

הנה הדרך THE PATH TO FOLLOW

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G-D SAVES US FROM THE EVIL INCLINATION

(by Rabbi David Hanania Pinto שליט"א)

Commenting on the verse that states, “Moses erected the Sanctuary; he put down its sockets” (Exodus 40:18), the Midrash teaches: “When they finished building the Sanctuary, they waited for the revelation of the Divine Presence ... They went to those who were skilled and said, ‘What are you doing here? You yourselves should erect the Sanctuary!’ The latter tried to erect it, but they could not; each time they thought that they were successful, it collapsed. They went to Betzalel and Oholiab and said to them, ‘Erect the Sanctuary that you yourselves built. Perhaps you will succeed.’ They immediately began to work on it, but failed in their efforts. All the Children of Israel then went to Moses, and the Holy One, blessed be He, finished by telling him, ‘They must understand that if you, personally, cannot erect it, it will never be erected.’ ‘Master of the universe, I am not capable!’ Moses replied to the Holy One, blessed be He. ‘Touch it with your hands,’ said Hashem. ‘Pretend to erect it, and it will erect itself. I will then write that you erected it.’ Thus it is written, ‘It was in the first month of the second year, on the first of the month, that the Sanctuary was erected’ [Exodus 40: 17]. And by who was it erected? By Moses, as it is written: ‘Moses erected the Sanctuary’ [v.18]” (Tanhuma, Pekudei 11).

Citing the Admor of Betz, the author of Midbar Kadesh is of the opinion that the erection of the Sanctuary by Moses constituted a true miracle, for the Sanctuary consisted of 48 beams, each measuring ten cubits long, one and a half cubits in width, and a cubit in breadth. There were, in addition, sockets that each weighed a kikar [or “talent” – roughly 70 pounds] of silver and measured one cubit high. The work was exhausting, and it was beyond Moses’ strength. Yet the beams erected themselves, for it was a true miracle!

Now as we know, it is forbidden to rely on miracles (Pesachim 64b). Why then did Moses not ask for outside help?

Commenting on the verse that states, “When you will go out to war against your enemies...” (Deuteronomy 21:10), most saintly writings explain that the verse is referring to the evil inclination, man’s permanent enemy, which is born with him (Genesis 8:21; Bereshith Rabba 34:12), and which pursues him throughout life. However Hashem promises man that He will “deliver him from its hands,” meaning that He will help him to fight and conquer the evil inclination (see Sukkah 52a,b). If the evil inclination is, as we already saw, an old and foolish king (Ecclesiastes 4:13), it nevertheless persists in lying in wait for a man, continuously trying to make him fall into its trap. It finishes him off by stripping him of his life, both materially and spiritually.

The evil inclination works in the following ways:

- Its occupation is to tell a man, “Do this today, and that tomorrow.” It finishes by having him worship idols (Shabbat 105b).

- It intensifies its attack on a man every day as it tries to completely destroy him. Without G-d’s help, a man cannot defeat it (Kiddushin 30b).

- It is so hard that even its Creator calls it “wicked” (ibid.).

- It intensifies its fight against a man even when he is in mourning (ibid. 80b).

- It has seven names: Wicked, uncircumcised, unclean, enemy, stumbling block, rock, and hidden (Sukkah 52a).

- At first, the evil inclination resembles a spider web, but in the end it is like a thick chariot rope. A man becomes solidly attached to it (Sanhedrin 99b; Sukkah 52a).

- It harms a man in this world and testifies against him in the World to Come. It first appears as a guest, then later as the master of the house (Sukkah 52b).

Happy are the Children of Israel, who defeat the evil inclination by engaging in Torah study and by helping their fellow, the Talmud finally teaches (Avodah Zarah 5b).

We see from here just how fierce the battle against the evil inclination is, for it tries by all possible means to make a man transgress, and it often changes its name [i.e., its tactics] to make him fall to the lowest depths of hell. It even attacks him when he is suffering, and finally it settles down within him.

However, by the grace of His kindness, the Holy One, blessed be He, has lavished us with sound advice that allows us to completely destroy the evil inclination: “If that scoundrel comes upon you, drag him to the house of study. If he is as hard as rock, he will shatter; if he is as strong as iron, he will melt” (Sukkah 52b). Only the diligent and in-depth study of Torah will destroy it, as it is written: “The one who slaughters his evil inclination [Rashi: Kills it and repents after it had incited him to sin] and confesses his sins is as if he ‘sacrificed’ himself to the Holy One, blessed be He, and he will honor Him in this world and the World to Come” (Sanhedrin 43b).

As we have seen, the evil inclination constantly works against a man as it tries to kill him. Now the Talmud teaches that it ascends to Heaven, testifies against a man, and then comes back down to take his soul (Bava Batra 16a). How is it that the evil inclination tries to kill him if it only receives permission to harass and make him sin?

The reason is that the wicked are called “dead” even while they are still alive (Berachot 18b), for the sinner resembles an invalid, an unkosher animal (Chullin 42a). His heart becomes dulled following the sins he commits. Concerning this the Talmud teaches: “Do not read venitmeitem [and you become impure], read venitamtem [and

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you became dull-hearted]” (Yoma 39a). Because of the hardship that the evil inclination makes a man suffer, he is considered as being dead, even while alive. The evil inclination kills a man by means of the sins that it makes him commit.

To defend himself against this mortal attack, a man needs solid divine help and tremendous miracles. Let us therefore purify ourselves; let us study Torah diligently; let us continuously grow and acquire good character traits. The Holy One, blessed be He, will then help us with His miracles to completely triumph over the evil inclination.

By erecting the Sanctuary by himself, Moses wanted us to understand that G-d considers each of us to be a miniature Sanctuary. By spiritually building ourselves, we must realize that we have to fight the evil inclination on a daily basis, and that we need G-d’s urgent help to triumph over it. Even if we have attained all 48 virtues by which the Torah is acquired, we must not fool ourselves by relying on our own strength.

The 48 beams of the Sanctuary that Moses erected allude to these 48 virtues, and he refused any help from the Children of Israel in order to teach us that all help should come primarily from G-d. It is that help which allows a man to conquer his evil inclination. Without it, all accomplishments are in vain; all attempts to erect the sanctuary will result in a collapse.

The beams were erected by themselves, which alludes to the fact that man’s victory over the evil inclination is always temporary: He can conquer it today, yet be conquered tomorrow. Divine help is therefore indispensable in maintaining the sanctuary that we have erected. We lay the foundations – the 48 beams/virtues – yet we still need G-d’s help, not that of an intermediary (“the middle bar inside the beams shall extend from end to end” [Exodus 26: 28]). For this, let us undertake to study Torah and even devote our lives to it. It will thus become ours and help us to become pure.

Moses did not rely on miracles, but he had to rely on G-d’s help. A man should strengthen himself each day against his evil inclination and grow in his devotion to and study of Torah, which is the only way to fight the evil inclination. With regards to this, the Midrash teaches: “Rabbi Chiya bar Yosef says, ‘During the seven days of miluim [inauguration ceremony of the Sanctuary], Moses set up and took down the Sanctuary twice each day.’ Rabbi Chanina says three times a day” (Tanhuma, Pekudei 11). Moses wanted the Children of Israel to understand that at every hour of the day or night, the evil inclination strives to demolish the personal sanctuary that they erected, and so they must constantly fight against it (twice each day, morning and night; or three times by means of their daily prayers) to prevent this from happening. Let us therefore intensify our study of Torah, strengthen our fear of G-d, and devote ourselves completely to Him. We will then experience joy in this world and in the World to Come.

THE STORY OF THE WEEK

For a Debt of Seven Perutahs

Rabbi Eliyahu Lopian recounted this terrible story as he heard it from his teacher, Rabbi Tzvi Broide, who heard it from his teacher and father-in-law Rabbi Simcha Zissel of Kelem, who heard it from his Rav, Rabbi Israel Salanter, who heard it from his Rav, Rabbi Yosef Zundel of Salant, who finally heard it from his Rav, Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin, who lived through it.

One of the best students of Etz Chaim yeshiva in Volozhin fell ill. Since he needed care, he packed his bags and set off for his parents’ home accompanied by one of his friends from the yeshiva. Near nightfall, they arrived in a village and decided to spend the night at an inn. The innkeeper gave them their bill in the morning, but when the sick boy counted his money, he realized that he was seven perutahs short. The innkeeper said that he trusted him, and that he could repay this debt when the opportunity arose. From there, the two boys continued their journey until they arrived at the sick boy’s home, at which point his friend wished him a complete and speedy recovery, then traveled back to Volozhin. Before he left, however, the sick boy remembered his debt and gave his friend seven perutahs, asking that he not forget to pay the innkeeper on his way back. His friend promised to do so, and they parted ways amicably.

Meanwhile the boy’s illness grew worse, and not long afterwards his soul left this world. The boy was mourned when this sad news reached the yeshiva, and at his funeral it was said that he would have become one of the greats of the generation. The custom at the Volozhin yeshiva was for the voice of Torah to be heard 24 hours a day, and there were students taking shifts studying around the clock. One evening after midnight, Rabbi Chaim was walking in the hallways of the yeshiva looking to encourage the diligent study of Torah in the large Beit Midrash. Then to his great surprise, he saw with his very eyes the deceased boy as he was walking to meet him. Without fear, Rabbi Chaim asked him, “How did your judgment go above?” The boy then revealed to him that when he was before the Celestial Court, his merits and faults were weighed, and he was found to be clean of all sin. This boy had been one of the best students in Torah and possessed a tremendous fear of Heaven, and the few sins that he had committed (“For there is no man so wholly righteous on earth that he [always] does good and never sins” – Ecclesiastes 7:20) were atoned for by his illness and repentance. It was therefore decreed that he should enter directly into Gan Eden. Yet as he was at the gates of Gan Eden, the Satan stood in his way and barred the entrance before him, screaming that he would never let him enter because he had committed theft! He revealed that the boy had left this world while still owing seven perutahs to an innkeeper. And even if it was not his fault (since he had given the money to his friend and asked that he reimburse the debt for him), it remained that the innkeeper was still missing seven perutahs, a debt that he had not given up hope on and which he still expected to be repaid. This story rattled the Celestial Court, and it was decided that although the boy was absolutely not guilty, nevertheless the innkeeper remained without his seven perutahs. The boy was thus given extraordinary permission to take on the appearance of the living to come before his Rav and ask that he resolve this debt. The boy recounted all this to Rav Chaim, who promised that he would settle the whole affair. At that, the boy suddenly vanished. Rav Chaim then called for the boy’s friend, and he acknowledged that he had received the seven perutahs to repay the debt, yet bitterly regretted that he had forgotten about it up to that point. Thus he returned to the innkeeper and repaid the whole amount. Since that time, the deceased never reappeared, for he had attained rest in his heavenly abode.

IN MEMORY OF THE TSADIKIM RABBI ITZCHAK HADAD

Born in Algeria, Rabbi Itzchak Hadad was one of the most illustrious figures in the Jewish world. His numerous talents and immense scholarship allowed him to create works of great richness. He first went to settle in Jerba, Tunisia, and there he extended his stay to benefit from the wisdom of his teachers, the Gaonim Rabbi Nissim Hayat and Rabbi Avraham Hacoen. These teachers could foresee the exceptional destiny that awaited him, and they enabled him to grow in knowledge both to render Halachic decisions and to teach Torah.

From his youth, Rabbi Itzchak adopted a method that was unknown up to then in Tunisia. In order to preserve his Chiddushim (novel interpretations) of the Torah, as well as the knowledge that he received from his teachers, Rabbi Nissim had them printed.

The works of Rabbi Itzchak became famous. The first of his books, *Karneh Re'em*, presents the commentaries of Rashi and Rabbi Eliyahu Mizrahi on the Torah. It also contains a collection of Chiddushim entitled *Zerah Itzchak*. His original commentaries on Shas have been assembled under the title *Toldot Itzchak*.

Among the sages of Jerba, Rabbi Itzchak Hadad was the first to have his works printed in order to distribute them among his community.

Rabbi Itzchak's three sons, precious gems that adorned his head, were Rabbi Yaakov, Rabbi Shimon, and Rabbi Avraham.

The youngest, Rabbi Avraham, founded a synagogue that still exists to our day and which carries his name. There Rabbi Avraham kept a room for his father to allow him to study and resolve various community problems.

Another of his sons, righteous among the righteous, was motivated by a pure heart and benefited from the blessing of Ruach Kodesh. He once alerted his brother, the owner of a vineyard, that thieves were about to try and steal from it. Shocked, his brother armed himself and went running out to his vineyard. In fact, he did find thieves there, and imagine their surprise to discover the owner in his vineyard – armed! Overcome by fear, they took to flight.

The light of Rabbi Itzchak Hadad was extinguished on I Adar 9, 5515 (1755).

THE PATH OF THE JUST HUMILITY - PART I

The man who possesses humility as a positive character trait (humility being the opposite of arrogance) is protected from numerous problems. If he has acquired this trait, he has performed a commandment for which he will receive a reward in proportion to the degree of humility attained. Humility is the foundation of Divine worship. Our Sages say, "Whether we accomplish little or much, the essential is to have pure intentions" (Menachot 110a). On the other hand, an act born of pride is not accepted by Hashem, Who loathes this trait, as it is written, "A haughty heart is an abomination to the L-RD." Because of his arrogance, a man prays without receiving a response: "Even if you were to intensify your prayer, I will not listen" (Isaiah 1:15).

Alternatively, the virtues of humility and modesty permit a person to acquire all good things, for "He gives grace to the humble" (Proverbs 3:34). Now if a man finds favor in the eyes of Hashem, his prayers will be immediately answered, as it is written, "It will be that before they call, I will answer" (Isaiah 65:24). When a humble man carries out the commandments, these are accepted with good favor and joy, as it is written, "For G-d has already approved your deeds" (Ecclesiastes 9:7).

What do we call humility? It is the submission and modesty felt by the soul of a man who considers himself as nothing. A man should put this virtue into practice at all times by judging himself as insufficient. He should maintain a humble spirit, a sensitive heart, and a soul broken by failure.

The essential aspect of humility is to undertake a personal introspection. We should do so while we still taste of peace and tranquility, health and riches, benefits that the Creator has bestowed upon us with unmerited goodness. A man will then consider the greatness and superiority of Hashem, and he will rationalize as follows; "What am I, if not a lowly creature, living in a material and ephemeral world? All the meritorious acts that I can accomplish are but a drop in the ocean compared to my debts." He will always act in view of accomplishing the will of Hashem, and not to be approved by men or to obtain an immediate benefit. Such is the foundation of humility. A man who shows himself humble before Hashem because he has fallen sick (or has injured himself, or has lost a child or someone dear to him, or his fortune or position have been lost, or he has become old, etc.) has nevertheless not attained true modesty, although humility and contrition are always pleasing to Hashem.

THE MORAL OF THE STORY

From the Maggid of Dubno

It is written, “These are the accounts of the Sanctuary ... that were rendered at Moses’ bidding” (Exodus 38:21). The Midrash states: “Our Sages have taught that to collect money, we do not appoint a single person for the task, but at least two. Now Moses was the only treasurer, yet despite everything he called others and made them responsible to count for him, as it is written: ‘These are the accounts of the Sanctuary.’ It is not written, ‘that Moses counted,’ but rather, ‘that were rendered at Moses’ bidding’ – by Itamar. Concerning this it is written: ‘They did not make an accounting with the men into whose hand they gave the money to pay out to the workmen, for they acted with integrity. The money of guilt-offerings and the money of sin-offerings was not brought to the Temple of the L-RD’ [II Kings 12:16-17].”

It is surprising that the Midrash tries to prove that Moses wanted to have the offerings counted for him by using a passage that says exactly the opposite! In addition, it is very unlikely that someone would have suspected Moses, the man of G-d, of having stolen any of the money at his disposal, for concerning Moses Scripture testifies: “In My entire house he is the trusted one” (Numbers 12:7).

To better understand this, let us illustrate by using the following parable:

A man had a daughter who was extraordinarily beautiful and possessed exquisite character traits. All he wanted was to have the opportunity to give her a large dowry, but each time that a prospective suitor was presented to her, she found a fault with him, so perfect that she herself was. One day, a matchmaker from a distant land came and proposed a match with the son of a famous wealthy man. However the father thought to himself, “Who knows if this young man is good-looking enough for my daughter?” He considered how he was going to bring it up with the matchmaker, for he couldn’t say that before agreeing to the match, he wanted the young man to come and let his daughter see him. Such an important man would consider that as an insult. He therefore resorted to a ruse. He told the matchmaker, “My friend, you should realize that my daughter

is marvelous in my eyes, but who knows if she’ll please the young man that you’re proposing for her? No one wants to make unnecessary expenses, and I also don’t want to commit myself before being sure that this match will be successful. Therefore let the young man come over and see my daughter for himself. Then if she pleases him, we can finalize the match.” Naturally, it was the opposite that he had in mind, for he only wanted the young man to visit so that he could see if his daughter liked him.

This is what happened with Moses, the man of G-d. Since he was to employ each offering in relation to the purity of its giver’s heart, he needed everyone to gather around him so that he could evaluate how each one’s offering would be used. However Moses was too modest to say that, so he had to reverse things by stating: “Because you have given a great amount of silver and gold, at least come and count it with me!” This gave him the opportunity to observe the Children of Israel at his leisure and to plumb the depths of each one’s heart.

This is what the Midrash expresses with subtlety: “These are the accounts of the Sanctuary ... that were rendered at Moses’ bidding.” It is not written: “that Moses counted,” but rather, “that were rendered at Moses’ bidding.” The Midrash underlines that he asked them to come so that he could take an accounting of the offerings in their presence. To explain Moses’ intention, the Sages added that concerning this it is said, “They did not make an accounting with the men into whose hand they gave the money to pay out to the workmen, for they acted with integrity.” In other words, the Sages wanted us to understand that there is no reason to believe that the basis for having others count the money was because Moses was viewed with suspicion. The basis for that lay elsewhere: “The money of guilt-offerings and the money of sin-offerings was not brought to the Temple of the L-RD,” meaning that Moses just wanted to verify if, among the offerings, there were any that had been given without completely pure intentions. This is hinted at by alluding to the phrase, “The money of guilt-offerings and the money of sin-offerings.”