

THOUGHT CONTROL

By Ozer Bergman

It's all in the mind.

"Where do our thoughts come from?" is a question I was recently asked. The short answer is that there are two "reservoirs" (as I like to call them) of thought. One reservoir contains holy thoughts: how to imitate God by being patient, forgiving and doing kindness; how to be more sincere in one's devotions—for example, *davening* (prayer) and Torah study; how to raise one's standard of behavior and thought in relation to money, food and morality. The other reservoir contains thoughts contrary to the above, as well as thoughts that encourage the pursuit and enjoyment of sacrilegious attitudes and behaviors. The reservoir from which one receives depends on how good a person one is. If you're good in ways a *tzaddik* would be good, you receive from the first reservoir. Bad guys, evilniks and people indifferent to matters of the *neshamah* (soul) get their thoughts from Reservoir #2. (This answer is based on the second half of *Rebbe Nachman's Wisdom* #5.)

Like most short answers and other incomplete pictures, this one leaves out a lot and, as a result, can be misleading. Even though it tells us that we can help determine our thoughts by our positive behaviors and desire to be good, it leaves out a critical piece of information—namely, that we can actually choose what we want to think and what we think. A person's arm doesn't fly around haphazardly. He chooses when to lift it, when to lower it, when to touch something gently and when violently. A person has the same ability to control his thoughts: when to let his thoughts soar, when to keep them down to earth, when to think kindly, when fiercely.

The way Rebbe Nachman puts it, you're the rider and your thoughts are the horse (*Likutey Moharan* II, 50). The Rebbe's analogy tells us that not only can we train our thinking, and regain control over it when it veers off course, but that it's normal for it to run astray, so there's no reason to panic! The challenge is to remember that you are the rider. You have to dominate the horse and subdue it. The challenge exists because the horse/thought seems to be as independent as you. Not so. God made it to truly look and seem that way in order that we should have free will. In fact, anyone who wants to can control and ride the horse.

All day long, and all night, too, we collect thoughts. A glanced-at headline, article or

picture, listening to the news in the car, catching a snatch of a conversation or even a few bars of a Mozart overture, all take up residence in our minds. All these and "random" pieces of Torah that others share or that we read are coming from the reservoirs. As contradictory as any two thoughts are, they accurately indicate your current state and what you are meant to be. Instead of letting the horse ride you into oblivion, remember that these are not at all random. God is arranging for you to have them. Hold His hand and scream out to Him, again and again. He will help you meet the challenge.

This is also true of the material we actively and consciously introduce into our heads, whether we are a doctor, lawyer or Native American chief. At a certain point, whether or not we should have invited them in is moot. Once they are there, they vie for supremacy. It is your job to assert your authority over the "horse" and choose which thoughts to think. You already know what to do if you need help.

The ashes of the *Parah Adumah* (Red Heifer) were used to transfer a Jew from a state of deep *tumah* (impurity) to a state of *taharah* (purity). The former condition impedes spiritual progress; the latter invites it. Reb Noson tells us that *tumah* and *taharah* begin in the mind. What you think and why you choose to think it determines your spiritual progress. Aharon told the Israelites to gather gold. Their motivation was false. As a result, when he threw the collected gold into the fire, the Golden Calf emerged. In contrast, Moshe told the Israelites to donate gold for the Mishkan. When he threw that gold into the fire, the Menorah, symbol of pure thinking, emerged.

The *Parah Adumah*, the "mother" of the Golden Calf, cleans away all the impure thinking of her "child." When you were younger, you may have sullied your mind by wrong thinking, but now that you are more mature, you can purify it thoroughly (Rashi on Numbers 19:2). Amen.

*a gutn Shabbos!
Shabbat Shalom!*

—Based on *Likutey Halachot, Shutfin* 5:35

SIDEPATH

Rebbe Nachman teaches:

The world considers forgetfulness a shortcoming. I consider it a very great advantage. If a person didn't forget, it would be impossible for him to serve God. Remembering all his wrongdoings would prevent him from ever being able to pick his head up and start again. With forgetfulness, however, a person can forget the past and face the future with hope (*Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom* #26).

PARASHAH PEARLS

By Chaim Kramer

35:5 Take from among yourselves a contribution to God

We Can Subdue The Power Of the Imagination By Giving Charity

At the time of the Revelation at Sinai, the Jews attained awesome levels of prophecy and were able to see God "face to face." How could they subsequently make a Golden Calf?

Rebbe Nachman teaches that each time a person is ready to ascend to a higher level, the *kelipot* on that level are aroused to confront him and prevent him from rising to greater spiritual heights. When the person conquers those *kelipot*, he ascends to the next level. But when he prepares to ascend to an even higher level, the *kelipot* of that next level are aroused to prevent his ascent. These *kelipot* are a person's powers of imagination. To subdue them, he must give charity (LM I, 25).

Reb Noson adds that when someone does not vanquish the *kelipot* of the higher level, they can overpower him and force him into a deep descent. This is what happened to the Jewish people, resulting in the making of the Golden Calf. Their rectification lay in building the Tabernacle, which represents giving charity (LH VII, p. 130).

37:1 The Ark

Torah Is Both Attainable And Unattainable

The Ark contained both the second set of Tablets and the [first,] broken Tablets (*Berakhot* 8b).

The Torah is presented both as an attainable and unattainable entity. At first it is revealed to a person (i.e., the Second Tablets which were received), but then he forgets it (similar to the First Tablets which were broken). This procedure tests a person's resolve, to see if he is willing to draw close to God even though he forgets and can sometimes feel unfulfilled (LH II, p. 396).

38:21 These are the accounts of the Tabernacle

The Tabernacle Draws Us To God And God To Us

MiShKaN (משכן, Tabernacle) is related to *MaShKoN* (מכון, guarantee). God gave us the Tabernacle as a guarantee that He will always be with us (*Shemot Rabbah* 31:10).

MiShKaN (משכן) is also similar to *MaShKheiNi* (משכני, draw me) (cf. Song of Songs 1:4; see Rashi), for it draws us to God and God to us (see LH I, 70).

Tzaddikim Help Us Elevate The Mundane

MiShKaN (משכן, Tabernacle) is an acronym for *Mitah* (מטה, bed), *Shulchan* (שולחן, table), *Kisai* (כסא, chair), *Ner* (נר, lamp). These mundane objects are absolutely necessary for our lives in this world. They can also help us attain awesome spiritual heights if we know how to use them properly. We learn how from the great tzaddikim—as hinted at by the final letters of these four words—*mitaH* (מטה), *shulchaN* (שולחן), *kisAi* (כסא), *neR* (נר)—which spell *AHaRoN* (אהרן, Aaron), the tzaddik who was the first Kohen Gadol to God (LH III, p. 12).

39:33 They brought the Tabernacle to Moses...Moses erected the Tabernacle

The Tzaddik Puts Each Prayer In Its Proper Place

Our deeds and prayers cause God's presence to be manifest in this world—which is conceptually equivalent to erecting the Tabernacle. However, only a true tzaddik knows how to put each prayer in its place so that the Tabernacle will be properly

constructed. This is why Moses was the only one who could erect the Tabernacle (LM I, 2:7).

39:43 Moses blessed them

Remembering God While Earning A Living Is Equivalent To Building The Tabernacle

What blessing did he give them? "Let the pleasantness of God our Lord rest upon us, [let] the works of our hands be established, establish the works of our hands" (Psalms 90:17) (Rashi).

The double reference to "our hands" indicates a blessing for our work and livelihood, together with a request that the building of the Tabernacle be blessed. Work and the building of the Tabernacle are synonymous. As long a person recalls God when he works for a living, his labors are tantamount to the work of building the Tabernacle! (LH VII, p. 44a).

40:18 Moses erected the Tabernacle

The Tzaddik Makes Godliness Manifest

All the Jews contributed to the building of the Tabernacle. Some provided the materials while others contributed to the construction. But Moses alone was able to put the Tabernacle together.

Every person can attain a level of *ratzon* (will or desire) to serve God. However, only the leading tzaddik of the generation can attain the level of *ratzon* that draws Godliness and makes it manifest. Thus, everyone had to bring his or her handiwork to Moses before it was used in the Tabernacle (LH III, p. 8).

Someone once asked Reb Noson, "Who is greater? One who performs great devotions, or one who behaves more simply yet follows the tzaddik?" Reb Noson replied, "Look at the building of the Tabernacle. No matter what the person contributed, if he did not bring it to Moses first, it had no value or place in the Tabernacle. Yet if the simplest Jew made the most insignificant item and brought it to Moses, it was assured its place in the Tabernacle!" (*Aveneha Barzel* #62).

KITZUR L" M WEEKLY

10 — "And these are the laws" (Exodus 21:1) *(continued)*

9. With the nullification of pride, wisdom reaches its corrected state and a person merits life and longevity. All the harsh judgments are thereby nullified, and a person merits faith, great joy, an understanding of the Torah as it revealed and hidden levels, and the spirit of prophecy.

10. Repentance has its root in Rosh Chodesh (the start of the lunar month). Accordingly, on Rosh Chodesh, repentance descends upon all the world's creatures and brings them to thoughts of repentance. Even the wicked in Gehinnom must inevitably feel some remorse on Rosh Chodesh, at which time they repent, regret and admit their wrongs, and are ashamed. For even though the torments of Gehinnom are suspended on Rosh Chodesh (*Zohar* II, 150a), this shame and regret itself remains their Gehinnom. (It is written in *Likutey Moharan* I, 22 that the shame [a person feels over his sins] is even more [painful] than the punishments of Gehinnom, may God save us.)



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