

Succa Topic 1: Identifying the Yetzer Hara

Posted by Ykv\_schwartz - 11 Aug 2009 08:29

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As promised, I am starting the topics from messeches succa. I hope to explain some of the concepts about the yezer hara, as explained by our Rabbis. Please read the [succa thread here](#), to gain proper familiarity with the sections. I do not have a clear vision how I am laying it all yet, so please have patience. Comments will be greatly appreciated. I do want to warn the reader, that while I hope to bring inspiring thoughts, my focus is not that. I am just trying to penetrate the truth. Though, if you have any stories or vortlech that relate to anything I speak about, by all means share.

I think it is important to comment here that I am not trying to prove anything. I am just relating a sugya as I understand it and continue to learn it. I am trying to remain as objective as possible. My sole purpose is just to understand an intriguing sugya, as I gain greater clarity the words of our holy Rabbis.

I think we are ready to go.

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Introduction- Two Forms of the Yetzer Hara

Posted by Ykv\_schwartz - 11 Aug 2009 08:35

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**Introduction- Two Forms of the Yetzer Hara**

Upon delving into the words of our Holy Rabbis in the sugya of the yetzer hara, we are struck with a blatant contradiction. One on hand we find sources that refers to the yetzer hara as an external self contained being known as the ????. It seems to have a personality of its own who desires nothing else but to make man sin. But we also find sources where our Rabbis refer to the yetzer hara as man's physical drives. The yezer hara is none other than man himself. When we look in the mirror, we can see our yetzer hara. We therefore stand baffled and confused at this mystery as we try to identify what is the yetzer hara.

Rav Yisroel Salanter addresses the above question in his famous Iggeres Hamussar. He explains that both approaches are true. There are in fact two distinct forms of the yetzer hara. There is the physical form on one hand and then there is the spiritual form on the other hand.

[This basic idea can be found in many seforim. I quote Rav Yisroel because he elaborates on this point in clear terminology. Another good place to look is in Likutei Moharan #72, where Rav Nachman addresses the issue head on. However, the terminology is obviously a lot harder to understand.]

The first form refers to one's negative character traits and natural physical desires. This is a natural and physical force internal in man's body. These traits can be natural tendencies that a particular person was born with. Or, they may be acquired through life through improper exposure. We can often detect such forces with methods of science and psychology. As stated above, this yetzer hara is none other than man himself. The Yetzer Tov counterpart is the intellect (sechel). The intellect is what detects rationally right from wrong.

The second form refers to a spiritual force external to man. It is an angel like contaminated figure (?? ?????, as Rav Yisroel refers to it) that persuades man to act improperly by purposely tricking him into seeing the world in a crooked fashion. Chazal often refer to this force as the satan (???). The Yetzer Tov counterpart of this form is a pure and holy form from above (?? ?????) that inspires man to do the ratzon Hashem, which we may refer to as the Neshama. Man's spiritual desires to bond with Hashem emanates from this pure source.

When the Rishonim discuss the issue of the yetzer hara, they are usually discussing the first form. Every man has the fight between the body and mind. The body wants physicality and the mind knows what is right from wrong. The mind tries to guide the body in the right direction. Man is constantly torn between what he wants and what he knows to be true. The most elementary form of *milchemes hayetzer* is whereby man tries to conquer and control his desires. This is a constant struggle between the will of the mind and the want of the body.

By reading the Shemoneh Perakim of the Rambam, one can begin to gain a clear picture into this level of the *miclehems hayetzer*. The Rambam maps out for us in clear terminologies the natural powers in man. His Son, "the Maspik", elaborates further on the principles set forth by his father, as he gives us clear guidance on how to deal with the natural tendencies and impulses in man. Man recognizes the forces within him and controls them using his intellect. He recognizes right from wrong and makes sure to use his physical drives for the good. His intellect is not only used for making decisions. His intellect is also used to train his body into desiring the right things. The intellect realizes that naturally he set up to sin. And so he works to create a change in himself.

As man proceeds with this fight, he learns to overcome the natural and physical desires to the point that he is able to control all his desires and directs them towards Hashem. He realizes

that every function has a purpose and he should not abuse his desires. As he grows further, his physical desires are only awakened for good purposes. He desires nothing but good. At this level, he no longer naturally desires physicality as he is now interested in nothing but spiritual pursuits. At the highest level, he has no desires at all in the physical world, as reaches the level of a malach.

Rav Dessler explains that as long as a person does not address his basic yetzer hara, his situation is very low. At this low level, the ??? does not need to come and trick man into sinning. He will sin on his own. His body is conditioned to sin. This is natural. The person is already a slave to his own physicality and will lead himself into total failure and despair. The Satan's work is taken care of without him getting involved.

Once man begins to overcome his natural inclinations by changing and reforming his character traits to the 'good', the malach (???) comes to persuade him and trick him. At this level, the man transformed his fight with the yetzer hara. This is a totally new fight. This is the fight between the powers of kedusha and tumah. At this level, man is constantly deciding between two opposing forces that come to influence him. At the higher levels of this yetzer hara, the fight is far removed from physical matters. The yetzer hara may trick a big masmid into creating bitul Torah, for example.

Our Rabbis tell us that even at this level, the yezer hara is able to attack man in physical ways. IYH, tomorrow, we will try to delve into this topic at greater length as we work to understand how the ??? is able to enter our pure lives and make us fall in the most obvious of aveiros.

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Re: Succa Topic 1: Identifying the Yetzer Hara  
Posted by yechidah - 11 Aug 2009 13:04

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Dear Yaakov,

You will (and definitely should) receive inspiring comments along the way from those who see the wonderful insights you are bringing forth-but also please make sure you also have a version without the comments,(PDF,Word,ect)like a handbook type of thing,because when you are completed I would like to have all of it as a one unified yesod,because that really is what this is.

Hatzlacha & Bracha

yechida

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Re: Succa Topic 1: Identifying the Yetzer Hara  
Posted by Efshar Letaken - 11 Aug 2009 22:08

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U'Voh E.L. V'Noshak L'Reb Ykv Al Roishoi!

I never had clarity on this like I do now.

Reb Ykv

You put life into my Soul.

E.L.

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Gaining Clarity of the Spiritual Yetzer Hara  
Posted by Ykv\_schwartz - 13 Aug 2009 08:53

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### **Gaining Clarity of the Spiritual Yetzer Hara**

“???? ???? ???? ???? ???? ????” (Tehillim 37). Chazal

[url=[rehab-my-site.com/guardureyes/forum/index.php?topic=568.msg6707#msg6707](http://rehab-my-site.com/guardureyes/forum/index.php?topic=568.msg6707#msg6707)]section  
#7[url]- Every Day the Yetzer Hara Increases] explain this pasuk as referring to the yetzer

hara. The yetzer hara gets stronger each day and yearns to kill the tzaddik. An obvious question needs to be addressed. If this is what the pasuk means, why does the pasuk speak only of the tzadik? Don't non-tzadikim also have a yetzer hara?

Based on the above principles of Rav Yisroel, we can understand. Chazal are referring to the spiritual form of the yetzer hara. We can see this based on the fact that this yetzer hara has a personality of its own. The Pasuk speaks of the yetzer as yearning (????) and seeking (????). Only the spiritual yetzer hara can do this. The physical yetzer hara is none other than man himself. It would be foolish to describe man's inner desires and negative character traits with such personality descriptions. And certainly we could not speak of man's inner desires as trying to seek and kill oneself (unless he is mentally ill). Psychologists, physicians and scientists would have a good laugh if you told them that the above statement. If we wanted, we could relegate this statement to the annals of poetry and say that chazal are just making a point. They are explaining our milchemes hayetzer with words of drama.

As stated above, this is not chazal's intent at all. They are not speaking of the natural yetzer hara. This pasuk speaks of the spiritual yetzer hara. And this form has a personality. He is external to man and he has an agenda. This form has a goal. His goal is to kill.

Now we can understand why this pasuk speak only of the tzaddik. The less perfected one is, the less is his spiritual yetzer hara. Being that this pasuk is speaking of the spiritual yetzer hara, it speaks only of the tzaddik. Only the tzaddik has this spiritual yetzer hara. A person that is not yet perfected is already a slave to his own physicality and will lead himself into total failure and despair on his own. He does not need a spiritual force to persuade him to sin.

We find a similar idea in [section #5](#), entitled "The Damage of the Yetzer Hara". Chazal explain that the yetzer hara will be sent away as a punishment for all the damage he created. Based on a pasuk, (Yoel 2,20), they explain further that one of the greatest 'crimes' of the yetzer hara is that he puts most of his attention to the talmidei chachamim in order to destroy them. The fact that the yetzer hara is being punished is a clear indication that chazal are referring to the spiritual yetzer hara. And furthermore, he is being punished for 'putting his attention'. We could never describe man's physical desires as 'putting attention' into damaging himself. Once again, chazal are speaking of the spiritual form of the yetzer hara. The yetzer hara in this context as well is being described as one who seeks to cause trouble to the tzadik.

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Re: Succa Topic 1: Identifying the Yetzer Hara

Posted by Efshar Letaken - 13 Aug 2009 23:09

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Solid Stuff!

I'm going to have to print it out so that I can make Chazoro on it.

E.L.

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Re: Succa Topic 1: Identifying the Yetzer Hara  
Posted by Ykv\_schwartz - 14 Aug 2009 07:34

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Thanks E.L. and yechida.

I hope to add another installment soon.

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Re: Succa Topic 1: Identifying the Yetzer Hara  
Posted by Efshar Letaken - 14 Aug 2009 16:03

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Reb Ykv,

Ich Hub Gevart In Gevart, In Beis Medrash In Ah Vinkel.

Di Lechtel Bai Di Umid, Hut GeShaant Dus Letsteh Shain.

That's from M.B.D. for those of you that didn't get it.

E.L.

**Admin edit:** [Download that song here.](#)

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Re: Succa Topic 1: Identifying the Yetzer Hara  
Posted by bardichev - 14 Aug 2009 16:38

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MY FAVORITE SONG IS ON THAT RECORD YES RECORD

REB YOM TOV EHRLICHS SHABBOS NIGGUN

YESS I AM THAT OLD!

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Re: Succa Topic 1: Identifying the Yetzer Hara  
Posted by Ykv\_schwartz - 16 Aug 2009 07:37

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berdichev and E.L.

Thank you for that short advertisement. We are now ready to proceed in our topic as we move on to the next discussion. We will attempt to understand the magnitude of the yetzer hara. Who has a bigger yetzer hara? The tzadik or the rasha? Or, does it depends on *which* yetzer hara we are referring to? You knew I was going to say that. I see you are learning so quickly.

Stay tuned...

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## The Magnitude of the Yetzer Hara

Posted by Ykv\_schwartz - 16 Aug 2009 07:43

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Note: All references to the gemoras are [at this link](#), where I subdivided the sugya into sections for easy reference.

### The Magnitude of the Yetzer Hara

A question that is often raised when studying our sugya in succa is a contradiction with regards to the magnitude of the yetzer hara. Some Gemoras seem to imply that the tzadik's yetzer hara is greater than the rasha's (Sections #1, #5, #6, #7). And some seem to say the opposite (Sections #2, #11, #12, #13).

The following Gemoras teach us that the tzadik has a greater yetzer hara:

- Section #6 states "He who is greater than his friend has a greater yetzer hara than his friend".
- Similarly, we learn (section #1) that in future times, Hashem will slaughter the yetzer hara. The tzadikim's yetzer hara looks like a mountain and the reshaim's looks like a [thin] thread. As we learned previously, the yetzer hara of the tzadik tries much harder to defeat the tzadik. He puts all his attention into destroying the talmidei chachamim (section #5) and he seeks to kill the tzadik (section #1).

On the other hand we learn the following:

- The gemora tells us that the yetzer hara starts off as a thin thread and eventually turn into a thick rope (section #2, "Thin to Thick"). Many explain this gemora to be teaching us the concept of the more you give in to the yetzer hara, the harder it is to pull away.
- The Gemora (section #10, "Dual Loyalty of the Yetzer Hara") quotes a pasuk (Mishlei 29), "???? ???? ???? ?????? ???? ?????", which means that if a person spoils his servant ("yetzer hara"), it will eventually become the master of the house.
- The Gemora teaches a similar idea in Section #12, ("From Passerby to Master of the House"), by explaining that as man gives in to his temptations, the yetzer hara



eventually rules over the man.

- In section #11 (“Internalizing the Yetzer Hara”) we learn that the more a person gives in to his yetzer hara, the more internal and second nature it becomes. Eventually it becomes #12 (“The More You Feed The More You Need”) teaches us that man has a small organ (the reproductive organ). If he feeds it, it will become hungry. If he starves it, it will become satiated.

I do hope to address these Gemoras in greater detail in the next topic entitled, “Addiction-losing control”. But for now I would like to address them as they pertain to our discussion. How can we reconcile this apparent contradiction?

The **Arvei Nachal** (?? ???) answers this contradiction based on the assertion we set forth above. It all depends on what kind of yetzer hara we are talking about. The tzadik has a small physical yetzer hara. His character traits and physical desires are close to perfected. He does not feed his physical desires for the sake of pleasure. He will not naturally sin. When faced with any form of temptation, he will not desire it the way a simpleton desires it. And any desires he has, he will have the proper self control and will power to hold back.

When faced with a situation that will normally anger another person, the tzadik will remain calm. The more perfected tzadik, like Hillel Hanasi, will not even be tempted to get angry. The less perfected tzadik, although he may feel anger, will be wise enough to control himself. He understands the magnitude of the sin of anger and is capable of self control. We can therefore safely state that the tzadik’s yetzer hara is small in comparison to the rasha’s. The Rasha is enslaved and the tzadik is free.

However, because of the fact that the tzadik is perfected, the ??? needs to work over time to get the Tzadik to sin. When the tzadik fights back, the ??? makes new and stronger attempts. As the tzadik wins each battle, the spiritual yetzer hara gets stronger and advances new techniques.

We can now reconcile the above contradiction. When Chazal say that the greater a person is the greater is his yetzer hara, they are referring to the spiritual yetzer hara. When chazal tell us that he who gives in to temptations has a larger and more controlling yetzer hara, they are referring to the physical yetzer hara.

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Re: Succa Topic 1: Identifying the Yetzer Hara

Posted by Noorah BAmram - 16 Aug 2009 13:07

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We can now reconcile the above contradiction. When Chazal say that the greater a person is the greater is his yetzer hara, they are referring to the spiritual yetzer hara.

There is a story that someone said to the gaon of Vilna "if only I had the rebbes YH" to which the Gaon trembled and replied "chas V'shalom, you have no idea how strong my YH is".

I never understood this story before. It seems ludicrous to think that an angel as the Vilna gaon

Now the way you are explaining it .....it seems pashut.....the Gaon was referring to the spiritual YH!

Chazak V'amatz! Gevaldik!

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Re: Succa Topic 1: Identifying the Yetzer Hara

Posted by Noorah BAmram - 16 Aug 2009 13:18

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Reb Yaakov,

There is an Ohr Hachaim on last weeks parsha that speaks directly on the different forms of YH. He says that there are 4 different aspects of the YH! should have even a remote connection to the base physical YH, so well known to us

He ties it beautifully into the pasuk "kee yisichah achichu ben imechah ..... ' See Ohr Hachaim Devarim 13:7

Let me know what you think.

Your humble student

Noorah

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Re: Succa Topic 1: Identifying the Yetzer Hara  
Posted by Efshar Letaken - 18 Aug 2009 04:02

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Shomaim News - Torah Section.

The Y"H has been spotted trembling with Fear,  
Realizing that his end is Near.

He saw Reb Ykv's shiur at G.Y.Eyes,  
As Reb ykv explains the Y"H's Lies.

He Knows that as soon as Reb Ykv's clarify's what the Y"H is all About,  
His end is near, without any Doubt.

E.L.

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Re: Succa Topic 1: Identifying the Yetzer Hara  
Posted by Ykv\_schwartz - 18 Aug 2009 11:47

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E.L.

Thanks so much for letting us know. I had no clue. I don't normally read the news. Just goes to

show the power of one simple shiur.

I never understood this story before. It seems ludicrous to think that an angel as the Vilna gaon should have even a remote connection to the base physical YH, so well known to us

Yes, Noorah, so many people are confused about this. I still don't quite get it. If you are so daring to read Rav Nachman, take a look at the piece I referenced above LM #72, where he explains the sins of Dovid Hamelech and Shlomo Hamelech based on the Y"H model we present here.

There is an Ohr Hachaim on last week's parsha that speaks directly on the different forms of YH. He says that there are 4 different aspects of the YH!

Thanks for mentioning. I looked it up. Didn't quite understand it fully, but got the basic gist. I guess you can say it is a different approach entirely than the one that Rav Yisroel laid out. He seems to refer to the yetzer hara as purely an external being that comes to persuade man to sin. Even the physical yetzer hara is described this way. You will find in the maharal, perek 2, he goes very much with the external model, like the Ohr Hachaim. I am sure all these 'approaches' are explaining the same thing from a different angle. But I have not figured it out. I was sitting at that maharal not knowing what to do with it. But if you get a chance, look it up. It has great practical yesodos. Maybe I will share.

For most people, like myself, it is hard to always think of the yetzer hara in external terms. It is easier to think of him as your physical body acting naturally (at least at the lower levels). This helps me identify him. Of course, I think of the ??? figure as well. But, as my proper avodah I focus on me not acting on physicality and making my body less physical. This is what I described from the Rambam, at I hope to explain a beautiful idea from the Rabeinu Yona on this at a later stage. Even the maharal, does not deny such an idea, as he himself discusses in perek 4. Our protection against the ??? is mainly in tefilla, as you (and me) like to say all the time '???? ?' ?? ?????'. Just you like Aramaic, as it is presented in the Gemara. I speak Lashon Hakodesh, as it is presented in the Pasuk (take a look at the Maharsha). And every night from the day I started my sobriety, I yell that whole Pasuk out. Even if I am so tired, that I cannot say all of the Pesukim in Krias Shema Al Hamita, that Pasuk is a must. Remember, **recovering addicts are an ??? ????? ???**.

So now in light of of E.L.'s post, lets all hold hands and yell out: ???? ?' ?? ?????

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