

בראתי יצר הרע ובראתי לו

תורה תבלין

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(1) או"ח תרה"א (2) משנה ברורה תרה"ב (3) שם (4)
או"ח תרד"א, וביאור הגר"א שם (5) או"ח תרנ"ד (6)
מטה אפרים תריט"ז (7) משנה ברורה תרז"א

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מעשה אבות סימן לבנים

ואנכי הסתר אסתיר פני ביום ההוא וכו' (לא-יה)

Often we do not understand a particular sequence of events and how or why they've unfolded in the manner in which they did. Even more often, we think we do understand how and why certain things happen and later on we find out how wrong we were. This is the definition of the *middah* of "הסתר פנים" (lit. "concealing His face") which *Hashem* employs to test our *bitachon* in Him. In fact, we don't have to understand all the time; but we do have to believe at all times!

In his later years, the great *Gaon* and *posek*, **R' Chaim Ozer Grodzensky ZT"L**, would visit the renowned health springs and natural baths in Carlesbad, Germany, in order to benefit from the rejuvenating waters. As his health deteriorated, he was required to travel more often. One time, his doctor decided that it was imperative that he go immediately, even though it was during the holy month of *Elul*, and that he must remain there throughout the *Yomim Noraim*. R' Chaim Ozer was very distressed by his doctors' orders. Although he knew that he should go, he nevertheless wondered why *Hashem* had decreed that he spend these awesome days so far away from his beloved Vilna, where the spirit of *Elul* was tangible and pervasive? The very thought of remaining far from home, in such an alien setting, disturbed him greatly. Nonetheless, the doctors had ordered it, and so he felt he had to go.

During his stay in Carlsbad, by *Mincha* of *Shabbos Shuva*, he noticed a man in *shul* who was obviously not from around those parts. After davening, R' Chaim Ozer went over to the man and greeted him warmly. "*Sholom Aleichem*," said the *Rov*. "*Fun vannet kumpt ah yid?* (Where are you from?)"

The unusual-looking man shook his hand. "I am a Jew from America," he answered. "America? So what brings you all the way here?" R' Chaim Ozer asked smiling. The man explained that his brother in Std. Petersburg had recently passed away leaving a young widow with small children. His friends had persuaded him that rather than allow her to marry someone else and subject the children to an unknown stepfather, he himself should marry his brother's widow and raise his nieces and nephews. He had written his sister-in-law who was inclined to accept the suggestion, and they had agreed to meet the following day in Dancing to conclude plans for a forthcoming marriage.

R' Chaim Ozer was horrified. "But if one's brother's widow already has children, the *Torah* explicitly forbids marrying her," he told the man anxiously. The man looked at him for a long moment and then shrugged noncommittally. Seeing that the man was not persuaded, R' Chaim Ozer continued, "If you think this is only a חומר - a stringency concocted by the *Chaye Adam*, I'll show you a *posuk* in the *Torah* clearly prohibiting such a marriage." With that he took out a *Chumash* and showed the man exactly where it was forbidden and how grave the offense was.

But the American Jew was still not convinced. "*Reb Yid*," he finally said to R' Chaim Ozer, "I appreciate your concern but I don't know who you are and anyway I have made up my mind. I have no intention to change my plans based on the words of some stranger I just met in a *shul* in Germany." The man turned to walk away and then with a smile, he turned back and said, "Perhaps if the chief rabbi of Vilna himself would tell me that it is forbidden then I would listen to him."

At that point R' Chaim Ozer exclaimed to the man, "But I am the chief rabbi of Vilna!" The man was stunned and after quickly verifying that he was speaking with the great *Rov* of Vilna, he began to take the words seriously and a catastrophe was averted. "Only then," R' Chaim Ozer would say later, "did I understand why I had been required to spend the *Yomim Noraim* in Carlsbad." To prevent an ordinary Jew from violating a *Torah* prohibition, it was even worth it to afflict R' Chaim Ozer with bad health so he would have to be in Carlsbad and to subject him to the despondency his absence from Vilna caused him!

משל למח הדבר דומה

אבינו מלכנו חננו ועננו כי אין בנו מעשים עשה עמנו צדקה וחסד והושיענו וגו' (תפילות לימים נוראים)

משל: The *Bais Medrash* was packed to the rafters. Old and young were waiting for the *Kol Nidrei* prayers to begin. But the *Rov*, **R' Binyomin Diskin ZT"L**, had not yet arrived. "What is keeping him?" people whispered to one another. The sun was setting, darkness was falling - and the Rabbi was missing. "Run to the Rabbi's house," they urged the *Shamash*, "and see what is detaining him."

The *Shamash* hurried to the *Rov*'s house. When he entered, his eyebrows arched in surprise: R' Binyomin was calmly

sitting and learning with his young son, Yehoshua Leib! Immediately, R' Binyomin apologized. "I am terribly sorry for the delay. You see, the Holy Day was approaching and when I was reviewing my actions of the past year, I could not recall even one *Mitzvah* that I had performed. How can a man usher in this awesome day in such a manner? I decided to fulfill at least one *Mitzvah* before this time - וישננתם לבניך - And you shall teach to your children, hoping that in the merit of this *Mitzvah*, I might be judged favorably."

ויאמר ה' אל משה הן קרבו ימך למות קרא את יהושע וגו' (לא-ה)

The *Medrash* writes that *Hashem* told Moshe: "When I sent you to redeem the Jews from Egypt you refused, saying 'Behold, they will not believe me and they will not heed my voice.' Therefore, I now decree that you will die with the word 'Behold!'" What was improper about Moshe's remarks of "Behold! They will not believe in me and they will not heed my voice?" Was this not the truth?

R' Yisroel Meir Hakohen ZT"L (Chofetz Chaim) explains that Moshe's sin was in using the word "הן" - "Behold." This is an expression of unequivocal certainty, signifying that he was fully convinced that the Jewish People would refuse to believe in him. For this he was punished measure for measure. After Moshe repeatedly pleaded with *Hashem* to rescind His decree forbidding him to enter *Eretz Yisroel*, he was given a definite, final "No" from *Hashem*. "No! You are soon going to die." The same word that Moshe had used in negating the spiritual capabilities of *Klal Yisroel* was used to stifle his hope to be allowed entrance into *Eretz Yisroel*.

This *Medrash* teaches an important lesson: One cannot give up on a Jew and say there is no hope for him. No matter how far a person has fallen, it is always possible to wipe away the stain of sin and become a *Baal Teshuvah*. This is because there is an indestructible spark of holiness deeply embedded in the soul of every Jew - the wondrous thing we call the "*Pintele Yid*." When that tiny spark is ignited in the soul of a Jew through *Torah*, it will burst into a blazing fire of spiritual holiness. This will rapidly destroy the impurity of the person's past and transform him into a *Torah* Jew, loyal to *Hashem* and His *mitzvos*.

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS
ON THE WEEKLY MIDDAH OF...

תשובה 2

Teshuvah means returning ourselves to our starting point. Examining our actions, reassessing our goals. What unique attributes was I given when my *neshama* was created and am I fulfilling my purpose on this world? *Teshuvah* means returning to the awareness that *Hashem* is our King and we are put on this world to serve Him and sanctify His Name.

When *Hashem* created *Adam Harishon*, all the angels looked down from Heaven and said, "אל יכרא" - "*Do not create him*." They were afraid. They saw that Man's potential is greater than theirs. In fact, the very first words spoken by *Adam* when *Hashem* blew into him his soul was "ה' מלך" - "*Hashem is the King*." *Adam* said it out of free choice, whereas angels have no choice at all, they do only what they were created to do. This is why we declare over and over on *Rosh Hashanah* - "ה' מלך" - *Hashem* is the King - our King - to prove ourselves worthy of life, of being recreated, because only human beings, with our own free will understand the true purpose of our existence.

Just as *Hashem* blew life into *Adam Harishon* on that first *Rosh Hashanah* of creation, so too, explains the **Ramcha'l**, each and every *neshama* was created then and given its specific and unique purpose. Just as *Man* immediately recognized and declared that "*Hashem is the King*," so too, must we work during this period of *Teshuvah* to subserviate ourselves to Him. This is our goal. We must rededicate our lives to the service of *Hashem* - to return to Him with the single minded decision to utilize every gift and aspect of our lives, to serve Him. May we all be worthy of this lofty achievement.

TORAH GEMS

כי ידעתי את יצוד אשר הוא עשה היום בטום אביאנו אלהאין וגו' (לא-כא)

The *gemara* (סוכה נב.) states that in the future, *Hashem* will show the *yetzer hara* (evil inclination) to the evildoers and it will appear like a strand of hair (כחוט השערה). They will cry and wonder, "How is it that we were unable to overcome so slight an obstacle?"

How are we to understand this? Certainly, the evil inclination is a formidable foe. Is this "strand of hair" just an optical illusion designed to torture the wicked? Surely, this would be a grotesque violation of truth in a world of pure, uncompromised truth.

R' Eliyohu Dessler ZT"L explains that the question the wicked must answer is: "Why did you remain where you were? What kept you from working on yourself? How difficult would it have been for you to take those first steps to self-improvement? Had you taken the first step, you would certainly take one more step, then another, then another. Who knows how far you might have traveled spiritually had you but taken that first simple step!"

Indeed, how hard would it be for us to study *Torah* five more minutes, to say a blessing with proper concentration, each and every day? Could we not restrain ourselves, at least once, from speaking *Lashon Hara*, from saying something we shouldn't? We can do it without much effort. Shall we allow a "strand of hair" to stand in our way?

And this is just the start. *Chazal* tell us: "*One mitzva drags another mitzva*." Instead of the discouragement of looking back on another year that began with such good intentions but concluded without measurable progress, we will have something concrete to show for our efforts. This sense of accomplishment, this taste of success, will likely motivate us to take another step, to meet another challenge.

דרגה יתירה

FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF
R' GUTTMAN - RAMAT SHLOMO

שובה ישראל עד ה' אלקיך כי כשלת בעוניך וגו' (הושע יד-ב)