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Tziyon BeMishpat Tipadeh: The Month of Av - Introduction

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

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This *maamar* focuses on the spiritual implications of the verse that concludes the *Haftorah* read on the *Shabbos* preceding Tishah BeAv:¹ “Zion will be redeemed through judgment and her captives, through charity.” To enable us to understand the meaning of this redemptive process, the Alter Rebbe first explains that exile is an unnatural spiritual state that prevents a soul from realizing its inherent potential. When exiled, the soul’s essential connection to G-dliness lies dormant, buried under material preoccupations; its emotional energy diverted into worldly concerns.

As The Pendulum Swings

To explain: Every person experiences emotional highs and lows. The ebb and flow between these two states is a natural fact of the human condition. But the acid test for one’s spiritual sensitivity is identifying what actually motivates our feelings. Knowing the triggers of our emotions is a vital factor in understanding and advancing the spiritual state of our souls.

The natural state of the G-dly soul is to feel happiness and bitterness in response to spiritual concerns. When a person contemplates the unique bond with G-d that can be established through Divine service in this material world, he will rejoice at every opportunity for enhancing such a connection and feel bitterness whenever that connection is obstructed.

Unfortunately, however, instead of being focused on the spiritual, our feelings of happiness and bitterness are often elicited by worldly matters. This indicates that our souls have wandered into exile and our spiritual qualities have been taken captive and enslaved by foreign masters.

Reversing The Trend

The *maamar* does not merely describe the spiritual counterpart of exile, it also guides us in departing from that state. Torah study empowers the inner dimensions of the soul and enables them to be redirected towards its G-dly core. And charity, showing mercy to others, evokes G-d’s mercy, motivating Him to grant us the understanding to change the course of our conduct. This is the true inner meaning of an individual’s experience of redemption from spiritual exile. Afterwards, as a natural consequence, such a

person serves as a catalyst to bring redemption to the world at large.

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FOOTNOTES

1. *Yeshayahu* 1:27.

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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