

נ

Nun

“Egoless”

Invocation Verse:

וְאֶנְחֵנוּ נְבָרְךָ יְיָ מֵעַתָּה וְעַד-עוֹלָם הַלְלוּ-יָיָה
Va'anakhnū n'varekh Yah me'ata v'ad olam, hallelu Yah!
We will bless the Divine from now unto Eternity!
(Psalm 115:18)

Meaning and Mystical Associations:

Nun means “fish” in Aramaic, and “kingdom” and “heir to the throne” in Hebrew. In the *Sefer Yetzirah*, *nun* is one of the twelve “simple letters” and represents the sense of smell, the astrological sign of Scorpio, the intestine in the human body, and the month of Heshvan in time.

Text

שְׁבַע דְּבָרִים בְּגֵלָם וְשִׁבְעָה בְּחָכְמָם. חָכָם אֵינוֹ מְדַבֵּר בְּפָנָיו מִי שֶׁהוּא גָדוֹל מִמֶּנּוּ בְּחָכְמָה
וּבְמַגִּנָּו, וְאֵינוֹ נִכְנָס לְתוֹךְ דְּבָרֵי חֲבֵרוֹ, וְאֵינוֹ נִבְהָל לְהַשִּׁיב, שׂוֹאֵל כְּעֵנֶן וְיֹשִׁיב כְּהֶלְכָה, וְאוֹמֵר
עַל רֵאשׁוֹן רֵאשׁוֹן וְעַל אַחֲרוֹן אַחֲרוֹן, וְעַל מָה שֶׁלֹּא שָׁמַע, אוֹמֵר לֹא שָׁמַעְתִּי, וּמוֹדֶה עַל הָאָמֶת.
וְחֵלּוֹפִיָּהוּן בְּגֵלָם.

Seven things in a golem, and seven in the wise: The wise do not speak before those who are greater than they in wisdom or in years, and do not interrupt their companion's words. They are not hasty to answer, and they ask what is relevant to the topic and answer to the point. They speak of the first thing first, and of the last thing last; and concerning that which they have not heard, they say: “I have not heard;” and, they are surrendered to the truth. And the reverse in a golem.

-Pirkei Avot 5:9

Stories – The Kotzker and Reb Zushia

Someone said to Reb Menachem Mendel that so-and-so was greater than so-and-so. The Kotzker replied, “If I am I because I am I, and you are you because you are you, then I am I and you are you. But if I am I because you are you, and you are you because I am I, then I am not I and you are not you.”

Reb Zushia was visiting his rebbe, the great Maggid of Metzrich, when a man came asking for a blessing from the Maggid for some enterprise. Zushia had the power to see all the sins the man had done, and became angry: “How can you who has done such and such stand before the holy master and not yearn to atone?”

The man was taken aback, and he left silently in shame. Zushia realized he had greatly embarrassed the man and regretted what he had done, but didn't know what to do. The

Maggid put his hands on Zushia's head and gave him a blessing that he should see only the good in people, even if they sinned right before his eyes. But because Zushia's vision could not be taken away, he was changed so that when he saw the sins of others, he blamed himself. Rabbi Yisrael of Rizhyn would tell this story and add, "And if all of us were like Zushia, evil would be destroyed and perfection achieved."

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

Nun means fish in Aramaic. The *mem* represents water, the medium of the fish, and symbolizes consciousness which takes the shape of all perceptions, just as water takes the shape of the vessel that contains it. The fish represents egoless-ness: lack of separate self-consciousness and lack of self-image. Self-image comes from comparing oneself to others, which is irrelevant in the perception of everything as consciousness, which is the fish swimming in the water.

Land animals, on the other hand, represent ego. These two archetypes, the fish and the animal, represent the two ways of relating to Torah: the revealed, halakhic aspect, and the hidden, esoteric aspect. According to legend, in the messianic future these two archetypes will "fight it out" and eventually unite into one, integrated being. This hints at our potential to integrate the egoless state with our ordinary identity and live in a "Messianic" (awakened) way.

Nun is the fourteenth letter, which equals *David*, the progenitor of *Moshiakh*, Messiah. Another name for *Moshiakh* is *Yinun*, which has the same root as *nun*. *Moshiakh* is also referred to as "The Fallen One," perhaps because there is always a messianic potential, but so far it has "fallen" in every generation and not been actualized. Another association with *Moshiakh* and falling is perhaps that in order for humanity to integrate the egoless state, it needs to "fall" (make mistakes and suffer) enough to achieve humility.

Nun is related to the image of falling, and according to the Talmud, this is why *nun* is left out of its normal place, before *samekh*. The *samekh* verse says, *Hashem supports the noflim – the fallen*, and the psalmist wished to not reinforce the idea of Israel falling by leaving out the *nun* verse.

By bringing *nun* back at the end, we affirm the ultimate messianic hope that all of our "fallenness" will become the foundation of a new world, fully free from the negativity of ego. This is also represented by the shape of the "final *nun*" – a line that extends down below the line, representing Divine realization within the world of form.

Practice *Nun* Meditation and Chant

Take note of everything around you, and notice that there is nothing *in your experience* except consciousness, letting go of the sense of being separate from any of it. Imagine yourself as a fish in the ocean, and everything is water. Don't try to feel anything special, as the expectation would be in expression of separateness; just note that everything is the same, in different forms, like waves in the ocean. Then, anchor this awareness with the chant:

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Va'anakhnu n'varekh Yah me'ata v'ad olam, hallelu Yah!
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Daily Practice

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