



RAV BRAZIL ROSH HASHANA תשפ"ד

YAMIM NORAEEM – THE TORAH TIGHTROPE EXPERIENCE

Funambulism is the name given to tightrope walking. It is the art and skill of walking on a tight rope or wire connected at two end points high above the ground usually done for entertainment. The Torah also possesses this art of tightrope walking except that there are a few major distinctions between the secular skill performance and the holy one. The first difference is where this art takes place and its purpose. One belongs in a circus a place of fun and entertainment. This is the reason of the prefix "fun" to the word ambulum that describes this unique skill. The Torah aspect of tightrope walking is serious and personally spiritual and it is not done for entertainment to please the onlookers. Secondly the profane funambulism's direction is horizontal walking which is in contrast to the Torah experience whose direction is vertical.

By now, you are probably wondering, what is this spiritual tightrope experience to which I am referring? It is found in the *passuk* (Devarim 32,9).

כי חלק ה' עמו יעקב חבל נחלתו

The portion to Hashem is His nation, Yaakov is the portion of his inheritance. Rashi explains that His portion is Yaakov the Third of the Three Avos for the third Yaakov together with Avraham and Yitzchak is the one that creates a strong חבל a rope, with three twisted bonded strings. It is Yaakov and his descendants who merit Hashem's inheritance excluding Yishmael from Avraham and Eisav born from Yaakov.

This spiritual rope possesses an esoteric understanding as well. A Yid has a small part of his *neshama* in his body or above his head. However the source of his *neshama* is fixed above in *shamayim*. This explains how one on earth can affect the spirituality in the highest heavens only because there is a connection between the two *neshamos*. If one would stretch a rope for miles in a tight straight fashion, by tugging the rope on one end he would automatically register a pull of the rope on the other end. When we do *mitzvos* and correct our *middos* we create lights of *Kiddush Hashem* in the upper worlds. As the *meforshim* learn the *Mishna* in Pirkei Avos ממך למעלה ממך one should know that all what happens in the Upper Worlds is caused by his thoughts speech and actions as the *sefer* Nefesh Hachyim elaborates on in the first *perek*. Our task is to reach the other side of the rope situated in the heavens and deliver the spiritual energy that is needed to keep the world in existence from second to second.

There is yet another spiritual tight rope that we must cross every day and that is the wisdom in our heads which is a product from our *neshama* must travel and deliver its instructions to the heart. The Medrash calls the brain מוח the *shamayim* and the heart is called הארץ (in Yiddish it is read *hartz* which means heart). Just like in the secular realm to tightrope walk requires training and persistence in art of balancing, so too the tight rope walking from מוח to לב needs dexterity to outsmart the *yetzer harah* not to block the messages that the *saichel* sends to the *middos* and limbs to fulfill its demands. The Torah says ערלת לבבכם ומלתם את ערלת לבבכם that one can possess a foreskin over his heart



which wards off any spiritual data to make a person closer to Hashem. Our *avodah* is to circumcise this division and allow the flow between head and heart.

This tightrope is hinted in the *passuk* Tehillim 17,10 בגאות סגרו פימו דברו **חלבמו** Living in the pursuit of **chelev** (fats ישמן וישראל became fat with indulgence of this world) their mouths became closed and they spoke with arrogance. Rashi writes

חלבמו סגרו - בחלבם ובשמנם סגרו לבם ועיניהם מהביט אל פעלך ליראה מפניך

With their materialistic life style they closed their hearts and eyes from looking at your wonders and creations that would have brought them to fear you. Their **חלבמו** ambition created the foreskin over your heart blocking the *neschama's* calling to the heart to stop what it's doing in order to allow the tight rope connection to flow freely between them. Notice that the word **חלבמו** has the letters **חבל** and also **מוח לב**. This is the second spiritual tightrope which every Yid must cross daily hundreds of times. The word **חלבמו** is the same *gematriah* of **אלהים** which is the *gematriah* **הטבע**. If we realize that the nature of this world is only a concealment of Hashem hiding behind it, the thruway from head to heart would always remain open without any traffic jams or obstructions. If however one thinks that nature has a life on its own then nature can *chas veshalom* overtake you and drown you (טבעו בים סוף) in its embrace of your heart and head in the sea of temptation and instant gratification. That is what happened to **פרעה** which is *gematriah* **חלבמו סגרו**. Pharaoh's stubbornness which caused him and his entire army to drown was because his heart was closed off from his head.

Furthermore, we find that a large body of water also relates to **חבל** in the *passuk* in (Tzefanya 2,5) **יושבי חבל הים**. What could this rope be referring to? I once saw a *pashat* why the ocean and bodies of water reject a dead body from its contents. The *sefarim* say that the waters contain a unity amongst themselves. When Adam ate from the *Aitz Hadaas* he caused separation in creation. Death with which he was punished is a separation of body and soul. Any creation that had to do with the *chait* has the nature of separation within its core. The water was not spiritually defiled by the *chait* in contrast to the earth from which the *Aitz Hadaas* grew. Therefore it still remains connected to spirituality in a very strong way. The **שמים** possesses water as part of its name. Therefore the water rejects death which is caused by the separation of *nefesh* and *guf*. That is why a *mikveh* of water brings to *taharah* since all *tumah* comes from the *chait* of *Aitz Hadaas* which caused death in the world. The waves of the ocean also demonstrate that they yearn to return to *shamayim* before the firmament separated them to be on earth. It is as if they try to climb the rope but they don't get too far. Nevertheless their failure to do so never ever stops them from trying.

The *passuk* says (Tehillim 124,7) **נפשינו כציפור נמלטה מפח יוקשים** the *yetzer hara* attempted to capture us but we were like a bird which spread its wings and flew away from the trap. Why did *Dovid Hamelech* describe the escape from the clutches of evil with a bird and not a fish with a net or fishing rod? The answer is that when a fish escapes the bait and net, it swims down deep into the water. The bird on the other hand flies upwards. When a Yid runs away from *chait* not only is he saved from the

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chait in the form of סור מרע, he elevates himself to another height higher than the position he was in before he was tested. The rope of יעקב goes heavenwards.

To return to Hashem with *teshuvah* is an act of tightrope walking back to His presence and to one's upper *neshama*. That is why on Rosh Hashanah we visit a body of water to be inspired to grab onto the חבל that removes חבלה spiritual injuries and blemishes to be replaced with color of חלב milk whiteness and purity and forgiveness.

חלבנו סגור with the two words and *kollel* add up to משיח a time רינה ולשוננו פינה. At the time of *Moshiach* our mouths will open with song and praise to Hashem. It will a time 'ומל' Hashem Himself will circumcise our hearts so that the connection of our לב ומח will be united to bask in the glory and revelation of Hashem.

Just remember that this particular tightrope has to be firm and tight, not flimsy or flexible. Only then will the return to Hashem be successful.

Kesivah Vechasima Tova

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