

SEFIRAH OF THE WEEK: NETZACH, HOD

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The Light of Attachment

As the energy of the upper Sefirot is channeled into ever more diminishing and specific proportions to the lower Sefirot, we begin to see a more exacting and refined view of our goals.

This process can be easily visualized in the human anatomy that parallels the Sefirot. Chesed, Gevurah and Tiferet manifest in the upper part of the body, in the arms and torso that represent upward, downward and outward movement, symbolizing the “larger” viewpoint and sweep of all we may accomplish. Still, the ideas are too broad, the goal yet imprecise. Our energies must be further distilled through Netzach and Hod. These Sefirot parallel the legs, which, though they can move in several directions, have limited mobility compared to the arms.

The legs are the main pillars that support the body, as well as the principal means of human locomotion. Spiritually, the legs represent the lower and outer reaches of man. With his legs, man makes contact with the physical ground. When he pushes his legs against the earth, he is able to lift himself and rise above it. With the energies of Netzach and Hod (which correspond to the right and left legs, respectively) we can learn to be firmly grounded even while we are striving for great heights. At the same time, we won't lose sight of our limitations despite our yearning for things beyond.

The Hebrew word NetZaCH shares the same root as l'NatZei aCH (to gain dominance, victory, eternal). As the Sefirah that follows Tiferet (truth), Netzach represents the necessity of being honest in victory, as in (I Samuel 15:29), “Netzach

Yisrael lo yeshaker—The Eternal [and Victorious One] of Israel will not lie.” Attainment of Netzach also means that others recognize the value of our achievements and our opponents call for a total cessation of hostilities. Even if there is no direct opposition to our objectives, there may still be “talk” and perhaps ridicule. But Netzach—true victory—brings about the cessation of even this antagonism.

HOD means splendor. It is related to the word HODa’ah (admission), connoting a state of submission and empathy. The “splendor” of Hod is manifest in how one honors the Torah and Torah scholars. *Hod reflects the “admission” that Torah is the means by which we come to learn about God; by submission to a Higher Power, we can formulate and better direct ourselves towards our goals. Hod also mirrors empathy, as we direct our energies to support the weak—including those who are physically weak, financially insecure, and emotionally or spiritually vulnerable.

These Sefirot direct us to avoid “walking in the path of the wicked” (cf. Psalms 1:1). The Hebrew word for foot, ReGeL, is etymologically related to leRaGeil (to slander). By acquiring the attributes of Netzach and Hod, we minimize our involvement with slander and evil speech (see Likutey Moharan 1, 14:12). Our efforts will lead to peace among people, furthering the influence of Tiferet (peace). Peace—the absence of conflict in our minds and surroundings—is naturally the best state in which to concentrate and focus on our objectives.

*Since Netzach and Hod border on Tiferet, their adjacent position reflects their support of Torah (which corresponds to Tiferet, as explained in the previous chapter).

Taken from Hidden Treasures, By Chaim Kramer

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