

Alter Rebbe

ושאבתם מים בששון ממעיני הישועה

Sukkos

And you shall draw water with joy from the wells of salvation (Isaiah 12:3).

Throughout the year, there was the pouring of wine on the altar, which is explicitly mentioned in the Written Torah in several places. However, during the festival of Sukkot, there was an additional ritual of pouring water on the altar, which took place all seven days of the festival. This ritual is a law given to Moses at Sinai (*halacha leMoshe miSinai*) (Sukkah 34a, Zevachim 110b), though it is not explicitly mentioned in the Written Torah, but the Sages found scriptural support for it through indirect references. The water drawing was performed with great joy, as the verse says, "And you shall draw water with joy," as explained in the Talmud (Sukkah 48a, 51a).

We need to understand why this ritual is not explicitly written in the Torah. (See more on this in the Zohar at the end of Part 1, in the additions 11b-12a.)

First, we must understand the concept of the wine libation. Concerning wine, it is written (Judges 9:13), "Shall I leave my wine, which cheers God and men?" It is known that *binah* (understanding) is called the "mother of children," as it is said, "The mother of children is joyful" (Psalms 113:9). For joy is the revelation of that which was hidden, and therefore it comes specifically from *binah*, which is when one understands and grasps the hidden wisdom that is revealed through comprehension and intellectual attainment. When a person truly grasps it, they experience joy. However, if the matter is still beyond their understanding, remaining hidden within the potential of wisdom (*chochmah*), without being revealed in actual understanding, they will not feel any pleasure or joy at all.

Now, *binah* is also called the "hidden world" (*alma d'itkasya*), as explained in the Zohar, Parshat Vayeitzei (153b, 154a, and in other places). This was the task of the Levites, as it is written, "And the Levite shall serve," meaning they would draw down the level of "He" (*hu*), referring to the hidden world, which is the ancient aspect (*Atik*) clothed within *binah*. They would bring this from concealment into revelation, and this was done through the songs they would sing over the wine, which corresponds to *binah*. This is the concept of "wine that cheers God and men," which brings the divine to a state of revelation for people. Through *binah*, one understands and grasps the greatness of God, and one's soul becomes inflamed with love for God.

This is also the concept of physical wine, which causes joy and the revelation of that which was hidden. As the saying goes, "When wine enters, secrets emerge" (Eruvin 65a). (See also the discourse on "And the Levite shall serve," and the discourse on *Lech Lecha* regarding the phrase "He made us.")

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But the difference between the wine libation and the water libation is as follows...***

"In everything that had wine, there was joy and gladness within it, and we rejoiced greatly during the festivals, clapping hands in celebration. However, this joy and gladness is not revealed throughout the year, but rather specifically during the festivals, which are designated for joy. Especially during Sukkot, which is referred to as 'the time of our rejoicing,' and also the wine libation. Wine is like when a person is moved and rejoices over something—even though the joy and excitement might be concealed from others. But when someone is truly moved by something, their joy is visible to everyone, and they sing and dance, removing the concealment due to the greatness of the joy."

"Similarly, even though throughout the year a person might be inspired by the infinite Divine light, which fills all worlds and surrounds all worlds, the joy remains concealed within them, as the vessel of the body limits its expression. However, during Sukkot, the joy is visible to everyone, because the light breaks through the vessel due to the overwhelming greatness of the joy and the immense revelation of that which was previously concealed. This is similar to what is written in the discourse on 'The Lord is my helper' regarding the spies, where it explains 'a land flowing with milk and honey,' symbolizing the additional light and revelation that the vessels cannot conceal. It is like the great noise and excitement when someone rejoices in a physical sense, singing and dancing with joy. Even more so is the spiritual rejoicing, with songs and praises before God, as it is written, 'And the angels ofanin, with a great noise' (Ezekiel 1:24). This is the concept of the wine libation throughout the year, and also during the festival of Sukkot, when they would also pour wine."

"The water libation, which took place during the festival, represents a much higher level of joy. Specifically, the wine libation represents *binah* (understanding), and the water libation represents *chochmah* (wisdom), which is far higher than *binah*. This difference is analogous to the difference between the roles of the Kohanim (priests) and the Levites, as it is explained in the Zohar (Part 3, 138a), that wine corresponds to the Levites, while water corresponds to the Kohanim. The natural property of water is that it flows from a high place to a low place, symbolizing the role of the Kohen, who brings down divine influence from the Kohen Gadol (High Priest) to all the Kohanim, as the Sages say, 'The Kohen Gadol takes the first portion because the head portion gives influence.' Wine, on the other hand, corresponds to the Levites, who elevate from a low place to a very high place, and their service is done with noise and song, representing revelation, as the Sages say, 'All the singers go out with song.' In contrast, water flows quietly, representing the service of the Kohanim, which is performed in silence."

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"Just as the Kohanim are on a higher level than the Levites, as it is written, 'They shall join you and serve you' (Numbers 18:2), so too, the water libation is much higher than the wine libation. Especially because the water used was 'living water,' which is known to correspond to a very high level of *chochmah*, as is explained elsewhere regarding the living waters used for the purification of the red heifer. Additionally, in the discourse on 'You shall tell your son,' it explains the difference between festivals (*Yom Tov*) and Shabbat: *Yom Tov* corresponds to the intellectual lights of *Ima* (mother, *binah*), which are connected to comprehension, while Shabbat corresponds to the intellectual lights of *Abba* (father, *chochmah*), which are beyond comprehension. In another place, it is explained that this is also the difference between 'blessing' and 'sanctity.' This is why it says regarding the Kohanim, 'You shall sanctify him' (Leviticus 21:8), while regarding the Levites, it says 'to purify them' (Numbers 8:7), as explained elsewhere in the discourse on 'Shabbat Shabbaton' and the verse 'I will make your windows of agate' (Isaiah 54:12)."

This translation covers the mystical discussion of the joy associated with the wine and water libations, their symbolic connections to different levels of divine intellect (*binah* and *chochmah*), and the roles of the Kohanim and Levites. It highlights how these elements are reflected in the service and celebrations during the festival of Sukkot, emphasizing the unique spiritual qualities of each.

"It is known that there is a distinction between the Written Torah (*Torah Shebichtav*) and the Oral Torah (*Torah Sheba'al Peh*). The Written Torah consists only of letters and their combinations, as the Sages said, 'The entire Torah is the names of the Holy One, blessed be He.' Therefore, all its letters are counted, so that no letter should be added or omitted, and every letter must be in its correct form and shape, as any deviation disqualifies it. The letters correspond to the level of *binah* (understanding), as explained elsewhere in reference to the verse 'You shall engrave upon it engravings of a seal' (Exodus 28:11), and see the commentary of the *Ramaz* at the beginning of Parshat Vayikra. It is clear from experience that when intellect reaches the level of understanding and comprehension, letters of thought are revealed. However, at the level of *chochmah* (wisdom), which is higher than comprehended intellect, there are no letters yet.

This is the concept of the letters of the Torah, as the Written Torah corresponds to the level of *binah*. *Binah* is referred to as the 'Book of the Torah,' as it says in the Zohar, Parshat Vayakhel (206a). This refers to the letters of thought. Even though the Torah emerges from *chochmah* ('Orayta mechochmah nafkat'—the Torah emerges from *chochmah*), relative to the Creator, it is on the level of *chochmah*, but relative to the

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creations, it is on the level of *binah*. (This is why there are fifty days between the Exodus from Egypt and the giving of the Torah, corresponding to the fifty gates of *binah*. On the fiftieth day, the Torah was given, as explained in the Zohar, Parshat Tetzaveh 183a.)

The Oral Torah corresponds to the level of *chochmah*, and there, the letters are not the main focus; rather, the intellect and understanding are primary, which are revealed within the letters. Therefore, the exact form of the letters is not as strict in the Oral Torah because, in the Oral Torah, the main focus is on the wisdom and comprehension. This is like what the Talmud says in reference to Rabbi Meir, 'What is the reasoning behind Rabbi Meir's opinion?'"

"And this is the concept of *ta'amim* (musical cantillation), which corresponds to the level of *chochmah* (wisdom), as is known. (And although, on a lower level, the Written Torah is associated with the level of *Zeir Anpin* (Z"A) and the Oral Torah is associated with *Malchut*, in truth, the verse 'With wisdom, He founded the earth' refers to *Malchut* of the Oral Torah, while 'He established the heavens' refers to *Zeir Anpin*, which is the Written Torah, through *binah*. See what is written on the verse 'The heavens are My throne, and the earth is My footstool,' etc.)

This clarifies the concept discussed earlier: the wine libation is written in the Torah, but the water libation is not written in the Torah and is instead a law from Moses at Sinai. This is because wine corresponds to *binah* (understanding) and the Written Torah. This is the meaning of 'the wine of Torah,' as will be explained below, and therefore it can be written in the Written Torah. However, the water libation, which corresponds to *chochmah* (wisdom), cannot be written in the Written Torah because it cannot manifest in the form of written letters. It corresponds to the intellectual aspects of *chochmah* and *binah*.

(And according to what is written in *Eitz Chaim*, Sha'ar 26, Chapter 1, it is understood that just as the relationship between the World of Atzilut and the World of Beriah is one of higher to lower, so too is the relationship between *chochmah* and *binah* in Atzilut itself. That is, *binah* is like the World of Beriah within Atzilut, while *chochmah*, and particularly *chochmah* referred to as 'living waters,' is like the level of Atzilut within Atzilut. This is why *binah* is referred to as 'water that can be questioned,' meaning that although it is concealed, it is the concealment that is connected to revelation, as in the verse 'He forms light and creates darkness.' Formation (*yetzirah*) is revelation, while creation (*beriah*) is concealment. This is the concealment related to revelation through thought and speech. But *chochmah*, which is Atzilut, regarding Atzilut, creation and

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formation are equal, as darkness is like light, as explained elsewhere. This is because the level of Atzilut is beyond the chain of worlds (*sefer hishtalshelut*) of Beriah, Yetzirah, and Asiyah. Therefore, both concealment and revelation within the chain of worlds, i.e., creation and formation, are equal compared to Atzilut.)

Now, through the water libation on the festival (of Sukkot), we draw down the revelation of the concealment that is beyond the chain of worlds. This is the level of *chochmah*, which is Atzilut, the intellectual aspect of *chochmah*, and therefore it is much higher than the wine libation, which corresponds to the intellectual aspect of *binah* that reveals the concealed within the chain of worlds.

(And see what is written in the discourse on 'Shir HaShirim' regarding the verse 'Your love is better than wine.' This is similar to the splitting of the Sea of Reeds, where the sea and the dry land correspond to the concealment and revelation of the chain of worlds, the hidden world (*alma d'itkasya*) and the revealed world (*alma d'itgalia*). But through the 'eastern wind,' which is the primordial aspect of the world, beyond the chain of worlds, the sea turned into dry land, because there, both are equal, as darkness is like light, as mentioned above.)

And this clarifies the statement of our Sages on the verse 'Your love is better than wine': 'The words of the Scribes are more pleasing to me than the wine of the Torah.' We need to understand: Who are the 'Scribes,' and what is 'the wine of Torah'?

The matter is explained in the *Sefer Yetzirah*, where it says that God created His world with three things: *sofer* (scribe), *sefer* (book), and *sipur* (story). *Sofer* refers to *chochmah* (wisdom), which influences the *sefer* (*binah*, corresponding to thought), and *sipur* corresponds to speech, which receives from thought, for without thought, speech cannot exist. (And these three aspects correspond to the creation of the world, because the creation of the worlds comes from the 'word of God,' which is the level of *sipur* (speech), and speech receives from thought, which is called *sefer* (book), and this thought is drawn from *chochmah*, which is called *sofer* (scribe). This is the meaning of 'In the beginning, God created,' which means that through *chochmah*, it is drawn into thought, and from thought into speech.)

This is the meaning of 'The words of the Scribes are more pleasing to me,' referring to the level of *sofer*, which is *chochmah*, and that is the root of the Oral Torah. The water libation is higher than the wine of Torah, which is the Written Torah, called *sefer* and corresponding to *binah*. The wine libation, which corresponds to *chochmah* (wisdom), the level of *sofer*, is much higher than the level of *binah*, which is the level of *sefer* (book).

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(And see what is written in the discourse on 'Where is the scribe?' and on the verse 'I am black but beautiful,' regarding the concepts of *sofer* and the words of the Scribes, etc.) However, although *chochmah* is higher than *binah*, *chochmah* and *binah* are 'two friends that never separate.' Therefore, they always need to be connected below through an awakening from below, which draws down an awakening from above. This is the meaning of 'You will draw water with joy.' Water corresponds to *chochmah*, and 'with joy' corresponds to *binah*, and through this, the two levels of *chochmah* and *binah* are connected as 'two friends that never separate.'

(And see what is written elsewhere in the discourse on 'See, I am giving you' regarding this concept—how in the service of God, a person below must always unite the two aspects of *chochmah* and *binah* together, as a 'point within the palace,' and it is impossible for one aspect to exist alone. See there for further explanation. And see the discourse on 'You shall know today,' regarding 'peace, peace to the far and the near.')

This is why people of action would sing and dance during the water libation, and also why water was poured together with the wine during the wine libation, as mentioned by Maimonides at the end of his laws."

Laws of the Daily and Additional Offerings: This is also the concept mentioned in the Zohar (Parshat Balak, 188a) on the verse "And he brought him wine" — that this refers to drawing water with that wine.

To understand the concept of "from the wells of salvation," we first need to explain the verse "I will lift the cup of salvation." This was said by King David (peace be upon him) about his attribute, which corresponds to the *sefirot* (attributes) of *Atzilut* (the World of Emanation), known as the "cup of salvation." As the Zohar explains (Parshat Vayechi, 210a), "With this cup, the blessings are drawn from the higher salvations," and he [David] took them and gathered them unto himself. Just as speech serves as a vessel that channels and enclothes the powers of the soul (such as intellect and emotions), so too is *Malchut* (sovereignty) the vessel through which the flow of all ten *sefirot* is drawn down. This is the meaning of Hallel at the Rejoicing of the Water Drawing, "If I am here, everything is here," as explained in the Zohar (addenda to Part 1, 12a). And the Zohar explains that "salvation" refers to the right hand, as it is written, "His right hand saved him." And in Parshat Bereishit (1a), it is explained that these are the five strong leaves that surround the rose, which represent the five *Gevurot* (strengths) sweetened by the five *Chesed* (kindnesses), as explained in the Zohar's commentary on Bereishit. The concept of salvation is that *Malchut* of *Atzilut* descends to give life to the worlds of *Briya*, *Yetzira*, and *Asiya* (Creation, Formation, and Action), as it is written, "Her feet go down

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to death," meaning that it needs salvation to prevent the external forces from taking hold. Thus, David said, "I will lift the cup of salvation," meaning to elevate the cup to *Atzilut*, where no evil can dwell.

This is the concept of "from the wells of salvation," referring to the wellspring from which salvation flows to the cup of blessing. This is like what is explained elsewhere regarding the meaning of "Let us bless" in the Grace after Meals, which corresponds to what is written in the Zohar, Parshat Bo (42b), concerning the concepts of a source, a wellspring, and a reservoir. The wellspring is drawn from the source, and the reservoir collects the flow from the wellspring. The meaning of "Let us bless" is to draw down this concept of a reservoir, from which the flow continues to the cup of blessing that receives from the reservoir. This is the concept of the "wells of salvation" (which corresponds to the foundations of Abba and Ima, as the Zohar explains in Parshat Balak, 189b, that the wells of salvation are Abba and Ima, and everything flows from these deep wellsprings).

This also connects to the future prophecy, "A spring will come forth from the House of the Lord and water the valley of Shittim," which refers to the present time, when the flow is from the river that goes out of Eden, which is the level of *binah* (understanding). As it descends, it becomes separated, as it is written, "From there it was divided," and it becomes a distinct entity. However, when the revelation will be from the level of a spring, corresponding to *chochmah* (wisdom), "where wisdom is found from nothingness," it will water even the Valley of Shittim, meaning that the revelation of self-nullification will extend even to the lowest levels. This also helps explain the superiority of the water libation, which comes from the level of the wellspring, representing the level of *chochmah*, which is far higher than the wine libation, which corresponds to *binah* and the river that flows from Eden (see Zohar, Parshat Chukat, 188a). It can also be said that these deep wellsprings correspond to the two Mazalot, "Noseh" and "Nakeh," from which Abba and Ima receive.

According to the explanation of the Ramaz on the verse "I will lift the cup of salvation," these salvations are drawn from the *Yesod* of *Atik* (a higher spiritual level) which is enclosed within Arich Anpin (a higher manifestation of God's attributes). Therefore, the wells of salvation come from Arich Anpin. Another interpretation in the Zohar, Parshat Balak, is that the wells of salvation are Netzach and Hod (the *sefirot* of Eternity and Splendor). The Pardes discusses the connection between this and the idea that "He who fears the Lord will be pure from the wells of salvation."

Now, based on what was explained earlier regarding the water libation not being written in the Written Torah because it comes from the level of *sofer* (scribe), which is above the

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level of *sefer* (book), we can also understand the concept of the Hakafot (circling the Torah) on Simchat Torah, which are not written even in the Oral Torah and are merely a custom. This is because they represent the encircling lights of Abba, which are so high that they cannot be written down, not even in the Oral Torah, which is the inner light of *chochmah*.

This is similar to what is explained elsewhere regarding the evening prayer being considered voluntary, because this drawing down comes from such a high place that human effort (awakening from below) does not reach there. Therefore, it is not a full obligation. See Zohar, Part 1, 133a. Another explanation for "drawing water with joy" is that it was a time of great joy because the drawing of the water symbolized the illumination of *chochmah* from a distance, as it is written, "I said, 'I will become wise,' but it is far from me." This is the concept..."

"This is also related to the idea of 'And his sister stood from afar' (Exodus 2:4), and it is written, 'Say to wisdom, "You are my sister"' (Proverbs 7:4). See the commentary *Mikdash Melech* on Parshat Toldot (142a), which explains 'From afar, God appeared to me' (Jeremiah 31:3). However, from the level of *binah* (understanding), it draws closer, as in 'As one whom his mother comforts' (Isaiah 66:13). This is why 'the mother of children is joyous' (Psalms 113:9), for joy is the aspect of revelation, which comes specifically from *binah*. This is the idea of 'wine that gladdens' (Psalms 104:15), which is connected to *binah*.

However, during Sukkot, the Jewish people have the ability to draw down the level of *chochmah* (wisdom) so that *chochmah* also shines in a state of closeness and revelation, similar to *binah*. This is the meaning of 'A wise son makes his father glad' (Proverbs 10:1)—specifically, a wise son. See more on this in the discourse on 'BeYom HaShemini Atzeret'. This is the joy of the Water Drawing Celebration (*Simchat Beit HaShoeva*), where the level of 'living waters'—the higher level of *chochmah*—is drawn down in a state of revelation and closeness, similar to 'the mother of children is joyous,' where joy is the aspect of revelation. This means that at that time, the intellectual lights of Abba (*chochmah*) are revealed just as much as the intellectual lights of Ima (*binah*), and this power comes through the repentance of Yom Kippur, as it is written, 'Before God, you shall be purified' (Leviticus 16:30), etc. Through repentance, the level of *keter* (the crown, which is above *chochmah*) is aroused, and then, through the revelation of *keter* within *chochmah*, it causes *chochmah* to shine in a state of revelation.

See what is written on the verse 'I have gathered my myrrh' (Song of Songs 5:1), which explains that when a wise person receives many new intellectual insights, they are

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compelled to reveal a little of their wisdom because they cannot contain the abundance of light. This is similar to what is written in another place regarding the verse 'Then your light will break forth like the dawn' (Isaiah 58:8). See also the explanation of 'I will exalt You, O Lord, for You have lifted me up' (Psalms 30:2), where this concept is explained. And see what is written in Parshat Shemot in the discourse 'Who has made man's mouth' (Exodus 4:11). This is also the meaning of 'Your pious ones will rejoice' (Psalms 149:5), as explained in the Zohar, Parshat Vayeitzei (148b).

Just as repentance brings the distant near, so too it draws down from above, making that which is on the level of *chochmah*—which is distant—shine in a state of closeness. See the explanation on the verse 'And I pleaded' (Deuteronomy 3:23), etc.

It is also explained in the discourse on 'You shall tell your son' that the holiday (Yom Tov) is associated with joy because it corresponds to the intellectual lights of *Ima* (*binah*), which are connected to comprehension. However, on Shabbat, the intellectual lights of *Abba* (*chochmah*)—which are beyond comprehension—there is no joy, only nullification (*bitul*). Similarly, the 'pure waters' of *chochmah ila'ah* (the higher *chochmah*) are not associated with joy. But after Yom Kippur, which is higher than Shabbat and *chochmah ila'ah*, Sukkot draws down the light of *chochmah* in a state of closeness and comprehension. Therefore, there is joy during the water libation (*nisuch ha-mayim*), which is joy in the aspect of nullification, as explained in the discourse on 'When Pharaoh sent the people' regarding the verse 'And He did not lead them through the land of the Philistines' (Exodus 13:17). This is the meaning of 'the wells of salvation,' which prevent the external forces from taking hold, for *chochmah* repels them. Similarly, the joy of nullification."