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Tziyon BeMishpat Tipadeh: The Month of Av - Section II

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

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והנה Behold, the way to achieve [the fulfillment of the command]: “And you shall love [G-d]” is through meditation on [the verse]: *Shema Yisrael*, [“Hear O Israel... G-d is one,”] and [the expression]: *Baruch shem kevod malchuso l’olam vaed*, [“Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom forever and ever”].

The Maggid of Mezritch asks (see Sefer HaMaamarim 5701, pp. 116, 119): How can there be a commandment to love G-d? How is it possible to order a person to experience a particular feeling? Feeling is not a deed that can be performed at will.

The Maggid answers that the command to love G-d follows the commandment Shema. Shema does not imply merely hearing an idea, but rather contemplating and internalizing it. Once a person has meditated on the oneness of G-d stated in the verse Shema, he will, naturally and spontaneously, be roused to love G-d. As the Alter Rebbe proceeds to explain, our Sages (Pesachim, loc. cit.) ordained that the recitation of the Shema be coupled with the recitation of the expression Baruch shem kevod..., because meditation upon this theme contributes fundamental concepts that arouse one’s love for G-d.

[For this reason, these verses precede the command to love G-d in the recitation of the *Shema*.]

פ' To explain: Creation [involves bringing] existence [*yesh*] into being from absolute nothingness [*ayin*]. As reflected by the expression “Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom forever and ever,” this means that G-d’s kingship — [the quality that causes] Him to be called King over [the created beings] and is thus not His essential dimension

*I.e., one is a king over others; there is no concept of kingship with regard to one’s own self. In other words, kingship does not reflect a person’s character — who he is or what he himself thinks or feels — but rather how one can manifest his authority over others. Similarly, in the analogue, G-d’s kingship does not reflect how He exists for Himself, as it were, but how He manifests His sovereignty in the creation. Thus Malchus, kingship, is the aspect of G-dliness which predicates the creation of beings that feel independent (*yesh*).*

— conveys vitality to all the higher spiritual realms. [Thus it is said:¹ “Your kingship is kingship over all the

worlds; Your dominion is in every generation.”] “Your dominion” reflects a lower level than kingship. It implies imposing one’s rule by force, against the will [of his subjects].

There are two dimensions to G-d’s sovereignty: His kingship and His dominion. The term “kingship” indicates that the people voluntarily agree to a king’s authority, as indicated by the phrase from the liturgy, “They accepted His kingship willingly.” Dominion, by contrast, is imposed by force, regardless of the subjects’ consent.

Thus G-d’s kingship is the source for the creation of the higher realms where His sovereignty is willingly accepted, and His dominion is the source for the creation of the lower realms where the created beings do not consciously accept His sovereignty and it is imposed upon them.

[This quality,] the external dimension of His attribute of kingship, is present “in every generation.” [This includes] generations that were wicked, like the generation of the Flood that did not accept His kingship willingly. Even so, abundant vitality was drawn down to them from the attribute of “Your dominion.”

והנה Behold, all of the higher [spiritual] realms — the lower *Gan Eden*,

Lit., “the Garden of Eden.” In this context, the term refers to the afterlife, the spiritual realm where the souls enjoy the rewards for their observance of the Torah and its mitzvos. There are myriad levels within this general category. In general, two fundamental divisions are made: the lower Gan Eden, to which enter those souls whose primary motivation for Divine service was emotional; and the higher Gan Eden, to which enter those souls whose primary motivation was intellectual.

which represents a level of pleasure far more wondrous than [the delights of] this world, as our Sages stated [with regard to *Acher*]:² “It is preferable that he be judged... [and {ultimately be allowed to} enter the World to Come]...”;

Acher (Rabbi Elisha ben Avuya) was a great scholar, but had committed many severe transgressions. Hence, after his death, a Heavenly voice declared that rather than undergo the harsh punishments of Gehinnom necessary to purify himself before he could receive a portion of the World to Come, it would be preferable for him to forego both the punishments and that eternal reward. Rabbi Meir, his colleague and student, however, maintained that it was preferable for him to be judged so that he would ultimately receive that spiritual reward.

Chassidus (Torah Or, p. 32d, et al.) explains that from Rabbi Meir’s words, it can be inferred

that the pleasures of even the lower Gan Eden are so great that it was worth undergoing all of the suffering in Gehinnom to receive them.

the higher *Gan Eden*, and [indeed,] an infinite number of higher levels — were brought into being from [G-d's] kingship. For that reason, the Creation is described as [being brought into] existence (*yesh*) from nothingness (*me'ayin*). For the created beings are brought into existence from the quality and attribute of *Malchus*, an attribute which is like nothingness and a nonentity,^{vii} it being no more than a radiance and a glimmer from G-d.

There is a fundamental difference between Malchus and the other Sefiros. The other Sefiros parallel and are the source for qualities like intellect or emotion that tell us something of who the person is. Hence, these qualities are described as being of substance. By contrast, as mentioned above, Malchus does not communicate the person's inner qualities; it only shows his ability to motivate others to accept his authority. The projection of his authority over others involves merely a glimmer of his personality, i.e., his energy is invested, but not in a manner which reveals who he is. Therefore it is associated with nothingness. (The term "glimmer" is used because unlike light which reveals the qualities of the source of light — i.e., from the light, one can describe the qualities of the source — a glimmer does not reveal the qualities of its source, only the fact that a source exists.)

Similarly, in the analogue, unlike the other Sefiros, Malchus does not manifest any of G-d's qualities. It is a mere glimmer, an external dimension of His light.

Moreover, even [the influence from *Malchus*] does not enclothe itself within the inner dimensions [of the created beings]. Instead, it rests over them from above in an encompassing manner.^{viii} To refer to the analogy of kingship: [the king's] name

A person's name also does not reflect the nature of his character traits, i.e., who he is for himself. It is only necessary in the context of a person's relations with others. Thus it shares parallels with the attribute of Malchus.

is called over his kingdom.

There are two ways in which a king controls his kingdom:

a) He ordains laws under which the country lives and, in that way, controls the day-to-day functioning of the country;

b) *He projects a general identity; the populace know that they are members of this-and-this country.*

The first aspect relates to the king's inner qualities, his thoughts and his feelings; the second merely to his name. Most of the members of the kingdom know little of how the king runs his kingdom and what goes into his decision-making process. They relate only to his name, the general identity he projects.

אך All of this,

That the created beings have their source in a mere ray of G-dliness.

however, applies to [the light that maintains] the Spiritual Cosmos (*Seder HaHishtalshelus*)

Lit., "the chainlike order," the framework of spiritual worlds that lowers the Divine life-energy level after level until it can be en clothed in our material world.

and brings the sublime spiritual worlds into being. In this [material] world, by contrast, it is possible to draw down the revelation of the actual essence of the *Ein Sof*

Our Sages (Midrash Tanchuma, Parshas Naso, sec. 16) state that G-d "desired a dwelling in the lower worlds." This desire emanates from His very Essence, a level that transcends all His revealed qualities (see Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 6, p. 13ff.; translated in Crown Jewels, SIE, Vol. 1, p. 83ff.). It is through teshuvah and good deeds that this desire is consummated.

through *teshuvah* and good deeds.³

As stated in Avos 4:17: "One hour of teshuvah and good deeds in this world surpasses the entire life of the World to Come."

ועוד A person should also be conscious that in the World to Come, it is [only] possible to ascend in a measured way. [Through purification via] the *kaf hakela*

Lit., "the hollow of the slingshot"; a state of ceaseless unrest after death in which the soul is hurled alternately from peaks of awareness, where it is given a glimpse of the highest levels of Divinity, to the depths of confrontation with the cosmic repercussions of its misdeeds done on earth. See Derech Mitzvosecha, Mitzvas Vidui U'Teshuvah, by the Tzemach Tzedek (Selections from Derech Mitzvosecha, Vol. I, p. 37ff.).

and *Gehinnom*,

Purgatory.

[the soul ascends to] the lower *Gan Eden*. And [through immersion in] the River of Fire,

This term, first found in Daniel 7:10, is used by the Zohar, Vol. II, pp. 211b, 247a, to refer to a purification process that enables the soul to ascend from a lower level of Gan Eden to a higher one. Just as on the earthly plane, immersion in a mikveh is a process of purification, so too, in the spiritual realms, immersion in the River of Fire cleanses the soul of worldly memories and makes it fit to receive more refined levels of awareness. See Likkutei Torah, Devarim, p. 34a; the series of maamarim entitled Yom Tov Shel Rosh HaShanah 5666, p. 15ff.

it ascends to the higher *Gan Eden*. [At every level, a soul receives a measure of Divine light] according to the judgment appropriate for it.

I.e., a person's position in the afterlife reflects the level of his Divine service in this world. His sins determine the nature of the punishment he will receive, and the mitzvos he performs and the Torah he studies determine the quality of the Divine light that will be revealed to him.

[This is because the spiritual realms receive their vitality from the Divine light that is] *memale [kol almin]*.

For that entire framework of Divine light is limited.

אבל In this material world,

As will be stated, since there is a ray of G-d's light that is *sovev kol almin* (i.e., an unlimited potential) manifest in this world, there is the possibility for ascent that has no constraints.

by contrast, [a person] can change [his spiritual level radically and] immediately, from one extreme to another. This concept finds expression in Torah law.⁴ If a man consecrates a woman on the condition that he is completely righteous, she is consecrated, even if he is known to be utterly wicked. [The rationale is that at the time of the consecration,] perhaps he had thoughts of *teshuvah*.

And in one moment, teshuvah would wipe away all of the person's sins and indeed, transform them into merits (Yoma 86b).

This [radical transformation is possible] because a ray of G-d's light that is *sovev kol almin* — [and thus beyond limitation — is present in this material world].⁵

Our material world also derives its vitality from G-d's light that is memale kol almin, as implied

by our Sages' statement (Bereishis Rabbah 10:6): "There is no blade of grass on this plane that does not have a mazal above that strikes it and makes it grow." Nevertheless, in addition to these influences which define the character of the different created beings, G-d's infinite light that is sovev kol almin is invested in this world, as the Alter Rebbe proceeds to explain.

ומטעם For this reason,

I.e., because a person's service of Torah and mitzvos in this world draws down an unlimited light.

our Sages state: "One hour of *teshuvah* and good deeds in this world [surpasses the entire life of the World to Come]."

For, as explained above, the World to Come is limited, representing a quality of Divine light appropriate to a soul's particular level of refinement, while the observance of the Torah and its mitzvos in this world relates to G-d's Essence and as such, taps an unlimited potential.

This is also the meaning of the verse⁶ [which states that Divine retribution will come "because you did not serve G-d your L-rd] out of encompassing (כל) abundance." [This refers to the higher levels of revelation afforded by observance of the Torah and its *mitzvos* on this material plane] which surpass [the revelations] of the World to Come that are called כל, "encompassing."^{7, ix}

See Bava Basra 17a. See also Likkutei Torah, Bamidbar, p. 34a, which identifies כל (numerically equivalent to 50) with the 50 Gates of Wisdom that enable the souls to attain the awareness of G-d in the World to Come.

ולכן [The awareness of the above concepts should evoke] love for G-d "with all your soul,"⁸ i.e., to the point of sacrificing not merely the body, but also the soul.⁹ The ultimate purpose is to draw down G-d's infinite, [encompassing light] that is sovev [*kol almin*] into this lowly plane. This is accomplished through the Torah and its *mitzvos*.

For the Torah relates to G-d as He exists for Himself, as it were, above the limited light which brings Creation into being.

וז"ל This is intimated by the verse:¹⁰ "And these words which I command you today...." [The verse highlights how] "I," i.e., "I, being Who I am,"¹¹

See the Zohar, Vol. III, p. 11a, which states that this refers to G-d as "the sublime unknown": His Essence, which transcends all capacity of knowing.

G-d's Essence, "commands," i.e., "connects,"

The word mitzvah is related to the word tzavsa, meaning "connection" (Torah Or, Shmos, p. 82a, et al.).

[with the person observing the *mitzvah*. Through the observance of *mitzvos*, we connect to G-d's Essence] and not [merely] to "the name of His glorious kingdom."

היום [This connection is established] "today," [in this world,] and not tomorrow, in the World to Come, [whose purpose] is only for receiving a reward.¹²

The reward for the observance of the mitzvos, the World to Come, reflects the pleasure and the satisfaction of a created being, while the pleasure and satisfaction of G-d comes, as it were, from the actual performance of the mitzvos. Since there is no comparison between a created being and the Creator, it is clear that "the entire life of the World to Come," the satisfaction experienced by mortals, cannot be compared with "teshuvah and good deeds in this world," the satisfaction experienced by the Creator (Likkutei Sichos, Vol. V. p. 241ff., translated in Crown Jewels, Vol. I).

ובהתבוננו When one contemplates this, [the words of the Torah] will be "new" in his eyes every day,

Since we live in a world defined by time and space, it is seemingly against our nature to regard the Torah as "new" at all times. Simply put, having studied the Torah on the previous day, how can one regard it as new today?

When, however, a person becomes aware of the essential G-dliness that is manifest through the Torah, he will continually view it with the excitement with which one contemplates a new entity.

because "today" — i.e., in this world — he can draw down G-d's Essence.

Through the observance of the mitzvos.

This is not true tomorrow, in the World to Come.^x

ולכן Therefore the 248 *mitzvos* are referred to as 248 limbs,¹³ i.e., 248 [different] means of drawing down the sublime will. To [develop] the analogy, a limb has a nerve running [to it] from the brain, which motivates [the limb to move as the person] desires. [Similarly, the *mitzvos* convey G-d's influence from its root and source to actualization in this physical world.]

I.e., through the nerves, the limbs bring about the expression of a person's desires. Similarly, the mitzvos manifest G-dly influence in this world.

זרה This [inspires the fulfillment of] the command: “And you shall love ה' אלקיך [G-d, your L-rd].” [By arousing love for G-d, we cause] ה', [i.e., *Havayah*, the aspect of G-dliness that transcends nature,] to become אלקיך, [your strength and your vitality,

G-d's name Elokim (which appears in the possessive form Elokecha, translated as “your L-rd,” in the above verse), is associated with the G-dly power and life-force that enclothes itself in every entity to endow it with vitality. (See the maamar entitled BaChodesh HaShelishi, Torah Or, Shmos, p. 66c, translated earlier in this volume.)

enabling the love for G-d to be “with all your heart,” interpreted by our Sages as being “with both your hearts,”) i.e., that there will be a revelation of G-dliness in both ventricles of the heart. [A person's] left ventricle

Associated with the animal soul and material desires (Tanya, ch. 9).

will be filled with bitterness over being sunk in [concern for] the matters of the material world and being distant from G-d. And his right ventricle will be filled with the happiness [associated with the observance] of *mitzvos*, as it is written:¹⁴ “Israel will rejoice in its Maker.”^{xi} This refers to the *mitzvos* that are enclothed in deed. The more that one will feel bitter about his lack [of spiritual focus], the more [forcefully will be felt] the happiness from the revelation of [G-d's] infinite light through the observance of the *mitzvos*.^{xii}

The concept that he is able to draw down G-d's infinite light through his deeds will infuse him with joy.

ואף Even though this [Divine light] is not revealed at present, it will be revealed in the future, [in the era of *Mashiach*]. This is intimated in the saying:¹⁵ “He sows righteousness and causes deliverance (ישועות) to sprout forth.” [The root of ישועות is ישע, as in the verse:]¹⁶ “And G-d turned.”

See Tanya, Iggeres HaKodesh, Epistle 3, which explains that this relates to drawing down Divine light and influence.

This relates to the 375 lights [that will be revealed at that time].

Tanya, loc. cit., mentions 370 lights, which is also the wording in the Zohar, Vol. III, Raya Mehemna, 133b. The concept of “375 lights” is found in several places in Chassidus and is explained in Shaar HaHakdamus, Perek B'Erkai HaKinuim BeShem Ban, p. 220a.

[To describe by analogy,] this is like a person who owns a chest filled with jewels and pearls. He takes joy in them even though he does not see them because they are stored away in the chest.

Similarly, the knowledge that G-dly energy is being drawn down through the observance of the mitzvos should bring us happiness even though that G-dliness is not revealed at present.

Summary

The previous section of the *maamar* concluded by emphasizing that it is necessary for a person to reach a state of love for G-d. This section begins by explaining that such love can be maintained by contemplating the truths implied by the verse *Shema Yisrael* and the expression *Baruch shem kevod malchuso...*, i.e., that the life-force for the existence of the entire Spiritual Cosmos originates in His kingship, an external dimension of His being.

Through the observance of the Torah and its *mitzvos* in this material world, by contrast, one establishes a connection with — and elicits energy from — G-d's Essence. For that reason, it is said: "One hour of *teshuvah* and good deeds in this world surpasses the entire life of the World to Come." For the World to Come involves an awareness of the revealed dimensions of G-dliness which are limited. In this world, by contrast, one can establish a connection with G-d's Essence which is truly infinite.

This resolves the second question raised at the beginning of the *maamar*: How will the soul benefit from its descent to this material plane? Because it is only on the material plane that such a connection is possible.

And it enables us to resolve the first question: How is it possible for a person to fulfill the charge of the *Shulchan Aruch* to continually regard the Torah as a new entity? For when one contemplates the above concepts, the words of the Torah will continuously be "new" in his eyes. Although regarding the Torah as new at all times runs contrary to our natural tendencies, when a person appreciates the bond with G-d that he can achieve through the Torah, he will be inspired to reach such awareness. Then his happiness will come from the satisfaction he derives from the observance of the Torah, and any bitterness he feels will be spiritually oriented, stemming from his awareness of his distance from G-d.

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FOOTNOTES

1. *Tehillim* 145:13.
2. *Chagigah* 15b.
3. Cf. *Avos* 4:17.
4. *Kiddushin* 49b. See *Sichos Chai Elul*, 5711, which discusses this passage.
5. *Likkutei Torah, Bamidbar*, p. 75c.
6. *Devarim* 28:47.
7. See *Bava Basra* 17a.

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| 8. <i>Devarim</i> 6:5. | 11. See the <i>Zohar</i> , Vol. III, p. 11a. | 14. <i>Tehillim</i> 149:2; see Tanya, ch. 34. |
| 9. <i>Berachos</i> 9:5. | 12. <i>Eruvin</i> 22a; <i>Rashi</i> , <i>Devarim</i> 7:11. | 15. The blessing <i>Yotzer Or</i> in the Morning Service. |
| 10. <i>Devarim</i> 6:6. | 13. See <i>Tikkunei Zohar</i> , <i>Tikkun</i> 30; <i>Tanya</i> , ch. 4. | 16. <i>Bereishis</i> 4:4. |

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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