

לעילוי נשמת  
 מרת עקא עדנה  
 צפורה ע"ה  
 בת משה מנחם הלוי ז"ל



# על פני השטח

## AL EI DESHE

Weekly Torah Insights and inspiration on the Parsha from the Rosh Yeshiva Shlit"za of Gur

## Defense Strategy

The *yahrtzeit* of the Rebbe R. Henoch of Alexander *zy"ta* is on יח אדר שני, but even יח אדר ראשון, which fell out this week, is connected to the tzaddik. As Chazal put it in Megillah (6b), "There is no difference between Adar I and Adar II aside from reading the Megillah and *matanos l'evyonim*."

Get to work. Fight with your nails, climb higher, and if you slip and fall, get back to work, and climb back up, again and again

After the passing of the Chiddushei HaRim, those close to R. Wolf of Strikov did not allow him to travel to R. Henoch. Although R. Henoch was known as a *talmid chacham* and *chassid*, he managed to hide his great *madreigos*, to the extent that for many *chassidim* he was not perceived as a worthy Rebbe. After R. Henoch passed away, R. Volf asked a *chassid* to repeat something he had heard from the Rebbe. The *vort* he chose to repeat was on this week's *parshah*:

When Moshe Rabbeinu ascended to *Shamayim* to intercede on behalf of Klal Yisrael following the *Cheit Ha'eigel*, Hashem agreed to have mercy on them and not destroy them for now. But their sin had not been erased; *וביום פקדי ופקדתי עליהם* (32:34), as Rashi explains, *Whenever I recall your sins, I will recall some of this sin [along with the other sins]*. As Rashi elaborates, quoting Chazal: There is no punishment that befalls the Jewish people that does not include some punishment for the *Eigel*.

R. Henoch taught that this means the opposite of what we might suppose. When Hashem punishes Klal Yisrael, He remembers the *Eigel*: He recalls that He forgave and redeemed His people even after so grave and grievous a sin as the *Eigel*. 'Certainly,' Hashem says, 'I can forgive them for this relatively minor sin, if they ask to be forgiven and cleansed.'

Hearing this, R. Volf of Strikov expressed great remorse that he was not given the chance to gain from R. Henoch in his lifetime.

Continuing in R. Henoch's theme, it is not only that Hashem remembers the *Eigel* as a mitigating factor in every punishment. The strength and assistance required for *teshuvah* come packed into this *parshah*

as well. The *parshah* is full of sheltering *saneguria*, compassion, and assistance to *teshuvah*.

1) Moshe Rabbeinu davens to Hashem (32:11): *למה הי' יחרה אפך בעמך אשר הוצאת מארץ מצרים - Why, Hashem, should Your anger flare at Your nation, which You took out of Mitzrayim with great might and a strong hand. The mefarshim' ask, why didn't Moshe Rabbeinu stop after 'Your nation'? Doesn't adding the fact that Hashem took them out of Mitzrayim only magnify the travesty of the cheit!*

I believe that Moshe Rabbeinu was suggesting a mitigating consideration. When Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim, He had to send *makah* after *makah*, with *great might and a strong hand*. And why didn't the Mitzriyim let us out once they saw they were doomed? Because Hashem hardened their heart so that they would act irrationally and keep the Jewish nation enslaved. Moshe was hinting that the hearts of the Yidden are also in Hashem's hand, and claiming that their indiscretion was due to Hashem's directly influencing them. As Eliyahu Hanavi says to Hashem (Melachim I, 18:37) *ואתה הסבות את לבם - אחורנית - You turned their hearts backwards!*

2) Moshe Rabbeinu pleaded (32:31): *אנא חטא העם הזה חטאה גדולה - Please, this nation*

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1 The Rebbe for four years between the passing of the Chiddushei HaRim and the leadership of the Sfes Emes.  
 2 See Alshich and Abarbanel, et al.

# Defense Strategy

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has sinned a great sin. He could have left it at *חטאה*; why did he add 'great'? That's the job of the prosecutor!

The Gemara (Avodah Zarah 4b) says that actually, Klal Yisrael would not have stooped so low as to sin so grievously. They were better than that. Hashem brought them to this sin unnaturally, to teach the future generations that even if a large part of the population fell in and sinned, they can still do *teshuvah* and come close to Hashem. It is true that Klal Yisrael did their share of sins throughout their years in the desert, but to sin at the level of the *Eigel* was actually below them.

Moshe Rabbeinu said, "This nation has sinned a great sin" — a sin so grave that it really was not something they would have done at all. They were forced into it by the *yetzer hara* which Hashem set upon them, as the *pasuk* says in Michah (4:6), *אשר הרעותי* – that I have caused them to be bad. The Gemara (Berachos 31b-32a) says that in this *pasuk* Hashem admitted 'guilt' (כביכול) in response to Eliyahu's claim. *I have caused them to be bad.*

Pointing out that it was a *great sin* serves as a defense, and that was Moshe's intention. What's more, it serves to preempt the prosecutor. If he will claim that they sinned greatly, his poison has been neutralized in advance: "Yes, they sinned greatly, far worse than they could have done on their own! It was Hashem." What can the *satan* say to that?

3) At one point (32:12) Moshe Rabbeinu pleaded: למה יאמרו מצרים לאמר ברעה הוציאם להרוג אותם בהרים ולכלותם מעל פני האדמה – *Why should the Egyptians say: He took*

*them out with evil intentions, to kill them among the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth.*

My father asked,<sup>3</sup> which mountains would the Mitzriyim be talking about? The Midrash<sup>4</sup> says that the Pillar of Cloud (amud ha'anah) flattened all of the mountains in their path, leaving only Har Sinai, Hor Hahar (where Aharon was buried), and Har Nevo (where Moshe was buried).

The Egyptians were alluding here to the *yetzer hara*, which appears to tzaddikim as a mountain (Sukkah 52a). They had seen, when Hashem hardened their heart, that He does with hearts as He pleases. So they would say: *אשר רעה ברעה הוציאם*; Hashem took them out and then caused their hearts to be worse than they actually were. Again Moshe Rabbeinu was stressing this point that it was all orchestrated by Hashem to teach future generations the ways of *teshuvah*.

4) The *pasuk* (32:35) says, *ויגוף ה' את העם על אשר עשו את העגל אשר עשה אהרן – Hashem smote the people, because they made the calf that Aharon made.* Which is it; did the people make the *eigel* or did Aharon? Onkelos explains that the words *עשו* and *עשה* here have two different meanings: *עשו* means *they served*, and *עשה* means *he made*. *Hashem smote the people because they served the eigel that Aharon made.* Moreover we can explain (and it may be included in the Targum's words) that by serving the *eigel* they gave significance to the *eigel* that Aharon made. Therefore the *pasuk* considers the people as having 'made' the *eigel*.

But in a different vein, it may be that the *pasuk* is hinting at the same *limud zechus* and defense claim. It is almost blasphemous to say directly to Hashem that He is at fault: You did it. So the Torah says that everyone else did it, while the unspoken implication is, "*Ribbono shel Olam*, it wasn't them, and it wasn't Aharon: it was *אשר הרעותי*"; it was directed from behind the curtains."<sup>5</sup>



In no way does this mean to exempt us from responsibility. *Chalilah* for a Yid to think that he can do whatever he wants to and blame it on Hashem's interference. The Gemara (Bava Kama 50a) speaks terribly of one who says that Hashem will overlook his sins. We mean to give *chizuk* and encourage those who may falter on the path to *teshuvah* because they are fixated on their past deeds. They are haunted by the terrible things they did and they are discouraged.

All we have spoken speaks to this person, and tells him, Hashem only expects from you what's described in the Midrash: *Yisrael said before Hakadosh Baruch Hu, "Ribbono shel Olam, You know how strong the draw of the yetzer hara is!" Hashem responds, "You clear away one small stone after another in this world, and I will eradicate it from you in the next world."*<sup>6</sup>

Get to work. Fight with your nails, climb higher, and if you slip and fall, get back to work, and climb back up, again and again. Hashem is the One Who created the *yetzer hara* – *אשר הרעותי*.<sup>7</sup> Know that your efforts give Him supreme *nachas*.

(כי תשא תשכ"ב, ס"ג מאמר ב)

3 *Pnei Menachem* p. 216 s.v. למה. See also *Pnei Menachem Parshas Pinchas* p. 162, 176.

4 *Bamidbar Rabbah* 19:16

5 Due to space constraints we had to omit some more *limudei zechus* from this *derashah*.

6 *Bamidbar Rabbah* 15:16. See alternate version in *Pesikta D'Rav Kahana* (24:17), "Sand it down little by little until the time will arrive and I will eradicate it from the world."

7 See *Sukkah* 52b, where the Gemara states that in this *pasuk* Hashem expresses regret that He created the *yetzer hara*.

## פיטום השמן כיצד | The Prohibition to Imitate the Shemen Hamishchah

The Gemara (Kerisos 5a) cites a *baraisa* about how the *shemen hamishchah*, which was comprised of olive oil and fragrant spices, was prepared. R. Yehudah says the roots of spice were boiled in the oil. R. Yosi disagrees, arguing that if the roots were merely set to soak in the oil, they would absorb all the oil, since only a small amount of oil was used; certainly, they could not be boiled in it. Rather, the roots were first boiled in water, so that they would no longer be absorbent. Afterwards, they would be placed in a vessel with oil, so that the oil could absorb their fragrance. R. Yehudah responds: Many miracles occurred with the *shemen hamishchah*; their preparation, too, was miraculous, in that the oil was not absorbed in the roots.

The *pasuk* (30:33) states, **אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִרְקַח, כַּמִּזְהוּ וְגו' וְנִכְרַת מֵעַמּוּי** – *Anyone who shall compound its like... shall be cut off from his people.* *Panim Yafos* (30:23) wonders about this: according to R. Yehudah, who holds that the creation of the *shemen hamishchah* is impossible without a miracle, how could this prohibition possibly be transgressed? In any case the *shemen hamishchah* will not actually be produced.

A discussion of the answer of the *Panim Yafos* was included in *Alei Deshe* of last year (Vol. 88). On a different occasion Rabbeinu offered his own answers to the question.

One possibility is that unlike Moshe Rabbeinu's recipe, this person started with enough oil to end up with the *shiur* after the roots had absorbed all they could. The prohibition of imitating the

compound of the *shemen hamishchah* is on imitating the result. Since his result is identical to the *shemen hamishchah*, he has violated the prohibition and is *chayav kareis*.

Another possibility is that a person decided to make the compound of the *shemen hamishchah* for the Beis Hamikdash, and it cooked long enough to be admissible in that capacity. Afterwards he decided that he wished to keep it for his personal use, and gave the pot a final stir. That stir is enough to be considered compounding the *shemen hamishchah*.<sup>8</sup>

In this case it is likely that he will experience the *neis* that happened, according to R. Yehudah, with the original *shemen hamishchah*; originally, he cooked it with the right intention, to donate it to the Beis Hamikdash, and only afterward did he change his mind. Although Hashem knew that he was going to change his mind and end up sinning, Hashem would likely still perform the miracle, since this world operates according to the dictates of free will, and this person has not yet decided to do wrong. This is similar to the *malach* saving Yishmael despite his dubious future, because he was judged 'here and now' (Rosh Hashanah 16b).

It may sound strange that the instance which the Torah prohibited is only possible in a very far-fetched case, but it may be quite reasonable. *Sefarim* tell us that there is a good reason why some of the prohibitions that incur *kareis* are very unlikely to cross the average person's path, and one is not

generally struck with an urge to violate them. They explain that the 36 *kerisos* correspond to 36 bonds which bind a Jew with Hashem. A person who violates one of the *kerisos* has severed one of those bonds. Hashem wanted to make sure that no Jew will entirely sever all of his bonds with Him, so He made some of the *kerisos* uncommon and undesirable. If we are correct in this answer to the *Panim Yafos*'s question, we see to what extent Hashem went to make sure **לבלתי נדח – ידח ממנו נדח** – *So that no one is pushed away from Him*; he made it extremely far-fetched for someone to incur *kareis* for this prohibition.

In a similar approach to answer the *Panim Yafos*'s question, it is possible to violate this prohibition in another interesting scenario. The spice roots must be sanctified before they are prepared as *shemen hamishchah*.<sup>9</sup> If a person is *makdish* the roots with the stipulation that he can change his mind at a later time, it is likely that the miracle of the roots not absorbing the oil will occur, since right now it is sanctified. The fact that Hashem knows he will change his mind will not affect his current credibility, as suggested above. If at a later time he changes his mind, and the roots revert back to his possession, it will emerge that he had made the compound without having first sanctified it, thereby violating the prohibition of private imitation.

(קידושא רבא תשפ"ב, ותחילת הדברים שם, עיין בהערות רבינו שנדפסו בראש ספר פרי שמחה על מסכת כריתות לחתנו הגרש"ב שפירא שליט"א.)

8 See Shevuos 17b.

9 See *Sefer Hamafte'ach*, Rambam (Frankel) *Hilchos Klei Hamikdash* 1:1.

# Yahrzeit of the Chiddushei HaRim – 23 Adar

It is impossible to compare ourselves with prior generations. The distance is disproportionately so much more severe than it was in the intervening generations since the Chiddushei HaRim. In this week's *parshah*, the *pasuk* says, נוצר חסד לאלפים וגו' פקד עון אבות על, ועל בני בנים ועל רבעים – *He keeps kindness for two thousand [generations]... He recalls the sins of fathers upon the children and grandchildren, to the third and fourth generation.* (34:7)

*Mefarshim* ask: how is it even possible to have two thousand generations, if each generation is twenty-five years on average, and the total duration of this world is only six thousand years?<sup>10</sup> One answer given is that one generation can count for many, if it is worse than usual in rapid spiritual descent. A gaping spiritual distance from the source can be equivalent to two thousand generations.

The Mishnah (Eduyos 2:9) lists positive attributes which a father leaves to his son. One of the items is במספר הדורות לפניו והוא הקץ *in the tally of generations which proceed him, and [the son] is the final [generation].* The plain meaning refers to an instance where Hashem has decreed that a certain benefit will come after a given number of generations, and thanks to the father occupying one generation, the son will merit that benefit, as he is the final generation decreed to wait.

But the deeper meaning is that the father bequeaths to his son the appreciation for the distance that divides us from the previous generations. Even more so, if we understand מספר הדורות לפניו as referring to Hashem: מספר הדורות לפניו – it is known only before Hashem the gaping chasm which exists between us and previous generations. Only He can calculate when two thousand generations have passed.

We are so very distant from the Chiddushei HaRim. While in physical generations we can count five, six, seven, or eight generations,

in *ruchniyus* it is many more. And they were people of such *penimiyus*, *Kotzker chassidim*, whose true greatness could not be seen from the outside. We simply have no concept how distant we truly are.

Still, considering that the Chiddushei HaRim was completely dedicated, in everything he did, to the future generations, we are surely able and we must learn to grasp onto some aspect of his teachings and his ways. We need to learn from him to sacrifice something when necessary for what's right and what's needed. We can't do it on his level of *mesiras nefesh*. (He lost one of his children each time he traveled to the Rebbe R. Bunim of Peshischa.) But we can do it on some micro level: to sacrifice something we really want, on the *mizbe'ach* of *avodas Hashem*. *Zechuso tagein aleinu.*

(יומא דהילולא דרבינו החידושי הרי"מ ז"ע,  
כ"ג אדר תשפ"א, לחיים אחרי שחרית)



Another point on this *pasuk*. נוצר חסד לאלפים וגו' פקד עון אבות על בני בנים ועל רבעים – *He keeps kindness for two thousand [generations]... He recalls the sins of fathers upon the children and grandchildren, to the third and fourth generation.* (34:7)

We find that Chavah was punished for adding to Hashem's words. Hashem said not to eat from the *Eitz Hada'as*, and Chavah added that Hashem said not to even touch it. What was so terrible about adding a level of protection to the prohibition of Hashem? We find that the *Chachamim* concerned themselves a great deal with adding protections to the Torah. Another troubling point we find in Chazal is that Adam Harishon responded to Hashem, "I have eaten [from the *Eitz Hada'as*], and I'll do it again!" It's unthinkable that Adam Harishon would respond with brazenness to Hashem. What, then, did he mean by this response?

The Chiddushei HaRim explained: Adam Harishon recognized that before the sin, the word of Hashem was a brick wall to him. He

realized that now that he had sinned, the brick wall was no longer there to stop him from sinning again. "I have eaten, and I'm worried that I will eat again." For the same reason, Chavah was only punished because at that time there was no need to add to Hashem's words. Before the *cheit*, the words of Hashem were enough; adding to them effectively weakened that brick wall.

Every person has the ability to strengthen and build a brick wall of *yiras Shamayim*. The *Panim Yafos*<sup>11</sup> writes as follows. If Chazal tell us that when a person transgresses an *aveirah* and then repeats the transgression, in his mind it becomes as if it is allowed. Surely the same holds true, all the more so, on the side of positive *ruchniyus*: If one overcomes an urge to do an *aveirah* once, the power of the *yetzer hara* is reduced, making it much easier to subdue it the next time; and if he overcomes the impulse again, it will become set in his mind as inviolable.

We know מדה טובה מרובה ממידת פורעניות *Hashem's positive ways with us are much greater than the negative.* Chazal derive this from the aforementioned *pesukim*: Hashem remembers and rewards goodness on two thousand future generations, while only three or four generations bear their fathers' sins. That is, *middah tovah* is five hundred times more present than *middas pur'anus*.<sup>12</sup> If one *aveirah* repeated has such a negative effect, one victory over the *yetzer hara* will have an exponentially greater positive effect.

Two, the Gemara speaks of an *issur* switching in the person's mind to *what it is not*; 'permitted'. That is a more drastic change than this case, where the *issur* is becoming more concrete in his mind – as an *issur*. We can take this *hisorerus* and build a mighty wall; with each time we overcome our *yetzer hara* the wall becomes stronger, and it becomes easier and easier to subdue it.

(שפתי כהנים סימן ז אות ד, ס"ג ראה תש"כ,  
הובאו בבבאז"ד כי תשא פרה תש"כ)

10 See *Sifsei Chachamim*, Yisro 20:6, and *Tosafos Chadashim*, end of Mishnayos Makkos.

11 Devarim 12:23

12 *Tanchuma*, Beshalach 21.