

## The Horse and The Pump

Rebbe Nachman told a story. Once there was a man who did not accept the common belief in *leitzim* (devilish pranksters) from the *Sitra Achra* (Other Side), who sometimes come to trick people. Although such things have happened, this man did not believe in them.

One night a *letz* (prankster) came and called him outside. He went outside and the *letz* showed him a beautiful horse for sale. Examining it, he saw that it was indeed a very beautiful animal. “How much do you want for it?”

“Four rubles,” replied the *letz*. The man realized that the horse was easily worth eight. It was a prime horse, in very good condition. He bought the horse for four rubles, realizing that he had gotten an excellent bargain.

The next day, he took the horse to sell. People readily agreed to his price. He thought, “If they’re willing to give me that much, it’s probably worth twice as much.” Therefore, he refused to sell it. He brought the horse elsewhere. The people there were ready to give him twice the original price, as he wanted. He said to himself, “It’s probably worth twice this amount.”

He brought the horse from place to place, until its price was in the thousands. But he wouldn’t agree to sell it to anyone, because no matter how much someone wanted to give him he thought, “It’s probably worth twice as much.” Finally no one could afford it, except the king.

He brought the horse to the king. The king offered him an astronomical sum for it; everyone thought the horse magnificent. However, he could not settle even with the king; he thought, “Most probably it is worth even more.” So even the king did not buy the horse.

He left the king to water the horse. There was a nearby pump. The horse jumped into the pump and vanished. ([Rebbe Nachman said,] “So it seemed to him. The entire ‘horse story’ was only a *leitzim*/pranksters’ trick.”)

The man began to scream because of what had happened. People heard his screams and gathered around him. “Why are you screaming?” they asked him. He replied that his horse had jumped into the pump. The people beat him; they thought he was mad. A pump’s opening is very small; how could a horse possibly jump into it?

He realized that they were beating him because he appeared mad and wanted to leave. As he was preparing to go, the horse stuck its head out of the pump. Thinking the horse was back, he began to scream again. Again the townspeople gathered around him and beat him because he was insane.

This happened again. He wanted to leave, but as soon as he was preparing to go, the horse stuck its head out of the pump. He began to scream, and the people gathered and beat him.

This is the *modus operandi* of the *Sitra Achra*. It fools a person time and again with nothing, with absolute lies that have no basis. The person is seduced by it and follows it. Each time he thinks he will gain more and have more satisfaction. He pursues his desires over many periods of life and suddenly they vanish—his desires flee and escape from him.

Sometimes, the desires recede somewhat. A person may decide to completely separate himself from them, but then they “stick out their head” again, and again he pursues them. This cycle repeats itself over and over.

Rebbe Nachman did not explain this concept further. Understand it well.