Dvar Torah Outline — Rabbi Shulman on Maharal (Perek 66): The Purpose of Yetziat Mitzrayim, Shechinah in the Tachtonim, and the 7 Noahide Mitzvot

Abstract

Rabbi Shulman continues learning Maharal (פרק ס״ו), arguing that the miracles of Yetziat Mitzrayim were aimed at a single telos: that Hashem be *our* God by dwelling among us—"ושכנתי בתוכם." He develops the Maharal's framework of עילה/עלול (Giver/recipient) to show why the tachtonim (humans and the physical world) are the *essential* locus of Divine connection, while even angels are ultimately dispensable intermediaries. Rabbi Shulman then connects the historical "withdrawal" and "return" of the Shechinah to human sin and human righteousness, and explains how the שבע מצוות בני נח function as the bare-minimum structure for being "טוב לשמים וטוב לבריות," with אבר מן החי serving as a restraint on uncontrolled desire that otherwise cascades into broader עבירות.

I. The goal of the Exodus: not miracles for their own sake, but "Hashem should be our God"

A. Why Yetziat Mitzrayim had to be so direct and miraculous

- Rabbi Shulman explains that if the יציאה was carried out with Hashem Himself orchestrating open miracles, it signals a major intended outcome—not merely liberation.

B. The sought-after "outcome": Hashem dwelling among Israel

- Central purpose: **Hashem should be our God** in a direct relationship.
- Anchor idea: **"ושכנתי בתוכם"** (that Hashem dwells among us).
- This is not a peripheral benefit; it is the תכלית / יעד of the process.

C. The Maharal's model: עילה (Giver) and עלול (recipient)

- Hashem is definitionally the **עילה / משפיע** (the ultimate Giver and Provider).
- Therefore, the central character in this relationship is the **עלול / מקבל** (recipient)—i.e., human beings in the lower world.

- Intermediaries (e.g., מלאכים) may be great, but they are only a **היכי תמצי** (a mechanism), and therefore **dispensable** relative to the goal.

II. The unique importance of the “lower world”: tachtonim are the main arena of connection (2:34)

A. “אין לך לומר שמיוחדים בזה העליונים, כי אם התחתונים”

- Rabbi Shulman explains the Maharal’s claim: the unique players in Hashem’s dwelling are not the “upper beings” but the “lower beings.”

B. Man as the עיקר הבריאה

- Citing the conceptual line found in works like דרך השם: **אדם is called the עיקר בריאה**.
- Even if angels are “higher” in some spiritual sense, they remain **טפל** relative to the purpose.

C. Defining “עליונים” correctly (not spatially)

- Rabbi Shulman stresses that “above/below” here is not geography.
- means: those that ”עליונים“**influence / bestow** upon the world—i.e., they are the **משפיעים**.
- means: the ”תחתונים“**מקבלים**, recipients.

D. A modern parable of misunderstanding “heaven”

- Rabbi Shulman critiques the simplistic “we went up to the heavens and didn’t find God” type of claim.
- The point: “heaven” in Torah terms is not the sky; it denotes **levels/realms of separation and influence**, not altitude.

III. Midrash: the Shechinah began in the tachtonim, then withdrew through sin, and returned through tzaddikim (6:30)

A. The Midrash on “מתהלך” in Gan Eden

- Rabbi Shulman quotes Midrash Rabbah on:
  - **“וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ אֶת קוֹל ה׳ אֱלֹקִים מִתְהַלֵּךְ בַּגָּן לְרוּחַ הַיּוֹם”** (They heard the voice of Hashem God “moving about” in the garden in the breeze of the day.)

- Midrashic nuance:
  - Not “מהלך” (walking), but **“מתהלך”**—a reflexive form.
  - Teaching: **עיקר שכינה בתחתונים היתה**—the primary Shechinah presence was originally in the lower world.

B. Seven stages of withdrawal: sin creates layers of separation

- Rabbi Shulman outlines the Midrash’s sequence:
  - Adam’s sin → Shechinah withdraws to the first רקיע
  - Kayin’s sin → second
  - Dor Enosh → third
  - Dor HaMabul → fourth
  - Dor Haflagah → fifth
  - Sedom → sixth
  - Egypt in the days of Avraham → seventh
- Key interpretive point:
  - is framed as ”רקיע“**separation** (a מחיצה / disconnect), not a physical ceiling in the sky.

C. A related Chazal: “Shechinah doesn’t descend below ten tefachim…”

- Rabbi Shulman brings a Gemara (mentioned in passing) that sounds literal but must be read spiritually:
  - Moshe “ascending to heaven” means **transcending levels**, not flying upward in space.

D. Seven righteous figures “bring the Shechinah back down”

- The Midrash’s list: **אברהם, יצחק, יעקב, לוי, קהת, עמרם, משה**
- Rabbi Shulman addresses the question “why not Yosef?”:
  - The list is tracing a specific *line* culminating in **Moshe**, the figure of maximal revelation (פה אל פה) and the giving of Torah.

E. Re-reading the pasuk about tzaddikim inheriting the land

- Rabbi Shulman cites:
  - **“צַדִּיקִים יִירְשׁוּ אֶרֶץ וְיִשְׁכְּנוּ לָעַד עָלֶיהָ”** (The righteous will inherit the land and dwell forever upon it.)
- Drash point:
  - It can’t mean only tzaddikim physically “dwell on land,” since everyone lives on land.
  - Therefore “וישכנו” is read causatively: tzaddikim **cause the Shechinah to dwell** on earth.

F. What “Shechinah” means in practical terms

- Rabbi Shulman, citing Ramchal (דעת תבונות):
  - Shechinah is not “fairy dust”; it means **palpable חשיבות / כבוד שמים of Hashem** made perceptible in the world.
- Example:
  - When ten learn Torah together and the Shechinah is “with them,” it means Torah-learning creates visible **honor of Heaven** in that place.

IV. Why sin causes distance: dissimilarity to Hashem’s will breaks “dveikut” (16:01)

A. The original state: no פחיתות in the recipient

- Rabbi Shulman explains the Maharal:
  - At creation, the עלול (recipient) had no diminution; therefore the “natural” connection between עילה and עלול functioned fully.

B. The essence of connection: being an עלול who properly receives from the עילה

- The deepest “bond” is between Hashem as true עילה and humans as true עלולים.
- Angels/abstract forces receive existence, but they are not the focal “end” of connection.

C. How עבירות create separation

- Sin “misses the mark” and breaks alignment with רצון ה׳.
- Since mitzvot are the revelation of Hashem’s will, ignoring them makes האדם **dissimilar** to that will.
- Dissimilarity → reduced likeness → reduced connection → increased separation.

V. The 7 Noahide mitzvot as the minimal structure of connection (18:37)

A. Why there are “seven stages” of withdrawal

- Rabbi Shulman explains: the Midrash’s “seven” maps to the **שבע מצוות בני נח**, the most basic covenantal/moral structure given to humanity.

B. Listing the שבע מצוות בני נח (as presented)

- אבר מן החי
- ברכת השם
- עבודה זרה
- גילוי עריות
- דינים
- גזל
- שפיכות דמים

C. Maharal's division: 3 + 3 + 1

- Rabbi Shulman notes the Maharal's framework:
  - עבודה זרה, ברכת השם, גילוי עריות: **Three בין אדם למקום**
  - דינים, גזל, שפיכות דמים: **Three בין אדם לחבירו**
  - אבר מן החי (תאוה curbing raw): **One "self-mastery" category**

D. Clarifying why גילוי עריות is grouped as בין אדם למקום

- Rabbi Shulman addresses the intuition that עריות harms others, but emphasizes the Maharal's point:
  - one is—i.e., whether a person is fit for אדם fundamentally undermines what kind of עריות relationship with Hashem—so it is categorized primarily as a breach with Heaven.

VI. "צדיק" vs. "טוב": being good to Heaven and good to people (24:00)

A. The Gemara in Kiddushin on "אמרו צדיק כי טוב"

- Rabbi Shulman cites the derash:
  - The Torah's phrase suggests the possibility of **צדיק טוב** versus **צדיק שאינו טוב**.

B. The definitions

- צדיק טוב = **טוב לשמים וטוב לבריות**
- צדיק שאינו טוב = **טוב לשמים ואינו טוב לבריות**
- Rabbi Shulman highlights the linguistic move:
  - "צדיק" is narrowed to describe primarily man's stance toward Hashem,
  - "טוב" is narrowed to describe beneficence toward other people.

C. Application back to the 7 mitzvot

- The seven mitzvot are structured to ensure a baseline of:
  - not being “רע לשמים” (through three prohibitions), and
  - not being “רע לבריות” (through three prohibitions),
  - plus one that restrains inner appetite before it spills outward.

VII. Why אבר מן החי matters: restraining תאוה prevents collapse into other עבירות (29:00)

A. אבר מן החי as a “fence” against becoming animalistic

- Rabbi Shulman frames it as a Torah-mandated restraint:
  - don’t “devour” like an animal;
  - kill properly, wait, and only then eat.

B. Observations about human nature and bloodlust

- He describes the “deep animalistic part” that can be awakened by raw consumption.
- He links this to Torah restrictions around blood and the idea that some desires are real and powerful even if modern society disguises them.

C. Chazal’s critique: impatience as סימן of uncontrolled desire

- Rabbi Shulman cites:
  - **“נטיעה מקטעא רגליהון דקצביא”** (a planted tree “cuts the legs” of the butchers)
- Meaning:
  - Someone who can wait three years for ערלה exposes the shame of someone who can’t wait a few minutes for an animal to die.

D. Parallel: בועלי נדות

- Rabbi Shulman connects impatience in eating to impatience in sexuality:
  - Those who can’t wait for טבילה demonstrate subjugation to תאוה.

E. The escalation model of the יצר הרע

- Core principle:
  - If a person follows raw desire, the יצר הרע progressively pushes further.

- Rabbi Shulman explains the Maharal's claim:
  - uncontrolled desire can become the gateway into **the other six עבירות**—ultimately "עד שיעבור כל העבירות."

VIII. In Summary

- Rabbi Shulman explains that Yetziat Mitzrayim's miracles aim at one outcome: Hashem dwelling among human beings ("ושכנתי בתוכם"), not reliance on intermediaries.
- Using the Maharal's עילה/עלול model, he argues that tachtonim are the essential recipients and therefore the central arena for Shechinah, while even angels are secondary mechanisms.
- He traces a Midrashic history of the Shechinah withdrawing in seven stages through sin and returning through seven tzaddikim, interpreting "רקיע" as separation rather than physical location.
- He presents the שבע מצוות בני נח as the minimal framework for being "טוב לשמים וטוב לבריות," with עבירות singled out as self-restraint that prevents a downward spiral into broader אבר מן החי.