

## Torah as Weapon in fighting evil: Antidote or Spice?

*To see a World in a grain of sand,*

*And a Heaven in a wild flower,*

*Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand*

*And Eternity in an hour . . .*

*We are led to believe a lie*

*When we see with, not thro' the eye,*

*Which was born in a night, to perish in a night,*

*When the Soul slept in beams of light.*

### *William Blake, Songs of Innocence*

In a remarkable passage the Rabbis struggle with the notion that the evil inclination was implanted in mankind setting it up for failure, and in a dramatic parable, a father wounds his son with a great wound, the provides a treatment for the wound adjuring the boy to never fail to apply the salve or else the limb might become gangrenous. The wound is the evil inclination in the explication and the salve is the Torah, implying we did not invite this evil inclination in, it was part of our collective wound by the father. The only hope is to contain the spread of the contagion caused by the wound. The word used for the salve is תבלין, which has a dual meaning, which I would like to explore and suggest that the resultant translation has effects for how to deal with the evil inclination that cut across the traditional versus mystical approach to immanence and evil.

*How is Torah a תבלין "spice" for the evil inclination? As an antidote, Torah would cure us of it, but as a spice, Torah brings out the best of the evil inclination, by channeling its energies in a positive direction.*

Pinchas Winston<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.neveh.org/winston/yfactor/y-07.html>

אמר לו קיסר לרבי יהושע בן חנניא מפני מה תבשיל של שבת ריחו נודף אמר לו תבלין אחד יש לנו ושבת שמו שאנו מטילין לתוכו וריחו נודף

This term **תבלין** was employed metaphorically by R. Joshua b. Hananiah in his reply to questions by the local procurator, why *has the Sabbath dish such a fragrant odor?* To this R. Joshua replied: *We have a certain spice, תבלין, (tavlin) called the Sabbath, which we put into it [the Sabbath dish] and which gives it a fragrant odor.*

Talmud, Shabbat 119a<sup>2</sup>

**תְּבֵלִין** m. (בְּלֵל) 1) *mixture, spice, seasoning*. Y. Orl. I, 61<sup>b</sup> top 'וכי ביותר וכי' spices have no seasoning effect in a mixture larger than two hundred times their quantity. Arakh. II, 6 'בנעימה' ליתן ה' כדי ליתן ה' in order to put spice (sweetness) in the melody (to raise the effect of the melody through the accompaniment of young voices). Yalk. Prov. 943 (ref. to תְּבֵלִין, Prov. VIII, 31) Palestine is called *tebel* 'על שם ה' שבתוכה וכי' for the spice which is in it, and what is this? The Law; Sifré Deut. 37 'תבלין', v. infra.—Pl. 'שנים וכי' תבלין (tradit. pronunc.) תבלין. Orl. II, 10 'וכי' שנים of two or three different legal categories, of one kind or of three. Ib. 15, v. תבלין. Kel. II, 7, a. e. 'בית ה' spice box. Y. Pes. X, 37<sup>d</sup> top 'תבלין מצויה'; Bab. ib. 116<sup>a</sup> 'תבלין מצויה' spices for the Passover ceremony (תְּרוּסָה); a. fr.—Also used as sing. Sabb. 119<sup>a</sup> 'יש לנו וכי' we have a certain spice the name of which is Sabbath &c. B. Bath. 16<sup>a</sup> 'חורה ה'... הקב"ה the Lord created the evil inclination (in man), and he created the Law with which to season (temper) it; Kidd. 30<sup>b</sup>. Sifré Deut. 37, v. supra; a. e.—Ned. 51<sup>a</sup> (play on תבלין, Lev. XVIII, 23) 'הוא ה' 'is it a spice? is there any spice (additional gratification) in it? &c.—[2] (b. h.) *confusion, unnatural act, deflement*, v. supra, a. תבלין.—[Y. Shebu. III, 34<sup>c</sup> top 'התבלין מן הרבלין', read: 'התבלין מן הרבלין']

Jastrow above suggests both meanings of **תבלין** as spice/seasoning and also salve, based on Talmudic/midrashic references:

## SOURCES for definition of "תבלין"

רבי שמעון בן יוחי אומר: "תבלין" זו א"י, שנאמר "משחקת בתבל ארצו". למה נקראת תבל שמה? שהיא מתובלת בכל. שכל הארצות, יש בזו מה ארץ אשר לא במסכנות תאכל בה לחם, לא תחסר כל בה (דברים ה) שאין בזו, ויש בזו מה שאין בזו. אבל א"י אינה חסירה כלום, שנאמר

<sup>2</sup> Tikkunei Zohar: Tikkun 27 "The spices of Havdalah too are symbolic of those Torah revelations that unite above and below. Because of this spices are good to bless for their essence is of Torah, of Shekinah and of the connection we have above."

ד"א: "ארץ" - אלו שאר ארצות, "והוצות" - אלו מדברות, "תבל" - זו א"י. ולמה נקרא שמה תבל? - ע"ש תבלין שבתוכה. איזהו תבלין שבתוכה? בגוים אין תורה, מכאן שהתורה בא"י" (**איכה ב**) זו תורה, שנאמר

## Sifre Deut 37

Shimon bar Yochai said: **תבל** "The world" in Prov.8:26,

**כ** עַד-לֹא עָשָׂה, אֶרֶץ וְחַצְוֹת; וְרֵאשׁ, עֲפָרוֹת **תַּבֵּל**. **26** While as yet He had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the beginning of the dust of the **world**.

refers to the Land of Israel, for it is said: "Delighting in the world of His Land" (Prov.8:31)<sup>3</sup>

**ל** אֵל מִשְׂחָקָת, **בְּתַבֵּל אֶרֶצוֹ**; וְשִׁעֲשִׂעִי, אֶת-בְּנֵי אָדָם. **31** Playing in His **habitable earth**, and my delights are with the sons of men.

Our main source for discussion is as follows:

**"Said the Holy One Blessed be He to the Jewish people: 'My son I have created an evil inclination and created the **תורה תבלין** Torah as a *tavlin*, spice, for it. If you are engaged in Torah you will not be given to its clutches."**

Talmud, Kiddushin 30b

*Maimonides struggles with the evil inclination in his commentary:*

*Raw food has little or no taste. Add some spices and the sweet aromas entice us to try what surely is a delicious dish.*

*The yetzer hara are the raw ingredients of life. Whether it be pride, greed, jealousy, seeking wealth, even anger, add the **right mix of spices** and what was once leading us on a most negative path can be transformed. We can channel our inherent anger so that it expresses itself when we see injustice, we can seek wealth and its accompanying status so that we may be honored for our charitable giving, we may be jealous of those more learned than us or build successful companies to stoke our egos - and provide work and riches for others.* <sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Why is it called **תבל** "the world?" (*tevel*) Because it is more savory (*metubelet*) than other lands.<sup>10</sup>

As we know, with other lands, what this one has, the other lacks; and what this one lacks, the other has. But the Land of Israel lacks for nothing! As it is said: "You will lack for nothing within it!" (Dt.8:9). Another word: "The land" (Prov.8:31)—**אֶרֶצוֹ** this refers to other lands. "fields" (Prov.8:26)—**וְחַצְוֹת** this refers to the deserts. "the world" (Prov.8:31)—**בְּתַבֵּל** this refers to the Land of Israel. **Why is it called "the world?" (*tevel*) בְּתַבֵּל "Because of the spice (*tevel*) within it."**<sup>11</sup>

Now, which spice is within it? This is Torah, for it is said: "Among the gentiles there is no Torah" (Lam.2:9).

**ט** טָבְעוּ בָּאָרֶץ שַׁעֲרֶיהָ, אֶבֶד וְשֹׁכֵר בְּרִיחֶיהָ; מַלְכָּה וְשָׂרֶיהָ **בְּגוֹיִם, אֵין תּוֹרָה--גַּם-נְבִיאֶיהָ, לֹא-מִצְאוּ חִזּוֹן מִיְהוָה.** {ס} **9** Her gates are sunk into the ground; He hath destroyed and broken her bars; her king and her princes are among the nations, instruction is no more; yea, her prophets find no vision from the LORD

On this basis [it is taught]: the Torah is in the Land of Israel.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.torahinmotion.org/discussions-and-blogs/pass-the-pepper-kiddushin-30>

*Therefore, let a man prepare his own mind and request from God that anything that should ever happen to him in this world, whether of the things that are by God's providence good, or of the things that are by Him evil, that the reason [for their occurrence] is so that he might attain true happiness. Now this was stated with regard to the Good Inclination [in man] and with regard to [his] Evil Inclination, that is to say, that he might lay to his heart the love of God and his [continued] faith in Him, even at an hour of rebellion or of wrath or of displeasure, seeing that all of this revolves around [man's] evil inclination, just as they have said: 'In all your ways acknowledge Him' (Prov. 3:6),<sup>5</sup>*

The power of man to make good choices is mirrored in the RAMCHAL:

*"Man is the creature created for the purpose of being drawn close to G-d. He is placed between perfection and deficiency, with the power to earn perfection. Man must earn this perfection, however, through his own free will... Man's inclinations are therefore balanced between good (Yetzer HaTov) and evil (Yetzer HaRa), and he is not compelled toward either of them. He has the power of choice and is able to choose either side knowingly and willingly..."*

Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto, Derech Hashem

In this essay, I will be analyzing the dual use of the metaphor of **תבלין** in the Torah's fight against the evil inclination as a kind of antidote or as a spice. The word **תורה תבלין** "**tavlin**" is used with both connotations in mind. I will explore the differences and the approach of the Hassidic masters in contrast to the classical Jewish Philosophers in the use of the term.

ת"ר (דברים יא, יח) ושמתם סם תם נמשלה תורה כסם חיים משל לאדם שהכה את בנו מכה גדולה והניח לו רטייה על מכתו ואמר לו בני כל זמן שהרטייה זו על מכתך אכול מה שהנאתך ושתה מה שהנאתך ורחוץ בין בחמין בין בצונן ואין

<sup>5</sup>Talmud Berachot 63a cited by Maimonides op cit.

ו בקל-קרקה דעהו; והוא, יישר ארחהו.

6 In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct thy paths.

בר קפרא איזוהי פרשה קטנה שכל גופי תורה. [meaning], even in a matter involving transgression. תורה. .... תלוינה בכל דרכיך דעהו והוא יישר ארחהו אמר רבא אפילו לדבר עבירה

Bar Kappara taught: Which is a brief passage upon which all fundamental principles of Torah are dependent? "In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths" Proverbs 3:6. Rava said: One must apply this principle even to acts of transgression, as even then one must adhere to God and refrain from sinning excessively.

אתה מתיירא ואם אתה מעבירה הרי היא מעלה נומי כך הקב"ה אמר להם לישראל בני בראתי יצר הרע ובראתי לו תורה תבלין ואם אתם עוסקים בתורה אין אתם נמסרים בידו שנאמר (בראשית ד, ז) הלא אם תטיב שאת ואם אין אתם עוסקין בתורה אתם נמסרים בידו שנא' לפתח חטאת רובץ ולא עוד אלא שכל משאו ומתנו בכך שנאמר ואלו תשוקתו ואם אתה רוצה אתה מושל בו שנאמר ואתה תמשל בו

B Talmud, Kiddushin 30b

We begin with the original statement in the Talmud (Kiddushin) where the parable of a father striking his son with a serious blow causing an open wound, is presented as the disturbing mashal/exemplar of Torah as a salve for the wound inflicted by God on mankind, the evil inclination.

*Is the salve meant to heal the wound or control the spread of infection?*

*Why did the father inflict the wound on the son?*

*Was it deserved?*

*Was the wound to be treated using the exemplar of Torah, will it be healed or merely control the spread of the infection or gangrene?*

*The evil inclination was created by the same author as the salve, what does this say about predestination and a "set up" for mankind?*

*Is the real message of the parable a hidden protest by the Rabbis?*



*The Sages taught: "And you shall place [vesamtem] these words of Mine in your hearts" (Deuteronomy 11:18). Read this as though it stated **sam tam**, a perfect (potion) elixir. The Torah is compared to an elixir of life. There is a parable that illustrates this: A person hit his son with a strong blow and placed a bandage on his wound. And he said to him: My son, as long as this bandage is on your wound and is healing you, eat what you enjoy and drink what you enjoy, and bathe in either hot water or cold water, and you do not need to be afraid, as it will heal your wound. But if you take it off, the wound will (become gangrenous) will break out into sores.<sup>6</sup>*

כך הקב"ה אמר להם לישראל בני בראתי יצר הרע ובראתי לו תורה תבלין ואם אתם עוסקים בתורה אין אתם נמסרים בידו שנאמר (בראשית ד, ז) הלא אם תטיב שאת

*So too the Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Israel: My children, I created an evil inclination, which is the wound, and I created Torah as its antidote. If you are engaged in Torah study you will not be given over into the hand of the evil inclination, as it is stated: "If you do well, shall it not be lifted up?" (Genesis 4:7). One who engages in Torah study lifts himself above the evil inclination.*

ואם אין אתם עוסקין בתורה אתם נמסרים בידו שנא' לפתח חטאת רובץ ולא עוד אלא שכל משאו ומתנו כך שנאמר ואלו תשוקתו ואם אתה רוצה אתה מושל בו שנאמר ואתה תמשל בו

And if you do not engage in Torah study, you are given over to its power, as it is stated: "Sin crouches at the door" (Genesis 4:7).<sup>7</sup> Moreover, all of the evil inclination's deliberations will be concerning you, as it is stated in the same verse: "And to you is its desire." And if you wish you shall rule over it, as it is stated in the conclusion of the verse: "But you may rule over it" (Genesis 4:7).

In deeper analysis of the parable:

**(Beraisa):** "V'Samtem הם ושמתם הם (you will put them)" - Torah is compared to a *Sam Tam* הם (a pure potion) of life, (by splitting the verb into two nouns and substituting the samekh for a sin) From the context of the verse "and you will put My words on your heart(s)" the midrash has provided a dual meaning to those words, inasmuch as they have a medicinal effect beyond the didactic command to study them.

### **Mashal/Parabola**

This maybe compared to a man who severely wounded his son. He put a bandage on the wound and told him 'as long as the bandage is on, you may eat and bathe like you desire. If you remove the bandage, blisters will sprout.

<sup>6</sup> Deut. XI, 18: Therefore, shall ye "lay up" (we-samtem) these my words, like a bandage or salve.

<sup>7</sup> Gen. IV, 7; so the E.V. Possibly the Talmud translates: at the door of sin-i.e., when one yields to the Evil Desire — one lies lost — i.e., becomes its slave.

*The father wounds the son. Why? Out of rage? We are not told. Now the consequences of the rage are evident in the wounds of the son. Then he adjures the son in wound care! A warning, as long as it is covered, "as long as you are healing the wound or protecting it from spreading, you can live as normal. But should you remove the salve or bandage then the wound is no longer under control or protected and the lesion will spread into boils, blisters or gangrene." The son is now condemned to chronic wound care treatment like a diabetic foot ulcer.*

*The father has inflicted a wound which is not a localized lesion but one which can become infected and spread and the consequences might be fatal ("severely wounded"). The wound has caused a secondary result and must be managed in order not to affect the whole limb or body. It is this secondary consequence of the wound the son must watch. The initial wounding, the pain and suffering of the blow (we are not told whether deserved or not) is incomparable to the secondary effects of the wound which can become malignant if not held in permanent check.*

### **Nimshal/Explication**

God warned Israel, "I created the evil inclination, and I created the Torah to fix it;"

- i. If you engage in Torah, it will not overcome you - "if you will improve, you will rise";
- ii. If you do not engage in Torah, it will overcome you - "sin crouches at the opening."
- iii. Further, the evil inclination will be dedicated to make you stumble - "your desire is to it"
- iv. If you want, you can rule over it - "you will rule over it."

The explication of the parable clearly lays responsibility on the father. God created the evil inclination, but he also created the treatment/countermeasures. In the parable the father does not "apply the bandage" rather, he provides an antibiotic salve and instructs the son to apply it at all times to prevent contagion.

*The father wounding the son is not new to Midrash, a number of times in lamentations rabba we are told of a father who suffers rage and kills his son, wounds his son or banishes his son.<sup>8</sup>*

*The entire midrash is based on the notion of two inclinations in man (and you will put My words on your heart(s)) לבבך the plural of hearts לבבך prompts the adjuration to love God with both hearts, the good and the evil.*

HaKetav VeHaKabbala (R. Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenberg, 1785-1865) comments on this verse in Deut 6:5. The commentator first summarizes Maimonides' view of the Rabbinic idea of two inclinations (*yetzer tov and yetzer hara*) which should both be enlisted in serving God.

Maimonides, according to R. Mecklenberg posits that each of the Yetzer's will relate to a different set of Commandments, usually delineated as "*Mishpatim*" (laws that are logical, which comprise the social contract that governs interpersonal relations) and "*Chukim*" (laws that are difficult if not impossible to understand, and which generally focus on ritual law, and non-rational). The Yetzer HaRa doesn't bother with *Mishpatim* because the Yetzer HaTov has an "easy" time to guide the individual to comply with what is logical and understandable.

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<sup>8</sup> See David Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996

Where the Yetzer HaRa comes into play is with regard to *Chukim*. Maimonides states that it is necessary to be “*Koveish*” (conquer) the Yetzer HaRa with regard to such Mitzvot, and if one does, then he will be worshipping God not only with his Yetzer HaTov, but also with (perhaps more precisely “despite”) his Yetzer HaRa.

But R. Mecklenberg notes that there are those who take issue with Maimonides, and argue that all Mitzvot should be approached in “the Yashar” mode, i.e., one should come to the point with regard to all Mitzvot whereby the temptations of the Evil Inclination have been rendered null and void to the extent that one never has to even think twice about them. Apparently, the “Milchemet HaYetzer” (war of the Inclination[s]) that Maimonides describes, appears to them to indicate that the individual in question has not reached an ideal level of purity and sanctity.<sup>9</sup>

In the trajectory of Aggadah, the RAMCHAL, Rabbi Moses Chayim Luzzatto realizes the power of the evil inclination claiming that only Torah can fight and win over its power; Maimonidean will power is insufficient. Since God created this evil inclination it is too powerful to overcome without the divine potion to remedy it.

הנה פשוט הוא, שאם הבורא לא ברא למכה זו אלא רפואה זו, אי אפשר בשום פנים שירפא האדם מזאת המכה בלתי זאת הרפואה, ומי שיחשבו להנצל זולתה, אינו אלא טועה, ויראה טעותו לבסוף כשימות בחטאו. כי הנה היצר הרע באמת חזק הוא באדם מאד, ומבלי ידיעתו של האדם הולך הוא ומתגבר בו ושולט עליו. ואם יעשה כל התחבולות שבעולם ולא יקח הרפואה שנבראה לו שהיא התורה, כמו שכתבתי, לא ידע ולא ירגיש בתגבורת חליו אלא כשימות בחטאו ותאבד נשמתו.

*It's obvious if the creator only made the Torah the **cure for this wound** (the yetzer hara), then it is impossible, without any exception, to be healed from it without [Torah]. Someone who thinks they can be saved from it without [Torah], is only making a mistake, and he'll see his mistake when he dies due to his sin. Behold, the yetzer hara, in truth, is very strong in a person. Without his knowledge it grows and overpowers him. Even if he tries every strategy in the world besides the cure that was created for it, meaning the Torah, as I wrote, he won't know or sense the strengthening of his disease. He'll only realize when he dies from his sin and loses his soul.<sup>10</sup>*

*Mesillat Yesharim: Ch 5,*

In the Musar movement's revolution against the pure intellectual study of Torah divorced from the moral and pietistic elements of devotion, its leader appeals to the mystical power of Torah to rescue the student from the grip of the evil inclination beyond the mere intellectual mastery and study of Torah as an end in itself. Clearly the split between the intellectual mastery of Talmudic texts and the moral religious and ethical behavior of its students prompted a crisis that resulted in the corrective approach of the Musar movement.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://vaakovbieler.wordpress.com/2015/11/18/serving-god-with-ones-evil-inclination/>

<sup>10</sup> Derech Hashem

Rav Yisroel Salanter, its founder, claims there is another power that transcends the subject of the study itself.

He explains that to study about a specific Mitzva leads the student to be more compliant with the Mitzva. But he adds that there is an additional property of the **"Torah tavlin/spice"**, which transcends the human intelligence, as mentioned in Talmud, (Sotah 21a) "As for [study of] Torah, whether while one is engaged upon it or not, it protects and rescues." אלא אמר רבא תורה. בעידנא דעסיק בה מגנא ומצלא בעידנא דלא עסיק בה אגוני מגנא אצולי לא מצלא בעידנא דלא עסיק בה אגוני מגנא אצולי לא מצלא

Regardless of the topic, Torah occupation can save the student from sin, for instance, **if** he will learn "an ox has gored a cow", it will be saved from Lashon Hara (calumny). This is a consequence of the *spirituality of Torah*.

This points to a mystical element of Torah that has the capability of protecting the student from the evil inclination although we are not told how this works.

אגרת המוסר

אין העולם רגילין בה כמו בניאוף וכיוצא כחאחרים ז"ל מעוטן בעריות ותקפה עליו ילדו שנעשה לו כהתר ר"ל, עיקר רפואתו [לכד התנוונות היראה והמוסר השייכים תאגדות וחדשי קז"ל וספרי מוסר השייכים לזה] היא למוד ההלכות השייכים לזה בעינין ובסוד ע"פ לעשות, בתחלתה נטה שאין ילדו תקפו לזה כדאשכחן בחומר לחאזון בקולין (ד"ז) שהתפן שהיה נביתו נפסק ועבר על כל יראה, תפליטה אחר הפסק להקל האסור (כדפי"ר ש"ס) וסמכין ע"ז דודאי עשה כן, ואיך לא ננוט ולא יתם לנו כמים בראותנו שפלות נפשינו כנדרות הראשונים אשר החומר לפנים אשר החזיק קצון נפסק היה לו קניה נענעי להקל אסורו בהדבר נמה שאין לו חאזה, וכדורותינו בעוה"ז אכנתו טפלים נגדר להכעים, נעניות אשר הורגלו לא נשים לכד להתליף תאותם נהם להקל האסור ורעתו רנה [כדין מוסר להכעים ר"ל], ועיקר הרפואה לכד [לכד התנוונות היראה כי אין די באר גדולת העונש בלהכעים חול לחאזון ואכנתו מושכים על נפשינו עונשים מרים באין חאזה חולאת] לעיין בהלכות הללו איש לפי ערכו [הדבר לרדך עיין גדול ליעדם אינם מוסרים כ"כ באחריות ולרדך חפשו לעיין במקור הדברים] זאת מתן פרוי לאש לאש אחת ענה נפשו להשמך מה שאולי תחית לכה"ם חלהכעים הרבה עד אשר חובל חח כחה ע"י עסק דב בהלכות השייכים להעניות הרגילות לקטת טבע אחרת כל יעלה על לב לעבור עליהם גם אם יכד הדבר, והנה בתבלין התורה ליצר הרע יש עוד נחיתה רוחניות [כלאה שכל ופשי האדם להכיר נמתה] היא מחמר חז"ל בסוטה (כ"א). תורה בעידנא דעסיק בה מנלי בו אין נ"מ באיזה ד"ת יהיה עסקו תגילגו מחטא, אם יעסוק בשור שנגח את הפרה וכיוצא תגילגו גם מלשה"ר וכיוצא, הגם כי אינם שייכים ז"ל. רק רוחניות התורה תשמרנו, והנה זה נשקיף בעיני חודרת נראה כי התנולחיתו למרכ רפואת היצה"ר היא דק נבחינה הגשמיית היא התנוונות היראה ולמוד ההלכות נביל, כי רפואה השני היא הרוחניות היא רק נאה ממילא ונקראת רפואה מוקרית, כי מנות למוד התורה היא נ"ע נפ"ע תלוי בגדרה המבואר בה' ת"ת איך להתנהג בה נגד מנות וכגד עניני העולם אין נ"מ בהגהתה איך יצרו של אדם מחגבר עליו אם מועט ואם הרבה, והאדם נרדך ללמוד תמיד לקיים מנות ת"ת

\* ורואים אכנתו אשר גם לדיכא נשתנה בזה"ל כ"פ"ש הבית הלל ביי"ד (ס"י ב' ס"ק ב') חז"ל מוסר אוכל נבילות למיאזון, ונראה דבשני בנתיבו מיי שהוא קשור לאכול נבילות למיאזון אין אוכלין חטבו שום דבר מאכל שיש לחשו בו קשה איסור לשום דבר שבקדושה (ר"ל שקשור הוא לעשות אף שלא למיאזון, אע"פ שלכנינו לא הוזקו אלא לאכול למיאזון) ויכול אכן שלא לתת לו הסכין נדוק לשאול ולאכול מקיטתו (שהיה קומר מקין השי"ת) ועי' שמועה דבר זה (לאכול נבילות למיאזון) בכלל מוסר יקשד לכל מילי עכ"ל.

In preparing for the radical innovative approach of Hassidut to fighting the evil inclination we must begin with its founder the BESHT.

*“God is great and much praised, in the City of our God, His holy mountain.” (Psalms 48:2)  
This may be interpreted in context of the verse, “Israel, in whom I shall be glorified” (Isaiah 49:3):  
God derives much glory, delight and pleasure from the tsaddik’s deeds, his Torah and prayer.  
Our sages, of blessed memory, state: “[The Holy One, blessed is He, says to Israel: ‘My  
children,] **I have created the yetzer hara, and I created the תורה תבלין Torah as its תבלין**  
**its “spices” (seasoning) or antidote.’”***

*Kiddushin 30b*

*This is to say: “Your love and affection for us is very great! You created the yetzer hara and You created the Torah. Thus, you gave us the strength to overcome the yetzer hara and to ‘sweeten’ it by means of the Torah, even as spices are used in cooking. It follows, then, that everything is from You. All we accomplished is from You and from Your power. Nonetheless, you take great delight in it, and You take pride in us, as if we had done it by the might of our own hands. <sup>1</sup> This manifests the fierce love, and the additional affection that was made known to us, in calling us ‘children of the Omnipresent’ (Avot 3:18).”*

### **Mashal/Parable**

*It is like a child dearly loved by his father, visited by a guest who came to examine him. [The boy] had no understanding at all of the legal ruling [on which he was to be tested] because of its great profundity and subtlety. The father, for his great affection for him, could not bear his beloved son’s anguish at being confounded and unable to understand. What did the father do? He provided him with an opening to that ruling, showing him a way to follow, so that he would be able to discuss it properly. He just about informed him of the full content of the ruling.*

*Now the guest came to ask [the son] about the ruling and to test him in front of his father. [The son] started to recite the ruling and the visitor asked him several questions, raising a number of difficulties. He answered appropriately, offering objections and resolving them, with a clear and brilliant mind. His father is joyful, delighted and proud seeing this. [The father knows that the son’s] achievement was wholly due to himself. Nonetheless, he has great pleasure [from it]. Moreover, as the visitor notes the father’s pleasure, he wants to enhance it further. Thus, he prevails over the boy with additional questions, raising numerous new and complex difficulties. The son, however, trusting in his father, bestirs himself on his own to be wise, and resolves all difficulties.*

## *Nimshal/explication*

*This is the meaning of their saying that “he who is greater than another, his yetzer [hara] is greater than the other’s.” (Sukkah 52a) Also, our sages, of blessed memory, said: “Satan acted for the sake of Heaven.” (Baba Bathra 16a)<sup>2</sup> The moral is clearly understood. For when [Satan, i.e., the yetzer hara] sees that the tsaddik subdues him, and that this causes delight unto God, he strengthens himself against [the tsaddik] every day,<sup>3</sup> and [the tsaddik] subdues, and prevails over, his yetzer [hara].*

*Our Sages, of blessed memory, thus said that “the Holy One, blessed is He, called Jacob Eil.” (Megillah 18a) Eil denotes strength and might,<sup>4</sup> as in “He took away the eilei (mighty) of the land.” (Ezekiel 17:13) This is the meaning of “He called him Eil,” because the tsaddik is referred to as “the mighty who subdues his yetzer [hara].” (Avot 4:1)*

*In the time to come, our sages, of blessed memory, say, the yetzer hara “will seem to the righteous to look like a tall mountain” (Sukkah 52a), and the might of the righteous in subduing so tall a mountain will be recognized, manifest and made famous to all.*

*In the time to come, perhaps all will refer to the tsaddikim with the name Eil. This is alluded in the verse “As now, it is said [to Jacob and to] Israel, ‘What has Eil wrought?’” (Numbers 23:23) It is known that “Israel” is a term for the tsaddik.<sup>5</sup> Thus it is written: “As now, it is said . . . to Israel,” i.e., to the tsaddik, saying to him “What has Eil wrought?” That is, the tsaddik is asked, “What have you, Eil, wrought?” just as one inquires after the well-being of another in terms of “You, ‘so-and-so,’ what do you do, and how are you?”*

The sequence of the text thus reads as follows:<sup>11</sup>

*“God is great and much praised.” That is, it is incumbent upon us to magnify and praise Him for all the good He bestows upon us. For all the greatness and glory that He, blessed be He, derives from our worship is altogether “be’ir Elokeinu (in the City of our God)”: be’iris an expression of hit’orerut (stirring; awakening),<sup>6</sup> [thus reading be’ir Elokeinu as “by virtue of the stirring] by our God.”*

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<sup>11</sup> FOOTNOTES to BESHT reading

1. All of man’s achievements are possible only by virtue of God providing him with the possibility and energy to do them. In effect, then, man should not get any credit for these. Nonetheless, God accounts it to man as if he had accomplished it on his own. This resolves the apparent contradiction in the verse “You, God, have kindness, for you reward man in accordance with his deeds” (Psalms 62:13): “Kindness” implies gratuitous grace; to “reward man in accordance with his deeds” implies well-deserved compensation, thus not something gratuitous! However, though it is only by Divine grace that man has the ability and opportunity to do good, God in His kindness rewards him as if he had done it on his own. (*Likkutim Yekarim*, sect. 110; *Keter Shem Tov*, sect. 191-193, and end of 354, and *cf. ibid.* sect. 55.)

2. i.e. he serves the purpose of testing man, as in the parable cited above, sect. 130, note 2.

3. *Sukkah* 52b.

4. *Zohar* III:132a.

5. See Isaiah 49:3 at the beginning of this section. In *Maggid Devarav Leya’akov*, sect. 250, this is stated more explicitly: “‘Israel in whom I shall be glorified’ refers to the *tsaddikim*, for His glory, blessed be He, comes about by means of their good deeds and their *devekut* in God.”

6. This interpretation for the word *ir* is found already in *Targum Yehonathan* on Numbers 21:27.

7. i.e., to take the initiative on his own in order to deserve what comes his way. One is not to rely on gratuitous gifts (which the Talmud refers to as “bread of shame”) or the merits of another. See *Keter Shem Tov*, sect. 35, 133 and 260; *Likkutim Yekarim*, sect. 260.

8. Job 31:2, related to the Divine soul in man.

9. *Be’ir Elokeinu* is thus given two interpretations: In the preceding paragraph it is read in terms of our ability to serve *God and overcome the yetzer hara* “by virtue of the stirring by our God” from Above. In this paragraph it is read in terms of the admonition that our service of God must be by means of our own “stirring of the ‘part’ of our God within us,” i.e., of our Divine soul and *yetzer tov*.

*For He is the one who bestirs us and gives us the strength to serve Him and to prevail, as our Sages, of blessed memory said: "If the Holy One, blessed is He, would not help [man], [he could not overcome (the yetzer hara).]" (Sukkah 52b) Nonetheless, He, blessed be He, still has pleasure and pride, and gives us a great reward, rewarding us **as if** we had done everything on our own.*

*In fact, however, the true service is something that has to come by virtue of our own stirring.<sup>7</sup> We are "a part of God from on high;"<sup>8</sup> thus [our service should be] be'ir (by the stirring) of our yetzer [hatov], i.e., the portion of Divinity within us-"Elokeinu-our God."<sup>9</sup>*

### **Baal Shem Tov: Tzava'at Harivash 138<sup>12</sup>**

In this dramatic shift from prior rabbinic readings, the Baal Shem Tov realizes that all our spiritual accomplishments derive from a monistic influence from the pantheistic divine, incarnated in all matters. The "as if" points to the approximation, *as if* we really only received reward because in reality it all comes from God. (Except those few tzaddikim who do arouse the divine from below). The rest of us battle with the evil inclination at the pleasure of the divine and its overcoming is always with His assistance.

The Holy Ruszhiner made the following humoristic aphorism that illuminates the hassidic approach to the evil inclination:

*The **yetzer** hara never relents. R' Yisroel of Rizhin asked, "Why does the Talmud refer to the **yetzer** hara as an '**old and foolish king**'? It is **old**, because it is as **old** as Creation. It is a **king** because it rules over so many people. But in what way is it **foolish**? On the contrary, the **yetzer** hara appears to be very sly **and** cunning.*

*"But when I was imprisoned, the **yetzer** hara did not leave me. I said, 'No sane person wishes to be in prison. I had no choice. I was put in chains **and** dragged here. But no one forced you to come. If you came into prison of your own accord, you are indeed a fool.' "*

His deep psychological insight into human nature reflected in this aphorism has no illusion about the power of the evil inclination that even followed him in extremis when locked up in jail.

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<sup>12</sup> [https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/146283/jewish/Tzavaat-Harivash-138.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/146283/jewish/Tzavaat-Harivash-138.htm)

The most radical approach I found was in the writing of Reb Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl<sup>13</sup> His writing finds inspiration found in the Zohar and writings of the ARI z'l.

### Me'or Eynayim Parsha Va'eschanan : "Ve'ahavta" (Deuteronomy 6:4-7)

ואהבת את ה' אלהיך בכל לבבך וגו'. ודרשו רז"ל בשני יצריך ביצר הטוב וביצר הרע ולהבין איך אפשר לאהוב השם יתברך ביצר הרע אבל הענין הוא שהשם יתברך צוה לאהוב אותו יתברך ואיך אפשר לאהוב דבר שלא נודע מהותו לכן יעצה לנו התורה ביצר הרע והוא שהשם יתברך ברא בעולם משל שממנו נוכל להבין הנמשל דהיינו כל התענוגים שבעולם כמו אכילה ושתייה ומשגל שיבין מפני מה אני אוהב אותו דבר הלא הוא רק אהבה נפולה מעולם אהבה כנזכר אצלנו כמה פעמים ועל אחת כמה וכמה שיש לי לאהוב הבורא ב"ה שהוא מקור כל התענוגים וזה שאמר דוד המלך ע"ה (תהלים ס"ט, י"ב) ואהי להם למשל רצה לומר שהם סוברים שאני אוהב במשל לבדו ואין אני לוקח הנמשל אבל באמת אינו כן. אך יש יצר הרע שמסמא עיניו בל יראה ליקח הנמשל רק לאחוז במשל לבדו העצה לזה הוא עסק התורה כמאמר רז"ל אם פגע בך מנוול זה משכהו לבית המדרש וכו' ולהבין למה קורא כאן בשם מנוול דוקא הענין הוא כי כל התענוגים הם תענוגים נמצא הוא שבור ואינו שלם וסופם הוא דבר מאוס כמו אכילה שבורים ואינם שלימים שהם רק לפי שעה ואחר כך בטל נעשה אחר כך דבר מאוס וכן שאר כל התאוות וזהו אם פגע בך מנוול זה שמסיחך לדברים המאוסים משכהו לבהמ"ד כי התורה היא תבלין ליצר הרע כמאמר בראתי יצר הרע בראתי תורה תבלין וזהו נקרא תשובה מאהבה שמישיב עצמו מהתאוות עצמם לאהוב השם יתברך וזדונות נעשים לו כזכיות שמכל עבירה נעשה מצות אהבה שלוקח מהם הנמשל לאהוב השם יתברך ולכן נקרא התורה תבלין כמו תבלין שממתקים אותו התבשיל עצמו כך על ידי התורה מהזדונות עצמן נעשים זכיות והבן

*"And you shall love the Lord your God" (Deuteronomy 6:4-7),*

*And sages interpret<sup>14</sup> (the plural of hearts) לבבך as meaning there are two hearts or two desires in the heart, the good and the evil inclination.*

*Now to understand how it is possible to love the divine with the evil inclination, furthermore how can one love something that has no knowledge of its essence? As a result, the Torah advises to make use of the evil inclination. Since the Lord created in the world (the concept of) a mashaal (exempla) from which we might derive a nimshal (explication). So too from all the physical pleasures of this world, for instance eating drinking and sexuality, one can question as to why he or she is so addicted to these pleasures, surely they come from a divine source that has (somehow) "fallen", from that supernal (archetypal) world of "love". (as we have mentioned a number of times). And how much more so if I have the creator blessed be He, to love, who is the source of all pleasure in this world.*

<sup>13</sup> (born 1730, Norynsk [uk], Volhynia - died 1787, Chernobyl, Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth) founder of the Chernobyl Hasidic dynasty. He was a disciple of the Baal Shem Tov and the Maggid of Mezritch, and published one of the first works of Hasidic thought.

<sup>14</sup> Berachot 54a (Devarim 6:5) "And you will love the LORD, your God with all of 'Levavecha' (your heart) ..." "With all your heart"—with both of your inclinations, the Good Inclination and the Evil Inclination. What precipitated the interpretation was the odd spelling of the Hebrew word "Leiv" (heart) whereby two "Veit"'s were employed. According to the Talmud, a dualism is suggested by this extra letter in the Tora—the underlying assumption of the interpretation is that every letter in the Tora text must be accounted for, and appropriately mined for specific meaning—whereby a constant struggle between one's "two hearts" is experienced by every individual.

This faith in the possibility of uplifting fallen love may be characterized as the central moralistic theme of the Me'or Eynayim. The Rebbe elsewhere (six times) talks of fallen loves as lower representations of the divine love above:

*It is known that Torah is referred to as Torat Hesed, referring to the quality of love. Therefore, the essence of worship in both Torah study and fulfilling the commandments is derived from love. Love is the true midah of Torah and its 613 commandments. But the way to enter the gate of that inner love comes about through various fallen loves. These are the ripe fruits from the world of hesed, fallen into a broken state and garbed in external loves. When some love, even of an external matter, is aroused in a person, it becomes easier for him to bring that love into an interior holiness, thus loving the Creator with that awakened love. [That love] is then lifted high and stripped of the outer garment in which it had been dressed. It is raised up and included within its holy root in the world of hesed...if, as that love is aroused, one begins to study Torah out of love of the Creator, or performs some commandment. But even if you begin to love God without any Torah study or commandment, it is also considered Torah. Love itself is one of the 613 commandments! Thus, you bind that love which had fallen from Torat hesed to its root in the Torah, which is hesed itself...<sup>15</sup>*

And this is what David meant (Psalm 69:12):

יב וְאַתְּנָה לְבוּשֵׁי שָׂק; וְאַהֵי לָהֶם לְמִשְׁלִי. **12** I made sackcloth also my garment, and I became a byword (proverb) unto them.<sup>16</sup>

*For they think that I hold onto the parable (mashal) alone without the explication (nimshal), but in fact this is not the case. For the evil inclination blinds a person from seeing, so as to work out the nimshal, and to remain (stuck) with the mashal.*

Punning on the term מִשְׁלִי whereby King David fears he is being used as a byword for faithlessness or worse, the Rebbe misreads the term in the Psalm verse as to the notion of a fallen spiritual archetype, so for instance David's love for Bathsheba down here in this earthly world is a reflection of his true intent (nimshal) which is the love of the divine. But in the gates of his city the people see him only as the mashal, the lower carnal intent.

The Rebbe sees the work of the evil inclination as preventing us from realizing the true desires of the flesh (the mashal) as being a reflection of the higher divine love (nimshal). Its work is to disconnect the mashal from the nimshal. So, David complains to the Lord that people see his action (with Bat Sheba) as a mere satisfaction of his carnal/evil urges whereas he was connecting his love for her with his divine love.

<sup>15</sup> Yesamah Lev, Rosh Ha-Shanah, 554.

<sup>16</sup> The following verse implies the word לְמִשְׁלִי. Could mean a song, as in the song of drunkards

בְּגִישֵׁיהֶוּ בִּי יְשִׁבֵי שֶׁעַר אֲנִינֹת שׁוֹתֵי שִׁכָּר:

**13** They talk about me, those who sit in the gate, and [they make] melodies [about me] for those who imbibe strong drink.

His recommendation (to connect the lower loves with the divine love) is through the “study” of Torah. (a technical term in Hassidut implying much more than didactic mastery of a text but using the text as a pretext for *dveykut*, or attaching to the author of the text mystically).

Torah for this Rebbe is not confined to textual didactic learning, rather the tool by which to see everything as a reflection of the supernal world. Everything in the world, including all those moral qualities and values (*middot*) present within the corporeal and created realm, is just an example, pointing to something beyond itself. That is the divinity within it: The whole earth is filled with His glory (Isa. 6:3). His classical theory of immanence is stretched to the limits with the use of the technical term *mashal* as a theological category:

יְהוָה--בְּשָׁמַיִם, הָקִין  
כְּסָאוֹ; וּמְלֻכּוּתוֹ, בְּכָל מְשָׁלָה.  
19 The LORD hath established His throne in the heavens;  
and His kingdom **ruleth** over all.

“His kingdom rules (*mashalah*) over all (Ps. 103:19) to mean “He is exemplified (*mashal*) in everything!”

As Chazal state:<sup>17</sup>

תנא דבי ר' ישמעאל בני אם פגע בך מנוול זה משכהו לבית המדרש

“I that lowlife accosts you, drag him to the study hall.”

So, to understand why he (the evil inclination) is called a lowlife<sup>18</sup> specifically, we must understand that all the pleasures (of this world) are broken pleasures, and lack completeness (integration?) for (worldly bodily pleasure) is merely temporary, following which they are nullified. Thus, it is broken and lacks perfection. In fact (too much of it?) it ends up becoming repulsive (once the urge is satisfied) for instance with eating, once satiated, more food becomes repulsive, and this is true for the other physical urges too. Which explains the term *מנוול* as lowlife, since he (the evil inclination) leads one to (pleasures that end up) repulsive the advice is to drag his to the study hall, **for Torah is the תורה תבלין *tavlin/spice for the evil inclination***, as stated in the Talmud: בראתי יצר הרע ובראתי לו תורה תבלין I created the evil inclination but I also created the Torah as a spice... And this is the concept of “Repentance out of love” (as opposed to repentance from fear of the divine) since he turns himself around (transforms/makes use of) his lowly physical love (of this world passion/ pleasures) in order to love the Holy Name blessed be He.

In this way we can understand the Talmud (Yoma 86b)<sup>19</sup> גדולה תשובה שזדונות נעשות לו כזכויות  
Because from every sin one can derive the Mitzva to love the divine, whereby one derives the *nimshal* (of loving God) even from the sin, **and this is why the Torah is called תורה תבלין**

<sup>17</sup> Kiddushin 30b:8

<sup>18</sup> Various translated as villain, rotten, contemptible, scummy; ugly

<sup>19</sup> The Talmud struggles with the effect of repentance to actually transform sin to merit:

(R. Yochanan): Teshuva is so great that it (so to speak) overrides a Lo Sa'Asei in the Torah (the Lav of taking back one's divorced wife after marriage to another man, as indicated in the proof text).

(R. Yonasan): Teshuva brings the redemption (proof text).

((Resh Lakish): Teshuva causes Zedonos to be Shegagos (text).

Question: But Resh Lakish has taught that Zedonos become Zechuyos (proof text)!

Answer: One speaks of Teshuva out of fear/miYira'ah (they become Shegagos) and one speaks Teshuva out of love/MiAhavah (they become Zechuyos).

***tavlin/spice just like spice makes the food palatable so too through the Torah, the sin themselves become merits...and understand this!***

In this dramatic rendition of the Talmud passage the Rebbe redefines *tavlin* תורה תבלין not as mere antidote or salve rather as spice. And in a daring and dazzling exposition he weaves a mystical notion of immanence with the problem of the evil inclination and how is it possible for us to overcome that which God has created within us. The evil urge becomes a God-given tool by which we might transform ourselves by seeing everything in this world including our pleasures desires and even evil urges as tools for transformation into the love of the divine.

In a way he has raised the spiritual stakes from the dualistic notion of the religious command to fight the good versus evil urges, to a monistic view where the sin of lust has become theologized in a powerful way. Carnal desire is not only a transgression against the literal Torah's commandment but a willful perversion of God's own greatest gift to humanity, the power to love.

Even more radical is the use of the literary device of *mashal/nimshal* from the Psalmist (69:12) to the pun on (Psalm 103:19)

יֵט יְהוָה—בְּשָׁמַיִם                      הָיָן      19 The LORD hath established His throne in the heavens;  
וּמַלְכוּתוֹ, בְּכֹל מַשְׁלָה.              וְהָיָה      and His kingdom ruleth over all.

The notion that the world is a *mashal*/parable needing explanation is seen also, in the Degel Machaneh Ephrayim, grandson of the BESHT:

דגל מחנה אפרים, לקוטים א

טעם למה נקראה התורה משל הקדמוני (שמואל - א כ"ד, י"ג). והוא כי יש להבין מהו בחינת המשל כי משל הוא על דרך חכם שרוצה לומר דבר חכמה לפני אנשים פשוטים צריך להלביש את הדברים בכדי להבינם במקום אחיזתם כמו לסוחרים דרך סחורה ולבנאים דרך הבנין בכדי להבינם דברי החכמה אשר רוצה להבינם בכדי לקרבם אל חכמת האמת ועל ידי זה מעלה אותם האנשים למקום החכמה אשר הוא משיג ולכן אותיות משל היא אותיות שלם כי בתחילה היה החכמה רחוקה מהם וחלוק מהם ואחר כך נעשה קרובה ואחדות בהם עם החכמה והוא אותיות שלם בחינת המחבר והבן, ולפעמים המשל הוא מעשה אשר לא היה בכדי להעלות אותם האחוזים בבחינת השפלות והשקרים לקרבן משם אל החכמה ונברר הטוב, והרע נופל ממילא:

והתורה היא אמת ומשלים שלה אמיתים כמו שכתב שלמה המלך ע"ה (משלי א', ו') להבין משל ומליצה המשל הוא אשה זונה והמליצה היא עבודה זרה, וכן המשל היא אשה טובה והמליצה היא התורה ושניהם הם כאחד טובים להבין ולהשכיל, וכן התורה הוא שורש כל העולמות העליונים והתחתונים ושורש כל הנבראים כמו שכתוב (שם ח', ל') ואהיה אצלו אמון ואהיה שעשועים יום יום בודאי לפי זכות העולם וציחצוחו כן הוא שם צירופי התורה והתורה שנתן הקב"ה לישראל בה נכלל הכל מראש ועד סוף ולכן היא עמוקה מני ים ורחבה מני ארץ (עיי' איוב י"א, ט') כי אין לה גבול וסוף רק לכל אחד כפי קבלתו וכפי שורש נשמתו כה משיגו ולפי חשקו ואהבתו אותה כה מגלה לו מסתורה וכאשר אמרתי על פסוק (תהלים י"ט, ו') והוא כחתן פירוש האדם נקרא חתן התורה לגלות לו מסתריה כאשר יוצא מחופתו מן המסכים המבדילים בינו לבין קונו וזהו על ידי תשובה ומעשים טובים הנקרא ממש בשם חופה והבן:

וזהו קדם ידעתי מעדותיך כי לעולם יסדתם (תהלים קי"ט, קנ"ב) פירוש אני יודע הדבר מראשיתו קודם היותו בעולם הזה וכן אני מכיר עולמותיך הנעלמים אשר בראת על ידי התורה כי לעולם יסדתם נמצא התורה היא שורש כל העולמות והקב"ה נתן לישראל בצירופים לפי העולם הזה בכדי שישגו ונעלם הדבר בסיפורי מעשיות ומאורעות

שאירעו לישראל ובודאי החכם ישיג בה אורות ואלהות וכמו שאיתא בתיקונים (תיקון כ"א ס' ב) שטיין מסתכלין בלבושיה וכו' ולכן נקראים **משל הקדמוני** כמו שהמשל הוא להבין החכמה הנוראה והנשגבה ובו מולבש שכל החכמה הקדמוני וכן היא התורה הקדושה ודי למבין:

*"In order to understand the reason why the Torah is known as A Primordial Mashal (Samuel 1, 24-25), one must understand the notion of the mashal. The mashal is akin to when a wise man wishes to impart his wisdom to simple folk. He requires dressing up his words so that they can understand according to their level. For instance, to merchants using industrial metaphors and to builders using construction metaphors so that they can understand the words of wisdom that he wishes them to understand in order to draw them close to the true wisdom. And through this technique, raise those simple folks to the level of wisdom which he himself understands. The letters of the word "mashal" also form the word "shalem" (integration). For initially, this elevated wisdom is beyond them. However, after the employment of the mashal, they are drawn close and there is a unification among them with the wisdom, implied by the letters "shalom", meaning attachment.*

*"Other times, the mashal is in fact a historical fiction and is employed to elevate those who understand it using fictional narratives to bring them close to the wisdom and a refining of the good so that the evil falls away automatically. However, the Torah is truth and her meshalim are true as King Solomon said (Proverbs 1:6), "To understand the mashal and the figure," the mashal represents the whoring woman and the figure represents idol worship. In contrast, the mashal is the good wife and the figure is the Torah and both of them are as one, useful to understand and become enlightened.*

*"Torah is also (mystically speaking) the source of all upper and lower worlds and the source of all creation, as is stated (Proverbs 8:30), "And I was for Him as an artisan and as a plaything daily." For the Torah, which God gave Israel, contains everything from beginning to end and therefore is deeper than the sea and the earth. It has no border or end, only according to the ability of each one to receive it according to the soul of his soul and his desire and love for her; she reveals him her mysteries.*

*"God gave Israel the Torah with different permutations of letters consistent with access to it in This World so that people can understand and grasp it in its simple stories and journeys of the Israelites. Surely a wise man can grasp the divinity and exalted lights in it. Therefore, it is known as "primordial mashal" just like a mashal allows one access to exalted wisdom and bring it close as it is dressed up, so too this primordial wisdom and so too is the holy Torah."*

For the Degel the Torah represents the supernal wisdom of the divine and, as such, predates the creation of the world. The Torah, however, might appear as a loosely organized history with stories and mundane events and mislead one into thinking it is banal. On the contrary the very stories represent mere meshalim which hide the deeper mystical truths buried in **משל הקדמוני** *mashal hakadmoni* which is the hidden Torah. In this he follows the Zohar regarding the notion of a hidden supernal Torah that is hidden within or above the earthly Torah we currently possess.

The *Me'or Eynayim* has stretched this concept of Torah as a cipher that unlocks the mysteries of the supernal worlds clothed in parables and stories and uses the *mashal/nimshal* as a spiritual tool by which to reify the inner urges and evil inclinations that were implanted by the divine, not to trip us up, not to judge us at the end of days, rather to point us to a higher love that was fallen into this (gnostic) world but can also allow us an escape route if we only bring god-consciousness to it.

I believe his spiritual roots come from the Zohar where close contact with evil is part of the spiritual quest of the heroes' journey.

I like Wolfson's depiction of the difference between philosophical metaphysical approaches to evil, typical of the philosophical rabbinic tradition, versus the religious anthropological approach whereby the direct impact of evil is experienced, since I believe that dualistic approach is reflected in our dual view of Torah as a salve or Torah as a spice. The former may represent the philosophical approach to confront evil and fight it in order to overcome it. The latter understands the experience of evil occurs within and is part of the very fabric and anatomy of the soul as a hologram of the evil without and in the supernal world of the divine.

*That is, in what sense and to what degree does the person of faith appropriate the evil dimension of experience, whether it be understood as an internalized principle of will or as an objective cosmic force- in his or her spiritual quest?*<sup>20</sup>

*The spiritual path that is most complete is one that incorporates evil as well as good. The conceptual framework for this ideal in the Zohar is the dialectical relation that pertains between the demonic and the divine. That is, the former is rooted and sustained by the latter. We have seen above, however, that there are basically two ways to explain this in the Zohar: the cathartic and the emanative. Leaven was used allegorically as a symbol for that which is evil or impure in Jewish and Christian sources dating from the Greco-Roman period. In either case the ethical ideal of inclusion of the left in the spiritual path follows logically. Yet, in one case the ideal is merely negative and in the other positive. According to the cathartic view, just as in the divine the forces of impurity emerged prior to those of holiness, so too in the life of the human spirit the evil inclination precedes the good. Moreover, just as the initial stage in the divine process is a purging of evil so too by the human spirit purification of the impure is the preliminary stage in the path. This purification is achieved exclusively by means of contact with the impure. In terms of the Zohar's own symbolic language: one must go down to Egypt before one can enter the Holy Land. According to the emanative view, on the other hand, the demonic force is said to have emanated from one of the grades in the upper realm. To contain evil in the good-that is the true affirmation of divine unity for in its ontic root the evil is bound to the good.*

*It follows therefore that even in the darkness there is a spark of light. This notion, which became a central motif in the kabbalah of Isaac Luria and subsequently in the writings of the Hasidim, is not stated explicitly in the Zohar, although it is implicit in various contexts. In contrast to later sources, however, the task of homo religiosus in the Zohar is not the separation of the holy spark from the demonic shell but rather inclusion of the latter in the former. Evil has no absolute existence in itself; it is ontologically posterior to the divine, for the life force of evil derives from the divine attribute of judgment. The realm of evil is constituted by the **unbalanced force of***

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<sup>20</sup> Elliot Wolfson, *Light Through Darkness: The Ideal of Human Perfection in the Zohar*, Harvard Theological Review, 81:1 (1988) 73-95

*judgment that has, as it were, assumed an unwarranted autonomy. Hence the religious and moral task of the human being is to restore that energy to its divine source, to balance judgment with mercy, (mituk ha-din) to temper the untempered force of severity with the effluence of love-to contain the left in the right. The Gnostic sources imparted to the kabbalah the idea of two forces, light and dark, right and left, that structurally parallel each other. Both these forces have their origin in the one God. According to these sources, however, there is no principle by which to reintegrate the demonic into the divine. "Good and evil are two causes, separate and distinct one from another. Yet the mystery of the Tree is one. ... Thus it is a religious duty and obligation to know and seek out that very matter [sc. the forces of the demonic] to distinguish between good and evil but not to cleave to it."*

*The Zohar, in contrast, although accepting the gnostic typology, introduced into the discussion a mediating principle, "the left contained in the right," and by doing so moved beyond gnostic dualism into theosophical monism. The theosophical doctrine, moreover, is reflected in the moral and religious sphere. That is, the ethical task of the human being is to contain the left in the right and thereby restore the former to its source in the latter. The idea of spiritual perfection as it is developed in certain Zoharic texts is one in which the person achieves holiness through contact with the unholy, and by means of such contact the unholy is transformed and contained in the holy. The purpose of religious life is not to liberate the spark of light from its demonic shell in order to separate the two realms. On the contrary, the one who separates the two, like Job, creates a blemish above. The goal, however, is to contain the left in the right. To see the light through darkness-that, according to the Zohar, is the ultimate perfection.*

I see echoes of this zoharic consciousness in our Me'or Eynayim text where the Rebbe sees all carnal desire as a reflection of the supernal archetype.

הנמשל דהיינו כל התענוגים שבעולם כמו אכילה ושתייה ומשגל שיבין מפני מה אני אוהב אותו דבר הלא הוא רק אהבה  
נפולה מעולם אהבה

## Conclusion

The translation of the word **תורה תבלין** *tavlin* as antidote/salve or spice/seasoning has repercussions that profoundly affect the way we look at the evil inclination and our approach to carnal urges in mankind. The provision of Torah as a gift in the Talmudic passage discussed above, can be seen in two ways. In the first Torah is an antidote, an antibiotic that will prevent the spread of contagion in the wounded limb. True, God created the evil urge like the father who wounds his son in the leg, (and we did not question why the father wounded the son in the first place nor why God set us up for failure with this evil inclination.) We are given the **תורה תבלין** Torah as an antidote to fight the evil urges the way an antibiotic fights infection.

In the second view of *tavlin*, **תורה תבלין** the spice cannot be eaten alone. It needs the meat or food with which to season, enliven and make palatable. The evil urge is not seen as something to be ridden. Rather in a radical interpretation it is seen as vital to understand the supernal world. Without love desire and passion for food, drink, and sex we would never know of the same drives for loving the divine. The pleasures of this world are tools by which we can access the divine love

if only, we do not indulge them. The **תורה תבלין** tavlin of Torah is a spiritual guide to avoiding the pitfalls of fallen loves. It points us to god-consciousness whereby we can reify these drives to a higher love.

The Torah seasons the food, it tempers the evil inclination in the second understanding, validating the evil urges yet by adding spice, opens the palate to a consciousness of the higher order of pleasure that it points to, the love of the divine. This was seen in the mystical tradition especially the Zohar and developed as an internal psychological process by the Hassidic masters and most profoundly by the Rebbe from Chernobyl.