

## DIFFERENT VIEWS TOWARDS REALITY

### *The Dissension Between The Brothers And Yosef*

In *Parshas Vayeishev*, Yosef brings home bad reports about his brothers to his father Yaakov *Avinu*. Later he has dreams of ruling them, whereupon the brothers come to hate him and they are no longer able to speak to him. Yosef is on one side, with the brothers on the other side – they had different perspectives.

There was once a *rebbe* who taught young children. He said that it's easier to explain to little children about the previous *parshiyos* in the Torah, which discuss the differences between *tzaddikim* (righteous individuals) and *reshaim* (wicked individuals). It is easier to explain how Avraham was righteous, Yishmael was a *rasha* and Yitzchok was a *tzaddik*, and how Esav was a *rasha* and Yaakov a *tzaddik*.

But when we learn about the *shevatim* (the tribes), the sons of Yaakov *Avinu*, who were all *tzaddikim*, who were all holy, it is hard to understand and explain their *machlokes* (disagreement), and the different sides which these *tzaddikim* took.

When the brothers did not

talk to Yosef, there were two sides. The 12 *shevatim*, who are the roots of the 70 souls who descend from Yaakov *Avinu*, were not just 12 or 70 different souls, but 12 different perspectives of how to see the same reality. And they are all views that are rooted in the Torah.

Even more so, the 70 souls who descended from Yaakov *Avinu*, personified the Torah since Yaakov dwelled in the tent learning Torah all day. The 70 descendants of Yaakov are rooted in the “70 facets of understanding” in the Written Torah. Thus, the 12 sons of Yaakov, who later branched out into 70 souls, are really an offshoot of the “Torah” itself. The “70 facets of understanding” in the Torah are thus the roots of the 70 souls who descended from Yaakov.

For this reason, whenever we learn Torah, there are always many ways to understand the same verse. The world was created from the Torah, for “Hashem looked into the Torah and created the world”<sup>1</sup>, and since the Torah contains 70 facets of understanding to it, so are there many ways to understand the reality in this

world. The reality that we see in this world is therefore not always the same perspective for all people.

When Hashem looked into the Torah to create the world, He did not look at one of the ways to understand the Torah, but at all 70 ways of understanding the Torah. Thus, the world, which was created from the Torah, can be seen from 70 different perspectives.

That is why the Sages each saw the same reality through a different perspective. “Their words, and also their words, are the words of the living G-d.”<sup>2</sup> Whenever a person learns Torah, the Higher Court accepts his views, and Hashem Himself learns the words of one sage, while learning the words of another sage with a different view.

This is how we can understand the *machlokes* between Yosef and the brothers. Yosef saw the brothers eating what appeared to be a live animal, when in reality, the brothers were not committing any sin. This was merely a result of the *machlokes* between them. The actual root of the *machlokes* between them was because they had differing

views. Yosef's blessing is that he is "above the eye"<sup>3</sup> – meaning that the "evil eye" cannot affect him. He saw reality in one way, whereas the brothers saw reality in another way. The *machlokes* between Yosef and the brothers was because they saw the same reality from different perspectives.

### **Good Eye And Evil Eye**

The *Gemara* says, "A *dayan* (judge) only has what his eyes see."<sup>4</sup> When a *dayan* sees reality correctly, he can give a true verdict, which reflects the truth as it is. That is one kind of "seeing".

As mentioned previously, seeing reality, as it is, can be viewed in 70 different ways, for there are "70 facets of understanding" in the Torah. However, there is also a distorted way to see things. This is called the view of the "evil eye", (*ayin ra*), or "narrowed vision" (*tzar ayin*). This is not one of the 70 valid ways of seeing reality, but it is certainly a viewpoint that exists, in which a person sees reality through a distorted lens. When the brothers accused Yosef of slandering them, they thought he was viewing them through the lens of his "evil eye," *chas v'shalom*.

The truth is, however, that he did not have a view of an "evil eye" towards them. Yosef's blessing is that he is "*ben poras Yosef, oilay ayin*" – "A charming son is Yosef, above the eye."<sup>5</sup> The Sages learn that "above the eye" means that the "evil eye" cannot affect him or any of his descendants. This also means that Yosef's vision is "above the eye", and he does not see reality through this negative lens.

(On a deeper level, it also means that he does not differentiate between "good eye" or "evil eye", and that he has a higher vision which comes from Above, which is entirely good. This resembles the quality of Moshe Rabbeinu, of whom it is said "A good eye is blessed"<sup>6</sup>, for he possessed a positive vision that came from Above, which only sees good.)

### **Good Understanding And Evil Understanding**

We have so far described two kinds of "vision" – a way to see reality through many different viewpoints, which stems from the "70 facets of understanding" in the Torah; and a distorted view of reality, which is called *ayin ra*, "evil eye" or *tzar ayin*, "narrowed

eye", in which a person sees reality through a negative place in himself, due to his own inner evil.

When Adam ate from the *Eitz HaDaas Tov V'Ra* (the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil), the evil *daas* entered his original, pure *daas*, and created a mixture of good and evil in man's *daas*. When one sees reality, he is seeing it through his mind, but his mind is a mixture of good and evil *daas*, so he may have a distorted perception of reality. The Sages, in contrast to this, are the "*einei haeidah*", "eyes of the congregation"<sup>7</sup>, who can see from a higher view, from an accurate viewpoint. The Sages see from their "*daas tov*" (good and pure *daas*), whereas those who have not purified their minds sufficiently enough see through their "*daas ra*" (evil *daas*). Moshe Rabbeinu had *daas tov*, and therefore he possessed the ultimate level of the "good eye".

The less one has purified one's mind, the more one's vision will be obscured from seeing a true reality.

### **Inner Bribery**

Even more so, we find that a

3 Bereishis 49:22

4 Sanhedrin 6b

5 Bereishis 49:22

6 Mishlei 22:9; see Midrash Tanchuma parshas V'Zos HaBerachah 1

7 Shir HaShirim Rabbah 1:15

person's ability to see reality can be distorted through the act of taking a bribe. The Torah says that taking a bribe can sway even the minds of the wise and distort the words of the righteous.<sup>8</sup> There can even be inner bribery, which stems from one's own character traits, which will sway a person's mind from seeing reality objectively. This reason of inner bribery is why most people do not see reality accurately.

### **Imagination**

Until now we have explained two kinds of vision – seeing the truth of reality, which can be viewed through 70 different viewpoints; and narrowed vision, which may stem from “evil eye”, or from bribery, which sways his vision from seeing reality correctly.

There is also an additional kind of seeing: the imagination. This is the matter of dreams which this week's *parsha* discusses. Just as there is physical vision, so is there a power to see an inner vision. The holy and accurate use of this power is called “eyes of the intellect”, described by the *Chovos HaLevovos*, in which a person can “see” through his intellect. This includes all of the mental powers, such as thinking and memory. But there is also a way to see reality through the

power of the imagination.

Just as a person can see through his physical eyes and through the “eyes of the intellect”, so can a person “see” using the “eyes” of the imagination. When a person is awake, he will usually see using his physical eyes, and if he has purified his intellect, he will see through his “eyes of the intellect”, but when a person goes to sleep (and sometimes even when he is awake) he can see through the power of the imagination.

The imagination is also a way of seeing reality. When a person is dreaming at night, he sees many different kinds of realities. They may not be total and absolute realities, but the person is still seeing certain realities, through the imagination.

To summarize, we have altogether described four ways to see reality: 1) through physical vision; 2) through narrowed vision (which comes from either “evil eye”, or from bribery, both external and internal); 3) through the “eyes of the intellect”; 4) and through the view of the imagination.

### **Differing Views Of The Brothers & Yosef**

We can now have a better understanding of the dissension

between the brothers and Yosef in this week's *parsha*. The brothers accused Yosef because of his dreams. They hated him and therefore did not talk to him. The brothers thought that Yosef was seeing reality through the “evil eye”, and that this was why Yosef was bringing home “evil reports” about them to their father.

Even more so, Yosef was having dreams that he would rule over them. When the brothers became aware of this, they thought that not only is he having an “evil eye” towards them, but that he is also seeing reality through his imagination, based on the fact that he was having dreams about them. They hated him because they thought he was viewing them with an “evil eye”.

What was the truth?

As mentioned earlier, Yosef was really “above” the eye, so he was not seeing reality through the perspective of the “evil eye” or through a perspective of imagination, but from an entirely different lens of vision.

### **How A Distorted View Of Reality Is Created**

The Vilna *Gaon* says that when a person sleeps and subsequently dreams, the intellect weakens and the imagination is dominant. This

<sup>8</sup> *Devarim* 16:19

is the case with most people. What happens as a result? The imagination and intellect are fused together in dreams, and the person will see reality in his dreams through a mixture of imagination and intellect.

From the time a person is born, he does not have the inner vision of “eyes of the intellect”. All he has is physical vision, and he will also usually have a strong ability to imagine. Children sleep a lot, and the deeper reason for this is because children see reality through their imagination, which is linked with sleep. The imagination is dominant when sleeping and children imagine a lot, therefore, they sleep more.

When a person gets older and matures, he develops the ability of “eyes of the intellect”. When a person advances in age, slowly his imagination weakens and he is able to stay more awake.

But in one’s younger years, he mainly sees through imagination, and only very minimally through his intellect. Therefore, even his physical eyes may be seeing through imagination!

We can see that a child will think he has seen something, when in reality he has not

really seen it. It is only his imagination which has seen it. When a person gets older and matures, his imagination weakens. However, since a person is used to imagining things since he was young, this habit does not go away completely.

A person will continue to imagine things even if he is fully awake, even while his intellect and physical vision is functioning, and therefore his vision will be a fusion of physical vision, intellect, and imagination. That means that a person is usually seeing reality in front of him through a combination of physical vision, intellect, and imagination.

We have briefly explained the powers of vision and the ways in which we see reality. We have no comprehension of the greatness of the brothers and Yosef – we are simply trying to understand the powers of vision that are in the soul, the means by which a person sees reality.

### ***How Imagination Affects The Way We See Reality***

Now let us ask ourselves: Do we see reality as it really is? Are we seeing reality through any of the 70 valid ways to see it, or are we perhaps seeing what we want to see, because we have

taken a bribe? Are we externally bribed? Are we internally bribed? Are we seeing reality through our intellect, or are we seeing reality through our imagination?

If a person has a superficial perspective, he will think that whatever he sees is the reality. He is confident that he sees reality as it is. But when a person lives inwardly, he is aware that there are different ways to see reality, and that there also exists distorted perspectives towards reality. He knows that it’s possible for one to fantasize about what reality is.

Many people are clear they have seen something, and yet they have only imagined it. This happens all the time with children, where the imagination dominates. But even mature adults may imagine what they see, and they will say that they have clearly seen something, when in reality, that is not what they have seen.

The Sages said that this is what happened with the spies who went into *Eretz Yisrael* to see if it was safe for the people to follow: “They said with their mouths that which they did not see with their eyes.”<sup>9</sup> This does not mean that they did not see anything dangerous. But there was some exaggeration in what

<sup>9</sup> *Sanhedrin 104b*

they saw.

When most people say over what they have seen or heard, it is usually not precise. Someone with the negative trait of habitual lying will totally fabricate a story, but most people are simply seeing or hearing through their imagination, and that is why they see or hear an exaggerated or distorted view of reality. They are ready to testify and swear that they have seen or heard a certain thing, and they are confident that they know what has taken place, when simple reality contradicts what they have seen or heard.

This is all because a person is born with a nature to imagine, and he has become used to the habit of imagining since he was a child. Unless he has worked to clarify his perception, this habit of imagining remains. The imagination will be escorting his intellect wherever he goes, and it will distort what his intellect sees.

When Hashem wanted to minimize the size of the moon, He offered the moon the choice to serve both by day and by night. In terms of the soul, the imagination, which is mainly dominant by night,

is also “serving” by day, when the intellect is supposed to be dominant. Simply speaking, that is why people do not see reality as it is. The vision of most people is distorted because their imagination is active even during the day.

### **Imagination And Sin**

At a more evil level, the imagination is used as a way to fantasize about committing an act of sin. “The eyes see, the heart desires, and the tools of the actions complete.”<sup>10</sup> When the eyes see something and a person desires it and lusts after it, this is the use of the imagination.

The imagination is called “*medameh*” in Hebrew, from the word “*Dumah*”, which is the name of the angel that oversees *Gehinnom*.<sup>11</sup> In other words, a person who is being controlled by his imagination will be controlled by the passions of the *yetzer hora*, which leads to *Gehinnom* (purgatory). The commandment of the Torah not to stray after the eyes and the heart is not simply a matter of guarding the eyes. Sin mainly comes from dreams at night, which is the domain of the imagination. It is essentially a state where

one’s intellect is subjugated to his imagination. Most people are susceptible to the forces of *tum’ah* (spiritual defilement) because they are subjugated to their imagination.

There are also a small percentage of people who have the vision of “evil eye”, though not as evil as the “evil eye” of the wicked Bilaam, who had *daas ra*, an evil *daas* that was a twisted form of “*daas elyon*”<sup>12</sup> (higher knowledge), which most people do not reach. Most people are simply seeing through their imagination, whereas Bilaam could see reality, albeit through his “evil eye”. The “evil eye” is a way of seeing reality, and although it is a negative trait, it is still a view of reality; but the imagination is a distortion of the reality. (In subtler terms, “evil eye” is at the core of distorted vision, and imagination is the external layer of it.)

### **Leaving Distorted Vision Behind By Toiling In Torah**

When a person exerts himself by studying Torah (which is called “*tov*”, “good”), he leaves imagination, narrowed vision, and the “evil eye” behind and enters into reality.

10 *Avos 2:1*

11 *Zohar parshas Shemos 18*

12 *Editor’s Note: Daas Elyon (“Higher Knowledge”) and Daas Tachton (“Lower Knowledge”) are two alternative levels of perception of reality. Upper Knowledge refers to the Divine view “from Above”. From the Divine view of Higher Knowledge, in truth only God exists.*

The Torah was given through Moshe, and Moshe possessed the trait of “good eye”, as the Sages state. When one leaves behind the distorted way of seeing things and can see reality as it is, one can then begin to understand the differing views of the brothers versus Yosef.

One can then understand that there were different ways to view the same reality, and that they were all valid ways. This is also true about all arguments between the holy Sages of which it is said, “Both of their words, are the Words of the living G-d.”<sup>13</sup>

The arguments that take place between most people, though, are essentially an argument between two views of imagination. A higher form of argument is “the argument between Moshe and Bilaam”<sup>14</sup> – the view of the “good eye” versus the “evil eye”.

The arguments of the Sages, though, are all differing ways to see the same reality, and they are all seeing reality from the lens of the Torah, and there are 70 valid ways of seeing reality - all rooted in the Torah.

### ***Understanding Machlokes Between Our Sages***

In every *machlokes* we find ourselves in, we need to check how we are viewing the reality.

If it is a *machlokes* between the Sages of the Torah, we need to see this as different ways to see reality, which each stem from the holy wisdom of the Torah. This does not apply to the results of the *machlokes*, but to the very root and beginning point of a *machlokes* between Sages: each of the Sages can see reality in a different way, because there are “70 facets of understanding” in the Torah, and hence there are 70 valid ways to see reality, based on Torah wisdom (as explained earlier).

Of course, there are people who intentionally start a *machlokes* simply for the sake of proving that he’s right. Here we are speaking about a *machlokes* which has a valid starting point, where one is seeing reality in the first place.

The only question is: In what way am I seeing reality? One needs to examine this and see if he is viewing reality through either the imagination, from narrowed vision, or from true vision (which sees reality

as it is). On a higher level, a person sees reality through the wisdom of the Torah. The more a person exerts himself in Torah, the better he can see reality.

### ***Preparing For Chanukah By “Seeing” Reality Accurately***

This is also a way to prepare for the coming days of Chanukah. On Chanukah, the *halachah* is that “We do not have permission to benefit from the Chanukah lights, except to see them.” In order to “see” properly, we need to clarify the way we are seeing things, and to keep clarifying it, until we reach the spiritual light that is radiated during this time of the year<sup>15</sup>, which is also called a “flame that rises on its own”<sup>16</sup> - the root of all vision, which is *chochmah*, wisdom.

That is the depth of the lighting of the *menorah* – to “see” through a place of wisdom, rooted in the Torah. That is the depth of “seeing” the lights of the *menorah* on Chanukah.

13 *Erwin 13b*

14 *Bamidbar 24:16*

15 *Editor’s Note: Refer to Sfas Emes - Chanukah, and Kedushas Levi – Chanukah.*

16 *A quote from Rashi in the beginning of parshas Behaaloscha*

## Q & A CHANUKAH

### CHANUKAH AND PURIM THROUGH WOMEN

**What** is the depth behind why the Chanukah and Purim miracles came about through women, Esther on Purim and Yehudis and Chanah on Chanukah?

**ANSWER** The Torah's festivals came about in the merit of great men [*the Avos/forefathers*], whereas the Rabbinical festivals [*Chanukah and Purim*] were allotted to be in the merit of women.

### LOOKING AT THE LIGHTS

**When** we are looking at the ner Chanukah (*the flame on the Menorah*) what should we be thinking? What kind of "light" are we receiving from it?

**ANSWER** The Bnei Yissocher says that the ner Chanukah is [*an aspect of*] the ohr haGanuz, the original light from the first day of Creation which Hashem hid away for the tzaddikim in the future. Therefore, Chanukah is really the "light of the future", which was hidden away for the future. That was the depth of why the jug of oil sealed by the Kohen Gadol was hidden away - and when it was found, it was a fulfillment of the verse, "The light of the righteous brings joy." The miracle of Chanukah came about through the Chashmonaim (*Hasmoneans, or Macabees*) who were few against many when they fought the

Yevanim (*Greeks*) and there was no natural way for them to win, yet they were willing to give their lives for this and they showed mesirus nefesh, which really meant that they give up their personal ratzon (*will*), because nefesh is identified as the ratzon and by giving up their own ratzon (*in order to fight for the ratzon Hashem*) they were essentially giving up their nefesh, and it was this mesirus nefesh which made them win and bring about the entire miracle. The "light" revealed on Chanukah is therefore the power of giving up our own ratzon, and when we are divested from our ratzon, the will of the Creator takes over our will [*enabling us to give up our will to do Hashem's will*]. That was the miracle of the jug of oil. Normally, constriction brings sadness while expansion brings joy, yet from this tiny, sealed, constricted jug of oil there was a joyous miracle which came about. The joy was really the depth of the miracle.

**As** a hint to all of this, the word Chashmonai חשמונאי can be rearranged into the words *ayin yismach* א"י"ן ישמ"ח which means "through ayin, we can be happy", meaning that joy comes from accessing ayin, which is reached through bittul (*surrendering*) of our ratzon (*our personal will*) in order to do Hashem's will.

### LIGHT OF THE FUTURE

**What** is the connection between ayin and the "light of the future"?

**ANSWER** Our world is a world of shelo lishmah, a world in which people naturally do things for self-gain, where people do mitzvos for the sake of reward and getting the Next World, etc. Man was originally created to serve Hashem lishmah, completely for Hashem's sake and with no self-serving motives, but ever since we Adam and Chavah from the Eitz HaDaas mankind fell from the level of lishmah to the level of shelo lishmah. But of the Next World it is said, "For My Sake, for My sake, I will do it", meaning that in the Next World all motivations are focused on Hashem and not on oneself. When a person does a mitzvah shelo lishmah, he is rewarded for it on this world, the place of shelo lishmah - and when he does a mitzvah lishmah, he is rewarded on the next world, the place of lishmah.

### TZADDIKIM

**Though** the tzaddikim experience ayin in the Next World, we also know that in the Next World the tzaddikim are enjoying the radiance of the Shechinah, so isn't this experience of enjoyment an experience of the "I", the self?

**ANSWER** The enjoyment of the tzaddikim there is from the

state of bittul of being nullified to Hashem.

### **SIMCHA ON CHANUKAH**

**If** there is simchah on Chanukah (*which is reached through ayin, or bittul*) then why is it that terms of simchah are associated only with Purim but we do not terms of simchah associated with Chanukah?

**ANSWER** On Chanukah the joy is [*hidden*] because there is a light of the future which is radiating even now and which we can feel a spark of. Purim was when we were saved from destruction by Achashveirosh and Haman, we were saved from death to life, but we are still slaves of Achashveriosh so we weren't redeemed completely then, but we were completely saved from death and that is the celebration of Purim. But Chanukah is coming from the light of the future, and now we just have a spark of that light which will come, and therefore the joy we have on Chanukah is only a spark of the light of the future but not the light of the future.

### **WLOOKING AT SHABBOS CANDLES**

**What** should a woman think of all of this as well when looking at the Shabbos candles?

**ANSWER** Shabbos is a degree

of the serenity (*menuchah*) of the Next World. The Shabbos of now is a semblance of the next world, it is partial taste of that serenity. Chanukah though is a spark of the light of the future, it is a partial light. Shabbos is about the serenity of the next world, and Shabbos is a semblance of the next world so it is a semblance of that serenity of the next world, while Chanukah is a semblance of the light of the future and therefore we have a spark, a partial degree of that light of the future. That is why Shabbos candles, which are for the purpose of shalom bayis, takes financial precedence over buying the lights for the Menorah, because Shabbos is about shalom, peace, perfection, shleimus, the next world. So the Shabbos candles is a semblance of perfection of the next world. Thus, both Shabbos and Chanukah are two different aspects of the same concept – the Next World.

### **WHY IS THE RAV SO HARD TO ACCESS?**

**I** want to ask the Rav, why is it that the Gedolei Yisrael are such great people yet they are still approachable, we are able to observe them and they have time of kabalas kehal (*meeting with the tzibur*), but this is not the case

with the Rav. I want to know, is there a reason that the Rav has for this? Is there any way I can have a personal relationship with the Rav so I can get advice and guidance and be able to have more shimush (*training*) under the Rav?

**ANSWER** I am not at all from the Gedolei HaDor, so I don't really understand the question.

**There** are several reasons why [*I don't do what you mentioned*]. Here are a few of them. Today, everything has become external/superficial. Everything today has to get recorded or videoed, and that is so different from [*the low-key, calmer situation of the*] previous generations. This is all one big "noise", which steals the necessary inner calmness and solitude away from a person, and this is especially detrimental to someone who needs it [*the inner calmness and solitude*] as part of his cheilek (*portion or personal work*) on this world. This is besides for the profound level of tumah (*devious influences*) today, which is causing destructive and fearful to anyone.

**You** are able to attend shiurim that I give in person, and you can also help with spreading and publishing/printing the divrei Torah.



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