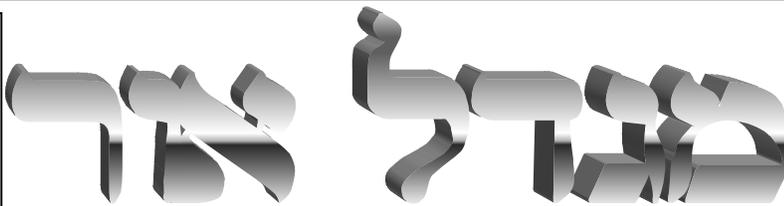


Think of it as a test.

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This issue dedicated לע"נ
חנוך אברהם בן מרדכי ז"ל

Mr. Haney Dombroff z"l

יארצייטר"ח - א' אלול

*He is still thought of often and his
lessons remembered.*

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A publication dedicated to Harbotzas Torah

Zmanim for שבת

Wesley Hills, NY

- 7:15 - הדלקת נרות
- 7:33 - שקיעה
- 8:55 - זק"ש מ"א
- 9:38 - זק"ש גר"א
- 10:44 - סוף זמן תפילה
- 7:33 - שקיעה
- 8:15* - צאת הכוכבים
- 8:45 - צאת 72

* Based on Emergence of 3 Stars

Times Courtesy of MyZmanim.com

Did You Know?

This parsha speaks about going out to war and one law that we are given is that one may not cut down a fruit tree to make a battering ram for it provides sustenance.

In truth, this prohibition is not absolute, but it is preferable to use a non-fruit-bearing tree to one that is producing.

This goes under the heading of "Bal Tashchis," the prohibition to destroy things for no reason. If there is a reason, however, then that prohibition does not come into play.

For example, if one has food still on his plate, it might be thought of as "wasting" to throw out the food. However, if by eating it one will become sick, or it simply appears gluttonous, then it is permitted and preferable to throw away the food.

Similarly, slaughtering an animal for its hide would be an acceptable use according to Halacha, even if the meat were not going to be eaten.

The Torah, here, also compares trees to Man, and homilectically we compare men to trees. Just as it is forbidden to cut down and destroy a tree, so is it forbidden to cut down (even verbally) and destroy a person.

The only way that would be permitted is if one could be absolutely positive that the person would never bear fruit of any kind, and that's impossible for us to know.

Instead of cutting people down, our best bet is to nurture them, and then we will see the fragrant growth we are looking for and enjoy the bountiful fruits of our labors.

Thought of the week:

The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting.

-Sun Tzu

"כי תצא למלחמה על איבך וראית סוס ורכב עם רב ממך לא תירא מהם כי ה' אלקיך עמך..."

"When you go out to war upon your enemies and you see horse and chariot, and a horde that is greater than you, do not fear them for HaShem is with you..." (Deut. 20:1)

When the Torah speaks of an "enemy," often it is not limited to a physical one. Usually, this reference can include the common enemy all Mankind shares – the evil inclination.

The lifelong battle between a person and his or her personal Yetzer Hara can be compared to a war. Each side has the goal of defeating the enemy, or at least living to fight another day. As much as we want to be good and do what is right, the fact that the evil inclination is a part of us makes it a struggle.

Understanding the true nature of one's challenges and temptations can make it easier to overcome them. Having the proper perspective can give us the weapons needed to be victorious, and this posuk gives us one.

Of course, the best defense against the Yetzer Hara is avoiding the situation. By not getting into the test, we don't have to worry about passing it. This could be, for example, not going to a place where you know the conversation will revolve around others and include gossip and slander or to a place where the people are dressed or acting immodestly. It could be hiring an independent auditor to make sure you are honest in your business dealings, or any other means of avoiding temptation in the first place. But that is not always possible.

Sometimes you are on the frontlines, battling your urges or desires, and they seem overwhelming. There are so many ways to sin, and so many reasons to give in to our evil inclinations. How do we withstand the attack and stay strong?

Rashi comments that the posuk uses the singular versions of the words horse and chariot to tell us that as far as G-d is concerned, a million tanks are no more powerful than just one. To Him, it's all the same. He can save us from whatever it may be. Similarly, even though it seems to us that we are outnumbered, to G-d it's the same as if it were a single person. That puts HaShem's power in perspective somewhat, but there's a subtle nuance that is a game-changer.

We are told not to fear these enemies because HaShem is with us. If He's with us, why are we staring down enemies?? Where is G-d when those enemies are killing our people??

The answer is that G-d is hiding behind them. Not cowering in fear, but rather standing in their shadows, using the enemies as camouflage for His operations. To Him, all they are is a smokescreen that obscures our vision so we don't see that He is the one orchestrating events in the world. He sends us enemies to test us, to toughen us, to make us pray.

They are just tools in HaShem's arsenal and the way to overcome the temptations of our Yetzer Hara is to peek over his shoulder and see G-d, watching to see if we pass the test.

One Shabbos, during a break in an Agudah Convention, R' Moshe Feinstein z"l went for a walk with another Rav to get some fresh air. As they approached the boardwalk, R' Moshe asked the younger rabbi to hold his hand.

When the younger man asked for an explanation, R' Moshe said, "There are immodestly-dressed women here and I want to close my eyes as I walk."

Surprised that the sage, who had been a senior citizen for many years would be concerned about this, the fellow asked, "What about me? Shouldn't I have to close my eyes as well?"

"I don't know YOUR Yetzer Hara," replied the gadol, "I only know mine."