



Vav

“Welcoming Whatever Comes”

Invocation Verse:

וְעֲזוּז נֹרֹתֶיךָ יֹאמְרוּ וּגְדוּלַתְּךָ אֲסַפְּרָנָה
Ve'ezuz norotekha yomeiru, ug'dulat'kha asap'reina
And of Your awesome power they will speak,
and of your greatness I shall relate!
(Psalm 145:5)

Meaning and Mystical Associations:

Vav can mean “hook,” and as a prefix, it means “and.” Both words imply connection. In the *Sefer Yetzirah*, Vav is one of the twelve “simple letters,” and represents the activity thought, the astrological sign of Taurus, the right kidney in the human body, and the month of *Iyar* in time.

Text:

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ
In the beginning, The Divine created ET the heavens and ET (i) the earth...
-Torah, Bereisheet, 1:1

Kabbalah Commentary (Based on Aleph Bet by R. Yitzhak Ginsburgh)

Vav is the sixth letter of the twenty-two letters of the *Aleph Bet*. The first instance of vav in the Torah happens in the first verse, in the sixth word. This vav is the prefix “and.” It connects the “et heavens” and the “et earth.”

Et is untranslatable; it is a direct object marker and comes before direct objects in sentences. In Kabbalah, however, the meaning of et is “totality” or “all that is,” implied by its spelling, *aleph – tav*, the first and last letters of the *aleph bet*. Seen in this way, the vav in this verse is the principle of connecting, yet also separating, all elements of Existence. This vav also happens to be the twenty-second letter of the Torah, further reinforcing this interpretation.

The basic practice for vav, then, is actively welcoming everything that arises in experience. This is similar to *aleph*, but the difference is that with vav, we are reminding ourselves that everything is constantly changing, new things are arising in experience all the time. So vav is like the active aspect of *aleph*, pointing with openness into the future, always ready to embrace and include whatever happens.

Here is a Mishna which illustrates some different aspects of this:

גדולה תורה יותר מן הכהונה ומן המלכות, שהמלכות נקנית בשלשים מעלות, והכהונה בעשרים וארבע, והתורה נקנית בארבעים ושמונה דברים. ואלו הן

...

ובקבלת היסורין, המכיר את מקומו, והשמת בקלקו, והעושה סגל לדבריו, ואינו מחזיק טובה לעצמו, אהוב, אהב את המקום, אהב את הבריות

Greater is learning Torah than the priesthood and than royalty, for royalty is acquired by thirty stages, and the priesthood by twenty-four, but the Torah by forty-eight things, and these are they ... By receiving of suffering, knowing one's place, joy in one's portion, making a fence around one's words, taking no credit for oneself, being beloved, loving the Divine, loving creatures...

(Pirkei Avot 6:6)

Another function of *vav* is that when it is used as a prefix before a verb, the tense of the verb is reversed. The first instance of this is in the twenty-second word of the Torah, *Vayomer* – *And Elokim said*, in the third verse: וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי אֹר וַיְהִי-אֹר – *And Elokim said, let there be light, and there was light.*

Yomer means “will say,” but *vayomer* means “and said” – the *vav* reverses the tense.

The deeper meaning of this is the power of *teshuvah*, of returning to the Divine in your heart. When we regret having done something, and we commit to serving the Divine better in the future, the positivity of our future transforms our past, and our *past mistakes actually become merits*. The key to this is in the meaning of “and.” When we fully own our mistakes, saying yes to them without justifying or denying them, AND committing to change, than an aspect of ourselves that became fragmented becomes whole again.

There is a story of Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berditchev, that once he saw a wealthy but stingy and sinful man in the street. “Oh sir, I envy you!” said Reb Levi Yitzhak.

“What do you mean?” cried the man.

“I envy you because when you one day turn to Hashem, all those sins will become such glorious merits, their light will light up the whole world! Oh sir, I do envy you!”

Practice

Vav Meditation

Notice different elements in your experience, and say *V'Atah Hu*, or *V'At Hi– And You are the Divine*. See each different perception also as the Divine. Then add, *V'ani Hu* or *V'ani Hi – and “I” am Divine*. Know that your consciousness is the Divine perceiving through you.

Vav Chant and *Kavanah*

Think: *V'Atah Hu*, or *V'At Hi– And You are the Divine*, and chant:

וְעֵזוּז נִרְאָתִיךָ – *Ve'ezuz norotekha yomeir*

Think: *V'ani Hu* or *V'ani Hi – and “I” am Divine* and chant:

וּגְדוּלַתְּךָ אֶסְפְּרֶנָּה – *ug'dulat'kha asap'reina*

Daily Practice

1. Chant the *Hei* Invocation Verse with *kavanah*.
2. Open meditation with the Ten Sefirot, adding *Aleph*, *Bet*, *Gimel*, *Dalet*, *Hei* and *Vav* verses and visualizations. Visualize the *Aleph* above, the *Bet* below, the *Gimel* at your right, the *Dalet* at your left, *Hei* in your chest and *Vav* as your spine, extending into your belly as you chant the first six *sefirot*, then continue with the rest of the *sefirot* and the *Sh'ma*.
3. Spend some time in silent meditation. 20 minutes is wonderful, 2 minutes is infinitely better than nothing!