



Adapted from the sefer חמין במוצאי שבת a collection of maamarim on
תנא דבי אליהו given by the Tolner Rebbe shlita at Melave Malka

Melave Malka Parshas Beshalach 5765

In our Motzaei Shabbos limud of Tana D'vei Eliyahu, we find the following image.

“If you ask why Hashem created the Yetzer Hora, when he already has millions of malachim who constantly sanctify his name... the Yetzer Hora was created for flesh and blood human beings who eat, drink, and eliminate like any other animal, and come to serve Hashem. This can be compared to a king who erected a wall of steel, separating him from his subjects. The king declared, “Whoever fears me, and loves me, should climb over the wall and join me. One who does so, certainly loves and fears me. However, one who does not, certainly does not fear or love the king”. (Tana D'vei Eliyahu 12/1-2)

Eliyahu Hanavi chose the image of a steel wall. Unlike a stone wall that has footholds, a steel wall is virtually impossible to climb. Were it not for the king's command to climb over the wall, no one would even consider attempting such a feat. However, once the king demands it of his subjects, those who truly love and fear the king, overcome the obstacle and join the king. Those who don't, despair and don't even try. They remain imprisoned behind the steel wall for the rest of their lives.

If the task was not so daunting, if the barrier was a stone wall, even those who don't love and fear the king, would try to scale the wall. They also want to escape the enclosure. The difficulty and danger of climbing the steel wall, ensures that only those who truly love and fear the king will meet the challenge and get to the other side.



Elyahu Hanvi compares the Yetzer Hora to the steel walls, because, by natural methods, it is virtually impossible to overcome the Yetzer Hora.

“R. Shimon ben Lakish said, ‘A person’s Yetzer gets stronger every day, and wishes to kill him, as it says in Tehillim, "צופה רשע לצדיק ומבקש להמיתו". Were it not for Hakadosh Baruch Hu’s assistance, no one would be able to defeat the Yetzer.’”

R. Shimon ben Lakish clearly states that there is no other way to defeat the Yetzer Hora. R. Tzadok Hakohen of Lublin zy”a, in his sefer Pri Tzadik (Parshas Vayetze), adds, “from this statement we see that the Yetzer Hora cannot even be defeated by Torah, only by Hashem’s help.”

When Hashem sees our earnest efforts to scale the steel walls of מלחמת היצר, he enables us to achieve the impossible.

Some may ask why Hashem encloses us in steel walls? Wouldn’t it have been preferable to create a weaker Yetzer Hora, enclosing us in stone walls that we may be able to climb? Why imprison us in the world of a Yetzer Hora that can overcome even our strongest efforts? The Tana Dvei Eliyahu provides the answer. The Yetzer Hora was created for a human being who has a physical body, and physical instincts and urges that are indivisible from his existence.

We can elevate ourselves beyond our basic physicality and draw close to Hashem, but only by fighting the onslaughts of the Yetzer Hora with all of our strength and spirit. That battle, and only that battle, can enable us to reach levels far above the millions of מלאכים who sing to Hashem each day. The king gives those who fear and love him the opportunity to elevate and transform themselves by scaling the steel wall.

This approach reveals the depth of Chazal’s drasha on the pasuk "וירא אלוקים את כל אשר עשה והנה טוב מאוד" (Hashem saw all that he made and behold it was very good). טוב מאוד זו יצר הרע. “Very good” refers to the



Yetzer Hora. How could those two concepts go together? We now understand that the Yetzer Hora causes and enables us to reach the ultimate good. The Yetzer's attacks and temptations force us to fight until we defeat him and actualize our full potential. As Chazal say in Pirkei Avos "לפום צערא לפרא", the reward is commensurate to the tzaar.

This concept applies to other areas than מלחמת היצר. Both in ruchniyus and gashmiyus, we grow by overcoming adversity. For example, if someone learns a page of Gemara easily, without hard work, he will forget that day in a matter of days. However, if he had to labor and toil to understand the pshat of the gemara, that day will enter his bloodstream. Even in the field of worldly wisdom, someone who does not review what he learns and work hard to retain it, forgets it quickly.

One who absorbs this lesson knows that he must not retreat at the sight of battle. He should fight joyfully, knowing that only this struggle with his lowest desires can elevate all of aspects of his being, and enable him to acquire Torah and Avodas Hashem for eternity. He sees nisyonos (tests), as golden opportunities to fulfill his purpose in life. He doesn't despair in the face of the myriad nisyonos that we all have to deal with. He accepts them joyfully, knowing that if he encounters no difficulty, he must be on the wrong path. The correct path invariably leads us to countless tests, temptations, and downfalls. As Chazal said (חגיגה ה.), "כל מי שאינו בהסתר פנים", anyone who does not experience Hester Panim, is not one of Clal Yisrael.

I have often shared my grandfather's account of his meeting with the Lubavitcher Rebbe, R. Yosef Yitzchok Schneerson zt"l. My grandfather was a young bochur trying to live as a chossid in the spiritual wasteland of America. He asked the Rebbe for a brocha that he have no nisyonos in life. The Lubavitcher Rebbe stood up and forcefully stated "אן נסיונות גייט ניט", (It does not work without nisyonos, one must love nisyonos!). My grandfather asked, (and when he would tell the story he emphasized that in Chabad, one is allowed and even expected to ask), "Don't we say in Birchos Hashachar, "ואל תביאנו לא לידי נסיון" (Don't bring us to



nisayon)”? The Rebbe instructed my grandfather to read the end of the sentence, ולא לידי בזיון (and not to shame). We request the ability to overcome our challenges so that we are not shamed, but we should accept the tests themselves joyfully. My grandfather zy”a used to say that this lesson left an impression that remained with him for the rest of his life.

When discussing nisyonos, I often share a wonderful mashal that the Gerrer Rebbe, the Bais Yisroel zy”a, told me during one of his visits to Haifa. I had the privilege of accompanying the Rebbe when he took his walks in the predawn hours. One morning he told me that since I counsel younger talmidim, I must hear R. Yechezkel of Kuzmir’s parable of the “Poilishe Ganav”.

The Yetzer Hora, works like a Poilishe Ganav, (a Polish thief). The thief wants to rob the shopkeeper who, by the end of the day, has a significant amount of money. However, he keeps his earnings in a moneybox on his table, and never leaves it unprotected. The ganav offers a polish child a “kopek” to enter the store when there are no other customers, and steal a few sweets, making sure that the shopkeeper sees him. The child is then to run away as quickly as he can. The child is happy to gain both a kopek, and some sweets.

At the right moment, they implement their plan. The shopkeeper, enraged by the theft, pursues the young shoplifter with all of his strength. Meanwhile, the Poilishe ganav enters the abandoned shop, empties the moneybox, and escapes.

When the shopkeeper returns from his unsuccessful pursuit, he discovers that while trying to recover a few candies, he has lost all of the earnings that he had stored in the moneybox.

This, explained the Rebbe, is the modus operandi of the Yetzer Hora. Initially, he focuses all of his efforts on causing a Jew to transgress a small aveira. However, that aveira isn’t his true goal. He hopes that, as a result of his transgression, the Jew will give up on himself. That loss of hope and



spirit, can lead to total abandonment of avodas Hashem. The Yetzer then achieves his goal of emptying the Jew's entire spiritual "moneybox".

If only the shopkeeper was clever enough to think ahead, he would say, "Let that kid choke on the candy he stole. I won't abandon my moneybox because of a few pennies."

We need to be clever shopkeepers. Even when the Yetzer Hora successfully tricks us into transgressing an aveira, whether big or small, we need to realize that he really wants the resulting depression. We have to fight with all of our strength, to ignore that aveira for the time being, and to maintain our position. Like the clever shopkeeper, we should tell the Yetzer Hora, "You can choke on that aveira! I will continue to serve Hashem with simcha. I may have lost with that aveira, but I know that if I give in to despair, I will lose everything."

R. Bunim of Parshischa zy" a would often say, גאר ניט – גארלוייערען "געלט פארלוייערען. קורזש פארלוייערען – אלעס פארלוייערען." (If you lose money, you have lost nothing, if you lose courage, you have lost all.)

When we learn to appreciate the value of nisyonos, and what we stand to gain by fighting to overcome them, we will fight with strength and courage. Even when we suffer defeat, whether major or minor, we will never put down our weapons. This spirit will enable us to scale the steel walls that surround us, and experience the closeness of our king.

וה' ישמע שיעוונתנו ויחיש גאולתנו ופדות נפשנו בב"א



[5]

© כל הזכויות שמורות למכון 'המאור' שבתורה' שע"י מוסדות טאלנא ע"ה"ק ירושלים תובב"א

The editor is solely responsible for any mistakes and omissions

If you would like to be added to our mailing list, or for any comments, please email us at

hamaortolna@gmail.com