



Adapted from the sefer **חמין במוצאי שבת** and **דעות דעיר אנפין** collections of
maamarim

given by the Tolner Rebbe shlita at Seuda Shlishis and Melave Malka

Seuda Shlishis Parshas Nitzavim-Vayelech 5766

In our *Parsha*, we find the following description. (דברים ל"א:י"ז-י"ח)

וְחָרָה אַפִּי בּוֹ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא וְעִזְבֹתִים וְהִסְתַּרְתִּי פָנַי מֵהֶם וְהָיָה לֶאֱכֹל וּמִצָּאָהוּ רָעוֹת רַבּוֹת
וְצָרוֹת וְאָמַר בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא הֲלֹא עַל כִּי אֵין אֱלֹהֵי בְּקִרְבִּי מִצָּאוֹנִי הָרָעוֹת הָאֵלֶּה

וְאֲנֹכִי הִסְתַּר אֶסְתִּיר פָּנַי בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא עַל כֹּל הָרָעָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה כִּי פָנָה אֶל אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים

And on that day, I will become very angry with them and leave them, and I will hide my face from them and they will be consumed, and many evils and traumas will find them. And on that day, they will say, ‘is it not because my G-d is not within me that these evils have found me?’

And I will surely hide my face from them on that day because of all the evil that they have committed for they have turned to foreign gods.

Mefarshim ask, “If they have already admitted their wrongdoing and done *teshuva* by saying “because my G-d is not within me have these evils found me”, why does Hashem respond by saying **ואנכי הסתר אסתיר פני** - and I will surely hide my face?

The *Sfas Emes zy”a* (שבט תשובה תרל”ד ד”ה ואמר, נצבים תרל”ב) addresses this question with a fundamental principle that he heard from his grandfather the *Chidushei Ha’Rim zy”a*, in the name of *Harav Hakadosh Mi’Pshischa zy”l*. He explained that when a person says that evil has befallen him because his G-d is not within him, that statement itself is an additional sin! Every Jew must always believe that Hashem is within him.



[1]

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When someone loses his *bitachon* in Hashem, and says that Hashem is not within him, the result is מצאוני הרעות האלה - evil befalls him. Doubting that Hashem is always within him is a serious *aveira* that prevents his *teshuva* from being accepted, and results in punishment. This *parsha* teaches us that a Jew must strengthen his *bitachon* that Hashem is always within him, even if he has sinned.

We must never forget the rule that מידה טובה מרובה - a positive attribute is always five-hundred times greater than the negative one. If a Jew who despairs and says that Hashem is not within him is punished so harshly that he finds the gates of *teshuva* locked before him, a Jew who remembers that, despite his many *aveiros*, Hashem is still within him, will certainly be able to return and draw close to Hashem.

There is no doubt that such *bitachon* will result in Hashem revealing *kvod malchuso aleinu*, enabling all to see that Hashem is always our one and only *Melech*.

In *Maseches Chulin* (קל"ט:) Chazal asked אסתר מן התורה מנין - What is the source of Esther in the Torah? They answered that the source is the *pasuk* in our *parsha* ואנכי הסתר אסתיר פני. The above lesson from Rav Bunim of Pshischa enables us to understand the depth of that mysterious question and answer.

In the time of Achashveirosh, Am Yisrael had descended to such a low spiritual level that they even served *avoda zara* (מגילה י"ב). To our eyes, they didn't deserve to be saved, and certainly not in a miraculous manner. However, Mordechai Hatzadik worked tirelessly on their behalf, by both *davening* for Hashem to have mercy on them, and by finding and presenting *zechuyos* - merits, until the decree of destruction was cancelled.

This is what we should learn from the *Gemara's* statement that the roots of Esther in the Torah can be found in the *pasuk* ואנכי הסתר אסתיר פני ביום ההוא. For even in the time of the greatest concealment, when Am Yisrael



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suffer in so many ways, Hashem is always within us. Therefore, we can always return to him and draw close to him despite our misdeeds.

Someone who falls into the trap of the *yetzer hara* and cries out in despair, מצאוני הרעות האלה אין אלוקי בקרבי will suffer the punishment of *galus*. We must never forget that even when experiencing the darkest *galus*, whether as a nation or as individuals, it is only *hester panim* - the hiding of Hashem's face. Hashem is always within us, and we can always return to him.

The *satan* (who is also the *yetzer hara*) invests the majority of his strength into convincing a Jew that he has sinned to the extent that he can no longer return and draw close to Hashem. Such thoughts, while meaningless and baseless, have the power to destroy one who mistakenly believes them.

I often repeat a precious lesson that I was fortunate to hear from the *Beis Yisrael zy*"a himself. I heard it when he was visiting Haifa, and I had the privilege of accompanying him on his pre-dawn walk. He told me that since I am involved in the *chinuch* of young *talmidim*, he wanted me to hear the fundamental guidance that he had heard first-hand in Poland from a *chasid* of Rav Yechezkel of Kuzmir zy"a.

Rav Yechezkel taught that the *yetzer hara* works like a "*Poilishe ganav*", a Polish thief who wants to steal the cash accumulated by a shopkeeper at the end of the day. In order to get the shopkeeper away from his cash register, he approaches a street urchin and gives him a coin. He explains that in return for the coin, he wants the boy to enter the store. Then, when he sees that there are no other customers, the boy is supposed to steal some candy from the counter in front of the shopkeeper, and run.

Of course, the enraged shopkeeper abandons his store and pursues the boy who stole the candy. While the shopkeeper is gone, the *poilishe ganav* empties all of the day's profits into his sack, and disappears. When the shopkeeper finally abandons his pursuit of the street urchin, he



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consoles himself that even if he lost a bit of candy, he still has the substantial profits that he earned from the day's transactions. However, when he returns to his store and sees the empty cash register, he realizes that he has lost not only the candy, but also all of the cash that he had accumulated.

A wiser shopkeeper, upon seeing the theft of the candy, would have simply said, "זאל עהר דערשטקט ווערען" - "Let him choke on it", and remained to guard his cash register. He wouldn't allow the loss of some candy to trick him into recklessly abandoning the profits of his labor.

The *yetzer hara* utilizes the same tactics. First, he tries to trap a person into doing any *aveira*, large or small. There is no *Tzadik* who does only good and never sins. However, that *aveira* itself was never the goal of the *yetzer hara*. His true intention is for the transgressor to fall into *yiush* - despair and depression. Once the *yetzer hara* succeeds in convincing a Jew to give up on himself, he can easily cause him to commit any and all *aveiros*.

I heard a similar story from my father-in-law Harav Yaakov Yitzchak Weissbloom zt"l. He heard the story from the uncle who brought him up, R' Meshulam Ashkenazi zt"l, a very wise man, and a well-known Belzer *chasid*. R' Meshulam heard from elder *chasidim* that on one Rosh Hashana, just before *tekias shofar*, the First Belzer Rav, Rav Sar Shalom zt"l yelled out דערשטיקט דיר מיט דעם! - You should choke on it! Fear gripped all of the *chasidim* who had no idea what the Rebbe meant.

After Yom Tov, the elder *chasidim* approached the Rebbe and asked him to explain what had caused him to cry out in that way. The Rebbe explained that just before blowing *shofar*, it seemed to him that the edge of the *shofar* caught one hair of his beard and pulled it out. His heart fell. Could it be that on *Yom Hadin*, he committed the *aveira* of pulling out a hair on Yom Tov? How could he, a *baal aveira*, now blow the *shofar* on behalf of the entire *tzibur*?



[4]

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However, he thought again and realized that this was the goal of the *yetzer hara* who wanted to convince him that he had sinned in order to cast him into the depths of sadness and depression. Once he would be in that state, it would be easy for the *yetzer hara* to take away all of his *hasagos and madreigos* - understanding and accomplishments.

The Rebbe said that once he discovered the *yetzer hara's* plan, he told the *yetzer hara* to choke on that *aveira*, while he would continue to fulfill Hashem's *mitzvos* with *simcha*.

This is the lesson that we can learn from our *parsha*. Every Jew is בני ישראל, Hashem's firstborn son, who can always return and draw close to Hashem, no matter how seriously he has sinned. There is always a *nekuda* - a spark of holiness in every Jew that can never be extinguished. We must never allow any situation to lead us to despair. There is always hope, because every Jew can always return and reach the highest heights.

Bez"v when we strengthen our belief that Hashem is always within us, we will have the *zechus* to experience מלך על כל העולם כולו בכבודך אבינו.



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