



Parashat Ki Tetze



English version

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THE ART OF FIGHTING THE YETZER HARA

The four parashiot of Elul have in them endless tools for change and Teshuva. Reeh – See that you have choice, more choices than you think. Shoftim-observe how much self-control you have and how honest and true to yourself you have been. Ki Tetze – Now, go out to war against your Yetzer Hara, your evil inclination; recognize its ways. And then, Ki Tavo- let the past fall behind, וקללותיה שנה וקללותיה and start a new year, with new blessing.

The difference between a Tzaddik and a Rasha, says the Alter from Kelm, is what you imagine and how you imagine. The way to fight the Yetzer Hara is to use its own weapons against him. The strongest weapon of the Yetzer Hara is false imaginations and fears. Temptations of pleasure and pride are only able to capture us, once we use imagination to magnify the temptation, making it more attractive and powerful than it actually is. Fear of missing out, fear of change, fear of failure, fear of poverty, fear of retirement ... it is not that these things aren't real issues, it is that the Yetzer Hara magnifies and blows them out of proportion.

So, we fight the Yetzer Hara with imagining, but imagining the truth. How powerful a Rosh Hashana can be, how great the reward and punishment of the next world can be, how great I can be, if I just imagine, do my due diligence and trust in G-d. The first step of being a Torah Jew, the first law in Shulchan Aruch, is to imagine, wherever you are, whoever you are with or not with, שויתי לה' נגדי , I place and imagine G-d in front of me, present with me, "alive" with me. No matter where I am in the world, I am מלך חי וקים.

But the Yetzer Hara counter attacks with imagination: *You can't do this repentance thing! How many times have you tried to improve yourself, and you failed! You're broken down and tired of this self-improvement merry-go-round! How many times have you tried to rise up, like the waves, and you just came crashing down! You may be a failure, but you are not foolish enough to try improving again, for the thousandth time! You know you can't change!* He makes you ignore and forget your strengths. And when that doesn't work, when you actually get into the repentance zone, he makes you forget your weakness and imagine that you can do more than you actually can: *You can change, if you really want to. It won't be hard. You can change at the last minute.* He makes you bite off too much, more than you can swallow, so that you have spiritual indigestion. He makes you overestimate what you can do in one year and underestimate what you can do in seven years.

Another tool of the Yetzer Hara is to start with something so small and seemingly insignificant, that before you realize it, it becomes something you can't stop. This is the lesson of the Ben Sorer U'moreh, which begins with a young boy going after worldly pleasures and continues with a person who will turn into an unstoppable beast. Parashat Ki Tetze introduces to us the war tactics of the Evil Inclination, how one thing leads to the next : marrying an Eshet Yefat Toar will lead to having a rebellious child.

To counter that, G-d doesn't ask us to change, but to change direction. No matter how far you have

gone off the beaten path, the point when you realized that you are in the wrong direction is closer to the destination than the point that you started to go off in the wrong direction. All G-d asks from us is, פתחו לי פתח כחודו של מחט ואני אפתח, Open up even a tiny opening for Me, an opening so small like the sharp point of a needle, and I will open up for you an entrance like a hall. This is the lesson of the shape of the Shofar, that on one side, it is narrow, and on the other side, it is wide. Because all G-d wants from us, is to take the first step. Elul is called אלול because it stands for אני לדודי ודודי לי, I am to My beloved, and My beloved is to me. The month is not called Dalul, after the other passuk of Shir Hashirim, דודי לי ואני לו, My beloved is to me, and I am to Him, because G-d waits for us, to make the small change, to take the first step towards the relationship. וְאֶשׁוּבָה אֵלֶיךָ

The best way to get ready for Rosh Hashana is to imagine how many things were decided upon, last Rosh Hashana. It's been a crazy year. Last Rosh Hashana was "heavy stakes", on a personal and a global level. A year of collapse in so many ways. Meron. Givat Zeev. Surfside. Everything we relied on: doctors, hospitals, justice, our votes in America and Israel, police enforcement - everything just seems to be collapsing. The trust in leaders, the trust in the economy, the trust in "the system", whatever the system might have been. People are anxiety-ridden about how to be ready for the next "collapse", as we shift from second vaccine, to the third vaccine, to the unknown...

The Rambam tells us that no matter how saintly we are, every Rosh Hashana we need to blow shofar, to wake up and realize that we are spiritually

sleeping. We forgot G-d, even if we trusted in Him. We forgot the truth, as we busied ourselves with unimportant things. Chasing after money we don't need, running after respect and honor that is, anyway, short lived, eating tempting food that is not even good for us, and wasting endless time which is life itself, justifying it by calling it "entertainment". (see Rambam Teshuva 3) This is the message of the Shofar, to simpletons and Chief Rabbis alike. The Shofar blowing is the trumpet blow as we crown G-d as King, at the beginning of the new year. By waking up from spiritual slumber, by searching for the truth, focused on self-improvement, as we crown G-d as the world begins anew each Rosh Hashana, just as G-d was King on the first day of creation.

Elul is time for war. Elul stands for אהת למעלה ושבעה למטה One above, and seven below, the strange way the Kohen Gadol would count and track the sprinkling of blood on Yom Kippur. The Yetzer Hara comes from seven places, with its seven names. (See Succah 52b) He uses any possible way to trick you, to go against you ... but there is always the One Above. *Every day the Yetzer Hara tries to kill you, spiritually, and if G-d won't help you, you won't be able to withstand him* (Kiddushin 30b). But it also means that if we just stick to the truth, if we learn Torah, all the lies of the Yetzer Hara will fall by the wayside. The only way to Teshuva is through Torah learning. Onkelos says, if you learn My Torah, I will forgive your sins. If you do not, I will not forgive your sins. The Torah is the only vaccine against the Yetzer Hara, בראתי יצר הרע בראתי לו תורה תבלין. If you learn Torah, you will not be given over into the hands of the Yetzer Hara. (Kiddushin 30b)

MEANINGFUL IMPACT

There are three judgements all souls need to go through by the Heavenly court. 1. Rosh Hashana. 2. When one dies. 3. And at the resurrection of the dead. (Ramban Shaar Hagmul)

When King Shaul brought the soul of the prophet, Shmuel, down to earth to ask about his fate and the upcoming war, Shmuel's soul was trembling so much, it brought Moshe along, as a kind of attorney. Shmuel was afraid of the judgement of



the End of Days, of the resurrection of the dead. Why did Shmuel fear Judgment at the End of Days, at the resurrection? Upon his death, he had been judged and G-d ruled that he was equal to Moshe and Aharon, together! מִשָּׁה וְאַהֲרֹן בְּכִהְנֹי וְשְׂמוּאֵל בְּקִרְאֵי שְׁמוֹ (Tehillim 99)

The Ramchal answers that in the final judgement at the resurrection of the dead, G-d will judge all the **results** of your actions, the impact you made, for good or for bad, until the end of days. The ripple effects that keep going on, even after we do not. Shmuel was afraid of the repercussions of his actions. Children, students, followers, etc. (Daat Tvunot) When G-d judged Kayin for killing his brother Hebel, He said, קוֹל דְּמֵי אָחִיךָ צֹעֲקִים אֵלַי מִן־הָאָדָמָה: It does not say the voice of the **blood** of your brother are crying out to me from the ground... It says the voice of the **bloods** of your brother. All the children that could have come from Hebel cried out to G-d for vengeance. Judgment concerns every outcome, present and future, of one's actions.

We say שמע ישראל ה' אלוקינו ה' אחד. Why do we mention "Listen Yisrael", when we accept the yoke of Heaven? Because Judaism is accepting G-d in a way that it will have ripple effect, influencing other Jews. On Rosh Hashana, we are judged as to how effective we are in acting as **channels** to bring G-dliness into the world. מלוך על כל העולם כולו בכבודך. How much G-dliness is there in each of our actions? (Rambam Deot 3;2) כתבנו בספר חיים למענך Write us in the Book of Life, so we can live our life for You, G-d. בְּכָל־דְּרָכֶיךָ דַּעְהוּ יְהוָה יִישָׁר In all your ways know Him, and He will straighten your paths (Mishlei 3) The **whole religion** is this passuk, because Judaism is about being a vessel to bring G-dliness into the world, into everyday life, with whatever He blessed us with. (Berachot 63a) We are being judged in Tishrei, even according to the opinion that the world was created in Nissan... because now is the time of plenty, of harvest. G-d is judging us, seeing how much we use what we have, to serve Him.

Rebbetzin R. Shemesh tells the most fascinating story that took place in Israel. An observant Jewish singer was hired, with his orchestra, to perform at a wedding. When he arrived at the hall, he was shocked to see that wedding was inappropriately attended. Apologetically, he approached the young couple, explaining that, as an observant Jew, he could not perform at their wedding. He was never invited to play at such weddings before, and he assumed it was obvious from the type of person he is, and from the type of music he played, that he would not play at such weddings. His apology was completely sincere, but firm.

The bride and groom said, *No! We are not religious, and you were hired for the event. You cannot leave us without a band!* The singer, head of the group, expressed his apologies again, but told them that to perform under such conditions was against his principles. All this commotion disrupted the wedding, and in the middle of the disarray, a lawyer strode up to the singer and informed him: "It is against the law for you to not play, if you were hired and you took the job. If you leave, you will be fined in accordance with the law, \$10,000!"

This silenced the whole commotion. The head of the orchestra, after a moment of thinking, apologized, but with a firm voice, told them that he would pay the \$10,000, no problem. And with that, he packed up his orchestra and went home.

A little over a week later, he got the charge for the fine, and he paid it with love and joy, to show G-d how dedicated he is to His Mitzvoth. Two years passed, and he was asked to play at someone's Pidyon Haben. He came with his band, and while he was setting up, the father and mother of the baby approached him. "Do you recognize us? Do you remember us? You left our wedding two years ago, because you do not play at the type of wedding we made. You paid us a \$10,000 fine, and you are probably puzzled as to why we are inviting you again. Well, you have no idea what happened after the wedding. As we went home, shocked because of what had happened, we asked



each other, where can you find people that have the strength of principle to stay firm in their values!?! Who is willing to make a fool of himself, and lose 10k, just for a belief and a value?!? Where do you find Jews like that that are so dedicated to G-d? If dedication to Torah and Mitzvot can give you such strength of character, we, also, want to be like you. So, we started, slowly, to learn to become more connected to G-d, to His Torah and to His Mitzvot. And now, after we had our first baby, at our Pidyon Haben, we wanted to invite you to play; we wanted to pay you back the \$10k and also pay you for playing music at our Pidyon Haben. Because we wanted to tell you how your dedication to G-d melted us; it melted our Yetzer Hara.

When you are willing to give up your money, time, sleep, honor, respect, comfort, relationship, pleasure, vote or rights for something, that means you are living by that value. When you are a walking, breathing, living example of your value, you make a ripple effect, you impact others. Nothing will build your self-esteem or character like having values and living by them.

What type of meaningful impact do you *strive* for? To be great in Torah? To be great in prayer? To be great in relationships, kindness? That is who you are. Judgement on Rosh Hashana is on your goals, on the direction you are headed in. The Ben Sorer Umoreh, the rebellious child, is punished, because his whole goal in life is to be זולל וסובא, to be a person who is focused on the most materialistic life possible. Although G-d judges people only as they are at the moment, באשר הוא שם, still, a person is the sum of his goals. (Siftei Chaim) Only G-d can fathom this and make judgment on it. The world is called Olam, which means hidden, for there are seven things that are obscured from mankind. 1. Day of death. 2. Day of consolation (the day when a person will be calmed from his worries). 3. **Depth of judgement.** 4. You will never know what is inside a person's heart. 5. You cannot know what will bring you financial success. 6. When Mashiach ben David will come. 7. When the wicked will receive their punishment. (Pesachim 54b)

Judgment is so deep. A student once asked R Naftali Rupshitz why G-d hides the depth of judgement from us. Just as G-d revealed Himself at Mt. Sinai, once, why does He not open the Heavens, once, to show us the reward of Gan Eden and the punishment of Gehinom? The Rabbi answered: If people would see who is rewarded and who is punished in Gan Eden and Gehinom, and how, everyone would leave the religion!

The student was astounded! Why?!? The Rabbi explained: People's vision is extremely limited. כִּי יִרְאֶה לְעֵינָיו וְיִקְנֶה יִרְאֶה לְלִבּוֹ הָאֱדָם לִרְאֵה לְעֵינָיו וְיִקְנֶה יִרְאֶה לְלִבּוֹ: *For a person sees only that which is before his eyes, but G-d sees into the heart* (Shmuel 1:16:7) If G-d opened the Heavens and people would see those who they thought were Tzaddikim being punished in Gehinom, and those who look like Wicked ones being rewarded, they would lose their minds!

The judgment of Rosh Hashana is too deep for mankind to fathom, as it entails infinite ripple effects and the deepest goals of your heart. And, most of all, it is the judgment of how much you are willing to make yourself into a channel, a vessel, for infusing the world with G-dliness. There is nothing more humbling than accepting that G-d *uses* you to bring his G-dliness to the world. At the closing moments of Neilah on Yom Kippur, we beg G-d to set in motion a new direction for our lives. א-ל גורא עלילה, The G-d who is the Awesome One of the Plot, who orchestrates people's lives in ways that they will return to Him. G-d sees the goals in your heart, your "plots"... and if you pray with enough intent, He will set everything in motion for you to make the right goals and achieve them.

How does one make the most meaningful impact? Here are the selfie steps:

1. Live according to your values.



2. Look for a place where what you have to offer, something that is needed and relevant. Education. Charity. Mentoring. Tutoring. Entertainment. At times, you need to go against the systems and the powers that exist. At times you need to help them.
3. Widen your imagination of what and how you can impact. Covid has taught us that

the world is so interconnected that what happens in one part of the world will impact another.

4. Widen what you are willing to commit to. Ask yourself what impact you would be happy to leave behind.
5. Most of all, love the people around you.

A CALM ELUL

It has been said that one who says Psalm 27 every day in Elul is promised that he will live his full amount of allotted years and days in a good way, and he will overpower all the prosecuting angels against him, and will merit in judgement. (Siddur Arizal)

What is the meaning of this Psalm?

Psalm 27 is a psalm that says that G-d is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? G-d is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When the evil approach me to devour my flesh... it is they who stumble and fall. Even if an army would besiege me, my heart will not fear. Even if war would arise against me, I would still remain confident. Trust in G-d, strengthen yourself and He will give you courage, and place your trust and confidence in HaShem. Be strong and he will make your heart strong, so that you can continue to trust in G-d. The Midrash explains the words: אורי My light, this is Rosh Hashana. ישעי My salvation, this is Yom Kippur. (Midrash Shochar Tov)

A few questions. Why is Rosh Hashana referred to as my light? If anything, the darkest night of the month of Tishrei is Rosh Hashana, for there is no moon on that night! And why is it wrong to fret about the judgment on sin? Didn't Amos write אִם-תִּקַּע שׁוֹפָר בְּעִיר וְעַם לֹא יִהְרָדוּ If a Shofar will blow in the city and the people will not fear? (Amos 3 6) אֲרִיָּה שָׁאָג מִי לֹא יִירָא A lion roared, who will not fear (Amos 3 8) א' - אלול ר' - ראש השנה י' - יום כיפור ה' - הושענא רבא Why should the sinner not fear that he

may receive the punishment he deserves? Why is it important for a person not to fear his enemies, and to know that G-d will be there for him, no matter the strength of the enemy? Isn't fear a good thing, when you are outnumbered? When you deserve punishment?

Kind David is singing throughout all the Eluls that will ever be, for every Jew, that nothing will ever scare us, not even our greatest enemies; not even a judgment summons for a repentant on Rosh Hashana. Because I have a G-d I can always trust. בזאת אני בוטח. G-d is on my side, so Rosh Hashana judgement is my light, despite the fact that I have no moon to shine in my darkness.

Why is this calm mindset crucial for Elul? Without being calm, a person's soul cannot soar. As the Sephardic custom is to say in Selichot דלפה מתוגה נפשי הענוגה וחליץ מדאגה נפש עבדך My delicate soul drips from grief, Release the soul of your servant from worry. Because more important than serving G-d out of fear, is the calmness and security that comes from knowing you are in G-d's Hands. You cannot serve G-d, you cannot connect to Him, when you are not calm. You can really serve G-d, only when you are really happy. (Devarim 28;47)

We need to learn how to become calmer. The National Institute of Mental Health estimates that one in five adults in the US will experience a mental health issue over the course of a year. The Anxiety and Depression Association of America



claims anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in the country.

Calmness does not mean being complacent, indifferent, apathetic, unconcerned. Calmness does not mean lying on a hammock between two palm trees, sipping a Pina colada. That calmness is artificial. Calmness means to be totally in control of all your senses, even when you are working towards your goals, maximizing your capabilities and strengths. Contrary to popular belief, Teshuva and calmness are not opposites: they are one and the same. The only way to real Teshuva, begins from a point of calm. That is the only Teshuva that lasts. Fear of G-d is not anxiety. It is recognition of what is real. It is awareness of the reality of the world.

Lack of calmness is the underlying reason why so many people have a hard time to fight their Yetzer Hara, to take out time to learn, to pray, to connect in Elul, to forgive in Elul. Tension, anxiety, and lack of calmness are the Yetzer Hara's three most failproof ammunition. Just think about it. The whole year, you are so busy running from fear to fear, you don't even have a second to hear your soul! Financial fear, Social status fear, F.o.m.o. (fear of missing out), Fear of the unknown, fear of what people might say, fear of being vulnerable, fear of change, fear of sickness or loss, fear of death, fear of retirement, fear of loneliness, fear of being rejected, or fear that I might miss another deal...The list does not end. And when you are not calm, you can't hear your soul. Soul can only be heard when subconscious is silent.

In Parashat Shoftim, the Kohen takes out the fearful from the army before battle. Even though the lives of all the soldiers are at risk, and everyone had fear, any added fear, fear of loss of a new vineyard, loss of new house, loss of a new wife... could cause the soldier a drop more stress than needed. Calmness is the only way you can fight, pray, learn, do Teshuva, and most importantly, be a healthy person to be around. Fear is actually something you can catch from your colleagues. It is called "secondhand stress". Extra tension or

anxiety has no place at the front lines of battle. Neither does it have any place in Elul.

Fear is an emotion that is almost always inaccurate. The statistics of the danger, the percentages quoted by the one who is afraid, are mostly off. Most anxieties are just misinformed emotions. Are you scared of sharks when you swim in the ocean? If you said yes, are you afraid of bathtubs? I don't mean to scare you, but did you know that more people die from drowning in bathtubs than from sharks? Deer collision are more common to cause death than airplane crashes, and still people are more afraid of flying than of driving. Why? Because people fear the unknown. People fear not being in control.

The fear that David was talking about was real, imminent danger. In David's every blind spot lay war, enemy, ambush. From his youth, David's brothers would send him to shepherd the family flock out in dangerous areas of the wilderness, so that he would be eaten alive by the bears and lions. They suspected that he was mamzer, and they wanted him dead, not to bring shame or suspicion to the prestigious Ben Yishai family. Kind David was chased to near death by his own father-in-law, who David respected so much. Later, he entrusted the Moabite king to watch his family. He thought he could trust the Moabites, for his grandmother Ruth was a Moabite princess. But King of Moab killed all of David's family, instead! (Imagine the trauma, the guilt that David could have felt, for mistakenly trusting Moab! Nonetheless, he did not let his mistakes take over his life. He was never afraid!) David was chased to near death by his beloved son, Avshalom. David's rabbi, Achitofel, advised David's rebellious son Avshalom how to kill David. David was cursed a horrible curse from the Gadol Hador, Shimi Ben Gera. Still, David stuck steadfast to his mantra, בּוֹזֵאת אֲנִי בַּיהוָה. In this G-d I will trust.

Although King David is speaking about fear of imminent danger, David's trust in G-d turns fear to light. For King David, fear was like oxygen. Because that is what made him close to G-d. G-d



brought the fear, and G-d can bring His salvation. This is Bitachon, this power of זמח, the power of calm, Midat Hamalchut, is what Moshe Rabbenu prophesized will be the superpowers of David. וְזאת ליהודיה ויאמר שמע קול יהודה ואצל עמו תביאנו ידיו רב (Devarim 33: See Rabenu Bachye)

Rosh Hashana, also, is imminent, the “statistics of danger” are accurate. There is so much at stake. As Mishna Berura writes, “Even though we trust that we will come out of judgement with merit, still, we need to be afraid from the fear of judgement, and this will bring us to be remembered for merit.” (584;1)

Calmness is not something out there, dependent on something external or artificial. Calmness results from a decision that you make, from a commitment. It needs to be one of the highest goals you set for yourself. It is something that you need

to practice. Because calmness is the only way you can connect to G-d.

Here are the selfie steps, the self-help steps to becoming calmer.

1. Identify and Control. Identify the stressor, and find a way to control it. If you cannot control it, trust in G-d that only He can control it.
2. Slow Down. Especially in Elul. Your life is going too fast. A red traffic light means G-d is telling you to slow down.
3. Be Kind to yourself, first. גמל גפשו איש תסד (Mishlei 11; 17) Make sure that you eat well (quality over quantity), sleep well (even if you are saying Selihot), and listen to your body, so that you know what it can handle.
4. PRAY! Talk to G-d. If you are afraid, if you want to cry, speak to Him. He brought you the danger, that is just the way He opens up a conversation sometimes.

TESHUVA FOR THE ORTHODOX JEW

Teshuva for the Orthodox Jew is usually more about quality than about quantity. For the Orthodox, Teshuva is more about improving how you do what you do more than it is changing what you do. *But Rabbi, my plate is too full! I am doing too much already! I do not have more time/energy/money/headspace to do more! I am maxed out!*

Teshuva is not about *doing* more. It is about *being* different. It is not about the *what*. It is about the *how*.

Improving on the *how* in G-d’s service is not an investment of time/energy/money/headspace as much as it is one of emotional intelligence. About being in total control of your emotions. What you focus on. What state of mind you are in. No matter how much you did or you are doing. Let me give three examples.

In Eshet Chayil, we sing, גדיה שלחה בכישור Her hand she sent to the spike. Who is this referring to?

To Yael. Yael did not kill Sisra with a sword. As it says תשלחה ליתד תשלחה her hand she sent to the spike (or tent peg). (Shoftim 5 26) And why did Yael kill Sisra with the tent peg and not with the sword? Because in the Torah,(in our Parasha) it says, לא ינהיג אשה על גבר כל ימי חייה A woman should not bear masculine accessories . (Yalkut Shoftim 5, 56)

Yael saved the Jewish Nation at war from the evil general, Sisrah. G-d performed a miracle at the war, and the 900 iron chariots of Sisra got flooded in the valley during the miraculous thunderstorm. Sisrah fled to hide out in the tent of Yael, the wife of Heber Hakeni, Sisra’s friend. She then slept with him 7 times, to make him weak. (R’ Akiva was a descendant of the third relationship. Rama Mipano) Yael offered him some milk, to make him sleepy. And then, she took the tent peg to kill him. She did not use Sisra’s sword. She was allowed to do what she did with him based on three factors. A. She was saving the entire Jewish people, B. He was a non-Jew, and C. She had no pleasure from sinning with him. *But she did not need to use a sword.*



Using a sword is forbidden, as war is a masculine occupation. It is forbidden for a woman to wear armor, as armor is considered to be exclusively masculine. (Nazir 59a, see Rashi. Also, Shu”A YD 182;5) So, she used the wooden tent peg, instead.

Why was this small element of Yael’s superhuman act worthy of such a great amount of attention? Because Yael kept her cool in serving G-d to the max at the time of an emotional whirlpool. Despite the fact that she was allowed to transgress the laws in order to save the Jewish Nation, she was able to minimize those permitted transgressions. It was the same superhuman act. But her finesse in the how, in choosing to use the wooden tent peg was what got her into the Eishet Chayil Hall of Fame. שְׁלֵמָה בְּפִישׁוֹר

We are all at war. An internal war against our Evil Inclination. In this war to do the right thing, our ability to control our emotions, to perform at our best in the 613, makes all the difference. And it is the small things that count. *If Yehonatan, son of King Saul, would have offered David just two loaves of bread, when David was fleeing from K. Saul, he would have circumvented all the tragedies that followed. The Kohanim in the city of Nov would not have been killed, and Doeg would not have been lost, and Shaul and his three sons would not have died.*” (Sanhedrin 104a) Despite the everlasting love that Yehonatan had for David, his willingness to give up his rights to the throne to David and even to risk his life for David... still. The Torah holds him responsible for not offering David two loaves of bread for the road. It is the small things that count. It is the small things that make all the difference. A drop more consideration. A drop more awareness. A drop more Kavannah.

There were seven prophetesses, *Sarah, Miriam, Deborah, Chanah, Avigail, Hulda, and Esther.* (Megillah 14a) Deborah lived in the time of Yael. How did Deborah become a prophetess, and merit being the author of one of the Ten Songs of Tanach? The Yalkut Shimoni hints to the answer in his words.

Although Eliyahau Hanavi was present at the time, Deborah became the prophetess and the Judge of the Jewish Nation. G-d promises us, and testifies by the heavens and the earth, that both a gentile and a Jew, a man or a woman, a slave or a maidservant can have Ruach Hakodesh. Bestowing Ruah Hakodesh is dependent upon a person’s actions.

What was so special of Deborah’s actions that she deserved Ruach Hakodesh? She is known for being the wife of Lapidot. Her husband was a simpleton. But she wanted him to have a portion in Torah learning. Deborah donated the wicks for the Mishkan in Shiloh, and she would make them, and send her husband to the study hall, so that he would be a part of the righteous and merit Olam Haba.

What? From making wicks she became a prophetess? That’s all you need to do to achieve Ruach Hakodesh?!

Eliyahu the Prophet teaches us Deborah’s secret. She was מַחְבֻּנָּה, she focused on making the wicks to be especially thick wicks, to bring about the most light in the Mishkan of Shiloh and the study hall there. G-d sees the intentions of the heart, and He said to her, Deborah, you intended Me to have a lot of light. So too, said G-d, that He would make Deborah’s light spread throughout Yehuda and Jerusalem. (Y Shimoni Shoftim 42)

It was Deborah’s *focusing*, not to make just *any* wicks. Not even her making the *thick* wicks. But it was her *concentrating* all her efforts on serving G-d. It was her complete dedication to making the wicks, specifically in such a way as to serve G-d to the max. The focusing, the intensity of devotion, is what made her different. The how.

G-d wants quality. So, what do we need to focus on? Here is the trick. Listen closely, because if you cross the wires, you can blow your battery.

The 613 are divided into 248 positive and 365 negative commandments. The service of G-d, of



the heart, is split into two. Fear of G-d and Love of G-d. If you want to improve your *positive commandments*, i.e. learning Torah, Birkat Hamazon, Tzitzit, Tefillin, honoring parents, your best bet is to focus on upgrading the quality by adding LOVE of G-d into those acts. (See Ramban, Yitro) If you try to keep the positive commandments by adding FEAR of G-d, you will burn your battery. FEAR is reserved for the negative commandments, like not speaking lashon hara, not mixing meat and milk, not desecrating Shabbat, etc. To improve on the quality, we need to add LOVE to the positive commandments, and FEAR to the negative commandments.

Even in the realm of the material, studies and experience in all life areas teach us, quality over

OLAM HABA EYEBALLS

I recently realized what my biggest life problem is. Why I can't focus in davening and learning. Why I can't forgive and forget. Why I can't make those important decisions in life when faced with crisis, or deal with conflict and chaos. It is a problem with my eyeballs.

I've been printing 1000 parsha sheets of self-introspective Torah for the last 6 and a half years. I was told so many times by publishing companies, "Rabbi Farhi, if you would only write more stories... People LOVE stories! You'd make best sellers!" But the answer, I realized, is that I am always writing stories. Every introspective Torah idea I write is the underlying story behind my life story and the stories of many others. This article is the idea behind ALL of our stories. It is the Olam Haba Eyeball story.

I see my world as the world I see. But the real world is the Olam Haba world. G-d created the world with the intent that we wear Olam Haba Eyeballs. ברוך אלוקיננו שבראנו לכבודו... וחי עולם נטע בתוכנו It is a lifetime of work. To live a life of נצח. To transcend time. But so many times, I foolishly stick to Olam Hazeh Eyes, because they are so "sticky". It is like the fellow who is stuck with a stock of Nasa Eclipse Eyeglasses. You have use of

quantity. To manage your time to the max, it is not how many things you cram in, but accomplishing your most important tasks first, "Important over Urgent". In learning, it is not about amassing knowledge (quantity), but about attaining wisdom (quality). Knowledge comes and goes, but wisdom lingers. With family and friends, quality time has more value than quantity time. In dieting, you need to increase the quality of what you eat, not just reduce the quantity.

And in serving G-d, as well. למה-לי רב-זבחיכם יאמר *To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me, says G-d?* (Yeshaya 1; 11) G-d wants from us quality over quantity.

those only before and during the eclipse. No one will buy that stock today. The faster you get rid of that useless stock, the better. Olam Hazeh Eyes work for you only when you have a nice car, a nice paycheck, and things go your way... But when the "eclipse" is over, you don't want to be stuck with those glasses. Get rid of them as fast as you can! All the pain you have in life is because you are trying to hold on to those stupid eclipse glasses. The faster you get rid of your Olam Hazeh Eyes, the easier it will be for you to focus on davening and reconnect. The faster you will be able to make those important life decisions. And the faster you will find serenity.

The stories of our rabbis are all Olam Haba Eyeball stories. R Yisrael Salanter sees a candle late at night at the shoemaker's shop, and the shoemaker bangs away with the last drip-drop of his candle. He tells R Yisrael, "As long as the candle is still burning, I can keep fixing." R' Yisrael, with his Olam Haba Eyeballs, says, "As long as I am alive, נר ה' בשמת אדם, I can still fix my soul..." R' Yisrael! What is the connection? What is the relevance? But R' Yisrael has different eyeballs than most of us. And that is what he saw. What he heard. What he lived. All of the Chafetz Chaim



stories. They are all Olam Haba Eyeball stories. About conceptualizing.

Imagine, for a second, that you meet Tarzan in the jungle. You pull out a map of Israel, point to Jerusalem, and tell him, this is where I live. If you go north, you will get to Rosh Hanikra. Go south, and you hit Eilat. Go west, and you hit the ocean. East, and you hit Jordan. He looks at you, and says, “What is this map thing? This is just a piece of paper with different colors, lines, numbers and letters (!?)”, because he sees only a two dimensional piece of paper. He does not understand that the map on the piece of paper represents a three-dimensional world, charting places and the distances between them. But to you, there is something much deeper than that page. Olam Haba is seeing our 3d world with a fourth dimension. The spiritual dimension.

Our parents, our grandparents, lived more Olam Haba Eyeball lives. The Lower East Side Jews that gave up their parnassah, getting the pink slip each and every Friday, and still staying strong, positive and proud, all had Olam Haba Eyeballs. For many of us, Olam Haba sounds scary, unknown, distant, so we stick to our Olam Hazeh stories, our Olam Hazeh Eyeballs, lacking the spiritual dimension. And then, we can't be the Jews we want to be, and we just can't figure out why not. The worst things can happen to us when we stick to our Olam Hazeh eyes. Because the only way we can be the Jew we want to be is if we are calm, courageous, and consistent. And to be those “three C's”, we need to be able to transcend the other 3 C's: circumstance, conflict and crisis. We need Olam Haba Eyeballs, with the spiritual dimension in them.

In this week's parasha, the Torah tells us about the mitzvah of Shiluach Haken. ‘You can take the baby birds from the nest, but you have to send away the mother. Do this, so that your G-d will give you good, and you will merit longevity’. Elisha Ben Avuyah sat in the valley of Ginosar, learning Torah. He was the Rebbi of Rebi Meir, and R' Meri was the anonymous Tannah of Shas and one of the pillars of Torah Sheh b'al Peh, the Oral

Torah. So, just imagine who R' Meir's Rebbi was. And as he learnt Torah, he noticed a fellow climbing up a fig tree, to take a nest of chicks, while sending away the mother bird. The man climbed down the tree, but did not make it to the bottom before getting bitten by a venomous snake. End of story, end of life. No longevity, no good life, and Elisha is left confused. He looks at his Book, he looks at the circumstance and can't make sense of the contradiction. So, Elisha gives up the Book, and becomes Acher. The other one. And lives a life that is the opposite of Judaism, until he cries on his deathbed, hoping that maybe G-d will accept his Teshuva.

The Talmud explains that Acher made this mistake, because he did not know how R' Yaakov explained that verse of the Torah. ‘Longevity’ is referring to life in the Next World; the good life is referring to the Next World. Acher didn't know this, so he rejected everything that he had believed until then, because of what seemed to him to be a glaring contradiction. But didn't Elisha know that there is a Next World?

The answer is, yes, he did. But this world is full of contradictions not to be resolved until we get to the Next World. So, to get by sane, it is not enough to know that Olam Haba exists. You need Olam Haba Eyeballs. You need to be someone who, when you speak about a good life, you are referring to a spiritual life. A good wedding is a spiritual wedding. A good marriage is a spiritual one. So, when the Torah says that a person who performs the mitzvah of Shiluach Haken is going to have long life, a good life, OF COURSE IT IS TALKING ABOUT THE NEXT WORLD!!! Acher missed that point, because he did not have the Olam Haba Eyeballs, and that led to his demise.

Trying to describe Olam Haba is like trying to paint a picture for a blind man, or play a tune to someone who is deaf. The Talmud refers to Olam Haba as a place that is *יום שכולו ארוך*, A day that is entirely long. R Dessler explains what “A day that is entirely long”, means. Every minute of Olam



Haba is Eternal. How so? Because every minute is above Past, Present and Future.

Take a piece of paper with a little hole in its center and place it over a map, the hole over Jerusalem. All you see is Jerusalem, nothing else is seen, although it is there. Move the paper with the hole to Rosh Hanikra, and Jerusalem can't be seen. Take off the piece of paper, and the whole map is exposed, at once. The whole Israel. In this world, we can experience only the present. The past, the future, cannot be experienced in the present. But take off the paper, and you see past – present – future, all as one, with no boundaries. That is one minute of Olam Haba, experiencing past, present and future, all at the same time. To be an Olam

Haba person means to be able, in your mind, to transcend past, present and future and not get stuck on any one of them. It means being fully aware of the fact that what we are aware of now is not the whole picture. There is much more than the 'now'. To be able to say, "Make G-d King" over all three, ה' מלך ה' מלך ה' ימלוך לעולם ועד.

On Rosh Hashana, according to the Ramchal, this is what we are judged on. If we are Olam Haba people, if we will have Olam Haba Eyeballs, and if we will have an Olam Haba life, a spiritual life. And this is our prayer: למענך אלוקים... וזכרנו לחיים חיים

YOUR OWN NEW TESTAMENT

The *Ben Sorer Umoredh* is the child we know who went astray from his parents, and went astray from the ways of the Torah. We all know that the word *sorer* means to go astray. But what does the word *moredh* mean? Rashi and the Targum explain this word as rebellious. But usually, that word means teaching. What did this rebellious child teach? And to whom?

The Yalkut Gershuri writes that this boy is not only a bad kid. He gets others to join him in crime, so that he won't burn in hell alone. He teaches others his Torah, as he teaches himself his own Torah. For a person to become a sinner, he needs to create his own Torah. He needs to make his own New Testament, to justify his inappropriate behavior. Even Eichman justified his behavior, saying that he was just following orders.

The more I coach, the more I realize that everyone has their own story. I realized that productivity and performance are closely connected to the 3 S's. State, Structure, and Story. Our State of Mind, will have a powerful effect on our performance and productivity, in any given situation. The Structure that we are in has an equal effect on our performance and productivity. But the most powerful effect on performance and productivity is the Story. How did you get into this area of

productivity or performance? Why are you there? When did you start and when will you end? Who are you up against, and who is on your side? Where is this story taking place?... Most of the time, the client is not even aware of all the parts of his own story, until he gets into some sort of bottleneck between his motivation and his goal.

Studies have proven that story telling is an extremely potent form of persuasion and motivation. Stories set your brand. Stories build your identity. And people sometimes give up everything they have, because they cannot give up on their version of the story. Even G-d wrote the Torah in story fashion, because that is the way the human mind connects with concepts. When one spouse calls me for help with Shalom Bayit, I know that the only way I can help them is if I can listen to both stories, find the contradiction between the two stories, and figure out how they can both buy into a third story. When I help a yeshiva student with his conflicts in religious observance, it is usually not the religion that he wants to be coached on. It is about his personal story in the religion, his story with his relationship with G-d. "What is your story?" is a powerful question. Everyone has a story, a perspective on their place in the family, how much they deserve, and how much they were mistreated.



The *Ben Sorer Umoreh* could not have become such bad kid, if he did not have a story. When a religious teenager takes off his yarmulke, he is not just taking off a piece of clothing. He has a long story that is behind it. The *Ben Sorer Umoreh* has a story; he has a belief that this world is where it all begins and ends. And that the easy life is the good life. And he teaches others his story, to make himself feel that there is credibility to his story, that he does not stand alone.

We start off the Selihot saying, לך ה' הצדקה ולנו לך ה' הצדקה ולנו *To You G-d, is Righteousness, and all we have is shame.* The difference between a sinner and one who sinned is that the sinner has a story of self-justification, while the one who sinned realizes his wrongdoing. This is the beginning of Selihot, because the first part of repentance is to alter our story. And this is what we mean in the beginning Piyut of Yom Kippur, לך א-לי, when we say with a tear on our cheek, ובהלתי בתורתך- ובהרתי בתורתך, *And I was repelled by Your Torah, and I chose my own Torah.*

TZEDDAKAH! TZEDAKKAH!

Tzedaka is difficult to give, only if you believe that the money you earned was earned by your hard work alone, and not given to you by G-d. Tzeddaka is one of the greatest tests on your core beliefs, measuring how much you believe that G-d is in your life and involved in your successes. Listen in to a conversation that the rich man has in his subconscious, that he, himself, might not be aware of...

"But I worked so hard for my money! If G-d gave it to me, why did I need to work so hard for it?"

There are those who worked harder than you, that are smarter than you and did not make the money you made. There are those who had much more money than you, and now, they have much less. So, why do you still have the money that's in your account? G-d. G-d. G-d.

"But I came up with the business idea! It was my brainstorming! Not G-d's!"

When we do *Teshuva*, when we change from our sinful ways, we are ridding ourselves of our story and buying into G-d's story. Our story is that we are Orthodox Jews, so we are okay. Relative to the place from which I started out, I have come quite far in my religious observance. But G-d has a different story. His story was, is, and will always be, the Torah, Shas, and Shulchan Aruch. It does not make a difference how digital or crazy the world becomes; Obama, Clinton, or Trump: G-d does not change His Story. His story is an old one, starting from before Creation, freeing us from slavery, keeping us alive through the exile, and giving us all an ultimatum; to choose which world is of higher importance, this world or the next. His Story is the story of our accepting his Kingship over us and the Universe, even if it is a digital Universe. And His story is always the real story, while our story is just digital. Just as fast as you created it, you can delete it.

Your creativity is from your Creator. Your brainstorming – your brain is just some noodle mush.

We start the middle blessings of the Amidah by confessing this to G-d. אתה חונן לאדם דעת ... *You grant Man Knowledge, Understanding, and Wisdom.* This is the greatest confession Man can ever make to G-d. *All my intellectual achievements came from You.* The greatest honor you can give someone is appreciating and honoring his opinions, ideas and beliefs, because, naturally, people attribute "thinking" to the big "I". "I thought of a great idea." "I believe..." "I am of the opinion..." So, that is how we start our prayers. "G-d, You give me knowledge, and I need You so, so greatly in life."

99% of success in today's business world boils down to an advantage in one of these three fields: Knowledge, Understanding or Wisdom. Whether it is financial intelligence, being street smart, book



smart, or whatever smart, money comes to the ones who use the grey matter, the “noodle mass”, the brain. What is that matter? I saw it once in a jar, in a Museum, when I was 12 years old. A jar of noodles. So, Who generates guts? How does it work without batteries? Who decides when the brain will be focused and when it won't be? G-d. G-d .G-d. Sometimes, such wise people make such foolish mistakes and lose all their life's savings. A little, humble reminder of how much we need G-d in life. And, once we realize how much G-d has given us, and how generously He gives us tzaddakah, it will be much easier for us to give others, as well. We would feel like that overflowing cup.

Some approach Elul on fire. Others, on ice. Most religious Jews are somewhere in between, waiting for some outside factor to heat them up, motivate them, to have the Elul they are “supposed” to have. Someone sent me a letter in Hebrew, to wake me up, but all it did was shake me up. The letter was headed “letter from the Heavenly Courts”, telling me that I am being summoned by my Father, the Judge, to stand trial, in thirty days time. I will not be allowed to come with any lawyers, witnesses on my behalf, and I will be unable to deny any claims

PARTY PLANNERS

The Mesillat Yesharim writes in the very beginning that a person in this world is always at battle. There is always a war, whatever you do and wherever you go. The reason why we are not conscious of this is because we are living in a trance. We get used to thinking that things are the way they appear on the surface. For example: One might think that he is going to a wedding, when, in reality, he is going to war. *Is he or she going to keep the guidelines of tzniut and modesty? Is he or she going to be jealous of others? Are you going to the wedding to enjoy the food and the music or to make the bride and groom happy?* This is an inner war. We have this battle every day of our lives, in every scenario, at every moment. We think that if we socialize, we are just socializing. But our rabbis tell us that this is not the case. We are actually waging

against me. The claims against me will be that I have not learned Torah on the level that I could, I have not given enough tzeddakah , I have not guarded my eyes properly, I have spoken Lashon Hara. Etc. I will not write the punishments in this article, as they are too harsh. The only way to make things easier, to tilt the verdict in my favor, is to admit that I have sinned, and to try to better myself in the course of these Elul days. To give Tzeddakah, learn Torah, and perform acts of kindness. If I am found guilty, I will be graced with ten days to change my behavior, and, ultimately, change my fate. Signed, Heavenly Court.

I was shaken up by the letter although nothing changed inside. But, when I read the words in Selichot, לך ה' הצדקה, ולנו בושח הפנים, I twisted the meaning of the words a bit, and it twisted my heart. *To you G-d, you are the One who gives me Tzeddaka, and all I own is embarrassment.* All that I have is Tzeddaka from G-d, and I owe You so much. I felt motivated by that thought. I felt that everything I have ever had, possessed, or done in life was asking me to give it all for Him. My energy, my thoughts. My money, my time. All for G-d. For as long as I think this thought, I am on fire. *I am to my Beloved...*

a war against letting ourselves speak freely of the faults of others. We think that when we sit down for a meal, we are just having a meal. No such thing. If and how you say the blessing before you wash your hands or eat is an inner war. If you will speak Torah at the meal or not is a war, and when you think that you are just having a sandwich, you most probably will lose your battle with the Evil Inclination. This is written between and behind the lines in the words of the Messilat Yesharim on the very first page.

This is the importance of the words that start off our parasha *כי תצא למלחמה על איביך* *When you go our to war against your enemy ...* One must mentally and intentionally be prepared for this inner battle. If you are going to be passive about this war thing, then it is more than likely that you



will lose the battle. Thus, the Torah warns us that we must go out to fight, and not just sit back, thinking that things are just “chilled”.

The way we go out to fight is by planning: we plan what and how we will behave at the wedding in advance, we decide consciously that we are coming not to look around with envy at what others have; rather, we know that coming to the wedding is a mitzvah, one to be done with a smile on our face. Our presence says that we are happy for the new couple. With this mental preparation, there is a much better chance that this is how we will behave. Similarly, if we have in mind that the Shabbat table is a time when we can share Torah thoughts and learn some halachot, then there is a better chance that the planning will come true than if we do not plan at all. And, even in areas in which we are weak, if we plan ahead, there is a greater chance

SHORT AND SWEET

The Gemara in Makot tells us, *“How foolish are those who stand up for a Sefer Torah, but not for the rabbis! The Torah states, YOU SHALL SMITE HIM 40 TIMES, and the rabbis come along and say that one should get only 39 lashes.”* A great question is asked about this. Why does the Gemara have to go through so many parashiot to find a passuk which highlights the point that our rabbis had the power to interpret a passuk in a way different from the literal translation? In Sefer Vayikra, we find the same concept regarding Sefirat Ha’omer. The Torah tells us to count 50 days, and our rabbis come along and tell us to count only 49!”

The answer is this. To be able to learn that the Torah means to say that one should count only 49 days when it says 50 is not such a great feat. However, to say that one gives only 39 lashes, not 40, decreasing the amount of pain this Jew would have to go through, making his life easier for him – THAT’S GREATNESS!

The Mabit, in Beit Elokim asks the following: If we read the Ten Commandments with concentration, we will find that the first five, the

that we will succeed in overcoming our obstacles. This is one of the ideas that was very much encouraged by R’ Yisrael Salanter. One can help himself to form good habits by picturing exactly how he will make his Berachot and thinking what type of blessing he will make. People are creatures of habit, and being used to something will more often than not dictate the way they will behave. That is, unless they plan differently. And, when someone does plan, for better or for worse, there is a special Divine aid to put a person on the path which he chooses for himself. בדרך שאדם רוצה לילך . מוליכים אותו . I have found this true while coaching people. Once someone says and describes, spells out in detail what he wants, G-d just helps him achieve it.

commandments that are between man and his Creator, are much longer in comparison to the last five, those between a man and his fellow. Some of the latter five are merely two-word commandments. If this is so, why did G-d leave so much empty space in the last tablets in comparison to the space in the first tablets? Could He not have elaborated a bit on the commandments between a man and his fellow, making the size of the margin somewhat equal?

The answer given is that when it comes to the laws between man and his fellow, people often prefer to ignore their social duties. It is much more *difficult* to forgive and forget, especially in a case where there is money over which we are in dispute with others, then it is to part with possessions to do a mitzvah. It is in this very sensitive area of preserving our honor, our self image, that we are given the opportunity to excel in refining our middot. When a person is able to rise above his distaste for a fellow Jew – no matter how justified his feeling may be – he transcends himself and makes a powerful Kiddush HaShem. This is why G-d wrote the latter mitzvot in big letters, leaving the same amount of open space as in the



first set of commandments. Just to have the commandments between man and his fellow stand out, showing and underlining their importance. It is in observing these mitzvot that we have the opportunity to be complete in our serving G-d.

People who recognize that the latter five commandments are those that give us an

COMFORTABLE WITH SIN

At first I did not understand the Midrash in this week's parasha. But when I did, I was all shaken up.

"...And G-d did not want to listen to Bilaam, and Hashem your G-d turned the curse to a blessing, because He loves you..." The Midrash comments, *why did Bilaam go against the will of G-d, and try to curse the Jews? Because he thought that he himself would redeem the Jews from Egypt, and he thought that the Torah would be given to the Jews through his hands. Once Bilaam saw that the Jews were redeemed from Egypt by Moshe and that the Torah was given by Moshe, Bilaam became filled with jealousy and planned a list of curses against the Jews....*

How could Bilaam, the most impure, the most selfish of all, the master of the Evil Eye, believe that the Torah could be given through him? How could he be "shocked" that Moshe Rabbeinu, who loved each and every Jew as himself, was chosen to take out the Jews from Egypt instead of him? What was he even thinking?

READY FOR WAR

כי תצא למלחמה על איוביך ונתת ד' אלקיך בידך ושבית
When you go out to war against your enemy, and Hashem, your G-d, gives you victory...

Our Sages tell us that this *passuk* is hinting at going to war against the Evil Inclination, our *worst enemy*. As the *Chovot HaLevivot* writes: *Know this: Your greatest enemy in the world is your Evil Inclination...he gives you advice for your every step. While you sleep, he is awake plotting against you. He appears to you as a friend, and he becomes one of your most trusted*

opportunity to care about others – whether we like them or not – are people who deserve to be stood up for. They stand out like bold letters on a blank page!

I thought about this for a while, and when I figured it out, it shook me up. The reason is because Bilaam could only be so wicked as Bilaam, if he really, truly believed that he was as righteous as Moshe Rabbeinu. When people we know do wicked things, it is along the lines of "all roads to hell are paved with good intentions". A person, in essence, cannot do bad. One can only do something wrong when he *thinks that there is something right to it*. That it can be justified. So Bilaam, as well, could only be *so* evil, only if he truly thought that he was a *tzaddik like Moshe*. He truly believed it, and when he faced reality in the mirror, he was filled with rage.

A person can go his whole life thinking that he is a *tzaddik*. He has no clue that this is many times the only way that his conscience will allow him to actually go ahead and be a *Rasha*. As we approach days of Judgment, let us keep this in mind.

friends and advisors... His greatest weapon against you is confusion and false arguments to make you forget your true interests and doubt your confirmed goals and beliefs... (Shaar Yichud Hamaaseh). The ways of the Evil Inclination are manifold. He always has new ideas, and he never gives up. When you thought you conquered him, you find that he has only gotten stronger. This is the general picture. The Rebbe from Pashische put it even more dramatically: You should always perceive the Evil Inclination as one who is standing over your head with an axe waiting for the moment



to chop off your head. If you cannot perceive him as such, it means that he has already chopped off your head!

The metaphor of battling the Evil Inclination has always been extremely apt – all the way down to our time. We can illustrate this through the example of the modern tank, which was a product of World War One. During the war, the leaders of England and France (Allied Forces) looked for a way to break through the front lines of forts established by the Germans. After much thought and research, they concluded that this could be accomplished by vehicles with thick side walls to protect them from being stopped by machine-gun fire, and ones in which soldiers could hide and shoot. They also wanted a vehicle that could climb over obstacles and pass over trenches.

At last, a vehicle was invented that met all these requirements, and a squadron of them was to be brought to the front. The leaders of the Allied Forces wanted their new weapon to surprise and startle the enemy. To conceal their true identity as weapons, they were brought to the front lines as water carriers for the Mesopotamian campaign, and referred to as *tanks* (as in *water tank*).

The Evil Inclination works very much the same way. He presents himself as innocent – a mere water tank – or even as good. And he always invents new ways of doing things.

As for the essence of the Evil Inclination, the statements of the Sages may, at first glance, seem paradoxical. Is it an external angel or an inner part of the human psyche? On the one hand, we have a Talmudic passage which tells us that the Evil Inclination, the Satan (Adversary), and the Angel of Death are one and the same. The Evil Inclination attempts to get one to sin, and when he succeeds, he goes to the Heavenly Court as a prosecuting angel. When he succeeds in his prosecution, he returns to the world as the Angel of Death, and executes the punishment (*Bava Batra* 16a). From this description, it seems that the Evil Inclination is

external. On the other hand, the Sages tell us that ever since Adam and Chavah ate from the Tree of Knowledge, the Evil Inclination resides within us (see נפש החיים א' פ"ו). This also seems to be reflected in the *Chumash* itself: “*The inclination of man’s heart is evil from his youth*” (*Bereishis* 8:21); “*Love the L-rd, your G-d, with all your hearts*” (*Devarim* 6:5) – with both the good and the evil inclination (Rashi); “*You should not have in you an alien god*” (*Psalms* 91:10) – i.e., evil inclination (*Shabbat* 105b).

The resolution of this paradox lies in the observation of R’ Yisrael Salant that there are actually two Evil Inclinations – the internal and the external, or what he calls the *Yetzer Hatumah* and *Yetzer Hata’avah* (see *Iggeret Hamussar*). R’ Yisrael uses this to explain contradictions in a given person’s behavior that almost make the individual look like he has a split personality. He notes, for example, that while a person may have a desire for honor, this desire is strangely absent when it comes to honor for spiritual or ethical matters. He explains that this person’s inner desire for honor is being neutralized by an outside force (*Yetzer Hatumah*) which influences him not to look for honor in the spiritual or ethical realm.

Although it is often difficult to figure out whether the external Adversary or the internal Evil Inclination is operating, one thing is for sure: neither one has anything to do with our “inner self.” There is an “inner self” deeper inside than the “heart,” the abode of the Evil Inclination. In other words, the Torah perspective is that our bad habits are external, something we can fight against. This is an amazingly useful self-help concept! (If the Evil Inclination had been part of our inner self, we wouldn’t have had a chance.) This may well be hinted at by the Torah when it speaks of “*going out to war against your Enemy*.” Even the internal Inclination is not part of the inner self. With all this in mind, we are ready for war!



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