



## SHOVAVIM: ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGE

### THE OPPORTUNITY TO RECONNECT TO HASHEM

Yesterday, we spoke about the power of the yetzer hara, where he comes and he challenges each and every one of us, and presents us with new things. He has innovations. He offers us opportunities for new, imaginary horizons. And people succumb to his tricks. He gets into our minds, and messes with us, and we fall for it hook, line, and sinker.

Now, these weeks, beginning from Parshas Shemos are called yemei hashovavim. "Shovavim" is an acronym formed by the first letter of the names of the parshios: Shemos, Vaeira, Bo, Beshalach, Yisro, Mishpatim. During these weeks, it is a time to address a very specific area of innovation and chataim that the yetzer hara presents us with. We don't find a source in the Torah for the uniqueness of these weeks, but we find it from gedolim, mekubalim. We find it from the ba'al Terumas Hadeshen.<sup>1</sup> We find it from the rebbi of the Maharil.<sup>2</sup> It's mentioned in the Magen Avraham,<sup>3</sup> in the Levush,<sup>4</sup> in the Elya Rabah (תרפ"ה שם), and in Be'er Hetev.<sup>5</sup> The minhag, as brought down in the sefarim, is to fast these days to be mesaken the very specific cheit of shichvas zera levatalah (spilling one's seed) and the source of this comes from the Arizal. The Arizal, in his Sha'ar Ruach Hakodesh, says there's a minhag Yisrael to fast for forty days from Parshas Shemos through Mishpatim.<sup>6</sup> The siman is shovavim. And these days are for the cleanup, for the tikun of this specific cheit, more than other days of the year. So, it behooves us to seize the opportunity and figure out how we can utilize these days. Are we expected to fast, to increase teshuva, tachanunim and our learning during these days? We'll discuss specific strategies a bit later.

Now, there are a number of lessons in these yemei hashovavim. Lesson number one is to know that this cheit is a very popular one. The cheit that is the shoshon, a source, of many, many chata'im. It's the powerhouse of chata'im. The Beis Yosef in the Shulchan Aruch, חלק אבן העזר סימן כג, writes: אסור להוציא שכבת זרע לבטלה, it's forbidden for a person to spill his seed, ועון זה חמור מכל עבירות שבתורה, this sin is more severe than all aveiros in the Torah. It causes estrangement from Hashem.

Now, to be estranged from Hakadosh Baruch Hu is not a very pretty thing. There are many people who feel emotionally estranged. They feel disconnected. In many instances, it may come as a result of their being challenged. Being estranged is one of the worst places a person could be in because that is the greatest of richuk (distancing). That's called being distanced, being pushed away. When a person is rejected or pushed away, it's a very, very unpleasant experience. It also has a snowball effect, and it brings many other devarim ra'im (bad things) along with it. Namely, the first and foremost consequence of this cheit is that you do not feel good, and if you feel bad, you feel depressed, and

<sup>1</sup> כ"ה בספר לקט יושר: "וזכרני שהמנהג באשטריך בשנת העבור מתעניין ח' תעניות, ומתחיליו פ' שמות ביום ה', ואח"כ בכל יום ה' עד פ' תצוה, וסמן לאלו התעניות שובבי"ם ת"ת [שהם ר"ת מן הסדר שמות וארא בא בשלח יתרו משפטים תרומה תצוה] ובכל שנת העבור הרב והקהל מקבלים עליהם אלו התעניות בחצר ב"ה בשבת יחי, ומתנה אם בא יו"ט ביום ה' שיתענו ביום ב' קודם יום ה', ומלמר שיש לו ו' שעות אין צורך להתעניות, והרבה תנאים כאלו. וזכרני שהוא [התרומת הדשן ג.א.] מתענה ביומי דשובבי"ם ת"ת אע"ג שיכול לי ת' ד' פשיטם לצדקה, והוי פטור להתענות בע"מ [=בעל מנת] שאכל צונן בלא בשר."

<sup>2</sup> כתוב בקובץ "אור ישראל" שמקור הראשון שמוזכר מנהג [למה זמן שובבי"ם מסוגל לתשובה] זה הוא בימגהי מהר"ש [לרבי שלום מנושיטאט רבו של המהר"ל] וז"ל: "שאלתי למה"ר שלום מפני מה מתעניין כשהשנה מעוברת? ואמר לי לפי שהשנה ארוכה יותר משנים אחרות, ויש זמן מופלג מתענית שלאחר החג שמתענים בה"ב לתענית שיני וחמישי שלאחר הפסח מבנים אחרות, ולכן מתענים." [בס' המנהגים לרבינו אייזיק מטירנא' מביא יתר פירוט בשם מהר"ש מתי מתענים, וז"ל: "בעיבור רגילין לקבוע תענית לסימן שובבי"ם פרשת שמות וארא בא בשלח יתרו משפטים ו"א גם ת"ת פ' תרומה תצוה."]

<sup>3</sup> ואע"פ שענין שובבי"ם הוא לא רק בשנה מעוברת אלא גם בשנה רגילה (פמ"ד א"א תרפ"ה, שע"ת שם ס"ק ב, יסוד ושורש העבודה שער יב ב, כף החיים רמ ו) לפי המג"א, העיקר ענין הוא בשנה מעוברת, וז"ל: יש נוהגין בשנה מעוברת לקבוע תענית בכל יום ה' מפרשת שובבי"ם ת"ת ו"א גם פרשת ויקהל ופקודי ואומרים שומר ישראל וכו' (ס' תרפ"ה), וכן כתב הלבוש (שם א), וגם מטה משה (ס' תתרכג)

<sup>4</sup> הלבוש כתוב (ס' תרפ"ה ס"א), וז"ל: "יש מקומות שנוהגין בשנת העיבור לקבוע תענית בכל יום ה' לפרשיות שובבי"ם ת"ת והם פ' שמות וארא בא בשלח יתרו משפטים תרומה תצוה וקורין בשחרית בפרשת השבוע ואומרים שומר ישראל ובמנחה קורין ויחל ומפסירין דרשו."

<sup>5</sup> יש נוהגין בשנה מעוברת לקבוע תענית בכל יום ה' מפרשת שובבי"ם ת"ת ו"א גם פ' ויקהל ופקודי ואומרים שומר ישראל וכו'. ופשוט דהש"ץ אומר ענינו בשחרית ומנחה. וכתב האר"י ז"ל בפי' התורה שימים אלו מסוגלים לתקן עון קרי יותר מכל השנה להתענים בהן לכן מתחיל מפ' שמות שאז התחיל השעבוד שנתקן הקרי דאד"ר ונגמר בפ' כי תקנה עבד עברי וע"ש. (אורח חיים תרפ"ה)

<sup>6</sup> תקון כ"ז למוציא שכבת זרע לבטלה. והנה יש בו כמה כוונות בפרטות ובכללות. הנה ענין עון שכבת זרע לבטלה ומה ענינו ומה כוונתו נת' בק"ש שעל המטה וע"ש כי הוא תקון גדול מאד והוא עיקר תיקון עון הקרי וע"ש היטב. ענין השובבי"ם הנודע"י ר"ל שיש מנהג קדום בכל ישראל להתענות מ' יום רצופי' שיש מן יום הראשון של פ' שמות עד פ' תרומה וקצת מן תצוה ונתנו סימן בהם שובו בנין שובבי"ם ר"ת שמות וארא בא בשלח יתרו משפטים. והנה עיקר התענית בהם במ' ימים אלו לא נתקנו אלא על עון הקרי וימים אלו מסוגלי' להתענות בהם על הקרי יותר מכל ימות השנה. וטעם הדבר יתבאר לך ממה שביארנו בענין גלות מצר' בחומר ובלבנים מה ענינו ושם נתבאר כי אותם שנשתעבדו בגלות מצרים היו אותם הניצוצות של הנשמות שיצאו מאד"ר באות' ק"ל שנה שפירש מן אשתו ומה מוליד שדין ורוחין ע"י טיפת קרי וכל אלו נתקנו בגלות מצר' הוא ולכן בזמן הפרשיות אלו יש בהם סגולה לקבל תשובת האדם המתענ' בהם על עון הקרי ולכן מתחילי' מן פ' שמות ומה שז"ל בפ' ה' היא היה התחלת השעבוד ומסתיימי' בפ' משפטי' לטעם שנתבאר שם ג"כ בענין סמיכות כי תקנה עבד עברי אל מתן תורה כי אז נגמרו אותם הניצוצות להתקן בענין כי תקנה עבד עברי וע"ש. גם דע כי עיקר אלו התעניות נתקנו בימי' אלו לכפר על עון שכבת זרע לבטל' שעליה' כתיב סוחטי הילדים וכו' ומה שצריך לכונן בתעניות הנז' הוא זה. יכין בהו"ה דע"ב דידו"ן כי יש בה ד' יודי"ן שהם בגי' מ' כנגד מ' יום של התעניות ולכן בעשרה ימים ראשוני' יכין בכל יום מהם אל החלק האחד מעשרה של היו"ד הראשונה ועד"י יכין במ' יום בד' היודי"ן הנז' ויכין בכל יום להעלות ביום ההוא חלק אחד מן היודי"ן ההם אשר בהם הגיע הפגם שלו והשליכו ארצה בעונו ומסר איתו חלק הקדושה תוך הקליפות ועי"כ נתן חיות וכו' אל הקליפות ועתה ע"י תשובתו זאת מסיר הקדוש' בתוך הקליפות וחוזר להעלותה למקומה ועי"כ נשארים הקליפות מתים בלתי חיות וז"ס פ' שובו בנין שובבי"ם פ"י כי אותם הבנים שמסר אל הקליפות בהשחתת הזרע ועי"כ נתלבשו תוך הקליפות ונעשו שובבי"ם לכן עתה שובו בתשובה והסירו אותם הבני' השובבי"ם בתוך הקליפות והשיבו אל הקדוש' כבראשונה. גם צריך שיתענה פ"ד ימים רצופי' כנגד שם של מ"ב שהוא סוד הזווג והטפה העליונה שהם מ"ב זווגי' והם פ"ד כי כל זווג כולל שנים כמבואר אצלנו במאמר בראשית דף א' וע"ש על מ"ש וכמה דדיקנא דברית אזדרע במ"ב זווגין וכו' וטוב הוא שיתענה מ' יום הנז' של כל ימי השובבי"ם ואח"כ יתענה עוד מ"ד יום אחרים להשלי' הפ"ד יום הנז'. גם טוב הוא שיתן פרוטה אחת לצדקה קודם התפלה בכל יום מימי תעניתו ויכין לתקן מה שגרת וחסר מן היצידק העליון אל המלכות. גם צריך שיזכר משם ואילך שלא לשמש מנתו אלא אחר חצות לילה ולשהות על הבטן עד שיכלו כל טפות זרע ושלא להשיח עם האשה בדברי בטלה בעת הזווג (שער רוח הקודש מ"ג)

depression becomes a tremendous weight on a person. There's a passuk in Yirmiyahu (3:14) that says: שׁוּבוּ בְּנֵי שׁוֹבְבִים, "turn back rebellious children." This indicates that in the days of the shovavim, a person should seize the opportunity to do teshuvah for this cheit.

### SIN IS COMPARABLE TO BEING IN MITZRAYIM

Now, the pashut pshat of how this relates to these parshiyos is because during these weeks, the Torah describes how the Yidden went into galus Mitzrayim and they fell into the most terrible and awful place in the universe. They fell from their kedushah to the mem tes sha'arei tumah. There was a tremendous yeridah that they had through the exposure to Mitzrayim. But in spite of all that, through their experience, they were zocheh to turn it around, get out of Mitzrayim and reach the highest madreigos of kabalas haTorah. You have to know that these days are most appropriate in order to do it!

### SAY "I WANT TO GET OUT" AND START FIGHTING!

Whatever the yetzer hara tells you, I don't care. The Torah tells us that a person can overcome this yetzer hara. I've met people who were very deep into the cheit. The degree to which they were involved in it and the number of years they struggled with it, was mind-boggling. I said to them, "We were in Mitzrayim for a lot longer than eight years. We were there for hundreds of years, 365 days a year. You want to get out? Let's follow the pattern of yetzias Mitzrayim. Let's walk in the footsteps of your fathers." And I said, "You are one of the good guys. You know why? Because 80% of the people did not make it out of Mitzrayim. So, anybody who is sitting around now, regardless of what kind of background you have, or what your immediate parents or grandparents are or aren't, you've got the genes of the 20% who made it out. That means you have the genes to make it out." The biggest thing with this cheit is to tell yourself, "I can get out."

But just because I want to get out, that's not going to get me out. You've got to fight and take the bull by the horns. You've got to up this fight. רָגַזוּ, you've got to make a milchamah, וְאֵל תַּחֲטְאוּ, and not sin (Tehillim 4:5). You have to have the confidence that you can overcome this aveirah. But the yetzer hara knocks us all down. And when you're down, he comes to you and says, "You're down. Try this. I've got a new shtick, a new twist on this same old cheit." He gives you this picture. He gives you that picture. He gives you this. He tries to chap you. Most people go into what's called a 'dumpster diving' mode. They dive into the garbage cans, and they get stuck in the shmutz. It's heartbreaking to see their eyes, to see them walking around with the droopy shoulders. To see them walking around without the light in their eyes. And it's always because of chataim. It's never because of learning Tosfos. The yetzer hara convinces them, "You know why you lost the light in your eyes? Because you learned too much gemara. If you just do more chataim like I'm telling you, then you would see the light. Then, you would spark it up. Then you'd be into the matzav." No bigger sheker than that could be possible.

But the fact of the matter is most people are embarrassed. They think this is their personal yetzer hara, and they think that no one else is challenged with this. I can't tell you how many hundreds of calls I have gotten and how many people I've spoken to about this who have heard some of the shiurim on it. Older people, even married people. Many married people! And I tell them, "You could win the battle, but you've got to fight it. If you don't fight this battle, you're never going to win." When a person fights it and gets out of it, I'm telling you, he gets a taste of what it means to get out of Mitzrayim! When you finish the shema every morning and you say אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מצרים, and Hashem said to us right before that, "You should be קְדוּשִׁים לְאֱלֹהֵיכֶם." You've got to know that you can get out of Mitzrayim. You've got to want to get out of Mitzrayim.

Rashi tells us, the 80% who didn't get out of Mitzrayim, it was for one reason. You know why? Lo ratzu, they didn't want to. The 20% wanted. Now, if you want to get out of Mitzrayim, you shall get out of Mitzrayim. Don't tell me how bad the cheit is. Don't tell me how deep you're in it. Don't tell me you're an addict. Don't tell me that you've got to get married. Don't tell me if you're married, you need two more wives. People ask if I know of medications, do I know about this or that. I know one thing, rabbosai. I know Hashem. Get with Hashem, my friend, and you will get out of the darkness! When you read these parshiyos, when you do the shnayim mikra ve'echad targum, say, "Ribono Shel Olam, I want to be zocheh. I'm in Mitzrayim and I want to get out." A lot of people were in Mitzrayim and never got out of it. They never did teshuvah. They never were mesaken anything.

Our gedolei olam, who had insights beyond anything we'll ever have, told us this is the time to get to work on this.

### PREPARE FOR WAR!

Now, it's got to be a step-by-step process. It's got to be an undertaking of a war. You fight wars day by day. That's how wars are fought. You take it day by day, and fight the battle. You say, "Today, I'm going to win this battle."

Now, a person can become addicted, especially if they have that kind of personality. (Some people have an addictive personality by nature. When they get into things, they can't let go.) But even people who don't have addictive natures can become addicts. They do something a number of times, they become uncontrollable, and they develop an addiction. You have to know you can get out of it. Tell yourself that. You have to say, "I want to get out of it!"

Now you have to employ tachsisei milchamah (tools of war). Again, I've got to make this clear. Just because you want to get out of it, doesn't mean that you'll get out of it. Just because you don't like the way it makes you feel after a long time - it's not going to help you. Even when you get married, it's not going to help you. It may take a little of the edge off for a little bit. But what happens is people get married, and the gemara says: מִשְׁבִּיעוּ רַעֲבָ (Sukkah 52b).<sup>7</sup> The

<sup>7</sup> אמר רבי יוחנן: אבר קטן! יש לו לאדם, מרעיבו - שבע, משביעו - רעב, שנאמר: "קמריעתם וישבעו וגו'".

more you satiate this need, this ta'avah that נפשו של אדם מחמדתה, people desire this inherently. They live for this. They eat for this. They sleep for this. They walk for this. The more you imbibe in this, and you're masbio, you're ra'eiv. You become hungry. You want more. Age doesn't make any difference. You can be 50. You can be 40.

You'll be 70. You'll be a zaken nayef. It doesn't make a difference! You've got to break out and get out of 'Mitzrayim.' This is the first 'Mitzrayim' that every single Jew finds himself in.

### STAGE 1 OF THE BATTLE: FIGHT YOUR THOUGHTS

Now, the first thing that a person has to know is that the first window to this cheit is a person's machshavah. From when a person is a little child, everybody is challenged with machshavah. There's a gemara in Bava Basra (164b) that says: נְשַׁלַּשׁ עֲבִירוֹת אֵין אָדָם נִיצוֹל מֵהֶן בְּכָל יוֹם, there are three sins from which a person is not spared each day.<sup>8</sup> I remember reading this gemara and thinking about my rebbi, my grandfather (Rav Avigdor Miller), Rav Chaim Kanievsky, great tzaddikim, Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman, the Chafetz Chaim, נְשַׁלַּשׁ עֲבִירוֹת אֵין אָדָם נִיצוֹל מֵהֶן בְּכָל יוֹם. One of them is hirhur aveirah (a thought of sin).

Now, the first time I saw this gemara, you know what I said? "Forget about it." I said, "If אין אדם ניצל מהם, I sure ain't going to be ניצל מהם. And once you have the hirhur aveirah, you're toast." So what is the pshat? What is the hope over here?

### TURN AWAY IMMEDIATELY!

So Rav Chaim Volozhiner, in Keser Rosh says - and I want to elaborate on the explanation of his words.<sup>9</sup> He says: The machshavah ra'ah that comes to a person is automatic. What a person does with that machshavah is his choice. He says, אם מסיח דעתו מן המחשבה רעה, if the guy is masiach da'as (disregards it) from the machshavah, if he "turns away his mind," and he doesn't fantasize, he doesn't allow himself to run with the thought. He doesn't wallow and immerse himself in the yam hata'avah, the yam hamachshavah, but he's masiach da'as from it, בזו כופה הסטרא אחרא, You know what that means? You're taking the whole power of ra and you're pushing it down. You're minimizing it. You're being kofeh, you're pushing down the koach hara. When a person is masiach da'as from a machshavah ra'ah, he's minimizing the koach hara in the world. But on the other hand, אם מחשב בזה, if he thinks about it, זו רעה חולי, it is a very bad sickness.

So you've got to understand that if a person has a thought, a thought comes on the screen of your mind - which it will - you're not going to be nitzal (spared) from that, you need to be masiach da'as from it. That's the difference between us and the gedolei olam and the tzaddikim. The second that thought came, they didn't say, "Oh, that's not a bad thought. Chaval, it's not lema'aseh." They didn't say that. They were masiach da'as from it. They switched the channel and there's no bad in this whatsoever. The fact that a thought comes in your mind is uncontrollable. The avodah of a mentsch is to turn away from those machshavos.

Now, of course, you've got to know that if you have that machshavah, if you have that hirhur and you do think about it - and like Rav Yisrael Salanter says an adam is chofshi bedimyo. You know what that means? A man thinks he has the freedom of thought. In this life, there's no freedom of thought! Judaism does not give a person freedom. A person is not free. He thinks he's chofshi bedimyo and he thinks that he can think about whatever he wants and it's "only thoughts" and there's nothing wrong with that.

I'll never forget. A fellow who was about 51 years old, became frum, and then he discovered that you're not allowed to look at certain things and you're not allowed to think about certain things. He came to me. He was angry. I said to him, "Who started up with you? Who wronged you? Who didn't respect you?" He says, "You want it straight? You!" I said, "Me?! What did I do today?!" He said, "You gave a shiur. First, you tell me I can't do A, I can't do B, I can't do C, I can't do D. Now a new thing. I can't look at something even if I don't do anything. And even worse you tell me I can't think! Don't you think that's a little controlling?! Don't you think that's a little too much?! Don't you think that's a little imposition to come to a person and impose on a person in such a way?!" The guy was mamash upset.

I told the guy, "I know how you feel, and especially since you were competing with all the dogs in the neighborhood and you thought you were the bulldog. You're calling yourself Mr. Dog. But no. You're a human being and a human being is not free to think what he wants or to look at what he wants. No, you can't do that."

### A JEWISH THOUGHT IS VERY POWERFUL

A person has to know that a hirhur aveirah is so powerful, you can't imagine! Now, I want to tell you that people make the following mistake here. People are under the impression that just thinking about something bad is totally

<sup>8</sup> אמר רב עמרם אמר רב: שלש עבירות אין אדם ניצל מהן בכל יום - הרהור עבירה, ועיון תפלה, ולשון הרע  
<sup>9</sup> מהשבה רעה גם הראשונים לא נצלו מזה וכדכ"ל אין אדם כו', ואם מסיח דעתו מן המחשבה רעה, בזו כופה הסטרא אחרא, ואם מחשב בה זו רעה חולה ר"ל \*\* (ארחות חיים כתר ראש, אות קל"ו) (\*\*כתוב בס' אגרות ומכתבים ח"א מכתב ו ומכתב כה, וז"ל: "במכתבים למרן רבי ישראל סלנטר זצ"ל (הובא בספר הזכרון קדוש ישראל אות י') כתב "הרפואה (להרהורים), לבלי לשום לב לזה כלל ולא להשקיף אם עדיין לא נרפא המחלה. כי בקשת הרפואה בזה מגדיל מחלת המחשבות, כאשר איש יש לו צער ודאגות כל זמן שירצה לדחוף הצער והמחשבה עוד יגדל כפלי כפליים המחשבות. כת"ר ידבר עמו ויבחיץ היטב אם לא מזיק לו למעשה ויזהירו לחזק המעשה לפי מצבו למוד התורה וזהירות המצוות, ובדבר המחשבות אל ישים לבו מאומה. התקוה שבמשך הזמן (אם לא יהיה אץ לרפואה) יתרפא בע"ה. חולים כאלה היו אצלי ונסיתים ושמעו לקולי ונתרפאו בע"ה." עוד שם "דבר הקרי מקרה לילה הוא המסובב, ויסוד העבירה הוא הרהור ביום, ואם הרהור בא מאונס, יש להקל לבלי לחושבה לעוון, (ע' עירובין דף יח ע"ב, הערת גדול אחד), ואין להעמיק, ולא בהשתדלות מרובה לדחות הרהורים כי זאת טבעת נפש האדם כל שמעמיק לדחות איזה רעיון, איזה צער וכיוצא, עוד תתגבר ההתנגדות בנפש האדם להליבי המזור לאדם, לזאת מרובי ההשתדלות לדחות הרהורים יכול להיות שתולד לפעמים סיבה גדולה לחזק הרהורים. כן זה גם בתפלה, העמל הרב לדחות מחשבות זרות מולידים לפעמים סיבה למחשבות זרות, מסיבת טיבעת נפש האדם להתנגדות, והנסיין ברעיון גופני יוכיח הדבר למדי." וע"ע בכתבי הסבא מקלם לחנוכה ופורים במאמרי ימי השובבים"ם שכתב ז"ל "שלא לחשוב הרבה באיזה רצון, אף בבקשת עצות כנגד הרצון, וכלל גדול בזה כל מה שיכול להסיח דעת מאיזה רצון אשר כבר נחזק בו, טובה מכל תחבולות שבעולם", עכ"ל.

harmless. What they don't realize is that a Jewish mind is "connected." If a goy has a machshavah ra'ah it's a dud. It's gornisht mit nisht. I don't say it's a good thing for him, but it's a dud. But when a Jewish person has a machshavah ra'ah, it's something totally different. Let me share with you what Rav Chaim Volozhiner explains in his sefer Nefesh Hachaim (Sha'ar I, 4:9). I want you to hear this because it's a gevaldige insight. It's a real eye opener. He says as follows. When a person allows his mind to explore a machshavah asher lo tehorah, a thought that's not tahor, immoral, what he's doing is he's bringing a zonah into kodshei hakodashim ha'elyon. Nora! It's like he's bringing it into the upper higher worlds, in the kodesh hakodashim.<sup>10</sup>

There was a Beis Hamikdash upstairs that corresponded to the Beis Hamikdash downstairs. When the Beis Hamikdash downstairs was destroyed, there remained a Beis Hamikdash lema'alah. Lema'alah, there exists a Beis Hamikdash exactly as it existed lematah and there's a kodesh hakodashim over there and we are connected to it! When a Jew has a thought, he's bringing a zonah into the beis kodshei hakodashim haelyon. What does that do? It's magbir, it strengthens, rachmana litzlan, the kochos hatumah. You are empowering the kochos hatumah in the world, and the kochos of the sitra achra, of the Satan in the beis kodshei hakodashim haelyon. Harbeh yoser veyoser, much, much more, mimah shenigram, than what was caused in the hisgabrus of koach hatumah al yedei Titus. Titus Harasha, that low piece of dirt, that piece of shmutz what he was. He brought a zonah into the kodshei hakodashim bemikdash matah and he unfurled a sefer Torah and he did the aveirah in the kodshei kadoshim, in the Holy of Holies! I think most people understand that that's awful.

Zugt Rav Chaim Volozhiner, you know what an effect it had? Very little. You know why? He was a nobody. Therefore, his koach to affect the Beis Hamikdash was minimal. He wasn't connected to anything, so it was already considered a destroyed Beis Hamikdash and the effect that his actions had was very little.<sup>11</sup>

But when a Yid, whose brain, whose machshavah, whose neshamah, is attached to the kodesh hakodashim in Shamayim, when you have a hirhur ra what you're doing is mamash you're being machnis. That thought is a metzius and you're taking that thought, that reality, and you're putting it in the kodshei hakodashim.<sup>12</sup>

It's not for nothing that Chazal tell us אמר הקב"ה, Hakadosh Baruch Hu says בני, My child, אתה נותן את עיניך, I know, שאתה שלי, that you are Mine, because then a person is connected to Hakadosh Baruch Hu.<sup>13</sup> This is a very serious, frightening and overpowering thought. But if you don't think about it, then you say to yourself, "So what does Hashem expect of me?! That's too much to ask!" Hashem expects you to give Him your mind and eyes.

He expects you to commit to giving your mind and eyes to Hashem and then you won't be nichshal in doing some of the worst sins.

Now, I want you to know something. The gemara (Yoma 29a) says that הרהורי עבירה קשו מעבירה, thoughts of a transgression are worse than transgression itself. A frightening gemara! There are many ways to understand this. What does it mean that a hirhur of an aveirah is worse than the aveirah itself? Some say the reason is simple because a thought doesn't last for a second. A thought is repetitive. It's over and over and over and over. So in one minute of thinking, how many aveiros could a guy get? Thousands! If a person does an act of an aveirah then it's just one aveirah. The impact that it has on the neshamah is limited. However, hirhurim have a much greater impact on the neshamah of a person than an aveirah, even a ma'aseh aveirah with an action.

## FIGHTING FIRE WITH FIRE

The aveirah starts with a thought. Therefore to fight the aveirah requires the following process: The first thing that has to be done is, you have to "re-route" your da'as. You have to say or think, "Hashem gave me da'as. Hashem gave me the ability to know the difference between good and bad. He gave me the ability to think, to be connected to Hashem, and to be separate bein kodesh lechol." The first thing that happens is when you have a machshavah ra'ah, you're mafkia your da'as. That's what you do.

A person has to understand that this is the challenge we're up against. And what we have to do is, we have to embark on a career of change.

## STAGE 2: FILL YOUR MIND WITH TORAH

Now the question is, again: "How do you change?" So the first thing you have to know is that an empty mind, meaning empty of machshavos of Torah, or machshavos of mitzvos, or machshavos about Hashem - an empty mind is a fertile ground for hirhurei aveiros. The Rambam says: שאין מחשבות עריות מתגברת אלא בלב פנוי מן החכמה. If your mind is a vacuum and your mind is not preoccupied with chochmah, you are inviting and you are growing mold. You are growing

<sup>10</sup> א"כ בעת אשר יתור האדם לחשוב בלבבו מחשבה אשר לא טהורה בניאוף ר"ל. הרי הוא מכניס זונה סמל הקנאה בבית ק"הק העליון נורא בעולמות העליונים הקדושים ח"ו. ומגביר ר"ל כחות הטומאה והס"א בבית ק"הק העליון. הרבה יותר ויותר ממה שנגרם התגברות כח הטומאה ע"י טיטוס בהציעו זונה בבית ק"הק במקדש מטה.

<sup>11</sup> כי הלא נ"נ וטיטוס לא עשו במעשיהם שום קלקול כלל למעלה כי לא להם חלק ושושור בעולמות העליונים שיהיו יכולים לנגוע שם כלל במעשיהם. רק שבחטאינו נתמעט ונש כביכול כח גבורה של מעלה. את מקדש ה' טמאו כביכול המקדש העליון. ועי"כ היה להם כח לנ"נ וטיטוס להחריב המקדש של מטה המוכון נגד המקדש של מעלה. כמו שארז"ל (איכה רבתי) קמחא טחינא טחינת. הרי כי עונותינו החריבו נוח מעלה עולמות עליונים הקדושים. והמה החריבו רק נוח מטה (שם, שער א ד:ה)

<sup>12</sup> וזאת תורת האדם כל איש ישראל אל יאמר בלבבו ח"ו. כי מה אני ומה כחי לפעול במעשי השפלים שום ענין בעולם. אמנם יבין וידע ויקבע במחשבות לבו. שכל פרטי מעשיו ודבוריו ומחשבותיו כל עת ורגע. לא אתאבידו ח"ו. ומה רבו מעשיו ומאד גדלו ורמו. שכל א' עולה כפי שרשה לפעול בעולמות בגבהי מרומים בעולמות וצחצחות האורות העליונים. [הגהה: וקרוב לשמוע שגם זה בכלל כוונתם ז"ל באבות דע מה למעלה ממך. ר"ל עם כי איך ראה בעיני העינים הנוראים הנעשים ממעשיך. אבל תדע נאמנה. כי כל מה שנעשה למעלה בעולמות העליונים גבוהי גבוהים. הכל ממך הוא על פי מעשיך לאן נוטים. על פיהם יצאו ויבואו]. ובאמת כי האיש החכם ויבן את זאת לאמיתו. לבו יחיל בקרבו בחיל ורעדה. בשומו על לבו על מעשיו אשר לא טובים ח"ו עד היכן המה מגיעים לקלקל ולהרוס בחטא קל חס ושלום. הרבה יותר ממה שהחריב נ"נ וטיטוס.

<sup>13</sup> ירושלמי, ברכות, פ"א, ה"ד (תרגום)



spores and you're empowering the thoughts to enter your mind.<sup>14</sup>

Now, some people can't think in learning. Do you know why? Because their hearts are full of contamination. They're maybe nice people, very nice people, but their hearts are so malei from tumah, so devoid of chochmah there's no place for any chochmah to get in. You have to remember what it says in the Avos D'rebi Nosson: חנניה סגן הכהנים היה, אומר, a very famous Avos Derav Nosson, Rabbi Chanina Segan Hakohanim says, כל הנותן דברי תורה על ליבו, anyone who takes words of Torah to heart, you've got to put divrei Torah in your lev, מבטלין ממנו הרהורי חרב הרהורי רעב הרהורי שטות, the negative thoughts are removed from his mind! He's no longer troubled by thoughts of destruction, thoughts of hunger, foolish thoughts, lustful thoughts, thoughts of temptation, thoughts of another man's wife. It's interesting, he counts them all as separate types of hirhurim. He says, there's shtus, there's hirhurei zenus, hirhurei yetzer hara and hirhurei eishes ish. You hear this? You hear how many hirhurim a guy has in his mind?<sup>15</sup>

Rabbi Chanina Segan Hakohanim tells us, you want to drive them out? Be נותן דברי תורה על ליבו. You want to know if you're even shayach to the parshah of being able to do a cleanup job on your toxic lev? You want to know if you're able to get the tumah out of your arteries? Try putting divrei Torah inside your mind. Let's see if divrei Torah stick to it.<sup>16</sup>

You know there are some people who seem to have Teflon hearts and minds. No Torah sticks to them. Nothing. It's like trying to put something on an oily wall. It doesn't stick. Even gum doesn't stick. You know why? Because they're full of oil. If your heart is lined with junk and gunk the Torah is not going in, my friend. You've got to put דברי תורה על ליבך. It doesn't say learn Torah. No no. You've got to put the divrei Torah in your lev!

### PUTTING TORAH ON YOUR HEART, HOW?

You should exercise this. Try to think of something you're learning currently and then you can learn some things by heart. Learn a mishnah by heart. You'll find out how hard it is because nothing goes in your mind at first. Try to put some divrei Torah al libcha and keep on pumping your heart with Torah! Keep on injecting it with divrei Torah. And if you do that, then the yetzer hara is not going to have shlitah on you. That's all there is to it.

There's a famous medrash in Mishlei that says the yetzer hara sees an empty house, do you know what it does? It moves in and takes up residence. Once it's there, it's not easy to get it out. But if you make sure you're living in your house, you're being נותן דברי תורה על ליבך - then you stand a chance.

### STAGE 3: POSITIVE ACTION

Step number three that you've got to do is, you've got to daven like you have never davened in your life. You've got to daven to Hashem Yisbarach that He should save you from sins. Now, remember, to save you doesn't mean to take away the yetzer hara. To save you means to empower you to overcome and deal with this yetzer hara.

### STAGE 4: MONEY

Another eitzah is giving tzedakah. That's a powerful eitzah. But a lot of people say, "I don't have the money." So, they can try learning. Try putting some Torah in your mind. (You know how hard it's going to be? You meet people and ask, "Can you say something over?" Gornisht. You show me a person who can't put divrei Torah al libo, who can't insert Torah on his lev and I'm looking at a guy who the yetzer hara owns! That's what it is. This is what a person has to understand. If this is your name, that's pretty bad news, my friend. You should flee from this. Some people think, "Ah, it's not shayach. I'm really an addict." But you've got to work on it.)

There's an easy eitzah that I've heard from my zeide. It works like magic but it doesn't work on everybody. That eitzah is be mekabel on yourself a monetary obligation that you will undertake if you cross the line. You have to find that magic number. \$50 is not going to do it. The yetzer hara tells you, "It's worth \$50." And if you tell yourself when you fail, "Well, since I failed and I'm paying the \$100, I can already chap aprein as much as I can on the same \$100." No, no, no! It's \$100 per aveirah!

I knew one bachur, a very fine bachur. He really wanted to break this thing. He said the magic number is going to be \$700 for him. That's a lot of money. He didn't have a lot of \$700s. His magic number was \$700. When he undertook that, Hashem took him out of Mitzrayim like nobody's business! It was shocking! In three years, once he had a safeik - was it an ones or not. He had a safek. You know what that is? To go from addiction to three years of taharah in the prime of his yetzer hara!?

He did all four things. He was נותן דברי תורה על ליבו. That's the first thing he did. He definitely pumped it in there. Keep on pumping the heart! That's number one. Number two, he davened to Hashem to help him. Then he gave

<sup>14</sup> וכן ינהג להתרחק מן השחוק ומן השכרות ומדברי עגבים שאלו גורמין גדולים והם מעלות של עריות. ולא ישב בלא אשה שמנגה זה גורם לטהרה יתרה. גדולה מכל זאת אמרו יפנה עצמו ומחשבתו לדברי תורה וירחיב דעתו בחכמה שאין מחשבת עריות מתגברת אלא בלב פניו מן החכמה. ובחכמה הוא אומר (משלי ה יט) "אילת אהבים יעלת חן דדיה ירוך בכל עת באהבתה תשגה תמיד" (משנה תורה, הלכות איסורי ביאה כ"ב:כא)

<sup>15</sup> רבי חנניה סגן הכהנים אומר כל הנותן ד"ת על לבו מבטלין ממנו הרהורי חרב הרהורי רעב הרהורי שטות הרהורי זנות הרהורי יצר הרע הרהורי אשת איש הרהורי דברים בטלים הרהורי עול בשר ודם שכן כתוב במשנה תורה על ידי משה רבינו (דברים כ"ח:מ"ז) "והיו בך לאות ולמופת ובזרעך עד עולם תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה' אלהיך בשמחה ובטוב לבב מרוב כל ועבדת את אויביך אשר ישלחנו י"י בך ברעב ובצמא ובעירום ובחוסר כל.

<sup>16</sup> ובספר 'שם משמואל', פרשת ויחי, כתוב: "וממוציא הדברים הנה ימי השובבי"ם ת"ת הם זמן התיקון לחטא הידוע וע, ויש שמ שמתענים ועושין סיגופים, מוטב שיאמר כל אחד לנפשו מוטב להשתעבד בביתה של תורה ולצמצם את כל מעשיו ותהלוכותיו שיהיו בדרך התורה ולא להשתעבד לתעניתים וסיגופים, כמו שהגיד כ"ק זקני האדמו"ר הגדול זצלה"ה מקאצק שההילך בדרך התורה הוא הגדול שבסיגופים דוף, ע"כ", ומובן שהאיש השם שכמו להשתעבד לתורה, הן ביעית הלימוד והן בצמצום תהלוכות מעשיו עפ"י דרכי התורה, מועיל יותר מכל סיגופי הגוף."

tzedakah. He gave ma'aser from his earnings. And he davened, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu, it should be a help for me!" He raised money from people for tzedakah. If you can't give money, you can raise money for that purpose.

Hakadosh Baruch Hu sees and hears you. He knows what's going on. He's a **בוֹחֵן לַבְבוֹת וְכַלְיוֹת** and He sees if you're a serious customer or you're just trying to buy your way out of jail. Then you get there again and you'll buy yourself out again. Hashem sees everything.

### REDEMPTION AT LAST!

And then you come out! And then you can say **ה' ימלך לעולם ועד**. You're mekabel the malchus, **ברצון קבלו עליהם**. You'll say: **צור ישראל קומה בעזרת ישראל ופדה כנאומך יהודה וישראל גואלנו ה' צבקות**: ah! You are going to feel the presence of Hashem like nobody's business! You are going to feel what emunah means! You're not going to have to read any books about emunah! You're not going to have to read any bubbe measas about emunah! You are going to be a witness to it! And you can say and mean, "I went out of Mitzrayim!!"

Imagine trying to tell a Yid who came out of Mitzrayim, "Let me tell you an emunah story. Why don't you read a book on emunah?" **כימי צאתך מארץ מצרים**. He would say, "What do you mean? I got out of Mitzrayim! I'm a Mitzrayim Yid!" (He knows it firsthand, he doesn't need stories.) And even people who became frum, they didn't get out of Mitzrayim, necessarily. But when a guy is steeped in the cheit and he gets out of the cheit and he experiences the yetziah mamash, pshhhh! **אשרי איש שככה לו**. There is a reason to celebrate! That's what a person has to remember. We should all be zocheh.

Let's undertake to clean up our old hirhurim, to protect ourselves from our present day hirhurim and to be able to stand tall with a spark in our eyes and not feel depressed and not feel beniduy, and to tell Hakadosh Baruch Hu, "I'm sorry." Let's do teshuvah.

### TWO ADDITIONAL EITZOS - RETZIFUS, TAANIS DIBBUR

Now, another wonderful eitzah that would help you tremendously is, if you can't fast - and I don't want you to fast - learn Torah beretzifus. When you're learning Torah, be mekabel to learn Torah beretzifus - without interrupting in the middle. That's what you should do.

And you should make yourself a part-time ta'anis dibbur.<sup>17</sup> That also is tremendous - to keep your mouth closed and not open your mouth in the way that is prescribed for a taanis dibbur because that itself is a tremendous way of connecting with Hashem and cleansing yourself. Let us put ourselves on the right track of tikkun during these amazing weeks of Shovavim and be matzliach!

## THE BOTTOM LINE

The *cheit* of **הוצאת זרע לבטלה** is not only the most severe of all the *aveiros* in the Torah, but it stands at the root of many other *aveiros* and challenges posed by the Yetzer Hara in the area of *kedusha*. As a result of this *aveirah* many feel spiritually estranged from Hashem, pushed away, and emotionally imprisoned. But there is a powerful *eitza* to help us with this challenge. During the precious few weeks of *Shovavim*, we can implement specific strategies, prescribed by our *gedolim*, to try to escape from the clutches of the Yetzer Hara. However, just like the *Yidden* in the *galus* Mitzrayim had to have had a strong *ratzon* to leave Mitzrayim, we, too, must have this *ratzon* to leave this prison. The strategies that we discussed include: being *masiach da'as* by "switching the channel" when challenged with negative thoughts, filling up our minds with Torah thoughts and learning whenever we are free - by committing to memory some *mishnayos* or the "back and forth" of the *gemara*, learning in an uninterrupted way and continuously, davening intently, undertaking a part-time *ta'anis dibbur*, and giving a sizable sum to *tzedakah*, as a *kenas*, to not cross the line. Finally, as we read and learn these *parshiyos*, while trying to implement the above steps, we will give up our minds and hearts to Hashem, we will ask Him to give us the ability to distinguish between *tov* and *ra* and to get out of our personal Mitzrayim. And in the *zechus* of undertaking these changes and having a true desire to loosen the grips of the Yetzer Hara in this area, we will see much *hatzlacha* and *yeshua*, *b'ezras Hashem Yisborach*.

<sup>17</sup> כותב המשנ"ב (תקעא ס"ק ב): "וראיתי כתוב בספר אחד שכשאדם רוצה להתנדב תענית טוב יותר שיקבל תענית מן הדבור ממה שיקבל עליו מן האכילה כי ממנו לא יהיה לו חזק לא בגופו ולא בנשמתו ולא יחלש ע"ז וכעין זה כתב הגר"א באגרתו שצריך האדם לייסר עצמו לא בתענית וסיגופים כ"א ברסן פיו ובתאוותיו וזהו התשובה וכו'".