

SIN, REPENTANCE & HUMAN NATURE

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1. THOMAS HOBBES, LEVIATHAN, PART I, CHAPTER XIII (1651)

... during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war; and such a war as is of every man against every man.

2. JOHN DRYDEN, THE CONQUEST OF GRANADA (1672)

I am as free as nature first made man,
Ere the base laws of servitude began,
When wild in woods the noble savage ran.

3. GENESIS 6:5

(ה) וַיֵּרָא ה' כִּי רַבָּה רָעַת הָאָדָם בָּאָרֶץ וְכָל-יֶצֶר מַחְשַׁבַת לִבּוֹ רָע כָּל-הַיּוֹם:

And the Lord saw that the evil of man was great in the earth, and every *yetzer* of his heart **was only evil all the time**.

4. GENESIS 8:21

(כא) וַיִּרַח ה' אֶת-רִיחַ הַנְּחִיחַ וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל-לִבּוֹ לֹא-אֶסְפֹּף לְקַלֵּל עוֹד אֶת-הָאָדָמָה בְּעֵבֹר הָאָדָם כִּי יֵצֵר לִב הָאָדָם רָע מִנְעֻרָיו וְלֹא-אֶסְפֹּף עוֹד לְהַכּוֹת אֶת-כָּל-חַי כְּאֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי:

And the Lord smelled the pleasant aroma, and the Lord said to Himself, "I will no longer curse the earth because of man, for **the *yetzer* of man's heart is evil from his youth**, and I will no longer smite all living things as I have done. So long as the earth exists, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease."

5. RASHI, GENESIS 8:21

מנעריו. מנעריו פתיב, משוננער לצאת ממעי אמו נתן בו יצר הרע:

This is written *mi-ne'arav* [i.e., without a "vav," implying that] from the time that he [the embryo] shakes himself to emerge from his mother's womb, the evil inclination is placed in him.

6. RABBI DAVID KIMCHI, GENESIS 8:21

כי יצר לב האדם רע מנעוריו, קראו יצר לפי שנוצר עמו, ואמר מנעוריו, כי יצר הרע הוא באדם קודם יצר הטוב, כי אין בו יצר טוב בפועל עד שיגדל ויקנהו מעט מעט....

It is called *yetzer* since it is created [*notzar*] with him, and it says “from his youth” because the evil inclination [*yetzer ha-ra*] is in man before the good inclination [*yetzer ha-tov*]. For the good inclination is not actualized until he grows up and acquires it little by little....

7. MAIMONIDES, GUIDE FOR THE PERPLEXED 3:22

[The Rabbis] say that the evil inclination we receive at our birth; for “sin crouches at the door” (Gen. 4:7), as is distinctly said in the Law: “And the imagination of the heart of man is evil from his youth” (Gen. 8:21). The good inclination, however, comes when the mind is developed.

8. TESHUVOT RASHBA 6:172

והטעם לפחות מעשרים שאינו דן דיני נפשות אפי' שהביא ב' שערות לפי שאין אדם עומד על שלמות דעתו עד שיהא בן עשרים

And the reason there is no capital punishment, even if he shows physical signs of adulthood, until the age of twenty is because a person does not possess (lit., “stand on”) the completeness of his *da'at* until he is twenty.

9. PIRKEI AVOT 3:2

רבי חנינא סגן הכהנים אומר, הוי מתפלל בשלומה של מלכות, שאלמלא מוראה, איש את רעהו חיים בלעו.
Rabbi Chanina, the Deputy High Priest said, “Pray for the welfare of the government, for were it not for the fear it inspires, every man would swallow his neighbor alive.”

10. BEREISHIT RABBAH 14:9

חמשה שמות נקראו לה: נפש, רוח, נשמה, יחידה, חייה.

[The soul] is called by five names: *nefesh*, *ruach*, *neshamah*, *yechidah*, and *chayah*.

11. RABBI ZEV REICHMAN, FLAMES OF FAITH, P. 115

Yechidah is the hidden part of the soul. Man himself is frequently unaware of it; it is a root motivation underlying much of one's conscious thought. It is deeper than the subconscious, and it is totally united with the Almighty. This soul part is completely pure and constantly advocates virtue.

12. DEUTERONOMY 30:2, 11

(ב) ושבתי עדה' אלקיך ושמעת בקלו ככל אשר-אנכי מצוך היום אתה ובניך בכל-לבבך ובכל-נפשך: (יא) כי המצוה הזאת אשר אנכי מצוך היום לא-נפלאה הוא ממך ולא רחקה הוא:

And you will return to the Lord, your God, with all your heart and with all your soul, and you will listen to His voice according to all that I am commanding you this day, you and your children... For this commandment which I command you this day, is not concealed from you, nor is it far away.

13. RAMBAN, DEUT. 30:11

(א) וטעם כי המצוה הזאת על כל התורה כולה והנכון כי על כל התורה יאמר (דברים ח:א) "כל המצוה אשר אנכי מצוך היום" אבל המצוה הזאת על התשובה הנזכרת כי והשבות אל לבבך (דברים ל:א) ושבת עד ה' אלקיך (דברים ל:ב) **מצוה** שיצוה אותנו לעשות כן ונאמרה בלשון הבינוני לרמוז **בהבטחה** כי עתיד הדבר להיות כן .

"FOR THIS COMMANDMENT" — The meaning thereof is that it refers to the entire Torah. But the correct interpretation is that when he refers to the entire Torah, he says [as above] "Every commandment which I command thee this day" (Deut. 8:1). Rather [the expression used here] "this commandment" refers to [the commandment of] repentance [teshuvah] aforementioned, for the verses, and "thou shalt bethink thyself" (Deut. 30:1), "and thou shalt return unto the Lord your God" (Deut. 30:2) constitute a **commandment**, wherein he commands us to do so. It is stated in a future tense [rather than in the imperative] to suggest, in the form of a **pledge**, that it is destined [that Israel will repent].

14. YOMA 57A

הַשָּׂמָא בְּרֵי טְמֵאִים אֶתּוֹן, דְּכָתִיב: "טוּמְאַתָּה בְּשׂוּלֶיךָ". אָמַר לֵיהּ, תָּא תְּזִי מָה כְּתִיב בְּהוּ: "הַשְּׂוֹכֵן אִתָּם בְּתוֹךְ טוּמְאַתָּם", אֲפִילוּ בְּזִמְן שָׁהֵן טְמֵאִין – שְׂכִינָה שְׂרוּיָה בִּינְיָהוּ.

Now you are certainly impure, as it is written [about the Jewish people]: "Her impurity was in her skirts" (Lamentations 1:9), [and the Divine Presence does not dwell upon the Jews when they are impure. Rabbi Chanina] said to him: Come and see what is written about [the Jewish people]: "That dwells with them in the midst of their impurity" (Leviticus 16:16). [This indicates that] even when they are impure, the Divine Presence dwells among them.

15. PINCHAS PELI, INTRODUCTION TO "ON REPENTANCE" P. 23

The Almighty resides in man, in his heart and soul, and He never departs from there even if man sins and defiles the sacred abode. God, as it were, inhabits the deepest recesses of the sinning soul... "that dwelleth with them in the midst of their uncleanness" (Lev. 16:16)

16. RABBI JOSEPH B. SOLOVEITCHIK, ON REPENTANCE, P. 95

"That which is holy" – that is the Holy One, blessed be He, who becomes impure, as it were, from the iniquities of the children of Israel. Sin is contaminating, and even the Holy one, blessed be He, as it were, becomes contaminated. But the *Shekhinah* never departs completely from any Jew, no matter how far he has gone or how deep he has immersed himself in sin. God is there after man sins, He remains hidden in the inner recesses of the heart of even the worst evildoer until the moment arrives when he remembers his Maker and renounces his ways and repents....