

Parshas VaYaishev - Protection of the Yetzer Hara

Posted by ovadia - 28 Oct 2010 10:33

Note: The title of this thread refers to the last dvar Torah posted.

Parshas Chayai Sarah - Living each day

This week's Parsha begins by telling us the age Sarah Imeinu was when she died. The posuk breaks up each digit in the number of years she lived, with the word "years", and Rashi quotes Chazal who say that this is to tell us that Sarah was as pure from sin at the age of a hundred as she was when she was twenty and as beautiful at the age of twenty as she was when she was seven.

Rav S. R. Hirsh ZT"l says that the simple reading of the posuk reads that Sarah was one hundred years, twenty years and seven years. These three figures correspond to three different periods in a person's life: childhood, adolescence and old age. Sarah used each of these to the full and took whatever she achieved in one period to the next. Thus, she took her childlike beauty into adolescence and her spiritual purity till her old age.

Similarly later on the pasuk describes the old age of Avraham Avinu as "ba bayamim", meaning that he lived the days. He did not let himself drown in the time. He lived each day to its fullest, and took the achievement of each day with him into the next.

Rav Hirsch comments on how generally people live their lives exactly the opposite. Adults wish for the beauty of a child and grownups wish for the purity of "under 20's". That is not like Sarah who took the purity and beauty with her into the next period. The phrase "childlike innocence" is a misconception, because it implies that purity from sin is the same as innocence. This is a mistake. The definition of "innocence" is one who has not been exposed to a temptation, while purity is one who withstood the temptation despite the exposure. Sarah did not live her life in childlike innocence; she took the purity of an "under twenty" with her for her entire life.

This reminded me of the distinction Dov made between "stopping for a day" and "one day at a time".

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Re: Parshas Chayai Sarah - Living each day
Posted by Yesod Tzadik - 28 Oct 2010 16:26

thanks, very nice insight.

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Re: Parshas Chayai Sarah - Living each day
Posted by ovadia - 04 Nov 2010 12:41

Another thought on Parshas Chayei Sara, which I wrote whe I reached 90 days.

[ovadia wrote on 11 Apr 2010 10:08:](#)

I once heard this powerful idea from R' Mattisyahu Salamon Shlita.

Most Rishonim say that the last Nisayon of Avraham Avinu was the Akeida. However Rabeinu Yona says that the last Nisayon was the burial of Sara.

The question is obvious. After having been through the Akeida, what was the big deal about having to haggle over the plot to bury Sara?

The answer is that sometimes a person feels after having been through a very hard Nisayon "HaShem I have done my bit, leave me alone already!" and Avraham Avinu had every reason to feel this way. He had just been through nine difficult Nisyanos. Surely he had proven his loyalty to HaShem! But in this world there is no letup, and that was the final most difficult test.

So for all those who have reached 90 - the battle has just begun!!

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Re: Parshas Toldos – lip-service or heart-service

Posted by ovadia - 04 Nov 2010 12:57

Parshas Toldos – lip-service or heart-service

(The following Dvar torah although sobering is not intended to make anyone feel down or meyuash. To me it gives a perspective to our struggle with the Y”H.)

The pasuk tells us that Esav was “tzayid befiv”. The common understanding of this is that Esav tricked Yitschok into thinking that he was really a righteous person and Chazal tell us that he would ask Yitschok halachic questions such as whether maser needs to be taken from straw, thereby misleading him.

However Rav Dessler ZT”L quotes from the Arizal that these discussions were in fact genuine. Otherwise there was no way Esav could have conned Yitschok. Nevertheless there was a critical flaw in Esav’s mindset; all his righteousness was only “befiv”, it was all lip-service. In his heart he was the wicked Esav and there was no contradiction between his wicked heart and his “pure’ mouth.

This is what is meant in Chazal by Timtum Halev; referring to the situation a person reaches at which the Avairo causes a blockage between the heart and the mind; the sins of a person can actually prevent inspiration from penetrating a person’s heart.

Rav Yeruchem Zt”L would say that many people may have an inspiration or be bothered by their conscience. However the only difference this might make to them is that it might diminish their pleasure from a sinful act without making any essential difference.

Similarly there is an expression used among the Baalei Mussar that: Reshaim Mlaim Charotos; the wicked are full of regrets. The reason for this is that since the regret of a wicked person even if it is genuine is only external they never become absorbed by his heart in a way that will make him change his ways, and so the "regrets" just stay in one place.

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Re: Parshas Toldos – lip-service or heart-service
Posted by an honest mouse - 10 Nov 2010 11:07

thanks a lot ovadiah that was a really powerful idea, so relevant to todays frum society, not just us addicts. I said it over at the shabbos table.

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Re: Parshas Vayaitsai - climbing the ladder
Posted by ovadia - 10 Nov 2010 12:30

Parshas Vayaitzai - Climbing the ladder

The following Dvar Torah is part of a chapter in Michtav Me'Eliyahu . For the whole piece see MM vol. 1 p. 24 and Strive for Truth vol. 1 p. 93.

At the beginning of this week's Parsha the Torah tells us of the vision of the ladder which Ya'akov Avinu was shown as he fled from Esav.

Rav Dessler ZT"L sees the ladder as the symbol of man's "ascent" in his service of HaShem. This service is like a ladder firmly planted on the ground with its head reaching up to heaven. Rung by rung the person must work to combat his Yetzer Hara. He cannot jump any part of the way; all his life he has to progress laboriously from step to step.

Yet this vision to whom was it shown? To no less a tzadik than Ya'akov Avinu who Chazal say was the bechir shebeovos. Even this superlative tzadik was shown the vision of the ladder, hinting that for him too the only way to rise in the service of HaShem was by way of the rungs of the ladder.

A healthy person can go up the rungs of the ladder by himself, though he may well get tired if the ladder is a high one. One who is weak or ill climbs the ladder if he must, looking for as much help as possible in his weary ascent. A child scrambles up with his arms and legs and may succeed in climbing a few rungs. But what can the cripple do? Both his legs are amputated; he

cannot even stand. The flood-waters are surging round him; he must get to the top; it is a matter of life and death. What does he do? He screams for help. There is sure to be some kind person around who will carry him up on his back. He too gets to the top; but not by his own efforts. Someone else has taken him.

And so it is with the ladder of the service of HaShem. The tzadikim ascend by their own efforts, conquering the Yetzer hara at each step. Those who find the going difficult, and beginners (who are like children), try and help themselves by any means that present themselves; with shelo lishmah of all kinds. ***But there are those who are spiritual cripples and are no longer able to conquer their Yezer Hara' at all by their own efforts. They have become habituated to sin to such an extent that their hearts are defiled, and they are unable to ascend even the smallest step by themselves. What can they do? They can cry out to HaShem and he in his mercy will take them up to the top without their having to tread on a rung. If their heart is broken and their remorse for all their wrongdoing is thorough and sincere and they pour out their heart to HaShem they may suddenly find themselves at the top.*** The tzadik has to labor for many years to bring holiness into his heart; the baal teshuva has it implanted their directly by HaShem.

It follows that no sinner can say, "How can I ever do teshuva? I am so far from all that is good and holy; I am full of desire for all the wrong things; the avenues of teshuva are blocked for me." All he has to do is to see the situation truly and clearly, realize the terrible mess he has got himself into, be filled with sincere remorse and ask HaShem to help him - and his work will be done for him.

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Re: Parshas Vayaitsai - climbing the ladder
Posted by ovadia - 10 Nov 2010 12:38

Continuation of the previous piece:

Rav Dessler continues to explain that obviously no one envies the cripple who has to be carried up the ladder by others. And certainly the tsaddik need not envy the baal teshuva. Yet we find that Rav Yehuda Hanosi wept when he learned about life-long reshaim who had succeeded in gaining olam habo in one brief moment, saying "Some gain their world in one hour, while others have to fight for it during seventy long years!" Similarly, Chazal say "the place where baaley teshuva stand [in olam habo] is not accessible even to the greatest tsaddikim. How are we to understand this?"

The answer is this. The purpose of creation is to reveal the glory of HaShem. This can occur in two ways. It can be brought about by tsaddikim, who reveal G-d's majesty by their actions. By constantly sacrificing their will in order to do the will of their Creator they reveal the greatness of His spiritual power. It can also come about by our seeing the way G-d conducts His world.

A tsaddik reveals the glory of HaShem every time he make sthe right decision in a situation of temptation and in everyone of the manifold good deeds he does throughout his life. But the sinner has been occupied all his life in obscuring the glory of G-d. his heart has been so obstructed and contaminated by his sins that he finds himself unable to raise himself by his own efforts even to the slightest degree. ***But his effort, slight and ineffective though it may be, gives rise to heavenly aid to an unimagable extent. He reveals the infinite mercy of HaShem to a degree never achieved by the tsaddik. He reveals the mercy of teshuva. He finds himself taken by the hand and raised to the heights in one great leap.***

(From strive for Truth Vol. 1 p. 93)

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Re: Parshas Vayaitsai - climbing the ladder
Posted by ZemirosShabbos - 10 Nov 2010 17:15

wow, thanks Ovadia! that was marvelous!

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Re: Parshas Vayaitsai - climbing the ladder
Posted by the.guard - 12 Nov 2010 11:08

ACE laasos laHashem

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Re: Keyomim Achadim - living each day
Posted by ovadia - 16 Nov 2010 10:29

[guardureyes wrote on 12 Nov 2010 11:08:](#)

ACE laasos laHashem

Thanks Guard. On Shabbos I saw this. A little bit late but very relevant

Parshas Vayaitsai - Keyomim Achadim - living each day

One of the most baffling things in Parshas Vayaitsai is the conduct of Yaakov Avinu during his encounter with Rachel.

The Torah tells us: Then Yaakov kissed Rachel; and he raised his voice and wept. Later on after Yaakov worked for Lavan for seven years the Torah says: Yaakov said to Lavan "Deliver my wife for my term is fulfilled and I will consort with her." The explicit language used here provokes Chazal to comment that even the lowest of people do not talk in this manner. Chazal explain that Yaakov was in effect expressing the urgency of his mission to establish the twelve Shvatim of Israel. Yet even this seems to be a weak excuse for such explicit language.

Rav Elya Lopian ZT"L says that the key to understanding this lies in a profound observation of another verse in the story. In describing the seven years which Yaakov worked for Rachel the Torah says: So Yaakov worked seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him a few days because of his love for her.

This seems to contradict reality. Normally when we look forward to something, time seems to take longer to pass, yet with Yaakov, the opposite seems to occur; even though he eagerly awaits Rachel, for him the time passes quickly. Why?

The answer is found in the seemingly superfluous words at the end of the Pasuk: "they seemed

to him a few days . . . *because of his love for her.*" Although it is clear from the story that the time passed for him quickly because of his love for her, the Torah emphasizes it. Why?

The point the Torah is stressing is that his love was *for her*, entirely, and not for. . . . himself! There is a well known anecdote about someone who tells his friend that he likes fish, to which his friend responds "If you like fish then why do you eat them!"; It is not the fish that he likes, it is himself. This is the case with most love; the focus is on what one has to personally gain from the love.

When the Torah stresses that Yaakov loved Rachel, the implication is that everything Yaakov did in relation to Rachel was totally altruistic, with not one thought for himself. In this context it is almost natural for Yaakov to demand from Lavan: "Deliver my wife for my term is fulfilled and I will consort with her." He only wanted one thing; to establish the house of Israel with Rachel as its Matriarch.

And therein lies the distinction between the feeling of Yaakov during his seven year wait and the feeling of one who "can't wait" to fulfill his desire. In the latter case the time which passes is an obstacle to the objective and of course the wait seems endless. In contrast, to Yaakov each day was another step in building the ultimate goal; the process itself was part of the result. No wonder that they seemed to him a few days . . . [it was] because of his love *for her!*

Once again, the difference between "counting days" and living "one day at a time".

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Re: Keyomim Achadim - living each day
Posted by ovadia - 18 Nov 2010 09:48

Of course, my favourite.

Haftoras Parshas Vayishlach - Chazon Ovadia

From my first thread

www.guardyoureyes.org/forum/index.php?topic=1294.msg31424#msg31424 , a year ago.

I would like to tell you why I chose the username Ovadia. It is after Ovadia HaNovi who is my inspiration.

Chazal ask "Why did Ovadia prophesise about the downfall of Esav?"

Answer "Let Ovadia who lived between two wicked people (Achav and Ezevel) and was not influenced by them, and prophesise about Esav who lived with two righteous people (Yitschak and Rivka) And did not allow himself to be influenced by them.

R Dessler ZT"L explains that whereas we know that one is always influenced by his surroundings, if he succeeds in going against the tide then the environment has the opposite effect on him.

Esav resisted the influence of Yitschak and Rivka and became the epitome of evil. Ovadia resisted the influence of Achav and Ezevel and thereby elevated himself.

This made me think that even though being exposed to certain Yetzer Horas is dangerous, and we don't want them, however if I am confronted with them, by resisting I can reach higher Madreiges just like Ovadia.

I heard a similar thought a few years ago from R Ezriel Tauber Shlita.

He related that he was asked to speak in a certain school, where the principal had discovered that the kids were sharing blue movies. This is what he told them.

He said that the 6000 years of creation are split into three parts. The first part corresponds to Eloikai Avraham, the second to Eloikai Yitschok and the third to Eloikai Yaakov. However the Chasima of creation corresponds to Magen Avraham as in the Brocho.

What was the Gadlus of Avraham Avinu?

That he was able to stand up against an entire world that worshiped Avoda Zora, and he preached monotheism.

Said R Tauber: When we face a computer with access to the world, every one is an individual Avrohom Avinu, because we each face an entire world. This is why our generation corresponds to Avraham.

Thanks for everything

Ovadia

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Parshas Vayishlach – battle tactics
Posted by ovadia - 21 Nov 2010 09:15

Parshas Vayishlach – battle tactics

(From Michtav Me'Elياهو and Strive for Truth)

In this week's Parsha we witness the confrontation between Yakov and Esav. Chazal identify three approaches which Yaakov Avinu employed in preparation; "Doron, Tefila VeMilchama" gifts, prayer and war.

Based on the Zohar and the Ramban, Rav Dessler ZT'L says that this confrontation was in fact a battle between the forces of good and evil and that every aspect had cosmic ramifications. In light of this it must be understood that each of Yaakov's tactics correspond to an approach in our combat with the Yetzer Hara, the force of evil.

The first tactic of Yaakov was to send gifts to Esav to try to appease him. In the spiritual battle, this corresponds to the initial step in a person's struggle with the Yetzer Hara. The Mishna in Avos says: A person should always occupy himself with Torah and Mitzvot, even if not for their own sake (shelo lishma); because out of doing them from ulterior motives one can come to do them for their own sake (lishma).

In Ruach Chaim, Rav Chaim Voloshiner comments on this as follows:

Learning Torah shelo lishma is an important key to the stage when one comes to learn it lishma. In fact without this [preparatory stage] one is incapable of combating the yetzer Hara.

And further on Rav Chaim adds:

The preparatory stage of shelo lishma is indeed essential. Without it, it is impossible to arrive at the stage of lishma.

Indeed the word "always" in the mishna would seem to bear this out.

Seen in this light serving Hashem shelo lishma, for example by convincing oneself of the material gain one has from doing good, is a prerequisite to conquering one's Yetzer Hara. The reason for this is that at the beginning of each advance towards lishma the tender plant of purity

is too weak to stand on its own; it needs assistance from shelo lishma. These were the “gifts” which Yaakov sent to Esav

The second approach is Tefila. Although one has to use personal motivation (shelo lishma) as an incentive to overcome the Yetzer Hara, it is by no means obvious that this will always lead to lishma, nor is it always the case. One knows people who start learning for ulterior motives and remain with them for the rest of their lives.

Rav Simcha Zissel ZT”L used to say that the transformation can only take place, if one intends right from the beginning that it shall lead to lishma. If our main aim and ambition is to achieve a pure and unselfish mode of service of HaShem and we make use of the shelo lishma to ease our struggle against the Yetzer hara, then we stand a chance of eventually arriving at the stage of lishma. In the spiritual life one arrives only at the destination one intended in the first place.

Therefore one must constantly ask HaShem for His help. By doing so he shows that his overall motivation and aspirations are pure. Only with this combination of lishma and shelo lishma can one eventually reach a level of serving HaShem with purity of heart.

[In addition Tefila can be a “short cut”, (as explained in Parshas Vayaitsai). This is for those who are spiritual cripples and are no longer able to conquer their Yezer Hara at all by their own efforts. They have become habituated to sin to such an extent that their hearts are defiled, and they are unable to ascend even the smallest step by themselves. What can they do? They can cry out to HaShem and He in his mercy will take them up to the top without their having to tread on a rung. If their heart is broken and their remorse for all their wrongdoing is thorough and sincere and they pour out their heart to HaShem they may suddenly find themselves at the top.]

Finally, Yaakov prepared himself for war. In the spiritual realm this is the third stage which culminates the process of overcoming the Yetzer hara. The greatest service of HaShem lies in the purification of motive. Once one has established himself with the aid of “gifts” to the Yetzer Hara, he can now attempt to purify his actions. In order to achieve this, one has to battle with his Yetzer Hara to eliminate the impure and egoistic motives. He can then reach the ultimate level of serving HaShem with pure intent (lishma); and then on to the next advance, until one comes as close as possible to complete lishma.

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Re: Parshas Vayishlach – battle tactics
Posted by ovadia - 22 Nov 2010 09:56

A profound insight on Parshas Vayishlach:

The Torah tells us that Yaakov was attacked by the Malach of Esav. As dawn approached and Yaakov prevailed the malach asked to be freed. Chazal tell us that the reason it was so urgent for the Malach to leave, was because each Malach receives one chance to say Shira and precisely on that day the turn of the Malach of Esav had arrived.

Rav Dessler ZT”L points out that obviously the remarkable “coincidence” of these two occurrences was not by chance. He explains that the opportunity of a Malach to say Shira arises when he has completed the mission for which he was created. **The mission of the Malach of Esav was completed after he fought with Yaakov AND YAAKOV WON!**

What a paradox! Although the task of the Yetzer Hara is to fight with each one of us mercilessly, his achievements are measured by OUR SUCCESS in beating him.

In this context it is well worth reading this fantastic letter www.guardyoureyes.org/forum/index.php?topic=2943.msg78361#msg78361 from the Yetzer Hara himself posted by “HaShem’s Soldier”.

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Parshas VaYaishev - Protection of the Yetzer Hara
Posted by ovadia - 25 Nov 2010 10:48

Parshas VaYaishev - Protection of the Yetzer Hara

Both Yitzchak and Yaakov were miraculously born from mothers who were naturally incapable of conceiving. One of the reasons for this is that spirituality is transcendent and by definition has to exist independently to the natural.

Rav Dessler ZT”L points out, that in the same way as Yaakov was born miraculously, so was Esav. Obviously this is no mere coincidence and requires explanation; why does Esav, the force of evil require a miraculous existence?

The answer lies in the Pasuk, quoted by Rashi at the beginning of this week's Parsha which likens Yaakov to fire and Esav to straw. What is straw? It has no intrinsic value but it serves a purpose; it protects the wheat in its growth. It complements the wheat yet its existence depends on the existence of the wheat.

Similarly the function of Esav is to protect Yisroel. When Yisroel is deserving, Esav protects him in the normal way by keeping the peace and enabling him to progress in his heavenly service. However if Yisroel is undeserving then Esav "protects" him by tormenting him and reminding him of his spiritual mission. (Both of these aspects were mentioned by Yitzchak in his Bracha to Esav). Hence, the existence of the Esav, is completely spiritual and is as miraculous as the existence Yaakov. For this reason Esav too had to be conceived miraculously.

In a deeper sense Esav represents the force of evil in the world; the Yetzer Hara. Here too the function of the Yetzer Hara is not to harm a person spiritually but to help him achieve his spiritual goal by giving him the opportunity to overcome the temptations of the physical world. And if the person succumbs to the temptation then the retribution which he will incur will serve to remind him and others of the ultimate spiritual mission in this world. In this sense too, the Yetzer Hara is the tool in achieving this goal. Therefore our Yetzer Hara, our physicality, that pull towards sensuality is our greatest asset, and its existence is as spiritual as our Yetzer Tov.

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