חסידות

From the Chassidic Courts

RUZHIN · VAYERA, BEIT YISRAEL (RUZHIN)

Why does God set a constant inner struggle within us?

Beit Yisrael

Drawing on the Sages' teaching that whoever is greater than his fellow has a greater yetzer hara (evil inclination), the author explains that God arranged a constant inner struggle so that a person can serve Him, and that the remedy, based on the verse "I have set God before me always," is to hold to faith in God beyond one's own comprehension when the yetzer rises. Drawing on the Zohar, the author adds that when a person turns from evil and does good, God joins the mitzvot to His Name and purifies the deed, and that a person who recognizes his fervor as God's gift will be helped to serve God with love and yirah (awe). AI SUMMARY

"And Hashem appeared to him in the plains of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of the tent in the heat of the day." I say: It is written, "I have set Hashem before me always." The matter is this: God made the one opposite the other (zeh le'umat zeh), "a wise heart at his right and a foolish heart at his left." As our Sages of blessed memory said, whoever is greater than his fellow, his yetzer hara (evil inclination) is greater than his. It is also taught that every day a person's yetzer overpowers him, etc. Hashem made this too for the good, for a constant delight is no delight. Therefore Hashem made it that a person would have a struggle with the yetzer in his avodah (divine service) of Him, yitbarach (may He be blessed).

The counsel for this is "I have set Hashem before me always." That is, always to place the aforementioned before him, in opposition, and to believe in Hashem truly, beyond one's own comprehension. For the yetzer can overpower a person's comprehension, but it cannot overpower faith in Hashem that is truly beyond comprehension. This is "I have set Hashem before me always": when a person is in opposition, when the yetzer is overpowering him, then the mitzvah (commandment) is to place Hashem in that opposition and to believe that "the whole earth is full of His glory." That is the Name Havayah, the Name of mercy, which is above comprehension, and there the yetzer has no dominion at all.

I say: When a person does this and turns from evil, then it is possible for him to do good, to serve Hashem in everything, to engage in Torah, and to bind himself to Hashem. For HaKadosh Baruch Hu (the Holy One, blessed be He), the Torah, and Israel are one, and the mitzvot too are one with Hashem. As it is written, "In every place where I cause My name to be mentioned I will come to you and bless you," which the Targum renders, "In every place where I cause My Shechinah (the Divine Presence) to dwell within it, I will come to you and bless you." And the Zohar HaKadosh states: "My name" (shemi) with Yud-Heh is 365, and "My remembrance" (zichri) with Vav-Heh is 248. These are the 613 mitzvot, and they are united with the Name Havayah, the Name of mercy. This is "do good": to serve Hashem, to engage in Torah and the mitzvot.

Sometimes a person performs a mitzvah as "a commandment of men learned by rote," but his thought is directed to Hashem, a good thought. Then Hashem combines the thought with the deed. That is, through the good thought, Hashem combines and

also purifies the deed. When a person turns from evil and does good, he can come to a revelation of Godliness. This is "And Hashem appeared to him in the plains of Mamre": when a person is in the bechinat (aspect of) "You have been rebellious (mamrim) against Hashem," that is, when the yetzer is overpowering him, he places Hashem in opposition to it. Then he can overpower it and serve Hashem. In truth it is better when a person refines the evil and takes from it the good for his avodah of Him, yitbarach. This is "And Hashem appeared to him in the plains of Mamre."

I say: When a person serves Hashem with fervor, he must take to heart, believe, and understand that the fervor came to him from Hashem, who gave it to him, and that he himself accomplished nothing. This is "as he sat at the entrance of the tent in the heat of the day." That is, with every fervor he must reflect in his heart and understand that he is still at the entrance, which is the gate to Hashem, and has not yet begun at all to serve Hashem with the traits of yirah (awe) and ahavah (love). He must know that "Yours, Hashem, are the greatness, the gevurah (strength, severity), and the tiferet (beauty, harmony)." For when a person thinks that his own strength and the work of his hand accomplished his avodah, he falls from his level. But when he understands that it is from Hashem, then Hashem, yitbarach, helps him so that he can serve Him with ahavah and yirah.

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