

A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

Jump?

I'd like to share a thought in preparation for the awesome days on the horizon.

The Talmud in *Masechta Shabbos* 105b describes the tactics of the evil inclination. "Such is the craft of the *Yetzer Hara*, today he tells him, do such, and tomorrow he says, do such, until he tells him to serve an idol and he goes and performs idolatry."

At first glance the Talmud seems perplexing, for in these particular words, and even in the context of Gemara, it is not clear that the first act the *Yetzer Hara* is urging him to do is prohibited. In fact, the Vilna Gaon (O"C 240:1) cites these very words as the source for the *Shulchan Aruch's* words which state, "This is the advice of the *Yetzer Hara*. From the permissible he pushes him to the prohibited."

What follows is a very deep question:

How can it be that permissible acts can be viewed as a fulfillment of the influence of the forces of evil in this world? If G-d allowed it, technically, then how can it be evil?

This powerful question is really the product of a misconception. It belies a proper understanding of mission in this world. The Torah is filled with verses and teachings that tell us, "Serve G-d!" in one form or another. This demands of us observation and introspection. Would we allow a child to walk on the edge of a cliff? Why not? Because he may fall! Where are the edges of the cliff in our lives? The *Yetzer Hara* doesn't push someone off a cliff when he's hundreds of feet away; he says, "look how pretty it is over here, yes, just a little closer and you'll really enjoy!"

Sometimes the most difficult thing to do is look inside ourselves and discover the gray. We know what to do with black and white; it's the gray where we are vulnerable. The Talmud is sharing an insight into the tactics of the *Yetzer Hara*, but our lesson is to learn how important it is to check our direction.

This Rosh Hashana approaches after so much time alone with ourselves these past months to reflect. I think now more than ever we are equipped with the motivation and "self-inventory" insights to really make the change for ourselves and our people and to move in the right direction, the way that leads to Hashem! I wish you and all of Klal Yisrael success! 🌟

RABBI
EZRA
STETTIN



THE RABBI WAS ASKED

ADAPTED BY RABBI DOVID TZVI MEISSNER FROM ME'AH SHE'ARIM BY RABBI YITZCHOK ZILBERSTEIN

An oil refinery was looking for suitable land to drill for oil. Its testing revealed that Reuven's property had an oil reservoir beneath it. The company offered to buy Reuven's land from him. After some back and forth, they came to an agreement that the refinery would give Reuven 50% of its profits for the next ten years.

The refinery did not wish to pay Reuven, so it delayed selling the oil they dug from his land for ten years and began selling it afterwards. They told Reuven that his ten years of splitting the profit was up, and they did not have any profit to split. Reuven countered that he had only sold the field on condition that he would receive 50% of profits from the sales, and it didn't matter which ten years it was.

Q Whose claim wins?

A It would seem that Reuven's claim is correct and the sale is annulled. *Shulchan Aruch* (C.M. 207:3) rules that selling one's courtyard or field with a

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THE RABBI WAS ASKED

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stipulation that he's only selling the land because he plans to travel to another place, is considered a conditional sale. If something prevents him from traveling to his destination, the sale is retracted. *Pischei Teshuva* (ibid, 4) adds that certain situations would not even need a verbal stipulation, for there is a *gilui da'as* (implicit intent) as to what he meant.

Here, too, there is a *gilui da'as* that Reuven only agreed to sell his field in order to get his share in the profits, and not with intent that the oil sales would be delayed for ten years to prevent him from receiving his share in the profits, so there are 'grounds' to say that the sale is void and he regains ownership of his land. 🕒

A PARASHA Q 4 U

RABBI DOVID SPETNER

How many times is space travel mentioned in the *parasha*?

Bring this question to the Shabbos table and see who knows the answer! 🕒

A SHINING EXAMPLE

Nachman, as he always did when he visited Israel, was visiting his Aunt Rachel. Aunt Rachel seemed to be more than from a different generation, almost from a world so different. Aunt Rachel was austere, proper, everything done in perfect order, everything in its proper place. Guests always needed to be served refreshments; there was no such thing as "go help yourself" with Aunt Rachel. Nachman really felt like he never quite connected well with Aunt Rachel, but he felt it was important that he keep up a relationship with his elderly aunt who had been living alone for many years already. Nachman filled her in on news of his growing family in America while Aunt Rachel was slicing vegetables. In the background the radio was playing and was being ignored mostly until an announcement of an important news flash. The breaking news was

of a 19-year-old Israeli soldier killed in East Jerusalem. Nachman had been listening to the news flash and was not paying attention to his aunt until he heard a clatter on the kitchen floor. The knife had fallen to the floor, and his aunt was still standing with her back to him but there was no doubt she was sobbing. Her shoulders were shaking and she took out a handkerchief to wipe her eyes. Nachman could not believe his eyes. This was Aunt Rachel after all. He could not imagine her ever breaking into tears for anything! After she regained her composure, Nachman asked, "Do you do that every time you hear something like that?" Aunt Rachel stopped what she was doing and turned around. Looking at Nachman with a piercing look, she said, "And you don't!!" 🕒



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RABBI MOSHE TZVI CRYSTAL

While it entailed a significant cultural transition and lengthy journey, the phenomenon of an American student traveling to pre-World War II Europe to study in yeshiva was eventually something that was done. It is probable, though, that the first boys to be sent back to Europe for yeshiva hailed from the city of St. Louis. Sholom Yitzchok and Rivka Raskas left Kovno, Lithuania, in 1882 and made their way to St. Louis. Sholom Yitzchak began to deliver milk to earn a livelihood. Sizing up the situation of Jewish education available for their oldest two sons, Yudel and Louis (older brothers of Rabbi Spetner's grandmother Rose), they made the decision to send them back to learn in the famed Slabodka Yeshiva which was near their hometown of Kovno, becoming known there as *Der Amerikaners*. The children would not see their parents again for many years until they came home in 1906 for a visit. Yudel and Louis would return to St. Louis permanently in 1914 and take part in the family dairy which their father had purchased around the turn of the century. The Raskas brothers successfully grew the business and eventually moved out of dairy farming and into production of soft cheese products. They would become the nation's largest manufacturer of private-label cream cheese by the time the business was sold in 2002. The Raskas family would become synonymous with philanthropy in St. Louis and abroad. 🕒

SOURCES: Levine, Dr. Yitzchok. "Louis Raskas of St. Louis (1888 – 1974)" The Jewish Press. 2007.
Desloge, Rick. "The deal: Raskas acquired by Schreiber Foods." St. Louis Business Journal. 2002.

Cincinnati Community Kollel

2241 Losantiville Avenue, Cincinnati OH 45237 • 513-631-1118 • kollel@shul.net • cincykollel.org

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