

ת

Tav
“Truth”

Invocation Verse:

תְהִלַּת אֱלֹהִים יְדָבֵרִי וַיְבָרֶךְ כָּל־בָּשָׂר נִשְׁמָה קָדוֹשׁוֹ לְעוֹלָם וְעַד:
Tehilat Adonai yidaber pi, vivarekh kol basar Shem Kodsho le'olam va'ed!
*Praise of the Divine my mouth will declare,
and may all creatures will bless the Holy Name forever!*
(Psalm 145:20)

Meaning and Mystical Associations:

Tav means “sign.” In the *Sefer Yetzirah*, *Tav* is one of the seven “double letters” and represents the quality of Peace, the astrological planet Saturn, the mouth in the human body, and Shabbat (Saturday) in time.

Text

רַבִּי יָנָא אָמַר, אֵין בָּקָרֵנוּ לְאַמְשָׁלֹות הַרְשָׁעִים וְאַף לְאַמְسֹרֵי הַצָּדִיקִים
*Rabbi Yannai said: it is not in our hands [to explain the reason] either of the security of
the wicked, or even of the afflictions of the righteous.*
Pirkei Avot, 4:19

אַרְבָּע מִדּוֹת בַּיּוֹשְׁבִים לְפִנֵּי חֲכָמִים. סְפֻוג, וּמְשֻׁפֶּה, מְשֻׁמְרָת, וְגַנְפָה.
סְפֻוג, שֶׁהוּא סְופָג אֶת הַכָּל.
מְשֻׁפֶּה, שֶׁמְכַנֵּס בָּזָז וּמוֹצִיא בָּזָז.
מְשֻׁמְרָת, שֶׁמוֹצִיא אֶת הַיּוֹן וּקוֹלְטָת אֶת הַשְׁמָרִים.
גַּנְפָה, שֶׁמוֹצִיא אֶת הַקְּמָה וּקוֹלְטָת אֶת הַסְּלָת.

There are four types among those who sit before the sages: a sponge, a funnel, a strainer and a sieve. A sponge, soaks up everything; A funnel, takes in at one end and lets out at the other; A strainer, which lets out the wine and retains the sediment; A sieve, which lets out the coarse meal and retains the choice flour.
Pirkei Avot, 5:18

Story – The Kotzker Rebbe

When Rabbi Menachem Mendel was already the infamous and hated rabbi of Kotzk, he once returned to the little town in which he was born. There, he visited his childhood teacher who had taught him his *alef beis*. But, he didn’t go visit the teacher his other teacher from when he was older. At one point, he accidentally ran into the second teacher, who was upset that Mendel had not come to visit him too. “After all, your first teacher only taught you to read. I instructed you in the actual writings. Are you in some way ashamed of me as your teacher? Did I do something wrong?”

Mendel replied, “You taught me things that can be refuted, for according to one interpretation they can mean this, and according to another they can mean that. But my first beloved teacher taught me things that cannot be refuted, and so I hold him in special reverence.”

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

Tav means “sign” or “seal” and the Divine seal in creation is Truth, *emet*. The word *emet*, אמת, is formed from the last letters of the last three words in the account of creation: ברא אלקים לעשות – *bara Elokim la’asot* – *created the Divine to do*. The last letter of this *emet* is *tav*, the conclusion and culmination of all twenty-two letter-portals, signifying simple faith that goes beyond all concepts and beliefs.

Furthermore, the three letters that spell *emet* are the first, middle and last letters of the *alef bet*: *Alef*, *Mem* and *Tav*. The *alef* is the pre-condition for knowing Truth: willingness to experience Reality as it is, both joy and bitterness. From this willingness flows *mem*, merging with present experience and realizing that all we know is this experience. This is “knowing that we don’t know.” From this comes *tav* – the movement from “knowing not-knowing” in the mind to fully trusting Reality in the heart and gut, and this is the simple faith of *tav* that emerges in the silence of alert, no-thought.

Practice *Tav* Meditation and Chant

Take a scan of what is present in awareness, and pick something to bring to the foreground; it could be a sound, a feeling, a visual perception, or anything. Imagine the letter *tav* ת “engraved” into the perception. It doesn’t have to be a clear visualization, just simply know that the *tav* is there. Know that the *tav* is calling you to focus on the Truth of what is present, calling you away from thought and into Presence. Let go of all thought as it arises, staying in the simple faith of presence-with-what-is.

Then, anchor this awareness with the chant:

תְהִלָּת יְהוָה יַעֲרֵפִי וַיְבָרֶךְ כָּל־בָּשָׂר שֶׁם קֹדֶשׁ לְעוֹלָם וְאֶד:

Tehilat Adonai yidaber pi, vivarekh kol basar Shem Kodsho le’olam va’ed!

Daily Practice

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