

The Meraglim Failed Due to Haughtiness - a Derivative of Idolatry That Sin Ultimately Led to the Sin of Denial

This week, we read in parshas Shelach: **“וידבר ה' אל משה: לאמר, שלח לך אנשים ויתורו את ארץ כנען אשר אני נותן לבני ישראל, איש אחד איש אחד למטה אבותיו תשלחו כל נשיא בהם”** - Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying, “Send forth for yourself men, and let them spy out the Land of Canaan that I give to the Children of Yisroel; one man each from his fathers' tribe shall you send, every one a leader among them.” The Baal HaTurim provides us with a magnificent allusion in this possuk: the final letters of the three words **שליח לך אנשים** spell out the word **חכ”ם** - indicating that every one of the “meraglim,” spies, was both wise and righteous. The commentaries deliberate at length over the significance of this allusion; why did HKB”H specifically allude to the character of the meraglim with the word **חכ”ם**?

I would like to propose my own explanation for the Baal HaTurim's observation, based on an amazing introduction from the impeccable teachings of the great author of the Tevuos Shor. In his sefer Bechor Shor (Shabbes 150a), he addresses the following statement of our blessed sages in the Gemoreh (Tomid 32a): **“איזהו חכם הרואה את הנולד”** - the true wise man is one who can foresee future consequences. Here is what he writes:

“כי בכל עבירה יש אבות ותולדות, כגון עבודה זרה, האב הוא שעובד לעבודה זרה מממש, והולדות הם גסות הרוח, דאמרינן בפרק קמא דסוטה (ד:): דהוה כעבודה זרה. ובפרק קמא דבבא בתרא (י.) כל המעלים עיניו מן הצדקה כעובד עבודה זרה. בפרק חלק (סנהדרין צב.) כל המחליף בדיבורו כעובד עבודה זרה, וכל שכן מי שאינו מקיים תקיעת כף או הן צדק. וכן בגילוי עריות יש תולדות, המתקרב אל הנשים האסורות בקריצת עינים וברמוזים וכדומה... וכן אמרו חז”ל (סוטה ד:): כל האוכל בלא נטילת ידים כאלו בא על אשה זונה...”

וכן בשפיכות דמים אמרו חז”ל בפרק הזהב (ב”מ נח:): כל המלבין פני חברו ברבים כאלו שופך דמיו... וכן בכל העבירות כולן יש אבות ותולדות. ולזה אמרו ‘איזהו חכם’, דעיקר חכמתו של אדם למלט נפשו משאול, כמו שכתוב (קהלת ט טו) ומלט את העיר בחכמתו, ‘הרואה את הנולד’, שלא יאמר הריני נשמר מן האבות ודי בכך, אלא שיראה נגד פניו תמיד להישמר מהתולדות.”

Every transgression possesses a prototype and derivatives - an “av” and “toldos.” For example, the prototype of “avodeh zoreh” is the actual sin of idol - worship; derivatives and subtypes of “avodeh zoreh” include haughtiness, refraining from giving charity, and not remaining true to one’s word. Similarly, there are derivatives and subtypes for the transgression of “Giluee Aroyos” - sexual immorality; these range from improper flirtations to eating without first washing one’s hands. The subcategories of “shefichus domim” - spilling another’s blood - include the sin of publicly embarrassing another person.

In this fashion, all categories of transgressions possess prototypes and derivatives. This is the significance of the statement **‘איזהו חכם’** - who is truly wise and is able to utilize his wisdom to avoid harmful consequences to one’s soul? **‘הרואה את הנולד’** - he who foresees the consequences of his actions - one who realizes that it is not enough to avoid the prototypes of transgressions - the “aves” - but it is equally important to avoid the derivatives - the “toldos” - of those prototypes.

The Bechor Shor is teaching us an important lesson concerning the scheming ways of the yetzer hara. The yetzer does not necessarily try to persuade a person to commit a serious transgression right off the bat, for it realizes that the person will resist such an attempt and will ward him off. Therefore, he devises an alternate game plan - to initially tempt the person with the “toldos” of the severe transgressions, such as anger and haughtiness. Now, since one transgression leads to another - a sort of domino effect - transgression of the “toldos” will eventually result in the transgression of the “aves” - the prototype transgressions themselves which are far more serious. This is the implication of the maxim: **‘איזהו חכם’** **‘הרואה את הנולד’** - a wise man realizes that the yetzer intends to trip him up initially with the lesser derivatives of the more serious transgressions with the ultimate goal of causing him to transgress, chas v’shalom, the actual “aves.”

We can apply this concept as a subplot in the struggle described in parshas Vayishlach between Yaakov and the mysterious stranger identified by Rashi as Eisav's ministering angel (Bereishis 32, 25): **“ויותר יעקב לבדו ויאבק איש עמו עד: עלות השחר, וירא כי לא יכול לו ויגע בכף ירכו”** - Yaakov was left alone and a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn. When he perceived that he could not overcome him, he struck the socket of his hip. We know that this angel wrestling with Yaakov Avinu was none other than the yetzer hara attempting to trap Yaakov's descendants, chas v'shalom, in its nefarious net.

Upon realizing that he could not succeed in a frontal assault - causing Jews to perform outright violations of the prototype transgressions, the “oves” - he adopted an alternate strategy: **“ויגע בכף ירכו”** - to trip Jews up with the “toldos,” the offspring of the more serious transgressions. This plan, of course, was designed to ultimately cause Jews to transgress the prototype transgressions, the “oves,” chas v'shalom.

This can also be insinuated in the words of the prophet (Yirmiyah 3, 14): **“שובו בנים שובבים”** - repent, wayward children. He is warning them to repent not only for the serious transgressions, the “oves,” but also for the offspring (children) and derivatives of those transgressions, the “toldos.” Due to the transgression of the more minor “toldos,” they were induced to transgress the more serious “oves” - by the process of “aveirah gorreeres aveirah.”

One Good Deed Leads to Another while One Misdeed Leads to Another

Just as there are prototypes and derivatives regarding transgressions, similarly there are prototypes and derivatives regarding mitzvos. For example, Chazal (Beroches 6b) compare one who enhances the joy of a bridegroom to one who brought a “todah” offering and to one who rebuilt one of the ruins of Yerushalayim. In the same vein, they state (Menoches 110a): **“כל העוסק בתורת חטאת, וכל העוסק בתורת אשם כאילו הקריב חטאת, וכל העוסק בתורת אשם כאילו הקריב חטאת”** - engaging in the study of the “chatat” or “asham” offerings is considered as if one actually brought one of those respective offerings. We find statements of this sort from Chazal over and over again. The principle underlying these statements is: **מצוה גוררת מצוה** - the performance of one mitzvah leads to the performance of another. By performing a mitzvah in its derivative or secondary form - its “toladah” - one will ultimately merit to fulfill the mitzvah in its primary form.

This amazing principle provides us with a better understanding of the Mishnah (Oves 4, 2): **“בן עזאי אומר, הוי”**

רץ למצוה קלה כבחמורה, ובורח מן העבירה, שמצוה גוררת מצוה - ועבירה גוררת עבירה, ששכר מצוה מצוה ושכר עבירה עבירה - Ben Azai encourages a person to pursue a minor mitzvah just as enthusiastically as a more significant mitzvah; likewise he advises a person to steer away from a transgression at all costs. For, one mitzvah leads to the performance of another just as one transgression leads to another. It turns out that as a reward for performing a mitzvah, one merits to perform another mitzvah; whereas the consequence of performing a transgression is the performance of another transgression. The commentaries note several subtleties in the language of this Mishnah: (a) how does one distinguish between a minor mitzvah and a more significant mitzvah? After all, it is an established principle that the value and rewards of specific mitzvos are unknown to us. (b) Is the only reason and incentive for pursuing the fulfillment of a minor mitzvah solely because “mitzvah gorreeres mitzvah” - one mitzvah leads to another? Even without this incentive, one is obliged to fulfill every mitzvah possible - be it minor or major. (c) For that matter, is the sole reason for refraining from committing a transgression because of the principle of “aveirah gorreeres aveirah” - one transgression leads to another? Clearly, it is vital to avoid transgressions at all costs regardless of this principle.

Yet, applying the insight of the Bechor Shor, we can better appreciate Ben Azai's words of wisdom. He is warning us not to belittle or underestimate the consequences of derivative transgressions - “toldos” - such as haughtiness and anger - by thinking that they are not as dangerous as avodeh zoreh itself. Similarly, he cautions us not to underestimate the value of the derivatives of mitzvos - falsely concluding that they are not truly significant. Hence, he emphasizes: **“הוי רץ למצוה קלה כבחמורה”** - even the fulfillment of a minor mitzvah, or the “toladah” of a mitzvah - an action that is considered as if one actually performed the original mitzvah - should be aggressively pursued. In like fashion, one should steer away from the performance of even a minor or derivative transgression just like one would from the prototype transgression itself.

He provides the following rationale for his statement: **“שמצוה גוררת מצוה”** - since the performance of one mitzvah leads to the performance of another, the fulfillment of the “toladah” of the mitzvah will allow one to ultimately fulfill the “av” of the mitzvah itself. The corresponding reasoning also applies to transgressions: **“ועבירה גוררת עבירה”** - falling prey to the derivative of an aveirah, eventually leads to the transgression of the primary, prototype aveirah itself. Thus, he concludes: **“ששכר מצוה מצוה”** - as a result of performing the “toladah” of the mitzvah, one eventually merits fulfillment of the primary mitzvah; **“ושכר עבירה עבירה”** - and the penalty for

transgressing the “toladah” of an aveirah is falling prey to the prototype aveirah itself.

Based on this discussion, we can understand the custom to recite Mishnayot everyday in our Shacharit prayers prior to “pesukei d’zimrah.” We recite: **“איזהו מקומן של זבחים”** - dealing with the various sacrifices including the “chatos,” “oleh,” “oshom,” “todah” and “shelomim.” After this recitation, we request that if we are obligated to bring one of these offerings, it should be considered as if we indeed brought and sacrificed the appropriate offering. Then we conclude with the following prayer: **“יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלקינו ואלקי אבותינו שיבנה בית המקדש במהרה בימינו ותן חלקנו בתורתך, ושם נעבדך ביראה כימי עולם וכשנים קדמוניות”** - may it be the will of Hashem, our G - d, and the G - d of our fathers, that the Beis HaMikdash be built swiftly, in our times, and give our portion in Your Torah, and there shall we serve You in reverence, as always and as in times past.

We can now understand this practice as follows. Engaging in the study of the “chatos” and “oleh” offerings is considered as if we actually offered those sacrifices. As such, Torah study focusing on these sacrifices constitutes a “toladah” of the actual mitzvah of offering these sacrifices in the Beis HaMikdash. Therefore, we beseech HKB”H that by engaging in the “toldos,” we will merit to actually perform the prototypes - the “oves” of these mitzvos - and offer these sacrifices in the Beis HaMikdash in the near future.

Rabbi Binyamin Zeev’s Solution to the Chozeh of Lublin’s Question

Concerning this matter, let us introduce an incredible idea presented in the sefer Shulchan HaTahor on the Pesach Haggadah. The great tzaddik Rabbi Binyamin Zeev, z”l, once went to the divine Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchak, the Chozeh of Lublin, zy”a. The Chozeh of Lublin remarked that he found several statements of our blessed sages difficult and troublesome. He was concerned about statements that compare anger and haughtiness and the like to actual idolatry. What possessed our blessed sages to regard these types of behavior so severely?

Rabbi Binyamin Zeev, z”l, responded that Chazal’s intention was not to saddle us with a more severe punishment for these negative behaviors. Rather, they intended to do just the opposite. In their great wisdom, they intended to benefit us by increasing our rewards. We find this concept expressed in the Gemoreh (Kiddushin 39b): **“ישב ולא עבר עבירה נותנין לו שכר כעושה מצוה”** - if one had the opportunity to commit a transgression, and he was spared or refrained, he is rewarded as if he actually performed a mitzvah.

A question arises, however. This scenario applies nicely to working people, engaged in commerce and surrounded by opportunities in the outside world to commit major transgressions. By resisting these opportunities to transgress, they are rewarded as if they had actually performed a mitzvah. What of the tzaddikim and Torah scholars who spend their days within the confines of the Beis Kenesses and Beis Midrash. They are not surrounded by these same opportunities to transgress and are not subjected to these same tests of will power. How are they to be rewarded for avoiding the major transgressions?

For this reason, our blessed sages brilliantly proposed the following: **“כל הכועס כאלו עובד עבודה זרה”**, **“כל שיש בו גסות הרוח”** - **“כאלו עובד עבודה זרה וראוי לגדעו כאשרה”**. Even a great tzaddik, who is not exposed to the major transgressions present in the outside world, may still guard himself and separate himself from the derivatives of the major transgressions, such as anger and haughtiness. In this manner, he, too, is rewarded as if he had withstood more severe transgressions.

We can now apply this concept to interpret the Gemoreh’s maxim (Sanhedrin 104a): **“ברא מזכה אבא”** - a father is spared in the merit of his son. In other words, one may not be faced with the opportunity to commit a serious transgression - whose avoidance would be considered and rewarded as if one had actually performed a mitzvah. Nevertheless, by means of avoiding the son, the “toladah,” of that serious transgression - such as anger or haughtiness which are equated with actual idolatry - one can still reap the rewards for distancing oneself from idolatry. Thus: **“ברא מזכה אבא”** - distancing oneself from the son, the “toladah,” is considered as if one avoided the “av,” the prototype of the aveirah.

Fulfilling the Extensions of the Mitzvos Alleviates the Need to Reincarnate

It is reasonable to expand on Chazal’s concept of: **“ברא”** **“מזכה אבא”** - a son’s merit can spare the father. To do so, let us refer to the author of the Bnei Yissaschar’s introduction to his sefer Derech Pikudecha - where he cites our teacher the Arizal from Shaar HaGilgulim (Introduction 11). He posits that every Jew must fulfill all of the Torah’s “taryag” (613) mitzvos on three levels - thought, speech and deed. This accomplishment will confer upon him a rabbinical cloak to clothe the neshamah in the spiritual world composed of 248 mitzvos aseh and 365 mitzvos lo - ta’aseh. Failure to complete this task - the observation of all 613 mitzvos in all three dimensions - necessitates the reincarnation of the neshamah a second and third time until the feat is accomplished.

Clearly, then, every Jew must strive to fulfill all of the “taryag” mitzvos - in order to avoid the necessity of several reincarnations. The Derech Pikudecha provides several suggestions as to how one may fulfill the entirety of the mitzvos - even those which are seemingly unavailable to us in present times. One of his suggestions (listed in Introduction 3, 5) is to fulfill the extensions and offshoots of the mitzvos - which is counted as if one fulfilled the actual mitzvah itself. He writes:

“ותדע ותתבונן עוד, שכל מצוה ומצוה יש לה ענפים רבים, והוראות ואזהרות רבות יוצאים ממנה לפי הטעמים המקובלים מקדמונים, ולפי הטעמים אשר מתבונן האדם בכל עת, כי אין סוף לטעמיהם ומוסרים רבים והנהגות רבות יוצאים מכל מצוה ומצוה, ואם כן לפי זה הגם שנמנע ממנו [לקיים] עיקר [המצוה], ישתדל לעשות מה שבכחו מענפי המצוה הנמן - עת, והמוסר והנהגה היוצא ממנה לפי טעמים המקובלים ולפי תבונת שכלו, והשם יראה ללבב ויחשב לפניו יתברך כאילו קיים בפועל עיקר המצוה.”

Every mitzvah has many extensions, guidelines and implications; there are many rationales and moral lessons to be gleaned from each and every mitzvah. So, even mitzvos which are unavailable to us can be scrutinized and observed on some secondary level; in fact, it is vital that one endeavor to do so to the best of one’s ability. As a reward, Hashem will benevolently consider this effort as if one performed the mitzvah in its original and primary form.

Hence, there exists a tremendous advantage to performing the “toldos” of the mitzvos. Since their performance is considered as if one performed the actual mitzvah, it becomes unnecessary to reincarnate a second time on account of that particular mitzvah. This is alluded to by our blessed sages’ poetic saying: “ברא מזכה אבא”. If a person is able to perform the extensions of the mitzvos - which are analogous to offspring and “toldos” - he is credited with the actual parent mitzvah; this alleviates the need to reincarnate on account of that mitzvah.

How Is It Possible that the Princes of Yisroel Fell Prey to Spiritual Denial?

Now, let us examine the episode of the “meraglim.” It is well - known that the commentaries are extremely perplexed by many issues concerning the “meraglim.” They were princes of Yisroel, men of outstanding character and, yet, they fell to such spiritual depths. They went so far as to speak ill of Eretz Yisroel and to deny and contradict HKB”H’s promises regarding the land. After all, HKB”H promised to give them a land flowing with milk and honey. Then to add insult to injury, they blasphemed by saying (13, 31): “לא נוכל לעלות אל העם כי חזק הוא ממנו” - we cannot ascend to that people for it is stronger than us!

Here Rashi comments: “כביכול כלפי מעלה אמרו” - as if it were possible, they were insinuating that the inhabitants of the land were stronger than Hashem. Thus, we are forced to inquire what transpired here. What caused these noble princes of the twelve tribes of Yisroel to descend to such spiritual depths as to deny Hashem’s power and sovereignty?

We can resolve these issues by referring to the Zohar hakadosh on this week’s parsha (158a). It explains that the “meraglim” were aware that they would only maintain their current, lofty status as princes in the wilderness; upon entering Eretz Yisroel they would forfeit their status as princes. Hence, they did not wish to enter Eretz Yisroel and they delivered a negative report apropos the promised land. We can conclude, therefore, that the source of their downfall was the negative influence of arrogance; they were too proud to forego their elevated status for the sake of entering Eretz Yisroel.

With this understanding, we can appreciate the sacred words of the great Rabbi Naphtali Tzvi of Rophshitz, zy”a. In his Zera Kodesh on this week’s parsha, he expounds on the possuk “שלח לך אנשים ויתורו את ארץ כנען אשר אני נותן לבני ישראל” - Send forth for yourself men, and let them spy out the Land of Canaan that I give to the Children of Yisroel. He notes that the word “Canaan” here is superfluous. The name “Canaan” connotes submission and humility. These character traits surpass all others. For instance, Moshe Rabeinu, a”h, the pinnacle of mankind, was most noted and praised for his humility. This was also the outstanding quality of Eretz Yisroel, the land promised to us. By its nature, it instills submission and humility in its inhabitants. Therefore, Moshe advised the spies to note and heed this incredible aspect of the promised land.

We see that HKB”H warned Moshe from the onset of this mission: “שלח לך אנשים ויתורו את ארץ כנען אשר אני נותן לבני ישראל” - Send forth for yourself men, and let them spy out the Land of Canaan that I give to the Children of Yisroel - that the spies should strive to attain the attribute of humility associated with the sanctity of the land. We might wonder why HKB”H specifically emphasized the attribute of humility in this warning. Yet, according to the explanation of the Zohar hakadosh, the reason for this emphasis is obvious. We learned that the “meraglim”’s failure was due to arrogance and pride; they were afraid to forfeit their status as princes in Eretz Yisroel. Consequently, HKB”H provided the remedy in advance of the malady. Specifically in the Land of Canaan would the men chosen for this mission be able to acquire the necessary attributes of submission and humility - if they only so desired. Unfortunately, they did not withstand the test, because they were unwilling to part from their positions of honor.

Upon Recognizing His Great Humility Moshe Renamed Hoshea the Son of Nun Yehoshua

We have learned in the Gemoreh (Soteh 4b): **כל אדם שיש בו** "any man who is arrogant is considered as if he worshipped idols. So we see that the negative attribute of arrogance is a derivative of "avodeh zoreh" - idol - worship. So, had the "meraglim" rushed to overcome the negative attribute of "arrogance" - a "toladah" of avodeh zoreh - it would have been considered as if they had overcome avodeh zoreh itself - in keeping with Rabbi Binyamin Zeev's advice to the Chozeh of Lublin, zy"a.

Unfortunately, once the "meraglim" succumbed to the negative attribute of "arrogance," fearing their loss of status, one transgression led to another. By tripping them up with the "toladah" of avodeh zoreh, the yetzer then succeeded in getting them to transgress the "av" of avodeh zoreh itself. They descended spiritually to deny Hashem's omnipotence and sovereignty by speaking ill of Eretz Yisroel and suggesting that the inhabitants of the land were too formidable even for Him.

In this light, the allusion provided by the Baal HaTurim takes on a deeper meaning. He pointed out that the final letters of the words at the beginning of our parsha, **שליח לך אנשים**, spell **חכ"ם** - a wise person. We can suggest that HKB"H was conveying a message to the "meraglim" that they should personify the wisdom of the Mishnah: **"איזהו חכם הרואה את הנולד"**. As explained by the Bechor Shor, a wise man must be cognizant of the danger inherent in the derivatives of transgressions, the "toldos," and not limit his focus to the prototype transgressions, the "oves." For, the yetzer tries to persuade a person to neglect the "toldos" on the premise that they are rather insignificant. A wise man, however, recognizes the consequences associated with transgression of the "toldos." He understands that this is the yetzer's scheme. It persuades a person to transgress the "toldos," so that that person will eventually transgress the "oves" themselves.

Had the "meraglim" heeded the message, they would have wisely endeavored to overcome the negative influence of "haughtiness" that prevailed among them - a derivative and offshoot of avodeh zoreh. Thus, they would have avoided the chain reaction of "aveirah gorreres aveirah" and not become guilty of true avodeh zoreh in the form of denial of Hashem's

sovereignty. This process is implied by the flow of the possuk. After hinting to the "meraglim" to act as a wise man, a **חכ"ם** - the final letters of **שליח לך אנשים** - cognizant of the dangers of the "toladah" of an aveirah, the possuk continues: **ויתורו את ארץ כנען אשר אני נותן לבני ישראל**. Here the possuk informs them which "toladah" is of the utmost concern. They are being instructed to draw upon the natural submission and humility inherent in the Land of Canaan so as to fortify their personal attributes of humility. As we learned from the Zera Kodesh, the name **כנען** connotes submission.

Based on what we have learned, we can better appreciate the commentaries' explanation of the well - known words of the Targum Yonatan on the following possuk in this week's parsha (13, 16): **ויקרא משה להושע בן נון יהושע** - Moshe called Hoshea bin Nun Yehoshua. Rashi comments: **התפלל עליו י"ה** - he prayed on his behalf, **"May G - d save you from the plot of the spies."** The Targum Yonatan explains: **וכדי חמא משה ענותנותיה קרא משה להושע בר נון יהושע** - only after recognizing the degree of his humility did Moshe rename him Yehoshua and utter the prayer: **"יה יושיעך מעצת מרגלים"** - May G - d save you from the plot of the spies. It behooves us to understand the connection between Yehoshua's humility and Moshe's entreaty that HKB"H should spare him from the other spies' misguided intent.

According to the commentaries, upon realizing Yehoshua's degree of humility, Moshe understood that he need not fear that Yehoshua would not want to enter Eretz Yisroel for fear of losing his princely status. Therefore, he named him Yehoshua - a prayer and assurance that HKB"H would spare him from the plot of the "meraglim," due to his inherent humility. We can add one more point based on our previous discussion. Moshe recognized that Yehoshua would not fail as a result of the "toladah" of avodeh zoreh, haughtiness, due to his attribute of humility. Nevertheless, it was still appropriate to pray on Yehoshua's behalf that he should not fall prey to the negative influence of the "av" of haughtiness, avodeh zoreh itself. Accordingly, he uttered the prayer: **"יה יושיעך מעצת מרגלים"** - may G - d save you from the plot of the "meraglim".

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לע"נ אברהם דוד בן ברוך פרידמן ע"ה