

BILVAVI IYAR TALKS

Avodah | Thinking
Essence | Thought & Visual
Mazal | The Bull
Tribe | Yissocher

Collection of Drashas from the
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Iyar – Avodah | Thinking

Women Have “Extra Binah”

The ability of the month of Iyar is *hirhur* (thought). This is also known as *binah* (contemplation), the ability to have deep thought and analyze.

Chazal say that women were blessed with “extra *binah*” than men, for the wife of a household can better recognize the spiritual level of her guests more than the husband can. A woman can better sense inner realities; she can see into the heart and sense what kind of guest the person is. A guest might look very well-dressed and well-behaved, but a woman can see what he’s all about inside, like if he is a G-d fearing person or not.

What is the “Extra Binah” that Women are Blessed with?

Our eyes only see something appears like at first glance, but with our power of thought, we can see what’s really going on in the inside of something.

Everything in Creation has much depth in it – depth within depth. We need to think into things, at how deep everything really is.

A child doesn’t think that much. He knows that food is food and that a toy is a toy, but he doesn’t realize that there is more uses to everything. He never thinks into the depth of something. But as a person gets older and matures, he thinks more into things and discovers that there is a lot more to life, such as picking up a pen to write or driving a car. The more we think into something and what it is, the more depth we uncover to everything in life.

The more we think into things, the more our outlook changes. When we think into things, we get a whole new outlook on the same situations, just like an adult sees a situation in a totally different way than a child does. If we use our ability to think deeply, we can see a whole new depth to old situations and uncover a whole new outlook on what we are used to.

To give an example, as parents, we change our perspective on raising children as they grow older. When our children are younger, we send them to nursery, and as they get older we help them with their homework. Parenting gets more challenging the older our children get. When they reach marriageable age, our perspective as parents is a whole different outlook than when our children were young.

The same can go for any other situation. We need to change our perspective on our situations in life and think into them. We must mature in life.

Our responsibilities have grown more since we were young. We have grown in our actions, and we have grown in our feelings. We must grow as well in our thoughts – our outlook on life. Our outlook has to be different now than it was ten years ago.

1- Thinking Into Our Acts of “Chessed”

We will give a few examples of how we can gain a more mature outlook on situations in life.

One example is *chessed* (acts of kindness). It is not just in our actions of *chessed* which we must learn to increase as we go on through life, but it is our perspective on *chessed* which must change. We can gain a whole new perspective on *chessed* now if we think about all the *chessed* that Hashem does in Creation. *Chessed* is not just acts of kindness which I do, but it is a power which affects all of Creation. Hashem does endless *chessed* throughout the whole world. When we do *chessed*, we are called “partners with Hashem” in doing *chessed*. This is a change in perspective to our *chessed* that we need to acquire as we get older and more mature.

2- Thinking About The Purpose of Life

Another example is to contemplate the concept of our *tachlis* (the purpose of life). We know that there is a purpose and goal to everything we do, but how much do we think about the purpose of life? We know what the purpose of life is, but how much do we think about it? Knowing what the purpose of life is not just another detail in life. The more a person thinks into the purpose of life, the deeper his perspective is on the purpose of life becomes.

3- Thinking About Being Close to Hashem

A third example of using our power of thought is to contemplate *kirvas Hashem* - what it means to be close to Hashem. We know that the purpose of doing the mitzvos is to become close to Hashem (as the *Mesillas Yesarim* states), but how often do we think about this? We must deepen our awareness of this. Are you close to Hashem on the same level that you were when you were younger?

Most people look at closeness to Hashem in the same way since they were children, but our whole attitude to being close to Hashem should be vastly different now than it used to be. Most people stay the way they were as children and aren't connected yet to Hashem. Their feelings toward Hashem haven't grown since they were younger. We need to think about this more and it will become more of a reality to us.¹

We gave three examples of how to think deeply into familiar parts of our life, but we must know one thing. If someone doesn't have time to think on a constant basis about his life, he might get older and become smarter, but his actual level of *Yiddishkeit* remains small.

Making Use of Our Power to Think

The month of *Iyar*, which is to work on deepening our thoughts and awareness about life, can change us and help us grow in our values.

Usually, a person only uses his deep thinking to think about his problems: “How do I get out of this problem...What should I do...” But we should make use of our power of thought and think into simple things as well, when we are calm.

¹ Refer to the *Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh*, Parts One and Two

Women have a power of “extra *binah*”, and they can use this to take simple things and think into them deeply. So we should take everything that we know about since we were younger, and think into them.

Women are often using their extra *binah* to think into materialistic parts of life, but really this power can be used as well to grow in spirituality. In order for a woman to really utilize the potential of her “extra *binah*”, she should take the time every day and think into her life, such as the three examples we gave. If we begin to think more into what’s in our life, our whole way of life will change for the better! We will uncover a deeper and inner kind of life.

There is a lot more which we can know and should know. We should think more into important topics, such as the foundations of *Yiddishkeit*, some of which we mentioned before.

The words here are not just a piece of advice. It is a way to really live life. We need to think more about what we do and what we feel. This is the root of an inner kind of life. Once we are connected in our minds more to a matter, we will carry them out with a whole different meaning, and we will feel totally different toward them. When we use our thoughts, our actions and feelings gain a whole new perspective, and we reveal a whole new depth to life.

Questions & Answers with the Rav

Q1: *If my birthday is in Iyar, does that mean that my special Avodah in life is to use the power of deep thought?*

ANSWER: It can definitely help you find your main *avodah* in life, but it doesn't mean that this is your main *avodah* in life.

Q2: *If someone wasn't born in Iyar, can he still have this ability of deep thought?*

ANSWER: Yes.

Q3: *How can I know what my main, personal Avodah in life is (Besides for the general mission that the Jewish people has)?*

ANSWER: That is a very complicating matter. Generally speaking, a person has to know his main quality and his main weakness in life, and these are the roots of his *avodah*. The rest are always details which one has to learn about himself, but the root of one's mission on this world is to know the depth of his main quality, and the depth of his weakest point.

Q4: *What does it mean to analyze things using the power of binah?*

ANSWER: There are three kinds of *binah*. There is *binah* which comes from the mind, and in this men are better at than women. This is intellectual understanding. There is another kind of *binah* which comes from the heart, which is intuition, and in this women are better at than men. There is a third kind of *binah*, when we think into facts. This is also an ability which women excel at more than men. It is this third kind of *Binah* which was discussed here in this class.

Q5: *Is there a month which is associated more with the other kind of Binah that women have (intuition)?*

ANSWER: The month of *Elul* has the *mazal* of *besulah* (a virgin girl). This represents the power to have intuition.

Q6: *Is there a connection between the two kinds of binah?*

ANSWER: Yes, there is a connection. First, we must analyze facts, which is the power of this month of Iyar, and then we will be healed, which is the power of the month of *Elul*, when we are healed from our spiritual failings.

Q7: *Is there a special power of refuah (healing) in the Hebrew month of "Iyar"?*

ANSWER: As is well-known, the Hebrew word “Iyar” (אייר) is an acronym for the verse, **אני ה' רופאיך**, “*Ani Hashem Rofecha*”, “I am Hashem, your Healer”, and the Talmud teaches that the request in *Shemoneh Esrei* for healing, *Refoeinu*, is placed near the request about *teshuvah*-repentance, *Hashiveinu*, to show that healing is a result of doing *teshuvah*. This is based on the verse, “*And understand with its heart, so that it will repent and be healed.*” (Yeshayahu 6:10). Through attaining the heart’s ability to understand, one draws forth *refuah*/healing from there. The verse is teaching us that through gaining the ability to “understanding” (*hirhur*, which is the special power contained in the month of Iyar), one can get healed. Iyar is a month of gaining the ability to understand deeply (*hirhur*) and that is precisely how one gains *refuah*/healing that is inherent in the month of Iyar. But it depends on one condition – doing *teshuvah* (repentance).

Q8: *Is hisbonenus (reflection) the same thing as hisbodedus (meditation)?*

ANSWER: That is a very good question. They are two different abilities in our soul. Many of our Sages said that they need to be practiced together, but some say they are two separate forms of *avodah*. What we need to do is integrate them with each other. *Hisbodedus* is to be alone from people, but what do we do once we are alone? That is where *hisbonenus* comes in: we analyze our life, and we also use our power of simplicity (*peshitus*) in the soul to talk to Hashem. There is a deep, analytical part to it – which was the subject discussed today -- and there is also a simple part, which is to talk to Hashem freely.

Q9: *What is the order – to first think deeply and then think simply, or to first have simplicity and only then to think deeply?*

ANSWER: It depends on the person, and we would need to have a whole series of derashos just on this one topic to know the answer.²

Q10: *Is analyzing our strong points and weak points a part in this?*

ANSWER: Yes, that is part of how we become close to Hashem.

² Refer to the Rav’s series on *Inner Silence*, which explains how to do *hisbodedus*

Iyar – Essence | Thought & Visualization

Preface

With the help of Hashem, we have concluded the festival of Pesach, and now we are in the month of *Iyar*.

Our Sages state that the twelve months of the year are parallel to twelve abilities (or senses) of the soul. Each month contains a unique ability that reflects the nature of the month, which is manifest in the soul of man.

There is a dispute about the abilities which each month reflects, but the main view of our Sages is as follows: (1) *Nissan* is parallel to the ability of “*sichah*” (speech), (2) *Iyar* is parallel to the ability of “*hirhur*” (thought), etc.³

The Concept of ‘Hirhur’: Mental Speech/Thoughts of the Heart

The month of *Iyar* contains the ability called *hirhur*, thought. The rule is that everything has a holy use and an evil use, so there is a way that *hirhur* is used for holiness, and there is a way how *hirhur* is used for evil.

The holy kind of *hirhur* is ‘*hirhur b’divrei Torah*’, ‘thinking into the words of Torah’ - when a person’s thoughts are immersed in Torah. The evil kind of *hirhur* is “*Do not follow after your eyes and after your heart*”; when the heart has thoughts of heresy or sin.

The Gemara⁴ says that one of the things that a person cannot avoid each day is *hirhur aveirah* (thoughts of sin).

Before we try to understand what good *hirhur* is and what evil *hirhur* is, let us first understand the very concept of *hirhur*.

The *Vilna Gaon* lists five layers of the soul: *ratzon* (will), *machshavah* [thoughts of the brain], *hirhur* [thoughts of the heart], *kol* (voice), and *dibbur* (speech). Everything begins from the point of *ratzon* (the will): the *ratzon* of a person is found in the essence of the soul, for *ratzon* is identified with the very *nefesh* (soul) of a person. *Machshavah* is found in the mind, and *hirhur* is found in the heart. [*Kol* is in the throat, and *dibbur* is in the lips].

3 [(3)*Sivan* is the month of *halichah*\walking, (4) *Tamuz* is the month of *reiyah*\sight, (5) *Av* is the month of *shemiah*\hearing, (6)*Elul* is the month of *maaseh*\action, (7) *Tishrei* is the month of *mishush*\touch, (8)*Cheshvan* is the month of *reiach*\smell, (9)*Kislev* is the month of *sheinah*\sleep, (10) *Teves* is the month of *rogez*\anger, (11) *Shevat* is the month of *le’itah*\eating, and (12) *Adar* is the month of *sechok*\laughter.]

4 *Bava Basra* 164a

What exactly is *hirhur*? The Vilna Gaon describes it as *'dibbur b'machshavah'*, “mental speech.” What is the difference between a *hirhur* and a *dibbur*? *Hirhur* is what a person ‘says’ in his mind and heart. We find that “*Haman spoke in his heart.*” It is a kind of speech which takes place in the heart. *Dibbur* is when the speech exits the mouth.

There is a *halachah* that if one is not allowed to say *Kerias Shema*, he may mentally imagine the words, *'mebarher b'libo'*, and he fulfills the mitzvah of *Kerias Shema* in this way⁵. The person ‘says’ the *Kerias Shema* in his heart. So *hirhur* is essentially a kind of mental speech: when a person speaks inside himself.

When the prophetess Channah (mother of Shmuel *HaNavi*) prayed, the *possuk* says that she “spoke on her heart”. She was speaking with her heart - meaning, she spoke with herself. Eli HaKohen saw her talking to herself and therefore assumed she was drunk. It appears strange when you see a person talking to himself; but in essence, every person talks with himself.

There is a *mitzvah* of “*And you shall speak in it*” - to speak words of Torah - and the Sages expound, “Speak words of Torah, and not idle words.” The Gemara brings a *halachah* that it is forbidden for a Torah scholar to walk in an unclean place, because a Torah scholar is always thinking of Torah, and it is forbidden to think Torah in unclean places⁶. The *Acharonim*⁷ dispute if a person fulfills the *mitzvah* of speaking words of Torah through thinking. The more simple view is that thinking of words of Torah is considered like speaking words of Torah; “*hirhur* is like *dibbur* (speech)”.

But there are two kinds of speech: speech of the mouth, and speech of the heart. Whether one says the words or whether one thinks of the words, in either case, he first ‘speaks’ with himself, in his mind. So *hirhur* is when speaks within himself. One thinks *to* himself - and *with* himself.

What is the reason that we were given such a power as *hirhur*? The abilities of regular thought and speech make sense: we need to think, and we need to tell others what we are saying in order to have conversations; we cannot survive being a mute our whole life. But in between the faculties of thought and speech is the process called *hirhur*: speaking with oneself. Of what use is it? Why must our thoughts pass through the stage of *hirhur*, before they are released by our mouth in the form of speech?

Another question we can ask is that we see that Eli HaKohen thought Channah was insane for talking to herself. So why is it a good thing to speak to oneself?

Our first task with this is to identify in the first place that we have such an ability called *hirhur*. When we identify it in ourselves, it will then be much easier to realize its purpose. Let us think about the great wealth that is contained in the power of *hirhur*.

Hirhur: The Ability to Lead Oneself

⁵ *Berachos 20a*

⁶ *Tractate Berachos, Chapter II*

⁷ “*Later Sages*”, the great Torah scholars spanning from the 15th-19th centuries

What is the purpose of speaking to others? When two people wish to bond, they speak with each other. However, *Chazal* say there is a deeper reason: “*Daber echad l’dor*” – there is ‘one leader per generation’, who speaks to them. One leads himself - as well as others - through speech. Sheep are guided through the command of their shepherd, just as humans are guided by speech.

There are two “kings” that reside within man: the brain, and the heart. The heart is the king that presides over all the parts of the body. If someone is not in the category of *tzaddik*, he is ruled by the left chamber of the heart [which contains the evil inclination]⁸. With *tzaddikim*, “their hearts are in their control”, whereas with the wicked, their hearts rule them.

Speech is both in mouth as well as an ability of our heart. What is speech of the heart? It is the ability in oneself to rule the rest of himself, just as a king rules his country. *Hirbur* is found in the heart, as the Vilna *Gaon* writes, and it is a kind of speech. So it is a kind of speech in which one speaks with himself, and through this internal kind of talking, he leads himself. When one wants to lead others, he speaks to them and commands them. So too, when one wants to lead himself, he speaks within himself, so that he can lead himself.

There is a possuk, “*I believed, for I spoke.*” If one wants to acquire *emunah* (faith in Hashem), he must speak words of *emunah*. This is a revelation of the concept of *dibbur* (speech): one leads himself through speaking with himself. Without speaking with oneself, one is not able to lead himself.

“*Hirbur*”: The Power to Internalize Our Knowledge

It is written, “*And you shall know today, and you shall let the matter settle on your heart.*” We might know what the truth is, but our heart contains certain desires which are preventing us from subordinating ourselves to what that knowledge will demand.

We all are familiar with this [inner contradiction in ourselves]. A person can *know* what the truth is very well, but he wants the opposite of the truth. He *knows* he must learn Torah, but he *wants* to chat or waste his time. One might *know* very well that he needs to disconnect from indulging in worldly pleasures, but his *heart* still desires This World very much. The distance between what we know and what we want is like the distance between the sky and the earth.⁹

So the knowledge that our mind is aware of is not strong enough to subordinate our heart. Our mind, our *daas*, is aware of the ‘X’, for example, while our heart has a desire for the opposite of what ‘X’ will entail....

This is true with all people, but the difference between knowledge and internalization is not the same distance with each person. In some people, the contradiction is greater, and in others, the facts are closer to the heart. But every person contains in himself a distance between his mind and heart, creating a contradiction between what he *knows* with what he *wants*. In all people, the

⁸ *Sefer Tanya*

⁹ *A statement of the Alter of Kelm*

mind is more mature than the heart, and therefore, the heart isn't capable of understanding what our mind knows.

How, indeed, does a person 'download' the information of his brain into his heart? How do we internalize in our hearts, the knowledge that we know of in our brains? What is the language that speaks to our heart?

It is called *hirhur*. It is the ability to speak to ourselves and within ourselves, using our heart.

'Thinking in Learning': Through Our Brain, Or Through Our Heart?

The *mitzvah* of learning Torah is "And you shall speak in it" – it is essentially a *mitzvah* for our heart to think the words of the Torah and reflect into them. Learning Torah, which requires us to speak in learning, is not simply a *mitzvah* to 'talk in our learning' using our physical mouth. It is a *mitzvah* that involves the use of our heart to *think* about the words of the Torah.

Thus, if one is thinking about words of Torah using his brain alone, this is not the ideal kind of learning Torah! In order to speak of the Torah, one needs to speak of it using his mouth or his heart, but what kind of speech must it be? If the brain is thinking about Torah but its knowledge is not yet in the heart's reach, it is not the ideal form of the *mitzvah* of learning Torah.

A wise person, a *chacham*, is called *chacham lev*, one who has 'wisdom of the heart'. It is when one's *chochmah*/wisdom that he learns is on the level of *hirhur*; when it has become speech of the heart.

When wisdom remains in his brain and it doesn't reach his heart, *Chazal* refer to this as one whose "wisdom is greater than his actions". He knows a lot, but it doesn't affect him enough. Wisdom is only called wisdom when it is in his heart.

Shlomo HaMelech is the epitome of a *chacham*, for he was the wisest person who ever lived, and he himself was the one who said, "My heart has seen much wisdom." True wisdom is when the heart is aware of the wisdom, and it is beyond the intellectual understanding contained in the brain. The heart's wisdom is not called *machshavah* [brain-thought]; it is rather called *hirhur* [heart-thought] – the "speech of the heart".

A Torah scholar is defined as one who "sits and thinks ('*meharber*', from the word '*hirhur*') of it constantly"; the way of a Torah scholar is to always use his ability of *hirhur*, in thinking about Torah. If one finds that he cannot think about Torah all the time, it must be because he only knows how to 'think' in Torah using his brain, and the wisdom of Torah he learns is not yet in his heart. But when it has reached his heart, he is able to always speak words of Torah, and he is able to always think of Torah; this is the level of *hirhur b'divrei Torah* that is reflected in the ideal Torah scholar.

The difficulty which many people have is that they are either involved in the "world of action" or in the "world of thought", whereas the "world of speech" is often misunderstood. Speech is mainly used by people either towards others, or in praying and speaking to Hashem; but when it comes to the idea of speaking with *oneself*, most people cannot identify with this. With regards to oneself, we can relate very well to either actions or thoughts that we do with ourselves, but who can relate to speaking to himself? A person almost never speaks with himself.

But this is a problem. The structure of our soul is generally composed of action and thought, and in between these two faculties, is our speech: the ability of *hirhur*, to speak to ourselves. Thoughts are the highest layer of the soul, with our actions being the lowest layer of our soul. Our ability to speak to ourselves is the middle layer. It is the design of Creation.

How did Hashem create us? Through His word. We were formed through His speech. The world was created with His Ten Expressions. First Hashem had the thought of creating man, then He formed Creation and made man – but in between the stage of “thought” and “action”, came His speech: the Ten Expressions. So speech represents the idea of Creation itself that we live in. In addition, the Torah was given through speech: the Ten Commandments.

On a deeper level, the ability to speak to ourselves is an ability that is rooted in Hashem’s act of speaking with Himself, as it were, when He commanded each creation to come into being. When Hashem said, “Let there be light”, of what use did He say this for? He could have created it without saying it. But it is to show us that even Hashem speaks with Himself (so to ‘speak’).

Thus, when we speak to others, it really begins in our ability to speak to ourselves. Those are the words of the Vilna Gaon, that *hirhur* precedes *dibbur*. But this is true with all kinds of speech that exist: speaking to others, speaking to the Creator, and speaking to ourselves.

Identifying “Hirhur” In Your Thinking Process

Although we are always speaking to ourselves before we talk, we are not consciously aware of it, because it is a very quick internal process. In order to become aware of our *hirhur*, we need to consciously become aware of the five stages of speech, as the Vilna Gaon lists them, in this order: our *ratzon* (will), our *machshavah* (thoughts), *hirhur* (speaking to ourselves), *dibbur* (speech), and *kol* (audible voice). The crucial stage we need to become aware of is *hirhur*, because it is often overlooked.

When a person is unaware of the stage of *hirhur* – the fact that he talks to himself in his mind/heart – his speech will be external. It will not be “Words that come from the heart, enter the heart.” When *Chazal* tell us that our speech comes from our heart, this is not simply to dismiss the notion that perhaps speech comes from other parts of the body. Obviously, speech stems from our heart. So why are *Chazal* telling us that words must come from the heart? It is to hint to us that we need to think before we talk, of the words that we are about to say.

The *Ramban*¹⁰ writes that one should think about the words he is about to say, before he utters them with his mouth. This is more than just to think *what* you will say and formulate the words in your mind. It is to think *about* what you will say, before you say them.

When one skips over the *hirhur* stage [subconsciously], he lacks the proper structure of the soul, and has omitted one of the essential stages of the mental and verbal process. In fact, when one skips over *hirhur* [by not consciously being aware of it], he has omitted the basic and root faculty of the entire thinking process.

¹⁰ *Iggeres HaRamban*

This is not a mere intellectual discussion. It is the entire secret of all inner work we must do with our soul! It is based on the words of the *Vilna Gaon* quoted earlier.

‘Hirhur’ – The Expression of the Heart’s Thoughts

Man is called *medaber*, a social creature. The Sages state that the animals, trees, and birds can also converse with each other. If so, why is speech considered to be the defining nature of man? There are many explanations given, but we will say the answer that pertains to our discussion. It is because “*medaber*”, which is our trait of *dibbur*, is not simply to say words using our mouth. It is preceded with the stage of first speaking with our heart. This is unique only to humans.

By contrast, animals and trees do not have the heart as a factor in their speech. There is only speech, with no heart involved. When speech only comes from the mouth and it does not first pass through the heart, it is not called *dibbur*. Thus, animals and trees are not called *medaber*, even though they converse. The title of ‘*medaber*’ refers to the inner essence of speech: the speech that takes place in the heart, before the words leave one’s mouth. The superficial layer of speech is the words that exit the mouth, but the essence of speech is the speech that takes place in the heart, before the words exit. This is the unique ability of man, who is called *medaber*, one who can speak: only man has the ability to speak with himself, to speak in his heart, before he speaks with his mouth.

Furthermore, man is also called *maveh*, which is identified with prayer¹¹. Prayer is called the ‘service of the heart’¹². Prayer is not simply when the heart concentrates, nor is it limited to being an expression of the heart’s desire; although this is all true, it is not the essence of prayer. Prayer is the speech that flows from the heart. It expresses the *hirhur*, the thinking process, of the heart.

Thought vs. Visualization

Let us think into the depth of the concept of *hirhur*, the ability of man to think before he talks.

The *Gemara* states that a person dreams at night about what he thought about during the day. Because of this fact, elsewhere the Sages warn that a person should not entertain lewd thoughts during the day, so that he won’t become contaminated at night¹³. This is because our heart imagines what we thought about during the day. A person dreams about things that he has [mentally] visualized during the day, not about things he has merely ‘thought’ about. The heart imagines various fantasies.

At night, when imagination is more dominant, a person will fantasize about what he imagined about during the day. And if a person has a very imaginative nature, he will fantasize like this even during the daytime, when he is perfectly awake. At nighttime, when people have dreams, there is a kind of ‘videotape’ that a person visualizes as he’s dreaming, which is experienced as a

¹¹ *Bava Kamma 3b*

¹² *Berachos 31a*

¹³ *Kesubos 44a*

visualization, not a mere abstract thought. That is essentially the dreaming process: it is the imaginative faculty presenting various visions to the mind. When we dream at night, these are not simply thoughts – they are visions which we can palpably experience.

Being that a person dreams at night about what his heart imagined about during the day, *Chazal* warn that a person should not look at improper sights during the day. Our heart is full of visions, whereas our brain is filled with thoughts; there is very big difference. The heart's ability to imagine, *tziyur*, can have a mental picture of things; whereas our brain can only conceptualize a thought, and it cannot conjure any kind of mental image. These are two distinct mental abilities: *choishev* (or *machshavah*), and *tziyur* (visualization)¹⁴. To give a simple example of the difference, if you think about an apple, you can either 'think' about what it is, or you can envision what it looks like. They are two different kinds of thoughts. [The first kind of thought is called *machshavah*, and the second kind of thought is called *tziyur*.] The Torah says that those involved in building the *Mishkan* were called "*chacham lev*", those who possessed 'wisdom of heart'. It refers to those who were able to envision – the ability of *tziyur*.

When There Is a Disconnection between the Mind and Heart in Learning Torah

When one is 'thinking' in learning, using only in his brain, and not his heart - this will mean that his mind can be immersed in Torah, but his heart is entrenched in the desires of This World at very same time! These words are deep and penetrating to anyone who understands them.

It is possible that a person is regularly involved in learning Torah, *davening*, and doing all the right actions he needs to do, but it's all in his brain, and his heart is disconnected from all of this. His *heart* might be filled with all kinds of fantasies about This World even as his *brain* is immersed in Torah and in doing *mitzvos*!

And even worse, his heart might very well be filled with sinful thoughts and images that are outright forbidden by the Torah to think about, even though his *brain* is immersed in Torah.

The brain of a person might be thinking about Torah, but at the very same time, his heart might be filled with fantasies of This World; some of these fantasies are simply vain, while other fantasies are worse than just fantasies: they are sinful and evil.

If one wishes to truly purify his heart, his only weapon against this problem is to develop an imagination for holiness [as we will soon explain].

The Imagination Process

As we explained, the brain thinks about thoughts in the form of abstract conceptualization, whereas the heart imagines, in the form of mental pictures.

¹⁴ For more on the difference between thought and imagination, refer to *Getting To Know Your Thoughts_05_Intellect and Picture*, and the Hebrew audio file of (מדמה) 036_ כוחותיך דע את דע את and דע את (מחשבה) 039_ כוחותיך

The Torah commands us not to stray after our hearts and eyes. The Sages learn from this that the heart desires what the eyes see, and this leads a person to the act of sin. Let us think into these words of the Sages. The heart has desires for certain things which are improper. How does it desire? It imagines something.

It uses the ability of *tziyur*, visualization, and not the ability of *machshavah* that's in the brain. The heart can only imagine what the eyes have seen, however. It can only receive images from the lens of the eye. It is not capable of thinking in the abstract.

Thus, even if a person is very accustomed to 'thinking in learning', this might only be involving his brain's thoughts; his heart remains empty from any content of visions that are holy. As we explained earlier, there is a huge distance between the brain and the heart. The brain is thinking about Torah, and at the same time, the heart is immersed in a fantasy; sometimes the heart is completely visualizing a sinful image even as the brain is thinking in learning.

What is the remedy to this problem?

Method 1: Holy Visualizations

One method, brought in the works of our *sefarim hakedoshim*, is for a person to imagine holy pictures. Examples of this include looking at pictures of *tzaddikim*, imagining what the *Beis HaMikdash* looked like, or to imagine the song of the angels on High.¹⁵

Method 2: Picturing the Letters of the Gemara

However, there is an alternative method brought, which is even clearer and simpler to implement, as a means of purifying the heart. It is as follows.

All of the letters of our *Aleph Beis* are essentially pictures. Each letter of the *Aleph Beis* is a *tziyur*, a visualization, of the letter that you see or read. The Sages state, "*Oisiyos Machkimos*" "Seeing the letters [of the *Aleph Beis*], brings wisdom." To view the letters of the *Aleph Beis* is to view a holy kind of vision. In every letter of the *Aleph Beis* that you read, there are two aspects contained in it: the thought or idea that it tells you, as well as the holy image that it appears in. The letter of the *Aleph Beis* that you see is its *tziyur*, and the information it imparts to you is its *chochmah*/wisdom.

When a person does not see letters of the *Aleph Beis* in front of him, all he views is the *chochmah* that is contained in the letters and words he is reading. He can comprehend the meaning of the words, and he will understand the message that the letters and words are forming, but he is missing a vision of holiness that he could have seen in it.

That is the "*hirhur*" stage of learning Torah, and if it is skipped over, a person is lacking a holy visualization of the words of Torah he has learned. He might have gone through the other stages of *ratzon*, *machshavah*, *dibbur* and *kol* in his Torah learning, making sure to 'think in learning' and 'talk in learning', but he is missing the stage of *hirhur*. An important element of the process

¹⁵ Mentioned in *Sefer Chovas HaTalmidim of Rav Kolonomis Kalman zt"l*, the "*Aish Kodesh*"

has been missed. His thoughts and his speech have touched holiness, but his actual heart is still far from the words of Torah he has learned.

It is written, “*The inclination of man is evil from his youth.*” The evil inclination from youth refers to the evil desires that are present in the heart. A person’s brain might think of Torah and the person’s mouth can speak Torah (and other words of holiness, such as prayer), but if one’s heart is not included in the process of one’s Torah learning [when *hirbur*/visualization is skipped], then his heart remains at its initial and immature state of fantasizing the desires for This World,

But if one makes sure to build his soul in the order of the stages presented by the *Vilna Gaon* (*ratzon, machshavah, hirbur, dibbur, and kol*) – in particular, when he makes sure to think of what he will say, before he says the words – this is “*hirbur*”.

‘Hirbur’: Using Our Heart’s Visualization, As We Learn Torah

How, indeed, does one use the power of *hirbur* [in his Torah learning]? He can use his heart to imagine the holy letters of the *Aleph Beis* of the words he is reading. This internal process is what cleanses and purifies the heart from within.

This is really the secret behind learning Torah. Our entire *avodah* is “*And purify our hearts, to serve You in truth*” – and how, indeed, is the heart purified? We know that the mitzvah to learn Torah is the greatest mitzvah, equal to all the other *mitzvos*; and *Chazal* state that “Hashem wants the heart.” How do we reconcile these two facts? Does learning Torah have anything to do with our heart? It would seem that they are two completely separate issues, and that they have no relation to each other. After all, we can all see that there are many people who spend a lot of time learning Torah, but it doesn’t purify their heart.

But the truth is that the *mitzvah* of learning Torah, and the fact that Hashem wants our heart, are interdependent on each other. When a person learns Torah in the true manner, (which is to go in the order of the *Vilna Gaon* (first *ratzon*/will, then *machshavah*/brain-thought, then *hirbur*/heart-thought/visualization, then *kol*/sound, and then *dibbur*/speech), then it can be said of his Torah learning that “It [the Torah] is life, to those who verbalize it with their mouths.” We just have to make sure that we do not skip over the crucial stage of *hirbur* as we learn Torah. When we are in touch with ‘*hirbur*’ in Torah as we learn the words of Torah,

Hirbur in our Torah learning means that the words of Torah we are learning are passing through the visual lens of the heart, [which pictures the holy letters of the *Aleph Beis* contained in the words what we are learning]. This in turn weakens the evil and forbidden images that have become stamped onto our psyche. As we get used to this holy visualization technique more and more, it slowly weakens and conquers the improper images which our heart contained.¹⁶ It is

¹⁶ Editor’s Note: As explained before, however, the heart only ‘contains’ what the eyes have laid sight upon; it does not conjure any images on its own. According to the approach here, we have a way of uprooting the evil images that our eyes have seen and, in turn, what our heart has desired.

then that it can be applied the concept of “*Oisiyos Machkimos*” - “Seeing the letters [of the *Aleph Beis*], brings wisdom”.

In this way, we arm ourselves with the power of *tziyur d’kedushah*, holy visualization, which can counter the images of *tziyur d’kelipah* (fantasies that are improper or evil).

If one is not aware of the stage of *hirhur* in his Torah learning – in other words, if he is not using his heart to visualize the letters of the words he is learning – what will happen? He only remains with thoughts of Torah, which are conceptual and abstract, and he does not palpably envision them. His brain has learned Torah – but his heart did not.

Concentration in Prayer

The same problem exists with *davening* as well. A person might be thinking of the words he is saying as he’s *davening*, and he’s concentrating on the meaning of the words, but his heart is fantasizing about all kinds of things.

The *Nefesh HaChaim* writes that the main “*kavanah*” (concentration) we need to have when we daven is to think of the meaning of the words. This does not simply mean to mentally think of the meaning of the words. Thinking of what we are saying is *machshavah* (thought), but it is not yet the heart. We can call it ‘*iyunah shel tefillah*’, ‘analyzing the prayers’, which is certainly an accomplishment, but it is not yet called having “*kavanah*” when we *daven*.

Real “*kavanah*” in davening, as the *Nefesh HaChaim* writes, is to vividly picture the words of what we are saying, in our heart. When the words of prayer then exit the mouth, it is called prayer, which is called the “service of the heart.”¹⁷

Tziyur D’Kedushah: Infusing the Heart with Holy Images

When a person learns Torah in this way, making sure to use his heart’s power to visualize the letters, his heart becomes filled with the holiness contained in the 22 letters of the *Aleph Beis*. These 22 letters were used by Hashem to create the heavens and the earth. It brings wisdom into the heart, transforming it into “*The heart of the wise person, is to his right.*”

What does it mean that the “*heart of the wise person, is to his right?*” It means that his heart is filled with visualizations that are holy. By contrast, the “*heart of a fool is to his left*” – when the heart is not fused with holiness, it is filled with all kinds of unholy images.

We cannot live [spiritually] without the ability of *tziyur d’kedushah* (using our heart to envision holiness images). Generally, women are stronger when it comes to the area of the (spiritual dimension of the) heart, and therefore, they are naturally more inclined towards using their imagination and mental visualization.

¹⁷ For more on this concept, see *Tefillah #0137 – Inner Prayer*

But every person has the *bechirah* (free will) to choose what kinds of images will fill his heart – if he will be filled with holy images, or with unholy images.

The Avodah of the Month of Iyar: Gaining Control Over Our Imagination

The [previous] month of *Nissan* contained the power of *sichah*, conversing; to tell over the story of the exodus to our children. The month of *Iyar* contains the power of *hirhur*, to think. [We have explained that *hirhur* refers to the thoughts of the heart, which mentally visualizes something].

It is harder to gain control over our thoughts than what comes out of our mouth. We have an easier time restraining our speech, but restraining what we will think is quite difficult. When our mind is filled with fantasies, it is very hard to stay focused on what we are doing at the time, even for a timespan of one minute. This is because it is very difficult to fight the fantasies of our heart.

Animals can communicate, but they have no *bechirah* (free will). They do not decide what they are going to say. But people have *bechirah*. We have two “hearts” to decide between, whenever we are about to talk: a ‘right side’ of the heart, and a ‘left side’ of the heart. We have the *bechirah* to transform the visualizations of our heart from evil images to holy images.

We can transform the heart from its initial state of “*the inclination of the heart of man is evil from his youth*” - the heart ruled by the *yetzer hora* (evil inclination) - into a heart that can conjure images of holiness, *tziyur d’kedushah*, the heart that is ruled by the *yetzer tov* (the good inclination).

Both the *yetzer tov* and the *yetzer hora* are from the word *yetzer*, which is from the word *tziyur*, to visualize. The *yetzer tov* in our heart can visualize images that are holy, and our *yetzer hora* is the source of fantasies (*dimyonos*) that strengthen the hold of This World on us. When a person’s imagination dominates, the root of the problem is that his heart needs fixing; as *Chazal* say, “The wicked are ruled by their hearts.”

The “wicked” refers to those who are not in control of their hearts, and it is rather their hearts which control them; they are stuck in evil kinds of fantasies.

The *Vilna Gaon* says that the month of *Iyar*, which contains the power of *hirhur*, has the power of rectify the trait of *taavah* (indulgence in desires). As we brought earlier from the words of *Chazal*, Desire begins in the eyes and continues into the heart, and the heart continues to visualize the image more and more until a person eventually sins. But our heart also contains an ability to counter this: *hirhur*, or *tziyur d’kedushah*.

Hirhur, the ability of our heart, and the special power of the month of *Iyar*, is the ability to receive visualizations of holy images; it is the power that can essentially help us eliminate improper desires.

In Conclusion

This concept is really describing the inner root behind the purpose of Creation, which is, “Hashem wants the heart.” It is how we can reach, “*And purify our hearts, to serve You in truth.*”

The genuine kind of *Yiddishkeit* (religious Judaism) is to live a sanctified kind of life. It is not just actions that we do. And it is not just about going to *shiurim*¹⁸ (which is of course commendable). It is mainly about being able to use our heart to visualize images that are holy!

May Hashem merit us to turn our hearts and visualize the truest image of all: “There is no Rock (*tzur*) like our G-d.” Our Sages expound this to mean, “There is no artist (*tzayar*) like our G-d.” Then we can come to the truest possible recognition: to recognize Hashem, in the depths of our heart. *Amen*, and *Amen*.¹⁹

18 Torah lectures

19 For more on the topic of imagination and how it relates to the brain and the heart, refer to [Getting To Know Your Imagination_05_The Heart's Imagination](#)

Iyar – Mazal | The Bull

The Mazal of Iyar – ‘Bull’

The *mazal* (astrological sign) of the month of *Iyar* is called “*shor*”, the bull (or ox).

The *Gemara*²⁰ says that there are two kinds of bulls (or oxen). One kind of bull\ox is a day-old ox, which is called “*shor ben yomo*”, and the other kind of bull is “*eigel v’naaseh shor*”, when a calf has matured into a fully grown ox. So there is “*shor*”, and there is “*eigel v’naaseh shor*”.

The *Vilna Gaon* says that the purpose of the exodus was to arrive at Sinai, where Hashem said, “*Serve G-d at this mountain*” – the giving of the Torah. After the giving of the Torah, came the sin with the *Eigel*, (the Golden Calf). The sin of ‘serving’ the Golden Calf caused the Jewish people to fall from their level of ‘serving’ Hashem at the mount of Sinai, and it plunged them into ruination ever since then. Ever since that sin, we lost the true level we were at when we received the Torah at Sinai.

The *Vilna Gaon* writes that in the month of *Iyar*, the *mazal* of *Iyar* which is the bull hints to the breach which took place because of a bull. This is referring to the sin with the Golden Calf, which broke our great level of spirituality and made us fall from our exalted level. The *mazal* of the month of *Iyar* is “*shor*”, the bull\ox, a hint to the sin with the golden calf.

Every concept exists both in the side of holiness as well as in the side of evil. Let us try to understand what the holy side to “*shor*” is, and what its evil side is, and then we can draw these matters closer to our soul, so that we can take out the practical lesson to be learned from all of this.

The Depth Behind “Shor”\The Bull

Ever since the sin with the Golden Calf, our exalted state was ruined. At the giving of the Torah, we reached perfection, and after the sin with the Golden Calf, we fell from that perfected level. This all came as a result from the *eigel*, which was a *shor*, a young bull.

In Aramaic, ‘*shor*’ (שור) is called ‘*tura*’ (תורא) - which is the opposite of the word “Torah” (תורה). Thus, *shor\tura* represents the force of evil that fights the level of perfection we reached when we received the Torah. Ever since then, we fell from the level of Torah to ‘*tura*’, to the level of ‘*shor*’; the second set of *Luchos*²¹, which were not on the same level as the first step of *Luchos*. The *shor* of the *eigel* brought us down from the level of receiving the Torah, to a lower level of existence.

²⁰ *Bava Kamma 65b*

²¹ *The Tablets*

The *Gemara*²² says that there are two kinds of bulls. One kind of bull is a “*shor tam*”, a “tame” bull, and a “*shor muad*”, a wild bull. A *shor tam* gores occasionally, and a *shor muad* gores on an established basis. One is obligated to guard his *shor muad* so that it does not gore, because it has a tendency to gore; one is not obligated to watch his *shor tam*, because there is no reason to assume it will gore. What is the depth behind the concepts of *shor tam* and *shor muad*?

Yaakov Avinu was called an “*ish tam*” (wholesome man), which parallels the concept of the “*shor tam*”. And in the blessings of Yaakov Avinu, it is Yosef who is compared to the *shor* (ox). The Gemara derives the *halachah* of *shor muad* from the blessing of Yaakov Avinu that describes Yosef, so Yosef represents a “holy” kind of “*shor muad*”.

Thus, we have two kinds of holy manifestations of *shor* (bull\ox\ox): Yaakov parallels the holy kind of “*shor tam*” (a tame bull, who does not usually gore) and Yosef parallels the holy kind of “*shor muad*” (wild bull). The normal *shor*\ox, or the “*shor tam*”, is for the most part docile, so it does not engage in battle. If it does harm someone, the owner must pay half the damage, but normally, it does not attack. The bull which engages in battle is the *shor muad*, the wild bull, which is likely to gore another and which must be watched.

Yosef represents the *shor muad* in the side of holiness, for Yosef will wage war with the force of Esav in the future. The evil “*shor muad*” is Esav, and in the future, this evil *shor muad* will be fought through the holy *shor muad*, Yosef. Of the future it is written, “*the house of Yaakov will be like a fire, and the house of Yosef will be like a flame, which will burn Esav like straw.*” The power of Yaakov and Yosef together will wage war against the evil wild bull, the wicked Esav, in the future. Bull will be pitted against bull, and we will see who will win. The holy “bull” is Yaakov, who bore Yosef; the evil “bull” is Esav. This is the outline of the concept. Now we will try to understand its implications.

The Bull and The Sense of Sight

The *shor* (bull\ox\ox) is linked with the concept of sight. The word “*shor*” is rooted in the verse “*V'lo yashurenu*”, “And you shall not see”, thus the term “*shor*” is linked with sight. The word “*shurah*”, which means “row”, is related to the word *shor*; in the laws of mourning, the mourners stand amidst a *shurah* (row) right after burial [so that they can be easily seen and deciphered as mourners]. The word “*shor*” is called “*tura*” in Aramaic, and in the Torah’s language, “*tura*” comes from the word “*tor*” (as in the “*tor*” of Queen Esther), which means “order”, which is also another meaning of the word “*shurah*”.

Evil Began With The Sense of Sight

The root of all *nisyonos* (tribulations) on this world stem from the eyes. Chavah laid eyes on the *Eitz HaDaas* and desired it, and ever since then, the tribulations of mankind began.

The word “*tura*” (תורה) related to the word “*lasur*” (לתור) to “spy”, which is written concerning the Spies, when they wanted to spy the Land and see if it was safe to dwell in. [Thus,

²² *Bava Kamma 2b*

tura\shor is about seeing, implying the idea of checking and examining, because there is something that seems uncertain]

Earlier, we explained that after the exalted level we were on at the time of the giving of the Torah, when we fell to the sin with the golden calf, we fell because of a “bull” (the calf); it caused us to fall into the level of the “bull”. [Now we will elaborate more on this point].

When we uttered the words “*Naaseh V’Nishmah*” (“We will do, and we will hear”), before we accepted the Torah, we did so without any questioning; we did not examine if it was good or not for us to accept the Torah, because we were on a completely earnest level of having *emunah* in Hashem and in what He was giving us. Unlike the logic of the nations of the world, who considered us foolish for rushing to accept the Torah without first questioning what it was, we instead trusted in the Creator, and we believed wholeheartedly that the Torah was entirely good for us to receive; we had absolute *emunah* that our Giver was giving us something completely good, and we did not question it. It reflected the statement of *Chazal*, “A bride who has beautiful eyes, does not need to be checked.”

But when we fell with the sin of the golden calf, we fell from the “Torah” to *tura*, to the “bull”, represented by the golden calf. We fell to the level of *shor\tura\bull* – a level in which we need to spy on the land of Eretz Yisrael in order to see if it was safe or not; a level in which we lost our earnest level of *emunah*, which caused us to question things and to check things out. Had the Jewish people never sinned with the golden calf, they would have gone straight into Eretz Yisrael, and there would have been no episode of the Spies that were sent into the land to check it out.

At the level of the giving of the Torah, we first said “*Naaseh*” before “*Nishmah*”, because we did not feel a need to question the authenticity of what we were receiving. We knew, with *emunah*, that it was good for us, because we trusted the One who was giving to us. But when the nation grew afraid that Moshe wasn’t returning from Heaven, they lost that *emunah*, and they fell from the perfected level they were at upon receiving the Torah. They fell from the level of total *emunah* in their Giver, and ever since then, there is a nature in people to question and examine things. That was the depth of their spiritual descent.

Hashem says, “*Follow me into the desert.*” When we went out of Egypt to go receive the Torah, we did so with total *emunah* in Hashem. That was the level we needed to be on, in order to receive the Torah. When we fell from that level – due to the sin with the golden calf, a “bull” that caused us so much spiritual defilement – we fell into the level of the “bull”, where we need to examine anything until we can trust it. Ever since then, everything needs to be examined and checked, before we can trust in it. We lost the level of total *emunah* in our Giver, and that was the depth of the ruination that resulted from the sin with the golden calf.

When one wants to examine something, he uses his eyes. He can continue to feel it with his hands, but he begins to examine something by first seeing it, with his eyes. Chavah first saw the *Eitz HaDaas*, and then she touched it and then she tasted it. In other words, she first examined it with her eyes, in order to think about what it was, and after that she wondered if she should eat it or not. But it all began with her eyes.

Everything that came after that was all but a result of first laying her eyes upon it. The entire sin began with the eyes. Hashem commanded not to eat the *Eitz HaDaas*. Why did she feel a

need to check what the *Eitz HaDaas* was? It was because she saw it and laid eyes upon it. When she saw it, she felt a need to check it out, and then she thought about it more, which led her to the rest of the act.

But this was because she fell from her level of complete *emunah* in Hashem. When there is complete *emunah* in Hashem, a person doesn't feel a need to examine anything. It is clear to a person that if Hashem said "Do not eat it", then that is what must be done, and there is no need to question why or why not. The root of all sin therefore began with a need to examine something, to see if it's good or not, instead of relying on Hashem's word that it is indeed not good.

"Zuhama" – The Serpent's Impurity That Entered Man After The Sin

The Gemara says that when the people stood at Har Sinai, the spirit of impurity (*zuhama*) that the Serpent had injected into mankind was now removed. What was this "*zuhama*" that the Serpent had brought upon mankind, which was now being removed?

The *zuhama* was essentially the loss of absolute *emunah* in Hashem, and the subsequent need that man feels to question and examine something, because he doesn't trust enough in Hashem. That was the *zuhama* which the Serpent injected into Chavah. When the Serpent convinced Chavah to eat from the tree, it ruined her pure thinking patterns, and from that moment onward, Chavah began questioning and examining things, and that is what led her to the sin.

This *zuhama* was removed from mankind when we stood at Har Sinai. How did it leave us? It left us when we said "*Naaseh V'Nishmah*", which caused us to return, to the original absolute *emunah* we had in our Giver, when we felt no need to examine anything.

The Jewish people are compared to the bride, and Hashem is compared to the groom, Who took her into marriage, with the Torah at Har Sinai, which was our betrothal to Hashem. We were that "*bride with beautiful eyes*" – we felt no need to examine anything, because we completely trusted in Hashem; unlike Chavah, who "saw" the *Eitz HaDaas* with her eyes and then thought about it, questioned the word of Hashem, and examined what it was. At Har Sinai, we returned to the original perspective, that nothing needs to be examined and checked.

The Depth Behind The Concept of The "Tame Ox"

This is the depth behind the concept of "*shor tam*", the tame ox. What does the *shor tam* represent? The surface definition of the *shor tam* is that it does not gore more than three times. But why is it called "*shor tam*"?

Yaakov Avinu is called "*ish tam*" (wholesome man), and "*tam*" is from the word "*temimus*" (earnestness); how can a *shor tam* be called a "*tam*" (wholesome) like Yaakov Avinu, just because it hasn't gored three times? Where is its *temimus*?

The answer lies in the following. The Gemara discusses a kind of ox which only becomes wild on certain occasions; for example, there is a kind of ox which will only gore when it is in certain places, and then it will be wild, so it will need to be watched in those places. Why would an ox

act wild only in certain places, and not in other places? If it's wild, shouldn't it behave like this wherever it is? It is because when an ox gores, it only gores based upon what it sees.

There are three primary examples in the Gemara of how an ox inflicts damage: through goring (*keren*\its horn); through eating (*shein*\its tooth); and through trampling (*rege*\its foot). The Gemara says that when it eats things, it is doing so out of a desire for pleasure, and when it tramples things, it is doing so because something is getting in its way. But when it gores, it is doing so with “intention to do damage”. What is the depth of this matter, that an ox gores with “intention to do damage”?

When a tame ox gores, it is not goring because it saw something. When it gores, it had no agendas; it had *temimus*. But when a wild ox gores, it gores because it saw something, and then it wanted to do damage.

The *zuhama* began with the Serpent, and the Serpent was the ultimate creature that had “intention to do damage” to man. It wanted to kill Adam and take Chavah for itself, as *Chazal* teach. [Soon it will be explained how the Serpent is therefore like a “wild ox” that gores intentionally, and what the root of its evil is].

We are taught that there is a concept of a “good eye” and an “evil eye”, and this concept is discussed in *Chazal* in a number of places, with various applications. Moshe Rabbeinu was called one who had a “good eye”, whereas Bilaam had an “evil eye”. What, essentially, is the “good eye”, and what is the “evil eye”?

The “good eye” represents a pure kind of vision, where a person is not trying to examine and see something. The “evil eye” is when a person examines everything. A person checks out something and becomes curious about it, and he is wondering: “Maybe there's something bad here?”

Where did the first suspicion come into Creation? When did man first entertain the thought that maybe there's something bad in the world? It began with the sin of Adam. Hashem created the world and testified that it was all “very good”; everything was good, in the pure state of Creation. How then did evil enter into Creation? It was as soon as Adam stopped believing that everything was “good”. He then connected himself to the perspective of evil.

This was like the wild ox that gores. When it gores, that is but the result of something that prompted it. The ox is defined as either a tame ox or a wild ox depending on how it sees things. The tame ox sees something in one way, whereas the wild ox sees it in another way. Thus, the deep understanding of the difference between the wild ox (*shor muad*) and the tame ox (*shor tam*) is because the wild ox gores when it has seen bad in something; whereas the tame ox usually sees good in something, and therefore it usually will not gore.

The ‘Good Eye’ (Choosing Not To See Evil) and The ‘Evil Eye’ (Choosing To See Evil)

Earlier we mentioned that Moshe possessed the “good eye”, whereas Bilaam had the “evil eye”. When Bilaam said the words, “*I do not notice sin in Yaakov, and I do not see exertion in Yisrael, Hashem his G-d is with him*”, this was really Hashem's perspective being uttered through

him. When Hashem created the world, He testified about it that it was “very good”. Hashem only saw good in it; everything was good.

Adam, in his power to choose (which actually began with Chavah), had the possibility to see evil in Creation. The possibility to see evil in Creation is like the wild ox that goes upon seeing something it didn’t like. The mere fact that a person sees evil in the world is the root of all ruination in Creation!

The Sages state, “The eyes see, the heart desires, and the actions complete.” The simple understanding of this is that when the eyes see what it shouldn’t have, such as a forbidden sight, the heart then obsesses over it and desires it, and this leads to the action of sin. But the depth of this is that the very fact that the eyes can see evil, is already its downfall. It is not about what it has seen.

The sin of Adam and Chavah therefore didn’t begin with seeing the *Eitz HaDaas*. Rather, there was a point that preceded this: the very fact that man chose to see evil. Man has the power to choose what he will see, and if he chooses to see evil in Creation, this itself is the beginning of all ruination.

The simple understanding is that all sin begins in our heart, which can choose to lust after sin or not. But *Chazal* teach us that “the eyes see, and the heart desires”, so the power of choice really begins with the eyes, of what we will choose to see. The first choice in Creation was Chavah’s choice to see the *Eitz HaDaas*. This returned with the sin with the golden calf, a bull, which goes upon seeing something.

Thus, we have learned about what the root of all ruination is (seeing evil), and where our main power of *bechirah* (choice) lies, in each and every one of us. The power of choice does not begin with the passions of the heart, but with our eyes, which see.

Our Current Avodah In Rectifying Mankind: Seeing Only The Good In Creation

What then is our *avodah*, to rectify the “eyes that see”, which are the root of all sin? Simply speaking, our *avodah* now is contained in the words of the verse, “*He closes the eyes from seeing evil.*” This is true of course, but what is the deep meaning of this?

The simple understanding is as the Gemara explains, that if one has an alternate route to take where he can avoid seeing an improper sight, he must take that path, and that is how his eyes can avoid seeing evil.

But the depth of “*He closes his eyes from seeing evil*” is contained in the words, “*I do not notice sin in Yaakov, and I do not see exertion in Yisrael.*” It is when the *soul* of a person only sees good and it does not see evil. This is the meaning of the verse, “*The one with a good eye, is blessed*” – when one has a soul that only sees good - when he has the “good heart” which only sees good - and his eyes will then not see evil in anything. Even if he sees the evil, he chooses not to “see” it. This is also the meaning of the verse uttered by Bilaam, “*I do not notice sin in Yaakov*”, which was really Hashem’s perspective being uttered through him, the pure and untainted perspective which only sees good in Creation.

The Loss of The “Good Eye” Perspective

There is a very deep point here, which one must contemplate. Where does our soul’s power of *bechirah* (choice) begin? Where does our *bechirah* lie?

When the people sinned with the golden calf, it brought them all down to a lower spiritual level, from the level they were at upon receiving the Torah; and ever since, we are currently at that low spiritual level. Where did this originate from? It began when the people did not know where Moshe was, and the depth of this is that they did not where the perspective of the “good eye” was, which Moshe represents, for of Moshe it is said, *“The one with the good eye, is blessed.”* When they despaired from Moshe returning to them, they essentially lost the perspective of the “good eye”. When the “good eye” is lost, that is the entranceway to all evil and ruination.

The sin with the golden calf began with the “ox” that they carved an image of, and the ox\bull is linked with the sense of sight, as we explained above. The eyes can see evil, and that is where all ruination can occur. We can now understand better the difference between the level of the giving of the Torah, with the level we fell to after the sin with the golden calf. At the giving of the Torah, our souls only saw good. We had the “good eye”. After sinning with the golden calf, our nature underwent a change, and ever since then, man sees both good and evil in Creation, and usually, he sees evil, for this world is “mixed with good and evil – it is mostly evil, and partially good.”

“Hashem looked into the Torah, and created the world.” The Torah is called “good”, for it is called *lekach tov*, the “good purchase”, which Hashem gave to us. Hashem created the world from it, so the entire creation was created from something that was entirely good, which has no bad in it. So the Creation was entirely good, in its original state. As soon as Adam sinned, the perspective changed. Now man can see evil in it, and this has become his second nature.

The Ongoing Spiritual War Between Yaakov and Esav

This is the depth contained in the ongoing war that takes place between the forces of Yaakov and Esav, which we began this discussion with.

Esav said, *“Behold, I am going to die”*, when he demanded to be fed. This can be explained on a deeper level as follows. There is a verse, *“A wise person, his eyes are on his head, but a fool walks in darkness.”* This is explained to mean that a fool sees only evil in something, whereas the wise person sees the beginning state of everything, which is pure and good.

The war between Yaakov\Yosef against Esav is essentially a war about how to see things, of how to view Creations. Esav says, *“Feed me now this red stuff.”* He sees what he sees: he sees the red color of the lentils in front of him, the red color of blood, which symbolizes evil. Yaakov, though, was the *ish tam yoishev ohalim*, a “wholesome man, who dwelled in the tents”, whereas Esav is the *ish sadeh*, “man of the field.” One of the Sages said “My wife is only called “my home”, and my ox is only called “my field.” The ox is therefore like a field, which Esav hunts in and spends his time in.

Yaakov and Yosef each represent different spiritual powers that can fight Esav. There are two ways to fight the perspective of the “evil eye” (represented by Esav) and to reveal the pure perspective of the “good eye”.

Esav saw the “red stuff” of the lentils and connected with it; he is called Edom, which means “red”, and he only sees evil in Creation. He sees the *admimus* (redness) in Creation, meaning that he only sees the evil in Creation. Yaakov and Yosef, though, are the opposite of this. They represent the perspective of seeing only good in Creation, and they are each two distinct levels in this. Yaakov is called “*ish tam*”, and this is his power to fight Esav; Yosef though is called *shor*, the ox, and this is a different spiritual force that can wage war against Esav.

Yaakov, the “*ish tam*”, represents the perspective in which a person only sees good to begin with. *Rashi* explains that an “*ish tam*” is “someone who does not know how to swindle” – an *ish tam* is someone who does not know of evil, because he doesn’t see it, and therefore he doesn’t think of how to lie. He is a “*tamim*” (pure individual), meaning that there are no devious thoughts that enter his head at all which would cause him to think about evil. Yaakov’s power to fight Esav is through his power to see only good, and this counters Esav, who sees only evil.

Yosef, though, represents another spiritual power. Yosef was tempted with evil, he saw it and he was aware of it, but he fought it. In the blessings of Yaakov to his children, the verse describes how the young girls of Egypt would climb upon the walls to see him when he passed by them, but he would not lust after them. He saw that there was evil in front of him, but he fought it constantly.

The Powers of “Yaakov” and “Yosef” Within

These are two distinct spiritual powers in our soul, of how to deal with evil. The lower level is “Yosef”, who sees the evil and fights it. The higher level is “Yaakov”, the “*ish tam*”, who also possessed the trait of *emes* (truth), which enabled him to learn the “*Toras Emes*”, the “Torah of truth”; he had the *temimus* (earnestness) to learn the “*Toras Hashem Temimah*” (the perfect, untainted level of Torah). With *temimus*, a person only sees purity, because his perspective is pure.

In terms of our own personal soul-*avodah*, a person needs to first traverse the level of “Yosef” and then reach the level of “Yaakov.” Yosef saw evil, tried to fight it, and he tried to only see purity and good. Yosef was repeatedly tested with visual temptations, where he had to keep seeing evil and then fighting with it. He had to deal with the struggle of seeing evil. Yaakov reached the deeper place in the soul than this - “*ish tam*”, the quality of *temimus* (earnestness), the perspective in which a person doesn’t even see evil.

The Month of Iyar – A Spiritual War Of Our Vision

The month of *Iyar*, which has the *mazal* of *shor* (the bull), is therefore a spiritual war, with our vision.

All ruination began with the sense of seeing. As is well-known, the word “*Iyar*” (אייר) stands for *אני ה' רופאיך*, “*I am Hashem, your Healer.*” When we *daven* for a recovery from illness, we *daven* for “a healing of the soul, and a healing of the body.” Our body is healed when physical maladies are removed, and how is our soul healed? If there is illness in the soul, how is it healed? What is the root that heals it?

The ruination to the soul began when Chavah's eyes saw the *Eitz HaDaas*. So when Hashem says "*I am Hashem, your Healer*", it means that He can heal the root of all illnesses that came upon the soul, which began with an improper use of the sense of sight and the damage that it caused.

How We Fight Our Spiritual Struggles

If we want to make these concepts practical in our life, we should know as follows. All of our struggles on this world, the many "wars" we have to fight on this world in our spiritual task, can be fought with two different methods. Either we can fight with the latter parts of our struggle [which will prove unsuccessful] or we can fight at the beginning point [which is the sensible approach].

"*The wise person, his eyes are in his head, but the fool walks in the darkness.*" The 'foolish' perspective is to wage war with the latest stage of war he is in; he fights with evil from a place that he has fallen into. In contrast, the 'wise' perspective is to wage war at the beginning point of the war, as opposed to the current and latter point of the war.

All tribulations which we have on this world can be fought either by fighting our current problems, or by fighting the beginning point of all our problems.

If a person is tempted with a sin - for example, he is tempted to speak *lashon hora* – simply speaking, he can fight it by telling himself that it is forbidden, and then try to avoid the act. That is true, but the Sages said that "When the evil inclination is present, there is no mention of the good inclination."²³ Once a person is already amidst a spiritual struggle, the evil inclination is dominating. "*The fool walks in the dark*" – and the evil inclination is called an "old, foolish king"; when a person is amidst a test with evil and he is trying to fight from there, it will be a very difficult battle. He is unlikely to succeed. It will not be impossible to succeed, but it will be most difficult.

What is the proper way to wage war with evil forces? When a person lives an inner kind of life, when he lives a life in which he is always purifying his thoughts, as soon as his thoughts begin to steer towards anything evil or improper, he will quickly catch himself and realize that it will take him away from the life of pure thought that he tries to live.

The *korbon olah* was brought in order to atone for any sinful "thoughts of the heart", and the depth of this is that it rectifies a person who has returned to his beginning point. The depth of how the soul is rectified is when a person thinks about the beginning, pure state of something. When a person does not deal with the beginning of a matter, the matter festers, like a poisonous root that is left untreated.

Treating The Root

The month of *Iyar*, which is the month that contains healing, is a healing that comes through the "wise" perspective, whose "eyes are in his head" – who sees the beginning of a matter and

²³ *Nedarim 32a*

reflects into it. It represents the kind healing that can heal the soul at the very root of whatever evil came upon the soul. Instead of healing all that has resulted from the evil, it heals the beginning point which spurned the evil in the first place.

Adam sinned at the beginning of Creation, on the sixth day, and ever since then, for almost 6000 years, we are dealing with the effects of the first sin; we are at the end of the 6000 year period. How can we deal with the evil? Should we fight the evil that has come upon us for the last 6000 years, including this period of the End of Days? Or should we fight its root, which was the sin that happened on the sixth day of Creation?

When Adam sinned, his original wisdom that he was created with was ruined. The struggles with evil that we have today are all because of the first sin, because Adam and Chavah failed to fight the evil, at the beginning point. This is the general state of mankind, and it applies individually to each soul. Each soul has two ways to fight evil – either to fight the evil where it is currently, or to fight its beginning point.

Esav said “*Behold I am going to die*” - man’s task ends at death, so when must he fight evil? In his lifetime, man must do *teshuvah*, until his last dying day. He must wage war with all the evil which currently surrounds him, and this is true. But if he has the deeper perspective, the perspective of the “wise” person, he fights the evil at its beginning point, by quickly gaining control over his mind as soon as there is a slight divergence in his pure thinking process.

If one tries to wage war today in the area of deeds alone, it will be almost impossible for him to succeed, in the spiritual war. But if he is trying to gain control over the thoughts of his mind and the desires of his heart, he is getting to the root, and he is constantly returning to his beginning point, which is the “wise” perspective.

Treating The Root of Our Actions – Discerning Our Desires, Thoughts, and Feelings

We are saying that there are two totally different ways to live life. Naturally, a person tries to deal with the current points that are bothering him. But the higher approach to take is to get to the root of the matter, to the beginning point. When one lives inwardly and not superficially, he lives in his soul, in a world of thought, in a world of feelings, and his struggles will be with the subtlety of his feelings and thoughts.

As an example, there was once a student of Rav Dessler who dreamt that he wanted to kill his son. He was frightened by the dream and ran to Rav Dessler, asking him what it meant. Rav Dessler told the student “Sometimes, when your son is bothering you, you have a fleeting thought that you wish he wouldn’t exist. Because you are able to have such a thought, you are able to dream about killing him.” For every action, there always thoughts and feelings that are behind it.

A wise person’s perspective is that he identifies his deeper motivations, his thoughts and feelings that are behind his actions, and that is how he works on himself. As opposed to working on the level of his actions alone, he gets to the root of the matter, the beginning point, of the problem.

If one works with this approach, he will find that most of his [spiritual] *nisyonos* will disappear. He will be fighting the root of the evil, as opposed to fighting the branches and results of the evil.

The “Healing” In The Month of Iyar

The month of Iyar, of which Hashem says “*I am Hashem, your Healer*” – what is the depth of this healing? And what is the difference between the healing that Hashem Himself gives, with the healing of a doctor, who is given permission to heal?

A doctor cannot heal the very root of the illness. He can only heal a person after he sees symptoms, of how the disease has spreading and what it is causing. But when Hashem Himself heals a person, He heals the very beginning of the problem. On a personal level, when a person reveals G-dliness in his life, it reveals “*I am Hashem, your Healer*”, and then his problems can be treated at their root.

The more a person lives externally and superficially, he will only seek to correct his deeds alone. The more a person lives inwardly, he will wage war against the subtle thoughts and feelings that are behind his actions. Then he can rectify his actions at their beginning point. A person surely has to wage war with any improper deeds he is doing, but even a gentile can do this. Only a member of *Yisrael*, however, can rectify the beginning point of his deeds. Only the Jewish people are called “*raishis*”, the “beginning”, because the unique ability of the Jewish people is to rectify beginnings. This is a war that is unique only to the Jewish people.

Higher than this aspect is the war that Yaakov (and Yosef) must fight against Esav; Yaakov is the “tame ox” (*shor tam*) on the side of holiness, which must fight the “wild ox” (*shor muad*) on the side of evil. The “tame ox” on the side of holiness is the ability in the soul to be a *tamim*, to be loyal and trusting in Hashem, to see a world in which there is only good.

Connecting To The Point of Complete “Good” In Our Soul

Currently, we do not live in a world where there is only good. We live in a world which is mostly evil and with little good, as *Chazal* state. But in the depths of our soul, there is a pure place which can allow us to see a world which is only good and with no evil in it.

We cannot actually live from this place in ourselves, because that would be denying the world in front of us. But there is a point deep in our soul where we can access this perspective at times, of seeing only good in Creation, which was the initial state of Creation, where Hashem testified that it was all “very good”.

If one connects to this place through learning Torah and through connecting to it in his soul, he lives in a world which is completely good. Of course, when he goes out in the world, he is in a place which is mostly evil. But his soul can be found in a place that is completely good. Of this it is said, “*Your world [the Next World] can be seen in your life.*”

The more a person lives inwardly and he lives this point of seeing a world that is entirely good, he will be able to wage war with the very beginning point of evil, as opposed to the results and the branches of evil, which is like the words of Esav, “*Behold I am going to die.*”

That enables a person to leave the level of existence of the “bull” that we fell to after the sin with the Golden Calf, and instead to return to the holy kind of “bull” - which sees only holiness.

Leaving The Fallen State of The “Bull” and Entering Into The Holy “Bull”

Chazal state “the bull is king of all domestic animals, for it is the heaviest of all the domestic animals”. This is referring to the “bull” on the side of evil, for it is referring to the evil trait of heaviness and indifference. How does one come out of this evil heaviness?

One way is an evil way, through becoming conceited. The holy way to come out of the heaviness is through the lesson implied by the *korbon olah*, which atones for lustful thoughts of the heart – in other words, through fixing the beginning point of the evil.

Hashem says, “*I am the First, and I am the Last.*” When a person is living a life in which he is always returning to the beginning, it is revealed to him how Hashem is his true beginning point. He will also have an easier time with spiritual struggles, for he will receive a revelation of “*I am the Last*” when he is faced with the evil inclination, and Hashem will persevere for him. The more a person lives inwardly as opposed to living on his surface, when he is facing struggles outside of him, he will win those battles.

Of this it is said, “If not for Hashem’s help, a person cannot overcome.”²⁴ But in order to receive Hashem’s help, one needs to reveal “I am the First and I am the Last.”

The Power To Deal With Evil At Its Root – Orderly Thought

When a person internalizes this concept, he will receive an entirely different mindset to live life with; he will receive an inner power of orderliness (*seder*) to deal with anything that comes his way. A hint to this is that the word “*shor*” is from the word “*shurah*”, which means “order”. When one has the power of the *shor*\bull\ox on the side of holiness, he receives a special power of inner order to deal with spiritual struggles.

One who does not live inwardly will mainly be fighting external stimuli, and there is no order to be found on the outside world; it is all turmoil. But one who lives inwardly lives in a world of thought, which is an orderly process that keeps him stable.

This is the holy kind of *shor*\bull\ox, where a person will have a constant inner order (*shor*\ox is from the word *shurah*\order) to deal with life. His thoughts will receive order to them and this will help him deal with difficulties.

Without living in a world of thought, a person lives in the world of actions alone, so he will only be able to struggle with actions, because his struggles will be limited to actions alone, and not beyond that. In contrast, when a Torah scholar lives inwardly, he lives in a world of thought, of orderly thought – a life of holy thought (*machshavah*).

This is the meaning of Yaakov’s trait of being an “*ish tam yoishev ohalim*” (wholesome man that dwells in the tents) - when there is orderly thought in one’s mind [for the term “*ish tam*”

²⁴ *Sukkah 52a*

parallels the concept of the *shor tam*, the tame ox, who represents the “bull\ox” on the side of holiness, which we have explained as an ability of holy sight, and an ability to maintain orderly thought] – from this, one is able to learn Torah properly, because there will be inner order given to all of his soul’s abilities as well.

In Conclusion

May we merit from Hashem the fulfillment of the verse, “*All of the illnesses that I placed upon Egypt, I will not place upon you, for I am Hashem, your Healer.*”

Iyar – Tribe | Yissocher

The Month of Iyar Corresponds to the Tribe of Yissocher & the Power of Thought

The month of Iyar corresponds to the tribe of Yissocher. There are differing views regarding which tribe the month of Iyar corresponds to, but the main view is that the month of Iyar corresponds to the tribe of Yissocher.²⁵

By the blessing given by Yaakov to his son Yissocher, the Torah says, “*Yissocher is a strong-boned donkey; he rests between the boundaries. He saw that serenity was good...yet he bent his shoulder to bear.*”²⁶

The month of Iyar also corresponds to the soul’s ability of *hirhur*, thinking.

What is the connection between Yissocher, and the ability of thinking?

The Gemara says that just as a donkey stays awake both at night and at day, so does a Torah scholar think of Torah at day and at night.²⁷ The Vilna Gaon says that a Torah scholar thinks of Torah even as he sleeps. Thus, the “donkey”, which Yissocher is compared to, is the metaphor for a Torah scholar, who is constantly thinking about Torah.

Yissocher Can Enjoy Reward For Efforts In Torah Learning Even In This World

The blessing of being “a strong-boned donkey” is a general blessing that Yaakov gave to the Jewish people on a general level, and it was given to the tribe of Yissocher on a more specific level.

In the blessings that Moshe gave to the Jewish people, Moshe said, “*Rejoice, Zevulun, in your departure; and Yissocher, in your tents.*”²⁸ As is well-known, Chazal teach that there is a special relationship between Yissocher and Zevulun. Zevulun pursues commerce, and provides Yissocher with food and other forms of support, so that Yissocher can learn Torah.²⁹

The work which Zevulun pursues is not like the work which Adam was cursed with, which has become the curse of mankind ever since. Adam was cursed with having to exert himself with work. Man’s sustenance can only come to him when he puts exertion into making a living, as the

²⁵ *Peirush haGra to Sefer Yetzirah 5:1*

²⁶ *Beraishis 49:14*

²⁷ *see Rashi ibid*

²⁸ *Beraishis 49:13*

²⁹ *Rashi ibid*

Torah says by the curse given to Adam: “*By the sweat of your brow.*”³⁰ But Zevulun working to support Yissocher isn’t like that. Yissocher and Zevulun aren’t just in a partnership together, with Zevulun working to support Yissocher. Rather, the blessing of Yissocher is that although he benefits from the efforts of Zevulun, yet he still maintains his reward for Torah learning.

Yissocher is compared to a donkey, and the Gemara explains that it is the ‘donkey’ of Zevulun, which refers to the commerce of Zevulun, which enables Yissocher to learn Torah. Of the partnership between Yissocher and Zevulun, Chazal state, “Today is for action, and tomorrow is for receiving reward.”³¹

[But on a deeper level], the word “Yissocher” contains the word *s’char*, reward, which is a hint that Yissocher enjoys reward even on This World. The root of the word “Yissocher”, which is the word *s’char*/reward, is similar to the word that Leah used when she said to Rachel, “*Your wages have been earned, with the dudaim of my son,*”³² when Leah allowed Rachel to have the *dudaim* which Reuven would bring to her, in exchange for moving into Yaakov’s tent in Rachel’s place. The Torah uses the term *s’char* in this verse. This is a hint that “Yissocher” reveals how the reward in the future for today’s efforts is not only in the future, but that it can also be enjoyed today.

There are two kinds of effort that one needs to go through on this world: Effort in our Torah learning (represented by Yissocher), and the effort that one needs to put in to making a living (represented by Zevulun).

Working hard to make a living is a kind of work that is represented by the element of “earth”, the “earth” that man has been plunged into ever since the first sin, when Adam was cursed with having to work hard by plowing the fields (making a living) and with returning to the earth (death). The concept of “Today is for action, tomorrow is for reward” implies that one will enjoy his reward for today’s work (all of the hard work that he endured on This World) only in the future. This is all the kind of work that is associated with the element of earth, and it is the work of Zevulun. This is also the implication of the verse, “*Plant with tears, and reap with joy,*”³³ where one enjoys the reward for his efforts only in the future.

But Yissocher reveals that even in This World, there can be reward, for Yissocher’s name is from the words *yeish s’char*, “There is reward”³⁴, implying that there is reward that can be enjoyed even now as we are on This World. Even in This World, there can be a point where we are unaffected by the curse placed on Adam and the rest of mankind. Chazal teach based upon the verse “*Rejoice, righteous ones, in Hashem*”, that this rejoicing is referring to Yissocher, because Yissocher enjoys the *rinah shel Torah*, he “sings” over the Torah, through his exertion in Torah

30 *Beraishis 3:19*

31 *Talmud Bavli Eruvin 22a*

32 *Beraishis 30:16*

33 *Tehillim 126:5*

34 *Zohar I 158a*

learning, thus Yissocher has the blessing of enjoying the reward for Torah study even on this world.

So not only does Yissocher enjoy from Zevulun's commerce, but he enjoys his reward even on this world. Zevulun only enjoys reward in the future, and this is in line with the rule that "Tomorrow is for reward." Normally, reward is only in the future. But for Yissocher, there is reward even now, in this world.

Leah's Reward: Yissocher Enjoys The Results of Zevulun's Work

As mentioned, Yissocher is from the words *yeish sochor* (there is reward). Chazal teach that Yissocher was the *s'char*, the reward (given to Leah) for the *dudaim* (which Leah gave to Rachel). Chazal expound that the Hebrew letter *shin* (ש) appears twice in Yissocher's name, with the second letter *shin* being silent and unpronounced. This was a hint that Yissocher was rewarded to Leah for two different reasons, with the first reason being the primary reason, hence the first *shin* is pronounced, and the second reason being the secondary reason, hence the second *shin* in Yissocher's name is silent.

The first reason that Leah was rewarded with Yissocher was because, as Chazal teach, that when Leah saw how Rachel wanted to bear tribes through her maidservant Bilhah and introduced Bilhah as a wife to Yaakov, in order to beget tribes her name, Leah followed suit and brought in her maidservant, Zilpah, into marriage with Yaakov Avinu, in order to beget more tribes in her name. Thus, Yissocher was the *s'char* (the reward) that Leah received through bringing in Zilpah. Another reason why Leah was rewarded with the birth of Yissocher, Chazal teach, is because Leah gave away *dudaim* to Rachel.

What is the meaning of this? Chazal are teaching that the primary reason for Yissocher's birth was a reward to Leah for bringing in her maidservant Zilpah into marriage with Yaakov Avinu to beget more tribes. A maidservant is enslaved to do work for her owner, while the owner enjoys the results of the work of the slave or maidservant. When Leah brought her maidservant Zilpah into marriage with Yaakov Avinu, she would enjoy the results of Zilpah's work. In reward for bringing in Zilpah, Leah would enjoy the results of her maidservant's work by bearing Yissocher and also Zevulun, and Zevulun's work would support Yissocher, so that Yissocher can enjoy the results of Zevulun's work.

There are two kinds of work on this world. There is the kind of work which was given as a curse to man, to work and plow the fields of the earth, in order to earn a livelihood. This was the kind of work that was given to Zevulun, and the results of his work are enjoyed by Yissocher, whom Zevulun supports. But another kind of work is when a person can find serenity after his work, as the Torah says about Yissocher, that his blessing is to find *menuchah* (serenity) after all of his hard work, after bearing the yoke of Torah on his shoulders. Yissocher's exertion in Torah, in bearing the yoke of Torah, is the source of why the tribe of Yissocher is called *yodei binah l'itim*, "men who understand the times", and as the Gemara says, since the tribe of Yissocher were experts in the knowledge of astronomy and the constellations, they became the heads of the Sanhedrin to calculate and modify the months of the Jewish calendar.

When Yissocher was born, the Torah says that he was the fifth child born to Yaakov (and that Zevulun was the sixth child born to Yaakov). In actuality, Yissocher was really the ninth child

born to Yaakov (because the births of Dan, Naftali, Gad and Asher preceded his birth), but he was the fifth child of Leah. Chazal ask: Why is it that only by Yissocher and Zevulun that the Torah specified what number child they were, which the Torah did not do when it came to the other children of Yaakov? Chazal learn from this that the Torah called Yissocher the fifth child because unlike the other tribes, who would later fight the nations of the world with their armies (to conquer Eretz Yisrael), Yissocher had *chamushim*, “armies”, of men who fought the “war of Torah”. The word *chamushim* is from the word *chamesh*, which means the number 5.

Work on this world is primarily Zevulun’s role, but the effort in Torah learning is primarily the role of Yissocher, who fights the “war of Torah”.

The Depth of Why Yissocher Is Compared To The “Donkey”

As mentioned, Yissocher’s name is from the words *yeish sochor*, “there is reward”, and this is also connected with the fact that Yissocher is compared to the *chamor*, the donkey. The word *chamor* is from the word *mochor*, “tomorrow”, implying that Yissocher’s reward in the “tomorrow”, the future, is because he bears the yoke of Torah, through exertion in Torah learning. Yissocher’s reward in the future will be due to all of his Torah learning.

But there is also more to this matter. The Gemara³⁵ says that those who rule the *halachah* for the Jewish people either descent from the tribe of Levi or from the tribe of Yissocher. Of Levi the Torah says “They shall rule Your laws to Yaakov”, and of Yissocher the Torah says that they are *yodei binah l’itim*, “men who understand the times.” The Gemara explains that Yissocher knows the knowledge of astronomy and the constellations, which primarily is based on the knowledge about the sun and moon. From this Gemara, we can see that the inner root of Yissocher’s power of Torah learning and his expertise in ruling the *halachah* is because Yissocher possesses knowledge about the sun and moon, which represent time.

Our world will last for a total of 6,000 years³⁶, which is the dimension of time. The world in the future will be a “day that is entirely Shabbos”, it will be above time. In our world, there is a dimension of time, and time is governed by the *mazalos* (the constellations), which is primarily centered around the sun and moon.

Yissocher is *yodei binah l’itim*, he understands the knowledge of time, the knowledge about the sun and moon, and this is also connected with the fact that Yissocher is called *chamor*, “donkey”. On a deeper level, *chamor* refers to the 248 limbs of the body, because the word *chamor* can be rearranged to form the word *ramach*, the number 248.

The Gemara says that at first, Avraham ruled over 243 limbs of the body, and later he was rewarded by Hashem to rule over the remaining 5 limbs of the body which are ordinarily not in a person’s control, so that he was ultimately able to rule over all 248 limbs of the body.³⁷ So too, the “reward” for Yissocher is, on a deeper level, the fact he can rise from the “*chamor*”, which

35 Talmud Bavli Yoma 26a

36 Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 97a

37 Talmud Bavli Nedarim 32b

refer to the materialism of the body, to the level of *ramach*, to be in control over all 248 limbs of the body. The “reward” given to Yissocher is that he can resemble the reward given to Avraham, who was able to rule over all 248 parts of the body.

That is the depth behind why Yissocher is compared to the *chamor*/donkey, and this is his “reward”. The exertion of Yissocher in Torah study enables him to learn Torah, through bearing the yoke of Torah like a donkey carrying a load, and Yissocher’s reward is that he is compared to the *chamor*, the “donkey”, which is equal to the number 248, a hint to the power to rule over all 248 limbs parts of the body, which includes the 5 limbs of the body which are normally not under a person’s control.

Thus, the *chamor* aspect of Yissocher is the fact that he can rise from the level of *chomer* (chomer/materialism) to ruling over all 248 limbs of the body, even the 5 limbs that are not in a person’s control. These 5 limbs of the body are not within one’s power of *bechirah* (free will), and only through a special reward did Avraham merit from Hashem to have control over them. The ability to rule over all 248 limbs, given to Yissocher, is the ability to access the time period when there will be no more *bechirah*. This will be in the future, of which it is said, “*Days in which I have no desire.*”³⁸

That is the depth of Yissocher’s name which implies *yeish sochor*, that “there is reward”, referring to the future reward for Yissocher, the power to go above *bechirah*. The power of *bechirah* given to man is that he can utilize his free will to rule over 243 of his 248 limbs, and in the future, man will be able to rule all over 248 limbs. Yissocher’s reward is that he is given the power to rule all over 248 limbs, even in our current times.

Analyzing The Difference Between The Powers of Yehudah

Chazal state that Yissocher was the second tribe to bring the *korbonos* when the *Mishkan* (the Tabernacle) was being inaugurated, in the merit of giving advice on how to donate to the *Mishkan*. What was the “advice” that the tribe of Yissocher gave? Yissocher’s advice was that everyone should donate wagons to the *Mishkan*.³⁹ This advice, Yissocher’s wisdom, did not come from ordinary wisdom. It came from the level of the wisdom of the future.

Since Yissocher is *yodei binah l’itim*, Yissocher’s tribe can “understand the times”, drawing wisdom from the future, from the future “day that is entirely Shabbos”, which is also known as the wisdom of Mashiach, and it is the “*new Torah shall come forth from Me.*”⁴⁰ This is the wisdom of the future, but it is able to become revealed onto our current dimension, through Yissocher.

There is a verse about Mashiach’s arrival by the Redemption, that Mashiach will come like a “*pauper riding on a donkey.*”⁴¹ Mashiach descends from Yehudah, and Mashiach ben Yehudah is

³⁸ see *Talmud Bavli Shabbos 151b*

³⁹ *Bamidbar Rabbah 12:16*

⁴⁰ *Yeshayah 51:4*

⁴¹ *Zechariah 9:9*

being compared to a donkey. Yissocher is also compared to the donkey. What is the difference between Mashiach ben Yehudah with Yissocher, who are both compared to a donkey?

As it is being explained here, the reward of the future, which can be revealed even in today's time - the power of a person go above his *bechirah* – is a power which comes from the spiritual illumination of the Torah of the future, which penetrates into our own dimension. That is essentially the “*yeish s'char*”, the reward, which Yissocher can access even now. This is also the meaning of the “In the future, Hashem will give 310 worlds to each *tzaddik*”⁴², the reward which Yissocher can merit even within this current world.

From a subtler perspective, there are two kinds of reward in the future. There will be reward for all of today's efforts, as Chazal state, “Today is for doing, tomorrow is for reward”, and “Whoever toils on Erev Shabbos, will eat on Shabbos.”⁴³ But there will also be another kind of reward, of receiving Hashem's endless mercy even when we are undeserving, which comes from the *otzar shel matnas chinam*, Hashem's “treasury of free gifts”, which is essentially the power of *menuchah* (serenity) that will be in the future, the “day that is entirely Shabbos”. This power is more elevated than Yissocher's, and it was given to Yehudah, and it will be revealed through Mashiach ben Yehudah. This will be Yehudah's gain over Yissocher. Yissocher's reward comes from effort and toil, whereas Yehudah's reward comes from Hashem's compassion even when we are undeserving.

Yissocher and Yehudah are both compared to a donkey, but what is the difference between them? There is the level of the future, and there is the level where the future can become illuminated into our own dimension. The level of the future is the power of Yehudah, whereas the future being shined within our own dimension is the power of Yissocher.

Yissocher's advice was to donate wagons to the *Mishkan* (the Tabernacle in the desert). Of the *Mishkan* it was said, “*By the word of Hashem, they journeyed.*”⁴⁴ The *Mishkan* had an outer and an inner aspect to it. The inner aspect of the *Mishkan* was that it was a resting place, a point of non-movement. The outer aspect of the *Mishkan* was that it had to keep being moved from place to place every so often. The 6,000 year era we are currently in is a dimension of movement. In it, we had 42 encampments in the desert. This required wagons, to transport all of the material for the *Mishkan*. But in the future, which will be the day that is entirely Shabbos, there will be an eternal resting place, the third *Beis HaMikdash*, which will not have to be moved anywhere, and there will be need for wagons. It will be the absolute level of *menuchah* (serenity).

The depth behind Yissocher's advice to make wagons for the *Mishkan* was because in our current dimension, there is a need for movement, and therefore the *Mishkan* had to get moved from place to place. But the *Beis HaMikdash* was placed in Yehudah's portion (for the most part) and there was no need for wagons, because the *Beis HaMikdash* was not moved anywhere. This is really because the *Beis HaMikdash* is meant to become a place for eternal rest, with no need for

⁴² *Mishnayos Tractate Uktzin 3:12*

⁴³ *Talmud Bavli Avodah Zarah 3a*

⁴⁴ *Bamidbar 9:18*

movement, and hence there is no need there for wagons to transport any material. That is the power of Yehudah, which will become revealed in the future.

The Dudaim Revealed Yissocher's Connection to Yehudah

The lower aspect of Yissocher is that he enjoys the results of Zevulun's work, and the higher aspect of Yissocher is his exertion in Torah, which brings serenity to him even now, so that he can enjoy the future reward even now. But there is yet a deeper aspect of "reward" given to Yissocher.

The Gemara says that because Leah gave away the *dudaim* [the special plants with mystical properties] to Rachel, she was rewarded with the birth of Yissocher. The commentary of the *Gilyon HaShas* (authored by Reb Akiva Eiger) and the commentary of *Daas Zekainim al haTorah* both explain, based upon the Gemara⁴⁵, that when Yaakov was coming home to the field, a donkey roared and died, and Leah heard the sound and went outside to see what happened, and then she saw Yaakov and greeted him. Later that night, Leah conceived Yissocher. Hence, it was a donkey that caused Yissocher to be born, because it was a donkey caused Leah to leave her house and meet with Yaakov, which led to her conception of Yissocher. (A different view in Chazal is that the *dudaim* in the fields made a noise which caused the donkey to die, and there are many other views in Chazal regarding this matter.) In any event, Chazal explain that it was a donkey that was the catalyst for Yissocher's birth.

The meaning behind this matter is that since Yissocher's birth came about through a donkey, Yissocher is not able to enjoy the complete revelation of "the pauper riding on the donkey" that will be in the future, which refers to the coming of Mashiach. The Gemara says that "If the Jewish people are meritorious, they will merit the Redemption through clouds of Heaven, and if they are not meritorious, it will be through a pauper riding on a donkey."⁴⁶ Yissocher's advice by the *Mishkan* was to make wagons to transport all of the material for the *Mishkan*. The wagons are a hint to the donkey, which transports material. This is Yissocher's higher aspect, the "pauper riding on a donkey", and it is the lower level of Redemption, and the lower aspect to Yehudah's power of redemption.

From the perspective of Yehudah, either we merit redemption through clouds of Heaven (the higher mode of Redemption, which is more dazzling) or through a pauper riding on the donkey (the lower mode of Redemption, which is less dazzling). But for Yissocher, the highest level is "the pauper riding on a donkey". Yissocher's higher aspect, the donkey, a hint to "the pauper riding on the donkey", is only the lower aspect for Yehudah. The *dudaim* gave off a scent which brought about the birth of Yissocher. The *dudaim* gave off a scent that came from the future Redemption, where there will be the scent of Mashiach. Yissocher's birth, which came about through the scent of the *dudaim* [which Leah gave away to Rachel] was therefore a 'spark' of the scent of Mashiach (who comes from Yehudah). Hence, there is a connecting point between Yissocher and Yehudah, though the *dudaim*.

⁴⁵ *Talmud Bavli Niddah 31*

⁴⁶ *Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 98a*

Yissocher's highest point is only at the 'heel', at the lowest point, of Yehudah. Yissocher's comparison to the donkey, which symbolizes his exertion to bear the yoke of Torah, is the highest spiritual point that Yissocher can reach. But for Yehudah, this is his lower point. The "donkey" that Yissocher is compared to is really like death for Yehudah, because it represents only the lower level of Redemption [in which there is only exertion in Torah, without serenity], the level that is "the pauper riding on a donkey".

Yissocher enjoys the results of the work of Zevulun. Just as Zevulun has to go from place to place as he earns livelihood, never finding true rest in his efforts to earn livelihood, so does Yissocher never find true rest, since Yissocher is being supported by Zevulun's work. Yissocher is compared to a donkey, who has no *menuchah* (serenity), because just like the donkey moves from place to place and it has no place of rest, so does Yissocher wander from place to place [through his exertion in Torah learning] without any absolute *menuchah*. Yissocher does not possess the absolute level of *menuchah*, which is Yehudah's power, the spiritual light of the future.

Healing In The Month of Iyar

The month of Iyar is an acronym for "*Ani Hashem Rofecha*", "I am Hashem, your Healer."⁴⁷ It is a month that contains the power of healing. The power of healing comes from Yissocher, because through exertion in Torah and bearing the yoke of Torah, a person merits healing. When there is a wound or a malady, there is a need for healing, but if there is no wound or malady present, there is no need to be healed. And similarly, when there is sin, there is a need to repair the sin, but if there is no sin present, there is no need for repair. The entire need for exertion came about through sin. Through bearing the yoke of Torah, which is the power of Yissocher, one can receive healing to any of his maladies.

But there is also a deeper understanding. Through the *dudaim*, there was a pleasant scent, a scent that came from the spiritual level of the future, the scent of Mashiach. The *dudaim* symbolized the connecting point of Yissocher to Yehudah, the ability of Yissocher to rise above our current dimension of time, and to go to the level of Yehudah – to be above our world of time, and to shine the light of the future within our current dimension of time. That is the complete *tikkun*.

Pesach Sheini – The Power to Rise Above Time

The month of Iyar has *Pesach Sheini* in it, and *Pesach Sheini* represents the spiritual light that is above time. The holy *Zohar* explains that "*Pesach Sheini* is above the level of *Pesach Rishon*". This is because the spiritual light of *Pesach Sheini* (the 15th day of Iyar) is above time.

During our current dimension, where we are bound to time, a person is able to reach the high spiritual levels of Pesach only during the actual time when it is Pesach, which is the 15th of Nissan. But when a person accesses the dimension that is above time, he is able to reach those high spiritual levels on the 15th of Iyar, which is *Pesach Sheini*.

⁴⁷ Chasam Sofer Shabbos 147b

Where does *Pesach Sheini*, the 15th of Iyar, get its spiritual illumination from? *Pesach Sheini* contains spiritual power only because of the festival of Pesach itself, which is on the 15th of Nissan. The spiritual illuminations of Yehudah and Yissocher [during the months of Nissan and Iyar] provide the power to go above time.

The concept of *Pesach Sheini* [in the times of the *Beis HaMikdash*] was that a person who couldn't bring the *korbon pesach* on Pesach, because he was far away from Jerusalem or because he was impure and couldn't come, he was able to bring the *korbon pesach* on *Pesach Sheini*. Yissocher represents the light of the future touching upon our current dimension of time. But because Yissocher also connects with Yehudah, who has the power of meriting Redemption through clouds of Heaven, through the power of Yissocher (in the month of Iyar) we are able to “skip” over our current dimension, and rise to the dimension that is above time, to have a kind of “*kefitzas haderech*” (shortcut).

This is not only a way to merit healing in the month of Iyar, it is a way to merit the complete spiritual recovery. The *Megaleh Amukos* says that the word “Iyar” is an acronym for Avraham, Yitzchok, Yaakov, and Rachel. These four *tzaddikim* are also the “four feet that uphold the Heavenly Chariot”, which represents the complete spiritual circuit.⁴⁸ The month of Iyar therefore represents the concept of transcending our dimension of time and accessing the level of complete spiritual repair.

Practically Accessing The Power of Yissocher

In terms of the soul, one can use this power of Yissocher by separating himself from the world and exerting himself in Torah, which leads to enjoyment in Torah study. This is the deeper implication of the “*yeish sochor*”, the reward, which Yissocher has.

Another way to use this power is by becoming connected with Hashem, where a person can receive wisdom because he has gained greater *d'veykus* with Hashem, as in the verse, “*And wisdom, from where is it found*”⁴⁹(meaning that *chochmah*/wisdom is found in *ayin*/the spiritual, which is connection to G-d). This is essentially the spiritual light that comes from the future, and this is the *menuchah* (serenity) of which “*Yissocher saw that it was good.*”⁵⁰ It is a level where Torah learning does not require exertion, where one knows Torah becomes he becomes a *maayan hamisgaber*, a “mighty wellspring”.⁵¹ It is when one is above the level of regarding Torah learning as a “burden” that one must bear upon himself. This level of Torah learning is accessed when one can tap into the light that comes from the future, which is the concept of *menuchah* (serenity), the “day that will be entirely Shabbos”.

⁴⁸ cited also by *Beis Shmuel to Shulchan Aruch Even HaEzer 126:6* and in *sefer Bnei Yissocher: Maamarei Chodesh Iyar 1:1*

⁴⁹ *Iyov 28:12*

⁵⁰ *Beraishis 49:15*

⁵¹ *Avos 6:1*

The fact that the months of Nissan and Iyar are adjacent to each other shows that a person needs to synthesize the powers of these two months together. When one only tries to ascend higher to G-d through the path of Yehudah (Nissan/time/exertion in Torah), without using the path of Yissocher, he cannot succeed.

First, a person needs to separate from the world, to stop being interested in what the rest of the world is pursuing. Then, one will merit that his livelihood will come on its own to him, just as Zevulun supports Yissocher, without Yissocher having to worry where his livelihood will come from.

But this alone is not enough, because a person will still be within the realm of time and he will thereby be limited to the bounds of time. He would only be activating the lower use of Yissocher's spiritual power. He would still be found within the level of This World, for he is still within the "burden" of living on this world (and there, and he will not be able to go beyond the level of the "donkey" who must bear the yoke of Torah upon his shoulders (which is his greatest burden in life). One needs to also make use of the higher power of Yissocher, the power to become connected with Hashem to the point that he is "one" (*chad*) with Hashem.

Then the Torah can become truly revealed to him, now that he is found with Hashem. This is the meaning of the verse, "*Be wholesome with Hashem your G-d*",⁵² to merit a kind of Torah learning that comes from being attached with Hashem.

⁵² *Devarim 18:13*



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