

Adapted from sefer Even Shelaimah (of the GRA), chapter 11 (6-8)

The Vilna Gaon's Words About the Erev Rav

*Footnotes are from the "biur" on the bottom of the sefer, they are likkutim**

6) Grain contains three parts which get thrown away: the chaff, the straw, and the rest of its remains which are unfit for consumption. The nation of Yisrael, who is compared to grain – as is written in *Yirmiyahu*¹, "*The beginning of her wheat*" also contains three disposable parts to her grain: Yishmael, Esav, and the Erev Rav.

From Avraham came Yishmael, and from Yitzchok came Esav; but the two Messiahs will also come them [Avraham and Yitzchok] – one Messiah will come from Yosef, and the other Messiah will come from Dovid² – and they will eliminate the 'chaff' and 'straw' from amidst Yisrael. They [Esav and Yishmael] will then be like the chaff that is blown away by the wind, as it is written, "*And it will be that the house of Esav will be like straw.*"

However, the 'grain' [Yisrael] will not be totally purified until the "Erev Rav" has been sifted out from it; they [Erev Rav] represent the remaining unwanted material from the grain, and they cling strongly to the grain. They [Erev Rav] are the undesirable parts left over from Yaakov; they represent the evil powers of *bittul Torah* (wasting time from learning Torah) and throwing off the yoke of Heaven.

They [Erev Rav] are very attached to Yisrael, and therefore Yisrael learns from their evil deeds. They are wealthy and are arrogant because of their wealth; of them, it is stated³ that "Ben David [Messiah] will not come until the arrogant ones among Yisrael are destroyed."

Just as the undesirable parts of the grain cannot be separated unless the grain is first grinded well, so is it impossible to separate the Erev Rav from Yisrael without first going through the difficulties of the exile.

7) As the generations go on, the spiritual level of the generations decrease, and the Erev Rav grows stronger. For this reason, the Sages throughout all the generations have to make decrees and new rules, in order to circumvent the breaches that the Erev Rav causes.⁴

¹ *Yirmiyahu, chap. 1.*

² *Tikkunei Zohar HaChadash, 36a; the two Messiahs each represent the positive commandments and the negative commandments (ibid).*

³ *Sanhedrin 98a*

⁴ *Tikkunei HaZohar 34a*

8) There are five kinds of Erev Rav⁵ that are in Yisrael: 1) Those who seek strife and slander on others; 2) Those who seek lusts, 3) Those who are “*tzevuim*” (lit. “colored ones”), fakers who are not the same on the inside as they are on the outside; 4) Those who chase after honor to make for themselves a name; 5) Those who run after money.

The worst type from all of them are those who seek strife; these are called “*Amalekim*.” Ben David [Messiah] will not come unless they are destroyed from the world. Arguments that are not for the sake of Heaven are caused by Erev Rav, who jump to give rulings on matters so they can gain the crown of glory.

5 In Tikkunei HaZohar 41b, it is brought: “They [Erev Rav] are identified as “Nega Ra”, “Evil Affliction;” Nega Ra stands for Nefilim, Giborim, Amalekim, Refaim, and Anakim. The Nefilim are those who seek lust...the Giborim are those who seek to gain an honorable name for themselves, even building synagogues and donating items for the Sefer Torah so that their name can be honored... Amalekim are those who are at the heads of the nation of Yisrael during the exile, and they steal from the poor Jews.... Refaim are those who slacken off from doing kindness and charity with those who learn Torah... Anakim are those who ridicule Torah scholars...

...”All of the brazen and wicked ones of the generation are reincarnations of the souls of the Erev Rav, descending from Kayin. All of the exiles, suffering, and destruction of the Temples are all because Moshe accepted the Erev Rav into the nation, thinking that they had converted earnestly....

“Yishmael and Esav are the chaff [that must get separated from the grain], while the Erev Rav are like the “yeast in the sourdough” that remains. The chametz (remaining yeast) must be burned on Erev Pesach, six hours into the day, since they [the Erev Rav] made the Golden Calf at six hours into the day. They [the Erev Rav] are worse than all the idol-worshippers of Yisrael, because Yisrael is drawn after their influence, whenever they see that the Erev Rav is enjoying success. This is the reason for the lengthiness of the exile.”