

GREAT FOR SHARING
AT THE SHABBOS TABLE!



אור ישראל

Living Life Deeper

PARSHAS
SHEMOS 5778

בְּטֵבֵל

BY RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT
RABBI NAFTALI ZIONS

Willfully Blind

Pharaoh reacted to Moshe and Aharon's request to free the *Bnei Yisrael* by increasing the amount of intense labor *Klal Yisrael* had to do.¹ He surmised that they must not be working hard if they have to think about freedom!² By adding more work, he would disallow any such thoughts of sedition.

We are thankful that we don't live in Egypt, and aren't subject to the intense workload that Pharaoh unleashed on *Klal Yisrael*. Who can imagine the inability to have a moment to think? However, as removed as we are from *Mitzrayim*, it's a mistake to think that we don't have the same workload!

The *Mesillas Yescharim*³ highlights that this tactic is one of the cunning strategies that the *Yetzer Harah* uses against us to stop us from thinking what we are doing, which is an essential process that we often need to utilize in order to serve Hashem properly. While it is clear how Pharaoh accomplished this, how does the *Yetzer Harah* accomplish this? In what way does the *Yetzer Harah* keep us busy with an uninterrupted barrage of "hard work?"

Rav Yitzchok Blazer,⁴ one of Reb Yisrael Salanter's closest students, elaborates and explains that there are two general tactics used by the *Yetzer Harah*. One stems from our need to provide for our families, but that pursuit extends to the superfluous accessories in life. We begin to confuse our wants with our needs and we end up in a relentless chase after the attractive distractions that the *Yetzar Harah* dangles in front of us. The 2nd category works with the 1st. The *Yetzer Harah* causes us to want any desire and pleasure that crosses our senses. We feel that we need to have that pleasure RIGHT NOW! And we will take leave of our senses to get it! Rav Blazer concludes that the effect of his two-prong attack is likened to "being flung like a stone shot from a slingshot - head spinning, heart pounding, eyes plastered shut and his intellect dulled."

Life seems so busy, particularly in this day and age where there are many things to juggle. We need to be aware that this fast pace has been largely orchestrated by the *Yetzer Harah* so that we get lost in life and get swept away with the fast current, neglecting the things that we truly need to do.

1 *Shemos* 5:6-9

2 *Rashi Shemos* 5:9 s.v. ראל ישעו, *Mesillas Yescharim* Chap. 2

3 *ibid.*

4 *Shaarei Ohr* Chap. 6

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Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

Life is busy! There are so many things to do - between eating, sleeping, schoolwork, homework, when is there time for anything else?

And when we get older, it doesn't get any easier. How can we make sure our busy schedules don't overwhelm or *Avodas Hashem*?

It's important to set a specific time every day for introspection. One idea is to attach that time to an event that's done every day. For example, 10 minutes a day, right before bedtime. No matter how tired, that's when I learn Mussar, go through my day, and see where I can improve.

Another idea is to attach it to a learning session with a *Chavrusa* (study partner). If one studies with a partner on a consistent basis, 10 minutes right before or after that time can be used to further one's *Avodas Hashem*.

Don't let life drown you!

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A MOMENT OF MEDITATION

Reb Yisroel Salanter was a brilliant *Talmud Chacham* and very knowledgeable in *Halacha*. His legacy, though, was his focus on Mussar, and the prominence that he gave to the study of *Avodas Hashem*. Many of the yeshivos of today can trace their spiritual roots back to Reb Yisroel Salanter.

The story is told that a businessman once met with Reb Yisroel for some advice. He was always very busy, he explained, and didn't have much time in the day to focus on spiritual pursuits. Though learning Torah was important to him, he just didn't have the time to spare! However, by maneuvering around his schedule, he was able to create a small window of time that he could use to study.

"In that short period of time, what should I learn? *Gemara? Halacha?* Perhaps review the *Chumash?*" Without hesitation, Reb Yisroel answered that he should study Mussar. "Do not think that it's because I think Mussar is more important than those other topics. Of course one must study *Gemara, Halacha, and Chumash*. However, if you study Mussar, you will realize that you actually have much more time in the day than you previously thought."

Mussar gives one the ability to see through the fog of life, and recognize reality. By learning Mussar, we then help ourselves help ourselves.

**Story based on Sparks of Mussar and other sources.*

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DID YOU KNOW?

- The *Nevi'im* would warn the people in their generation not to run on autopilot, but to pause and pay close attention to their actions and direction in life.¹
- If one allows himself to get swept away with the tide of life they are bound to succumb to the *Yetzer Harah* without even realizing it.²
- If one puts even minimal time of introspection they will immediately improve their *Avodas Hashem*. This is the reason the *Yetzer Harah* puts so much effort into distracting us from learning *Mussar*.³
- Despite the *Yetzer Harah* being smarter and stronger than us, once we put in the time to think about our actions, Hashem assists us and saves us from the *Yetzer Harah's* schemes.⁴

¹ *Yirmiyah* 8:6

² *Mesillas Yesharim* Chap. 2

³ *Shaarei Ohr* Chap. 6

⁴ *Mesillas Yesharim* Chap. 2