

## MAPPING THE THIRTEEN ATTRIBUTES OF MERCY BY RAV DOVBER PINSON

After the episode of the golden calf, Moshe Rabbeinu re-ascends to the Divine Presence to seek atonement for the people. "If you do not forgive them, wipe me out of this book." Hashem accepts this prayer. Moshe goes a step further and asks to see the Infinite glory. Hashem says, "You will not see my face... but my back." Hashem 'passes by', and reveals these Thirteen Attributes of Mercy. The Midrash envisions Hashem as embodying them--as wearing a *tallis* and *tefillin* of the Attributes.

The Zohar correlates these thirteen with a parallel thirteen found in the Book of Michah. This correlation can be viewed in the Tashlich service in the siddur. The Arizal correlates the attributes shown to

Moshe with the various parts of the Divine "Beard" (reflected in the human beard). The Arizal also correlates these attributes with sefiros within Keser. Some Kabbalist's, as the Bnei Yissachar points out, confirm that the way to activate the Attributes is simply by reciting them. The RaMaK suggests that they must be actively embodied, and in *Tomer Devorah* he describes how to do this. He says a person should become like his Master.

Rashi (on these verses) begins counting from the name/attribute *Keil*. This perhaps implies that *Hashem Hashem* (usually counted as 1 and 2), here symbolize Divine Essence/*Atzmus*. The Thirteen are therefore revelations that flow from *Keser*, Crown,

which corresponds to the world of *Atzilus*, the realmless realm of unmanifest manifestations of Essence.

Keser is above fixed categories of mercy and judgment. This reminds us that each of the Thirteen is inherently paradoxical. When to us it seems that the path of embodiment is unhealthy or merely "co-dependent enabling", we're forgetting that these are Divine Attributes within Keser. We cannot approach them from a "victimized" or reactive or dualistic consciousness. Embodying them presumes self-mastery. Also, all of these embodiment practices are only real if they are done within the context of halacha. Halachicly, we must act to prevent a violent person from

hurting people, but this is putting Hashem's judgment into effect, not ours. We can remain merciful and positive. Theoretically then, we could actively embody forgiveness toward someone even while we're placing them in prison.

How do you become like your Master--how do embody Keser? Through action. Attributes 1-8 are more revealed. As we rise higher and enter Keser of Keser, we begin to embody more interior attributes of Hashem. Thus, 9-13 are similar to 1-8, but are more radically compassionate. The highest levels, the mind/*mochin* or ChaBaD or ultimate reasoning of Keser is not revealed. It is our mission to reveal the *mochin* of Keser, and we do this through Torah contemplation...

	Attribute as revealed by/to the prophet Michah	Attribute as revealed by/to Moshe Rabbeinu	Part of the Divine "Beard", reflected in the human beard (Arizal)	Sefirah (Arizal)	Path of Embodying the Attribute: b.) Our Master's model 'embodiment' b.) Our way of embodiment (from RaMaK, <i>Tomer Devorah</i> )
1	Mi Keil Kamocha Who is like You, G-d!	Keil G-d	Small hairs under Peyos	Malchus of Chochma of Keser	a.) The Ultimate Reality is <i>savlanis</i> --radically tolerant. Even when we rebel, Hashem continues to give us the very life-force we're using against 'Him'. b.) We can continue to give, even when the recipient is using it against us, like giving a child confidence, even when he uses that confidence for rebellion
2	Nosei Avon Who "lifts" iniquity	Rachum Merciful	Moustache (halachically one can trim or even remove)	Yesod of Chochma of Keser	a.) Hashem continues this <i>savlanus</i> to the point that we ourselves finally remove our negativity, or until it 'naturally' lifts. b.) We can tolerate others until they wake up and correct themselves.
3	V'oveir al Pesha And overlooks transgression	Chanun Gracious	Hairless part in indentation under nose	Hod of Chochma of Keser	a.) Hashem, beyond 'tolerance', lowers Himself to clean up our messes directly. b.) We can actively and directly help someone who hurts us. (Hod is humility.)
4	Lisheiris Nachalaso For the remembrance of His inheritance	Erech Long/slow	Denser hair under center of lip	Netzach of Chochma of Keser	a.) Hashem calls us His wife, His daughter, His sister, His mother. He allows us to feel close, or as part of Him. He feels and honors our suffering and joy as His Own, and embraces us accordingly. b.) We can feel the suffering and joy of others as our own--the other <i>is</i> us--like Rachel Imeinu, who honored her sister Leah when Leah married Rachel's beloved.
5	Lo Hechezik Lo'ad Apo Who has not retained His anger eternally	Apayim Anger (Merciful)	Lighter hair under # 4 above	Tiferes of Chochma of Keser	a.) Hashem can manifest corrective 'anger', but quickly repents and puts aside his anger, even when we hold onto our anger or are unrepentant. He withholds Himself in hopes that we will turn to Him, and seeks to lovingly bring us close. b.) We can use loving anger and admonishment when objectively helpful, and when we are emotionally equanimous. We should be ready to drop it instantly. Even when someone is hurting us, we can seek loving reconciliation.

6	Ki Chofeitz Chesed Hu For He desires kindness	Rav Chesed Great Kindness	Place here hair starts to widen on cheeks, descending from peyos areas	Gevurah of Chochma of Keser	a.) Hashem desires to see the good, the <i>chesed</i> in us, and He multiplies it in His eyes. He creates angels that overlook our negative deeds, and promote our good deeds. b.) We can look to the good in others and 'multiply' it. This is done through <i>gevurah</i> , because we have to overcome our inclination to react to the other's negativity in order to emphasize the good.
7	Yashuv V'rachameinu He will again be merciful to us	V'emes And Truth	Hairless place under eyes	Chesed of Chochma of Keser	a.) When we say we're sorry, Hashem loves us even more than before our mistake. Even a tzaddik can't stand where a baal teshuvah can stand, in Hashem's eyes. b.) When someone wants to return to us and make up, we can allow our intimacy with them to become even greater than before.
8	Yichbosh Avonoseinu He will suppress/vanquish our iniquities	Notzer Chesed Preserving Kindness	"Goatee" area under chin: The end, or main part of beard.	Binah of Chochma of Keser	a.) Hashem presses down ( <i>yichbosh</i> ) our negativity so it doesn't arise into his presence; He is only 'aware' of our goodness. b.) We can see only goodness in other. This is similar to #6, but on a higher level: <i>bina</i> instead of <i>gevurah</i> --the awareness of negativity doesn't arise in the first place.
9	V'sachlich bimtzulos yam col chatosam And cast into the depths of the sea all their sins	La'alafim To Thousands	Lighter hairs further under the jaw (more hidden)	Hod of Keser of Keser	a.) In the future, Hashem will transform the Samech Mem, the satanic force, into goodness. This will cause it great suffering. Because of this punishment, Hashem will have compassion on it, and draw it close. b.) When we see a very destructive person suffering, we can reward them in a sense, and compassionately <i>m'karev</i> them.
10	Titein Emes L'yaakov Grant Truth to Jacob	Nosei avon Forgiving (lifting or carrying the burden of) iniquity,	Area from base of the neck up to the top of the throat	Netzach of Keser of Keser	a.) Hashem sees that the <i>beinonim</i> , the normal 'good Jews', ( <i>Yaakov</i> ) are serving Him truthfully according to the law. He rewards them measure for measure ( <i>midah-kneged-midah</i> ), by being true: carrying the burden of their sins, their untruths, (as if He did them--see #4 which is also <i>Netzach</i> ). Thus, He lifts their sins to the level of His Truth. b.) We can see others as truthful, and in unity with Hashem we can lift and take possession of their actions--reward them by embodying Truth for them.
11	Chesed L'avraham Kindness to Abraham	Vafesha And transgression,	Micro-hairs on neck (all equal length)	Tiferes of Keser of Keser	a.) Hashem sees everyone as a <i>chasid</i> , one who lovingly goes beyond the letter of the law. Hashem rewards everyone infinitely, beyond <i>midah-kneged-midah</i> . b.) We can "surround ourselves with good people"--see everyone around us as worthy of infinite reward, and reward them beyond what is logical.
12	Asher Nishbata La'avoseinu As You swore to our ancestors	V'chataah And sin,	The mouth itself	Gevurah of Keser of Keser	a.) Hashem rewards people who are lacking any righteousness from the Treasury of Unearned Gifts. He looks back into their ancestry to find merit. b.) Even if we can't find any goodness in someone, we can realize that their ancestors were holy, and reward them on that basis.
13	Mimei Kedem From ancient times	V'nakei And He Cleanses.	Stronger hair under the jaw, closer to neck than #9	Chesed of Keser of Keser	a.) Even when there is no merit to be found in a meritless person's ancestry, then <i>mamash</i> Hashem rewards them on the basis of the <i>kadmonios</i> , the earliest time in that person's life. There was surely some goodness in them when they were an innocent baby. b.) We can envision even a completely negative person as he was when nursing his mother. We can remind this person of this innocent state. This is the ultimate mercy. (Note that the word <i>rachamim</i> comes from <i>rechem</i> , 'womb')

"I remember the affection of your youth,...how you followed Me into the Wilderness, ..." Yirmiyahu, 2:2