



Samekh

“Fully Supported to Accept and Grow”

Invocation Verse:

סומך יהוה לכל הנפלים וזוקף לכל הכהפכים
Somekh Adonai l'khol hanoflim, v'zokeif l'khol hak'fufim

The Divine supports all who have fallen, and straightens all the bent!

(Psalm 145:13)

Meaning and Mystical Associations:

Samekh means “support” and its form is the circle. In the *Sefer Yetzirah*, *samekh* is one of the twelve “double letters,” and represents the activity of sleep, the astrological sign of Sagittarius, the pancreas in the human body, and the month of Kislev in time.

Text

בן זומא אומר איזהו עשיר, השם בקהלך

Ben Zoma said, “Who is rich? One who is happy with one’s portion....”

הוא היה אומר... וידלא מושיר, יסף

He (Hillel) used to say, “whomever does not increase, decreases.”

Pirkei Avot 4:1, 1:13

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

The circular shape of the *samekh*, which implies equality and lack of hierarchy, relates to equanimity and the practice of remembering the Divine equally in all things, as in the verse: ש'תי יהוה לנצח תמיד – *Sh'viti Hashem l'negdi tamid* – *I place the Divine before me constantly* (Psalm 16:8), in which *sh'viti* – *I place* – is related to the root *shin* – *vav* – *hei*, which means “equal.”

This is a different way of approaching the equanimity we saw in both *aleph* and *tav*. In *aleph*, the emphasis was on intentionally opening to the full spectrum of experience, and knowing the field of experience, or awareness, as the *vav* that unites all polarities (the “upper” and “lower waters.”) In *tav*, the emphasis was on remembering the goodness inherent within everything. Meaning, that when goodness isn’t the obvious thing, we can intentionally bring to mind that there is always hidden or potential goodness, and it becomes our responsibility to bring that goodness forth either by simply noticing it or by actively creating it.

Here in *samekh*, the approach is to see the circularity of polarities; meaning, when we experience negativity, positivity is around the corner... and vice versa. This leads to not

getting too excited about whatever is manifesting in the present for good or ill, because it's all part of the cycle. This is reflected in the first *Pirkei Avot* text above, in which we focus on contentment with wherever we're at.

This kind of equanimity implies a kind of passivity, and according to *hassidut*, this is the proper attitude toward material things such as wealth, status, and so on. On the other hand, when it comes to spiritual matters, one should have an opposite attitude, constantly striving to improve and "climb higher." This is reflected in the second *Pirkei Avot* text above, in which we focus on increasing our consciousness, increasing our understanding, and increasing our service, because if we don't increase, we in fact decrease; there's no standing still. This is the *samekh* not of the circle, but of the spiral, where our efforts keep us moving forward as we spiral around and encounter both success and difficulty.

Both sides of this polarity relate to the concept of *samekh* as "support" in the sense that when we take a passive attitude of equanimity, we can remember that we are being supported by the Divine exactly in the way that is right and appropriate. This is reflected in the first part of the verse, *The Divine supports all who have fallen*.

At the same time, as we strive to grow spiritually, we should likewise know that we are totally supported and empowered to grow. We can sometimes see this experientially, in that when we "take a tiny step" toward the Divine, we sometimes experience as if the Divine "leaps" toward us. This is reflected in the second part of the verse, *and straightens all the bent*.

Another way of understanding these two levels of *samekh*, the circle and the spiral, is to relate the equanimity/circle *samekh* to our present moment experience on all levels – material, spiritual, and everything else. The striving/spiral *samekh*, on the other hand, lives *within* the equanimity circle *samekh*, in that we always must step up to do our best and respond to our situation *while still accepting this moment as it is*.

To take an extreme example: when we exhale, we don't simply accept the feeling of no air in our lungs and not take another breath until we die. Obviously, we take another breath; we "strive" toward maintaining life. The equanimity is both the acceptance of the feeling of wanting air, *and* the acceptance of our responsibility to we have to take another breath; the spiral is "inside" the circle, and this is universally applicable to every moment and every situation: relax and accept this moment as it is, and as part of that, strive to step up, grow, and do your best...

Practice

Samekh Meditation and Chant

Adopt the attitude that “today I will be more present, more open, more aware than I was yesterday. I will embrace my responsibilities more fully and dedicate my actions to service of the Divine more completely. The Divine supports me in this effort and I am exactly where I need to be. I fully accept this moment as it is.”

Then, anchor this awareness with the chant:

סומך אדונא ל'חול הנו פלים זוקף ל'כל ה'כפוקים
Somekh Adonai l'khol hanoflim, v'zokeif l'khol hak'fufim

Daily Practice

1. Practice the *Samekh* meditation and chant the Invocation Verse.
2. Open meditation with the Ten *Sefirot* and *Sh'ma*, chanting each of the invocation verses as you 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*). Next, chant *Yisrael* extending the light downwards, and visualize the *lamed* below your body (above the *bet*). Next, chant *Adonai* projecting the light to the front, and visualizing the *Mem* before you. Then, chant *Eloheinu* projecting the light to the back, and visualizing the *Samekh* behind you. Then, continue with the rest of *Sh'ma*.
3. Spend some time in silent meditation. 20 minutes is wonderful, 2 minutes is infinitely better than nothing!