't be true *daas*. When we awaken the name AZBOG"H, this kills these *kelipos* of *Pharaoh* and *Erev Rav*, and with this we can be *zocheh* to do *yichud* at all times, for that is the secret of A"Z, equal to 8, the 8 letters of *yichud*, where one binds himself to the inner point of the *Shechinah*.

### ***Fixing Jealousy, Lusts, and Honor-Seeking***

There are 30 different types of fruit that can come from a tree, corresponding to the 3 worlds of *BiY"A* (the three lower worlds *Beriah*, *Yetzirah*, and *Asiyah* each contain 10 *Sefiros*, adding for a total of 30)<sup>2</sup> that are meant to repair the three evil traits of jealousy, lust, and honor-seeking.

This makes way for the world of Hashem's Throne of Glory (*Atzilus*), because when people fall into these three evil traits, they cannot build Hashem's throne. Jealousy must become channeled to become zealous for the Creator. Lusts must be channel to a desire for the Creator. The only honor we should be interested in is to glorify the honor of the Creator.

But the *Sitra Achara* (Other Side) wants to destroy the throne, by entering thoughts of jealousy, lust, and honor-seeking into people. To counter it, we need to contemplate the three *yichudim* of *HaVaYaH-EHY"H*, *HaVaYaH-Elokim*, and *HaVaYaH-Adonoy*.

The Jewish people are children to Hashem and they rule over even the angels. They rule over the *Ofanim*-angels, who do the *avodah* of *kabalas ol*, the world of *Asiyah*. They rule over the *Malachim*-angels, who do the *avodah* of *yirah*, *ahavah*, and *d'veykus* (fear, love, and attachment to Hashem), the world of *Yetzirah*. They rule over the *Seraphim*-angels, of the world of *Beriah*. All of the angels must listen to the Jewish people, who grasp onto the

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<sup>2</sup> Elsewhere, *Moreinu shlit"a* explains: On a smaller scale and at our own level, we can do these three levels of *avodah* every morning. Saying *Modeh Ani* in the morning (followed by relieving oneself and washing the hands) is the *avodah* of *Asiyah*. Putting on *tzitzis* is the *avodah* of *Yetzirah*, and putting on *tefillin* is the *avodah* of *Beriah*.

*Shechinah*. The desires for jealousy, lusts, and honor must become nullified, so that G-dliness can be revealed in their place.

How? By entering the joy that we express in the blessing, “Blessed are you Hashem that I was not made a gentile.” There is a great joy, that a Jew is holy whereas the gentiles are in a state of intrinsic defilement. Through entering this joy of our exalted status, we can raise *BiY”A* to the world of the throne, *Atzilus* – the world of *d’veykus* in Hashem.

The truth is that *d’veykus* is not a simple matter to reach. But it begins with *emunah peshutah*, which enters one into the ways of holiness. The *emunah peshutah* must be genuine and not false, and it is only genuine when a person wants nothing else except for *emunah* in Hashem. If a person is looking for anything else in addition to wanting *emunah*, then his *emunah* is false and it cannot be true *emunah peshutah*.