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We are going to be doing the Maharal's essay in Netivot Olam called Netiv Koach Ha Yetzer

A bit of introduction:

One of the very unique facets of the Maharal's writings is that he combines so much nigla and nister in a way that unsurpasses scholarship, so questions are answered by him on many levels simultaneously. Netivot Olam means paths of the world. He speaks about different paths we take in our journey through life. His style is that he brings a pasuk from Mishlei and then asks questions on it after first giving us possibly a medrash or gemara. He then answers some of the questions, brings us more information and draws a conclusion. So because his style goes back and forth, it might seem like he is repeating himself, but in fact he is drawing different points together. This is the style.

Perek Beis

From Mishlei:

If your enemy is hungry give him bread and if he is thirsty, pour out water for him to drink because you will be pouring hot water on his head, Hashem will reward you. If you have an enemy, if someone hates you, he says what you should do with that person.

Shlomo tells us if your enemy is hungry don't fail to give him bread or being compassionate on him. Not concretely and not internally. Why?

Compassion is the opposite of animosity. He won't be your enemy if he feels your compassion. It is a matter of feeling compassion toward him which will change things.

When a person gives, the rachmanos turns over the enemy because when the person feels compassion, they identify with them, feels close to them and this leads to a reciprocal feeling, even in an enemy that opposes you.

When you pour hot water on his head you annihilate your enemy, he can't hate you anymore.

Because you have attached yourself to him through compassion, you won't find the opposition. He won't be able to hate you and you won't be able to hate him.

In our times, we have different ways to face evil. If our enemy is one of us, the first step is awaken compassion, because that can change things. The person goes from one extreme to the other and Hashem will repay him for this. This is especially true if the person is completely compassionate as opposed to self serving compassionate.

The way this works is that a person can't feel compassion and hatred simultaneously. So we move beyond our hatred. For the enemy, he will feel a certain inner shame if he defines us as an enemy. Let us understand how shame works There is a premise that the

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more the person thinks of himself, the higher the threshold of their shame. Gerald Ford once tripped coming off the plane and it was a source of humiliation. If I tripped, it would not be the same, because my expectations for myself and from other people are not that exalted nor should they be. Some people's expectations of themselves has been diminished so much they have no shame. They sleep in the street, etc. Their expectations for themselves have diminished so much.

When you feel compassion, you give hashivos to someone, you see significance, which in turn gives them a sense of shame. How can I do this to someone who likes me, who understands me?

It doesn't mean when you pour coals on his head that you have set him afire. It could actually be destruction as with Esther and Haman. Why did Esther invite him? The Gemara adds, if your enemy is hungry (Haman wanted power and control), give him bread, which she did, she invited him to the seudah. It will lead him to submission, you are pouring coals on his head. As soon as you sustain him, he is under your control. When he is under your control because he has received from you, your poured coals on his head because you changed his ability to act. Hashem Who does not want opposition will give him over to your hand and He will help you.

This is a dear and beautiful explanation. Regarding Haman, Hashem does not want opposition in the world, He wants things to work within the frame of his pattern. That would be Esther should defeat Haman, which restores order. If you are talking hatred within the Jewish community, it would mean something else. It means you turn someone over by to alleging himself through your rachmanos on him. So either way, the bond that is created through giving is the first step to defeating an enemy. Concretely, we realize that hatred and compassion are incompatible. When you are dealing with someone with whom you wish to have compassion, you have to not only give but to feel for him, and that will diminish your hatred and their hatred. If it is a hatred like Haman, the act of giving (not rachamim) makes him subservient. And there is a third component, busha, shame. The enemy will be embarrassed to turn against someone who treated him in a way that he came to grips with his own hashivos.

Concretely, some of you may be teachers. If you have teenager who is totally turned off, one way to approach is opposition..I won't allow...which is sometimes for the sake of the other children, but not for that person. Find out what he needs, what is his bread? You give him what he wants and he will be embarrassed to oppose you. A story of Reb Aryeh Levine...he had a congregation, the people involved in opposing the British rule. Reb Aryeh approached one of them and one of his congregants swallowed a cigarette because he could not stand to be seen in contrast to Reb Aryeh's wishes.

Would this work with every relationship?

You know who your enemy is? You may think it is someone who opposes you or does not value you. The gemara tells us your real enemy is yourself.

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With the present enemies of Israel there is a difference between feeding them enough to give them subservience and giving your country, which would be giving yourself. If we give our selves to them rather than giving them what they need and create dependency, then we become subservient to them.

.The yetzer hara presents itself as someone hungry and thirsty. When you feel that lack, that hunger and thirst, you have to fill it with something or else it will make its demands and take whatever it wants from you. Give it bread of Torah, water, of spirituality.

He begins by telling us that the yetzer hara has two forms, the yetzer that tells us to uncover the body so you can get at it and take delight in it. Take physical reality and let the pleasure of that fill the lack. This is the pursuit of taiva, lack of kedusha. This comes from the profound feeling of lack and trying to fill it with physical means. For example, food. It is not good for filling the empty space within you....no one loves me, I am bored, etc. Because it emotionally makes that claim, overindulgence in gashmius it opens the door to all kinds of yetzer hara. There is nothing wrong with gashmius, the physical world is purposeful and good. but it can be used for the wrong purpose to fill that empty space.

The second kind is avoda zara. What is in it for idol worship. We have an empty space. Either we can fill it by making ourselves bigger or by making G-d smaller and more immediate, so that we have no need to upraise ourselves and uplift our lives.

Someone who is frum but has a yetzer and likes to experience everything went to Beth Lechem. People go down these steps, and the crowding was extreme, but she saw at the bottom a cradle...Betsy Wetsy. In the manger there was a plastic doll that you feed and it wets. Thousands of people brought themselves into religious ecstasy using that as a medium. What people do is they find what they admire the most in the aspect of G-d within them and they worship that. So in Christianity, they say that G-d is love. G-d is far more than love...and not only that, it is love as we humans experience it, so they create a legendary human being that is infinitely loving and compassionate and worship that. As opposed to moving what human love and compassion could be to its Divine source through the mitzvohs.

So avoda zara takes one sense of yearning for meaning and connection and degrading it bynot moving all the way up to G-d but settling on a more base form of perceived hashivos. For example, lashon hara. When a person speaks lashon hara and throws judgments out right and left, they are in the judge's seat which feels very good. Or if not judging, they are in a central position, the one in the know that someone else is listening to. So finding self importance through making the G-d within you small instead of taking the G-dliness within you and attaching it to its source is called avoda zara. Both forms have to be fed. And you feed the yetzer with Torah.

How does this work?

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The gemara says, if you happen to find the despicable one, meaning the yetzer hara, drag him to the bais ha medrash . If he is stone he will be erased and if he is iron he will explode and shatter. Are not my words like fire, Hashem swears, and like a hammer He explodes a rock. How does this work? Why does learning and Torah annihilate the yetzer hara.

The effect of mitzvahs are in two categories, positive and negative. One form of yetzer hara opposes positive mitzvahs..get up and do, fill the empty space by doing something positive. But we have a part of us that is like a stone. We want others to do for us. We don't like to move. We like being energized by movement, but we don't like to move. The nature of the physical body is take a rest, take a break. The body is of the earth. On a deeper level, there is a part of us that is stonelike, that becomes much more a presence in our thoughts when we despair. When we despair, we no longer believe in our ability to move things, we become stone like.

It has to be then that you take this stone and you reduce it, with water. Give yourself small steps until you have the courage and will to do. Another form of the yetzer hara is the opposite. We want to do something, but it is destructive. Destruction is just as much fun as creation! The feeling of empowerment that you get by destruction, self-destruction, destroying others, doing – that sometimes is hard to contain. If the yetzer hara within a person tells that person to get up and do wrong and to transgress negative mitzvahs through doing the wrong thing, then that person at that point is similar to iron that breaks and destroys. That person enjoys destruction, I have broken the limit, I have gone past morality, I have done whatever I have done. There is a good feeling of empowerment that comes from destruction. The pleasure and feeling of activity that comes from real learning can quiet this. The yetzer hara can only act when you feel lack. The yetzer hara lives in a vacuum of lack. When a person is full of Torah, they are not lacking. This feeling of lacking...this is where the yetzer hara finds his place and it can always be filled with Torah and mitzvahs.

The Torah can fill this empty place deep within us, to the point that whatever is lacking in a person disappears. The process is that at least at the moment a person is full of Torah, they are like an angel because they have moved away from the place of lack (in the body, I want more and more; or emotions and ego, I need to be more and more acknowledged.) The Torah moves a person to a place of seichel. Ordinary intellectual pursuit tells you about the world, science, humanity, etc. The basis of secular info is observation. Even mystic observation comes from what the physical eye can see. The process of knowing is limited by human observation. We don't see all that much, and our quest for truth is very limited. The Torah comes from a place that is beyond human seichel from beyond our powers of observation. Because of that when a person enters the seichel of the torah, they can fill any empty space. And it doesn't just mean learning Torah, it means learning Torah in the way in which one desires to fill the empty space.

Righteous people walk in the statutes of Torah, takes them higher and higher. The people who are using the Torah as a means of filling themselves with material or ego gain

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through the Torah may not get there. What about going through shelo lishma to lishma? The only way to lishma is from shelo lishman. There has to be some will to see shelo lishma as a process and not an end in itself. He tells us the Torah can eliminate ego and materialism with something pure and real.

He explains more deeply. The Torah is complete. Nothing that we have is complete.

A story

A Rabbi in California told this story. He went to the funeral of the late Bobover Rebbe. There was a Black man there, weeping. The Rabbi was interested in why he was there, he was not Jewish nor a convert. He knew the Rebbe. 25 years before, the Rebbe called him to paint the house. The first day, he filled the cracks and the next day you paint. The first day, the Rebbe asked him if he had breakfast, and started to serve him. He ate the breakfast. The next day, he was ready to start. The Rebbe said to him, it doesn't have to be perfect. The man said I am a very good painter, why doesn't it have to be perfect. The Rebbe said, in this world nothing is perfect, no people, nothing is perfect. Nothing is perfect? The rebbe said, we had a temple in Jerusalem that was perfect, but since then nothing is perfect. The painter took that in.

He had another job in a different rebbe's home. No one asked him about breakfast the first day. The second day, the Rebbe said, I want a perfect job, no mess, no corner mistakes. The black man said, Rabbi, in this world nothing is perfect, no people, nothing is perfect. You Jews once had a temple in Jerusalem that was perfect, but since it was destroyed nothing is perfect. The black man said, the Rebbe, he is my man. He had a picture of the Rebbe in his wallet.

The perfection of the Bais HaMikdosh was real because it brought Hashem's presence into the world, and Hashem is perfect. The way Hashem communicates His perfection to us is through the Torah only the Torah is perfect. Everything else leaves a missing place. On a communal or national level, we feel this lack. Whatever is lacking predominates and we become disillusioned. The early Communists were often Jewish, they filled themselves with it, to fill the empty space but it didn't predominate because it was not the justice of Torah. The secular Zionists filled that empty space with building the land, but they, as opposed to other Zionists, wanted to do this oppositionally to Torah and the act of milking cow isn't going to fill the empty space very long. To the point that the same people who built are in the process of destroying to a very large degree. What the Maharal is saying if you don't want to end up with that despair of having tried to fill that space with something else, the only thing that fills it authentically is Torah because only Torah has no buchitza to the world.

The way the Torah works to erase that which is stone and explode that which is iron. Looking further, it says concerning the age of Moshiach...I will remove the stone heart from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. The place where the yetzer hara can dominate is in the heart of flesh, the place where the stone is, I don't have the patience,

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the koach, the part that wants immediate gratification doesn't get it. It takes time. It wants immediacy. I will give you a heart of flesh not of stone.

No one is interested in ideology. If I interview the kids who come out, and I try to tell them about the Guide for the perplexed, they would look at me like I am crazy. The issue is immediacy and desire, I want it now.

This was predicted. It says Hashem will take away the heart of stone. That is where we are, with a heart of stone.

The fact is if you want to change someone or anyone, you have to feel compassion to bond the person to you. There is a however.

For example, there are people in the world to steal because they want to own the item and maybe the feeling of getting away with it. You can't justify theft if you want someone to stop stealing. Through compassion, you try to give them something to substitute. Let us not be patronizing. Compassion is when the person is lacking and you want to help them, Judgment is to see what is lacking, but if you stay there and just say this is wrong like a broken tape recorder, there will be no change. There has to be a bond of compassion between you.

To conclude we have spoken about different forms of yetzer haras and different approaches to it...we spoke about the approach of compassion , bonding, creating a certain sort of busha, dependency in dealing with enemies. We then spoke how the enemy within us, the yetzer hara, within us feeds on perceived lack and we can fill that lack with taiva or self-importance by instead learning Torah, and this works because it is true, and it comes above human limitations.

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So here is our next class in Maharal, Netiv Choach HaYetzer from Netivat Olam Perek Beis

For those of you have books, we are beginning with the perek on Avoda Zara.

Question from last week:

What would you say to someone who does not feel fulfilled by the Torah filling that empty space.

Answer:

To tell you the truth that is the topic of this week. The question is deeper than it sounds. Everyone has a hailich in Torah. Sometimes the halik has to do with the theoretical side, and sometimes the hailik has to do with the practical. In addition to that (that is going to be the topic this week – different aspects and expressions of Torah) what we find is that for various reasons a person sometimes doesn't know their halik in Torah because the nature of teaching in a group setting is that the teacher addresses the group. The Arizal's talmid Reb Chaim Vital quotes a gemara that says if a person doesn't see a simmon bracha in what they are learning in five years, they have to go on to another form of learning. In the case of Reb Chaim Vital that other form of learning had to do with Toras nister rather than Toras nigleh exclusively. People have to be creative in their approach to learning. The reason I am not saying maybe you should become an artist to fill the empty space, is that when you look at what a person is, we look at their thoughts, he is in communication with you. The Torah has thought and the part of us that relates to Gd most intimately is our mind. The mind to mind connection has enormous potential. Everyone has their halek. For women, it isn't Torah lishma but whatever inspires them in Torah, for some it will be mussar, or finding the ideas of Torah in the world, whatever is inspiring. If we find the part that is their halik it will be profoundly fulfilling.

He begins by quoting a gemara in which it says "Happy are you who plants upon all of the water." Happy are you oh Yisrael, at the time you are busy with Torah and acts of kindness then your evil inclination is given into your hand and the Jews are not given into the hand of the Yetzer Hara.

Happy are those who plants in all the water, and there is nothing compared to planting more than charity is. Plant charity. There is no water other than Torah. All those who thirst shall come to water. The gemara concludes by saying that we have to put your foot to the work of this the way an ox does (to his yoke by putting his focus on it) and a donkey does (he bears it). All those who thirst will come to water. The gemara concludes by saying you have to put your foot to this the way an ox does (he channels his energy to his yoke) and the way a donkey (he bears his burden).

He is saying how does the work of the Torah bring about the situation where the yetzer hara is satisfied by the work? The answer is that there has to be a combination of Torah and gemilas chesed. And not only in Torah and gemilas chesed, the what, but also the how. There has to be a way to take your energy and give it direction. The example of how to do it is plural. There has to be a way to take your energy and give it direction the

way an ox does with enormous force controlled by the yoke and the way a donkey does it.

Now the Maharal explains the gemara

We all have evil in us from the day of our birth. Let's look at that idea for a moment – do we see little babies as evil? Of course not. So, what does it mean? The Gra explains the way we start out, our awareness is ego centric and physical. For babies all that matters is themselves. The only thing important is physical. There is no reciprocity in the relationship. He doesn't understand. We start out a very different way than we hope to end up. As a person grows, his spiritual awareness becomes stronger until the point when they become Bar or Bat Mitzvah their spiritual awareness which is experienced to some degree as intellectual openness as such. At Bar Mitzvah, they can understand the logical consequences of their actions. If a 13 year old breaks a window, the child should understand the consequences, he is accountable. But it takes until 20 when the voice of the soul and the body are heard equally loudly which is why people are judged by Hashem only from the age of 20. We are born with evil and to overcome evil we have to have a relationship to good. (a baby is still innocent because he does not choose to do evil) So good is what the Torah is offering you, that is what fills the empty space, not the information but the goodness and devekus that comes forth from the information.

The place where you have to let good affect you is in your mind and in your soul. That means there is a huge difference when a person does a positive act with consciousness as opposed to without consciousness. In the highest form of tzedakah, a person makes the other self sufficient. Compare that to an external way of giving...just habitually writing a check. The more your mind and your soul is involved, the more that the good that you do becomes you. It is something we have to do with the mind and the soul.

Torah changes the way you think. Torah is called good. When you get a picture about how Hashem wants the world to look, which is what all learning is about, even abstract learning shows how He wants the world elevated, it shows you His plan. And the elegance and logic of His thought gives you a closeness and intimacy to His thought. That gives your mind a relationship to goodness. When you do chesed, your soul is involved, so that your soul and not just your mind (nefesh is the spiritual self experienced through the walls of the body) is elevated and that is what fills the empty space.

If a person is devoted to goodness in mind and soul, of course they are distant from yetzer hara which is blocked – which is evil, evil means blockage of good. If a cup is full of wine it can't be full of milk. If you are full of Torah and chesed, you are not going to want to or try to fill it with something else.

He now begins to tell us what that destructive something really is. He stops telling us about good and now he talks about the alternative way of filling the empty space. It has a name. What is the name? Ra. Absence of goodness. But it has a name, so there is a presence of something.

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There is no such thing as a dark wave, only a light wave. If something blocks light, it is dark. Evil is an illusion, it is intangible. Imagine building a lego tower and then taking it down, knocking it over. When you build it, it is there, but when you destroy it, it feels good but there is nothing there, just the absence of the tower and the force you generated to make it happen.. The same when you humiliate someone. You make them less, you don't make them something else. When you are kind to someone and you build up their esteem, you build and there is something to see. Destruction has no mamashal.

The Ramchal explains from a different angle. He agrees, saying there is no mamashal, no presence in a physical sense, but there is magnetism. Hashem imbued the act of destruction with a certain sort of magnetism and draw and those are called chochos a tuma, the result of destroying something that is rather than becoming something that is.

If the yetzer hara doesn't control a person then they control it. When you do something positive, you fill the empty space by going higher than you were. The illustration is acts of chesed. Let's think about any chesed...when you visit the sick, you hear someone is ill, you go to Manhattan. You blank out time, you bring something with you, you have the ride, you go to the hospital building, you go see her and it may be stressful. We realize the person before us could be us, and she might need something, a trip to the pharmacy. Could you be happy? If you keep her in mind, and care for her the whole way, you can feel good. You can see that you can have enormous pleasure in what we did. Chesed removes you from the realm in which you associate pleasure with physical sensation (riding on the train is not that pleasant), but you replaced it and are energized by the spiritual sensation of giving. The act of doing chesed does is it redefines the definition of pleasure for you, you take pleasure in giving and building instead of physicality. So you move into the transcendental world, to the world that isn't limited by what limits physical things and through doing that, the coarseness and the earthiness that holds us down (and in the end keeps us away from pleasure also, by the way) is diminished.

He quotes Pirke Avos, "A person of the earth isn't one who goes beyond the limits and does chesed". Here, we usually translate am ha'aretz as ignorant. But He takes it literally. A person is am ha'aretz, when all they understand is physical pleasure, they can't understand giving and be a chasid. As soon as he does an act of kindness, he becomes a person of kindness. That is the effect of chesed. When you go through the list of cheseds, hachnchas orchim, etc., the acts themselves don't give pleasure, but you are absorbed by the act of self transcendence by giving to the other to the point where the physical tirkas doesn't matter to you. You are flying on the simcha.

Now he talks about how Torah works. The joy of learning Torah, "I got it, I understand!" Sometimes chesed is difficult and it is hard to feel spiritual pleasure. Because chesed is difficult, that is what makes it easier to feel the pleasure. There is a family in Har Nof that is a hard case. The derech a teva is not resolvable. The person who was in charge wanted to help them out, and went there, and saw the list. Another person solicited students – you will not solve their problems, this is chesed lishma. This is chesed where you can effect at the moment, but it is hard. Many volunteered. If you are informed that

the chesed is hard so you realize you are running the fast track and there is elation. It is sometimes hard to move from expectation to the fast track. This is really the issue. But when you realize that you can do it, the more elation there is. The more overwhelmed you feel, the less elation you feel.

This is something understood for people who think deeply. So now we are leaving what to do and moving toward how to do it. But there is a new question. What if the sick person you were visiting was sleeping or asked you to leave or was discharged? The fact is that the chesed exists not just externally in the effect you have but internally in your desire to move beyond physical comfort. If you were committed to that person the whole trip there, you have moved within yourself. You have accomplished something within yourself. Internal change has to do with intent. There is a famous story of a violent demonstration in Israel a few years ago, and someone threw a rock through a police car window and hit an officer but he wasn't injured. Word came to Reb Levenstein who called a big meeting and was dramatic. "There is a murderer amongst us". The person who threw the rock is a murderer. From the negative to the positive, the person is discharged. Your kavannah to rise above yourself and relate to another person and ease their burden is in your hands and you are a baal chesed whether or not there is a recipient.

A myth that we have, the more you don't enjoy a mitzvah the holier you are. NO. Many tzoros in the Torah came upon us because we did not serve Hashem with simcha. The Rambam quotes, the lack of simcha shel mitzvah takes away the energy and spirituality of the mitzvah. Of course you should feel simcha shel mitzvah, it doesn't degrade the mitzvah in anyway to enjoy the mitzvah. Is a difficult mitzvah preferable? According to the difficulty is the reward. You don't get kvetch points. In order to get to the mitzvah you may have to make tradeoffs. Ideally you are aware enough of what a chesed and a mitzvah are that you make the tradeoffs with joy. If you make the tradeoffs with joy, and according to the value of the tradeoffs it is visible how you value the mitzvah, the chesed. For example, if I asked you if \$15000 is a lot of money, you would say yes. If someone let you buy an apartment for \$15000, you would have great joy and think it was nothing. Even though the sum hasn't changed, you would have joy in spending \$15000 for something worth more. If you are getting something worth far more, there is joy in spending it. If less, there is intuitive regret in spending it. The same is true with a chesed. The more you see that the chesed is far more than the maximum tircha, the more you give then the more you are, then the more simcha and the greater the mitzvah.

There was a woman active in Bikur cholim who helped a man from Israel who was in bad shape and the airlines didn't want to take him back on the plane. The woman took off her pearls and gave it to the attendant who put the man on the plane. This woman understood he wanted to die in Israel with his family. That was worth more than the pearls. That is what this is supposed to be.

Q Mitzvah at shul involves too much politics and stroking

A. If I ever do someone a real favor, I will have to defend myself (he had a rock). Social reality is that most things that involve people involve imperfection because people are imperfect. There is a certain kind of a person who can carry others' imperfection with them as part of their chesed. (Mrs. Heller has a son involved with the poor. The

organizer took the volunteers – you need more food, go ask the farmers for donations. Bring back cartons of eggs. Her son couldn't understand why the farmer would give him eggs. They taught him to knock and say he is collecting for the poor can I have one egg and see what happens next. The man says yes and gives many eggs. If you can touch their goodness, then besides whatever good the shul is doing you are getting part of the tikkun) Now, he tells us the way you do the mitzvah is specific. He said the yetzer hara has two routes, d'erva, desire or avoda zara, wanting to make Gd small to make oneself feel big – lashon hara, ego stroking, power politics. People want personal significance. If we are skilled enough to give significance to them so they can feel good about themselves, it is a chesed, and you help the person enjoy the good feeling of ruchni direction of egocentricity and you are part of their tikkun which is huge chesed. You should continue with that expectation. You will see imperfection, accept it and be part of the rectification process.

Avoda zara has to do with the ego, compared to the shore. Why? Of all the domestic animals the ox is the strongest –the lion for wild – but without wild, the strongest is the ox. The ego is compared to the ox. It is hugely powerful and it yearns for direction. Torah gives direction, it tells you where do you put yourself, where do you put your mind? It makes you part of something bigger than yourself. The word shore is the same as ashrei, has to do with vision. If you take someone's inner vision, who they are and what the world could be and channel it through Torah, that is huge. Conversely, there is another part of us, that has to be like the chamor --the desire yetzer, which is not a visionary, it wants pleasure. You have to be like a chamor and be willing to take the chumri world, bear it and make it go where you want it to go.

A person who is learning is like an ox and a chamor. A person should put their foot to it like an ox and a donkey. The foot comes into direct contact with the earth. We don't only have the rosh in shemayim, we are held down by ego, material considerations...when a person learns Torah, they have to be able to involve their soul like an ox and move above the earthiness and like a chamor to contend with the physical things that keep us from learning Torah.

In general, the Maharal says in other places, go exactly where your koach is maximized but where you won't be pushed beyond your endurance. However, every so often Hashem will present you with something that does push you beyond your endurance. He thinks it is time to move onto the next level. Open your heart and mind and soul and flow with it. For example my daughter runs a gan. The bus comes at 1 o'clock and some go on the bus. One day, the parents came before 1 to pick up the children. One of the mothers had a child who had a syndrome and she was visibly expecting. What is the worst thing someone could say? Aren't you afraid that this baby might also have this syndrome? There are no words. The woman replied I don't make the babies Gd makes the baby. I want whatever baby He gives me. This means when things happen, Gd says this is where you can be maximally effective.

We have to get rid of what draws us down from both, symbolized by the foot. All of the person's energies are in control and aim toward that one goal. A person should be

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focused upon Torah with body and soul. Their physical actions and emotions which are connected to the physical since we experience emotions through our senses which are attached to the physical world via the sense, should be directed as should our minds. The key to everything is direction.

This is very clear to those familiar with the remez of ox and chamor. If a person is occupied with Torah, if it is their essence and drive...

Q What if someone is struggling, what bracha if Hashem thinks you can handle the situation?

Even if someone is standing in the grocery and they are holding a shopping bag with lemons and one falls on the floor and they ask to wipe up, don't say gam zuletova. People will think you are patronizing unless they know you and trust you so much that they know you have become them at that moment. If you can't be them at that moment in a way that is credible, there is not much to say. You can't possibly say something. It is a matter of their trust in you, which means that you are trustworthy, there is nothing voyaristic about your interest, you could say "this is going to take you far and I will be here to help you". If you really become them that is obviously the next question.

Q In a case when Hashem presents a hard situation, does that minimize the yetzer hara.

Only if that is where you want to go. It is an opportunity to reduce it, but we have free choice and the possibility of not responding well is in the picture. Not responding well isn't just in the case of the woman, but on the people who interact with her. It is a nisayon to help. I had a student at Neveh from California with a mentally ill sister. At that time Reagan was governor of Cal and he released all patients in mental institutions who were unlikely to hurt themselves or others. Her sister was released and sent home. The mother was unable to be with the woman 24 hours. The girl would wander, and she was pretty and she was taken advantage of. She had a child. The sister went back to Ca to legally adopt the child. She went through the bureaucracy and what kept her going, she had to find out all the legal ramifications. Someone said, "I'll help you" he helped her in every way possible. There is no guarantee that those around us will pass our tests, that depends on their free choices..

To conclude, we got as far as understanding that the whole concept of filling the empty space is a combination of Torah and gemilus chesedim, not just good will. Torah works because of its effects on the mind, chesed works because the self transcendence that it engenders. We spoke about the different sources of chesed and how they work, the different forms of yetzer hara and how they have to be dealt with. We spoke about being like an ox and a chamor. We concluded by saying that you can be this and if you become this you can go far far beyond where you were at the starting point.

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Rebbetzin Heller November 26 2006

This class is dedicated lelui nishmat to Rachel Leah bat Chaim Tzvi ...we'll get back to that.

While we are waiting for the name, the idea really does affect their soul.

We left off last time with a gemara that told us what the effect of Torah is on fighting the yester hara. We are beginning on kof chof gimel, the right column.

There are seven names that the yetzer hara has. Of course when you question who cares how many names you give anything? The idea is if you give something a name, you are defining what it is to you, so the seven names of relevant.

Question from last week:

Someone asks that I explain l'fum sara agra, which we spoke about last week. The payment goes according to the suffering. The people sometimes misinterpret this to mean that the more you suffer the better you do. Logically, if that is true, if it takes a certain amount of effort to look good for Shabbos, it would be even better if you bought a sheep, shear it, dye the wool, etc. Not true. You can measure what something means to you by what you are willing to trade off to get it. Suppose I were to tell someone they lost \$100,000. Conversely if I told you that you could buy two 5 room apartment and a new car for \$100,000, they would say, what that is nothing..it is because what you are getting is better than what you are giving out. Similarly, when we do mitzvahs with the awareness of where the mitzvah takes them, they are willing to make sacrifices to get there. Let's take a simple example, a girl who is just beginning to keep Shabbos and she doesn't know what to do, she hasn't learned what to do. She sees that all her food is in the refrigerator and the light is on. For her, that means no food. To her, Shabbos is worth more than food is. That is l'fum sara agra. She is willing to make enormous tradeoffs for it, which Hashem will pay back.

In a more major sense, look at all the stories in the gemara of mesiras nefesh, Rabbi Akiva says at his horrific death, this is what I always wanted. He didn't want suffering. Having absolute allegiance to Hashem's will, this is cheap,losing your body which is lost anyway.

Let's look at these seven names. Hashem refers to it as ra. That was the name he gave it. The inclination of man is evil from his early youth. Moshe refers to it as the uncircumsized one. And you shall circumsize the uncircumsized heart. Dovid called it impure. He said, Hashem give me a pure heart. It's opposite is an impure heart, the yetzer hara. Shlomo HaMelech called it the enemy. If your enemy is hungry give him bread, or water, and you will be pouring coals on his head and Hashem will pay you back. Yeshaya called it the stumbling block. Pave pave, clear out the way, remove the stumbling block from the path of my people. Yechezkeil called it the stone, and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh. Yoel called it the viper, I will distance the viper from you. And that is the end of the gemara.

Now the Maharal says, we have to understand the terms good and evil. What is evil? Let's understand evil as the opposite of good. Hashem is the source of all goodness, all life, creativity, all giving. All the middos through which we see Hashem's presence are manifestations of His goodness and the yetzer hara is the opposite, everything that conceals that.

The Maharal goes a step deeper. He says that goodness is absolute, it's real. What do I mean by real? Hashem is the cause of everything we call real. Anything that comes into being, that wasn't here originally – all that is a result of Hashem's creativity. He is not the result of anything so we call Him the absolute reality, not relative to the will of some external creator, while everything that He made is only relative in terms of its reality because it is dependent on the will of its Creator. Nevertheless everything He Created is a manifestation of Him, and we see His goodness. He saw it was good. Everything that was created gives testimony to His goodness. Because of this the yetzer hara causes absence, that which conceals, and it makes all the goodness seem absent.

I want to take this a step deeper before we go back to the text. The Maharal's book on Chanukah, Ner Mitzvah, he talks about Daniel's vision, and he stands by the sea and sees four animals rising from the depths, a lion, a bear, a tiger or leopard and one is indescribable. He understands these animals with their different features, and he saw them an embodiment of the four kingdoms that will invariably rule. He tells us that the four kingdoms are spoken from the very beginning – the world was formless and empty/chaotic and dark and faces the death. These four phrases hint to four empires that will conceal Hashem in different ways. The empires are an inherent part of creation, a result of creation. There is a distance between the Creator and creation. The creation is other than Hashem, now there is an other. The otherness already creates the consciousness of absence of Hashem. Let's listen back to what we just said.

The yetzer is the opposite, the absence. It is called evil. It's evil is in relationship to its Creator. Evil comes from otherness, but still it is something that Hashem can say this is not me, it is ra.

Moshe called it uncircumcised. A person who is uncircumcised is a completely different creation than one who is. Moshe says evil has to do with people not reaching their fulfillment or completion. To understand why this name relates to Moshe, we have to know that Moshe was on such a high level that the yetzer no longer had a connection to him. He was g'dly so, the yetzer was despicable to him. Many people understand this with question that when people are great they also have a great yetzer hara.

Question:

With the rockets falling in Sderot, is it correct to think of the enemy here as an "iron" representation of the yetzer hara, an iron stick to hit us, an iron stick that loves to destroy, and if so, would it be especially wise of us to tackle this evil as exists in our own consciousness

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It is very difficult to take a complicated problem and give a yes or no answer. The question is complex, it has to do with this last of all exile, the Roman exile (iron) which ends with a sub-exile of galut Ishmael (taiva). The Romans and Ishmaelites are entwined. The qualities of the Ishmaelites are compared to the chamor, the bale taiva, the e'ven, are entwined with the gaiva of the Romans, the iron. Because they are entwined, this golus is the hardest of all. In Tehillim we refer to this last golus as one of the man of no kindness which we see all the time.

Often times people are asking the great Torah sages of today what should we work on. Oftentimes they have their own ideas of the answers. Recently some women put together an evening of prayers for various important reasons. One of the women had an agenda and saw that we are trapped in chumrios, in Ishmael's own trap, there is immodesty and everything that shows that we are being despoiled by our own bodies. She wanted Rebbetzin Heller to put the line on this is the problem. I wouldn't do it, it is too much of a responsibility and I am not sure it is true. I told her to ask Reb Eliashiv and he said he doesn't want to say it's this or it's that. Everyone knows the anguish of their own soul and this is what we are meant to look at. Certainly the middah keneged middah against Esav is the barzel.... and Ishmael is the tzada kumri but they are combined now in their love of destruction.

Going back to Moshe. If you are tempted, then greater people must be even more tempted. But this is not so. The yetzer hara is a greater level of yetzer hara for a greater person. It would have to be something sophisticated, something with meaning to engage them. Ordinary sins would be repulsive to a greater person like Moshe, a person of transcendence. So why is the yetzer called despicable by him?

Nonetheless, because Moshe was not Hashem, he said the yetzer covered something, whereas Hashem said it is the essence of that which could cover, of concealment. Moshe's level of revulsion was less than Hashem's although certainly more than ours.

Question

I always learned that the Jewish view of Yetzer Hara/ Satan is that it is created by Hashem for the purpose of free will. There seem to be situations where it appears to have more "power" and needs to be "appeased" - Seir L'azzazel, The strange circumstances that brought about the Davidic line, etc. What does that mean? Thank you.

[miriam spielman] what is the idea of "Kol Hagadol Michaveiro Yitzro GAdol Mimenon"? Does it mean their Yetzer Hara works harder/smarter, OR that they have a yetzer hara for baser things (that's how I would've understood it, since that Chazzal is always brought whenever there's an incident of an aveirah involving arayos)

The idea of appeasing the yetzer hara ...think of Yaakov. When Yaakov was born, he was holding onto Esau's heel. They could have been born separately and then everything could have been more clear. Yaakov and Esau wanted to find the world. The world is like a nut. A walnut has shells, hard shells so hard that you would think it was wood if you were a baby. The three outside shells are the three courses of evil that cannot be

penetrated by good. They have to be rejected. But then there is a fourth level, a papery cover. Ordinary material experience is in that category. You can degrade material things or you can elevate it, see it as gift of His goodness. Klipah nogah is the battleground. It is the cover not the fruit. The relationship of Yaakov to klipah nogah is symbolized by holding on to Esau's heel, he had to have a connection. In order to prevent the relationship from being reversed, he had to offer something back to Esau. How to reverse? Be on the side of the klipah. If you can get that over to your side, it will be far greater. For example, think of the painting the last supper, which captures Yushka's Pesach seder. The reason they used a seder, it is because then depth and meaning go to the other side, it has more power. When we engage with the klipah nogah, it is best for us to pay our bill – give them something of us to show that we are willing to let go, to the point that we have no desire for what they have, but we'll use what they give us. Look at the Davidic line, they give us desire – yes, we use desires for good, here is your desires back. All the things having to do with the Davidic line is all about this (Lot, Ruth, etc). Yes we draw energy from you, we use it for kedusha, We are willing to pay our dues. This is an esoteric idea.

For Hashem the yetzer is the force of concealment and has no reality. For Moshe, it is a cover, like oil on the flesh. Dovid calls it impure. A person who is impure has to be separated, go outside the tent. This is why we have the halachos, when a person leaves the camp – go away, tamei, he is separate from us. Dovid, because his level is less than Moshe, saw an impure person as a person, there was a connection, he saw the forces of evil as being another aspect of humanity, even if we reject it. It is part of me, not out there. Moshe was on the level that it was not part of him.

For example, none of us is tempted to do human sacrifice. It is not something I have to do battle with, it is out there. For Moshe, everything is out there. He is pure. When a person reaches a certain level, there are places they don't go. Dovid was closer to us, it was like me, not me, but like me. It is tamei, it is what I want out, but it is part of the persona. The difference between us and Dovid is that he could say a part of him he rejects, not a part with whom he identifies...I wish that wasn't part of me. There was no doubt about who "I" is. For Dovid, something that is impure was something he wanted distance from, no connection with. He wanted no connection with it. He didn't want the kosher version of it, he wanted it over there.

Shlomo calls it the enemy because an enemy is separate from a person. An enemy doesn't defile you by touch. Tuma does. All the halachas regarding tuma have to do with touching. Dovid's sense of refinement in spiritual matters was such that he saw tuma as repulsive, he wanted no connection, he didn't want to touch.

Shlomo saw it as the enemy, he had no equivalency about that, but he wasn't afraid to touch it. We see this in Shlomo's life. Arguably the greatest mistake in his life was the number of women he took. His intent was to take whatever holiness there was from their societies and elevate it and bring it into Am Yisroel and thus elevate the world. Take it from klipah noga and bring it to kiddusha but it didn't work because Hashem forbade it. There should have been something about the fact that Hashem forbade it which made the

act itself repulsive to him, not because he couldn't do it because for a significant part of his life he did it, but before Hashem forbade it. For Shlomo it was not repulsive. For us halavai we don't do it.

In Yeshaya, we are going down. He called the forces of evil a stumbling block. There was no hatred there, it was something you had to get passed. Nobody considers a stumbling block their enemy...it's something you pick it up and move it aside. He had no idea compared to Moshe or Hashem, that anything that is good that is hidden is a lost opportunity and anything that conceals it should be despised. To him it was something to get through and halavai we should even see yetzer hara as a mikshul.

Yechezkeil saw it as a stone. We have all experienced when our hearts are hearts of stone. We can't get anywhere in our prayers and mitzvahs, they feel like it is mechanical. But we don't feel the stone is our enemy, we think of it as normal. It stops sometimes being a stumbling block and becomes an aspect of our personality. Which is a much lower level.

Yoel who is on a lower level still called it a viper, which means concealed. It is hidden in my heart and I don't know it is there. For example, if a person calls a Rav about a certain product and really wants an answer of muter. There is no consciousness of this that there is a part of the product that might be harmful. Rather, how do I get around this as if it is a stumbling block?

Question

What is the idea that the yetzer hara works harder and smarter?

Answer

The yetzer hara...the tzaddik in question would fall to arayos because something about his yearning for devekus goes off. Every so often we hear about good people who go off and they don't plan to go off, it is that their closeness with the other person was such that they didn't notice the yetzer in their hearts, exactly what we are talking about. If they were Moshe, it would have been repulsive to the point of being impossible. If they were Dovid, it would be something outside of consciousness. Although Dovid didn't sin with Batsheva, it was beneath his madrega. His belief that it was right overtook his consciousness. For people of a higher level, there is a greater possibility of turning something forbidden into muter and mitzvah is a greater possibility than it is for us.

We do things because we want to but at least we know where the line is drawn.

When you understand that these go from the higher to the lower, then you realize that since there are only seven levels, there is a limit to how far evil goes, symbolized by 7. How? Gehinnom which is evil in its absence of Hashem, also has seven names and it is all one thing. The seven levels relate to seven kinds of people.

A person who understand sin.

A person who is hard for him to bear

A person who realizes it could cause him to fall

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A person whose opposition is such that he hates it – away away tamai
A person to whom a sin is so estranged and beyond that he has no relationship to it at all
A person who sees that doing the sin makes a person non-human.

The consensus of the Gedolai Torah is that the problem is we no longer despise sin, that it seems almost good. We have tolerance as a virtue, but we have to see sin as harmful distancing, not ourselves, no place for tolerance.

In the attempts to bring us to that place, to make our world narrower, oftentimes there is resistance because we are not Moshe Dovid Shlomo..or even Yoel, because we reached the point where sin is familiar and comforting, and this is what evil is, the absence of anything real. There is a hint in this that it has seven names, and he concludes with this.

The yetzer hara disguises itself as something that which gives us satisfaction. Which is why the number seven is the same letters as sova, satisfaction. Let's look at satisfaction, it isn't only physical -those who have material wealth are not necessarily satisfied. Nor is it only spiritual because if a person's physical needs are not met they are not satisfied. It is a way of taking that which is physical and giving it spiritual depth and meaning. People's yearning for meaning takes them to wanting to satisfy the empty place within them with forbidden acts and thus it says the desire for forbidden relations comes – which is often the source of evil- under the disguise of bringing satisfaction. Again this is why the number 7 is involved and with that we concluded what the Maharal says are the names of the yetzer hara.

We said that the yetzer hara has names that we can identify from higher to lower. The highest is Hashem who says this conceals me, the middle level is Moshe, who sees the person who surrenders to evil as being redefined, a walking human tragedy. Dovid would see not that the person is different but the evil has to be thrown out, down mikshul down even, until we get to where we are, the hidden viper that lives in our own emotional basis that lives with our desire for satisfaction that allows us every evil imaginable. This is true of arayos, which is what the Maharal was talking about but it is also true in avoda zara. There are tremendous numbers of Jews in India. The street signs are in Ivrit, there are so many Israelis there. The viper in the heart presents it as the self is saying satisfy me through avoda zara, through arayos because there is no feeling that these things are a mikshul, are an even, are tomei are arel and ultimately distance us from Hashem.

Perek Beit Netiv Koach Hayetzer Dec 24 2006

Last time we spoke about the seven names of the Yetzer hara. Today we will go further.

It presents us with an axiom. The seven names have one thing in common, which is that they connote lack. Humans are lacking, we are made lacking, we are not whole, and lack is the source of all evil and it is because of that we are drawn towards evil, because it resonates. The more whole a person is, the more he doesn't feel himself to be lacking, the less the yetzer hara can dominate him.

Let's look at an example, something everyone agrees as reprehensible such as murder. When a person murders, the motive is the lack. If they murder for money or fear, or whatever, it is motivated by lack.

The gemara means regarding the avos, the yetzer did not have dominion over them. How do we know this the Gemara asks? Because each one at a different time in their life was referred to using the word Kol, meaning all, that they felt that they were everything or had everything. When they reached that point, then there was no place for the yetzer hara to enter.

Avraham bakol, Yitzchol mikol is used, Yaakov the word kol

Now he is telling us why it is this way for the avos. You could think that it is why is because of their own personal efforts toward self perfection. But that is not what he says. He says something very deep. He says they had to be guided by Hashem in this direction because each one of them contains, like a hologram, the whole of their future descendents, the total of their future descendents and because of this they can't be defined by chasorim. Their definition of what made them themselves had to be whole.

The gemara tells us there are only three patriarchs. What does this mean? We all have parents. There are only three that are worthy of being called fathers in the ultimate sense. What is the ultimate sense? In the case of ordinary people, something of what the parents are is conveyed biologically and middos, but the child can choose their way out of this to a large degree.

With the avos, because their lives were bigger than life, because they made such enormous choices in their lives, Hashem made a covenant that who they are would be passed on, but there is more. You can only make a choice within the frame of choices available to you. These were people with enormous spiritual capacity. For them to be bigger than life to begin with, they had to have gifts, and the reason they had these gifts was that they were meant to be the avos of an entire people, it was in the plan from before the creation. The souls of Israel were made before the world was. We learn in Bereshis it tells us the world was made for Yisrael. For them to emerge from a specific point was part of the original plan. Hashem didn't cause the Jews to descend from Adom in a direct

sense because to be a nation and not just a family, there had to be a population on earth. The bigger than life dimensions of the avos was part of the original plan.

If you are talking about an individual, a private person, who isn't defined as being a source of a nation, that person has an inherent lack, not just a lack that they choose into from mistakes and bad deeds, but because their souls are not gigantic like the avos. So if you read the life of the famous Tzaddik of Yerusahlayim, Reb Arey Levine, enormous sensitivity and chesed, this is his strong point, chesed. When you look at Gedolai Torah of today, you see in the nikudos of greatness clarity, devotion, but they are not who Reb Aryeh was, he is a different person. All of us on the basis of our individuality are lacking. Now you could think the avos also on the basis of their individuality might have been lacking, Avrohom chesed, Yitzchok gevurah, Yaakov emes. It is not as simple as it sounds. The essence of what everyone would be was in Avraham. Yitzchak who started where Avraham left off, took that essential quality, what Avraham was, and took it further. What Yaakov became was already there in Yitzchok but he actualized it. This is the idea of the bracha and the bechora, this is why these episodes are so significant. Therefore, the yetzer hara didn't have room in them and why the word kol could be used.

There are those who maintain that Dovid also was a bigger than life figure which is an easy argument to make. It says concerning the avos that they were G-d's chariot, meaning they took G-d from infinity and brought Him into this world the same way a vehicle takes a rider from where he is to where he wants to be. Dovid is called the fourth leg of the mirkava, the one who steadies it. His middos which is Malchus, making Hashem rule in any situation in any time, when you look at how varied his life was, it is enormous. So Dovid was also a super soul, in fact it says Adom Dovid Moshiach are one soul.

Anyone who is called kol, the yetzer hara can't have dominion over him. Was Dovid never under the dominion of the yetzer hara? Arguably he could have made more perfect choices. What about the Batsheva episode. What about Avraham and Yitzchok and Yaakov? But they reached a point in their lives where the word kol could be used and the potential was there for them to reach that point to begin with.

Moshe Rabbeinu is called individual, meaning his madrega was so high he was really different from the rest. We aren't all bits of Moshe the way we are all bits of Avraham. He was really different from the rest. The Gemara asks a riddle – which woman had the most children, it is Yocheved because she had Moshe and his soul equaled everyone else all together. He was on a level called nivdal, which means transcendental or separate from everyone else's level. Because of this he is unlike the avos, he was unique. The Avos were connected and he was unique. They were kol. He is called pratis. The yetzer could rule him to some degree, even though given his tzidkius we have no relationship to understanding this.

The gemara tell us the yetzer hara dwells on a talmid chochim more than on anyone else. We have heard the ma'mar -what is the end- yisro. If I get involved in something and I miss mincha, it is not the same as a talmid chochim missing mincha more than I.

A talmid chochim's greatness in this is that he is sichli – we don't mean that he has a high IQ- we mean that his identity is intellectual. We are all complex. What will claim our identity – intellect, emotions, body? By definition, his definition of self is in the world of mind. That world is not inherently chaser (transient). Truth isn't transient. So there is a certain shelamos that has to do with sichlios.

Question: Do we all have potential to be nivdalim, or is this also pre-ordained?

Answer: It depends. Kiddusha is the essence of being nivdal. We all have some ability to be nivdal and we are obligated to be nivdal. It is a mitzvah. Every Jew has a minimal capability of living a life that is kaddosh. That is not even a question. But there are different levels within nivdal. Different aspects of the self grab one's personality. Not everyone is Moshe. To understand more, Hashem made souls, different levels of souls. It is not only up to us, it is up to Hashem. A person can be born with a great soul and what we do with it is up to us. There is inherently different potentials in different people, also in terms of nivdal.

But the shelamos that is inherent to seichel isn't inherent in every thing, the person who's world is sichlios, truth, has to apply that truth to a world full of chisronos. So because of that the seichel can be reduced to being defined through the chisronos of the world. In that regard he is not like the avos. It says concerning Torah that the righteous walk with it while the wicked stumble with it. What does that mean? The gemara says it is like a potent. It gives energy. Where they go with it could take them to death or higher levels of life. Similarly sichlios is enormously powerful and lead to nivdal but it could also take a person to atomic bombs, psychoanalysis, communism. It wasn't just ignorance of Torah. The problem was that they were using their seichel to serve their emotional agendas so the seichel was devoted to what was chaser rather than elevating that which is chaser.

The conclusion is that a talmid chochim and the Jewish people have to interact with the world. The Gra tells us in the difference between Jews and non Jews, physically you cannot tell the difference. But spiritually, even non-Jews can be nivdal. What is the difference? It is in our nefesh, specifically the nefesh of the behamot, our bodies. If we are inspired by something we hear, we need ears, so it is dependent on the body. The nefesh is divided into two, the animal and the spiritual nefesh. The nefesh bahamot of the Jews is made from Eretz Yisroel while the nefesh of the goyim is made from other countries. Eretz Yisroel's segula is that the physical can be uplifted, only in Israel. In Lakewood, you never take meiser. Similarly the Jews have to interact with the world – our mitzvahs force us to interact, while the non-Jews can escape because they don't have the idea of elevating the world. The nisayon of being drawn into the world is very real.

Q Is a talmid chochim supposed to be disconnected from his emotional side.

A The tzaddikim are in charge of their hearts. Ideally our emotions should be swept up by what our minds tell us to feel. The emotions are inspired by truth or goodness. Before the expulsion of Gush Katif, at the kotel, davening, then suddenly silence for shemona esrei, it was inspiring emotionally, but here, the emotions are following the mind. When the emotions sweep away the mind (e.g. a rock concert), this is something else. A talmid

chochom be in control of the direction his emotions take. The Rambam tells us to beware of emotions, that they are hard to change. He advises emotional restraint. From the kabbalistic perspective, in Strive for Truth, the heart is the repository of binah, and the Gra says so as well, it draws its energy from chochma but in the end it rules, so it is hard to say that there should be disconnection from that perspective.

Now something new. Another reason for chisoron would be that we are almost there but we are not there. We have enormous capacity for closeness to Hashem, identity to Hashem, but not completely in this world. Devekus is always lacking. As we search a slight turn takes us off track. The chisoron in elokut also drives us. How does that work? There are people who dedicate their seichel to emotional agendas. Or there are people who think they are right but they are wrong because a mistake was made. The classical example has to do with the evolution of Christianity, that arguably began with a student of a student of Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakkai. There was a misguided search for truth. Now if this person had a subconscious motive, idol worship, that is another issue.

With other nations, you can't say their lack is great because their inspiration is less, so their potential for destruction is less. With a Talmud chochim, because we are not whole, we come to tragic attempts toward shelamos and we miss the boat. That is why we received the tablets of the covenant, the truth, and the yetzer hara grabbed onto us the most, the golden calf. What was happening in the world was happening in the world. When you read about the golden calf, what did they want? What did they think? They wanted to make a religious symbol that said who they are and where they are going. The ox is the strongest domesticated animal, a symbol of taking strength that is controlled and directed, and letting that be the symbol. Gold is a remes on middos hadin. It was meant to be an authentic religious symbol. What was so bad? We were told not do to it, no symbols. The mishkan had symbolism. We had the keruvim, which was commanded. It was a desire to draw close to Hashem, on His terms, making our ego bittel.

This world is not a place where there will be shelamos and that is why the yetzer hara drew them out half the day. The more you look for shelamos the more tolerant you should be. Everyone makes mistakes. Some make bigger mistakes, but everyone makes mistakes because the world is imperfect. When we see mistakes, the more nebach this person was victimized by living in this world.

Q. In one of your tapes, it said that to raise good kids a model could be the Solovetchik family, who taught their children that if they want something they need to ask Hashem for it. It seems that many solutions we need as adults need to be planted as children, in attaching them to goodness along the way. Is there an axiomatic theme to instill that universally will plant the proper building blocks for spirituality?

A. Of course there isn't. How could there be. The closest you could find is the following paradigm. There is nothing axiomatic. The paradigm is as follows. The letter vav is a symbol of the Torah 6x6. Six dimensions in dealing with the world. If you make the vowel with a dot, that dot is a symbol of divine wisdom within us and in the Torah. The word melupim for the vowel comes from mala pei – a full mouth. Everyone has what to

say that is holy. If a person can look at another person and think what do they have to say that is holy, if we look at ourselves and say what do I have to say that is holy, then we look at the Torah what is it telling me in this moment, that is the key.

The yetzer hara attaches davka to where the chasirim is and the talmid chochim who has this great mila, because of their closeness to shelamos the chisarim is more pronounced, like a stain on white garment.

Therefore the yetzer attacks them most. The more a person is elevated, the more guarded they have to be against the yetzer hara. If you can identify your own level, that is where you have to be guarded that your energy is going where it belongs, that it doesn't swerve. One of the sports we indulge in far too frequently is shita criticism, this group is good except for...etc. Usually the criticisms are true, meaning their mila is the place of their chasorim. We should look at what do they have to say, rather than what don't they have to say. It is up to us. Which is why we pasel each other so readily. Which is why we are so self critical and critical in general.

Now he will talk about desire. One of the reasons why we move toward chisarim is desire, here he talks about sexual desire. The more you satisfy it, the more hungry it is. The gemara tells us that the yetzer hara always follows the experience through hunger and lack, and this lack is taiva, so the more you fulfill the taiva, the hungrier it is. A person could think the reason why someone fails in this area is because I am too harsh with myself. So if I give in, I will be better. But with taiva, if you give in, you get more taiva you have. This doesn't work intuitively, but it does work actually. If you have control, the taiva is diminished. It is not bad if you make him hungry. Even if a person seems more whole if they fill their taiva agenda, all that was filled is the yetzer hara not the part of them that is shelaim.

How much of the outer world do we close off? What is the line? Different groups have different answers but the bottom line is as follows. Either you are elevating the outer world or not. When you are talking about things that are differ reshus, there is a grey area. How much self indulgence is self indulgence. If you are filling that empty space, you are probably crossing the line. How empty the space and where the line is varies.

The yetzer reflects lack not shelamos. The more a person wants to fill desire, the more he is accentuates the part that is lacking and the more that part of him grabs onto his identity and hungrier he will get. The more you make permitted things accessible, the more kids in theory not want forbidden things. However, the more kids are drawn to it! Where kids are guarded within reason, the kids are preserved from crossing the lines.

If the person starves the yetzer hara and he is not lacking and that is how he gets rid of the yetzer hara. Now remember the first lesson, that if you feed your enemy you interfere with its ability to harm you. This is true if you feed that which is lacking by elevating it, not by giving into it. A person has to be in charge.

If a person gets close to the middos ha avos, the yetzer hara did not have dominion over the avos, and we get closer to that by enhancing the part of us that is not hungry. This is very relevant to many of the eating disorders we encounter today...all have to do with wanting to fill the empty space. Overeating – fill emptiness with physical sensation, or with anorexia, filling it with a sense of perceived control and dominion. It takes the void that is part of our yearning for shelamos and fills it with something other than that, so a person becomes defined by their yetzer hara instead of limiting it.

Understand this very well so we can use this information. Let's tie this together. We are saying that desire is what we often feel when we should be feeling yearning. If we fill that desire with desire, the yetzer becomes stronger, not weaker.

The yetzer hara is a guest and then becomes a host.

Q What about the mentality of people who say exposure to the outside world is a preservation in the long run, within reason.

A. If you create a mystic around something, it becomes more desirable. If a person wants to limit exposure to the outside, they create a mystic around it...don't read that book, don't do that...it doesn't matter what it is. A certain number of people will run to get it because of the mystic. To shield, you must not create a mystic. If you make something demystified by deglamorizing it, then preservation works. For example teenagers go to the mall to buy, but they go also because of the energy and it is colorful and they end up more exposed than we want. The interest of the mall is to commercialize them and it works. One of the girls asked "Are we allowed to go to the mall? Are we allowed or not? You lose either way, because if you say yes they are exposed, and if you say no you create mystic. The answer is if you can't find it anywhere else and you feel like taking two buses, etc. It now lost its mystic. It is lifestyle. This is the area where there is the most disagreement. Some draw the line very close to the chest and others far out. There is much space between them

The yetzer comes first as a guest. What he says here is that from day 1, the yetzer is there but it hasn't grabbed our identity. If it grabs our identity, we would have no reason to exist. It is a guest. Similarly the yetzer hara by its own nature is a passerby. But if you follow it, then the chisarim becomes attached. When it becomes your identity it is a consequence of your free choice. How does it look when the yetzer hara grabs someone? There is a list of sins that is hard to do teshuva for. For example, a person who buys stolen merchandise. If you can comfortably buy it, you have reached a point where stealing is okay and it part of what you do. It can be worse than the act of theft, for which you might feel guilt. But when a person shops in a thief's market, it is their plan, they are okay with it, it is part of their identity. Habit creates desensitization. The big enemy is desensitization.

The yetzer becomes like a guest who sleeps over and then becomes the host. Then it attaches to him and the evil is him, he is evil in and of himself. You can understand this matter when you consider how the yetzer attaches itself to a person. The prayer in berachos "save me from a friend who is evil, or from an evil occurrence, or from the

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yetzer hara (that is part of you)” The goyim see the yetzer as external, between man and the Satan. We are saying that the yetzer could through our choices actually become part of us, that it is possible for a person to become evil. The yetzer hara can grab their identity and through great efforts they can do teshuva, but a person could reach that point.

To become a rasha, the key is desensitization. The way to become desensitized is to gratify desire with desire instead of discovering the empty space and finding some other address where you can find the resources to fill it.

At first the yetzer is comparable to a spider’s web and then to the leather reigns that lead a wagon. When a person is not desensitized and has shemos, the yetzer doesn’t have that much force, because there is an inner mechanism which is shocked by it – I have never done that and I can’t do that. Once it is desensitized, it can enter, it has more force. If a person goes toward the chait, ultimately the drive to go there is so thick and coarse that a person feels they can’t escape it, automatic pilot. These are a consequence of desensitization. The first step which may not even be chait, is just filling an inner void with something that is not holy, could be the decisive step.

Rebbetzin Heller notes December 31 2006 Maharal Sefer Netivos Olam

We are going to discuss a different take on the matter. Today we will do Derech Hashem the fourth perek, where the Ramchal talks about what it is like to be in this world. He is going to tell us in a particular way, not in a general way (that it is a choice between good and bad), but what our lives unfold as being in the course of this battle.

The situation of a person in this world can be observed in two ways, the character and everything that makes it up and the environment, where that person is put. A person is made up of all sorts of character traits that can be used for good or bad and a person will be put in an environment that could potentially trigger either overcoming the bad in their character or expressing the good in their character rather than suppressing the good.

We spoke earlier in the perek about physicality and spirituality that a human has two opposites inside, the soul and the body. We see with our eyes that the material side is the primary part and the earliest part to emerge... a baby is conscious of who he is physically. The Gra points out that this basic physical identity grabs our identity to the point that it takes years until the spiritual and physical sides speak with voices that are equally loud. What comes forth from the material self is very strong. As soon as he is born he is almost completely physical and his intelligence is only activated a bit, meaning the potential is there at birth but the unfolding doesn't yet take place. By the way it has now been discovered that intellectual potential is there on day one, no new brain cells get there. Education helps develop, but the intelligence is there. As a person grows, according to their lives, but the material side still rules him and inclines him as he does whatever he has to do, whatever matters he is involved in. The material side is always going to be a voice.

The exception being is if the person grows in wisdom and strengthens himself in its ways, then he can struggle and conquer his nature so that he can let go his taivas and he can be powerful as he goes in the way his mind directs. It is not a matter of just chisaron and shelamos, but also chumrios and ruchnios. The Maharal says the root of all evil is lack. He is saying the root of all evil is materialism. The relationship is that all material things are death-bound. They have only brief endurance and can satisfy only for moments until you desire something else. The more material you are, not only don't you hear the voice of their own spirit (Ramchal) but also the possibility of experiencing chisaron becomes more real.

As we see in reality that material things in life are cloudy and dark and don't reveal spirituality, and it is almost opposite of what we need to attach to for holiness. The material can be used to give your spiritual side hands and feet, but it is conditional on not giving them equal time. As soon as you give the material side any form of conquest, then you doom your spiritual side because it becomes harder to access.

Picture this. You are waiting for Reb Sheinberg for a bracha. The man in front of you wants a bracha for a business deal that is important. What are you watching? The person sees something material as being his make it or break it. If he said, I need to make this

money so I can keep my kids in school, a means for an end, but it is a difference in how he would receive the bracha. In one case, it may not expand him or make him more of a person. Having what you want materially doesn't always make you more of a person. But if you are really sure about where your material blessings are to take you, then the blessing is blessing, it makes you more. We have to be careful.

Even though the soul by its nature is pure, when it enters the body it becomes confused because the soul is expelled from closeness to Hashem and is involved with everything that is opposite to its nature and it is conquered by it and can't get out without struggling with great force against the body. The enemy is physical consciousness, not the body. The body taking over the soul – its emotions and consciousness is the enemy. Material things can be used for good or bad, but emotional involvement with material things is the enemy – it dooms you.

For example, a car is good for getting you from here to there. But can you have an emotional involvement with a car? Advertisement sells you status, prestige, control along with the car. This is the danger.

Another example, an aesthetic home is very good for harmony. But the magazines sell you aesthetic at best and status at worse and to measure your value by your home -that it reflects YOU. Don't buy into that.

Since the Master decided this combining body and soul will never tear asunder, even if you say at death you are separated from your body (ordinary people when they die, they want out, the body has been the scene of their defeat too many times, there is no sentimental attachment to it. After the first year when the body disintegrates, the soul flies to where it wants to be, not here in this plane. But with real tzadikkim, because the body was the way the soul expressed itself, there is always some spiritual attachment to the body and the body does not disintegrate). But the body, even if it disintegrates, this marriage is only temporarily dissolved until tehillas hamaisim, when the soul comes back to the body, and they will survive together forever.

The soul is going to try to weaken the hold of the body on the self because that is where the darkness of materialism comes from. If the darkness could be removed, the body could rise up with the soul instead of the soul descending with the body. When in this world the material side is strong, our lives are very dark, very far from what they should be. One of the most apparent realities is that most people are not that happy. This is because we are very materially self aware and the more a person's consciousness is that way, the unhappier we are because pursuing material things falls prey to lack. I'm tired, hot, cold, bored. We distract ourselves with ads and other things that take us further into pursuing material things to fill the lack. It is not true. Much of what we read takes us to a place where there is no such thing as Hashem or spirit. Innocent or not, the things we read have no G-d in them. The more we distract ourselves, we are conquered by materialistic passions, escape. The only way out is to be more spiritually aware, to have Hashem's presence within you, where are you going, why do you want to be there,

incredible nature of travel, is there good around you..distract yourself with things that have meaning.

By trying to put one's effort to strengthen the soul against the material side, a person betters their situation and gets to a place where they deserve to be. Until then we spoke about the person as if we are alone here. But all of us are in an environment, we are not alone. The environment, the world is also dark in the sense of being material. Before we talk about the environment, I will pause here for questions on the darkness within ourselves, the way our bodies and our souls do battle for our identities and the nature of lack.

In the world, everything is material. All of the occupations that we busy ourselves with are material because everything is material and physical. If you are programmer or a banker or a lawyer, you are dealing with material acquisitions. Even if you are a teacher, you are dealing with interpretations of material reality. It is very hard to escape. Our bodies demand that these be our occupations so that we can live, we need all of it. We can't exist without all the things that our nature demands. And you can't get these things without money and a marketplace to get them. We have awareness of our material desires and the world is the marketplace. When you are looking at a person's nature or occupation or what they busy themselves with, they are involved with chumrios.

Q: Why do we get reunited – why does the soul want the body

A: Our bodies then will not be like our bodies now. There is a process. Olam haba is a totally ruchni place. We go through a process, go through the tunnel, account for our lives, but they are not the end of the story. There is a great day of judgment and people will be judged on the effect they had on the world generationally as well as on themselves. Oftentimes a person can do something and can have an impact far greater than they anticipated. For example, in the Yosef story, where was he for 22 years? Why didn't he get word to his father? The answer is that if he had sent word to his father it would have exposed what his brothers did and that could have led to terrible consequences for what his brothers were to be part of establishing. Tragedy would have occurred. The brothers would have been humiliated or the father would have expelled them but everything his brothers dreaded would have happened. So Yosef is responsible for Am Yisroel as a klal...one choice, I am not going to write..had that effect.

Look at Shabtai Tzvi, at some point from his own perspective, he probably knew he wasn't going where he thought he was going, he no longer thought he was Moshiach. At that point, when he kept on talking, he sowed heresy which led to mistrust of kabbalah since he was a kabbalist and spoke out kabbalistic ideas, which led to suppression of peninias HaTorah which arguably is one of the forces that has led people to practicing religion by rote. Did he see that? No. So the great day of judgment we have to see the whole picture.

After that, the rishoim, the unspeakable rishoim perish and everyone else will come back to their rectified purified bodies that will now serve their soul. From that perspective what they are experiencing now is a continuum forever of the joy of having done

something, the feeling of achievement. It is hard to relate to because in this world, we forget everything as soon as it happens because we are stuck in time. At that point, the joy of continued achievement will affect both the soul and body continually at the same time which is what the techiim hamaisim is about.

Q: Is being at home a good occupation?

A: For a man or a woman, the issues of what you are and what you do is real. The ikur is who you are. Rambam talks about occupations, choosing one that takes you further from pure chumrios. He talks about becoming the person you could be. Hashem made people to have to work is for them to pass the nisayon of discovering Hashem in the midst of their own efforts and to strengthen their ruchnios and their contributions to the environment. Becoming and being is the purpose. Doing is the means. Now lets look at women. It is very hard to make the case that a woman's becoming will be more actualized by any job than she can become in any job other than enabling people. In Halacha, it is very high on the scale of things, because human life is enormously significant. When the woman makes the home and raises children properly, it is hard to make the case that she would evolve doing other things. For a whole slew of reasons, women who don't work at a profession are not dedicated to being and becoming and fall to other forms of chumrios. The choices are where do you develop more ruchios in yourself and in the world. When you decide which mitzvah to do, choose the one that you can do and no one else can do. No one else will be your child's mother or your husband's wife. You have to question whether entrusting the child to the care of someone whose values you don't respect even if they are a good person - where does that take you? Today some women affirm their being and becoming, by supporting Torah by bringing in parnassa. At what point is that a means toward an end and at what point is that an end in itself? Women assume the nisayon of men. There are more and more women who absorb the nisayon that their parnaso is their identity, we have another identity and that is ruchani. When choosing an occupation, choose what gives you satisfaction, but where does it fit in with the scheme of things? Don't let it grab your identity.

So now he is telling us the happy ending, the resolution. The depth of Hashem's wisdom is such that He arranged things so potentially (notice potentially) that a person can be totally involved into material activity but can turn the material over into spiritual consciousness. That means that a person can be doing something material but rather than being lowered to that material level, he is uplifting that material with them so the lower he goes, the higher he goes because the more effort is involved.

An example is a Shochet. With a shochet, with the knife and with blood and with killing, he says the bracha and through that he elevates himself, the animal and the person eating of that animal. This is why there are 12 sorts of bedika that have to be done on the shochets knife to parallel the 12 tribes. The idea being that the 12 tribes, the gates of Yerushalayim, all of which are interconnected, all are elevated by taking that which is animalistic and bringing it into a higher form.

And this can happen through Hashem who wants that to happen, having made limitations and order and having given us man. Let's make this clearer. We people like order. In the name of chaos, in an intellectual and spiritual frame, is freedom. We don't like freedom, so we create structure. The structure that humans create because we don't see clearly where our direction could/should be, so we create structure to make the material side of life more convenient or more aesthetic, which gets us nowhere in terms of the bigger picture. So Hashem did is give us structures to get us somewhere, by determining what use we should make of the world and its creation and the intent that a person should have when involved with them. So the intent – there is a maklois if a mitzvah requires intent or not, but they do. Let's say you have an uncle who is 119 and who is immobile all Shabbos. You can't say he is now Shomer Shabbos even if he doesn't break shabbos because there is no intent, no consciousness of keeping Shabbos. Mitzvohs require consciousness. Without consciousness they are refining physical activity. This is what we find in non-Jewish literature. Do what is right because what goes around comes around. This is self-serving and materialistic. Doesn't get you very far. Better is do it because it is fulfilling. This protects that part of you that is transcendent, but it is still very much in the trap of ego and self.

Hashem gave us borders and limitations through the mitzvohs, and if we use them as borders and order, with the intent Hashem commanded, at that point, the action that the person is doing physically or materially will have perfection in part of it – it is being used perfectly as the wagon that carries the merchandise, and through this the person will become empowered to become more than self as they develop a greater advantage over who they were initially before they even encountered the nisayon of chumrios.

They rise from the low position and become higher. Hashem with His superior wisdom saw all the different forms of lack that are inherent in a person, He saw the great advantage of inner honor and pride a person needs to develop if they are going to attach to Hashem and have profit from His goodness, so if he does this, then he is going to have all the wholeness of the virtue we mentioned before, and he will deny anything that moves him away from attachment to Hashem. This is what is meant if you want to understand where Hashem is coming from in this equation. In Shiur HaShiurim, it talks about the kiss of Hashem, He kisses me with the kiss of His mouth. A kiss only gives delight because gives a feeling of closeness and attachment. There is nothing inherently pleasurable in the physical kiss. This is why people don't buy plungers to give themselves artificial kisses. There is the kiss of connection – I want you, and the kiss of exclusivity is I don't want anything to destroy our relationship. There are two kinds of mitzvahs, aseï and lo aseï. Aseï tells us "Here is how to connect"- how to connect that moves us toward shelamos and fills up the empty space. Lo aseï tells us how not to self-destruct. Don't go here...this will give you greater chisaron, it will attach you to the physical world, more chumrios – don't go there because you want only real connection. So what comes forth from this is the mitzvohs lo aseï, we often misunderstand and think they are there for the sake of others or the world, but (and the Gra says this), the reason we don't murder or steal (Hashem could have made these averahs impossible) is so we can make the choice so we don't go there and see life as sacred and possessions as a

consequence of Hashem's hashgacha. So the more we do mitzvahs, the more we have shemos, the more we have shemos the more we don't have chisaron, the more we are not defined through gashmius, and the more we do this with exactitude, the more removed we are from Koach HaYetzer which we learned last time.

To sum up, as we said last time, Koach Hayetzer comes from lack. We spoke about the avos being shaleim, kol. We said that we don't have that wholeness but we yearn for it. And our yearning makes us acutely aware of our imperfection, which in turn destroys us, with the feeling of not being shaleim, we look for wholeness in other directions. We learned today in the Ramchal that when we try to find fulfillment and identity through the gashmius world, what we are doing is giving ourselves a death sentence. The animal side of ourselves and the physical side of ourselves will claim all of us and we will have nothing left in the end since everything it has to offer is transient and sharpens our sense of chisaron. What we came to is rather than be defined by gashmius we can define it by where we want to go and who we want to be. The guide we have to do this are the mitzvahs aseï and lo aseï, which provide us with the feeling of shemos that will make the feeling of chisaron non-existent and keep us on the path that we want to be.

Good morning.

We are starting this class with a question.

Q: I notice that the first class quotation regarding coals on the head is in Perek Shira with the frog who lets the sea creature in it and quotes this perek. Anything to add in this context.

A: Perek Shira is very interesting. After it became popularized, the meforshim on it became popularized as well. One of the perushim as written by a talmid of the Chosom Sofer who was a great chossid of Perek Shira and he says something fascinating, and he says that the frog hints at a spiritual capacity that was the essence of Shlomo HaMelech. The word sephardai means to proclaim, to know. Dovid HaMelech was like a sea creature who like the leviathan who could swim from one end of the world to another very quickly. There are two kinds of tzaddikim, those that can flow, their souls are so powerful and passionate, they are compared to the leviathan, the great fish the leviathan and can go very fast. Similarly there are those tzaddikim whose passion is so great, it takes them beyond any kind of speed to move higher and faster. The average person though needs words, to chew over and digest. Shlomo gave words and ideas to give form and context to Dovid's passion.

Now bear with me. When you are talking about different levels of reality, the lowest reality is this world, the world of visibility. Above that, given Tu Beshevat was yesterday, think of it like a fruit with a thick peel. Take away the klipah and then you get to something. This parallels our interactions with physicality. In tefillah this is like seeing Hashem with our physical bodies and the world and uplifting it. The next dimension, the next world is Atzerah, formation, where Hashem on His side, is where He begins the process of things happening. The outside displays Hashem but there is an inner core is like a pit that is not edible, tzimtim halev, contraction of the heart. We can see as much as our hearts let us see, but our emotions take over and that takes us to another place. That is analogous in tefillah to speaking out praise of Hashem but our praise is limited by our ability to open our hearts. The level above that is bria, creativity itself. That is analogous to a fruit that is completely edible like a strawberry. The outside and inside are both completely edible. That is analogous to having absolute consciousness, and there there are no words because words always make limitations. That is like Shemonah Esrai where we have words of devotion but not our own voice. Dovid lived in that world but Shlomo brought it down to the world below where there are still words and he did this through thought. He was like the frog who said proclaim knowledge and by doing that, the sea creature could eat him and make this kind of awareness accessible to others.

Q. I was listening to a past class about starving the Yetzer hara. What about the idea of making something permissible because of the idea mayim geduva ...

A. It is not simple. The Torah doesn't say forbidden, it demystifies her. She takes off her garments that are pleasing (when someone is on the battlefield) and mourn so as to

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demystify herself. It is worth looking at the Ohr Chaim, who discusses demystification. It is not permitting it in its present form, it is taking something out of it (stolen water is sweeter) but you have to begin by making it less exciting, less cool. For example, before a friend of mine was frum, she taught in a school and she was very small, and looked like a victim. The boys would make a remark and she would say to a different boy he said something not nice...can you help me? The first boy was totally made uncool. The trick of making something uncool makes it demystified.

Q: Isn't being with her, once permitted, still on that battlefield before the whole process begins? What about that?

A: it is not clear that he can take her in the heat of battle. To take her with the full knowledge that he has to demystify her.

With that, Perek Daled. This is our last shiur for this sefer and we will have questions at the end.

A person, he tells us, who breaks dishes when he is angry or tears his clothing when he is angry, or spends money when angry, that person should be in your eyes like a person who worships idols. This is how the yetzer hara works skillfully, today he says lo to the person, do this! The next day he says do that! Until he can tell him, go! Worship idols. Meaning the yetzer hara tells a person to break one border and then another until there are no borders left.

What does it mean by equating anger with avodah zara. Let there be no foreign power in you, which is the anger. Don't bow to a power which is a foreign one. What foreign thing is there in a person's body? This is the yetzer hara. The way he deceives you is by having you put excessive fear on the people who live in the house. What is happening is that the person is so overtaken by the yetzer hara, that the person becomes the action, it isn't that he is doing the action like tearing his clothing, and it envelopes him completely, and that is why he wants to do bad. It is self expression. Otherwise why would he want to do something destructive. As an aside, this is why people hurt themselves. It is coming from having so much bad feelings within them that they have to enact it. It is because of the yetzer hara within them. It is bad expressing itself. Anything that takes a person over that they do evil, of course if they do bad they are bad (the name of the person who steals is ganif, if he actually stole, he let the concept of theft define him.) A person who does things that are bad for him can be called bad, because he is doing bad. When he himself is the victim, it is even worse.

When you are talking about a person breaking his dishes, whatever a person needs for his own use, when they limit what they use by destroying it, it is also destructive energy. Now we are moving closer to the essential person, to their mind. A person has to use their

mind when they are engaged with money. How so? You can't eat or wear money, you have to spend it and you think about it. You make a plan to get money and spend it. That person is distorting and destroying all the intellectual investment they put in themselves.

We see a person's emotions in the way they spend money. Meaning, because a person is so intellectually invested with money, they develop an emotional response to money. Let's say you have a job. In order to get a job as a legal secretary, you have to become educated. When you get your salary, it tells you that you are invested, and you have an emotional investment in it..you are skilled etc. These three things relate to different aspects of what a person is. When a person tears their garments, it is as though they tear themselves, like wise with dishes or money, they are affecting themselves.

When a person not only does bad but is bad, that is avoda zara. He is serving something strange..he is strange, something foreign to Hashem. Just as avoda zara actually separates a person from Hashem when he serves the idol, so the same way a person's devotion to Hashem is lost when they serve the yetzer hara, the devotional part serves something where Hashem is not in the picture. The tragedy is the person has the energy but is misdirecting it.

He concludes this part by saying the yetzer hara creates something other..not only hashem and His world, but something else that is just as compelling, just as real. If the yetzer hara seems to be overpowering you, remember the Shema, Hashem Echad. I have to account for this, it has a root and a direction, I can't separate it from Hashem. Similarly, if they are overtaken by evil within themselves...they are not seeing Hashem as part of themselves - there is I want and Hashem wants and these are two completely separate realities for that person at that time. Especially when a person is broken through life to the point where they no longer believe in themselves at all, there is room for the yetzer hara to cause them to do things that are self-destructive. We were away for Shabbos and the father of the family overheard his Rav speaking to someone else to someone so broken he felt there is no place on the planet for him. By the time he was 50 he thought he would find another job, and he is not married. No job, not married, he feels there is no place for him. He was blaming himself. He was completely broken. The Rav said to him the only thing that matters is devekus to Hashem. The Rav began to confide in the man, that the Rav has enormous debts and he is worried about payments, but none of this affects devekus in Hashem. This is what it means when people do self-destructive things. It seems to me, Mrs. Heller, our society is so twisted that the food disorders so many are stricken with are examples of terrible things that we do to our bodies, thinking that it is good when it is so bad. The tragedy is that it is an illness, has to do with living with a foreign force within.

In the next perek, the gemara tells us that Reb Yosef really said with the tzaddikim, the yetzer tov is the only thing that can sway judgment. My heart is hollow from within me,

meaning I can make my heart go wherever I want it to go. Meaning he slaughtered his yetzer hara, he made it submit to him through fasting. Conversely, the reshaim, it is only the evil part that wins, the only judgment that is heard. A person can say, I just had to say it and chas vshalom it could be true. And benonim, sometimes one wins and sometimes the other.

The Maharal is saying that the yetzer hara is separate from the person but with a rasha, the separate self is directing the action and the yetzer tov is also separate from a person and it can run the show. The tzaddik says it is what I want to do it is completely yetzer tov, and with a rasha, it is completely yetzer hara. With a benonim, it depends on the day. Someone asked Rabbi Shteinman why he is traveling so much now he is so old. It is not easy to travel. When you read in the paper, he goes to four places in one day. He said, at this time I asked my self what I should be doing and I looked at my options and I realized Hashem gave me time that He did not give to everyone, so Hashem spared me to do something (the Yetzer tov talking) and what I can do is give people chizuk. He has been talking about tznius, I the eved Hashem, what should I be doing? Conversely, there is I the yetzer hara. What is left for me? In the 60's Bob Dylan or something, I don't want to live past 30, don't trust anyone over 30, because when you are 30 you are dead. Meaning the yetzer hara starts to lose its power at 30. What would I be alive for? The real battle for benonim is who claims our identity. The sign is that we can be bad to ourselves.

What does this pasuk mean? There is a small city with fortifications. He begins to explain, the small city is a person's body and his limbs are its population and the King who comes to surround it is the yetzer hara and he builds fortifications, which are the person's sins. The more we see ourselves as sinful, the more credibility the yetzer hara has, so I want you to hear how the yetzer hara sounds...you are bad – destroy yourself, he is bad, destroy him. I cant stand life, break those dishes. It all begins from feeling the weight of the avanut. So what do you do? The gemara finishes as follows. A poor but wise person found the city (the yetzer tov found the city) and rescues the whole city with his wisdom, and his wisdom is teshuva and masim tovim. The answer to the self hatred and the guilt is not argument (you are not guilty because really it was your mother...) but rather it is teshuva and masim tovim. See yourself doing good. Look yourself in the face. This is what I did but it isn't where I am going to stay and here is what I am going to do. Move your identity towards avodas Hashem and you can rescue the whole city. At the time, a person barely remembers this poor man, (the yetzer tov), and when the yetzer hara is there, meaning the battle for identity is one that can have the conclusion. A person's teshvua and masim tovim are the wisdom a person needs to win. What do they win? A city has 10 officers who rule – 2 hands, 2 feet, 2 eyes, 2 ears, and the sexual organ and the mouth. This means whoever wins the battle for identity gets the 10 officers. If the yetzer hara wins, it affects everything, and if your yetzer tov wins, it gets all the body members. When a person is in a certain state of being, the way they use their eyes and ears changes. For example, a 72 year old lady, not too clean, bad teeth, sandals, torn clothes, collecting. A person with a good eye, a person who sees as an eved Hashem,

what can I do for this person? Someone else sees this person as yuck, delete that person. She is miskain, and are not allowed to appear. Same is true with the ears. A person hears complaining and one person thinks – they are so needy like a sponge. Someone else hears a person in pain, how can I help them? The poor smell bad, but an eved Hashem would not focus on this. The winner is the one who gets the body to do what he wants.

He says a person's soul, like anything of chashivus, has to have many ways of self-manifestations. So a city is not a place with a population of one, but rather a population of at least 10 because each one absorbs the other one's energy and provides for the other and the whole is more than the sum of its parts. Similarly with a person, with the ten limbs a person is like a small city. And the city includes the people within it. Of all the things that the yetzer hara is compared to, it is compared to a King. Why? Because it wants control and this is how we identify it. It is willing to give control to no one, not even Hashem. When we want control, it is probably the yetzer hara. This person who wants to control things is not because they are so high (I am too big to submit to him or that) but our desire for control is always artificial..the angels don't desire control.

The yetzer tov is like a poor man because he is humble...he is like a poor man who can say what do you think? Tell me more. The more the yetzer tov humbles himself, the more he can be defined as that person's identity by bringing Hashem back into the picture, which can't be done if a person is proud, which is why the yetzer tov is called a poor man. The yetzer hara is called the king because it convinces the person to have a proud heart because a person with a proud heart can't identify with Hashem. If a person is arrogant, he can't see something bigger than himself. You never will see a parent losing their temper and hitting their child. If the slap is given in anger, it is not educational, but before he hit the child, he did not have Hashem in the picture. Gatlus is really the problem, we forget Hashem because our hearts were high.

The yetzer tov is called a chochom. In Pirke Avot, it says who is wise? Someone who can see the future. A midwife is a chochoma. Why is a wise person one who can see the the future? Because you can see where it goes, the outcome. The Yetzer tov makes you see the outcome. Think about the kind of person who throws dishes. A woman, not young, has a profession, she went on an interview, got a job and blew the job in one day. She came home in a state and from that mistake she started scratching her arms with her fingernails...from her hatred for herself. Now here is what she could not see at the moment. Where is this getting you? Scratching your arms not going to give you financial security. The chochom whose yetzer tov moves the person out of reaction and into taking control of their destiny to a large degree by determining who they want to be and who they want their identity to be.

They even take the person's doing teshuva, meaning the person will see there is hope. What he says is that the yetzer hara is like an old foolish king. The foolishness is that when you ask the yetzer hara where does this go, it doesn't care about the answer. That

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is the foolishness This is compared to the sea wave. The reshonim are like the waves in the sea, one breaks on the shore and the second wave still rises. Concerning the reshonim, they rise to flood the world and can see it is taking them to failure, but they rise anyway even though they have seen others in that place. Because of that, a person who can remember the yetzer tov and notice that there are two paths open to them won't come to evil.

We have concluded this part of perek daled and I will take questions for two minutes.

There are no questions. We should claim our identity, cut off the voice of choser, demystify the yetzer hara, don't battle it head on (gaiva) but ask Hashem for help. We will go on to a new netiv very soon, netiv hashalom.

Q How do you identify which yetzer is speaking?

A The yetzer hara speaks with the language of choser and the yetzer tov speaks with action and hope.

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We are on Netiv Koach haYetzer Perek Beis

Last time we spoke about how the yetzer hara becomes progressively stronger as our identity becomes progressively more entwined with it. We are continuing on the same thing and will get into how to deal with that fact.

A person has to be enthusiastic and strong to stand up to the yetzer hara...passivity is not going to do it.

Reb Yitzchok takes this further. The yetzer hara renews itself every day, meaning every day is a different battle from the previous day. And all the formed thoughts in the human heart are only evil all of the day. What is this talking about? All of man's thoughts are evil all of the day?

The pasuk is telling us that the yetzer hara always seems new, and anything that is new is more active. So as an example, if we look at contemporary yetzer hara, people say, "don't live in the 50's, what's all the sexual repression about?" If we hear this, sexual repression is old and promiscuity is new. This would mean 2000 and 3000 years ago no one was promiscuous. This is not true. People talk about gay liberation as though being gay is something that began to be on the agenda the year maybe 1990. They use to call it Greek love, which means that these desires were discussed and something within societal structures during the greek era. There is nothing new about it at all, but it has the patina of something new. The same holds true for every form of yetzer hara...atheism is "new"...were there no people in Rome or at the time of the Tower of Babel who did not believe in G-d? It always seems new. This is part of the balancing force that Hashem gave us.

He is saying something very deep here. The reason why evil seems new and good seems old is because good is part of human essence while evil is superimposed upon human essence. What that means is that good resonates in the deepest part of yourself, in your essence, who you are, and nothing is older than that. A soul can be a thousand years old. Good resonates as real, ancient and permanent. Thus the yetzer hara seems new, and this is because it is not oneself, it does not already exist within the self.

You can't say it is the opposite, that the essential nature of man is evil and the good is superimposed because evil by definition doesn't have metziut, that which conceals G-d, that which creates the illusion of darkness. There is no such thing as a darkwave, only a lightwave. The darkness is the absence of good not the presence of something else. Evil can't be the metzuit rishon, all it is is that which conceals metziut. Now at this point someone is supposed to ask – isn't the yetzer hara there first and then at 13 the yetzer tov comes in. I want to differentiate between yetzer tov and essential tov. A baby is essentially soul. Virtually everyone understands killing a baby is a terrible act. People understand that every person has something human, not just in potential but in actuality. The soul is there, the person's ability to reach in and relate to the soul is not there because the soul's presence is covered by physical instincts and desire. A newborn child is egocentric and desire oriented and as the self and mind develop more so that they speak

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to each other, the more the ego and desirous part of the self, as the child develops, the desirous part to some degree go back in consciousness until there is equal balance between the soul and that which covers it. That is why it says the yetzer hara renews itself every day.

Something that is new affects us more...we are drawn to the new. We like renewal and change because we are discontent with who we are. This is why if you want to sell something...NEW and improved. It will take you where you've never been before.

If the yetzer hara were like other aspects of our inherent humanity, like creativity, it wouldn't feel so new every time because it would have been there already. The attraction of evil is its newness, or its patina of newness, which is possible for it to speak out in its dialogue with us because it doesn't resonate as being old.

One of the best ways to fight the yetzer hara is on its own grounds. Various times in Jewish history, people battled it by presenting the yetzer tov in new ways. But the way the yetzer tov is presented is new. When you look at the movements that battled the enlightenment, chassidus and mussar, both took existent reality and dressed it up..here is a new way to discover G-d and in yourself. Even those who did not subscribe to these methods gave Torah a new patina – Yeshiva life, zman,...the Ramban would not have known what you were talking about. The idea to create the patina of newness is something we must use in our battle against evil. This is why one of the least successful battles is don't abandon the old..stay on track...even the Chosom Sofer, who battled successfully against the enlightenment, approached the idea of forbidding that which is new in a novel way...he made the battle against new (which isn't a Torah value per se) an ideal and because of that he was able to rally the troops around him. This is one of the reasons why one of the selling points in the Baal Teshuva movement is do something different – find out who you are – learn in Israel. Discover! All new. Without the newness, it is hard to muster up energy. As Reb Nachman said, a person has to find something new and novel in their battle against the yetzer hara. When Zionism became a force, the Gerrer Rebbe said that if we had not gotten on the bandwagon, we could have renewed ourselves and rebuilding and building ourselves could have been done in kedusha, but we missed the boat.

Hearing and seeing are part of a person, they are not the essence of a person, they are tools we have but we don't discover it every day – wow I can see and hear – it is only evil that has that capacity tragically.

Now he takes the same ideas and deepens them. The yetzer hara is described as the Satan and the malech hamavis. These are not physical forces (everything that is physical is inherent to the world). Hashem created the world in 6 days and caused all the laws of physics in place from then. That is old. The yetzer hara is not physicality. People sometimes mistake the yetzer hara with physicality since one of the tools the yetzer hara uses most is the animal side of who we are. But physicality is old. Yetzer hara is new. That tells us the yetzer hara in essence is spiritual, not physical. From this perspective we can understand how this is the Satan, the accuser. The accuser is created within oneself.

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If someone told me not to eat cookies and I do and I have cookies on my mouth, they don't need to accuse, it is self evident that I ate. My reality is my accusation. The Satan is the fact that reality is the accusation. The tool of the yetzer hara is lack. We always have lacks in ourselves and in society. The Satan says – see that lack? And then gives you a new way of dealing with it. For example, haskalah movement. We were so poor and suffering, so there is a remedy. The new remedy – become like your oppressors and they will love you. Take that out of your reality.- this is the mentality of the secular Zionists too...something is wrong, lacking.

We tend to listen if the accusation is true. But we have to be careful about is whether the solution to lack is making deeper lack rather than solving the problem at all, which is invariably the case when we turn to evil for a solution in imperfection in good.

On a personal level, let's say someone is jealous of someone else..The lack is I don't have what that person has, and this lack can lead to terrible things that feel like a chiddush and a validation. The yetzer hara is the Satan. The accusation carries with it the forces of evil. A person who wants life, what should they do? Guard your tongue from speaking evil and your lips from deceit (tools of the Satan).

The malach hamavis, the angel of death...why do we die? In theory, Adam could have lived forever says the Rambam. He tells us that Adam's soul initial soul had such enormous vitality it would have waived the self manifesting in this world forever and it would have given life force to the body. Why do we die? Because of the truth of the accusations – we are fragmented, etc. So the yetzer hara is the Satan and the malach hamavis, it is an angel, which is why, since the yetzer hara has spiritual force, without help from Hashem we cannot do battle with it.

It is not natural under the rules of the sun, under the rules of energy. It's strength comes from above natural laws of energy. That is why we say it renews itself everyday. It is above the conventional progression of reality. Therefore its attraction has two aspects. It is new to us because it is not part of the essential self and since it is above nature and time, it is not going to seem old and it will be able to attack in seemingly different new ways all of the time.

It's power comes from a high level above nature. In this sense he is renewed all day every day. If you think about this deeply you will always be able to remember the force of what the yetzer hara is and recognize it. Keep this on your mind. Be suspicious of accusations not because the accusations are not true, but because of how you will feel that you have to silence them. Be suspicious of something new that drowns out the voice of your essential sense of truth. Those two things will keep you in the straight and narrow.

Q. If a person is on the receiving end of actions where a person fails at their behira point, such as being the object of motzei shemra out of jealousy, are we to understand that we are being stricken by Hashem alone and not lacking but rather receiving a goodness, perhaps a kaparah, out of fear of having our identity absorbed by the pain.

A: Here is how I understand the question. Suppose someone speaks badly of you that is false. Their motivation is jealousy. Factually they are saying bad about you. You are on the receiving end, it is not true. The fact that the person is credible and listened to is caused by Hashem. The person who made the choice made the choice. Hashem knew and planned on Rosh Hashana you would have a certain amount of suffering and this person is a staff in His hand unwittingly and that person will be punished. There are all sorts of reasons why it is good for a person to be the victim of gossip. It is humbling, it helps them counteract how other people's opinions are fickle. As far as having your identity absorbed by the pain, the pain can give you a feeling of lack, whatever I would have had if that person did not say the lies. The feeling of lack is real, but its essence is that it is not lacking. If a person wants to act on the negative feelings and takes revenge or speaks ill of them, they are filling the empty place with still more negativity and lack. Conversely, this is from Hashem and this person is broken and in bad shape, and I am part of that person just like my arm is part of me, I should be davening that He should be mashbiach of his good and his inherent desire for return to give him a ruach of teshuva. The desire to fill the empty space is normal. The illusion is emptiness, but the desire to fill it is normal. The question is, fill it with what? I hope that was clear.

We are going to take this from a different angle. He says, suppose a person's evil is something they brought upon themselves, not from the outside. We are not talking about a situation where a person was spoken about or foreign influence, rather yitzer derva which always comes from within the self.

Q. How is the yetzer hara like the Malach Hamavis

A. The function of the Malach takes a person out of this world because their soul has no more vitality, no more purpose in maintaining itself through the body. The reason for this is because our missions were fragmented after the sin of the eitz hadas tov vra. This is what the Rambam says. There were only 4 people in all history who died exclusively because of Adam's sin. Let's assume for arguments sake that we are not one of those four. We all do things that put us in a place where there is no more reason to continue the battle...our missions are done as well as they can be done in this frame. This is because of the smallness and is a consequence of the yetzer hara. That is why death is considered tuma, blockage. There is a difference between blockage and evil. So and so died and cannot interact with the world anymore. The reason why Hashem puts limits on human interaction has to do with what evil is and therefore the Malach HaMavis which creates the heaviest level of concealment and ends behira most completely, is a spiritual force generated by the yetzer hara's reality.

We are talking now about self imposed yetzer hara..coming from the inside. Now we said it is not a person's essence. What he is telling us, there is an internal and an external aspect. The internal is the soul, and the external is the desires of the body even though they feel like it is us. This is why Hashem rejects this person. For example, you are shopping for an outfit. The outfit matches the image we want to project the image of us we have internally and externally. Sometimes we find the great outfit. We are in harmony. Often this doesn't happen. We have to make a choice. Maybe there is something that is modest but the image is of the outer self, and has nothing to do with the

inner idea of who you are as a person, dignified , polished and refined. This is the huge battle we are talking about. If you conscientiously bring yourself to that battle and say you will not listen to the good side, you have distanced yourself. Sometimes the borders are so shakey and what is going on in our choice process, both voices sound like the real self. It is a tough call.

If a person brings this on himself, it is more severe in a certain sense than a person who sins actually but he didn't bring it on through his own conscious decisions, through his own thoughts. As long as the thought process is not involved, then the essential self is not involved, the person is just drawn after the yetzer hara. But the thought process is very deep. Let's understand the essential self and its garments. The essential self is the soul and, in its ultimate sense since it is part of Hashem, it is unknowable as it is from Hashem. But we experience it through its three garments, thought, speech and action. Action is the most external of the garments, speech is the most definitive because it bridges both body and soul, but thought is the deepest and most internalized. Our contact with our souls comes through thought. So if a person conscientiously brings themselves to externalized thought, the separation between the essential self and how we experience the essential self is so fine that we can almost fail most of the time because our inner self has been redefined. So a person is choosing an outfit and makes the wrong choice. But I have to be me. That is not me that other outfit. Who is the real you? Which side? How deep are you willing to go to find yourself? I remember as a teenager I notice that people who describe themselves as being themselves rarely dressed differently from their group. I dressed hipper. It was more an expression of self. Likewise with a long flowing skirt rather than polyester blue. But I looked like others. Being truly nonconformist in a society that we live in with such a rigid and narrow sense of the outside being the self is almost unapproachable. It is something to think about. We have lost our sense of self.

Concerning this person who brings evil upon themselves, he brought evil upon himself and driven Hashem out of his consciousness. It is a statement of fact. The aspect of self he is pursuing is called evil and you can't identify with evil and good at the same time. That is why it is called evil if a person brings himself to evil thought.

We are going to complete this thought by telling us about the machlokes we read last time. The Yetzer hara drives a person in a certain sense out of both worlds. How? In light of what we just said, we can see how it cuts a person's reality off from this world and therefore cuts them off from Hashem who is the eternal and ultimate sense of good

Q Is our feeling of devekus possibly an alternative sense of self?

A. Yes. What do I mean? Let's talk about pure devekus, such as davening at the kotel early in the tunnels, there is a kabbalah minyan upstairs and downstairs where the kodosh hakodishim is. The tefillah is long but at the very end of it the devekus a person can feel at that pirche kohanim is very other worldly. If you recognize yourself as being surrounded by Hashem's bracha and opening your heart and your hands for it, it is real devekus, not illusion. You are finding the part of yourself that is shoe for devekus. Once that button is pressed you can feel the devekus itself. It does begin in self. It is an awakening from below that creates more than a parallel awakening from above.

Q What can be described as a means of positive and necessary renewal in today's society as compared to mussar battling haskala

A. Kiruv harokim has had a positive effect on people who are frum. Explaining yourself, reaching out, doing battle against the ignorance gives people vitality. Although people don't call it chassidus, the great speakers of our time who speak to the frum world are taking us much deeper than people took us in the past. The fact that people like us can talk about the garments of the soul is something you would not have found 100 years ago. The journey inward toward our deeper self and outward toward others seem to be part of the path today. The Yeshiva movement, Kollel, excelling in Torah has had a revolutionary effect too. We can look back and see those who alleged themselves to these movements are the ones who survived and those who didn't drowned out. If you were living then, you might not have seen it because there were other voices that seemed just as attractive. I listened to someone who was a talmid from a great yeshiva in Europe who was charmed by secular Zionism and then did teshuva and his teshuva was so authentic he was asked to speak in prestigious litvish Yeshivas in elul. When you are there, it is very hard to separate what is real and what is not. Especially since it seems the external driving force today isn't wearing ideological clothing but rather wearing desire, it is hard to fight back. Move inward, go outward, and the vitality of learning.

A little further. I should mention that anything that takes on the garment of the outward society – tolerance, permissiveness- feels new but is not new. Don't fall for what is old and think that it is new, at least that. Taking this to its conclusion, we then went into the maklokes last time where the sin was disgusting or something that fills the lack. We are talking about the location of chisaron, lack. Rav says in the tzerua, in the structure of one's life, is something despicable like a fly. He says it is not tzerua at all, it is not a lifestyle and making it despicable, but rather it is mostly material. Therefore it is compared to something completely material. This is the main thing if you can understand it.

Tov we should have a good week.

Today we are going to start with a question:

Q. In understanding the connection between the Malach HaMavos, the Satan and the yetzer hara, I got a little lost...for example, a newborn baby that dies – there has been no accusation and there is no negative reason that the Malach HaMavos has to block the baby's interaction in this world, right? Likewise, as you said, four people died even though they never sinned. I understand that our missions are fragmented and for whatever reasons we are judged chayav misa, and I understand that we can no longer move forward on our missions in this frame, but is it quid pro quo because of our averahs? And if not, would you kindly please clarify again for me the way to understand the connection to the yetzer hara ? Thanks so much.

A. Let's start with the first question regarding a newborn baby that dies. The Arizal says that there are no new souls. This means every person comes into the world at this point in order to finish a business from previous lives. It is completely conceivable that someone is born in order to die. What does this mean? The one thing that was lacking in their previous life was experiencing death in a certain way. There is a story from the Baal Shem Tov about a childless couple who went for a bracha and the mother was insistent even though the Baal Shem Tov told her no, I won't give the blessing like that because you don't want the child. She insisted and became pregnant and was fearful that the child would be born with birth defects or worse. The baby was perfect but died of a fever at 2 years old. The woman went back to the Baal Shem Tov and said what did you do to me? He told her who the soul was. In medieval Poland, there was a monk who was Jewish and he could not teach to a young prince the new testament, and the prince was bright and began to ask piercing questions and the monk answered him and the prince decided he wanted to convert to Judaism. He told his father the king that he wanted to be a monk and he lived in a cave near the Jewish community and he converted and he had grape juice and matzah and the story ends that the prince dies over a cliff to avoid being baptized in his father's home. The Baal Shem Tov saw this in a meditative trance and Hashem told the soul he could have whatever he wants and the soul said he wanted to be born to a Jewish mother and have a briss and nurse from a Jewish mother. That was the soul's desire. The soul wanted to achieve a level of completion that could not be achieved without another lifetime. Is that connected to sin or not? That is a tricky question. Sin means something that makes you smaller, and completion and sin are very related although not identical. What does that mean? If a person suffers, they should go through their deeds to see if they did something wrong to bring about the suffering, and if they do not come to a conclusion, the gemara says blame it on bittel Torah, on this you haven't observed every possibility that the Torah opens. Unfulfilled potential is also the issue of lack and is need to tikkun. In the case of a newborn, it's life could be the completion of something as yet unfinished. Is this sin? It is not exactly sin but it does have to do with fulfilling something that was incomplete. How do we understand the maimar discussing the relationship between the yetzer -the Satan and the Malach HaMavos? The accusation here would be incompleteness now being fulfilled – what reason is there for him to be here any longer? The yetzer hara is that which is incomplete

in the previous frame. With the story I gave you, it was not a consequence of choice, but often it is and that is where the Malach Hamavos comes in.

But there is a deeper approach than this, opened up by the question, which is what about the four who died without sin? These four are discussed in Torah She Bal Pe, so they didn't die for Bitel torah but only because of the poison of the snake. So now we go into another idea, that the world inherently and everyone in it is incomplete because of the sin of Adom, We are born into a world where evil lives within us. This fact requires the submission that comes through death. What does that mean? Let's look at the easy level and then the sophisticated level. Suppose you have a person who says I am not going to die, I don't like it. Will that save them from dying? No. Why? Because dying is not a human choice. It forces a person to submit to Hashem's will. Death is always on some level a possible atonement because it moves a person to absolute bitel to Hashem's world, absolute self-negation to Hashem's world. The fact is that since the time of Adom's sin, evil is part of us. It can be overcome, it can be re-directed, but it is part of us. Because of this, the submission of death is the ultimate eradication of evil for a person who is on that level. Any separation of the self from G-d and His Will can be overcome through the act of death and the submission that death necessitates.

Taking this a step deeper, the Rambam tells us, Adom could have lived forever. His soul was strong enough and powerful enough to give life to the body infinitely, he could make higher and higher choices but once that evil is there, there are limitations on the choices, so the limitations are passive, not active. Not that the person is evil, but that the person is unfulfilled as we said already. By the way I want to make a correction to the class before last, one thing that draws us to evil is similarity, which we said the evil within us, the snake, is drawn to sins of desire. The other is when we are imperfect, the imperfect part of us wants to cleave to something that will allow the illusion of perfection. We spoke about chita being the cleansing force but it also means the simple sense, wheat. I wanted to make this clear.

Q: What is the notion of this and original sin

A: In Christianity, all people are damned unless they accept the Savior. The concept of the nachash is that evil is within us, we are mortal, but we are not damned. We will always be mortal within this frame. We don't believe we are damned and we don't believe that faith alone will do something for us.

Perek Gimel

A person who slaughters his yetzer hara and confesses honors Hashem thereby in both worlds, in the future world and in this world. This manner is telling us the advantage for a person who overcomes his yetzer hara . It says he slaughters it and he confessed upon it, it means that he confesses that the sin is that he went after his evil inclination. Why else would a person confess a sin? Well there is a whole other way of confessing a sin, the autobiographical confession. This is where I've been and this is what I've done, but it brought me to where I am if it weren't for that so it is really all for the good. The good news is this could be factual, but the bad news is that the sin is still alive and well. In

order for a sin to be a springboard for growth, there is a step that has to take place. That step is confessing that the deed done was indeed sin. You have to say it isn't me and it isn't who I want to be. Not, well, this is who I was and this is who I am. It is a rejection of something. The rejection of something can lead you to being who you are today, the same as infancy leads you to adulthood. An adult who still feels that there is a part of them that is infantile and that part of them is just as valuable as the mature side is in big trouble.

He confessed that it was a sin and he went after his yetzer hara. When a person sins willingly (not through lack of knowledge or inadvertently), a sin that is done with full knowledge, what does a person think? That this is also an approach. It seems that there are two forces that are on equal footing. One force that drives them here and one force that drives them there. It looks like there are two forces that inherent and oppositional to each other, which is what they think in virtually every other religion.

There are two beginnings one good and one evil. The heretics would say one can't bring forth two, a beginning that is good can't bring forth evil, so therefore there are two beginning points, one good and one evil and therefore when the yetzer hara and yetzer tov are treated as equal, it looks like there are two beginning points both of which are equally valid. In our times, when pluralism is embraced readily by people, this is what they are saying. There is no objective source that brings forth all truth. There is your truth and my truth, or even, if you take this further to Shopenhauer, Neitche and those, they say the forces of evil are just as valid as the forces of good.

A person is overwhelmed by the yetzer hara..take it to the bais hamdrash, say the shema, or remember the day of death. What is the shema for? By saying shema, that Hashem is one, you are really saying that the source of goodness is the beginning point and that all evil comes from there to challenge us and to bring about good. But the beginning is always good and there is no validity in the forces of evil and no reality therein. When you identify Hashem with the good and you identify everything else as part of Him, you give kovod to Hashem in this world. What's kovod? Kovod is related to kaved, which means taking seriously or heavily. It shows Hashem as a reality, heavy, must deal with reality, even in the darkest moments, that nothing is independent of Hashem.

If a person slaughters his Yetzer Hara, what is left is only goodness and at that moment the good that is left is validation of Hashem's presence. The person because they become a ben olam haba, a person who values our lives and is not stuck in the world of transience, that person brings kovod to hashem in olam haba by achieving that level by working through the evil.

What does it mean to slaughter the yetzer hara? Such dramatic language. When we speak about two paths, overcoming it and turning it around and rechanneling it. The first, overcoming it, is what we mean by slaughtering it. How so? When we slaughter something, it is dead, finished, it has no more vitality. You can slaughter an animal slaughtered, there is nothing left because it has no spiritual force. Similarly a person can come to a level where when they stop doing whatever they did wrong in the past, they

reach a point where that deed no longer seems credible or viable, it is dead. Let me give you an example of what I mean by this. There was a woman who grew up on a demeaning household where people put each other down. "I can only be good if you are bad". It can be a disaster for children. She grew up thinking that in order to be worthy of anyone's love or validation, she had to degrade others. No one was good enough, etc. So she could always find a point of evil that was actually there, and could point it out. Whatever was true, she would zero in on it and see it as the definitive. The end of the story I wish is that she came to see it. But instead, she stopped believing in anything or anyone. She was on the edge of absolute despair. From that place she was able to slowly pick herself up and find a narrow circle of people she could trust and relate to them and now it is expanded somewhat, but she certainly doesn't have a positive attitude toward life in general. When she began her process, she had to realize that being focused on the evil is a death sentence because it is a focus on that which is transient and not that which is eternal. The yetzer hara is transient – all of the desires (look at yitzro d'erva) that it sells us at a dear cost are transient desires, and kovod is even more laughable. Slaughtering the yetzer hara means recognizing it as only transient, death bound.

On that day, Hashem will be one and His name will be One. Until now, He is not One. No, in this world is not the same as the future world. In this world we say Who Is good and does good, and for bad news we say the final judge. But in the future, it is who is good and does good, that there is only one force. He wants to say that in this world there is only One. In this world as it is now, there is an illusion that Hashem is not One because terrible things happen here in this world. These things happen as peranos. What is the meaning of peranos? The zohar says this means repay...they are all repayments, in response to deeds that were done that require either us going to a higher level or repairing what was done erroneously. By the nature of things, the peranos, which are bad, that feel bad, that conceal Hashem, make us not see Him. The concealment is very effective so it seems to us that not everything comes from Hashem. This feeling is subtle..people say Hashem is good, people are bad, Hashem is good, but what can you do, people are mortal. NO! Hashem is good period. People sometimes suffer because the suffering is what they need for them to become either more whole or less damaged, but it is for a spiritual purpose. In this world, objectively we can't see it. It isn't that if you are clever you will see it. No matter how clever you are, the concealment that is inherent to this world is very deep and you can't penetrate it. Sometimes we look at someone else's life and because of their struggles, they achieve incredible levels of spiritual mobility, we can say yes it came from a good source, this was the on button. But in our own lives we don't see it.

This tells us, this maimar, when you slaughter the yetzer hara you take away the illusion of separateness, how great a person is when they conquer evil. Anyone who conquers evil makes Hashem's unity with the world clearer. So this is important to know. We sometimes think that conquering evil has to do with something huge and dramatic. For example an embezzler giving back the money and going to prison and saying well at least I saved myself spiritually, and this is an enormous thing. But what if your conquest of evil takes place on a much simpler level. Someone hurts your feelings. You have two avenues open, you feel belittled and in pain. You can take refuge in physical things...eat,

go shopping, go to sleep, OR you can take refuge in Hashem, you can talk to Him and pray to Him and try to bring yourself to a place in which you recognize that your closeness to Hashem gives your life your dignity. Now this is something that no one else will ever know, and even you yourself once you make the decision to you threw yourself upon Hashem, you won't remember that you thought of doing the other. Hashem is like a Succah. If you take refuge there, you are completely changed. Conversely, taking refuge on the outside is referred to in the zohar as the sukkah of tuma and you are changed by that also. Why? Because again it creates the illusion of other, there are real things that make me feel good – we associate good with the creation rather than the Creator, and we are not taking shelter in the source of good but rather looking that there are two sources of good. I am not taking not to go shopping or take a nap, what I am saying is don't let that be the consistent source of refuge.

He brings a pasuk from Shiur haShiurim, where it says, the Dudaim from Bereshis, the plants that were believed to have fertility properties. These Dudaim there is a lot of maklokes – it is a plant with the form of a human. These are the young men who don't sin, and the Jewish women who are open to their husbands and no other men. What this means is that the pasuk is praising the girls and boys for overcoming their yetzer hara. And why are they using reach, the sense of smell, as the vehicle for conveying the madrega? Fragrance is different from other senses in that it can be experienced even from a great distance. Similarly the spiritual effect of overcoming the yetzer hara has a profound effect on the world and it changes the standards of the spiritual integrity far more than other sins do or mitzvahs. How so? One of the deepest things that is within us is the desire to become whole, through attachment to something else, toward someone else. This has to be in an ideal sense through a person toward Hashem which is what spiritual union in marriage is all about. The body, the union of the flesh, is related to a higher union, two people drawing together and loving each other and finding each on in the other, discovering each other through the other, is a step toward discovering Hashem in relation to both of them. For the woman, as she receives from her husband, she recognizes that he receives from Hashem, and Hashem is the source of all the goodness that makes the relationship valuable. Conversely, in a promiscuous relationship, there is no vision of Hashem as the source of love, and there is no vision of love at all... it is all body. That relationship is compared to death, while the first to life. Of all the senses, the sense of smell is the most spiritual of them, the least tangible, the most ephemeral. When the nachash tempted Eve, he said touch it feel it, but he never said smell the forbidden fruit. The Maharal tells us the same way actual fragrance goes far, the spiritual effect of chastity, fidelity and overcoming has a profoundly deep effect on the world.

Hashem will see this kind of spiritual consciousness, it won't be hidden from Him. There will be no gashmius in how Hashem relates to him, but it will be the name, the identity, the structure, so the person's name, their identity, will go very far. The fame is not gashmius fame, it has to do with spiritual fame.

Now he explains in more depth. When a person overcomes something within themselves, what happens is that their structure, their identity changes. They move from being

whoever they are to being the person whose closer to the ultimate structure and form that their spiritual side can take. In essence, their identity, their name has changed.

The opposite is false *gevurah*, which is pertaining to people but not to Hashem, Now in the real world, if a person wants a real connection and it is not happening and they do everything they can, daven, *tehillim*, *shadchanim*, improve and it doesn't happen. So if a person steals, but when they chose in this difficult situation to stay alone, that nothing happens but what they are doing is nothing. In fact, they are doing something, that choice is something even though it looks like nothing. Imagine someone whose intuitive self is very critical. Let's say she is rooming with someone idealistic and her roommate is a *bale teshuva* straight from *Neve'* and thinks everything is so wonderful and the first girl says give me a break. For once, she is quiet. She says nothing..so what, why is my picture more accurate than hers. For once, she shuts her mouth. From the outside, it looks like nothing happened, but the fact is that this nothing is really something, her silence is something to Hashem, it has an intangible presence like smell and has enormous power. This is true when we overcome the *yetzer hara*. It looks like nothing happened when someone overcomes, but really there is the presence of spiritual *shefa*, spiritual close, that affects that person and the entire world. A person can never know when they overcome themselves how profound their effect might be. When we tell *tzaddikim* stories, we tend to tell about people who did, not about people who didn't do. It is important to realize that those who didn't do but who overcame themselves have achievements that are just as real as those who did something. For example if someone does a great *bikur cholim mitzvah*, this deserves lots of recognition, this is huge. But it is an illusion to think that someone who could have said something self destructive and other destructive didn't also do something huge just because it is not visible. The *Gra* says that there are two types of *tzaddikim*, *tzaddikim ase tov* and *tzaddikim asumera*, those who are meant to do things and achieve things, and those who battle their own evil but they are just as real in terms of being *tzaddikim*, their *tzidkus* is just as real as the other kind, but because they don't get outside recognition since what they do is invisible, it is harder for them. The first type is *tzaddik be tov lo*, a *tzaddik* to whom good adheres, people will associate him with good, and the other a *tzaddik b'ra lo*, and evil adheres to him, and by the nature of things he is not going to get acknowledgment.

The *gemara* tells us about three people who Hashem tells us about their righteousness. The first is a single person who goes to a city and does not sin, has many opportunities and does not sin. The next is a poor person who finds a lost object and returns it to his owner, and the third is a rich person who tithes does it secretly. These people all are motivated by one fact. They have a sense of the enormity of Hashem's presence, fear of Hashem Himself. This is so clear, these three achievements are so real, there is no possibility that a person can come to that without a clear understanding of Hashem's presence. There are three things that move us toward sin. Lack, a different sort of lack which is having too much and the third thing is opposition. These things bring a person to *chait*, to sin. Let's look at *chaser*, the poor person, he has no means to survive. And if he finds a lost object, his returning shows he has a sense of Hashem's presence sincerely. The other is *tosefes*, he has so much he has to give away so much, but he doesn't ask, what am I getting? Instead, they continue to give secretly. The third is the one who faces

opposition. The yetzer hara goes to a bachelor in the city and cause him to sin and he has to oppose the part that is posing as his lawyer and his best friend but is really his opposition.

Q. Regarding inner conflict, is it really as black and white as you say?

A. the yetzer hara and yetzer tov do not identify themselves by name. Every so often a person like the Chofetz Chaim has great clarity. In the winter he would talk in the morning to his yetzer hara when he didn't want to get up out of bed..I see you are up. But most of us think that the yetzer hara is ourselves, our identity. Sometimes they are really part of our identity, they both claim a certain trait. Let's look at the trait of humility. The yetzer hara will say you are worth nothing, don't aspire towards anything. The yetzer tov will say you are nothing, only Hashem is great, cleave to Hashem and you will fly, but it is the same trait, which is humility. They have to be channeled in a way that is consistent with truth, but you have to know what voice you are hearing and not just go with the flow. The reason is that the part that is your best friend, your lawyer is really the part that is self-destructive. An example is a woman who came home and found her husband looking at a lewd internet site. She immediately felt enormous pain and shock, it was terrible, these were developed people. He saw that she saw, so the choice that would have been easiest, to walk out of the room and think what to do next was not going to happen. She was bright enough and aware enough to realize at that moment that saying what she felt and what resonates (the horror of it, what's wrong with you - you learn in kollel, you are a phony) instead she got a grip on herself and said, we will work through this together. The voice within her that made her say this was much less true than the other voice, the other voice was much louder but she saw it to be the yetzer hara, that she would be destroying and not building. She is a very rare person.

Similarly, there was a woman - in Israel they have return call so you can get the number of who just called. She found one of her children had listened to a terrible station. Her initial response was to confront, but instead she consulted with an expert, and was told. He knows where he is, you don't have to tell him. He gave her strategies that were constructive. So she was able to distance herself from the emotions she was feeling and to see which voice is true and false, you can easily delude yourself. Going with the flow is not good enough.

Good to see you again

We are up to our final perek in Netivas Koach Hayetzer. Hopefully we will finish this week and next and start something new.

Our topic this week isn't going to be about the Koach of the yetzer but rather our responses to an enemy who is so strong.

He says that every human being was created by Hashem with the yetzer hara within them and he has to do his best to get rid of it, and even if the person's image of himself is accurate, that he is a tzaddik, that most of his time their thought speech and action are devoted to Hashem, or chassid, most of the time they walk the extra mile, that they do more than they have to do, let them not see defeating the yetzer hara as easy because it is very hard.

Meaning, the person has to pray continually to Hashem that He should help them get rid of the yetzer hara because to do it by yourself is very hard. He didn't say impossible, he said very hard and that the key is bringing Hashem into the picture. It is as though we are imprisoned by a king who is old and foolish, but he has imprisoned us. The rule is a prisoner can't free himself from prison, which by the way, noticing this will help us be more compassionate toward others. If we treasurer a moment of terrible failure and realize how powerless we felt, that is how other people feel in their moment of failure as well. With help from Hashem we need someone else to free us. Hashem can take us out of prison.

We have a gemara that tells us, there was a person who used to say we can aim at the yetzer hara's eye, he would start up with the yetzer hara and say he would spit in his eye. So, he would say, I can defeat and overcome the Satan. He was fearless. What happened to him? The Satan was able to defeat him by bringing him to an obstacle he could not contend with. The more you say I can do it, I can defeat the Satan, I can defeat my inner accuser, the less likely you are to succeed. Why? Because that same koach acts against you. So what should we do? Instead of saying I can do it, I know, instead say, I can't do anything, Hashem you defeat the Satan, you give me help. What help do we expect to get from Hashem? The help is not that He make the initial choice for us, that has to come from us. Here is where I don't want to be and here is where I do want to be, that comes from us. But the inspiration and the strength and the situational backup - that comes from Hashem and without that we don't do it. It is worthy for a person to pray that Hashem should cause the Satan to move from him and that Hashem should push him aside.

If a person is trying again through his own power to oppose, that power is not going to allow the person to exist without Hashem's help. In the secular world, it is widely acknowledged that in all the ways of defeating obsessional behavior, the twelve steps work the best. The statistics are clear, and the first step of the 12 is bringing Hashem into the picture, I can't do this myself. Conversely, all of the self help plans that say I can do this myself never work.

Therefore, we have a prayer in which we ask Hashem to guard us from the yetzer hara, and this is very important. Rebbe Meir, whose level we can't even begin to imagine, would mock the yetzer hara and Rebbe Meir was almost defeated, and the yetzer hara said except because it was declared in heaven not to destroy you, you would have been finished. This is Rebbe Meir, whose level is so far from ours.

Rabbi Akiva mocked people who sinned. What happened? It was declared on high that except for this, the Satan said, it was declared in heaven, watch out for Rabbi Akiva, watch out for his Torah, or he would have been finished. What this tells us is we can never look at ourselves and say I can defeat this on my own. When a person thinks they can win like any battle, a person should not say I can defeat the yetzer hara easily, they should say rather it is very hard and I need help from Hashem. So notice the difference in the two approaches. One the person takes themselves and fills the page with himself and his own ability to oppose, his own sense of empowerment and strength. The other is when the person reduces himself to being small and sees that only Hashem's strength can defeat evil.

Taking this further, he concludes by saying that a person never comes to a point where they are reliant on their own strength, but conversely they should say it is only by Hashem's strength that I can defeat this. He finishes this in which he repeats the same thing a number of times and it seems simple but it is very deep. What is deep? What is deep is what he calls the ability to oppose. Once it is unleashed, two things can happen. One is we can easily take that capacity and move it to where it doesn't belong and be defeated by the yetzer hara in a whole other and new form. Another is that the self-empowerment creates so many illusions that it easily could in and of itself be a cause of defeat. So again there are two enemies here, one is the illusion of self-empowerment, and the other is unloosing our power of opposition which once it is gone we can't stop it and we find it erupting in many different and surprising addresses.

A person who is going to try to get rid of their yetzer hara has to listen to the fathers of the world. He says look in Pirke Avos where it tells us to remember that we came from a drop of putrid semen, that we are headed toward accounting for our lives, think about Who we will have to stand before in judgment. The more we think about this, the more the picture of Hashem's grandeur and our smallness will keep us from sin. Nowhere in Pirke Avos does it say, look at yourself, you are so marvelous, so controlled, surely you can overcome evil. It does not say that there.

It begins by telling us another gemara. The gemara says a person should be careful not to believe the nonsense the yetzer hara tells us. The yetzer hara will corrupt the correct ideas. For example, we are small and Hashem is infinite. The yetzer hara will say, yes, Hashem is infinite and His mercy and compassion have no bounds. Therefore when you sin, He will certainly forgive you why, to Him, sin is nothing. Don't believe this. This is the yetzer hara out to destroy you.

He says and we should not rely on the leader (Hashem) to take the first step, we shouldn't let the picture of infinite compassion cause us to trust Him to make the initial step instead

of us, the commitment to eradicate evil. We have to want to get rid of the yetzer hara. The smaller we make ourselves, the more likely it is that Hashem can help us. But we can't expect Him to be on our side and defeat evil if we don't want evil defeated. You see this syndrome amongst people who say to one degree or another "I meant well, Hashem will forgive me." We might be doing our best but it we are not doing the best. For example, let's say there is a child who does not know Hebrew and does not make any effort to learn it, and instead does other things with his time, thinking it is the heart that counts. The heart counts but Hashem wants us to become something because He cares about us. His compassion is not like a parent who lets a child eat potato chips for breakfast.

What makes us accountable? Everything in our surroundings testifies to what we have done with our lives. This includes everything in our homes and the angels we make with our actions. Hashem is not going to ignore their testimony. Why? Because he gave us power to affect the world.

A person's soul testifies. What sort of testimony are we talking about?

Q. What does overcoming the yetzer mean if not opposition (albeit with humility)

A. I'll give you an example. It is not unusual for people to lie to get out of trouble. Why were you late? There was traffic. Translate – I had a second cup of coffee. Here is the difference between effort and opposition. Opposition sounds like "I can take this on myself, I am a person of character and I won't tell a lie, I can overcome this tendency. I am trustworthy and I can get past this." That is opposition. The other side sounds like this "Hashem I am trapped here because I have done this more than once. If there were a magic button to push, I would push it. I am opening myself to you. Here are the efforts I am making -I am trying this and that and the other. Help me so it works because I have no power without =Your guiding me." That is the difference.

The opposition is the part of me that says "I will defeat" and villainizes the yetzer hara as being an enemy who can't be dealt with except through bitterness and opposition, that person is doomed. A person who conversely says, I have to do what I can and I will do this and that because I know the yetzer hara will destroy me otherwise, but Hashem you help me, is in a completely different situation.

A person's soul testifies for them. A person's soul that lies in his bosom testifies, a person's limbs testify, Hashem says you are my witnesses. He tells us that the yetzer hara has two presentations, one is Hashem is so great He won't punish you, and the other is that Hashem isn't interested in punishing people, which is the voice of k'vera. We are told that we shouldn't believe our own minds which tell us that Hashem is not interested in punishing man, and we should not believe that we won't have to account. Both views take Hashem out of the picture.

What he is saying is that the yetzer hara uses imagery and the tool we have to defeat it is truth, which lives in the mind. But the mind can be corrupted. How? If the mind tells us that Hashem will not hold us accountable. Who thinks like that? In the Knesset there was

an argument over legislation – a left winger said to a religious member, do you want to say that Hashem will kill an innocent person because you drive on Shabbos? No matter what the religious Knesset member would answer, he would be wrong, because he can't deny there is a correlation between what happens and what we do, but he would also be wrong to say that the innocent died because of mikal Shabbos, because he can't possibly know that. What the chaver Knesset was trying to do is take the issue of accountability and make it seem ridiculous by using the intellect as a weapon. We have to believe that our intellect is too small to grasp Hashem's judgment, and all we can do is ask for His mercy.

What he says (remember what we said a moment ago, that a person's house and furnishings testify against him). The Maharal has an enormous chiddush here. It is not his literal house, it is the house he builds for himself in Olam Haba that testifies. To understand with depth, the gemara says there is only one accusation Hashem makes against man, but it encompasses everything. He has defiled my sanctuary. I gave you a body and a soul and a world and you defiled it. The world we create is what brings testimony to us. There are people who create in terms of their spiritual consciousness within themselves a world that is beautiful and wherever they go, they take beauty with them. That is their world, their home, that is the self they live with in the future life. Conversely there are people who make a home within them with vengeance, anger, and that is what they take with them. That is what is meant that the stones of their home give testimony. If he is attached to things that are exalted or things that are belittling. A person goes to beit olamo – the house of his eternity.

Q. What powers do we really have to effect the world?

A. I will give you two examples of powers we have. We are saying a bracha on a pear with devotion and focus. They have changed their own awareness and they have also changed their pear, thinking about all that was involved with it's creation, there has to be in fact the whole universe. The person has taken the pear and defined it according to Hashem's will. The pear and everything that accompanied it physically has changed. Additionally, the person has changed the spiritual balance of the world which if it was on the edge, and the Rambam tells us to always see the world as though it is on the edge, could go this way or that. That one deed can change the world to being viewed as a world that is basically spiritual. But there is a more direct thing that happens as well. More tangibly, they have changed what people see as possible, they changed the possibility horizon by introducing factors that may not have been there before. So this affect is huge.

We create our house in eternity, and in the future life each person has their own dwelling. When it says the stone of their house testifies against them, every stone is unique and created by them. So in this world, the person we become within ourselves creates our home for eternity in Olam Haba. The people who bring beauty wherever they go, in Olam Haba, they have a mansion of spiritual beauty and goodness, which is something to think about.

The second pshat is that the angels we create testify. Every time we do anything we create spiritual forces. What we send up comes down. Every person is born with two

malachim to guard us. We will call this conscience. To sin, we have to silence our conscience. What is the testimony? The testimony is I could have stopped myself but I chose to silence the part of me that would keep me choosing. A person can take the malachim Hashem sent to guard him and sends them away. All he has to say is I don't need to hear this. I don't want to feel guilty. The classic example is Pharaoh who through his deeds and choices made a situation arise within him where he no longer deserved to be guarded and every test he had offered enough room to defeat himself but it was his doing.

The third is a person's soul testifies against him. Hashem made a pure and whole and clean spirit within him. The soul Hashem gave us a pure soul. If we return it in purity, the soul testifies to the efforts we made to keep it pure. Conversely, if we return it distanced and impure, then the condition the soul is in testifies to the choices we made to reject and defile it.

So this is what it means to return a soul in purity. A person could be in a situation where they are on the right side of the law but they are not pure. For example let's say you work in an office with Mr. Goldberg, a Jewish decent man who is a little closer than he has to be and he is trying to make you an office wife, someone to confide in, share a joke. No actual line was crossed, no physical contact, isolation, no suggestive talk. But there is not purity. What is purity? If I say this is pure honey or pure water, it only honey or water. If I say that this is a pure soul, it is soul and nothing other than soul. One of the attributes of the soul is middos hayesod, the ability to bond. Pure bonding between men and women takes place only in marriage. Anything else is sullied. A person's soul can testify and say Mr. Goldberg was looking for bonding where no bonding should be. Now let's say the woman is not innocent either, she enjoyed the whole situation feeling important and close to someone even though no line has been crossed. There is still lack of purity. And even if they crossed lines subtly, even if within the law, if he speaks to her in a way that says I see you as a woman, the impurity is greater.

Q. How does this fit in with someone who doesn't know better?

A. There are different levels of not knowing better. I'll take you to a spectrum of perspectives. The classical case of the child taken to Babylon and then finds out he is Jewish and comes back and confesses...he has to offer a sacrifice and he is forgiven because it wasn't from choice. But he does have to make an offering – he is not off the hook, there has to be some act of elevating the physical which is what korbonos is about because the physical state has been degraded. Similarly, a person is affected by sin even if they made no choice, but that effect doesn't have to be that which is meid against them. To understand more clearly, the Maharal says the following elsewhere. What is the difference in level between a tzaddik and a bale teshuva? Imagine two points connected by a string. If the string is broken and then knotted the two points are now closer than before but the place of the knot is weak. A tzaddik is analogous to two points held together by an unbroken string, but the yearning and devekus that can be turned on by the process of teshuva has not come into play, so the distance is greater than that of a bale teshuva because the devekus and yearning are part of the teshuva. For the bale teshuva the sin leaves an impression and that is why in the place of the sin there is a certain

weakness. Everyone is affected to some degree, but the degree to which there is opposition determines the degree to which this knot is weak. The general rule is when a person is really forced against their will Hashem who is merciful, will exempt them from all of the damage, meaning He will heal the wound.

A person's neshama can be changed, and the one who says it is a person's limbs who testify against him. He concludes by telling us about a person's limbs. If a person is a tzaddik they use their limbs constructively and beautifully so the spiritual source of those limbs and organs testify for him. In Shaare Kedusha, the author tells us that the same pattern that the physical body has reveals its spiritual source, which is the Divine image within us. This is why there are so many anthropomorphisms in Torah. It talks about Hashem's hand (force), eye, (hashgacha, vision) which are not visible. Similarly, on a person, the body is a parable through which the soul can be observed. If a person sins, it is as though they harmed the circulation of blood to give the limb or organ of the spiritual body. If the circulation is restored, nothing terrible happens but if not, it can be tragic. A person's state of being spiritually is analogous to physically what can become of a person. The limbs and organs - for instance, there was a tragedy where a young mother was killed in an accident and the father could not take care of the children and people were there - they wanted to raise the children- to take the children even though they were not easy children. These people used who in the spiritual life will have astounding beauty - their spiritual arms were used in a way that is beautiful. In the future life, the organs testify and it will be beautiful.

Conversely there are people who misuse their organs. In the future life, their ugliness as humans shows. Hashem Yirachem Aleinu.

The medrash - a difficult gemara to understand. There are sorts of yearnings appear appear to be unrelated. The first is the yearning of a wife for her husband. Chava, after the sin, you will desire your husband. Next, the yetzer hara desires Kayen the jealous one, the murder and his companions. Next, the rain yearns for the earth and it wants to be absorbed by the earth, and finally Hashem yearns for Israel. What does this mean?

Of all of these four, the Maharal chooses the yetzer hara yearning for Kayin and his friends. Maharal says wait -the yetzer hara goes after Yisroel, not Kayin. He explains. He says that the yetzer hara is out for people and even more out for the Jews because his interest is to defeat something with tangible presence and to bring it over to his side, illusion, which is why it is called ra,. Because of this, the yetzer hara is most threatened by the Jews and talmide chachamim. The person who is destructive wants to burn down a building that exists, to destroy it. The Jews are the constructive house. Who wants to break down a house that is broken already? He brings a gemara that we already learned - if a person is stricken with yetzer haraitis, confront it, bring it to the bais hamedrash, say the shema, and remind the yetzer hara that one day you will die, remember the day you die. As soon as you admit your mortality, the yetzer hara's interest in defeating you is less sweet. This brings us back to the beginning, don't try to attack the yetzer hara, don't oppose him. What we are saying, the smaller and more mortal you are, the less investment the yetzer hara has in your total defeat.

This takes us back to the fact that the yetzer hara is already attached to people who are evil. As soon as death enters the picture the yetzer hara is quiet. The more a person or a situation seems to be powerful, the more the yetzer hara attacks. But not attacking, but devekus, and in that sense, the yetzer hara yearns for Kayin because they are wicked.

We have two sorts of relationships, one of principle and attack. And the other of devekus. The first is I am stronger than you, you are powerless, and we are unless we turn to Hashem. The other is that the yetzer says I am you, I am your identity. When Kayin heard the yetzer hara, they were hearing that form, you are a killer, that is who you are. Why should you let Hevel get away with this? The yetzer hara was the lawyer, the friend. But for tzaddikim, the yetzer hara attacks them. One of the great Rebbes, before he would speak publicly he would look in the mirror and his gabbai once heard him say “Holy man, wise tzaddik” and the gabbai asked him what he was doing, and the Rebbe said I am listening to how ridiculous this sounds before the yetzer hara makes it seem credible. Now there is nothing to oppose and I can hear how ridiculous it is. Later, I might believe it. The idea there is again, don't do battle with the yetzer hara, do battle with your own humility and bring Hashem to your side. Never say I can do this alone because that is a sure way to defeat.

Rebbetzin Heller

Netiv Ha Yetzer Jan 7 2007

He quotes the Gemara. A person who purposely brings himself towards thoughts of desire, that person can't be within the same encampment of Hashem. It is evil in the eyes of Hashem and it says in another context that Hashem does not desire wickedness and He does not dwell with evil. He is going to explain what is so bad about hirhor.

In a certain sense, a person with desirous thoughts is worse than a person who sins in the world of practicality, if the hero wasn't some self developed because if a person ends up doing a bad deed, it doesn't mean that he in essence is bad, he just was trapped by his passions of the moment. But a person who purposely brings himself to thoughts of desire, his essential self is affected. Concerning this person it says evil shall not live within you. A person who is evil (which means lacking) can't dwell with Hashem who is goodness and this person is called evil because he himself brought about his negative thoughts.

Let's talk about negative thoughts, thoughts in general and essential evil. The soul has three garments, thoughts speech and action. None of these are the soul in essence. Each garment however moving from the outside in gets closer to the essential soul, so deed is the most external. So although deed is the main thing. We were put into this world to do deeds – tikkun olam. The fact is that you can't see through a deed who the doer is, we can't see who the doer is in essence. If you see three people kill, it could be widely different. The essential person is defined by intent rather than action itself. Intention matters. A person with fantasies or desires, what is that coming from? It is coming from an empty space within them that should be full with good, with light, with the desire for tikkun hatvi and tikkun olam. Without that, there is darkness and people try to fill that darkness with something. This is where fantasy comes into play, especially sexual fantasy. While for men, the deepest yetzer has to do with the physical covenant with Hashem, sexual desire, for women there is also the covenant of speech, the need to express, the need to say. So if a person's speech and their inner descriptive powers (hirhor) are misguided and misdirected, if a person thinks or speaks badly of others, they are filling that same empty space with evil. That is something to consider.

The gemara tells us, that the yetzer hara seduces a person in this world and testifies against him in the future world. He brings the proof pasuk, the one who spoils (seduces) someone from their youth, by the time a person gets to their end, he will be milyon. What does that mean? The word for witnessing is sometimes milyon.

Rav Huna adds the spirit of sinful relationships causes them to be lost and that same spirit of a sinful relationship is within them. At first it causes them to stray and in the end it is within them. A person should not be attentive to the words yetzer hara as if it is a worthy opponent. We sometimes end up with inner debates...on one hand this and on the other hand that...the yetzer hara should not be an equal contender to the yetzer tov. We should not allow that sort of equality within us to take place.

The idea is as follows. The yetzer hara in this world is attached to us and meaning its voice resonates as true, as a true possibility, whereas in the next world it is no longer attached to us and we are who we are and it testifies against us from a place of detachment. An example using speech is as follows: We sometimes have a litany of complaints. There is not real frum literature although there are novels. This is because when you write for the frum audience, you can't be honest, which means that we can't put down on paper what we really think and feel because it is so far from what the Torah idealizes that it will never make it past the self-censorship that we impose upon ourselves. And it is true. We can't write about illicit affairs or temptation to murder. The question is why is that called honest. The reason is that those voices resonate as being more authentic than the message love people, see what is good about them, don't let yourself fall into the cliché's. Because the yetzer hara sounds real, it resonates as being ourselves, so shutting up the yetzer hara is like shutting up ourselves. And the truth is in this world the yetzer hara is attached to us. But in the future, there is no such attachment and what now seems honest and authentic in resonance is really just superficial which is a terrible awakening for people to have.

It is like a person who sees something from close, then distances himself from it. You have the up close witness and the distant witness. In this world the yetzer hara is part of us, is attached to us and therefore resonates and his job is to draw the person after them that they also become ra, meaning that they become consumed by their feeling of lack and emptiness. But in the future, the yetzer hara views the person with greater detachment and gives detached testimony. What does this mean? In this world, it is attached which is why it resonates as being true. Let's make up a person. Imagine someone who lives alone in a tiny apartment in Brooklyn, with a job, but it is not particularly fulfilling. It keeps her sustained, but it is not marvelous and she feels her life is unbearable. What she is telling herself is that she has no future, she is not making a contribution, and all of these things resonate as true because there is a certain level of chisaron that is in her life at this time. Here is what the yetzer hara is too involved for her to see. But if she were to see herself from the perspective of someone in hiding in 1945, that person would see her life as full of possibility – she can say brachas, change the world. Both people are seeing with some accuracy, but the first person is seeing through expectations rather than reality. That is where the yetzer hara came in. The yetzer hara's job is to keep you out of reality.

He brings another gemara. The yetzer hara is like a fly that sits on the two openings of the heart. The first amora compares it to a fly because a fly is despicable and has a short life span. No one takes a fly seriously though. The yetzer hara of taiva (the other is kovod) is despicable. Imagine how ridiculous we look when we see how much emotional effort we put towards reaching goals in the world of desire that really don't get us anywhere and really don't give us that much pleasure. We look ridiculous. We are supposed to enjoy this world, but don't get emotionally engaged in it...it is not that important if it is this way or that way. There was a man in a restaurant who was very particular about his sunny side up eggs and finally the waiter brought it too him and the man sent it back because the edges were too brown. What is the problem here? The man is going to forget this shortly. Why be so involved in sunnyside up eggs?

When you go to a fancy restaurant, you often have to wait when there are no tables. There are people who don't wait for anyone, but they will wait ½ hour to sit because they have an emotional desire for what they want based on nonsense like they are important or love themselves. Reb Amnon Yitzchak says food is relevant for the time it is in our mouth, but then it is gone, but we let it take on emotional significance. So in the other world we see how nonsensical this is and sometimes we see it in this world too. All forms of promiscuity are in the same category.

Nothing is cleaner than a cleanser and nothing is more repulsive than a fly. He is taking us off onto a tangent, he says to understand what appeals to us in evil we have to go something more basic –what appeals to us at all? There are two views, opposites attract. A person who is warm might be drawn to a cooler person, but there are also some who say similarities attract. What people really want is to become more complete. In the opposite, we want greater completion. Different or similar, these are the two. The yetzer hara, a fly, will find itself in something despicable. It is repulsive and we are drawn toward it for that reason alone. The fact that it is despicable and small and transient has its own attraction and magnetism. The yetzer hara that is despicable and repulsive is drawn to things that are despicable and repulsive. So he is saying there is another possibility. We are in a certain sense clean and drawn because it is opposite...we like excitement. We don't want to have a clean slate, we want something not quite so shiny. So that is the machlochos, are drawn to yetzer hara because it resonates and the part of us that is matus is something that affirms that? In psychology, sometimes a person will do an act because a person is capable of doing that act. A person will act awkwardly and then people will treat him that way, and affirms their feelings, we have self-fulfilling prophecy. A person who feels disgusted with themselves, and they may do things that are indeed disgusting. This plays out with the it doesn't matter anymore mentality. Another form of the yetzer hara where a person is aware of their own inner purity, and they want excitement and difference they don't want to be a goody goody and they are drawn because the yetzer hara is something else. Picture two people who are about to go to a pornographic site on the internet..one because they feel dirty and the other because they want to see something they have not seen before. This is the machlochos.

He tells us a chiddush. We are not that good, we are not that squeaky clean. There is a part of us that is lacking no matter who we are. That is the part that says see the forbidden. Don't think for a moment it is because goodness creates a lack...goodness does not create a lack. G-d is infinite and we can go higher and higher and never have a moment of boredom or emptiness. The part of a person that says but I want to try something else is the part that is already pagum, the part that is already lacking. The yetzer hara that says you are too narrow, that part of you is the part that is not too narrow but is already experienced in lack.

To understand this in light of the miemar (at the beginning of the essay), the yetzer hara goes after Jews more than any other nation and goes after the scholars more than anyone else. Why? Because if you are almost perfect, the little black spot that is there that decreases the shelamos is felt more acutely. So the part that wants something that

resonates with that is the part that says try it, do it, go there. This is why the more we want shelamos and the closer we are to shelamos, the contrast between that which is familiar and the hishtod to evil, which is not, causes the evil to be very empowered.

This is the opinion of Shumuel that it is like the cleanser and this is why it is more than with anyone. Now he explains the machlokis more. According to the view that sees the yetzer hara like a fly, the chisaron is in the essential self. When a person has a place within themselves that is despicable, a burden of guilt, they disguise themselves in their identity as injured, they give up on themselves and do whatever they will do out of disgust with themselves. Oftentimes when dealing with kids who are off the derech, you are dealing with a pivotal moment, such as the first time they broke Shabbos, or indecent behavior with girls.. The thought process that goes with that moment is I am nothing anyway, I am despicable anyway so I can do whatever I want.

A true story. In a family, the politic was that the child ended up in the role of loser. Third daughter after several sons, no academic star. The father said things to hurt her feelings, but he thought he was being a good parent who is putting her in her place. She could not rebel at home because the atmosphere at home was such that it was inconceivable to not do what her father wanted. At school, she rebelled, and came to school with short socks, anklets, so far from the school rule that it was off the charts. The teacher said to her, you are not a Bais Yaakov girl, she at 16 walked out and never went back to any school. Why did that happen? The teacher was affirming what the girl already believed about herself...you are despicable. Her wearing the short socks at most was like the fly and that took her to do things that were much worse, and she fell very far and it took a long time before she got a grip on herself. That is one kind of yetzer hara. It was in the image of the girl, and that was why she was able to let herself fall. It was the similarity. This tells us two things. We can never be pogeah in someone else's pogeah. Their essential self is never anything less than beautiful.

Someone came to talk to Reb Freifel. The parent was saying that the parent was doing so poorly in school, they wanted to take him out and put him in the veggie bin. Reb Friefel banged on the table. I belong in the veggie bin, not him. I was not always good at learning. What Reb Freifel got across to the father was that he could not go into the identity of the child. There is another kind of yetzer hara, of the chomer, where the self image is okay, but they are drawn because their body has desires, they want a bit more, because there is something lacking. They think they are exploring. They don't notice that they are not being driven by the shelaim part. We are living in unprecedented times of materialism. People associate success with money. If you don't have beautiful things, you must be a person who lacks, and this is a whole other kind of yetzer hara.

The yetzer hara is in both places, but the root of the person, the rot is there in the person's root, in the heart. When he talks about the spiritual trait that the word heart embodies is binah, understanding one thing from another thing, moving into the world of looking at the other and not just at truth. This is the source of interaction and the source of exploration and where evil comes in most easily.

Perek Gimel

Any person who slaughters the yetzer hara and confesses is as if he honors Hashem in this world and in the other world. As it says, a person who slaughters a gratitude offering has honored Me, with two nuns, which hints that there are two sorts of honor, here and in the next world. Now we go to something different. Until now, we spoke about the voice of the yetzer hara and how we can identify it in ourselves and others, we spoke about chisaron and lack of shelmos. What if you deal with the yetzer hara and do not ignore it? He tells us it brings honor to Hashem. This tells us what happens to a person who overcomes his yetzer hara. What overcoming the yetzer hara means is not what we think. It does not mean not coming to temptation. He takes it a step further. For a person to say I overcome my yetzer hara does not mean not doing the action, it means confessing before Hashem that what they did happened and it was wrong. The person has honored Hashem in this world and the future world. The idea is that any time a person sins, it is a certain level of chilul Hashem because they promote evil in this world and it gives the illusion that there are two power sources, good and bad. Let's look at Saddam Hussein's execution. All the people were looking at the noose around his neck. For many people, this was the end of the story, the circle is closed. But there are many people who did not see that - his victims didn't live to see that. For them, the story did not have a happy ending. Until Moshiach comes there will be loose ends, but whenever a person sins, they promote the illusion that there is no closure of the circle, that there are two power sources, G-d and something else, which is in virtually every other religion what people believe. Even Islam, which is monotheistic has this. A Muslim lives in a world where there are believers and deniers and the deniers are a power source, which is why they have to die, according to the believers.

As the heretics would say, you can't have one source from which both good and evil come. So therefore heretics say there are two beginning sources, one good and one bad. We see that there is a desire for evil that feeds on chisaron, which is the yetzer hara, and the desire for good which feeds on shelamos, which is the yetzer tov, it looks like there are two power sources, chas v'shalom. So therefore he says a person has to have the yetzer hara involved in his fight against the yetzer tov. The yetzer tov has to anger the yetzer hara, he says - anger and don't sin. And if this works, great. And if not, study Torah. So if a person wants to make a horrific phone call and pour out lashon hara, let the yetzer tov into the picture. Try to build something. Move yourself from the mentality of chisaron and taking to the mentality of shelamos and giving. If that doesn't work, go learn Torah. From tehillim 4, say this in your heart. But if not, say the shema, because it asserts Hashem's unity. The reason you want to speak yetzer hara, lashon hara is because you saw something in someone, they harmed you or damaged you and you want to release your own negative feelings about someone because you think they are empowered, but there is only one power source, Hashem. If that works, good. If that doesn't work, remember the day of your death. Would you like your last words to be "He is such an idiot". Of course not. Be silent.

Why would the shema cause the yetzer hara to depart? Because recognizing that Hashem is one, the unifying force of all reality causes evil to depart. And if evil goes then there is

only good left. And at that point, the person's own experience is that all there is that is real is good and is testimony to Hashem's existence. Thus a person honors Hashem as the source of all good. What we are saying is that if in that situation you recognize everything is from Hashem and whoever hurt you, that person is taking you right now to a higher level than you could have been, in that moment of cognizance and reliance on Hashem's transcendental wisdom, makes you closer to him so that what is left, what fills the vacuum now is devekus instead of evil. But when the opposite happens and the yetzer hara makes you do an action that seems to show that Hashem is not in the world and there is another force, evil, when that person slaughters the yetzer hara, they take away this false image of two sources of control and they honor Hashem in both worlds.

He says, even though the person, their yetzer hara doesn't exist in any case in olam haba, how did he honor Hashem in olam haba? When a person takes himself away from the yetzer hara here and now, his here and now has a certain vantage of olam haba. Olam haba is the world of truth and this world is the world of falsehood. The biggest falsehood in this world is that there is control outside of Hashem's rule, that there are two control sources. In olam haba, we see things as they are. If a person confesses, I sinned, not I was bseder and I meant well. NO! I saw that there was another source of control and followed, and when a person rejects this, they bring olam haba into olam hazeh, so that both worlds are one. And therefore a person who does this honors Hashem in both worlds.

The real issue is one issue. All forms of yetzer hara, in the chomer (identity) or in the uma (material) or not, seduce us to think that there are two power sources. I am outside G-d's reality, I am so despicable and small that I am outside of G-d reality. There is G-d and me and I am outside. The delights of the material world are somehow outside of G-d's authority, and if I want pleasure, I have to take G-d out of true picture and that is possible!

The real issue is always achdus Hashem.

Because of this to conclude, we have the methodologies we are supposed to do. Bring the consciousness of Hashem into your world by wanting good, by saying I reject this, I am not going to live with this illusion of two control sources, I am going to put my faith into the good. Let's say someone robbed you, ripped you off. You bought something, it has guarantee, and there is no repair man, and they are waiting for guarantee to end. I can easily get upset with them and blame them or I can see that there is something bigger, that perhaps I don't have the right amount of money that belongs to me. Think there is something bigger, there is a whole circle there, that part of it involves what is rightly my parnasa, or a nisayon of looking at an imperfect Jew and not being mikatrich and ask rachamin for this person who has gone far. If I can see the bigger picture, to move toward good, then I would have dealt with the sefira within me that tells me there are two power sources - G-d and the repairman! (as the power sources). If that doesn't work, then learn Torah so as to distract myself with goodness so my mind expands. In the great world of heter and issur, in the great world of Torah, this is small. Or say the shema and verbally

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talk about Hashem's oneness. Or picture myself on the day of death and think about how petty this will look in Olam Haba where there is only truth. Tov.

Nourishment for the Neshama

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Friday, May 25, 2007

Maharal Sefer Netivos HaShalom -Notes from Rebbetzin Heller class May 13 2007

Rebbetzin Heller notes of May 13, 2007 on Maharal Sefer Netivos HaShalom

"There is deceit in the hearts of those who plow evil while to those who give counsel of peace there is joy." He [the Maharal] always begins with a pasuk from Mishlei and indeed the purpose of this pasuk is to give us consciousness of what happens emotionally when people try to make peace and don't.

He begins by telling us something that is an enormous chiddush: the reason why we usually think there is controversy is that it is a response to an event that occurred. This event occurred and people are distraught, they don't like how it is being handled so they have a conflicting view of what should happen as opposed to what is happening. We would think that that is where machloket comes from. His chiddush is that there are people who want to plant controversy. Who are these people? To use his words, they are the ones who put madanim – the Gra explains this word as coming from the word din – it is the sort of person who will cause one person to judge another. And those people are called plowers of iniquity., meaning that they like to prepare the earth for something to grow. What does that mean? A plow turns the earth upside down so the seeds can be put in and the earth will be receptive. There are people who apparently want to dig and dig and look at other people with a microscope to judge them and cause others to judge them because they like the result. The result that they like is controversy. It makes them feel alive, it gives them a feeling of superiority by being on the side of the angels. But the cause is not the controversy. The result is the controversy. That means that the person has put themselves emotionally in that type of a set up so that they are like a tragedy waiting to occur. There is always deceit in their heart. Part of the mindset of a person who always like controversy is deceit, because if they are not deceitful, they can't really stir up a controversy, and I will tell you why as the Maharal says. If they had no deceit then people would see through them, people would say the reason you are doing this or that is because of the hatred you have toward this person, it is not about ideology, it is all personal. What they have to do is be deceitful to begin with , create a climate in which it is clear to the observer that it purely ideological , purely in response to controversy and nothing to do with personalities when in fact it has everything to do with personalities. That person will do everything deceitfully in order to send forth madanim, to create an atmosphere of microscopic judgment, where each person is scrutinizing the behavior of the other person. Machlochet is not a byproduct of that person's act, it is the goal of that person's act. The question is how do people get this way? What is this goal that they are so attracted to?

He tells us that there are divisions caused within the people as a consequence of the deceit, of this consistent desire to plow controversy, and the name of this maklochet (to divide) is called evil. This word evil should be used specifically with machloket. The word for sanctity is kodesh. It's opposite is chol (secular) but literally it means "sand" like on the beach. When you look at sand, it doesn't stick to itself. The individual grains go back to being individual grains. Similarly that which is holy is always unified. That doesn't mean amalgamated, that all the individuality is lost, but that something is there that binds it together. So if we look at the world, everything in the world is itself, it is what it is, but it is part of a system bigger than itself. The Maharal also talks about achdut and peirot. Achdut is commonality of goal and purpose, mutual respect and chashivos of the purpose of every individual, that we are all one, like limbs and organs in a body. The opposite is peirot where there are borders that do not relate to each other. In nature there is nothing that has no relationship to everything else . In our time, we see the world in ecology that speaks about the interrelatedness of everything. The Maharal did not know biology, but he understood the singularity of G-d in a way that we don't. He understood that what G-d brought forth is something that mirrors His singularity and unity, that everything in the world has purpose and it's contribution is defined by its borders. If we took away all earth worms, it would be a disaster. The worms aerate the soil and nothing could grow. But for the worm to contribute, it has to remain itself. Similarly borders is what makes true achdus possible, each thing has to be itself in order to contribute to the whole. Machlochet takes place

when people lose this, when they can't see how it is possible for things to have borders and boundaries and still be part of a greater whole. What he is saying is that this division, this machlokes, is called evil. What is evil? The simple meaning of good is something that does its function. A good person is a person who does what humans can do, a person that is truly human. The Maharal says a good person is someone who mirrors Hashem's image, b'tzelem Elokim. This means we have something of this achdus, the ability to rule the world, to see its' interconnectedness and to give it definition. In that sense, we are greater than any other creation. The Rambam says someone is good who actualizes their humanity, they are gifted, creative, intelligent, self-transcendant. Maharal says the angels are even more that, but that we can emulate Hashem and we can rule the world through our free choice. We can use the choices that we make because we are in this world to unify everything, to see its physical purpose and its spiritual purpose, and to make everything mirror G-d's unity. So the opposite of that from both perspectives is a person who is in-human, like Idi Amin, through their free choice totally – territorial, aggressive, whatever. From Maharal's perspective it would be that and more, it would be someone who does not see the purposefulness or underlying unity in the world and therefore has to devalue everything that is not him...everything that is not him is a threat. That is an evil person.

Maharal takes this further. On the second day of creation it doesn't say Hashem looked and saw that it was good. On the second day, Hashem made a separation (firmament) between the spiritual and the physical manifestation. There is a big empty space called free choice, see it or don't see it. There are people who never see it. It doesn't say ki tov because it was the day of separation. This is to tell us that by definition machloket is evil meaning it distorts G-d's plan and image.

It says in Navi Hashem makes peace, meaning He constantly recreates the world moment by moment which makes peace and each thing is contributive, but he also created evil out of nothing, offering us choice. Machloket is the opposite of peace. Now you could think, Why is he telling us this? We sometimes think that war is the opposite of peace. No, war is hard enough. But machloket means looking at the world as being divisive – A has nothing to do with B, I have nothing to do with her, they have nothing to do with us. That is evil. So a concrete example of this way of thinking – and to some degree we all fall victim to it – you hear of an accident, let's say it is people going up to the mountains for the summer. If the answer is it not someone we know, we feel relief because we feel that whoever was part of the accident was not part of you. This is human, but it is not machloket, disunity. A machloket is a person who wants to plow this, and magnify it and gets his vitality from it and enjoys it. Suppose upon hearing that they accident involved them, not you, you say, they always drive too fast, that is how they are, they are not respective law-abiding like we yechies. That would reveal a pre-existing agenda to judge and that is the source of evil. In the example of feeling relief in the first instance, it is not perfect, it is human and it is not evil. But judging people from that perspective because they are not like us, that is machloket and that is evil.

The pasuk goes on, to those who give counsel of peace, they deserve joy. Because peace by its nature equals wholeness, and wholeness brings a feeling of completion, joy, of seeing everything in its place. So let me give you an example. I was in Malon for Lag B'Omer where every possible kind of Jew was, old and young. Everyone was streaming towards Rashbi's tomb, in front of the kever. There were half a million people there. By the time you get to the kever passing the vendors and dancers, you eventually get in. There are two ways to look at it – who are all these people to crowd me? Why am I uncomfortable? Or they all want what I want, they all want a few minutes here. It can make the experience one of achdus and love or one of peirus and hatred. It is the same experience.

A person who loves peace will see shelamos, this is people completing themselves, and this is what Reb Shimon wanted.

Peace means making everything whole. I want you to hear this phrase again – wholeness is what gives things presence or reality. Let me explain this. Suppose I was introducing you to someone who you haven't met before, Yvette came from France and doesn't speak English and I am introducing her to you. Yvette this is Chavi, Chavi this is Yvette – you see each other as people with an identity. Suppose I were to say, Yvette this is head. Head, meet body. It means that my introduction is focusing on commonality, the real you, or on fragmentation – that is a French woman, she is 35 you are 19. You can take a fragment and turn it into the whole or you can take what is real and enduring and turn that into the person. As you mature, your core identity changes, this one's wife, that one's mother. We can't fragment based on least real things. Shelamot, seeing the total picture, gives something reality. Fragmentation makes it unreal.

It is therefore appropriate that those who pursue peace have joy. The immergent picture is beautiful. It says about Hashem that there is strength and delight in His place, the totality of His Creation with His imprint, you see something joyous emerge. The more you go and look at the edges the less you see, the less joy, the more room for criticism. A tragic thing, the way we are, we tend to see truth as being negative.

Someone would say, "I can't not see this" meaning the negative thing. Or you look at the piece of the puzzle, the less truth you have. People think that if you tell them to see the whole you are telling them not to see the parts – NO – they are telling you to see ALL the parts.

I want to share with you something that happened. I was in the States recently and after the Shabbaton with Neve girls I went to a speaking arrangement for the deaf. There were speaking people there as signers, and there were more speaking people there than deaf. After I spoke a speaking person came to me and gave me a little book called Shamati. I assumed it was about hearing. I thanked her and I looked to see it was a kabbalistic tract brought down to the level that people can understand it written by Reb Wachshlav, who lived a generation ago, believed the inner aspects of Torah have to come forth before Moshiach can come and he has dedicated his life to spreading simplified Kabbalistic teaching. I was a little surprised and it showed on my face. Instead of saying How nice, I looked confused. She said this sefer was written by his student and this student comes to America and speaks and she saw something when he spoke that moved her. There was a woman who came to the shiur who was mentally unwell and very disruptive. I understood what the shiur must have looked like. What did he do? The woman's disruptiveness was so great that the shiur couldn't take place everyone was asking her to leave and the speaker said, no, this isn't what we do, and everyone sat down including the disturbed woman, and he said, hold each other's hands and close your eyes, and ask Hashem to give everyone what they lack, everyone is lacking something, ask Hashem to give you what you are lacking. Everyone knows what they are lacking, ask Hashem for it. And they did, and the immediate effect is that the disturbed woman was serene for the rest of the shiur. The woman said she got it- that they are all really one! Each one was lacking something – but amongst them they had it all, they were one. The simcha that comes from seeing us all as one comes from seeing lack as part of our universal journey and seeing it honestly and unflinchingly. See things as whole. The opposite of simcha is mourning. Mourning is about missing something, seeing something as lacking. We think that mourning has to do with our feelings of grief, but also acknowledging the enormity of that which is lost. The word shelamot – see everything as part of the whole. Shalom is what makes you see the reality as whole as it is and nothing is lacking. It would mean after the initial grief is over, the day comes when you can celebrate the joy of the person's life, how much you got out of knowing them, and their presence still lives with you. This is why we don't mourn forever, and this will be explained further.

Especially when a person is trying to make peace, a man and his brother, he will see the good in both of them and see how they complete each other. They are both lacking. A real baal shalom will be able to see that both parties are right in a certain way and in order for there to be wholeness, one may have to pay the other, but it doesn't mean that he is invalid or his presence in the world is unnecessary. This is why when I was once in a din Torah, I got to speak on someone's behalf. The dayanim determined who should pay, and looked at the person and said you can rejoice and be happy because you have accepted din. They saw that the person was in the process of becoming shalaim. They did not invalidate him. The opposite of shalaim is loss and absence. Deceit is the opposite of peace because they don't accept reality on its own terms. We sometimes pretty-up things to make peace and that is not peace either. How do we pretty things up? You will see something that is really wrong like shoplifting, and you pretty it up by saying they are deprived and have low self esteem and it would change everything, so we can't judge them. The way a person of shalom would look – this person is lacking in honesty but we can help them become more honest. They will see the truth that this person is lacking something. They are not looking at something lacking and calling it okay, that is not making peace, that is called patronizing. There is no insult worse than telling someone I would expect nothing better. Nothing devalues a person more than that. I am still trying to figure out the hashgacha side of this, but when I traveled, the films they showed on the plane with one big screen, they were African movies, terribly violent with real footage. There are two untrue ways to look at this..this real footage shows that African's are animals, they are so destructive, where is G-d there? Another look is look what colonial heritage did to them –every white person is responsible, this is our collective guilt. A third is what a terrible human tragedy this is – people, what a terrible place that they are, and a recognition that if we were as we should be, the spiritual forces that we send up would be strong enough to effect them also somehow and when Moshiach comes there will be shelamos as well, but to look at them and say it's okay because this may be the result of colonialism is just as patronizing as saying oh what a bunch of chayas. Neither is shalaim and neither view has a future. When a person destroys them they see wholeness, and when a person pursues peace, he should feel this wholeness. Peace by its nature is wholeness.

In the world as it is, we are all on this journey together. There is no peace and there won't be peace until Moshiach comes. We are on the journey towards it. On that day (when Moshiach comes) Hashem will be one and His name One, we will be one with His Essence, we will be clearly part of what He is, and until then we are in process. Our decision is not will we be at peace, our decision is will we pursue peace within ourselves and with others, which is a much more sophisticated question.

The opposite of that is deceit, which means fooling someone, and any act of dishonesty is a lie and it has no

mitziut...all lies have no reality. Until now, when people patronize, there is also the lie to enjoy strengthening the machloket because they like it, it makes it deeper and gives it more vitality. People do this by disparaging entire groups. For example, Rav Eliashiv did not go to Meron on Lag Bomer. It was reported and the response was that people who are serious people don't go to Meron. Does Rav Eliashiv go camping? No. His place is learning and psak. That doesn't mean that no one else has a piece in the puzzle, but people who want to make machlokes empower themselves by making these statements. In this sense, things like this belong to those who plow iniquity.

People who send forth criticisms or quarrels between a man and his friends destroys the mitzeut of the world because as soon as people are polarized, it is hard to see anything. If one limb or organ is ill, it can destroy the whole body, lo aleinu. Deceit and machloket are always connected. When both people see the good in each other, they come to a place of shelamos. Machlokes wants to destroy the people who are not like them, exaggerating their claims against them by creating polarization. Reb Nachman has a story, that there was a man and people let him be their trustee. He had a safe and someone stole the money. He lost as well as those who entrusted him. He was totally distraught and went to the Rav. What am I going to do? What about the widows? The Rav said, there is something I know that I will share with you...he took out an ancient map -see this? It is an island, there is sand that has special property that can make people do teshuva. Go to this island immediately and he gave him exact longitude and latitude. Bring back the sand that causes people to do teshuva, take the sack, and put it all over the floor of the public square where people do business and the thief will walk there and he will do teshuva and return it.

The island has two sides – the north side has the teshuva side, the south side though has the property of making people mad. Be careful. Don't explore, just fill your sack and come back. He gave him a bracha and he was off. He took many sacks with him to fill. He got there, filled up the sacks. Then the yetzer hara said...life is long..maybe you will need the other sand too –maybe you will need it. He thought it through and he was very careful not to mix them up. All of the sacks for teshuva had a big tuf all over. And the other sand he put red paint for meshuga. He tied them carefully and put them on opposite ends of the boat. There was a storm at sea. All the sacks were torn open. When the storm abated, he could not differentiate. He got new sacks, swept the mixed sand back in the bags. He was so ashamed he did not tell the Rav, he sprinkled the mixed sand all over the market floor. For mincha, all of a sudden the shul is full, davening for $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour and everyone is doing teshuva. The next night his money is restored. Someone returned it. Thank G-d, the sand worked. Looks like the other sand didn't work. Baruch Hashem. This continued for several weeks. Then people started arguing with each other. Your Rav is no good, mine is better. The meshuganah sand worked as well. In our era, we are all crazy.

In our times, at least we should know it is craziness, obsession with things that are not real, we must see the whole picture without being deceitful, without wanting more empowerment, without becoming more parochial and narrow. At the same time, we have to not be patronizing, we have to see everyone else with their lack as part of klal yisroel, a collective journey that leads to shelamos.

When a person plows deceit it takes them to falseness and unreality. Conversely a person who pursues peace deserves simcha because he is in the process of making things more whole (even though we won't have peace until Moshiach comes). Therefore, that person should pursue peace with the full knowledge that what they are going to get is wholeness and joy just for the pursuit, the pursuit alone, just trying, just moving in that direction is enough to give someone peace. Just trying will give a person the ability to see the beauty in everyone we encounter. We should just be worthy of this and take this seriously. Until next time then.

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Wednesday, May 30, 2007

Maharal Sefer Netivos HaShalom -Notes from Rebbetzin Heller class May 20 2007

Rebbetzin Heller May 20 2007 Maharal Netivos Shalom

We spoke about last time that the nature of discord is that people are looking for their vitality, and instead of getting it through shelamos and wholeness, they get it through plowing and planting discord and we are going to continue with this.

He quotes the Gemara – The Gemara says that it is forbidden when greeting your friend in the bath house (in earlier times they did not have private bath houses, they had group bath houses) to greet your friend by saying Shalom. Rather, you should say good day and the reason for this is because it says “And he called to Him (to Hashem) Shalom” meaning that Shalom is one of Hashem’s names. This tells us how great shalom is, how great wholeness is, how great peace is because it is one of Hashem’s names. Of course it is one of Hashem’s names, in light of what we learned last week, how could it be other? Every day we say “Hashem Echad.” We say Hashem Echad we don’t mean that He is one compared to two or three possible gods. If we are talking about G-d at all, we are talking about infinity, and you can’t have two infinities – where would one begin and the other one end? So, Hashem’s name has to be whole, Shalom, inclusive of every possible thing.

He says something very interesting. We are allowed to say the word truth in the bathhouse even though truth by definition is the whole picture. We can’t say shalom but we can say emett. What is the difference? What he says, quoting the Gemara, is that emett is the stamp of Hashem but Shalom is the name of Hashem. What is the difference between a stamp and a name? A stamp – if I were to have an imprint on something – it is here. We could look at “A” and conclude that I have been there, but you are not seeing me. You are seeing where I left my print. Similarly the world is a place where you can see, by seeing all of the dimensions that are there, something of Hashem’s truth, even though ultimately this world is called falsehood because we don’t see, the more you look at the world, the more truth you can see. But when you are looking at the world, or other people or at yourself, you are looking at something other than Hashem in order to see truth. If I see Gloria and say hi, I am saying hi to Gloria directly not through how I might perceive her. Similarly, Shalom is not just the picture of wholeness, it is the source of wholeness.

Shalom is the name of Hashem is therefore forbidden to say in the bath house, and certainly this requires a reason, why is Hashem’s name peace more than truth? The reason (more deeply to understand Hashem’s name is Shalom) when you look at the world, the world is full of opposites. Everything in the world requires a hidden hand to make harmony between opposites. Hot and cold, high and low, gravitational forces and antigravity, everything is based on contrasts and opposites, male and female. So the hidden hand is the hand of Hashem that joins them all together.

The reason why Hashem can draw them together is because He is there in all of them, so the common denominator between hot and cold, male and female, black and white, is Hashem’s vitality and force that joins them.

He is the form of the world. All of the opposites are meant to come together like a giant puzzle and give us a picture of who Hashem is. So if you understand this in the spiritual sense, order is enormously important, it means respecting the integrity of every person, of every object, seeing that it’s boundaries are there for a reason, and seeing that it is part of the whole is the most important thing that there is. Discord is the result of not seeing the value of all the pieces, and that is the opposite of shalom.

This is what is meant when it says we call Hashem Shalom.

Hashem is the final form that the world takes, the final picture. What this is like is when you put together a

puzzle that has many many pieces. In Israel there are 20,000 piece puzzles. If you don't see the picture on the box, you can't put the puzzle together. The Torah is like the picture on the box. The Jewish people, who live Torah, are meant to be a living picture of the people on the box. But the actual picture, what is it a picture of? It is a picture of Hashem's will and wisdom. You only see this when every piece of the puzzle is in order. Hashem is the final form that the world takes.

Hashem includes all things. He binds and unifies everything. The relative place and beauty of every thing comes when Hashem's will is manifest through that object. This is peace in essence. Hashem is peace, He puts all the pieces together and gives some kind of commonality and purpose. Let's say you are a teacher and you have a class full of kids. You are going to have some kids who can't sit still and wants to be busy. He needs a lot of structure. You might have another child who needs to hear it several times, which makes the first child crazy. Then there is the genius who hears it the first time and wants to go on, and then everyone else. So who do you talk to? You have to find the part of you that is like Hashem and talk to everybody. You can't exclude anyone.

Last week I heard Rabbi Wallerstein speak, and people asked him what is your target audience? Street girls? Frum girls? 18-19? Older? Who do you want? He said he doesn't believe in a target group. That is a person who can see shalom.

Because peace is a consequence of seeing Hashem as the final form that the world takes, it is not one of the puzzle pieces, it is Hashem Himself. It is not what He made, it is what He is, and this is what we mean when we say His name is Shalom. Shalom describes who He is in essence. Since it is the last thing, in a certain sense, it is what Hashem signs off with. When you look at when there is peace, you look at Hashem as the One who holds everything together. Every so often we have beautiful moments, when everyone is together. It is one of the things that I like best about going to Malon on Lag B'Omer. Everyone is there. The pushing, the craziness, that is what I like the most because everyone is there, and they are there for one reason, because Rab Shimon said I am there for everyone, and it drives people there.

Our Sages hinted to this in Midrash. Maharal brings something else to expose this more deeply. He quotes the sages to say peace is great because if all the benefits and comforts that Hashem brings to Israel, He feels it with the word Shalom. You see this in the Shema. He spreads out His succah of peace. Ose Shalom in Shemonah Esrai. In Bircat Kohanim as well. And in korbonos, because tefillah is instead of korbonos. The korbon elevates the world to a place that is closer to Hashem. A bracha takes Hashem's presence from above to below, and a korbon moves Hashem's presence from below to above. A bracha is a "male" element, and the korbon is the "female" element. We have already said how shalom is there in brachot. How is there in korbonos?

It says when Hashem is presenting all of the korbonos in Vayikrah, this is how to bring korbon olah. Mincha, gift. Chata, etc. and the last is the peace offering, shalomim. A korbon that incorporates everyone together. There were some offered just on the alter, and also the kohanim were given portions. But a shalomim was offered on the alter and some given to the kohanim, but the person who brought the korbon also got a significant portion of the animal offered. In fact in ancient Yerushalayim there was a bbq area where the person could eat the korbon with pita bread and celebrate Hashem's divinity in giving. That was called Shalomim.

This has to do with the pattern of korbonos in a general way. Similarly when each one is mentioned individually, the last one is Shalomim, and when it mentions it, how do we know that this is also true with other offerings? Later in Bamidbar, this is what we should do for Hashem on the holidays. It finishes there with Shalomim. Now he explains it.

Hashem's name and that which has everything in common also means that everything has an order. Why are there so many different detailed sacrifices? The idea is that everything in the world is purposeful and specific, so that this sin affects us in this way, and that sin affects us in a whole other way. This animal hints and allegorizes some spiritual aspects that we have that can be elevated. This same animal actually parallels some aspects of who we are. Everything is defined and specific. This holiday is not like that holiday. Because of this, not only are the korbonos having something in common, which is that they are all offered to Hashem, but that they are all specific. This means that every single one of them has a boundary. This goes back to a broader and deeper picture of what Shalom is. Shalom does not mean amalgamation, the melting pot is not shalom. The melting pot is the enemy of shalom. Shalom means that everything maintains its individuality and integrity. Everything is valued as itself. The boundaries that surround everything are valued. But they all come together to make one puzzle. So the worst thing that happens is when you get into the mindset of saying this piece is more important than that piece and therefore ...this piece is necessary and that piece can be pushed aside.

Let's go back to the classroom example. One of the great tragedies of our time is that our schools have become exclusive. I remember when I was a student in Bnei Brak, someone told me about the early days of education in Israel. He would go knocking on doors. He had seen the destruction in Europe and he knew how much had to be built in Israel. He would plead with the parents to please give your children a Torah education. It was hard for them. The reason it was hard is that the secular party saw religion as the enemy. At that time (the late 50's and then 60's) there was one large labor union that incorporated all of the others. The large union was called Histadrut. A person who is a member of the Histadrut who was found to be sending their child to a religious school would be expelled from the Histadrut. You could say, how could they possibly find out, isn't voting anonymous? Here is how they found out. In those days, there were ballots, secret ballots. Let's say there were 500 people in a few blocks. It is clear that if there are 10 who send to religious schools that some of the schools, they were scared for their jobs. Some lost their jobs – it wasn't an idle threat. When he was knocking on doors, it is because he valued every child. Now when I went to school in Bnei Brak he would look away from the fact that if there were girls over Bat Mitzvah, their skirts were too short, but he looked away. He knew that if they outgrew the skirt, they had no money to buy the new one. It wasn't that they didn't learn tznius. These families could not put bread on the table. So he looked away. We have gotten so far from that, and it is easy to blame the schools, but I want to tell you how the schools are exclusive. It is because the parents not the school masters, want to send their children to school where the school is seen as having the highest status because only people who fit a certain mold are accepted and if a person doesn't fit that mold they are rejected. They should go to the other school the veggie bin. We will never have peace with ourselves if we can't accept that other people are okay. Another thing that typified schools when I was there (1956) special ed had not developed all that much, but there were schools that were for retarded children. Reb Vovl wouldn't let schools reject Downs children. He said it is good for the other children to help the children with Downs and to be kind to them and to extend themselves to them because they are precious and important. There is space for every person on the spectrum. We have to be more open and less rejecting.

Here is an enormous chiddush of the Maharal. Hashem not only draws people together but he makes the borders and separations. You don't have to become the other person to value the other person. And they don't have to become you to be valuable. They can be themselves, there can be boundaries. And you can still value them as being part of this whole.

There is true peace when nobody breaks down the other person's borders, when each person can stand independently and still be part of the whole. Part of the whole, but themselves. Everything needs shalom, meaning everything requires boundaries and inclusion. This includes the higher worlds. Hashem is what both binds them and gives them definition. He is both. And this is what is meant when you talk about Hashem's middos coming from one source. The Baal chesed, who gives forth, is also the Baal gevurah, the One who created boundaries for the sake of clarity and mutual contribution.

That is why hashem's name is shalom because it includes all of the other attributes. In order for Him to be the source of peace, you have to appreciate that He is transcendental, that He is above all reality. He is not just one reality of limits and bounds and power, like everything else. He is above all of that.

All of the things that are created need something to give them their place and to set their boundaries. What does that mean? Nothing is whole other than Hashem. Humility, recognizing that I am not the whole, I am part of the whole. We have to realize that none of us is always right. If we are in the mindset "my way or the highway" there is no room for peace not only because we don't respect the other person's boundaries, but because we don't recognize that we are only part of the puzzle.

Only Hashem is above the puzzle. Through Him comes peace for everything. And because of this, we see Him as being transcendent, above all things, not just one thing amongst others.

Now there is a third reason why Hashem's name is Shalom (1st is that He is all things and gives boundaries to all things, and that is the form that all things take, and 2nd He is also transcendent, above all things and still connected.) He is going to take us further. To sum to this place, there is an integrity to all things, we spoke about how everything has to be included, that humility means placing oneself as one piece of the puzzle amongst many, we said Hashem is transcendental, that He binds things and gives them boundaries, and He has sufficient humility that even though He is above everything He is still connected to everything.

Further then. Peace is great, and how do you see it? Hashem said, For the sake of peace. For example, when Sarah heard she was going to have a child, she said how can that be when I have grown old and my master is also old. But when Hashem repeated that to Avraham, he only said that she has grown old, no mention that Avraham had grown old. Now let's think about this. Let's say Hashem would not have changed the words. What would have happened next? Would Avraham have thrown a fit? Was he under the

impression that he was still young? Would he have fought with Sarah. NO. This Avraham and Sarah. So this is telling us something that we have to focus on but we have to have more information. A second reference. The angel who came to Shimshon's mother to tell her that she would have a child (she was barren) and when the angel didn't wanted to bring up to the man that his wife was barren, he left that part out. There is a third reference. The greatest peace, the divine name could be erased to make peace between a man and his wife. What are we talking about here? We are talking about the sotah ceremony whereby Hashem's name is written and dissolved into the water that would be drunk by the sotah.

The words of the prophets are implanted in us for the sake of peace. Peace is good because it is a vessel that receives everything else. In Israel, years ago, we went to the grocery – pick out your items – the man adds up the bill and you go. No bags. We had to bring our own baskets. If not, we have the problem. The basket is not your breakfast, it has no worth except that it lets you bring home everything else. Shalom is like the basket that holds everything together without which you have nothing.

Bircas HaKohanim ends with the word shalom to show you that all of the blessings given have their value in peace. It acts like the basket in the grocery store.

Not only does it put Hashem's blessings in the basket but it also puts our tefillah in. The humble shall inherit the earth and delight in great peace. Is it a humble person? Then it is part of the whole. Shalom is considered great because Hashem made peace and created everything. Why are we quoting all these gemaras? It shows that the Maharal is not using his own chiddushim but the underlying meaning is from many chazals about shalom, that we see all these dimensions because we have the picture in front of us. In the generation when the people are not pious, in a situation where there is maklokos - in a situation where people are otherwise b'seder but they have no room for anyone else because everyone has to be b'seder in exactly the same way, what this brings is that everything we do here brings down a parallel response from above, opposition below brings opposition above. Which is one of the reasons why the trips made by the Gerrer Rebbe and Reb Shteinman have been so beautiful because it is such a living example of two people who don't become the same person but who can bring peace down.

He goes on to something else. Not only is peace dear, but makloches is not dear. Even in war you need peace. The basic concept of order has a place even in war. There are halachos under what circumstances a person country should go to war, make peace, all of these things have boundaries. Terrible tragedies happen when people do not know the boundaries and therefore create their own boundaries. The two extremes we see in our own time are those who believe in fighting in all circumstances and those who believe in fighting under no circumstances. None of them look to the Torah and ask what are the boundaries? Even to conduct war you need this, which is why the king was supposed to consult the Gadol, after the political side gets, because the borders have to be clear and it has to be dealt with.

Even the dead need peace. What does that mean? The perfect state of being is that the components have their own integrity, its own purpose and are bonded together. The soul rises above the body but still holds the body in high regard for having been its instrument to perfect itself during the person's life, which is why we visit the keverim of tzaddikim, because their bodies still have kedusha. The mourners take care of the needs of the dead. The mourners mourn, but the time is 7 days. Everything is connected that has borders. What happens when not? There is ultimately devaluing of both parties. In India, the widow of the man who dies is burnt alive in the funeral fire. There are pictures of young women dying this way. The man who died is seen as important but they regard the mourner as having no integral value. These are two sides of one coin. Both sides – each has internal value and G-dliness. Even in death you need peace.

Reb Meir adds that when a person leaves this world, Hashem gives them the most beautiful gift of peace if they are tzaddikim. There are three different categories of angels that greet them. The idea of angels greeting them has to be understood. Angels are created by the force of our deeds. Do a good deed, create a good angel. Do a bad deed, create a bad angel. These three groups of angels are reflective of the deeds of tzaddikim. The first one says, let him come in peace. That means that he, this tzaddik, should come in peace because that is where he brought other people. The second says you can lie in your resting place in peace, which is what we said that there is peace between the soul and the body. The third, come before me, meaning that the person has a place before Hashem. It is not enough that the tzaddikim get their reward, but what they also get is acknowledgement for how they brought peace into the world. That is their beauty.

And the opposite is true of the wicked. The wicked will never have peace, because for a wicked person, who is there room for in the world? Themselves! So listen to what happens to them for this person. When they die, three groups of destructive angels greet them. The first says, Ain shalom, because of who you are integrally, there can't be peace because your nature is to push aside others. The second one says Hashem says this to rashaim – you lie down with those who have made grief. It is not about a tzaddik meeting his

ultimate fate or a rasha meeting his ultimate fate, but that holding his wishes together, the basket, his love of inclusion and boundaries (and what the rasha hates is inclusion and boundaries.)

You get the greatest peace as reward – how do you get the basket? Through having the things ready to put in the basket. Shalom comes as a consequence of loving Torah. Why? Torah gives everything its boundary. This is yours, this is mine, this is mutar, this is ussar, this tme this is tahar. These six categories which parallel the six sides of a cube tell us what the boundaries are. This is what halacha is about.

The desire to learn, the desire to know, comes from the desire to see inclusion. Just knowing boundaries is not enough, you also have to see the connecting force, each one knows Hashem.

Shalom is given to those who give tzedakah. There was a picture in the paper of all the Chabad Shlichim in Russia – maybe 70 or 80 people – and they all had something happening. A great philanthropist, whose father had been raised close to Chabad, footed the bill for the gathering. Some mention was made of this man's philanthropy. It is good to understand the need for inclusion and boundaries. Give this much to this cause, that to that. Don't keep it for you, that is not where it belongs.

He ends this by reminding us that Hashem's name is Shalom. He concludes by bringing the gemara that even the angels need Shalom. Each angel has its own name (which means it has its own boundary) and its name is the name of its shlichus, he can do that and no more. It is all part of Hashem's greater plan. Even the angels who can't be baal machloket still need a frame from above them, how to bind them together, while still retaining their boundaries. Even more so, the gemara finishes by saying from a place where there is no hatred, no despising, there has to be an outside force that brings peace. How much more so in a world where there is hatred and rejection do we need peace. We have to have the inner desire for there to be peace and the name for that inner desire is humility. I am only a piece of the whole, I have to find my place and my place isn't more important than anyone else's place. You have to be willing to learn enough Torah to know where the boundaries are. This is your place, where you have to grow. You can't impose yourself and try to fix someone by becoming them. We have in life in Bereshis that there was no rain until Adam prayed for rain. It had to be a person who could pray who could be grateful and if Hashem did not make that boundary Adam would not have been able to be Adam. He would not have been a fully developed person. At the same time that we have humility and boundaries, you also have to have inclusion, to be able to take Adam and see that he is in Hashem's image. Concretely, this should take us to a place of humility, of recognizing the other person and still having boundaries that we don't cross under any circumstances. What does it look like when it happens?

One example – there is a woman in HarNof that just adopted two orphaned brothers. Her mitzvah had been to make celebrations in her beautiful home for engagements, etc. But right now these children need a full time mother so she changed her boundaries to make room for them and to help them and she has her own place, which is where she needs to be. Someone else might say I will do it all, which means it won't get done right. Real shalom means making room for the other and for oneself and for Hashem to be included.

Nourishment for the Neshama

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Thursday, May 31, 2007

Maharal Sefer Netivat HaShalom - Notes from May 27 2007

Rebbetzin Heller Maharal Netivat HaShalom May 27 2007

We have gone on at length about the trait of shalom for two reasons:

The first reason is to show that shalom includes everything, it is the all inclusive trait. Remember what we said shalom is, and I am going to review this briefly, it is when all of the pieces of the puzzle are put in the right place and the vision of the One who formed the puzzle is therefore fulfilled. So there are three things – the puzzle pieces, each of which has to retain its own integrity, their dependence upon one another since none of them is the puzzle all by itself, and finally the vision of the One who made the puzzle that is fulfilled when each piece is in its right place. In that sense, Hashem's name is Shalom (this is what we ended with last time). Shalom includes everything (it is the whole puzzle) and it has to do with the integrity of every piece. He is saying one reason that we spoke about this at such length is that by definition –Shalom is weighed against everything and therefore we had to explain how it contains everything, meaning that if you were to weigh all of the puzzle pieces they equal the concept of Shalom, which is the puzzle when all of its pieces are in place.

This is all known in divine wisdom, the midda that is called hakol is also called Shalom. Where do we have the midda of HaKol? It says in the Torah at the end of Avraham's lifetime that Avraham was old, his days had come and Hashem blessed him bakol. There are three possibilities of what bakol is. One is that he didn't have a daughter, and that was a blessing because had he had a daughter, whom would she have married? The other is that he did have a daughter because how can you say he is complete if he did not have a daughter? And the third is that he did have a daughter and the daughter's name was bakol. The Rambam speaks about this and this is a very difficult thing – how can not having something be a blessing and how can you say that Avraham did have a daughter and we have no history of who she married and what became of her? So he says both of these things have to do with the third pshat which is that he had a daughter named bakol. So he says, we are not talking about a physical daughter, but a spiritual midda that we call allegorically bat. In Hashem's self-presentation to the world, the allegory that we always use is that of a human being because we have the Divine imprint. In order to understand Hashem's relation to us we speak about different human beings.

These are called personae, faces, that Hashem presents to the world. There are five major personae. The last of which is female, or bat or the daughter. What is this about?

A person's child is the way they continue eternally in this world. Similarly the two attributes that are called the child attributes are the ways that Hashem is self-manifest in this world, in our world, another word for it is Shechina, Hashem's presence in the observable world. To understand this trait a bit, picture this.

This happened to me. I was on the bus and the woman next to me was speaking to someone across from me and the topic was someone who had gone out of business. They said Mr. So and so the day before he went out of business he was still taking orders. Now I know this person, not well, I bought things in his store on occasion. We are not talking about Atilla the Hun. I don't know what financial difficulties drove him to being dishonest, and I don't have to know. But this is lashon hara. Lashon hara is true negative information given unnecessarily. I could have two responses. The really bad response which is to listen more carefully to the conversation so that I can know what really happened, or the less bad response, which is to tune out, but this time I made the right response. I see both parties are observant and I turn to the woman sitting next to me and I said this is lashon hara and I don't have to hear this and I would imagine that your friend also doesn't have to hear it. This man has been out of business for over a year. Why do we have to hear this? And you don't need to say it. So her first response because she is a human is But it's true! He did that!. Lashon hara by definition is true. Then she was quiet and she even thanked me and that was unusual because most people would stay with their defensiveness.

It was Hashem's providence, I that I had just read in the Likutei HaMoran that when we are angry, it is because we feel the tzar HaShechina, the pain of Hashem's Divine Presence. How painful it is for Hashem Whose presence is in the hearts of each one of us, when somebody through their defenses or because of their pressures actually takes orders the day before they declare bankruptcy. How painful this dishonesty is. So we feel this pain within our own souls because we are part of Hashem. This is the part of us that says This isn't right – this isn't right. But what we are supposed to do with that feeling of This isn't right is to move towards fixing it if that is possible (which in this instance it wasn't – it was a year afterwards) or at least feeling compassion and asking for Hashem's compassion to guide the person in the right way to let the person make rectification somehow, that he give us the wisdom to judge this person favorably in order that we be judged favorably, etc.

The voice within us that feels this is called Shechina. One aspect of this is called daughter – why female? A female takes in what is given and then reproduces. She takes in the sperm and then makes a baby out of it biologically.

Now let's go back to the Gemara. Avraham had a daughter whose name was bakol. Avraham gave birth to something – not physically. This is an allegory, a daughter. He planted a seed that gave birth to something bigger than itself. What is that? That is peace. He put the pieces together, he saw the picture. He was the first one who saw the picture on their own. Adam was born with awareness. He was created with awareness. Avraham had to come to this on his own. He had to look at the world and say Who made it? What do the pieces of the puzzle mean? What am I supposed to do with this? Why am I in this puzzle? This is called middas hashalom.

How is everything at peace? So all of the sages whose words we just heard last time, in which they compared shalom to many things and spoke about its greatness they are trying to explain what this seed gives birth to. That is one reason why we went on about shalom so much.

Now he is going to give us a whole other reason.

It is because this world by its nature is full of discord, so we have to hear about shalom as a possibility because the nature of this world is that there is tremendous discord. We need to be warned and rebuked that we not stumble in this midda of shalom because that is what completes everything. All of the things that read before include every aspect of peace.

There is no reason to say more, but to show us 2 things, that there is such a thing as shelamos and that every one of us can carry Avraham's torch and look for wholeness. The other is that we should be warned, that this world does not lend itself to finding peace so easily.

We have to know that maklochet is a huge thing. The energy of maklochet is vast. The same way as we have the desire to see how the pieces fit together is deeply implanted within us, the desire for discord is very powerful. We like being part of this. It gives us identity. I will give you an example.

Quite a few years ago, the religious parties divided. This happens relatively frequently. There was a presidential election. One party had a symbol and people, being partisan, had the letters on their porch. The letter that my kids wanted was gimel. They wanted me to put out a giant gimel. And I wasn't into it. I am not that partisan. So they were willing to negotiate, but I wasn't going to go for it. But then my kids said, but then we are not important. Then we are not For Something.

This is how we think, that you have to be opposed to something in order to be yourself. Now the real truth is when you are talking about things that are true (not everything is true but when you are talking about truth, the pieces of the puzzle, if they have retained their integrity) you need all of the other pieces because they are different, not because they are the same. But kids will never get this.

Because makloches is so huge and it is very destructive, when the words themselves Shalom and Makloches, what they really are is hinted as follows:

The words which we use are before a person continually, it is wholeness that is the source of peace. You have to retain your desire for the whole picture, no matter how much you guard the integrity of your particular piece, you have to remember it is part of a whole. At the risk of sounding partisan I would have to say that what I admire most about the head of the Nevee Institution is he never under any circumstances will say anything negative about another institution of Torah learning or pressure a girl to stay at Nevee because it is Nevee. He will always say that the main thing is that it is Torah and the main thing is that you are learning. And I have heard him say this more than once.

And the opposite is maklochet. In the Torah, peace is called shalom. The opposite is true with dissent. Shalom is called shalom in the Torah and in the Rabbinic writings. Conversely, in the Torah, the word maklochet is not used. In the Gemara the word maklochet is used. "Reiv" is used in the Torah, a reiv between two people. But the Gemara uses maklochet. It is because the word shalom begins with the letter Shin. In order to understand what he says next we have to understand why we care what letter it begins with. We are used to English where the name of something is a random sound of something that we can already conceptualize. The fact that the word table is related to tabla (a flat place) is very interesting but most people use the word table don't know it and are not interested in it. It is not relevant, we know what a table is and this is what we use to describe table. The word book is the sound we use to describe book. In Hebrew the words are descriptions and the letters (ot) symbolize what the word is conveying. It isn't that we know the concept of shalom and we have to have a sound to describe it so shalom is just as good as any other sound, NO. It is not coincidental. It has to be a word that begins with the letter shin. Think about the letter shin

What you see is a base and there are three lines that come out of it, one to the right, one to the left and one from the middle. That is a picture of shalom, that is the essence of Shalom, it is exactly what shalom is. There are two extremes and something that joins them, that holds them and gives them commonality while they all retain their integrity and individuality. The middle one is the one that can find commonality and can make decisions that include both extremes. There is one extreme, the other is the other extreme, and you need something to decide between them, and because the head is what needs shalom the most, an ordinary person is under the dominion of the people who are the heads of the people, the ones who rule them, and they put peace amongst the people or not. The heads don't have someone who they listen to – if there is no shalom between the leaders, then the followers are also divided. I will give you an example of this.

One of the things that has happened in our day that could not have happened two hundred years ago, it is so beautiful that we live to see this, are the trips that have been made in recent years by the Gerrer Rebbe and Rav Shteinman. Neither of these people are people who are bored and want to travel in order to fill up the days. These are people with unbelievable schedules. But they make a point of traveling together to give strength to the various communities in the world. Recently they were in France and Belgium, there is a plan to go to England I have heard. Now I want to point out what this isn't. This isn't that Reb Shteinman suddenly decided that chassidus is the way to go and that he will be eating kugel in the shteibel next week while singing Yishehu B Malchuscha. This isn't going to happen. It isn't that the Gerrer Rebbe decided that the Litvaks were right all along and that at the next tish he is going to make an announcement no more singing – take out your gemaras. It isn't going to happen. What they have decided is to retain their individuality of approach but to point out by physical example of the enormous respect they show each other that it is okay, that they are both people of Torah. Their little arguments are only about who should speak first, who should get more kovod, each one wanting the other one to precede them. At one point I remember in the entourage, it was who should get off the plane first and Reb Shteinman said to the Gerrer Rebbe you must go out first. So the Rebbe went out first and he said, I am your welcoming committee Reb Shteinman. It is beautiful. This is the letter Shin. This is how it should be, this is what it should look like. It doesn't mean amalgamation. It means retaining individuality on the basis of truth. So the shin in its classical symbol would be Avraham, chesed on the right, Yitzchak, gevurah on the left which always has to do with overcoming and restraint, and Yaakov, the person of Torah between them. This is called tifereth or beauty which is very related to shalom. If the leaders are at peace then the people will be at peace.

Therefore it isn't just one letter but there have to be the two extremes. Again, picture the shin, with the two sides and the middle, but the middle is not straight. It inclines a little to the left. If the right side is always the stronger and more appealing side, we like chesed a lot better than we like din, is this not so? Chesed is very appealing and din is far less appealing. Talking about self-conquest is never going to get the same kind of audience that talking about kindness will get.

In order for there to be peace between them, the middle player has to move a little towards the left, the side of din, to combat the inherent pull that the right side has. If it would go to the right side, it would just create more maklochet. Why? Because the nature of the bigger one, the side of chesed, is to say that the smaller one, the side of din, is the cause of maklochet...you are petty and nitpicky. So that is the side that needs more validation, which what people actually say. The right, chesed, is always more popular. Overcoming self, self-sacrifice, is always harder and if you don't validate that, then that can be reduced in people's eyes as being thought of as unimportant and there is more maklochet. Therefore the middle one has to move toward the left to show its beauty, to show its merit. So, a practical example of this would be, in our day, if you want to inspire someone, you have to work very hard to remind people that self-transcendence is a value, that tznius and humility are values. You don't have to tell anyone that doing is a value, that being there for someone is a value. They got that. It is when you validate the left that there is complete peace. But Shin isn't the only letter.

The next letter is lamed in the word Shalom. The lamed goes high, it is the highest of all of the letters. Peace comes from a higher place. Who knows what the puzzle should look like in the end? Only Hashem. We can know where we fit in and sometimes we can feel how dependent we are on others and the beauty of who they are but from where we are, we don't see the whole puzzle. To make peace, you have to be willing to say I don't see the whole puzzle. You have to look above.

Nothing is higher than shalom because it is the purpose for which everything was created. The only way the Jews will ever have peace between them (and we won't have peace in the world until Moshiach comes by the way) but even between ourselves, we are not going to have peace until we are all dovek in Hashem, until we can let go of seeing our own individual piece of the puzzle as being the only thing that matters. We have devekus in Hashem when we see the interdependence and we see the beauty of His picture and even when we don't we trust that there is beauty in this picture as it emerges. Then we will have peace. Therefore peace between them goes to the highest heights and this is what causes shalom, when people rise above themselves.

And now we are up to the last letter of the root of shalom which is the final mem, which is called mem stuma, the closed mem. The mem is closed, it has no opening (like a non-final mem). It is like it has a fence on all four sides. Not like an ordinary mem that has a little opening. It has a wall on every side. Real Shalom is something closed. There is no room for someone to take over if there is real peace. What does that mean concretely? That would mean, the way people like to put pepper in the stew. I will give you a true story. As some of you know one of the great Rebbes in Eretz Yisroel is the Amshener Rebbe, a person of enormous insight, very caring. He is a person who says of himself I am Tefillah. He can pray Shemonah Esrai six hours on an ordinary weekday. He doesn't talk much about himself at all. He will hear the other person and respond to them but once he had something escape from his mouth. He was making havdalah, and havdalah for him could be easily two hours. Most of the time he was silently standing, just holding the cup. Somebody said, why are you holding the cup, what are you thinking, what are you saying? He said for a moment, I could see from one end of the world to the other. So why am I telling this to you? Because by the nature of things, he can't be punctual on our time. Sometimes the prayers run into each other, shacharis leads into mincha, maariv is already in the morning. He is offtime by our concept. And he doesn't allow his Chassidim to do this by the way. Somebody who likes a little pepper in the stew, likes a little action, went to Rav Shach when Rav Shach was alive, and said have you heard? And Rav Shach said what are you talking about. And he said, there is a so-called tzaddik in Yerushalayim that does not keep the shulchan aruch. Rav Shach said what are you talking about? So he said, you know the Amshenever Rebbe, and he said yes, look what time he davens, why his mincha can be way after shkia, you know. So here is what Rav Shach said. There is a mishna in Pirke Avos that says mitzvah gerrera mitzvah and avera gerrera avera. One mitzvah drags in another mitzvah, and a sin drags in another sin. So he said, if this is an avera, there is going to be a result. A sin leads to another sin, so when he does the next sin, be sure to tell me. Okay? That is what we mean when we say a closed mem. A person who is a person of peace does not open the wall for maklochet. Doesn't open the wall. Now that doesn't mean sticking your head in the ground like an ostrich, that is not seeing the whole picture at all. But a person who cares about the whole picture is not going to open up to maklochet.

He says peace is so great that even if we worship idols but we have peace with each other, Hashem says, so to speak, that the accuser can't touch them. But when they have divisiveness between them, when their hearts are divided, then they will be held guilty. This is what is taught by the closed mem. It is closed from all four sides, you don't have to let in any negativity if you want shalom. Correction yes, negativity no. So how do you know where the line is? If you want to correct someone, who do you talk to? The person that you want to correct. How do you talk to them? In accordance with the halacha. You don't bring in other people and even at the times when it is necessary to bring in another person, you have to do it in a way that you are not opening up to maklochet, which in our days tragically, people are so maklochet addicted. I was once at the Torah Umesorah convention and a very important Rav was speaking and amongst the things he said is that he once got up and someone said Why did you sign it? And he said, sign what? And he said the posters against so and so. And he said what posters. What had occurred that somebody that is sure that he is right and likes maklochet photocopied a different letter on a different issue, pasted a letter concerning a different issue, and through computer graphics made it look as though the signature was on the second letter. Now the person who did this no doubt thought he was right. But that is a bale maklochet. Even if he was right, if this Rav decided not to sign his name, that is because he could see the harm done by maklochet even greater than the good done by taking an opinion on one side.

Something similar happened to Rav Orbach. When the Degel HaTorah political party was founded, Rav Shach wanted his approbation. Rav Orbach said I don't sign anything political. So Rav Shach came himself personally saying you have to sign, it is necessary for klal yisroel which is clearly the truth at the time. But Reb Shlomo Zalman Orbach's opinion was that no matter how much that is true, the damage that is done by

maklochet which inevitably happens when a new political party enters the scene, is so great that the words he used is speak to stones, to the tree. I am not signing anything political, and he didn't.

That is what peace is about. Something of peace is whole. There is no opening. If there is no opening then no one can overcome it, which is why when there is peace between us, no enemy could rule us, no enemy could successfully attack us, because there is no open place for accusation against us. That would mean even the sinners are part of the whole, which includes the righteous people. So the worst thing that could happen is when you disinclude people from your sense of the whole. We are us and they are a bunch of whatever. Now this is hard, I am not going to pretend that this is easy. This is hard. You have people who do terrible things. It is very hard to feel at one with them. It is easy to say that is a beautiful ideal. But if you are the one who is suffering because of the doings of that person, it is a lot harder to say with any integrity. You could play the game but to mean it? It is very hard. That is because of the tzar haShechina within us. When we feel that something is really wrong, we can't make peace with it. But we have to be willing, as Jews, to say, this person, no matter how wrong he is, is still part of me. Could there be a person who is so far beyond the pale that they have to be exorcised from the body of klal yisroel? There could be, but we are talking about people who are very far gone, the real apikorsim, not people we don't like.

All three things are hinted at in the word Shalom. Let's review what is hinted at in the word. We have the shin that joins the two sides together and has a base holding it together, and that inclines slightly to the left because the left is the less popular side. We have the lamed that shows that true peace is transcendent, that the true picture comes from Hashem and therefore there may be things we find difficult to accept but they come from a higher place. A practical example of that is in a din Torah, the good guy doesn't always win because the dayanim make their decision based on the facts presented to them. So sometimes you have a situation where the more clever of the two people succeeds in hiding evidence and the other person loses out and the dayan has his hands tied because he can't make up evidence. So realize there is a bigger picture. There is always a bigger picture and if a person is doing what is right they will get their compensation in the end, if not this way, then that way. Hashem is very great. The last letter is mem, if we are whole with each other there is no room for accusations since the wicked people become kalem for the righteous people, we are all one, there is no room for accusation and therefore we are whole. That is what is hinted at the three letters in the word shalom.

The word shalom shows what it is and therefore the word that they used, our chachamim, the word is maklochet and not reiv, and they explain the word reiv through the word maklochet. To tell us what a fight really is and how a fight really ends. The same way we learn from the meaning of the word shalom. In the word maklochet, the mem is open, it begins with He did this and it is wrong, which opens the way to accusation, especially if what you are saying is true. So instead of closing ranks, and saying the less great are part of klal yisroel as well, we say he is wrong – that opens the door to accusation. The person creates opening and breakthrough, which is the opposite of shalom, which is whole and has no opening. If you take the letter mem away from maklochet, you have the word chalik, which means piece, a fraction. You open the way to accusation and all you have left is disjointed chalakim, disjointed pieces. The chalakim may be there, but they are disjointed, they are not part of anything bigger than themselves. There is no possibility of them becoming whole even. He is going to explain now, his purpose in this gemara which we are only going to begin to explain, is talking about the nature of maklochet, to explain the open mem, the mem at the beginning of the word maklochet. It is compared to opening a faucet. When you open this, then what happens is that more and more flows. The act of opening shows what it leads to. It is like a camel's hump, a camel can take in all of this water and store it, meaning that maklochet by its nature does not dissipate. What is the water in both of these parables? Interestingly the water is the factor called heedar, the absence of reality. What keeps a maklochet going is the falsehood in it, the absence of reality. Shalaim means each piece is trying to put itself in the existent picture that Hashem wants. Maklochet means No I don't want to know from this whole picture, what picture? That is maklochet. When you look at bad maklochet, because there is maklochet that can be l'shaim shemayim that comes davka from seeing the whole picture but we will have to speak about that next time because it is too big to start today, but when you look at bad maklochet, and I will give you an example of bad maklochet. A certain chassidish group divided after the death of the Rebbe. The elder son took over being the rebbe as one would expect, but the son in law had a dream and no one doubted that he had this dream, not even the elder son, and in the dream the Rebbe came to him and said you have to be the Rebbe. So the elder son didn't contest the truth of the dream because there was no way a person of his stature would make it up, but he wasn't willing to step down either because it is his inherited role. They have no problem between them. There are now two Rebbes of this group which divided. They are fine with each other, they support each other. Who has the problem? Some of the Chassidim have a problem. They have to make a choice between the son and the son in law. I am not making this up, it is so grotesque. A husband finds he will put himself with the son. His wife's family is with the son in law. I will spare you all of the acts of this play, but where do you think it ended? In spite of both sides imploring, it ended up in the divorce court, and I will tell you why. Because it

stopped being about this Rebbe or that Rebbe who have no problem with each other. It ended up being about I am right you are wrong. That is what it ended up being about. Why should I listen to you is what it ended up being about. Why should you prevail? It had nothing to do with the issue, it had everything to do with personality. That is what heedar is, and what is the heedar? It is when a person thinks I should rule. Who should rule? Hashem should rule. There is no place for that. So maklochet always means taking Hashem out of the picture by trying to put the crown where? On one's own head, which is a terrible human tragedy.

And it always gets worse, it goes on and on. He says this is the way when you enter the unreality of gaivah, it always gets worse. The question is why does it get worse. The answer is fantasy. The way Hashem made us is that we have certain instincts. One of them is survival which is positive, if we didn't have survival instincts then we wouldn't survive. We would walk into traffic, we would do all kinds of idiotic things, so He put survival inside of us. What happens is that we become involved with fantasies of extinction. When a person says I am right and you are wrong, oftentimes it is saying how could you extinct me? How could you kill me? How could you make me non-existent? My prevailing is my existence. Now nobody has the power to choose against their survival instinct. The problem that we have, and this is why heedar always gets worse and worse, is that the voice of I have to do this otherwise I'll be overcome – I shouldn't be treated this way, why should I become a shmata? Who does he think he is – it only gets worse because what the person is looking for on the deepest most subconscious level is metzius and you can't get metzius through heedar, so what people do is put more and more heedar into the pot, which is like putting more and more oil on a burning fire.

Question

How do we understand when leaders of the generation come out against each other.

Answer

I can't stress this strongly enough, shalom doesn't mean homogenization, it doesn't mean that all the pieces are the same. It means it is all pieces of the same puzzle. Here is a classic controversy regarding two leaders that are no longer with us. Rav Shach and the Lubavitcher Rebbe had oppositional opinions regarding giving away territory to the Arabs. Rav Shach maintained that in the interest in preserving life, one is obligated to give away territory, and the Lubavitcher Rebbe maintained that giving away territory would only create further endangerment to life. Here is what they both agreed upon – the Torah gave us a land that is extraordinarily precious and can't be given away for political considerations, ego considerations, personal considerations. The Torah gave us a criteria of what is important, human life since we are in G-d's image, is enormously important. This is what they agreed upon. The question was how to fulfill that. In this case, two puzzle pieces, the right and the left were not the same, which is okay. Now in one's life, one has to take a position and oftentimes we don't. It is not necessary to take a position on everything and in this particular maklochet between them, the average person has no reason to take a position because no one is asking us. But assuming that we did need to take a position, it is reasonable to go as far as your mind can take you and ask people who are close to you who know better than you who have learned more, and listen and make a decision. But you can still be respectful of the fact that the opposing opinion still values life and still values Eretz Yisroel. There was no doubt about either of those things, the question was, what has to be done in this circumstance?

I gave you this as the example because it was very heated and because the leaders are no longer with us. But in every controversy what you will find is that when it is l'shaim shemayim, there are underlying truths that both sides agree upon and that by and large we don't have to have opinions on because most of the time no one is asking us. But when we do, we do have to take a side, and it doesn't necessarily have to involve devaluing the other one. Rather, it should involve seeing where truth lies. Here is where this gets sticky. I don't want you to hear what I am not saying. I am not saying vailu vailu – because sometimes you have to take a stand on one side or the other. So sometimes the differences in the positions have to be pointed out clearly. What I am saying is this is not like an anti semite against the Jews, not at all. So because of this we have makloches that lasts and makloches that don't. The stronger the base of truth, the more enduring the maklochet because the two positions will have integral truth to them and the more ego oriented they are, the quicker they go.

Tov.

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Tuesday, June 05, 2007

Maharal Sefer Netivas HaShalom - Notes from June 3 2007

Rebbetzin Heller June 3 2007 Maharal Netivas HaShalom

We began to talk about the word shalom and talking about the word from its actual construction, the shin, the lamed and the mem. I did not speak about this enough last time. The Maharal has a very interesting perspective on things. He maintains that if something is true, it is true on every possible level. So if something is true philosophically, it will also be true mathematically, it is going to be true aesthetically, it is going to be true at every level. What he would see would be truth being something that is whole but multileveled. If I had been listening to our class about the construct of the word shalom, I would have seen it as interesting, but not necessarily true, just interesting. But what the Maharal's thesis is is that this has to be true of the root of the word shalom, there is no other way to convey the idea. It isn't that if it had a gimel he would say this and if it had a yud he would say that, no! This is an essential picture of what shalom looks like. The same way in Chinese that the letters are actually pictures of the concepts, not pictures of sound. In English the letters are pictures of sounds. The letter b is "bu". It doesn't mean anything. In Chinese, the letters are concepts, for example the word for man looks like a little man. In Hebrew, the letters are sounds, pictures and numbers, and this takes us back to the Maharal's idea of something being defined as true on more than one level at the same time. Let's review about shalom and then we will go into maklochet.

He said that the root of the word shalom is shalaim, it is the whole picture, when each component is there in order to create a picture by the One who is known to have created the dynamic of the picture to begin with. The first letter of the word is shin and it has three lines, the idea being that the extremities of what these pieces can look like is the right (chesed, outpouring) the left (boundary making, resistance, overcoming) and something to hold them together, there is a bar on the bottom, but there is also the middle line. We said that the middle one inclines and leans toward the left because if it were in the center we would drag it toward the right because chesed is so much more attractive to us than gevurah. So the first thing is the shin is telling us that the attractive pieces of the puzzle are no less part of the pieces of the puzzle than the less attractive pieces. To concretize this, there are people who feel defensive who hear about anyone doing something that they don't do. They hear about someone giving a lot of money to charity and they say well he has so much money to begin with it's probably nothing compared to what he can give. Or, if in a particular area the women are very tzniut, one might say oh they are so frafrumt, they are so externalized, it is beyond belief, they take conformity as vitamins when they are infants. This is how people talk. The reason we talk like that is that anything that requires overcoming self is not easy to achieve and it is easier to identify ourselves away from things that require a certain kind of gevurah than it is to identify ourselves towards them.

Then look at the lamed in Shalom, it is the highest of all the letters and the reason is as we said the picture that pulls together all the myriads of pieces is Hashem's wisdom, which is above our wisdom. To concretize that, you can read in Pirke Avos that every person has their hour, then you can read this man does not have in my life, uh uh. There are people to us that seem like air, redundant, a ditto, a copy of someone just like themselves. Do we admit this to ourselves? No. Do people feel this, that some people are more relevant and some people are less relevant? Obviously we feel this. Otherwise we couldn't possibly allow ourselves to behave in public some of the ways we allow ourselves.

The last letter is the letter mem. Mem at the end of the word is closed and we completed the idea that if you have the whole picture, if the picture is impregnable, then nothing can be broken. Hence, if we have peace with each other, we can't be destroyed by enemies, there is nothing for the enemies to hold, because the most vulnerable part of the picture is part already of the most complete and beautiful part. That is what Shalom is, and we began from there to talk about makcholet.

He began by bringing a gemara –what is it like? It was compared to a pipe taking water out of the stream

and once you get the pipe on you can't turn it off. Or like water that is contained. Now we talk about this more.

He gives us an axiom. Maklochet is moved by something lacking. So when two people are arguing, each one has an agenda to prove that the other one is lacking. As we explained already, shalom is wholeness. Maklochet feeds on lack and absence and because of that it can go on and on. He gives us an example. Let's hear his example of why it moves. It is the nature of anything that is full of lack that lack keeps on increasing continually. A garment that is whole (that isn't torn, that is what he means by whole) is hard to tear. But if you begin to tear it, then you can tear it easily. What does this mean? The basis of most quarrels is seeing imperfection, not seeing that this is a different shaped piece, it doesn't have all of the components – it fits into this piece of the puzzle, not the whole thing. You find what is really missing, because if the maklochet is going to continue there has to be a certain spark of truth there, and you can expand on it and expand on it and expand on it until it becomes the definitive of the person, the idea or the group. Let me give you an example of this. If you take any group, there are always going to be lacks because the good part of a person or a group has the same root as the bad part of the person or the group. For instance if someone is passionate and spontaneous, they probably are not also pedantic and precise. The dark side of passionate and spontaneous would be possibly lacking in borders. Or too expansive, saying more, or doing more than the situation requires. Precision is a wonderful thing, but the back side of it might be lack of spontaneity. Scholarship is a wonderful thing. The back side of it may be staying in the world that is academic and not letting flow down to the world of reality. Anything's good side is also its potential bad side. You can choose what to look at. You don't have to look at what is lacking, you can choose to look at what is there and see its beauty and integrity. If you choose to look at what is lacking, the nature of things is that it becomes bigger and bigger until it floods out what is there.

That is why the word machloket begins with an open mem. It is completely open, you can look at the same chisaron from many many different sides and aspects. Let's look at personal relationships, let's say you have a husband and wife and she is more spontaneous and he is more pedantic. The flip side of spontaneity might be saying too much, anger – it is the same person. He could choose to focus on that until the good part of her nature is forgotten. You are hysterical, I can't trust you, everything comes from emotion, why don't you just think? He forgot the beauty of her passion. Conversely, he is precise, he knows where the borders are, which makes him very close to truth in a certain sense. But she may focus on that he is not as spontaneous as she is, he creates a certain kind of tension, he may seem boring. You have no heart or soul. What has she forgotten? She has forgotten his goodness and precision and dedication and commitment and the fact that his word is his word. Why? Because it got flooded out by seeing things on the outside of the issue at hand.

Then it is like a chet which has a big opening on the bottom. There is room for endless fall. It is not like a hay that has an opening on the bottom but it also has an opening for re-entrance. In machloket there is a chet not a hay, there is no place for re-entrance. That is why it says quarrelsomeness is like the water pipe and it gets bigger and bigger meaning that it flows more and more. It could become from something small into a huge abyss that can't ever be closed. What would an example of this be like in our history? Look at the tragic machloket, the ones that tear people and communities apart needlessly. Invariably what happens is that the real issue is small, but what people make of it once it is put in dimion, once it is in vocabulary, becomes huge.

The other view is that it is like a camel with a bump that rises and rises, it is also like a person who sits on something immobile. The nature of a machloket is once you start, it is very hard to get rid of it. The words were said, the positions were taken, it is very hard to go back. In modern Hebrew you say get down from the tree, but it is very hard to come down from the tree. Once the positions are taken it is very hard to move.

He says we humans by nature are able to enter machloket because we are different one from another, we can look at anything that separates one person from the other and remember each person is unique, and expand upon what you have that the other person lacks, which again if you are not twins will be there or visa versa, and take positions on this where everything becomes an ikkaron, everything becomes a position and from that perspective, no two people can get on. There are people who can't tolerate someone using different laundry detergent than they use. There are people who can't tolerate – I once read in a religious periodical that ended up bringing a series of letters – the article was one of the more forgettable articles, a nostalgic reminiscence of the author's home and the beautiful white table cloth on the Shabbos table. It took two pages and as I recall it didn't say much more than that. Now comes someone else who says you have proven it once for all – Shabbos tables have to be white, so a person who has a salmon tablecloth with matching napkins and a pink over cloth and candles...that table isn't beautiful. Why? Because it doesn't convey to THAT author the vision of the table of their home where Shabbos was treasured. However, it is

conceivable that the person with the salmon colored tablecloth grew up in a different environment in which beauty had a different definition and this may be to them what is special and beautiful, and once the positions are taken, it is very hard to come down from there. There are principles involved, this one is less, that one is more, this is the narrower view, that is the wider view, this is Yeshivish, but that is more original and expansive...all over tablecloths. We are different! We are different in our middos, our backgrounds, our cultures. Is that how it should be? We have to bring all the pieces together with their individuality.

That is why we need a third person to make peace between two people because person A can't understand the piece of the puzzle that person B provides and visa versa, but someone outside can sometimes see it.

If we don't move from that place, and remember the differences are real, he is not saying the differences are illusory, we are not all basically the same, once the positions are taken, they are not going to move and then you are stuck!

If there is peace integrally with people, even if they were to depart from it and go to machloket, it would not be permanent, if underlying there is a view of absolute similarity. Because something that is an exception doesn't stay. So if we are really all the same and then somebody somehow became a bale machloket, invariably the positions taken formed against will disappear because the underlying truth is that we are all the same. But now we are in the sticky position where the underlying truth is that we are all different. The background lends itself to machloket.

Given who we are, our natures take us to being divided and separate. If a person stays in a machloket for a long period of time they are going to be stuck in it. In the word machloket, Reb Huna makes mention that the mem, the opening is first small, but by the time you get to chet, the opening is bigger. What is this telling us practically? It is bad enough if you can't accept another person's individuality. It is bad enough if you don't say what can I learn from this person and how can I give to this person? That is bad enough. But if you are already there and you stay focused on the difference between you and the other person, it is only going to get worse to the point where it could become irresolvable, which a huge human tragedy.

The first view is that a machloket by its nature expands. The second view is it was already big, you may not have seen it, but it was big.

After we spoke about the mem and the chet is the kof. It shows that when a person is involved in machloket, they can go in so deeply that they will end up annihilating Hashem's presence. That takes us to the problem that people get into in our times, we see it that people think that the ends justify the means, that they can do things that the Torah forbids in order to validate their side of the machloket.

Question:

How can we say that a machloket is irresolvable if we say that a machloket that is not lshaim shemayim will not last forever.

Answer

The machloket will not last forever, but the people who are the bale machloket will die at some point and new people won't carry it on, but it is conceivable that the bale machloket will not find resolution in their own lifetime. And such tragedies have happened, and it is a huge tragedy.

He is going to speak soon – not in today's class – about machloket l'shaim shemayim. I am going to leave that alone until then. What I am saying is that people die with their differences. It is not something that hasn't happened.

I will give you an example. We have in the lives of many rabbonim a story that recurs. So and so disagrees with so and so. So and so's position is picked up by a third person who is much less than either of the Rabbonim, and the third person, in defense of his position, sees that the authorities imprison the other Rabbi. This has happened many times, The Baale Hatanya was imprisoned because of Jews. The machloket themselves could be resolved, but the people who put themselves out may not live to see it, and the place they have put themselves is self-righteousness. It can have quite tragic results.

Sometimes in a machloket a person will go against his Rav to whom he should be loyal and in that way he is going against the shechina – what is the Rav and the shechina? Isn't the Rav just a person? The reason we can make that connection is that there is a mitzvah in the Torah to go in His ways. How do you go in His ways? Chazal ask this question – how can you go in His ways? The answer is going to be to follow in His middos. That sounds very clear, but it says to attach yourself – what does it mean to attach yourself to something abstract? What does that mean concretely? The answer there is attach yourself to people who live Torah – find a Talmid Chochim who lives in the right way – that is who to attach – the midda of chanina,

grace, a Talmid Chochim who knows his limitations and has something of G-d 's grace. Be separate from that which is limiting. One example is the story of the man who was traveling and asked the Chofetz Chaim why he had no furniture and the Chofetz Chaim said he is just traveling through this world, here temporarily, just like a hotel. I am here just for now. This is something of what kiddusha is – it means trading off A because B is better. When you hear an idea from the life of a tzaddik, you don't know what it is until you see what chesed really is. It has something to do with the being able to grow, not with the giver's being fulfilled. When you look at how a tzaddik does chesed, it is a totally different picture. From that perspective one of the worst tragedies is when someone rebels against their teacher, not when the teacher went wrong of course. But where a person's ego brings them to a point of rebellion, where they want to be a bale chesed the way THEY want to be a bale chesed. Or they want to be a bale kedusha the way THEY want to be a bale kedusha. And they rebel against their Rebbe and in that way they rebel against the Shechina.

It starts with the small opening against the Rebbe until it enlarges against Hashem and His directives. It gets bigger and bigger. Who argues against his Rebbe is as though he argues against the Shechina.

The Baale machloket goes higher and higher – in order for the machloket to maintain itself there has to be some principle that is real or not real, but if there is no principle, the machloket will fade. This is why our worst machloket is the machloket where there is corrupted principle. Let's look at the classical example – the rise of Reform Judaism – where Mendelsohn's points, and he meant well, that the religion isn't drawing in the young people (which was true at the time) and therefore changes have to be made (which is true as I will explain in a moment.) That lead to others making the line of what could be changed and what could not. Rav Hirsch knew what changes could be made, changes that had to do with style and not concepts, that had to do with externalities and not ritual and not minhags. He understood because he was in line with Chazal and Torah of his time. But the next generation after Mendelson, who lived and died shomrei mitzvah, but the next generation took the opening that he opened –there have to be changes- and they made it much bigger –they hated halacha with a passion. When you read the history of Reform in America and you read the Pittsburg platform, which was so extreme that it is beyond belief, kashrus was encouraged NOT to be kept. It isn't because you don't wear a kippah because you are afraid of the relationships you will have with the non-Jews, you SHOULD'N'T wear a kippah because it separates you from the non-Jews. It now became a principle – it was a lamed – which is quite tragic.

The next letter is kuf. The end result of machloket is descent into Gehinnom. Look at the kuf, it's tail goes all the way down, which you don't find in other letters that are not end letters, like chof sofeis. You don't have this tail. What is Gehinnom, as the Maharal says many times, Gehinnom is absolute absence of G-d. That is where Friedlander found himself in his own lifetime. No sense of G-d. It was gone. Once a person moves up to lamed in rebellion against your rebbe and the Shechina, the next letter is kuf, to be sunken into Gehinnom. This is what happened to Shabbatai Tzvi and his disciples. When you read about it, he no doubt believed what he was saying, but he was always a bale machloket, a small opening, against those of his times. But if you look at his disciples, the vulgarity, you can see the Gehinnom and this affected Shabbatai Tzvi in his lifetime.

There is nothing that a bale machloket is prepared for except Gehinnom. This is taking him to greater and greater separation from G-d. Now a medrash – it doesn't say ki tov on the second day of creation. Now let's look at the word sheni –which means difference, shoni. Shoni is never good in essence, it is only good when the shoni is used well, when it is part of the davar shalaim. Rebbe says on the second day Gehinnom was created. Gehinnom is the consequence of the tragic mixture of ego and shoni (affirmation of self above all others). That is what Gehinnom is in essence. It doesn't say ki tov because machloket was created on the second day. Both Gehinnom and machlokes are the same thing. This is how we understand the Korach story much better. The Zohar tells us that if Korach had not been a bale machloket, what would have happened to him? He had a huge soul. Being a Levi didn't speak to him – there would have been a position called a Levi Gadol just like a Cohen Gadol. That is who Korach should have been. But what? He didn't look to see and what is G-d's picture of the puzzle. He only felt his own personal frustration of not fitting in, compounded by his vision that Shmuel would be his descendant.

Now, he thought that this machloket was against Moshe, against Moshe's negiyos, that Moshe wasn't big enough to see the puzzle, that he (Korach) could see the puzzle better than Moshe. What does Chazal tell us the real truth is? The truth that he himself might not have been aware of, that these feelings only came to him after Elitachon was appointed the nasi of the tribe. Elitachon was the son of the younger of the brothers. He was in line, and Elitachon was after him. No one cares about Elitachon. In Korach's debate did he even mention Elitachon? He spoke instead about principles.. But what drove Korach to it is that, and he himself may not have known it, he was jealous of Elitachon. It was the pain of his being crushed into acknowledging that the piece of the puzzle that he thought was his wasn't his. It was the only issue. So what happened next? He had to get others to validate him – 250 others. He speaks principles. Does he

mention Elitachon? Of course not, because that wouldn't be a lamed, that wouldn't draw anybody. It wouldn't sound good, there would be no principle. What was his punishment? Again the demonstration – will his ketoras be accepted or not, and finally the earth opens for him. He could have been destroyed in many ways. By plague – this was unique to show that machloket equals Gehinnom. That is what Gehinnom is. Gehinnom is the absence itself. Therefore the name of Gehinnom shows what it really is, the place of perishing, the pit, and all of the other names.

That is why the kuf comes after the lamed, the height of the lamed – rebellion against the Rebbe and then the Shechina- then the Shechina is what brings a person all the way down. The greater the height, the greater the descent. The foot of the kuf goes all the way to the bottom to teach you this thing. That the essence of Gehinnom is for people who are involved in machloket. They find themselves more and more involved in their own ego and less and less relating to G-d on any level whatsoever.

This is what a machloket is about in its worst sense.

Now we are up to the last letter the taf. The last letter is the sort of machloket we are discussing today, ordinary every day machloket, within ourselves, within different aspects of our personalities, where certain parts of our personality want to destroy other parts. The machloket of the body and mind, the heart and the conscience. Then there is machloket in the family where a person's sense of self is so big that there is no room for someone else to have a role. Where the wife has to be both parents, the child has to be a child and a parent. It is like gehinnom when machloket is in a family. G-d is not there! When you look at any family, any family has bad moments. When you isolate the bad moments, where is Hashem at that moment? Nobody hits a child after davening. First, you have to get Hashem out of the picture and then your ego can take it the rest of the way so from that perspective there is no place for it to go. A machloket in one's home can lead to disintegration of the home unless something can come in to stop it. A machloket within oneself can lead to disintegration of the personality unless something comes in to stop it.

Then there are machloket between Am Yisroel, and I am only talking now about people who believe in the Torah. Within our groups, basic things are not taken for granted. For example, the city of Beit Hair in Israel (whose mayor happens to be my nephew) he learned in Reb Zimmelman's yeshiva, which views itself as the Vilna Gaon's heirs. Nonetheless, as mayor, he saw the Chassidim had money for their buildings and schools and communal lives. Do you think no one ever said, Why are you giving them money? Of course he heard that. Where is it coming from? If this is my piece of the puzzle and it is good, how can that piece of the puzzle have any value whatsoever.? It never ends. This is the sad story of politics. If you move this into ideological things with people who are not frum, the tragedy is that we don't have machloket with them, they have machloket with us because they are looking for Hashem and they don't know how to find Him.

Every machloket takes you to finalization, the end, meaning it doesn't go to a new address. Machloket burns itself out after awhile and becomes irrelevant, because the further a person descends into Gehinnom, the less truth (and remember there might have been a small opening of truth) the more ridiculous the machlokes becomes, to the point that no one cares about it, it becomes irrelevant. This is why when you read the Kuzari or books from that era, we see how the authors go on and on about people who have fallen into the traps of various Islamic heresies (the Karaaites) what are you doing when you read those pages? I know what I do – I skip those chapters. Who cares about it – they are irrelevant and forgotten. Who are they? Who cares? That is the nature of machloket, it burns itself out after the Gehinnom stage. First the small opening then the big opening, then the exalted idea that grabs onto spiritual energy (but G-d is out of that picture and it is fueled by ego), which leads to Gehinnom (once it is there it inevitably becomes irrelevant) and it is forgotten.

It stays with those people because their whole identity is tied up with that machloket. They have no other identity past a certain point. If there is resolution, they don't know who they are! So resolution is impossible for them. But the issue itself will be forgotten, so the bale machloket will be stuck spending his life alleiged to an irrelevant issue. There is no return to peace. Hashem will not give them renewed vitality because once they go into this stage of Gehinnom, Hashem is not going to give them the strength to stay there are grab others to there. This is why all machlokes past a certain point become irrelevant. In our own times we can see irrelevant machloket. Not that long ago, secular Zionism was a hot issue. How do you feel about the State? And there are people whose entire definition became who they aren't. Secular Zionism has burned itself out. It is a non-issue. The people who were seeking to define themselves against Torah by being Zionists no longer exist. The ideology is dead, gone. It started with a little opening against Gedolai Torah of that time, whereby they were maintaining that in order to survive as people we had to redefine what being a Jew is, it expanded into something huge where they did battle against any definition of a Jew OTHER than settling the land, it became a matter of principles NOT to keep mitzvahs, it had enormous spiritual vitality and energy at one point – the anti-Torah phase of life. But it ended up in Gehinnom,

lifeless. It is irrelevant, uninteresting. So the secular Zionists who are around today aren't by and large anti-religious, they are instead anti-anyone who impedes upon their comfort level. They don't want Shabbos observed because they like going to the beach. The old die-hard ideologues are gone. So the people who waste their lives fighting against them are making a tragic error. The machloket has ended, they are defeated, it is time to go on to something else.

I don't want to sound like I am saying something that I am not. I am not saying that people who opposed Secular Zionism when it was a vital force were wasting their lives. What I am saying is that what we lived to see is that the machloket ends, this is no longer a relevant battle, just liked doing battle against the Karaaites is no longer relevant. Any more than Yaakov Frank who was an apostate Jew who believed that Judaism and Christianity could be resolved in his time, talking about fighting against him is irrelevant.

Hashem will nullify all machloket completely, all of these falsehoods will be irrelevant, dry as dust and we have seen a lot of this in our own times. This is what you have to say and there is no reason to go on with this. Our eyes tell us this – the hot issues of yesterday are boring today. No one wants to re-hear about why cousin Martha and cousin Matthew divorced 30 years ago. It is irrelevant. So what is the point in knowing how irrelevant machloket is. The point of knowing that is that there is a fine line between defending truth and being a bale machloket is a fine line that we often do not negotiate very well. We start with thinking that I have the right to be me, I see the whole picture, here is how things should be, without even noticing that there is a little bit of an opening on the bottom here. When you find yourself doing battle against people who have an opinion different from yours, or doing battle within yourself, before you end up opening the door so wide that you can't close it again, or making it leshaim shamayim, do yourself a favor. Speak to people who are authentic Daas Torah. What does Daas Torah mean? It means a person who has learned enough Torah to know what the big picture is. Are they perfect, no they are not perfect. Could this be a cop out? Yes for some people it could be a cop out. But the same way you go to an expert for anything that requires expertise – you have to go to Daad Torah to know who the bale machloket is and who is the defender of truth, how much you should be involved and how much you should not be involved, when it is appropriate to decide that involvement is necessary and when it is appropriate to say that involvement is not necessary. Interestingly, sometimes what you find is that people who define themselves as being anti-machloket have also taken an opinion – that both sides of the machloket are equally false, that is also an opinion. So if you are saying that the two sides have some merit, you have to consult, to know whether you are arrogantly creating a third position, in which case you end up saying I hate people who are involved in machloket, which isn't where you want to be.

I am going to conclude that Hashem should bless us with clear eyes and appreciation of truth, in others and in ourselves, and we should have a sense of what is real shalom, and the wisdom to be people with a sense of shelamos who are willingly to go authentically high and in whose merit Hashem will give us the closure and wholeness that will protect us from all of the enemies, even the enemies within us. That is my bracha. We have finished the first chapter, and in the coming chapter we will talk about how to pursue peace. Now that we know what peace and machloket are, we are going to get into the practical and real discussion of the pursuit of peace.

Until then.

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Monday, June 11, 2007

Maharal Sefer Netivas HaShalom - Notes from June 10 2007

Rebbetzin Heller notes June 10 2007 Maharal Netivas HaShalom

Just a word regarding parochialism, where different communities have to protect their own interests. If I were interested in my children getting an education and I was Moroccan, I would vote for Shas because that is the party that will get the money flowing into the schools that will serve my children. Conversely, if I am not I would probably vote for a different party, a party that will represent my own interests. The question is where does representing your own interests fit into the whole picture of l'shma if we are trying to move beyond being like Bilaam. The answer ideally should be that we should see each one as having individual integrity, that we want everyone to have what is theirs, which means that they don't have to be "you", you don't have to convert them to being "you", which means that it is okay for them to demand what is theirs, just as it is okay for you to demand what is yours. But there has to be a continual picture of all of these puzzle pieces being part of the bigger picture of the puzzle. Sometimes we live up to this challenge and sometimes we blow it. When we succeed we become people of klal yisroel and some of our leaders have succeeded with this beautifully and in our own time, when we see—my kids brought home this video of Reb Shteinman and the Gerrer Rebbe in Paris, and all over – each one was himself. The Rosh Yeshiva did not start giving out brachas for parnasa and shidduchim, and the Gerrer Rebbe didn't become a Rosh Yeshiva giving little drashas. They stayed themselves with such mutual respect and friendship, it was a beautiful thing to see. But they do part ways at a certain point. Reb Shteinman went on to Manchester and Gateshead where people who respond to him and value him happen to be living, while the Rebbe went on to Amherst, where the same holds true for him. But it didn't diminish their mutual respect. But it did show that they see the integrity of their own communities also as being part of this puzzle. Was this easy to pull off? NO. Does everyone pull it off? NO. Is it easy to be entrapped by this? YES. But what we have to remember again, when we see flaws, even in our leadership, because the leadership is always a reflection of who WE are, when we see flaws, we have to get beyond the flaws and look at what we can learn from them and what is beautiful and what is good.

I want to share something with you that I experienced this week before we begin the shiur in a formal way. I had to go to a dinner, which I don't like – I don't like dressing up and fancy meals and sometimes I don't like the speeches or the small talk. It is not my cup of tea. But I had to go for a kindergarten in Har Nof called Gan Harmony, a kindergarten that services children both with special needs and without special needs. My daughter is the educational director there so I had to go. Part of the dinner involved having two kindergarten graduates who are now adults speak. One of them was a special adult, a Downs Syndrome young man, and the other was a normal young man, both 24. The Down's man spoke first, he had composed his own speech with some help and you could see it was his own speech. He began by thanking the crew of Gan Harmony for preparing him so well that when he went on to first grade in the special ed school they actually put him into second grade because they believed in him, just as they did in Gan Harmony. And he began to speak about his current life. He works for the Knesset in the mail room – I have to say that made me think funny things because it was the Knesset – and he went on to say as we say in Pirket Avos that a person should learn Torah, so I learn Torah every day. And then I began to listen, how does he learn Torah every day when he is not in school? It is not so simple, even people who are intelligent and motivated don't always learn when they don't have the framework. How does he pull this off? Turns out he gets this periodical in the mail – a parsha thing written for children- and then he mentioned that on Shabbos he also learns with his chaverusa, a chaverusa who is not a relative or a paid person, just a neighbor, who has been learning Pirket Avot with him an hour on Shabbos for 8 years. Why am I telling you this? The reason is I happen to know this person very slightly. This is a person who lives what we are talking about now, who sees the beauty in every person he encounters. As soon as he said this, everyone at my table who knew him, the man's name is Rabbi Benjy Levine, said, "That is just like Benjy, it is so much like Benjy." Then someone said another interesting little story about him. For various reasons, Benjy had to buy a burial plot for himself and his wife. And he asked the chevra kadisha who is to be buried on the other

side of my plot, my wife is on this side, who is there? They gave him the name of the man and he called the man up and he said "We are going to be neighbors for a long time and our son is getting married next week, come to the wedding, we should get to know each other." Now the reason I am telling this story to you, it is not a dramatic story, high impact, deep passion, p'kuach nefesh stories, but it shows a certain love and regard for other people that I found very moving. This is what we have to aim towards. In our leadership, we have to look at our leaders with love and overlook things that sometimes really are flaws. Reb Nosson says in Lkeutei Hamara something very interesting and so profound. He says that it is within human nature that when we look up to someone we look at them critically. Sometimes it is better in our own minds to see our leaders as tzaddikim of our times as equal to ourselves and we will be more forgiving of their flaws.

Having said that, let's go on to our shiur in Netivat HaShalom.

Chapter 2

The topic here is how to actually pursue Shalom.

He begins by saying, Everyone who knows that his friend will usually say shalom to him should say shalom first. Pursue Shalom. And if you greeted him and he didn't answer back, he is called a thief who burnt the vineyard, for the man is in your house. Now he is going to explain this gemara.

Going back to the things we know from the last perek, shalom means completing something, putting all the pieces together so it becomes something. So if you can't give shalom, then something is lacking. Therefore you have to actively pursue shalom, because it completes everything including of course yourself and your own piece of the puzzle. If you know that your friend is going to greet you you have to precede him and say shalom to him because if you are not doing it, you are not pursuing peace, you are letting it happen. As one of the great civil rights leaders used to say, you are either on the bus or you are off the bus. Either you are pursuing peace or you are not pursuing peace. Either you are actively putting the pieces together or you are not, you are passive. You need to pro-actively pursue peace. That is what happens if a person doesn't say shalom. He is now expanding this. Whenever you see something that is incomplete, do what you can to make it whole, to make it good, to put the puzzle pieces together. Everything that you encounter in the world, you should try to find its wholeness and be pro-active in bringing it about. That means that if you are eating a pear, hold it in your right hand and look at it and experience it. If you see someone that you don't know, get to know them, bring the puzzle pieces of you and of them together, since obviously Hashem engineered that you meet each other. When a person is very thirsty, he is going to pursue water, because that is what completes him, that is what gives him what he is lacking. The deeper you feel the lack of something, the more intuitively you try to fill that lack. The more we are aware of lack of wholeness, the more we have to pursue it. Proactively.

Therefore when a person is lacking in peace, and we don't have peace unless we are together with all of the others who form the greater whole, then we have to pursue it. We have to pursue it. We spoke about this also in Pirket Avos. You have to make it happen. I will give you an example. There was a young woman who got married, and when she married she was a little older, as was her husband, and they are different. They are certainly different from the people who are living in their apartment building. I am going to disguise the next part in case you might have some idea of who I am talking about. They are more artistic, less conventional, she is a dancer, and here they are, living right across the hall from the daughter of a Chassidische Rebbe and her Rosh Yeshiva husband. So what do you think she anticipated living in this sort of door to door relationship? She thought they would have a pleasant peaceful hi how are you relationship and that would be the end of it because they have nothing in common. The Rebbetzin, who is a person of great peace, for whom this is intuitive, I can't imagine that she ever saw this, but this is her, she wants everyone to feel whole, she went shopping, stopped at her neighbor's door, and said you have to see the skirt I bought. Now this is someone she doesn't know! She takes the skirt out of the package, shows it to her, tells her where she bought it, how much it cost, invites her over. She was actively pursuing a relationship by giving this woman something of herself which the woman reciprocated and appreciated and they are good friends. This is what pursuing peace means. It means going forward with what you can give of yourself to the other person, give them your wholeness so they can become part of you. Be generous with yourself, be unstinting with yourself.

Great is shalom. In all of the other mitzvahs it says "as thus". If you see your enemy loading his donkey "then" you have to help him with his load. If something happens to which you have to make a response, respond. But you don't have to look for donkeys. You don't have to make it happen. But here, you have to go looking for opportunities to give of yourself so you can make wholeness happen. Look for opportunities. You are online in the supermarket. Say hello to the woman in back of you. Make a small comment about the weather or about the product you are buying just to make her feel at ease and comfortable and feel good.

Treat people who serve you as though they are human beings.

The medrash says, look for it in your place and pursue it in another place. Everything is completed through peace. Since we said that it is within our nature that we always pursue completion, and that means closure, we want our needs to be met, experiencing closure in fancy English, not yearning and lack. And everybody moves towards what they think will make them whole. One of the saddest things about our generation is movie addiction. People just want to see someone else's life on the screen. Sometimes it is pernicious and evil, love and violence and promiscuity and what have you, but sometimes, and even in innocent movies, you just want to see someone else live their life. The formula is the same, the introduction of characters, the story, the climax, the resolution – but we love seeing that resolution, that end where everything fits together. But it is not true. That is the only problem.

When you plant a seed in the earth it moves and progresses and grows until its completion. And you can only rest once it is complete. Unless there is an embryo inside its mother, it moves until it is complete. There is a growth impulse in everything that says go, complete yourself, finish. Therefore, peace, which makes everything complete, it is something you have to pursue. Unlike the other things that we have no choice about pursuing, the embryo can't choose whether or not to grow until it is fully formed, and the plant can't choose whether it should form leaves and eventually blossom. Here Hashem gave us free choice, but we have to see this free choice as something to do in a spiritual sense as organic. And a person shouldn't rest until they feel this completion in everything.

If your friend says shalom to you and you don't answer, you are a thief. This will be explained. Because when you make shalom, you make everything into one, you unify everything. There is peace between them. If a person says shalom to you and you don't return it, which will have unified everything, this is theft. You robbed that person of the opportunity to feel whole, to feel united with you, to become part of a greater whole.

I read a very disturbing letter to the editor in one of the newspapers where a woman was living in Yerushalayim and she was living in an observant neighborhood, and she said when she goes to the park there is a sort of clique, where the women all sit tother under the tree leaving her and the newcomers on the sunny bench, and she feels excluded. So she wrote this as a public kvetch, and I am not sure why the newspaper published it, but it certainly was something that the woman felt strongly. I am not saying it was wrong to publish it, it was just a very down home letter. If you read the letter, you might think, how petty. But it is not petty. The pain that the woman was feeling is called exclusion, and when someone wants to be included and you exclude them you are robbing them of unity that is really everyone's heritage, we are one people and everyone has the right to belong. This happens a lot, old people are excluded, bale teshuvot are excluded, childless people feel excluded. Older gentlemen are excluded. We have to make it our business to include the excluded people as well as those excluding them. We have to pursue peace. That means, and this is very difficult, to go up to someone in who you have no interest and say hi how are you. That is very hard. But it is kind to do this.

The person gave you shalom and if you return it you would be one. If it were to be mutual, they become one and this is what peace does. And if you won't do this, if you stay in the position of being exclusive, then you are a thief. Now this raises two very serious questions, especially for women who value communication and sometimes relationships more than some men do. Could you be everyone's best and most intimate friend? Neither could you nor is it necessarily a desirable goal. There is a difference between giving something of yourself to someone and sharing your most intimate secrets. You have to be very selective of who you make your best friend. So says Mesillas Yesharim because in a certain sense, the influence you have on each other is so great that you have to be very discerning. You can be at peace and truly have something to give honestly to everyone and to receive from them. The problem that sometimes arises is that one person wants a greater level of inclusion than the other person is prepared to give. Meaning, Danielle feels excluded unless Rona tells her everything. Rona does not want to exclude Danielle, she wants friendship, she wants wholeness, she sees her beauty and humankind, but she doesn't want to tell her everything, nor should she. So there are difficulties, but the best way to deal with this difficulty is for Rona to keep on affirming Danielle's goodness without giving her more than she feels is appropriate, more than indeed is appropriate. This means that the fact that you are giving of yourself does not mean that there should never be a boundary – there has to be a boundary and the clearer the boundaries are, the more real peace there is, because when each piece of the puzzle maintains its own integrity, the puzzle is whole.

The person who attaches themselves to three things and distances themselves from three things. The first is attach yourself to chalutza. If a man dies without children, his wife is obligated to marry his brother in order to bring down a child who would bear the deceased brother's soul and offer completion. Today we no longer practice this so the Torah provides for an alternative practice which is "release." The next thing a

person should be attached to is bringing about peace. That one is easy. And the third is annulling vows. Now he explains all of them I am just listing them now but we will explain these as we go.

The three things we have to reject is refusal, holding onto security, and being a guarantor.

Surprising, what does one thing have to do with the other? What these two sets of rules is telling you is that in this world, as things go, that as the pieces work, for each one to have its own integrity and order, there are times when they have to be far from each other and times when they have to be close. There always has to be peace, and sometimes there has to be closeness and sometimes there has to be distance. And sometimes there doesn't have to be particular distancing or closeness, but things should be as they were created without moving from their place. When a person attaches to chalutzah, that means distance. They don't marry, she doesn't marry her brother-in-law, she doesn't bring down a child. But given the circumstances, and we just discussed this as appropriate, this maintains each one's integrity. This fits in the first paradigm which is that sometimes there should be distance. Why? Because it is possible and this is halacha in today's day, but if they marry the relationship won't be l'shaim mitzvahs. If a man marries his sister-in-law because of her beauty, it is as though he was in an incestuous relationship. Even though there is time when it is appropriate to do the leverite marriage and not chalitzah, the release, there is also a time for distance. That is our example of distance. It means when is distance appropriate? When kiruv is corrupting, when drawing close is corrupting. The opposite of that is bringing peace to make attachment. In case you didn't notice this, it is human nature that we are full of quarrels and contentions. Therefore, it says attach yourself to bringing about peace, to take the differences away from people and to take the differences away so that there can be peace between them. That is the second thing, there are times when we have to proactively draw things together. When it is not corrupting, and conversely each one can become more whole, then you can draw things together. Annulling vows – if you make a neder and it brings something closer or further than it should be, then the correct thing is to annul the vow. The person should not draw close something the Torah did not say to draw close, for instance, a person might say from now on I will wear only yellow clothing, and they shouldn't distance themselves from what the Torah says not to be distant from, and the person makes a neder for something unnecessary, he takes himself out of the group, out of the overlying unity of Klal Yisroel and he makes his own private Torah. So instead of being bound with every other Jew in what the Torah unites us, this person is making their own Torah, and he forbids to himself things that would otherwise be permitted. Now there are exceptions to this, if the person needs to make a neder in order to get to doing what the Torah says, as a means to being in the middle, he makes an extreme, but it is never an end in and of itself. Therefore, a person who makes a neder is as though he has built a private altar which is called forbidden, and the person who keeps that vow instead of annulling it, it is as though he made an offering on that altar. The explanation of this is that a person who builds his own private altar is separating himself by making his own private altar and sees his own way of worshiping as being superior and better than that of the klal. He is not part of the community. This conglomerate of klal Yisroel is our beauty and our health, with a single mizbeach. If a person builds a private mizbeach therefore, a person who makes a neder forbidding himself something that the Torah permits has made a Torah that is his private property and it has no relationship to the entirety of Am Yisroel. In that sense, it is as though he has made his own private altar and has separated himself from the tzibbur. In earlier times, when people brought bomot, they didn't think they were doing something wrong, they thought they were doing something even better, something super, their own active religious passion and devotion because they never grasped those who built bomot, they become bigger by being part of the klal Yisroel, becoming more and more yourself. And it says, a person who actually keeps this vow instead of annulling it, that person is analogous to someone offering on a bomot, which makes it much more severe because in Nefesh HaChaim it says, Hashem is the shadow of your right hand. Whatever you do creates a Divine response. This is Yaakov's ladder, He sends angels up and other angels come down. Even thought has an effect, speech has a profound effect, but when you do deed, even though speech in a certain sense is stronger than deed by the way because it is the essence of what a person is, a deed because it is so this worldly takes something out of the otherworldly and it brings it down here. The person who just made a boma isn't all comparable to a person who actually sacrificed on it. Similarly, a person who felt an inner need to make a neder, to feel superior, even though it separates him, once he actually does it and concretizes it, it is much worse. To annul a vow, it is not like the other two chalitzah and to go after peace, all three are different. With the aboma, you are making distance to create integrity, in making peace you are drawing close in order to create unity, and in the case of annulling vows, you are creating both simultaneously/, not letting the person reject the klal while at the same time they maintain their integrity just not more than their initial integrity. These things parallel chesed (more kavod lchaver), gevurah (distance) and tiferet (this mixture.) This draws something closer or more distant, but it is still in the same place.

A person should distance himself from miyum, which is if a father receives kedushin for a daughter who is not yet the age of majority, she has the right of refusal when she reaches majority. So in some ways, this is similar to what we said about chalitzah, there is something inappropriate here, and especially with chalitzah he

brings a Gemara that in general the woman doesn't feel affection toward the brother-in-law. But here, stay away from miyum is not the same because what someone does is not thought of in the deed that is thought out. He brings out other examples that are somewhat off target. So miyum is like chalitzah but somewhat off target. Something that offers security (deposit) on one hand it draws you together, but on the other hand the thing becomes your thing but it is really theirs. Let me give you an example of this, supposed someone gave you a diamond ring for security. They want the loan and you did them a favor and they give you this diamond in order to get this favor and when they pay this loan you will give this back. You are allowed to wear it? NO. It is not yours. With collateral, people tend to take what is not theirs and see it as though it is theirs even when they keep the law. There is a certain relationship that lends itself to crossing boundaries. And that is not appropriate. The last one is being a guarantor. If he doesn't pay, I will pay. You have taken over a person's life too much when you say that. "I am him" and you mean it as an act of friendship and there are times when it is appropriate and permitted, it is not what you should want. He is being very very careful. When you are talking about making shalom you are not talking about becoming the other person, or taking over their life, which is what happens when people don't keep boundaries.

A person should be with their friends in accordance with *mautz* – you should be very clear in your mind how much closeness, how much distance, and how much leaving things alone. You have to think.

He leaves us with this – that we have to think – I would like for him to give us a formula, but he says we have to think. What could you do? The goal in all three things is shalom, which means that the other person has their integrity, you have your integrity and there is still unity. Let that be your guiding light in determining where the boundaries belong and where they don't belong, when they can be moved, and when they shouldn't be moved .

He brings the well known mishnah that you know, that these are the things that a person gets the fruit in this world (the *interesta*) but that capital is saved for *olam haba*. This includes honoring parents, bringing peace between people, visiting the sick and learning Torah which is equal to them all, because Torah is the recipe. With these we are going to have all of the different sources of *chesed*, which are the commandments of the Torah, *chachnasa challah*, accompanying the dead, etc. which really stem from the three that we explicitly mentioned in the mishnah – honoring parents, doing *chesed*, and bringing peace.

He is saying – he is not going to discuss why these three are the ones that are the ones that are discussed – but I will tell you what they are - honoring parents has to do with maintaining boundaries, justice as it should be –they have done for you so you have to do for them; *gemilas chesed* is going beyond boundaries –and bringing peace or doing for a friend maintains integrity. In a sense this is why these three are selected but this is not his topic here. He is saying, what is the effect on the generation, on the *dor*? He goes to the trouble of saying where the boundaries should be, when you give yourself, what did it do for you? He says it will affect you in both worlds. The question is why and how does it affect you in both worlds? He says that it has a double benefit – it affects your relationships and it affects your *G-dliness*. In that regard, it is not like other mitzvahs that just affect your *G-dliness*, that give you a bond to *G-d*. These also affect your relationships. It is not like *tzitzit* and *lulav* where you don't see how they bring benefit in this world. You can't say you eat their fruit in this world while the capital remains in the other world. When a person does these other mitzvah, they are living in the other world while they are in this world. It doesn't have to do with their relationship to this world. But the ones that are mentioned here affect who you are and how you are here. In that sense you are eating their fruits in this world, meaning that they change your relationship to this world. They have intrinsic value in this world, not just extrinsic value in this world.

What do we mean when we say this? The way a mitzvah works is that it gives you a relationship to Hashem. What these mitzvahs (respect for parents, *chesed*, making peace) you are taking the benefit you have gotten from your relationship with Hashem and it pours over into your relationship with others. Now we can talk about what this doesn't mean because this can be easily misunderstood. It doesn't mean that there are two worlds where *tzitzit* and *lulav* will help and this world where you have to be nice to folks. NO. He is saying, there are two different dimensions of one world. That world is a world of relationship to Hashem. Your relationship to Hashem, your *devekus* to Hashem, changes you and ideally should pull forth and change the people who you are with. So your relationships in this world, when it says you eat the fruits in this world, it is the fruit of the mitzvah, not just the fruit of being nice, the fruit of the mitzvah, your relationship to Hashem – there is a mitzvah *havei* here – a Commander here- and your relationship to Him and the *shefah* that you bring down from Him affects your relationship with others.

Therefore the mitzvahs are called *perot*. This is something he explained previously in another *Netiv*, and that is the idea again that the act of *chesed* makes you more spiritual. How? With *chesed* you always lose if you are a materialist. And this doesn't just mean materially, if you are giving help or advice to someone you can't simultaneously exploit them, can you? Or, if you give materially, you have less. The affect of *chesed* is

that it brings you into the transcendental aspect of being, where you care more of who you are than what you have. The idealized way to make peace, the idealized way to do chesed, is to have so much elochut that it pours over. That is the difference, Ihavdil, between Avraham and Oprah.

This is what we are going to conclude with for now. What he is going to tell us (and this is what we will discuss next time) is how our relationship with Hashem translates into making peace. How does it translate into our avoiding machloket? What practically do we do now that we know the principle which I will review with you in a moment – now that we know the principle of shalom, how practically do we use this in terms of developing our own spirituality, and avoiding or solving machloket.

So to sum things up for this week, what we said is that unlike other things, you have to pursue shalom proactively. It is part of your own essence, you lose something by not doing that. Pursuing it proactively means wanting to make everyone more whole through being with you, in that you give yourself to others. What this doesn't mean is that you don't acknowledge your integrity versus their integrity to the point of having no borders. So you have to be able to recognize that there are times to give freely, times to withdraw so that the person can maintain their own integrity, and that you not corrupt yourself, and times to leave things as is. You have to be wary of relationships in which there are no boundaries, in which integrity could be sacrificed on either side, you have to be willing none the less to pursue shalom, which is a huge task. He said the affect of this is that it draws you close to Hashem and brings your G-dliness into the people with whom you have something to do. Tov. Have a good week.

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Tuesday, June 19, 2007

Maharal Sefer Netivas HaShalom - Notes from June 17 2007

Rebbetzin Heller Maharal Netivas HaShalom notes from June 17, 2007 given through www.naaleh.com

We spoke last time about redifas Shalom, now we are going to talk about the consequences of machloket a bit more, and then we are going to go back to it, so I am skipping a part and we will go back to it next time.

Machloket which we learned last time is the opposite of shalom, we remember that the letters of machloket and how their message was the opposite of the letters of shalom, as you might remember. So everything about them, the openness, where it opens, where it shouldn't be open, the dissent, you remember all of this from last time there is no need to review it again.

He says machloket is in a different place from other bad behaviors. It is in a whole other place, which is obvious in what we learned until now, that shalom is necessary to put everything into place. Machloket doesn't only affect the bale machloket, it takes everything out of place. So we see that the severity in machloket generates a different level of punishment than with other sins. The Gemara makes mention of this, that a person is punished by Hashem from the age of 20 and from a human court from the age of 13. Before we go into machloket, let's talk about why there is a difference.

We don't believe humans can judge anyone. We can't. Let's say someone stole a car and was caught red-handed. And let's say the law of the country in which he stole the car says that he should get 6 months in prison. Red-handed, he gets 6 months. Does he deserve it? Maybe yes, let's assume it is a just punishment. Will his wife who didn't steal a car be affected? Will she or not? Of course she will be affected and in fact, especially if she is on a better level than he is, the humiliation of being married to a car thief will be much greater than his humiliation of being in jail. Could the judge who sentenced him take that into consideration? No, and if he did he made a mistake. Now let's take it further. Let's say they have two kids and one kid goes to gan. Now is life going to be harder because this child's father is in prison? Of course. Other children may mock him, this could affect his self esteem, he may get reactive. The kindergarten teacher, did she steal a car? No. Will she have to deal with this difficult child? Yes. So she has a terrible day at gan, and her husband comes home – did he do anything that mad e him deserve having to deal with a contentious and difficult wife? No but she had a hard day in gan. Did he steal a car? No, now this can go further, his boss, his chaverusa, there is no end. A human being can't possibly take all of this into consideration. Hashem can.

When Hashem judges it is the whole picture. So we don't believe that a person can ever judge another person, so why do we judge at all? What we could do is to see that someone restores damage to the person that they hurt so that a person could see this. At the age of 13, a child is mature enough to realize that if they threw a rock through a window, the window will break and replacement costs money and why should the person who did no wrong have to pay? Now that doesn't mean that they can possibly pay for all of the other things that are involved there. They will have to pay with their money, so they won't have money for the gift they wanted to give to their mother, the mother will be upset...we don't even try to go there. So the earthly court punishes at the age of 12 or 13 when the child can see the observable consequences of their deeds. Hashem punishes at 20 when a person is fully mature and accountable for who they are, not just for what they do. The exception is machloket where you find Hashem punishing even infants, in the Korach story. So let's find out why.

He tells us something deep about human nature, but let's go into something else that we have to know by way of prelude, which is whatever you want is what you get in ruchnius. Materially, you get whatever Hashem thinks you need to do whatever you have to achieve in life, with previous lives taken into consideration etc, but spiritually you can be whomever you want! The nature of a person who is a bale machloket –let's carefully define this as a master of machloket, someone who enters quarrels and has no regrets, someone who enjoys quarreling, not just someone who once in their life ends up in a quarrel.

A baal machloket always feels that he is right. I am right so why should I give in if I am right? This feeling evokes middos ha Din. Middos ha Din means Hashem is setting boundaries on human behavior, not allowing them to do things that are destructive to others or to themselves. So the more you become a person of Din, the more you invoke Din upon yourself and upon others. Maharal says a person who is truly a person of din will be involved in machloket because they can't compromise on anything. Everything is principle and everything is my way or the highway. I know I mentioned this in other shiurim, but because this is one of my pet peeves, I want to tell you how this looks.

This happened to me (and I don't come out looking that good in this story so I am warning you before hand). I got a call from someone who was reluctant to give me their name, who says she has a check of mine that came back. So I said, put it back in the bank, I know there is money there, I don't know why it came back. Put it back in.

So she says, well actually, it was 8 months ago. So I said, now it is no good anymore, where were you for these 8 months? She said, it wasn't actually my check, it was a check that came to me through someone else through someone else, through someone else. So this began to be suspicious to me so I asked her what she wanted. She said, I will send you a copy of the check and you send me cash. So I said no. She said why not? So I said, until I have my check back I have no way of proving that I paid you. I am not going to mail you money until I see my check. Mail me the check and I will give you the money if I owe it – you can't cash it this way anyway. You are losing nothing. This is bad enough. I could have looked more carefully to try to find out where she got the check from originally and to deal in that way but I didn't. She says but you are chareidim, why can't you be mvater? Now she pressed my button, and I will tell you why this is my button in a minute. I said you are also a wonderful moral person, why can't you be mvater? She says why are you being so aggressive? I am not being aggressive, I am willing to give you the money if you give me the check, why are you being aggressive? What game was being played by both of us? The same game that people play in marriage. Picture a couple. He likes the beach, she likes the mountains. It is vacation time and here they are talking to their best friends...she if he really cared about me, then he would know I am miserable at the beach, so hot and boring I can't bear it. If he really loved me he would want to go to the mountains because he knows I can't stand the beach. So his problem is really that he is an insensitive person. He is talking to his friend now, saying, you know, she seemed so sweet and nice when we were going out, you should hear her – if she was really sweet and nice she wouldn't want me to be bored out of my mind in the mountains – what am I supposed to do count the apples on the trees? I like the beach, why is she so self-absorbed? She thinks this world exists for her. She is not a sensitive person. So what are they both saying? Each one is saying that the other one, that the proof of someone's sensitivity, is saying if they do what I want. This is what happens in every machloket, both parties think that they are right and that the other person should be honest or decent enough to compromise. What is the truth? In marriage, no one should be able to be happy unless the other one is also happy. You have to make a compromise or take turns or take pleasure in seeing your spouse happy.

Similarly where there is machloket, say I am committed to there being shalom, it doesn't have to be my way – that is not my commitment.

Let's go back to what I am saying here. The person who says I have to be 100% right brings down 100% middos Ha Din.

People who really want peace go beyond the letter of the law. But people who are into Din don't want to let go of even the smallest thing. Now the problem is not that people don't want to give in per se, the problem is that they made it a principle and therefore a machloket. The truth is , 100 sheckels was not going to change my life radically. Since this woman was talking from a corporation, it was not going to bring that corporation under. The problem is that it became the principle. The same things holds in marriage. As soon as you say it is the principle that the other person should be sensitive, you no longer are just talking about the outcome, you are talking about the principle, and people who are able to let go aren't able to let go of principles. These principles often spell out machloket. Let's see how.

Of course din is stretched forth against bale machloket because that is their middos, their midda is extreme din, they feel completely right. A chochma that a person has to learn in the course of their life is to learn to say I am right so what! Okay, that is one thing, I am right. But what is the best way to deal with this? What is the best way to bring shalom in this situation. What is good in this situation, not just who is right? How can I make this good for all of the parties concerned, how can each person have their piece in the puzzle, maintain their integrity? So in the marriage example, how can I go where my husband doesn't want to go and still have him feel as though he is the husband in the relationship, and that I give him kovod and see him as an important person? Or , how can I go where my wife will not be happy when I am supposed to make her happy and provide for her? Both people should be saying am I right but is it good (ve a ve the

integrity of the other person). So there are all sorts of stories that bring this home but I will tell you just one, that you probably already know. It is a famous story. Everyone knows the story of the man who goes to the famous Rosh HaYeshiva and says his wife doesn't have her act together, she wants me to take out the garbage. And the Rosh HaYeshiva says yes, and? And he says I am a Ben Torah, she married me because I am a Ben Torah, she wanted to be married to a Ben Torah. Her parents are committed to supporting us so I can learn, why should I become the family garbage man? Why doesn't she see to the house and even the unpleasant parts of housekeeping? These are hers, while I give the house spiritual direction? The Rosh Yeshiva speaks to the wife. I don't know what is wrong with him, he thinks I am the maid. All the husbands take out the garbage, he leaves in the morning why can't he take the garbage with him? Why does he have to make a principle? He is treating me like a slave, he is not normal. The next day there is a knock on the door, and there is the Rosh HaYeshiva. He says, the garbage. You can't take it out, she can't take it out. It has to go out, so give me the garbage. I'll take it out. This is a true story. And usually when it is told it is told as showing the great humility of the Rosh HaYeshiva, but that is not what the story is really about. What the story is really about is the blindness of middos hashalom of both the husband and the wife. You have to be able to say yes I am right but let's make shalom, let's deal with the situation as it is.

Even the children who are certainly not the bale machloket themselves are caught up in this because of the severity of din. When you have machloket, everything goes according to middos hadin.

We are talking about the machloket of Korach. The Gemara says that the sun and the moon went before Hashem and each one of them had what to say. Master of the World, they said, if Ben Amram is right (speaking about the Korach episode) then we will go out. But if Korach makes him seem wrong, then we will not shine today, we are not going out. So Hashem says to the sun and moon, for the honor of Moshe, a human being, you protest? What about My Honor? I am the one who set up the Bereshis, why are you not protesting for My Honor? Now, where anything sounds like it did not actually happen, don't think it actually happened- most of the times these are parables, so don't try to figure out how exactly the sun and moon speak. This tells us, this maimar, which is really strange because what do the sun and moon have to do with Korach, is how great the power of machloket is in drawing other forces into it. Before we read how great the power of machloket is, bringing in the sun and the moon, let's talk about something more concrete which is getting involved in other people's quarrels. Hashem is saying to the sun and moon, why are you involved with this? Why is this your quarrel? What is the pshat in that? So the power of machloket is that idealism and principles are so engaging that we often take very strong and uncompromising stands on issues that we don't have to be involved in at all. Political issues, for instance. If something is currently an issue and your vote can change it, then by all means it is worth becoming informed and having an opinion. But if something is not current and there is no point in having an opinion because your voice will not be heard in any case, why alienate people by saying you are wrong and I am right? What are you actually gaining by this..I am against those and I am for this. And these ones are right and those are wrong. They have opinions on every possible group and subgroup in the area of Torah Judaism. Why? Why is this necessary? In any case, he says because it has great force. He says the great force of machloket in the spiritual sense is as great as the force of energy that generates continual light, heat and movement in the sun and the moon physically. So he is saying that the sun's continued existence, the continual production of the gases where we don't even have vocabulary to describe this kind of energy, spiritually, machloket has that kind of force. What he says is that in the creation story, which he mentions many times, the name Elokim is used, meaning that Hashem is the Master of Forces. This is called middos haDin, the name Elokim is always used to convey Din. How so? The idea of their being forces is that each one has to have a border. So Hashem moves from His All Encompassing Infinity, created a world by creating limitations and borders between gravity and velocity, hot and cold, times' passage and endurance. There are all sorts of borders that constitute the laws of nature. So nature equals borders and limits. The name Elokim in Gematria is the same as haTeva, nature. Nature equals Din equals borders. That is why Elokim is the name used to convey middos Ha Din, the midda through which Hashem imposes limitations. In the Creation narrative it continually says vayomer Elokim, because as soon as Hashem says let there be this, it is this and it is not that...a border was put into place. He says Shemayim is not the land, these are two separate things. In time, it is yom ha sheini, there is no more infinity. What he is saying is that of all the things in nature that we relate to, the sun and moon are viewed by people on our level as being the source. How so? The most sophisticated form of idol worship is sun worship because the worshippers notice and consider how everything is vivified through energy and how all the energy comes physically from the sun. So the sun has borders, if it had no limitations or borders, if there were too much sun, then we would be burnt. Too little, no possibility of life would be sustained. So you can see that the sun and the moon are for symbols of border making, symbols of limitation, symbols of restriction, and since the beginning of time, they also conceal Hashem. Din is also concealment. In Kol Zeh, the sun and the moon have no tolerance for Korach's machloket. Why? Because its destructive nature would have destroyed the very purpose of existence. Machloket is wrong because it can render natural law irrelevant. Now this is also why Korach died by the earth opening and swallowing him and

his community alive. As you know from Pirke Avos, one of the things that was created Ben Hashamshot was the mouth of the earth. Ben Hashamshot was the time that was not quite Shabbos but not quite ordinary weekday. If it were from Shabbos, it would be above time and space and if it were part of the week it would be totally within time and space. Chol, sand, individual pieces of sand, don't stick together. Kedusha has to do with achdus, this world of chol has to do with pieces, they are not the same at all. Things that were created Ben Hashamshot are things that are both kodesh and chol (seeming separateness, separation, limits). So those that are listed in Pirke Avos are not quite kodesh and not quite chol. Now lets look at the mouth of the earth. What actually happened? The earth opened, but we have testimony of sometimes the earth opening. Those of you from California are aware of the San Andreas fault and terrible geological events that take place there. Now what makes this "p ha aretz" the mouth of the earth is that there wasn't a huge earthquake that left a huge gap. Everywhere else except where Korach was stayed in tact. No shaking, no nothing. So because of that it is called the mouth of the earth. It was as though the earth opened its mouth. But the function of the mouth isn't just to consume, the mouth also breathes and is the instrument we use in speaking. The Maharal explains there that the mouth of the earth is the articulate message of the world. Machloket is too destructive to tolerate. It is the earth's voice, it is the earth's articulation of its purpose.

He explains more about the sun and the moon. The way we measure time is through rotations and revolutions. Through the constant movements involving the luminaries. Otherwise we have no sense of time. So what he says now, and this is a very deep idea, is that the ultimate statement of din, of border-making is time. How so? If something takes place in time, then brevity is what it is all about. Something that happened to a minute ago belongs to that thing called past. Something that is going to happen in five minutes from now has no tangible form. The narrow place in presence is where all existence takes place. Middos HaDin here is the least flexible of any other form of Din. We can never go backwards. The borders are too heavy. Even with teshuva, Hashem heals the damage, but you don't go back. If you killed someone, they are still dead. That wall is so solid, that border is so great, there is absolutely no possibility of change. The same is true for the future. We can envision the future, plan the future, but as long as we are here, right now, our access to the future is limited. I remember once someone was gravely ill, and the doctors gave her two weeks, which of course made her feel terribly distraught. Her husband called up Reb Mattisyahu Salomon and I want you to hear carefully what he said. According to what the doctors see, the prognosis of what will happen is two weeks, they are not lying to you. But they are seeing the present, what the tests look like today, in the present. They are stuck in the present. Everyone is going to die in the world, but no human being really knows the future. Not really. It is not in our hands, and indeed the woman lived considerably longer. Time is the ultimate limitation, but even the limitation of time is nothing compared to the middos Ha Din in machloket. In mackloket, people stretch out middos HaDin, they speak about things they have no business with, so they can enlarge it and make it more strong than it needs to be..

What does peace look like? The sign of peace is quiet. And tranquility. Where does quiet fit in? Machloket in the context that he is describing today is a clash of principles. Silence means that you can have a principle without engaging in various and sundry battles. It is possible to do that. Now that doesn't mean being a morano and hiding who you are. But it does mean not having a need to say "you have to be wrong for me to be right." You can hear someone saying something that you disagree with and say oh, hm. B'emet. And accept that they see things through a different prism, may have uncovered a different facet, and even if you think your view should prevail you have to say but why do I need to say this now. Obviously if there is a practical issue at hand you have to say something. But if there is no practical issue, why say it? What is wrong with shecket?

He completes this part by taking us to an idea that you are familiar with, which is that machloket, since it is the opposite of peace, is going to be very noisy, it is not going to be silent. The sun and the moon which require din, they have laws that govern their behavior in every possible way, say we need these boundaries and machloket (and this is taking us to a whole different mabat) breaks din. You can two different people who are so involved in principle that there is no talking to them. How does machloket break din? He is going to take us into the idea of how machlokets can differ. In Korach's machloket there were not really two sides, Moshe was right and Korach was wrong. If Korach's borders were to be established in any way it would corrupt every border in the world. The world was made for Torah, and if he corrupts that, then the whole system is out. So now we have to learn to differentiate between machloket and machlolet. There are three kinds, machloket where both parties are right and you need someone with a little seichel to make shalom between them. This is the majority. Next, both parties believe themselves to be right because there is something true in what they are saying. It is not just selfishness or bad middos, there is something to be said for each position. However, what they should do, is to question whether they haven't taken something small and overlaid with so many other layers of ego or whatever, that there is no room to move. Now perhaps if they take away all the layers of ego, there will still be two positions. The positions and the differences between them will be small enough to have peace. And this is what we mean when we say don't

say everything. Don't put on layers of machloket unnecessarily. That way you can function. But sometimes you have a situation where there is objective 100% right or wrong. In that case, when you compromise you are not making peace, you are corrupting both pieces of the puzzle. Meaning, the wrong person who is being given enough credence to do what they want will now be an expanded puzzle piece, not the puzzle piece they should be. Conversely, the one who gave into them isn't generous and kind and peacelike, they have taken their puzzle piece and broken it. This third type of machloket bears no compromise. As I said, this is the minority of the machloket that we have to deal with.

What he is saying is that the sun and the moon therefore have to have movement, din, and direction (but it has to be true.) I want to take this principle and move it to child education for a moment even though I imagine most of you don't have children. In Neve, there are many girls who are off the derech and are coming back. I see many off the derech girls who are coming back. Of the ones that I have talked to, I have yet to find a girl who understood and had boundaries who went off the derech to begin with. Girls who don't feel understood feel that they have to discover themselves and write their own scripts. Girls that have no boundaries have no limits. Which mistake do you think is more prevalent? What I find is that it is generational. The younger the parents, the more likely that there are no boundaries, or fewer boundaries. So here is how things work in a home where there are no boundaries. Let's say a child doesn't want to go to school, he had a fall out with his teacher, the teacher said something unpleasant, and he storms out of the house and says I just want to have fun. I need a week off. And he goes to the beach. Comes the end of the week, the parents have understood, the teacher was too severe or whatever, he still doesn't want to go back to school. So the parents say school is school you have to go back, what is the child thinking? There wasn't school last week, what is your problem? If the parents hold their ground, the child will get it. Last week was vacation and now it is not. But what happens in a home where the parents learn Western permissive psychology, is that they tell the child that they are wrong but they won't make them go back to school. They won't say, no money, no bed, no nothing. Back to school. That is it. The parents will yell you are wrong, you are stupid, you are ruining your life – they will take his self-esteem – and turn it into garbage, but in the end they won't do anything to set a boundary, which is a terrible mistake. Why am I talking about this in this context? The sun and the moon – the physical things that make the world move – show us appropriate bounds and limitations. Not Korach. Now remember that Korach felt right. What actually went wrong with Korach? In order to understand what went wrong with Korach and from there how to identify an irredeemable machloket, we will talk about Korach's principles. To do this we have to go back to an earlier idea which is that Hashem created the world with the letters of the Hebrew alpha-bet. The letter through which Hashem created this world is the letter hay. There is a tiny Hay to give it focus, with the letters of yud and hay Hashem formed higher worlds. When you look at the letters that make up the word Korach, you will notice that they are all formed in a way that is similar but distorted from a hay. But first let us understand the letter hay. The hay has a top, an attached side and a detached side. The top is a symbol of spiritual and intellectual realities of this world that make it possible for G-dliness to flourish in this world. Coming down from there comes a leg, called a middos. There is spiritual reality in this world that we have access to that is not just there in the abstract, but that is our tool. Then you have the disconnected leg, gashmius, that doesn't necessarily have any observable connection to G-d or to the world of spirit, unless we incorporate it and make it one letter. The perfected world is where the hay is right inside and encompassed by the top and side and it forms its own letter. Now let's look at kuf. Kuf is very much like hay only with an elongated foot, the gashmi side is elongated. So what we know about Korach is that he was fabulously rich. To him, physical things took on an artificial sort of importance. Wealth made him think of himself as a person who deserves more kovod than what he got. When that is the issue in a machloket, then it is irredeemable. If the machloket is money equals power equals right, you have an irredeemable machloket. Did we ever have machloket like this? All the time. One of the things that people are not aware of historically is how many people converted in Germany before the birth of Reform and Labor and before the redeeming power of Rabbi Hirsch. Large numbers of people converted all for money, there was no pretext of idealism.

Next, Raish. Raish is the same thing and opposite. You have the exact same spiritual side but no world to enact it in. The exact opposite is where a person says that material things have no significance. The world is only transcendental, it has nothing to do with the material. Think of Korach's arguments in halacha – the tallis. He was a complex person, on the one hand the kuf was there but the raish was also there. Then you have the chet. The chet is almost exactly like a hay only there is a connection between the material, the spiritual and the top, meaning that the idealism is used to promote material goals equally to spiritual goals. There is no difference, no number one and then number 2. They are both number 1.

So let's look at fabulously wealthy Korach who wanted to be a Nasi, wanted to be seen as important as he saw himself being. He thought his wealth gave him privilege and purpose, but Hashem also gave him wealth because Hashem saw what a profound personality he had. The Gemara says that there would have been a post called Levi Gadol, just like Kohen Gadol, and Korach would have fit it, Korach should have been

the person of Din, the person who sets borders, but everything within him said be expansive. He saw the future and saw that he would be the ancestor of Shmuel. It set him off. He, by overcoming his yetzer hara for wanting more, could have brought din into the world on the highest possible plane – he missed the boat. Notice the three arguments though. One, the material reality is where it is at, two, materialism is not relevant and ideals don't have to actually be lived, and third you have to put equal emphasis on material goals as with spiritual goals. When these are the principles that are voiced, then machloket is inevitably the end and has to be the end. Let's take this just a little further.

Especially when you consider that in this machloket that Korach was arguing against Moshe who was above the sun, above nature, who doesn't have to follow the rules of nature, only the rules of Hashem, this is why Hashem says you had no respect for my kovod, only for the kovod of bosor vadam, the flesh of man. What does this mean? The only reason Moshe has chashivos is because Hashem gave him the chashivos. More than anyone, who knew this? Moshe, who was the epitome of humility, the transcendental power of nevuah, to split the sea, his ability to give Torah, to speak to Hashem face to face came because of Hashem's will not Moshe's will. What you have to be going out for, says Hashem to the sun and moon, is My kovod. If it is my kovod that you come out, then you come out. Now what does that say to us? We can't lose Hashem in our defensive principles, which happens all the time. You have people speaking lashon hara l'shaim shemayim, you have people ruining other people's reputations l'shaim shemayim, and it really is l'shaim shemayim except that they have lost track of what Hashem's Will is – that Hashem really means what He says.

May we live lives where we can notice which fights are not worth fighting, which ones are worth fighting, and even in the fights that are worth fighting and are necessities, that we are wise and insightful enough to know what weapons can be used so we don't demand justice as though justice is a value in and of itself. Justice just like all of the other middos is an emanation of Hashem's will but Hashem's will as it is revealed to us through Torah, Toras Emes, which incorporates both chesed and din, that is the world to which we have to be alleged and no other.

That is what I will leave you with for this week.

Nourishment for the Neshama

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Tuesday, June 26, 2007

Maharal Sefer Netivas HaShalom - Notes from June 25 2007

Rebbetzin Heller June 25 2007 Sefer Netivas HaShalom by the Maharal

Notes taken from class given at www.naaleh.com

We spoke a great deal about shalom. The question that we are going to talk about today isn't what it is, or how important it is, or even how to achieve it, but what we are going to talk about is how there are different places and different relationships that demand shalom.

There is a certain level of shelamos that we have to have within our own households, another level in our relationships to the people we care about, our friends, and a third, with people in general. We are going to talk about these three levels.

Before we go there I am going to talk about shalom within ourselves. A person is complex. We have minds, emotions, and we have bodies. Being at peace with yourself means that at the deepest level all three of those are going in the same direction, that there is mutual respect between them. What that means is that a fragmented person, a person's whose mind is here but their feelings are somewhere else, and their bodies are still doing a third thing, and there is no respect- meaning that the body is in denial of the mind's dictates and the mind doesn't admit that the emotions even exist. This happens tragically. Before we go into our relationships with others, I want to briefly talk about what the relationship should be from the mind, to the emotions to the body.

The mind is meant to be the first in this paradigm. That means our emotions are always altered by our thoughts. Let me give you an example of what I mean by this. Let's say it is an extremely hot day, and let's say you have to wait 25 minutes for the bus. You may be hot, you may be irritable and when the bus comes it is crowded, and someone pushes you and says move, move. And you find yourself answering them back in kind. What thought was there before? The thought that you might not be aware of if you don't train yourself to notice your thoughts would be a feeling of vulnerability and a need to defend yourself. We can't always control the initial thought. What we can control is how long to stay with it and where to take it. Our thoughts are so ephemeral and move so quickly that an appropriate image is like a rider going on a horse that they can barely control through a field. But the fact is that we can control it. Once we control our thoughts, because you are where your mind is, then your feelings will be under control as well, and it is this combination of thought and feeling that will control what you actually do. When a person reaches that level, then they can be at peace with themselves.

Most of us have ups and downs, which is why we are not always at peace with ourselves. So a critical addition is adding to ask Hashem to give us peace.

Now with that, let's go into other relationships.

The perek mikonet, which is in Bava Batra: Achitofu commanded his son three things before his death. You may recall Achitofu was the person who was Dovid's friend who betrayed him. Don't be in machloket, don't rebel against Dovid's kingdom, and on the day of atzeret, that is the time when you have to already choose seeds for planting wheat next time. That is the time when a person should select seed because that is when they will be successful in doing so. You have to ask Why are these the three things that He is commanding more than anything else? It is because Achitofu, who was a great talmid chochom (don't forget that) he saw how entwined he was through the machloket that he had, and where this machloket brought him. There is nothing that could have brought him to this terrible situation where his despair (in Shmuel he choked himself) and therefore he warned against this. What we are going to begin to understand now is why and how Achitofu ended up where he was. His warnings have more credibility than anyone else's because he tasted it, there is no wise man who is wiser than someone who actually is experienced.

Therefore he said, do not enter controversy, because it is the essence of evil. So he told them this in order for them to realize that avoiding machloket is not passive, it is something active. You have to actively be careful and entuse yourself to pursue peace if you don't want machloket. What he is saying is that the natural state of affairs if you do nothing is that you will be drawn into machloket. You have to move against the natural flow of one's own nature and the flow of events that surround oneself to avoid machloket. And this is very great.

To understand this more, because we are all individual and because we are living in Olam HaSheker and Olam Ha Pirut, we are living in a world that is false and divisive, we loose track of the fact that everything has one source and an assigned place. Life naturally leads to machloket if you don't watch yourself. There is an Arabic parable which says it is us against the others, it is my tribe against the other tribes. It is my extended family against the other extended family, it is my family against the extended family, its' my brothers against the family, it is me against my brothers. What this means is that a person should be careful of Ishmael, don't fall into their hands because it is hard, it is hard because their essence is to be focused on chiluk, oppositional to us. We want to see unity, we want to see things in terms of one cause, we want to find commonality, and their natures take them away from that.

True peace has three faces, three things that draw us away from shalom in these situations. The first is shalom bayit, peace with your wife (who is called your house). The second is the peace one has with one's companions and friends. And this is going to be a reflection of the peace that he has within himself. And the third is with other people, that he should not find controversy with them.

This third one comes from having respect for the government because the government brings peace amongst the people. The government is the voice of the people, in an ideal and spiritual sense. Dovid HaMelech, who is our paradigm of a perfect King, was perfect because he had no self, he could be the voice of the people in their highest sense. Conversely, in elected governments, oftentimes the governing forces are the voice of the people and they are weakening in a sense. When you have politicians who make promises – elect me and you will get this, or that, --it appeals to people's level of money and kovod, but it rarely appeals to their highest selves. But when it does, then the government has an enormous power of bringing about achdus for the good or for the bad, I want to point out. In spite of all of his terrible moral failings, President Roosevelt spoke to the American people in which they felt their higher self manifest to the point that they were blind to his moral failings. He was a womanizer, an anti-semiter, but people didn't see it. Kennedy similarly spoke to the higher part of the American people. Ask not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country – he touched something. Ronald Reagan touched something.

In terms of shalom bayit, he is saying something else...he says choose wheat seeds. When a person doesn't have peace at home, it is because he doesn't have wheat. The Gemara says a man brings wheat but you can't eat wheat, a man brings flax, but you can't wear flax. What does the woman do? She takes the wheat and turns it into bread and the flax into clothes. Stands him on his feet and brings life to his eye. So his role is to provide. Now this provision is not just material, it is on all levels, and so wheat is used oftentimes as a symbol of chochma. The gemara says, what fruit grew on the tree in the garden of eden and one of the answers is wheat. Wheat is a symbol of chochma in order to turn wheat into bread you need human ingenuity and an animal would never dream this up. A child begins to show intelligence when he can begin to digest wheat. So man, if he wants shalom bayit, must bring wheat into the home. He has to bring something. Otherwise his wife, who has the desire to build, will have nothing to build with. Let's say you are the wife, which is not where the Maharal is taking us right now, what do you do if your husband doesn't have what you want – he is not earning enough money or he is not wise enough or he is not emotionally sensitive enough – or he is not and he's not and he's not. Realize the only complaint a woman can validly have against her husband is he doesn't give what he does have. You can't give what you don't have, so if his job gives him x amount of money, he can only give that money. If his mind only takes him that far, he can only give you what his mind takes him towards. But you can ask Hashem, Hashem has no limitations. He can open His Hand and give anyone anything. If your husband is giving you what he has, daven to Hashem that He should give your husband more.

Perek chazav. A man should always see that there are crops in his home, because there is no fighting except about wheat. Hashem makes your borders peaceful and the cream of wheat shall satisfy you. It is holding back this wheat that brings about a parnasa. On a simple level what that means is that having money makes it smoother. You can ask Hashem to give your husband hatzlacha and shefa. And now he is taking us deeper, to take away this machloket he is going to tell us through his hand and his wisdom, on atzeret is the time. There are two days that are called atzeret, one is Shavuot and the other is Succos. Shavous is the time of the wheat harvest but it is also the time of matan Torah so to have the shefa of wisdom to bring into the house, the time to develop that is on Shavous. As you know, Succos is also called Atzeret, even though this is not the intent here, so the last day is simchas Torah, which can also bring shefa into the house.

The second kind of peace is that there should not be renewed machloket between a man and his fellows, his brothers. Achitof said may you have no machloket between this one and that one. You should not have machloket, when you have quarrels with other peoples, and the intent is that you will surely have quarrels. But there are some people who will always have quarrels on a regular basis. If it isn't their family, it is their neighbor, if it is not their neighbor, it is their boss, if it is not their boss, it is their co-worker or the person sitting next to them. The problem is that such a person does not feel whole within themselves. So they are looking to the other person to give them a feeling of wholeness which doesn't happen, and then they are angry at that other person. I will give you an example of this. Envision this situation. If a person for whatever reason doesn't feel whole within herself, she has a job, she is a teacher. At the end of the year, her class gives her a present, not worth much money, not with great sentimental value, and she is terribly upset. Where is that coming from? It is not because they did not spend the money to acknowledge her, it is because she does not have inner acknowledgement of herself. If she had inner acknowledgement of herself, she wouldn't need other people to tell her she is okay. Imagine trying to give Reb Elyassef a certificate of merit. Is that an image that comes to mind easily? This is from the people of Yerushalaym to you along with a gold watch. And Thanks for over sixty years of faithful service – it would be a joke. When people want that sort of thing it is because they don't feel the shelamos within themselves.

When he says don't have quarrels with Dovid's malchus it is again because the government as we said. A person should pray for the government as it says in Pirke Avos because if it weren't for fear of the government we would eat each other alive. Which is what we see. Several years ago New York had a particularly liberal mayor and he put a lot of constraints on the police which led to a huge upswing of crime. Someone asked Rabbi Avigdor Miller what he thought the answer was to the problem of increasing crime in NY was, and the desired answer from that person's perspective would have been to move to the suburbs or whatever, but he didn't say that. Give the Irishman back his stick. What could be less politically correct than that? Nothing. But I want you to know when another governmental ruler said we will have zero tolerance, which is another way of saying the same thing, not physical but legal, but it is the same statement, crime went way down. The fact is we are not all that altruistic, and fear of the government, not just when the government appeals to our ideals, but when they are not tolerant of things that they shouldn't tolerate, then we tend to live better lives which is one of the great tragedies of liberalism. With liberalism you have the government appealing to our higher side – you should be loving, tolerant, kind, givers, compassionate – without saying you can't be kind and tolerate cruelty at the same time. You can't be generous and tolerate theft. It is a problem.

He said don't rebel against King David's kingdom. And this would cause an end to machloket and the establishment of peace. Now he specifically mentions Dovid's malchus because Dovid was the epitome of what a king should be and therefore Hashem gave him malchus. With other governments, even Shaul, whose government was still better than governments we are familiar with, there will be machloket because they don't rule perfectly which leads to conflict. The rule, these three commandments, are parallel to the three kinds of quarreling from which people have to distance themselves in order to bring about peace.

The first is shalom bayit and that is the first. He reiterates, that is what brings about peace. If you don't have peace and your husband is giving you what he has, ask Hashem to give him shefa. He can't give what he doesn't have. Conversely, if I am addressing the man, your wife isn't doing what you want, give her more, don't hold back. Realize also that it is within human nature that a person wants to feel that they are doing what they do. So for a man to give, a woman must be happy in receiving. For a woman to build, there has to be recognition that he can't do anything unless she turns what he brings into something.

The second one, man to his brother, don't be involved with machloket with those that you love, with your brother, with yourself. And the third is peace that can affect the whole people and without this people eat each other up.

Therefore, don't rebel against Dovid because when you have a king like Dovid people don't eat each other alive. Why? Because he also brought out what was good in people. It was a combination of two things. When you look at political movement, everyone talks politics now and again. This is what the government should do, they should do this or that. I also talk politics sometimes. The terrible mistake the government made with the expulsion from Gush Katif...all you have to do is press me this lightly and I am already talking about that. The fact is that you have to still recognize that any government is better than anarchy but that the kind of government that we want is not going to come through this system. The kind of government that we want is going to be Malchus Bais Dovid, not an elected government, because an elected government not only reflects the higher side of people, but their lower side as well and usually has no sense of morality as its guide.

Malchus Bais Dovid could bring peace to Israel. It is about this that it says that Hashem will put peace upon

you. We are going to quote a Gemara that some of you might be familiar with. There are three kinds of peace. The river, the bird and the kettle, as Rav Feldman put in his book. So those of you who read Rav Feldman's book on Shalom bayit are familiar with this. So what are these three kinds of peace? First he brings a support pesukin. The hold I will stretch forth upon her like a river of peace, as the birds fly thus Hashem will protect, Hashem will outpour. It is not telling us that there are three things that have peace, it is saying that there are three different kinds of peace. The first kind is governmental peace, and this is the kind of peace that Achitofu warned about when he said don't rebel against Dovid. This is the peace of the bird. Government is meant to rise above the people, not just voice their limitations. A bird flies above. And the shadow of its wings surround that which is below them. That is what a king is supposed to be. He is supposed to be transcendental, he is supposed to be above the people, and his vision is supposed to shield them. That is our idealized leader. Every so often the girls in Neveh ask me, they don't understand Jewish leadership, so they ask what kind of election takes place to choose the Gadol Hador, is there a convention, do we also vote? Who chooses the Gadol HaDor and who chooses who the greatest Rebbe is. So, the fact is, the way we choose leaders is the ultimate state of democracy. We choose by our feet, we see who is the person who seems to fly above and who shields us with his shadow, whose vision is higher than our vision, who is the one who sees what we don't see? That is the one we will follow. And historically we have done well by this, and the reason why is because what gives that person the ability to lead is not their charisma or personality, many of the Gedolai Hador were not particularly charismatic. Reb Elyassef for instance almost never speaks publicly. In my memory the only time I have seen him speak publicly in front of a large group was many years ago at a convention. He is not charismatic, warm, full of gestures and stories that would draw people to him. His credibility is his vision – he sees beyond what we can see. We feel shadowed by his wings because he can see beyond us. This is how we choose leadership. He is not the only great leader who is not greatly charismatic. The Vilna Gaon would hardly leave his study. What makes someone a great leader is this quality, their transcendence and their ability to lead us, that we see something in them that is more than what we see in ourselves. This is very different than democracy. In democracy, people choose leaders who ARE them, not their higher self, but their actual self.

The second kind of peace is the peace of the river. The way rivers are is that they reach out and connect different tributaries. So the streams feed into the river and the river connects one stream to another one. When you follow a long river like the Jordan, you see all these small streams and tributaries that flow from it or to it, so the river is the connective. This parallels the second kind of peace which is between a man and his brother. They have to find their common denominator, that which connects them, that which makes him look at the other and say you are me. I am her. There should not be any kind of division or separation between man and his brother, like the streams that attach together. When you are talking about finding friendship and sustaining friendship, that means you have to constantly remember what you and your friend share in common. It happens to the best of us sometimes, that you have a friend who is not there for you at the moment you wanted them. It happens. Sometimes a person experiences a tragedy and the friend doesn't know what to say so they avoid them. Sometimes a person extends themselves to a friend when the friend is in a moment of difficulty or pain or stress, and instead of being grateful, they are critical. It is easy to lose a good friendship. A good friendship can be lost over nothing. So in your mind's eye you always have to keep the chibor, the times when you felt commonality, the times when you felt attached. You have to keep them in the forefront of your memory. Remember what was good, what bound you, what attracted you in the first place even if right now it is eclipsed by the difficulty of the moment. And that is the second peace.

The third kind of peace is the peace of the pot. Now a pot only exists for one reason - to put food into it. Now when you cook, you put in different ingredients and they all improve each other. So nobody, even a simple cook, makes something that is just one thing - there is still many ingredients. There is a mixture that improves when you boil them together it tastes better and becomes one dish. If you want soup, you take the composite. Even if you are eating cholent and take only the meat, the meat still tastes from the potatoes and seasonings. Everything in the pot has the quality of all the other ingredients, certainly in baking. This is the peace between a man and his wife, where they become one, where he is providing and she is building. They are doing it together, they are not on two different planets. They are attached until they are like one body, where the arms and the legs are still acting for the body as a whole. It is like the food that becomes one thing by being cooked together in the pot. There are a lot of ways in which people misunderstand this. As soon as you talk about this is what men do and this is what women do, people perceive this as being two different planets. In some segments in society, he earns and she spends, in other segments of society, he is in the bais medrash and she is in the kitchen. But they are not connected. Her job is to make connection, to find out who he really is, not just what he provides, but his true identity. And what he provides and to make something out of that, to be the arms and the legs, to make something out of that. Also if you observe in nature, an animal and to certain degree in plant life also, there is a segment that protects and a segment that provides. The woman is the protective segment, the man is the provider. So interestingly when you look at Avraham and Sarah, Sarah was the one who knew that Ishmael should be

expelled, she was protective, but when you look at Rivkah, what you see is that she understood who Esav was and she protected Yaakov from him. When you look at Rachel and Leah, they knew that they could abandon their father's house, that they had to protect their children from that influence. Devorah did battle. So women have the ability to say no in order to protect what is while men provide what is. Women may act as joiners, articulators, while men act as initiators. So concrete shalom bayit issues, it is very easy to be simplistic and it is painful. People get into rigid role playing and they can see that it doesn't always work. A girl can go into a very religious school and she might think he should be in the bais medrash and she should be working – what if he is not there all the time? She has to make due with what he is providing at this time, he is only young, and find his will to make himself into something by being connected with him. And the same holds true in the opposite, if the woman has not yet learned how to merge her ego with her husband's ego, she treats him sometimes almost as though he is not important, as if he does not exist. He has to see that he shows her appreciation for what she builds from what he is and from what he does. It is not easy. This is the third kind of peace.

Achitofel commanded his sons to make all three kinds of peace, national peace, peace between friends, and shalom bayit. And an intelligent man, and remember that Achitofel for all of his failings was brilliant, he understands that if any of the pieces will fall together to form a puzzle, all of them have to be there. You can't be a person who is dedicated to national peace and actually achieve that if there is not simultaneously peace between you and other people. There are people who love the bigger picture and do not like the smaller picture. A person who has good friendships but who has a terrible home life does not even know what shalom is, a person who does not have shalom within himself is lacking. Shalom is multilayered, it has to do with the self, move to the home, then to friends and then to the nation. It is multilayered. If any one of these layers is lacking then the whole act is shakey, it is like the puzzle in which only some of the pieces are put in the right place. And the opposite. Lack of peace, the opposite of peace, when a person lacks peace then all sorts of lack like a domino effect happens, if you lack peace within yourself then there will be a lack of shalom bayit. If there is a lack of shalom bayit it will affect your relationships with people, and through your inability to form relationships with people, this will alter your ability to see the bigger picture. Therefore, gadol hashalom means not only is it a great thing, as we spoke about, but it is an encompassing thing, a huge thing, an inclusive thing.

Therefore we learn this from Achitofel, who was brilliant, but it isn't just his brilliance that made him an incredible teacher, it was his failure that made him an incredible teacher. He failed. There is no wise man like an experienced person, he understood that his failure to see the bigger picture, his failure to be a better friend to Dovid, his failure in his own homelife, all of his failures were intertwined, he understood it, and because of that, he used, as an opportunity in his very last moments in this world, to share this with his sons. And this is for some people a great secret, they don't get how intertwined all the layers are.

Therefore he gave this command at the time he was going to die. Now we find that at the moment of a person's death is the moment when they are credible. Because of this we see, even with Moshe who is of course very different from Achitofel, that he also saved the rebuke that he gave the people to the time of his death. The reason that Rashi says that we find this with Moshe is that people don't like hearing this again and again, but we have to realize that at least for ourselves, we have to be able to tell ourselves this message again and again. We have to have multilayered shalom that comes from within ourselves.

He had another reason for doing this – he was the cause of great machloket, which raises a question. As you know from Hilkos Teshuva, there are five steps of teshuva if you involve another person. The three usual steps are vidui, regret, and change, apologize and making good the loss. But we sometimes do things that we can't fix. Because of that I once heard a great Rav say this, the easiest damage to repair is financial damage – you give someone money and it is all over, finished. But what if you do if you do something that can't be repaired – if you humiliate someone, you can apologize but you can't rebuild their self esteem so easily. You cause machloket, you can't always put the pieces back together so easily.

I want to share with you something that happened. I had a student in Neve many years ago and she looked like a zombie, here but not there, if you know what I mean. It would not have been nice of me to go over to a strange girl and say hey you look like a zombie anything I can do for you? So I let the situation float and eventually she came to me and she told me, we were learning about teshuva because it was elul, and she said I did something for which there is no teshuva. I was a big chochom and said, oh you can always do teshuva, that is my line. She told me that she had an affair with her brother in law, her sister found out. And she said what am I supposed to do with that, say I am sorry, that is good enough? I realized I got myself into deeper waters than I thought I was getting into so I told her I had to think about it and consult. I went to Rabbi Chalkovsky at Neve, without telling him who the girl was, and I said what happened. He told me to have her go to Reb Simcha Wasserman and I told the girl that it was recommended she go to a great Rav and he will tell you what to do. She was reluctant but I talked her into it. I don't know if any of you

knew of Reb Simcha Wasserman, he was a very interesting person. He looked and acted like most people's picture of Santa Claus..short, round, jolly. He lived a terrible life, lost everything in the war, saw his father who was one of the Gedolei HaDor killed in front of him. After the war, he pulled himself together, he married, he started a Yeshiva in Paris that failed, he started several other Yeshivot all of which failed, he never had children, he came to Israel, you would expect him to be the most bitter person. He would come to Neve periodically to speak and he would come into the room with a prepared speech, he would look at the girls and smile and weep with joy and say I should see this – so many wonderful girls coming to learn Torah in Yerushalayim. That is how he was. So I took the girl there. You know how sometimes having no idea makes it sound better than that, so I loved the idea of someone else taking the responsibility off me. I took her there and I realized that as soon as we got down to his apartment that this is a mistake. I knocked on the door and his Rebbetzin answered, Mrs. Santa Claus, the snood, sweet, look Reb Simcha some wonderful girl came from the seminary. Can you imagine how she felt? I thought she was going to faint. She got us into her kitchen and sits us down at her table, she asks what we want to drink and eat, and this girl is having a hard time, and the nicer she got, the worse it was. Would you like some brownies? No, this can't be happening. He is finally ready for us, we go into the living room, he is sitting at the table, smiling and how can I help you today? Now she wasn't going to say anything, of course not, so I realized I have to talk. So I began to say, Rebbe people sometimes do things that they didn't plan on doing because today things are different from the way they used to be and this is my friend, Fran, and her sister got married – now what's the worst thing he can say now – Mazel tov- okay? No, that is not what this is, her brother in law is a very attractive man and when people are not religious and they don't keep yichud things happen that one does not anticipate and he got it. He got the whole picture, I saw it in his face. So he said, you are the teacher? So I said yes, and you don't know the Rambam, and I said no. He was short, he had a little ladder, climbs up, gets the Rambam, and reads the laws concerning a murderer. If you spill blood you have to bring life back into the world. You can rescue people. He did not make light of what she did at all. He said you did a terrible thing, which got her attention, and you can change things, you brought tuma into the world, you have to bring tahara, purity, into the world. You will get married and you will put aside money and eventually you will put this money toward building a mikvah. And you have to do this. And I want to say that this was the closest thing that I ever saw to tehillim hamaisim. She was alive. She had a future, she was going to get married, she could do things. He broke through.

The reason that I am telling you all this is is this is where Achitofu was. He could say I did a terrible thing, I did a machloket, that caused the whole nation to suffer so I am going to be the one who will tell you how to make peace. That is what he was doing.

And he thought that thus he would find peace through his death, by making peace. And that is why at that time of all of the things that he was, he was Dovid's Rebbe originally, he had a lot to say, he could have taught them secrets of Torah, but he realized in terms of what he broke, he has to fix something. He used those moments to teach them the secrets of shalom, on all three levels, at home, in oneself and letting that move towards ones' relationships to his fellow man, and shalom on a national level. He taught them all, the whole picture, of what shalom has to be. And the Maharal ends his thesis with the words. And let there be peace upon Yisrael, amen and let this be Hashem's will. So when we talk about peace for Israel, the Gemara tells us that the Jews are the most contentious of people, and amongst Jews the talmidei chochomim are the most contentious of all. So how will there be peace? The reason why Jews are the most contentious of people – we have millions of opinions on everything – you know if you tell people how many political parties there are in Israel I want you to realize that there would be far more if they weren't requiring parties to have a certain minimal level of voters- it is because we love truth and want peace. Everybody grabs onto their own piece of truth, their own vision of peace and hold onto it. Other people don't care that much so it is not an issue to them. The talmedai chochomim want truth and peace more, so they are going to be more contentious, they are going to be unwilling to let go of what their picture of what peace is. How will we ever find peace? Where is it going to come from?

This is the idea of Moshiach being a descendant of King Dovid, of Dovid HaMelech. Dovid, what held his personality together, he went through so many things in his life, he experienced almost anything a human being could experience, what held his personality together is that he searched for Hashem's will in every situation. This would be when he had power and when he had no power, when he was beloved and when he was hated, when he sinned even, to the degree that you can say that he sinned. The idea of looking for Hashem, Hashem is called Melech HaShalom, when we look for Hashem's will and try to form a more transcendent and inclusive picture, then there is hope for peace. But the place that we have to begin with is in ourselves. And the peace has to be there between our hearts, our minds and our bodies. So I am going to conclude this, which is the end of our entire thesis on Shalom, by wishing that we all be worthy of achieving this in every way, within our homes, and through this we will eventually see it within the nation of Am Yisroel, which is something approachable.

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Monday, July 02, 2007

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

Rebbetzin Heller Maharal Netzas Yisroel July 1 2007 www.naaleh.com

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.

