



Invocation Verse:

קָרוֹב יְהוָה לְכָל־קָרְאִיו לְכָל־אֲשֶׁר יַקְרָא אֲלֵהוּ בְּאַמֶּת
 Karov Hashem l'khel korav l'khel asher yikra'uhu ve'emet!
 The Divine is close to all who call upon It, to all who call out in Truth!
 (Psalm 145:18)

Meaning and Mystical Associations:

In the *Sefer Yetzirah*, *koof* is one of the twelve “simple letters” and represents the activity of laughter, the astrological sign of Pices, the spleen in the human body, and the month of *Adar* in time.

Text

רַבִּי שְׁמֻעוֹן אָמַר, שְׁלַשָּׁה שָׂאכְלוּ עַל שְׁלַחַן אֶחָד וְלَا אָמְרוּ עַל יְדֵי תּוֹרָה, כְּאֵלֹא אָכְלוּ מִזְבְּחִי
 מַתִּים, שְׁנָאָמַר: כִּי כָל שְׁלַחַנות מְלֹאו קִיא צָה בְּלִי מָקוֹם. אֲכֵל שְׁלַשָּׁה שָׂאכְלוּ עַל שְׁלַחַן אֶחָד
 וְאָמְרוּ עַל יְדֵי תּוֹרָה, כְּאֵלֹא אָכְלוּ מִשְׁלַחַן שְׁלַמּוֹךְ בָּרוּךְ הוּא, שְׁנָאָמַר: וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים כָּל
 אֲשֶׁר לְפָנֵי הִ

Rabbi Shimon says: Three who ate at one table and did not say upon it words of Torah - it is as if they ate from the offerings of the dead, as it is said (Isaiah 28:8): “For all of the tables are full of vomit and feces without the Omnipresent.” However, three who ate at one table and said upon it words of Torah – it is as if they ate from the table of the Omnipresent, It is blessed, as it is said (Ezekiel 41:22): “And he said to me, this is the table that is before the Divine.”

-Pirkei Avot 3:4

Story

There's a story of Rabbi Barukh, the grandson of the Baal Shem Tov, that once his grandson Yehiel was playing hide and seek with a friend. Yehiel had hidden himself well and waited a long time for his friend to find him. Finally, he came out from his hiding place and his friend was nowhere to be seen. Yehiel began to cry, because he realized that his friend had not even tried to find him in the first place.

So, he ran to his grandfather crying and complaining of his faithless friend. Rabbi Barukh's eyes brimmed with tears and he said, “God says the same thing: ‘I hide, but no one wants to seek Me.’”

Kabbalah Commentary (Based on The Aleph Beit by Rabbi Yitzhak Ginsburgh)

Koof stands for *kedushah* – holiness. Holiness means “separate” which hints at the transcendent nature of awareness to be separate from all that is perceived. At the same

time, awareness is also not separate from all that is perceived, because everything perceived arises within awareness. Our awareness is a microcosm of the Divine (Reality or Being); the Divine is completely one with everything, yet is also beyond everything.

This is hinted at in the shape of the *koof*, which is composed of a *zayin* and a *reish*. The *zayin* descends below the line, hinting that the Divine is fully one with all form. The hovering *reish* represents the transcendence of the Divine – all forms come and go, but Being is always what it is. This paradox is expressed in the phrase from the Zohar: “It is grasped within all worlds, yet nothing can grasp It.”

The classical concept of *kadosh/holy* is that certain rituals and ritual objects are holy, because they have the effect of separating us from the mundane and making us aware of the Eternal dimension. The Torah spends a lot of time laying out the ways to interact with the holy through specific prescriptions. Hassidic teaching, on the other hand, sees the ultimate purpose of holiness in ritual not as an end in itself, but rather its aim is to imbue us with the awareness and intention to connect with the holy in everything. Both types of holiness are described as the “elevation of the sparks,” but the it is the elevation of the sparks in the ordinary and mundane that uniquely characterizes Hassidic teaching.

How do you do it?

Shviti Hashem l'negdi tamid – I place the Divine before me constantly. Know that the eternal dimension is the very awareness that you are, and know that everything and everyone you encounter is an embodiment of the Divine as well... then live from that Knowing!

Practice

Koof Meditation and Chant

Bring to mind that in your encounter with the fullness of this moment, The Divine encounters Itself. Imagine that through your realization of this and speaking and acting from this, the “Divine Sparks” inherent in everything are able to reconnect with their Source.

Then, anchor this awareness with the chant:

קָרוֹב יְהֹוָה לְכָל־קָרְאִים לְכָל־אֲשֶׁר־יַקְרָא־הָבָאֵת
Karov Hashem l'khol korav l'khol asher yikra'uhu ve'emet!

Daily Practice

1. Practice the *Koof* meditation and chant the Invocation Verse.
2. Open meditation with the Ten *Sefirot* and *Sh'ma*, adding the *koof* (see the practice sheet).
3. Spend some time in silent meditation. 20 minutes is wonderful, 2 minutes is infinitely better than nothing!