

LESSON SIX

MORE ON SIN AND THE SITRA ACHRA; DEATH AND TRANSMIGRATION

TEXT ONE --- ZOHAR I, 83a

And Abram went up from Egypt (Gen. 13:1)...Rabbi Shimon said: Come and see. All is a mystery of wisdom. This verse hints at wisdom and the levels down below, to the depths of which Abraham descended. He knew them but did not become attached. He returned to vitality, was not seduced by them like Adam.

When Adam reached that level, he was seduced by the serpent and dragged death into the world. When Noah descended to that level, what is written? *He drank of the wine and became drunk and uncovered himself within his tent (ohalo)*. (Gen. 9:21) The spelling implies “her tent” (**ohalah**).

But what is written of Abraham? *Abram went up from Egypt*. (Gen. 13:1) He went up and did not come down. He returned to his domain, the high rung he had grasped before. This story appears in the Torah to reveal wisdom. Abraham fulfilled himself, was not seduced, rose to his full stature, returned to his domain *into the Negev* (Gen. 13:1), the South, the high sphere to which he was linked before. Before, it was written: *Abram journeyed by stages toward the Negev*. (Gen. 12:9) Now, *into the Negev*, the domain he adhered to before.

Come and see the secret of the word. If Abram had not gone down into Egypt and been refined there first, he could not have partaken of the Holy One, Blessed be He. Similarly with his children, when the Holy One, Blessed be He, wanted to make them unique, a perfect people, and draw them near to Him; if they had not gone down to Egypt and been refined there first, they would not have become His special ones. So too the Holy Land; if she had not been given first to Canaan to control, she would not have become the portion, the share of the Holy One, Blessed be He. It is all one mystery.

TEXT TWO --- ZOHAR III:70a

Come and see. The Holy One, Blessed be He, produced ten crowns, holy crowns above, with which He is crowned and clothed. They are He, and He is they, like a flame attached to a burning coal, and there is no division there. Corresponding to this are ten crowns, below, which are not holy, attached to the filth of the finger-

nail of a holy crown, called **Chokmah**. Consequently, they are called “Wisdoms.” And it has been taught: Ten types of these “Wisdoms” descended to the world, and they were all absorbed by Egypt, except one that spread throughout the world. These are all types of sorcery, and from them Egyptians learned more sorcery than all the other inhabitants of the world.

TEXT THREE --- ZOHAR II:103a

Come and see. It is written, *And a river goes out of Eden to water the garden* (Genesis 2:10). This river never stops propagating, multiplying, and bearing fruit. But *another god* (Ex. 34:14) is emasculated, and has no desire at all; neither does it propagate itself or bear fruit, for if it were to bear fruit, it would pollute the whole world. Therefore the man who causes this side to increase in the world is called “evil” and will never see the face of the **Shekhinah**, as it is written, *Evil shall not dwell with You* (Psalm 5:5).

TEXT FOUR --- ZOHAR I:49b

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and cleave to his wife, and they shall be one flesh. (Gen. 2:24) This is still intended to draw her with love, so he might cleave to her. Once he had aroused her with all these words, what is written? *The serpent was more cunning than any other creature...* (Gen. 3:1) The evil impulse (**yetzer ha-ra**) aroused himself to seize her, to bind her with bodily desires, and arouse in her other things in which the evil impulse delights. So much so that *when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and it was a delight to the eyes, and the tree was to be desired...she took of its fruit and ate.* (Gen. 3:6) She received it willingly, *and she gave some to her husband as well.* Her desire for him was aroused, so that she bestowed on him passionate love. This shows that events among men are patterned on the world above.

Rabbi Eleazar said: How can we support the view that there is an evil inclination in the world above that takes hold of the female?

He replied: We have already discussed the fact that both the good impulse and the evil impulse exist in the upper and the lower worlds, the good impulse on the right, and the evil impulse on the left, and the left in the world above takes hold of the female, to join with her as one, as it is said, *His left hand is under my head.* (Song of Songs 2:6) So, until here, may be interpreted as applying to both the upper and the lower worlds...

TEXT FIVE --- ZOHAR II:237b

Rabbi Shimon said: ...the Holy One, Blessed be He, has given power to it (the **Sitra Achra**), and this impure spirit must be subjugated from all sides. Come and I will tell you a mystery, which cannot be revealed except to the supernal holy ones. Come and see. The Holy One, Blessed be He, has given to this place, to the impure spirit, the authority to rule in the world on several sides. He can do damage, and we should not treat him lightly, for we must beware of him, lest he accuse us even within our holy deeds. Therefore, we have a certain secret: we must assign him a tiny place within our own holiness, for it is from holiness that his authority comes. We must hide within the mystery of the tefillin one hair from a calf, which sticks out visibly, for this single hair can only defile if it is joined together to make its full length; less than this, it cannot defile. We place this hair into our supernal holiness and give it a place, so that it will not accuse us within our holiness.

TEXT SIX --- ZOHAR III:72b-73a

(You shall not copy the practices of the land of Egypt where you dwelt, or of the land of Canaan to which I am taking you; nor shall you follow their laws.) My rules alone shall you observe, and faithfully follow My laws... (Lev. 18:3-4)

Rabbi Abba opened: Happy is the portion of Israel, because the Holy One, Blessed be He, has selected them from among all the idolatrous nations. Because of His love for them, He gave them laws of truth, planted the Tree of Life in their midst, and made the **Shekhinah** dwell among them. Why? Because Israel is marked with the holy sign (of circumcision) in their flesh. They are recognized as His and as those who belong to His palace. Therefore, all those who are not marked with the holy sign in their flesh are not His, and it is known that all of them come from the side of impurity. It is forbidden to associate with them or to discuss with them matters of the Holy One, Blessed be He. It is forbidden to make known to them the words of the Torah, for the whole Torah is the name of the Holy One, Blessed be He, and every letter of the Torah is attached to the Holy Name. It is forbidden to impart a word of the Torah to any person who is not marked with the holy sign in his flesh, and obviously one cannot delve into it with them.

TEXT SEVEN --- ZOHAR I:218b-219a

It has been taught: When a man's soul departs, all his relatives and friends in that world (i.e., the afterlife) accompany his soul and show it its place of delight and its place of punishment. If he was virtuous, he sees its place and ascends to dwell and delight in the supernal bliss of that world. But if he was not virtuous, that soul remains in this world until the body is buried in the earth. Once it has been buried, numerous officers of justice seize (the soul) and take it to **Dumah**, and bring it into the abodes of **Gehinnom**.

Rabbi Yehudah said: All seven days, the soul goes from his house to his grave, and from his grave to his house, and mourns for the body, as it is written: *His flesh is in pain for him, and his soul mourns over him.* (Job 14:22). It goes and sits in his house. It sees them (i.e., the family) all grieving, and mourns.

TEXT EIGHT --- ZOHAR III:71b

A man who consults the dead. (Deut. 18:1) “*The dead*” means here the wicked in the world, among those nations who are idolaters, who are always thought of as “dead.” But as for Israel, who are truly righteous, Solomon said with respect to them, *I praised the dead that have already died* (Eccl. 4:2) – in the past, “*that have already died*”; but not now when they are alive. Furthermore, when the other nations visit their dead, they do so with sorcery in order to arouse evil spirits. But when Israel visit their dead, they come in great repentance before the Holy One, Blessed be He; they come with a broken heart and fasting into His presence, and all so that those holy souls might plead for mercy for them before the Holy One, Blessed be He. And the Holy One, Blessed be He, has pity on the world because of them. Consequently, we have learned: Even though a righteous man has departed from this world, he is not removed from, or vanished from, all the worlds, since he exists in all those worlds more than in his lifetime. During his lifetime he exists only in this world, but thereafter he exists in three worlds, and is welcome there, as it is written, *The maidens love you* (Song of Songs 1:3). Do not read **alamot**, “maidens,” but **olamot** (worlds). Happy is their portion!

TEXT NINE --- RABBENU BACHYA (13TH-14TH C.), **KAD HA-KEMACH**, I:73b

And what does the Holy one, Blessed be He, do in His mercy that he may merit seeing Him in the supernal light? His soul transmigrates to a body, and returns there as in the beginning...and when it is grown, it will beseech God and appease

Him through penitence and suffering and then His justice will return to that mortal. For from the day he was born he never sinned and his suffering was because of earlier sins that should have warranted his demise. But the Holy One, Blessed be He, “devises means” that he not be banished from the world to come, and then he may gaze at the supernal light.

TEXT TEN --- CHAYYIM VITAL, SEFER HA-GILGULIM, ch. 5, p. 4b

Gilgul is when, as the newborn emerges from its mother’s womb, the soul enters that body, and it suffers all the sorrow and sufferings of that body from the moment it came into the world until its death, and it cannot leave until the day of death. But **ibbur** is when the soul exists in this world after a person has been born and grown up; then, another soul enters him and that person is like a pregnant woman (**ubarrah**) who carries an infant in her womb, and thus it is called **ibbur**.

TEXT ELEVEN --- LURIA/VITAL, SHULCHAN ARUKH HA-ARI, p. 46, on return of lost objects

Thus shall you do with every lost object of your brother (Deut. 22:3). Know that a person may at times be perfected through **ibbur** and at times he may require **gilgul**, which is much more painful. The penalty for anyone who finds a lost object and does not return it is that he cannot find restoration (**tikkun**) through **ibbur** after his death, but he must return it in a form of **gilgul**. And this is the meaning of the concluding section of the verse cited above: *You may not hide yourself*. This refers to **ibbur** by itself, which involves being concealed in his neighbor’s soul. He will require **gilgul** which is much more painful than **ibbur**.

TEXT TWELVE --- ELIEZER AZIKRI, 16TH C. Safed, SEFER CHAREDIM, ch. 33, p. 142

It once happened in Castile that gentiles had designated an ox for sport, it being their custom to beat and afflict an animal. During the night preceding the event a Jew had a dream in which he saw his father, who told him, “Know, my son, that because of my many iniquities I transmigrated into an ox following my death, and it is the very ox designated for affliction and hard blows tomorrow in the people’s sport. And so, my son, redeem me and save me that I may flee through a certain place before they kill me by tearing me to pieces alive. Redeem me from their hands: Give no thought to the cost involved, and slaughter the ox in a proper manner and feed it to poor students of Torah. I have been informed of this from

above and have been permitted to inform you. In this way my soul shall ascend, returning from transmigration into an animal to transmigration into a human being and enabling me to serve the Lord, with God's help."

TEXT THIRTEEN --- excerpts from VITAL, SHA'AR RUACH HA-KODESH

And by applying this **yichud** we are able to restore his soul somewhat so that he [the spirit] may depart from the person's body. And following is the procedure, as personally tested by myself. For I would grasp that man's arm and put my hand on the pulse,...since this is where the vestment of the soul is located, and therein it clads itself. And I concentrate upon that soul, clad in the pulse, that he might depart from there by the power of the **yichud**. And while clinging to his hand at the pulse, I recite a particular verse verse, normally and backwards, and concentrate upon the following Divine Names that issue from the text...In many cases the exorcists said: *Appoint a wicked man over him, and let Satan stand at his right side* (Ps. 109:6), and some additional verses and textual combinations.