



BILVAVI
TAMUZ
TALKS

Avodah · Essence · Mazal · Tribe

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TAMUZ – SEEING THE GOOD

Tamuz – The Power of Re'iyah (Inner Sight)

Tamuz and Av are the two most tragic months from the whole year, due to the tragedies in our history that took place during these times. We must know how to properly view this time of the year, or else it is possible that a person views this time of the year as a sad and tragic time of the year, with no other meaning to it. We must know the *avodah* that is upon us during these difficult months of the year.

Chazal state that five tragedies took place during the month of Tamuz. These months require a lot of contemplation, and we need to find how Hashem is here with us, even in these trying months. It seems as if nothing good can be said of these two months, which are full of sad events. But we can learn how to see the good, even amidst all the bad.

The power contained in the month of Tamuz, as explained by our Sages in the *sefarim hakedoshim*¹, is *reiyah* (“sight”). There is physical sight which our eyes can see, and there is an inner power of sight, called “*einei haseichel*”, the “eyes of the intellect”.² Just like our physical eyes can see both good and bad things, so can our power of inner sight see both good and bad.

Ever since Chavah set her eyes upon the *Eitz HaDaas Tov V’Ra* (the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil), which contained a mixture of good and evil, all of the things which we see in the world since then are a mixture of good and evil. Nothing we see is totally good, and nothing we see is totally bad. It is always a mix.

There are people who were naturally born with a very positive nature and they are inclined to focus on the good in everything, while others were born with a more negative nature and thus

1 Sefer Yetzirah, with the Vilna Gaon’s commentary

2 A term used by sefer Chovos HaLevovos.

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they are naturally inclined to see the bad side of everything. But all of us can see everything as a mixture of good and evil.

Chazal state that those who have a “good eye” (*ayin tovah*) are the students of Avraham *Avinu*, while those who have a “bad eye” (*ayin ra*) are students of Bilaam, so we must therefore strive to have a “good eye”. Ever since the sin of Adam, everything has become a mixture of good and bad. If we look at the good of things, we are being “students of Avraham”, but if we only see the bad in something, we are being negative, “students of Bilaam”.

We can't see only good or only bad, though, because in the current state of affairs, there is no such thing as only good, and there is also no such thing as something totally bad. Everything is a mix. Therefore, we need to see the good, and bad, in everything, and after that, we can connect to the good that is found in it.

We will try to explain, with the help of Hashem, how we can come to think about only the good in things.

The First Step: Taking Apart the Information

Since everything is a mixture of good and evil, the very first step of learning how to see the good is to see what each thing we encounter is made up of. We need to see how much good is in something, and how much bad is in it. Everything has some good in it and some bad in it, and we need to get used to thinking into the good parts and the bad parts in something. The point is to take something apart in your mind and analyze it, thinking: “What is the good here, and what is the bad here?”

Practically speaking, take a piece of paper and make two rows, one row labeled “Good” on the right side and the other row labeled “Bad” on the left side. Write down all the good things you can find in a situation, and all the bad things you see, and line them against each other.

You will discover as you get used to this that there are things which you thought were totally good that have really have some bad in them also, and there are things which you thought were totally bad that actually has something good in them.

The Tricky Part

Now comes a danger which you should watch out for, though. When you realize that a situation is mostly bad, you know that you should keep away from it. But the tricky part is when you discover something good in something which also has bad in it, and you might be tempted to connect to it, because you see good in it. But although you see good in something bad, this doesn't mean you should connect to it.

There are some situations which we cannot choose otherwise, so there is nothing we can do to get out of them, even if there is bad in them. But there are situations in life which we can choose to connect to or not. In these complicated situations, should we choose to connect to the good in them, or not?

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What we need to do is to somehow connect to the good in every situation. The question is, how? If there is mostly bad in a situation, even if you have found some good in it, how can you connect yourself to it and feel that it is somehow good, when you know quite well that there is bad here also?

Finding the Root Good Point

This is the hard part. There are difficult times we go through in which we can't seem to find anything good in the situation. When we go through a difficult time, we must bear in mind that our difficult times are just like everything else in life that is made up of both good and bad.

If there is more bad than good, how do we get by a situation? How do we deal with situations that are mostly bad? True, there is some good to everything, even situations that are mostly bad. But if it is mostly bad, how indeed do we get by these situations?

What one has to do in such a situation is to find the strongest good point in this situation, and that will shed an entirely new light on the situation. Let us give some more background to how this works.

Everything in Creation has in it a root and its branches. There is always one root good point in every situation, and although there are many branches that stem from it which are bad, the root is always good. There are actually 287 branches which can stem from one single root³, so a person can find 287 negative things to say about any situation! But if a person finds the root of a situation – if he finds the root good point – then all of the “branches” lose their vitality, because they have no ‘bad’ root with which to feed on.

Thus, if you want to see how any situation is good, no matter how bad it is, you need to find the “root” of the situation. The “root” is always good, and this knocks away all the negative things you see in the situation.

We will try to explain how we can put this into practice. These are really very deep matters, but they are the root of how to live a true, inner kind of life.

What It Means To “See Good”

There are two approaches in how a person can become more positive, to have an “*ayin tovah*” (“good eye”). One way is to think positive thoughts all the time, and as the saying goes, “Think good and then it will be good.”⁴ When you think positive, your good thoughts can help you transform the situation into a good situation. Another way, though, is to find the good point that is contained in every situation. [This second approach is the way we are describing here.]

³ The source for this is in the writings of the Arizal

⁴ Editor's Note: Based on the Yiddish saying, “Tracht gut un zul zein gut” – “Think good, and then it will be good.” Based on a statement of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov.

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This doesn't simply mean, however, for a person to try to find the one good point in any situation; that alone will not be enough, because there are many other bad points in the situation which would just cancel it out. If a person is aware of many bad points about a situation and he simply comes up with a good point contained in the situation, this will not help, because then he is still saying that there is mostly bad here, and he is just admitting that there is some good here also. This is not the depth to having an "*ayin tovah*".

The real definition of "*ayin tovah*" is to find how the *root* of the situation is somehow good, and therefore, that root good point makes the *entire* situation good as a whole.

An Example From Chazal

How do we know this is true? We can give a very good example. The destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash*, as we know, was a very great tragedy, a truly sad situation. On one hand, we must mourn the destruction and all the tragedies it caused, but on the other hand, *Chazal* also brought words of comfort for us. How did *Chazal* find comfort over the destruction?

There is a statement of *Chazal* that Hashem was so angry with the Jewish people that He really wanted to destroy them, but instead He unleashed His anger on the stones and wood of the *Beis Hamikdash*. In this statement, however, *Chazal* did not find comfort. This fact alone wasn't enough for *Chazal* to find solace. There is a different fact about the destruction, however, in which *Chazal* found comfort in. *Chazal* state that on the day of the destruction, Moshiach was born. This was how *Chazal* found the positive in the tragedy of the destruction.

The fact that Hashem took out His anger on stones and wood doesn't bring out the comfort in the situation, because this doesn't show how the destruction was a good thing. It just shows us some good amongst the bad. But the fact that the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash* heralded the birth of Moshiach is something that shows us how the entire tragedy, at its root, was good, because now we saw that the destruction was a cause to begin the final redemption.

From here we can see that when *Chazal* wanted to find how even the worst situation can be good, they didn't find comfort in the fact that there was one good point to say about the situation. That alone was not a comfort. What *Chazal* found positive about the situation was that the root of the entire sad situation was good, and that was what is able to comfort us.

Summary

To work on seeing how every situation is really good its root, a person still needs *siyata d'shamaya* (Heavenly assistance), *tefillos* (prayer), and *hisbonenus* (reflection) in this concept, besides for what we have explained here, in order to see how every situation is really good.

Anyone can split up every matter into how it is good and bad, and then he can see how the root of it is always good. Then he can connect himself to the root good point of any situation.

Applying This to Current Events

The words here are not only true on a general basis; they apply as well on a more specific level.

As we speak now, *Eretz Yisrael* is going through trying times. Three young boys have been kidnapped by terrorists, and we have not yet merited for them to return home. The entire country is worried for them, and this appears to be such a bad situation that it doesn't seem that any good can be said about it.⁵

Yet, if you think about it, there is some good in this situation. This situation has revealed so much *Ahavas Yisrael* amongst Jews from all walks of life. All Jews are united together in prayer for the boys, and everyone has put aside all their differences. Another good point is the *chessed* that this situation has caused people to increase in.

These are some good points about the situation, yet one can still argue that the bad of this situation far outweighs the good. To counter this pessimistic attitude, we can use our deeper method of *ayin tovah*, which is to find the root of the situation, which is good; and when we find the root good point of this situation, it will show us how this entire “bad” situation is really good.

The root good point of this situation is that it shows us about our own situation: we are also “kidnapped” amongst the seventy non-Jewish nations of the world. We are Hashem's children, and we are kidnapped by the nations. This situation can show us how much we long to be rescued by Hashem from the nations who want to destroy us.

The kidnapping of the three boys shows us the depth of our exile, and how much we should want to come out of it. It can show us that we shouldn't only *daven* for the children who were captured – we should *daven* for the entire *Klal Yisrael*, who currently live in darkness, surrounded by people who wish to destroy all the Jews – who have no value whatsoever for a Jew's life.

It is unfortunate that we have to use the three captured boys as a *moshol* (parable) to our own situation, but now that this is the situation, we need to use it as a way to get us to daven for all of *Klal Yisrael*, who are kidnapped in this exile. We are kidnapped from our true level of spirituality, because of the effect that the non-Jews have had on us throughout this dark exile.

May we merit from Hashem that the boys return home, and may all of us merit the redemption. That is how this situation is good, at its root – it can stir up in us a realization to daven for *Klal Yisrael*, that He take us out of this dark exile – speedily, in our days, Amen.

⁵ This shiur was given the day before the sad news of their tragic deaths. Yet, the lesson remains true, as the author has stated that every situation is good, and it can still be said that this episode caused much unity amongst Jews.

Questions & Answers With The Rav

Q1: What exactly is the “root” of all good that we must find? Isn’t Hashem the root of everything, who is always good?

ANSWER: Very good question. Yes, it is true that Hashem is the root of all good, but the question is, what is that root that Hashem is trying to show us in every situation? We need to find that good root of every situation. We know that Hashem is the source of everything, and that is clear. But we need to see in our own personal life how we see how the root of every possible situation is somehow good.

Q2: If I see bad in a situation, how do I focus on the good? Do I have to get myself to see a situation how others see it?

ANSWER: Good question. It depends why something is bothering you and not other people. Sometimes there is something that bothers you that really shouldn’t, and you are just overreacting. This kind of problem stems from simply being negative, which is a problem that stems from the *nefesh habehamis* (lower, animal layer of our soul). But if it’s a problem that not only bothers you but bothers others as well, it can be because the negative elements in the situation far outweigh the positive aspects of the situation. If that is the case, the *avodah* is, as we have explained here: to find how the root of the situation is somehow good.

Q3: What is the source for how there are 287 negative things to say about every situation?

ANSWER: The source is from the *Arizal* in *Parshas Beraishis*, who says that the word “*merachefes*” (blowing) has in it the letters *reish*, *pei*, and *ches*, (רפ"ח), which altogether has the numerical value of 288. If a person has the root, then these three letters become the word “*perach*” (פרח) which means “flower.” If he doesn’t find the root, then the letters become “*chafar*”, (חפר) which means “dug under”, a reference to being underneath the tree.

Q4: If someone is in a difficult marriage, how can he/she work on seeing the positive in this situation? Should he just focus on the nachas he/she has from the children?

ANSWER: Take apart all the factors going on in your marriage, and see everything that’s going on. This can take a few months. You will then discover much good in your marriage, and then, you should *daven* to Hashem that He should help you find the root good point in your marriage.

Q5: How do you know what the “root” of the situation is, and what the “branch” of the situation is?

ANSWER: If you know your soul well, you can identify better what the root is.

Q6: If a person doesn’t see anything negative about a situation, is he supposed to think about the negative? For example, if a person doesn’t feel pain at a situation going on in Klal Yisrael that he is supposed to feel pain about, is he supposed to feel that pain, as part of the process of seeing the bad and good?

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ANSWER: It's hard to answer this question, because it depends on each person and what his situation is in life. There are some people who are very stressed out in their life, and it will be detrimental to them to work on seeing what's bad in our situations, because this will only add to their stress. Only a person who is capable of doing this emotionally should work on it.

Q7: *The Rov said that a person should write down the good points on one side and the bad points on the other side. What can person do if he doesn't like to write, and it's not practical?*

ANSWER: Type it on a computer. Or, sit with a close friend and do it, and you will find it much easier to write it down.

Q8: *How do we tell this to people who are secular? How do we explain this concept to them?*

ANSWER: Even *frum* people who keep Torah and mitzvos have to work on the topic we discussed here [in this chapter]. In today's generation, although we keep the mitzvos, most people aren't connected to their *pnimiyus* (inner, spiritual world). Of course, every Jew is good in general, and there are some people today who are amazingly connected to their *pnimiyus*; but most Jews today, even *frum* Jews, are weak in their *emunah*, and therefore, they have to work on this *avodah* of seeing the good point in a situation.

Q9: *But what we can tell secular people, who aren't asking on how they can improve themselves?*

ANSWER: The concepts taught here was for people who keep Torah and mitzvos, who want to work on themselves. If a person doesn't ask how he can work on himself, then he doesn't have our questions, and he doesn't seek answers. The material here is thus not for people who aren't seeking to improve themselves, because my answers here are only for those who are asking on how they work on themselves.

Q10: *What practical point can the Rov suggest we work on every day from now on, in order to improve ourselves?*

ANSWER: Every day, seek to become a more truthful person.

Q11: *Which point should a person work on to become more truthful in – in learning Torah, in doing mitzvos? Which point exactly?*

ANSWER: Each person must become more truthful in his own unique circumstances in life and on his own level. This is a question which cannot be answered on a general level, because I would have to know the individual person who is asking it, in order to see how he needs to become more truthful. But there is something to this question which can apply to all people no matter what situation: no matter what your situation is in life, every person needs to try to become a more truthful person each day, in general.

TAMUZ – HOLY IMAGINATION

The Month of Tamuz: The Power of "Sight"

The month of Tamuz contains the especial power of *re'iyah* (sight). A hint to this is because each of 12 months is parallel to one of the 12 tribes, and the tribe represented by the month of Tamuz is Reuven, whose name comes from the words, "*Reu, ben*" ("See, that I have a son"). So the month of Tamuz is connected with *re'iyah*, with "seeing".

Let's try to understand how this is a power of the soul as well, and what we do with this power.

Inner Sight: The Heart's Power to See

The Gemara says, "A *dayan* (judge) only sees what his eyes see."⁶ A *dayan* determines a case according to how he "sees" it – meaning, according to what he feels and discerns the information. So seeing doesn't just mean to see in the plain and simple sense. It means to discern, and it involves the heart's feelings.

Our eyes can see the physical, whereas our heart can see a deeper dimension into the physical. Shlomo HaMelech said, "*My heart has seen much wisdom.*" The heart "sees" – it can discern things. *Chazal* say that "the eye sees, the heart desires, and the actions complete". It seems from this statement that sight is only with the eyes, and not with the heart. But the real understanding is that *the heart sees* from the eyes. Thus, when the heart desires that which the eyes see, it is really seeing that which the eyes see.

The Sages state, "The evil inclination rules only where the eyes see." When the eyes see something, the heart desires it and thus "sees" what the eyes are seeing. Chavah desired the *Eitz HaDaas* as soon as she saw it; the possuk says, "*And the woman saw that the tree was good for consumption.*" How did she 'see' that the tree tasted good, before she even ate it? It was because her *heart* saw the tree and thereby desired that which her eyes laid sight on.

Thus, there are two places from which we "see" in ourselves. One place is the eyes, and the other place is the heart. What does it mean that the heart can "see"? Firstly, we need to know what the nature of the heart is.

The heart is the seat of emotion in us. It is the source of both positive and negative feelings we experience: hatred, joy, sadness, etc. It is also the source of our various desires, motivations, and yearnings. But besides for this, there is another dimension to our heart: its power to "see".

What does the heart see? When a *navi* (prophet) is young, he is called a *chozeh* (seer), before he actually sees prophecies. A prophecy is an interpretation of Hashem's word, but it is a kind of vision. The prophet would see things from his heart. A prophet was at a purified internal state,

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where his heart could see a clear vision. The prophets reached the total level of this kind of vision (the heart's sense of sight), but each person as well can also reach it on his own level.

It is written, *"In the hands of the prophets, I appear."* The visions of the prophets were seen through the lens of a purified kind of imagination (*dimayon*). When most people hear of this concept, they react skeptically: "Prophecy involved imagination?!" But this reaction is only possible when a person is not aware of the concept of a holy kind of imagination. The prophets saw a holy and purified kind of imagination. Since most people have not reached a level of a purified kind of imagination, most people identify imagination as nothing but fantasy. But when imagination is pure, it is the level of prophecy.

Currently, we do not possess the level of prophecy. But we are still capable of traversing the very way that the prophets took to see their prophetic visions: the power of holy imagination.

We aren't referring to the kind of imagination techniques which the secular world presents. We are speaking here about the way of our forefathers; we are trying to return to their footsteps.

The Heart Needs to Picture Information

What exactly is the power of imagination which the heart is capable of?

Our intellect can think, scrutinize, build, take apart, decide, etc. Our heart, however, cannot relate to abstract information. It must be able to receive some kind of image, and then it can work with the image to understand it. If something cannot be imagined, it can be perceived rationally, by the intellect; but it cannot pass into the heart. The heart will not register any information that has no mental picture to it. If something can be pictured, it is perceived by the heart.

Our rational intellect is aware that two plus two is four. The heart, though, can only understand this if there is a picture of this. For example, if two books are placed next to two books, the heart can perceive that there are four books. There is now a picture here being given to the "two plus two", it can be imagined and thus the heart can register it. Thus, our intellect works with the abstract, whereas the heart needs some kind of picture of the information.

Mashal V'Nimshal – A Parable and Its Lesson

Shlomo HaMelech said, *"My heart has seen much wisdom."* Of Shlomo HaMelech, it was also said that he "established many parables." The concept of a *mashal* (parable) speaks to the heart, for it is a way to envision the information.

Shlomo HaMelech spoke in the form of parables. Why was this necessary? What is the idea of speaking in parables? It is because when our intellect is not capable of understanding things, we need to give it some kind of wrapping, like a parable, that will help us perceive it. Our heart will visualize the information being conveyed through the parable, and then the heart can understand.

Shlomo HaMelech spoke in parables, so that the wisdom he is imparting will be perceived by our heart.

The Difference Between Hirhur (Visualization) and Re'iyah (Inner Sight)

Generally speaking, there are two ways how the heart visualizes things.

One way is through envisioning it in letters of the *Aleph Beis*. This is also called *hirhur* (visualization), which is an ability of the heart, for we find that a person can fulfill *Kerias Shema* through '*hirhur b'libo*', through thinking of the words in his heart. This is the idea behind the month of *Iyar*, which we explained in the past.⁷

The month of *Tamuz*, however, is about *re'iyah*, "sight". It is the idea of perceiving things in terms of parables; to draw lessons from what we observe on this world and to understand the *nimshal* (lesson) that the *mashal* is teaching. The heart fantasizes the information, which makes use of the imagination, and in that way, it can use *mashal* to reach the *nimshal*.

Imagination: A Tool

The heart imagines something, and this forms a *kli*, a spiritual 'container', to hold the information. What will enter this 'container'? A true and tangible vision (*tziyur*) can enter it and be contained in it. That is the purpose of using imagination: it is a tool that allows us to receive a great vision that will become contained in us.

Thus, if one simply remains with the fantasies alone, he lives in his imagination. The 'guided-imagery' techniques of today therefore are not using the higher purpose of imagination, and they are causing people to become immersed in fantasy. It is a way meant for people who are very ill in their souls. The true way to use the power of imagination is to always see the *nimshal* (lesson) of the *mashal* (parable) that we are processing. Guided imagination, which has been devised by gentiles, is placing too much emphasis on the 'container' (the imagination). Imagination is but a tool we can use to receive something greater. It is a tool to receive a true vision.

The prophets reached the highest level of this, for they were essentially receiving the spiritual light of the *nimshal* contained in the *mashal* they were seeing. In the broader sense of things, man is an entirely a *mashal* (parable) of how to receive a *tzelem elokim* (image of G-d) and have it shined upon him – which is the *nimshal*.

Tziyur (Visualization) and Dimayon (Fantasy)

There are two powers related to the imagination. One is called *tziyur* (visualization) and the other is called *dimayon* (fantasy). *Dimayon* is for a person to imagine something which a person cannot understand rationally. It is used a *kli* (tool) to contain the vision which we want to put into it. *Tziyur*, though, is to imagine something which the person already knows of.

Feeling Hashem: Through Holy Imagination

⁷ See Essence of Rosh Chodesh #02 _Iyar_ Thought and Visualization

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We must use our imagination for holiness, so that it will become a container for the *tzelem elokim* (image of G-d) or the *tzurah elyonah* (heavenly image) that we want to put into it: a spiritual vision of a reality that is palpable.

It is written, “*And I will dwell amongst them*”, and the Sages explain, “In the hearts of each and every one of them.” Hashem dwells in every person’s heart. How can a person grasp such a thing? How are we to relate to such a thing? One of the ways that can help us understand this is through using the power of holy imagination. Through using the power of imagination for holiness (to envision spiritual realities), we build in ourselves a container that can hold onto the spiritual. That is what allows us to experience G-dliness in ourselves.

Holy Imagination vs. Unholy Imagination

However, there is a fine line that differentiates between holy imagination and unholy imagination. When a person uses imagination as a purpose unto itself, with no greater goal in mind, than imagination is unholy. By contrast, when imagination is used as a tool to reach a greater purpose, it is holy.

How Do We Internalize?

It is written, “*For the inclination of the heart of man is evil from his youth.*” How, indeed, does a person change and purify his *yetzer hora* (evil inclination)? The tool we can use this is the power of holy imagination, which our heart is capable of.

Our intellect is not capable of this; our intellect cannot tell our heart what to do and rationalize with it. Even if a person could live for 1000 years, his intellect would not be able to change his heart. This is because the intellect and the heart are polar opposites. The intellect rationalizes and brings proof, while the heart needs some kind of picture or vision of the information in order to be affected. The heart speaks a different language than our intellect.

For this reason, although many people know in their heads what the right thing is, their hearts remain unaffected by this knowledge. The *Ramchal* writes that if a person would know what a sin is, he would never sin. We all know what a sin is; our minds are aware of right and wrong. So why is sin so common? The *Ramchal* says that it’s because the knowledge in the mind isn’t in the heart.

How, indeed, can we internalize our mind’s knowledge into our heart? One of the ways is through the power of *hirhur* (to visualize the letters of the *Aleph Beis* of things), which we explained about in the month of *Iyar*. But another way is through *dimayon d’kedushah*, holy imagination – in which we can use our imagination as a tool to receive the spiritual.

The power of holy imagination was a power that many of the leaders of the past used. It is the heart’s power to “see”: the heart in us can see holiness. The tool and container we use for this is the vision of holiness, and the spiritual light that can enter that container is the actual spiritual vision.

The Powers of Ahavah and Yirah

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There are two parts to seeing the spiritual. These are really well-known matters, and here we will attempt to understand these concepts.

The heart can “see”. What can it see? What does it envision?

As the Sages tell us, there are two *chalalim* (spaces) in the heart: the *chalal hayemini* (the right side of the heart) and the *chalal hesemali* (the left side of the heart). It is written, “*The heart of the wise is to his right, and the heart of a fool is to his left.*” A heart that is “to the right” is referring to the “right side of the heart”, and a heart that is “to the left” is referring to the “left side of the heart”.

Our *avodah* (task) on this world, simply speaking, is to bring our *yetzer tov* (good inclination) into our heart, and drive away the *yetzer hora* (evil inclination) from the heart. This is true, but there is more depth to the matter.

Everything in Creation is two-sided; there are always two opposite aspects which we need to utilize in order to reach our desired purposes. There are two abilities which we can use in order to work with our heart. The Sages call them the “right side of the heart” and the “left side of the heart”; and the *yetzer tov* and *yetzer hora* are found in them. But let’s speak here about the actual different *spaces* of the heart, rather than the forces present inside them.

They are really two different abilities of the heart – the “right” aspect of the heart, which is otherwise known as *ahavah* (love), and the “left” aspect of the heart, which is otherwise known as *yirah* (awe).

We have a *mitzvah* to love Hashem as well as a *mitzvah* to fear Hashem. Our heart can “see”, and we can “see” from the place of *ahavah* that is in our heart. But we can also “see” from the place of *yirah*; the word *yirah* is related to the word *re’iyah* (seeing).

What are the abilities of *ahavah* and *yirah*? It seems the *ahavah* and *yirah* is simply a *middah* (character trait), and this is true, but from the fact that the heart can “see” we learn that there is a way to “see” from the place of *ahavah* in our heart, and there is a way to “see” from the place of *yirah* in our heart. What does it mean to “see” from *ahavah*, and what does it mean to “see” from *yirah*?

Reb Yisrael Salanter would mainly use the power of *yirah*, and there was a lot less emphasis on *ahavah*. He would mainly practice envisioning thoughts that inspired *yirah*, such as imagining the fire of *Gehinnom*. This was the way of the great leaders of the *Mussar* movement. However, this is not yet the stage of purifying the heart. It is the tool to get there, but it is not yet the goal.

Thus, the method which Reb Yisrael Salanter and the *mussar* movement used was the power of *tziyur* (visualization) present in the “left side of the heart.” This was the path of *yirah*, and it is one side to the power of *tziyur* which the heart is capable of.

There are many ways to use the heart’s power of *tziyur*. If someone has a hard time imagining what *Gehinnom* is like, one of the methods written about in the *mussar sefarim* is for a person to place his hand in a physical fire, so that he can get some kind of *mashal* (parable) of what *Gehinnom* is like. In any case, the heart’s power of *tziyur* uses the “left side of the heart”.

The other power of *tziyur* in the heart, the “right side of the heart”, is totally different. It is to imagine something that is loving and embracing. One example of it is to try to imagine the reward in the World To Come. In *Michtav M’Eliyahu*⁸, it is explained how a person can vividly see this world as a *mashal* to the reward of the World To Come, such as by trying to imagine how many drops in the ocean there are and how this mimics the magnitude of the reward that awaits a person in the World To Come. This is a loving kind of vision, not a fearful one, and it is experienced through the “right side of the heart” (also called “*kav hayamin*”, the “right line”).

In summary, we have explained the two general kinds of *tziyur* in the heart: to imagine a vision that conveys *yirah*, and to imagine a vision that conveys *ahavah*.

In recent generations, our *Gedolim* realized that people today are weaker when it comes to *yirah*; for example, most people have a hard time when trying to imagine *Gehinnom*. Therefore, the *Gedolim* wrote that we mainly have to make use of thoughts of *ahavah*, and deal less with thoughts of *yirah*. However, they never meant that *yirah* should be abandoned completely. We need both *ahavah* and *yirah*. The only question in our *avodah* is where to begin: Should we begin with *ahavah* or should we begin with *yirah*? But it is impossible to have one without the other.

Seeing Everything In Terms of Parable and Lesson

When we use the heart’s power of *tziyur*, this surely has a positive effect on our heart, and it purifies the heart to a certain extent. Yet it is not enough to connect a person to the reality of the spiritual. With the power of *tziyur* alone, a person will only live in the *mashal* of life, but he will never get to the *nimshal*. He will still remain connected to the materialism of This World.

What a person needs to do is to try to get to the *nimshal* (lesson) of the *mashal* (parable), and then he will leave the ideal kind of life, in which he will be truly connected with the spiritual. When a child hears a story, he is only hearing of a *mashal*; he does not hear the *nimshal*. In every story we hear as well, it’s possible that we are just hearing the *mashal* alone, without ever grasping the *nimshal*.

The Chofetz Chaim would hear an inspiring message in every event. He saw and heard events as entirely being a *mashal*, a parable, to something greater; he saw the *nimshal* of each *mashal*. He saw all of reality as a *mashal* against the backdrop of a greater reality. He realized that everything on this world can be seen as a *mashal* that leads to a *nimshal*.

The idea of this is not simply to see everything as parables and to remain there. Seeing everything as a parable is but the first step, but the second step, which is the goal, is to see the lesson behind the parable. For example, when a person sees snow, he can see it as being an example of Hashem’s power. He sees the snow as a *mashal* of Hashem’s power. But he has not yet reached the *nimshal* of this *mashal*. When one sees the *nimshal* behind each *mashal*, he reaches purity of heart.

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But one cannot jump to the *nimshal* unless he has first seen the *mashal*; the *mashal* is needed in order to relate to the *nimshal*. *Sefer Shir HaShirim*⁹ is entirely a *mashal* of a loving relationship between husband and wife, and the *nimshal* of this is the relationship between the Jewish people and Hashem. Yet many people have heard and read *Shir HaShirim*, but they never see it as a *mashal* to the *nimshal*. They are aware of the *nimshal*, but they skip over the *mashal* stage.

Everything you see on this world is all a *mashal*. If you get used to seeing the world like this, you have a tool to get the *nimshal* of each *mashal* you come across. Your eyes will see something, and your heart will see the *mashal* that is behind what you are seeing, and then your heart will search to understand what the *nimshal* is.

Hashem did not place in Gan Eden. He placed on this world. What do we do with everything that we see on this world? If we do not think into the reality we see before us, we never see the *mashal* of life. All we will see is the *nimshal*, and if we remain at this thoughtless stage, the *nimshal* we will see is nothing but the materialism of this world. But if we get used to seeing everything as a *mashal*, then everything we see can become a tool that we can use to connect to the spiritual.

The Heart Sees Reality

Thus, the abilities of *tziyur* and *dimayon* which are in our heart are both representing one *avodah* we have on this world. Our heart's ability of *tziyur* (or *dimayon*) can conjure realities we have never seen, and we have explained that there are two kinds of holy imagination which accomplish this: thoughts of *yirah* [i.e. imagining *Gehinnom*], and thoughts of *ahavah* [i.e. imagining the reward in the World To Come].

This is the inner essence that is behind the heart's power to "see". The depth of it is because our heart is capable of grasping reality. Our eyes see things objectively, but our heart sees the reality behind what we see; it sees into the inner dimension of what we are physically seeing.

A Life Ruled By Fantasies

Everyone has the power to imagine. Most people only know of it from the fantasies of dreams, and many people fantasize during the day as well; in fact, many people are immersed in imaginative thoughts during the day, ruled completely by their imagination; some more and some less. The problem with this is not the fact that people are immersed in fantasy. The problem is that it negatively affects the heart.

When imagination dominates a person, the heart will imagine various fantasies, and it will not imagine spiritual realities. It will be the kind of heart of which it is said, "The eyes see, and the heart desires" – the heart will fantasize about unholy and evil thoughts. As the Sages say, "If a person wants one hundred, he will want two hundred." Everything physical that we see will then turn on the imagination, and then our heart will do nothing else except fantasize of various, worthless desires.

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It's even possible that a person's head is immersed in thoughts of Torah, yet his heart is immersed in childish fantasies. Just because a person isn't consciously aware of this doesn't mean that it is not the case. A person can have a highly developed intellect yet his heart still remains at the level of a child. As long as a person has not yet worked to purify his heart, his heart lives in various fantasies.

This is the depth of the contradiction between our intellect and our heart. It is not simply because the heart doesn't feel the knowledge present in the intellect. That is also true. But it is a much deeper contradiction. It is because the heart's role is to grasp reality, whereas the intellect knows rationally what the right thing is, but it doesn't grasp that knowledge as a reality; what results from contradiction [when it is left unresolved]? The heart is left with nothing but fantasies.

Fantasy dominates over any person who has not had enough involvement with a Torah scholar to learn from, even if the person has learned a lot of Torah in his life. When the heart is left unchanged as it is, it will desire what the eyes see, and it will fantasize over worthless pursuits. The *Sforno* says that the desire to eat from the *Eitz HaDaas* was essentially the power of imagination.

Not only will the heart desire and fantasize about things that are not good – it will completely immerse a person in a pursuit of fantasy. The person will live a fantasy kind of life, and he will never live reality. Reb Yisrael Salanter wrote of the woes of imagination: “Man roams around freely in his imagination.” This is because when the heart remains at its initial and immature state, it fantasizes.

But if a person learns how to see the *mashal* of each thing, and he also searches to understand the *nimshal*, he lives in the reality, and he leaves imagination behind.

In Conclusion

Thus, the depth of our *avodah* on this world is not simply so that we should “*purify our hearts, to serve You in truth.*” That is what we should aim for, but it does not define our actual *avodah*. Our actual *avodah* is to leave imagination, and enter into reality - namely, the ability to palpably feel Hashem as an existing reality.

Why is it that a person doesn't feel Hashem as a reality in his life? It is not because his heart isn't pure; it is because his heart is living in fantasies. When a person leaves fantasy behind, he can then feel the simplest reality that exists: Hashem's presence. The more a person leaves behind fantasy, the more he will feel Hashem - in his heart.

When a person sees all of life as a *mashal*, and he searches to get to the *nimshal* of the *mashal* – he is the person who will reach the Creator.¹⁰

¹⁰ For more on the concept of seeing life as ‘*mashal v'nimshal*’ (a parable and its lesson), see Getting To Know Your Home_012_The Lesson of Marriage.

TAMUZ – TWO EYES TO SEE WITH

Tamuz, Reuven, and the Sense of Sight

In our mystical teachings, the five senses of man are listed as sight, hearing, smell, touch, and speech. This order is given specifically. Therefore, our most prominent sense is the sense of sight. It is like the ‘firstborn’ of our senses. It is also at the highest place in our body from all of our senses: it is located in the eyes, which is at the top of the head.

The month of Tamuz is represented by the tribe of Reuven, the firstborn son of Yaakov Avinu. Reuven was named so from the words “*Reu, ben*” which is mother Leah expressed upon his birth, and these words are related to the word *re’iyah*, to see. Thus, the month of Tamuz is connected with the sense of *re’iyah* (sight), and the tribe of Reuven.

A person sees the world through his eyes. The sense of sight is the sense that accompanies man wherever he goes, guiding him and directing him.

The sense of sight is linked with Reuven. Being that Reuven lost his rights to the status of *bechor* (firstborn son), the sense of sight was damaged along with this. Reuven lost the rights to the firstborn status, and it was given instead to Yosef. Reuven was originally called the ‘*raishis*’ (beginning) of Yaakov’s children, but it was taken away from him, due to the episode with moving Bilhah’s bed out of Yaakov’s tent; he was cursed for being too impulsive. The ‘beginning’ was thus ruined, and he is no longer considered the firstborn of Yaakov Avinu.

We have no comprehension of the greatness of our *Avos* (the forefathers) and their children, the *shevatim* (the 12 tribes), but what can we learn from this? It shows us what damages the sense of sight, and it shows us what causes the sense of sight to lose its ‘firstborn’ status from us (thus the sense of sight is no longer the initial guiding sense in man).

Chazal say that “a *dayan* (judge) does not see except that which his eyes see.”¹¹ There are people who go to *Beis Din* and they witness an argument erupt between the *dayanim* there, and they become terrified at this sight; they watch in horror as the heated *machlokes* (argument) takes place. But the truth is that *machlokes* amongst the wise people of *Klal Yisrael* has always been around. The Sages record that the very first *machlokes* between the sages was the argument between the sage Yoezer with Yochanan *Kohen Gadol*, regarding what the *halachah* is if one may perform *semichah* (anointing) on an animal on *Yom Tov*. Ever since then, there has been *machlokes* amongst the Sages about what the *halachah* is. [We will try to understand here the deeper meaning behind why this is so.]

The ‘Right Eye’ and The ‘Left Eye’

We have two eyes – a right eye and a left eye. Each of them are two different lenses that view the physical world. From a deep understanding, every person contains two different ‘eyes’ which see different views on reality - and it is our head which connects our two eyes together and unites

11 Sanhedrin 6a

them to see only one view. The *sefarim hakedoshim* write that we have a ‘right eye’ and a ‘left eye’ which each see different perspectives on a situation. With most people, they see two different perspectives on things, and they do not see the same exact thing. Therefore, every person sees things differently.

It is explained that the ‘right eye’ sees the *hekef* (general picture) of things, while the ‘left eye’ sees the *peratim* (details) of things. The true perspective on things is to see the totality: to see its *hekef* and to see its *peratim* together with it. But most people are “either, or.” Either a person will be the type to focus on the general picture without paying attention to details, or a person will get too focused on a particular detail of a situation and thus he misses the bigger picture.

Chazal say, “Who is wise? One who sees what will come.” This is not referring to the ability of *Ruach HaKodesh* (the holy spirit); it is referring to a far simpler level. It is referring to the ability of seeing the *hekef* of a situation. A person tends to only see the moment and be in the moment, but he usually cannot see further. As a person matures spiritually, he begins to see a bigger picture that goes beyond the present moment. As an example, in regards to the timespan of Creation, the *hekef* is a timespan of 6,000 years (And in the mystical teachings, it is also brought that there will be a total of 10,000 years).

So the ‘right eye’ in us sees the bigger picture of things, while the ‘left eye’ in us sees only details, such as the current moment. The more a person matures spiritually, the more he can see from his ‘right eye’, which sees the bigger picture.

Reuven was punished for removing Bilhah’s bed from his father Yaakov Avinu’s tent. We can now have a deeper understanding of this: he was too focused on a particular detail. As the Sages state, he did this in deference to his mother’s honor, for he felt that his mother Leah should not have the same status as the maidservants. Although he acted for the sake of Heaven, he could not see beyond this particular detail; he did not see the bigger picture. In his mind, though, the detail that he saw was a representation of the bigger picture. His father Yaakov saw the real bigger picture of this episode; he saw that it reflected a flaw in Reuven’s nature and thus he knew that Reuven cannot be of the firstborn status.

If we try to understand this episode in the Torah from *seichel hayashar* (straight, human logic) alone, Reuven is definitely right. He had a very good reason for how he acted. But Yaakov saw beyond that reason; he saw a bigger picture.

The *chachamim* (the sages) are called ‘*einei haeidah*’, eyes of the congregation, because a truly wise person sees not only the current moment, but the bigger picture that goes beyond the current moment, and he fuses the two views together. The *Gemara* says that the definition of a *chacham* is one who can answer a question on any area of Torah he is asked; so a *chacham* is one who sees the big picture. The numerical value in Hebrew of the word ‘*chacham*’ is ‘*chaim*’, life, for a truly wise person sees what life is all about. He sees something from its beginning to its end – “One who sees what will come.”

Seeing the *hekef* (bigger picture) of things is the power of *chochmah* (wisdom); the view of *chochmah* sees an all-inclusive view which goes beyond the amassment of many details. This is also the concept behind *emunas chachamim*, believing in the Sages. In order to believe in the

words of our Sages, one has to see the bigger picture of a situation. It is the power to believe that the Sages can see things which I cannot see.

This is not a power that comes from our logical and deciding power of *da'as*. It is not simply to believe in the “*Daas Torah*” of our Sages. Although that is also true, it is deeper than that. It is because the Sages see a larger view towards the Torah and towards life.

Adam *HaRishon* was given a light that could see from one end of the world to another; Hashem hid this light away because He saw that mankind will not know how to use this light properly, and it will be revealed in the future. This is otherwise known as the *Ohr HaGanuz* (the hidden light). But the Baal Shem Tov revealed that this hidden light was hidden away into the Torah; therefore, through learning Torah in the right way, a person is able to gain an all-inclusive view on things. Thus the meaning of a ‘*chacham*’ (wise person) is one who receives the hidden light from the Torah he learns.

We have outlined the concept, and now we will try to draw this concept closer within reach of our souls.

The Right Eye Sees Past and Future; The Left Eye Only Sees The Present

What does it mean to see the bigger picture of things, and what does it mean to see the details?

From all of the senses, the sense of sight contains a drawback, with the fact that it cannot see except what it is directly in front of it. A person can only see what’s in front of his eyes, but he cannot see behind him. By contrast, our other senses can sense both what’s in front us and what’s behind us. We can speak to someone who is in front of us or behind us. We can smell something that is in front or behind. We can hear and touch something that is either in front us or behind us. But we can only see what’s in front of us, and we cannot see behind us.

This is because, as we brought earlier from the words of our Sages, that the sense of sight has become damaged (ever since Reuven lost his status of the firstborn). Therefore, we start out in life with an initially damaged ‘sense of sight’, which can only see the present moment and not beyond. Obviously, we are referring to our spiritual sense of sight, not our physical sense of sight. We are explaining the depth of our spiritual sense of sight. We start out with a limited kind of view that cannot see the bigger picture of things; the ‘left eye’, which only sees details.

The Gemara says that a person is apt to forget the words of Torah he learned the day before. (But the fantasies of yesterday, that he remembers...). This is an example of the ‘left eye’ – where a person only lives in the present moment; he does not recall past nor can he see beyond the present. He only sees what’s in front of him, right now, but he cannot see ‘behind’ him – he doesn’t see his past. He doesn’t connect the present day with yesterday.

By contrast, the ‘right eye’ can see both yesterday as well as the morrow, within the present moment. This is the deeper meaning of “Who is wise? One who sees what will come.”

The hidden light which Hashem created on the first day of Creation was a kind of view which man could use to see from one of the world to the other. It could see both the present moment

and the past and the future - within the present. It was the original sense of sight of man in its pure form: the 'right eye', which saw the totality of things.

In contrast, when Chavah laid eyes upon the *Eitz HaDaas* and desired it, she only saw what was in front of her, and she did not think about the consequences. It was her 'left eye' dominating her. When the faculty of desire dominates, a person is so immersed in the present moment that he cannot see beyond the desire. The desire continues to pull the person after it because the person is not seeing past it. He is only seeing this very moment that is taking place right now.

The 'right eye' though sees the past and the future within the present. It is aware of the statement of our Sages, "Know from where you come from...and to where you are going" even as it views the present moment.

Reuven lost his firstborn status; the deeper understanding of this, as we explained, was that he lost his 'sense of sight'. And on a larger scale, mankind in general has a damaged sense of 'sight', ever since Chavah laid eyes upon the *Eitz HaDaas* and desired it. She was immersed in her *taavah* (desire) for the *Eitz HaDaas* and she could not see beyond it; this represents the depth of the trait of *taavah*. Indulging in a *taavah* makes a person focus only on the present moment, on the *taavah* itself, and the person loses sight of his past and future.

We find in *halachah* that there are certain sights which are forbidden to stare at. For example, it is forbidden to stare at the rainbow. If one does so, he is spiritually damaging his eyes by laying his physical eyes on it. However, there is also a concept of damaging one's eyes on a more inner level: when a person fantasizes about what he sees and he is pulled after his vision. Ever since the sin of Adam with the *Eitz HaDaas*, man initially sees an incomplete and disparate picture of something, and his imagination can lull him after this disparate view that he sees. Man initially sees things now based on how desirable it is to his eyes, reminiscent of the sin with the *Eitz HaDaas*.

"Who is a wise person? One who sees what will come." A truly wise person sees the beginning, middle and end of the picture. Thus he is able to be drawn after the inner essence of life.

Changing Our Perspective

The view from the 'right eye', the ability to see the bigger picture of things and see beyond the present moment, is essentially the view that comes from our pure and higher *seichel* (intellect).

An example of this would be if a person on his wedding day can remind himself of his day of death. (There is indeed a *minhag* by some people to remind themselves of death on the day of their wedding). It is an example of having a totally different view towards life; to be in the moment yet not to become too caught up in it, so that a person is still aware of the larger picture of life even as he's in the moment.

The Sages state that at the time where the *yetzer hora* (evil inclination) is present, there is no mention of the *yetzer tov*.¹² This can also be explained in terms of the 'right eye' and the 'left eye'.

¹² Nedarim 32a

When a person is stuck in the vision of his 'left eye', he cannot see beyond the fragmented pieces of reality that lay before him. What is our task when we are faced with improper desires and sights? Our task is not simply that we must try to overcome the difficult temptation. Rather, our task is to gain a new view towards the situation; to leave the view of our left 'eye' and instead see it through our 'right eye.' If we accomplish that transition, our difficulties with temptation will become greatly weakened. The change of perspective will give us entirely new strength to deal with it.

When a person only sees through his 'left eye', all he sees is the desire of his eyes, and there is no way for him to succeed in overcoming the desire and to stop lusting after his eyes. What is really needed is a change of perspective towards the situation, and then the person will have a much easier time with the struggle.

Compare this to a child who has developed the bad habit of overeating. The parents tell him, "Stop eating already!!" but he continues to eat and eat, because he doesn't know how to control himself. But if they tell him, "This snack has been set aside specifically for Shabbos", then the child understands that he cannot eat it, for it is specially set aside for Shabbos. He has a change of perspective towards the food now, so he doesn't touch it.

When a person fails at his *nisyonos* (difficulties) with temptation and lust, the true perspective is not to feel "I just couldn't withstand the temptation...I failed..."; rather the perspective needs to change entirely.

The *Gemara* says that if a person is coming towards an immodest sight and there is an alternative route to take, he should take the alternative path; but the *Gemara* says that even if he takes the alternative path, it is still very difficult for him to avoid the immodest sight, because the temptation is very strong. What, indeed, is the 'path' that a person must take? It is for a person to acquire a change of perspective towards the situation.

So, how does a person acquire a change of perspective? It is through looking into the Torah.

The Torah gives a person a new perspective entirely towards life; through viewing the situation through the lens of Torah – through an all-inclusive view that sees beyond the current moment.

Leaving the Narrowed View of the 'Left Eye'

Every person has many failures and difficult tests on this world. Usually a person begins to seriously deal with his problems only when the problems become very extreme. A person is usually complacent with his issues, and he only gets nervous when the issues become extreme. Compare this to a person who hears about a fire. He is relatively calm when he hears the news. Then if he hears that the fire is getting near his house, now he begins to worry.

Another example: a person hears that another person has become ill, yet he remains calm, and he doesn't think that maybe it can happen to him too. He thinks, "Only other people get sick. These things don't happen to someone like me..."

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It is like the verse, “*Seeking desire, breeds separation.*” When a person lives apart from others and he never empathizes with others’ pain, he thinks “I am okay, *Baruch Hashem*. As for others, *rachmana litzlan* (may Hashem have mercy on them)...” And then if he himself receives the very same *nisayon* which he thought only happens to other people, he reacts with negativity: “This is so not fair! Life is so difficult!”

This is all the view from the ‘left eye’. The ‘left eye’ immerses a person into a self-absorbed kind of existence. In contrast, the view from the ‘right eye’, the view of the wise, is the view that can bring a person to get to where must get to.

The Sages state that “all of the world has the status of a blind man, until Hashem comes and opens up the eyes.” Everyone must understand that he is like a blind person who cannot see properly. (This is referring to our inner sight, not our physical sense of sight.) When a person really feels in his heart how true this is, he will then seek how to come out of his narrowed perspective, and receive a new way to view situations.

“Woe is to the creations, who see and do not know what they are seeing.” This is referring to people who remain at the view of their ‘left eye’.

It is indeed a challenging *avodah* (task) upon us to develop our ‘right eye’. But for this, we are given an entire lifetime to work on this; an average lifespan of 70 years. We are given an entire lifetime to work on drawing ourselves closer to gain the view that is *einei haeidah*, ‘eyes of the congregation’.

Here is an example. Whenever the Chofetz Chaim felt that he needed to strengthen himself and improve, he would look to strengthen his *emunah*, by reviewing the story of *Beraishis*. (Yes, even our *Gedolim* had ups and downs in their *ruchniyus*, and they needed to strengthen themselves). The depth of this was because whenever a person has a struggle or difficulty, he should remember where he comes from. When a person simply remembers his beginning, this itself can be a remedy to his problems.

All of our great forefathers, sages, and leaders of the past had difficult lives. But they saw life through the lens of their ‘right eye’, thus they saw the bigger picture of things, and that was how they got through life. They saw past their private existence and were aware of the bigger picture of Creation that goes beyond oneself.

This does mean to say that all of a person’s problems are coming from a previous *gilgul* (incarnation). We are trying to explain a far deeper perspective than blaming it on a past *gilgul*. We are speaking about a perspective that comes from the power of *emunah*.

Hashem says, “*I am the First, and I am the Last.*” This describes our *emunah*. With *emunah*, we can see the path of things from beginning until end. And ultimately, the beginning and end of each thing is Hashem.

To illustrate, Rav Dessler would say that at a wedding, the boys dance so much and are very joyous, because they are immersed in the present moment and they aren’t thinking about the totality of life. He saw a wedding much differently. On a similar note, many people think that the world begins with them and ends with them.

Gaining the View from the 'Right Eye'

These words are not mere ideas. It is a way to view life.

To practically actualize this concept, get used to thinking into the beginning and end of each thing, and realize that everything begins and ends with Hashem. When you get up in the morning, think: “What is the beginning of the world? The fact that *“Hashem is One, and His Name is one”*. What will be at the end of the world? *“On that day, Hashem will be One and His Name will be one.”*”

This is what it means to get used to the view of our ‘right eye’, to the hidden light of Creation which saw from one of the world to the other. What does it mean that the hidden light could see from one of the world to another? Did it mean that a person could see the entire universe all at once? It means that a person was able to always see the beginning of creation and the end of creation: Hashem.

The Complete View: Bigger Picture and the Details Together

In actuality, we were given both a ‘right eye’ and a ‘left eye’, so we need to make use of both. We need a ‘right eye’ because we need to see the bigger picture of things, but we also need a ‘left eye’ which can see details. We need to fuse both perspectives together.

If a person only sees the general picture of things, he never sees details, and this is obviously detrimental. If a person only sees details and he never sees the bigger picture, he will think that a particular detail *is* the bigger picture of things; this resembles a person who is mentally deranged. Yet if a person tries to only see the bigger picture of things without seeing the details, he lives a delusional kind of existence.

We need both the right eye and the left eye; we need to see both the *hekef* (bigger picture) and the *peratim* (details). A wise person sees a situation through both of these lenses; he is aware of the general picture of the situation as well as the details, and he knows how to avoid getting caught up in either one of these views.

This is what it means to possess “*einei haeidah*”, “eyes of the congregation” – it means to see the all-inclusive view on things. Not only did the wise sages of the past see the general picture of what was going on in their own generation, but they were able to connect all the details together and see how it formed the general picture.

May Hashem give us the strength to acquire the perspective that comes from both seeing the general picture of things as well as seeing the details, and to be able to combine these two views together: as one of the sages prayed, “That we see the qualities of our friends, and not their faults” – to view Creation through a true lens.¹³

¹³ For more on this topic, see Tefillah #0117 – The Big Picture and The Details; and see also Getting To Know Your Thoughts, chapters 06-09.

TAMUZ – THE CRAB

The Mazal of Tamuz - The Sartan/Crab

The *mazal* of the month of *Tamuz* is called “*sartan*”, “crab” [cancer]. What is the meaning behind the *mazal* of the *sartan*/crab, and what is the personal *avodah* in our soul that it implies?

The Words of Raavad and Rav Saadya Gaon About The Crab's Nature

Rabbi Avraham ben David (*Raavad*) writes that “the nature of the *sartan* (crab) is that it lives within the water and also above the water... There are waters which cause joy to our eyes, which are tears of joy, and there are waters which hurt our eyes, tears of sadness.” (When a person cries tears out of joy, it is beneficial for his eyes. When a person cries tears in anguish, it is damaging to the eyes.)... “This is the secret of the matter that “Women weep in the month of Tamuz.”¹⁴

The destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*, which took place in the month of Av, begins in the month of Tamuz, where our weeping over the destruction begins [with the fast on the 17th of Tamuz]. *Rav Saadya Gaon* explains that the *sartan*/crab is “a creature that grows in water, which gives healing to the eyes, and it is an ornament placed on the garments of kings, and it can bring things into the water, which we do not find with any other creature.”¹⁵ In these cryptic words of *Rav Saadya Gaon*, we learn that the crab’s special ability is that it can bring things into the water, transporting it from the land into the water.

That is the underlying concept behind the crab, which is the *mazal* of the month of *Tamuz*. Now let us try to understand more about this.

The Concept of Dry Land Within Water

Each of the 12 months of the year is parallel to 12 nations of the world, and the month of Tamuz corresponds to the nation that is called “Armania”. The Torah says that the Ark of Noach came to rest on the mount of “Ararat”, and *Targum Yehonasan ben Uziel* says that the mountains of “Ararat” is the place where the nation of “Armania” dwells.¹⁶

[Later, the connection between the month of Tamuz, the ark of Noach, the mountains of Ararat, and Armania will be explained]. Let us now explain this in clearer terms.

Chazal state that “Hashem first created several worlds and destroyed them”¹⁷, until He created our current world. At the beginning of Creation, water filled the entire world, and then Hashem

14 Raavad to Sefer Yetzirah: 5

15 Peirush HaMeyuchas L’Rav Saadya Gaon to Sefer Yetzirah:5

16 Targum Yehonasan on Beraishis 8:4

17 Beraishis Rabbah 3:7

split the waters to allow for the land to exist. Hashem split the waters on the second day, and gathered the waters on the third day, to form dry land (*yabashah*). When Hashem brought the Flood upon the world, it resembled a situation of the world returning to nothingness, for it was a form of destruction to the world.

After the waters of the Flood cleared and subsided, the Ark was able to come to rest on dry land, which the Torah calls "*yabashah*". This resembled the third day of Creation, when the waters were first gathered to form dry land. The Torah first mentions the term "*yabashah*" (dry land) on the third day of Creation, when Hashem told the waters to gather together and form the *yabashah*, the dry land.

The original "*yabashah*" was the perfected *yabashah* of Creation, which was not preceded by any curse, whereas the "*yabashah*" formed after the Flood came about through a curse of destruction upon the world, hence, it was a cursed form of "*yabashah*". A hint to this is that the dry land which the Ark came to rest on was the mount of "Ararat", from the word "*arur*", "cursed".

The Sages also find a parallel between the 12 months of the year and 12 of the prophets. The month of Tamuz corresponds to the prophet Yonah, who was swallowed by a big fish. When Yonah lived inside the fish, it was like being on dry land within the water. Yonah was in the water, in the belly of the fish, but he was dry. It was like a situation of dry land within water.

The dove, which informed Noach that there was dry land, is called a "*yonah*". The connection between the *yonah*/dove, and the prophet Yonah - who corresponds to the month of Tamuz – is that there can be a revelation of a new *yabashah*, dry land within the water.

This is the idea behind the *sartan*, the crab. It is a creature that reveals "dry land" within water. Hence, the deeper meaning behind the *mazal sartan* in the month of Tamuz is that it is a *mazal* which reveals "dry land, within water". Based upon this, we can now understand the depth of the words of *Rav Saadya Gaon* that the crab is a creature which grows in the water and which transports food from the land to the water. By moving food from the land to the water, the *sartan*/crab reveals how there can be a concept of "dry land", the *yabashah*, even within the water.

Thus, the crab, which lives from the water and brings food from the land into the water, represents the point where dry land meets water. The *mazal sartan*, represented by the crab, reveals how there can be "dry land" within "water". The root of this began on the third day of Creation, when Hashem first formed the dry land from the water.

The Roots of the Destruction of the Beis HaMikdash

Let us delve more into the understanding of the words of *Rav Saadya Gaon*, as follows.

There are two kinds of "water" - in the form of tears - which are either damaging, or healing, to the eyes. When a person cries tears of joy, these tears give the eyes a shine and they are healing to the eyes. When a person cries tears of sadness or mourning, these tears are blinding and harmful to the eyes. This is "The secret of the matter that women weep in the month of Tamuz" which the *Raavad* writes about.

What was the root of the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*? It was rooted in the very fact that “Hashem builds worlds and destroys them.” The *Beis HaMikdash* was designed by Betzalel, who “knew the secret of combining the heavens with the earth”.¹⁸ Betzalel knew how to create an edifice on this earth that resembled Heaven, which this world is modeled after. Therefore, when the *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed, it was really a destruction upon the entire design of Creation, for the *Beis HaMikdash* represented the ideal design of the entire Creation. The destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash* was therefore a destruction to the *pnimiyus* (inner dimension) of all of Creation.

Destruction was built into the very design of Creation, for “He builds worlds and destroys them”, and this was the very root of all destructions to come after that. The Flood was the first time in history where this concept of destruction actually took place. The waters of the Flood destroyed the world. Later, destruction took place once again when the *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed, which was as if the world had been destroyed, because the *Beis HaMikdash* was a microcosm of the entire universe in one edifice. Its destruction therefore represented the destruction of Creation. Building the *Beis HaMikdash* was the building of the world, and the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash* was the destruction of the world.

The Hebrew for “destruction”, *charuv*, can also mean “desolate land”, as in the term *charavah*, when water dries up and there is parched, dry, and desolate land. The *Beis HaMikdash* was built on a place of *charavah*, on desolate land. The Sages teach that Dovid HaMelech was digging at the future site of the *Beis HaMikdash*, in order to lay its foundation, and the waters of the *tehom* (the depths) where the *Even HaShesiyah* was placed, threatened to rise up and flood the world.¹⁹

The inner meaning behind this is that the *Beis HaMikdash* is built in the place precisely atop the place where the *tehom* wants to flood the world. Just as the Flood destroyed the world, so did the *tehom* wish to destroy the world again, when Dovid was laying the foundation for the *Beis HaMikdash*. That is the place upon where the *Beis HaMikdash* was built – it was built on such a place where destruction almost came to the world.

The Gemara says that the world will be for 6,000 years, and then it will become *charuv*, desolate.²⁰ On a deeper level, this means that the first 6,000 years of the world correspond to the period when the *Beis HaMikdash* was built, because the *Beis HaMikdash* was built atop the *Even HaShesiyah*, the stone which blocks the waters of the *tehom* from flooding the world, and the word *Shesiyah* is from the word *shishi*, “six”, corresponding to the 6,000 years of the world. The time period when the world becomes desolate (*charuv*), on a more inner level, is a hint to the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*, when the world became “desolate” and destroyed.

The *Beis HaMikdash* was built on a place of *charavah*/desolation, because the waters of the *tehom* underneath the ground of the *Beis HaMikdash* almost rose up to destroy the world. This was a hint that the *Beis HaMikdash* would eventually be destroyed, it would become *charuv*, desolate.

18 Talmud Bavli Berachos 55a

19 Talmud Bavli Succah 53a

20 Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 97a

Mourning The Beis HaMikdash – Returning To The Point Where No Destruction Is Possible

Now that the *Beis HaMikdash* has been destroyed, it is as if the entire world has become destroyed. What do we do, now that this has happened? We lament its loss, as in the verse, “My eyes, my eyes, they flow with tears.”²¹

However, there is a rule that “From the wound itself comes the recovery”. The Gemara says that “Whoever mourns Yerushalayim, will merit to see it in its consolation.”²² The depth of this matter is because when one cries over the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*, he is essentially revealing the point before the *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed, when the *charavah* (desolate land) was called *yabashah* (dry land). When the *Beis HaMikdash* is destroyed and I want to repair its destruction, I need to return it to the way it was before it was destroyed, when there was no *charavah* in the world yet.

That is the secret behind crying over the loss of the *Beis HaMikdash*. Through crying over the *Beis HaMikdash*, our eyes are becoming “filled with water”, and this returns us to the state when the world was filled with water, before the six days of Creation. On a deep level, the time period when the world becomes *charuv* (desolate) corresponds to the original state of the world, when the world was filled with water, before the six days of Creation, the point which preceded all destruction, and the point in time where there is no concept of destruction. At that point, there was only water, and no land yet.

This means that there is a very deep point where the world is filled with water. When water first filled the world, this was a repaired world, where there was no destruction yet. Of course, from our current perspective, if the world would return to being filled with water, it would be destruction to the world. But at the root, this is actually a repaired state of the world. In fact, it is only when water disappears from the world that there is destruction. When water dries up, the world becomes *charavah*, desolate land.

The third *Beis HaMikdash*, which will descend from Heaven, will come down in the form of a fire.²³ The third *Beis HaMikdash* will come from Heaven, where water and fire are combined (as a hint, *shomayim*/heaven comes from the words *aish*/fire and *mayim*/water). This will be a revelation of “dry land” within the water. The splitting of the sea was also a point where the dry land met the water.

[Just as there is a concept of “dry land within water” in the side of holiness, so is there a concept of “dry land within water” on the side of ruination.] *Chazal* state that on the day Shlomo married the daughter of Pharaoh, which was also the day the first *Beis HaMikdash* was built, the angel Gavriel laid the foundation in the sea for the land of Greece.²⁴ Unlike the redemption from Egypt, where the people went from the sea to dry land (at the splitting of the sea), where there was a holy revelation of “dry land” within water, the day of when the first *Beis*

21 Eichah 1:16

22 Talmud Bavli Taanis 30b

23 Talmud Bavli Succah 39a

24 Talmud Bavli Shabbos 56a, and see Rashi to Megillah 6b

HaMikdash was built, when the land of Greece was formed from the water, there was a chilling revelation of “dry land” within water, on the side of ruination.

When there is dry land without water, there is desolation and destruction. The *mazal sartan* in the month of Tamuz – the crab – represents the concept of revealing “dry land within water”. When the Ark of Noach settled on the peak of the mountain Ararat, it was dry land within water. At that time, the entire world was filled with water from the Flood, but the Ark was amidst dry land, on Ararat. Even when there is water everywhere, which destroys the world, there can be a point of “dry land” within the waters of destruction.

Summary

Thus, the idea is that there is either (1) Dry land without water, which brings destruction, (2) Water flooding the world, which is also destruction, (3) Water filling the entire world at the beginning of Creation, which was a repaired state for the world, and (4) “Dry land within water”, a state of repair.

Crying In Tamuz: Revealing Tears of Joy In The Tears of Sadness

By the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*, the world became desolate again. It was like having land (the world) without water (our spiritual energy, our sustenance). It totally dried us out. What happens when there is total dryness? A person dries up, becomes thirsty, and longs for water.

Hagar cried in the desert because she had no water. Hagar was also the daughter of Pharaoh (king of Egypt). [This is a hint to Shlomo’s marriage to the daughter of Pharaoh on the day when the *Beis HaMikdash* was built, which paved the way towards destruction.] *Rav Saadya Gaon* also says that the month of Tamuz also corresponds to the exile in Egypt. Hence, the crying and mourning which we express in Tamuz, over the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*, is a crying that comes from thirst, from having no water.

The *Raavad* furthermore states that the root of crying is in the month of Tamuz, because the *mazal* of Tamuz is the crab, which lives in the water [tears are a form of water]. Thus, our crying in the month of Tamuz corresponds to the crab.

But there are two kinds of crying. There is crying out of sadness, and there is crying out of joy. When a person cries, a person has some revelation of “water” coming forth from him, because tears are a form of water. This is somewhat comforting to a person, because he is not totally dried up. If he is able to cry, he has some “water” in his soul, and he is not totally dry. This is a comfort, on some level. When one cries, one is returning to a state of “water”, through the tears.

Tears are salty, and when a person cries out of sadness, he has “salty” water, so the crying does not completely calm him, just as salty water does not quench a thirsty person. This World is compared to “salty water”, because at first it seems to a person that worldly pleasures are satisfying, but soon a person realizes that he is not satisfied by the pleasures of This World, like

salty water, which temporarily quenches a person's thirst, but which doesn't truly quench the thirst.

The crying which we express in the month of Tamuz, which is when we cry out of sadness over the *Beis HaMikdash*, is a crying that leaves us saddened and thirsty for something. Although crying is somewhat comforting, it does not completely calm a person, if the person is crying tears from sadness.

Our crying in the month of Tamuz resembles the state of the lower waters in Creation, which cry and yearn to return to above.²⁵ This is a kind of crying which, although it is coming from a good source, it doesn't have the power to bring a person yet to completion. It only makes a person thirstier for more, and it leaves a person feeling unsatisfied and unquenched.

When a person drinks salty water, he is not imagining the water. There is definitely water here, and it is not being imagined. But it only quenches his thirst partially, and soon after the person is thirsty again. Crying out of sadness, which is like salty water, can only comfort a person partially, it is some kind of "water" which quenches a person's longing, but it does not completely comfort the person.

When a person cries tears of joy, the *Raavad* says that this can heal the eyes. An example of crying "tears of joy" would be the crying expressed at finding one's spouse. The Sages state "Finding a mate is as difficult as the splitting the sea." By the splitting of the sea, there was dry land within water. When there is a revelation of "dry land within water", there can be tears of joy, which are coming because of the "water" that is here. But when there is only dry land and there is no water, there can only be tears of sadness.

When a person cries, he is connecting himself to the state of "water", to his tears, and that is how he can cry. But when a person has "dry land within water", he is able to cry tears of joy, from finding water within dry land. He is not crying for water - for he has water. He has water within the dry land.

Revealing Joy Within The Sadness of Mourning The Beis HaMikdash

Now that the outline was described, let us bring this down to the realm of our emotions.

Crying out of sadness takes place whenever something meaningful has become removed from a person's life. In contrast, crying tears of joy is when a person gains something, from a feeling of fulfillment, from the emotion of acquiring and reaching something.

All crying, even crying tears of sadness, really needs to be mixed with joy and sadness. How? On one hand, there is so much to cry for. The spiritual level of the generations becomes worse as time continues, for the Sages state that "There is no day that is not more cursed than the day before it."²⁶ There was destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*, the place where the glory of Hashem was revealed on this world. Nothing could be sadder. But at the same time, we always have to

²⁵ Tikkunei HaZohar 5

²⁶ Talmud Bavli Bava Basra 74a

remember these words: “There is no place that is empty from Him.”²⁷ Even in the absolutely worst times of destruction, Hashem is present!

On one hand, we are missing the *Shechinah*, Hashem’s presence on this world, and the glory of the Jewish people has disappeared with this as well, ever since the *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed. Our souls are in pain over this, and over the absence of the *Shechinah* in the world. But at the same time, we can still apply the verse, “*In any place where I My Name, I will bless you.*”²⁸ Even as we mourn and cry tears of sadness over our destroyed world, we can also cry tears of joy, because “There is no place empty from Him.”

We are able to leave behind the current state of the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*, and enter into the dimension of “There is no place empty from Him.” If we can only cry over the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash* and we are only saddened, with no source of joy in our lives, then we truly remain with nothing except destruction and sadness. But if we can recognize that even in the lowest and darkest point that we can still find Hashem, it is like finding dry land within water.

There are, essentially, two totally different ways in which Hashem’s Presence is revealed to us. One way is when it is obvious, such as by the splitting of the sea. This was “water” within dry land, because we walked on dry land where there should have been water. Another way in which Hashem is revealed to us is when there is “dry land” within water: through the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*, we can also reveal Hashem, when we find the “dry land within water” – when we manage to find Hashem’s presence amidst all of the destruction around us.

Revealing Joy On Our Inside Amidst Sadness On Our Outside

Now let’s describe this all in simpler terms which we can apply to our own lives.

All of us, each on his own level, has times of failure, of being pained from our personal past, as well as from the generation level of this generation. Every person is bothered by his own personal shortcomings and failures from his past, and if a person is on a higher level than this, he is pained also from the low spiritual level of today’s generation. We can all clearly recognize that we currently live in *hester panim*, where Hashem’s radiance is concealed from us, and we feel like we are living in the dark. But even within all of the darkness, can still find Hashem hidden there. He is found there, and we can all find Him, to the extent long as we recognize this truth.

The prophet Yirmiyahu wrote the book of Eichah, which laments the loss of the *Beis HaMikdash*. There is a rule that in order for a prophet to compose any of the books of the Prophets, he had to be in a state of prophecy, of Hashem’s Presence resting upon him, which required him to be in a state of joy. The question is, how could Yirmiyahu write Eichah when he was clearly in distress from mourning the *Beis HaMikdash*? The deep answer to this is because even as one is mourning and saddened on the outside, on the inside, he can still find Hashem, in any situation, even as destruction is raging around him.

²⁷ Tikkunei HaZohar 57

²⁸ Shemos 20:21

Tears of sadness are about destruction, whereas tears of joy are about finding “dry land within water”, a place of respite amidst all of the destruction. When we are pained in our souls about our losses, both our personal losses and our collective losses, all of this pain can be experienced on the “outside” of the soul, but on the “inside” of our soul, we can find joy! How? When we realize how Hashem is always there with us!

The Gemara says that “On the outer chambers, Hashem weeps, but on the inner chambers, Hashem is joyous.”²⁹ This also applies to us on a personal level, on the level of our own souls. On the “outer chambers” of our soul, we mourn the *Beis HaMikdash*, and we can be profoundly saddened at all that we have lost. But even amidst all of this mourning and sadness, we also need to access the “inner chambers” of our soul, where we can find joy, where we discover Hashem’s eternal presence.

In the month of Tamuz, we begin to mourn. The *mazal* of Tamuz, the *sartan*/crab, reveals the dry land within water. The crab is a creature that is used for healing, as the Raavad says. Its hide is used to beautify royal garments. The deeper meaning of this is that even within the crying of sadness, we can find the constant presence of Hashem, the ever-present reality of Hashem, and that is the “dry land within the water” that we can always find. When one is connected to that, he is only saddened on his outside, but on his inside, he has joy.

If a person can only cry tears of sadness, he lives only on the “outer chambers” of the soul, and he will remain only with the “salty water” that comes from such crying, which only makes him become thirstier. One also needs to cry tears of joy, by finding Hashem’s presence, even amidst the worst times of darkness and destruction.

Of course, we do not mean that a person should not cry over the loss of the *Beis HaMikdash* and that he should only be joyous, *chas v’shalom*. Rather, what we mean is that along with our mourning over the *Beis HaMikdash*, we also need to become connected to our inner dimension, of feeling Hashem’s Presence in all times, where we can always find joy.

Such a person will gain the true “*nechamah* (consolation) of Yerushalayim”, because he will reach the place of “There is no place empty from Him” – in the present, revealed in his soul.

In Conclusion

May we merit the time when the fasts of Tamuz and Av will become turned from pain into joy, when even the outer chambers of the soul will become filled with the revelation of “There is no place empty from Him.”

²⁹ Talmud Bavli Chagigah 5b

TAMUZ – NAFTALI

Naftali's Name Is Rooted In Connection and Prayer

The month of Tamuz, according to the *Gra*, corresponds to the tribe of Naftali.

When Naftali was born, Rachel proclaimed, “*Naftulei Elokim niftalti*”, “G-d has answered my persistent prayers.”³⁰ Rashi explains three reasons for Naftali’s name. The word “Naftali” connotes either: (1) connection, (2) persistence, and (3) prayer.

[In this *derasha*, it will be explained how Naftali’s primary blessing is that he enables “connection”, facilitated through “prayer”].

Naftali's Blessing – The Fruits of Ginosar

In the blessing of Yaakov to the tribes, Naftali’s blessing is that he is “*swift as a gazelle, who bears good tidings*.”³¹ In the blessing of Moshe, Naftali’s blessing is “*Naftali is satisfied, and he is full of blessings of Hashem*.”³² Rashi explains that Naftali’s blessing is that his portion of land is where the “fruits of Ginosar” grow. These fruits are the most blessed fruits in Eretz Yisrael, they are very sweet-tasting, and they grow very swiftly.

Naftali – The Illumination of Gan Eden On This World

Why are Naftali’s fruits blessed? The Gemara says that Bais Sha’an, which is in Naftali’s portion of land in Eretz Yisrael, is where the entrance to Gan Eden is.³³ Thus, not only did the fruits in his portion grow quickly, but his portion of land contains an entrance to Gan Eden.

The Torah says that Hashem placed a churning sword of fire at the entrance to Gan Eden, to guard the path that leads to the *Eitz HaChaim* (the Tree of Life). That entrance to Gan Eden is in Bais Sha’an. So on one hand, Bais Sha’an is the area where there is a churning sword (*cherev*) of fire, which symbolizes destruction (*churban*). That is one side of the coin to Bais Sha’an: It connotes destruction.

On the other hand, the Sages teach that when the tribes were about to bury Yaakov in the Cave of Machpela, Esav tried to prevent them, and Naftali ran swiftly to retrieve the documents showing that Yaakov had the rights to buried in the final spot in the cave.³⁴

³⁰ Beraishis 30:8

³¹ *ibid* 49:21

³² Devarim 33:23

³³ Talmud Bavli Eruvin 19a

³⁴ *Talmud Bavli Sotah 13a* (Editor’s Note: Later in the *derasha*, the Rav noted that Naftali’s actions were not needed in the end, because Chushim the son of Dan killed Esav in the interim. Still, Chazal

Thus, it was Naftali who enabled Yaakov to be buried in the Cave of Machpela, which was in “Chevron”. Naftali enabled “Chevron”, the antithesis of *cherev* (sword/destruction), the antithesis of Esav who acted like a “churning sword of fire”, when he tried to prevent Yaakov from burial by standing in front of the cave of Machpela.

A *cherev*, a sword of fire, was placed at the entrance to Gan Eden, separating Gan Eden from the outside world. But Naftali’s portion contains the entrance to Gan Eden, where the churning sword was in place, and Naftali implies connection [as cited earlier from Rashi]. The depth of this is that Naftali’s power of “connection” would enable Yaakov to become connected with the Cave of Machpela.

When Adam and Chavah were sent out of Gan Eden, they lost the special fruit which grew swiftly in Gan Eden. Hence, Naftali’s blessing of swiftly growing fruit, which was connected with Gan Eden, was really an illumination of Gan Eden onto this world. The fruits of Naftali, the “fruits of Ginosar” which are in Beis Shaan, are blessed by the opening of Gan Eden there, which shines an illumination of Gan Eden into world outside, enabling a connecting point to Gan Eden.

The Fruits of Ginosar (of Naftali’s Portion) Are More Prominent Than Bread

The “fruits of Ginosar”, the crops which grow in Naftali’s portion, have special laws when it comes to the laws of blessings over food. *Tosafos* in Tractate *Berachos* explains that while there is normally a rule in the laws of blessings on food that bread is the most important food, and a blessing on bread exempts all other foods on the table, there is one exception: the fruits of Ginosar. If there are fruits of Ginosar in one’s meal, even bread becomes secondary to these fruits, and a blessing on bread will not exempt these fruits of Ginosar from a blessing. Bread becomes secondary to these fruits of Ginosar.³⁵

The depth of this is because after Adam sinned, he was cursed with “*By the sweat of your brow you will eat bread*”, and all bread would now have to be earned from hard work as a result of the sin. Bread became spiritually tainted from the effects of the sin. But the fruits of Ginosar, which grew in Naftali’s portion, symbolize Gan Eden, for they grew in a place where there was an opening to Gan Eden. Hence, the fruits of Ginosar symbolize Gan Eden, the level of before the sin of Adam. Hence, bread is secondary in importance to the fruits of Ginosar. The bread, which is part of the curse given to Adam, is not as important as the fruits of Ginosar, the fruits of Naftali’s portion, which are from the illumination of Gan Eden.

Naftali’s Power of the Mouth and the Feet

The Sages speak of three different abilities of Naftali: (1) His ability of swiftness [which was explained above]. (2) The “speech” of Torah which was in Naftali’s portion, for the *Beis Din*

praised the swiftness of Naftali when he ran back to retrieve the documents, which showed that Naftali had the potential to allow Yaakov to be buried in the Cave of Machpela.)

³⁵ See Talmud Bavli *Berachos* 44a and *Tosafos* *ibid*

would convene in his portion of the land). (3) The ability of “satisfaction” of Naftali, for Moshe said “*Naftali, seva ratzon*”, “Naftali’s will is satisfied”.

Naftali’s ability of “satisfaction”, *seva ratzon*, is also identified as *sechok* (laughter). This is because there are 12 senses in the soul, corresponding to the 12 months of the year. Speech corresponds to Nissan, and satisfaction (laughter) corresponds to Adar. The month of Adar, the month of “laughter”, corresponds to the tribe of Naftali.

This laughter is really the laughter of the future. Currently this laughter cannot be complete, due to the existence of sinners, who go against Hashem’s will, which prevents the world from being filled with true laughter. But in the future, when there will be no possibility of going against Hashem’s will, there will be complete laughter. Adar, which contains the power of laughter, is the laughter of Naftali. The month of Adar connects the beginning of the year (Nissan) with the end of the year, revealing laughter throughout the year.

The mouth contains the power of laughter. Naftali’s blessing of *seva ratzon*, which is the ability of laughter, is therefore an implication that Naftali’s power lies in the mouth. Naftali’s blessing is also that he can run swiftly, which uses the feet. Thus, Naftali’s power lies both in the mouth (laughter) and in the feet (running).

There are different sections of the body. According to one system, the body contains three sections (the head, the torso, and from the stomach and below). According to another system, the body generally consists of two main sections: The head and the rest of the body. The head begins with the skull and ends with the mouth. The end of the body is the feet. Hence, Naftali’s abilities lie in the mouth and in the feet, connecting together the two ends of the body - the end of the head (the mouth), and the end of the rest of the body (the feet).

Naftali’s Power of Prayer

Furthermore, Naftali is compared to the gazelle. There is a verse, “*Like a gazelle thirsting on the banks of the water*”³⁶, which refers to a person’s ability of thirsting for connection to G-d through the power of prayer. So the swiftness of the gazelle is also connected with the power of “prayer” that is symbolized by the gazelle, Naftali.

What is the connection? A person cannot be swift when he is too connected with his element of earth, which weighs him down. The “feet” are connected to the element of earth, to the ground, and with the feet alone, a person cannot overcome the heaviness of the element of earth which slows him down from pursuing the spiritual. Only through the mouth – specifically the tongue, which the *Chovos HaLevovos* calls “the lightest part of the body” - is a person able to be swift. Naftali’s ability is that he connects the “feet” with the “mouth”, and with the swiftness of the mouth (speech and prayer) the feet are able to run swiftly.

In Gan Eden, Adam was originally on the level of the “mouth”, where he enjoyed tasting the secrets of the Torah. After the sin, when he sent away from Gan Eden, he fell from being on the

³⁶ Tehillim 42:2

level of the “mouth” to the level of the “feet, because Adam was cursed with death, “*To earth you shall return*”, and death connects man to the earth, which the feet stands on and touches.

Yaakov’s burial was in Chevron. The Gemara says that the worst place for growing crops is Chevron, while the best place for crops is Teverya (which was in Naftali’s portion). Thus, when Naftali ran swiftly to retrieve the documents so that Yaakov could be buried in Chevron, the depth behind this was that Naftali’s swiftness enabled Chevron to be connected with “Teverya”. By connecting “Teverya” with Chevron, Naftali’s ability countered Esav’s attempt to prevent Yaakov from Chevron (though ultimately it was not Naftali who prevented Esav, but Chushim the son of Dan).

How did Naftali contribute to stopping Esav’s attempt of preventing Yaakov’s burial in Chevron? It was because Naftali enables a connection of the mouth and feet together. Through Naftali, the “mouth” of Yaakov overcomes the “hands” of Esav. The power of the mouth is essentially the power of prayer - and prayer can overcome Esav. And that is the depth behind Naftali’s blessing: his power of prayer, which can overcome Esav.

Naftali - The Revelation of The True Sense of Taste

When the Sages describe the senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste), some of the Sages list the power of speech instead of the power of taste. Before the sin of Adam, the mouth was only used for speech, and taste was a higher sense that was used for intellectual and spiritual comprehension (the secrets of Torah), so the sense of taste was not originally associated with the mouth. After the sin, when taste fell from being on an intellectual and spiritual level down to a sensual level, the mouth would now become a container that holds the abilities of speech and taste.

Naftali’s blessed fruits represent a repaired form of connection between the sense of taste with the sense of speech. In Gan Eden, the sense of taste was only used [by Adam] to “taste” the *taamei Torah*, the secret explanations and reasons of the Torah. After the sin, when Adam tasted the forbidden fruit, Adam was no longer able to enjoy the *taamei Torah*.

The Raavad writes that the sense of taste is in the tongue, the *cheich*, which is from the word *chochmah* (wisdom), a hint to the true sense of taste, which is used to perceive higher understanding and wisdom of Torah. This will be the reward given out in the future - the understanding of the *taamei Torah*. Hence, the true use of taste is to taste the *chochmah* (wisdom) of the *taamei Torah*. After the sin, Adam lost this sense of esoteric taste and now the sense of taste is in the mouth. Speech was always an ability of the mouth, but before the sin the mouth only housed the ability of speech, because taste was an intellectual and spiritual sense and it was not associated with the mouth. After the sin, when taste was used for evil (by eating from the forbidden fruit), the sense of taste fell from its higher level and now it would be used sensually, and now the mouth would become a container for both speech and taste.

Through the blessed fruit of Naftali, though, there is a return to the level of taste in Gan Eden, when taste was repaired. This is a not a sense of taste is coming from the mouth alone, but a taste that is connected with the speech of the mouth. The ability of speech is connected with the mind, the ability to perceive *chochmah* (wisdom of the Torah), which is in the head. After the sin, the sense of taste fell from the level of the mind (intellectual and spiritual taste) to the level of

the mouth (sensual taste). But through Naftali's blessing, through the fruits of Ginosar and the waters of Teveria (the Kineret), the speech of the mouth connects the sense of taste to the *chochmah* (wisdom of Torah), elevating the sense of taste from the mouth to the head.

The Sages teach that there is also *horaah*, halachic rulings of Torah, which came from Naftali (the Beis Din would convene in Naftali's portion). Although *horaah* (rulings of Torah) mainly came from the tribes of Levi and Yissocher, there was only an aspect of *horaah* that came from the tribe of Naftali, and this was because the members of the tribe of Naftali were blessed in their "mouth": They were connected to the *chochmah* of the Torah, by way of the mouth. This was the unique revelation of Torah in the tribe of Naftali.

The sweet fruits of Ginosar in Naftali's portion, on a deeper level, represented the sweetness of the words of Torah which were enjoyed by the tribe of Naftali. The unique share in Torah which the tribe of Naftali had was mainly about connecting together the *chochmah* (wisdom) of the *taamei haTorah* with the speech of the mouth. This produced sweet words of Torah, because it was a connection of the *chochmah* in the head with the speech in the mouth. It repaired the taste of Adam which had been ruined from eating of the *Eitz HaDaas*. It is the repaired level of the sense of taste, which reveals an ability to "taste" the *chochmah* of the Torah – the ability of the *Eitz HaChaim* (the Tree of Life).

Thus, the fruits of Naftali, which are really rooted in Gan Eden, specifically in the *Eitz HaChaim*, is the ability to taste the *chochmah* of the Torah, of which it is said "*And wisdom sustains her owner*"³⁷, the higher sense of taste which is connected with the *chochmah* (wisdom) in the head. Hence, the blessing on Naftali's fruit wasn't just that it tasted sweet. The blessing given to Naftali was that he received a revelation of a sense of taste that was connected with *chochmah*, the wisdom of the Torah. That was the power of Naftali: To connect the sense of taste with the head.

Thus, we have seen so far that Naftali has the power of connecting different levels together (Gan Eden with the world, Teverya with Chevron, the mouth with the feet, the sense of taste with the head). Now we can understand with greater depth the implication behind the word "Naftali", which Rashi explains as "connection".

Naftali – The Root of Why Esav's Head Merited Burial

Based on the above, we can now proceed to understand the following.

The *Leshem* explains that Leah and Rachel were supposed to be born as one woman, but as a result of the sin of Adam HaRishon, their soul became divided into two parts, Leah and Rachel. The war between Yaakov and Esav, the war of the younger versus the older, was also embodied in the "war" (so to speak) between Leah and Rachel – the competition between these younger and older siblings. But from a deeper perspective, Leah and Rachel are really one soul. Only as a result of the first sin were they split into two different souls, but at their root, they are really one soul.

³⁷ Koheles 7:12

The Sages teach that the head of Esav (after it was severed by Chushim son of Dan) rolled into the Cave of Machpela and was buried there.³⁸ On a deeper level, this was because Naftali connected Rachel and Leah together, because Naftali connects the mouth [Leah/prayer] with the head [Rachel/wisdom], and therefore Esav, who was originally destined to marry Leah, had a part of him which was buried in the Cave of Machpela. But it is only his head which was buried there, because it is only the head of Esav which was connected with the *taamei HaTorah*. The rest of Esav's body was not connected with his head, therefore the rest of his body did not merit burial in the cave of Machpela.

Esav was called *ish seir*, a hairy man, and he was called *asuy v'gamur*, he was born made and complete, because he was full of hair. The Sages teach describe the hair as "surplus of the head".³⁹ On a deeper level, the hair, the surplus of the head, refers to the *taamei haTorah* which we currently have no comprehension of. Currently, these *taamei haTorah*, represented by the concept of hair, which is above the head, cannot be comprehended, because it has fallen into the side of Esav. But at the repaired level, the hairs represent the *taamei haTorah* which will be revealed in the future.

This was the deeper reason why the head of Esav was buried in the cave of Machpela. Through Naftali, Leah and Rachel were connected, and this repaired the mouth of Esav, because Naftali represents the elevated level of the mouth, thus Esav's head merited burial.⁴⁰

In Conclusion

Esav was called "Seir", which also means "hair", alluding to the future judgment on Mount Seir over the nations of the world. The depth of this will be that the spiritual level of comprehension represented by the "hair" – the *taamei haTorah* - will be taken back from Esav, and it will be given to the Jewish people.

Rachel and Leah became connected together through Naftali, and this connection is the epitome of the complete unification of the future, when the mouth will become connected with the head, when the *taamei Torah* (secret explanations of the Torah), which are currently concealed, will become revealed again. May that happen very soon, speedily in our days, with the building of the *Beis HaMikdash, Amen V'Amen*.

³⁸ Talmud Bavli Sotah 13a

³⁹ Pri Eitz Chaim (Rabbi Chaim Vital) shaar haTzitzis 3

⁴⁰ Editor's Note: The Ramchal in sefer Daas Tevunos explains that the 10th century (the "Elef haAsiri") corresponds to the hair.



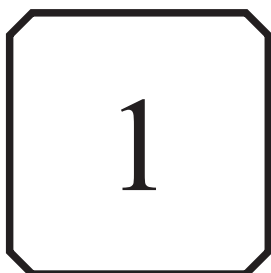
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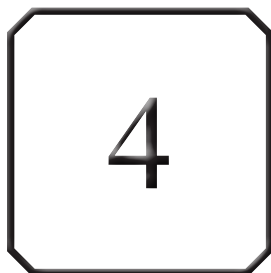
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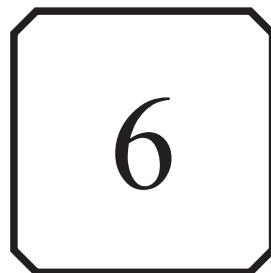
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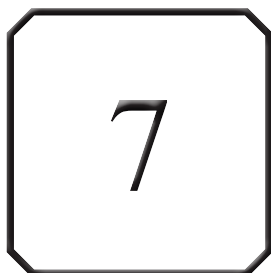
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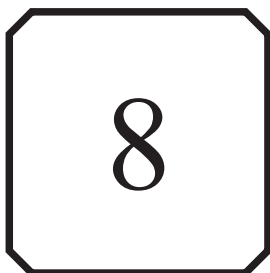
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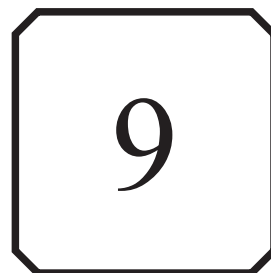
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