

Zera Shimshon

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Chapter LII: Vaveilech (Deut. 31:1–31:30)

Essay 9. Separating goodness from the *Klipat Noga*¹

פְּסוּקִים "לב טהור" וכו' "רוח נכון" וכו', "אל-תשליכני" וכו', "רוח קדוש" וכו', "השיבה לי" וכו' "רוח נדיבה" וכו'. צריך עיון שמהפסוק הראשון נראה שצריך שיחזיק הרוח דכתיב "חדש בקרבי", לפי שהרוח הראשון אינו עוד טוב. ומהפסוק שני נראה שעדיין יש לו רוח הקודש אך הוא מתפלל שלא יקחנו ממנו, ומהפסוק השלישי נראה שפבר הלאה ממנו והוא מתפלל שישיבנו לו. ועוד למה קראו בשלשה שמות, רוח נכון, רוח קדוש, רוח נדיבה, ומה רצה לרמוז בזה?

There are verses: “Create a pure heart for me, O G-d; renew in me a suitable spirit. Do not cast me out of Your presence, or take Your holy spirit away from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation; let a willing spirit sustain me.” (Ps. 51:12–14). This requires study, that from the first verse, it appears the spirit should be renewed, as it says, “renew in me” [literally, “make new within me”], because the first spirit was no longer good. From the second verse, it appears that the holy spirit is still with him, but he prays that it won’t be taken from him, but from the third verse, it appears that it has already gone from him, and he prays that it will be returned to him. Further, why were they called by three terms, “a suitable spirit,” “a holy spirit,” and “a willing spirit,” and what did [Scripture] want to hint by this?

ואיתא בפרוש הרמ"ז (פרשת נשא דף קכ"ב) שאדם הראשון גרם להחזיק פח קליפת נוגה וכו' שגפלו לתוכה כמה ניצוצי קדושה וכו'. ועל זה ניתנו המצוות להחזיר הטוב ולהעלותו למקורו וכו', וזהו פועל הצדיקים להבדיל הטוב מקליפת נוגה. ומעשה הרשעים הוא בהפך שהם גורמים אדרבא לחבר נוגה לקליפות אחרות ולהשפיל שם הניצוצות, והטוב נכנע לרע וזהו פגם גדול וכו', ועיי"ש בפסוק שקודם שינתחיל העונש לבוא על החוטא אז התשובה היא קלה להחזיר הניצוצות למקומם, לפי שעדיין זכרי הסוד מאירים והוא סימן שעדיין לא נשתקעו הניצוצות וכו' ועיי"ש.

It’s brought in the explanation of the ReMeZ² (parshat Naso page 122) that the first man caused the *Klipat Noga* [“husk of brightness”] to gain power etc., that a number of sparks

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¹ Parshat Vaveilech is known as Shabbat Shuva, the Sabbath of Redemption, after the opening words of the Haftorah, and it is read between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. The theme of this essay is connected to repentance and the role of the righteous.

² Rabbi Moses ben Mordechai Zacuto (c. 1625–1697), Kabbalist and poet in Amsterdam and Italy. The translator has not identified which sefer of the ReMeZ is being referenced by the Zera Shimshon.

of holiness fell within it. There are four *klipot*, the husks or shells, of which three are entirely impure, while the *Klipat Noga* is a mixture of good and evil.³ **For this reason, the commandments were given, to return the goodness and to restore it to its source etc., and this is the work of the righteous, to separate the goodness from the *Klipat Noga*. The work of the wicked is the opposite, for they cause, to the contrary, the connection of the *Klipat Noga* to the other husks, which are entirely impure, and to bring down the sparks there, and the goodness surrenders to the evil, and this is a great flaw. See there in the ReMeZ, in an adjoining section, that before the punishment begins to come upon the sinner, the repentance would easily return the sparks to their place, because the radiance of G-d's kindness illuminates and this is a sign that the sparks have not yet become sunk completely into the husks, etc., and see there.**

וְיָדוע שְׁדוּד הָיָה לוֹ לְמַסְנֵי נִשְׁמַת אָדָם וְעַתָּה שְׁחָטָא בְּנֻדָּי שְׁאֲדַרְבָּא קַלְקַל וְחִזְרָא לְהוֹרִיד אֵינָה נִיצוּץ וְהַגְבִּיר לְפָחוֹת פֶּחַם קַלְפַת נֹגְהָ. וְהִנֵּה מַלְת "נִכּוֹן" רָצָה לֹמַר נִכּוֹן מִשְׁשֵׁת יְמֵי בְּרָאשִׁית, כְּמוֹ שְׁאֲמָרוּ ו"ל רְאוּנָה הֵיטָה בַת שְׁבַע לְדוּד דְּכַתִּיב "כִּי־אֲנִי לְצַלַע נִכּוֹן", וּמִשּׁוֹם הֵכִי הֵיטָה מִתְפַּלֵּל שְׁיִבְרָא לוֹ עַתָּה לֵב טְהוֹר, מִכָּלֵל דְּאֵיפָא טָמֵא לְפִי שְׁפָבֵר חָטָא, וּבְזָה יִמְסָן הַפְּגָם שְׁעֵשֶׂה בְּעַצְמוֹ. וְעוֹד יוֹסִיף וְיַחֲדֵשׁ לוֹ הַכֶּסֶם וְהַרוּחַ שֶׁהֵיטָה לוֹ מִשְׁשֵׁת יְמֵי בְּרָאשִׁית לְמַסְנֵי אַף הַפְּגָמִים שְׁעֵשֶׂה אָדָם הַרְאֵשׁוֹן. וּלְפִי שְׁאֵלוֹ הַתִּיקוּנִים צָרִיף זְמַן הַרְבֵּה לְעֲשׂוֹתָם שֶׁהָרִי תְלוּיִים בְּהַרְבֵּה מְצוֹת וּמַעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים, מִשּׁוֹם הֵכִי הֵיטָה מִתְפַּלֵּל שְׁבִין כֶּף וּבֵין כֶּף לֹא יָבֵא שׁוּם עוֹנֵשׁ עָלָיו עַל מַה שְׁחָטָא.

It's known that David, as a reincarnation of Adam, could have corrected the soul of Adam, but now that David sinned with Bathsheba, it's certain that to the contrary he caused damage, and continued to bring down whatever spark⁴ and to strengthen at least the power of *Klipat Noga*. Here, the word "*nachon*" [נִכּוֹן], which typically means "correct," here intends to say "suitable" [or "prepared," "ready," or "fit"] from the six days of Creation, as [the rabbis] of blessed memory said:

Rava taught: What is [the meaning of that] which is written: "For I am ready [*nachon*] to stumble [*letzela*] and my pain is always before me" (Ps. 38:18)?
Bathsheba, daughter of Eliam, was suitable for David from the six days of Creation.

³ Kabbalah speaks of the four central worlds: Atzilut ("the world of emanation"), Beriah ("the world of creation"), Yetzirah ("the world of formation"), and Asiyah ("the world of action"). The last three terms appear (in verb form) in Isaiah 43:7, "Every one that is called by My name, and for My glory, I have created him, I have formed him, indeed, I have made him." Atzilut emerges directly from G-d's infinite light (revelation); this world is all good. Atzilut is the soul and the source of life to Beriah, the first world created from nothing, where Seraphim are created. Beriah is mostly good, with some bad. Beriah is the soul and the source of life to Yetzirah, where angels are created, forces entrusted with performing tasks without any free choice. Yetzirah is half good and half bad. Yetzirah is the soul and the source of life to Asiyah, our finite world in which created beings have a strong sense of independence. Asiyah is mostly bad, though there is some good. Therefore, the worlds are all linked, and all have a connection to G-d's infinite light.

Kabbalah also speaks of four husks, with the names derived from Ezek. 1:4. The husk *Esh Mitlakachat* ("Erupting Fire") stands opposite the world of Beriah; the husk *Anan Gadol* ("Great Cloud") stands opposite the world of Yetzirah; and the *Ruach Se'ara* ("Stormy Wind") stands opposite the world of Asiyah. These are the three husks that are entirely impure. The fourth husk, the *Noga*, contains a mixture of good and evil; it can become stuck to the other husks, or it can be freed from them.

⁴ Rabbi Chaim Vital, Sha'ar haGilgulim, 7:17.

[That is, Rava interprets “ready [*nachon*]” as “suitable.” He interprets the term *letzela* as referring to Eve, who was taken from the side [*tzela*] of Adam.⁵ Thus, “I am ready to stumble” is reinterpreted as “I am suitable for this woman.” Just as Eve was destined for Adam, Bathsheba was destined for David.]

- Sanhedrin 107a

Thus, Batsheba was suitable for David, as it is written, “For I am ready to stumble,” which as explained above means, “I am suitable for Bathsheba.” But while she would have ultimately become permitted to David after the death of her husband, he sinned by taking her prematurely, and always felt anguish over this.⁶ **Because of this anguish, he prayed in Ps. 51:12 that [G-d] would create for him now a pure heart. “By inference, there was an impure [heart],”⁷ because he had already sinned, and in this way, the flaw that he caused himself will be repaired. Also, David prayed that [G-d] should add and renew for him the power and the spirit that he had from the six days of Creation in order to repair even the flaws that the first man made. Because these corrections required much time to carry them out, for they depended on fulfilling many commandments and good deeds, because of this, he prayed that between this and that, no punishment would come upon him because of his sin.**

וְזֶהוּ "אֶל־תְּשַׁלְּכֵנִי מִלִּפְנֵיךָ" שֶׁאֵז אָנִי בְּטוֹם וְ"רוּחַ קְדוֹשְׁךָ אֶל־תִּקַּח מִמֶּנִּי", לְפִי שֶׁעֲדִינִי זִקְרֵי הַחֶסֶד מֵאִירִים, דְּלֹאֶסֶר שֶׁאֶעֱשֶׂה הַרְבֵּה מִצְוֹת אִתָּךְ תִּשְׁיב הַכֹּל לְמִקּוּרוֹ הָעֲלִיּוֹן וְתִהְיֶה שְׂמֵחָה גְדוֹלָה בִּישׁוּעַת הַנִּיצוּצוֹת שֶׁל הַקְּדוּשָׁה.

This is the meaning of, “Do not cast me out of Your presence”: that now I am certain that “You will not take Your holy spirit away from me,” because the radiance of G-d’s kindness illuminates, and that after I perform many commandments, You will return everything to its uppermost source and there will be great joy at the salvation of the sparks of holiness.

וְזֶהוּ "שִׁשׁוֹן יִשְׁעֶךָ", שֶׁהָרִי גִשׁ לִי לְסִמּוּךְ עַל מַה שֶׁהֵייתִי גְדִיב בַּעֲשִׂיית "מִשְׁפָּט וְצְדָקָה" כְּדַכְתִּיב "וַיְהִי דוֹד עֲשֶׂה מִשְׁפָּט וְצְדָקָה". וְעִינִי בְּפֶרֶק קִמָּא דְּסִנְהֶדְרִין, וּבְמַסְסַת סוּפָה אֶמְרִינֵן כְּאֵלּוּ מִלְּאוֹ לְכֹל הָעוֹלָם כְּלוּ חֶסֶד, "אֵהָב צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט" וְכוּ', וְזֶהוּ "רוּחַ קְדוֹשְׁךָ" וְכוּ'.

This is the meaning of “the joy of Your salvation”: that I can rely on the fact that I performed “justice and charity,” as it is written, “and David executed justice and charity unto all his people” (II Sam. 8:15). See the first chapter of tractate Sanhedrin (6b), where it says

⁵ I.e., the word *letzela*, “to stumble,” is derived from the word *tzela*, “side,” because when one stumbles, he falls to one side.

⁶ See Chapter I: Bereisheet, essay 4, for more analysis.

⁷ Sukkah 52a.

that David practiced mediation,⁸ and tractate Sukkah (49b), “**It is said** those who perform charity and justice are considered **as if they filled the whole world with kindness**, as it is written, ‘**He loves charity and justice**’ (Ps. 33:5),”⁹ and this is the meaning of “**a willing spirit**” etc.

וּבְדָרְךָ זֶה יוֹבֵן הֵיא דְשְׁלִשָּׁה סְפָרִים נִפְתָּחִים בְּרֵאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה, שְׁכַמָּה דְיָו נִשְׁתַּפֵּךְ עַל זֶה מִהַמְּפָרְשִׁים, דְּצַדִּיקִים גְּמוּרִים הָיִינוּ אוֹתָם שְׁלֵא הוֹרִידוּ הַנִּיצוּצוֹת אֶלָּא לְקַלִּיפַת נוֹגַהּ, וְהוֹרְדָה זֶה הִיא יְרִידָה קְלָה וְקַרְוָה לְהַתְקַן עַל יְדֵי מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם הַטּוֹבִים וְאִינָם קְרוּבִים לְהַשְׁתַּקֵּעַ שָׁם כָּלֵל, אֶלָּא הֵם מוֹכְנִים לְצַפְצָף וְלַעֲלוֹת. וְהַרְשָׁעִים הֵם אוֹתָם שֶׁהוֹרִידוּם לְקַלִּיפוֹת הַתְּחַתּוֹנוֹת וְנִשְׁתַּקְעוּ שָׁם, וְהַבְּיֻנְיִים הֵם אוֹתָם שֶׁעָדִין זָהָרִי הַחֶסֶד מְאִירֵם עָלֵיהֶם אֲמָנָם קְרוּבִים הֵם לְהַשְׁתַּקֵּעַ.

Thus will be understood that:

Rabbi Kruspedai said that Rabbi Yochanan said: **Three books are opened on Rosh HaShana** [before the Holy One, Blessed be He]: One of wholly wicked [people], and one of wholly righteous [people], and one of intermediate [people whose good and bad deeds are equally balanced]. Wholly righteous people are immediately written and sealed for life; wholly wicked [people] are immediately written and sealed for death; and middling [people] are left [with their judgment] suspended from Rosh HaShana until Yom Kippur, [their fate remaining undecided]. If they merit [through the good deeds and mitzvot that they perform during this period], they are written for life; if they do not so merit, they are written for death.

- Rosh Hashana 16b

For how much ink has been spilled on this by the commentators, that the wholly righteous are those who only brought down the sparks of holiness to the *Klipat Noga*, and this bringing down is a slight drop that is close to being repaired by their good deeds, and is not close to being submerged there at all, rather they are prepared to shine and to ascend. The wicked are those who brought down the sparks of holiness to the three lowermost husks, the *Esh Mitlakachat*, *Anan Gadol*, and *Ruach Se'ara*, and they became submerged there; and the intermediate people are those that the radiance of G-d's kindness still illuminates, but they are close to becoming submerged.

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⁸ Sanhedrin 6b: “It says: ‘And David executed justice and charity [to all his people]’ (II Samuel 8:15). And is it not that wherever there is [strict] justice, there is no charity, and [wherever there is] charity, there is no [strict] justice? Rather, which is the justice that has within it charity? You must say: This is mediation.”

⁹ Sukkah 49b: “And Rabbi Elazar said: Anyone who performs charity and justice is considered as though he filled the whole world in its entirety with kindness, as it is stated: ‘He loves charity and justice; the earth is full of the kindness of the L-rd’ (Ps. 33:5).”