

Balak - Viewing Others With The Good Eye

The “Good Eye” and “The Evil Eye”

Regarding *Parashas Balak*, there is a *Mishnah* of our Sages: “The students of Avraham have a good eye... whereas the students of Bilaam have an evil eye.” A person has the power to have a “good eye” towards others – or an “evil eye” towards others.

The powers of “good eye” and “evil eye” are part of the soul’s power to see. There is the faculty of imaginary sight, and there is the faculty of realistic sight.

An example of imaginary sight is that in the future, Hashem will slaughter the evil inclination, where the righteous and the wicked will cry; to the righteous, the evil inclination looked like a mountain, and to the wicked, the evil inclination looked like a hair.¹ Thus, the evil inclination is a form of seeing, through the imagination.

Another kind of seeing is when one sees through his intellect. This is called “eyes of the intellect”. As we spoke about in *Parashas Shelach*, according to the level that a person is on, that is how he will see reality. Although reality is always one single reality, each person sees it differently, depending on his level.

Getting more specific, there is a way to see from a “good eye” and, correspondingly, a way to see from the “evil eye”. What is the source of the good eye (*ayin tovah*) and bad eye (*ayin ra*)? Where do these powers of sight stem from?

1- The Basic Level of Ayin Tovah\Good Eye – Becoming A More Positive Person

There are several ways of how a person can gain the view of the “good eye” (*ayin tovah*). A basic use of this power is when a person trains himself to see things in a positive light, and to see the good in everything.

After all, Hashem created a universe that is entirely “good”; on a deeper level, Hashem carved out the entire Creation from His own goodness, and there is no such thing as evil in Hashem, so the entire Creation is good, in its essence.

Ever since Adam and Chavah ate from the *Eitz HaDaas Tov V’Ra* (the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil), which was a mixture of good and evil, everything in Creation has become a mix of good and evil. Therefore, the world we see in front of us is a mix of good and evil, for that is what reality has become. Since that is the case, how then can a person see reality with a “good eye”? One way to gain the view of a “good eye” is, as mentioned above: To train oneself to see the good in everything.

One can slowly but surely work on becoming a more positive person, by trying to discover something positive in each thing he comes across. Even when viewing something that seems to be bad, a person can train himself to start seeing the good side in something.

The Disadvantages With Trying To See The Good In Everything

That is surely a constructive kind of self-work, and it is certainly commendable to do so. However, to remain at this level is superficial. After all, even animals can be trained to do certain things. Therefore, “training” oneself to getting used to new habits and thinking patterns is only a superficial kind of growth, so we should not remain at that level. There is more inner work to be done.

There is also a stronger point to consider about this. On one hand, it is wonderful to start seeing things in a positive light and to see good in everything, but on the other hand, this might cause a person to distort reality. He will come to deny that there’s anything bad in the world, and he will only see the good in something, ignoring the reality he encounters.

Also, even when he gets used to seeing the good in everything, he doesn’t change inwardly. He has gotten used to this habitually, so it has become “second nature” to him, but his original nature hasn’t yet changed. He has simply learned how to see things differently, but in doing so, he denies reality.

So while it is certainly a good thing that he has learned how to see the good in things, there is also a downside to this type of *avodah*.

Even worse, if a person gets used to only seeing the good in things and never the bad, he will train himself to deny that there is any evil in the world, and this is simply not true. Hashem created both good and evil in reality, and we must be wary of the presence of evil in this reality we live in.

If a person gets used to ignoring the evil in the world, he will become more susceptible to the evil influences in the world, because he will not be vigilant of the danger. He won’t be careful in avoiding evil, because he has gotten so used to denying the evil in the world. His spiritual situation is in danger, and he will become connected with evil.

2 – Through Love For Others

Here is an additional method, which is a method we can use in order to gain the quality of viewing others with a “good eye”: The more that a person develops a **love** for Hashem’s creations, the better he will be able to view them in a positive light.

Compare this to a father’s love for his child; the father loves the child and therefore he ignores the child’s faults, because the love covers over the faults and allows him to see past them. This is the verse, “*Upon all sins, love conceals*”. When there is love, the love covers and conceals any of the evil that is there, enabling you to see past it and to view the other in a positive light. There is a deep force of love in our souls which wants to see only the good in Creation, and to look past all the evil.

Love is the root of having a “good eye” towards others, and for this reason, a person who has the quality of a “good eye” is of the “students of Avraham Avinu”, because Avraham personified the trait of kindness, which is rooted in his great love for all of the creations. Loving others enables you to view others positively. When your soul is connected to the power to love the creations, in turn, you will want to see the good in others, as an automatic byproduct of the love.

Thus, a “good eye” doesn’t start with simply trying to have a “good eye” towards others; it is but the result of love. What we see from this is that a “good eye” is not simply a superficial kind of training to try to view others positively, but a kind of self-work which must originate from within. The

“good eye” does not become acquired merely through habitual kinds of training, but from somewhere deep inside you, from a love, which wants to see the good in Hashem’s creations.

The first method mentioned earlier, where a person tries to get used to seeing others in a positive light, is a superficial method which, if you are persistent in it, it can eventually penetrate the soul and affect you internally. This is true about any kind of external self-work. But if you use the second method mentioned – to reveal a love for the creations, which is the inner method – the result will be that you will develop an inner kind of “good eye” towards others.

Even more so, if you connect to the good that is within you and to focus on it, this in turn will cause you to see the good in the creation around you. The more you are connected to your own inward good, the more you will see good on the outside world in front of you. The same is also true vice versa – the more a person focuses on the evil parts of himself, the more negative of a view he will have towards the creations around him.

Fighting The Evil In Ourselves, While Seeing The Good In Others

This leads to us the following fundamental point.

A person contains a mixture of good and evil, and his avodah is to remove the evil and reveal the good. “*The inclination of the heart of man is evil from his youth*”. We must remove the evil from within us, but how? If there is always evil embedded into us, how do we have the power to remove it? Simply speaking, we need to wage war with the evil inside us, and to keep fighting it.

However, it is too difficult for a person to fight evil at every moment of the day. A person cannot live in a state of constant fighting. If he is fighting evil all day, that means he is constantly meeting up with evil and dealing with it. That, itself, makes him connected to the evil!

That is why if a person is constantly fighting the evil in himself (and he never connects to his own good), he will usually see evil in others, and all the time. It is because he is dealing with evil all day, so naturally, he will see the evil everywhere, in everyone he meets.

If a person is someone who is engaged in a lot of personal self-work, he will be able to see the good in others, and only see evil in himself. This is actually a deep contradiction in the soul: To never see evil in others, and only their good; and at the same time, to only notice the evil in yourself.

Through getting used to only seeing the good in others and ignoring their faults, you can gain a “good eye” towards them (as mentioned earlier). Or, you can use the more inner method, which is to love all creations, and then you will only see good in them. The inner method, however, requires great purity of character, in order for a person to genuinely acquire a pure love for others.

3 – Stop Being Judgmental

For this, we can mention the famous words of the Kotzker, who explained that the teaching “Do not judge your friend until you reach his place” means that you will never fully understand another person, so don’t judge him. Each person is a complete world to himself, and it is impossible to see the full picture of another person. You will never fully get down to the subtleties of his character, so you cannot really judge him accurately. You just have to believe that Hashem created him a certain way, which you will never completely understand.

In Summary

When you get used to this idea, you will be able to see others with the “good eye”. It will enable you to only fight the evil within you and not to deal with the evil in others, because you will only see the good in others, either because:

- (1) You have gotten used to focusing only on their positive points, or
- (2) Because you have developed a love for others, or
- (3) Because you have learned how to stop being judgmental towards others, because you are aware that you will never fully understand another person’s life.

Focusing On Our Good

So far, we have discussed how you battle the evil in yourself, while avoiding seeing any evil in others. But as we mentioned, this is only one side of the coin. The second part of our *avodah* always is, to reveal our own good. A person must be able to see the good in himself.

We certainly have a lot of evil to remove from ourselves. We must remove the evil character traits, as well as any personal agendas and ulterior, self-serving motivations; those are all “illnesses” of the soul. But our main focus should be on our good. As proof, the main *mitzvah* [for a man] is Torah study, which is the involvement of the mind in the ultimate “good” there is, for “there is no good except Torah.”

What Is More Important – Torah Learning, or Avodah (Self-Work)?

There are those who feel that their main *avodah* in life is to fight the evil within them, to work on matters of personal *avodah* – with less focus on Torah learning. They learn Torah too, but they place the main emphasis on matters of personal *avodah*, with less emphasis on improving their Torah learning. Let us see how this is a mistaken attitude.

What is the main aspect of life? Is it Torah learning, or personal *avodah*? If the main point of our life should be spent on personal *avodah*, a person would be contending all day with evil forces. When the focus is mainly on “*avodah*” and not on Torah learning, such a person, even while he is learning Torah, is only learning it for the sake of purifying himself from his evil inclination. Although Chazal state that Torah learning is the remedy for the *yetzer hora* (the evil inclination), this is not the main purpose of Torah study.

(On a more subtle note, there are some souls who do have this *avodah* to mainly use Torah study as a way to overcome their *yetzer hora* [but generally speaking, this is not the case with most people]).

The truthful approach to take is that the main part of life should be spent on focusing on the “good” (Torah learning), as opposed to placing more of an emphasis on purging ourselves from the “evil” (fixing our character and purifying our inner motivations). Therefore, our main work in life is with Torah study, which is the “good” of life. That is where we need to mainly connect our souls to. “*And in His Torah he delves, day and night.*” The Torah is referred to as the “good” in the verse, “*For a good purchase I have given to you.*”

Even more so, the ultimate level of connecting to “good” is to connect our soul to HaKadosh Baruch Hu, Who is entirely good [Who is found through Torah study].

Thus, the main part of our life should be to connect to the “good” of life, with less of an emphasis on contending with all of the forces of evil. In the end of the day, we have a *yetzer hora* (evil inclination), and therefore we certainly have an *avodah* to remove evil. But the main emphasis of our *avodah* on this world is with focusing on the “good” that is here – which is each person’s Torah learning.

The “Good Eye” - The Power of Moshe Rabbeinu

The Sages state the verse “*A good eye, he shall be blessed*” is referring to Moshe Rabbeinu. Why is Moshe the epitome of the “good eye”? There are many explanations, but along the lines of our discussion, it is because Moshe was utterly connected to the Torah, and to HaKadosh Baruch Hu, through the Torah. The Torah epitomizes as “good”, and the ultimate good is HaKadosh Baruch Hu; since Moshe reached the highest level of connecting to the “good” of life, he epitomized the quality of the “good eye”.

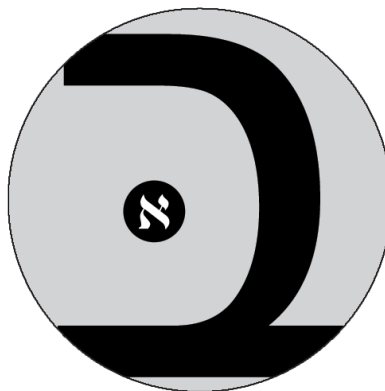
The more that a person connects his soul to Torah, and to HaKadosh Baruch Hu, the more he will acquire the “good eye”, because his soul will be in a place of “good”.

From Avraham Avinu, who perfected the trait of kindness\love, we received the power to love others, from the depths of the soul. But after we were given the Torah, we received an even deeper level, which was through Moshe: to experience a dimension where everything is completely good. Even in the current time we live in, where the world is a terribly disturbing mixture of good and evil together, it is still possible for us to experience a point where everything is good: being immersed in Torah study.

In Conclusion

When one learns Torah, during that time, he is removed from this lowly, depraved world, and he can see the World To Come. He can live here on This World yet see the World To Come; as it is written, “*Your world [to come] can be seen in your life.*”

שיחת השבוע 033 – בלק – עין טובה



Above The Questions

These questions that people have are questions that stems from our seichel – our logical, thinking, rational mind. There is no “answer” to this “question” – from the perspective of our intellectual mind, that is. But there is a more inner place in ourselves – our inner soul - which has the answer to this question. When a person is deeply connected to Hashem in his life, when he feels Hashem’s Presence in his heart, he can go above his logical thinking, and he will be above this question.

In a deep place in our soul, we are able to feel that we close with Hashem. When we feel the closeness to Hashem, that secure feeling of of being connected to Hashem will help us go above all of our natural fears and questions. This is also known as the point of “temimus” (*simplicity, or earnestness*) in the soul – where we feel pure and genuine faith in Hashem.

When a person remains outside of this inner place in the soul, he has questions: “Do you think that if I become close to Hashem, then I won’t have tzaros, that I will no longer have any suffering?! I might “know” in my mind that “everything is for the good,” but it is still very frightening to me that I may go through it, and it will still feel very painful if it happens to me.”

But when one enters the inner place in his soul, there, his feelings will be connected to a higher place. His heart will recognize a higher dimension, which is above the perception of the human intellect. It is there that a person draws forth bitachon (*trust in Hashem*), which is above the place of fear in the soul.

We might still grapple with the question, for we see that our Gedolim did go through many tzaros, such as what we see with the life of Yaakov Avinu (*and he had certainly had pain. He was consumed with agony over the loss of his son Yosef, that the Shechinah left him, for all those 22 years*). Our Gedolim had high levels of emunah in Hashem and in feeling Hashem’s love for them, yet they still had pain from all of their suffering. If we see that even our Gedolim had pain from their suffering, then what are we to say? What will it help for us to increase our emunah in Hashem? Surely having emunah can definitely weaken the extent of the pain, but it will not remove the pain totally; there will still be a lot of pain left over.

So there is no logical answer to the questions that we may have. Our seichel (*intellect*) cannot provide us with the answer. The ‘answer’ can only come to us through a deep place in our heart, the part that is intrinsically connected with HaKadosh Baruch Hu. In a deep place in the soul, a person is connected to Hashem, and there is no room there to feel alone in any way.

We explained earlier that the root of all fears stems from the soul’s fear of becoming alone. Thus when we are in a place where we do not feel alone, there is no fear. When a person feels that he is not with Hashem, when he is unaware that Hashem’s Presence can be felt deep in his heart, he will have fears, and indeed, he

will have many things to be afraid of. He will be afraid of all kinds of painful circumstances, but the root of all his fear is because he is afraid of feeling so alone. But when a person connects to Hashem deep in his soul, the reasons for the fear fall away.

Although he will still find it possible to fear all kinds of things, if he has removed the source of the fear, he will not have that much reason to fear; his feeling of fear will only be minimal.

Why Our Current Generation Experiences Much Fear

The reason why so many people in this generation have fears is not simply because there are many tzaros (*difficulties and hardships*) in people's lives. The inner reason is because most souls feel deep down as if they have no Father to be close to – we are a “generation of orphans.” When a person feels that he is so far from Hashem, it is a truly frightening feeling for him, and this is the source of most fears taking place in this generation.

There is an inner place in our soul which is so closely attached with Hashem and feels His presence, where there is no place for fear there. But we are not consciously aware of this place in ourselves, because we have usually not revealed it outward from its hidden state, and that is why we don't often feel it on a conscious level.

It appears to many people that they are afraid of certain things, or of certain trying circumstances that have happened in the past which they are afraid of from happening again. But if we look at all this from a truthful lens, the many difficulties and trying events which we see in our generation are not the actual cause for fear, but a symptom of a deeper kind of fear. The deep root of the fears is because deep down, there is a loneliness, from feeling so apart from Hashem. When that fear exists, all the fears in the world can take hold of a person.

The deep advice we can use to solve our fears, as we said, is not simply to remove the outer symptoms of the fear. Sometimes there is a possibility to deal with fears in a superficial way, which we spoke about earlier; but although this is helpful, the main thing we need to is to get to solve the fear at its root. For this, we need to dig deep into ourselves. The inner solution to fear is: to understand that are never “alone” on this world, and to connect ourselves to the One who has made this world come into existence. This is the true solution to all fears.

Practically Speaking

All that was described here is essentially an inner solution, a more truthful solution, to deal with our fears. However, practically speaking, since this is a very deep and inner approach, which we cannot reach in one day alone, in the end of the day, we may have to use physical remedies available in order to soothe fear.

People might have to take certain pills to relieve them of the anxiety they have from their fears, while

simultaneously trying to get to the inner method described here. The outer layers of the soul which are closer to physicality cannot relate to the inner solution to fears described here, so they will need to be calmed with various physical means.

The physical aspects involved treating our fear may involve confiding in someone who can advise us; it should be someone who can listen to us attentively, who understands us, who feels us. Many people, when they feel that they have the support of others, become calmed from this feeling, and on a more subtle note, it is because they feel like they feel that they are no longer facing their fear alone.

Also, sometimes we can help a person with fears by showing him that it's all in his imagination, and that it is not happening in reality; this can also soothe a person. However, many times a person is well aware that his fear is only in his imagination, yet even so, he continues to have the fear. When this is the case, he should then make use of the inner solution to fears, described here.

Therefore, our intention here is not to invalidate the physical methods of alleviating fear. There are times where indeed a person needs to take pills in order to remove his fears.

Here we only meant to present a more inner solution that exists *[that there is a deep place in our soul, where we can feel closeness to Hashem, where we can truly feel that we are "with" Hashem, and there are no fears there in that place]*.

Practically speaking, when we want to solve our fears, as a temporary basis we may make use of the various physical methods of treating fear; but our point is that this should not become a fundamental approach towards how we deal with life.

We are saying here that in order to fully treat our fears, we will need to dig deep into our soul, to bring out the fear from its root, so that we can remove the root of our fears and all of the 'branches' of the fear that come along with it.

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