

The Nature of Temptation and Social Pressure

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller-Gottlieb

The Midrash juxtaposes the beginning of Mishlei to the sale of Yosef. The twelve tribes were *tzadikim*. They are referred to consistently as the *shivtei kah*, the tribes of Hashem.

Kah (*yud* and *heh*) are the two first letters of Hashem's name and have special significance. The *yud* is a dot. It signifies that first flash of energy. The *yud* is above the line. There's something about this world that's magnetic and beautiful and compels us to admit that there is a Higher Being who created all this. There's a line going up above the *yud* that is called *kotzo shel yud* -the thorn, so to speak, of the *yud*. This tells us that there's more up above that we cannot see and know. The *yud* is *chochma* which evokes the question, *koach mah*- what is it. To discern the answer, you have to be able to look at its breath, depth, history, and details and compare one thing to another. This is *binah*-understanding one thing from another. *Chochma* is the father of an idea and *binah* is the mother that nurtures and gives birth to it. The *shivtei kah* were very divine- conscious. Each one of them was unique, specific, and

defined in their relationship to Hashem. How did they come to want to sell their own brother?

Let's look at *pasuk yud* in Mishlei- "If those who sin try to seduce you, don't go..." The Midrash quotes Rashbi and says, realize that the path of selfishness can take you to devaluing other people. The voice of the *yetzer* says, "He has it all, let's take it from him." This is what the brothers said. Yosef had it all. He was superior in every measure- good-looking, smart, and closest to his father. When you create otherness, when you think- this person is a threat to me because he has more, the battle become vicious because you think you need to fight for your own survival. It's thinking- if I let you get away with it, that means my life doesn't matter. The brothers thought Yosef was a threat because he had more. They could have thought- regardless of who he is, he is a person. The Midrash says, "If you save one person, it's as if you've saved an entire world." Although you may feel threatened that someone is different or has

more, he's part of the pattern of the world. If you save him, it's as though you've saved the whole world.

The *shevatim* were *tzadikim*. The feeling of being threatened by Yosef was there. But they were wise and controlled enough to wait. When Yosef arrived in Dotan they saw his coming as a danger and decided to kill him. The Midrash says as they were saying this Hashem was saying- Imagine what will happen to you if you were to kill this *tzadik*. The situation evolved that he was saved, but had they killed Yosef who was so central to the world's reality, they would have degraded themselves to a point beyond rescue. Reuven suggested they throw Yosef into a pit. His intent was to rescue him. In the meantime, the brothers decided to sell him. The return on that was that in the end, Yosef saved them from hunger. When he revealed himself to his brothers, they were beyond frightened. Yosef calmed them, "I was sent here to sustain you." He understood that we are all part of Hashem's divine plan.

Categories of Muktzah Part IV #2

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Shimon Isaacson

The Rema points out that reading books that don't contain *Torah* content on Shabbat is prohibited only if they are written in a foreign language. However, if it's in *loshon hakodesh* it's permitted as involving oneself in the holy language is considered a minor *mitzva*. In fact, when the Mishna says that one should be as careful with a light *mitzva* as with a severe *mitzva*, the Rambam notes that speaking *loshon hakodesh* is an example of a light *mitzvah*. However, reading business documents in Hebrew on *Shabbat* would still be prohibited.

The Shulchan Aruch quotes the Rambam that reading books of wisdom such as science and math texts is prohibited on *Shabbat* as it is a day meant to be fundamentally different from the rest of the week. The Rashba, however, permits it. The Mishna Berura writes that the custom is to be lenient, however one who fears Hashem should endeavor to find more spiritual reading material on *Shabbat*.

According to the Rambam, books of wisdom would be a *keli shemelachto l'issur* while according to the Rashba they would be a *keli shemelachto l'heter*.

What is the *halacha* regarding newspapers, magazines, mail order catalogs, and novels? Business magazines, the business section of a newspaper, and advertisements in newspapers and magazine fall under the category of *shtorei hedyotot* and *keli shemelachto l'issur* and may not be read on *Shabbat*.

A telephone directory has two uses- checking addresses and phone numbers. Checking phone numbers is the dominant use which would make it a *keli shemelachto l'issur*. However, one can use the directory for permitted use (*l'tzorech gufo*) such as checking an address or as a booster seat for a child.

According to the simple reading of the

Shulchan Aruch, novels, sports magazines, and the like written in a foreign language may not be read on Shabbat as they are *shtorei hedyotot* and a *keli shemelachto l'issur*. Is there any leniency for people who do read these material on *Shabbat*? The Shulchan Aruch writes that our speech on *Shabbat* should be different than during the week. One should not have conversations of no real value (sports, news, politics) even if there's no mention of any *melacha*. However, the Rema notes, people who derive enjoyment (oneg) from this type of talk, may do so in a limited way. The Mishna Berura adds that one should not involve oneself excessively even in purely objective activities such as eating and sleeping, as *Shabbat* should ideally be spent in a spiritual pursuits. The Rema adds that this leniency is only if you personally enjoy this type of talk. You shouldn't do it to give someone else pleasure. When it comes to the prohibition of reading novels and the like one could extrapolate that it falls in the same genre

Continued on Page 2

Categories of Muktzah Part IV #2

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Continued from page 1

of *daber davar*, preserving the *Shabbat* atmosphere. If it's a kosher book, one could argue, based on the *oneg* factor it provides, that it would be permitted and it would have the status of a *keli shemalacho l'heter*.

Rav Bodner takes the stringent view and writes that fiction, mystery books, and plays

may not be read on *Shabbat* and are considered a *keli shemalacho l'issur*. A competent Rav should be consulted regarding how to conduct oneself.

Rav Bodner cites the view of the Rashba that a telescope and science texts are not *muktza*. If a student has a science test the following

week, can he study on *Shabbat*? If he's only studying to pass the exam and is uninterested in the knowledge, it's considered a week-day activity and would be inappropriate on *Shabbat*. If he enjoys the knowledge per se and would read the texts anyway, then perhaps one could rely on the Rashba that this would not be prohibited.

Traveling through Life Accompanied by Tehillim Part IV #3

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

A person who gives gains two-fold. First, attributing his wealth to Hashem and not to himself, brings him closer to Hashem. Second, it's difficult for a wealthy person to see Hashem in his life when his sustenance is given to him in a natural way. But when he deals with the poor and sees how Hashem helps them in unnatural ways, he can come to discern Him. On a logical level, faith in Hashem is a given. The world's existence can't be explained without a Creator. Yet the ultimate level of faith is when we internalize it, to the extent that all we want to do is His will. This was the level of Adam before the sin and although it's a very lofty goal, we must constantly work towards it.

Hashem gave us free choice and in turn He gave us obstacles that we must overcome so that we will choose good. Our main obstacle is our ego. We're self-centered and don't want to be told what to do. If we would see clearly that doing Hashem's will is the only worthwhile pursuit, choosing good would be less meaningful. Therefore, Hashem created impediments. We can overcome them by giving to others. A person is affected by what he does. Giving subjugates the ego and opens the gate for a true and deep relationship with Hashem. When we can see Hashem with clarity, our faith is transformed from an abstract idea to one that touches the heart. It then becomes easier to give which further

deepens our relationship.

Taking the first step is hard. The initial feeling towards giving is resentment. We can say things like- "I don't even know this person, why should I give? How do I know he really needs it?" On a superficial level it seems we're protecting ourselves, but in reality we're just boosting our ego and distancing ourselves from Hashem. If we understand this mechanism, we can recognize the resentment as the way Hashem created us so that we would have free choice. We can then ask ourselves objectively- is it right for me to respond to this request or not? Sometimes the right response is no. If we are involved in something very important and are asked to do something less important for others, we should be saying no. But in other instances, it behooves us to overcome our natural resistance and give. Giving the second time will be much easier. We've already made room for Hashem inside us and want more of that feeling of fulfillment.

We can now understand why David Hamelech delineated the reward for giving. Becoming a giver is the foundation of a relationship with Hashem. A person who thinks only about himself has no space for the Creator. The moment a person recognizes Hashem, he becomes open to something that he didn't experience before on a deeper level. The fact that we can always give no matter what our life

circumstances are, tells us that every Jew has the ability and the equal opportunity to create a relationship with Hashem.

A man who suffered almost total paralysis and was only left with the ability to move his eyes and mouth, wanted to know if he could recite the blessing in the morning, "*She'asi li kol tzorchi* -Who has given me everything." He asked the hospital chaplain who was unsure how to respond. Some time after that, Rav Vosner came to visit the hospital. The chaplain asked him if he would go see this person. When Rav Vosner entered the room, the man smiled broadly. Rav Vosner asked him how he could smile when his situation was so miserable. The man answered that he felt honored by the visit but he was incapable of offering anything but a smile. Rav Vosner told him, "You can say, *she'asi li kol tzorchi*. Hashem gave you what you need to fulfill your mission." If he could still give of himself and smile despite his circumstances, it was a phenomenal accomplishment. A person like this can experience closeness to Hashem in a way that others can never achieve.

The more we give, the more we open ourselves up to see Hashem and the less afraid we are of the obligations it brings. Giving creates inner satisfaction, but also brings us to the realization that closeness to Hashem is the greatest pleasure.