YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

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**The Philosophy of Manitou**

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**Shiur #30: “The Sin of Adam Has Already Been Repaired”**

In this *shiur*, we will examine a significant statement by Manitou that we have not yet discussed, although it has hovered the background since the start of this series – the assertion that the sin of Adam has already been repaired.

We often hear that the essence of the repair [that we are expected to carry out in this world] is repair for the sin of Adam, but in truth this repair was already completed by King David on the collective level, on the level of Creation as a whole. (*Sod Midrash Ha-Toladot I*, p. 137)

It is difficult to find a source for this statement among the sages of previous generations. A glance at the relevant passage in his book shows that the editors, too, had trouble finding explicit support; they refer only to sources that might at most be considered as inspiring his statement. No one seems to have suggested this prior to Manitou himself. In contrast, the opposite assertion, awarding great significance and weight to Adam’s sin, is found in countless sources both in the Talmud and in Kabbala.

**The Problem with Attributing all Deficiencies to Adam**

First of all, we must understand what disturbs Manitou about defining the repair of Adam’s sin as our mission. One problem is related to his ongoing polemic against Christianity, which inflates and magnifies the idea of primordial sin, resulting in its view of all of humanity as sinners. Manitou argues that Judaism disagrees with this view and that it seeped into Jewish thought from the Christian world:

In this regard, the dispute with Christianity is a most fundamental one. Christianity argues that since Adam’s sin, every human being is by definition sinful. Unfortunately, there are Jews who have not studied enough and who express similar ideas. According to Christianity… man fell from his level and is unable to overcome [sin] unless he is granted Divine grace, and this is dependent not on his behavior, but rather on an arbitrary decision by the Creator.

The Torah’s position is entirely different. Whoever sins, sins. He sins because he decides that his own will takes precedence over God’s command. No one is forced to sin because of some primordial sin. King Solomon, the wisest of all men, says that “God made man upright” (*Kohelet* 7:29). It is a fact that when *Bnei Yisrael* received the Torah at Mount Sinai and declared, “We shall do and we shall obey,” they reverted to the state of Adam prior to the sin and the contamination of the serpent was ended. Afterwards, through the sin of the golden calf, they upset things again. The person who sins is the one who has to deal with his own sin – he and no one else. (ibid.)

Another issue relating to the concept of primordial sin that troubles Manitou is the idea that one man sins and other people suffer the punishment. Perhaps other individuals repeat Adam’s sin, and as such will need to repair their sin, but on the collective level it is impossible that all of humanity is punished for the sin of a single individual. According to Manitou, this is unjust and is not the way that God works.

**Why Doesn’t Manitou Resolve the Difficulties?**

One might seemingly have resolved these difficulties using solutions that Manitou himself proposes elsewhere – for instance, his emphasis on the centrality of free choice in guiding the course of history. According to this principle, we might attribute the necessity of historical repair to the sin of Adam, without going as far as the Christian view. Christianity maintains that the sin cannot be repaired; Judaism maintains that we have the ability to repair the sin through our free choice. Manitou could have pointed to this distinction between Judaism and Christianity, but instead he proposes a different model for which primal sin should be emphasized.

The question about the seeming injustice could likewise be resolved from within Manitou’s own teachings. We have seen how he explains *Chazal*’s teachings that appear at first glance to view the subjugation in Egypt as a punishment for the sins of Avraham. Faced with the question of how *Am Yisrael* could be punishment for a sin that they themselves did not commit, Manitou proposes the identity principle: The “sins” of Avraham reflect a deficiency in the Israelite identity that he built, and *Am Yisrael*, which inherits and shares that identity, must repair that deficiency. In a similar way, we might have suggested that Adam builds the identity of humanity as a whole, and therefore humanity manifests in expanded form the same deficiency that he suffered from and must work to repair it.

Thus, the questions that Manitou raises do not lead us inexorably towards his assertion that Adam’s sin was already repaired on the universal level by King David. It therefore seems that he is opposed **in principle** to viewing all of our repair work as being directed towards that sin. We need to understand the reason for his opposition.

We also need to understand how the alternative model that he proposes resolves his questions. Manitou maintains that mankind’s task is to repair the sin of Kayin and Hevel. This assertion appears to raise the same questions that he raises about the sin of Adam. What, then, is its meaning and intention?

**Deficiency is Inherent in Creation**

The question of whether and why we are required to repair the sin of Adam is treated at length in Kabbala, but it arises even on the plain level of the biblical text and pertains to a more profound and fundamental question: What is the source of deficiency in the world? Why is the world deficient? As we have seen, one of the conventional answers to this question is that the world was created perfect and whole, but Adam sinned and spoiled it. But close examination of the opening chapters of *Bereishit* leads to a different answer.

The foundation of the answer is actually to be found in the second verse of the Torah. God creates a world, and the second verse of chapter 1 of *Bereishit* already tells us that “the earth was unformed and void.” All the rest of Creation is the process of emerging from that “void.” The next verse tells us, “God said, ‘Let there be light… and God separated between the light and the darkness.” This tells that that light came into existence – but where did the darkness mentioned in the verse come from? The “darkness over the face of the deep” is present already from verse 2, and the light comes to contend with it. On the third day God commands, “Let the waters under the heaven be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear….” Once again, it would seem that the dry land already existed; what that was required was merely for it to be revealed. But when was it created? The answer is that it was created when God created the heavens and the earth, but at that point, the earth was “unformed and void.” Only now does the dry land, which was covered over with water, become visible.

We see that the need for repair arises from the gap between verse 1 and verse 2 – a gap referred to in Kabbala as the “shattering of the vessels.” This tells us that the deficiency of the world goes all the way back to the beginning of Creation. It did not appear as a result of a sin on the part of Adam, who destroyed a world that had previously been perfect. Rather, the world was deficient before Adam himself appeared – all with the purpose that he would be a partner in its repair. It is true that Adam sins in Chapter 3, but the problem that is created in the wake of his sin is simply the continuation of the deficiency that was already manifest in the world. Hence, says Manitou, the question is not how to repair the sin of Adam, but rather how to repair the world, how to repair the deficiency that we were created to repair. On the long road to this repair, we sometimes commit additional sins, and we have to repair them too, but the essence of our mission is to move forward in the general repair of the world.

This view runs counter to the Christian view, according to which all the deficiencies of the world stem from the disorder and disharmony created by Adam. Manitou maintains that this is one of the ideas that seeped into Judaism over the course of our exile. According to Judaism, if there is sin, one atones and moves on. He draws the same message from the structure of *Sefer Vayikra*: The sinner brings a sin offering and achieves atonement, but *Sefer Vayikra* does not start with sin offerings, but rather burnt offerings, which are not a response to or result of sin. Our connection with God is not limited to atoning for the sins we have committed. We have a more general, over-arching mission; we are partners with God in repairing the world.

**Adam vs. Kayin and Hevel**

Although the source of all deficiency in the world goes back to Creation, Manitou nevertheless defines the sin of Kayin and Hevel as a fundamental, formative sin that humanity must repair. In what way is this different from the sin of Adam? Manitou argues that the sin of Adam lies outside of our world. It occurred in the Garden of Eden, in a reality that is mysterious and beyond our grasp, completely different from the reality that is known to us. The story of Kayin and Hevel is the first episode that is described in the world as we know it. The great challenge facing Kayin and Hevel, as we saw in our discussion of the fraternity equation, is how to conduct oneself in a reality in which two human beings share the same space. This is the fundamental challenge of our reality. Our lives are full of conflicts and collisions between people and between nations. Therefore, we should view the task of moral repair, which has echoed on in the world since the episode of Kayin and Hevel, as the foundation of our lives:

The moral criterion is a key to understanding the biblical narrative from the beginning of chapter 4 of *Sefer Bereishit*. I usually start my *Chumash* instruction with a study of this chapter, since it presents, for the first time in history, a moral problem, in the form of the story of Kayin and Hevel. This problem remains to be solved over the course of history. I know that many people emphasize the sin of Adam, but that is a mistake, because on the collective level this problem was resolved already by King David. All of world history is a repair of the sin of Kayin, and this is the problem that should concern us on the collective level throughout the generations: repairing the fraternal relations between people. (*Sod Midrash Ha-Toladot III*, p. 151)

The crux of our work is to be partners with God, out of free choice. This principle turns the world into a place for optimism and, in contrast to the despair that Christianity seeks to impose, inspires us with hope for progress.

Translated by Kaeren Fish