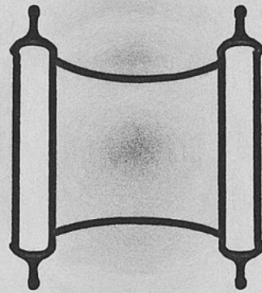


בס"ד

The Maggid of Mezritch

Parshas Ki Teitzei



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Rabbi Dov Ber of Mezeritch

Ohr Torah Parshas Ki Teizei

Siman #174

When you go out to war against your enemies, etc.

כי תצא למלחמה על אויביך וגו'

The explanation is: when you, the person, go out from cleaving to Hashem—then certainly, you will enter into war;

פירוש: כי תצא אתה האדם מדבקות השם
יתברך—בודאי תבוא למלחמה

meaning, into the world of separation, where warfare exists, as is known.

רצון לומר, לעולם הפרוד ששם המלחמה פנודע

“And you see among the captives a woman of beautiful form” — this refers to the form of physicality, a woman (alternate version: the form of woman — physicality),

וראית בשביה אשה יפת תאר, רצון לומר: התאר
של הגשמיות אשה (נסח אחר: התאר של אשה —
(הגשמיות)

and it is called “captive” because it all comes from the Shevirah (shattering), which is the secret of captivity.

ונקרא שביה, לפי שהכל בא מהשבירה שהיא סוד
השביה.

“And you desire her” — meaning, perhaps your desire will be only for this physical beauty.

וקשקת בה — רצון לומר: פן תהיה חשקה רק
ביופי הגשמיות הנה.

And this is what it says: “And you shall take her for yourself” — you are not permitted to relate the taking to yourself, for your own benefit, G-d forbid.

וזהו שנאמר: ולקחת לה — אין אתה רשאי ליחס
(הלקיחה לה להנאתה) (חס ושלום).

This you are not permitted to do.

זה אין אתה רשאי לעשות

Rather, [if she comes against you suddenly,] elevate everything to fire (אש ה'),

א'לא [אם באה פתאום] תעלה הכל לאש-

as it is said: “a fire-offering, a pleasing aroma to Hashem” — that is, to elevate the sparks upward.

כמו שכתוב: אשה ריח ניחוח לה

Meaning, that your thought should cleave to the source of the higher Attribute.

רצון לומר: להעלות הנצוצות למעלה — הינו
שתדבק מחשבתך בשרש המדה העליונה

[NOTE Summary:

In this teaching, the Maggid of Mezritch offers a penetrating spiritual interpretation of the verse "כי תצא למלחמה" — "על אויביך" — “When you go out to war against your enemies.” He understands this not as a historical or physical battle, but as the soul’s descent into a fragmented, material world — the “world of separation.” The moment one steps away from cleaving to Hashem, one inevitably enters this battleground of distraction, temptation, and spiritual opposition.

The “woman of beautiful form” (אשה יפת תאר) seen among the captives represents the alluring appearance of physicality. This beauty originates from the spiritual shattering (שבירה), hence it is a captive — divine sparks

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trapped in material form. The danger lies in desiring this beauty for its own sake — to enjoy the world selfishly, severed from divine purpose.

The Maggid teaches that such temptations must not be claimed for personal pleasure (“וְלָקַחְתָּ לָךְ” — “you shall take her for yourself”). Instead, one must *elevate* the encounter, transforming the pull of the physical into an act of divine service. This is done by attaching one’s mind to the supernal source — to the root of the divine Attribute being manifest — and thereby releasing the holy sparks trapped in physicality.

Practical Takeaway:

Temptation or physical beauty is not inherently evil — but our reaction to it determines its spiritual value. When a person finds themselves drawn to something material, rather than suppress the experience or indulge in it mindlessly, they should direct their awareness upward, asking: “How can this be used to reveal G-dliness?” By reframing the moment with mindful intent, one elevates the physical to holiness and deepens their connection to the Divine.

Chassidic Story;

Reb Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the Alter Rebbe, once met a man who told him he had fallen spiritually and could no longer see a path back. The Rebbe responded: “When a soldier goes to war, he sometimes trips in the mud. But if he stays there, he dies. If he lifts his eyes and remembers who sent him and why he fights — that fall becomes part of the victory.”

In the spirit of his teacher, the Maggid of Mezritch, the Alter Rebbe taught that even spiritual descent can be the starting point of ascent — if it awakens in the person a will to reconnect and elevate what fell.

END NOTE]

Siman #175

“Send, you shall surely send away the mother, and the children you shall take for yourself.”

שְׁלַח מִשְׁלַח אֶת הָאֵם וְאֶת הַבָּנִים תִּקַּח לָךְ

Its explanation: Rabbi Yisrael Baal Shem Tov, of blessed memory, interpreted based on the Gemara: “Convert me on condition that you teach me the entire Torah while I stand on one foot.”

פְּרוּשׁוֹ, רַבִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּעַל שֵׁם טוֹב זְכוֹרֵנוּ לְבָרְכָה אָמַר קִנְדַּת עַל הַגִּמְרָא: “גִּיּוּרִנִי עַל מִנְתַּ שְׁתַּלְמִדִּי כָּל הַתּוֹרָה כִּלְיָה כְּשֶׁאֲנִי עוֹמֵד עַל רֶגֶל אֶחָת

For man is a portion of G-d above, and in the Infinite (Ein Sof), there is no concept of a “portion,”

כִּי הָאָדָם הוּא חֵלֶק אֱלֹהִים מִמַּעַל, וּבְאֵין־סוֹף לֹא שִׁיּוּד חֵלֶק

for the Holy One, blessed be He, fills all worlds — therefore, [man] is acquired.

וְהַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא מְמַלֵּא כָּל עֲלָמִין (מִמִּילָא) קִנְיָה

And sometimes a person comes into low and repulsive worlds, and thinks thoughts of vanity.

וְלִפְעָמִים בָּא הָאָדָם לְעֲלָמוֹת שְׁפִילִים וּמְאֻסִּים וְחוֹשֵׁב מְהֻשְׁבוֹת שֶׁל הֶבֶל

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“Hashem tests the righteous” — for He tests him and throws him into evil worlds so that he may elevate them to the Holy One, blessed be He.

ה' צדיק יבחן — שבוחר אותו ומשליך אותו לעולמות רעות כדי שיעלה אותם להקדוש ברוך הוא

And this [soul] is considered very precious to Him, blessed be He.

והשוב [הוא] אצלו יתברך מאד

And the person, even if he falls into something bad, should accept everything with goodness —

והאדם, אף על פי שהוא בא לדבר רע, יקבל הכל בטוב

like Rabbi Akiva, whose candle was extinguished and a lion ate his donkey, and he said regarding everything: “This, too, is for the good,”

כמו רבי עקיבא, שנכבה נרו ואכל ארי את חמורו, ואמר על הכל: “גם זו לטובה”

and in truth, it led to actual good.

ובאמת הביא לתוכן טובה

And this is [the meaning of] “Convert me on condition that you teach me the whole Torah while I stand on one foot” —

ונהו: “גייירני על מנת שתלמדני כל התורה כשאני עומד על רגל אחת”

meaning, that I should always be in a good state.

רצון לומר: [שאהיה תמיד במדרגה טובה]

And [Hillel] said to him: “What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow,”

“ואמר לו: “מה דעלך סני לחברך לא תעביד

hinting that when you were in a low state, a good person had to fall down in order to elevate you —

רמז לו: כשהיית אתה במדרגה רעה, היה צריך אדם [טוב] ללל למטה כדי שיעלה (את אחר) [אותך]

therefore, you too must fall [in order to elevate another].

[לכן צריך גם אתה ללל]

And Rabbi Akiva, who was the son of converts, “uprooted mountains and ground them against each other with reasoning” —

ורבי עקיבא, שהיה בן גרים, “עוקר הרים וטוחנן זה (בזה) (בסברא)

meaning: the mountains are the attributes of the Patriarchs, and he elevated those attributes upward,

פירוש: הרים נקראים מדות אבות, והוא הביא את המדות למעלה

for the delight was greater because he was the son of converts — as in the known parable.

כי היה התענוג יותר גדול (מפני) שהוא היה בן גרים, כמשל הידוע

And this is “Be silent! So it arose in thought” — for he brought everything into the World of Thought.

ונהו: “שתוק! כך עלה במחשבה” — שהביא את הכל לעולם המחשבה

And this is “Send, you shall surely send away the mother” — even if the Shechinah does not hover over you —

ונהו: “שלח תשלח את האם”, אף על פי שאין השכינה חופפת עליה

“and the children you shall take for yourself” — that you should have the attributes of love and fear within you.

ואת הבנים תקח לך”, שיהיו בך המדות אהבה ויראה

(Alternate version: “Send, you shall surely send away the mother, and the children you shall take for yourself” —

נסח אחר: “שלח תשלח את האם ואת הבנים תקח לך”, רצון לומר: שרש המחשבות הנזרות תשלח, שתדבק את עצמך במדת אהבה ויראה

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meaning, the root of foreign thoughts you shall send away, and attach yourself instead to the attribute of love and fear.)

[NOTE Summary:

In this mystical teaching, the Maggid of Mezritch reflects on the verse “שְׁלַח מַשְׁלַח אֶת הָאָם וְאֶת הַבְּנִים תִּקַּח לָךְ,” using it as a profound metaphor for spiritual struggle and elevation. Quoting the Baal Shem Tov, he explores the idea that a soul may descend into “low and repulsive worlds,” encountering base thoughts and inner exile—not as a punishment, but as a divine mission. Hashem “tests the righteous” by casting them into spiritual darkness so they can uplift those places, redeeming divine sparks concealed within. The “convert who wished to learn the whole Torah on one foot” symbolizes the soul’s longing to remain always in a high state. But Hillel’s reply—“What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow”—hints that just as others once descended to uplift *you*, so must you sometimes descend to uplift *others*. This descent is not failure—it is a holy task.

Rabbi Akiva, a child of converts, exemplifies this. His hardships—both literal and spiritual—are reframed as missions to refine and elevate. He “uprooted mountains and ground them together,” meaning he spiritually elevated the emotional traits (midot) of the Patriarchs. Because his origin was lower, the pleasure and divine satisfaction in his elevation was all the greater—like a sweet aroma rising from the lowest place. The phrase “שִׁתוּק כָּךְ עָלָה בַּמַּחְשְׁבָה” (“Be silent! So it arose in [Divine] thought”) refers to the ultimate silence in the face of this mystery: that all descents, confusion, and impurity are part of a divine plan embedded in the very “thought” of creation.

Thus, the mitzvah to send away the mother bird symbolizes sending away the “source” of foreign thoughts (שרש המחשבות זרות), and taking the “children”—love and awe of G-d—into oneself. Even when one feels the Shechinah is absent, the person can still acquire holy traits through the struggle itself.

Practical Takeaway:

If you find yourself thinking base, troubling, or spiritually disconnected thoughts, don't despair. Sometimes these experiences are *not* signs of failure, but rather invitations to transform that space. By choosing to stay conscious, respond with faith, and turn your focus toward Hashem, you fulfill the mission of elevating fallen sparks—even from within darkness. In these moments, the soul becomes a vehicle of redemption.

Chassidic Story:

The Maggid of Mezritch once confided in his students that he had a vision during prayer in which his mind was flooded with foreign and disturbing thoughts. Instead of pushing them away harshly, he quietly turned inward and whispered: “I see you. You are sparks waiting to be redeemed.” After the prayer, he explained: “Sometimes the greatest elevation is not in avoiding descent—but in sanctifying it.”

END NOTE]

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Siman #176

“When you build a new house,” etc.

כִּי תִבְנֶה בַּיִת חָדָשׁ וְגו'

Its explanation: a person who expresses a new interpretation on some matter in Torah.

פירושו: אדם האומר פרוש חדש על איזה ענין בתורה.

“And you shall make a guardrail for your roof” — meaning, according to the plain sense it should have said “for *its* roof,” and it would be referring to the house that he built.

ועשית מעקה לגגך — רצון לומר: דאילו לפי הפשט היה צריך לכתוב “ועשית מעקה לגגו”, והנה קאי על הבית אשר בנה.

But according to the above interpretation, it comes out properly.

ולפי הפרוש הנזכר — אתי שפיר.

And this is its explanation: “And you shall make a guardrail (for your roof)” — that is, a fence — “for your roof,” meaning: for *your greatness*.

וכך פירושו: “ועשית מעקה (לגגך)”, רצון לומר: מחיצה — “לגגך”, רצון לומר: לגדלה שלך.

So that you will not have ulterior motive in it, that your heart not be raised in pride over having said a novel Torah idea that no ear has ever heard.

שלא יהיה לך פניה בזה, שלא יגבה לך בזה. שאמרת תורה חדשה שלא שמעה אוזן מעולם.

For the greatness is not yours, for all is from Him, blessed is He.

כי לא לך הגדלה, כי הכל מאתו יתברך.

“Lest the faller will fall from it” — he is worthy of falling, etc.,

(כי יפל הנפל ממנו — ראוי הוא לפל (וכו).

as mentioned above — for you know that the [primordial] shattering already occurred because of arrogance, when each one said: “I will rule.” And that is enough.

כנ"ל, כי ידעת שהשבירה כבר הייתה בשביל גדלות — שכל אחד אמר: “אני אמלוד”, ודו"ל.

[NOTE Summary:

The Maggid of Mezritch offers a powerful reinterpretation of the verse “כִּי תִבְנֶה בַּיִת חָדָשׁ וְעָשִׂיתָ מַעְקָה לְגִגְךָ” — “When you build a new house, you shall make a guardrail for your roof.” Rather than viewing it only as a law of physical construction, he explains it as a spiritual warning to someone who shares a novel Torah insight.

The “new house” is a metaphor for expressing a new interpretation in Torah. The “roof” represents the height or pride one might feel upon saying something profound—something “no ear has ever heard.” The Torah commands: build a *fence* around that greatness. Don’t let ego or arrogance seep in. Remember, the insight isn’t yours—it comes from Hashem. Otherwise, one is liable to fall, just as the “shattering” (שבירה) occurred in the spiritual worlds when each divine force said, “I will rule.”

Practical Takeaway:

When you’re gifted with a new insight, creative idea, or spiritual success—build a “guardrail.” Protect yourself from pride by remembering the true Source of wisdom. Humility is not downplaying your contribution; it’s

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recognizing where it truly comes from. Doing so preserves the purity of your growth and prevents the spiritual fall that comes from self-centeredness. **END NOTE]**

Siman #177

“When you beat your olive tree, do not glorify [take off] after you.”

כִּי תִחַבֵּט זֵיתָךְ לֹא תִפְאֵר אַחֲרָיֶךָ

For olive oil is difficult to forget.

כִּי זֵית שְׁמֶן קוֹשֶׁה לְשִׁכְחָה

The *kelipah* (husk) is the sin that causes forgetting — to forget Hashem, may He be blessed.

הַקְלִיפָה הִיא הָעֲבָרָה, הַקֹּשֶׁה לְשִׁכְחָה, לְשַׁכַּח לַה' יִתְבָּרַךְ.

But when one performs the mitzvah of teshuvah, then he extracts the mitzvah of teshuvah from within the sin, which had been forbidden there.

אֲבָל כְּשֶׁעוֹשֶׂה מִצְוַת תְּשׁוּבָה — אָז הוּא מוֹצִיא [אֵת הַי], מִצְוַת הַתְּשׁוּבָה מִתּוֹךְ הָעֲבָרָה שֶׁהָיְתָה אֲסוּרָה שָׁם.

And one must return [do teshuvah] out of love.

וְצָרִיךְ לָשׁוּב מֵאַהֲבָה

For when a person commits a sin, it is usually done out of desire —

כִּי כְּשֶׁעוֹשֶׂה הָעֲבָרָה, מִסְתַּמָּא עוֹשֶׂה מִחֲמַת תַּאֲוָה

for when done under compulsion, it is not called a sin.

כִּי כְּשֶׁעוֹשֶׂה בְּאִנּוּס — לֹא מִיקָרִי עֲבָרָה

And desire comes from pleasure, and pleasure is a very great thing.

וְהַתַּאֲוָה הִיא מִכַּח הַתַּעֲנוּג, וְהַתַּעֲנוּג הוּא דָּבָר גָּדוֹל מְאֹד.

“Then you shall delight in Hashem” (as it were), as is known in its interpretation.

אָז תִּתְעַנֵּג עַל ה' (כְּבִיכּוֹל), כְּנֻדָּע פִּירוּשׁוֹ

Except that he fell into sin, as mentioned (alternate version: rather, that he fell into the shattering, meaning...).

רַק שֶׁנִּפְל בְּעֲבָרָה כְּנֻזָּר (נִסַּח אַחֵר: רַק שֶׁנִּפְל (לְשִׁבְרָה רָצוֹן לֹאִיר,

Therefore he must return out of love.

לְכֹךְ צָרִיךְ לָשׁוּב מֵאַהֲבָה

And this is: “When you beat your olive tree, do not glorify [take off] after you.”

וְזֶהוּ: כִּי תִחַבֵּט זֵיתָךְ לֹא תִפְאֵר אַחֲרָיֶךָ

If you extract oil from the olive — meaning, from the sin you make the mitzvah of teshuvah —

אִם תּוֹצִיא שְׁמֶן מִן הַזֵּית — פִּירוּשׁ: מִן הָעֲבָרָה, תַּעֲשֶׂה מִצְוַת תְּשׁוּבָה

“do not glorify” — do not become prideful about it.

לֹא תִפְאֵר — שְׁלֹא יִהְיֶה לְךָ גִּאּוֹנָה בָּזֶה

[NOTE Summary:

The Maggid of Mezritch interprets the verse “כִּי תִחַבֵּט זֵיתָךְ לֹא תִפְאֵר אַחֲרָיֶךָ” (“When you beat your olive tree, do not glorify after you”) as a profound lesson in the inner mechanics of **teshuvah** (repentance). Drawing from the imagery of extracting oil from an olive — something that requires pressure and force — he explains that sin (the “olive”) often arises from misplaced desire, which itself stems from the soul’s innate yearning for **ta'anug** (pleasure) — a capacity intended to be directed toward **ה' התענג על** (delight in Hashem) (cf. Yeshayahu 58:14).

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The *kelipah* of sin causes a person to forget G-d. But when one returns out of **ahavah** (love), they elevate the sin itself, extracting from it the hidden potential for light — like oil from the olive. This concept of transforming sin into merit through **teshuvah mei'ahavah** is rooted in Chazal (Yoma 86b) and echoed by the Baal Shem Tov and his disciples.

Yet the Maggid warns: **“Do not glorify after you”** — even after such transformation, one must not grow prideful. The spiritual fall may have become a springboard for ascent, but arrogance would only reopen the very breach one tried to repair. The shattering (שבירה), says the Maggid, originally occurred because each divine energy proclaimed **“אֲנִי אֶמְלֹךְ”** — “I shall rule” (Bereishis Rabbah 8:5). The fall was rooted in pride; so the elevation must be rooted in humility.

Practical Takeaway:

If you've fallen spiritually — even badly — don't despair. Hashem may allow such descent only so you can extract from it a deeper light through sincere teshuvah, especially teshuvah motivated by love. But when you do rise, stay humble. Never turn your transformation into a badge of ego. Your oil comes from the olive — crushed and bitter. Let your light shine, but never forget its source.

Chassidic Story:

Once, a troubled man approached the **Maggid of Mezritch** and confessed: “I've fallen so low I can't see how I'll ever return to Hashem.” The Maggid looked at him and said, “Did you think oil comes from stroking the olive? No — it comes only by striking it, by crushing it. Your brokenness is not your barrier — it is your beginning.”

Later, the Maggid explained to his students that this man's teshuvah would reach higher than theirs. “Because his *ta'anug* (pleasure) had been misdirected, when he reclaims it for holiness, his delight in Hashem will burn brighter than ours who never fell.”

END NOTE]