

19 Kislev 5768

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Yud Tet Kislev Farbrengen

Part 3 of 4

from Harav Yitzchak Ginsburgh

There are many meanings to the word "Torah." One meaning is התרה, which means "freeing." The three letter root of "freeing" is נתר, which also means to skip, or to jump over. In the language of the Bible, this is also the root of the word *neter*, which means "soap." It is a special type of soap that can clean even the blemish of the covenant. Why is a cleansing of the blemish caused by a transgression called skipping? Because it takes the blemish and elevates it to a higher level where it is no longer a blemish! Thus, the soap, the נתר that can clean even blemishes of the covenant is the Torah of the Mashiach. According to the *Torat Chaim* that we just reviewed, to really be able to free something, you have to know that the hold that the impure spirit has over it, which is what the blemish is, that this hold has been completely freed. Who can say such a thing?

Literally, what we would have to find is that the hold of impurity over the world has completely been released. But, we are here today, over 200 years from the time of the Ba'al Shem Tov when Torah of the Mashiach began to be revealed. Those opponents of Chassidut, who were responsible for putting the Alter Rebbe in jail, they thought that the Alter Rebbe was bringing lights from before the contraction into a place that is after the contraction. They were afraid that the *tzimtzum* (the contraction) would be destroyed and the rules and regulations of the Torah of this world would become annulled. This was their explicit explanation. They said this very clearly. As explained above, this is the mentality of the Egypt of holiness. God, however, agreed with the Alter Rebbe! The fears of his opponents were not justified. Had they been able to comprehend the essence of the Torah's inner soul, the secret of Jewish soul's ability to carry opposites and been able to recognize the true *nasi* (leader) of the generation, they would never have waged war against the Ba'al Shem Tov and the Alter Rebbe. In any case, returning to what we said before, it is the *tzadik* of the generation who knows to what extent the impurity has freed its hold over reality.

There is a beautiful mathematical allusion to the fact that this is all related to *Yud Tet Kislev* and to the freeing of the Alter Rebbe from prison. The numerical value of the verse "And the spirit of impurity I will extricate from the earth" ואת רוח הטמאה אעביר מן הארץ (1350) is exactly equal to 10 times the value of *Yud Tet Kislev*, יט כסלו (135). The factor of 10 corresponds to the 10 stages that are needed in order to construct the spiritual world



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of the king, the world of *Nukva* (the same inner process that occurs during the ten days from *Rosh Hashanah* to *Yom Kipur*).



Now, let us look at the full wording of the verse that we have been discussing: והיה ביום ההוא נאם הוי' צבאות אכרית את שמות העצבים מן הארץ ולא יזכרו עוד וגם את הנביאים ואת רוח הטמאה אעביר מן הארץ.

“And it will come to pass on that day, says God, the Lord of Hosts, that I will uproot the names of the idols from the earth and they will not be remembered, and the prophets and the spirit of impurity I will extricate from the earth.”

The prophets here are the false prophets of course, for the generation before the revelation of the *Mashiach* is full of false prophets.

What is the “spirit of impurity?” We will see that there are a number of different opinions. *Rashi* explains that this spirit is the evil inclination, the *yetzer hara*. It is then up to the *tzadik* of the generation to sense where we are, and depending on how much evil inclination there is, he can free us from certain prohibitions. Of course, since no one today thinks that there is less evil inclination, we cannot yet free ourselves of prohibitions. *Nebech, nebech*. As long as we still have an evil inclination, according to *Rashi*, we cannot make the prohibited permissible.

The second explanation is the *Torat Chaim's* which we discussed earlier. He gives the Kabbalistic explanation, that this spirit is the “other side,” the *sitra achra* (סטרא אחרא). So the *tzadik* is sensing how much purity there is in the air and how much impurity.

The third explanation is the *Malbim's*. He explains that this profane spirit is the spirit that inspires the false prophecies of the false prophets. Every false prophet uses some false spirit that inspires him. Of course this is a spirit that is in the air, like the “other side” that the *Torat Chaim* talked about. What is this in our times? We tend to think that there are no prophets around. But the truth is that anyone who has a political system or political beliefs has false prophecy. He has to say what he thinks in a charismatic and inspiring way. The sign then is that we see that there is less and less of a source for the false prophets of the generation. At that time, we can begin to increase more and more the true prophecy and the freeing of the prohibitions by the Torah of the *Mashiach*. These are very delicate issues. We cannot stress how delicate they are and hope that no one leaves with the wrong impression of what we have been explaining. A person needs to have a lot of sensitivity in both his heart and in his mind not to make a mistake in this area.

Let us in passing mention that these three interpretations of what “the spirit of impurity” is correspond to a submission-separation-sweetening model.

The basic characteristic of “the other side” is its lack of *bitul*, selflessness, the essential characteristic of the holy side, as explained in *Tanya*. Often “the other side” puts on a façade of humility, but it is false humility, the opposite of true submission to God. The evil inclination channels the otherwise neutral energies of the soul in negative directions,

in desire and lust of that which is forbidden. This is the opposite of true separation, the state of the soul when all of one's energies and desires are directed to the good. Finally, the spirit that speaks from the mouth of the false prophets is the antithesis of the truly sweet words spoken by a pure soul that are able to sweeten external reality, as taught by the Ba'al Shem Tov.

Now, what does "the names of the idols" in the verse refer to? Let us ask a little differently, why does the verse not simply refer to the idols themselves? It is very common today for people to import all kinds of practices from the East and to think that by adding the word Jewish to it, they make it kosher. For example, kosher Yoga, or Jewish Yoga. So first of all the name of this idolatrous practice has to be cast away.

If we take the numerical value of these three things: שמות העצבים נביאים רוח הטמאה ("names of the idols," "prophets," and "the spirit of impurity") we see that it exactly equals the value of the words: ואת רוח הטמאה אעביר מן הארץ "And the spirit of impurity I will extricate from the land."

The value of the whole verse is $7 \cdot 768$ (or 7 times our present year, תשסח, which is also the value of $2 \cdot$ משיח יְהוה, "the Mashiach of God"), or $דוד \cdot$ משיח יְהוה, "David" times "the Mashiach of God."



Now, in order to connect with the people and to be with all our people, we cannot use the *chareidi* mindset. Such a mindset will never bring the redemption; it will never be able to bring us to Jewish kingship, because the majority of our people are simply not willing to "buy" it.

The simple example of what it means to make something that until now was forbidden permissible, that in our generation it is necessary to make it necessary: to go out and talk with people on the street. Not just to Jews, but to non-Jews as well. Why was this not done until our generation? It's not that this is forbidden by the Torah. It was simply not the Jewish custom. It was a taboo to do this in the past. Now, we have to accept that the world is ready for redemption, even Esau is ready.

There is Jacob who is still in bondage in the holy aspect of Egypt, which is like the prison of the contraction. He has no ability to talk with the nations of the world.

We would like to look more into the topic of "there is nothing as joyful as making permissible the doubts," an alternative understanding of the sages' saying: אין שמחה, בהתרת הספקות, a topic that we have treated on earlier occasions.

There is a prime example of this in the *Tanya*. There is a verse that the *Tanya* discusses that reads "With every sadness there is something gained" בכל עצב יהיה מותר. At times a person has to criticize himself harshly and this of course leads to something that resembles sadness (it is actually not sadness but bitterness). Nonetheless, even though sadness is negative, there is something gained, a מותר will come out of it, which is the joy that one gets from it in his work of Hashem. A *chareidi* Jew is always sad because he is

never sure whether he has really done things the way that they should be done, whether he has performed the *mitzvah* with all of its components correctly.

Because we are not in the highest sphere where it says *עז וחדוה במקומו* "might and joy are in His place," we have to find joy here below. This is what the Rebbe really wanted us to go out with, a joyful face to the nations of the world, because they are ready. In his encounter with Jacob upon Jacob's return after 20 years in Haran, Esau says "I have plenty." He really means that he has much more than enough. Jacob replies: "I have all." Thus, plenty (*רב*) represents Esau's state of plentiful lights of chaos, while Jacob's much (*כל*) represents Jacob's abundance of strong, rectified vessels (created through his performance of the *mitzvot*).

The *Arizal* taught us that the reason for the whole exile is found in the verse: "Because you have not worshipped *Havayah* your God with joy and a good heart, out of much plenty" *תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה' אלקיך בשמחה ובטוב לבב מרב כל*. This verse unifies the lights of Esau (*רב*) with the vessels of Jacob (*כל*), and is teaching us that the reason for the exile is that the lights of Esau's did not serve us together with Jacob's vessels in our service of God.

There are only two more verses that unify "plenty" with "much," both of them found in Ezekiel. In both, the translation of the idiom used is "out of many riches" *מרב כל הון*, one in reference to Damascus, the other in reference to Tarshish. The value of this idiom is exactly the value of "joy," *שמחה*. And, since this appears twice, we have 2 times the value of *שמחה* "joy," which is exactly the value of *בשמחה ובטוב לבב מרב כל*, "with joy, and a good heart, out of abundance." The most important thing is to be full of joy. With joy you can get out of all of your constrictions and joy allows you to get to the Torah that is before the contraction. This is being "with the king" and allowing even the nations of the world to witness this. This is all the mindset of making things permissible (as it pertains to us at present).

So once more, to understand correctly what this mindset of making things permissible is, we gave an example that there are certain ways of conduct, certain places that a Jew would not do or not go. They were considered taboo in previous generations. But, slowly we have to let go of these taboos. It is specifically those who are considered God-fearing Jews, those who are whole in their commitment to the Torah that need to get out of the mindset of things being taboo. Still, you need the sense of smell of the Mashiach of the generation, who can correctly judge exactly how much the spirit of impurity is still present in the air. Because he knows this he also knows what taboos can be gotten rid of and which cannot. He can slowly make permissible all the different pledges that our entire people have made. A pledge (*neder*) is stronger than a *mitzvah* in regard to its obligation, which is why all the Jewish customs and all the severities (*chumrot*) that we have taken upon ourselves are in a certain sense even more obligatory than the *mitzvot* of the Written Torah. Nonetheless the Moshe Rabbeinu of the generation, the one who sees through a clear lens, can slowly make them permissible,

until finally we can come to a state where slaughtering with a sickle is understood to be kosher. Since this is such a delicate topic, we have to stress once more that only the greatest *tzadik* of the generation can deal with it correctly. However, since the Alter Rebbe wanted all of us to taste from the wonderful taste of the rationales of the Torah, to taste from the new Torah, he also taught us a great deal of the new Torah in a way that we can understand and grasp it fully, indulging in the secrets of the secrets of the Torah. Because the ability to sense the state of the spirit of impurity belongs solely to the greatest *tzadik* of the generation, in order to get to our distant brother and in order to bring the Mashiach and build a kingdom here in our holy land, we need the sense of smell, the "*morach ve'da'een*" (lit., "[he] smells and judges") of the Mashiach of our generation.



To understand this better we have to look at another saying of the sages. נתר is the root we brought before, from which we get the verse: "God frees prisoners." But, there is another root יתר, which means a string or a bowstring. The most important one in the Bible is the bowstring, from which arrows are shot; to shoot arrows of Torah. "To shoot" in Hebrew comes from another related root, ירה, from which derives the Hebrew word for the "first rain," יורה, which indicates the might or strength of the rain. An arrow has to be shot with enough strength and precision to hit the target with enough force. For this you have to have a very tight bowstring. You have to then pull it to increase its tension even more, and then it shoots like an arrow, which in Hebrew is written יורה כוח. Rabbi Avraham Abulafia, one of the first Kabbalists, writes that this idiom permutes to spell כוח היוצר, which means the power of formation, which alludes to the verse in Chronicles that we have already seen: "They were the artisans who... sat *with the king* when he was working." (1 Chronicles 4:23). In Hebrew, "artisans," היוצרים, would literally be translated as "the formers," who use the "power of formation." In other words, the related roots יתר and ירה allude to the power to be alongside and with God as He creates the world. Who is with God in this place? As we said, his beloved spouse, the Jewish people; in the idiom of the sages, to "shoot like an arrow" is found in context of the act of procreation. Through the marital relationship between God and the Jewish people, we ourselves are able to "shoot like an arrow" and to create a new reality.

But, let us imagine for a moment a different situation. What if I loosen, or completely free the string on the bow of a violin? If I do this then I have made the violin useless. This is a destructive type of freeing. So, on the one hand the root יתר, "string," refers to the tension in the string, on the other hand the related root נתר, "to free," refers to loosening the string. These seem to be two contradictory meanings. How can we carry the opposites in this case? How can we understand both meanings at the same time? Both of these roots refer, simultaneously, to the secret of the word *Torah*, the new Torah to be revealed by the Mashiach.



To understand this paradox we shall contemplate an idiom used by our sages: הותרה הרצועה, which literally means “the lash has been loosened.” This is an important idiom. In the literature of the sages it appears only twice, but in later sources it is frequently used to indicate a slackening of harsh judgment, the topic that we have been discussing this evening, the Torah of Mashiach that relieves and frees us from certain taboos and which will make it possible for us to build the kingdom of the Jewish people here in the Holy Land.

Before looking at the context in which the sages use this idiom, let us see its numerical value: הותרה הרצועה = 992, which is 2 times the value of מלכות “kingdom” (meaning that the average value of each word is “kingdom”). So, this idiom is definitely key in our understanding of the nature of the rectified Jewish kingship.

The second word in the idiom, הרצועה (lit., “the leash”), has the same numerical value as עשו “Esau,” which has the same value as שלום “peace.” Thus, this idiom also alludes to freeing Esau, or making peace with Esau permissible.

רצועה (pronounced: *retzoo'ah*) means either a leash or a lash used to hit someone (sometimes it is even used in the sense of a cane used to strike someone). In the *Zohar*, the designated purpose of a *retzoo'ah* is to hit someone, that is, to punish him. Now, someone who is not frum, what does he see when he sees frum people? He sees people who are really involved with reward and punishment. But, more than the reward, he sees the punishments hanging over their heads. He says to himself: “I don’t keep the Shabbat the way that you do. So what would you have done to me? You would want to come and stone me, no!?” In short, what he sees is the lash—if you do not follow the commandments, that lash will strike you. How do we understand what he sees in spiritual terms? We understand that as long as there is still a place that is empty of the true awe of God, it is an empty pit, scorpions and snakes will fill it, i.e., fear of punishment will fill it. And as long as there are such pits where it is not God that is feared but punishment that is feared, the redemption cannot come. Simply put, if a person sees only punishment, only the lash (the *retzoo'ah*), he cannot be redeemed. As explained in Chassidut, a place that is empty of awareness of God is a place where a person does not sense the King, the Master of the Universe, but instead he senses *gehenom*, hell. Anyone who is experiencing only the lack of God’s Presence is experiencing the contraction or concealment of God’s infinite light and that person is unfortunately in *gehenom* already. As long as this is the case, we cannot yet make peace with Esau. The lash is like a string drawn very, very tight, ready to strike at any moment, and loosening to the point of completely freeing it is what is needed in order to reveal God’s Presence. And to this end we need the Torah of Mashiach. We should not get the wrong impression that there is some change in the eternal Torah, it just means that we have a new mindset for looking at the Torah. We gain the ability to carry opposites, to make the punishment permissible.

So, now let us see this idiom “slackening the lash” in context. Everything we have said so far this evening culminates with this final meditation. The first source that we are going to look at is in the *Midrash*. The *Midrash* (*Vayikra Rabbah* 28:1 and elsewhere) recounts that the sages wanted to make the book of Ecclesiastes apocrypha because they saw that a few of the ideas King Solomon expressed in it lean towards heresy (literally, Epicureanism). One of the verses that troubled them was: “Rejoice young man in your youth and let your heart give you joy in your youth. Follow that ways of your heart and whatever your eyes see...” (Ecclesiastes 11:9). The sages protest. Moshe Rabbeinu wrote in the Torah, “You shall not follow your hearts and your eyes.” So, with Solomon’s words, the lash has been cut loose! Is there no more judgment? Is there no judge to fear? Still, we know that Ecclesiastes is a holy book of the Bible. So what happened? The sages answered this apparent heresy with the end of the verse, which reads: “But know that for all these things, God will bring you to judgment.” So the sages conclude that Solomon spoken well!

Before continuing let us note that the numerical value of this problematic phrase **והלך בדרכי לבך ובמראי עיניך** “Follow that ways of your heart and whatever your eyes see...” is exactly 768, the number that represents our current year: **תשסח** ([5]768)!

Now the question that we have to immediately ask is why does the *Midrash* act as if it does not know the end of the verse. There are many times in the Talmud and *Midrash* when the beginning of a verse is difficult but the end of the verse explains the beginning. In that case, the sages say to the one asking the question, “read [lit., go down to] the end of the verse!” (In Aramaic, “go down to” can be read: “humble yourself [and look at the end of the verse].”) Why is this idiom/approach not applied here? Why entertain the difficulty and protest that the beginning of the verse uproots justice? Why consider extricating the book from the Bible? Instead, just send the questioner directly to the end of the verse and the question will be answered. Since the *Midrash* could have done this and does not means that it is trying to teach us something very important. What is the message?

(to be continued... God willing, tomorrow)