

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.