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Ani LeDodi VeDodi Li: The Month of Elul - Section III

From the teachings of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi; adapted by Eli Touger

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The Additions of The Tzemach Tzedek

אך [To complement the spiritual power of the service of *teshuvah* described above,] each person must seek an additional course of action for the sake of his soul. [The service required] is alluded to in the following passage:

The concepts that follow are amplified in the maamar beginning Ani LeDodi, 5739.

בשווקים In the marketplaces and the streets, I will search for the one whom my soul has loved....

In the verse, the alef of the word שאהבה, is written with a kametz, implying a love relationship that is long-established. As the Tzemach Tzedek indicates in his additions (endnote xxi), this alludes to the fact that even before the souls came into existence, they existed in G-d's mind, as it were, and a bond of love was then established.

When I found the one whom my soul has loved, I held fast to him and did not let him go until I brought him into my mother's house and into the chamber in which I was conceived.¹, xxi

והנה The search is carried out "in the marketplaces and the streets," [i.e.,] in the place where the loss occurred.

As explained in the previous section, it is sometimes necessary to confront the evil within one's personality, not merely devote oneself to doing good.

אך Nevertheless, [even when the search is successful, and through *teshuvah*], the person "finds the lost object" [and thus identifies with his inner G-dly potential], the light of G-d will not be maintained without vessels. [For without them, his inability to retain the light] will cause it to depart. It is thus necessary to make vessels for the G-dly light. These are the letters of the Torah. Thus, in the above passage, "my mother's house" refers to the Written Law, and "the chamber in which I was conceived," to the Oral Law.²

הורתי, translated as "I was conceived," relates to the term הוראה, "halachic directive." It is through the Oral Law that we arrive at directives for Torah observance.

ש"כ [This concept is clarified] by the verse:³ "G-d, your L-rd, is a consuming fire." Just as a fire cannot take hold except through a wick or another entity, [the revelation of G-dliness must have something to

which to attach itself. This is the implication of the verse], “I held fast to him and did not let him go until I brought him into my mother’s house.”^{xxii}

I.e., the positive impetus toward Divine service aroused by teshuvah must be anchored within our personalities through Torah study.

וכדאיתא This is also implied by the *Zohar*’s⁴ interpretation of the expression, “the shepherd among the roses.” [Noting that the Hebrew for “roses”, שושנים, shares the same letters as] ששונים, “those who study,” [our Sages comment: “Do not read ‘among the roses,’ read] ‘among those who study Torah law.’”

Not only does this study benefit the soul of the person studying, it has far wider consequences.

The word “shepherd” is used since [through this study, the Jews become like shepherds, so to speak, as our Sages say]: “[The people of] Israel sustain their Father in Heaven.”⁵

מפני Through the study of the Torah, which embodies G-d’s will, “the spirit

Man’s spirited Torah study.

brings a Spirit

I.e., arouse a Spirit Above, generating Divine energy.

and draws to it [that] Spirit,”⁶

“Draw[ing] to it that Spirit” implies that the person causes the Divine energy to be drawn down into this material realm.

causing the inner aspect of G-d’s will to rest and be revealed within the individual concerned. [To illustrate this concept:] When a person eats, his soul becomes connected to his body, causing the faculties of his soul to be expressed within it more powerfully. Similarly, “[The people of] Israel sustain, [i.e., perform a function equivalent to the provision of food for,] their Father in Heaven.”⁷

Just as a shepherd nurtures his flock, the Jews provide nurture for G-d, as it were.

Through one’s involvement in Torah and *mitzvos*, which are G-d’s will, “the spirit brings a Spirit and draws to it a Spirit,” causing the radiance of the sublime will to rest and become manifest [within him], with a shining countenance, through the letters of the Torah.

ג [This] is also [accomplished through] the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*,

Tzedakah involves giving life and vitality to one who is needy. Since all of our deeds draw down a parallel influence from Above, giving tzedakah causes G-d, as it were, to grant life and vitality to the created beings.

the attribute of *Chessed* (kindness) which is the external manifestation and vessel that can contain the qualities of light and love, which are its inner dimensions,

Tzedakah is generally translated as charity (note, however, Likkutei Sichos, Vol. II, p. 410). Its meaning is not, however, confined to gifts of money, but all gifts, even a smile, can be seen as tzedakah. For example, when a mashpia, a person who serves as a source of influence, gives to someone on a lower level, he is also giving of himself; he is conveying light and love from his inner being.

as we say,⁸ “For in the light of Your countenance...You have granted us a Torah of life and the love of kindness.” The explanation is that the light of G-d’s countenance has two mediums — Torah and kindness⁹ — [through which it is drawn down to this material realm], as clarified above.

Summary

[After searching for and establishing a connection to G-d through *teshuvah*, a person must follow the course of action alluded to in] the verses: “[When I found the one whom my soul has loved,] I held fast to him and did not let him go.”^{xxiii}

[After a person successfully] discovers [a means to] reveal this love, he must “hold fast to ‘him’” and, [by making the appropriate vessels,] “bring ‘him’ into my mother’s house,” [i.e., the study of] the Written Law,^{xxiv} and “into the chamber in which I was conceived,” [i.e., the study of] the Oral Law.^{xxv}

[This also relates to the *Zohar*’s interpretation of the expression:] “the shepherd among the roses” as referring to “those who study Torah law.” [The word “shepherd” is used since through this study, the Jews become like shepherds, so to speak, as our Sages say:] “[The people of] Israel sustain [their Father in Heaven.” This also arouses] sustenance [for the Jews].^{xxvi} The two mediums, Torah study and kindness, [draw down G-d’s light and love].^{xxvii}

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FOOTNOTES

1. *Shir HaShirim* 3:2, 4.

2. See *Zohar*, Vol. III, p. 40b.

3. *Devarim* 4:24.

4. *Zohar*, Vol. II, p. 20b. See also *Shabbos* 30b and the second *maamar* entitled *Ani LeDodi*, *Likkutei Torah, Devarim*, p. 33a ff.
5. *Zohar*, Vol. III, p. 7b.
6. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 162b.
7. *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 7b.
8. The daily liturgy, in the blessing *Sim Shalom* in the *Shemonah Esreh* prayer.
9. See *Berachos* 5b.

FROM THE TEACHINGS OF RABBI SCHNEUR ZALMAN OF LIADI; ADAPTED BY ELI TOUGER

Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi (18 Elul 1745-24 Tevet 1812), known as "the Alter Rebbe," was one of the main disciples of the Maggid of Mezritch, and the founder of the Chabad Chassidism. He is the author of *Shulchan Aruch HaRav* and *Tanya* as well as many other major works in both Jewish law and the mystical teachings.

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