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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 it's 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.

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.