



## Shin

“Transformation”

### Invocation Verse:

שומר אֱדוֹנָי וְכֹל אוֹהָבֵי וְאֵת כָּל־הַרְשָׁעִים יִשְׁמִיד

*Shomer Adonai et kol ohavav v'et kol har'shayim yashmid.*

*The Divine guards all who love the Divine, and those who hate will be destroyed.*

(Psalm 145:20)

### Meaning and Mystical Associations:

In the *Sefer Yetzirah*, *shin* is one of the three “mother letters” and represents the element of fire, the head in the human body, and the hot season in time.

### Text

הֵם אָמְרוּ שְׁלֹשָׁה דְבָרִים. רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר אָמַר, יְהִי כְבוֹד חֲבֵרָךְ חָבִיב עָלֶיךָ כְּשֵׁלֶךְ, וְאַל תְּהִי גוֹחַ כְּנֶגֶד אוֹרֵן שֶׁל חֲכָמִים, וְהָיִי זֹהִיר בְּגַחְלִתָּן שֶׁלֹּא לְכַעַס. וְשׁוּב יוֹם אֶחָד לְפָנַי מִיַּתְדָּךְ. וְהָיִי מְתַחַמֵּם תַּכְוָּה, שְׁנִשְׂיַכְתָּן נְשִׁיכַת שׁוּעָל, וְעִקְצָתָן עִקְצַת עֶקְרָב, וְלַחֲשִׁשְׁתָּן לְחִישַׁת שָׂרָף, וְכָל דְבָרֵיהֶם כְּגַחְלֵי אֵשׁ

*They [each] said three things: Rabbi Eliezer said: (1) “Let your friend’s honor be as dear to you as your own, and do not anger easily; (2) ‘return’ one day before your death, and (3) warm yourself by the fire of the sages, but beware of their glowing coals, lest you get burned – for their bite is the bite of a fox, their sting is the sting of a scorpion, their hiss is the hiss of a serpent, and all their words are like coals of fire.”*

Pirkei Avot 3:15

קִי־עֵזָה כְּמֹות אֶהְבָּה ... אֵשׁ שְׁלֵהֲבַתְיָה

*... for love is fierce as death ... a blazing flame.*

- *Shir Hashirim* (Song of Songs) 8:6

### Story

A disciple asked Reb Pinkhas, “Why is it that you are so calm and still when you *daven*, unlike so many other *tzadikim*?”

Reb Pinkhas replied, “You know, the essence of prayer is *deveikut*, attachment to the Divine (Presence), and this involves the death of the separate self. There are two kinds of death: one kind is as difficult as pulling a rope through a mast, and the other is easy as removing a hair from a glass of milk. It is the second kind that I was granted...”

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

*Shin* has three “heads” which can represent two different flame symbols, the first being a symbol for change (which is one of the meanings of *shin*, as in *sh'nui*), and the second

being a symbol for love. Both of these ideas are embodied in the above text, which equates love with death (change).

The first symbol, representing change, is the image of a flame bound to a coal. The flame bound to a coal is comprised of three parts: the coal itself, the potential for flame within the coal, and the manifest flame. The coal represents the world of form, since all forms are temporary and are constantly changing, though sometimes imperceptibly. The potential flame within the coal represents the changeless world of “Being” or “Existence” that manifests as the changing form, and the manifest flame represents consciousness of the world of form, which accelerates change, just fire can burn up forms quickly.

These three levels are present right now within our experience: our awareness is the manifest flame. Everything that we become aware of is the coal – sensory perceptions, feeling tones and emotions, thoughts, and the awareness of awareness itself. The continuous fact of the eternally-present Reality of Existence Itself is the potential for flame within the coal – the always invisible “Beingness” of everything.

The second symbol, representing love, is the image of the three levels of flame: the dark light around the wick, then the white/yellow flame around the dark flame, and then the aura around the white/yellow flame. The dark flame is *ahavat briyut* – love of creatures, because the light of consciousness is “enclothed” within physical bodies. The outer flame is *ahavat Torah* – love of the Teaching, because the Teaching (Torah) illuminates our path through life. The aura around the flame is *ahavat Hashem* – love of the Divine, because our actual experience of the Divine is luminescent feeling field of consciousness within which everything is experienced.

These two qualities, love and change (death), are two aspects of the transformational process catalyzed by Presence.

When we bring the fire of consciousness to fully connect with our present moment experience, without rationalization, judgment or resistance of any kind, this is the most basic act of love – full connection and presence with. The paradox is that with full acceptance of and presence with our own thoughts and feelings, the thoughts and feelings are transmuted, and consciousness is freed up from identification with them, resulting in the “death” of the old, ego “self.”

## Practice

### ***Shin* Meditation and Chant**

Offer your awareness into your body with love, and visualize your body on fire with awareness. Hold all of your feelings, impulses and sensations within this “flame” of consciousness.

Then, anchor this awareness with the chant:

שׁוֹמֵר אֲדוֹנָי וְכֹל חֲוָוָו וְעֵת כֹּל חַרְשָׁיִם יַשְׁמִיד

*Shomer Adonai et kol ohavav v'et kol har'shayim yashmid.*

## Daily Practice

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