



Adapted from the sefer שבת במוצאי שבת and חמין אנפין דזעיר דזעיר collections of maamarim given by the Tolner Rebbe shlita at Seuda Shlishis and Melave Malka

Melave Malka Parshas Nitzavim - Vayelech 5766

It is important to know that the *Satan/Yetzer Hara* does everything in his power to convince a Jew that *aveiros* have distanced him so much that he is no longer able to do *teshuvah* and draw close to Hashem Yisbarach. That train of thought is entirely a *maaseh Satan*, a false and meaningless illusion that the *Satan* utilizes to cause us to despair and lose hope.

Once, I had the *zechus* to join the Gerrer Rebbe the Beis Yisrael zy”a as he took a pre-dawn walk while visiting Haifa. He told me that since I was beginning to teach *talmidim*, it was important for me to hear a teaching of Rav Yechezkel of Kuzmir zy”a, that the Beis Yisrael heard from a first-hand source when he still lived in Poland.

Rav Yechezkel said that the Yetzer Hara works like a “*Poishner Ganav*”, a Polish thief who decides to rob the local shopkeeper because he has more money than the other townspeople. The problem is that the shopkeeper always stands next to the cash register where he keeps the money. The thief decides to wait till the end of the day, when the shopkeeper is tired, and the cash register is full.

He calls over a little Polish boy and asks him if he would like to earn a “*kopeck*”. When the boy says that he would, the *ganav* tells him to enter the store, and, when the *ganav* gives the signal, steal some candy from the table in front of the shopkeeper. The thief instructs the boy to make sure that the shopkeeper sees him steal the candy, and then to run as fast and as far as he can.

Everything goes according to plan. The thief waits for the store to be empty of customers, and then gives the signal. The boy steals some candy, and



the enraged shopkeeper runs after him. Meanwhile, the thief enters the store, empties all of the cash into his bag, and swiftly departs.

The shopkeeper, who was tired to begin with, and couldn't keep up with the young candy-thief, consoles himself by remembering that even though the thief escaped with some candy, he still has a cash-register full of money. Imagine his despair when he discovers that not even one "kopeck" remains in the cash-register.

If the shopkeeper had been wise enough to think ahead, he would have remained at the counter rather than chase a boy who stole a few candies. He should have said, (in the words of the Beis Yisrael) "זאל עהר דערשטיקט" - "ווערן!" - "Let him choke on the candy! I won't abandon my shop and irresponsibly leave my hard-earned money unprotected."

Rav Yechezkel explained that this is exactly the way the *yetzer hara* works. He tries to trap someone into committing one *aveirah* or another, and he will inevitably succeed. The *pasuk* in Koheles says;

כִּי אָדָם אֵין צַדִּיק בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה טוֹב וְלֹא יִחַטָּא (קהלת ז' כ"ו)

There is no righteous person in the world who does only good and doesn't sin.

However, that particular transgression was never the *yetzer hara's* goal. He hopes that after committing the *aveirah*, the Jew will despair and give up on himself. Once that occurs, the *yetzer* will easily be able convince the sad, hopeless Jew to do any *aveirah* conceivable.

I heard a similar story from my father-in-law Rav Yaakov Yitzchak Weisblum zt"l whose *yahrtzeit* was on י"ט אלול. He heard the story from his uncle, R' Meshulam Askenazi zt"l who was the leader of the Belzer *chasidim* in Stanislav.

"One year on Rosh Hashanah, Rav Sar Shalom, the first Belzer Rebbe zy" a was about to blow the *shofar*. Suddenly he yelled, "דערשטיקט דיר מיט דעם!" - "Choke yourself on it!" He then proceeded to blow the *tekios*.

The chasidim were understandably shocked and frightened by his exclamation.



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It was only after Yom Tov that some of the older *chasidim* were able to ask the Rebbe what led him to shout those words.

The Rebbe explained that just before *tekios*, it seemed to him that the shofar caught one of the hairs of his beard, and when he moved the shofar, it pulled out a hair, something which is *assur* on Shabbos and Yom Tov.

This greatly disturbed him and caused him to lose spirit. He felt that he was now unfit to blow the shofar for the *tzibur*. He was a *baal aveirah*, a sinner. How could he blow the *shofar* on behalf of his congregation?

However, he then thought more deeply about what had occurred and reached the conclusion that this was the *yetzer's* plan from the beginning. The *yetzer* hoped that if the Rebbe pulled out a hair, he would become sad and depressed. In that state of *atzvus*, he wouldn't be able to utilize the power of his wisdom and levels of *kedushah*, to perform the *mitzvah* of *shofar* in the best way possible.

We all need to learn this lesson. Each Jew bears Hashem's name and every Jew is Hashem's בן בכור, his firstborn son. He can always return and come close to Hashem, no matter how repeatedly and how seriously he has sinned. Inside every Jew, there is always a *nekudas magen Avraham*, the immutable spark of Jewish identity that burns with a flame that can never be extinguished. Therefore, a Jew must never lose hope. No matter how far down he has fallen, he can always reach the loftiest heights.

B'ezras Hashem Yisbarach, if we strengthen our awareness that Hashem is always, בקרבי, (inside each of us), we will be זוכה to see Hashem reveal himself, as described in the Rosh Hashanah *tefillah*,

מלוך על כל העולם כולו בכבודך וגו' ויאמר כל אשר נשמה באפו, ה' אלקי ישראל מלך ומלכותו
בכל משלה אבי"ר



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