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MASKIL LE'DAVID

The Yetzer hara is Overcome in Circumventing Ways

"When you will go out to war against your enemies, and Hashem, your G-d, will deliver him into your hand, and you will capture his captivity; and you will see among its captivity a woman who is beautiful of form, and you will desire her, you may take her to yourself for a wife" (Devarim 21:10-11).

Masters of Mussar explain that this verse refers to the *yetzer hara*; one must wage a constant all-out battle against the *yetzer hara*, for he is a Jew's greatest enemy. When someone enlists all his strength in this battle, he is explicitly promised "you will capture his captivity." This means not only will he emerge victorious from the battle against his *yetzer hara*, he will also succeed in regaining all the "captives" that were taken by the *yetzer hara*. To clarify: When one is under the influence of the *yetzer hara*, it cunningly takes a number of things from this person. For example, it "captures" his *yirat Shamayim*, his meticulousness in obeying Torah law, his fear of sin, or other similar matters. But when a person decides to wage war against his *yetzer hara*, he is promised to emerge victorious and even regain all those positive traits that were taken from him when he was a captive in the *yetzer hara*'s hands.

Many commentaries ask why the verse says, "And Hashem, *your G-d*, will deliver him into your hand?" Why did the Torah find it necessary to add the words "your G-d"?

One explanation is that according to nature, man does not possess the ability to conquer his *yetzer hara*; the *yetzer hara* is fashioned from consuming fire while a person is only flesh and blood. When fire competes with flesh and blood, it easily overcomes the flesh. So the Torah added the words "your G-d" to teach us that only when one rejects all other "gods," which refers to the

lusts and vanities of This World, and appoints Hashem over himself as the only G-d, only then is he given special Heavenly Assistance to defeat his *yetzer hara*.

In addition, when a Jew fights his *yetzer hara*, heaven and earth testify that Hashem has authority over him; how else could he have the strength to battle the *yetzer hara*? This Jew's actions prove that he is under the Kingship of Hashem Yitbarach, he therefore merits Heavenly Assistance in his battle against the *yetzer hara*.

The Torah says, "And you will see among its captivity a woman who is beautiful of form." If we interpret this by way of mussar, the verse is alluding to the Torah which is described as "a woman." For as long as a Jew is held captive by his *yetzer hara*, the Torah that he had learnt was also in captivity. Once he defeats his *yetzer hara* and redeems all the attributes that were taken from him, he immediately acknowledges the truth of the Torah and regrets that it remained in captivity while he was swayed by the *yetzer hara*. When a Jew repents completely, he reconnects to the Torah, and sees the Torah as "a woman who is beautiful of form" – the beauty and brilliance of the Torah glow brightly, causing this person to crave its connection.

Masters of Mussar question why Adam Harishon was punished immediately after he sinned by eating from the Tree of Knowledge. We know that Hashem is "slow to anger" and "abundant in kindness" and does not hurry to punish His children, rather He waits for them to repent. If so, why with Adam Harishon did Hashem hurry to punish Adam with great stringency, despite this being his first and only sin?

Our teachers explain that when Adam Harishon was created, the *yetzer hara* had not yet emerged as a presence in the world. Adam was the one who fashioned it and introduced it into the world by sinning. Had Adam been vigilant with his deeds and overcome his desire, this act would have stood for all future generations, and the *yetzer hara* would not have taken up residence in man's heart. Adam Harishon's eating from the Tree of Knowledge brought the *yetzer hara* into existence, including all its terrible repercussions for all future generations.

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13 Elul 5785

6 September 2025

1128

Ki Teitzei



Hilula

13 Elul

Rabbeinu Yosef Chaim
of Bavel, the Ben Ish Chai

14 Elul

Rabbi Mordechai Bardugo

15 Elul

Rabbi Amram Ben Divan

16 Elul

Rabbi Netanel Alshich

17 Elul

Rabbi Shlomo Chaim
Perlow

18 Elul

Rabbi Abdallah Somech,
author of *Zivchei Tzedek*

19 Elul

Rabbi Bechor Ahron
Alnakaveh, Av Beit Din,
Yerushalayim





PARSHAH PEARLS

Inspiring Reflections

Returning Lost Items

“You shall surely return them to your brother”
(Devarim 22:1).

The following is a true account of an incident which took place in Yeshivat Porat Yosef:

One of the *bachurim* found a fifty lira note (a large sum in those days) on the premises. He approached the gaon Rabbi Ben Tzion Abba Shaul *zt”l*, and asked if he could keep the money, since it is clear from the Gemara that one who finds money in a *beit kneset* or *beit midrash* may keep it.

Rabbi Ben Tzion took out a fifty lira note from his pocket and told the *bachur*, “Take this as a gift from me. Now go to the *beit midrash* and search for the one who lost the money!” The *bachur* did as he was told and indeed found a panic-stricken *avreich* searching for a fifty lira note that he had lost. This man was a poor *avreich* with many children. He had borrowed the money from a *gemach* and now it had disappeared.

The *bachur* immediately returned the money to the *avreich* and restored his peace of mind.

Rabbi Ben Tzion turned to him and said, “See how you performed an act of kindness with a fellow Jew! Even if you were right according to the law, it is proper to act stringently, going over and above what is required of you. You may be allowed to keep the money, but it is in no way forbidden to try and return it! There are times where it is correct to act beyond the letter of the law.

The Difference Between a Guest and a Prisoner

“So that He will not see a shameful thing among you and turn away from behind you” (Devarim 23:15).

When one brings a guest to the table, he walks in front of his guest, leading him to his place.

When taking an offender to prison, the guard walks behind him, to prevent the prisoner from escaping.

If so, writes Rabbi Shaul Natanson, when Am Yisrael follow in Hashem’s ways, Hashem leads them. But when they sin, He walks behind them.

Therefore we are warned, “So that He will not see a shameful thing among you and turn away from behind you” – we should not cause Hashem Yitbarach to walk behind us.



FROM THE TREASURY

Based on the teachings
of Moreinu v’Rabbeinu
Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi
David Chananya Pinto, *shlita*

Friend or Foe?

“When you will go out to war against your enemies”
(Devarim 21:10).

Masters of Mussar explain this verse as referring to the war against the *yetzer hara*, for a Jew must battle an all-out war against his *yetzer hara*. When Hashem sees him trying his best to defeat his *yetzer hara*, He endows him with Heavenly assistance to overcome this evil force.

A person’s main enemy is his *yetzer hara*, and to have success in this battle one requires help from Hashem. Just as Hashem helps those who fear Him to succeed in defeating their physical enemies, so Hashem will help someone achieve success in his battle against the *yetzer hara*, if his desire is sincere and his intentions are pure.

A Moroccan king once confided that he was more afraid of his friends than his enemies. His enemies openly express their evil intentions; he is therefore aware of the need to take precautions. On the other hand, his friends display a loving and friendly countenance, but he knows that beneath the surface they may be digging a pit for his downfall. He has no idea whether they are sincerely faithful to him or have evil intentions.

In the same way, the *yetzer hara* works against us with tricks and tactics, but acts as if it cares about our well-being. He sneakily tries to trap us into pursuing materialism and lusts.

When we lack awareness of our enemies’ intentions, we require great Heavenly mercy and Divine Assistance to triumph in our struggle; we alone are not capable of waging this war and emerging victorious. Only Hashem can help us succeed in this battle. Torah study contains the power to protect us from the lowly schemes of the *yetzer hara* and earn Hashem’s protection.

Chazal tell us (*Eruvin* 18b) that if one is faced with two paths, along one stands a woman and the other a hungry lion, a he should rather choose the path of the lion; if he takes the path of the woman he will almost certainly stumble because of the temptations of the *yetzer hara*. This shows us the extent to which a person must be careful not to stumble. To prevent falling into the grasp of the *yetzer hara*, we should make every effort to avoid circumstances that present temptation and challenge. This is why we recite daily in our prayers, “Do not bring us into the power of challenge.” If we are faced with a challenge, who knows if we will succeed in overcoming it?



WALKING IN THEIR WAYS

Tidbits of faith and trust penned by Moreinu
v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David
Chananya Pinto, *shlita*

Kosher Money – Cornerstone of Endurance

A Rosh Yeshiva once approached me, singing the praises of his worthy institution. He told me about the wonderful staff and the remarkable young men who glorify this noteworthy Yeshiva by immersing themselves in the Torah's teachings day and night. But, he added, the yeshiva suffers tremendous financial difficulty. They simply could not make ends meet.

I advised him to investigate the source of the money coming into the yeshiva. Did it originate from a place of sanctity or, *chalilah*, the opposite?

After an exhaustive search, the Rosh Yeshiva discovered that the majority of their funds came from Jews who violated severe Torah prohibitions, *rachmana litzlan*. He understood that a yeshiva cannot exist on contaminated foundations. Blessing cannot rest upon tainted funds, rather they were surely the source of his yeshiva's difficulties.

This incident reminded me of something that once happened to me. A while ago, a considerable amount of money was stolen from me. At the time I was stumped — the money had belonged to public funds. Why did Hashem allow

such a thing? I decided to make a thorough investigation of its source and discovered that this money originated from theft. When money is acquired in crooked ways, it cannot provide *berachah*.

On another occasion, when a *mikveh* was being built in Paris, things kept going wrong causing untold losses of money. An enormous sum had been invested in this venture to make the *mikveh* as beautiful and perfect as possible, but for some mysterious reason, each day brought more incidents of damage and deficit than the day before. One day a pipe burst, the next day the walls revealed cracks, and on and on.

Eventually I decided to investigate the source of the funding. I found that all the donations had come from Shabbat desecrators! No wonder this building was incapable of containing blessing.

I instructed the workers to demolish the entire edifice which had already been built. We then rebuilt the *mikveh* using kosher, untainted money. Baruch Hashem, the second time around, the building went smoothly without any monetary losses or hitches.

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Since Adam Harishon's sin was not only a "personal" sin but has destructive ramifications for all future generations, Hashem punished him with full severity.

This is why Hashem is particular with the righteous like a hair's breadth (see *Bava Kama* 50a). Their greatness in Torah endows them with the ability to recognize Hashem's greatness and the truthfulness of Torah. When the righteous sin, the accusation against them is significantly larger and more serious — they

possess the ability to overcome their *yetzer* and compel it, but did not use it properly. A Jew is only faced with challenges that he has the ability to overcome, so the righteous are certainly capable of defeating their *yetzer hara* due to their greatness in Torah, as Chazal say (*Kiddushin* 30b), "I created a *yetzer hara* and I created the Torah as an antidote." Therefore, the more Torah knowledge one possesses, the better equipped they are to overcome the *yetzer hara* and diminish its influence.



WORDS OF THE SAGES

Why are You Paying Him?

"On that day shall you pay his hire; the sun shall not set upon him" (*Devarim* 24:15).

The son-in-law of the Chafetz Chaim once travelled with a wagon driver to a certain destination. Upon arrival, he withdrew money from his pocket to pay the wagon driver.

The Chafetz Chaim asked him, "Tell me, why did you pay the wagon driver?"

His son-in-law replied, "What do you mean? I paid him because he brought me to my destination."

Again the *tzaddik* asked, "But why did you pay him?"

"Because he deserves it — he completed his job", replied the son-in-law.

The Chafetz Chaim did not let up. "Tell me why you paid him!"

The son-in-law could not understand what the *tzaddik* wanted. "We made an agreement that I would pay him for transporting us to our destination. He fulfilled his part of the deal so I must fulfill my part."

Finally the Chafetz Chaim animatedly said, "Say that you paid him because there is a mitzvah of 'on that day shall you pay his hire' — that is why you paid him!"

With the Chafetz Chaim there was no such thing as merely paying someone because "he deserved it." Who said he deserves it? The Torah! The Torah commands us to pay a person for his service; we pay because this is what the Torah commands us to do.

This is how the Chafetz Chaim conducted himself in all his ways and deeds. He had only one deliberation when considering how to act. What is Hashem's will? For this reason, when the Chofetz Chaim wrote his famous masterpiece, the *sefer Chafetz Chaim*, he did not sign his name on the *sefer*. What does it matter who authored this *sefer*? He cited every ruling; anyone studying the laws could explore the sources to see their accuracy — he did not originate anything. In the

Chafetz Chaim's opinion, it was not necessary to know the name of the author.

A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA



We Don't Lose Out from Doing Good

The Holy Ba'al Shem Tov said that a Jew's soul comes down to This World and lives here for seventy or eighty years, earning material, but mainly spiritual, benefit. Hagaon Rabbi Yitzchak Zilberstein adds: a Jew performs Hashem's will by benefitting his friend, and he has no reason to suspect that he might lose out from his kind venture. There is nothing more worthwhile than fulfilling the Will of our Creator. If He commanded us and warned us to protect the honor of our fellow man, taking care not to harm him, by doing so one will never lose out.

Harav Zilberstein related a wonderful story on this topic, in the name of Rabbi Goel Alkrief, which demonstrates the above directive.

There was a religious family of fourteen who set off to spend a few days in a guest house in the Galilee, during the summer vacation. The father had a few thousand shekels in his pocket, which he, together with his children's help, had saved up for the vacation.

In the middle of the journey, after already having passed the Golan junction, one of the children urgently needed to use the restroom. The father noticed a fancy restaurant in the distance and asked their driver to stop off there for a few minutes. The father took the child and asked a worker standing by the entrance for permission to use the restaurant's restroom.

The worker responded that the owner had instructed all the staff not to permit this on any account. The restaurant was located right on route to the Galilee; if word spread that the restroom was available, crowds would take advantage. However, the worker looked around and saw that no one was watching, so he allowed the child to enter but asked that he leave as quickly as possible.

Just at that moment the restaurant owner arrived! He had probably been following the incident on the security cameras and when he saw that the worker had allowed the child to use the restroom, he came right over and asked the father, "What are you doing here?"

The father, a religious and G-d fearing Jew, immediately grasped the situation and understood that if he would tell the real story and reveal that the worker had given them permission to use the restroom, this worker would be fired on the spot for going against his boss's orders.

He made a split-second decision to tell the owner that he had brought his family to dine in the restaurant. This answer satisfied the owner.

The father took out the few thousand shekels which were meant to pay for the guest house and told the owner, "You see, with this money I will pay for the meal in your restaurant." All this sacrifice to avoid jeopardizing the worker's job!

So the entire family sat down to eat in the restaurant and the waiters began serving them course after course, bringing food for the parents and all twelve children. This amounted to a few thousand shekels. During the meal, a waiter approached and offered the family drinks. Drinks are not given for free. The father decided to decline the offer and not order drinks, so as not to inflate the huge bill any further.

But to his surprise, the waiter told him that the owner had instructed him to offer them drinks on his account!

In his innocence, the father thought that because the owner was aware of the huge sum that the meal had cost them, he had decided to include the drinks free of charge.

The meal ended and it was now time for

dessert. Here too, due to the astronomical price, the father decided that he and his family had no need to indulge in dessert. But again to his surprise, the waiter announced that the owner had instructed him to present them with dessert free of charge.

They finished eating and the father went to pay the thousands of shekel that the meal had cost him. He stood by the desk while the cashier rang up the account and presented the receipt. He glanced at the receipt and almost fainted! After a detailed reckoning of all the dishes, the final sum indeed amounted to a few thousand shekels. Yet three words were printed on the receipt: "Not for payment"; the family was not being charged a shekel for the entire meal!

Seeing the enormous surprise on the father's face, the restaurant owner approached him, shook his hand warmly and said: "Tell me, do you really think I did not understand your clever tactic? Do you think I don't know that you came here to use the restroom, not to eat? Do you think that I am not aware that you did all this so I would not fire my worker who gave you his consent?"

"I understood exactly what your intentions were," concluded the restaurant owner. "And when I saw your nobility and good heartedness, and the fact that you were prepared to give up thousands of shekel so as not to cause harm to another Jew, I decided to give you the meal for free! You can go on your way in peace, I am not prepared to take an *agurah* from you!" The owner added that by sending him drinks and dessert "on the house" he was trying to hint to his plan.

This story demonstrates how when one has good intentions one never loses out!



"Contemplate and see that Hashem is good"

Exciting update: With siyata diShmaya, the shiurim of Moreinu v'Rabbeinu, the Admor Rabbi David Chananya Pinto shlit'a, are now available in Hebrew, English, French and Spanish

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