

ניצוצי אור Sparks of Light

בס"ד



No. 64

פרשת שמות תשע"ו

Recognizing the Enemy (1)

Rabbi Shimon Hellinger, Editor

Always on Guard

A person must be wary of the *yetzer hara* 24/7. When he forgets about it, the *yetzer hara* does not forget about him. He acts like a friend but in reality, is trying to completely destroy him.

A righteous person once met a troop of soldiers returning from a victorious battle, loaded high with spoils. The man told them, "Now prepare for the real war." Surprised, they asked him to explain. "The war the *yetzer hara* will fight when you celebrate with the spoils," he clarified "will really be a battle".

(חובת הלבבות שער יחוד המעשה פ"ה)

Reb Meir of Premishlan, once related: "One wintry day, while traveling with my **Rebbe, Reb Mordechai of Kremnitz**, our wagon reached an incline. It seemed that the carriage would topple at any moment. Full of youthful courage, I prepared to quickly jump out, but my **Rebbe** held onto me with his hand and said, 'Sit calmly; no harm will befall you.' So it was. The wagon passed the incline safely.

"After some time had elapsed, and I had already forgotten about my desire to jump out, the carriage, driving on flat land, turned over, and we all fell out onto the snow. **Reb Mordechai** laughed: 'Nu, you see?' But I didn't understand to what he was referring to.

"Quite a while later, I realized he had been teaching a lesson in *avodas HaShem*: Sometimes a *Yid* is worried that he will *chas veshalom* fall into the clutches of the *yetzer hara*, who is constantly out to ensnare him, yet *HaShem* helps him stay safe. However, if a *Yid* over-confidently goes along his path, without even realizing that the *yetzer hara* is ready & capable of pouncing at any second, specifically then, he is likely to fall into his clutches..."

(תפארת צדיקים)

Chazal warn us that throughout one's entire life, one should not rely on his righteousness, for **Yochanan Kohen Gadol**

served eighty years in the *Beis HaMikdosh* and then strayed and became a *tzedoki*.

(ברכות כ"ט ע"א)

The *yetzer hara* does not suddenly try to tempt a person to commit severe *aveiros*; he works stage by stage. At first he convinces him about something small, then he pushes further, until eventually he tries talking the person into serving *avoda zara*.

The **Rayatz of Lubavitch** explains that the *yetzer hara* may even begin by giving his approval to *mitzvos* being done ("*aseh kach*"), but he rationalizes and limits the extent of their fulfillment.

For example, he encourages a person to take it easy and watch his health, to be "normal", to find favor in the eyes of others, and he brings proofs and explanations for all his claims. This cools a person down and enables the *yetzer hara* to push him further, until he's actually committing *aveiros*.

(שבת ק"ה ע"ב, סה"מ קונטרסים א' ע' ל"ז ע"א)

Knowing his Tricks

The **Maharash of Lubavitch** once told his son, the **Rashab**:

"The *yetzer hara*, though called an 'animal', can at times act slyly, and clothe itself in the guise of a straightforward, humble *tzaddik*. One has to be clever to uncover its tricks. The *yetzer hara* manifests itself in each individual according to his nature. One person may suddenly feel a powerful desire to learn *Chassidus* [at a particular time], yet that desire is coming from the *yetzer hara*, who is trying to prevent him from davening at length, or the like."

The **Maharash** concluded, "Take this as a general rule and remember it always. If something actually leads to active *avodas Hashem* and is met up with opposition, then that opposition, even the noblest, is coming from the *yetzer hara*."

Relating this episode, the **Rashab** added, "When I left that *yechidus*, I changed my

avoda completely. Until then, I had assumed that the *yetzer hara* could only encourage a person to do negative things, and it is therefore necessary for one to be cautious only concerning those matters. I had never imagined that there could be a *frum yetzer hara*, let alone a *chassidishe yetzer hara*, who is there just to restrain a person from being involved in his true *avoda*."

(היום יום כ"ג סיון, אג"ק מהור"י צ"ח ד"ע סז)

The **Rayatz of Lubavitch** related:

When I was a child, my father [the **Rashab**] taught me *Tanya*, explaining in depth how a *Chassidishe* child must work to change himself. We learned the famous letter of the *Baal HaTanya*, penned just as he had been freed from Jail, the result of his "pious" foes calumny. The letter strongly warns his *chassidim* not to scorn these Jews who had fought with them, or to regard themselves as being superior to them in any way.

My father explained, "The *yetzer hara* convinces a person that such behavior comes from the good *middos* of holiness. His pride in his *avodas HaShem* can thus fool him into regressing further and further.. *HaShem yeracheim*"

(לקוטי דיבורים ח"א ע' כ')

The **Maharash** once told a *chossid*: "To fool *HaShem*, you surely can't; others, also not; who then will you fool? Yourself! Is it a *chiddush* to fool a fool?!"

(תו"מ ח"ג ע' 130 ועוד, וראה סה"ש תרפ"ד ע' 79 בהערה)

Consider This

Why does *HaShem* make our struggle even more difficult by bringing "good" in the guise of the *yetzer hara*?

Sparks of Greatness

Reb Peretz Chein

Reb Peretz Chein was a rov in Nevel, Beshenkovitz and Tchernigov, and was a great *chossid*, *lamdan*, and *oved Hashem*. Reb Peretz passed away 26th of Iyar 1883 (תרמ"ג).

Reb Dovber of Lubavitch once told Reb Peretz to perform "*Tikun Chatzos*." Later on, when he visited the *Rebbe*, he told the *Rebbe* that he had stopped, explaining: "To say *Tikun Chatzos* with a truthful heart, I am incapable of, and to lie to myself and say it anyway, that I don't want to do..."

The *Rebbe* agreed with him that he should not continue.

During the time period leading up to the passing of Reb Peretz, he continued with his regular *avoda*. Three days before he passed away he called his son and told him:

"Many years ago my mother appeared to me and told me three things: (1) I have been sent from Heaven to tell you that your *chazarah* of what you

have already learned is more precious than the learning for the first time. (2) *Machshavos zaros* during davening is equal to *piggul* (a *korban* brought with forbidden intentions and therefore *posul*). (3) She revealed to me all major occurrences that would take place until the end of my life. Now, since the last of those occurrences has happened today, I know that my end is near."

On *Shabbos* he davened for exceptionally long amount of time, and sent a message that the *seudah* should start without him. Everyone understood that something is about to happen, and they ate their *seudah* quickly.

Having finished their *seudah*, many people gathered to hear the davening of Reb Peretz. The recitation of *Shema* and *Boruch Sheim* alone extended for an hour and a half! After davening he sent one of the onlookers who was a *Kohen* to visit a nearby *Shul*. He then davened *Mincha*, and as he finished *Shmoneh Esreh* his *neshama* left his body.

Library Sparks

At the end of this week's *Torah* portion, *Shemos*, Moshe and Aaron go to Pharaoh to demand that he free the *Benei Yisrael* from bondage. Pharaoh answered them, "Why do you, Moshe and Aaron, hinder the people from their work? Go about your own tasks."

Our Sages explain that Moshe and Aaron, being members of the tribe of Levi, were not required to work like the rest of the Jewish People, and were exempted from the bitter decree of slavery. Pharaoh, in effect, asked the two of them: "Why do you involve yourselves in affairs that don't concern you? Let the rest of the Jews continue in their tasks, and don't disturb them."

Why did the Egyptians permit an entire tribe of the Jewish People to be exempt from the terrible bondage forced upon the rest? The Egyptians recognized that each nation must have its own leaders and teachers to whom the people could turn for spiritual guidance. Pharaoh therefore allowed the tribe of Levi to continue learning *Torah* and to disseminate its teachings among the rest of the Jews. It was accepted as a natural state of affairs that the spiritual authorities should enjoy a higher status and occupy an elevated position in society.

When Moshe and Aaron came to Pharaoh to demand that the entire Jewish nation be allowed to journey into the desert to worship Hashem, they were disputing this commonly held notion. Pharaoh, for his part, claimed that it was sufficient that the upper class, the clergy, be allowed to learn *Torah* and carry

out Jewish ritual. Pharaoh was the original proponent of the separation of "church" and state. The Egyptian king did not object to the *Leviim* learning *Torah*; he did not seek to totally negate the spiritual and intellectual yearnings of the Jews. He merely sought to perpetuate the Egyptian world-view which saw the two realms of the religious and the civil as two opposing concepts.

As religious leaders, Moshe and Aaron were allowed a certain amount of authority by the Egyptian regime, on the condition that they limit themselves to the synagogue and to the *yeshiva*.

When Moshe and Aaron came to Pharaoh with their request, it was seen as a total contradiction of the existing world order. They claimed that the *Torah*'s very purpose was to show man how to conduct his daily, private life, and that its laws were applicable to each and every facet of a person's existence. Moshe and Aaron radically challenged the man-made division between that which belonged in the spiritual realm and that which was outside of religious law. The *Torah* is neither limited in scope nor reserved for a select few.

From this we also learn the duty incumbent upon every Jew to help other Jews, even if he is not personally threatened. Aaron and Moshe were not content to remain within the secluded tents of learning if the rest of the Jews were not allowed to participate. Because of their self-sacrifice on behalf of the Jewish nation, they were ultimately successful in ending the Egyptian exile and leading the Jews to Mount Sinai.

Halacha Sparks

Piercing a Baby's Ears

Rabbi Chaim
Hillel Raskin

May I pierce my baby daughter's ears for earrings?

The *Torah* prohibits causing pain to another person or to one's self. A person doesn't own his body, as it was given to us by Hashem for safe-keeping only. However, if the pain is introduced for a positive purpose it is permitted. For example: One may strain oneself in work to earn money or undergo a medical procedure to improve his health.

Poskim write that since the pleasure which a woman will derive from wearing earrings exceeds the one time pain of piercing the ear, it is permitted. Indeed, we find many women in *Chumash* and *Mishna* who wore earrings.

A woman is not obligated to wear clip-on earrings to avoid piercing the ears, since that isn't the normal manner of wearing earrings. Furthermore, the overall pain of clipping the earring each day will outweigh the one-time pain of piercing.

Parents are given the responsibility of raising and protecting the child until they are old enough to care for themselves. Thus, they can decide what is best for the child's long term benefit.

Come visit our library at 1709 Avenue J, Brooklyn NY. Call us at 718-677-9000.

www.thebaalshemtovlibrary.com. tbstlibrary@gmail.com You can now listen to the *shiurim* on our website!

Library hours: Sunday : 1:30 pm - 9:30 pm. Monday - Thursday: 2:00 pm - 10:30 pm.

Come visit our unique Children's Library!

This week's issue is sponsored by:



800-273-5176