

ז

Zayin

“Cut Away and Be Still”

Invocation Verse:

זְכֹר רַב־טוֹבָהּ יְבִיעוּ וְצִדְקָתָהּ יִרְנְנוּ

Zekher rav tuv'kha yabiyu, v'tzid'kat'kha y'raneinu

*A remembrance of Your abundant goodness they will utter,
And of Your fairness they will sing!*

(Psalm 145:7)

Meaning and Mystical Associations:

Zayin can mean “sword,” and also “ornament.” In the *Sefer Yetzirah*, *zayin* is one of the twelve “simple letters,” and represents the activity motion, the astrological sign of Gemini, the left foot in the human body, and the month of *Sivan* in time.

Text:

אֵיזָהוּ גִבּוֹר, הַכּוֹבֵשׁ אֶת יִצְרוֹ

Who is mighty? One who conquers one's own impulses.

שְׁנַאָמַר (משלי טז) טוֹב אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם מִגִּבּוֹר וּמִשָּׁל בְּרוּחַו מְלִיכַד עִיר.

As it is said, “One who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and one who rules their spirit is better than one who conquers a city.” (Proverbs 16:3)

-Pirkei Avot, 4:1

Text:

שָׁמַעוֹן בְּנוֹ אוֹמֵר: כָּל יְמֵי גִדְלֹתִי בֵּין הַחֲכָמִים וְלֹא מִצָּאתִי לְגוֹף טוֹב מִשְׁתִּיקָה. וְלֹא הַמְדַרְשׁ
הָעֵקֶר אֶלָּא הַמַּעֲשֶׂה. וְכָל הַמְרַבֵּה דְבָרִים, מִבִּיא חֲטָא

Shimon his son (Rabban Gamiel's son) said:

All my days have I have been raised among the sages, and I have not found anything better for the body than silence. Not study, but practice is the main thing, and those who multiply their words bring on error.

-Pirkei Avot, 1:17

Kabbalah Commentary

The Zayin as sword is a metaphor for cutting away the ego's drive to try to manipulate and control one's experience, primarily manifesting as continuous thinking. This is a bit tricky, because the aggressive and violent connotation of the sword can be misleading. The key is not to try and cut away your thoughts or cut away your desires, but to cut the “cord” of your attachment to them; to “set them free” in a sense. You can do this simply by being aware of your desire to control or manipulate, deliberately disengage, and return to a state of allowing your experience to be as it is.

The Zayin as ornament hints at Shabbat, the seventh day of the week which is an “ornament of time” in a sense. The practice of disengaging from work (*malakha*) is a practice conducive to the deep surrender that leads to dissolution of ego.

There are three effects hinted at by the *Mishna* from *Pirkei Avot*: health of the body, authenticity of the personality, and wisdom of the mind – all are cultivated through the deliberate reduction of words and thinking, by “cutting away” or disengaging from our desire to control. In this way, we are free to be in the Reality of our actual experience. Our emotions and desires may still be there, but we are no longer trapped by them.

Practice

***Zayin* Meditation**

Sit and watch thoughts and feelings carefully. Imagine a sword cutting them away as they come. The sword doesn’t kill them or push them away, it severs them from your will, so you simply behold them without any need to manipulate them. Then, when you have the feeling of this in your body, anchor it with the *Zayin* chant.