

An offering for the 5th of Tammuz 5775 Monday June 22, 2015
on the 1st Yahrzeit for Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi

Tobie Hoffman
with special thanks to Daniel Sapon
P'nai Or Philadelphia

Psalm 48 The psalm for Monday of the Levites in the Holy Temple

In psalm 48, God is exalted and praised in the natural world, in the city of Jerusalem, in the Holy Temple, by kings and mountains, and daughters of Judah. These are the final words of the psalm as translated by Reb Zalman in *Psalms in translation for praying* (<https://aleph.org/psalms>)

*Go round Zion,
encircle her;
take note of her towers.
Set your heart on her strengths;
raise her mansions high.
Then you will tell about it
to generations yet to come.
This is God, our God!
Forever and ever.
He will guide us past death*

The Hebrew word **s'bu** in the first line, translated **Go round**, is the same root as the Hebrew word for dreidl /**Sivivon**. Think of what it would mean to be spinning in a 360 degree circuit at the same time as you encircle. Unlike the unstable dreidel, this motion is more like a well-engineered gyroscope whose axis of rotation is free to assume any orientation.

This revolving and rotating can be rather dizzying. But imagine how much more understanding you could gain about the unity of God by looking forward, backward, inward, outward, around, upside down. Imagine the exciting and surprising towers of wisdom you could *take note of* to tell *the generations yet to come*. Imagine in your spinning, learning that there are untold ways to say that the world really is One, really is unified.

Oh my! R. Zalman was someone who could *saviv*.

He chose over and over to count and review the towers and mansions of his beloved Jewish people while also spinning gloriously to view the beloveds throughout the earth. R. Zalman invited us on this gyroscope of his as he created myriads of ways to learn with him and from him while he was alive. Many joyfully strapped in to accompany him on this dizzying journey.

The elegant phrasing of his translation of the last line gave me pause on this first yahrzeit and in light of the tragedies in our midst. The final line in the Hebrew is sometimes translated as *God who will guide us forever*. R. Zalman didn't back away from the literal translation of the final Hebrew word *Moot*.

He wrote (God) He will guide us past death. May we use what we learned from R. Zalman in life to continue to cheer each other on: *s'bu Zion v'hakifuhah*. Let us exalt and proclaim to generations yet to come – simply - *this is God, Our God*