

Zera Shimshon

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Chapter LVII: Kinnot (Lamentations)

Essay 6: Distancing ourselves from sin, and repentance on Yom Kippur.

פתיחתא דאיכה רבתי אילו זכיתם הנייתם קוראים בתורה פייביום הנה זכפר עליכם, ועכשיו שלא זכיתם הרי אתם קוראים טמאתה בשוליה.

The introduction of Eicha Rabbati (Lamentations Rabbah) states: “If you had merited, you would have read in the Torah, ‘For on this day atonement shall be made for you to cleanse you of all your sins; you shall be clean before the L-rd’ (Lev. 16:30), but now that you didn’t merit, you are reading, ‘Her impurity was in her skirts’ (Lam. 1:9).”

ויוכן במאי דאיתא בילקוט על פסוק כרחק מזרח ממערב הרחיק ממנו וכו'. אומר רב ירמיה לא יהוי אומר איניש רחמנא רחיק יתנא מן החטא, אלא רחיק חטא מינו, שפאמר הרחיק ממנו את-פשיעו עב"ל.

This will be understood by what is brought in Yalkut Shimoni on Nach 859:5 on the verse, “As east is far from west, that is how far He has removed our sins from us” (Ps. 103:12). Rav Yirmeyah said, “A person won’t say that the Merciful One will distance us from sin, rather that He will distance sin from us, as it says in the conclusion of that verse, “He has removed our sins from us.”

והטעם בזה היינו במאי דפליגי רבי יוסי ורחמיהם בפירוש ב' דבתרא (משנה י"א) דקאמר ר' יוסי אף על פי שהבור קדם לאילן, לא קוצץ, שנה חופר בתוך שולו ונה נוטע בתוך שולו, משום דסבר על הגיזק להרחיק את עצמו, ורחמיהם סבירא להו על המזיק להרחיק את עצמו וכו', והלכה כר' יוסי.

The intent of this is what Rabbi Yosi and [the rabbis] disputed in the second chapter of tractate Bava Batra (Mishna [11]¹), that as Rabbi Yosi stated, “Even though the cistern was there before the tree, [the owner of the tree] need not cut down [the tree], since [the owner of the cistern] dug within his own [domain] and the [owner of the tree] planted within his own [domain].”² Rabbi Yosi says this because he is of the opinion that the damaged party

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¹ The text reads the 10th Mishnah, but our edition shows it as the 11th Mishnah.

² Mishna Bava Batra 2:11; Bava Batra 25b.

should distance himself, whereas the rabbis are of the opinion that the damager should distance himself etc., and the halacha is as Rabbi Yosi says.³

ואף כּאן חטא וּמַצַּר הִרַע מִזִּיק לְאָדָם, אֲלֵא שֶׁנִּקְרָא חוֹפֵר בְּתוֹךְ שְׁלֹו שְׁהָרִי מִן הַשְּׂמַיִם מִיּוֹהוּ עַל כֹּף לְהַסִּית אֶת הָאָדָם כְּדִי שִׁיְהִי שֶׁכָּר וְעוֹנֵשׁ בְּעוֹלָם, וְנִתְּנוּ לוֹ צַד וְרִשׁוּת וְאַחִיזָה בְּתוֹךְ לְבוֹ שֶׁל אָדָם בְּצַד שֶׁמֵּאֵל שְׁלוֹ כְּנוֹדָע, וּכְדִכְתִּיב וַיִּצְרָר בְּשֵׁתִי יוֹדִין כְּדֹאֲמַרְיָנוּ בְּבִרְכוֹת, וְאִם כֵּן עַל הָאָדָם דְּהֵיִנוּ הַגִּיזָק לְהַרְחִיק אֶת עֲצָמוֹ. וְאִין לוֹ לְהִתְפַּלֵּל לְהַקֵּב"ה עַל כֹּף שְׁהָרִי הַחֹבֵב מוֹטְלָת עֲלָיו לְהַרְחִיק אֶת עֲצָמוֹ כְּדִי שֶׁלֹּא לְהִיזֵת גִּיזָק, אֲלֵא כֹּף יֵשׁ לוֹ לְהִתְפַּלֵּל שֶׁיִּרְחִיק חֲטָא מִיָּנֹכַח פְּלוֹמֵר שֶׁיִּרְחִיק מִמֶּנּוּ הַמִּזִּיק כְּדִי שֶׁלֹּא יִהְיֶה מוֹכַרְח לְהַטְרִיחַ עֲצָמוֹ וּלְהִתְרַחֵק.

So too, here sin and the evil inclination cause harm to man, rather it is referred to as “dug within his own [domain],” for it’s from Heaven that it was named thus, in order to entice man in order that there would be reward and punishment in the world. An aspect of [the] domain [of the many], i.e., the diverse aspirations and thoughts in man,⁴ and *achiza*, the lifeline of the *klipot*,⁵ is given within the heart of man, on his left side, as is known. As it is written, “and He formed (*va’yitser*) (וַיִּצְרָר) man” (Gen. 2:7), with the word *va’yitser* (and He formed) having two *yuds*, as it says in tractate *Berachot*,⁶ and if so, man has the requirement if he is the damaged party to distance himself from that which is harming him. He should not pray to the Holy One, Blessed be He, for this, i.e., for G-d to remove man’s evil inclination, for the obligation was imposed upon him to distance himself in order that he should not be harmed by sin. Rather, he should pray that [G-d] should distance sin from him, as if to say that He should distance the damaging party from him, in order that he should not be obliged to exert himself to distance himself from sin. I.e., rather than praying for removal of his evil inclination, he should pray to not be exposed to temptation, so that he does not have to exert himself to fight his evil inclination.

³ Bava Batra 18b.

⁴ As explained in the previous essay, in Kabbalistic terms, the “domain of the many” was the state of the original vessels made by G-d in the world of *Tohu* (chaos), which existed separately and which did not share the light they were receiving from G-d. This light built up until the vessels shattered, resulting in the World of the *Klipot* (husks/shells/evil spiritual forces). The term “domain of the many” is also used in Kabbalah to refer to the diverse aspirations and thoughts in man. Thus, the root of all evil is separateness.

⁵ *Achiza* means “a grip” or “a hold.” As a plant’s root provides it with a grip or hold onto the ground, and the plant is nourished through the root, *achiza* [*ha’klipot*] is the root system of the husks of impurity, which seek out the *chisaron* (deficiency) within the *kedusha* (holiness), thus providing the *klipot* with power and energy.

⁶ *Berachot* 61a: “Rav Nachman bar Rav Chisda interpreted homiletically: What is the meaning of that which is written: ‘Then the L-rd G-d formed [*va’yitser*] man’ [Gen. 2:7], with a double *yud*? The Holy One, Blessed be He, created two inclinations: one a good inclination and one an evil inclination.”

ובנה יובן הטעם, אם הקב"ה רוצה שנהנה טובים, פדכת יב ובחרת בחיים, למה הכניס הניצור הרע באדם תכף שנולד, מה שאין כן הניצור הטוב שאינו נכנס בו רק בן י"ג שנים? ואדרבא איפכא מסתברא, או לפחות הנה להם לבא שניהם ביחד. אמנם לפי מה שאמרנו דעל הניזק דהיינו האדם להרחיק את עצמו. לא איכפת לו כלל בנה, שהרי פשיהיה גדול ויידע ויכיר גזול שפא לו מחמת הפיתויים של הניצור הרע אז ירחיק את עצמו, ולכן בא הניצור הרע תכף שנולד, שהמזיק אינו מחוייב להרחיק את עצמו, והניצור הטוב אין לו מה לעשות בעת ההיא, שקטן אוכל גבלות אין בית דין מצווים להפרישו.

The intent will be understood this way: If the Holy One, Blessed be He, wanted us to enjoy goodness, as it is written, “Choose life” (Deut. 30:19), why did He introduce the evil inclination into man as soon as he was born, which isn’t the case for the good inclination, which is introduced into [man] only at 13 years of age?⁷ “To the contrary, the opposite is reasonable,”⁸ i.e., why couldn’t man be born with a good inclination, and receive the evil inclination only at maturity? Or at least the two of them, the good inclination and the evil inclination, should have come together, i.e., at the same time. In truth, according to what we said above, that it’s upon the damaged party, that is the man, to distance himself from the damaging party, it doesn’t matter to us at all that man is born with an evil inclination and doesn’t receive a good inclination until age 13 years. For when he is grown and will know and recognize the great harm that comes to him because of the temptations of the evil inclination, then he will distance himself from sin, and therefore the evil inclination comes as soon as he is born. For the damaging party is not obligated to distance himself from the damaged party, and the good inclination has nothing to do at that time, for the minor can even eat something very unkosher, such as carrion, and a Jewish court would not be obligated to separate him from that.⁹ I.e., a minor is not punished for conduct that would be a sin for a young man of 13 (or a young woman of 12), having become a bar mitzvah (or bat mitzvah), i.e., a “son of the commandment” (or a “daughter of the commandment”), and thus obligated to obey the laws of the Torah and of the rabbis. So there appears to be no harm for man to receive the evil inclination at birth, or to not receive the good inclination until later.

ואם תאמר ולמה אין בית דין של מעלה עונשים פחות מבן עשרים שנה, והלא פינו שיש לו י"ג שנים נקרא גדול ויש לו סיוע הניצור הטוב, ועוד יש לו דעת להתרחק מהחטא ומהנזק? יש לומר משום דאמרנו בפרק ט' דבבא בתרא (דף קנ"ה) שאין הקטן מוכר בנכסי אביו עד שיהיה בן עשרים שנה. וענין בטור חושן משפט (סימן רל"ה), ואף כאן מי שנזוטה אחר תאוותיו ומחליף עולם עומד הנקרא ארץ החיים בעולם עובר, מה שעשה אינו עשוי, שעדיין אין לו דעת למכור בקרקעות.

If you will say: Why doesn’t the Heavenly court punish someone who is less than 20 years of age, since once he is 13 years old he is called “grown” and he has the assistance of the good inclination to combat the evil inclination given to him at birth, and further, he now has the knowledge to distance himself from the sin and from the damage? One can say it’s because, as it says in the 9th chapter of Bava Batra (page 155a) that, according to Rav

⁷ Eccl. Rabbah 4:13.

⁸ An Aramaic term appearing more than a dozen times in the Talmud, such as at Berachot 45b.

⁹ Yevamot 114a.

Nachman, a minor can not sell his deceased father's property until he is 20 years old. See also the Tur, Choshen Mishpat (235:9), "Here, too, one who tends to his lusts and exchanges a permanent world that is called 'land of the living'¹⁰ for a transitory world, what he did is not intended, for he still lacks the knowledge to sell the land."

ומעתה הרי הפתויב אומר החיים והמנות נמתי לפניך ... ובסרת בחיים, והעולם מקשים מה צורך לומר ובסרת בחיים דמילתא דפשיטא היא. נאדוני אבי זכרונו לחיי העולם הבא תירץ דחידושיא קא משמע לן שדי לאדם שיבסר ללקת בדבר החיים שאסר כך יסייע לו הקב"ה להוציא מהשבתו לפועל, שבדבר שאדם רוצה לילך בה מוליכין אותו.

Now, here we have Scripture saying, "Life and death I have put before you Choose life!" The world asks what need there is to say, "Choose life," as that is something obvious! My master, my father, [may] he be remembered for life in the World to Come, explained that the novelty this is coming to teach us is that it's enough for man that he choose to walk in the path of the living; that afterward the Holy One, Blessed be He, will assist him to put his thoughts into action, that in the path a man wants to walk, He will lead him.

וסכי נמי אף על פי שמן השמים נתנו צד אחיזה ורשות ליצר הרע בתוך לבו של אדם, מכל מקום פשהאדם יעשה עמו מלחמה וינצחהו ויגבשהו מאתו, הלא בנדאי שאבד תזקת מקומו ורשותו ואין לו עוד לחזור ולקדיחו, ומן הראוי הוא שמן השמים ישלחו לו עזרם מקדש לאדם הנה שהרי גילה דעתו שבסר בחיים. ולכן כיון שבאו ישראל לכלל זה שביום הכיפורים כלם קדושים וטהורים כמלאכי השרת, שמע מינה שגירשו מהם היצר הרע ואין לו עוד שום אחיזה ורשות בהם, ואם יחזור להסיתם ולקדיחם אינו נכנס עוד לרשותו אלא לרשותם, ואינו נקרא עוד חופר בתוך שלו, ואם פן על המזיק להרחוק את עצמו.

Here too, despite that fact that the aspect of *achiza* and [the] domain [of the many] were given from Heaven to the evil inclination within the heart of man, in any regard when the man will wage war for himself and will conquer [the evil inclination] and expel it from himself, then certainly he will vanquish the strength of its place within the left side of his heart and its domain [of the many], and he will no longer need to continue to dismiss [the evil inclination]. It is obvious that from Heaven, [G-d] will send help from the sanctuary¹¹ to this man, who revealed his opinion that he chose life. Therefore, since Israel arrived at this principle that on Yom Kippur they are all holy and pure as the ministering angels, we hear from this that they had expelled the evil inclination and no longer have any *achiza* and domain [of the many] within themselves. If after this, [the evil inclination] returns, to incite [Israel] and lead them astray, then there won't be a situation where there is an entrance [of Israel] into [the] domain [of the evil inclination], by the Jews seeking out sin, but rather [it

¹⁰ Isaiah 38:11. The words also appear adjacent to each other in Deut. 30:19, which was cited previously for the term, "choose life," but in Deut. 30:19 they do not mean "land of the living," but rather they are part of two different thoughts: "I call as a witness today heaven and *earth*; *life* and death I have put before you, blessing and curse. Choose life—if you and your offspring would live."

¹¹ The phrase, "He will send him help from the sanctuary" (ישלחו לו עזרם מקדש), is derived from Ps. 20:3, "May He send you help from the sanctuary (ישלח־עזרך מקדש).

will be the evil inclination that is entering] into their domain, i.e., by purposely trying to entice them, and that is not akin to the cistern and the tree innocently following their own path, and thus is not called “dug within his own [domain],” and so instead it is a case where the damager must distance himself.

ומשום הכי אילו זכיתם שהייתם עושים תשובה שלימה ביום הכיפורים, הייתם קוראים ביום הזה יכפר עליכם, שיקפר אף במה שתחטאו בשנה הבאה. שהרי מן הדין היה לו להיצר הרע להתרחק מכם ולא להתקרב, והוא הוא הגורם, ומטעם זה יכפר עליכם שהרי אתם כמו אנוסים.

Because of this, if you merit that you repent completely on Yom Kippur, it will be said about you, “For on this day atonement shall be made for you” (Lev. 16:30), that you will be forgiven even for what you will sin in the coming year! For according to the law, the evil inclination should distance itself from you and not draw close, and [the evil inclination] is the cause [of the sin], and in this sense, He will forgive you, for it is as though you were compelled, in that it did not distance itself from you.

אבל עקשיו שלא זכיתם, אתם קוראים טמאתה בשוליה, שהואיל שנתקרב הבית וכל דור שלא נבנה בימיו פאילו נחרב בנמיו, על כרחין לומר שלא שבתם בתשובה שלימה ולא באתם אפילו ביום הכיפורים לכלל מלאכי השרת. שאפילו לדעת רבי דסבירא ליה דיום הכיפורים מכפר אפילו בלא תשובה, צריך לומר שאינו מכפר כפרה גמורה, כמו שתירצו התוספות ישנים בסוף פרק ח' דיומא דמשום זה נחרב הבית ועיי"ש.

But now that you haven't merited to repent completely on Yom Kippur, it will be said about you, “Her impurity was in her skirts,” that since the Temple was destroyed, and since for “any generation in which the Temple is not built, it is as if it had been destroyed in their times” (Yerushalmi Yoma 5a). Therefore, we need to say that you didn't make complete repentance and didn't arrive even on Yom Kippur to be under the influence of the ministering angels. For even according to Rabbi,¹² whose opinion was that Yom Kippur serves as atonement even without repentance,¹³ it needs to be said that this is not a complete atonement, as the old Tosafists proposed at the end of the eighth chapter of Yoma, that because of this, the Temple was destroyed; and see there.

¹² Yehuda haNasi, chief redactor of the Mishnah.

¹³ Mishnah Yoma 8:8-9 (Yoma 85b): “The sin-offering and the definite guilt-offering effect atonement. Death and Yom Kippur effect atonement [when accompanied] with repentance. Repentance [itself] effects atonement for light transgressions: [the transgression of] positive commandments and negative commandments. And for more severe transgressions, [repentance] suspends [the divine punishment], until Yom Kippur arrives and effects atonement. One who says: I shall sin and repent, sin and repent, they do not afford him the opportunity to repent. [If one says]: I shall sin and Yom Kippur will atone for me, Yom Kippur does not effect atonement. *For transgressions between man and G-d, Yom Kippur effects atonement*, but for transgressions between man and his fellow, Yom Kippur does not effect atonement, until he has pacified his fellow.”

אי נמי שנגרבו בשביל שנאת חנם שהן עבירות שבין אדם לחבירו שאין יום הכיפורים מכפר, וזהו טמאתה בשוליה, שגשאר תמיד קצת מקום אהיזה ליצר הרע כמו שולי קדורה, ונקרא חופר בתוך שלו, ואם כן על הגיזק להרחיק את עצמו.

Alternatively, [the Temple] was destroyed because of baseless hatred, which comprises sins between man and his fellow man, for which Yom Kippur does not atone,¹⁴ and this is considered “Her impurity was in her skirts,” that a small place of *achiza*, i.e., some small potential handhold for impurity, will remain forever for the evil inclination, such as at the bottom of a pot, and this is referred to as “dug within his own [domain].” If so, the damaged party must distance himself.

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¹⁴ Id.