

ד וּבְשֵׁרוּצָה אָדָם לֵילֵךְ בְּדַרְכֵי הַתְּשׁוּבָה, צָרִיךְ לִהְיוֹת בְּקִי בַּהֲלָכָה, וְצָרִיךְ לִהְיוֹת לוֹ שְׁנֵי בְקִיאוֹת, הֵינּוּ בְּקִי בְּרִצּוֹא, בְּקִי בְּשׁוֹב, כְּמוֹ שֶׁפָּתוּב: 'זָבָא מֵאֵן דְּעִיל וְנָפִיק' (זהר וַיְקַהֵל רִיג, הַאֲוִינוּ רַצַּב).

וְזֶה בְּחִינַת (תְּהִלִּים קל"ט): "אִם אָפֶק שָׁמַיִם – שָׁם אָתָּה", בְּחִינַת עֵיל, בְּחִינַת בְּקִי בְּרִצּוֹא. "וְאֶצִּיעָה שְׂאוֹל – הַנֶּחֱךְ", בְּחִינַת וְנָפִיק, בְּחִינַת בְּקִי בְּשׁוֹב. וְזֶה (שִׁיר־הַשִּׁירִים ו): "אֲנִי לְדוֹדֵי וְדוֹדֵי לִי". 'אֲנִי לְדוֹדֵי', – זֶה בְּחִינַת עֵיל. 'וְדוֹדֵי לִי' – זֶה בְּחִינַת וְנָפִיק. [וְזֶה סוּד בְּנִגַּת אֱלֹוֹל], וְזֶה עֵקֶר כְּבוֹדוֹ.

וְזֶה (יְשַׁעְיָהוּ נ"ח): "וְכִפְדָּתוֹ מַעֲשׂוֹת דְּרָכֶיךָ". 'דְּרָכֶיךָ' – לְשׁוֹן רַבִּים. הֵינּוּ עֵיל וְנָפִיק, וְכַשֵּׁיִשׁ לוֹ אֵלוֹ הַשְּׁנֵי בְקִיאוֹת הַנֶּחֱךְ, אֲזִי הוּא הוֹלֵךְ בְּדַרְכֵי הַתְּשׁוּבָה וְזוֹכֵה לְכְבוֹד ה', כְּמוֹ שֶׁפָּתוּב: "וְכִפְדָּתוֹ מַעֲשׂוֹת דְּרָכֶיךָ", הֵינּוּ שְׂוֹכֵה לְכַתֵּר, כִּי לֵית כְּבוֹד בְּלֹא כֶּף, וְאִזּוּ יִמִּין ה' פְּשׁוּטָה לְקַבֵּל תְּשׁוּבָתוֹ, [וְזֶה סוּד בְּנִגַּת אֱלֹוֹל]:

ה וְעַל-יְדֵי הַדְּמִימָה וְהַשְׁתִּיקָה נַעֲשֶׂה בְּחִינַת חִירִיק, כְּמוֹכָא בְּתַקּוּנִים (בְּתַקְדָּמָה ז). "וְתַחַת רַגְלָיו כְּמַעֲשֶׂה לְבַנַּת הַסְּפִיר" (שְׁמוֹת כ"ד) – דָּא חִירִיק, וְזֶה בְּחִינַת (יְשַׁעְיָהוּ ס"ו): "וְהֶאֱרַץ הַדָּם רַגְלֵי". 'הַדָּם' – זֶה בְּחִינַת דְּמִימָה, וְזֶה בְּחִינַת הַנְּקֻדָּה הַתַּחְתּוֹנָה שֶׁל תְּמוּנַת א.

וְנִקְדָּה הַעֲלִיּוֹנָה שֶׁעַל הָאֵלֶף זֶה בְּחִינַת כְּתֵר, בְּחִינַת (יְחֻזְקָאֵל א): "וּמִמַּעַל לְדַקִּיעַ אֲשֶׁר עַל רֹאשׁוֹ אֶבֶן סְפִיר דְּמוּת כְּפֹא", 'דְּמַתְּבִסְיָא לְעֵילָא מְוָא' וְשֶׁבְּאֵלֶף, דְּמַתְּקֻרְיָא רְקִיעַ' (שֵׁם בְּתַקּוּנִים), וְהַנְּקֻדָּה הִיא כְּפֹא דְמַתְּבִסְיָא, כְּמוֹ שֶׁפָּתוּב (חֲנִינָה יג): "בְּמַפְלָא מְמַךְ אֵל תְּרַרְשׁ, וּבְמַכְסָּה מְמַךְ אֵל תַּחְקֹר", וְזֶה בְּחִינַת: "כְּבוֹד אֱלֹוִת הַסְּתֵר דְּכָר", בְּחִינַת כְּתֵר.

even promise Jacob that he would not repeat his attack. To release such a dangerous fiend was "unreasonable." This very unreasonableness endowed the act with the quality of the heroic, and may serve as a pattern for Halachic heroism.

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What is heroism in the Halacha? What does the Halacha recommend to us, that we may attain heroic stature? The answer is: one must perform the dialectical movement. The Halachic catharsis expresses itself in paradoxical movement in two opposite directions – in surging forward boldly and in retreating humbly. Man's heroic experience is a polar, antithetic one. Man drives forward only to retreat and to reverse, subsequently, the direction of his movement.

The Torah wants man, who is bold and adventurous in his quest for opportunities, to act heroically, and at the final moment, when it appears to him that victory is within reach, to stop short, turn around, and retreat. At the most exalted moment of triumph and fulfillment man must forego the ecstasy of victory and take defeat at his own hands. Jacob acted in this manner; he engaged in the dialectical performance. He did not consummate his victory; instead, he set free the antagonist whom he had defeated and whom he could have destroyed. By freeing the defeated enemy Jacob defeated himself. He withdrew from a position he had won through courage and fortitude. He engaged in the movement of recoil.

II

Halacha teaches that at every level of our total existential experience – the aesthetic-hedonic, the emotional, the intellectual, the moral-religious – one must engage in the dialectical movement by alternately advancing and retreating. The

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Halacha was cognizant of the program the Creator set for man: וְרִכְבֵּךְ אִתָּךְ וְרִכְבֵּךְ אִתָּךְ וְרִכְבֵּךְ אִתָּךְ וְרִכְבֵּךְ אִתָּךְ and subdue it." Man was called upon to defy opposition on the part of nature and to march to victory. Biblical man is out to subdue his environment. Yet, when conquest is within man's reach and the road to realization has been cleared of all hindrances, man-victor, who needs only to reach out and grab everything his heart has anxiously desired, must change his course and begin to withdraw. When victory is near, man must invite defeat and surrender the spoils that he had quested for so long. The movement is dialectical: forward-marching ends in retreat, which, in turn, leads to a resumption of the forward-march. After man withdraws from the position which he has acquired through hard labor and sacrifice, he begins once again to swing forward. Again Halacha encourages man to pursue greatness, vastness, to experiment daringly with his liberties, to search feverishly for dominion. And again, Halacha will command man to halt, and to make an about-face. This dialectical movement, no matter how incomprehensible to modern man, forms, as we stated above, the very heart of Halachic living. In a word, the Halacha teaches man how to conquer and how to lose, how to seize initiative and how to renounce, how to succeed, how to invite defeat, and how to resume the striving for victory.

I

The idea of catharsis through the dialectical movement manifests itself in all Halachic norms regulating human life. Nowhere, however, does this doctrine of dialectical catharsis assert itself more frequently than it does in the aesthetic-hedonic realm.

11. *Ibid.*, 1:28.

How does man purge himself in this realm? By engaging in the dialectical movement, by withdrawing, at the moment when passion reaches its peak. The stronger the grip of the physiological drive is felt by man, the more intoxicating and bewildering the prospect of hedonic gratification, the greater the redemptive capacity of the dialectical catharsis — of the movement of recoil.

”כַּתְנַךְ עֲרֻמַת הַטִּיטִים סוּגָה בְּשׁוֹשׁוֹנִים” – אָרָם נֹשֵׂא אִשָּׁה כִּזְ לִי שֶׁנֶּה בֶּן מִי שֶׁנֶּה, מְשׁוֹמְצִיָּא יְצִיאָתוֹ הוּא בֵּא לִזְקֵק לָהּ וְהִיא אֹמְרָת לִי כְּשׁוֹשׁוּנָה אֲרוּמָה וְאִתִּי וּפְוֹרֵשׁ מִמֶּנָּה מִיָּד. מִי גֵרָם לִי שֶׁלֹּא יִקְרַב לָהּ, אִיזָה כְּהַל כְּרֹדֵל יִשׁ כִּינִיָּהֶם וְאִיזָה עֲמֹד כְּרֹדֵל כִּינִיָּהֶם, אִי זֶה נִהְיָ נִשְׁכָּן, אִיזָה עֲקֻרָב עֲקֻצוֹ שֶׁלֹּא יִקְרַב לָהּ? דְּכַרִּי תוֹרָה שְׂרַכִּיז כְּשׁוֹשׁוּנָה שֶׁנֶּה, בֵּה ”יֹאֵל אִשָּׁה כְּנֻרָת טוֹמְאָתָה לֹא תִקְרַב.” וְכִן מִי שֶׁהִבְיָאוֹ לִי תְּמַחִיז שֶׁל הַחִיכּוּת, אֲמַר לִי הֲלֵךְ נִפְלֵ שִׁם וּמִשָּׁר יָרָד וְלֹא טַעֲמוֹ. מִי גֵרָם לִי שֶׁלֹּא לְטַעֲמוֹ, אִיזָה נִהְיָ נִשְׁכָּן שֶׁלֹּא יְטַעֵם וְאִיזָה עֲקֻרָב עֲקֻצוֹ שֶׁלֹּא יִקְרַב וְיִטַעֵם אוֹתָם? דְּכַרִּי תוֹרָה שְׂרַכִּיז כְּשׁוֹשׁוּנָה שֶׁכְּתוּב בֵּה ”כָּל חֵלֶב וְכָל רֵם לֹא תֹאכְלוּ.”

“Thy belly is like a heap of wheat set about with lilies.” It often happens that a man takes a wife when he is thirty or forty years of age. When, after going to great expense, he wishes to associate with her, and she says to him, “I have seen a rose-red speck,” he immediately recoils. What made him retreat and keep away from her? Was there an iron fence, did a serpent bite him, did a scorpion sting him? ... A dish of meat is placed before a man and he is told some forbidden fat has fallen into it. He withdraws his hand from the food. What stopped him from tasting it? Did a serpent bite him; did a scorpion sting him? Only the words of the Torah, which are as soft as a bed of lilies.<sup>12</sup>

Bride and bridegroom are young, physically strong and passionately in love with each other. Both have patiently waited for this rendezvous to take place. Just one more step and their love would have been fulfilled, a vision realized. Suddenly the bride and groom make a movement of recoil. He, gallantly, like a chivalrous knight, exhibits paradoxical heroism. He takes his own defeat. There is no glamor attached to his withdrawal. The latter is not a spectacular gesture, since there are no witnesses to admire and to laud him. The heroic act did not take place in the presence of jubilating crowds; no bards will sing of these two modest, humble young people. It happened in the sheltered privacy of their home, in the stillness of the night. The young man, like Jacob of old, makes an about-face; he retreats at the moment when fulfillment seems assured.

This kind of divine dialectical discipline is not limited to man's sexual life, but extends to all areas of natural drive and temptation. The hungry person must forego the pleasure of taking food, no matter how strong the temptation; men of property must forego the pleasure of acquisition, if the latter is Halachically and morally wrong. In a word, Halacha requires of man that he possess the capability of withdrawal.<sup>13</sup> Of course, as we have made evident above, man is called, following the movement of withdrawal, to advance once again, toward full victory.

2

The Torah demanded cathartic action, not only in the hedonic, but in the emotional world of man, as well. In the carnal hedonic realm, catharsis expresses itself in the movement of recoil from something extraneous; e.g. the retreat of the bridegroom from the bride, or the renunciation of food by the

12. *Shir ha Shirim* R. to Song 7:3.

13. *Avot* 4:1. *Who is a gibbor? He who conquers his drives.*



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