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The *Nefesh HaChaim* (Gate IV: Chapter 1) writes that as the generations continued, the *yetzer hora* devised ways to fight *Klal Yisrael's* study of Torah, and thus the idea formed of learning Torah for the sake of *pilpul* (give-and-take analysis) alone, with no involvement of *yirah* (fear of Hashem).

The *yetzer hora* fights our power of Torah study, and so did the Greek exile fight the Torah. Greek wisdom and philosophy was at war with the wisdom of the Torah.

Our Sages viewed Greek wisdom as being a wisdom that is entirely focused on the physical body and nature, with no trace of spirituality to it. There was also another way of understanding the difference between the Torah's wisdom and Greek wisdom. Greek wisdom is entirely intellectual-based, with no mention of the "heart". Regarding the Torah, "*fear of Hashem is wisdom*", the Torah is a wisdom that requires fear of Hashem, whereas Greek wisdom is intellect alone.

When the *Nefesh HaChaim* says that the *yetzer hora* devised ways to fight against *Klal Yisrael's* study of Torah, it is referring to the evil force of impurity that is "*Yavan*" (the Greek exile and its philosophy). When a person learns Torah, he is definitely not learning a wisdom that is focused on the physical body and nature, but it's possible that he has Greek attitude towards the wisdom of Torah! In fact, he might have the exact thinking of Greek philosophy even as he's learning Torah.

The *yetzer hora* has many different ways of how it fights *Klal Yisrael*. Sometimes it causes some people in *Klal Yisrael* to abandon Torah study by causing them to engage in the study of nature and the body. Another way it fights *Klal Yisrael* is through removing "*yirah*" (fear of Hashem) from the picture, where the fiery love for Torah is extinguished in their hearts.

The depth of this struggle throughout the generations, and in our generation especially, is that the Greek attitude has penetrated into the "*tents of Shem*" (the *beis midrash*), in the sense that a person today can be sitting and learning Torah in the *beis midrash* yet he has a 'Greek perspective' within his very learning. To an onlooker, it would seem that there is no difference between a person learning with a Greek perspective with a person who doesn't. The difference cannot be discerned by the eye.

Those who study other wisdoms outside of the Torah, such as those who study nature and the body, are an obvious example of Greek influence. But even someone who merits to sit and learn in the *beis midrash* might be affected by the same problem: his Torah learning has become exiled by the evil inclination, whose purpose is to fight against the Torah.

When a person does not clarify to himself what his connection to Torah is [as we have begun to

explain in the previous chapters], he might find out after 120 years when he goes up to Heaven that all of his Torah learning was with a Greek perspective.

There is a story told by Rav Shalom Shwadron of his grandfather, the *Maharsham*, which can make anyone shudder. The *Maharsham* fell ill, and he dreamt that he ascended to Heaven, where he stood in front of the Heavenly Court. They weighed out his merits and his sins. An announcement went out in praise of the *Maharsham's* merits of Torah learning and how awesome it was. Then an angel came and declared that all of his Torah is not called "Torah"; it came and blew into his mouth, and all of the words of Torah were removed from him, as if the words had never been there before! It was all removed from him. In the end, the angel returned all the words of Torah to the *Maharsham*, for it said, "In the generation you live in, your words of Torah can be called 'Torah'."

Anyone familiar with the works of the *Maharsham* knows that his Torah is awesome. He was one of the greatest leaders of his generation and you can see his greatness in his *sefarim*. Yet the *Maharsham* testified about himself that in the Heavenly Court, they instantly removed all his Torah.

If someone searches for truth and he hears the above story, how can he not suspect that the same thing can happen to him? Of course, in the end of the story, the angel considered the *Maharsham's* Torah to be Torah. But it is still shuddering to think that there was even such a possibility. How could such a thing be possible? We aren't discussing here a great person such as the *Maharsham*. We are talking about someone on our own spiritual level. How is it possible that a person's Torah is not considered to be real "Torah" in Heaven...?

If a person never clarified his connection to Torah – the external layer of the connection, and certainly the inner layer of the connection – he might think that he has love for Torah and that he learns a lot, but he might have a very mistaken attitude towards learning, for he has never clarified what connects him to Torah.

This is true even if he has learned much Torah both in quantity and quality; with understanding; with clarity; with *chiddushim*; with knowing the *Halachic* conclusions of each *sugya* (each on his own level); if he has not clarified the refined points of what connects him to the Torah he learns, then there is only a minimal connection to Torah he has (based on one of the qualities above), and he is missing much of what is required in a connection to Torah.

A person doesn't know what's missing from his learning, because he never makes this reflection. He thinks that everything's great simply because he is sitting and learning Torah from morning to night; after all, he merits understanding in his learning, he even has *chiddushim*, he has clarity in what he is learning, he is becoming knowledgeable in Torah – each person can say this on his own level.

Yet the story of the *Maharsham* proves that one's Torah learning is considered to be like nothing in Heaven. This is when one doesn't clarify what is connecting him to Torah and he isn't aware of what deeply connects him to it.

One who clarifies what connects him to his Torah learning is aware of what exactly connects him to the Torah and which parts he isn't yet connected to. He is aware of which areas in his learning are weak, which areas need improvement, which parts he needs to decrease and which parts he needs to increase, which parts he needs more connection to. One must honestly examine himself and take apart his connection to Torah and see which parts he is connected to and which parts are missing from his connection.

When a person ascends to Heaven after 120, the first question he is asked is, "Did you set aside times for Torah study?" That will be the first part of the examination. But after this the question will go

deeper: During the times he learned Torah, on what level did he learn it on? How deep was his connection to it?

We must know that we can't run away from this examination. Either a person clarifies it as he is here on this world, or it is told to him when he gets to the World of Truth - where it will be too late to do anything.

Obviously, anyone who is sitting and learning Torah all day in the *beis midrash* is someone who wants to make progress in his Torah learning. But one must be aware of which parts are necessary in the connection to Torah learning. Through this, one's connection to Torah will grow deeper and it will have more quality to it.

The evil spiritual force known as '*kelipas Yavan*', the "Greek perspective", is essentially the attitude that a person can learn Torah in a superficial manner, where he thinks that he is gaining wisdom and that he is understanding it, and the person thinks that everything here is fine. But with this attitude towards learning, a person will come upstairs after 120 and it will be shown to him that his entire way of life was spent incorrectly; that instead of being of those who sat in the *beis midrash*, he was considered to be of those who pursue other places, *chas v'shalom*. Although he did not actually run after frivolous things during his lifetime, he will be shown that his perspective is that not that far from those who do not consider Torah to be the main pursuit of life.

To emphasize again, each person will have to undergo this assessment of his Torah learning. The only question is if it will happen during a person's lifetime - when he uses his free will to do so - or if it will be made in Heaven, where it will be too late. A person on this world has the free will to choose to make this examination on himself: To see how much he is exerting himself in Torah, how connected he is to Torah, how much clarity he has in his learning, etc.

If a person does not make this reflection, he will simply live a carefree life, thinking that all is well and that he just has to keep increasing his time for learning and that he should simply keep exerting himself more and more. Although this is also true, a person must not think that this is all he needs in his connection to Torah. There is much more to the connection to Torah that a person needs, and every person will have to see it at some point; whether on this world, or on the next.

If a person didn't assess his connection to Torah on this world, he will be shown in the next world all that he was supposed to reach - which was a simple truth that he could have reached even as he lived on this world. If one realizes as he is on this world that improvement is needed in his connection to Torah learning, then he has a chance of changing, because he still has free will. But if a person waits until the next world to see the truth, there, it is too late to do anything, and there he will remain with his very minimal level of connection to Torah.

The *Nefesh HaChaim* explains that the study of *mussar* began because the great leaders were seeing that much was missing from their Torah learning. The *Nefesh HaChaim* calls them the 'eyes of the congregation.' In other words, these great people had the 'eyes' to see what was missing. They had a spiritual lens that could see beyond the external layer of things.

When a person sees the world through a superficial lens, he does not see what the problems are. He walks into a *beis midrash* full of people learning Torah, and he might feel, "Ah, "praiseworthy are the eyes that have seen this." But if he would have more inner vision, he would instantly see what is missing from the *beis midrash*. (To see and fix the problem, though, he would have to be on a very high spiritual level).

The *Nefesh HaChaim* says that the leaders of the generation who founded the study of *mussar* were the 'eyes of the congregation.' They had 'eyes' that could see things which others couldn't see. They could see subtleties; they possessed the discerning eye of a Torah scholar, who sees beyond the superficial layer of things.

In recent generations, there has been a great increase of Torah study. But those with inner vision can see that a deep connection to Torah is missing, and they see a whole different reality than how others see it. The leaders of the generation, who are called 'eyes of the generation', see this painful reality. But each person on his own level can gain some inner vision and he can sense that there is much that is missing from his connection to Torah.

The *Nefesh HaChaim* continues that those who noticed what was missing from Torah study wrote *sefarim* that explain *yirah* (fear of Hashem) to redirect the hearts of the nation, so that they could rededicate themselves to the study of Torah and to serving Hashem, with pure fear of Heaven.

A superficial reading of these words of the *Nefesh HaChaim* seems to imply that they realized that their Torah learning was causing them to be lacking in *yirah* and in *avodas Hashem*, thus the leaders of the past wrote *sefarim* that explain *yirah*, in order to gain back their *yirah*.

However, that is not what he writes. The *Nefesh HaChaim* is saying [in conjunction with the earlier paragraphs] that because their Torah learning was lacking in *yirah*, because it was lacking with a "burning love for Torah" as he puts it, they felt that their very Torah learning was lacking. [Thus they weren't just missing *yirah*; they were missing Torah, because they were missing *yirah* in their Torah].

Thus, when they wrote *sefarim* about *yirah*, they didn't do this just so they could gain *yirah*; they did it so that their Torah learning could become improved in this way. For it is written, "*Fear of G-d is wisdom.*"

They didn't want to just improve their fear of Heaven; they wanted to gain back a fiery love for Torah which had gone missing from them.

From a superficial perspective, it appears to be that *mussar sefarim* are here to explain to us merely how to better our actions, how to improve our *middos*, how to improve ourselves, etc. This is all true, but there is a much deeper purpose of the *mussar sefarim*. It is because "*Fear of G-d is wisdom.*" When a person learns *mussar* in the true way, not superficially but with in-depth analysis, he reveals a deeper connection to Hashem and to Torah. He gains a clearer perspective on life, thus the way he relates to Hashem and to his Torah learning becomes totally different.

This is apparent from the words of the *Nefesh HaChaim*, that the reason why the leaders wrote *mussar sefarim* was "to straighten out... and fix the breaches" that had been made. They were trying to help us become more precise and exact in our way of living. They were trying to fix the 'breaches', reminiscent of the '13 breaches' which the Greeks had made in the *Beis HaMikdash*, which symbolizes the negative Greek influences on our Torah learning. Thus the purpose of the study of *mussar* was essentially so that we would clarify our connection to our Torah learning and form a deep connection to Torah; to get it back to the way it used to be before all the breaches came along.

The *Nefesh HaChaim* writes that any sensible person understands that those who founded the study

of *mussar* never intended for people to abandon Torah study and to learn *mussar* all day. Their entire intention was so that people would improve their Torah learning and learn Torah all day; to learn the Written Torah, the Oral Torah, and the many *halachos* of the Torah. They just wanted people to add learn it with fear of Heaven.

How indeed did people then come to make such a mistake? It was because people thought that the study of *mussar/yirah* was solely for the sake of knowing what *yirah* is and what *avodas Hashem* is. That is how they came to neglect Torah study and to instead involve themselves with only *mussar*.

The true perspective is that the *mussar sefarim*, which explain how to have *yirah*, are really coming to explain our connection to Hashem, and precisely through the study of His Torah. The study of *yirah* was not meant to imply that people should stop learning Torah in favor of learning about *yirah*; for the whole purpose of *yirah* was to deepen our connection to the study of Torah. "*Fear of Hashem is wisdom*" – the purpose of studying about *yirah* was to reconnect us to the subtle and refined wisdom of the Torah.

This explains the difference between those who serve Hashem superficially with those who really serve Him. Those who truly serve Hashem are people who use all of their spirituality to deepen their connection to Torah learning, more and more. By contrast, someone who improves his 'Avodas Hashem' without being focused on improving his Torah learning, will slowly drift off from Torah study, preferring instead to spend most of his time in the study of *mussar* and *yirah*. He erroneously thinks that only in that area can he feel a burning love for Torah.

When a person understands what Torah is all about and what *mussar* is about, he understands that *mussar* is coming to explain the subtleties of the Torah's wisdom, and that this what ultimately connects a person to Hashem and His Torah. When this is the perspective, a person understands that the study of *mussar* is not meant to weaken our study of Torah; it is rather the ingredient that helps our Torah learning thrive. The study of *mussar* comes to analyze the subtleties of the human soul, which in turn helps our connection to Torah to be more precise and exact.

May Hashem give us the strength that *kelipas Yavan* (the Greek perspective) should be erased from the world in general, and on a specific level, from those who sit here in the *beis midrash*; that our Torah learning should not be a mere superficial and purely intellectual kind of study that resembles the study of Greek wisdoms. Rather, we should have a connection to our Torah learning which should stem from both the use of our mind and heart. Our minds should be heavily immersed in Torah, and our hearts need to burn with fiery love for it. Then our Torah learning can resemble the Menorah in its purity, in which the flame would rise on its own after it was lit; our souls should become enflamed with a burning love for Torah and thereby become exalted, going higher and higher.

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