

## EREV RAV VS. YISRAEL

Ever since the *cheit* of Adam HaRishon, a mixture of good and evil entered all of mankind, where there has been an ongoing process of *birur* of sorting out the good and bad from each other. In anything we come across, we need to know what the good parts are and what the bad parts are so that we can stay away from the bad. [It has been this way ever since the *cheit*, and it continues to become and more pronounced with the closer we get to the end.]

Rav Chaim Volozhiner (in *sefer Nefesh HaChaim*) explained that before the *cheit*, the evil inclination (embodied in the snake/*Nachash*) was outside of Adam and Chavah. After the *cheit*, the evil inclination, or the *Nachash*, injected its poison (*zuhama*) into Adam and Chavah for all of mankind to follow. The *yetzer hora* resides right in our heart, in its left chamber, and is enmeshed with our soul, living as an enemy within us that is ready to attack us at any moment, as the *Chovos HaLevovos* describes.

However, when one is *zocheh* to become truly connected to the Torah, which is called the "*Eitz HaChaim*" (Tree of Life) he partakes of the *Eitz HaChaim*, and is thereby connected with *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. He connects himself to the Torah, which is called the *Eitz HaChaim*: עץ חיים היא למחויקים בה. "*It is a tree of life it is to those who hold onto it.*" The Torah is the revelation of the *Eitz HaChaim* that was in *Gan Eden*. By becoming connected to the Torah, one is connected to an inner, true life, the life that is eternal and entirely good, the life that was contained in *Eitz HaChaim*.

Through connecting to the Torah, one becomes connected with Hashem, where all is good, where no evil can take hold, for it is written במקומו לא יגורך רע "*In His place, evil shall not visit you.*" Evil cannot affect the place where one stands with Hashem. The more that a person connects with the reality that is the Torah, with Hashem's reality, he enters into the innermost chamber with Hashem, where there is no mixture of good and evil. In that place one is experiencing the state of the pure soul (*neshamah tehorah*) which Hashem created man with. When one accesses one's inner world by connecting to the world of the Torah (which is Hashem's world) there is no mixture of good and evil. There is only good there, for Torah is called "good": כי לקח טוב נתתי לכם, The Torah is called a "good purchase I gave to you." In addition, Chazal said אין טוב אלא תורה, "There is no good except Torah." The Torah is the עולם שכולו טוב, a reality that is entirely good.

When a person lives in the external world as it is, he is

living in a mixture of good and evil, which cannot be sorted out properly. This was always true ever since the *cheit* of Adam. But even more so, ever since the Jewish people left Egypt, the Torah says that there was a group of people called the "*Erev Rav*" (Mixed Multitude), who came with them. The word "*Erev Rav*" means *taaruvos rabbah*, a big mixture. Simply speaking, they were a mixture of different nations together who ended up in Egypt. But the *Gra*, and later Reb Elchonon Wasserman, explained more deeply that the *Erev Rav* are a "mixture" because they are souls which contain an inherent mixture of good and evil that can't be sifted out.

In that way, the *Erev Rav* (who joined *Klal Yisrael*) are very different from *Klal Yisrael*. The *neshamos* of *Klal Yisrael* stood at Har Sinai to receive the Torah. This wasn't just an event, but a revelation of the *Eitz HaChaim* to them, where they received a world which is free from the mixture of good and evil. The *Erev Rav* didn't join in this experience [they weren't interested]. The *Ramban* says that the *Erev Rav* stood apart from the people when the Torah was being received at Har Sinai. Although they had undergone conversion to the Jewish people (the *Zohar* says that Moshe accepted them as *geirim*, in the hopes of drawing them close to the truth), they chose to stand apart from *Klal Yisrael* when the Torah was being received.

After leaving Egypt, the *Erev Rav* went up with the Jewish people and mixed with them, but only up until the point where the Torah was received. At the very apex of the giving of the Torah, Hashem's Presence was revealed to the Jewish people as a sublime experience which was the revelation of "the Torah that is entirely good" with no mixture of good and evil. The state of impurity that had enveloped mankind ever since the *snake/Nachash* influenced Adam and Chavah to sin, was now removed from and they were pure again. The *Erev Rav* didn't want to partake of this experience, because they were an inherent mixture of good and evil. But later, the *Erev Rav* became mixed again with us (through the *Eigel*) and they ruined the pure state of *Klal Yisrael*. The *Erev Rav* has remained in place ever since then until today. The *Erev Rav's* influence and mixture amongst our people has obscured the *ohr* of the Torah from completely reaching and elevating *Klal Yisrael*.

The *Ramban* said that "The *Erev Rav* stand on their own, as a separate nation." [The *Ramban* doesn't bring a proof to this, but the upright logic of the *Rishonim* is so logical that it doesn't need proof.] Had the *Erev Rav* stood together with *Klal Yisrael* when the Torah was being given, their impure presence amidst us wouldn't have allowed the *zuhama* (impurity) to leave us when we stood at Har Sinai. But the

*zuhama* was indeed removed from *Klal Yisrael* at Har Sinai. Therefore, the *Ramban's* view is that the *Erev Rav* stood apart from the Jewish people then, as their own independent nation that was completely separate from the Jewish people. Thus, with the *Erev Rav* apart from us when we received the Torah at Har Sinai, we separated from the world around us, which is entirely a hopeless mixture of good and evil together that can't be sorted, and we entered into an internal life, which is entirely good, with no admixtures of anything else. (That good, internal life remains accessible even today, but only if one is truly attached, in the depths of his *nefesh*, to the Torah and Hashem.)

When the Jewish people fell for the Golden Calf/*Eigel*, due to the influence of the *Erev Rav*, then the mixture of the *Erev Rav* re-entered our nation. The true devastation which resulted from the sin with the *Eigel* was that the Jewish people became mixed again with the *Erev Rav's* influence. The very fact that the people became mixed with that external world, where there is good and evil mixed together, was a terrible decline in their entire level, for they had now left their internal world where all is pure and good. They were now connected to a world where everything is a mixture of good and bad.

The *Gra*, and later Reb Elchonon Wasserman, explained that in the final generation, the influence of the *Erev Rav* upon the Jewish people will once again re-assert itself. We have gone through the exiles of Egypt, Bavel, Madai-Peras (Media-Persia), Greece, and currently the exile of Edom (Rome) which includes the exile of *Yishmael* manifested by our suffering from the Arabic nations. Within this exile, we also face the "exile of the *Erev Rav*." It is the final stage of exile, where we are being tested with all kinds of forbidden mixtures [harmful influences].

At the giving of the Torah, the Jewish people were separated from the *Erev Rav*, and even the evil Bilaam understood this separation, saying "They are a nation that dwells alone, and with the nations they do not think." The Jewish people were understandably separated from the rest of the nations, as well as from the *Erev Rav*. When they were in the desert they were separated from the *Erev Rav*. That was the case when the people stood at Har Sinai to receive the Torah, where this separation between the Jewish people and the *Erev Rav* was apparent. After the sin with the *Eigel*, though, which was caused by the *Erev Rav*, the *Erev Rav's* influence entered us and our exalted status of being totally separated from the nations was no longer possible. Ever since then, the influences of the *Erev Rav* have been making trouble for us and bringing us down. Hashem is always with us and He can be revealed to us in spite of this mixture of influences that we live with, but we still have to endure the test of be-

ing found amidst the mixture of the *Erev Rav's* influences. In our generation today, everything has become infected by all of the unwanted mixtures, the very opposite of the pure level we were at when we stood at Har Sinai.

In the final generation, where we are within the exiles of *Edom*, *Yishmael* and *Erev Rav*, everything in the world becomes mixed together, and since we are amidst that exile, we are affected by that mixture. Every possible bad influence of the world is coming in to our once-sheltered communities. These mixes of influences are not merely like *kilayim* of forbidden mixtures of certain plants, materials, and animals. It is rather a deeper kind of *kilayim*, where the mixture takes place on the inside. There will always be a pure place in our souls which remains unaffected by this mixture. But to the extent that we are influenced by the mixture of the *Erev Rav*, our *neshamos* suffer from the "exile of the *Erev Rav*," this mixture of influences among us.

What should a person do about it? In order for a person to live in a true world, he needs to penetrate to the depths of the Torah and a true, earnest relationship with Hashem. A Jew in every generation always had the *avodah* to separate as much as possible from the external world, and to enter more inward, where he could reach higher levels of purity. But today, the very definition of our *avodah* today requires one to disconnect from the world and to enter inward into his own inner world. As long as one does not enter inward enough, he is connected to the mixture of the world today - which means that he is in the depths of exile. Even if a person today has the talent of being able to draw out the good that is available in the mixture of good and evil in the world today, he is still living in the mixture, so he will be missing the inner truth, and he will be found in the depths of exile.

If we understand these words, it should awaken in us a desire, in the depths of our *nefesh*, to seek an inner kind of life, where a person is attached to the *kedushah* of the Torah, both with our intellect and heart - where there is nothing else his life other than the Torah, where the Torah fills all of his life. That is where one can become truly connected to, and that is where he lives. This does not require a high *madreigah* (level) to be on. Rather, all it requires from us is that we not be so callous and hardened, from the depths of the exile we are in.

It is a personal *Geulah* for the *nefesh* when one is *zocheh* to reach a deep connection to the Torah and to Hashem. It is the way for one to leave the depths of exile today. Of course, it will not be a complete *Geulah*, until the actual *Geulah* arrives, but it enables one to at least touch the place of *Geulah*. That is where purity and *kedushah* holiness reside. That is where a person can be *zocheh* to feel the *kedushah* of the Torah so that a transformation occurs.

Understandably, even when one is mainly living within the mixture of this world, he can still be affected by Torah, because the *ohr* of the Torah is powerful and can illuminate every dark place with its *ohr*. [Learning Torah always has a good effect on a person, no matter what level he is at.] However, the *kedushah* of the Torah will be obscured and blocked to a great extent, by the mixture that one is found in, and then he won't be able to clearly feel the *kedushah* of his Torah learning.

If one is *zocheh* to penetrate inward, to find a higher dimension of existence where there are no mixtures and there is only good, then his *nefesh* can feel the truth of the Torah with such clarity, since his *nefesh* has become more and more connected with the truths of the Torah. And as a result, he will naturally recoil, in his *nefesh*, from what is found on the outside world today, because now he has become aware of it and he is sensitive to it. Only then, will a person be able to understand the depth of the mixture he had been in until now. Before that, he simply wasn't aware. When one enters into the inner layer of reality today, he will want to separate from all of the evil of the outside world.

It is written, לך עמו בא בחדריך וסגור דלתך בעדיך עד רגע יעבור זעם, “Go my nation, come into your rooms, close the doors behind you, wait for the moment until the wrath passes.” Just as we can close the doors in our physical world, so can we ‘close the doors’ in our own *nefesh*, from whatever is taking place on the outside world, and to live only in the inner world, the *olam pnimi*, a place where we feel a connection to only Hashem, and His Torah. There, a person can discover the *kedushah* (holiness) of the *neshamah* (Divine soul) of a Jew. There, a person can truly discover how “My G-d, the soul You gave to me is pure.” It is pure!

To live with this perspective on a 24/7 basis is, understandably, not possible. But every person who searches for a life of truth, a life of Torah, needs to have times every day where he disconnects from everything, when he lives only in the *olam pnimi*, the inner world.

When the Jewish people left Egypt, they left behind the mixture that was in Egypt, and they prepared themselves to receive the Torah. They wanted to receive the *Aseres HaDibros*, when Hashem spoke to the Jewish people directly, by the first commandment of *Anochi Hashem*. Their entire focus was on listening to Hashem and His word, and they didn't want anything else besides this. Preparation for the Torah is when one prepares his *nefesh* to enter into the innermost chambers with Hashem.

The more that one is connected to the outside world, the more he is found amidst the mixture on This World. In contrast, the more one lives inwardly, in his *pnimiyus*, the less

he will be mixed with the world - until he can reach the ultimate level, where there is no mixture at all. And that was the state of receiving the Torah.

Every person needs times every day where he totally disconnects from the world around him – starting with an external disconnection from the world, and continuing with an internal disconnection from the world, by separating his mind (thoughts) and his heart (emotions) as much as he can, from all that goes on in the world. During this quiet time, one needs to bring his mind's thoughts and his heart's desires into the depths of the Torah, and into thinking of before Whom we are learning Torah [as the *Chazon Ish* wrote]. One should prepare himself, during this preparation time to start learning, to enter into the innermost chambers with Hashem.

Of course, a person cannot accomplish this all at once. It is a gradual process, of slowly disconnecting from the rest of the world, whereupon one merits discovering the *olam pnimi*, the inner world. At first, when one begins to try this, it will only be a momentary experience. But as one gets used to it, he will find that it settles his soul, and the inner world will become opened to him, a life that is entirely pure, free from all unsavory ‘mixtures’ of this world. The revelation of the Torah, and the *ohr* of Hashem which radiates within the *neshamah*, is where nothing else exists other than Hashem's Presence, as revealed through His wisdom, the Torah.

If one is not trying to reach this point, then by default, he is still eating from the mixture of the *Eitz HaDaas* all the time. In contrast, when one directs his life towards the light of Hashem and His Torah, he leaves behind the life of forbidden, unwanted mixtures which we don't really want. When we awaken our true *ratzon* that is found deep in our *neshamah*, we will want to find ourselves in a pure place that is free from any unwanted, unsavory mixtures.

When one realizes that he has living in a world of all these undesirable mixtures of influences that we find ourselves surrounded by, a desire will be awakened in him, for an inner world that is pure, the *עולם שכולו טוב*, the higher dimension that is called the “world that is entirely good,” a pure level of existence which isn't mixed with anything else in it.

When one accesses it, he will then find that he will want to give himself up for it, and to disconnect from everything else around him in order to penetrate into an inner place that is all-inclusive of everything – a deep connection to all of the *neshamos* of *Klal Yisrael* and a connection to all of the Torah, and more than anything, a connection to Hashem. It is this complete level of revelation of Hashem's Presence that can be revealed in the depths of our *nefesh*.

# THE EREV RAV

**QUESTION** The *Gra* (*Tikkunei HaZohar 41a*) describes five groups of *Erev Rav*, called *Amalekim*, *Refaim*, *Nefilim*, *Giborim*, and *Anakim* who each bear certain characteristics and evil behavior. The description there seems to describe a lot of people though. Does that mean that anyone who does any of these behaviors is from the *Erev Rav*, *chas v'shalom*?

**ANSWER** Only if a person does any of those things out of being truly bad on his inside, and with intentions to hurt another Jew, is he from the *Erev Rav*. **The *Erev Rav* souls have no compassion on a Jewish soul**, unlike the souls of the Jewish people, who have an inherent trait of compassion on others.

**QUESTION** What should a person do if he suspects that maybe he's from the *Erev Rav*?

**ANSWER** First of all, let's understand that if someone has a large percentage of "*Erev Rav*" in his soul, he won't be that insulted from our words here. However, there are people who do have some "*Erev Rav*" aspect in their souls. This is the part of the soul upon which we have a "*mitzvah* to erase Amalek" [our "internal Amalek"]. If a person recognizes some trace of 'Erev Rav' in his own soul, he should *daven* to Hashem that he should be *zocheh* to die *al kiddush Hashem*. If a person is truly willing to die *al kiddush Hashem*, that very decision to have *mesirus nefesh* for Hashem is like a "death" to that evil part of his soul, just as the *neshamah* leaving the body is considered to be its 'death' even though it continues to exist. In this way, the person remains with a soul that is entirely *kadosh* (holy). The question you have asked is very important, because there are indeed many people in this generation who contained a mixture of good/Jew and evil/*Erev Rav* in their souls.

**QUESTION** Why we are seeing so many *cholei nefesh* (emotional and mental illnesses) today, which weren't around in previous generations?

**ANSWER** The external reasons for this are because of the very stressful lifestyle of today's time, and also the surge of information that everyone knows about today, which causes a person to lose his calmness and peace of mind, and which causes a person to increased tensions and pressures, and more issues. The inner reason for this is because most of the souls in today's generation are reincarnations/*gilgulim* of several souls at once in the same body – either a person also has an entire soul that has been completely reincarnated, or he has "sparks" from souls of a previous lifetime. This leads to many inner contradictions in one's soul, resembling the internal clash of שני גוים בבטן "two nations are in you."

**QUESTION** Does this mean also that a person today can be a combination of a total *rasha* as well as a total *tzaddik* living inside him...? And would that be the reason why a person can feel like such a contradiction - he feels a pull towards the most evil things possible, yet he can also feel the pull towards *d'veykus* in Hashem and all the other qualities of *tzaddikim*?

**ANSWER** Yes! And, it is also because we are in the final days, where opposite aspects are quickly coming together (as quick as a "bolt of lightning"), and becoming integrated in each other.

**QUESTION** If a person chooses to let the *tzaddik* part him dominate over the evil parts of our being, does that raise the "*Erev Rav*" part of him to *kedushah*?

**ANSWER** Any evil parts inside us need to become nullified and integrated into holiness, and this is through the secret of revealing our soul's deep yearning for Hashem, to be willing to be burned up and destroyed in order to do Hashem's will, so that we can return to our

Source, Hashem – to reach the state that is called *hiskalelus*, becoming "integrated" with Hashem.

**QUESTION** Can *Erev Rav* souls do *teshuvah*?

**ANSWER** Most of the *Erev Rav* cannot be returned to *teshuvah* [and they don't really want to]. But a few of them can. Through *mesirus nefesh* (giving himself up for Hashem), though, one can separate any *Erev Rav* parts that became attached to his own *nefesh* (soul).

**QUESTION** Is Internet evil, or can we use it for good? Many people find that it helps their *avodas Hashem* with all the Torah they get from it. And a lot of money being donated to Torah institutions today is done online. I am asking this because it would be easier for me to keep away from the Internet completely if I would better understand why the Internet is evil. Is keeping away from Internet use merely a *geder* (safety measure) that the *Rabbonim* made to keep us away from it? Or is there some other reason here not to use it that's more intrinsic?

**ANSWER** In our times, where we are very near the end of the final days, the power of *echad* (Hashem is One) is becoming revealed. On the side of *kedushah*, it is the oneness and omnipotence of Hashem on the world, and we hope it will soon be revealed completely. Corresponding to this power is an equal force in the side of *tumah*, which is intensifying more and more as we get closer to the end, and it is the power of using "media," which connects the entire world and everything in it, together.

It connects *kedushah* and *tumah* together, leaving nothing out. It is the most dramatic example yet of the "*Erev Rav*," the mixture of every kind of influence in the world, and there is no bigger "*kelipah*" (impure shell) of "*Erev Rav*" than the Internet. And therefore, we need to keep a distance from the Internet as much as possible.

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