

First Tishrei Shiur

4 Tishrei 5772

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(Notes taken during the shiur by Moshe Genuth. Not reviewed by Harav Ginsburgh)

A good and sweet year to everyone.

The first book of Kabbalah is the Book of Formation (*Sefer Yetzirah*), attributed to Abraham our Patriarch, the first Jew. It is a small volume that predates the *Zohar* and the rest of the large books of Kabbalah. In it we learn that God created each of the year's 12 months with one of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. The month of Tishrei is the month of the Yamim Nora'im, the Days of Awe (Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kipur) which are then followed by the time of our joy, the festival of Sukot. There is a verse that reads, "His left [arm] is under my head, and his right [arm] embraces me." The Days of Awe are uplifted by God's left arm as it were and Sukot, the days of joy, are the time that we feel God's embrace. God's embrace is with both arms together, the left and the right. First judgment in the days of judgment and then a lot of love with the chesed, with the right. So this month, Tishrei, the seventh month, full of all good things, with all the measures of the heart, making the heart full of fear of God and then love of God, and from love to come to joy. God created all this with the letter lamed (ל). The previous month, the month of preparation for receiving all the lights of Tishrei is Elul and it was created with the letter yud, the smallest letter which is like a point hovering in the air. The lamed is the largest letter, in the sages it is described as a tower towering high. When these two letters are joined together, first the letter lamed and then the letter yud which is still left over in the Ten Days of Repentance, we get the word לי, "for me," which the sages say is a sign of eternity, something that does not move either in this world or the next. The connection between these two letters occurs now in the Ten Days of Repentance. Of all the allusions to the month of Elul, the most important is אני לדודי ודודי לי, the bride and the groom joining in embrace. The final letters are 4 yud's alluding to the 40 days from the time Moshe Rabeinu ascended Mt. Sinai a third time in order to receive the Torah anew, including the 30 days of Elul and the first 10 days of Tishrei. Moshe Rabbeinu came down from the mountain for a third time with the Tablets of the Covenant on Yom Kippur with the message that we had been forgiven. The message is that these are the days to become ba'alei teshuvah as the Rambam promises that at the end of the exile, we will do teshuvah and we will immediately be redeemed, an eternal redemption, גאולת עולמים, the initials of which are hinted to in our year, תשע"ב. So let us sing again the nigun אני לדודי ודודי לי with the intent that the two letters לי are the heart and the mind, the heart rises up with the lamed and then receives the light of the yud, symbolizing the intellect, and the לי then shines now during the Ten Days of Repentance.

The notion of לי during the Ten Days of Repentance is called in Chassidut, the nearness of the source of light to the spark. God is our source of light and our soul is the spark. During these 10 days, the source comes close to the spark and connects with it from above. So it is God that manifests the לי during these 10 days.

At the beginning of the book of Daniel it says that the wicked king Nebuchadnezzar looked for talented young Jewish boys who would serve in his court. He found 4 such children, who came from Jewish royalty: Daniel, Chanayah, Misha'el, and Azaryah. He was looking for 7 particular qualities that he found in them. Then he tries to give them the Pat Bag of the king, a special phrase. They of course were not willing to eat from food that was not kosher, keeping the sanctity of their Jewish body, just as we have a soul that is holy, our body is also holy. How is this connected to our time? One of the important commentaries of the Torah, on the first verse of the parashah this week, Vayelech, he writes that *בג המלך פת וילך* is *פת בג המלך*, this is a rhyme with the word *המלך*, the king rhyming with *וילך*. There is a sign here. One must make signs in the Torah. Here, if the king, the king on Rosh Hashanah is Hashem, whom we coronate and accept as our King, occurs on the two days *בג*, Monday or Tuesday then the parashot of Nitzavim and Vayelech are separate. In our calendar Rosh Hashanah cannot fall on *אדו*, Sunday, Wednesday, or Friday. If RH is on either Thursday or Shabbat then there is no Shabbat between Yom Kipur and Sukot and therefore Nitzavim and Vayelech have to be read together. But, if RH is on Monday or Tuesday there will be a Shabbat and then the two parashot are read separately. So now we are on parashat Vayelech and on the Shabbat between Yom Kipur and Sukot we will read Ha'azinu. This sign is based on the rhyme between king (*המלך*) and Vayelech (*וילך*). The word Vayelech does not appear in the phrase from Daniel, so there is something in walking, in Vayelech that has to do with kingdom. Apart from the fact that we accept Hashem as our king on RH, all 10 days of repentance have to do with the construction of kingdom. The rest of the month's holidays are also related to kingdom, with the high point being Shemini Atzeret. This all goes back to the fact that God created this month with the letter lamed, *ל*.

In Pirkei Avot it says that kingdom is acquired through 30 traits. Also, the name of Yehudah (*יהודה*), the tribe of kingdom, equals 30. There are many other things that also relate 30 to kingdom. What is special about Vayelech? It is the shortest of all the year's parashot. It has exactly 30 verses. This is the little that holds the most. Apparently this small quantity of verses has the greatest concentration of quality. There is another reason that 30 is related to kingdom, because in a full month, like Tishrei (the central full month of the year), there are 30 days. The cycle of the moon is like the power of kingdom, like the menstrual cycle in a woman. The normal cycle in a woman is defined as being 30 days long (*וסת בינוני*). Every month has a sense that goes with it and this month's sense is that of relationship, marital relationships between husband and wife. "His left is under my head and His right embraces me."

Another thing is that the main letter in the word "king" (*מלך*) is the lamed. If the lamed is taken out, what is left is "pauper" (*מך*). Indeed, in the righteous king's heart he feels like he is a pauper, he is lowly, but what makes him a king is the letter lamed. In the root *הלך*, to walk, the main letter is the lamed. Without the lamed, it becomes *הך*, meaning to strike, not completely positive. What makes walking positive is the lamed.

Again, if one wants to be a sofer (a counter), the first sages were called soferim because they counted the letters of the Torah, so what one should do it to count how many lamed's there are in the parashah. Just in the first verse, *וילך משה וידבר את הדברים האלה*,

אל כל ישראל, there are 5 lamed's. This is relatively a high concentration. The last three words each end with a lamed. If we count all the lamed's in the parashah we find that there are exactly—today we can use a computer—there are exactly 130. This is equal to 5 times Havayah (י-הוה), alluding to the five measures of loving-kindness (ה חסדים) that sweeten the 5 measures of judgment. What else does this tell us? The simplest words in Hebrew that equal 130 are עין (eye), which is actually the filling of the letter ע. One permutation of these letters עין is עני meaning a pauper. But, in the Zohar the main word that equals 130 is סלם (a ladder), as in Jacob's ladder. The letter lamed we said is likened in its form to a tower soaring high. Indeed, it can also be likened to a ladder. It's foot is on the ground but it soars high into the heavens. It doesn't go straight up, but rather is like a 3-stage rocket that is trying to break free from the earth's gravitational pull. There is no other letter in the Hebrew alphabet that looks like a ladder. Indeed, in the word סלם there is a lamed. If we take the lamed out we are left with סס, which means a drug. There are good drugs, the drug of life (the Torah) and negative drugs. This is also related to Shabbat Shuvah or Shabbat Teshuvah. The first name is based on the first word of the haftarah, שובה ישראל עד ה' אלקיך. The final word is different based on different customs. There is a custom by some to read only the next 9 verses in the Book of Hosea. But, there is another custom, based on the Arizal, the custom of the Sepharadim (also the custom of Chabad) which is to add 3 verses from Micah that reiterates the 13 measures of compassion. The custom of Ashkenaz is not to add these verses from Micah that adds verses from the next book after Hosea which is Yo'el. In any case what is common to all the customs is to read the verses in Hosea up to מי חכם ויבן אלה נבון וידעם כי ישרים דרכי הוי' וצדיקים ילכו בהם ורשעים יכשלו בהם. The person who is not righteous, for him the Torah itself becomes a drug of death. So the idea that there is a good drug and negative drug is all about the Torah, it is how you approach the Torah. This is the final message in Hosea. So again this is the allusion made by taking the lamed out of סלם.

Let's say something more about this point. What should we take from this? In particular in the 10 days of Repentance and in particular this year when we read only parashat Vayelech with its 30 verses and 130 lameds: we said that the lamed is a ladder that connects the earth with the heavens. The sages say that when Jacob saw the ladder, he was afraid to climb it. If only he would have received an invitation from the ladder to climb, then already we would have experienced the eternal redemption. We learn from this that the lesson of the lamed is that we are connected below with our head reaching the heavens. We are both in welt and aus welt, in reality and yet at the very same moment we are above reality. Being in two states of mind simultaneously. This is as we will explain the literal meaning of the first two words of this parashah, Moshe walked, וילך משה. What do these words indicate?

Every time that we want to understand the meaning of a word, we look for its first occurrence in the Torah. The first time וילך appears is after God said to Abraham Lech Lecha, Go from your land... to the land I will show you. And then it says, Abraham went as God spoke to him. He went by virtue of his faith in God. To walk, to go, is to pursue something (ללכת על משהו) as we say in Modern Hebrew. In Abraham's case certainly it includes physical travel, walking to the land of Israel. A second time is when

God commands him to go bind Isaac. There too he walks with faith, not knowing where it will take him. In Vayelech the word וילך appears twice, first Moshe alone and then Moshe and Yehoshua. These are the two final instances of the word in the Torah. But, the second time is not difficult to understand because it says explicitly where they went. But, in the first instance it just says that Moshe walked and spoke. Why did he have to walk? Where did he walk to?

Our main point this evening is to explain what type of teshuvah... Apart from the fact that these are the days in which God encourages us to ascend a ladder, to rectify Jacob's fear from climbing. This is why they are days of awe, because there is fear involved. But, we have to overcome this fear, like the BST's father instructed him before he passed away, that he should not fear anything but God. The Days of Awe are the time to overcome our fear of ascending on high. The source of light is coming down to meet our spark. "God is standing upon him," as it says by Jacob, and then even though we are entrenched below, our feet on the ground, we are in *welt*, in reality, at the same time we ascend and are above, *aus welt*.

The second point, which is even deeper is where Moshe Rabbeinu was going, and how is this related to the verse, *שובה ישראל עד ה' אלקיך כי כשלת בעניך*, "Return Israel unto *Havayah* your God, for you have stumbled upon your sins." They must be related.

We asked where Moshe is going when it says, "Moshe walked" (וילך משה) and we said that there is certainly a connection with the first verse of the haftarah. From the end of the verses we learn what it means to stumble, since it says that *פושעים יכשלו בם*, the wicked shall stumble over them, the Torah will turn into a drug of death for them, this relates to faith in our sages (אמונת חכמים). This is the strength of faith, the heart's ability to follow what the true sages, of our generation, of all previous generations have told us. Every Jew is a soldier and every Jewish woman is a soldier in God's army. And every soldier follows what he is told. He or she has faith in what they are told. So if he is told to ascend a ladder all the way to Heaven, then he does exactly that. Just as Caleb said, if Moshe tells us to build ladders and climb to Heaven we will do it and succeed. God speaks through the prophets, through the Moshe Rabbeinu of every generation.

In any case, how can we understand from the haftarah's first verse where Moshe Rabbeinu is going. The Magid of Mezritch explains, based on a similar verse that appears twice in the Torah, *ושבת עד הוי אלקיך*, You shall return unto *Havayah* your God. So this phrase, *עד הוי אלקיך*, unto *Havayah* your God appears three times in the Tanach. The Magid has a special explanation for this. From it we can get a sense for how the Chassidic interpretations began on top of the literal or drush explanations that were known until then. He explains that one must do teshuvah, should return to God to the point where God's essential Name, *Havayah* (indicating God's oneness) becomes your God, meaning your lifeforce and your strength. The point here is about the word *עד*, until or unto. He turns it into *עד ש*, meaning "until you turn it into." Chassidut is a sense about how to understand these relational words, like until. It says in *Hayom Yom* that when the Magid said this interpretation, his disciples were in tremendous excitement. But, one of his students, Rebbe Zusha said that this was too difficult for him. Therefore he said that he has to divide teshuvah into stages. He took the word teshuvah (תשובה)

and connected each letter with a verse that begins with that letter: תמים תהיה עם ה' אלקיך, שויתי ה' לנגדי תמיד, ואהבת לרעך כמוך, בכל דרכיך דעהו, הצנע לכת עם ה' אלקיך. As we said that even Jacob was not able to reach the top of the ladder, being at one and the same time within nature and above nature. We are to make nature into a miracle, by making Havayah into our life force. All we have to do is open our eyes to see that indeed Mashiach is here as the Rebbe said.

Let's do a gematria on this verse: שובה ישראל עד י-הוה א-להיך כי כשלת בעונך. There are 3 words before י-הוה א-להיך (Havayah your God) and three words after it. Each set of three words is one word with 2 letters, one with 4, and one with 5 letters. Altogether, there are 11 letters on each side. The value of the 3 words before and the 3 words after are exactly the same, 928. The point is that around making Havayah your God, the source of all that is happening in these days we see that to return unto God (שובה ישראל עד) is exactly equal to "for you have stumbled on your sins" (כי כשלת בעונך). The most important phrase that equals 928 is in the Ten Commandments. The sages say that of the Ten Commandments the fifth, respecting one's parents is the most important. כבוד את אביך ואת אמך equals 928. So even though we have stumbled because of our lack of faith in the sages, it is related to respecting one's parents. How so? The written Torah is likened to our father and the oral Torah, the Torah of the sages, is likened to our mother. To respect them is to believe in them and to do what they say. Every person should do teshuvah both in relation to God (בן אדם למקום) and in relation to other people. The first corresponds to da'at, knowledge, which is דע את אלקי אביך, Know the God of your father, as Rav Saadya Ga'on said that to know God is to know Him anew every day, to grow in our knowledge of God. The main part of teshuvah is to know who God is. This is attained through meditation (התבוננות). This is the main force in doing teshuvah in relation to God. Doing teshuvah in relation to people is chesed, loving-kindness. If I only do good I will never hurt anyone else. Hurting someone is the result of a vacuum left from doing good. If there is no such vacuum, you can never hurt anyone.

What mitzvah in the Torah connects our relationship with Hashem and with other people. This is the mitzvah of respecting our parents, כבוד את אביך ואת אמך. According to the Ramban this mitzvah is on the right tablet because it is one of the mitzvot between man and God (everything on the right tablet is between man and God, everything on the left between man and his fellow man). Why do I respect my parents? Because God commanded so. The fact that my parents conceived me is like God creating the world from nothingness. Through my parents I reach my own source in nothingness.

But, the Chinuch, another of the Rishonim says that the reason we respect our parents is because of their self-sacrifice in raising me. They suffered a great deal in raising me. So I have to return their kindness. There is no mitzvah that is more connected then to relations with other people. So here we have two explanations that interpret this mitzvah as belonging to both dimensions. Even if we don't add the explanation regarding the Written Torah and the Oral Torah, these 10 days of Repentance are the best time to rectify our relationship with our parents.

There is another phrase that equals 928, this one connected to Mashiach, as we want Mashiach now. It says that Mashiach will reveal a new Torah. The verse says, תורה מאתי

תצא, a novel understanding of Torah will come from me, but also a new Torah will come from Mashiach. The phrase, new Torah, תורה חדשה equals 928. How do we understand this connection with שובה ישראל עד and with כי נשלת בעונך. The new Torah is the connection between your spirit and your body, until Havayah (your soul) becomes your God (body).

Now in the Zohar it offers a number of interpretations. One is that he is going to die. To go, to walk is many times a verb used to indicate imminent death. Before Moshe goes from here, leaves this world, he says these things. But, actually as we will now explain, Moshe is going to the place where Havayah is your God. He himself is practicing the first verse of the haftarah. To understand this properly we have to look at the first three verses of the parashah. The next verse is ויאמר אליהם בן מאה ועשרים שנה אנכי היום לא אוכל עוד לצאת ולבוא והוי' אמר אלי לא תעבור את הירדן הזה. He is saying that he is on his last day, he will no longer be able to go out and come in. This strengthens the question of where is he walking, where is he going? Hashem told him that he will not be able to cross the Jordan River. Everything we read in the Torah we should identify with and experience. Everything by me, says Moshe is whole, I will no longer be able to come and go. The third verse reads, הוי' אלקיך הוא עובר לפניך, הוא ישמיד את הגוים האלה מלפניך וירשתה יהושע הוא עובר לפניך. כאשר דבר לך. This is the main part of what Moshe speaks as he walks somewhere.

If we meditate on these words that Moshe spoke, the verb to cross (לעבור) to cross the Jordan River, to the land of Israel, the promised land appears 3 times, indicating 3 stages. First he says, God told me I will not cross, but then he says that God will cross before and then adds that Joshua will also cross before you. The phrase הוי' אלקיך appears here a second time (at the beginning of the second verse). The Zohar says that the specter of leadership is here being transferred between Moshe and Yehoshua. The face of Moshe is like the sun and the face of Yehoshua is like the moon. Moshe Rabbeinu prayed earlier to God, if Your face does not go with us, do not cross with us, אל נא תעבירנו, meaning that he is not willing to accept the leadership of he who is like the moon. The people crossing into the land need the leadership of the one who looks like a moon, not the leadership of the sun. They need to eat from the עובר הארץ, the produce of the land and not from the manna that comes in the merit of Moshe. Moshe here is going here, is following the path of the type of leadership that God wanted all along and that until now Moshe has not accepted. God wants it to be natural leadership, a natural way of life, where a person has to sow grain and make bread from his produce and not the supernatural conduct that the people had with Moshe. Because of his faith, Moshe is now willing to follow something that previously he was not. His faith is above reason, למעלה מטעם ודעת. But, between the two types of conduct there is the statement that "Havayah your God will cross," to connect the sun and the moon we need Havayah your God. This is what allows Moshe Rabbeinu to come to terms with the change that is about to take place. Hashem your God is in the terminology of Chassidut the intermediate connecting Moshe and Yehoshua. Let's say it again. Moshe says he's 120 years old and I will no longer be able to come and go, the wellsprings of wisdom have been sealed for me, and God told me that I will not cross the Jordan River. My type of leadership and conduct is not fitting for the generation entering the land. Indeed, the

sages say that if Moshe Rabbeinu would have entered the land he would have built the Temple and become the Mashiach, and in spite of this, it will be Yehoshua who will lead and conduct the people. This thanks to the intermediate power of Havayah your God. God is going to enclothe Himself in Yehoshua's style of leadership.

What can we learn from this as individuals? Every year a new light descends, a light that has never been here. On the other hand, there is a continuing descent of the generations (that began with the giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai). These are opposite vectors of movement, ascent and descent. RH, according to Yechezkel continues from the first day of the year to the 10th day. Shanah means change. What change is occurring? From the perspective of the סדר ההשתלשלות, the world is constantly descending into a more and more physical frame of mind. But, this itself is what causes the balance to appear in the form of new light, light that has never been in the world, light that is greater than the light that created reality. And it is this light that holds us and balances us. What is our downfall is also our rectification in this case. If we connect with this light we will fulfill the most essential wish of the Almighty to dwell here below. To fulfill this want, we need this great light. The lower we descend the greater the light that comes down on Rosh Hashanah, and this itself is Havayah your God, the New Torah that appears. The more the generation descends, the more we are אלקיך below, the further below we go, the higher up the Havayah, the new light that appears has to be. So God is saying that it is good that the leadership be Yehoshua's which is more naturally oriented, yet this is possible only because the Havayah that is revealed is even higher.

The structure here is no-yes-yes. I will not cross. But Havayah you God will. And Yehoshua, he will cross. This structure corresponds to submission, separation, sweetening (חש מל מל). Here Moshe reaches the greatest state of his humility, willing to accept a leadership that is completely opposite from his own. He is the submission, then the separation appears in the form of Havayah your God. Finally, Yehoshua he is the speech, the leader of the next generation, "as God has spoken."

The first thing is that the lamed of this month is a ladder. This is the essence of the Ten days of Repentance. The second thing is from the Magid that now is the time to practice repentance to the point where Havayah (the new light, the new Torah) is connected to your God (אלקיך, the lowest descent that we are at in this generation).