

Nourishment for the Neshama

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Maharal Netzas Yisroel - Thesis on Golus and Geulah - Notes from Rebbetzin Heller's class July 1 2007

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We are beginning something new. As we enter the period of the Three Weeks, which will begin this Tuesday IYH, "All those who pursued her caught her during the time of besiegement". On a simple level this means that all of those who pursued the leadership of the Jewish people, caught them, trapped them, dispossessed them during this period. On a deeper level, the Zohar says 'All of those who pursued her, her being the Shechina, will catch Her during this time of besiegement. This means that the more we are willing to be real, and see our enormous vulnerability and how awful our situation is, spiritually and physically, more or less will turn to Hashem. We are going to be doing Perakim in Netzas Yisroel, The Maharal's thesis on Golus and Geulah. Each one of the perakim will shed new light about the source of exile and the possibility of redemption. With this in mind, we are going to be starting the fifth perek. It is complex like all of them are.

It begins by telling us over the story of Kamsa u'Bar Kamsa, which I am sure you know but we will read it anyway.

What does it mean in Mishlei when it says "Happy is the man who is always afraid, while a person who hardens his heart against fear will fall in evil." What that means is that the enemy of fear is hardening your heart.

We have three things to be afraid of: 1. Kamsa and Bar Kamsa , 2. A male and female rooster that led to the destruction of tara malka and 3. a wagon wheel through which something was destroyed.

We begin with the first one Kamsa u'bar kamsa. What is this about. There was a man who is friends with Kamsa. Do we know who this man is? No. And this an important part of this because most of us who hear this story assume that the bad guy was the host, but the host is not even mentioned by name. There is a certain man, who had a friend called Kamsa and a man with whom he had quarrels was named Bar Kamsa. He made a feast. He said to the person who listens to him (maybe his Shamash) "Go, bring me Kamsa." So he went and instead he got Bar Kamsa. It was when he saw that he was sitting, "You are the person with whom I have a quarrel, what are you doing here? Get up, go!. He said to him. Now Bar Kamsa applies to the host "Since I am here and have come, let me attend. And I will give to you the money for what I eat and what I drink. " No, he said to him.

"I will give you money for half of your seudah" No he said, no. "I will give you money for the whole seudah". NO. So he got up and he went. Bar Kamsa said "Since the Rabbonim were sitting there and they did not protest, it seems that they were okay with this, that they were content with this."

The next thing that he does, Bar Kamsa, is he went to slander the Jews in the house of the King. He said to the King. "The Jews have rebelled against you." The king said "Who says?" Bar kamsa says "Send them a korbon and see if they will sacrifice it." He sent with him an aigel meshulash, if you remember this with Avraham, it can mean one that was particularly good (it can also mean 3 but in this context it means one that was particularly good). At that point, what he did is make an imperfection in the animal's lip. The halacha is that if an animal has an imperfection in the upper lip then it can't be used as a korbon. There are some who say that it isn't the lip it is the eye. But in any case, to the Romans, it was considered a good animal. After the korbon was examined, the Rabbonim who were there said that we have to sacrifice it anyway even though it has this split lip or the injury to the eye because of maintaining peaceful relationships with the government. But Reb Zechariah said "Then people will say that it is allowed, they will just know what you did, they won't know your motivation, and they will say it is permitted to offer invalid sacrifices that have imperfections on the mizbeach."

The next idea was to kill the shaliach and to kill the animal and no one will know the whole story.

Reb Zechariah says, "If a person makes an imperfection in an animal that was set aside for sacrifice, he should be killed." Reb Yochanan said, "Reb Zechariah is anava, not because he is difficult but because he is humble, who am I to change the rules of the game?" Reb Yochanan says that in this instance Reb Zechariah's humility was misplaced and that is what destroyed our home, burnt our temple, and caused us to be expelled from our land. So after this happened, Miram Kasim was sent to Yerushalayim, a general sent by the king to put down the supposed rebellion of the Jews. When he got there, he sent an arrow to the east and it fell in Yerushalayim. No matter where he shot the arrows, it fell to Yerushalayim. He said to a child, because he knows children with a repository of information that is supernatural, tell me your pasuk – he talked to Yehezkel and he said I will put my vengeance in Edom, meaning he will use Edom, Hashem will use Edom, to be His hand in taking vengeance against the Jews and then He will take vengeance against Edom. And he wants to do it through me, so I'll go, and he converted and the result was that he was the ancestor of Reb Meir, and that is the Gemara.

Now we will begin to understand it.

He is talking about the beginning of the Gemara – what was the beginning? The beginning was that the story should inspire you to have continual fear. Continual fear of what? That is very unclear to us right now. What should we be afraid of? Sending a shliach and finding the wrong person? Be afraid of the wrong person coming to the seudah? What should we be afraid of? So the Gemara says that what pachad should a person have? It says fear of sin, fear is attached to sin. Others will say but this is speaking not about sin in general but specifically about guarding what one has learned, a person needs to review what one has learned in order to see that they don't forget. The Tosofos who is attaching this to the story that we just read about will say that the pachad that we have goes beyond that, what is going on in the story is that this person should have been afraid and not thrust it on his shelamos to take it upon himself the responsibility of humiliating someone. He should have had enough awareness that it is not his place to ignore what he knows about the severity of embarrassing someone so therefore, this is what caused the destruction, etc.

There must have been something wrong, because if it had just been Reb Zachariah's humility, he isn't the only one who suffered and since we have the rule that there is no suffering without sin, which is something that I will have to speak to you about in a moment, therefore there must have been an existing sin, and the sin that we see is that they didn't do either of the two things we just discussed, being afraid of sin or aware of what the Torah teaches them, because if those two components had not been lacking then Bar Kamsa would not have come to be embarrassed.

When a person sins they should be afraid for what will come upon them. The same way that a person has to be careful about what they learn, they also have to be careful to be worried about the sin of their generation, the generation in which they live, in order that they realize that if the generation is sinful, they may suffer the punishments together with the generation. Here is what we have to think about before we go further.

In general, fear has a very bad reputation. We don't like fear, we like feeling good. There should be fear, so he have several things to fear. Why should there be fear though? The underlying reality is again as we said earlier, no matter what you do you will bring down a result. Because of this, if you don't know or if you aren't careful, you have to live with the results and also with the result of the people of your generation who don't know and aren't careful. This is called Yiras HaOnesh. In a general sense, Yiras HaOnesh is the lowest level of Yirah. What is it good for? If you are not careful with Yiras HaOnesh it could lead you to hating Hashem. How so? A person will say "If I have to worry that Hashem will punish me if I do wrong things, why that proves to me that Hashem is punitive and out to get me, He wants to see me suffer, and that is why when I do A, B, C or D (and there is no one who does no sin), then I am doomed.

What should Yiras Haonesh look like? It should look like the way a person looks in the mirror when they are looking critically at their face. They want to see that they get all the imperfections away in order that the beautiful side of themselves comes forth. What that means concretely is that when a person suffers, certainly there is no such thing as punishment without sin, so the suffering instructs them as to what their tikkun is. If there is sin, then the punishment is good for them. I will give you an extreme illustration. Let's say , and I was just reading about someone who actually lived through this, a couple has a terrible relationship that leads to all kinds of verbal violence and abuse – withholding money, this and that. The husband is so verbally abusive, the shouting and the humiliations, that the wife succeeded in getting a court order to get him out of the house. Now as women, who do we identify with? The wife. She shouldn't have to suffer abuse, it is good that she is free of him. But I read the story from the man's angle. How did he write his story? He said the day that he got the zav, the decree, that is what it is called in Israel, zav hachakah, he said it is my home! I own half of this apartment, the furniture was bought with his money. He realized that they were not getting along and he has gone past where he can go, it would be immoral and ridiculous to throw her out especially with children involved , so he recognized that this is his reality, his deeds have

brought him to a place where he has been thrown out of the house. Step 1. Recognize reality. He is out of the house. Step 2, as a person who is religious, and in this case has a good Rebbe, he had to recognize that it is good for him to be thrown out of the house because now he is going to have to deal with things. Under his Rebbe's guidance, he found ways of dealing with his uncontrolled anger, new methods of communication, he was instructed immediately no matter what he has to fix what is wrong with him to take her out of the picture, not to plot revenge against her, not to plot how he will get back into the house or how, since he has more money than she, how he can overturn the court decree. No. Why is she that unhappy? Clearly, she is unhappy. Why is she unhappy? If she wants you out of the house, she is not happy with you. She married you thinking you were going to be the light of her life, what went wrong? Why aren't you making her happy? This is what his Rebbe made him face.

And he told him to take his time about getting back into the house. You have a lot of fixing to do. So in the course of a serious amount of time, he worked through these issues. And the way he did this was not with professional help, it was with his Rebbe and with others working through his anger, working with other ways to communicate. Send money, give her gifts, When you call the children tell them listen to your mother, don't say a bad word about her because your role is to be the kind of husband who can make her happy. And you know what? It worked. It worked because he recognized that this was a gift from Hashem.

This is ideally how we should relate to onesh. Onesh is there to stop us in our tracks and to give us the possibility of tikkun. Now sometimes we don't know because since our lives don't necessarily begin in this lifetime we don't know what we broke, but what we do know is that whatever onesh we are suffering here and now is the source of our tikun. With this in mind we can go further.

You could say, what is there about worrying about sin that carries with it worrying about not forgetting dvrai Torah. What is the proof? But of course it doesn't need an external life. In the story that the Gemara is about, the man sees another man and sees he is afraid and says so what is your sin? So the reality is that a person has nothing to fear except sin. If a person is afraid and he is an aware person, the only thing it could be is that he sinned, because if a person's lack that makes them fear. What does that mean? We all worry about things. We worry about personal things, will I find the right person, will my marriage be good, what will my children be like? What about if a child is not doing so well in school? On and on. Will I lose my job? Until we get buried, worry. It is natural. The source of all worry is lack. You feel that you are vulnerable and lacking, and the source of all lack (those of you who learned Netivas HaYetzer will remember this) is sin.

The person is not complete because of the sin. This is what we are afraid of.

If something is whole because its wholeness is real, it is not lost easily, and what we fear is loss. A person who is not shelaim is the person who will be afraid because he could lose something. Therefore when he saw that this man was afraid, he said he is a sinner, because he is not whole, and he is lacking, and he could lose something and that is why he is afraid. That means people's intuitive fear comes from their intuitive recognition of lack. A person who is whole isn't about to lose something, and therefore he is not afraid. But the opposing view is with dvrai Torah, why should we worry about Torah? Because you can't be whole without Torah. Because the nature of Torah learning is that we forget. Why? Because we have inner agendas that make us forget what we don't want to know. A person is physical so a person can't acquire a totally non-physical spiritual view of life. So whatever inconveniences the body or limits the body is something that we tend to forget. To concretize this idea, one of the halacha teachers at Neve is a very good teacher, he takes the girls through all the different shitas and then tells them the halacha and the girls will leave his class not knowing what to do. So he went to Reb Shternbach and said I am failing as a teacher – it isn't working. I have my outline of the shitas, I take them through the shitas, and then I tell them the halacha. Why don't they know it at the end? So Reb Shternbach, with many years of psach behind him, tells him "I'll tell you why. One of the shitas you use at the beginning uses the word leniency, and that is all they are going to remember. Why? Because our bodies want leniency.

As it says, the words of Torah are difficult to acquire and easy to forget. A person should be afraid of this. The second view rejects the first view, that presupposes there is already existent sin because it says the man who is always afraid is in a state of spiritual joy, osher, is a place that means spiritual joy (not physical joy). That person can't be mechosay so therefore, it must be, according to the second view, fear of losing the Torah that one has learned.

Either way, if you want to say it is the sin so it is a lack of shelamos and we say it is the Torah and the worrying that we will forget, again, because you don't own the Torah with absolute shelamos. The time when a person is in sholaim, meaning they have lost the Torah that they have, which is the cause and effect. At that time, even the tzaddikim have to worry about the sin of the generations. Our bottom line is that

every person has to worry about the sin of their generation which might be a consequence of having lost Torah.

Now with that in mind we are going to re-learn the Bar Kamsa story in some depth.

The first question he asks, the Gemara tells us there were three separate tragedies. And he asks why couldn't one just be the domino that knocked down all the others? Why are there three?

And the other is the story with the chicken with tela malka. The place of royal splendor, of beautiful vistas. He was killed because of the chicken as we will see as he tells us the story. How did a minor mistake cause such huge destruction? And also with the wagon wheels they also tried to convince them means even those sins caused the destruction. The trigger in each case is something else. In one case, the feast, in another case the chickens, and the third case the wagon wheel and the trigger is not coincidental.

Certainly Yerushalayim with its vast holiness being destroyed by Bar Kamsa was not coincidental. He says realize that the words of the sages when they said these three triggers caused these three results are very deep. I want to explain why he is telling us this. His shita in understanding aggadita, is that every detail of the Aggaditah was selected by the Chochomim to inform us. Nothing is coincidental.

For the Jews to have a presence in Yisroel there were three things: The first thing that characterizes Jewish national life in Eretz Yisroel and makes it unique is that the Shechina is with us. This is the most significant of all the other things of our being in this land. It has concrete effect, it affects us in gashmius. So he says that the hashgacha pratit with which rain falls in Eretz Yisroel is reflective of the Shechina being with us. Let me tell you a story. Before the first Gulf War, there was a housing shortage which is chronic but sometimes becomes acute. It was so bad that people were sleeping in tents in the public parks because there were not solutions for them. Those of you have been to Yerushalayim can understand what I am saying about how bizarre this was..frum Jews sleeping in tents in the Ezras Torah park because they had no place to live. So the bureaucracy is what it is, and nothing was moving, and people would try to help them out, they would bring them food and do their laundry for them, it was a very hard situation, emotionally and physically. In any case, there was a draught and the farmers in the valley went to Rabbi Kaduri who was living then and asked him to intercede with prayer and to give them a bracha. And he said no. And they were astounded. From their perspective the worst case scenario was that he would give a bracha and that the gezeira from Hashem would be too strong and the bracha would not help, but for him to refuse to give a bracha is something that they did not anticipate. So they said why not? And he said because it is not going to rain no matter what I do? And they asked why not? He said as long as people are sleeping outdoors because there is nowhere to live, and they get up every morning and say I hope it doesn't rain because all of their possessions will get ruined, it isn't going to rain. Their request is stronger and more sincere than mine would be. Somehow the government, which was at that time as bad as it can be at its worst, were, in the end Jews, and they found housing solutions for everyone because they couldn't be telling one segment of the population to go into sealed rooms with gas masks while others lived in the parks. They found solutions. There was a big tefillah at the kotel, and as soon as they prayed, there was a huge downpour, right after the housing solutions were found.

The reason that I told you this story is that this is Eretz Yisroel, it wouldn't happen somewhere else so easily. The distance between cause and effect everywhere else is greater. In Eretz Yisroel it is direct, it is immediate. And this is what makes the issues for Jews in Eretz Yisroel harder and better because it is better to have a deep relationship with a friend, a parent or a husband, even though sometimes there are bad moments, than to be alone. That is one aspect of it.

Hasheini. Another thing that makes us live in the land is that we have people living there. The land is populated by Jews. It is a Jewish land. Another thing is that it is viable, there are large fortified cities. These are the three components of having Jewish settlements in the land.

Again he reviews – it is the sense of Hashem's presence with Hashem's eye upon it, a place of no lack. The second is the people and the third is that there are large cities.

He begins by talking about the chorbos of Yerushalayim now. When the spies came and they asked about what the land was like and they asked about whether there are many people, the second thing that they asked is that are there cities with guards, and the third thing is there fertility in the land which would have reflected Hashem's presence. Very interestingly, if you look in museum pictures of Israel from the 20's, it was a desert until the Jews came.

When the chorbos began, each of these three things, which are separate and defined, would destroy one after the other. The first thing was that the Shechina departed which led to the destruction which led to the

land no longer being supernaturally blessed. Tura Malka was the most populated area, the glory of the king. Afterwards it was fortified, and this place which was the strongest of all was destroyed and plowed over. So now we know several things- let's tie these up before we go further. We know that a person should be afraid of the three causes of these three forms of destruction, of the three aspects of our yishuv bEretz Yisroel. We know that we should be afraid of sin, lack of learning because they create a certain inner lack within us that makes us unable to hold onto the three things through which the land is blessed.

Each thing brought about destruction through are deeds, which is appropriate. Yerushalayim was destroyed through senseless hatred, as explained previously. What is this? This is the Kamsa vBarKamsa story. How was the Kamsa VBarKamsa story reflective of sinas chinum?

Let's look at some aspects of the story.. Let's look at the very name Kamsa vBar Kamsa means one who grasps, the son of the one who grasps. The host, who has a friend called kamsa, he was there also. So Bar Kamsa comes. Then it says it was destroyed not only for Bar Kamsa but for Kamsa. What did he do wrong? All he did was not attend a feast that he ended up accidentally not being invited to. But again his name tells us who he was, it was this midda of grasping, of holding back, that destroyed Yerushalayim. He comes to the feast, and who was he? A person who was in it for himself. The host surely should have given into him, but why was he demanding this? The Maharal argues that Bar Kamsa must have been someone who was a terrible person with a terrible reputation, that the host earnestly didn't want him at his feast. We see from what he did later, slandering the Jews and bringing about the destruction, that he was no tzaddik. Not at all. Then we have the silence of the Chochomim. Again, it was because he was no tzaddik. What should they have done? They should have realized that what Bar Kamsa needed was to be drawn close, not to be distanced at this time possibly. But his hatred against the Jews as a collective was surely in vain. The Jews as a collective surely did not throw him out of the banquet. It was specific people. So this is sinas chinum. Let's get a working definition of sinas chinum. We all know that love means closeness and empathy. Any level of closeness and empathy is love, so there is greater love, lesser love. But there has to be some minimum level of empathy and closeness for the experience to be called love.

Similarly, all distancing is called hate. All lack of attachment, all lack of relationship is called hatred. So when a person says this person is not my type I can't relate to them, what they are really saying is that I hate them. It doesn't have to be huge passionate hate, just as love has many levels so does hatred. What is sinas chinam? It is when you are distancing a person not in order to protect yourself but because you are repulsed by them.. What are the laws, before we go back to the Maharal. It says in the Gemara that if someone sins, you hate them because they sin, you are repulsed by their sin. You can hate them and you can tell your Rebbe to hate them. But what is this? If you tried to give them proper rebuke and you were rebuffed. What is proper rebuke? That they are on your level – if a person is making good decisions on their level, then you can't judge them or distance them. The classical example would be two people learning in Kollel, let's say Lakewood, and he is surrounded by people who are there because they want to make something of themselves spiritually. Those are the people who surround him all day long. Because of this, his speech is refined, his goals are refined. Compare him to someone who is dealing in commodities as a day trader. He is surrounded by people who are takers, everyone he sees is a taker, no one has spiritual goals, and his speech may reflect it. So for person A to judge person B isn't right, because he has no idea of where that person is standing. So you find a person that is on your level, and you give them proper rebuke according to the halachas of rebuke, lovingly, etc. and they still continue sinning. According to the halacha, you are allowed to hate them. The Gemara tells us this. But you are simultaneously required to love them. You are required both to hate and to love. You are meant to hate what is evil and limiting within them and be repulsed by it, and love them, the struggling person who is caught up in what they have become. It means you can create distance, but at the same time there has to be simultaneously closeness.. We would call this a love hate relationship. That would mean you would feel profound compassion for the person and repulsion while at the same time, keeping the three deinnim, which is speaking well of the person, giving kovod to the person, and being concerned with their physical well being.

How do you feel compassion at the same moment that you are repulsed? The aitza given by the Baale HaTanya is that everyone should remember their worst moments. We all have terrible moments. If other people would know about our terrible moments, they would not only be sickened they would reject us. It would be a terrible humiliation if people knew about that moment. Keep those moments in the back of your psyche and revisit them, and in this moment of your own failure and degradation, say to yourself, was I conflicted, yes. Did I fail, yes. If there were a magic button that I could press to get out of the conflict and resolve it I would have pressed it. So imagine you are angry and you say things that are so devastating and you aim for the jugular and when you think about those words you have no words for yourself at that moment. If you had a way that you could have said those things without that person hearing you, you would have pressed that button. So there is no magic button. Realize the person whose evil you are despising rightfully (we are working on the assumption that you are right) also has no magic button and

they are stuck.

There is a rule – a prisoner can't free himself from prison. The way a person gets himself out of prison is from Shemayim, Hashem will open up to the person if they ask for help. This is where the person is and this is how you should feel towards them

Now he is going to explain why this has to lead to destruction.

The Bais Hamikdosh in Yerushalayim found the parts within all of us that was like one person, the part that aspires and yearns, the part that wants the magic button. They had one misbeach. They weren't allowed to build private altars where I reach Hashem in my way and you reach Hashem in your way. When the mikdash was around, they had one altar which means that all had to elevate their own lives collectively. That is what made us one person, that we became aware of our own collective aspirations. And when there was divisiveness between them, when people could look at each other and not see that one part, the part that is holy and good and yearns for connection, the place was destroyed that was created to unify Israel. Therefore Kamsa's midda grasping, which also means dividing, he takes some of the whole. When you take for yourself you are focused on divisiveness. A taker is always divisive. He gives us a halachic example from Gemara. You have several brothers who divided a field. Someone who has money owed to him goes and divides one, what they should do is that everyone should give a little. That which is divided and separated from the whole is called Kamsa, meaning they are grasped from the whole. A locust is called Kamsa. As we find that in the spies story, that we were like locusts in their eyes, we were like those who gather up, each one for themselves. The locusts are very numerous, they go in hoards. At the same time, they are separate, with their collective powers of each individual locust gathering for himself – but not like the bees where they gather for the whole – this is the midda of kamsa and this is the source for all sinas chinum and we will get more into this next time. I want to make it clear why this is the source of sinas chinim. The reason is that ahavas chinum, loving someone without there being a definable cause, comes from looking at them and seeing their inherent goodness and spirituality, that we have something in common with them, we all want the same, we all want devekus in Hashem and goodness. If you ask anybody, even a person who is very distant, who do you like the best? And why do you like them? The answer is always spiritual – they are kind, they are sensitive, etc. That is what we like the most, that is what we admire the most. We are all looking for pinei Hashem. However, when a person relates to someone on a physical and material level, they are going to end up with Kamisa and I will tell you why. The physical world is really limited. I am sure you observed this when you were a young child, that if you have two waffles and you give one away now you only have one. So the more materialistic and less spiritual people are, the more inevitably they see everyone else as a competitor. As soon as you see everyone else as a competitor, me against them, that means I am not them, we are separate and we are at each man for himself and that is the source of sinas chinum., where we distance from a person because we despise them, not because we don't like what they have done, but because we see them as a threat, a threat to something that we hold precious...could be our ego, or something material. But either way the source of it is always not seeing the other person's spirituality .

Let's take this one more drop further and then we will conclude for today.

There is no king of locusts because a king would gather them all together by catching them collectively without division. The reason we are held accountable for our government is because they are our collective voice. Locusts can't govern because each one is going out for himself. So this is all part of the name kamsa. The person kamsa, the friend, this was his essence, this was his personhood. The host, our unnamed host, was friends with him tells us where the host was holding and where all the beginning of the degradation started and where the sinas chinum also started. You can't have two opposing forces in co-existence without relationships to each other. So the achdus of Yerushalayim, where everyone saw what they have in common with everyone else on a spiritual basis, can't co-exist with the midda of kamsa.

What we still have to talk about is how does this affect the rest of the story, which we don't know what this has to do with Reb Zachariah, how this affects the generation, and other things that we still have to find out. But in the meantime we are beginning to understand what sinas chinum means and the sort of ahavas chinum that we have to try to acquire to enter a situation of geulah – geulah means bringing the Shechina back - that is what geulah is. Being who we could be. The first of the three components of being who we could be, of geulah, is the restoration of Shechina, which comes through achdus and the rejection of the midda of kamisa. This is where we are now and IYH we will go further next week.

