



THE KEY TO CURING ADDICTIONS

"GIVE ME YOUR CIGARETTES!!"

I want to begin today with a story, a new story. There is a fellow in Eretz Yisrael who is the editor of the Hebrew Yated Ne'eman. His name is Yisrael Friedman. He was extremely close with Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman. He was in his house many times. He didn't say what he did there, but he said he was in his house quite often. He was very, very close to Rav Aharon Leib. One day, eighteen years before Rav Aharon Leib was *niftar*, the phone rings by Yisrael Friedman. He picks up the phone - it's the *rosh yeshivah*. Rav Aharon Leib is calling. Rav Aharon Leib tells him, "I have to speak to you right now." It was the *chaf gimmel Tammuz*. He remembers the date. He came running to Rav Aharon Leib's house.

Rav Aharon Leib tells him, "I heard something terrible about you." The guy started to tremble, and tried to think as hard as he could, "What did he discover about me?" It's a pretty big rebuke. He sat there with his mouth open like a deer caught in the headlights, and Rav Aharon Leib said to him, "Is it true that you smoke?" "Yes." Rav Aharon Leib then asked him, "Do you want to stop?" He said, "Generally, most smokers want to stop." Rav Aharon Leib said, "And *af al pi* *ken* you don't stop." He said, "I haven't managed to stop yet."

The Rosh Yeshivah then did something that cured Rav Yisrael Friedman of his addiction forever. He said as follows: "You should know that there are three components of how people operate. There are *ma'asim* (actions), there are *diburim* (speech), and there are *machshavos* (thoughts). Of all those three," he said, "what's the easiest to control? *Ma'asim*. It's the easiest of all three to control. It's much harder to control your *dibur*, your speech. You know why? Because it comes from a more spiritual place. It's more *ruchni*. A *gashmi* doesn't have such a *shlitah* over *ruchni*." He said, "It's even harder to control one's thoughts." But then he said as follows, "If you can't control your actions, who knows how you speak? And if you can't control how you speak, who knows what kind of thoughts you have? A person who doesn't control either his thoughts or his speech or his actions..." and he started banging on the table for emphasis, and said, "is *gornisht*, *gornisht*, *gornisht*" (he's a nothing). And he said to him, "Hand over the pack of cigarettes. This isn't *bal tashchis*." Rav Yisrael handed over the cigarettes. The Rosh Yeshivah pulled the cigarettes out by the silver inner wrapping and he crushed them. He said, "You will no longer smoke again."

From that moment on, Rav Yisrael never touched a cigarette. What's more, he never had the typical withdrawal symptoms. It was as if he had never smoked.

He was looking back and thinking about this incident. What was it about what the Rosh Yeshivah had said that made such an impact on him? He said he gave up a lifetime addiction *keheref ayin* (instantly). He thought to himself, and said, "*Vus bin ich*, what am I? *Gornisht*. The Rosh Yeshivah thinks I'm *gornisht*." That alone changed him!

This is a very important lesson. If a person can't control his *ma'asim*, he's a goner. In order to gain some control over yourself, you have to begin with *ma'asim*. If you deal with your *ma'asim*, you can begin to control your speech.

Everybody heard of *shemiras halashon*, a wonderful undertaking! Do you know how many people tried to be *shomer* their *lashon* and it didn't work? Do you know how many people I know who learn religiously their two *halachos* from the Chafetz Chaim a day, and they still talk all the *lashon hara* in the world!? Why is that? It's because those people have no control over their *ma'asim*. If you don't have control over your *ma'asim*, you have no control over your speech. And if you don't have control over your speech, what about your *machshavos*? *Oy va'avoy*. What goes on in your mind is *shreklach* (frightening). It's like a loose cannon! Loose actions! Loose minds!

THE BEST TIME TO ACQUIRE SELF-CONTROL

Now, this time of the year, from *Shemos* to *Mishpatim* is the time when a person works on himself. During this time of the year a person can acquire and make tremendous gains in this area. I want to teach you and share with you some steps on how to accomplish this. But first, I want to make you aware of something that you're surely aware of, namely, the conversations that go on between you and your *yetzer hara*: "What do you think, I can be a *parush*? What do you think, I can be a *chassid*? I'm a regular guy. What do you want from me? You're never going to control yourself. You've been a loose cannon since you were born. Your mother told you that when you were little, you couldn't stop talking. You talked in your crib to yourself. You talked to your dolls. You talked to your monsters. You talked to your pillow. And you never stopped since then. And your thoughts? You had *dimyonos*. You imagined monsters. You imagined you were a cowboy. You imagined you were a fireman. You imagined you were a policeman. You imagined who knows what. And you never stopped."

You're never going to get control over yourself unless you put yourself into some sort of program. Without a program, you're not going to change. How do you get to the program?

MEKADESH A LITTLE BIT OF YOUR MAASIM

I once met a *bachur* who had a very difficult time controlling his *ma'asim*. He was such an addict that he did *aveiros* three hundred and sixty-five days a year, *lerabos* Rosh Hashanah and Yom Hakippurim. He told me that he did it for eight years straight. You know what kind of *aveiros* that is? Can you imagine that? I can't. And he was a good *bachur*. I'm telling you he was a *bachur* who was a *masmid*. *Pashut* the *yetzer hara* had him convinced that he could not function and it was *kulo leshem shamayim* - which was another thing that Rav Aharon Leib detested. He detested two phrases. He detested "*mesiras nefesh*" or "*moser nefesh*," and he detested "*leshem shamayim*." He said, "No one is *moser nefesh*. *Medreit a kup*, it's a made up imagination. A guy thinks if he pushes himself just a drop - Ah! He's *moser nefesh*. That's not *mesiras nefesh*. And *leshem shamayim*?! *Vos is leshem shamayim*?!"

Rav Aharon Leib told this fellow, Rav Yisrael Friedman, "You're writing great articles in the Yated." He said, "Yeah." "It's *leshem shamayim* right?" "Yeah." Rav Aharon Leib said, "*Leshem gornisht!* Sit yourself down with your *yetzer hara*, and your *yetzer hara* is going to tell you to write the articles to make *parnasah*, and you're going to say, 'Okay, I am *maskim* (agreeable).' Then he's going to tell you to write the articles to get *kavod*. *Nu, maskim*. Then he's going to tell you to write the articles to get even with the people or the groups you want to get even with. You have a pen? You have the power of the pen. You can write nicely, politically correct, you can *shtech* people. 'I am *maskim*.' After all that, tell your *yetzer hara*, 'Okay, I gave in to you in everything. Now let me ask you for something. Maybe, let's really do something a little *leshem shamayim*. *Nu*, you want to be *maskim* to that?' It was only after he gave in to him. Do you hear how Rav Aharon Leib understood people?! You hear how he plummeted the depths of people?!

I told that fellow, by the way, "You can get cured. You can get cured. You can get out of Mitzrayim. I don't care what level you're on. You're a decent *bachur*. You *daven* well. You learn well. You want to get out, just the *yetzer hara* has you wrapped in plastic saran wrap. He has you wrapped and packaged. *Pashut*, you can't move. He has you convinced that you can't *daven*, you can't learn, you can't sleep, you can't function without it." I told the guy, "Get out of it, but you're going to need therapy." He went to therapy, and I worked with him.

The guy was *yotzei Mitzrayim*. He said, "There's only one cure. I've got to get married." I told him, "You don't have to get married. You'll get married after you get some control over yourself. You can't get married." *Baruch Hashem*, he got married a year later, after he got out of his Mitzrayim.

THE TREASURE HUNT FOR SELF CONTROL

So where do you start? Where do you begin the program? Do you begin with your thoughts? No. Do you begin with your *diburim*? No. You know what you begin with? Your *ma'asim*, your actions.

Now, how do you begin with your actions? One of the *rishonim*, Rabeinu Avraham ben Rav Dovid (1125-1198), was a giant. He was known as the Ra'avad Hashlishi. He wrote a *sefer* called *Ba'alei Nefesh*, and in that *sefer* he has a *sha'ar* called *Sha'ar Hakedushah*. And on that *sefer* Rabeinu Zerachya Halevi (1115-1186), the *heilegeh* Rabeinu Zerachya wrote *hagahos* (notes). At the beginning of *Sha'ar Hakedushah*, Rabeinu Zerachya writes a little poem. He doesn't argue with Ra'avad. It's *kulo machmadim*. *Kulo mamtakim*. What Rabeinu Zerachya writes in this *perek* is *mamash hafla vefela*. He writes over there how a person begins to be *machnia* (subjugate) his *yetzer hara*. He says as follows.¹

HOW DOVID HAMELECH OVERCAME HIS YETZER HARA

By Dovid Hamelech, *Chazal* tell us his *yetzer hara* was *chazak vekashah*, powerful, והיה צריך לעשות עמו מלחמה בכל יום, Dovid Hamelech had to battle his *yetzer hara* every day. If you think he was some kind of natural, born *tzaddik*, he wasn't. And he was *lochem*, he fought. כיוון שראה שלא היה יכול לעמוד בה, when he saw that he couldn't deal with this battle. You know what he decided? עמד והרגו, Dovid Hamelech said, "There's only one way. I can't fight with the *yetzer hara*. I've got to kill him." So he killed him. ולבי חלל בקרבי, it says in Tehillim (109:22), "my heart is pierced within me." Some say he killed it through fasting, through *sak*. Some say that he was *lochem* because he saw that he couldn't deal with this battle. פירש מן האשה לגמרי כי ראה, because he saw that he couldn't deal with this battle. האיסור, from the *heter* it was drawing him to the *isur*. Whether it was this way or that way, Dovid Hamelech saw his *yetzer hara* was *mesgaber* on him, and he made it his business עמו ונלחם, until he completely destroyed it.

DEFINE, CONFINE, AND REFINER YOUR NATURE

"What does that have to do with me," you may ask. "I'm not Dovid Hamelech!" Says the Ra'avad, וכן כל האדם צריך, "What does that have to do with me," you may ask. "I'm not Dovid Hamelech!" Says the Ra'avad, וכן כל האדם צריך, *everybody*, he says, has to wage this battle. But first, he has to know his *teva*. And now the Ra'avad comes and blesses us. Hakadosh Baruch Hu enabled the Ra'avad *beruach kadsho* to give us some advice, to give the world a program, which the *rishonim* devoured. The *rishonim* bring this down many a time. Rabeinu Yonah in *Yesod Hateshuvah* brings this down.² All over, they bring it down. Let's follow the program because it's a very simple program. You don't need long-term therapy to succeed in this, rabbosai.

He says that the first thing is to be *machnia* your *yetzer hara* - you've got to start withholding your *guf* from pleasures. Don't feed your *guf* all the pleasures.

¹ וכו', דוד עשה עמו מלחמה וראה שלא היה יכול לעמוד בו עמד עליו והרגו שנאמר ולבי חלל בקרבי. פי' אברהם השלים עמו, הי יצור רך וטבעו נח וערב שלא היה צריך לעשות עמו מלחמה כמ"ש בגדרים בתחלה אברם שלא היה מולך אלא על רמ"ג איברים ולבסוף אברהם שהמליכו על רמ"ח איברים שהוסיפו לו ממשלה על שתי אונות ועל שתי עינים ועל הגויה. אבל דוד היה יצור קשה וחזו והי' צריך לעשות עמו מלחמה בכל יום וכיון שראה שלא היה יכול לעמוד כנגדו עמד עליו והרגו. יש מפרשים הרגו בשקים ובתעניות. ויש שפי' שפירש מן האשה לגמרי כי ראה שמתוך ההיתר הסיתו אל האיסור כדאמרין משביעו רעב מרעיבו שבע. ובין כדברי זה ובין כדברי זה כיון שראה יצרו מתגבר עליו שם את פניו להכניעו ולהכריעו. וכן כל האדם צריך לעשות כן כ"א ואחד לפי מה שהוא מכיר.

² וז"ל: הרי לך שלשה פרקים לשלשה וידוים. ככה יעשה כל הימים מיום תחלת תשובתו עד חודש ימים או שנה תמימה עד שיתחזק ביראת הבורא ויניח כל מעשים הרעים. וכשימור עצמו מן העבירות שהיה רגיל בהם וכמה פעמים שבאו לידו ונזהר מהם, לא יירא עוד כי מן השמים יסייעוהו. ואף העבירות יחשבו לו לזכות ועל פשעיו הישנים אשר השליך מעליו יהיה תמיד תוהה ומתחרט ומבקש עליהם מאת המקום למחותם מספר הזכרונות, וגם יענה נפשו עליהם

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I remember I once heard a *rav* - the guy thought he was a *rav*. He suggested that all *bachurim* should focus on *ta'avos achilah* (desire for food). That was his *eitzah tovah*. Because since it's allowed - a kosher food is allowed - so pig out! That was his *lashon*. "They should go for gold! Let them do sports. Let them do whatever physical desires they have. Let them give into it. And then they'll channel their *ta'avos* toward that."

That's the biggest *shtus* that's *shayach* in the *velt* because if a person encourages his *ta'anugim* (pleasures), there's not going to be any way he's going to get spared! There's no such thing as 'directing' your energy into sports. If you direct your *ta'anugei haguf* into food, and sports, and other things, you will end up with all the *yetzer haras* and *kol davar asur!*

You know where it says that? In the Ra'avad. The Gaon in *Even Shleimah*, *perek beis* also writes that.³ He says a person should not say, "Let me go and I'm going to follow, I'm going to sow my oats, I'm going to give myself the opportunity to follow my *ta'avos* and my *chemdos* and then afterwards I'll get it out of myself." Another *chochmah* that parents have is when they say, "Let them get it out of their system." But the Gr"a says *אחריהם למשוך שמתחיל למשוך*, כי, if a person begins to be drawn after them, *נטרד*, he's going to become obsessed, *והולך*, he's going to leave the *chaim hanitzchiyim*. He's going to leave eternal life. He says, *ואף מי שיש בו תורה ומצוות*, even if you have Torah and *mitzvos*, *כשתמשך*, אחר התורה, when you're going to be drawn after the *ta'avah*, you're finished! You're gone. *ואבד הכל*, you're going to lose it all. Any time you hear such a *shtus* like that person said, run away from such *narishkeit!*

So what's the *eitzah*? The Ra'avad says that in order for a person to get control over his *ta'avos*, one must understand that all the *ta'avos* are intermingled. It's not separate *sugyos*. That's not the *pshat*. Show me somebody who is a big *ba'al ta'avah* in the area of *achilah* and in other areas, he's a *kadosh*. No. It's all one *zach*. He says the *eitzah haye'utzah* is, he calls it *hageder hagadol*, הגדר הגדול והשמירה המעולה והדרך הטוב, you hear this one? Ah, this is good! For a person to *machnia* his *yetzer hara* he says: *הוא רעבון הנפש ממעוט הנאותיה ותענוגיה במאכל ובמשקה*, limit yourself from your pleasures and *ta'anugim* in food and drink. You hear that?

TRADE OFF ONE MEASURE OF PLEASURE

Now, he doesn't say go cold turkey. It's very interesting. He says, give yourself something in exchange for the *mi'ut* reduction that you have decided to apply to control the *ta'avos*. If a guy declares, "I am *ta'anug* free," that's drastic, he says. *Ta'anug* free. You know what he should give himself in exchange? He should enjoy good smells, *besamim*. Let him enjoy *rechitzah bechamim*, hot showers, because it's *geshmak*. He says the little *ma'achal* that you do eat, should be *mesukan*, prepared well. Don't eat it without salt, or without sugar, or cinnamon. It should be *metubal yafeh*, spiced well. He should enjoy what he's doing. He should enjoy eating. To go to a level of not enjoying eating is not the way to do it. He says by doing this, your *nefesh* will be able to accept it and it will be appeased when you limit from it the *ma'achal* and the *mishteh*.

Now, how do you do that? He says *לעולם יניח מעט*, a person should begin the withdrawal by leaving a little bit over on his plate. Do not fill yourself up completely when you eat. Surely, don't go for a second portion, and not a third. When you take that first portion, make sure you leave over a little bit. And don't be a wine drinker, he says.

This is a tremendous insight he just told us, rabbosai! In order to be a *moshel* (to rule) over your *ta'avos*, in order to be *machnia* yourself, you can gain tremendous self-control over your *ta'avos*. You know how? Just by not giving into them completely. Just by stopping yourself a little bit!

EXAMPLES OF TRADE-OFFS THAT WORK

Should you take three cookies? So you say, "I'm only going to have two." But if you really want three? Then you get a *frum yetzer hara* that makes you think, "What about a *kezayis*? What about a *kebaytza*?" The *yetzer hara* comes to you with the problem of not doing *bal tashchis*. All of a sudden, you're worried about *bal tashchis*. And it is not about health. This is a self-control program. Never fill your *ta'avah*. Rabeinu Yonah calls him *echad meichassidei olam*. You hear this? He says, don't say, "I won't eat meat." Don't say, "I'm not going to drink wine." No. He says, just leave over some of your food.

Now, does this sound easy? It sounds easy, right? When I first saw it, I said, "This? This is a cakewalk! Cakewalk. This is nothing. It's a piece of cake." It's a *pelah*. You don't realize what your *ta'avah* is! This is what happens: First, you start having a *shaylah* of how much to leave over. The *yetzer hara* tells you, "You know what? Instead of leaving over, take an extra portion. Take two up front, two scoops of the big mashed potatoes, and then you'll leave over half a scoop. You *chapped* an extra half. Isn't that called *ta'anis haRa'avad*?" That's not called *ta'anis haRa'avad*, oh no! Or the *yetzer* tells you, "You don't have to leave over such a big amount. It says *me'at*" (a little bit). Who says that's the *shiur*?" So you take a little bit more, and then you take a *nach* a little bit, and then you leave over, and you say, "This is already *pachus mishiur*, let me finish it up already," and you finish it up. That's what happens.

You don't realize how sick human beings can be. On the other hand, you don't realize how much you can achieve through exercising control over simple things. Things that you would not call being *moser nefesh* for. But just to eat another piece of potato chips. You say, "It's already there. What is one more French fry going to do to me?" How many do you need to live off? These are good fries. These are good fries! What if you go to a place and they have what's called truffle fries? I once went with someone to a certain place. He said, "You have to try these. They're truffle fries." Actually, you have to imagine a lot that it's special fries. If you imagine, it works. I left over a few. He said, "You're going to leave

³ לא יאמר האדם אלך מעט אחר התאוה והחמדה ואחר כך אפרוש מהם, כי כיון שמתחיל למשוך אחריהם, נטרד והולך מן החיים הנצחים לגמרי, כי קשה מאד לפרוש מהם, ואף מי שיש בו יראה, תורה ומצוות, כשתמשך אחר התאוה, יאבד הכל.

those over?! It's *bal tashchis!*" I said, "This is the first time I'm eating truffle fries, so I'll leave over a few, big deal." He said, "That's *bal tashchis.*" He puts his hand across and grabs the fries off my plate, and puts them in his mouth!

A person has to understand that it's simple to practice exercising control. Now, there are a lot of variations of this. The Alter from Kelm said a variation of this methodology. Let's say a person is in the middle of eating the French fries - and then he stops. Or, in the middle of eating the chicken, he pauses. He pauses and waits. He looks around. Everybody else is going further. They're *mamish* digging in and stuffing themselves. Look around the restaurant sometimes. You don't realize how much you can grow from such an exercise, rabbosai! You don't realize it!

A FOOD-OBSESSED PERSON

I remember there was a *bachur* when I was in *yeshivah*, who was very smitten. He was obsessed with food. He hated to be *mafsik* in the middle of his meal. What he did was he would eat after everybody finished. What would he do? Sadly, I watched him many times. I even helped him sometimes. He would go around the tables, and if any chicken was left on the bone on someone's plate, he would pull it off and put it on his plate. He always had a little heaping mountain on his plate. If a guy left a *polke*, he took the *polke*. But he took all the chicken off first and there had to be a mountain of chicken on the plate. No bones. He didn't want any *ikuvim* (delays). No *menios*. Nothing getting in the way. He took the fork, he held the fork in his hand like this and he ate. It was funny to watch. People would laugh, and he would laugh with them. *Nebach*. It was a *rachmanus*. What? Do you think you're better?! You're not any different from him! Rabbosai, we're not different from him. He just did it on a bigger level. But a person has to realize, we all face the same type of challenges on our own level.

A DECISION TO CHANGE, *LECHVOD HABOREI*

The Ra'avad says that a person should start with *ma'asim* - *achilah* is *ma'asim*. It's not *machshavah* and it's not *dibur* yet. It's the lowest level. The Ra'avad tells us, you want to be *machnia* your *yetzer hara*? You want to get a hold of yourself and be able to hold yourself back from other *ma'asim ra'im*? You want to be able to stop yourself from *diburim ra'im*? You want to be able to stop *machshavos raos*? This is where you begin. Take yourself in your hands and say you are not going to give in to your *taavos* completely.

Rabeinu Yonah (ibid) explains, however, that it only works if you do it *lechvod haBorei*. You have to do it *lechvod* the *Borei*, not because you're on a diet. He says ואל יאכל כדי תאווה, don't fill yourself up to your gills. בדרך זה, this *derech*, ימנענו מחטא, is going to hold you back from sin. You understand what he says over here? That's the *ikar teshuvah*. That's the *ikar teshuvah* and the *ikar* process.

HOW RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ATE BREAKFAST

My *Zeida* (Rav Avigdor Miller) had a *minhag* when he used to eat breakfast, he used to take one spoon, put it in his mouth, and then put the spoon down on the table and stop. I wouldn't be surprised if that was one of his *cheshbonos*. He said he was thinking about how enjoyable each spoonful was. He wanted to appreciate each spoonful, the *chessed Hashem* that Hashem is doing.

HOW TO MAKE HASHEM LOVE YOU

You understand this? The Rabeinu Yonah says (ibid), do you know what this is going to do to you? This is going to be *mazkir* (remind) you, this is going to develop in you *ahavas haBorei* more than a שבוע (fasting once a week)! Hashem is going to love you also! You want to make Hashem love you? This is how you make Hashem love you. It is a simple *eitzah*.

Start taking yourself in your hands. כי זה בכל יום תמיד, it's constant, better than fasting a whole day. Every time you drink, every time you eat, לביה מתאוה לכבוד הבורא, That's called *sheviras hayetzer*. You're saying to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, "I want to control myself. I want to get my *yetzer hara* under my control."

This is a *moradige chessed* Rabosai, that we have over here in these weeks. We read about *yetzias Mitzrayim*, and these are the weeks that are designated for this. So let us start undertaking this right now.

EVEN A LITTLE *HACHNA'AH* IS A HUGE SUCCESS

Even if you do it for a little while and you see the *peiros*, and you see that it helps you be *machnia* yourself, you will be way ahead of the game. You'll be a very lucky man. So therefore let us *daven* to Hakadosh Baruch Hu to give us the will to carry this out. Let us *daven* to Hakadosh Baruch Hu that we can become an *epes* and an *epes* and an *epes* - instead of becoming *efes efes efes*.

¹ואני רואה הגדר הגדול והשמור המעולה והדרך הטוב להכניע היצר הוא רעבון הנפש ממעוט הטאותיה ותענוגיה במאכל ובמשנה רק שיהנה מן הריח הטוב ורחיצת החמין לפי שהחמין ערבין לו והמאכל המעט שיאכל יהא מתוקן ומתובל יפה בעבור אשר יערב עליו ותהיה נפשו מקבלתו ומפייסות במעט ממנו ולעולם יניח מעט מכדי צרכו ומהשלמת תאוותו ולא ישתה יין כי אם מזוג יפה כדי שלא תטרף דעתו עליו ועל זה אמרו ז"ל סעודתך הטאתך משוך ירך ממנה. ושתי תקנות גדולות יש בענין הזה. האחת שלא תזיקנו אכילתו. והשנית כי היא הכנעת היצר ושברון התאוה, וכמו שאמרו בסעודה כן הדרך לכל הנאות שבעולם ותענוגיו שלא ימלא אדם מהם כל תאוותו. ואין צ"ל שישמור אדם מן המאכלים שהוא מכיר שהן מזיקין אותו ואפשר לו וזולתן הרי זה פושע בגופו ופושע בנפשו מפני שהוא הולך אחר תאוותו ואינו חושש על אבדת גופו והיא היא דרך היצה"ר ועצת הסכלים להסיתו מדרך החיים אל דרך המות. וידע כל חי המדבר שאין דרך ליצה"ר אלא מדרך ההיתר ופתח דרכו מן המותר אצלו ואם ישמור את הפתח אינו צריך שימור אחר. וכבר ערכתי את הכל לפניך בתחלת השער הזה כי דרך היועץ הבלעיל ההוא יעצו למלאות תאוותו מן המותר לו. ואחרי הרגילו אותו בהיתר והרגילו את נפשו להיות שוקקת כל עת ולהיותה מוכנת אל רעבונה אז יסיתנה לאסור הקל ומן הקל אל החמור כאשר אמרתי לך. ועל זה תזהר בהיתר ואם תגדר בו את עצמך ותמנעט תאוותך המותר לך מובטח אתה שלא יסיתך עוד יצרך אל האסור כי אם יעלה אל לבך דבר אסור מיד אתה נושא קל וחומר לעצמך במותר לי נאסרתי באסור לי לא כ"ש וכיון שאתה נושא ק"ו זה עליך מובטח לך שאת' פורש מן ההרהור וכ"ש מן המעשה ואל יתענה אדם עני נפש פן יחלש לבו ויתקלקל מעשיו וטבעיו ויתערב מוחו ויהיה הפסדו מרובה משכרו כי יבטל מן התורה ומן התפלה ואם ילמד לא תהיה תורתו מיושבת ולא יסכים להלכה ולפלפול השמועה לפי שאין התורה נקנית אלא מתוך שמחה ואל ימנע עצמו מכל שמחת מצוה ומכל הנאת מצוה רק שיהיה עניני פקוחות כנגד היצר ויהיה נזהר עליו פן ימלא כל תאוותו. ואם יחלש לבו על מיעוט אכילתו טוב לו שיאכל ב' פעמים ביום מעט ואל ימלא כריסו בפעם אחת ואם לא יזדמן לו לאכול ב' פעמים ביום יהיה לו מן המרקחות המישובות הלב ויאכל מהן מעט ויתחזק לבו גם אם

יראה בעצמו ובטבעו שהיא צריך להתענות יום או יומים בשבוע יתענה הכל לפי תקנתו כי היושב בתענית והוא צריך לו נקרא קדוש ובלבד שלא יבטל מן התורה ומן המצות בעבורו, וכו'.

ואם אדם חלש הוא שאינו יכול לסבול עינויים קשים ותעניות, ימשוך מתאוותיו, ואל ימלא כל תאוותו, לא במאכל ולא במשתה, וכן אמר הרב ר' אברהם בר דוד שהיה א' מחסידי עולם, הגדול המעולה המופלא, מניעת המאכלות. וכן פירש דבריו, אל יעזוב לגמרי מלאכול בשר ולשתות יין, כי דייק מה שאסרה תורה, אך בעת מאכלו ועודנו תאב לאכול יניח ממנו לכבוד הבורא מתאוותיו, ואל יאכל כפי תאוותו. ודרך זה ימנענו מחטוא, ויזכרנו אהבת הבורא יותר מתענית אחד בשבוע. כי זה בכל יום תמיד מדי אכלו ומדי שתייתו יניח מתאוותו לכבוד הבורא: וישים לבו בתורה; אם היה רגיל ללמוד דף אחד ילמד שני דפין, כי גדול ת"ת שמביא לידי מעשה. ויהיה מייסר עצמו בכפיית יצרו לתורה ולמצוות, והן הם יסורין של אהבה. ואל ילך אדם במצות הבורא כאדם העושה במקרה פעמים עושה פעמים מניח, אלא כולן יעשה בלב שלם תמיד. ואל יניח משום ענין לא מפני עצלות ולא מפני בושה, כגון אם רגיל לאכול ג' סעודות שבת למצוה, ונתארז אצל בני אדם שאינם מחזיקים באותה מצוה, אל יניח המצוה מפני הבושה, כי אוי לה לאותה בושה, אלא יעזי פניו ויאמר, שימו ואסעוד כזית כמצות הבורא, וכן כל כיוצא בזה. ואפי' אם יהיו העולם מתלוצצים עליו, מ"מ יש לו להיות כפתי בעיניהם, ולא יעבור מצוה קטנה ממצות הבורא, שעל זה נאמר באהבתה תשגה תמיד, כלומר באהבתה של מצוה תהי' שוגה ופתי, להניח כל עסקיך ולדון בה. ודוגמה זה מצינו בר' אלעזר בן פדת, שהיה יושב בצד שוק התחתון של צפורי ועוסק בתורה וסדינו מוטל בצד שוק העליון והיה נראה כפתי בעיני העולם בשביל אהבת מצות הבורא לעסוק בתורה (בפ' כיצד מעברין בעירובין). ואם עשה כן ונפטר בחצי ימיו, נותנין לו שכר כאלו חי כל שבעים שנה ימי שנותיו במצוות, וז"ש שלמה המלך ע"ה בחכמתו מתוקה שנת העובד אם מעט ואם הרבה יאכל, אם ימיו מרובין או מועטין, שכרו של מועט כשכרו של מרובה. משה פרנס את ישראל ארבעים שנה ושמאל הנביא פרנס י' שנים, ושקלן הכתוב כאחד, דכתיב משה ואהרן בכהניו ושמואל בקוראי שמו. משל למלך ששכר פועלים והתחילו במלאכה לעשות באמונה, אמר המלך לאחד מהם בוא ונטייל במדינות בגנים ופרדסים, הלך עמו כל היום והאחרים טרחו במלאכתו. לעת ערב באו למלך ואמרו תן לנו שכרנו, ובא אותו שטייל עם המלך ושאל שכרו כמו כן. אמרו האחרים ומה יש לך ליקח, הלא לא טרחת כל היום כולו באמונה במלאכה. השיב להם, על ידי לא נשאר לפעול. וראה המלך שהדין עמו ונתן לו שכרו. כן הוא כתוב במדרש תנחומא. והשב אל ידמה בנפשו לומר, למה זה הכל איגע לריק ולתוהו כוחי אכלה, כי איך תעמוד תשובתי לפני עוונותי, וכל מה שאוכל לעשות לא יועיל כנגד העוונות שעברו עלי. אל יאמר כן. כי הבטיח הקב"ה ע"י יחזקאל הנביא, כי פשעיהם לא יזכרו עוד, דכתיב והרשע כי ישוב מכל חטאתיו אשר עשה ושמר את כל חוקותי ועשה משפט וצדקה חיה יחיה לא ימות. כל פשעיו אשר עשה לא יזכרו לו, בצדקתו אשר עשה יחיה. נשלם יסוד התשובה

ועוד כתוב שם וז"ל: דרך היצר הרע להסית בתחילה ללמוד, וגם למלאות תאוותו, כי אם יסיתו שלא ללמוד כלל, לא ישמע לו. וכאשר ירגיל עצמו בהנאת הגוף, אז ממילא לא ילמד, כי טרוד תמיד למלאות הנאת הגוף, והיצר הרע אומר לו, שיזיק לבריאותו כשיעזוב הרגלו. אחר כך מתעצל לרדוף אחר התורה והמצוות (ואף על פי שלא יהיה לו על ידי זה העדר התאוה), ואחר כך אינו רוצה לעשותם, אף אם יזדמן לו בלא טרחה ויגיעה. כל ההנאות שאדם נהנה בעולם הזה, יתהפכו לו בקבר למרה, והקרומין המתאווים נעשים בחיבוט הקבר. ושם ינדון כל אבר ואבר שנהנה בעולם הזה שלא במצוה, ושורפין אותו כארס של נחש. וגם הצדיקים נעשים בחיבוט הקבר, אבל הצדיק המתכוין בהנאתו רק לשם שמים, אדרבה, נחשבת לו ההנאה למצוה, ואכילתו כקרבן. התאוה, אין ראוי לילך אחריה כלל, אבל חמדת הפרנסה והממון, אינה אסורה לגמרי, כמו שכתוב: "למען יברכך ה' בכל מעשי ידיך", רק שיהיה באמונה ולא יגע בממון שאינו שלו, וכו'.

THE BOTTOM LINE

If a person cannot control his actions, he will never be able to control his speech or his thoughts. To gain control over our negative tendencies and behaviors, we must begin examining and learning to control our ma'asim. The job of the yetzer hara, of course, is to tell us that we cannot control ourselves; for that reason, we need to employ a program. The secret to beginning the battle of controlling our actions lies in the ability to withhold our body from extra pleasures of food and drink, and learning to "exchange" this drive for other, permissible pleasures, such as smelling pleasant scents, or even preparing whatever food we do eat in a delicious way. This strategy will train and prepare us to accept some limits and still allow the body to be "appeased." Practically speaking, according to Ra'avad, to machnia your yetzer hara, we can begin leaving some food on the plate and not filling ourselves up completely. The secret lies in not giving into your taivos completely, and learning how to stop yourself by exhibiting some degree of self-control when it comes to those last few bites. But to really succeed in our commitment, we also have to do it l'kavod Habori - to honor Hashem - not just to diet, etc. This is the ikar concept of teshuva, and if done properly and with the right intentions, we will develop Ahavas HaBorei, a love that will reciprocate back on us! This week I will (bli neder) try leaving some food on my plate at the end of my meals for shviras hayetzer, as a way of saying to Hashem, "Hakodosh Boruch Hu, I want to control myself, and I want to bring my yetzer hora under my control. Help me accomplish this goal!"

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“GIVE ME YOUR CIGARETTES!!”

I want to begin today with a story, a new story. There is a fellow in Eretz Yisrael who is the editor of the Hebrew Yated Ne’eman. His name is Yisrael Friedman. He was extremely close with Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman. He was in his house many times. He didn’t say what he did there, but he said he was in his house quite often. He was very, very close to Rav Aharon Leib.. One day, eighteen years before Rav Aharon Leib was *niftar*, the phone rings by Yisrael Friedman. He picks up the phone - it’s the *rosh yeshivah*. Rav Aharon Leib is calling. Rav Aharon Leib tells him, “I have to speak to you right now.” It was the *chaf gimmel Tammuz*. He remembers the date. He came running to Rav Aharon Leib’s house.

Rav Aharon Leib tells him, “I heard something terrible about you.” The guy started to tremble, and tried to think as hard as he could, “What did he discover about me?” It’s a pretty big rebuke. He sat there with his mouth open like a deer caught in the headlights, and Rav Aharon Leib said to him, “Is it true that you smoke?” “Yes.” Rav Aharon Leib then asked him, “Do you want to stop?” He said, “Generally, most smokers want to stop.” Rav Aharon Leib said, “And *af al pi* ken you don’t stop.” He said, “I haven’t managed to stop yet.”

The Rosh Yeshivah then did something that cured Rav Yisrael Friedman of his addiction forever. He said as follows: “You should know that there are three components of how people operate. There are *ma’asim* (actions), there are *diburim* (speech), and there are *machshavos* (thoughts). Of all those three,” he said, “what’s the easiest to control? *Ma’asim*. It’s the easiest of all three to control. It’s much harder to control your *dibur*, your speech. You know why? Because it comes from a more spiritual place. It’s more *ruchni*. A *gashmi* doesn’t have such a *shlitah* over *ruchni*.” He said, “It’s even harder to control one’s thoughts.” But then he said as follows, “If you can’t control your actions, who knows how you speak? And if you can’t control how you speak, who knows what kind of thoughts you have? A person who doesn’t control either his thoughts or his speech or his actions...” and he started banging on the table for emphasis, and said, “is *gornisht*, *gornisht*, *gornisht*” (he’s a nothing). And he said to him, “Hand over the pack of cigarettes. This isn’t *bal tashchis*.” Rav Yisrael handed over the cigarettes. The Rosh Yeshivah pulled the cigarettes out by the silver inner wrapping and he crushed them. He said, “You will no longer smoke again.”

From that moment on, Rav Yisrael never touched a cigarette. What’s more, he never had the typical withdrawal symptoms. It was as if he had never smoked.

He was looking back and thinking about this incident. What was it about what the Rosh Yeshivah had said that made such an impact on him? He said he gave up a lifetime addiction *keheref ayin* (instantly). He thought to himself, and said, "*Vus bin ich*, what am I? *Gornisht*. The Rosh Yeshivah thinks I'm *gornisht*." That alone changed him!

This is a very important lesson. If a person can't control his *ma'asim*, he's a goner. In order to gain some control over yourself, you have to begin with *ma'asim*. If you deal with your *ma'asim*, you can begin to control your speech.

Everybody heard of *shemiras halashon*, a wonderful undertaking! Do you know how many people tried to be *shomer* their *lashon* and it didn't work? Do you know how many people I know who learn religiously their two *halachos* from the Chafetz Chaim a day, and they still talk all the *lashon hara* in the world!? Why is that? It's because those people have no control over their *ma'asim*. If you don't have control over your *ma'asim*, you have no control over your speech. And if you don't have control over your speech, what about your *machshavos*? *Oy va'avoy*. What goes on in your mind is *shrekla* (frightening). It's like a loose cannon! Loose actions! Loose minds!

THE BEST TIME TO ACQUIRE SELF-CONTROL

Now, this time of the year, from *Shemos* to *Mishpatim* is the time when a person works on himself. During this time of the year a person can acquire and make tremendous gains in this area. I want to teach you and share with you some steps on how to accomplish this. But first, I want to make you aware of something that you're surely aware of, namely, the conversations that go on between you and your *yetzer hara*: "What do you think, I can be a *parush*? What do you think, I can be a *chassid*? I'm a regular guy. What do you want from me? You're never going to control yourself. You've been a loose cannon since you were born. Your mother told you that when you were little, you couldn't stop talking. You talked in your crib to yourself. You talked to your dolls. You talked to your monsters. You talked to your pillow. And you never stopped since then. And your thoughts? You had *dimyonos*. You imagined monsters. You imagined you were a cowboy. You imagined you were a fireman. You imagined you were a policeman. You imagined who knows what. And you never stopped."

You're never going to get control over yourself unless you put yourself into some sort of program. Without a program, you're not going to change. How do you get to the program?

MEKADESH A LITTLE BIT OF YOUR MAASIM

I once met a *bachur* who had a very difficult time controlling his *ma'asim*. He was such an addict that he did *aveiros* three hundred and sixty-five days a year, *lerabos* Rosh Hashanah and Yom Hakippurim. He told me that he did it for eight years straight. You know what kind of *aveiros* that is? Can you imagine that? I can't. And he was a good *bachur*. I'm telling you he was a *bachur* who was a *masmid*. *Pashut* the *yetzer hara* had him convinced that he could not function and it was *kulo leshem shamayim* - which was another thing that Rav Aharon Leib detested. He

detested two phrases. He detested "*mesiras nefesh*" or "*moser nefesh*," and he detested "*leshem shamayim*." He said, "No one is *moser nefesh*. *Medreit a kup*, it's a made up imagination. A guy thinks if he pushes himself just a drop - Ah! He's *moser nefesh*. That's not *mesiras nefesh*. And *leshem shamayim*?! *Vos is leshem shamayim*?!"

Rav Aharon Leib told this fellow, Rav Yisrael Friedman, "You're writing great articles in the Yated." He said, "Yeah." "It's *leshem shamayim* right?" "Yeah." Rav Aharon Leib said, "*Leshem gornisht!* Sit yourself down with your *yetzer hara*, and your *yetzer hara* is going to tell you to write the articles to make *parnasah*, and you're going to say, 'Okay, I am *maskim* (agreeable).' Then he's going to tell you to write the articles to get *kavod*. *Nu, maskim*. Then he's going to tell you to write the articles to get even with the people or the groups you want to get even with. You have a pen? You have the power of the pen. You can write nicely, politically correct, you can *shtech* people. 'I am *maskim*.' After all that, tell your *yetzer hara*, 'Okay, I gave in to you in everything. Now let me ask you for something. Maybe, let's really do something a little *leshem shamayim*. *Nu*, you want to be *maskim* to that?'" It was only after he gave in to him. Do you hear how Rav Aharon Leib understood people?! You hear how he plummeted the depths of people?!

I told that fellow, by the way, "You can get cured. You can get cured. You can get out of Mitzrayim. I don't care what level you're on. You're a decent *bachur*. You *daven* well. You learn well. You want to get out, just the *yetzer hara* has you wrapped in plastic saran wrap. He has you wrapped and packaged. *Pashut*, you can't move. He has you convinced that you can't *daven*, you can't learn, you can't sleep, you can't function without it." I told the guy, "Get out of it, but you're going to need therapy." He went to therapy, and I worked with him.

The guy was *yotzei Mitzrayim*. He said, "There's only one cure. I've got to get married." I told him, "You don't have to get married. You'll get married after you get some control over yourself. You can't get married." *Baruch Hashem*, he got married a year later, after he got out of his Mitzrayim.

THE TREASURE HUNT FOR SELF CONTROL

So where do you start? Where do you begin the program? Do you begin with your thoughts? No. Do you begin with your *diburim*? No. You know what you begin with? Your *ma'asim*, your actions.

Now, how do you begin with your actions? One of the *rishonim*, Rabeinu Avraham ben Rav Dovid (1125-1198), was a giant. He was known as the Ra'avad Hashlishi. He wrote a *sefer* called *Ba'alei Nefesh*, and in that *sefer* he has a *sha'ar* called *Sha'ar Hakedushah*. And on that *sefer* Rabeinu Zerachya Halevi (1115-1186), the *heilegeh* Rabeinu Zerachya wrote *hagahos* (notes). At the beginning of *Sha'ar Hakedushah*, Rabeinu Zerachya writes a little poem. He doesn't argue with Ra'avad. It's *kulo machmadim*. *Kulo mamtakim*. What Rabeinu Zerachya writes in this *perek* is *mamash hafla vefela*. He writes over there how a person begins to be

machnia (subjugate) his *yetzer hara*. He says as follows.¹

HOW DOVID HAMELECH OVERCAME HIS YETZER HARA

By Dovid Hamelech, *Chazal* tell us his *yetzer hara* was *chazak vekashah*, powerful, והיה צריך לעשות עמו מלחמה בכל יום, Dovid Hamelech had to battle his *yetzer hara* every day. If you think he was some kind of natural, born *tzaddik*, he wasn't. And he was *lochem*, he fought. כיוון שראה שלא היה יכול, when he saw that he couldn't deal with this battle. You know what he decided? עמד והרגו, Dovid Hamelech said, "There's only one way. I can't fight with the *yetzer hara*. I've got to kill him." So he killed him. ולבי חלל, it says in Tehillim (109:22), "my heart is pierced within me." Some say he killed it through fasting, through *sak*. Some say that he was פירש מן פירש, because he saw האיסור הסיתו אל האיסור, from the *heter* it was drawing him to the *isur*. Whether it was this way or that way, Dovid Hamelech saw his *yetzer hara* was *mesgaber* on him, and he made it his business להכניעו ונלחם עמו, until he completely destroyed it.

DEFINE, CONFINE, AND REFINER YOUR NATURE

"What does that have to do with me," you may ask. "I'm not Dovid Hamelech!" Says the *Ra'avad*, וכן כל האדם צריך לעשות כן, *everybody*, he says, has to wage this battle. But first, he has to know his *teva*. And now the *Ra'avad* comes and blesses us. *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* enabled the *Ra'avad beruach kadsho* to give us some advice, to give the world a program, which the *rishonim* devoured. The *rishonim* bring this down many a time. *Rabeinu Yonah* in *Yesod Hateshuvah* brings this down.² All over, they bring it down. Let's follow the program because it's a very simple program. You don't need long-term therapy to succeed in this, *rabbosai*.

He says that the first thing is to be *machnia* your *yetzer hara* - you've got to start withholding your *guf* from pleasures. Don't feed your *guf* all the pleasures.

I remember I once heard a *rav* - the guy thought he was a *rav*. He suggested that all *bachurim* should focus on *ta'avos achilah* (desire for food). That was his *eitzah tova*. Because since it's allowed - a kosher food is allowed - so pig out! That was his *lashon*. "They should go for gold! Let them do sports. Let them do whatever physical desires they have. Let them give into it. And then they'll channel their *ta'avos* toward that."

¹ וכי, דוד עשה עמו מלחמה וראה שלא הי יכול לעמוד בו עמד עליו והרגו שנאמר ולבי חלל בקרבי. פ"א אברהם השלים עמו, הי יצור רך וטבעו נח וערב שלא הי צריך לעשות עמו מלחמה כמ"ש בנדרים בתחלה אברם שלא הי מולך אלא על רמ"ג איברים ולבסוף אברהם שהמליכו על רמ"ח איברים שהוסיפו לו ממשלה על שתי אזנים ועל שתי עינים ועל הגוייה. אבל דוד הי יצור קשה וחי' צריך לעשות עמו מלחמה בכל יום וכיון שראה שלא הי יכול לעמוד כנגדו עמד עליו והרגו. יש מפרשים הרגו בשקים ובתעניות. ויש שפי' שפירש מן האשה לגמרי כי ראה שמתוך ההיתר הסיתו אל האיסור כדאמרין משביעו רעב מרעיבו שבע. ובין כדברי זה ובין כדברי זה כיון שראה יצור מתגבר עליו שם את פניו להכניעו ולהכריחו. וכן כל האדם צריך לעשות כן כ"א ואחד לפי מה שהוא מכיר.

² זו"ל: הרי לך שלשה פרקים לשלשה וידויים. ככה יעשה כל הימים מיום תחלת תשובתו עד חודש ימים או שנה תמימה עד שיתחזק ביראת הבורא ויניח כל מעשים הרעים. וכשישמור עצמו מן העבירות שהיה רגיל בהם וכמה פעמים שבאו לידו ונזחר מהם, לא יירא עוד כי מן השמים יסייעוהו. ואף העבירות יחשוב לו לזכות ועל פשעיו הישנים אשר השליך מעליו יהיה תמיד תוהה ומתחרט ומבקש עליהם מאת המקום למחות מספר הזכרונות, וגם יענה נפש עליהם

That's the biggest *shtus* that's *shayach* in the *velt* because if a person encourages his *ta'anugim* (pleasures), there's not going to be any way he's going to get spared! There's no such thing as 'directing' your energy into sports. If you direct your *ta'anugei haguf* into food, and sports, and other things, you will end up with all the *yetzer haras* and *kol davar asur!*

You know where it says that? In the Ra'avad. The Gaon in *Even Shleimah*, *perek beis* also writes that.³ He says a person should not say, "Let me go and I'm going to follow, I'm going to sow my oats, I'm going to give myself the opportunity to follow my *ta'avos* and my *chemdos* and then afterwards I'll get it out of myself." Another *chochmah* that parents have is when they say, "Let them get it out of their system." But the Gr"a says *כי מכיוון שמתחיל למשוך אחריהם*, if a person begins to be drawn after them, *נטרד*, he's going to become obsessed, *והולך*, he's going to leave the *chaim hanitzchiyim*. He's going to leave eternal life. He says, *ואף מי שיש בו תורה*, and *כשתמשך אחר התאוה*, when you're going to be drawn after the *ta'avah*, you're finished! You're gone. *ואבד הכל*, you're going to lose it all. Any time you hear such a *shtus* like that person said, run away from such *narishkeit!*

So what's the *eitzah*? The Ra'avad says that in order for a person to get control over his *ta'avos*, one must understand that all the *ta'avos* are intermingled. It's not separate *sugyos*. That's not the *pshat*. Show me somebody who is a big *ba'al ta'avah* in the area of *achilah* and in other areas, he's a *kadosh*. No. It's all one *zach*. He says the *eitzah haye'utzah* is, he calls it *hageder hagadol*, *הגדר הגדול והשמירה המעולה והדרך הטוב*, you hear this one? Ah, this is good! For a person to *machnia* his *yetzer hara* he says: *הוא רעבון הנפש ממעוט הנאותיה ותענוגיה במאכל ובמשתה*, limit yourself from your pleasures and *ta'anugim* in food and drink. You hear that?

TRADE OFF ONE MEASURE OF PLEASURE

Now, he doesn't say go cold turkey. It's very interesting. He says, give yourself something in exchange for the *mi'ut* reduction that you have decided to apply to control the *ta'avos*. If a guy declares, "I am *ta'anug* free," that's drastic, he says. *Ta'anug* free. You know what he should give himself in exchange? He should enjoy good smells, *besamim*. Let him enjoy *rechitzah bechamim*, hot showers, because it's *geshmak*. He says the little *ma'achal* that you do eat, should be *mesukan*, prepared well. Don't eat it without salt, or without sugar, or cinnamon. It should be *metubal yafeh*, spiced well. He should enjoy what he's doing. He should enjoy eating. To go to a level of not enjoying eating is not the way to do it. He says by doing this, your *nefesh* will be able to accept it and it will be appeased when you limit from it the *ma'achal* and the *mishteh*.

Now, how do you do that? He says *לעולם יניח מעט*, a person should begin the withdrawal by leaving a little bit over on his plate. Do not fill yourself up completely when you eat. Surely, don't go for a second portion, and not a third. When you take that first portion, make sure you leave over a little bit. And don't be a wine drinker, he says.

³ לא יאמר האדם אלך מעט אחר התאוה והחמדה ואחר כך אפרוש מהם, כי כיון שמתחיל למשוך אחריהם, נטרד והולך מן החיים הנצחים לגמרי, כי קשה מאד לפרוש מהם, ואף מי שיש בו יראה, תורה ומצוות, כשנמשך אחר התאוה, יאבד הכל.

This is a tremendous insight he just told us, rabbosai! In order to be a *moshel* (to rule) over your *ta'avos*, in order to be *machnia* yourself, you can gain tremendous self-control over your *ta'avos*. You know how? Just by not giving into them completely. Just by stopping yourself a little bit!

EXAMPLES OF TRADE-OFFS THAT WORK

Should you take three cookies? So you say, "I'm only going to have two." But if you really want three? Then you get a *frum yetzer hara* that makes you think, "What about a *kezayis*? What about a *kebaytza*?" The *yetzer hara* comes to you with the problem of not doing *bal tashchis*. All of a sudden, you're worried about *bal tashchis*. And it is not about health. This is a self-control program. Never fill your *ta'avah*. Rabeinu Yonah calls him *echad meichassidei olam*. You hear this? He says, don't say, "I won't eat meat." Don't say, "I'm not going to drink wine." No. He says, just leave over some of your food.

Now, does this sound easy? It sounds easy, right? When I first saw it, I said, "This? This is a cakewalk! Cakewalk. This is nothing. It's a piece of cake." It's a *pelah*. You don't realize what your *ta'avah* is! This is what happens: First, you start having a *shaylah* of how much to leave over. The *yetzer hara* tells you, "You know what? Instead of leaving over, take an extra portion. Take two up front, two scoops of the big mashed potatoes, and then you'll leave over half a scoop. You *chapped* an extra half. Isn't that called *ta'anis haRa'avad*?" That's not called *ta'anis haRa'avad*, oh no! Or the *yetzer* tells you, "You don't have to leave over such a big amount. It says *"me'at"* (a little bit). Who says that's the *shiur*?" So you take a little bit more, and then you take a *nach* a little bit, and then you leave over, and you say, "This is already *pachus mishiur*, let me finish it up already," and you finish it up. That's what happens.

You don't realize how sick human beings can be. On the other hand, you don't realize how much you can achieve through exercising control over simple things. Things that you would not call being *moser nefesh* for. But just to eat another piece of potato chips. You say, "It's already there. What is one more French fry going to do to me?" How many do you need to live off? These are good fries. These are good fries!" What if you go to a place and they have what's called truffle fries? I once went with someone to a certain place. He said, "You have to try these. They're truffle fries." Actually, you have to imagine a lot that it's special fries. If you imagine, it works. I left over a few. He said, "You're going to leave those over?! It's *bal tashchis*!" I said, "This is the first time I'm eating truffle fries, so I'll leave over a few, big deal." He said, "That's *bal tashchis*." He puts his hand across and grabs the fries off my plate, and puts them in his mouth!

A person has to understand that it's simple to practice exercising control. Now, there are a lot of variations of this. The Alter from Kelm said a variation of this methodology. Let's say a person is in the middle of eating the French fries - and then he stops. Or, in the middle of eating the chicken, he pauses. He pauses and waits. He looks around. Everybody else is going further. They're *mamish* digging in and stuffing themselves. Look around the restaurant sometimes. You don't realize how much you can grow from such an exercise, rabbosai! You don't realize it!

A FOOD-OBSESSED PERSON

I remember there was a *bachur* when I was in *yeshivah*, who was very smitten. He was obsessed with food. He hated to be *mafsik* in the middle of his meal. What he did was he would eat after everybody finished. What would he do? Sadly, I watched him many times. I even helped him sometimes. He would go around the tables, and if any chicken was left on the bone on someone's plate, he would pull it off and put it on his plate. He always had a little heaping mountain on his plate. If a guy left a *polke*, he took the *polke*. But he took all the chicken off first and there had to be a mountain of chicken on the plate. No bones. He didn't want any *ikuvim* (delays). No *menios*. Nothing getting in the way. He took the fork, he held the fork in his hand like this and he ate. It was funny to watch. People would laugh, and he would laugh with them. *Nebach*. It was a *rachmanus*. What? Do you think you're better?! You're not any different from him! Rabbosai, we're not different from him. He just did it on a bigger level. But a person has to realize, we all face the same type of challenges on our own level.

A DECISION TO CHANGE, *LECHVOD HABOREI*

The Ra'avad says that a person should start with *ma'asim* – *achilah* is *ma'asim*. It's not *machshavah* and it's not *dibur* yet. It's the lowest level. The Ra'avad tells us, you want to be *machnia* your *yetzer hara*? You want to get a hold of yourself and be able to hold yourself back from other *ma'asim ra'im*? You want to be able to stop yourself from *diburim ra'im*? You want to be able to stop *machshavos raos*? This is where you begin. Take yourself in your hands and say you are not going to give in to your *taavos* completely.

Rabeinu Yonah (ibid) explains, however, that it only works if you do it *lechvod haBorei*. You have to do it *lechvod* the *Borei*, not because you're on a diet. He says *וְאַל יֵאָכֵל כְּדֵי תַאֲוָתוֹ*, don't fill yourself up to your gills. *בְּדֶרֶךְ זֶה*, this *derech*, *יִמְנַעֲנוּ מִחַטָּא*, is going to hold you back from sin. You understand what he says over here? That's the *ikar teshuvah*. That's the *ikar teshuvah* and the *ikar* process.

HOW RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ATE BREAKFAST

My *Zeida* (Rav Avigdor Miller) had a *minhag* when he used to eat breakfast, he used to take one spoon, put it in his mouth, and then put the spoon down on the table and stop. I wouldn't be surprised if that was one of his *cheshbonos*. He said he was thinking about how enjoyable each spoonful was. He wanted to appreciate each spoonful, the *chessed Hashem* that Hashem is doing.

HOW TO MAKE HASHEM LOVE YOU

You understand this? The Rabeinu Yonah says (ibid), do you know what this is going to do to you? This is going to be *mazkir* (remind) you, this is going to develop in you *ahavas haBorei* more than a *תַּעֲנִית אֶחָד בַּשָּׁבוּעַ* (fasting once a week)! Hashem is going to love you also! You want to make Hashem love you? This is how you make Hashem love you. It is a simple *eitzah*.

Start taking yourself in your hands. כי זה בכל יום תמיד, it's constant, better than fasting a whole day. Every time you drink, every time you eat, מתאווה לכבוד הבורא. That's called *shevira's hayetzer*. You're saying to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, "I want to control myself. I want to get my yetzer hara under my control."

This is a *moradige chessed Rabosai*, that we have over here in these weeks. We read about *yetzias Mitzrayim*, and these are the weeks that are designated for this. So let us start undertaking this right now.

EVEN A LITTLE HACHNA'AH IS A HUGE SUCCESS

Even if you do it for a little while and you see the *peiros*, and you see that it helps you be *machnia* yourself, you will be way ahead of the game. You'll be a very lucky man. So therefore let us *daven* to Hakadosh Baruch Hu to give us the will to carry this out. Let us *daven* to Hakadosh Baruch Hu that we can become an *epes* and an *epes* and an *epes* - instead of becoming *efes efes efes*.

¹ ואני רואה הגדר הגדול והשמור המעולה והדרך הטוב להכניע היצר הוא רעבון הנפש ממעוט הנאותיה ותענוגיה במאכל ובמשתה רק שיהנה מן הריח הטוב ורחיצת החמין לפי שהחמין ערביין לו והמאכל המעט שיאכל יהא מתוקן ומתובל יפה בעבור אשר יערב עליו ותהיה נפש מקבלתו ומפיוסיות במעט ממנו ולעולם יניח מעט מכדי צרכו ומהשלמות תאותו ולא ישתה יין כי אם מזוג יפה כדי שלא תטרף דעתו עליו ועל זה אמרו ז"ל סעודתך הנאתך משוך ידך ממנה. ושתי תקנות גדולות יש בענין הזה. האחת שלא תזיקנו אכילתו. והשנית כי היא הכנעת היצר ושברון התאוה, וכמו שאמרנו בסעודה כן הדרך לכל הנאות שבעולם ותענוגיו שלא ימלא אדם מהם כל תאותו. ואין צ"ל שישמור אדם מן המאכלים שהוא מכיר שהן מזיקין אותו ואפשר לו זולתן הרי זה פושע בגופו ופושע בפניו שהוא חולך אחר תאותו ואינו חושש על אבדת גופו והיא היא דרך היצה"ר ועצת הסכלים להסיתו מדרך החיים אל דרך המות. וידע כל חי המדבר שאין דרך לצה"ר אלא מדרך ההיתר ופתח דרכו מן המותר אצלו ואם ישמור את הפתח אינו צריך שימור אחר. וכבר ערכתי את הכל לפניך בתחלת השער הזה כי דרך היועץ הבלעיל ההוא יועצו למלאות תאותו מן המותר לו. ואחרי הרגילו אותו בהיתר והתגבר מוחו וביטח הפסדו מרובה עת ולהיותה מוכנת אל רעבונה אז יסיתנה לאסור הקל ומן הקל אל החמור כאשר אמרתי לך. ועל זה תזהר בהיתר ואם תגדר בו את עצמך ותמעט תאותך המותר לך מובטח אתה שלא יסיתך עוד יצרך אל האסור כי אם יעלה אל לבך דבר אסור מיד אתה נושא קל וחומר לצמצם במותר לי נאסרתי באסור לי לא כ"ש וכיון שאתה נושא ק"ו זה עליך מובטח כל שאת' פרש מן ההרהור וכ"ש מן המעשה ואל יתענה אדם עניי נפש מן יחלש לבו ויתקלקל מעשיו ויתגבר מוחו ויחטא הפסדו מרובה משכרו כי ביטל מן התורה וכן המעלה ואם ילמד מן ההיתר תורתו מיושבת ולא יסיכרם להלכה ולפולס השמעה לפי שאין התורה נקנית אלא מתוך שמחה ואל ימנע עצמו מכל שמחת מצוה ומכל הנאת מצוה רק שיהיה עניני פקוחות כנגד היצר ויהיה נזהר עליו מן ימלא כל תאותו. ואם יחלש לבו על מיעוט אכילתו טוב לו שיאכל ב' פעמים ביום מעט ואל ימלא כריסו בפעם אחת ואם לא יזדמן לו לאכול ב' פעמים ביום יהיה לו מן המרקחות המשיבות הלב ויאכל מהן מעט ויתחזק לבו גם אם יראה בעצמו ובטבעו שיהא צריך להתענות יום או ישינה שבועות יתענה הכל לפי תקנתו כי היושב בתענית והוא צריך לו נקרא קדוש ובלבד שלא יבטל מן התורה ומן המצות בעבורו, וכו'.

² ואם אדם חלש הוא שאינו יכול לסבול עינויין קשים ותעניות, ימשוך מתאוותיו, ואל ימלא כל תאוותו, לא במאכל ולא במשתה, וכן אמר הרב ר' אברהם בר דוד שהיה א' מחסידי עולם, הגדר הגדול המעולה המופלא, מניעת המאכלות. וכן פירש דבריו, אל יעזוב לגמרי מלאכול בשר ולשתות יין, כי ידיך מה שאסרה תורה, אך בעת מאכלו ועודנו תאב לאכול יניח ממנו לכבוד הבורא מתאוותיו, ואל יאכל כפי תאוותו. ודרך זה ימנעו מחטואו, ויזכרו אהבת הבורא ויהיה מתינת אחד בשבוע. כי זה בכל יום תמיד מדי אכל ומדי שתייתו יניח מתאוותו לכבוד הבורא: וישעיה לבו בתורה; אם היה רגיל ללמוד דף אחד ילמד שני פדפין, כי גדול ת"ת שמיאלי לדיד מעשה. ויהיה מייסר עצמו בכפיית יצרו לתורה ולמצוות, והן הם סירורי ש"ה אהבה. ואל ילך אדם במצות הבורא כאדם העושה במקרה פעמים עושה פעמים מניח, אלא כולן יעשה בלב שלם תמיד. ואל יניח משום ענין לא מפני עצלות ולא מפני בושה, כגון אם רגיל לאכול ג' סעודות שבת למצוה, ותאמר אצל בני אדם שאינם מחזיקים באותה מצוה, אל יניח המצוה מפני הבושה, כי אי לה לאותה בושה, אלא עניי פניו ויאמר, שימו ואסעוד צוית מצוות הבורא, וכן כל כיוצא בזה. ואפי' אם יהיה העולם מתלוצצים עליו, מ"מ יש לו להיות כפתי בעיניהם, ולא יעבור מצוה קטנה ממצות הבורא, שעל זה נאמר באהבתה תשגה תמיד, כלומר באהבתה של מצוה תהי' שוגה ופתי, להניח כל עסקיך ולדון בה. ודוגמת זה מצינו בר' אלעזר בן פדת, שהיה יושב בצד שוק התחתון של צפורי ועוסק בתורה וסודינו מוטל בצד שוק העליון והיה רואה כפתי בעיני העולם בשביל אהבת מצות הבורא לעסוק בזה (בפ' כיצד מעברין בעירובין). ואם עשה כן ונפטר בחצי ימיו, נותנין לו שכר כאלו חי כל שבועים שנה ימי שנותיו במצוות, וז"ש שלמה המלך ע"ה בחכמתו ומתוקה שנת העובד אם מעט ואם הרבה יאכל, אם ימיו מרובין או מועטין, שכרו של מועט כשכרו של מרובה. משה פרנס את ישראל ארבעים שנה ושמואל הנביא פרנס י' שנים, ושקל הכתוב כאחד, וכתיב שמה ואחרון בחכמו ושמואל בקוראי שמו. משל למלך שחכם פועלים והתחנן במלאכה לעשות באמונה, אמר המלך לאחד מהם ונטילי במדינות בגנים ופרדסים, הכל עמו כל היסוד האחרים טורחו במלאכה. לעת ערב באו למלך ואמרו לנו כל שכרנו, ובא אותו שטייל על המלך ושאל שרכו, כן. אמרו האחרים ומה יש לך ליקח, הלא לא טרחת כל היום כולו באמונה במלאכה. השיב להם, על ידי לא נשאר לפעול.

וראה המלך שהדין עמו ונתן לו שכרו. כן הוא כתוב במדרש תנחומא. והשב אל ידמה בנפשו לומר, למה זה הבל איגע לריק ולתוהו כוחי אכלה, כי איך תעמוד תשובתי לפני עוונותי, וכל מה שאוכל לעשות לא יועיל כנגד העוונות שעברו עלי. אל יאמר כן. כי הבטיח הקב"ה ע"י יחזקאל הנביא, כי פשעיהם לא יזכרו עוד, דכתיב והרשע כי ישוב מכל חטאתיו אשר עשה ושמר את כל חוקותי ועשה משפט וצדקה חיה יחיה לא ימות. כל פשעיו אשר עשה לא יזכרו לו, בצדקתו אשר עשה יחיה. נשלם יסוד התשובה.

³ ועוד כתוב שם וז"ל: דרך היצר הרע להסית בתחילה ללמוד, וגם למלאות תאוות, כי אם יסיתו שלא ללמוד כלל, לא ישמע לו. וכאשר ירגיל עצמו בהנאת הגוף, אז ממילא לא ילמוד, כי טרוד תמיד למלאות הנאת הגוף, והיצר הרע אומר לו, שיזיק לבריאותו כשיעזוב הרגלו. אחר כך מתעצל לרדוף אחר התורה והמצוות (ואף על פי שלא יהיה לו על ידי זה העדר התאוה), ואחר כך אינו רוצה לעשותם, אף אם יזדמן לו בלא טרחה ויגיעה. כל ההנאות שאדם נחנה בעולם הזה, יתהפכו לו בקבר למרה, והקרויין המתאווים נענשים בחיבוט הקבר. ושם נידון כל אבר ואבר שנהנה בעולם הזה שלא למצוה, ושורפין אותו כארס של נחש. וגם הצדיקים נענשים בחיבוט הקבר, אבל הצדיק המתכוין בהנאתו רק לשם שמים, אדרבה, נחשבת לו ההנאה למצוה, ואכילתו כקרבן. התאוה, אין ראוי לילך אחריה כלל, אבל חמדת הפרנסה והממון, אינה אסורה לגמרי, כמו שכתוב: "למען יברכך ה' בכל מעשי ידיך", רק שיהיה באמונה ולא יגע בממון שאינו שלו, וכי

THE BOTTOM LINE

If a person cannot control his actions, he will never be able to control his speech or his thoughts. To gain control over our negative tendencies and behaviors, we must begin examining and learning to control our *ma'asim*. The job of the *yetzer hara*, of course, is to tell us that we cannot control ourselves; for that reason, we need to employ a program. The secret to beginning the battle of controlling our actions lies in the ability to withhold our body from extra pleasures of food and drink, and learning to "exchange" this drive for other, permissible pleasures, such as smelling pleasant scents, or even preparing whatever food we do eat in a delicious way. This strategy will train and prepare us to accept some limits and still allow the body to be "appeased." Practically speaking, according to Ra'avad, to *machnia* your *yetzer hara*, we can begin leaving some food on the plate and not filling ourselves up completely. The secret lies in not giving into your *taivos* completely, and learning how to stop yourself by exhibiting some degree of self-control when it comes to those last few bites. But to really succeed in our commitment, we also have to do it *I'kavod Habori* - to honor Hashem - not just to diet, etc. This is the *ikar* concept of *teshuva*, and if done properly and with the right intentions, we will develop Ahavas HaBorei, a love that will reciprocate back on us! This week I will (bli neder) try leaving some food on my plate at the end of my meals for *shvivas hayetzer*, as a way of saying to Hashem, "Hakodosh Boruch Hu, I want to control myself, and I want to bring my *yetzer hora* under my control. Help me accomplish this goal!"

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