

Parashat Metzora

וְצִוָּה הַכֹּהֵן וְלָקַח לְמִטְהָר שְׁתֵּי צִפְרִים חַיִּים טָהוֹרוֹת.... וְצִוָּה הַכֹּהֵן וְשָׁחַט
 אֶת הַצִּפּוֹר הָאֶחָת אֶל כְּלֵי חַרֵּשׁ עַל מַיִם חַיִּים. אֶת הַצִּפּוֹר הַחַיָּה יִקַּח...וְטָבַל
 אוֹתָם וְאֶת הַצִּפּוֹר הַחַיָּה בְּדַם הַצִּפּוֹר הַשָּׁחֻטָה...וְשָׁלַח אֶת הַצִּפּוֹר הַחַיָּה עַל
 פְּנֵי הַשָּׂדֶה.

*"The priest shall take two live, ritually pure birds. ... The priest shall order one of the birds slaughtered over fresh water in an earthen vessel. He shall take the live bird...and dip...the live bird in the blood of the bird that has been slaughtered.... He shall then set the live bird free in the open country."*¹

These procedures are part of the purification rites a person afflicted with *tzara'at* must undergo when he is cured.

As we explained previously, the affliction of *tzara'at* is not simply a medical condition, but reflects a spiritual-mental affliction, a faulty attitude in life. This attitude results from the intrusion of some form of unG-dly ideas or perspective into a person's way of thinking, that eventually renders him depressed, negative, anti-social or afflicted by some other negative emotion. The purification process, then, must reflect how the individual disassociates himself with these negative ways of thinking.

This negativity or egocentricity is unabashedly called "evil" in Kabbalah. The imagery used for it is that of a "shell," a coarse, inedible husk that surrounds the fruit or meat of the nut. The image is significant on two counts: Firstly, the fact that the shell cannot be eaten, obstructs the fruit, and has to be removed indicates that egocentricity has no place in the Jew's life. Secondly, the fact that the shell does serve to protect the fruit while it is ripening indicates that, in the context of self-preservation, the ego does serve a purpose. In any case, central to understanding the purification process from egocentric negativity is the Kabbalah's "topology" of evil. It is this subject which will form the bulk of the passage from the Arizal's writings cited here.

עץ חיים, שער מוח, פרק ב

ענין הקלי' של די עולמות אבי"ע ונבנה דרוש זה על מאמר אחד בזוהר פרשה ויחי דרי"ז וזה לשונו תנא עלמא חדא אשתמודע לעילא כד נפקי תרין צפרין כו'

Eitz Chaim 48:2

We will now discuss the subject of the shells, i.e., forms of evil associated with the four worlds, *Atzilut*, *Beriah*, *Yetzirah*, and *Asiyah*. We will base this exposition on the following passage from the holy *Zohar*:² "We have been taught that there is a certain world above; when the herald goes forth, that world trembles and shakes, and there emerge from it two birds. Their abode is under the tree wherein is the appearance of life and death. One bird flies northward, and the other southward; one at dawn and the other at dusk."

ולהבין מאמר זה צריך להקדים כמה הקדמות

1. Leviticus 14:4-7.

2. 1:217b.

In order to understand this passage, we have to understand a number of other things first.

הנה כמו שיש די עולמות אבי"ע בקדושה כן יש די עולמות הטומאה

First of all, just as there are four worlds—*Atzilut, Beriah, Yetzirah, and Asiyah*—in the realm of holiness, so are there four impure worlds.

The *Atzilut* of impurity is also known as *kelipat nogah*, the “shiny shell,” which although not holy, is not entirely evil either. It is neutral, and whatever is part of it can be assimilated into holiness if utilized properly. The lower three worlds of impurity are the three entirely impure shells, which cannot be assimilated into holiness.

והנה בעולם האצילות אין הקלי" כ"א נגד זו"ן לבד נגד האחוריים שלהם ויש שם זו"ן אל הקלי" אך לא יש למעלה כנגד או"א

In the world of *Atzilut*, there are shells only opposite the backs of *Z'eir Anpin* and its *Nukva*. There is thus evil at the level of *Z'eir Anpin* and *Nukva*, but not at the level of *Abba* and *Ima*.

In the idealized world of *Atzilut*, evil cannot attack the intellect (*Abba* and *Ima*). This is because the objectivity of intellect precludes any possibility of evil “convincing” it to succumb to its enticements. Ideally, then, a healthy intellect should be a person’s first defence against evil. As long as he is thinking clearly, there is no way a person can fall into sin.

Even at the level of emotions and emotional expression (*Z'eir Anpin* and *Nukva*), evil can attack only from the “back.” Only when the emotions are oriented improperly (i.e., towards things other than Divinity) and a person begins to love, fear, etc. things other than G-d, does he become susceptible to evil’s machinations.

In the lower worlds, however, where the consciousness of G-d is not as pervasive as it is in the world of *Atzilut*, we find that the shells exist on successively higher levels.

ובעולם הבריאה יש קלי" אפי" נגד אמא של בריאה ובאחוריים שלה ובאחוריים דזו"ן דבריאה

In the world of *Beriah*, there are shells opposite the back of *Ima* besides those opposite the backs of *Z'eir Anpin* and its *Nukva*.

וביצירה יש קלי" נגד אחוריים דאו"א ודזו"ן אשר שם

In the world of *Yetzirah*, there are shells opposite the backs of *Abba, Ima, Z'eir Anpin* and *Nukva*.

ובעולם עשיה יש קלי" נגד אחוריים של כל ה' פרצופים שהם א"א ואו"א וזו"ן דעשיה

In the world of *Asiyah*, there are shells opposite all five *partzufim*: *Arich Anpin, Abba, Ima, Z'eir Anpin, and Nukva*.

Thus, in the world of *Asiyah*, all facets of the personality are susceptible to the inroads of evil.

וכבר נתבאר בדרושים הקודמים שבכל די עולמות אבי"ע דקדושה יש בו ה' פרצופים וכל פרצוף ופרצוף יש בו ז' היכלות שבהם י"ס דפרצוף ההוא

As we have explained elsewhere, there are five *partzufim* in each of the four

worlds of the realm of holiness. Every *partzuf* has associated with it seven palaces, in which exist the ten *sefirot* of that *partzuf*.

A “palace” is, in this context, simply a setting in which the *sefirot* may operate.

והנה כבר ביארנו שם בדרושים הקודמים כי היכלות הם ז' בוי' והם ז' היכלות דדכורא וז' היכלי דנוקבא והנה כמו שהנוקבא היא כנגד החוזה של הזכר גם ההיכלות הם עדיין שהיכלות של הנוקבא הם מתחילין מהחוזה של הזכר משם ולמטה עד סיום רגליו וענין זה הוא בכל די עולמות אביי"ע

Furthermore, we have also explained that these palaces are in fact twice seven: seven male palaces and seven female palaces. Just as the female's full stature extends only as high as the male's chest, so are the male and female palaces like this: the female palaces begin at the level of the male's chest and extend downward to the level of his feet. This applies to all the four worlds.

The dichotomization of reality into male and female was necessary in order to give full play to two necessary but divergent focuses in achieving the purpose of creation. The male is the abstract awareness of creation's source (G-d); the female is the drive to manifest that source in the reality. The male “needs” the female in order to actualize its abstract inspiration; the female “needs” the male to inspire and sustain the direction of its drive toward actualization.

The implication of this is that each facet, male and female, is given a personality (or in Kabbalistic terms: a *sefirotic* makeup) tailored to its focus. The female is therefore depicted as having its head on the level of the male's heart; in other words, the female intellect is *a priori* oriented toward thinking of ways to actualize what the male has already emotionally reacted to. Were the female's head to be on the same level as the male's (i.e., that of abstract inspiration), it could not focus on its intended goal.

This also explains why women are generally shorter than men.

והנה ג"כ ההיכלות דקלי' אשר באביי"ע הם עדיין היכלין ז' בהיכלין ז' והנה כפי זה היה נראה שז' היכלות דז"א דקליפה יהיה נגד ז' היכלות דז"א דקדושה וכן בשאר העולמות אמנם אין הדבר כן והטעם כי בכל ג"ר אין הקליפה נוגעת שם וא"כ נמצא כי כל ז' היכלי דמסאבותא דקליפה דז"א שיעורן הם נגד ז' היכלין תתאין דז"א דקדושה אמנם נגד היכל ז' העליון שהוא בחי' ג"ר דז"א אין כנגדו שום קליפה כלל וכן הענין בכל ההיכלות דקלי' שבכל די עולמות

The palaces of the shells of the four worlds are similarly structured, there being two sets of 7 palaces for each *partzuf*. We might therefore assume that the seven palaces of the *Z'eir Anpin* of the shells would be opposite the seven palaces of *Z'eir Anpin* of holiness, but this is not the case. The reason is that the shells do not touch the three first *sefirot* of any *partzuf*. Therefore, it follows that the full stature of all seven impure palaces of the evil *Z'eir Anpin* reaches only as high as that of the six lower palaces of the holy *Z'eir Anpin*. There is no shell opposite the seventh, highest palace of the holy *Z'eir Anpin*, i.e., the palace associated with its first triad of *sefirot*. The same is true of all the evil palaces in each of the four worlds.

The *partzufim* of evil are also shorter than the *partzufim* of holiness, although for an entirely different reason. Here, the shorter stature (for both male and female evil *partzufim*) indicates that evil is, as

we said, unable to attack intellect. Although the evil *partzufim* of course possess their own intellect (since by definition a *partzuf* is a full array of *sefirot*), their intellect is not abstract. It is *a priori* biased towards evil, that is, towards denial or at least de-emphasizing Divinity and/or its significance. Were evil to possess abstract intellect, it would not be evil, since abstract, unbiased intellect cannot but acknowledge the existence and omni-relevance of G-d.

The first triad of *sefirot*, *chochmah-binah-da'at* is that of the intellect.

אבל צריך שתדע כי אע"פ שקליפות דבריאה אינן יכולין לעלות עד ג"ר דבריאה עכ"ז ההיכלות דקליפה דאצילות הם יכולין לשלוט ולהאיר ממקומן העליון ועד"ז הוא בשאר עולמות

Still, it should be kept in mind that even though the shells of the world of *Beriah* cannot ascend to the level of the first sefirotic triad of *Beriah*, the evil palaces of the world of *Atzilut* can prevail and be manifest from their exalted height down into the world of *Beriah*. The same is true of the other worlds.

ודע כי כמו שבכל הפרצופים דקדושה יש בהם בחינות המוחין כנודע כן יש אל כל הפרצופים דקליפות כולם לזכרים ולנקבות אבל יש שינוי בזה כי הנה הזכר דקליפה וגם הנקבה אין בהם רק תרין מוחין לבד והזכר של הקדושה יש לו ג' מוחין חב"ד והנקבה של הקדושה יש לה ב' מוחין חו"ב לבד כי נשים דעתן קלה

Just as all the holy *partzufim* possess intellect, so do all the impure *partzufim*, both male and female. The difference, however, is this: the male and female evil *partzufim* possess only two "brains," i.e., *chochmah* and *binah*, while the male holy *partzufim* possess three: *chochmah*, *binah*, and *da'at*. The holy female *partzufim* also only possess two "brains," i.e., *chochmah* and *binah*, for, as we are taught, "women's *da'at* is light."³

Chochmah is the flash of insight that pierces through the veil of the sub- or super-conscious into the conscious mind. It is an ephemeral experience, since by its very nature an insight is foreign to the mental structure into which it is introduced. Being a foreign entity, if it is not in some way integrated into the mind, it will simply disappear and be forgotten.

Therefore, the task of *binah* is to integrate this new insight into the mental structures and thought patterns the individual already possesses. This is a process of translation and evaluation: translating the insight into familiar terms and evaluating the existing mental structures and ideas in terms of the new insight. Does this new insight confirm or contradict what I already know and believe, and if so, to what extent? And so on. *Binah* thus *distinguishes* (Hebrew: *bein*) between reality as reflected in the insight and as conceived of prior to the insight, and *reconstructs* (Hebrew: *boneh*) the person's mentality in the wake of the insight.

Still, all this is abstract mental activity. It is the function of the third component of the intellect, *da'at*, to make this new picture of reality relevant and meaningful in the person's day-to-day life. Now that I understand reality in a new, higher way, what does that say about how I have been living my life and how I should be living it from now on?

We now begin to see the essential difference between good and evil, or more precisely, holiness and mundaneness. The drive of holy intellect is always to seek the relevance of insight, understanding, and knowledge. The intellect of evil has no such drive. It is entirely content to focus on the experience of the insight, the "wow" or "high" without "polluting" it with moral concerns or relevance. For it, then, life is a succession of sterile experiences, titillating in and of themselves, but which produce no

3. *Shabbat* 33b.

lasting fruit or change in the individual's or society's life.

Women are also not granted *a priori* this third component of intellect, since as we said, their innate intellect is already fully "subjectified" and oriented towards translating abstractness into relevance. Women acquire *da'at* fully when they marry, and can then combine their own intellects with and fully benefit from their husbands' more abstract intellects.

זוה נרמז בסבא דמשפטים דק"ג וז"ל אל אחר אסתרס ולא עביד פירין פיי הדבר כמשי"ה ממני פריך

This concept is alluded to in the Zohar:⁴ "the 'other god,' i.e., evil, is emasculated, and has no desire to procreate; it does not multiply or bear fruit, for were it to bear fruit, it would turn the whole world into chaos." The explanation of this is in accordance with the verse, "Ephraim shall say: 'What more have I to do with idols? When I respond and look to Him, I become like a leafy cypress.' Your fruit is provided by Me."⁵

Forsaking idolatry, the evil orientation, is thus associated with fecundity.

נמצא כי הפירות הנעשין מזווג העליון דזו"ן דקדושה הם נשמתין ורוחין ונפשין דישאל והענין כי בחיי נפשות באים מן הנוקבא עצמה אמנם בחיי נשמות ורוחות באים מן צד הזכר המזדווג עם הנוקבא ואמנם הטפה הנמשכת ע"י הזווג הוא ממוח הדעת כי הוא המכריע והמחבר התרין מוחין חו"ב של הזכר ואי אפשר לשום זוג אם לא ע"י הדעת לכן נקרא הזווג בלשון דעת כמ"ש וידע אלקנה את חנה אשתו והאדם ידע את חוה אשתו ואיש לא ידעה וכמוהו רבים והטעם כי אם אין דעת אין זוג כלל.

In other words, the supernal coupling of the holy *Z'eir Anpin* and its *Nukva* produces fruits, i.e., the souls of Israel. The *nefesh* ("innate life force") issues from the *Nukva* directly. The levels of *neshamah* ("breath of life") and *ruach* ("spirit"), however, originate in the male (*Z'eir Anpin*), which couples with the *Nukva*. The seminal drop transferred through intercourse comes from the brain of *da'at*, for it is this brain that reconciles and bridges the males' other two brains, *chochmah* and *binah*. No coupling is possible without *da'at*. This is why the Bible refers to intercourse as "knowledge," as in the verses: "And Elkanah knew his wife Chanah,"⁶ "no man had known her,"⁷ and many such others. The reason is because without *da'at* there can be no intercourse at all.

As we said, *da'at* is the subjectification of the intellect. This is the element of the female within the male, i.e., the aspect of his intellect that propels him toward making his abstractness relevant and concrete. It is therefore the point in his mind that allows him to "get out of himself" and be sensitive to his other half, or spouse, and particularly to develop an appreciation for her innate drive towards actualization and concretization of Divinity in the real world.

ואמנם שם בקל"י אפילו הזכר אין בו דעת רק ב' מוחין לבד אבל מוח הג' הנקרא דעת אין בהן וכיון שכן הוא אי"כ אין בו בחי' זווג והרי הוא דומה לסריס שאינו עושה פירות

In the realm of evil, however, there is no *da'at*, even in the male. They possess the other two brains (*chochmah* and *binah*), but they lack the third brain, *da'at*. There

4. 2:103a

5. Hosea 14:9.

6. 1 Samuel 1:19.

7. Genesis 24:16.

is therefore no concept of coupling, and they are, as it were, emasculated, unable to procreate.

ונודע כי אל אחר הוא הזכר שבקלי' כנזכר בזוהר במקומות רבים ובפי' פקודי דרמ"ג על לא יהיה בך אל זר וז"ש כאן אל אחר אסתרס ולא עביד פירין כי בנוקבא לא שייך לישנא דסירוס אלא צינון כמשארז"ל על התנינים הגדולים

It is known that the term "other god" refers to the male aspect of evil, as is clear from the usage of the *Zohar* in many passages, particularly on the verse "You shall possess no foreign god."⁸ That is why it calls evil "the 'other god' emasculated, having no desire to procreate." The female shell obviously cannot be called "emasculated," but only "frigid," as our sages said with regard to the great serpents.⁹

It is said that G-d castrated the male primordial sea-creature, the Leviathan and killed the female in order to prevent them from procreating and their species overrunning the world. In contrast, when faced with the same problem regarding the primordial beast, the Behemoth, He castrated the male but only made the female frigid. The reason why he had to kill the female Leviathan and not simply make it frigid, the Talmud states, is because fish mate even when they are cool.

נמצא כי ישראל יש להן גר"ן מהקדושה נפש מן המלכות עצמה ור"ן מן הזכר שיש בו בחי' הדעת אמנם עכו"ם אין בהם רק בחי' נפש לבד מצד הנוקבא של הקליפות אך ר"נ הבאים מן הזכר אין בהם לפי שהזכר דקלי' אסתרס שאין בו מוח הנקרא דעת כדי להמשיך ע"י זווגו עם הנוקבא בחי' ר"נ אשר ז"ס אל אחר אסתרס ולא עביד פירי שהם הר"נ של הזכר

In any case, it follows from this that the Jewish people derive their souls from the realm of holiness. Their *nefesh* originates from *malchut* directly; their *ruach* and *neshamah* from the male, which possesses *da'at*. Non-Jews, however, possess only the level of *nefesh*, and theirs originates in the *Nukva* of the shells. They possess no *ruach* or *neshamah* from the male side, for the male shell is emasculated, i.e., possesses no *da'at*-brain through which it could couple with the female and produce a *ruach* or *neshamah*. This is the meaning of "the 'other god' is emasculated, and produces no fruit," i.e., no *ruach* or *neshamah* originating in the male.

The fundamental difference between Jews and non-Jews is that non-Jew is charged with keeping the world running smoothly, civilizing it, populating it, and cultivating it, while the Jew is intended to provide the proper Divine direction and inspiration for humanity. Therefore, the non-Jew's intellect is inherently this-world oriented. For this reason as well, non-Jewish culture is inherently "sterile," i.e., oriented towards diversion and stimulation rather than moral advancement or holiness.

אבל הנפשין הם פירי הנוקבא יש לעכו"ם נפש מהנוקי' דקליפה וז"ש גם בלא דעת נפש לא טוב כי הנפשות של האומות הבאים מהקליפות הנקרא רע ולא טוב הם נעשין בלא דעת לכן אין בהם רוחין ונשמתין ג"כ.

The non-Jewish *nefesh*, in contrast issues directly from the evil *Nukva*. This is the mystical meaning of the verse: "Also the absence of *da'at* makes a *nefesh* that

8. Psalms 81:10; *Zohar* 2:243a.

9. *Bava Batra* 74b; *Zohar* 2:273.

is not good.”¹⁰ The souls of the gentiles, which originate in the shells, which are called “evil” or “not good,” are produced without the aid of *da’at*, which is why they also do not possess a *ruach* or *neshamah*.

גם ז"ס מה שאמרו רז"ל מי שאין בו דעת אסור לרחם עליו כי הנה מי שאין בו דעת הוא נמשך מהקלי" שאין בו דעת והמרחם עליו גורם שיתפשטו הרחמים העליונים ג"כ בקליפות אשר גם בהם אין דעת

This is also the inner meaning of our sages' statement: “It is forbidden to pity someone who possesses no *da’at*.”¹¹ Someone who possesses no *da’at* is rooted in the shells (which possess no *da’at*). If someone pities such a person, he causes G-d's attribute of mercy to extend over evil (which possesses no *da’at*).

אמנם דע כי כל אלו הבחי" של המוחין דקליפות הם נזכרים בשמותם בספר אדם ישר דף א' במקומותן והוא כי תרין מוחין דז"א דקליפה שבאצילות הם נקראו שנים אנשים מרגלים הנזכר בס"ה קע"ח בפי ויראו בני האלקים את בנות האדם וגם נזכר בפי אחרי מות דף ס' ענין תרין בנין דינקין בכל יומא דאתקרון מאללי ארעא ולהותן תרין מוחין דקליפה דז"א דאצילות נקרא שני אנשים מרגלים ובי מוחין דנוקבא דקלי" דאצילות נקרא שתי צפרים אשר להם קרא הוהר בפי ויחי תרין צפרין כנ"ל ונבארם למטה בע"ה כי צפור הוא לשון נקבה כמ"ש כל צפור טהורה תאכלו ולא אמר צפור טהור וכן במצורע ושלח את הצפור החיה לשון נקבה

Now, all these different brains in the realm of evil are identified by name in the book *Adam Yashar*. The two brains of the evil *Z'eir Anpin* of *Atzilut* are termed the “two spies,”¹² as mentioned in the *Zohar*.¹³ The two brains of the evil *Nukva* of *Atzilut* are called “the two birds.” We see that the Hebrew word for “bird” (*tzipor*) is considered feminine in many places in the Bible....¹⁴

As the Arizal goes on to discuss, the purification rites of the individual afflicted with *tzara’at* involves the ritual of the two birds because these two birds signify the mentality of female evil. This egocentric self-serving mentality, that of orientation away from G-dliness and making relevance into the end-all and be-all of life, living life only for the high, the experience, is the root of *tzara’at*. Our sages tell us that *tzara’at* afflicts a person because he has indulged in slander, a vicious indication that his egocentricity has so overtaken him that he is ready to make another person into a mere subject of conversation, without regard for his feelings or reputation. He must therefore be ostracized, sent out of the camp, until his condition passes. As part of his purification he must take two birds, the chirping personifications of pointless and self-serving indulgence in relevance and experience, and kill one and set the other free. In this way he utterly dissociates himself from this evil, and is ready to begin his life anew in the image of holiness.

10. Proverbs 19:2.

11. *Berachot* 33a.

12. Joshua 2.

13. 2:178b, 3:60b.

14. E.g., Deuteronomy 14:11, Leviticus 14:7.