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The Mazal of Shvat - D'li\pail

The *mazal* of the month of *Shevat* is called “*dli*”, “*pail*” [i.e. as in a *pail* or bucket of water].^[1]

The word *dli* דלִי has the same root letters as the word “*yeled*” (ילד), “child”, which is also from the word דל, “*dal*”, “destitute.” A child is needy and therefore he is in a situation of *dalus* (poverty), for he is dependent on others. It means to be lessened, demoted, to be made small. But we also find that the word *dal* can mean “exalted”, as in the verse, אַרְוֹמְךָ ה' כִּי דִילִיתָנִי, “I will exalt You, Hashem, for You have drawn me up.”^[2]

Thus, the term “*dal*” can either imply “lessening”, or it can mean the opposite of this – it can mean ascent, raising, exaltedness, uplifting. The term “*dal*” therefore contains two opposite meanings.

The purpose of a “*dli*”, a *pail*, is to draw water from one place and bring it to another place. A *dli\pail* is lowered into a pit of water and then it is lifted back up, so that it can provide water. Therefore, a *dli\pail* is lowered for the purpose of ascending.

The Sages compare the Jewish people to a *dli* (*pail*) which is sometimes empty and sometimes full; so are the Jewish people sometimes ‘empty’ and sometimes ‘full’.^[3] When a *pail* is lowered into a pit of water, it is usually empty, and when it is lifted up from the pit, it is full. So too, the Jewish people are ‘empty’ when they are in a situation of *dal*\destitute, and they are ‘full’ when they become exalted by Hashem afterwards.

Thus, the word דִּילִיתָנִי (“for You have drawn me up”), which is rooted in the word *dli\pail*, is an expression of thanking Hashem for making one exalted and uplifted, after one has been previously lacking and destitute.

Yosef and Moshe Are Both Compared To The Pail

[There are different instances in the words of our Sages in which certain *tzaddikim* are compared to the *dli\pail*.] In *Pesikasa Zutrusi*, the Sages compare Yosef to a *pail*, for, just like a *pail*, he was lowered into a pit and later raised from the pit. Elsewhere, the Sages also compare Moshe Rabbeinu to a *dli\pail*.

As we will explain, these are two different connotations of the concept of the *dli\pail*.

The Sages state that “A *dli* (*pail*) is sometimes empty and sometimes full”. When Yosef was lowered

into the pit, this was because of Reuven's plan to save him, and later he descended to Egypt, sold to the house of slavery, which was entirely a 'pit' for him (in the spiritual sense, for it was a place of impurity and depravity), and finally, he was imprisoned, where he descended once again into a 'pit'. In the end, he was raised from the 'pit' and made viceroy, but he went through much descent in order to get there.

Thus, Yosef is compared to the *dli*, a *pail*, which is sometimes empty and sometimes full, for he went through descent and ascent. He first descended into the pit and later into slavery. When he was sold to slavery, his entire sense of self was nullified, for a slave does not own anything of his own; everything he acquires goes to his master. The slave is an example of complete *bittul* (self-nullification), where a person has nothing for himself. He was made truly empty from his own self, and this was his 'descent', and this is how Yosef is compared to the *dli*.

Moshe Rabbeinu is also compared to a *dli*, and this is in a different sense than Yosef. Moshe did not have to descend into a pit or into slavery. Although he was placed in a basket to float in the Nile, he did not actually descend into any pits. Moshe was a shepherd, who draws forth water to feed the sheep, but this did not involve any descent. Thus, the *dli* that Moshe is compared to is the kind of *dli* that is full, as opposed to the *dli* which Yosef is compared to, who had to go through descent - like the *pail* when it is empty.

Ascending Through The 'Pail' - By Means of A 'Rope'

Even more so, though, there is a deeper aspect of the *dli\pail*.

Although the *dli\pail* is simply an object that descends, we also find that the *dli\pail* can cause ascent. How can the *pail* cause ascent? Through attaching a rope to the *pail*, one can pull the *pail* immediately after lowering it into the pit. In this instance, the *pail* is never considered to have descended into the pit, for it can be easily pulled out. Since it is connected to above the pit, it is never really fully in the pit, for it can easily be pulled out of the pit and go back to above the point.

Thus, the kind of pit which is "sometimes empty and sometimes full" is only when there is no rope in the pit which attaches to above the mouth of the pit. But if at the bottom of the pit has a rope attached to above the pit, that means that the bottom of the pit is always connected to above the pit. In that sense, the pit will be considered to always be 'full' - for whatever is in the pit is considered to be above the pit even as it within the pit.

The Nile River would irrigate the land of Egypt through its *deliyas mayim*, through the drawing of its water. A slave could not leave Egypt. In and of itself, Egypt was a place of total spiritual descent. But there was also ascent there, for Yosef is compared to a *dli\pail*, and Yosef was in Egypt, which enables one to remain connected to his source even as he is lowered into Egypt.

Yosef Was In The 'Pit' Without A 'Rope'

When Yosef was lowered into the pit through Reuven's advice, he was not considered to be totally in the pit, for Reuven was above the pit and was able to save him, so he was connected to above the pit. Reuven was the like the 'rope' that attaches whatever is in the pit to above the pit. But when Reuven came back and Yosef had been sold to Egypt, there was no one waiting above the 'pit' to rescue him - and now he was truly in the 'pit'.

This was the depth of Yosef being compared to a "*dli\pail*: when the *pail* is empty and it is in the pit, with nothing to remove it from there. Through being sold to Egypt, he was totally in the 'pit' (in a place of spiritual depravity), and with nothing to take him out of there.

Yosef asked the butler to save him and remove him from this 'pit' - and the butler did not remember him. The depth of this was that in order to be raised from the 'pit', one has to connect to above the point. In asking the butler to save him, he could not be rescued, for the butler was currently in prison, in the pit, and one cannot save someone while he is in prison or when in a pit. And the butler didn't remember him, because he wasn't waiting for Yosef from above his 'pit' like Reuven was.

The 'Rope' That Lifted Yosef Out of His "Pit": The Torah Learning of Yosef In Egypt

How indeed did Yosef come out of his 'pit' he had descended to?

When Yaakov came to visit Yosef in Egypt and he wanted to know if it was really Yosef, Yosef proved it to him by learning with him the laws of *eglah arufah*, which they had been learning on the day he was sold. The depth of this is that Yosef remained connected to above, even as he was in the pit that was Egypt - like a *pail* attached to a rope above the pit. The words of Torah which he had been learning before he went to Egypt were essentially that 'rope' above his 'pit', which helped him stay connected to above the pit. Thus, his descent was not total, for even amidst his descent, he remained connected to above.

When water is drawn from a pit, the water has previously been below, inside the pit, and now it is above. The real place of the water is in the pit, but we can draw the water out of its source in the pit and now it is above the pit. In contrast to this, if we are drawing a person out of a pit, in order to rescue him, the person had previously been above the pit - so when we draw him out, we are really returning him to his real place, which was always above the pit.

The lesson we are pointing out from this is that it is easier for a person to be saved, in the spiritual sense, if he remains connected to his upper source, for if he identifies his real place as above the pit, it is easier to return him to his source above.

Connecting Oneself To The "Pail" of "Yosef" and The "Pail" of "Moshe"

Let us now 'draw' these matters closer to our souls.

There is much spiritual descent that the Creation has gone through until now. There are levels and levels in *Gehinnom*, in order of descent. One of these levels is called "*Bor*" - "the Pit". Through sin and other spiritual failings, a person descends into the "Pit" that is *Gehinnom*.

Whenever a person goes through a spiritual fall, if he can be like a *pail* attached to a 'rope' that is above the pit, he can then easily rise out of the 'pit', so his descent into the pit will never be total. [This is the '*pail*' symbolized by Yosef HaTzaddik, who, even when descended into the 'pit' of slavery and Egypt, he remained above all of it, for he remained connected to his source, through the words of Torah that he remembered learning with his father Yaakov].

After that, one can then rise out of the pit by using the power of Moshe Rabbeinu, who always remained above the pit, and was never lowered into the pit in first place - he is compared to the '*pail*' which never descends into the pit, who always remains above.

[Thus, first one needs to be like the '*pail*' which Yosef is compared to - when one can easily pull himself out of his 'pit', by making sure to be connected to his pure source, even as he is amidst the lowest levels. After one does that, he can then rise to the level of '*pail*' which Moshe is compared to - to be on a level where you never descend into any spiritual failures to begin with].

Applying This Practically: Acquiring Your "Rope" - Guarding Your Innermost Point

When a person is in the pit, where there is no water and only snakes and scorpions, he needs a 'rope' that will attach him to above the 'pit'.

To apply this point to ourselves practically, a person needs to make sure that he has at least one point in his soul which can be above all failure, which can always remain in its exalted state, a part of himself which never descends into the 'pit'. If one makes sure to protect this point of the soul well and to never let it descend with him in all his failures, he remains connected through this 'rope' to above the pit.

The *Sefer HaYashar* says that even as one is in a time of *katnus* (immaturity) and *yeridah* (spiritual descent and failures), he should protect at least one point in himself which can stay above all the failures, keeping it active, in spite of all the other failures he is going through.^[4] All of one's inner *avodah*, which includes spiritual failings – as it is written, “A *tzaddik* falls seven times and rises” – requires one to have a “rope” that can attach him to above his “pit”, above all of his spiritual failings and falls.

The Sages said that the *mazal* of the month of *Shevat* is “*dli*”, a *pail*, which is also explained to mean as a ‘*pail*’ of spiritual ‘water’ which Hashem pours upon the nation Yisrael, to purify them.^[5] These “pure waters” can be poured on one who makes sure to have a ‘rope’ that connects him to above.

The Sages also state that “Just as Moshe drew water as a shepherd, so will he draw water on all those in the future.” This is the future redemption, where all those who fell into the pit will be drawn out. But each person, even when he falls, needs to have a point where he remains connected to Above, even if he is going through the worst kind of fall possible. He needs to hold onto it before he falls, as well as after he falls. It is the unchanging aspect of the soul, which must remain as it is in its purity. Therefore, one must make sure to guard it, no matter how low he falls.

From this power, one can strongly connect himself, from within himself, to the power of the *dli*/*pail* which can raise him from any descent, and to merit the “pure waters” sprinkled upon him. This goes beyond the concept of “descending for the purpose of ascending” (*yeridah l'tzorech aliyah*), for even if the person is going through a kind of spiritual fall which is not for the purpose of later ascending, he can still be saved, as long as he has the ‘rope’ that connects him to above. In that way, even when he does fall, he will not fall completely, for he is always connected to his ‘source’ above the ‘pit’.

When does a person truly fall? Only when his connection to Above is severed. But if he can remain connected to a point above all of his failures, he can then easily rise from the pit of descent after he falls. Then he will know the meaning of *אָרוֹמַמְךָ ה' כִּי דִלִיתִנִי* – “I will exalt You, Hashem, for You have drawn me up” – which is closeness to Hashem.

^[1] *Sefer Yetzira* 5:14

^[2] *Tehillim* 30:2

^[3] *sefer Agadas Olam Katan; sefer Chochmas HaNefesh (Rokeiach)*

[\[4\]](#) Sefer HaYashar: 6

[\[5\]](#) Yalkut Reuveni: Beraishis: 1

Source: <https://bilvavi.net/english/rosh-chodesh-mazal-014-shvat-pail>