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## Tziyon BeMishpat Tipadeh: The Month of Av - Section I

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

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**ציון “Zion will be redeemed through judgment and her captives, through charity.”** *Yeshayahu 1:27.*<sup>1</sup>

**הנה** [The verse requires explanation, for the term “Zion” here refers not to the city itself, but to its exiled inhabitants.]<sup>1</sup>

*From the context, it appears that the term “Zion” appears to refer to the Jewish people as a whole.*

[What then is the difference between “Zion” and “her captives”?]

[This question can be resolved through an understanding of the concepts of exile and redemption. Exile is an unnatural spiritual state, one in which the soul is prevented from realizing its inherent potential.]

**והיו** [The soul’s inherent potential can be understood through an explanation of the verse:]<sup>2</sup> “And these words

*I.e., The words of the Torah,*

which I command you today [shall be on your heart].” “Today” means “every day,” because every day [the words of the Torah] should be regarded as new.<sup>3</sup>

*This concept is stated as a halachic directive in the Shulchan Aruch, indicating that it is relevant to every person.*

[The question,] however, [arises]: How can one reach such an appreciation? [Doing so appears to run contrary to our natural tendencies.]

*Since we live in the context of time, it would be seemingly impossible for us to continually relate to an event that occurred in the past as a present-day happening.*

**ויובן** This [difficulty] can be resolved by first [clarifying] the ultimate purpose of the descent of the souls from above, from the level on which they existed before the six days of Creation. [The source of the souls is higher than that of all created beings, even those of the spiritual realms. This is evident from the fact that] in the process of Creation, the angels were created from the breath of G-d’s mouth:<sup>4</sup> on the second

day according to some, and according to others, on the fifth.<sup>5</sup> [As support for the second opinion,] the phrase,<sup>6</sup> “and fowl that fly,” is interpreted<sup>7</sup> as referring to [the archangel] Michael.

*Although in practice the angels are on a higher level of spirituality than the created beings of this material world, their superiority refers to their spiritual perception alone. There is no fundamental difference between the degree of their connection with G-d and that of the other created beings.*

**אבל** Souls, however, are drawn down [from a higher level. The Creation as a whole came into being through speech. The souls, by contrast,] are drawn down from the level of thought

*There is a fundamental difference between speech and thought. Through speech, a person relates to others outside of himself, while thought is contained within himself. In the analogue, this means that entities created through G-d’s speech see themselves as separate from Him. In contrast, those which come into being from His thought sense the inner oneness they share with Him.*

and existed [even] before the six days of Creation, as our Sages comment:<sup>8</sup> “With whom did [G-d] consult [concerning the Creation]? With the souls of the righteous.”

*Obviously, this does not refer to “consultation” in the ordinary sense. Instead, the intent is that G-d saw the pleasure and satisfaction that He would derive from the Divine service of the righteous and, hence, brought the world into being.*

[Now,] this does not refer to [the souls of] righteous men alone, [but, rather, includes every member of the Jewish people,] as it is written:<sup>9</sup> “Your nation are all righteous.”

*For the righteous deeds of every individual play a role in bringing G-d’s intent in creation to fulfillment.*

**וירידתן** [Since the souls descend from such a lofty source, we must understand the purpose of their descent.]

*For, seemingly, the descent into a material body in this material world creates challenges for a soul in its Divine service.*

[It is explained that] the descent of the souls into the body is for the purpose of ascent. The nature of this ascent, however, requires explanation. Since [the souls of the Jewish people] “arose in G-d’s thought,”<sup>10</sup> [to what higher level can they ascend as a result of their descent into this material world]?

*The Alter Rebbe is asking: Since souls exist on the level of G-d's thought, a rung that is by nature above the Creation, what advantage can the descent into the material world — which came into being through speech, a lower level — bring them?*

**ולהבין** [This concept can be clarified] by prefacing with the interpretation of [the words recited in the morning blessing]: “The soul which You placed within me is pure.” This is the beginning of our [daily] prayers,

*The fact that this statement is made at the beginning of our daily prayers indicates that it reflects a theme of general relevance. As will be explained, the words of the blessing describe the soul's descent to this material plane and the elevated level that can be achieved through this descent.*

recited even before the blessing *Asher Yatzar*.

*Although in practice, this blessing is presently recited after the blessing Asher Yatzar (see the Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Aruch 6:7), it was originally intended to be the very first prayer recited upon awakening. (In that era, the practice of reciting Modeh Ani had not been adopted. See Kuntres Inyano Shel Toras HaChassidus, sec. 10. and notes.)*

As the *Talmud* states:<sup>11</sup> <sup>ii</sup> “When a person awakes from sleep, he should say: ‘My G-d, the soul which You placed within me is pure.’” The intent of the term “pure” is that [the soul] derives from [the level described as] “the sublime purity.”

*I.e., tehiru ilaah, a level identified with Adam Kadmon, a lofty spiritual rung, far above all limited spiritual existence, including even the world of Atzilus.*

**ואח"כ** Afterwards, [the soul descends, as implied by the continuation of the blessing]: “You created it.”

*The Tzemach Tzedek, loc. cit., notes that although the phrase “You created it” is included in the blessing recited every morning, it is not part of the text of the Talmud. It is, however, included in the text of the blessing found in the Halachos of R. Yitzchak Alfasi and the Mishneh Torah of Rambam (the Rebbe's notes to Or HaTorah).*

The term “creation” implies something brought into being from nothingness.

*Thus the world of Beriah (“creation”) refers to a realm in which entities begin feeling their own selfhood. The descent to such a realm — and, certainly, the subsequent descents — represents a challenging transition for the soul.*

[And then it descends further, as the blessing continues:] “You blew it into me,” [referring to] the enclothing of the soul within the body to give it life.

ואתה “And You preserve it [within me],” so that it will not depart from the body. [The process of preserving the soul within the body refers to] an encompassing light.<sup>12</sup>

*See the gloss of Rama to the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 6:1) which explains that because the soul is spiritual and the body, physical, there has to be a unique Divine force transcending them both that maintains the connection between them.*

In a similar way,

*I.e., there are two dimensions: a) the soul that enclothes itself in the body; and b) the Divine force that encompasses both the body and the soul and preserves their connection. Similarly, in the parallel in the world at large, there is a Divine force that enclothes itself in the world and grants it life. And there is a second emanation of Divine energy that encompasses the world.*

G-d’s infinite light “encompasses all the worlds”

*Sovev kol almin in the original.*

and “fills all the worlds.”

*Memale kol almin in the original.*

The intent is not that [G-d’s light] encompasses the world from above, [i.e., surrounding it without permeating it].

*I.e., this level of Divine light does not encompass the world in a physical sense. Instead, the intent is that while this light is invested within the world, it is not openly revealed because of its lofty nature.*

Instead, the intent is that [the light] fills every place and corner, [causing] vitality to be enclothed within a created being and, [at the same time,] encompassing it on a higher plane, preserving it so that the life-energy will not cease and depart.<sup>iii</sup>

*Thus every entity in the world is maintained by two types of Divine light:*

*a) a level of light that enclothes itself in the entity and endows it with the unique nature it possesses (the light that is memale kol almin);*

*b) a level of light that transcends the entity and yet is found within it (the light that is sovev kol almin).*

*A parallel to this concept exists within the human body. There are particular powers that enclothe themselves in each limb or organ; for example, the power of movement in the hands and feet, the power of sight in the eye, and the power of thought in the brain. Above these particular powers, however, there is a general life-force that enclothes itself in every limb and organ without discrimination.*

*Now this general life-force is far greater than any of the particular powers manifest within any limb or organ, for the latter are limited in nature, each one with a specific definition, while the general life-force is infinite and unbounded in nature, reflecting the essential G-dly power of the soul. Similarly, in the analogue, the particular dimensions of existence that derive from the light that is memale kol almin are limited in nature, while G-d's essential infinity is expressed through the light that is sovev kol almin.*

*As will be explained in the later portions of the maamar, the advantage reaped by the soul through its descent into the physical world is that prior to its descent, it was only able to relate to the light that is memale kol almin. Through its descent, it is able to unite with the higher level of G-dliness, the light that is sovev kol almin.*

**והנה** Behold, [the blessing continues]: “As long as the soul is within me, I acknowledge (מודה) [You].”

*The Hebrew term Modeh can also refer to giving thanks, and that is its meaning within the context of the blessing. Nevertheless, the interpretation mentioned in the maamar, [i.e., acknowledge,] is also within the scope of the term's literal meaning.*

[Because of the mere fact of the soul's presence in the body,] everyone can acknowledge G-d.

*The words of the blessing “As long as the soul is within me, I acknowledge You” imply that the acknowledgment of G-d is a natural consequence of “the soul [being] within me.” Because every soul is an “actual part of G-d” (Tanya, ch. 2), everyone, even a person who is underdeveloped spiritually, has the potential to acknowledge G-d.*

Afterwards, [however,] one must come [to the level of] “Blessed are You, G-d,” which is a higher plane than acknowledgment.

*As the Alter Rebbe proceeds to explain, the service of acknowledgment (הודאה) does not cause the level of G-dliness to which the person relates to be revealed within his thought processes. Blessing (ברכה), the higher level mentioned, denotes drawing down (and revealing) G-dly energy within the soul and the world at large.*

**ולהבין** To explain what is meant by acknowledgment (הודאה),

*The words הודאה and מודה share the same root.*

we find the expression:<sup>13</sup> “The Sages concede (מודים) to Rabbi Meir,” i.e., originally, they differed with him, [and afterwards, they acknowledged the validity of his approach].

*In particular, the concept of acknowledgment (הודאה) implies the acceptance of a position even though one does not understand it totally. One appreciates the truth of the other person’s position. Nevertheless, that position is above one’s ordinary level of comprehension and cannot be internalized.*

*To refer to the example stated above, Rabbi Meir’s understanding surpassed that of the other Sages, as Eruvin 13b states: “The Sages were not able to comprehend his ultimate intent.” Thus the other Sages were not capable of fully understanding Rabbi Meir’s perspective. Nevertheless, they acknowledged that it was correct.*

How can [the term מודה, “acknowledge,”] be used to describe [our relationship with] G-d, [for the implication is that we, Heaven forbid, differ with Him, but ultimately accept His view]?

**אך** [In explanation, however, it can be said that we do, as it were, differ with G-d.] We, the inhabitants of the material plane, say that [the world] was created *yesh me’ayin*, “something from nothing.” [We call] the heavens, the earth, and the celestial peaks a *yesh*, “something,” an entity that is apparent to our eyes.

*I.e., we refer to our existence as yesh, because it is the reality which we perceive.*

[We term the spiritual reality] above, [by contrast,] *ayin*, “nothing,” [because we cannot comprehend or define it].

*For we are speaking about a spiritual reality that exists above our entire frame of reference. By definition, it is an entirely different type of existence, so dissimilar that bringing our frame of reference into existence is considered as creating a new world.*

**אבל** From G-d’s perspective, by contrast, the opposite is true. For all [existence] is of no importance before Him.<sup>14</sup>

*It is not only that He is much, much greater, loftier, and more powerful than all other forms of existence, but that in an ultimate sense, there is no other existence outside of Him. Hence, all other existence can be termed ayin, “nothingness.”*

The lower [and more material] the entity, the more it is considered of no importance.

*There is an apparent difficulty with the Alter Rebbe’s statement: Seemingly, since He is the Creator — on a level exalted above all existence — all existence is equally of no importance before Him. When an entity’s greatness is relative, then there is a hierarchy that defines the extent to which others can relate to it or him. G-d’s greatness, by contrast, is absolute, for His being transcends all other existence entirely. Therefore the created beings are all equal in relation to Him. Indeed, we find the expression (Likkutei Torah, Shir HaShirim, p. 18a, et al.): Atzilus (the highest spiritual realm) and Asiyah (the lowest) are equal before Him.*

*The above statements, however, reflect an absolute scale. As the created beings, physical and spiritual, relate to G-d, however, there is a hierarchy. For the fact that a created being recognizes its nothingness and yearns to bond with G-d reflects its superiority. Indeed, the degree to which a being nullifies itself to G-d is the defining factor in determining the gradations of spiritual existence. Its awareness of its nothingness endows it with stature.*

*Conversely, when a created being — as is true of the created beings of this material world — fails to recognize G-d and thinks that it is true existence, it has no genuine importance.*

[Hence it is our world that should be deemed ayin, “nothingness.” In contrast, G-d] is the true Yesh;<sup>iv</sup> [He is genuine existence].

*As Rambam writes in the beginning of his Mishneh Torah (Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah 1:1):*

*“The foundation of all foundations and the pillar of wisdom is to know that there is a Primary Being... and everything that exists... came into existence from the truth of His Being.”*

*Similarly, the sages of chakirah, Jewish philosophy, refer to G-d as mechuyav hametzius, a term interpreted by R. Yosef Albo (in his Sefer Halkkarim) as meaning: “His existence must be; i.e., His existence is from Himself, and is not the result of any other cause which preceded it.”*

*Every other being was created; brought into existence from utter nothingness. In other words, the truth of every other entity’s existence is non-being. Since there was a time when it did not exist, even now when it does exist, its fundamental state is non-being. It exists only because G-d wills that it be.*

*G-d's existence, by contrast, has no reason and no motivating rationale. He just is. And He always was. The very definition of Him as G-d implies that He was not brought into being at any time or by any other cause. Instead, He exists independently. He must be, for He is the truth of existence. Thus He can be described as the true Yesh (genuine existence) and everything else is essentially ayin, non-being.*

With regard to this, we say: "We acknowledge You," i.e., we acknowledge that G-d's perspective is the truth. Every member of the Jewish people possesses [an innate] acknowledgment [of this truth].

*I.e., the power of faith that every Jew possesses enables him to come to the recognition of this truth.*

⌘ Nevertheless, this acknowledgment is "from afar."

*I.e., it is the product of abstract thinking.*

It is not the immediate, ordinary perspective of the one acknowledging [G-d's existence],

*I.e., as stated above, our ordinary conception of the world is that material existence is reality. Although we can acknowledge G-d's spiritual truth, it is distant from our ordinary thinking. This highlights the power of our souls — that they can bring us to an awareness of a spiritual reality that transcends our comprehension.*

but rather an expression of faith, which is like a crown

*See Derech Mitzvosecha, Mitzvas HaAmanas Elokus, sec. 2, which explains that just as a crown rests on a person's head and is independent of his body, so too, the power of faith transcends our conscious powers of thought and feeling and does not permeate the inner dimensions of our personalities.*

and an encompassing light.

*As explained above, the term "encompassing light" refers to a light too powerful and transcendent to be internalized within a limited frame of reference.*

Thus [our Sages teach]:<sup>15</sup> "Before breaking in, a thief calls to G-d and says: 'Master of the world, save me!'" He believes in the potential of the Master of the world [to save him and yet performs an act that constitutes rebellion against Him. This is because his faith is not internalized and does not have a direct effect on his thoughts and actions.]



*Although the fact that faith is an encompassing light leads to a disadvantage — it allows for the possibility of a dichotomy as stated above — it also has a positive dimension. It opens a person up to a level of awareness far above his natural potential. For that reason, as mentioned above, every person, even one who is spiritually underdeveloped, can relate to G-d from the perspective of faith. Moreover, even a person who has refined himself and his understanding can be continually lifted to new horizons by faith, because unlike intellect which is limited and defined, faith is infinite.*

**אבל** Blessing, by contrast, represents the revelation [of an elevated spiritual potential on a lower plane],

*The word for blessing (berachah;áøëä) shares a root with a number of seemingly unrelated words:*

*a) bereichah — a pool, a place into which the water on the surrounding slopes flows down and collects;*

*b) berech — a knee, a joint that enables a person to bend and lower the upper and more refined portions of his body;*

*c) lehavrich, which means bringing an animal (such as a camel) down to its knees. The very same verb also signifies the practice of embedding a low branch into the ground in the hope that it will strike roots and ultimately produce a satellite tree (Kilayim 7:1; see Torah Or, Bereishis, p. 37c ff.).*

*Common to all these terms is the theme of drawing something downward. Similarly, the concept of blessing (berachah) is to elicit and bring down a flow of Divine light from the higher realms where it is hidden (i.e., above revelation) to this material world where it will blossom into revelation.*

as [implied by the statement]:<sup>16</sup> “Yishmael, My son, bless Me,”

*that passage relates how once R. Yishmael, the High Priest, entered the Holy of Holies and saw an image of G-d. G-d then asked him to bless Him.*

*An obvious question arises: How can a created being bless his Creator? The Maharsha (Chiddushei Aggados, Berachos, op. cit.) explains that the concept of blessing is to draw down Divine influence to our earthly plane. Likkutei Torah, Devarim, p. 16a, develops that*

*idea, explaining that blessing G-d involves eliciting Divine energy which is hidden, subsumed in the light that is sovev kol almin, and causing it to be revealed within the world.*

and the verse:<sup>17</sup> “Blessed be G-d... from [one] world to [another] world,”

*e have translated the verse in the context of the maamar. Metzudas David renders it “from the beginning of the world until its end.”*

i.e., that [His light] be drawn down from the hidden realms to the revealed realms.<sup>18</sup>

*The Zohar is emphasizing that the verse is not merely speaking of conveying G-dly influence from a higher spiritual realm to a lower one, but rather of drawing down energy from “the hidden world.” The latter term refers to the light that is sovev kol almin, a level of G-dliness so sublime that its light cannot be revealed in any limited framework. That infinite light is then drawn down into the revealed realms.*

והיינו [The medium that enables this encompassing light to be revealed within the soul is indicated by the verse:] “And these words which I command you today,” i.e., the revelation [of G-dliness]

More particularly, the verse uses the term *Anochi*, which is interpreted as referring to G-d’s Essence. The Torah and its *mitzvos* draw down influence from the level of *Anochi* to the souls of the Jewish people.

is drawn down into the soul through the *mitzvos* and the Torah.<sup>v</sup> Initially, however, one must [fulfill the commandment]:<sup>19</sup> “And you shall love [G-d].”

*The fulfillment of the mitzvos alone is not sufficient for the influence drawn down from the level of Anochi to be revealed on a conscious level in the soul. The level of Anochi is, by nature, hidden, because it represents an essential quality above revelation. For its influence to emerge into revelation, the performance of the mitzvos must be motivated by love for G-d. Since that love is a revealed quality, it brings the essential light of the mitzvos into revelation.*

It is then possible through the eighteen blessings

*i.e., the Shemoneh Esreh prayer. [In practice, we recite 19 blessings because our Sages added another blessing in addition to the original 18 (Rambam, Hilchos Tefillah 2:1).]*

[to access] eighteen [different] means of drawing down G-dliness, [as indicated by the conclusion of each blessing]: “Blessed are You G-d....” Thus, between the level of acknowledgment [that relates to the encompassing light] and the level of blessing [that brings about the enclothement of G-dly light] is the level of love.<sup>vi</sup>

*Thus we see three rungs on the ladder of prayer: hodaah, acknowledgment; ve'ahavta, the development of a love relationship with G-d; and berachah, blessing, drawing G-dly influence into the world.*

## Summary

The *maamar* raises two questions, the explanation of which will enable one to understand the verse: "Zion will be redeemed through judgment and her captives, through charity":

a) How is it possible for a person to fulfill the charge of the *Shulchan Aruch* to continually regard the Torah as a new entity?

b) How will the soul benefit from its descent to this material plane?

The *maamar* begins answering those questions through the explanation of the blessing *Elokai Neshamah*, "My G-d, the soul which You placed within me...." In this context, it explains the two different expressions of Divine light within our souls and within the world at large: a) a dimension enclined within the body to give it life; a parallel to the light that is *memale kol almin*; and b) a level that transcends the body and encompasses it; a parallel to the light that is *sovev kol almin*.

It also highlights three rungs on the ladder of prayer: *hodaah*, acknowledgment; *ve'ahavta*, the development of a love relationship with G-d; and *berachah*, blessing, drawing G-dly influence into the world.

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## FOOTNOTES

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| 1. See the <i>Tzemach Tzedek's</i> interpretation of the verse, <i>Or HaTorah, Devarim</i> , p. 36.              | 6. <i>Bereishis</i> 1:20.   | 13. <i>Bava Kama</i> 29a.  |
| 2. <i>Devarim</i> 6:6.   | 7. <i>Zohar</i> , Vol. I, p. 46b.   | 14. <i>Zohar</i> , Vol. I, p. 11b.                                   |
| 3. <i>Beis Yosef</i> and <i>Shulchan Aruch</i> ( <i>Orach Chayim</i> 61:2); see <i>Sifri</i> to the above verse. | 8. <i>Bereishis Rabbah</i> 8:7.   | 15. <i>Ein Yaakov</i> , the conclusion of tractate <i>Berachos</i> . |
| 4. See <i>Tehillim</i> 33:6.   | 9. <i>Yeshayahu</i> 60:21.  | 16. <i>Berachos</i> 7a.  |
| 5. <i>Bereishis Rabbah</i> 1:3.  | 10. <i>Bereishis Rabbah</i> 1:4.  | 17. <i>Tehillim</i> 106:48.  |
|  | 11. <i>Berachos</i> 60b.  | 18. See <i>Zohar</i> , Vol. I, p. 158b.                              |
|  | 12. See the gloss of <i>Rama</i> to the <i>Shulchan Aruch</i> ( <i>Orach Chayim</i> 6:1). | 19. <i>Devarim</i> 6:5; included in the <i>Shema</i> .               |

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

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