



## SHAME IS NOTHING TO BE ASHAMED ABOUT<sup>1</sup>

Sarah Yehudit Schneider

Divine *perfection*, in order for it to be *infinite*, must include the possibility of perfecting...a never-ending process by which perfection becomes even *more* perfect (without implying that its previous state was ever *less* than perfect). It's a paradox and we'll leave it at that.<sup>2</sup>

The mechanism HaShem devised to accomplish this perfecting is called *teshuva*, a term that means literally, return. The Talmud reports that HaShem created *teshuva* even before he created human beings, which implies that the whole point of human beings is to participate in this holy mission of *return*.<sup>3</sup> And yet you can't return to something unless you have first gone away from it. But then what is really gained when a person just comes back to their starting point? How does that accomplish perfecting?

That brings us to a mysterious formula built into the structure of our universe called, “*yeridah l'tsorekh aliyah*—descent for the sake of rising (eventually and inevitably) to an even higher place in the end.”<sup>4</sup> *Teshuva* does precisely that. Like a spring compressed and released, its descent creates a rebound that propels the returnee beyond his/her starting point and in this way perfecting occurs.<sup>5</sup>

It sounds almost sterile, but that's because we must unpack the term *descent* which is actually a euphemism for all the grievous ordeals in life: sin, failure, tragedy, catastrophe, wrongdoing, felony, etc. It is shocking to realize that the perfecting which is the purpose of creation, requires the very adversities that (seem to) oppose it—both natural disasters that come from without and moral failings perpetrated from within.

Focusing in particular on the latter, the impurities of soul that produce our descents are ancient indeed, no blame. We all have an allotment of what kabbala calls *zuhama* (pollution) inherited from primordial times—from the Era of Shattered Vessels to be exact.<sup>6</sup> There were seven universes created and destroyed before our own, or eighth, whose origin is told in the Book of Genesis. This pre-historic cataclysm is a saga of narcissism, shame and woe. When a world self-destructs, it is not innocent; it has earned its fate. Kabbala reports that the fatal flaw of these seven shattered worlds was psychotic narcissism. Each rallied to the slogan of: “I want to be king. I want to rule the world.”<sup>7</sup> Their hubris had basis. These kingdoms *were* godlike in their eminence, for they embodied the vision of perfection that instigated the creative effort altogether. Yet, they overinflated, lost their humility, shattered and died. One after another they suffered the humiliating reminder of their failure and mortality.

We (citizens of the Eighth Kingdom) are built from the shards of those shattered worlds, from dazzling lights tainted by narcissism and shame. HaShem takes a pile of those fragments and sends them down into each of our bodies and they provide the raw material for our life's

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It is an honor to dedicate this Torah Wisdom to the memory of our beloved grandfather,

**Leo Weil, Eliezer ben Shaya z"l.**

This is the first Rosh Hashanah that he is not with us. But his integrity, leadership, generosity and unwavering values as a *mensch* inspire us everyday. Because of his dedication to love and support the Jewish people, his two granddaughters now live in Israel. May his shining example keep us inspired in *maasim tovim* and may he reap lots of *nachas* from the deeds of all of his family. ---Sarah and Leia Weil and Family

work. Their incandescent sparks tug us toward good while their grunge propels our teshuva (including its requisite descents).

Perfecting is an energy intensive process. No one invests the effort without compelling incentives. Hashem supplies a carrot in front and a fire behind to keep us moving. Carrots are the narcissistic gratifications that accompany success while fire is the shame that nips at our heels threatening to pounce if we stop moving.

In this sense our inherited impurities of soul—our narcissistic delusions and paralyzing shame—are actually, a kind of natural resource—a fossil fuel—that drives our teshuva. Oil looks like filthy crud, but in Texas they call it black gold, for oil supplies the energy that fuels our (individual *and* collective) evolving. Oil is wealth (at least until we learn to harness solar). Every galaxy has a black hole at its core, and every soul has an oil well on its property.<sup>8</sup>

Hashem please help us (individually and collectively) to turn darkness into light, bitter into sweet. May we use all the resources of our lives for good so that we *return* home enriched, transformed, enlightened, humbled, perfected and fully ourselves. There is no greater bliss than doing what we are designed to do.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> TsHTs 162 (missing ot)

<sup>2</sup> Schneider, Sarah Yehudit, *Kabbalistic Writings on the Nature of Masculine and Feminine*, (Chapt 6, “Transformation is Only Possible After A Fall—A Series of Excerpts from Orot HaKodesh by R. Avraham Yitzchak Kook,”) 171-191.

<sup>3</sup> TB Nedarim 39b; Pesachim 54a; BR 1:4; Zohar 1:134b-35a; 3: 69b-70a

<sup>4</sup> TB, *Makkot* 7b; Baal Shem Tov on the Torah, Yitro #26 (and many other places), R. Shneur Zalman of Liadi (Rashaz), *Likutei Torah* (LT), 3:87c, 4:2a.

<sup>5</sup> TB Shabbat 104a.

<sup>6</sup> R. Shlomo Elyahiv, *HaDrush Olam HaTohu*, 'ספר הדעייה ח"א מאמר הכללי אותיות א-ד', ספר שיערי הלשם חלק א - סימן טו, עילמות שעלו במחשבה והתיקון -. פרק א - And throughout his writings.

<sup>7</sup> R. Yitzchak Chaver, *Afikei Mayim*, *Sefer Biur Agadot*, Sota 5a, San7a.

<sup>8</sup> Zohar 3:69b-70a: See texts attached.

<sup>9</sup> R. Shlomo Elyahiv, *HaDrush Olam HaTohu*, part 1, p 149 left col.

## A Still Small Voice

Source Texts for *Rosh HaShana* Teaching 2018 / 5779

### צדקת הצדיק, אות קסב<sup>1</sup>

מכל עבירה נעשה מלאך רע כמו שאמרו ז"ל (זוהר חדש צב, ב.)

Every action that we do, good or bad, creates repercussions that spread through the cosmos. Their impact attenuates as they extend from ground zero, but they do always eventually touch every corner of the universe.<sup>2</sup> These repercussions are anthropomorphically called angels for Rambam defines angels as “the means by which a force exerts itself at a distance.”<sup>3</sup> The chain of cause and effect generated by a deed, that spreads its influence afar, is characterized as an angelic process. Based on the principle of measure for measure, our good deeds create good effects (i.e., good angels) and our bad deeds create bad repercussions (i.e., bad angels).

זהו לטובה לבני אדם שהמלאך הוא חיות רוחני והוא מכיר באמיתות ה' יתברך וחפץ שיתהפך לטוב ועל ידי זה נתעורר האדם לתשובה.

But this whole setup, including the “bad angels,” ultimately serves good. For when the negative consequences of our wrong action comes back around and takes its toll, we see, clearly and painfully, that it was a bad move, and our remorse instigates our teshuva (our repentance and resolve not to make that choice again).

שהרהורי תשובה הוא כשנזכר כאילו החטא ועבירה שעשה עומדת לנגד עיניו ומתמרמר עליה והוא המלאך שעשה על ידו...

...Inevitably, remembrance of our wrongdoings flashes through our mind and we feel a pang of conscience for what we have done. It's as if a picture of that misdeed stands before our eyes. The repercussion that has boomeranged back and awakened a flash of guilt is nothing but the “bad angel” created by the deed itself...

...אין לך עבירה של אדם שלא הרהר עליה בתשובה כמו שאמרו ז"ל פושעי ישראל מלאים חרטות והוא ע"י העבירה עצמה.

...The Talmud asserts that eventually we will all have to recognize our misdeeds and feel genuine remorse about them. But a Jewish soul is especially susceptible to feeling guilt from its transgressions. The source of that guilt is the repercussion of the deed itself...

...וכל עיקר ענין העבירות הוא רק לעורר האדם לתשובה ע"י זה כנ"ל...

...In fact, the whole reason that HaShem created (the inevitability of) sin in the world, is for the teshuva that it (inevitably) instigates...<sup>4</sup> HaShem actually created teshuva *before* He created human beings, which makes teshuva more essential than people (at least in some sense).

Creation is the means by which Divine perfection includes the possibility of perfecting, for otherwise Divine perfection would be lacking something essential, ie the satisfaction of becoming more perfect. Since perfecting happens through the jerky motion of “descent for the

<sup>1</sup> Ot 162 is missing from earlier additions of *Tsidkat HaTsadik* but is presently included in the expanded commentary on *Tsidkat HaTsadik*, the Berkovitch edition.

<sup>2</sup> See teaching from Leshem below. תורה - סימן ח - תורה

<sup>3</sup> Rambam, Guide to the Perplexed, II:6-7

<sup>4</sup> For Hashem created before he created human beings, before He created the world (Nedarim 39b).

sake of ascent (that overshoots its starting point),” so human beings (with their sins and floundering and teshuva) enable this perfecting which is the point of creation...

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### Zohar 3:70a

רבי אבא אמר, ממעמקים קראתיך יי, מקום גנוז הוא למעלה והוא עומק הבאר, ומוזה יוצאים נחלים ומעינות לכל עבר, ואותו עמוק שבעומק נקרא תשובה ומי שרוצה לשוב ולהטהר מחטאיו, בזה העומק צריך לקרוא להקדוש ברוך הוא. זה הוא שכתוב ממעמקים קראתיך יי.

“From the depths I call out to you, HaShem [Ps 130:1]:” There is a hidden place above—the depth of the well—from which streams and springs issue in every direction. That deepest depth is called *Teshuva* and one who wishes to be purified of his sins must call to the blessed Holy One through this, as is written: “From the depth I call you, HaShem.”

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### תנא דבי אליהו רבה פרק כו

ד"א אנכי ה' אלהיך מלמד שנסתכל הקב"ה בעולם כולו מתחלת העולם ועד סוף העולם וצפה בעשרה אנשים שבעטו בו ואלו הן א' מיכה ב' ירבעם ג' בן הישראלית ד' \*מקושש\* ה' אבשלום ו' יואב ז' שמשון ח' עכן ט' עדי נבות י' אחאב, אנכי ה' אלהיך בעט מיכה לא יהיה לך אלהים אחרים בעט ירבעם לא תשא את שם ה' אלהיך לשוא בעט בן הישראלית זכור את יום השבת לקדשו בעט מקושש כבד את אביך ואת אמך בעט אבשלום לא תרצח בעט יואב לא תנאף בעט שמשון לא תגנוב בעט עכן לא תענה בעטו עדי נבות לא תחמוד בעט אחאב .

In another comment on *I am the Lord thy God*, the verse is taken as implying that the Holy One looked at the world which He created—all of it, from one side to the other and from beginning to end—to make sure there would be [at least] ten individuals who would spurn Him [by transgressing one of the Ten Commandments which He introduced by the words *I am the Lord thy God*], These individuals were Micah (Judg. 17); Jeroboam son of Nebat (1 Kings 12); the half-breed Israelite (Lev. 24:11); the man who gathered sticks on the Sabbath day (Num. 15:32); Absalom (2 Sam. 15); Joab (1 Kings 2:5); Samson (Judg. 14:3); Achan son of Zerah (Josh. 7); the witnesses against Naboth; and Ahab (1 Kings 21). Micah spurned the Commandment *I am the Lord thy God*; Jeroboam spurned the Commandment *Thou shall have no other gods before Me* (Exod. 20:2). The half-breed Israelite, [a blasphemer], spurned the Commandment *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain* (Exod. 20:7); the man who gathered sticks on the Sabbath spurned *Remember the Sabbath day* (Exod. 20:8) and *Keep the Sabbath day* (Deut. 5:12); Absalom spurned *Honor thy father and thy mother* (Exod. 20:12); Joab spurned *Thou shalt not murder* (Exod. 20:13); Samson spurned *Thou shalt not commit adultery* (*ibid.*); Achan son of Zerah spurned *Thou shalt not steal* (*ibid.*); the witnesses against Naboth spurned *Thou shalt not bear false witness* (*ibid.*); and Ahab spurned *Thou shalt not covet* (Exod. 20:14).<sup>8</sup>