

The Nature of Exile

Part 2, The Solution

Starts by Understanding the Problem

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Years before the advent of modern psychology, the Ba'al Shem Tov, founder of the movement called Hasidism, peered into the depths of the human soul and saw the imbalances that we create for ourselves. He also was able to understand how many such imbalances could be healed. Although a Rabbi, the Ba'al Shem Tov pioneered a path in psychology, that unlike the modern atheist forms, takes into account the human soul and its untapped spiritual powers.

With regards to exile, the Ba'al Shem Tov recognized that it was not an isolated state of physical disconnection from one's traditional homeland. He saw the psychological state underlying such a disenfranchisement and recognized that it had multiple forms.

In his book, Sefer Ba'al Shem Tov (Balak 3), the Ba'al Shem enumerates that there are three different types of exile. He describes them as they exist in the political and social arenas, however each of these types are interconnected, with one state naturally causing the following states.

The three level of exile are as follows, (1) the exile of the nation of Israel amongst hostile other nations, (2) the exile of the religious community amongst the hostile non-religious majority, and (3) the exile of the spiritual mystics amongst the hostile larger religious community. Each group experiences rejection, alienation, ostracization and prejudice from those on the outside. Yet, what causes such divisions? What causes such rejections? Why are the exiles so obviously real, yet at the same time so irrational and seemingly without good rational cause? The reasons are psychological and reside inside the unconscious psyche of the individual and in the collective unconscious of the group at large.

It is impossible to understand human behavior unless one first understands the human psyche, which includes the conscious mind and the unconscious. Being that the largest part of the human mind is unconscious, the majority of "what makes us tick," which includes why we think and feel the way we do and why we perceive things the way we do is for the most part a total mystery.

The need of understanding our own inner selves is therefore paramount to our ever experiencing true liberation in either the psychological domains or in the social and political arenas. As long as we are subject to dark forces lurking within our own unconscious minds, we will continue to act in accordance to their nefarious compulsions. This is why the human mind is full of fears and



prejudices. Without even knowing why these unconscious forces push us and compel us, they direct our behaviors like a master leads a slave.

Fear and prejudice are tormentors projected out of the unconscious causing imbalance in the conscious mind. Without any apparent recognizable cause the conscious mind is driven by all types of unbalanced feelings to manifest terrible behaviors and actions. The political and social exile of a nation is caused by the wrong decisions its leaders who act incorrectly at the political level simply because there is something very wrong deep inside everyone of them on the individual level. Before a nation can be misguided the individual must be misguided first. Therefore, if we can address the problem of the individual, then we can address the problems of the nation.

The real reason for the irrational hatred that boils up out of the unconscious is the individual's inner psyche's inability to perceive and understand the ways and values of the other. Whenever something is unknown and unknowable to the unconscious, it responds primordially with fear, lacking as it does rational regard or reflection. It is sort of a psychological defense mechanism, to maintain a parameter of normalcy and thus stability in an individual's life. However, if left unchecked and unchallenged as in our case here, then the defense mechanism goes wild.

The conscious mind is designed to tempter and filter anything that rises out of the unconscious. When this does not occur and unfiltered and unchecked unconscious content rise to the surface and into the conscious mind, the conscious mind feels like it is surrounded by an envelope of reality that presupposes that all one's inner feelings are true, correct and beyond reproach. Thus even intelligent people fall victim to irrational fears and violent prejudice.

Individuals so affected lose the ability to perceive reality objectively. Everything they experience is through the subjective filter of their individual skewed inner vision. As such people react and respond to what they think they see and usually never to what is really there. In modern psychology this is called projection. In Kabbalah, this is called the klipot.

Human personalities are fragile things. As is shown through numerous psychological studies and profiles, each individual personality has a specific orientation towards life and these same orientations not only define its perception but also demarcate its parameters. In other words, each personality type has its limits as to what it can perceive and what it can tolerate. These personality limitations therefore are the source of much unconscious fears and prejudices. Corresponding to what the unconscious mind cannot perceive and handle there develops in the conscious mind a severe dislike and fear.

Unless there is an integration and harmony achieved between the unconscious and conscious parts of the mind, the individual will always be split and will fall victim to irrational fears. This also explains why and how superstitious behaviors develop. People are often just too lazy to confront their own unconscious content, to work through it and to extract from it the good and allow the bad to fall to the side. Good (Jungian-based) psychotherapy has always addressed this.

In previous generations and in ancient times before the advent of modern psychology, the Rabbi performed the task of the psychologist by providing direction from Torah through moralistic and self-introspective mystical types of instruction. Real Teshuva, repentance, was not just about observing religious rituals, it has always required of one deep self introspection and inner discovery with the intent to better one's character. Only in this way can one recognize unconscious content, and interact with it, understanding one's own inner workings and fix what needs to be fixed.

The solution to the problem of exile is clearly a psychological one. But this in and of itself is why

redemption is such a hard goal to achieve. Redemption does not come on a national or global level until it is first realized at the individual level. As long as those who are possessed by their fears (and prejudice against everything different) remain unwilling to look inside themselves to overcome their won unconscious compulsions, there will be no hope for a redemption. Such closed minded individuals are rightly called in Kabbalistic literature the "Erev Rav," the mixed multitude of souls who left Egypt with the children of Israel, but who never properly embraced true freedom.

Psychologically this Erev Rav is still with us. We see them through their prejudices and unwillingness to look beyond their own narrow, skewed perceptions of life. Such individuals regardless of their cultural associations or levels of religiosity display severe psychological retardation and as such are a danger to themselves and others. We see their influence in every group, secular and religious, Jewish and Gentile. The fear to confront that which is within the individual psyche always manifest as severe social problems in the outside world. It is the source of numerous mental illnesses on both the individual and collective levels.

Unless one makes use of one's own intellect to rationally confront the impressions and compulsions that arise from the unconscious, one is not fulfilling one's role and destiny of being a creature created in the Image of G-d. G-d gave us a brain; it is comprised of both a conscious and unconscious. We are supposed to use our entire brain, integrating both elements of it in order to make ourselves more like Him; and not more like instinct-driven animals.

In PART THREE of this essay entitled THE KABBALAH OF PERSONALITIES, I will address personality types from a Kabbalistic point of view and offer some suggestions how each type may take steps (musar) to better oneself and by doing so draw closer to G-d as an individual and equally to draw the entire nation closer to national redemption.