

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 bahamoth 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.