



### **Lamed**

“Yearning from the Heart, Transcending the Heart”

#### **Invocation Verse:**

לְהוֹדִיעַ | לְבָנֵי הָאָדָם גְּבוּרַתְךָ וְכְבוֹד הַדָּר מְלֻכּוּתוֹ

*L'hodia Liv'nei Adam Gevurotav Ukh'vod Hadar Malkhuto*

*To make Its Power known to the children of Adam*

*and the glorious majesty of Its Kingdom!*

(Psalm 145:12)

#### **Meaning and Mystical Associations:**

*Lamed* is related both to the heart (*lev*), as well as teaching and learning, which are the meaning of the word *lamed*. In the *Sefer Yetzirah*, *lamed* is one of the twelve “simple letters,” and represents Sexuality, the astrological sign of Libra, the gall bladder in the human body, and the month of *Tishrei* in time.

#### **Text**

בֶּן זֹמָא אוֹמֵר, אֵיזְהוּ חָכָם, הַלּוֹמֵד מִכָּל אָדָם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר מִכָּל מְלַמְדֵי הַשֶּׁפֶלְתִּי

Ben Zoma said, “Who is wise? One who learns (*lomed*) from everyone, as it is said, ‘From all my teachers (*m'lamdai*) I grew wise.’”

Pirkei Avot 4:1

#### **Kabbalah Commentary**

(Based partially on The Aleph Bet by Rabbi Yitzhak Ginsburgh)

The form of the *Lamed* represents the aspiration of the devoted student to learn from the mouth of the teacher. The seed of wisdom, represented by the letter *yod*, descends from the brain to “impregnate” the heart. The heart aspires upwardly to receive consciousness from the brain. This is the secret of the form of *lamed*: the heart ascending in aspiration to connect with the point of wisdom, which is the *yod* at the top of the *lamed*.

This dynamic between mind and heart is embodied in the phrase, “a heart that understands knowledge” – *lev meivin daat* – the first letters of which spell out *lamed*. The word for knowledge, *daat*, is also used for sexual union in the Torah account of Adam and Eve, and the mind is classically pictured as “masculine,” while the heart is “feminine.” Thus, the union between mind and heart can be understood as a kind of sexual union within one’s own being.

In practice, this is embodied in the complementary practices of bringing awareness down into the heart (meditation), on one hand, and longing for the Divine from the heart (prayer). These two practices are extremely complementary and bless each other’s

effectiveness. The meditation part creates a sense of inner freedom, because when you bring your awareness down into your body (mind down to heart), you don't get trapped by emotions. The prayer part creates a sense of receptivity and humility – antidotes to the possible shadow side of meditation, which can be a kind of detached arrogance. Together, the receptive humility and spacious wisdom combine to create the quality of someone who is *הַלּוֹמֵד מִכָּל אָדָם* – one who learns from everyone and everything...

## Practice

### *Lamed* Meditation and Chant

With each in breath, feel into your heart, imagining the energy of your heart aspiring upward. Invite any pain or longing in your heart to come forth and cry out silently to the Divine. With the out breath, let go and feel your awareness expand into a vast field far beyond your heart, with the heart at the center of the field. In breath is longing, feeling, praying; out breath is surrendering, letting go, transcending. On the in breath, let your mind chant *Atah* or *At Yah*, and on the outbreath chant mentally *Hu* or *Hi*.

Then, staying connected to this longing and surrender dynamic, let go of the visualization and breathing and chant:

לְהוֹדִיעַ | לְבַנֵי הָאָדָם גְּבוּרַתְךָ וְכְבוֹד הַדָּר מְלַכּוּתוֹ

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### Daily Practice

1. Practice the *Lamed* meditation and chant the Invocation Verse.
2. Open meditation with the Ten *Sefirot* and *Sh'ma*: Visualize the *Aleph* above, the *Bet* below, the *Gimel* at your right, the *Dalet* at your left, *Hei* in your chest, *Vav* as your spine extending into your belly, *Zayin* as your right leg, *Het* as your left leg, *Tet* as your belly/reproductive organs, and *yod* as your head expanding into the open space around you, as you chant each of the ten *sefirot*. Then continue with the *Sh'ma*. After chanting the first word *sh'ma* and extending the light upward, visualize the *kaf* above your head (beneath the *aleph*) and chant the *kaf* verse. Next, chant *Yisrael* extending the light downwards, and visualize the *lamed* below your body (above the *bet*). Then continue with *Adonai* and the rest of *Sh'ma*.
3. Spend some time in silent meditation. 20 minutes is wonderful, 2 minutes is infinitely better than nothing!