The mission of **Torah Is Geshmack** is to bring out the richness and enjoyment of Torah for everyone, and in doing so bring them closer to Hashem.

ט״ו באב תשפ״ו

The Fifteenth: Together At Last

Dovid Kopel

The final משנה in מסכת תענית makes a claim that should make us stop and think:

> לא היו ימים טובים לישראל כחמשה עשר באב וכיום הכיפורים (תענית כו ע״ב)

There were no days as joyous for ישראל *as* ט״ו באב *and* יום הכיפורים.

Two difficulties sit on the surface, and both are usually stepped over.

The first is the pairing itself. יום הכיפורים is the day of כפרה. What has ט״ו באב to do with it? The משנה does not present them as two independent good days; it presents them as a matched pair, the two highest points on the calendar, as though they were a single type of day.

The second is the answer the גמרא gives. When discussing what happened on ט״ו באב, it does not give a single reason. It gives six: the שבטים were permitted to marry one another; שבט בנימין was restored to the nation; the deaths of the דור המדבר ended and the Divine דיבור returned to משה; the barriers preventing עלייה לרגל — ascending to ירושלים for the festivals — were removed; the victims of ביתר were buried; and the cutting of wood for the מזבח was completed (תענית ל ע״ב-לא ע״א).

Six reasons invite a question. Are they merely independent events that converged upon one date, or do they issue from a common source? I want to suggest that they are not six accidents, that the משנה's pairing is exact rather than approximate, and that both follow from a single idea: גורל — the casting of lots. גורל is the principle, and it will account for both halves of the day: why difference among Yidden is not division, and why something already finished can still look unfinished. The event through which that principle becomes active on ט״ו באב is the return of דיבור to משה.

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גורל Is More Than Choice

ט״ו באב and יום הכיפורים are both connected to גורל — very connected.

On יום הכיפורים:

> וְנָתַן אַהֲרֹן עַל שְׁנֵי הַשְּׂעִירִם גֹּרָלוֹת, גּוֹרָל אֶחָד לַה׳ וְגוֹרָל אֶחָד לַעֲזָאזֵל (ויקרא טז:ח)

Aharon shall place גורלות *upon the two goats: one* גורל *for Hashem and one* גורל *for* עזאזל.

The משנה teaches:

> שני שעירי יום הכיפורים מצותן שיהיו שניהן שוין במראה ובקומה ובדמים ובלקיחתן כאחד, ואף על פי שאין שוין – כשרין (יומא סב ע״א)

The proper form of the two goats of יום הכיפורים *is that they should be equal in appearance, height, value, and the time of their purchase; nevertheless, if they are not equal, they remain valid.*

In their ideal form, human דעת has no visible basis for assigning one לה׳ and the other לעזאזל. Their different purposes emerge through גורל. These two goats will return; they are the first of three places where יום הכיפורים turns on גורל, and the three of them together are the answer to the משנה's pairing.

ארץ ישראל was likewise divided through גורל:

> אַךְ בְּגוֹרָל יֵחָלֵק אֶת הָאָרֶץ, לִשְׁמוֹת מַטּוֹת אֲבֹתָם יִתְנָחָלוּ (במדבר כו:נה)

Only בגורל *shall the land be divided; according to the names of their fathers' tribes shall they inherit.*

But גורל means more than that Hashem chose.

בחירה means choice, but a choice may still be explained through the qualities of the chosen. One שבט may appear suited to fertile land, another to a coast, and another to a border. The choice may reflect tremendous Divine wisdom, but it remains understandable from the perspective of those below.

גורל reaches higher. It reveals a relationship whose explanation lies entirely within the בוחר — the One Who chooses — not in the measurable superiority of the chosen. This חלק is not yours because you earned or selected it, or because your visible qualities forced the result. It is yours because רצון ה׳ placed you there from above טעם ודעת, beyond human reason.

> בַּחֵיק יוּטַל אֶת הַגּוֹרָל, וּמֵה׳ כָּל מִשְׁפָּטוֹ (משלי טז:לג)

The גורל *is cast into the lap, but its entire judgment is from Hashem.*

The plain meaning of חיק is the lap or bosom. Yet the image also suggests that the process is concealed from view. The result appears accidental, but וּמֵה׳ כָּל מִשְׁפָּטוֹ — its entire judgment comes from Hashem. The concealment does not mean that no one chose. It is the לבוש, the outer garment, through which a בחירה beyond all lower explanation appears.

גורל is not less than בחירה. It is higher בחירה dressed as מקרה — chance.

A purchase begins with my decision. A נחלה — an inherited portion — comes from a relationship that precedes my decision. It tells me who I am before I fully understand who I am.

שכל immediately evaluates: this appears good and that harmful, this portion desirable and that limited, this קירוב and that ריחוק. גורל reveals the רצון that precedes those divisions:

> חייב אדם לברך על הרעה כשם שהוא מברך על הטובה (ברכות נד ע״א)

A person must bless Hashem for adversity just as he blesses Him for good.

This does not mean that pain should feel pleasant. It means that טובה and רעה do not emerge from competing sources. Both remain held within one רצון ה׳ and one ultimate טוב.

On יום הכיפורים, one שעיר enters the inner עבודה and one is sent outward, yet both form one כפרה. Likewise, each שבט receives a different נחלה, yet every portion emerges from one higher רצון and together forms one ארץ. The גורל distinguishes the parts while revealing that they were never divided at their source.

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The מרגלים and the Silence

This places ט״ו באב directly opposite תשעה באב, and not by analogy. The משנה that lists the disasters of the ninth of Av puts theirs first:

> בְּתִשְׁעָה בְאָב נִגְזַר עַל אֲבוֹתֵינוּ שֶׁלֹּא יִכָּנְסוּ לָאָרֶץ, וְחָרַב הַבַּיִת בָּרִאשׁוֹנָה וּבַשְּׁנִיָּה, וְנִלְכְּדָה בֵּיתָר, וְנֶחְרְשָׁה הָעִיר (תענית כו ע״א)

On the ninth of Av it was decreed upon our fathers that they would not enter the land; the Temple was destroyed the first time and the second; ביתר *was captured; and the city was plowed over.*

Four of the five came later. The earliest is the decree of the מרגלים. The day does not merely contain their sin; it is dated by it. And the same perek of the same מסכת that opens the ninth of Av with that decree closes, two mishnayos later, with ט״ו באב.

The מרגלים assessed ארץ ישראל from below. They measured, and the measurement came back negative:

> וְהָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר עָלוּ עִמּוֹ אָמְרוּ לֹא נוּכַל לַעֲלוֹת אֶל הָעָם כִּי חָזָק הוּא מִמֶּנּוּ (במדבר יג:לא)

We cannot ascend against the nation, because it is stronger than us.

Their failure was not simply fear. It was the demand that the goodness of the land be perceptible through what they could presently see — that a נחלה given by גורל justify itself in the currency of משפט. They treated ארץ ישראל as a portion to be evaluated and then chosen, when ארץ ישראל was the place through which ישראל had been chosen.

> וַיִּמְאֲסוּ בְּאֶרֶץ חֶמְדָּה, לֹא הֶאֱמִינוּ לִדְבָרוֹ (תהלים קו:כד)

They rejected the desirable land; they did not believe His word.

The word is מאס — a verdict on worth. That is precisely the act: a portion given above טעם ודעת, appraised and found wanting.

And the instrument was the פה: וַיּוֹצִיאוּ דִּבַּת הָאָרֶץ — they brought forth slander of the land (במדבר יג:לב).

The act of speech names, defines, and fixes. They took a land given by a רצון above their understanding and confined it inside a description they could defend. Then they said what follows:

> וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל אָחִיו: נִתְּנָה רֹאשׁ וְנָשׁוּבָה מִצְרָיְמָה (במדבר יד:ד)

They said to one another: let us appoint a leader and return to מצרים.

The גמרא, explaining that ט״ו באב is יום שכלו בו מתי מדבר — the day the deaths of the wilderness generation ended — adds:

> עד שלא כלו מתי מדבר לא היה דבור עם משה... אלי היה הדבור (תענית ל ע״ב)
>
> *Until the deaths of the wilderness generation ended, there was no* דיבור *with* משה*; afterward, "the speech was to me."*

The פה had been used to sever ישראל from its מקום, and דיבור withdrew.

And what withdrew was not merely communication. תורה שבכתב gives the רצון in its written צורה, its fixed form — one, given, complete. תורה שבעל פה is the living דיבור through which that רצון is received, articulated, defined, and brought into the conditions of life; משה receives the דיבור and communicates it to ישראל. A נחלה given by גורל arrives from above טעם ודעת, and it needs a פה to bring it into the world — to say what was given and to fix where each Yid stands within it. A nation that used the פה to reject its portion lost the פה through which a portion enters reality at all. The withdrawal was not a penalty proportionate to the sin; it was the sin's own shape.

And downstream in history, the same fracture becomes the thing חכמים name as the cause of the second חורבן:

> מפני מה חרב? מפני שהיתה בו שנאת חנם (יומא ט ע״ב)
>
> *Why was it destroyed? Because of baseless hatred within it.*

שנאת חנם is not primarily an act one Yid commits against another. It is a condition in which one limb experiences another as foreign — in which a חלק treats its own perspective as the whole and forgets that the difference of the other is required for the גוף. That is a sin in the form of the body, not a sin inside it, and no individual can be מתקן it. A person can repair what he did; he cannot, alone, repair the shape of the thing he is part of.

And this is what the גמרא delivers. Several of the six are changes in the relations among the parts and nothing else: the restriction upon marriage is lifted, בנימין is restored, and the roads to ירושלים are opened. Not one of them is an individual's act.

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The Boundary and the End of the Boundary

Return now to the first of the גמרא's six reasons. The גמרא describes ט״ו באב as the day the שבטים were permitted לבוא זה בזה — to enter one another. More precisely, the restriction upon a בת יורשת נחלה — a daughter who inherits tribal land — marrying outside her שבט was declared limited to the generation entering the land. And that restriction came out of a single case, brought by five women, about a נחלה.

Before following it, the difficulty has to be stated. Why should this be cause for a יום טוב at all? A בת יורשת נחלה was never forbidden to marry; she could always marry within her own שבט. Nothing was newly permitted to her that she had lacked; only the range of candidates widened. Measured that way there is neither דרא דמצוה nor הנאה יתירא — neither the weight of a mitzvah nor any extraordinary benefit — and it is hard to see why such a thing should be marked forever.

The question is exact, and it is the question this entire section answers. If the היתר is measured as a gain in permissible matches, it is thin. But it is not a gain. It is an announcement that a boundary has finished its work.

בנות צלפחד approach משה:

> לָמָּה יִגָּרַע שֵׁם אָבִינוּ מִתּוֹךְ מִשְׁפַּחְתּוֹ כִּי אֵין לוֹ בֵּן? תְּנָה לָּנוּ אֲחֻזָּה בְּתוֹךְ אֲחֵי אָבִינוּ (במדבר כז:ד)

Why should our father's name be diminished from among his family because he had no son? Give us a possession among our father's brothers.

And Hashem answers:

> כֵּן בְּנוֹת צְלָפְחָד דֹּבְרֹת נָתֹן תִּתֵּן לָהֶם אֲחֻזַּת נַחֲלָה בְּתוֹךְ אֲחֵי אֲבִיהֶם וְהַעֲבַרְתָּ אֶת נַחֲלַת אֲבִיהֶן לָהֶן (במדבר כז:ז)

The daughters of Tzelafchad speak correctly.

The language is exact: דוברות — they speak. The מרגלים spoke and detached ישראל from the land. בנות צלפחד speak and demand that a שם become rooted within it. The same כח of פה that had produced separation becomes the means through which a נחלה receives its definition.

And notice precisely what their דיבור accomplishes. They do not create a portion; no one can. The basic assignment of נחלה belonged to the גורל rather than to their claim — from above טעם ודעת, and not answerable to it. What their question establishes is how a portion is held: by whom it can be inherited, and under what conditions it remains where the גורל placed it. Their דיבור operates directly upon the גורל, not alongside it. That is what makes them belong to this day: the day is about נחלה, and נחלה is the גורל given a defined place in the world.

It also draws out a dimension of תורה not yet articulated. The רצון was always present; through their דיבור it becomes explicit תורה — not a תורה created from below, but the hidden depth of תורה drawn out by the questions of life and confirmed by כן... דוברות. They are not answered before, and unless they ask. The question is theirs.

Their inheritance then generates the restriction. If a בת יורשת נחלה marries into another שבט, her portion will pass to children of a different tribe. Therefore:

> וְכָל בַּת י�רֶשֶׁת נַחֲלָה מִמַּטּוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, לְאֶחָד מִמִּשְׁפַּחַת מַטֵּה אָבִיהָ תִּהְיֶה לְאִשָּׁה (במדבר לו:ח)

Every daughter who inherits a portion among the tribes of ישראל shall become the wife of someone from the family of her father's tribe.

תורה שבעל פה is מגדיר — it defines. It gives the רצון the גבול it needs in order to enter reality at all. A portion without a boundary is not a portion.

And then, on ט״ו באב, the same תורה שבעל פה says:

> ״זֶה הַדָּבָר״ – דָּבָר זֶה לֹא יִהֵא נוֹהֵג אֶלָּא בְּדוֹר זֶה (תענית ל ע״ב)

This is the matter — this restriction applies only in this generation.

The פה that drew the boundary is the פה that recognizes when the boundary has completed its work — the definer declaring its own definition complete.

What had changed? Land could still pass from one שבט to another afterward.

The גורל had designated each portion from above, but a designation is not yet an embodiment. Each שבט had to enter its נחלה, conquer it, build in it, plant it, raise families in it, and serve Hashem from within it. The בחינה of the שבט — its particular spiritual expression — had to be driven into the soil. נחלת יהודה did not become יהודה's land because a name emerged from a גורל;

יהודה had to live there, until the hidden רצון had entered its fields and roads and homes. And the גורל did not only reflect what the שבט already was — it revealed what the שבט was to become through that מקום, a fit recognizable only afterward and never predictable from below.

While that identity was still taking root, mixing the portions would have blurred a צורה that had not yet penetrated reality. Once each שבט had lived its בחינה into its נחלה, the identity no longer depended on every field remaining forever unmoved.

So the permission to marry across tribes is not the cancellation of the גורל. It is its completion. That is why the day is a יום טוב, and it is not measured in permissible matches at all. And the human labor — ישיבה ועבודה, settlement and work — is the second place where this movement is genuinely ours.

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The stones of יעקב

I once asked my Rebbe, HaRav Nochum Lansky שליט״א, about the stones that יעקב placed beneath his head. The פסוק first says:

> וַיִּפְגַּע בַּמָּקוֹם וַיָּלֶן שָׁם כִּי בָא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ וַיִּקַּח מֵאַבְנֵי הַמָּקוֹם וַיָּשֶׂם מְרַאֲשֹׁתָיו וַיִּשְׁכַּב בַּמָּקוֹם הַהוּא (בראשית כח:יא)

He took from the stones of the place and placed them around his head.

And when he rises:

> וַיַּשְׁכֵּם יַעֲקֹב בַּבֹּקֶר וַיִּקַּח אֶת הָאֶבֶן אֲשֶׁר שָׂם מְרַאֲשֹׁתָיו וַיָּשֶׂם אֹתָהּ מַצֵּבָה וַיִּצֹק שֶׁמֶן עַל רֹאשָׁהּ (בראשית כח:יח)

He took the stone that he had placed around his head.

רש״י explains that the stones became one. The מדרש relates that יעקב took twelve stones corresponding to the twelve שבטים, and made it a test: if the twelve join into one, he will know that he is to establish the twelve שבטים (בראשית רבה סח:יא).

I asked Rebbe: are we saying that יעקב could no longer count twelve? Had they melted into one indistinguishable rock?

It seemed to me that twelve stones remained, each retaining its own identity, and that they had become fused as one. Otherwise the sign proves the opposite of what it is meant to prove: if twelve disappear into one, the אות would be that יעקב's descendants would be a single undifferentiated mass — the very thing the twelve שבטים are not. The sign is that twelve can remain twelve while being one.

Rebbe told me that I had been מכוון to a מדרש תנחומא expressing this same idea.

That is the צורה of כלל ישראל. יעקב does not produce one uniform continuation but twelve distinct שבטים, each with its own שם, כח, נחלה, and בחינה — and they are not merely set beside one another. They are one אבן. The unity does not come from crushing the stones into shapeless material; each remains distinct enough to be counted, and united enough to be one.

The twelve נחלות are the twelve stones. ארץ ישראל is the one אבן.

Marriage utilizes the same idea. Two people form one not because they lack identities, but because two developed identities enter a union. On ט״ו באב the שבטים were permitted לבוא זה בזה; their בחינות had become real enough that חיבור would no longer produce shapelessness.

And here is the precise inverse of שנאת חנם. שנאת חנם sees difference and creates distance. ט״ו באב sees difference and discovers חיבור. The same גורל that placed me in my מקום placed another Yid in his. I do not necessarily understand his בחינה through my categories, and I do not need to, because the two of us were never divided at the source.

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Why the fifteenth

ט״ו is י־ה, the first half of the שם הוי״ה, whose full value is כ״ו.

י־ה belongs to מחשבה — the concentrated point of the י and its inner expansion in the ה. ו־ה carries that מחשבה downward into expression and מעשה. So ט״ו is not the fruit. It is the moment the מחשבה becomes whole and the future stands complete בכח — in potential, entire before it appears.

On ט״ו בשבט no fruit is visible, but the rains have reached the roots and the future fruit is alive in the tree. On ט״ו בניסן ישראל leaves מצרים, having crossed no sea, received no תורה, entered no land — and the whole destiny of ישראל is already contained in that first גאולה. On ט״ו בתשרי the gathered produce comes beneath one סוכה:

> כל ישראל ראוין לישב בסוכה אחת (סוכה כז ע״ב)

All ישראל *are fit to sit in one* סוכה.

So too ט״ו באב. The final unity has not been achieved and the בית המקדש has not been rebuilt. But the מחשבה of unity is whole. On תשעה באב the visible גוף fractures; on ט״ו באב the י־ה of the future גוף is already complete.

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The remaining reasons

The rest of the גמרא's list divides into two movements, and they are one principle seen twice. In the first, parts are restored to their shared source. In the second, a concealed future stands already complete בכח.

A חלק given by גורל cannot be read from below, and that holds in two ways. I cannot measure another Yid's portion by my own, so his difference looks to me like division — that was שנאת חנם. And I cannot see a completion that has not yet surfaced, so a finished thing looks to me unfinished — that is ביתר, where the טוב had been true for years with no one in a position to see it. It is the same blindness twice. ט״ו באב lifts it both ways.

שבט בנימין had nearly been severed from כלל ישראל, and its restoration came through marriage. A גוף is not complete while a necessary limb remains permanently excluded — and no limb of this body is unnecessary, because none of them chose its place.

הוֹשִׁיעַ בֶּן אֵלָה removed the barriers ירבעם had erected to stop the northern שבטים from ascending to ירושלים. Every שבט needs its own נחלה, and every נחלה must face one ירושלים. Distinct limbs, one heart. The barriers were the political expression of exactly the error of the מרגלים: a judgment from below about where a Yid belongs.

The two remaining reasons belong to the second movement.

ביתר stands on both lists — among the five disasters of the ninth of Av and among the six joyous reasons of the fifteenth. But ביתר fell on the ninth; the decree of the מרגלים made the ninth. Two of the six joys of ט״ו באב directly answer two of the five tragedies of תשעה באב — and only one answers the first and defining tragedy: the decree of the מרגלים.

The dead of ביתר were finally given burial, and on that day חכמים established הטוב והמטיב (ברכות מח ע״ב). The גמרא reads the two words as two goods: הטוב — that the bodies had not decomposed; והמטיב — that they were brought to burial.

Notice how little that is. Nothing was reversed. The slaughter stands, the city remains destroyed, no one returns. Corpses did not putrefy, and then they were buried. On any ordinary accounting, these are thin goods — and the חכמים judged them weighty enough to be added permanently to ברכת המזון, said by every Yid, every day, forever. What is marked is not a reversal but a remnant, and the remnant was found sufficient to be blessed.

And the first of the two goods had been true the whole time. Years passed in which the bodies lay preserved and no one was in a position to see it. The טוב was held in reserve, unnoticed, before it ever surfaced. Complete בכח long before it appeared in מעשה.

The placement of the ברכה says the same thing again. The גמרא presents the four ברכות of ברכת המזון as an arc of eras: משה instituted ברכת הזן in the מדבר, יהושע ברכת הארץ upon entering the land, דוד ושלמה בונה ירושלים — and הטוב והמטיב was instituted afterward, by the חכמים of the post-חורבן academy at יבנה. The bracha that comes from the graves of ביתר stands immediately after the bracha for the city that had fallen. And observe the posture of the two: בונה ירושלים is a request — rebuild it, for it is not built. הטוב והמטיב is a bracha on good already received. Ask for the rebuilding; then bless the remnant.

That is the stance of ט״ו באב exactly. The בית המקדש is not rebuilt, nothing has been undone, and the day is one of the two greatest days of joy in the year.

And יבנה is the seat of תורה שבעל פה after the חורבן — the place that carried the transmission when ירושלים no longer could. So the one ברכה in ברכת המזון produced by תורה שבעל פה in its post-חורבן era is the ברכה appended behind the ברכה for ירושלים, and it is the ברכה that marks a day of ט״ו באב. The faculty that returns to משה when the גזירה ends is the faculty that later composed the words in which this day is remembered.

What the ברכה does not assert is that the חורבן was good. That טובה and רעה issue from one רצון has already been said, and said where it belongs — חייב אדם לברך על הרעה כשם שהוא מברך על הטובה. What ביתר adds is narrower and harder: that when almost nothing remains, what remains is still to be blessed.

יום תבר מגל — the day the axe is broken; רש״י: מיכן ואילך אין צריכין המגל לכרות עצים — carries the same form (בבא בתרא קכא ע״ב). It marked the completion of cutting wood for the מערכה, the arrangement of wood on the מזבח — and the wood was not yet fire and not yet קרבן. It was

prepared possibility, future עבודה standing ready, exactly as the preserved bodies were an unrecognized טוב standing ready. And from that day, in רש״י's words, תשש כחה של חמה ואינה מייבשת העצים — the strength of the sun has weakened and it no longer dries the wood — and the nights lengthen: מכאן ואילך דמוסיף יוסיף, from this point onward one who adds will have added to him (תענית לא ע״א).

The visible light diminishes as the hidden light of תורה increases. Here too the completion precedes its own appearance.

And there is a turn embedded in the date. The three weeks from י״ז בתמוז to תשעה באב are days of danger for כלל ישראל — the stretch in which a Yid does not walk alone, of which the midrash speaks of קטב מרירי; and of the month itself חכמים said ריע מזליה, that its מזל is unfavorable (תענית כט ע״ב). ט״ו באב is the first affirmative joy on the far side of them, and from here the direction is upward: toward אלול, and the work of being ממליך Hashem.

Notice what the day holds together. ישראל מונין ללבנה ואומות העולם מונין לחמה — ישראל are reckoned by the moon and the nations by the sun (סוכה כט ע״א). Every fifteenth brings a full moon; what is particular to this one is that חכמים fix here the threshold past which the strength of the sun no longer suffices to dry the wood. The light by which the nations are counted reaches the limit of its power on the very day that the light by which we are counted is whole. That is not the future; it is a glimpse of it. And the glimpse should be read the way the נביא reads it — not as the sun's defeat, but as the moon brought up to the sun's own brightness:

> וְהָיָה אוֹר הַלְּבָנָה כְּאוֹר הַחַמָּה, וְאוֹר הַחַמָּה יִהְיֶה שִׁבְעָתַיִם (ישעיהו ל:כו)

The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold.

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The Two Days and the יובל

Now the משנה's pairing can be stated simply, because יובל is itself a component of יום הכיפורים:

> וְהַעֲבַרְתָּ שׁוֹפַר תְּרוּעָה... בֶּעָשׂוֹר לַחֹדֶשׁ בְּיוֹם הַכִּפֻּרִים תַּעֲבִירוּ שׁוֹפָר בְּכָל אַרְצְכֶם... וּקְרָאתֶם דְּרוֹר בָּאָרֶץ לְכָל יֹשְׁבֶיהָ... וְשַׁבְתֶּם אִישׁ אֶל אֲחֻזָּתוֹ, וְאִישׁ אֶל מִשְׁפַּחְתּוֹ תָּשֻׁבוּ (ויקרא כה:ט-י)

On the tenth of the month, on יום הכיפורים, you shall sound the shofar throughout your land... and you shall proclaim freedom in the land for all its inhabitants... and each man shall return to his portion, and each man shall return to his family.

In the יובל year, on יום הכיפורים, a sale of ancestral land yields and each אחוזה returns to the family that received it. Land that human דעת had priced, measured, and negotiated reverts to where the גורל placed it. And the פסוק names both halves of that return together: a man to his אחוזה, and a man to his משפחה.

That is precisely the נחלה of בנות צלפחד. Their claim was תְּנָה לָּנוּ אֲחֻזָּה בְּתוֹךְ אֲחֵי אָבִינוּ — a portion held within the family — and the law that followed kept a נחלה within אָבִיהָ and אחוזה מִשְׁפַּחַת מַטֵּה are the two terms of their case, and they are the two terms of the יובל.

So the two days of the משנה hold one thing from two directions. On יום הכיפורים the human dealing in ancestral land yields and each אחוזה stands where the גורל assigned it. On ט״ו באב, the

boundaries that had protected those portions are declared to have completed their purpose and are therefore lifted.

And these are not the same boundary. What יובל restores is the reversion of an אחוזה to the family that received it — a boundary that never completes, because the bond between a family and the portion the גורל gave it does not expire. What ט״ו באב lifts is the restriction upon whom a בת יורשת נחלה may marry — a boundary erected to guard a צורה while it was still taking root, and therefore a boundary capable of finishing. The one that could finish, finished; the one that could not, returns every fiftieth year on the day of the גורל.

Two of the three strands of יום הכיפורים are now in hand: the שעירים, separated by גורל and forming one כפרה, and the אחוזה, returning on this day to where the גורל placed it. The third waits for the last of the six reasons.

✦

The Return of the דיבור

We left the ninth of Av in silence. Return to it now, because the earliest of the six reasons has been waiting for the thing that completes it, and because of all six, its meaning is bound up with the fifteenth itself.

Every one of the forty years, the braisa relates, the announcer went out on ערב תשעה באב and called: let each man go out and dig. And every man dug himself a grave and slept in it, in case he should die before he had dug. In the morning the announcer went out and called יבדלו החיים מן המתים — let the living separate from the dead — and whoever still had the breath of life rose and came out. So it was every year. And in the fortieth year they did it, and in the morning every one of them stood up alive.

They did not conclude that the decree had ended. They concluded that they had erred in the calendar. So they went back and slept in the graves again, and again, until the fifteenth: כיון שראו וכבר מ׳ שנה של גזרה נשלמו, ידעו שחשבון חדש מכוון, שנתמלאה הלבנה בט״ו ולא מת אחד מהם — once they saw the moon full on the fifteenth and not one of them had died, they knew that the reckoning of the month was correct, and that the forty years of the decree had already been completed (רש״י תענית ל ע״ב).

Look at what that means for the date. For the other five reasons the fifteenth is where the event happened to fall. Here the fifteenth is the answer. Nothing ended on the fifteenth — the dying had stopped on the ninth. What arrived on the fifteenth was enough light to be certain of it. יום תבר מגל is bound to the fifteenth as well — from that day the strength of the sun no longer suffices, and wood cut afterward will not dry for the מערכה. But that is a solar threshold, and it marks the moment something becomes true. Here the threshold is lunar, and it marks the moment something already true becomes knowable. The full moon did not end the decree. It made the end of the decree legible. רש״י's own word is וכבר — already; the forty years were complete before the moon rose to say so. And that is י־ה exactly as we described it: the thing is whole before it can be seen, the מחשבה entire while the world still waits for confirmation. Night after night of men lying down in open graves for a decree that had already ended.

And then:

> עד שלא כלו מתי מדבר לא היה דבור עם משה... אלי היה הדבור (תענית ל ע״ב)

Until the deaths of the wilderness generation ended, there was no דיבור *with* משה*; afterward, "the speech was to me."*

That is the hinge of the whole day, and רש״י says so outright: וקבעו יום טוב לפי ,יום שכלו מתי מדבר שחזר הדיבור למשה — the day the deaths of the wilderness generation ended, and they established a יום טוב because the דיבור returned to משה (רש״י תענית לא ע״א).

The פה rejected the מקום that had been given, and speech withdrew. Now the last of that generation have risen from graves they did not need, and the דיבור comes back. Everything that follows on ט״ו באב — the נחלה of בנות צלפחד defined by speech, the boundary drawn and then declared finished, תורה שבעל פה entering the conditions of life — depends on this, because all of it is done with a mouth.

Nor is this the first time תורה returned to משה after the sin of a nation. The גמרא gives two reasons for the joy of יום הכיפורים: it is the day of forgiveness, and it is the day משה came down with the second לוחות after חטא העגל. יום הכיפורים gives back a תורה that was broken; ט״ו באב gives back a דיבור that was silenced.

That is the third strand, and with it the pairing is whole. On יום הכיפורים the גורל is cast and the portion returns to where it was cast; on ט״ו באב the boundary the גורל had required is declared finished. And both days hand back a transmission that the sin of a nation had severed — handed back to the same man.

The restoration of דיבור on ט״ו באב is the restoration of תורה שבעל פה.

And consider to whom it returns. Of the men included in the condemned generation the פסוק names two survivors: וְלֹא נוֹתַר מֵהֶם אִישׁ כִּי אִם כָּלֵב בֶּן יְפֻנֶּה וִיהוֹשֻׁעַ בִּן נוּן (במדבר כו:סה). משה stands apart from both. כלב and יהושע survived the decree and will enter the land; משה survived the generation and will not. His own גזירה came separately, at מי מריבה, and the end of their decree does not lift his own.

So the speech is restored to the one man who will receive no portion. Two weeks earlier, on א׳ באב of that same fortieth year, he had buried אהרן (במדבר לג:לח); מרים had died that Nisan. He stands at the end of a generation that has finished dying, holding a דיבור that will define a land he will not enter — and he uses it to teach those who will.

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The מחול and the אצבע

The סוגיא closes:

> עתיד הקדוש ברוך הוא לעשות מחול לצדיקים (תענית לא ע״א)

In the future, Hashem will make a circle-dance for the צדיקים*.*

A circle is the encompassing form — the מקיף. It has no front and back, no higher and lower, no giver and receiver. The קו, the line, is what descends into a circle with specificity: order, direction, distinction, this one before that one. And the קו is everything already described — the גורל

assigning each שבט its precise מקום, the נחלה giving it a boundary, תורה שבעל פה drawing that boundary and then declaring it finished.

So the מחול at the end is not the circle finally being formed. It is the circle being seen. The מקיף was always there — it is what the parts were standing inside of all along, which is why they were never divided at their source. What the צדיקים discover in that dance is not a unity that has been built out of them. It is a unity they were never outside of.

The גמרא adds that וכל אחד ואחד מראה באצבעו — each one points with his finger.

The מחול is the most encompassing form; the אצבע is the most exact. A finger does not do the most — it identifies. Which is why what it says is זה — this.

And that is דיבור over מעשה, which is ט״ו באב. Speech is physically the lesser act; a prohibition transgressed by speech alone is a לאו שאין בו מעשה — a prohibition containing no act. Yet words reach a precision no action does: they name, distinguish, obligate, permit, and give exact form to intention.

And so the last image joins the widest כלל to the sharpest פרט. One encompassing circle; each צדיק still כל אחד ואחד, in his own place, pointing from it — and all of them pointing at the same center:

> הִנֵּה אֱלֹקֵינוּ זֶה קִוִּינוּ לוֹ וְיוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ, זֶה ה׳ קִוִּינוּ לוֹ נָגִילָה וְנִשְׂמְחָה בִּישׁוּעָתוֹ (ישעיהו כה:ט)

Behold, this is our God; we hoped to Him and He saved us. This is Hashem for Whom we hoped; let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation.

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From תשעה באב to ט״ו באב

On תשעה באב the פה rejects the מקום that was given, and the fracture runs forward through history into שנאת חנם, division among the שבטים, separation from ירושלים, and חורבן.

On ט״ו באב it runs backward, and it begins with a mouth. The גזירה of the מרגלים ends, the last of that generation rise from graves they did not need, and דיבור returns to משה. The פה that unmade the meaning of ארץ ישראל becomes again the living פה of תורה שבעל פה. Through the דיבור of בנות צלפחד a נחלה receives its law; that same faculty guards the boundaries and then declares them fulfilled. Each שבט has received its portion by גורל, lived its בחינה into the soil, and become itself. The twelve stones are one אבן. The שבטים may marry; בנימין returns; the roads to ירושלים open; the remnant of טוב that survived ביתר is blessed; the wood of future עבודה stands ready; and the distinct בחינות stand in one מחול, each in his own place, each pointing with his own אצבע, all pointing at one center.

ט״ו באב does not teach that difference dissolves. It teaches that difference was never division — that every חלק issues from one רצון and is needed for one גוף. A חלק cannot be read from below, and neither can a completion that has not yet arrived. On this day both come into view. The unity we are working toward is one we have been standing inside the whole time.

And the road from here is short. From ט״ו באב the calendar runs to ראש חודש אלול, and from אלול forty days to יום הכיפורים — the forty days of משה's last ascent, which ended with the second לוחות in his hands. The two days of our משנה are not only paired in meaning; they are joined by a road.

The דיבור returns to משה on ט״ו באב, and the walk from there arrives at the day the broken תורה was given back.

May we be זוכה to live the חלק Hashem has given each of us without denying the מקום of another, and to turn every distinction within כלל ישראל into a point of חיבור. May the מחשבה concealed within ט״ו באב descend into complete מעשה, until every שבט and every Yid stands in his proper place and declares:

הִנֵּה אֱלֹקֵינוּ זֶה קִוִּינוּ לוֹ וְיוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ, זֶה ה׳ קִוִּינוּ לוֹ נָגִילָה וְנִשְׂמְחָה בִּישׁוּעָתוֹ

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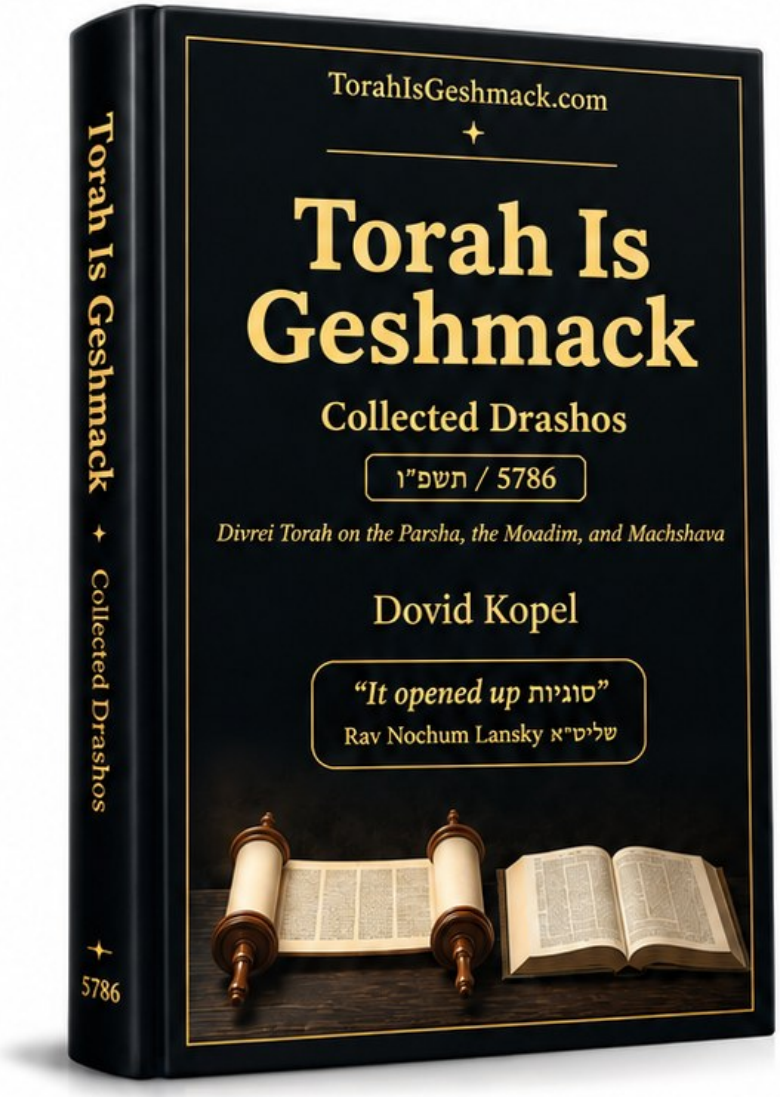
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