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[Home](#) > Rosh Chodesh Avodah - 004 Tamuz Seeing the Good

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Tamuz Contains The Power of Inner Sight

Tamuz and Av are the two most tragic months of the entire year. Chazal state that five tragedies took place during the month of Tamuz. These months require a lot of contemplation to find how Hashem is here with us, even in these trying months. It seems as if nothing good can be said of these two months, which are full of sad events.

The power contained in the month of Tamuz (according to some opinions of the *sefarim hakedoshim*), is “sight”. There is physical sight, and there is an inner power of sight as well – this is also identified as *einei haseichel*, “eyes of the intellect”.^[1] Just like our physical eyes can see both good and bad things, so can our inner sight see both good and bad.

From the time Chavah set her eyes upon the *eitz hadaas*, which was a mixture of good and evil, all things which we see are a mixture of good and evil. Nothing we see is totally good, and nothing we see is totally bad. It is always a mix.

There are people who were naturally born with a very positive nature and they are inclined to focus on the good in everything, while others were born with a more negative nature and thus they are naturally inclined to see the bad side of everything.

Chazal state that those who have a “good eye” (*ayin tovah*) are the students of Avraham Avinu, while those who have a “bad eye” (*ayin ra*) are students of Bilaam, so we must therefore strive to have a “good eye”. Ever since the sin of Adam, everything has become a mixture of good and bad. If we look at the good of things, we are being students of Avraham, but if we only see the bad in something, we are being negative, students of the wicked Bilaam.

We can't see only good or only bad, though, because in the current state of affairs, there is no such thing. Everything is a mix. Therefore, we need to see the good – and bad – in everything, and then what we need to do is connect to the good in it.

We will try to explain, with the help of Hashem, how we can come to think about only the good in things.

The First Step: Taking Apart The Information

Since everything is a mixture, we need to learn how to see what each thing we come across is made up of. We need to see how much good is in something, and how much bad is in it. Everything has

some good in it and some bad in it, and we need to get used to thinking into the good parts and the bad parts in something. Take something apart in your mind and analyze it, thinking: “What is the good here, and what is the bad here?”

Practically speaking, take a piece of paper and make two rows, one row labeled “Good” on the right side and the other row labeled “Bad” on the left side. Write down all the good things you can find in a situation, and all the bad things you see, and line them against each other.

You will discover as you get used to this that there are things which you thought were totally good that really have some bad in them also, and there are things which you thought were totally bad that actually have something good in them.

The Tricky Part

Now comes a danger which you should watch out for, though. When you realize that a situation is mostly bad, you know that you should keep away from it. But the tricky part is when you discover something good in something which also has bad in it, and you might be tempted to connect to it, because you see good in it. But although you see good in something bad, this doesn't mean you should connect to it.

There are some situations which we cannot choose otherwise, so there is nothing we can do to get out of them, even if there is bad in them. But there are situations in life which we can choose to connect to or not. In these complicated situations, should we choose to connect to the good in them, or not?

What we need to do is to somehow connect to the good in every situation. The question is, how? If there is mostly bad in a situation, even if you have found some good in it, how can you connect yourself to it and feel that it is somehow good, when you know quite well that there is bad here also?

When You Can't Find Anything Good

This is the hard part. There are difficult times we go through in which we can't seem to find anything good in the situation. When we go through a difficult time, we must bear in mind that our difficult times are just like everything else in life that is made up of both good and bad.

If there is more bad than good, how do we get by a situation? How do we deal with situations that are mostly bad? True, there is some good to everything, even situations that are mostly bad. But if it is mostly bad, how indeed do we get by these situations?

What one has to do in such a situation is to find the strongest good point in this situation, and that will shine an entirely new light on the situation. Let us give some more background to how this works.

Everything in Creation has in it a root and its branches. There is always one root good point in every situation, and although there are many branches that stem from it which are bad, the root is always good. There are actually 287 branches which can stem from one single root, so a person can find 287 negative things to say about any situation! But if a person finds the root of a situation – if he finds the root good point – then all the “branches” lose their vitality, because they have no bad root with which to feed on.

Thus, if you want to see how any situation is good, no matter how bad it is, you need to find the “root” of the situation. The “root” is always good, and this knocks away all the negative things you see in the situation.

We will try to explain how we can put this into practice. These are really very deep matters, but they are the root of how to live a true, inner kind of life.

What It Means To “See Good”

There are two approaches of *Avodas Hashem* in how a person can become more positive, to have an *ayin tovah* (“good eye”).

One way is to think positive thoughts all the time, and when you think positive, your good thoughts turn the situation to always be good.

Another way is to find the good contained in every situation. This doesn’t simply mean, however, for a person to try to find the one good point in any situation; that alone will not be enough, because there are many other bad points in the situation which would just cancel it out. If a person is aware of many bad points about a situation and he simply comes up with a good point contained in the situation, this will not help, because then he is still saying that there is mostly bad here, and he is just admitting that there is some good here also. This is not the depth to having an *ayin tovah*.

The real definition of *ayin tovah* is to find how the root of the situation is good, and therefore, that root good point makes the entire situation good.

An Example From Chazal

How do we know this is true? We can give a very good example. The destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash*, as we know, was a very great tragedy, a truly sad situation. On one hand, we must mourn the destruction and all the tragedies it caused, but on the other hand, Chazal also brought words of comfort for us. How did Chazal find comfort over the destruction?

There is a statement of Chazal that Hashem was so angry with the Jewish people that He really wanted to destroy them, but instead He unleashed His anger on the stones and wood of the *Beis Hamikdash*. In this statement, however, Chazal did not find comfort. This fact alone wasn’t enough for Chazal to find solace. There is a different fact about the destruction, however, in which Chazal found comfort in. Chazal state that on the day of the destruction, Moshiach was born. This was how Chazal found the positive in the tragedy of the destruction.

The fact that Hashem took out His anger on stones and wood doesn’t bring out the comfort in the situation, because this doesn’t show how the destruction was a good thing. It just shows us some good amongst the bad. But the fact that the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash* heralded the birth of Moshiach is something that shows us how the entire tragedy, at its root, was good, because now we saw that the destruction was a cause to begin the final redemption.

From here we can see that when Chazal wanted to find how even the worst situation can be good, they didn’t find comfort in the fact that there was one good point to say about the situation. That alone was not a comfort. What Chazal found positive about the situation was that the root of the entire sad situation was good, and that was what is able to comfort us.

Summary

To work on seeing how every situation is really good in its root, a person still needs *siyata d’shamaya* (Heavenly assistance), *tefillos* (prayer), and *hisbonenus* (reflection) besides for what we have explained here, in order to see how every situation is really good. Anyone can split up every matter into how it is good and bad, and then he can see how the root of it is always good. Then he can connect himself to the root good point of any situation.

Applying This To Current Events

The words here are not only true on a general basis, but they apply as well on a more specific level.

As we speak now, Eretz Yisrael is going through trying times. Three young boys have been kidnapped by terrorists, and we have not yet merited for them to return home. The entire country is worried for them, and this appears to be such a bad situation that it doesn't seem that any good can be said about it.^[2]

Yet, if you think about it, there is some good in this situation. This situation has revealed so much *Ahavas Yisrael* amongst Jews from all walks of life. All Jews are united together in prayer for the boys, and everyone has put aside all their differences. Another good point is the *chessed* that this situation has caused people to increase in.

These are some good points about the situation, yet one can still argue that the bad of this situation far outweighs the good. To counter this pessimistic attitude, we can use our deeper method of *ayin tovah*, which is to find the root of the situation, which is good; and when we find the root good point of this situation, it will show us how this entire "bad" situation is really good.

The root good point of this situation is that it shows us about our own situation: we are also "kidnapped" amongst the seventy non-Jewish nations of the world. We are Hashem's children, and we are kidnapped by the nations. This situation can show us how much we long to be rescued by Hashem from the nations who want to destroy us.

The kidnapping of the three boys shows us the depth of our exile, and how much we should want to come out of it. It can show us that we shouldn't only *daven* for the children who were captured – we should *daven* for the entire *Klal Yisrael*, who currently live in darkness, surrounded by people who wish to destroy all the Jews – who have no value whatsoever for a Jew's life.

It is unfortunate that we have to use the three captured boys as a *moshol* (parable) to our own situation, but now that this is the situation, we need to use it as a way to get us to *daven* for all of *Klal Yisrael*, who are kidnapped in this exile. We are kidnapped from our true level of spirituality, because of the effect that the non-Jews have had on us throughout this dark exile.

May the boys return home, and may all of us merit the redemption. That is how this situation is good, at its root – it can stir up in us a realization to *daven* for *Klal Yisrael*, that He take us out of this dark exile – speedily, in our days, Amen.

Questions And Answers With The Rav

Q1: What exactly is the "root" of all good that we must find? Isn't Hashem the root of everything, who is always good?

ANSWER: Very good question. Yes, it is true that Hashem is the root of all good, but the question is, what is that root that Hashem is trying to show us in every situation? We need to find that good root of every situation. We know that Hashem is the source of everything, and that is clear. But we need to see in our own personal life how we see how the root of every possible situation is somehow good.

Q2: If I see bad in a situation, how do I focus on the good? Do I have to get myself to see a situation how others see it?

ANSWER: Good question. It depends why something is bothering you and not other people. Sometimes there is something that bothers you that really shouldn't, and you are just overreacting. This kind of problem stems from simply being negative, which is a problem that stems from the *nefesh habehamis* (lower, animal layer of our soul). But if it's a problem that not only bothers you but bothers others as well, it can be because the negative elements in the situation far outweighs the positive aspects of the situation. If that is the case, the *avodah* is, as we have explained here: to find how the root of the situation is somehow good.

Q3: What is the source for how there are 287 negative things to say about every situation?

ANSWER: The source is from the Arizal in *Parshas Beraishis*, who says that the word "*merachefes*" (blowing) has in it the letters *reish*, *pei*, and *ches*, (רפ"ח), which altogether has the numerical value of 288. If a person has the root, then these three letters become the word "*perach*", which means "flower." If he doesn't find the root, then the letters become "*chafar*", which means "dug under", a reference to being underneath the tree.

Q4: If someone is in a difficult marriage, how can he\she work on seeing the positive in this situation? Should he just focus on the nachas he\she has from the children?

ANSWER: Take apart all the factors going on in your marriage, and see everything that's going on. This can take a few months. You will then discover much good in your marriage, and then, you should *daven* to Hashem that He should help you find the root good point in your marriage.

Q5: How do you know what the "root" of the situation is, and what the "branch" of the situation is?

ANSWER: If you know your soul well, you can identify better what the root is.

Q6: If a person doesn't see anything negative about a situation, is he supposed to think about the negative? For example, if a person doesn't feel pain at a situation going on in Klal Yisrael that he is supposed to feel pain about, is he supposed to feel that pain, as part of the process of seeing the bad and good?

ANSWER: It's hard to answer this question, because it depends on each person and what his situation is in life. There are some people who are very stressed out in their life, and it will be detrimental to them to work on seeing what's bad in our situations, because this will only add to their stress. Only a person who is capable of doing this emotionally should work on it.

Q7: The Rov said that a person should write down the good points on one side and the bad points on the other side. What can person do if he doesn't like to write, and it's not practical?

ANSWER: Type it on a computer. Or, sit with a close friend and do it, and you will find it much easier

to write it down.

Q8: How do we tell this to people who are secular? How do we explain this concept to them?

ANSWER: Even *frum* people who keep Torah and mitzvos have to work on the topic we discussed here [in this chapter]. In today's generation, although we keep the mitzvos, most people aren't connected to their *pnimiyus* (inner, spiritual world). Of course, every Jew is good in general, and there are some people today who are amazingly connected to their *pnimiyus*; but most Jews today, even *frum* Jews, are weak in their *emunah*, and therefore, they have to work on this *avodah* of seeing the good point in a situation.

Q9: But what we can tell secular people, who aren't asking on how they can improve themselves?

ANSWER: The concepts taught here here was for people who keep Torah and mitzvos, who want to work on themselves. If a person doesn't ask how he can work on himself, then he doesn't have our questions, and he doesn't seek answers. The material here is thus not for people who aren't seeking to improve themselves, because my answers here are only for those who are asking on how they work on themselves.

Q10: What practical point can the Rov suggest we work on every day from now on, in order to improve ourselves?

ANSWER: Every day, seek to become a more truthful person.

Q11: Which point should a person work on to become more truthful in - in learning Torah, in doing mitzvos? Which point exactly?

ANSWER: Each person must become more truthful in his own unique circumstances in life and on his own level. This is a question which cannot be answered on a general level, because I would have to know the individual person who is asking it, in order to see how he needs to become more truthful. But there is something to this question which can apply to all people no matter what situation: no matter what your situation is in life, every person needs to try to become a more truthful person each day, in general.

[1] A term used by Chovos HaLevovos.

[2] *This shiur was given the day before the sad news of their tragic deaths. Yet, the lesson remains true, as the author has stated that every situation is good, and it can still be said that this episode caused much unity amongst Jews.*

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