



## A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA

### מורינו הרה"ג ר' אברהם גורביץ שליט"א

### פרשת אמור

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה, אָמַר אֶל הַכֹּהֲנִים בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן, וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם וכו'. (ויקרא כא, א)

*Hashem said to Moshe: Say to the Kohanim, the sons of Aharon, and tell them ... (Vayikra 21:1)*

In this week's *Sidrah*, the Torah instructs the Kohanim that, due to their service to Hashem, they have a unique responsibility to uphold high standards of holy behaviour. Hashem's command to Moshe regarding these laws contains an apparent redundancy. The phrase: *אָמַר אֶל הַכֹּהֲנִים וכו', וְאָמַרְתָּ Say to the Kohanim ... and tell them*, suggests a double expression of *אָמַרְתָּ*, *saying*, leading the Meforshim to offer various interpretations of its meaning.

The Midrash (*Midrash Rabbah* 26:5, *Yalkut* 21) presents the following explanation:

לְפִי שְׁהַעֲלִיזוּנִים אֵין יֵצֵר הָרַע מְצוּי בָהֶן - אָמַרְתָּ אַחַת דִּיהָ לָהֶם, שְׁנֵאָמַר: "בְּגִזְרַת עִירִין פְּתֻגְמָא וּבְמֵאמַר קַדִּישִׁין שְׁאֵלְתָּא" (דְּנִיאל ד', יד). אֲבָל הַתַּחְתּוּנִים שְׁיֵצֵר הָרַע מְצוּי בָהֶן - בְּשֵׁתִי אֲמִירוֹת, וְהַלּוּאֵי יַעֲמְדוּ, שְׁנֵאָמַר: "וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה אָמַר אֶל הַכֹּהֲנִים וְאָמַרְתָּ."

*The upper beings (malachim) do not possess a yetser horah – one command is sufficient for them, as stated (Daniel 4:14): "The matter is by decree of the angels, and the sentence is by the word of the holy ones." In contrast, the lower beings (humans), who do have a yetser horah, require two commands, and even then, if only they should be able to uphold them. As the possuk indicates: "Hashem said to Moshe: Say to the Kohanim, and tell them."*

R' Leib *zatza* emphasises that this Chazal teaches an important lesson for life. Without the *yetser horah*, we would be like *malachim*, who never require Hashem to repeat His commands. However, since we do have a *yetser horah*, we need constant reminders. The *possuk* alludes to this by emphasising the double expression of *אָמַרְתָּ*. The Midrash continues by stating that even with this double "saying," Klal Yisroel are not guaranteed to observe the *mitzvos*. Even if someone has heard Hashem's commands multiple times, the *yetser horah* works tirelessly to hinder individuals from fulfilling Hashem's will and performing the *mitzvos*.

It is crucial to be aware of this fact: we should never feel overly confident that we are protected from sin, as we all have a *yetser horah*. Even after understanding our responsibilities, without constant reflection, we remain vulnerable to the influence of the *yetser horah*. For this reason, the study of Mussar was established to promote ongoing review and awareness of our life's purpose. Similarly, in the introduction to *Mesillas Yesharim*, the Ramchal emphasises that a simple reading of his *sefer* will not yield the desired effect; true benefit comes only through its repeated learning and reviewing.

The Chovos HaLevavos discusses how a person's greatest enemy lies within: the *yetser horah*, which constantly seeks to entice individuals to sin. He recounts the story of a great person who, upon witnessing a warrior joyfully returning from battle, exclaimed, "You may have won this small battle, but a greater battle lies ahead of you!" When asked to elaborate on his words, he explained that he was referring to the challenging struggle each person must face with their *yetser horah*.

R' Moshe Rosenstein *zatzal*, the Mashgiach in Lomzeh, once had a conversation with R' Yerucham of Mir. R' Moshe questioned how the people who left Mitzrayim after witnessing such incredible miracles could fall in *madreigah* and sin. He expected R' Yerucham to provide a profound philosophical explanation. Instead, R' Yerucham replied succinctly, "My beloved one, this is the power of the *yetser*!" R' Yerucham then said with deep emotion the *possuk* in Tehillim (95:10): אֲרֻבֵּים שָׁנָה, *For forty years I was angry with the generation; then I said, "An errant-hearted people are they, and they know not My ways."* R' Moshe concluded that this interaction was more valuable than any other explanation he could have received, and it had a lasting impact on him.

When a new *talmid* would introduce himself to R' Yerucham, the first question he would ask was, "Are you aware that there is a *yetser horah*?" For a person to work on self-improvement, they must first understand the nature of their challenge. Indeed, as the Gemara (*Kiddushin* 30b) teaches: בְּרַאתִי יֵצֶר הָרַע, בְּרַאתִי תּוֹרָה תְּבַלִּין, *I created the yetser horah, and I created the Torah as its antidote.* The Torah was given to protect man from the *yetser horah*. However, before one can take medicine, one needs to diagnose the type of illness. Once we are aware of the challenge we face, it becomes easier to combat it.

On Pesach, Klal Yisroel became free from the physical slavery to Mitzrayim; however, they only experienced true freedom when they received the Torah. As Chazal teach in Pirkei Avos (6:2): אַל תִּקְרָא חֲרוּת אֶלָּא חֲרוּת, שְׂאִין לָךְ בֶּן חוֹרִין אֶלָּא מִי שְׁעוֹסֵק בְּתַלְמוּד תּוֹרָה, *Do not read the words as charus (engraved) but as cherus (freedom), for you can have no truly free man except one who engages in the study of Torah.* The liberation from the greatest enslavement, which is the *yetser horah*, was only realised with the Torah that provides us with the tools to combat the *yetser horah*.

A person must be mindful of how many of the motives behind our smallest actions and thoughts are truly dictated by the *yetser horah*. For instance, someone who feels tired and wants to sleep may not realise that they are being influenced by the *yetser horah*, which wants them to feel weary, sleep more, and consequently delay their *davening* or other *mitzvos*. As the Chovos HaLevavos writes, "Your greatest enemy is wide awake while you are asleep!" The Rebbe, R' Moshe of Kobrin, once shared that he learns from the methods of the *yetser* to better serve Hashem. One early morning, as he was awaking to learn, he suddenly heard an inner voice saying, "Moshe, sleep a bit longer. You are tired, and it is such a cold morning." However, R' Moshe realised that this voice was none other than the *yetser horah*, and he immediately responded, "You are such a fool! If you can wake up early on a cold morning to try and entice me, how can I not arise to serve Hashem!"

In these weeks leading up to Kabbolas HaTorah, we are focused on preparing ourselves to attain complete spiritual freedom, which comes from being liberated from the clutches of the *yetser horah*. The key to freeing ourselves from the constraints and futility imposed by the *yetser* is through learning Torah. The more Torah one studies, the better equipped they are to weaken the influence of the *yetser horah*. Let us internalise the lesson from the Midrash: our mission in life is to combat the constant and often-hidden effects of the *yetser horah*. This endeavour requires ongoing reflection on Hashem's will, which we can attain by learning and connecting to His Torah.