





6 God sent poisonous snakes against the people, and when they began biting the people, a number of Israelites died. 7 The people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned by speaking against God and you. Pray to God, and have Him take the snakes away from us."

When Moses prayed for the people, 8 God said to Moses, "Make yourself [the image of] a venomous snake, and place it on a banner. Everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live."

9 Moses made a copper snake and placed it on a high pole. Whenever a snake bit a man, he would gaze at the copper snake and live.

24

Artscroll - Chumash

8. Even people who had been bitten were cured when they looked at Moses' copper serpent.

The Sages said (Rosh Hashanah 29a), "Does a serpent cause death or life? Rather, when they looked upward and subjected their hearts to their Father in Heaven they were healed, but if not, they died" (Rashi). God could have healed

למשל: - בין אדם למקום, יעשה שלא לשמה, כלו לצורך עצמו ומתוך שלא לשמה יבא לידי לשמה; יעשה מיראה, היי שירא לב פשוט מעונש; ויעשה ע"מ לקבל פרס, היי שמבקש שכר לעצמו. וכן בין אדם לחבירו יעשה כאלה; וגם מתוך רחמים, ומדות הרחמים, והנושא בעול עם חבירו, לא ממדת ההטבה הנקייה הנה כי סיבת מעשיו היא, אשר ידעה את צער עצמו, שהצטער בראותו את צרת רעה.

והנה כל אלה שרשם בכתב הנטילה, שהרי למען עצמו הוא עושה, אך טוב שישתמש בכאלה לצורך הרחמינות, כמו שנאמר: "ואהבת את ה' א' בכל לבבך, ופי' חז"ל: 'בשני צדריך' (ספרי). לאמר, שישתמש האדם העולה במדת יצרו הרע למען צרכי עלייתו.

25 Israel thus took all these cities. They [later] settled in Cheshbon and all its tributary towns, all the Amorite cities.

26 Cheshbon was the capital of Sichon king of the Amorites. He had fought against the first king of Moab and taken all his land as far as the Arnon.

27 The minstrels therefore say:

Come to Cheshbon!  
Let Sichon's city be built and established!  
28 For a fire has come out of Cheshbon;  
a flame from Sichon's capital,  
And it has consumed Ar of Moab,  
the masters of the Arnon's altars  
29 Woe is to you, Moab;  
you are destroyed, nation of Kemosh.  
Your sons have become refugees,  
your daughters are captives  
To Sichon, king of the Amorites.

אמר רבי שמואל בר נחמן אמר רבי יוחנן:  
R. Shemu'el b. Nachman said in the name of R. Yochanan:

מאי דכתיב, על-כן יאמרו המושלים, וגי' המושלים - אלו המושלים ביצרים.

באו חשבון - בואו ונחשב חשבוננו של עולם: הנסד מצדו כנגד שכרו ושכר עבדו כנגד הפסדת.

\* What is the meaning of the verses "Therefore the rulers say," etc.? "The rulers" - These are the rulers over their yetzer [(evil) inclination]. "Come to Cheshbon" (חשבון) - [They say,] "Come and make the supreme reckoning ['חשבון' also means 'reckoning']; the loss incurred by a mitzvah against its profit and the profit gained by a sin against its loss."

תבנה ותכונן - אם אתה עושה כן, תבנה בעולם הזה ותכונן לעולם הבא. עיר סיחון - אם משים אדם עצמו כעיר זה שמרדך אחר סיחה נאה, מה כתיב אחריו:

"Be built and established" - If you do this, you will be "built" in this world and "established" in the world to come.

Ethics from Serei - R. Benaim [Perak II]

Reckon the loss that a mitzvah entails, against its reward, and the benefit derived from an averah, a sin, against the loss it brings.

The first obstacle that the evil inclination throws in the path of a person on his way to perform a mitzvah is the thought of what it has to cost. "Think of the time, the effort, the money. How could you!"

Rabbi Judah haNasi's answer is: We cannot deny that observing mitzvot does involve an initial cost. But weigh this against the gain beyond price, the infinite reward that will surely come.

29 When tempted by a transgression, on the other hand, you have an initial gain. This, too, cannot be denied. There is an immediate pleasure. People use the expression, "ugly as sin." Sin is ugly, but only after the act. Before it is done, it is quite attractive and tempting. If it were not, people would not sin. True, says Rabbi Judah haNasi, it tempts you; it offers you some immediate benefit, some ready profit. But weigh the momentary gain against the infinite loss, the irreparable harm that it brings.

30 To control the yetzer hara, the evil inclination, this is the key: make a heshbon, a reckoning of what you gain and what you lose by everything, good or bad, that you do. For a mitzvah the cost, the loss is temporary; the reward is everlasting. For an averah, a transgression, the pleasure and the gain are transient; the harm, though it may not come at once, is devastating and permanent.

In any system of accounting, what is important is the final figure in the last column. Of what avail is it to show a profit in the beginning but to have a deficit in red ink at the end? A series of pleasures is a perishing series. Good times leave nothing in their wake except a feeling of emptiness. The experience of many pleasures amounts to nothing of permanent value. Transgressions end with loss; that spells their true significance. On the other hand, mitzvot end with gain; this is their reality. Make a heshbon, and you will become the "ruler of your spirit."

Note the term, "reckoning of the world." You might think the Sages were referring to international affairs, the state of the world economy or the balance of power. Of course, all of these conditions affect us. But in the last analysis, is this the "world" that really counts? Are these the conditions that will determine our ultimate destiny?

The newspapers are always filled with the "very latest news"; yet over the years their contents remain so very similar, reporting on a world that has little to do with us in our local, day-to-day lives.

What, then, is truly "our" world, in which you and I must make our private reckoning? It is the realm of personal morality that affects you and those about you. In this world, where you alone "rule" and judge, you must make a heshbon: reckon the gains and losses from a mitzvah and from an averah (a transgression), and then decide how you will act, what you will do.

And do not consider it trivial, insignificant—this private accounting in a personal world. The tensions of nuclear threats may leave your world untouched, but in the far-reaching vision of our Sages, your virtuous deed or your foul misdeed may profoundly affect this whole world of ours: "Since an individual is judged according to the majority of his deeds, and the world is judged according to the majority of its deeds, a man should ever regard himself and the world as half virtuous (pure, innocent) and half guilty. Therefore, if he does one mitzvah, how blessed is he that he has made virtue, innocence prevail in the scales of justice for himself and for the entire world. If, however, he commits one transgression, woe to him that he has made guilt prevail in the scales of justice for himself and for the entire world." In the succinct words of the Zohar, "Ever should a man see himself as if the fate of the entire world depends on him." Your deed can be the "deciding vote."

תקפת אוב - רב ב' פוס

חשבונם של המושלים ביצרים הוא, לדעת בעל ה"חפץ חיים" זצ"ל בקונטרס "תפארת אדם" (פרק ב), חשבון מסחרי פשוט. דרכו של הסוחר לבדוק בכל עיסקה המוצעת לו את הרווח לעומת ההוצאה. אם ההוצאה יתירה על הרווח בודאי שלא יכנס לעסק כזה. לעומת זאת אם הרווח עולה על ההוצאה, הרי העיסקה כדאית.

33

The Art of Jewish Prayer - R. Kirzner

When a person dies, his or her soul goes to a place known as the World of Souls. There, freed from the body, it grows to the extent that the person developed it during his or her lifetime. It develops according to how much Torah was learned and how many commandments of the Torah (*mitzvot*) were observed while it was with the body.

34

Resurrection speaks to the exact precision of God's reward to people. Nothing in spiritual creation is ever destroyed. Whatever we create spiritually, during our physical sojourn on earth, is brought back to us to the exact extent that we developed it while alive. This occurs when our souls rejoin our bodies during the time of resurrection and afterwards.

This concept invests tremendous, eternal meaning into our every act. Whatever we do remains with us forever because of the everlasting nature of positive spiritual behavior.

36

Path of the Just - R. Rachel [E]

it. For the evil inclination literally blinds his eyes and he becomes as one who walks in the darkness, where there are stumbling blocks before him which his eyes do not see. As our Sages of blessed memory said (*Bava Metzia 83b*), "You laid down darkness and it was night" (*Psalms 104:20*). This refers to this world which is similar to night." How wondrous is this truthful commentary to him who concentrates upon understanding it. For the darkness of night can cause two types of errors in relation to a man's eye: it may either cover his eye so that he does not see what is before him at all, or it may deceive him so that a pillar appears to him as a man, or a man as a pillar. In like manner, the earthiness and materialism of this world is the darkness of night to the mind's eye and causes a man to err in two ways. First it does not permit him to see the stumbling blocks in the ways of the world, so that the fools walk securely, fall, and are lost without having experienced any prior fear. As Scripture states (*Proverbs 4:19*), "The path of the wicked is like pitch darkness; they do not know upon what they stumble," and (*Proverbs 22:3*), "The wise man sees

37

The second error, which is even worse than the first, stems from the distortion of their sight, so that they see evil as though it were goodness itself, and good as if it were evil, and, because of this, strengthen themselves in clinging to their evil ways. For it is not enough that they lack the ability to see the truth, the evil staring them in the face, but they also see fit to find powerful substantiations and empirical evidence supporting their evil theories and false

40

To what is this analogous? To a garden-maze, a type of garden common among the ruling class, which is planted for the sake of amusement. The plants there are arranged in walls between which are found many confusing and interlacing paths, all similar to one another, the purpose of the whole being to challenge one to reach a portico in their midst. Some of the paths are straight ones which lead directly to the portico, but some cause one to stray, and to wander from it. The walker between the paths has no way of seeing or knowing whether he is on the true or the false path; for they are all similar, presenting no difference whatsoever to the observing eye. He will not reach his goal unless he has perfect familiarity and visual acquaintance with the paths through his having traversed them and reached the portico.

35

Sichar Mussar - R. Shmelowitz [35, 38-39]

This profound understanding of the essence of the יצר הרע was revealed to Yaakov by the Angel of Esav when the two wrestled at the Yabok river crossing. After overpowering the Angel, Yaakov asked him, "תגידה נא שמיך, Please tell me your name." He replied, "למה זה תשאיל לשמי, Why do you ask for my name?" (*Bereishis 32:30*). By asking for his name, Yaakov was actually asking him to explain his essence (see *Sforno*). The 'name' of an entity defines its essence. This we learn from the fact that Adam's greatness expressed itself in his ability to give names to all living creatures, thereby defining their essence. This, then, gives us an understanding of the Angel's reply, "Why do you ask for my name?" The Angel of Esav was not posing a question, but rather giving a reply. "My strength lies in the fact that people do not pause to examine me more closely to know my name, my essence, for if they would, it would dispel the illusion that I present." Thus the Angel of Esav truly answered Yaakov's question as to his 'name.'

38

R' Abba said: The yetzer hara can be compared to a decrepit [man who posed as a] robber sitting at a crossroads and ordering whoever passed by to surrender his possessions, until a shrewd person walked by and saw that he was too feeble to rob anyone and beat him (*Bereishis Rabbah 22:6*).

39

Another possible understanding of the Angel's reply to Yaakov is that in truth he has no name, for a name denotes a tangible reality. There is none by the yetzer hara since the יצר הרע does not exist as the reality that he presents, he is in fact nameless. Hence, למה זה תשאיל לשמי, Why do you ask for my name for I have none.

41

He who occupies a commanding position in the portico, however, sees all of the paths before him and can discriminate between the true and the false ones. He is in a position to warn those who walk upon them and to tell them, "This is the path: take it!" He who is willing to believe him will reach the designated spot; but he who is not willing to believe him, but would rather trust to his eyes, will certainly remain lost and fail to reach it.

42

So too in relation to the idea under discussion. He who has not yet achieved dominion over his evil inclination is in the midst of the paths and cannot distinguish between them. But those who rule their evil inclination, those who have reached the portico, who have already left the paths and who clearly see all of the ways before their eyes — they can advise him who is willing to listen, and it is to them that we must trust.

And what is the advice that they give us? "Let us enter into an accounting." Let us come and compute the world's account." For they have already experienced, and seen, and learned that this alone is the true path by which a man may reach the good that he seeks, and that there is none beside this.

45 לכן אומרים המושלים ביצרם - אלה שנחלצו כבר ממאסר טבעם - לאיש הנבוכ: "בן אדם עמוך וחשוב" נמלים אחרות אומרים הם: "למד מוסר והתבונן" ואז תראה אור ותצא מהאפילה. "כי כבר הם ניסו וראו שזה לבדו (דהיינו החשבון) הוא הדרך האמיתית להגיע האדם אל הטובה אשר הוא מבקש ולא זולת זה" (מסילת ישרים, שם).

הגיר בן ציון ברוך וצ"ל מקשה בספרו "הגיוני מוסר" (חלק ג), על הדמיון שבין המשל נמשל. במשל - הנבוכים מקבלים עצה של ממש, מראים להם את הדרך הנכונה בה ילכו. אולם מה אומרים המושלים ביצרם לאותם אנשים התועים בחשכת העולם הזה - "בואו חשבון - בואו וחשוב". הם אינם מצביעים על דברים ברורים, וממילא גם אינם מוציאים אותם ממבוכתם. האם בואת יוושעו? דומה הדבר לאדם שנקלע למצוקה כספית ובא אל חברו לבקש עצה כיצד יחלץ ממנה, וידידו מיעץ לו: "צריך לחשוב מה לעשות", הלזאת עצה ייקרא?

46 הגר"א אומר בפירושו למשלי (פרק טו, ד) שלכל אדם יש דרך בפני עצמו, כי אין דעות בני אדם וטבעם שווים כשם שאין פרצופיהם דומים זה לזה. בתקופת הנביאים היה כל אחד הולך אליהם לדרוש את ה', והנביא היה אומר לו על פי משפט הנבואה את הדרך אשר ילך בה לפי שורש נשמתו ולפי טבעו. משבטלה הנבואה היה רוח הקודש בישראל, ואיש רוחו הוא יודיענו כיצד להתנהג. רוח הקודש יש לכל אחד ואחד, אך יאשרי אדם לא יחשוב 'ה' לו עוון ואין ברוחו רמיח" (תהלים לב) - שאין ברוחו שום דופי. (עוד כתב הגר"א

44 ברם, על כרחינו זו העצה ואינו אחרת! הרמח"ל מחדש לנו כאן שההכרעה האמיתית בכל המבוכות תלויה אך ורק באדם עצמו. וכבר אמרו: "שיתין מלכין יהיו לך, ומלכות נפשך לא תשכוכי" (ששים יועצים יהיו לך, ועצת עצמך לא תטוש). רוב־רובן של המבוכות נעוצות בטבע האדם עצמו השקוע ברדיפה אחר כבוד וקנאה, ואם הוא בעצמו לא ימצא דרך כיצד להתגבר על טבעו, לא יוכלו האחרים לעזור לו. אפילו יראו לו את הדרך המובילה אל האמת, גם אז לא יוכל ללכת בה מפני מידותיו הרעות אשר יעכבו בעדו.

צ"ל שור - ר"ב וזלכו

48 בחינה לאדם אם יש בו משהו מיתודיות היא שעה של בדיקות: ל"סחם" אדם" משעמם כשהוא לבד. "יחיד" בעולמו שמח כשהוא יכול להיות שעה עם עצמו. מהנער בלילה והמהלך בדרך יחיד ומפנה לבו לבטלה הרי זה מתחייב בנפשו" (אבות ג, ה). הלא שעה כזאת היא עת רצון, ואיך הוא מפנה או לבו לבטלה! הרי זה מוכיח שאין לו עסק עם עצמו, ואין זה אדם שהוא "עולם מלא".

49 ובוא וראה רוממות מעלה זו של היהודיות: לפני שיעקב אע"ה נאבק עם המלאך שרו של עשו כתוב "ויותר יעקב לבדו", וחז"ל הבינו כי אין זה סיפור דברים בעלמא: "ר' ברכיה בש"ד סימון אמר אין כא' - ומי כא' ? ישורין, ישראל סבא. מה הקב"ה כתוב בו ונשגב ה' לבדו, אף יעקב - ויותר יעקב לבדו" (בר"ר פ"ז, א). "לבדו" זוהי התגלותו של הקב"ה לעמיד לבא כשיתגלה יחודו ית' לעיני כל באי עולם, ולהשגה זו הגיע יעקב אע"ה, ובכחה נאבק עם המלאך ויוכל לו.

50 Beadbar - G. 21

1 When the Canaanite king of Arad, who lived in the Negev, heard that the Israelites were traveling along the Atharim Highway, he attacked them and took some captives. 2 The Israelites made a vow to God, and said, "If You give this nation into our hand, we will render their cities taboo."

3 God heard Israel's voice, and He allowed them to defeat the Canaanites. [The Israelites] declared them and their cities taboo. The place was therefore named Taboo (Charmah).

Artiswilt - Chivmash

51 Who dwelled in the south. The south was the habitat of Amalek (13:29), but the Torah identifies this king as a Canaanite. The Midrash explains that the attacker was indeed an Amalekite, but he wanted to prevent the Jews from identifying his people in their prayers for God's assistance, so he ordered his soldiers to use the Canaanite language. Confused because the enemy wore the uniform of Amalek and spoke the language of Canaan, the Jews prayed for help against "this nation," and they prevailed (Rashi).

The Call of Torah - R. Munk

52 Israel took a vow to Hashem. Rashi explains their vow as a promise to dedicate the spoils of the battle to Hashem [for the Tabernacle].

ס - ספר הי"ן

ואל תחשוב בני לתפוס על דברי ולומר: ולמה יצוה אותנו השי"ת לעשות כל אלה לזכרון אותו הנס. הלא בזכרון אחד יעלה הדבר במחשבתנו ולא ישכח מפני זרענו? כי לא מחכמה התפסנו על זה ומחשבת הנוער ישיאך לדבר. כי יצוה בני אם בינה שמעה זאת והטת אונן ושמע, אלמדך בתורה ובמצוות: דע, כי האדם נפעל כפי פעולותיו, ולבו וכל מחשבותיו תמיד אחר מעשיו שהוא עוסק בהם אם טוב ואם רע, ואפילו רשע גמור בלבבו וכל יצר מחשבות לבו רק רע כל היום - אם יערה רוחו וישים השתדלותו ועסקו בהתמדה בתורה ובמצוות, ואפילו שלא לשם שמים, מיד ינטה אל הטוב, ובכח מעשיו ימית היצ"ד, כי אחרי הפעולות נמשכים הלבבות, ואפילו אם יהיה אדם צדיק גמור ולבבו ישר ותמים, חפץ בתורה ובמצוות, אם אולי יעסוק תמיד בדברים של דופי, כאילו תאמר דרך משל שהכריחו המלך ומנהו באומנות רעה. באמת אם כל עסקו תמיד כל היום באותה אומנות, ישוב בזמן מן הזמנים מצדקת לבו להיות רשע גמור, כי ידוע הדבר ואמת, שכל אדם נפעל כפי פעולותיו כמו שאמרנו, ועל כן אמרו חז"ל רצה המקום לזכות ישראל לפיכך הרבה להם תורה ומצוות, כדי להתפס בהן כל מחשבותינו ולהיות בהן כל עסקנו להטיב לנו באחריתנו, כי מתוך הפעולות הטובות אנחנו נפעלים להיות טובים ונזכרים לחיי עדי.

54 Living Inspired - R. Tatz

The business of evil is to dash the *mateh* to earth and cause it to manifest as the *nachash*. Our business is to hold it aloft and reveal it as the *mateh*. It is not easy. Once the road has forked one may be genuinely lost. Fighting home may take all we have. But that moment of transformation of the self, that point of snapping out of a terrifying ordeal into the transcendent clarity of victory is what life is about. And that is why we are here.