

Pursuit of Purpose

INSPIRING A LIFE OF MEANING AND CONNECTION

Our Vulnerability To The Yetzer Harah

Based on the weekly Shmuess given by HaRav Shaya Cohen, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshiva Zichron Aryeh

לעילוי נשמת גיטל בת הרב אליעזר מנחם | הרב יוסף חיים בן מאיר | רפאל חיים דוב בן בן-ציון שלום | ר' ברוך בן ר' יהודה | שרה בת ר' יחזקאל | ראובן יוסף בן יהושע
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In discussing the Makkah of Dever, the Vilna Gaon writes the following in his Sefer Kol Eliyahu, “It is known that the one who cursed Hashem, known as the Megadeph, was the son of a Jewish woman and a Mitzri. According to Jewish law he was considered a Mitzri. (Since before Matan Torah the lineage went after the father.) His animals died along with the other Mitzrim’s animals...Pharaoh was unaware of all this and thought he was a Jew, and when he went to go see what was going on by Klal Yisrael, he saw that although no animals died among the Jews, there was one exception where the animals did die. This caused Pharaoh to harden his heart and refuse to send Klal Yisrael out of Egypt.”

Upon initial analysis this is quite perplexing. Pharaoh saw all the animals in his country dying out. In contrast, he saw that the animals of Bnei Yisrael were not impacted by the plague. Granted he saw one exception to the rule, however, that should not have negated all of the devastation that he experienced, to the point that he would withhold sending out the Jews.

We can glean from here an important insight into our own vulnerability to the Yetzer Harah. The Yetzer Harah capitalizes on every opportunity to trip up a person, and will cling to the most remote possibility, causing a person to grab onto irrational thoughts. Therefore, when Pharaoh saw that one Jew’s animal died, he rationalized that this must not be a punishment for refusing to let the Jews go, even though amongst the rest of the Jewish people no animal had died.

We find a similar idea expressed by the Vilna Gaon in his commentary, Kol Eliyahu on the the Pasuk of “ואמרם זבח פסח הוא” in which the Pasuk commands that you

should say over the story of Hashem killing the firstborn Egyptians, while passing over the Jewish firstborn. The Gaon points out in his commentary that the Pasuk does not clarify who we should say this to. He continues to explain that it is not referring to responding to the wicked son, as we already said you are not supposed to respond to him at all. Rather, when the Pasuk says you should say over the story of the first born, it is referring to you saying it over to yourself. You, who were questioned by the wicked son, must now strengthen your own heart so you don’t become lax in your mitzvah performance, because of the mockery of the wicked son. Therefore, you should repeat the miracle of the firstborn to maintain your passion for mitzvos.

Once again this is perplexing, for the wicked son didn’t ask a deep philosophical question that should cause a person to question his faith. He merely cheapened the service of Hashem by asking, “What is this service to you?” expressing disdain for it. Why is it now necessary for a person to strengthen their faith when facing such a light attack? In addition, this Pasuk was written for the Rambam, Vilna Gaon and the Chofetz Chaim. Why would they be impacted by this attack? We once again see from here how vulnerable a person is to the attacks of the Yetzer Harah, that the slightest put down can totally shake a person up.

From all of the above it is clear that the Yetzer Harah is waiting to ambush a person. Therefore, it is critical that a person must remain alert so he can thwart these attacks. The key to protecting ourselves is Limud HaMussar. Through Mussar we gain a deeper understanding of the Yetzer Harah’s plan to attack us, and we are given the knowledge to defeat him.



Shir HaShirim Insights

In loving memory of Mr. Marvin Halpern

My Beloved is mine, and I am His, Who grazes amongst the roses. (Shir HaShirim 2:16)

My Beloved is mine, and I am His: He demanded all His needs from me; He commanded only me: Make a Passover sacrifice, hallow the firstborn, make a Tabernacle, sacrifice burnt offerings, and He did not demand these things of any other nation. **And I am His:** All my needs I demanded of Him, and not of other deities. **Who grazes:** His flock among the roses, in a good, pleasant, and beautiful pasture. (*Rashi*)

It is understandable that one's dedication to fulfill all another's needs would be a demonstration of love. However, here Klal Yisroel describes the great love between them and Hashem by the fact that we ask exclusively of each other, to the exclusion of all others, for the fulfillment of all our needs. How does asking exclusively of a specific person to provide your needs demonstrate your great love for them?

When one is in a loving relationship with another they tend to feel free to ask them to fulfill some of their needs, however, whenever possible, they will ask of others as well so as not to overburden their beloved. Klal Yisroel expresses the otherworldly love between us and Hashem by stating our realization that the fulfillment of each other's needs is not a burden upon us at all. Rather, it is the very focus of our existence and Hashem's purpose of Creation. As such, we don't feel the need to lighten this burden by sharing it with others, for to us it is no burden at all, rather it is the greatest opportunity this world has to offer. Fulfilling another's needs is an expression of love, in this case the love that the entire universe was created for!



ELIEZER INSTITUTE **Emunah Highlights**

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Radin, Poland. Between World War I and World War II. Yankel, known in the yeshiva for his piety and prayer, takes three steps back as he finishes his Shemoneh Esrei. He thinks of the effort he invested concentrating on each word as he wipes the sweat from his face. What a satisfying feeling. He looks over to the Chazan, but, as usual, he is still waiting patiently for the Chofetz Chaim to conclude his Tefillah. He looks with awe at the Rosh Yeshiva's shining face as his davening continues on and on. After Shacharis he approaches his Rebbe with trepidation. "Rebbe! I say every word with concentration and feeling, yet long after I complete my Shemoneh Esrei, the whole yeshiva is still waiting for Rebbe. I'm sure Rebbe must have been floating through the heavens, concentrating on the infinite and deep secrets behind the holy names of Hashem. I beg you, Rebbe, please teach me the deeper meanings that I'm missing behind each word!"

"Oh, my dear child!" the Chofetz Chaim responds to his dear Talmid, "You're mistaken! I merely concentrate on the simple meaning of each word. However, when I reach the Brachos of thanks... When I utter the word 'Modim!' my heart stops. How can I ever thank Him enough for all the kindness He does?! The good He does for me constantly every second of the day! For every breath he gives me I say 'Modim anachnu lach!' Even when times are tough, Hashem is always watching over us! Each and every Yid is like an only child, a whole world to Him! All the more so when things are going fine, we must thank our dear Father from the depths of our hearts saying: 'Modim!' with all our soul!"