

Weekly Shiur

3 Elul 5773

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(Notes taken during class, not reviewed nor edited by Harav Ginsburgh)

Lechaim lechaim.

1. *The days of Elul, creation, and teshuvah*

We are in the month of mercy and *teshuvah* and *selichot*. The month in which the world was created, Elul, on the 25th of Elul, as we know there is an order of *histalshelut* of the worlds, from *Rosh Chodesh Elul* and on. The 3rd of Elul is *binah* of *Adam Kadmon* according to this order. *Binah* is the source of *teshuvah* after the contraction. The power of *teshuvah* is that there is no person in the world who does only good and does not sin, from the side of the Divine soul, which is with God always, the power to do *teshuvah* is the *binah* of *Adam Kadmon*, and it is the secret of the 3rd of Elul.

The first day of *Rosh Chodesh Elul*, the 30th of Av, is before the first contraction, when God imagined in potential all that would be actually created. The first three days correspond to the 3 first *sefirot* of *Adam Kadmon*, and then the 7 last *sefirot* of *Adam Kadmon*. Then the *sefirot* of *Akudim*, and finally the *sefirot* of *Nekudim* that are the 7 days before the 25th of Elul. The 25th of Elul marks the first day of creation (recounted in *Bereisheet*). And then the 6 days of creation, with the second day of *Rosh Hashanah* being the Shabbat of *Bereisheet*. And all begins with the first day of *Rosh Chodesh Elul*. In the Torah's first words describing creation, בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת, the word אֶת stands for Elul and Teshuvah (אֶלּוּל תְּשׁוּבָה). Teshuvah existed before the creation, but what God is revealing in the lack before creation is already a sense of teshuvah of Elul.

2. *The three pillars of parashat Shoftim*

We are now in parashat Shoftim, and it begins, שִׁפְטִים וְשֹׁטְרִים and then "Justice, justice you shall pursue" (צֶדֶק צֶדֶק תִּרְדֹּף) and then the parashah moves on to the mitzvah of appointing a king (שׁוֹם תִּשִּׂים עָלֶיךָ מֶלֶךְ), and then the famous verse (that is the first of the 5 verses Rebbe Zusha used as an acronym for teshuvah) "You shall be sincere with Havayah your God" (תָּמִים תִּהְיֶה עִם ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ). Together, these three verses form the three pillars upon which parashat Shoftim stands.

Onkelos translates "justice justice" (צֶדֶק צֶדֶק) as "truth truth." Make sure that the judgment is true, that the facts are true. It also states, "With justice you shall judge your fellow" (בְּצֶדֶק תִּשְׁפֹּט עִמִּיתֶךָ). In our context this is an instruction to understand that in every Jew there is a measure of *teshuvah* even while he is sinning, all because of the *Ima*, the *sefirah* of *binah*, that precedes creation.

Since the Torah commands that, "Justice, you shall pursue justice" (צֶדֶק צֶדֶק), this quality defines the Jewish people, and it is only a people that have this quality, the tireless pursuit of justice (and truth) that can be commanded to appoint a king. Only

after the justice does the will of the people awaken and enclothe itself in a will to be like all the nations around them. Still, since this people is pursuing justice, and there is a mitzvah to appoint a king, it is appointing first God above as our King and then he has a surrogate here, with the flesh and blood king below. And then, once there is justice, a consciousness that there has to be justice, and there is the appointing of a king, then the people as one can connect to God with sincerity.

3. Prophecy upon all Jews

And they all go to God sincerely and do not follow the ways of the people around them who pursue witchcraft and false idols and beliefs. This people then go to the true prophet, they all become prophets themselves. Becoming a prophet is dependent on one's measure of sincerity.

A sign for 5774

So this is the order of the parashah: first justice, then appointing a king, then you will be sincere. You won't want to be a prophet, you will not seek the future, but prophecy will come upon you of its own accord. So if we have this order of צדק מלך תמים, we should start with a gematria, which in this month that prepares us for the coming year (לטובה) and there is a mitzvah according to the sages to make signs (סימנים), and there is nothing more important than to make signs regarding a new year that is coming upon us for ge'ulah. So we begin on Elul, and today we will see a number of signs for 774. The first is, as we just said, צדק מלך תמים (justice, king, and sincere).

In the first idiom, justice is the first word, in the second, king is the last word, and in the third, sincere is the first word. This is like the order of forming the Name of 72 triplets, first, last, and first.

When we speak of three things in connection to appointing a king, we immediately recall the sages' statement that there are three mitzvot that we are commanded to perform upon entering the land of Israel: to appoint a king, to destroy Amalek and to build the Temple. The three words that summarize these three mitzvot are מלך עמלק, מקדש, and we see that their value too is exactly 774! Meaning that 5774 is the best year to perform these three public mitzvot that we are commanded to perform in the land of Israel.

It says the prophet Jonah received his prophecy during the joy in the Temple during Sukkot – שמחת בית השואבה. There is a dwelling of the Divine Presence in the Temple, so when a sincere person, a תמים, comes to the Temple, immediately the Divine Presence and prophecy dwells upon him. Therefore we must say that the justice corresponds with the war against Amalek, it is doing justice with them. The height of appointing a king is with the appointing of the Sanhedrin that sits in the Temple.

A second sign for 5774 – the forbidden monument

Then there are two mitzvot related to the Temple, not to plant an asheirah (a tree that is worshipped) in the Temple courtyard and not to construct a stone monument there.

How much does **וְלֹא תִקַּם לָךְ מִצֵּבָה**, You shall not construct a stone monument? It also equal 774. There are many laws related to this mitzvah, with many intricacies. Meaning that this is a good year to learn this mitzvah and all its pertinent discussions in the sages. The commentaries say that this is relevant everywhere, not just in the Temple, unlike the prohibition against an Asheirah which is only in the Temple courtyard. In fact, it is forbidden because of this to build anything out of wood in the Temple courtyard. A monument (**מִצֵּבָה**) is a very important word. The rest of the verse reads, a monument that God your God hates. The asheirah is not described as hated. Seemingly, the tree is far more idolatrous than the monument, yet the hatred is for the monument. Again, these 2 prohibitions are a continuation of the commandment to pursue justice. That is why most of the enumerators of the 613 mitzvot mention them exactly in this order.

Monument (**מִצֵּבָה**) is a very important number, 137, a number that is very important by us. It also equals Kabbalah. Why does God hate the monument? Because in the time of the Patriarchs it was loved by God, but because the defiled powers in the world adopted it, it became hated by God. And that is how it remains, that God your God hates.

4. Laws of the forbidden monument and the State of Israel

What acronym can we make from מצבה? It has to do with 'state' (**מְדִינָה**): "A Zionist state in our holy land" (**מְדִינָה צִיּוֹנִית בְּאֶרֶצְנוּ הַקְּדוּשָׁה**).

The Rambam rules that just as the monument is forbidden everywhere (not just in the land of Israel), likewise it is forbidden to construct it even for the purpose of using it to serve God. If the monument is for false idols, that is simple, but the chiddush is that it is forbidden even for serving God. The Ibn Ezra on the chumash writes that the monument is forbidden only if it is for the intent of serving idols. The Acharonim dispute him, and say that he contradicts the sages by saying this. Yet, the Rabbi Perla on Rasag's Sefer Hamitzvot brings a whole list of Rishonim that hold like the Ibn Ezra: they hold that only when the monument is for the purpose of serving some false idol is it forbidden, but if it is for serving God, it is permissible. Why are we saying this today, on Gimel Elul, the 3rd day of Elul, how this is connected to the Zionist state in our holy land? Everyone can think about this for themselves. If constructing it is for the sake of Heaven, or not. If it is not for the sake of Heaven it is of course forbidden, but if it is for the sake of Heaven, there are different opinions about whether it is permissible. This is just a footnote, and needs further clarification.

5. Chance, ego, and their rectification

Let's continue with something else. There are a number of well known acronyms for Elul. The most well-known is "I am for my beloved and my beloved is for me" (**אֲנִי לְדוּדִי** ודודי לי). But, the acronym the Arizal loved most is, **אֲנִי לְדוּדִי וְשִׂמְתִּי לָךְ**. The verse continues, "I will give you a place where you can escape to," and as explained that during the month of Elul, each of us should flee to and be contained within a place of Torah learning as a conclusion for the passing year and in preparation for the new year. What

is similar between these two acronyms for Elul is their first word. In the acronym loved most by the Arizal it is the word, אָנָה. A most difficult word. It means a “chance occurrence.” God is saying that even if a person lives his life without feeling Divine Providence, *hashgachah pratit*, God’s Presence in all that he does and all that happens to him, there is still hope. On the way to the “city of refuge” (עיר מקלט) there were signposts that cried out “refuge, refuge” (מִקְלָט מִקְלָט) which equals Mashiach (מָשִׁיחַ). The first word in the other acronym, אני לדודי ודודי לי, is אָנִי, which of course means, “I.” It comes from the same 2-letter root as אָנָה. The reason that a person feels that everything is chance and not Divinely directed is because of the “I,” because of their ego. What is the ego’s rectification? The ego must be given back to God, אָנִי לְדוּדֵי, which literally means, “Give the ‘I’ to God.” After you do that, then וְדוּדֵי לִי, “God is to me,” and then, “I will give you a place to escape to.”

The 2-letter root that is the source for both “chance occurrence” and “I” is אָן. It is related with power of procreation, אָוֶן, and it is also related to the word “where” (אָנָה) – as in “where are you going?” The moment you are on a path there is danger, all paths are full of danger. Still, Jews know there are dangers but are not afraid to follow a path. We don’t stay at home, even though the entire month can be spent in the safe haven of Torah. But, a Jew is a mover, a מְהַלֵּךְ. So even though he knows the danger, he moves. Like what Rebbe Zusha learnt from a thief, that even though his line of work is very dangerous, he is not afraid to place himself in danger. How does he save himself at every moment? By submitting his I, his ego. Likewise, we at every moment should submit our ego to God—out of the love between us and God.

This vort that we have said, meditating on the word אָנָה (chance occurrence), we can look at its different permutations, one of which is נָאָה, like a beautiful and righteous bride (בְּלֵה נָאָה וְחַטּוּדָה). We’ve been speaking lately about the 55 (בְּלֵה, bride) days between the 15th of Av and Yom Kippur. 55 is also the triangle of 10:

ט ו
 ט ז י ז
 י ח י ט כ
 כ א כ ב כ ג כ ד
 כ ה כ ו כ ז כ ח כ ט
 ל א ב ג ד ה
 ו ז ח ט י י א י ב
 י ג י ד ט ו ט ז י ז י ח י ט כ
 כ א כ ב כ ג כ ד כ ה כ ו כ ז כ ח כ ט
 א ב ג ד ה ו ז ח ט י

The moment that the kallah, the bride is beautiful נאה, she is also protected, she will not be harmed in any way. This is the remez that אנה permutes to spell נאה.

6. The 13 Principles of Mercy and the 13 synonyms of "light"

Let's continue the meditation. During the month of Elul there is a great light that doesn't shine during the rest of the year. This is the light of the 13 principles of Divine mercy. This is like the parable from the Alter Rebbe that the king is in the field and accepts everyone openly. We explained in another place that the 13 principles of mercy correspond to the 13 synonyms for "light" in Hebrew. The first word is אֵל רַחוּם וְחַנוּן, the synonyms are אור זֶהָר נֶגְהָ, etc. All these lights illuminate during the month of Elul for every Jewish soul, to awaken us with *teshuvah*.

The 13 Principles correspond to the 13 generations from God to our generation

A few weeks ago we said that the 13 Principles also correspond to the 13 generations, that represent the chain of transmission of the Torah from when God gave it at Mt. Sinai to Moshe Rabbeinu, through Achiyah the Shilonite, through the Ba'al Shem Tov, and all the way to us. The prophet Achiyah, who was present at the Giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai provides a link between Moshe Rabbeinu and the Ba'al Shem Tov (since he was the Ba'al Shem Tov's teacher) until we reach our generation which is the 13th. Thus, the God Himself corresponds to the first Principle of Mercy, Moshe Rabbeinu to the second, Achiyah to the third, etc. while our generation, the 13th in this order of transmission corresponds to the final measure of mercy, וְנִקְהָ, the consummate principle that contains all the ones before it. וְנִקְהָ means that God cleanses those who return to him (וְנִקְהָ לְשָׁבִים), and as the Rambam promises and rules, when we return to God, we will merit the true and complete redemption.

What is left now is to correspond the principles and the generations with the 13 synonyms for light. אֵל corresponds to אור. The next principle is רַחוּם which corresponds to בְּהָר, which itself is equal to אור (they both equal 207), and corresponding to the generation of Moshe Rabbeinu, who received the Torah "at Mt. Sinai" (בְּהָר סִינַי), the same word as the synonym for light.

The next generation is Achiyah's and the corresponding synonym is זֶהָר (*zohar*). This fits very nicely, since Achiyah was not only the Ba'al Shem Tov's Rebbe, he was also the Rebbe of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai's, the author of the Zohar. So there is no synonym for light that is more fitting for Achiyah's generation than zohar.

The next synonym is נְהָר (like in נְהַרְהָרָה), it similar to the word "river," a river of peace as the prophet says, "All the nations will flow to Him like a river" in the future. The generation corresponding is the Ba'al Shem Tov's, which fits nicely too, because everyone flows after him like a river.

The next synonym is נֶגְהָ, and the generation is that of the Magid of Mezritch. And so it continues all the way to the 12 generation, the Lubavitcher Rebbe's generation, and the 12th synonym is הֶלֶל, which is the light that comes out of the mouth and like the light that

is atop the baby's head in the womb, which looks like a candle (as in the verse, בְּהִלּוֹ נֵרוֹ (עַל־יִרְאֵשׁ).

We are now in the 13th generation and the 13th synonym for light is טָהָר.

Of the 13, there are 5 of the synonyms that include the letters הֵר: בְּהָר זָהָר נְהָר צָהָר טָהָר: הֵר. We said that they correspond to Moshe Rabbeinu, Achiyah, the Ba'al Shem Tov, then the Alter Rebbe, and finally our generation is the final synonym that has the letters הֵר.

7. Three sub-categories of light and the Chashmal (pentagonal) numbers

טָהָר means pure, like the verse, בְּעֵצִים הַשָּׁמַיִם לְטָהָר, without clouds. Something that is clean. As it says that, "cleanliness brings one to purity" (נְקִיּוֹת מְבִיאָה לְטָהָר). Why are we mentioning this (apart for its own importance). There is a Malbim, and we know that the Malbim's special gift in his commentary and his system of learning Torah is differentiating between the different meanings associated with synonyms. Whenever there is more than one word in Hebrew that seems to have a common meaning, the Malbim explains and basis his method of learning, on how they are actually different. That is his special gift and trait.

The Malbim speaks of the different synonyms of light, but nowhere have I yet seen that he mentions all 13. But, in one of his comments, the Malbim writes that the different synonyms for light are divided into 3 categories. We are discussing this again because all these lights are now being revealed, when "the King is in the field" during the month of Elul. Each of these three categories has a main synonym, and the three main synonyms for light, says the Malbim are: אֹר נִגְה הַלֵּל.

What is special about these three synonyms that they should be considered the headings for these 3 categories of light. The Malbim gives a simple and straightforward explanation. אֹר is the light of the sun, light that comes from some essential source (מֵאוֹר). But, נִגְה refers to reflected light, אֹר חוּזֵר. Like the moon.

What about הַלֵּל? The first two types were direct light and reflected light. There is something special about reflected light, the moon is in some ways more beautiful than the sun, because to be able to receive light and return it, that is the rectification of the feminine principle. But, the third type of light (all three categories represents types of light that comes from the heaven) which also appeared on the fourth day of creation, is the light of the stars that were created on the fourth day of creation. What is the name of the morning star? It is the most beautiful of the stars. It is called also הַלֵּל בֶּן שַׁחַר, Hillel ben Shachar. Shachar means dawn, and Hillel ben, means the Hillel of the dawn, meaning the light of the dawn star. The Malbim explains that the light of a twinkling star is not enough to read a book by, for instance, but it has special beauty. We were speaking of the beauty of the Jewish girls these past few weeks. There is something more beautiful about the light of the stars, which is more than that of the sun and the moon. When a star twinkles, its light draws me towards it. It has the power to draw me to it. The sun and the moon do not draw a person to want to ascend to become one with them. But, the star does have some magic to it. This is a positive magical aspect that is

greater than what the sun and moon have (even before the moon's light was lessened). Again this twinkling light is not great enough to illuminate. The first light (אור) was illuminating, but the light of a star is even more essential and therefore it does not illuminate below. In any case, this is a principle by the Malbim: אור נגה הלל. The remez is that their initials spell, אנה, once again the first word of the verse whose initials spell Elul, אנה לידו ושמתי לך. When a person is on the way, he needs these three types of light to safekeep him.

Chashmal (pentagonal numbers)

Among the 13 types of light, the first is אור. Nogah נגה is the fifth synonym. Halel הלל is the 12th. So the Malbim chose the 1st, 5th, and 12th (which in generations correspond to God Himself, the Magid of Mezritch and the Lubavitcher Rebbe). This is very fitting, because the Magid is like the moon to the Torah he received from the Ba'al Shem Tov, he reflected all that he received and thanks to him Chassidut expanded. Finally, the הלל, the הלל בן שחר the twinkling star that is a harbinger of the coming redemption, that is the Rebbe, who also let's us know that everything is done and complete and everything is ready for the Mashiach to come. On the one hand, there is no one who praised the Jewish people that they are ready for the redemption more than the Rebbe, on the other hand the beginning of the redemption is exactly this praise that the Rebbe spoke.

This topic of 13 synonyms for light is very old in our teachings, but this is the first time we are corresponding it with the Malbim's 3 categories of light. So everything we are saying now is truly from Shamayim.

Again, his 3 categories of light are 1, 5, and 12, which among the figurate numbers are all part of the Chashmal series of numbers. If you are not familiar with this it sounds confounding. In number theory, these numbers are also known as pentagonal numbers. The Chashmal series begins 1, 5, and 12. We can continue the series using "finite differences." The difference between 5 and 1 is 4 and the difference between 12 and 5 is 7, so the difference between the numbers increases every time by 3. Therefore the next number will be 12 plus 10, or 22. The next number will be, 22 plus 13, or 35, and the next number is 51 and then 19 more gives us 70. For 70, there is actually no other two-dimensional figurate form that we can use. We know how important the number 70 is in Torah (70 faces of Torah...). The form of a chashmal number is a square with a triangle on top.

We wouldn't have mentioned this if there wasn't something else important here. Among the 13 synonyms for light, the 8th is itself חשמל, chashmal, the name of the pentagonal numbers in Hebrew. The eighth of the 13 Principles of Mercy is called the higher mazal in Kabbalah. But, there is something more. The three light categories that the Malbim explained, אור נגה הלל, their names together equal 330, also a chashmal number! So we have here 3 connections between the 13 synonyms for light and the pentagonal numbers: 1) The 8th synonym is itself "chashmal." 2) The three categories of light according to the Malbim are the 1st, 5th, and 12th synonyms, the beginning of the series of pentagonal numbers. 3) The gematria of the names of these three synonyms that head the 3 categories of light equal 330, a pentagonal number. This is truly significant.

The advancement of our knowledge of nature

Meditating upon this further: after 70, the next number is 92. 92 is the number of different words in the Torah's account of creation and it is the number of naturally occurring elements in nature. In addition, דור לדור ישבח מעשיך (connected with the generations we are talking about), and לשבח is to augment the value of something, לשבח. It means adding value. Based on this verse, the Malbim writes that by studying nature, every generation is able to understand nature infinitely more than the previous generation, so much that the new science completely supersedes the science of the previous generations. From generation to generation we understand God actions in nature infinitely more. Indeed, it is only in our generation that we know that there are 92 naturally occurring elements. The number 22, the fourth number in the series of chashmal numbers is the number of letters in the Hebrew alephbet. It is in this form of a square of 4 (16) with a triangle of 3 (6) above it:

א
ב ג
ד ה ו
ז ח ט י
כ ל מ נ
ס ע פ צ
ק ר ש ת

The 5 that comes before alludes to the five sources of sound in the mouth, חמש מוצאות הפה. The 1 alludes to the simplest letter, the hei out of which all the letters emanate. The 35 that follows 22 is the full alephbet in Hebrew (22 regular letters plus the 7 double letters, the left shin, and the 5 final letters, altogether 35).

Rabbi Pinchas Horowitz and 1820

Then we come to 70 which is the 70 faces of the Torah and then we come to 92 the number of naturally occurring elements. One of the greatest Acharonim, who is not so well known (Rabbi Pinchas Horowitz) discovered that in the account of creation there are exactly 92 different roots! He didn't know that there was a connection to the 92 naturally occurring elements. What number did this scholar love the most? 1820. The number of times that God's essential Name, Havayah, appears in the Pentateuch. 1820 is the product of Havayah, 26, times "secret" (סוד), 70, alluded to by the verse, "the secret of Havayah is [revealed] to those who fear Him" (סוד ה' ליראיו) is called the סודרא דרבנן, the garment of the sages. According to many opinions, 1820 is the most important number in the Torah. In fact, 1820 is a chashmal number too. It is the 35th chashmal number. But, 35 is itself a chashmal number—the 5th chashmal number. 5 too is a chashmal number, it is the 2nd chashmal number. So 1820 is a chashmal number of a chashmal number of a chashmal number. It is in this sense, a most perfect chashmal number.

There might be a few people who have heard all of this, so we have to say something new.

Let's take the 8th chashmal number, 92, which we said corresponds to the 92 elements and to the 92 roots in creation. Let's add all the chashmal number up to and including

92: 1, 5, 12, 22, 35, 51, 70, 92 = 288, the number of sparks of holiness. This is a very nice kavanah for what 288 means.

Now, let's divide 288 by 8, we get 36. So the average value of these 8 numbers is 36. But, 36 itself is the triangle of 8 (the sum of integers from 1 to 8), like the number of candles that we light on Chanukah (1 on the first night, 2 on the second, etc.). So what we have found is that the sum of the first 8 chashmal numbers is 8 times the triangle of 8. Is this true in every instance? Is there a general rule here?

Let's try the first 7 chashmal numbers. 1, 5, 12, 22, 35, 51, and 70 equal 196. Dividing by 7 we get 28, which is the triangle of 7 (sum of integers from 1 to 7). So we have discovered a beautiful principle about the chashmal numbers:

The sum of the first n chashmal numbers is equal to n times the triangle of n .

Let's try one more just to make sure. (Of course n times triangle of n is a function of the third order). If we sum the first 6 chashmal numbers, their sum is 126, which is 6 times 21, where 21 is the triangle of 6.

Of course, checking this again and again is not a mathematical proof, but doing so is very easy, something we leave for the fifth graders in our school.

Remember, we came to all of this from the Malbim's principle that אור נגה הלל are the three basic categories of light.

All this was just to confuse the evil inclination, who is now very confused, and since he is confused, we can continue with more content.

8. Rav Yehudah: The teacher of ba'alei teshuvah

The month of Elul is the month of Teshuvah. The sages ask, "What is a ba'al teshuvah like?" (היכי דמי דמי בעל תשובה). Says Rav Yehudah: for instance if he is capable of doing a sin a second and third time, and he refrains from doing it. Rav Yehudah pointed out: For instance, the same woman in the same place, in the same situation.

Our hero for the month of teshuvah is thus Rav Yehudah. He defines the ba'al teshuvah in two ways. The first he just describes orally. But, the second thing he wants to relate, he doesn't just say, he motions with his hand (מחוי רב יהודה).

Rav Yehudah (רב יהודה) equals "Let there be light" (יהי אור), 232, the value of the 4 central fillings of *Havayah*: עב סג מה בן. Rav Yehudah is one of the sages of the Talmud, an Amora. His student was Rav Zeira (רב זירא). Rav Yehudah here teaches us who a ba'al teshuvah is and what teshuvah is. The first answer is that there is a person who (according to Rashi) has already transgressed something twice, and now the third time, he is saved from doing the same again. Then Rav Yehudah explains this by motioning with his hand, by pointing to a certain person, and then saying, "For instance someone who was with the same woman, etc."

Rav Yehudah's good spirits

The time that all yeshivot start is on Rosh Chodesh Elul, and this year all the Chabad yeshivahs are learning tractate Shabbat. The question is where to start learning the

tractate in iyyun from? There are a few bochurim here from our yeshivah, so they can take this to heart. One should start learning the tractate in depth from the 77th blot (דף ע"ז, ב). We said that Rav Yehudah and Rav Zeira are a couple. Rav Zeira is related to both Rabbah and Rav Yehudah. What does it say on that blot?

Rav Zeira found Rav Yehudah standing at the entrance to a store, and he was in really good spirits. If you would ask him any question about nature (as Rashi explains) anything scientific (meaning that understanding nature can only be done with good spirits). There are stories of Chassidim that stood for hours on end and engaged in Divine meditation, but here Rav Yehudah is just in good spirits and you can ask him any question you like. What did Rav Zeira ask him. He asked him, What is the reason that in a flock the goats go first and then the sheep. Then come all kinds of such questions about nature, and then Rav Zeira asks Rav Yehudah to explain different words (among them is *Sudra*, that we mentioned before, and Rav Yehudah replies that it is because of *סוד ה' (ליראין)*. So first nature and then language.

Finally, there is a braita (this is a continuation of the natural wisdom displayed) that there are three animals, that the older they become stronger, mightier. They are: the fish, the snake, and the pig. This is all from Rav Yehudah bar Yechezkel. Bar Yechezkel equals Mashiach. Rav Yehudah's father was Rav Yehudah's disciple. His full name, *רב רב יהודה בר יחזקאל* is exactly equal to *דג נחש חזיר*, the three animals that become stronger as they grow older.

What was the previous sugiyah, Talmudic discussion, about? The first thing to teach is that there is hashgachah pratit about everything in the Talmud (everything in life) and the sign here is that this sugiyah appears on blot 77, which is the value of goat (*עז*). Rav Yehudah's answer is *ברישא חשוכא והדר נהורא*, "first there is darkness and then there is light." This is a very famous statement in Chassidut, and its source is here, from Rav Yehudah who said it when he was in good spirits. How is this connected to goats and sheep? Because the goats are black (dark) and the sheep are white (light). The darkness guides the light.

9. The prophecy of our generation

Why did Rav Yehudah not want Rav Zeira to make aliyah to Eretz Yisrael then?

For this we have to recall what the Lubavitcher Rebbe taught regarding Shoftim. We also have to understand as we said earlier that sincerity is a prerequisite for prophecy, that every Jew is worthy of being a prophet. Elisha the prophet twinkles in each of us, and the proof is from Shmuel the sage who called Rav Yehudah *שינא*, which equals *אלישע* which equals *תהו* (411).

The Tanach recounts the story of Elisha and Na'aman, the commander in chief of the army of the king of Aram. The latter tore his clothes because Na'aman was afflicted with leprosy. When Elisha heard this, he sent word to the king of Aram: Why have you torn your clothes? Don't you know there is a prophet among the Jewish people.

In his famous sichah on parashat Shoftim (in Dvar Malchus) the Lubavitcher Rebbe explained that there is a prophet in the Jewish people now too. In every generation there is one particular prophecy that is the essence of that generations service of God.

The prophecy of our generation is that Ba'alei teshuvah will take control of the State of Israel.

The moment we hear this, we should get excited. Elisha sent his disciple, Yehu, to capture the kingship. In the beginning Yehu was very afraid of doing something. But, when it was revealed that Elisha had told him that he would become the king, everybody got very excited. Yehu performed the prophecy that was given years earlier by Eliyahu the prophet. He killed Achav and captured the kingdom.

What should one be impressed by? By the fact that when one hears a prophecy, how excited one should be jumping up and down, getting into one's car and driving like a madman to perform the prophecy. So if we are saying that the prophecy of our generation is that the ba'alei teshuvah will control the State, then it should cause those who hear it to take it very seriously and act.

They should learn from Yehu (יהוא) – a special name in itself, since it comprises all four אהוי letters. And it is all from the power of Elisha (אלישע) equals (שיננא), whose name equals "chaos" (תהו).

Now, what did Rav Yehudah tell Rav Zeira, why did he tell him not to make aliyah? The essence of Rav Yehudah's wisdom is that in the beginning darkness, then light. He is telling Rav Zeira, to be a *ba'al teshuvah* you have to be dark enough. He quotes the verse from Jeremiah, במחשכים השביני כמתי עולם, in Babylon you can be dark.

Darkness precedes light. How long did it take for God to decide to create the world. How long did He wait. How long was there darkness before God said, "Let there be light" (which we said is equal to Rav Yehudah)? The Arizal says you can't understand, there was darkness for a very very long time. And then there was light. To reveal the light of redemption you first have to become one with the darkness, until the root of the light can be revealed.

In his book, *Orot Hateshuwah*, Rav Kook writes that the root of teshuvah is already in the transgression. What is pushing the world forward from creation is teshuvah. Teshuvah is the inner dimension of the kav. Just as there is the descent of the generations, there is also the ascent of the generations. In this vein, every generation is higher than the previous ones because it discovers the secrets of nature. We learn Chitas (חטא) every day. Chitas is also an acronym for "transgression, teshuvah, teshuvah" (חטא תשובה תשובה). In the transgression there are already two levels of teshuvah. The first is teshuvah from fear or awe, which turns transgressions into mistakes, and the second teshuvah is from love, which transforms transgressions into merits.

"Transgression, teshuvah, teshuvah" (חטא תשובה תשובה) is equal to 1444, the square of 38. What is the transgression? Making yourself into a monument (מצבה), which we said earlier is an acronym for, "A Zionist state in our holy land" (מדינה ציונית בארצנו הקדושה); the value of this phrase is also exactly 1444. So within this transgression there are two levels of *teshuvah*. Two different stages of teshuvah.

The Rebbe per se wasn't against the State of Israel. There is a common misconception in this matter. What the Rebbe was against was calling the State of Israel, "the beginning of redemption" (אַתְחִלְתָּא דְּגְאוּלָּה). Because of this misconception, people think that Chabad is at opposition with Rav Kook's understanding.

Nonetheless, for all the Rebbe's opposition to the use of "the beginning of redemption" in relation to the State of Israel, it should be known that in 1990, the Rebbe declared that we have reached "the beginning of redemption." So, if the Rebbe is already declaring that we have reached the beginning of redemption, then to some extent the dispute is over, and we've arrived.

We are now 23 years after the Rebbe's declaration of אַתְחִלְתָּא דְּגְאוּלָּה. The State of Israel is a monument that it is a sin to erect, but the moment there are a few crazy people, with a vision and the willingness to fulfill it, then this prophecy should cause everyone happiness. Rav Kook would have been happy with it—that ba'alei teshuvah would control the state. The Rebbe too is happy with it. This is a sticker that can bring a lot of peace to the world.

10. The weak overpowering the bold

Now let's return. Rav Yehudah knows that the goats go first. What are the goats, the עזים, the ones who are bold. Rav Zeira is bold too, so bold that he goes against Rav Yehudah, his Rebbe who holds that he should not leave Babylon for Eretz Yisrael. A ba'al teshuvah that wants to lead has to be both bold and he has to be black. King David is both bold and he is black, he has a קופה של שרצים behind his back.

What is the Talmudic discussion that precedes Rav Zeira finding Rav Yehudah in good spirits? The Talmud discusses these small creatures that cause all the big creatures fear. What is this, the Talmud asks, where does it say this in the Tanach? The verse is הַמְבִלִּיג שׁוֹד עַל עֵז וְשׁוֹד עַל מְבַצֵּר יָבוֹא (Amos 5:9). So the previous discussion ends with the word עֵז (77) and the next discussion begins with the word עֵזִי (goats) and it is all on blot 77 of tractate Shabbat.

Rashi explains that שׁוֹד here means someone weak. עֵז is someone who is might. What then is עֵז על עֵז, that God makes the one who is weak feared by the one who is mighty. No one writes that שׁוֹד is like שִׁדּוּד מְעַרְכוֹת, changing nature, that the weak shall control the strong. It is the same today, when we say that the ba'alei teshuvah will take over the state. Here too the ba'alei teshuvah are weak, and the ones controlling the state right now are very strong and bold. Still, if you make a sticker from this prophecy, then as far as I know it is still legal to claim this, that the ba'alei teshuvah will take over the state. So first of all, we have a verse that states this: הַמְבִלִּיג שׁוֹד עַל עֵז וְשׁוֹד עַל מְבַצֵּר יָבוֹא. The next statement that first darkness and then light, explains exactly what we are experiencing now, and as we said Rav Yehudah is the one who understands what a ba'al teshuvah is and he is the Rebbe of ba'alei teshuvah.

11. The essence of a *ba'al teshuvah*

Now let's return to this statement. We have to learn how to do *teshuvah*, according to tractate *Yoma*. The one who explains it most deeply is the *Ben Yehoyada* (the Ben Ish Chai's commentary on the Talmud).

There is also a Sefat Emet on this passage. He ends with a question. First he asks, what does the question, "What is a *ba'al teshuvah*?" mean. Everyone knows what doing *teshuvah* means. There are a few things in the pshat that the Sefat Emet leaves unexplained.

But, let's look at the Ben Yehoyada. He brings a terrible story, which is probably a parable that he invented, but he tells it like something that actually happened.

First to explain why the Talmud is asking what a *ba'al teshuvah* is, he says 2 things. If *ba'alei teshuvah* are going to take over the state, we have to know what a *ba'al teshuvah* is. To be a *ba'al teshuvah* there has to be a unification between a male (the *ba'al*) and the female (the *teshuvah*) and their union gives birth to merits out of transgressions. Therefore, a real *ba'al teshuvah* that does this is only one who does *teshuvah* out of love, because only then do the transgressions become merits. Only then is there a unification between the *ba'al* and the *teshuvah*, giving birth to new merits, new קשׁוּטִין that did not exist until now. This is the first explanation.

The second is that a *ba'al teshuvah* is one about whom the sages say that "in a place where *ba'alei teshuvah* stand, consummate *tzadikim* cannot stand." A *ba'al teshuvah* is higher than a *tzadik* in this sense. It is reflected light that returns higher than its source. How then can *ba'alei teshuvah* take control of the state, what is there current problem? That they currently feel that they are under the *tzadikim*. That they are dark, but you also have to be bold, like a goat. There has to be someone black who leads the flock (the עֵדָה). So on the one hand the *ba'al teshuvah* has to be lowly, בְּשַׁפְּלוּת, he has to walk as the Rambam says, with his head bowed down. But, on the other hand, he wants to teach Rav Zeira how to bring the Mashiach, by first of all connecting with the darkness of Babylon. But, if you don't have the boldness to eventually take over the state, what is the whole point. And this only a *ba'al teshuvah* can understand.

Another point. Shmuel praises Rav Yehudah that he cannot be the son of a woman flesh and blood. Who said this in the annals of Chassidut? The Magid about the Ba'al Shem Tov. He said that if I didn't know for a fact that the Ba'al Shem Tov was begat by a woman, I would not believe it. This is the connection between the Ba'al Shem Tov and Rav Yehudah. It says in the Talmud that when someone went up to the Heavens, he saw that the world was upside down, and there Shmuel sits below Rav Yehudah. Rav Yehudah was among the early sages that were worthy of miracles happening for them. Even though they had less *mishnah* than the later generations, they sacrificed themselves for God's sanctity.

Again, the Ben Ish Chai says that a *ba'al teshuvah* is either someone who has an inner unification between his *ba'al* and his *teshuvah*, and the fruits of this unification are the merits born from *teshuvah* of love. And the second explanation is that a *ba'al teshuvah* is

someone stands much higher than a *tzadik*. There are a lot of jokes about this, but the bottom line is that the *ba'al teshuvah* can take control of the state.

12. The Ben Ish Chai's explanation of Rav Yehudah's answer

Then the Ben Ish Chai continues with Rav Yehudah's two answers. The first is that he comes to a sin twice and then escapes it. Apparently the twice he sins is related to the two *teshuvah*'s we saw before. It is also called לעשות תשובה על תשובתו. It should be that the *ba'alei teshuvah* who take control of the state should first do *teshuvah*, but then they feel that they are second class, lower than the *tzadikim*, and then they have to do *teshuvah* again, to understand that it is up to them to take control of the state.

But, then the main *chiddush* the Ben Ish Chai gives is regarding Rav Yehudah's second explanation. He gives two explanations. The first is that Rav Yehudah pointed at someone. He didn't want to mention his name. And he said, "Like this person, who performed real *teshuvah*." From this we learn that one has to illustrate what *teshuvah* is. He wanted to show that in every *teshuvah* there are three dimensions. He doesn't mention that "the same woman, the same time, the same place" corresponds to the 3 dimensions of Sefer Yetzirah: space, time, and soul. Real *teshuvah* has to include all 3 dimensions. It requires one to rectify the entire עשן (עולם שנה נפש), world, year, and soul). Apparently a sin causes עשן, smoke.

So as Rav Yehudah was saying this he had to demonstrate three different dimensions (like the external, middle, and inner aspect of every vessel). Once the Rebbe was asked, Who do you mean when you refer to "the leader of our generation" (נשיא דורינו)? The Rebbe motioned at himself. Likewise, we have to say that Rav Yehudah pointed at himself when he said this. That is the inner dimension of this discussion.

Then the Ben Ish Chai brings a terrible story. Once there was a young scholar that learnt by him. He was very dedicated, learning day and night. He didn't know of anything but Torah. One time a year, apparently this time of the year (and from this we learn how it's not good to take a vacation) all the students would leave and not knowing what to do, he decided to go out to a park and there he found a well. He sat and meditated near it, until suddenly he feels that someone is grabbing him. He looks and sees there is a woman, a non-Jewish harlot who is trying to entice him, and with his simple earnestness, without thinking too much, he agrees and sins. When it ends, he can't stop crying. He goes home and looks in all the books for what to do in atonement. He agrees to do everything. Yet still, he was not content that it would be enough. Therefore, he decided that the only thing that can atone is if he goes back to the same spot and he will throw himself into the well and drown. He'll die. That is the only way he thinks he can atone. He is determined to do this and follows through. He returned the next morning to the well, stands at the edge of the well, ready to throw himself in, and then he feels that he is being grabbed again. It is the same woman again. This time, he understands that if he overcomes her, and throws himself over, she will call for help and he will be saved from drowning. So he ran away, all the way back to his *beit midrash*, where his Rebbe was (having returned from his vacation). When his Rebbe sees him, he sees that this student has a tremendous light over his head, the light of a consummate

tzadik. He demands that he tell him what happened. His Rebbe tells him: today before I came to the beit midrash I slept and dreamt about you, and until you tell me what happened, I won't tell you what I dreamt. In the end the student told his Rebbe his story. In his mind, he still wanted to cast himself into the well. But, his Rebbe when he heard the story said, I now understand the dream too. He says, you are forbidden from doing so, throwing yourself into the well, and on the contrary, you have attained the highest level. He says that in his dream he saw him in a park somewhere and suddenly a great snake approached, ready to kill you, but something small came out of you and killed the snake and it disappeared. That harlot was the snake, etc. and what came out of his mouth and killed the snake was the student's intent to sacrifice himself. You are completely absolved on the sin. It is worthwhile that everyone read this commentary by the Ben Ish Chai.

13. Conclusion

So what we have done this evening is we began with prophecy and that the prerequisite for it is sincerity and earnestness, especially in our generation, which is **וְנִקָּה לְשָׁבִים**. So the prophecy for our generation is a sticker that you can put on your car, with the statement that it is time for the ba'alei teshuvah to take control of the state.

The point was that everyone who is here can be a ba'al teshuvah. If you already are a ba'al teshuvah that is one thing, and if you are not yet, you can become one right now, and then merit the prophecy of the generation, to take control of the State of Israel.