

"One Lot for Hashem and One Lot for Azozel"

The Great Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sasov, zy" a, Teaches: ז'ה ל'עומת ז'ה ע'שה א'לקים Is an Abbreviation for עזאזל

In honor of the upcoming Yom Kippur, it is fitting that we examine the sacred service involving the two he – goats – one designated for Hashem and one designated for Azozel. This service is described in the Torah, in parshat Acharei Mos (Vayikroh 16, 5), as follows:

"ומאת עדת בני ישראל יקח שני שעירי עזים לחטאת... ולקח את שני השעירים והעמיד אותם לפני ה' פתח אהל מועד, ונתן אהרן על שני השעירים גורלות גורל אחד לה' וגורל אחד לעזאזל, והקריב אהרן את השעיר אשר עלה עליו הגורל לה' ועשהו חטאת, והשעיר אשר עלה עליו הגורל לעזאזל יעמד חי לפני ה' לבפר עליו לשלח – from the assembly of Bnei Yisroel, he shall take two he – goats for a sin – offering . . . he shall take the two he – goats and stand them before Hashem at the entrance to the Ohel Moed. Aharon shall place lots on the two he – goats – one lot for Hashem and one lot for Azozel. Aharon shall bring near the he – goat designated by the lot for Hashem and make it a sin – offering; and the he – goat designated by the lot for Azozel, shall be stood alive before Hashem to provide atonement through it, to be sent to Azozel to the Wilderness.

Rashi clarifies: "ונתן אהרן על שני השעירים גורלות, מעמיד אחד לימין ואחד לשמאל, ונותן ב' ידיו בקלפי, ונוטל גורל בימין וחברו בשמאל ונותן עליה, את שכתוב בו לשם הוא לשם, ואת שכתוב בו לעזאזל משתלח – Aharon places one of the goats on his right and one on his left. He puts his two hands in a lottery box and draws a lot in his right hand and draws the other lot in his left hand and places them on the goats – the one whose lot reads "to Hashem" is offered to Hashem and the one whose lot reads "to Azozel" is sent to Azozel.

It is essential to comprehend the significance of the two he – goats that are brought on Yom Kippur – one for Hashem and one for Azozel. Additionally, it is worthwhile considering what we have learned in the Mishneh (Yume 62a): "שני שעירי יום הכפורים מצותן שיהיו שניהן שוין במראה ובקומה ובדמים ובלקחתן כאחד – it is required that the two he – goats used in the Yom Kippur service be identical – in appearance, in height, in value and in their simultaneous purchase. There is certainly a deep significance underlying this requirement. Despite the fact that one of these goats is designated for Hashem and the other is designated for Azozel, nevertheless, they must be identical in all aspects.

Let us begin by introducing an incredible allusion brought in Heichal HaBerocheh (Bechukosai 295a) from Rebbe Yitzchok Isaac of Komarne, zy" a, in the name of the great Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sasov, zy" a. He teaches us that the Hebrew word "עזאזל" is an abbreviation for the phrase ז'ה ל'עומת ז'ה ע'שה א'לקים – the Almighty created the world with equal and opposite counterparts.

Explaining Why the Serpent's Legs Were Removed

To address these issues, let us first explain why the serpent's legs were cut off after the sin of the Tree of Knowledge. The possuk states (Bereishis 3, 14): "ויאמר ה' אלקים אל הנחש כי עשית זאת, ארור אתה מכל הבהמה ומכל חית השדה על גחונך תלך ועפר " – and Hashem G-d said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, accursed are you beyond all the cattle and beyond all beasts of the field; upon your belly shall you go, and dust shall you eat all the days of your life." Rashi comments:

“על גחונך תלך, רגלים היו לו ונקצצו” – the serpent slithers on its belly, because it once had legs which were later cut off. It is well – known from the words of our blessed sages in the Medresh and in the Pirkei D'Rebbe Eliezer that the serpent and the evil inclination, the yetzer hora, are one and the same. The yetzer hora appeared to Odom in the guise of a serpent in order to deceive him and trap him. It is important, therefore, to understand the deeper implication of the fact that the serpent's legs were cut off.

We can explain the matter based on a statement from Chazal (Succeh 52a): “כל הגדול מחבירו יצרו גדול” – the greater a person is, the greater is his yetzer hora. One of the fundamental principles of the Torah is that HKB”H gave man freedom of choice – to choose between good and evil and to choose whether to be a tzaddik or a wicked person, chas v'shalom. This is stated in the possuk (Devorim 30, 15): “ראה נתתי – לפניך היום את החיים ואת הטוב ואת המות ואת הרע” – **See, I have placed before you today the life and the good, and the death and the evil.** To preserve this freedom of choice, it is critical that a person's good inclination and evil inclination be completely equal.

Should one of them, however, be stronger than the other – be it the yetzer hora or the yetzer tov – man would no longer possess freedom of choice; the stronger inclination would overpower the other and sway the person in his respective direction. Consequently: “כל הגדול מחבירו יצרו גדול הימנו” – the greater a person is, the greater is his inclination to do good; clearly, this necessitates that he also have a stronger yetzer hora than his fellow man. With this balance of powers intact, his freedom of choice to do good or evil is maintained. Hence, when he overcomes his yetzer hora and chooses to do good despite this stronger, worthier adversary, he merits life in the World to Come.

Utilizing this concept, the commentaries address Chazal's statement in the Gemoreh (Succeh 52a):

“לעתיד לבוא מביאו הקב”ה ליצר הרע ושוחטו בפני הצדיקים ובפני הרשעים, צדיקים נדמה להם כהר גבוה ורשעים נדמה להם כחוט השערה, הללו והללו בוכין, צדיקים בוכין ואומרים האיך יכולני לכבוש הר גבוה כזה,

ורשעים בוכין ואומרים היאך לא יכולנו לכבוש את חוט “השערה הזה” – in the future, HKB”H will slaughter the yetzer hora in the presence of both the tzaddikim and the wicked; to the tzaddikim the yetzer hora will resemble a tall mountain; to the evil it will resemble a thin strand of hair; both the righteous and the wicked will cry in response; the tzaddikim will be amazed that they managed to overcome such an insurmountable obstacle; the wicked will be amazed that they were unable to overcome such a tenuous obstacle.

Seemingly, one might wonder how the very same yetzer hora could appear so differently to the tzaddikim versus the wicked – as a tall, insurmountable mountain versus a thin strand of hair. Yet, in light of the principle just discussed, it makes perfect sense, since the greater a person is, the more formidable is his yetzer hora. Therefore, for tzaddikim who ascend the ladder of kedusheh, achieving greater heights with every new day on their journey to the house of G-d, their yetzer horas must grow commensurately in order to preserve a balance of powers and maintain their freedom of choice. Their yetzer hora, therefore, appears tall and insurmountable, “כהר גבוה”. In stark contrast, the wicked descend spiritually from day to day; hence, their yetzer horas progressively shrink and weaken, out of necessity, in order to maintain their freedom of choice. Consequently, they perceive the yetzer hora as something very tenuous, “כחוט השערה”.

The Desire in One's Heart Is the Yetzer Tov and the Yetzer hora

Regarding this issue – that the good inclination and the evil inclination are equal and opposite forces – it is worthwhile introducing a phenomenal insight from the great Rav Tzoddek HaKohen, ztz”l, found in Tzidkas HaTzaddik (248):

“עיקר האדם הוא החשק שבלב שבו הוא יתרונו על המלאכים, והוא [החשק] הנקרא יצר טוב ויצר רע, [כי] כאשר הוא מגביר חשקו לטוב הרי זה טוב, ואם לאו וכי [הרי זה רע ח”ו]. ואמרו ז”ל ‘כל הגדול מחבירו יצרו גדול הימנו’, כי גדלות אחד על חבירו הוא רק כפי גודל החשק שלו לטוב, דהיינו כח היצר, כי יצר טוב ויצר רע אחד, זה לעומת זה בשני חללי הלב, כפי החשק שבלבו בימין לטוב כן בשמאל לרע, ולכך יצר רע גם כן גדול”.

According to Rav Tzoddek, the term “yetzer” incorporates the desire and the will that HKB”H created and instilled within a person’s heart; one’s will and desire is always split between the right side and the left side. In the words of Koheles (10, 2): **לב** “**לב**” **חכם לימינו ולב כסיל לשמאלו** — **a wise man’s heart tends to his right, while a fool’s heart tends to his left.** These forces located in the right heart, urge a person to perform good deeds and to serve Hashem; hence, it is referred to as **“יצר טוב”**, a good inclination. Conversely, the desire and will in the left heart, entice a person to pursue and lust after the meaningless illusions of this world; therefore, it is referred to as **“יצר רע”**, an evil inclination.

These two inclinations, the good and the evil, are always equal, in keeping with the principle (Koheles 7, 14): **“גם את זה לעומת זה עשה האלקים”** — **the Almighty has made the one as well as the other** — equal and opposite counterparts. Someone who has a strong desire and will toward matters of kedusheh, also possesses a strong desire and will toward matters of the opposite nature; nevertheless, he is able to successfully overcome these negative influences and direct them to the good. One who, by his nature, lacks evil tendencies will also lack inherent good tendencies. This, then, is the meaning of our blessed sages’ statement: **“כל הגדול מחבירו יצרו גדול הימנו”** — **one who is greater than his fellow man possesses a greater inclination than his fellow man.** So, when we observe someone who is greater than his fellow man, in that he is inclined to pursue good and honorable goals, it is evident that he also possesses an equally strong inclination to pursue evil and dishonorable goals. Yet, due to his freedom of choice, he is able to overcome these negative influences and redirect them to the pursuit of kedusheh.

This ties in nicely with another valuable principle taught by the great Rav Tzoddek HaKohen, zy”a, in Tzidkas HaTzaddik (49), concerning our service of Hashem:

“כל אחד ידע, שבמה שיצרו תוקפו ביותר, הוא כלי מוכן לאותם דברים ביותר להיות נקיים וזכים אצלו, ובדברים שהרבה לפשוע בהם, ידע שהוא כלי מוכן להיות דייקא באותו דבר נקי ובר לבב.”

In other words, suppose a person finds that he is weak in a certain area of religious observance and is unable, seemingly, to overcome the yetzer hora’s negative influences. He should deduce that he actually possesses significant powers regarding this particular area of observance; the fact that the yetzer is assaulting him concerning this matter is a sign that this is where he is meant to have a positive impact. As we have learned from the writings of Rav Tzoddek HaKohen, the evil inclination and the good inclination share a common source. If one possesses a strong desire for something negative, that very same desire can be turned around and redirected toward something positive; however, one who lacks such a desire even for something negative is also lacking any similar drive for the good. This is a consequence of the principle: **זה דה לעומת זה עשה אלקים** — the Almighty created the world with equal and opposite counterparts.

This appears to be the wisest — of — all — men’s intention when he stated (Koheles 7, 14): **“ביום טובה”** **היה בטוב, וביום רעה ראה גם את זה לעומת זה עשה האלקים** — the Almighty has created both the good inclination and the evil inclination; on certain days one wins out, while on other days its counterpart wins out. Shlomo HaMelech is teaching us an important lesson. A good day refers to a day on which you utilized your positive forces to serve Hashem properly. **“וביום רעה”** — there are days, however, when the yetzer hora is very strong and overwhelms you; so much so, that he blinds you to the simple truth that you possess the power to withstand and overcome his persuasions and temptations. That is precisely when you need to step back and: **“ראה גם את זה לעומת זה עשה האלקים”** — be cognizant of the fact that if you possess this strong negative desire and inclination, it is a sign that you also possess an equal and opposite positive desire and inclination. In reality, it is up to you to transform and redirect this innate desire of yours in a positive direction to perform a good deed.

Removal of the Serpent’s Legs Weakened the Power of the Evil Inclination

Now, let us consider Odom HoRishon’s situation prior to the sin of the Tree of Knowledge. Rashi writes (**“ואע”פ שנתנה בו דעה לקרות לו שמות, (Bereishis 2, 25); לא נתן בו יצר הרע עד אכלו מן העץ, ונכנס בו יצר הרע**

“וידע מה בין טוב לרע – even though the knowledge to assign names had been put in man, the evil inclination had not been put in him, until he ate from the tree; at that time, the evil inclination entered his being, and then he was able to differentiate between good and evil.

According to Rashi's commentary, Odom HoRishon did not possess an internal yetzer hora prior to eating from the Tree of Knowledge. The other commentaries find this puzzling and bothersome; for, we see that Odom HoRishon violated HKB"H's command not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge. If he did not possess an internal yetzer hora, what prompted Odom to rebel against Hashem's specific warning not to eat from the tree?

A wonderful solution for this difficulty is to be found both in the Nezer HaKodesh on the Medresh (B.R. 32, 12) and in R' Chaim Volozhin's, ztz"l, Nefesh HaChaim; both resolve the difficulty in similar fashions. Clearly, HKB"H created man with freedom of choice; thus, by necessity, he possessed a yetzer hora even before he sinned. Before he sinned, however, the distinction between good and evil was absolute. Evil, the evil inclination, took the form of the primeval serpent, which stood as a distinct and separate entity; it was completely separate from man himself, representing good.

The only contact and interaction between the yetzer hora — representing the forces of evil — and man — representing the forces of good — was that the yetzer hora, in the form of the serpent, was permitted to merely tempt Odom. This persuasive force was entirely external to Odom's being. Within his actual body and soul there was no inclination to evil; he was essentially good without any admixture of evil.

Had Odom not been tempted and deceived by this distinct embodiment of evil, both evil and good would have continued to exist separately, each in its own domain. However, once Odom fell prey to the serpent's persuasive tactics — and he ate from the Tree of Knowledge — he caused a transformation allowing this evil force to leave its separate domain and enter the domain of good. Good and evil intermingled within man's

being and a new concept of the “yetzer hora” was born. The yetzer hora was no longer restricted to external persuasion only, but it could now function and influence man from within. In other words, man now sensed that he himself was drawn, chas v'shalom, to perform acts that contradicted the will of the Creator, blessed is He.

This interpretation can be deduced from Rashi's precise choice of language: **“לא נתן בו יצר הרע עד אכלו — מן העץ ונכנס בו יצר הרע” — the evil inclination had not been put in him, until he ate from the tree; at that time, the evil inclination entered his being.** He is pointing out that the yetzer hora did not originally exist within Odom's being; he was solely an external force. Yet, after Odom ate from the tree, the yetzer hora actually invaded the domain of good and began to function within Odom's very being. From that moment on, man has possessed a tendency of his own toward evil deeds — the sense that he himself possesses evil desires beyond mere external temptations.

“The Serpent Was More Cunning than Any Beast of the Field”

We are all well aware of Odom HoRishon's greatness and stature prior to eating from the Tree of Knowledge; he was a direct product of HKB"H's handiwork. The Medresh teaches (B.R. 8, 10): **“בשעה שברא הקב"ה אדם הראשון, טעו מלאכי השרת ובקשו לומר לפניו קדוש — when HKB"H created Odom HoRishon, the ministering angels mistook him for G-d.** It stands to reason that in light of his tremendous stature, his external yetzer hora — the primeval serpent who tricked him into eating from the forbidden fruit — was also quite formidable — in keeping with the principle that the greater the person, the greater his yetzer hora.

This explains why at the beginning of the passage concerning the Tree of Knowledge, the Torah states (Bereishis 3, 1): **“והנחש היה ערום מכל חית השדה — Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field that Hashem G-d had made.** This portrayal is meant to allay our astonishment at how Odom HoRishon, the handiwork of

HKB"H, could have been deceived and trapped by the serpent, the embodiment of the yetzer hora. The holy Torah informs us that the serpent's guile paralleled Odom HoRishon's greatness — זה לעומת זה עשה — האלקים.

Consequently, the commentaries warn us against accepting Odom HoRishon's sin as simply and superficially as stated — that he wished, chas v'chalilah, to be on a par with the Almighty, **כאלקים יודעי טוב**, "ורע". Certainly, comprehending his mistake involves much deeper issues, as the commentaries endeavor to explain, each in its own way. It is quite clear that the serpent's method of persuasion was so overwhelming that Odom and Chava were unable to resist. As we have stated, the strength and magnitude of the yetzer hora always correspond to the measure of the individual's greatness.

Now, according to Chazal's teachings in the Medreshim and the writings of the Arizal, after Odom HoRishon sinned with the Tree of Knowledge and was expelled from Gan Eden, he experienced a tremendous spiritual descent. From his lofty status before the sin, he fell dramatically. Along with him, all of creation declined. The Torah depicts an example of this decline (Bereishis 3, 17): **ארורה האדמה בעבורך... וקוץ ודרדר: "accursed is the ground because of you... thorns and thistle shall it sprout for you."** So, had the serpent, the embodiment of the yetzer hora, remained at his original strength and magnitude from before the sin, Odom HoRishon and the rest of creation would no longer have stood any chance of overcoming its temptations and devices — for, Odom and all of creation had already declined significantly. As a consequence, man's freedom of choice, his ability to opt for the good, would have been negated.

A Person's Yetzer Overwhelms Him

This discussion allows us to address and resolve a contradiction pointed out by the Arvei Nachal (Ki Seitzei) regarding two statements of Chazal. On the one hand, the Gemoreh in Kiddushin (30b) states: **"הקב"ה אמר להם לישראל: בני בראתי יצר הרע ובראתי לו תורה תבלין, ואם אתם עוסקים בתורה אין אתם נמסרים**

בידו — HKB"H informs Yisroel that they possess the power and strength to resist and overcome the yetzer hora, by engaging in Torah study. On the other hand, the Gemoreh (ibid.) states: **"יצרו של אדם מתגבר עליו"** בכל יום ומבקש המיתה שנאמר **צופה רשע לצדיק ומבקש להמיתו, ואלמלא הקב"ה עוזרו אין יכול לו שנאמר אלקים** — **לא יעזבנו בידו** — without HKB"H's assistance, man would be unable to withstand the deadly influences of the yetzer hora; in other words, man does not possess the power to overcome the yetzer on his own, without divine intervention.

Furthermore, one might wonder why HKB"H created the yetzer hora in such a manner — that man is unable to withstand its temptations without HKB"H's help. Since the purpose of the yetzer's creation was to provide man with freedom of choice, it would have seemed more fitting that man could overcome the yetzer with his own devices.

In light of our previous discussion, we can supply a reasonable explanation for these apparent discrepancies. Originally, before the sin of the Tree of Knowledge, the yetzer hora HKB"H created for Odom HoRishon was only an external force — the clever serpent attempting to persuade Odom to sin. Indeed, Odom and Chava possessed the ability to withstand that yetzer on their own, because they were equally free to choose good or evil. Concerning this yetzer, HKB"H informs Yisroel: **"בני בראתי יצר הרע"** — when I created the world, I created the evil inclination, the yetzer hora; **"ובראתי לו תורה תבלין, ואם אתם עוסקים"** — **בתורה אין אתם נמסרים בידו** — but I also created the Torah; if you engage in Torah study and harness its power, you will not fall prey to the yetzer.

Odom HoRishon, however, subsequently sinned, thus allowing the yetzer hora to invade his body and his inner being. As a result, Odom HoRishon had in effect introduced an additional form of the yetzer hora into his life. This altered the balance of powers and eliminated his freedom to choose the good; he was no longer capable of defeating the evil inclination by means of his own devices. From the perspective of strict justice, he brought this situation on himself and deserved the consequences; it would have been fitting

for him to remain in this unfavorable situation, where the yetzer now had the upper hand. Notwithstanding, HKB"H, with His infinite mercy and kindness, assists man to overcome the yetzer in order to preserve his freedom of choice to choose between good and evil. We find, therefore, that after the sin of the Tree of Knowledge, HKB"H cut off the legs of the serpent to weaken the power of the yetzer hora.

This is the meaning of our sages' poetic statement: "יצרו של אדם מתגבר עליו בכל יום ומבקש המיתו" — a person's evil inclination threatens to overwhelm him every day and wishes to kill him. In other words, specifically "יצרו של אדם", the yetzer hora that Odom in effect brought upon himself — allowing it to invade his inner being after the sin of the Tree of Knowledge — that is the yetzer that threatens to overwhelm him daily — the yetzer hora that now exists in addition to the original external yetzer hora. Man is incapable of withstanding this internal adversary on his own. "ואלמלא הקב"ה עוזרו אין יכול לו" — consequently, HKB"H provides us with ongoing assistance, in every generation, by cutting off the serpent's legs and diminishing the power of the yetzer. This allows the sinner to engage the yetzer on a level battle — field and overcome its negative influences. Hence, in the anticipated future: "לרשעים נרמה להם כחוט השערה" — the wicked will perceive the evil inclination as a thin strand of hair.

"It Is Required that They Be Identical in Appearance Height and Value"

So we see that, in His infinite mercy and kindness, HKB"H cut off the legs of the serpent; in other words, he reduced the strength of the yetzer correspondingly to the diminution of Odom HoRishon's reduced level of kedusheh. This restored the balance of powers which HKB"H originally imposed upon creation. With this understanding, it is essential that every human being reinforce his efforts in his service of Hashem so that he does not fall into the yetzer's trap of lies, deception and confusion. For, the yetzer is so powerful that, if left to his own devices, man is truly incapable of withstanding it.

This insight enlightens us to a small degree with regards to why HKB"H commanded Aharon HaKohen to take two identical he — goats for the Yom Kippur service: "ונתן אהרן על שני השעירים גורלות גורל אחד" — "on one he placed a lot "for Hashem" and on the other a lot "for Azazel." As we learned in the Mishneh: "מצותן שיהיו שניהן שוין" — it was commanded that they be identical in appearance, in height, in monetary value and in their time of purchase. Specifically on Yom Kippur — when Yisroel are required to perform teshuvah for all of their transgressions — HKB"H wanted to illustrate the identical natures of the yetzer tov and the yetzer ra.

Therefore, one should not become disheartened upon realizing how difficult the battle he must wage against his internal yetzer hora will be. Instead, he should rest assured that if he has within his being such a formidable yetzer hora, this is the ultimate sign and proof that he also possesses an extraordinary capacity for kedusheh — "zeh l'umat zeh." Corresponding to these two forces located within a person's heart — the yetzer tov on one's right side and the yetzer ra on one's left side — HKB"H commanded the kohen to bring two identical he — goats — identical in appearance, height and monetary value. The goat "for Hashem" represented the right — sided good inclination and the goat sent off into the wilderness to Azazel represented the left — sided yetzer ra.

How beautifully this explains the insight supplied by the great Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sasov — that "עזאזל" is an abbreviation for the maxim "ז'ה ל'עומת ז'ה ע'שה" — the Almighty created both the yetzer ra and the yetzer tov as equal and opposite counterparts. The Sossover Rebbe is teaching us a vital lesson. The goat for Azazel represents the yetzer ra; its negative influence and capacity for evil is always paralleled by the yetzer tov's positive influence and capacity for good — no more, no less, equal. If so, it should be patently clear that if a Jew merely wants to overcome his yetzer hora, HKB"H will assist him to do so.