

חסידות

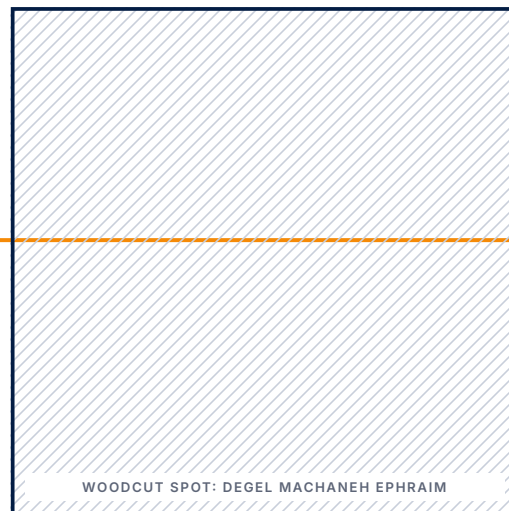
From the Chassidic Courts

SUDILKOV · DEGEL MACHANEH EPHRAIM, NOACH

What makes a person's deeds truly for Heaven's sake

Degel Machaneh Ephraim

A true tzaddik (righteous person) is one whose every deed aims "l'shem shamayim" (for the sake of Heaven)—to unify the Shechinah (Divine Presence), called "Shem," with the Kadosh Baruch Hu (the Holy One, Blessed be He)—and through this unification he renews his own soul like a newborn and becomes a father and crossing-point ("ever") who elevates all the fallen sparks and souls in need of rectification, as hinted in the verse about Shem, "father of all the children of Ever." The account of the Tower of Babel then warns, by way of derash (homiletical interpretation), that imposters who merely dress and act like true tzaddikim to "make themselves a name," rather than genuinely cleaving to Hashem, ultimately stumble through their own false piety and are scattered by sin'at chinam (baseless hatred) and confusion, since falsehood cannot endure. AI SUMMARY



And to Shem were also born [children]; he was the father of all the children of Ever, brother of Yefet the elder (Genesis 10:21). This entire verse presents difficulties: the word "gam hu" ("he too") makes no sense at all; the identifying phrase "father of all the children of Ever" seems superfluous, for it serves no purpose; and likewise "brother of Yefet the elder" cannot be understood in its plain sense. If the intent were to further identify him, it would have been more fitting to identify him in relation to Noach his father, concerning whom it is written explicitly that he was a tzaddik tamim (a wholly righteous man).

But it may be said that the Torah hints to us here, illuminating through the reasoning of its holy words, a great matter. For a tzaddik (righteous person) is called one whose every deed is "l'shem shamayim" ("for the sake of Heaven"), and we must understand this phrase and its meaning. It is known that this is the whole purpose of our prayer and our Torah-study all our days: l'akima Shechinta me'afra

("to raise up the Shechinah [Divine Presence] from the dust"), as it were, and to unify the Kadosh Baruch Hu (the Holy One, Blessed be He) and His Shechinah, as we say before performing every mitzvah, "l'shem yichud" ("for the sake of union"), etc.

This is "l'shem shamayim" — meaning that the striving of his actions is only "l'shem," that is, for the Shechinah, who is called "seh" (a ewe-lamb), as is known, while "shamayim" refers to the Kadosh Baruch Hu — meaning, to unify the Kadosh Baruch Hu and His Shechinah. He who does this is called the tzaddik, who corresponds to the sefirah of yesod (Foundation), for he constantly unifies through his deeds and arouses the flow of shefa (divine influence) into the world.

When a person merits this — that all his deeds are only to raise up the Shechinah and unify Her with Her husband — benefit comes to him from these

unifications, for he unifies the light of his soul with the holy influence that flows forth from the light of the union, as it were, and he becomes like a new creation, like a newborn child, since new light is added to his soul that he did not have before.

Moreover, when he elevates the Shechinah, as it were, automatically all the lower levels and the holy sparks that cling to Her, as is known, are elevated together with Her. It follows that he becomes a crossing-point ("ever") for all those souls and holy sparks that are in need of rectification, through whom they attain rectification; and he is a father to them all, and they are called his offspring.

This, one may say, is the whole matter hinted at here in the verse: "u'l'Shem" — meaning, one whose every deed is only "l'Shem," that is, for the benefit of the Shechinah, as it were, who is called "Shem" ("Name") — meaning, to unify Her with Her husband, as it were. Then "yulad gam hu" ("he too was born"). Since in the Torah this word is written without vowel-points, it is possible to read "yulad" as meaning that benefit was drawn also to him — namely, that he became like a new creation, like a newborn child, through the renewal of the light of his soul, new light having come to him from the holy flow that pours forth through his act of unification, as above.

"Avi kol b'nei Ever" ("father of all the children of Ever") means also that this tzaddik becomes a father to all the souls and holy sparks that had fallen into the kelipot (the husks/shells), may the Merciful One save us, for they are all elevated through him and are all called his offspring, since through him they attain rectification. This is the meaning of "kol b'nei Ever" — they are to him like children, for through him they "cross over" ("ovrim") to their root, and he becomes a crossing-point ("ever") for those souls.

"Achi Yefet hagadol" ("brother of Yefet the elder") — as is known, yesod and tiferet (Beauty) are the two vavs, "two companions that do not separate." Yesod is the small vav, and tiferet is the large vav. This is what the verse indicates: that this tzaddik, who corresponds to the aspect of yesod, becomes a brother to Yefet — that is, to tiferet hagadol ("the great beauty"), which is the large vav — meaning

that a union of yesod and tiferet comes about. Understand all this well, for it contains hidden matters.

And the whole earth was of one language and of one speech (Genesis 11:1). One may say regarding this, by way of derash (homiletical interpretation) — and the whole preceding matter as well, concerning "And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east... and they found a plain... and let it serve us for burning... and let us make ourselves a name" — that the Torah hints here at a group of imposters who resemble sh'lomei emunei Yisrael (the faithful and whole-hearted of Israel), but who in the end have no lasting existence and perish of themselves, for falsehood does not endure. This is hinted in the verse: at first, "and the whole earth was of one language" — meaning they were attached to the Shechinah, which shares the gematria (numerical value) of "safah" ("language/lip") — and "of one speech" — meaning that because they were attached to Hashem, there was great unity among them, and they did not speak one thing with the mouth and another with the heart; rather, mouth and heart were one.

But "and it came to pass as they journeyed from the east" — meaning, from the Ancient One of the world (kadmono shel olam), as our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, taught — "and they found a plain," etc. — meaning that they strayed and fell into a deep, dark pit. Worse still, they presented themselves as righteous, which is why they said, "let us make bricks" — meaning, "let us clothe ourselves in white garments," in imitation of the pure tzaddikim — "and burn them thoroughly" — meaning, to clap hand against hand in enthusiasm.

And all this was in order "to make ourselves a name," in its plain sense, and "let us build ourselves a city" — in order to conquer cities under their rule. But in the end, "and the brick served them for stone" — meaning that the white garments they wore became for them a stumbling block and a snare. And "chomer" ("mortar"), whose letters stand for chacham mufla v'rav rabbanan ("a wondrous sage and master of rabbis") — the title they claimed and displayed for themselves — became for them literal chomer (clay/mortar) in which to sink and fall.

"And Hashem scattered them from there" — for there ("sham"), because of our many sins, "bilbul" (confusion) was stirred up through them: strife, quarreling, and sin'at chinam (baseless hatred) was

aroused through them. "Their speech became confused [yinbalel]," so that no one understood what the other was saying. Understand this.

Translation: translated by AI (anthropic/claude-sonnet-5)

