בס"ד

Spread Light358

(TORONTO)

CANDLE LIGHTING 7:53 PM

SHABBOS ENDS 8:56 PM

ISSUE #37 · AUGUST 22, 2026 · ט' אלול תשפ"ו

PARSHAS KI SEITZEI

פרשת כי תצא



Gematria on the Parshah: The Battle Against the Yetzer Hara



BY REB MOSHE HERSKOVITS

Parshas Ki Seitzei begins with a warning. When Am Yisrael goes out to war, they must be aware of the temptation presented by the Eishet Yefat Toar, the woman of beautiful appearance. Chazal teach us that the ultimate battle is the battle within. If Am Yisrael can conquer the Yetzer Hara within themselves, they will be able to overcome their enemies as well. What can the laws of Eishet Yefat Toar teach us about how to conquer the Yetzer Hara?

THE STRATEGY OF THE YETZER HARA

There are three ways in which the Yetzer Hara can trap us. It can cause us to become stuck in the past, too focused on the present, or overly concerned with the future. We know that Hashem is היה, הוה, ויהיה, He was, He is, and He will be. To overcome the Yetzer Hara, we must learn to see our lives from this broader perspective.

Just like in a military battle, we must understand the strategy of our enemy. The Yetzer Hara tries to give us tunnel vision, causing us to see a limited perspective.

This was the strategy of the Nahash against Chava. Amazingly, the gematria of the opening phrase of the parsha, כי תצא למלחמה (when you go out to war), is 674, exactly the same as האשה + הנחש (the serpent + the woman).

The Or HaChaim explains that the Nahash's strategy was to trap Chava in the present, presenting the Eitz HaDaat as though it were the only tree in the Garden and causing her to forget future consequences. The Yetzer Hara continually works to blind us with the same tunnel vision.

The gematria of בהוה (in the present moment) is 18, which is also the gematria of חטא (sin), alluding to the danger of becoming too trapped in the present.

EISHET YEFAT TOAR IS A STRATEGY TO FIGHT THE YETZER

The law of Eishet Yefat Toar gives us practical advice for dealing with the Yetzer Hara. When we are overwhelmed by temptation, the Torah advises us to have the wisdom to wait. חכמה (wisdom) has the same letters as the word מחכה (wait).

When a warrior desires a captive woman, he is commanded to bring her into his house, for her to shave her head, let her nails grow, and wait an entire month before deciding whether he wishes to be with her, and marry her.

The Torah is teaching us that the Yetzer Hara works like a storm. We can experience an overwhelming desire, but if we have the strength to wait it out, the storm eventually begins to calm.

This is the advice of the Sfas Emes. When the Yetzer Hara comes, tell it to wait. Wait ten more minutes. Wait another half hour. Eventually, the emotional storm begins to weaken.

STEIPLER GAON STORY

There is a famous story about the Steipler Gaon. He was forcibly conscripted into the Soviet army, yet incredibly the Steipler never broke Shabbos.

Once, during a freezing Russian winter, the Steipler was assigned to guard duty for the entire Shabbos night. The weather was unbearably cold, so there was a special jacket designed for the night guard.

When the Steipler arrived at his post, he saw that the jacket had been left hanging on a tree by the previous guard. He was freezing cold, but the jacket was muktzeh.

The Yetzer tried to convince him that he needed the jacket right then, but he told himself, "I can survive one more minute." Another minute passed. "One more minute." He continued repeating this to himself until morning had arrived. The Steipler overcame the Yetzer Hara, not by focusing on the entire night, but focusing on overcoming the next minute.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 →

LESSON FOR OUR LIVES

The storm of the Yetzer Hara can arise in many different ways. Sometimes we expect it, and sometimes it catches us completely by surprise. When emotion overwhelms us, let us learn from the Steipler Gaon to say, "One more moment."

We do not have to defeat the entire battle at once. We only have to give ourselves enough time for the storm to pass.

For more, check out the Gematria Torah channel on YouTube!

The Fight Is Rigged!



BY RABBI AVROHOM JACKS

Before you step onto the battlefield for the biggest fights of your life, know this: the war is rigged. And it's rigged in your favor.

This week, Moses gives the strangest battle speech. "When you go out to war 'upon' your enemies, G-d will deliver them into your hands." The victory is announced in the same breath as the war. No general talks like that. Generals give rousing speeches; they promise effort and hope. But here, the ending is stated as fact before a single soldier takes their first step.

Look closely at the phrasing. It says you go to war 'upon' your enemies, when we would have expected it to say that you go to war 'against' them. This verse is the map for every inner battle you will ever fight.

The verse uses the word 'upon' to let you know that you stand above whatever you are fighting. Your soul is an actual piece of G-d, and darkness has no grip on it. None. The struggle in front of you was created for one reason only. To be defeated by you.

So stop brawling at ground level. Rise up. When you meet a struggle on its own turf, it can appear enormous. But when you claim the higher ground, and you identify with the part of you that comes from G-d Himself, the whole battle changes altitude.

How do you claim that ground when the fight is actually in front of you? The next time that struggle knocks, take ten seconds before you engage. Say it quietly, or say it out loud: I am a piece of G-d. This was created so I could defeat it. The fighter who remembers who he is fights differently.

Walk onto the field like someone who has already read the ending. Because you have.

The verse promised delivery into your hands because the outcome was determined long ago. Today's skirmish is simply where you get to reveal it. Walk onto the field like someone who has already read the ending. Because you have.

When Someone You Love Gets Lost



BY REB ADAM KLASNER

There is a mitzvah in this week's parsha that we usually understand very simply.

If you see something that belongs to another person and it has become lost, you have an obligation to return it.

But the Torah uses powerful language:

"Lo suchal l'hisaleim."

You cannot hide yourself.

You cannot simply look away.

And I keep thinking about how many people in our lives haven't lost an object.

They've lost themselves.

Sometimes it's your child.

Sometimes it's your spouse.

Sometimes it's a friend.

And sometimes it's you.

There are seasons when a person slowly becomes someone they don't recognize anymore.

They lose their joy.

They lose their confidence.

They lose their connection to Hashem.

They lose their ability to feel.

They become angry.

Numb.

Distant.

Maybe they start making choices that don't look like them.

And when someone we love gets lost, our instinct is often to focus on their behavior.

What's wrong with you?

Why are you acting like this?

You used to be different.

Why can't you just get yourself together?

But maybe the Torah is asking us to see something deeper.

This person standing in front of you may not need to be judged.

They may need to be returned.

Returned to the part of themselves they've forgotten.

Returned to their dignity.

Returned to their heart.

Returned to the knowledge that beneath everything they're struggling with, there is still a holy soul.

I think about this especially as a parent.

Sometimes a child begins struggling and we become terrified.

We see their choices and immediately think about where this is heading.

We try to fix them.

Control them.

Lecture them.

Correct them.

But beneath all of that fear is usually something much softer:

I miss you.

I miss seeing you alive.

I miss feeling close to you.

I know there's so much more inside of you than what I'm seeing right now.

And maybe what that child needs most isn't another person reminding them how lost they are.

Maybe they need someone who remembers who they are while they can't remember it themselves.

Someone who can look beneath the anger and still see the heart.

Beneath the addiction and still see the soul.

Beneath the rebellion and still see the child.

Beneath the failure and still see possibility.

That doesn't mean enabling destructive behavior.

Love sometimes requires boundaries.

Love sometimes requires saying no.

Love sometimes requires doing something painful because allowing someone to continue destroying themselves isn't love.

But even the boundary can come from a completely different place.

Not:

"What is wrong with you?"

But:

I love you too much to help you disappear.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3 →

And perhaps there is another layer.

Sometimes the person who has become lost is us.

We can spend so many years becoming what everyone needed us to become that one day we wake up and realize we don't know ourselves anymore.

We built the business.

Raised the family.

Paid the bills.

Showed up for everyone.

Kept performing.

Kept producing.

Kept smiling.

And somewhere along the way, we lost something.

Our softness.

Our aliveness.

Our relationship with Hashem.

Our ability to sit quietly and actually feel what is happening inside.

And maybe Hashavas Aveidah can become a deeply personal question:

What part of myself have I lost that Hashem is asking me to return?

Not create.

Return.

Because your deepest self was never destroyed.

It may be buried.

It may be covered in years of protection, fear, shame, success, pain, and survival.

But it is still there.

This is Elul.

We often translate teshuvah as repentance.

But teshuvah literally means return.

Maybe Hashem isn't asking you to become somebody else.

Maybe He's asking you to come home.

To return to the person beneath all the armor.

To return to the heart you stopped listening to.

To return to the relationship with Him that got buried beneath everything else.

And perhaps when someone else in your life is lost, your job isn't always to drag them home.

Sometimes your job is simply to stand close enough that when they're ready to return, they still know where home is.

Don't Let It Get Cold

BY REB YACOV ABOUDI



Ki Seitzei – the fifth step toward Rosh Hashanah

Over these past weeks, the Torah has been taking us somewhere. Va'etchanan taught us that life is a gift, not an entitlement. Eikev taught us to respond to that gift with gratitude. Re'eh demanded that gratitude become choice. Shoftim taught that good choices need structure–judges and officers that protect them from erosion.

Then comes Ki Seitzei. We have been inspired. We have chosen. We have begun the work.

Now the Torah warns us about what happens בדרך–along the way:

זכור את אשר עשה לך עמלק בדרך... אשר קרך בדרך

"Remember what Amalek did to you on the way... how he encountered you on the way." (Devarim 25:17–18)

Rashi explains קרך as related to קור–cold. Klal Yisrael had emerged from Egypt surrounded by miracles. The nations were terrified. Rashi compares it to a boiling bath that no one dared enter. Amalek jumped in. Although he was burned, he cooled the bath for everyone else.

Amalek did not need to win.

It was enough to lower the temperature.

THE DANGER IS בדרך

Inspiration happens in a moment. Transformation happens בדרך.

Something moves us. We experience clarity and decide to change.

Then life resumes. Work becomes busy. The children need us. There are bills, appointments, distractions and ordinary Tuesdays.

We do not necessarily abandon the decision. Something subtler happens. What felt urgent becomes merely important. What felt important becomes something we intend to return to.

Eventually, we remember what we decided without remembering why it mattered so much.

Shoftim taught us to appoint an officer to protect the decision of the judge. Ki Seitzei adds another warning:

The decision can survive while its warmth disappears.

That is אשר קרך בדרך.

THE ONE SMALL LAUGH

In Chapter 5 of Mesillat Yesharim, the Ramchal describes the power of ליצנות–cynicism and mockery.

A person can experience tremendous התעוררות והתפעלות–awakening and inspiration. Something has entered the heart. He genuinely wants to change.

Then comes one dismissive comment, one cynical thought, one laugh:

בליצנות אחד ובשחוק קטן יפיל האדם מעליו ריבוי גדול מן ההתעוררות וההתפעלות

With one act of mockery and one small laugh, a person can cast away a tremendous amount of awakening and inspiration.

The joke does not defeat the truth. It changes its temperature.

A tiny thing can cool a great inspiration.

Ki Seitzei also teaches the opposite.

BREAD AND WATER

The Torah explains why Ammon and Moav may not enter the congregation:

על דבר אשר לא קדמו אתכם בלחם ובמים

"Because they did not greet you with bread and water." (Devarim 23:5)

The Zera Shimshon asks: Why emphasize bread and water? Ammon and Moav had done far worse. They hired Bilaam and attempted to damage Klal Yisrael spiritually.

He answers with the teaching of Chazal:

גדולה לגימה שמקרבת את הרחוקים

"Great is sharing food and drink, for it brings those who are distant closer." (Sanhedrin 103b)

Had Ammon and Moav offered bread and water, the Zera Shimshon writes, היו נתקנים קצת–they would have achieved some measure of repair.

The distance was enormous. The first step back could have been tiny.

Perhaps that is the contrast within our parsha: Ammon and Moav refused to create warmth. Amalek came to cool warmth that already existed.

A small thing can cool a great inspiration—and a small thing can begin warming it again.

DON'T START OVER

As Elul continues, we may think growth requires another new resolution. But תשובה means return.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4 →

Before searching for a new fire, perhaps we should check the temperature of the one we already lit.

Something moved us. We recognized a gift, made a choice and built a structure to protect it. Perhaps it has already begun to cool.

Amalek whispers:

It did not last. You tried. You are back where you started.

The Zera Shimshon suggests otherwise:

Don't start over. Start with bread and water.

Do something small that brings what has become distant closer: five minutes of learning, one tefillah said slowly, one apology, one meal without the phone, one act of generosity.

One small action that says:

This still matters to me.

The Bnei Yissaschar connects the Torah's three commands regarding Amalek to three dimensions of the person:

מחשבה—לא תשכח: remember it in thought.

בפה—זכור: say it aloud.

במעשה—תמחה: translate it into action.

Remember why it mattered. Put it into words. Then do—not everything, but something.

Amalek attacks בדרך because the road is where inspiration must become life. We should not interpret cooling as failure. Our task is to keep enough warmth alive to continue walking.

Look back at the work already done. Find the ember that remains. Give it a little air.

And ask:

What has Hashem helped me recognize, choose or begin changing that has already started to grow cold—and what small thing can I do today to make it warm again?

Foul to Fragrant

BY RABBI NACHUM AARON KUTNOWSKI



In this week's Parsha, the Torah references several prohibitions involving Kilayim – forbidden mixtures: planting a vineyard with mixed seeds, plowing with an ox and donkey together, and wearing a garment woven from wool and linen (Devarim 22:9-11).

The Sefer HaChinuch offers a fascinating explanation for the prohibition against plowing with an ox and donkey together. He explains that this causes suffering to the animals because creatures of different natures experience distress when forced to work together.

From here, the Chinuch draws a broader lesson: we should learn from this not to force people whose natures are fundamentally different, such as a righteous person and an evildoer (Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah 550).

Yet this raises a question: we certainly cannot simply separate ourselves from those who have strayed. They remain members of Am Yisrael. In fact, Chazal teach that we actually need them.

The Gemara says that a fast which does not include the participation of sinners among the Jewish people is not considered a fast, comparing them to the Chelbana, a foul-smelling ingredient that nevertheless formed an essential part of the Ketores (Kerisus 6b).

As we enter Elul and prepare for Yom Kippur, this seems especially striking. If the Chinuch compares forcing a Tzaddik and a Rasha together to Kilayim, why does the Gemara insist that they must come together during public fast days?

The Kli Yakar explains that the Chelbana may have a foul smell by itself, but when it becomes part of the Ketores, it contributes to a beautiful fragrance. So, too, through Teshuvah, a person's sins are transformed into merits (Kli Yakar, Shemos 30:34).

None of us is defined only by who we have been.

Perhaps this is the distinction between Kilayim and the unity of Yom Kippur. Kilayim forbids combining things whose natures are fundamentally incompatible. But Teshuvah teaches that a person's nature is never necessarily fixed. The very person who once seemed distant can transform himself.

We do not come together on Yom Kippur merely to tolerate one another despite our differences; we come together because Teshuvah makes transformation possible across the spectrum.

As we enter Elul, we are all part of that process. None of us is defined only by who we have been.

May we use these weeks to transform ourselves, so that when we stand together before Hashem on Yom Kippur, we can rise together as one unified and beautiful fragrance.

THIS WEEK'S ISSUE IS SPONSORED BY

















REFLECTIVE QUESTION

What has already started to grow cold, and what small thing can I do today to make it warm again?

For inquiries or sponsorship, please reach out to spreadlight358@gmail.com · Designed & printed by innovarastudios.com