

הַיְהוּדִים THE PATH TO FOLLOW

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MOSHE'S REBUKE; THE TORAH AND UNITY VERSUS EVIL INCLINATION *(by Rabbi David Hanania Pinto שליט"א)*

Let us look at the first verse of Deuteronomy and attempt to analyze it in depth:

become white] as snow" (Isaiah 1:18). This is the ve'lavan of Deuteronomy 1:1. He will then be worthy of sitting in the hatzeirot (courtyards) of Hashem in the World to Come, and he will receive his reward for all his work (vedi zahav: gold, wages).

Be'aiver haYarden [on this side of the Jordan]: Repentance erases the sinner's avar (past), all the ra (evil) that he did. The word ra has a numerical value of 270, which is the same as that of haYarden (including one for the kollel, i.e., for the word itself).

Another interpretation: If you want to stay lavan (white) and conquer the evil inclination, then when that scoundrel comes to meet you, drag him to the house of study (Sukkah 52b; Zohar I:190a). Introduce him to Hashem's hatzeirot (courtyards). You will then attain di zahav (all good things) – the abundance and the blessings of the Creator of all the worlds.

Bamidbar: Repentance is also effective against the needless diburim (words) that we could have uttered.

Ba'aravah: Teshuvah erases all aveirot (sins).

Mol suf: Good advice for conquering the evil inclination consists of recalling the day of death, sof, the end of all men (Berachot 5a). The one who remembers this will be constantly connected to his Creator.

Vedi has the same numerical value (21, including 1 for the kollel) as the Divine Name Eh-yeh, such as He appeared to the Children of Israel in Egypt (cf. Exodus 3:14). Now the Children of Israel constructed the molten calf with zahav (gold) and proclaimed, "These are your gods, O Israel" (Exodus 32:4). Thus Moses wanted them to understand that they had replaced G-d with the golden calf, hence they had to repent.

We thus begin performing mitzvot that are also called peirot (fruits-Paran) and to reject all vanities (Tofel). This is what bein Paran u'vein Tofel alludes to.

Now the evil inclination never gets tired. It constantly tries its best to end a man's life (cf. Kiddushin 30b; Kallah 2), whereas the good inclination encourages him to perform mitzvot. A man should therefore overcome difficulties in order to remain pure, untainted, and clean of all sin. And even if he has sinned, his sins will be transformed into merits if he repents through love (cf. Yoma 86b). The verse states, "If your sins are like scarlet, yalbinu [they will

Furthermore, as we know, there is no Divine commandment (mitzvah) where the Name of G-d does not appear. In the process we get at bash (a type of Chilufei Otiyot, alphabetic transformation): The aleph becomes tav, the beit becomes shin (the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet is exchanged with the last letter, the second letter is exchanged with the second

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last letter, and so on). Thus the mem and the tzadhe of the word mitzvah change to form Y-h (yud-hei). Consequently, one who exchanges a mitzvah (which contains the Divine Name: yud-hei-vav-hei) with zahav (gold – i.e., this world) is severely punished and must repent.

The 15th of Av falls 6 days after Tisha B'Av, which occurs after the Shabbat in which we read the weekly section Devarim. As we know, this allows for the atonement of many sins, some of which are mentioned by Moses in our parsha. With regards to this, our Sages teach that there has never been as beautiful a day for Israel as the 15th of Av (Taanith 26b), and this for reasons that we will examine below. Yet is the 15th of Av really more important than Rosh Hashanah or Shavuot, for example? As it turns out, joy was complete on the 15th of Av: All young Jewish girls, rich and poor alike, exchanged their white dresses with each other (so as not to shame poor girls who had none of their own to wear) and this constituted what the Zohar calls “an awakening below” (Zohar I:184b), meaning that harmony and peace reigned among the Jewish people. This awakening below in turn brought about an awakening above, which bathed the entire world with blessings and peace. Other holidays are not, in and of themselves, marked with such equality between rich and poor. Rather, people spend them in their own homes with their own families. The 15th of Av therefore embodies unity, which brings about an improvement of conduct in the terms expressed by Moses' rebukes.

Yet why specifically the 15th of Av, rather than another different day (even if five other events occurred then)? It is because, in my humble opinion, the month of Av was marked by several tragedies, most notably the night of the ninth, when the spies and the people began to needlessly cry in the desert and wanted to return to Egypt. “They have cried for no reason,” the Holy One, blessed be He, said. “I will establish for them [this night as] a weeping for generations” (Sotah 35a). The ninth also marked the date of the destruction of the first and second Temples, brought about

by three cardinal sins and baseless hatred, respectively (Yoma 9a). It was precisely in this month, therefore, that G-d had to perform miracles for Israel to encourage them to repent and become reconciled to Him. The Holy One, blessed be He, actually made the cure precede the illness, and on the 15th of Av the Children of Israel stopped dying in the desert. It was on that same day that they later made peace with the tribe of Benjamin and that unity once again reigned among them.

Furthermore, the Tu (of Tu B'Av), whose letters tet vav have the same numerical value (15) as the Divine Name yud-hei, alludes to peace and the Divine Presence. Our Sages teach, “If ish [man] and isha [woman] merit it, the Divine Presence resides among them, for the yud of ish and the hei of isha form the Divine Name yud-hei. In the opposite case, without G-d (neither yud nor hei), there remains but aleph and shin, which twice form eish (a fire) that burns them”. That is why G-d chose the tet vav (Tu, or 15th of Av) to show His people that He is their father. The Jews will then be united, the rich giving to the poor and vice-versa, with the sin of baseless hatred thus being rectified.

Moreover, the expression Chamisha Assar Menachem Av (the 15th of Av consoles) has the same numerical value (1065, including 1 for the kollel) as the expression Yom Achdut Ve'Ahava l'Israel (a day of unity and love for Israel).

Moses wanted for the Jews to engage in Torah study, that they unite and love one another. This could rectify their past and help them undergo a complete Teshuvah. Moreover the expression aileh hadevarim asher diber Moshe (these are the words that Moses spoke) has the same numerical value (1349) as otzar haberachot (a treasure of blessings), while the expression aileh hadevarim asher diber Moshe el kal Israel has the same numerical value (1971) as HaTorah VehaAchdut nitzachon Yetzer Hara koh yitav lachem (because of Torah and unity, you will conquer the evil inclination for your own benefit).

STORIES OF TZADIKIM

After the death of our revered teacher, the author of Megaleh Amukot, a young man living in Krakow went to see the administrator of the Chevra Kadisha because he wanted to purchase the burial plot adjacent to the grave of the Megaleh Amukot. This young man was not known as a famous Talmid Chacham, which is why the administrator rejected his request, one that seemed marked by a sign of pride and vanity. The Gaon and Tzaddik who had just left this world was among the greatest names of Torah. He had written many works, and it was impossible to give the plot adjacent to his grave to someone who was unknown, a common man, this being contrary to Halachah.

Yet the young man did not give up, and when all the administrators went home, he went to speak to one of the oldest ones who remained there. He implored him to give his approval for this purchase, for his soul ardently yearned for that place close to the Gaon and Tzaddik. "No price will seem too much for me," he repeated to the elderly man who was over 80 years old. "I will give you whatever price you ask."

"Do you agree to pay 1,000 silver rubbles?" the old man asked with a little sarcasm. The answer did not take long: "Yes!" the young man declared, and he took out the money from his wallet and handed it to the old man. This elderly administrator told himself, "What's preventing me from taking this money? I don't have much longer to live. I'm old and this man is young, hardly 20 years old. From now until the time he passes away, there will be other administrators, and who among them will come to me and claim this money?" Now the next day, the bitter news spread that this young avrech had suddenly died. The Chevra Kadisha was called upon to take care of his burial, but since no one was aware of the secret agreement that he had concluded with the old man, the administrators chose a burial plot that seemed appropriate to them. The night following the burial, the young man appeared in the dream of the old administrator that had sold him the burial plot adjacent to that of the Megaleh Amukot, demanding that he transfer his body to the grave that he had purchased.

This dream, which the old man paid no attention to in the beginning, occurred again the next day and the day after that. The young man warned the Chevra Kadisha's administrator that if he did not obtain the adjacent plot, he would convene him to the Celestial Court.

This severe warning greatly worried the old man, who did not know how to get out of this predicament. It was to the point that, in his fear and distress, he went to find the Rav of the city and told him everything that had happened and asked him for advice. The Rav was astounded when he heard the story. He severely reprimanded the old man for what he had

done, and demanded that he give him the money he had received so that he could give it to charity. This would allow the avrech's soul to rest in peace. Nevertheless, the Rav absolutely refused to give him permission to transfer the dead man's body to the unused burial plot adjacent to the grave of the Megaleh Amukot. The old administrator was overcome by fear. What was he now going to do? The Rav gave him his cane and ordered that he go to the grave of the young man and summon him to Din Torah at the Rav's home three days hence in the afternoon. Since the old man feared for his life, he obeyed. To his great surprise, the dead man accepted to present himself to a Din Torah as the Rav had asked.

When the old man arrived at the Rav's home at the prescribed time, he saw that in the room in which the Rav studied was a partition that had been set up, behind which the dead man was to be. The Rav was seated on the other side, and with him was the Chevra Kadisha's administrator. The spirit on the other side of the partition presented his grievances: "I obtained the rights to the burial plot and purchased it with my own money. No one has the right to chase me away from it." The Rav asked the dead man to identify himself by name, but he responded that this was forbidden for him to do. To calm the dead man, whose voice could be heard coming from the other side of the partition, the Rav said, "As a result, if it is forbidden for you to identify yourself and to give your actual name, we cannot grant your request. The money has thus been distributed to the poor for your soul to rest in peace. And now, go and rest in peace." However the dead man refused to give in. He repeated that the administrator had not kept his word, and he demanded that he rectify his mistake.

Upon hearing these words, the Rav was filled with great consternation. He finally had the idea of saying, "If such is the case – if your soul is so great that it is forbidden to reveal your identity – then take action yourself and make your body role from its present resting place to the burial plot that you asked for and purchased with your own money on the day before your death." The Rav promised him only that he would make the Chevra Kadisha aware of this decision so that the plot adjacent to the grave of the Megaleh Amukot would not be given to anyone else. The next day, when the members of the Chevra Kadisha of Krakow went to the cemetery, they found a new grave that they did not recognize and which they had not dug. The administrators then convened to discuss the situation and decided to erect a headstone upon it, and since they were unaware of the dead man's name, they decided to inscribe the following words upon it: "His Neighbor will Testify for Him." This story spread far and wide.

(An Excerpt from the Archives of the Krakow Chevra Kadisha)