

# Fascinating INSIGHTS

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## Don't Think!

Teaches that the main Yetzer Hara is to get one to despair after the sin. In fact, the word עבירה is rooted in עבר, past, since after one sins the evil inclination gets one to think of his past sins causing him to despair.<sup>1</sup> In this light we can grasp הרורי עבירה קשו הרורי, thoughts of sin are worse than the sin itself,<sup>2</sup> as thinking about one's sin can bring him to despair. There is a saying, "Hashem buries our sins in the depths of the sea and then puts up a sign that reads: No fishing!"

R' Yitzchak Isaac Sher<sup>3</sup> (1875-1952) would repeatedly say that one shouldn't think about his sins.

<sup>1</sup> It has been pointed out that עבירה sounds similar to the English word over, as the Yetzer Hara gets one to think of his past sins thinking that it is all over, so give up.

<sup>2</sup> Yoma 29a.

<sup>3</sup> After hearing a drasha (lecture) from the Alter of Slabodka, R' Sher was inspired and joined his yeshiva in Slabodka called Yeshiva Knesses Yisrael, where he learned with R' Avraham Grodzinski (later a Mashgiach Ruchani in the yeshiva). In 1903, R' Sher married the daughter of the Alter of Slabodka. They moved to Kelm where he developed a close relationship with R' Simcha Ziv (the Alter of Kelm). He learned for a short time in the Mir Yeshiva, which was led by his wife's brother, R' Eliezer Yehuda Finkel. R' Sher soon returned to Slabodka, and in 1911, he was given a teaching position in his father-in-law's yeshiva. Aside from only giving his students a class on gemara, he also gave them Mussar.

Hashem created us with a Yetzer Hara. It's natural. Everyone has a Yetzer Hara. The only issue is how to cope with that which is something we must learn.

We need to live with the dictum רשע בפני עצמו, do not judge yourself to be a wicked person.<sup>4</sup> In this light we can explain Rashi<sup>5</sup> who says in regard to the פרה אדומה that the Satan and the nations of the world will say what is the reason for this Mitzva. So this is a חוק, statute that you shouldn't question. A deeper meaning is that the Satan and the nations of the world want us to think about the עגל, as the פרה אדומה is an atonement for that, since we descended from the high level we were on at Har Sinai. This could then cause us to despair. So, אין רשות להרהר אחריה, we shouldn't think about it, rather continue on and improve.<sup>6</sup> For this reason, we request in Maariv וחסר שטן ומאחרינו, remove the Satan from before us and behind us. ומאחרינו refers to not being enticed to sin. ומאחרינו refers to not having despair after we sin by thinking how low we are.

R' Shlomo Wolbe<sup>7</sup> writes to one who failed to protect himself from the known sin: My dear friend! Cease your searching for what the Sefarim say about that sin. The sources that you have already found and copied for yourself—dispose of them properly. The Yetzer Hara that brings one to this particular sin is so cunning that any thoughts about the subject can stimulate one to fall again. This includes even thoughts of remorse and Teshuva. The only solution is, therefore, is to take the opposite path... To forget about the sin. That is, to give it no thought, even after stumbling. You must stop thinking about the whole subject of this sin! How? By completely investing yourself and learning, with an attempt to be Mechadesh Torah, to develop original thoughts in learning,<sup>8</sup> and specifically learning with Simcha... This matter involves a great battle. Often you will be victorious. It is possible, however, that at times you will be defeated by the Yetzer Hara. If that, unfortunately, happens, don't think about it and pay it no attention! Banish any thought about what happened and particularly beware of feelings of helplessness! This is the primary goal of the Yetzer Hara—to knock a person down and make him feel hopeless. Don't allow him that victory! Continue to learn, and with joy, as if nothing happened! ... The only solution to deal with this issue is to be involved in learning and to become accustomed to thinking in learning; in the street, after you go to bed, etc., as much as possible, but also to socialize and interact with friends... In addition, forget what you've seen in Sefarim about the punishments and difficulty of doing teshuva resulting from

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This was the first time that a rebbe in the Slabodka Yeshiva fulfilled these two roles. In 1921, the Alter founded the Beis Yisrael Kollel, commonly referred to as the "Slabodka Kollel," of which R' Sher became the rosh kollel. The top students from the Slabodka Yeshiva were chosen to join the kollel, including R' Yaakov Kamenetsky. Shortly before the outbreak of World War Two, R' Sher, who was in poor health, had gone to a spa in Switzerland, and was therefore spared from the Nazi killings that left thousands murdered in Kaunas and Slabodka, including R' Grodzinski and the students of the yeshiva. He also became the Rosh Yeshiva of the Slabodka Yeshiva in Lithuania and Bnei Brak. At his funeral, eulogies were given by R' Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman and R' Elya Lopian.

<sup>4</sup> Avos 2:18.

<sup>5</sup> Bamidbar 19:2.

<sup>6</sup> We can learn from the sun how to never give up; it may set every night but still rises to a new day.

<sup>7</sup> Igros Uksavim, 1:24.

<sup>8</sup> In the Tzavaa (Ethical Will, 20) of R' Eliezer Hagadol, also known as R' Eliezer Ben Hurkanus, it says that no one can be Mechadesh something in Torah something that was reserved for another to be Mechadesh. Everyone has their portion in Torah that only they can bring down.

