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בס"ד  
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ברכתי שיזכה להיות בין מזכי הרבים בהרבצת תורה כראונו.

**Rabbi Zev Leff**

*Rabbi of Moshav Matityahu*  
*Rosh HaYeshiva—Yeshiva Gedola Matityahu*

**הרב זאב לף**

כ"ט

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Dear Friends,

I have read portions of the book "Poked Akarim - The Six Barren Women of Tamach" by my friend and esteemed colleague, Rabbi Zave Chaim Rudman.

Rabbi Rudman elucidates the work of HaRav Tzadok HaKohen MiLublin "Poked Akarim". Obviously, the work of Rav Tzadek does not need my *haskamah*. However, I feel compelled to commend Rabbi Rudman for presenting this work to the English speaking community, not as a mere translation, but as a phenomenal explanation of all of the concepts that Rav Tzadok included in this book. I found the presentation thorough, extremely informative, deep, yet easily understood, interesting and inspiring. It accurately conveys the ideas of Rav Tzadok and their intention.

I commend Rabbi Rudman for yet another quality presentation and pray that Hashem Yisborach bless him and his family with life, health and the wherewithal to continue to merit the community in his many and varied ways.

Sincerely,  
With Torah blessings



Rabbi Zev Leff

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## CHAPTER 1

# Prologue

THE TORAH RECOUNTS the journey of six women from barrenness to motherhood:<sup>1</sup>

1. Sarah
2. Rivkah
3. Rachel
4. The mother of Shimshon
5. Chanah
6. The *Ishah Hashunamis*

There is also a seventh entity, Klal Yisrael as a whole, whose barrenness ends when Mashiach redeems them from *galus*.

The challenge of infertility spans the entire history of Klal Yisrael, from the first of the Avos and Imahos, Avraham and Sarah, to the arrival of Mashiach. Klal Yisrael begins with Avraham and Sarah. But even though they teach the world monotheism and the service of Hashem, it seems to be without a continuation. Not only do Avraham and Sarah not have children, but Chazal also teach that they were physically unable to have children. Avraham was physically lacking the ability to have a child,<sup>2</sup> and Sarah did not have a womb.<sup>3</sup>

Avraham says to Hashem, “Behold, I am childless, and my servant will inherit me.” My contribution to the world seems to be barren and unable to have continuity. But this does not happen; Avraham and Sarah

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1 פסיקתא דרב כהנא, פסקא כ אות א—מושיבי עקרת הבית אם הבנים שמחה (תהלים קיג, ט) שבע עקרות הן שרה רבקה רחל ולאה ואשתו של מנח וחנה וציון.

2 יבמות דף סד.—אמר רבי אמי אברהם ושרה טומטמן היו שנאמר הביטו אל צור תחוללכם.

3 יבמות דף סד.—אמר רב נחמן אמר רבה בר אבבה שרה אמנו אילונית היתה שנאמר ותהי שרי עקרה אין לה ולד אפילו בית ולד אין לה.

miraculously give birth to Yitzchak and are the progenitors of the Jewish People. They are the first to recognize and overcome this challenge of infertility.

The culmination of the Jewish nation is when Mashiach arrives and the entire world returns to service of Hashem. The Navi Yeshayahu describes the joy of the arrival of Mashiach as that of a barren woman finally holding her child: “Rejoice, the barren woman who has not given birth, have joy and happiness.”<sup>4</sup> Throughout history, the Jewish People are viewed as barren. We are in exile, noninfluential, small, and downtrodden. We seem to have no impact on the nations around us.

But with the arrival of Mashiach, we will be as a woman who has finally given birth. Our impact on the world will be apparent to all. We will be holding our child, and what we have accomplished will be obvious.

Chazal say that the arrival of Mashiach depends on the birth of all the *neshamos* that Hashem originally created.<sup>5</sup> When Hashem created Adam and Chavah, childbirth was effortless. Chazal say that Adam and Chavah went to the bed and returned with a child.<sup>6</sup>

But because of the sin of Adam, the Satan can derail pregnancy and childbirth. He does not want the completion of the birth of all the *neshamos*. The consequence of the sin, that Chavah will have children with difficulty, is the ability of the Satan to interfere with the completion of the world, the birth of all the *neshamos*.

As we discussed in detail in the introduction, this is not because of the sins of particular people. There can be a component of *sechar* and *onesh* for an individual in this area, as in any part of a person’s life. But here we are discussing the concept of *avodah*.

The true joy will be when all the *neshamos* are born, and the Son of David can arrive. Then the infertility that was brought into the world by the sin will disappear, and then a woman can give birth every day.<sup>7</sup>

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4 נה, א.

5 יבמות דף סב:—רב הונא אמר קיים משום דרב אסי דאמר רב אסי אין בן דוד בא עד שיכלו כל נשמות שבגוף שנאמר כי רוח מלפני יעשוף וגו’.

6 סנהדרין דף לז:—שביעית נדווגה לו חוה שמינית עלו למטה שנים וירדו ארבעה.

7 שבת דף ל:—דיתוב רבן גמליאל וקא דריש עתידה אשה שתלד בכל יום שנאמר הרה ויולדת יחדיו.

In between the beginning of the Jewish People and the arrival of Mashiach are the other five women and their husbands. Each one has a child in seemingly impossible conditions. Together, they constitute the seven complete steps that lead from the beginning of the nation to its final fruition.

The challenge of infertility is different than others. The means for every creature to propagate is a fundamental and primary foundation of their essence. Eating and drinking are to survive, but to reproduce is a purpose.

The first commandment to Adam and Chavah is to be fruitful and multiply. The Navi says that the world was not created for emptiness, but to be inhabited.<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, the restoration of fertility is not a change, but a return to the natural state of the world from before the sin. Every other salvation can be a miracle that changes nature, but having a child is simply returning the world to its original purpose.

Each of these six barren couples teaches us how to return the world to its original condition.<sup>9</sup>

But why are there five others after Avraham and Sarah? The Torah does not just repeat incidents and concepts. Each one of the six situations taught in Tanach is to open a unique gateway.<sup>10</sup> Each person who davens to have a child has to daven, “He Who answered the *tefillos* of these six women should answer my *tefillah*.” But each *tefillah* is unique.

Therefore, we need to clarify what each of these women teaches us. What unique gateway of salvation do each of them open? From each one, we can learn about a different type of *avodah* to open that doorway.

8 ספר ישעיה מ"ה, יח—כי כה אמר ה' בורא השמים הוא האלקים יצר הארץ ועשה הוא כוננה לא תהו בראה לשבת יצרה אני ה' ואין עוד.

9 אות א—עקר כלל שהרי כל בריאת האדם הוא לפרות ולרבות כמו שנאמר (ישעיה מ"ה, יח) לא תהו בראה לשבת יצרה, ודבר זה שלא יוליד הוא יציאה מסדר הבריאה ודבר שאינו ראוי כלל כפי חוקי הבריאה שיסד השם יתברך ועל כן הישועה לזה אינו ככל נסים היוצאים מהטבע דזה אדרבא בא לקיים הטבע שהרי כך הוא חוק טבע הבריאה להיות האדם מוליד.

10 אות ד—כי כל פקידה שנכתב בכתוב לדורות עולם הוא פתיחת שער מחודש שנפתח בפקידה זו, וזהו השער האחרון ואין עוד כי כל עקרות הוא מצד קטרוג בענין קדושת הברית והם שש מדריגות מראשית ימי הבנין עד היסוד בו נשלם שלימות קדושת הברית, וכל הבא להתפלל על בנים הוא צריך ליכנס באחד משש שערים הללו שיענה בתפילתו שמי שענה לאברהם ושרה והשאר הוא יענה לנו גם כן.

These seven are divided into three sections. There are two trios of three, plus the culmination. There are the three who are remembered on Rosh Hashanah: Sarah, Rachel, and Chanah. Then there are three others: Rivkah, the mother of Shimshon, and the woman from Shunam. Then there is the seventh, the culmination, which is the rebirth of Klal Yisrael.

This structure parallels that of the *Sefiros*, of which there are also seven, divided in the same way. In the next chapter, we will explain the *Sefiros* and how they connect to the gateways.

The six women also symbolize six different levels of *tefillah*. As we learn each one, we will learn their unique gate of *tefillah*. In a concise overview:

- Avraham and Sarah are above *tefillah*; they are connected to the blueprint of the world found in the Torah.
- Yitzchak and Rivkah turn the *middas ha'din* to mercy through *tefillah* even while there is a judgment present in the world.
- Yaakov and Rachel also relate to the *middas ha'din*, but they bring Yosef into the world, who can exist even under the scrutiny of *din*.
- The mother of Shimshon is the power of *tefillah* that no matter how low he descends into the cellars of the Pelishtim, he can turn it into a sacrifice for Hashem. Her *tefillah* is taught to her by the *malach*.
- The *tefillah* of Chanah is easier. Shmuel's *neshamah* exists; the *tefillah* serves to bring it into the world.
- Last is the *tefillah* of Elisha, who decrees that Hashem should grant the woman of Shunam a child. Because all involved are *tzaddikim*, Elisha can "pressure" Hashem into granting the desire of the *Ishah HaShunamis*.

We will learn from all of them the gateways that we can also open. These are the different types of *avodah* that we need to follow, whether through Torah or the various aspects of depth and approaches of *tefillah*.



## CHAPTER 2

# The Ten Sefiros

*Kesser, Chochmah, Binah, Chessed, Gevurah, Tiferes,  
Netzach, Hod, Yesod, and Malchus.*

SEFIROS ARE the conduits by which Hashem created and interacts with the world. It is how Hashem created a buffer between the “*Ein Sof*” of infinity, “allowing” Him to thereby, through a series of steps, create and connect to our physical world.<sup>1</sup>

The concept of *Sefiros* is embedded in Jewish thought. If it was exclusively a Kabbalistic concept, then it would not be for us to deal with it here in the open. But since it is even found publicly in the siddur as we count *sefiras ha’omer*, it is correct to discuss it and provide a working explanation.

The word “*sefirah*” has several meanings.<sup>2</sup> The word means “to count,” related to “*mispar*.” Hashem is infinite—*Ein Sof*. Humans, as finite beings, cannot grasp the Infinite itself. Since Hashem created the world so that people should strive to reach Him, we need to be able to connect to the Infinite. That is done by the creation of a buffer zone between the finite and the Infinite. This process is to give a structure, a numbering system, but because it can be replicated over and over it has an element of the infinite too. Those are the *Sefiros*. Still, though, this is only our perception. Hashem remains *Ein Sof*—without a limit or elements; infinite in every way.

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1 שפת אמת ליקוטים לחדש ניסן—כי הנה יש עשר ספירות קדושות אשר על ידם בא החיבור מהש"י שנקרא אין סוף להגבראים וכתר חכמה ובינה הם מוחין והשבע הנשארים שהם גדולה גבורה תפארת נצח הוד יסוד מלכות הם נקראים כלי המעשה.

2 ספר פתחי שערים, נתיב הצמצום, פתח ג—עשר הספירות הן עשר שמות הבורא ית', ונקראים בשם ספירות מכמה טעמים. האחד, שספירה הוא לשון הארה זו וזוהר, כי על ידי הספירות אנו משיגים את רצון ופעולות הבורא ית'. טעם שני, הכינוי ספירות הוא מלשון מספר, וזהו מצדנו, שמצדו אין שום חשבון ומספר, ושנוי ופירוד.

This can be compared to a transformer. Electricity is generated at an extremely high voltage. It is too powerful to be used. It needs to be insulated so it cannot cause harm. Also, the voltage needs to be stepped down so it can be used. More powerful devices can use a higher voltage, while less powerful devices need less.

The *Sefiros* bring down Hashem's *ruchniyus* to levels we can connect to. Greater people can connect to higher levels of *ruchniyus*, while lesser people can only connect to lower, more diluted levels.

Another way of presenting this idea is based on the word "*sapir*," one of the stones of the *Choshen* of the Kohen Gadol (usually translated as sapphire). This stone is extraordinarily bright.

We are meant to connect to Hashem who has no physical existence, no connection to the world. We can do that through the least physical aspect of all creation, which is light. The metaphor used for the connection between the infinite Hashem and this world is a word *Sefirah* which symbolizes light.

There are ten *Sefiros*. They are the basis of the Ten Utterances of Creation and the Ten Commandments. Each system represents a connection between Hashem and the physical world.

The Ten Utterances of Creation facilitated the original creation of the physical world. The first act of Creation was *ex nihilo*, something created from nothing. That is what the *Ramban* describes as the creation of the "*chomer hiyuli*," the first speck of formless matter. This was the first speech of Hashem: "In the beginning." In the realm of the *Sefiros*, that was the creation of the physical manifestation of the first *Sefirah*, *Kesser*. The next Utterance was the creation of light. This continued until the entire physical world came into being through the ten stages of Creation.

This parallels the creation of the spiritual world, the Ten Commandments. It begins with the most fundamental statement that there is a God and continues through the tenth commandment.

(This topic alone is foundational to all Jewish thought; what we have written here is just to enable us to understand what Rav Tzadok will write.)

The ten *Sefiros* are divided into the upper three and the lower seven. They are all represented in the human dimension, which is the only way we can relate to these lofty concepts in some way. The upper three are represented in the human body by the intellectual division (*Mochin*). They are *Kesser*—the crown, *Chochmah*—the source of knowledge, and *Binah*—the expansion of *Chochmah* to a complete system of knowledge.

The lower seven are represented by the more physical, active parts of the body. *Chessed* is kindness. *Gevurah* is control. *Tiferes* is the beauty of balance. *Netzach* is the victory of the good. *Hod* is when evil submits on its own to good. *Yesod* is when all before this has been accomplished and the foundation has been established. Finally, *Malchus* is when we realize that all the above is from Hashem; we accept His sovereignty.

Those seven are further subdivided into two trios and the final *Sefirah* of *Malchus*. Each trio incorporates right, left, and center.

The first three are *Chessed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tiferes*. The right is *Chessed* and left is *Gevurah*. *Tiferes*, “Glory,” is the middle, representing the beauty of balance and symmetry.

*Netzach* is the power of good of the right. *Hod* is the submission of evil to overpowering good, on the left. And *Yesod* is the foundation that is perfectly balanced and therefore completely stable.

The culmination of the *Sefiros* is the seventh and last, *Malchus*. *Malchus* is the acceptance of Hashem’s authority. It is the sphere within which there is *bechirah*, the choice to accept or reject Hashem’s will. When someone does accept Hashem’s will, this completes the *Kesser*, Hashem’s “crown.”

Each of the *Sefiros* has a specific name of Hashem associated with it. This idea is taught in the *Zohar* and explained at length in the early *sefer Shaarei Orah* of Rabbi Yosef ben Avraham Gikatilla. Rav Tzadok sometimes refers to this idea, so we will not go into it in depth; instead, we will explain what is appropriate in each gateway.

The six women who opened the first six gates each connected to Hashem through one of the first six *Sefiros*. In each gateway, the *Sefirah* is rectified, allowing that gate of connection to Hashem to be opened.

Finally, the entire world accepts the *Malchus*, Kingdom, of Hashem, prompting Mashiach’s arrival.

## CHAPTER 3

# Remembrance of Pekidah and Zechirah

THE FIRST CHILDLESS WOMAN who is remembered by Hashem and gives birth is Sarah. That event begins with the *pasuk*, “And Hashem remembered [*pakad*] Sarah.”<sup>1</sup> Later, regarding Rachel, the word “*zachar*” is used.<sup>2</sup> Regarding Chanah, both words are used.<sup>3</sup>

Since the words are very similar, one way of understanding the difference is by defining *pekidah* exactly. Later in this chapter, in the section on Rosh Hashanah, we will explain the difference between *zechirah* and *pekidah*.

### PEKIDAH

Rabbi Menachem Azaryah of Fano, known as the *Rama MiPano*, one of the early Italian *mekubalim*, discusses the meaning of *pekidah*.<sup>4</sup>

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1 בראשית כא, א—וה'פקד את שרה כאשר אמר ויעש ה' לשרה כאשר דבר.  
2 בראשית ל, כב—ויזכר אלקים את רחל וישמע אליה אלקים ויפתח את רחמה.  
3 שמואל א' א, יט—וישכמו בבקר וישתחוו לפני ה' וישבו ויבאו אל ביתם הרמתה וידע אלקנה את חנה אשתו ויזכרה ה'.  
4 שמואל א' ב, כא—כי פקד ה' את חנה ותהר ותלד שלשה בנים ושתי בנות ויגדל הנער שמואל עם ה'.  
ספר עשרה מאמרות, מאמר אם כל חי, חלק א סימן ג—“פקד הפועל הזה משמעו השגחה. ומנין. וצווי. ומגוי. וחסרון.  
הראשון שאמרנו מענין ההשגחה הוא כמו פקוד פקדתי אתכם. והמנין כמו לפקודיהם והצווי כמו פקודי ה' ישרים והמגוי  
כמו ופקד המלך פקידים וממנו הפקדון אשר הפקד אתו. והחסרון כמו ופקד מקום דוד. ועם היות הפקידה הזאת בעצם  
וראשונה מענין ההשגחה כמו שנבאר מכל מקום כלהו איתנהו בה.”



The Radak in *Sefer Hashorashim* writes that the antonym is also part of a word's meaning since it is the same idea, just in the opposite direction.<sup>11</sup> There are several words that represent two diametrically opposed ideas. One example is the word “*shoresh*”: it means “a root,” but as a verb it means “to uproot.”

The most basic meaning of a word can be derived from where it first appears in Tanach. The word “*pakad*” is first used when Sarah is blessed to have a child. The word conveys, “It is to be remembered by Hashem supervising the person and fulfilling what she is lacking.” Sarah, and by extension all women like her, are redeemed by *pekidah* of *hashgachah*.

## PEKIDAH AND CHILDREN

Anyone who is supervised with *pekidah* by Hashem will be part of the system of *p’ru u’revu* that Hashem created in the world. The world was created to be fruitful and multiply. That was the first mitzvah given to Adam and Chavah. The Navi expands this and says that the world was not created for nothingness, but to be inhabited.<sup>12</sup> This is a fundamental goal of Creation.<sup>13</sup>

Not having children opposes this goal of Creation. It is different than any other defect in the world, since it contravenes the purpose of existence.

A person missing a limb may be unable to fulfill a particular mitzvah, but that mitzvah was not instituted into the process of Hashem’s creation

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- 11 ספר השרשים—סקל. עוד מעט וסקלני (שמות יז, ד), וסקלתו באבנים (דברים יג, יא)...ובהפך הענין סקלו מאבן (ישעיה סב, י), לפי שהוא דבוק עם מ"ם. וכן ויעקדו ויסקלדו (שם ה, ב), והוא חסר הדבק ופירושו ויסקלדו מאבנים רוצה לומר הסרת האבנים ונקות הכרם ממנו.
- 12 ספר ישעיה מה, יח—כי כה אמר ה' בורא השמים הוא האלקים יצר הארץ ועשה הוא כוננה לא תהו בראה לשבת יצרה אני ה' ואין עוד.
- 13 אות א—ומיד שהשם יתברך פונה אליו להשיגו עליו מיד הישועה באה לו מעצמה בפקידה והשגחה זו, ואפילו כשרה אמנו שהיתה אילנית בבריאה וטומטמים היו כמו שאמרו בהבא על יבמתו (יבמות סד:) מכל מקום מה שחורו להיות ככל אדם אינו אלא חזרה לטבע הבריאה, ומפני שהעולם הזה הוא הנחת המקום לבחירה ברע וקלקולים מזה נמשך גם כן קלקולים בנבראים בבריאה והקלקולים הם היוצאים מסדר הבריאה וכאשר האדם שב להשם יתברך ומחזיר הדברים למקורן כמו שהיה האדם ישר בתחילת הבריאה הרי כל הקלקולים מתתקנים וחוזרים למה שהיה כפי סדר הבריאה ופקידת השם יתברך הוא מה שהשם יתברך משיג אל לבו כביכול תחילת רצונו בבריאת העולם שרצון זה דיבור זה דמאמרות דששת ימי בראשית שעל ידן היה הבריאה על ידן הוא גם כן השגחתו יתברך בקיומו כל ימי עולם ועל ידי זה הוא חזרת הדברים למקורן במעשה בראשית ואין ראוי להיות יציאה מסדר מעשה בראשית כלל.