

SEFIRAH OF THE WEEK: NETZACH, HOD Part II

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Netzach is an extension of Chesed, while Hod is an extension of Gevurah. Both Netzach and Hod are necessary in order to achieve a balance in life, as we must learn not only how to give or to hold back, but also how to receive and acquiesce to others. Using both “legs,” we can move forward, confident of success in our efforts, while harboring a healthy awareness that at times we should hold back and submit to forces stronger than ourselves.

This means, on the one hand, that if you are worthy of ascending to a certain level, you must not allow yourself to remain at your current level. No matter where you stand, never be content with your present level. You are always capable of doing and accomplishing more, and are therefore obligated to develop and use that capability. This is Netzach.

On the other hand, if you should fall, regardless of how far and to what extent—even to the very depths of depravity, God forbid—you must never give up hope. Whatever happens, search out and entreat God to help you. You must “take a stand”—that is, remain strong in whichever way you can and whatever position you find yourself. Always choose to retain the vitality of the moment despite the restraints, challenges and opposition that you encounter. This is Hod.

These Sefirot also represent the ability for renewal, to begin again and despite the challenges that deflect us—to give our goals another chance to be actualized. Practice standing firmly on the ground. When you decide to move forward, do so with conviction. When you must stop and give way, do so without hesitation or regret. Walking in this manner reveals the

secret of self-effacement. The right leg corresponds to self-assertion, the left leg to self-effacement. Walking requires a combination of the two. When you assert yourself, don't push God out of the picture. And when you must efface yourself, don't be fooled into thinking that you are any less of a person. The greatest Tzaddikim knew the secret of self-effacement, and therein lay their greatness. They were able to hold on no matter what challenges they faced, relying on their trust in God and their faith in themselves.

Additionally, Netzach means asserting yourself and understanding your own significance in your search for God. Hod means appreciating your own insignificance. Yet it is that very recognition of your own insignificance vis-a-vis God that allows you to recognize that God is everywhere.

Kabbalistically, Netzach and Hod correspond to the kidneys, whose function is to "advise" a person (Berakhot 61a). Just as the kidneys act as a filtering system for the body, retaining necessary fluids and expelling waste matter, one who seeks advice must weigh what he hears, retain the ideas that will help him complete his task, and reject the superfluous. Netzach and Hod direct us to filter the advice necessary to complete our mission.

The Kabbalah almost always speaks of Netzach and Hod as being bound to one another. Similar to fraternal twins, they represent a unique type of attachment, a unity of opposites that still allows for individual growth. The energies of Netzach and Hod allow us to stand on solid ground throughout our lives and develop our latent potential into actual deed.

Rebbe Nachman draws a connection between these two Sefirot and the power of halikhah (walking or going). When a person wishes to draw close to God, the Rebbe explains, he must employ the skills of "running" and "returning" (cf. Ezekiel 1:14):

If you progress and reach a particular level of

spirituality—be it high or not so high—you should not stop there and be content with your achievement. In this case, the skill you need is to know and believe that you must advance still further. This is the skill of “running.” On the other hand, even if you fall to a lower level—even into the lowest pit of Hell, God forbid—you must still not despair in any way. Remain firm and search for God, pleading with Him and begging Him to help in whatever way He can. Even in the lowest pit of Hell, God is present, and even from there it is possible to be attached to Him. As King David said (Psalms 139:8): “If I make Hell my bed, behold, there You are.” The skill you need now is “returning” (Likutey Moharan 1, 6:4).

The word HaLaKhaH, from the same root as HaLIKhaH, refers to Jewish Law. This suggests that the path we choose should be the lawful one, not the unlawful one. And, just as Netzach and Hod are adjacent energies to Tiferet (Torah, i.e., Law), the skills necessary to develop our forward motion depend on our knowledge of Halakhah.

Taken from Hidden Treasures, By Chaim Kramer