

The Story of Our Lives: The Lost Princess (#15)

written by Yaakov Klein

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The Strategy of Emunah

Hey there, friends! We last left our hero as he slept deeply following his terrible error on the final day of the second year. Outsmarted by the yetzer hara once more, the viceroy had been ensnared in the trap of the “fascinating permitted”, a stream that looked and smelled like wine, which led to his tasting some and falling into a 70-year-long slumber. Just like the previous time, the viceroy failed in the final moments of his mission to free the lost princess, and she remained in captivity for all these years, yearning for her father. As a loyal attendant, the viceroy’s servant stayed by the side of his sleeping superior during the 70-year period,

waiting for something to happen. Finally, one day, something did.

Many troops passed, with a procession and equipment that accompanied them

These were the troops of the Other Side, the army of the yetzer hara. Having triumphed over the viceroy and disrupted his holy mission, the yetzer hara travels through his territory with free reign, parading his forces with great pomp and ceremony. The tzaddikim of Breslov taught that in truth, this is all the yetzer hara has – pomp and ceremony. The desires of this world are so transient that they have no real influence over a thinking person. “Vanity of vanities” cried Shlomo HaMelech, the wisest of all men. “All is vain.” (Koheles 1:2) As Chazal taught, “A person only sins if a spirit of folly has entered him.” (Sotah 3a) “For, in truth”, to a person who has even a slight measure of wisdom, the yetzer hara is, to him, folly and madness.” (Likutei Moharan 72) Indeed, Chazal teach that, in the world to come, the wicked will be able to see the yetzer hara for what it really was – a tiny hair. (Succah 52a) In this world, however, the yetzer hara puffs itself up (much like chametz, which, as Chazal state, symbolizes the yetzer hara) and makes itself look very intimidating. Here he travels with many troops, outfitted with fearful weapons and powerful artillery, making it seem as if there is no escape from his reach.

and the servant hid himself because of the soldiers.

As mentioned in previous lessons, the viceroy symbolizes the inner tzaddik within each Jew, the point of holiness that is constantly seeking to expand, rise, and conquer the Jew's being and set his heart aflame with the service of Hashem. When the viceroy is awake, the strength of his passion is such that nothing can get in his way. Regardless of what the yetzer hara might do to frighten him into submission, nothing works – his courage allows him to overcome every obstacle in his way

with ease. In the end, the way the yetzer hara overpowered the viceroy was by using that very confidence to his benefit. As we discussed earlier in the story, it was the viceroy's overconfidence that allowed him to fall prey to the yetzer hara's cunning traps. Now, however, with the viceroy in a deep sleep and the servant, who symbolizes the powers of intellect, on his own, the yetzer hara reverts to scare tactics to dispose of him as well. The servant's response is to hide. This is very deep.

Oftentimes, we feel as if we are disconnected from our mission, as if we have strayed from the path of avodas Hashem. Be it a result of physical desires, financial stress, sadness, confusion, or the mundane responsibilities of daily life, we become disconnected from the foundations of our existence – our inner viceroy falls asleep. The servant (our power of intellect) remains ever awake, and can aid us in rediscovering the deepest truths of existence (waking up the viceroy.) However, when the terrifying troops of the yetzer hara arrive and threaten to corrupt the integrity of the servant and his powers, there is only one thing he can do to save himself, and that is to hide.

When Rebbe Nachman teaches that the servant hid from the soldiers, he means that when the yetzer hara engulfs a person, the correct strategy is for powers of intellect to temporarily cease and give way to emunah. In an encounter with the yetzer hara, philosophizing and countering his reasoning will not yield success. The yetzer hara is a far better philosopher – he is rooted in Amalek, a power Rebbe Nachman equates with the cool, “rational”, heresy of the philosophers. The yetzer will outreason the powers of intellect any day of the week. Emunah, however, is beyond his reach. When the intellect hides itself and the Jew shifts his power source from intellectual clarity to simple faith, neither the intimidation nor the philosophizing of the yetzer hara are able to make any impression on his relationship with the Master of the world.

Chazal teach when a Jew is battling with the yetzer hara, if all else fails, he should recite k'rias shema – express his simple faith in Hashem and the paramount importance of adhering to His Will. (Berachos 5a) This is a surefire way for the intellect to emerge victorious.

After the troops passed, a chariot and covered wagon approached. In it, sat the lost princess.

As we mentioned in a previous lesson, all the forces of impurity in the world derive their strength from the side of holiness. Amidst the troops of the yetzer hara sits the princess, the fire of youth in captivity. Wherever they go, she must go as well, for she is their source of energy.

As tragic as this reality is, its implication is exceedingly positive: wherever the troops of impurity and concealment are found, one can discover the lost princess from deep beneath the rubble if he only knows how to search. Regardless of how far one has fallen, he can be sure that in accordance with the yetzer hara's power, so are the powers of holiness which lie dormant in that struggle, waiting to be utilized and enable him to emerge from the battle victorious and stronger than ever before.

The procession stopped nearby. The princess descended and sat next to the viceroy. She recognized him.

Despite his failures and the deep spiritual slumber the viceroy has fallen into, Rebbe Nachman teaches that he never loses his recognizability. He may have made tremendous errors that caused untold damage in the spiritual realm, but he never stops being the viceroy, the person who sacrificed so much, who yearned so much, and who refuses to give up in his quest for holiness. Many times along the journey of avodas Hashem, a person reaches "rock bottom". He becomes entirely unhinged from the mission he set out upon to the point that he feels he has lost his identity. Instead of saying "Where in the world

am I?" like the viceroy did, he wonders "*Who* in the world am I?". From his perspective, he is unable to remember his true essence. All he sees is the desolation he has caused and the mistakes he has made that led to a fall from which he doubts he will ever recover. But in truth, there is no such thing. Although he may not be able to access this perspective in his current state, one must always believe that regardless of how much dirt he has on his face, he is forever recognizable to the Shechinah, to the lost princess of passion and youthful excitement in avodas Hashem. From this perspective, the viceroy's true essence shines forth from all he has done *right* over the course of his journey – his intense desire to free the princess; the deserts, fields, and forests he needed to pass through before finding her; his years of yearning for the lost princess as he carefully followed her instructions etc. Internally, the viceroy has lost his ability to perceive his true essence and realign himself with the mission he set out to accomplish. Externally, however, he still looks just the same. The mistakes he has made have done nothing to obscure his true nature to an observer with an elevated perspective.

She shook him very much, but he did not wake.

The viceory's failure to free the princess has required her to become proactive in winning her freedom. As pained as she is over the mistakes that have led to his repeated failure, the princess yet needs the viceroy's help to free her from captivity. She has stopped here not to yell at the viceroy and berate him for his folly, but because she still believes in him despite his many failures. She still has faith in his ability to learn from his mistakes, to gather his strength, summon his courage, and resume the struggle. However, the viceroy is so deeply sunk in his slumber of despair, apathy, confusion and spiritual disorientation that even her expression of faith and encouragement fails to wake him. This is a step he will need to take on his own, when he is good and ready.

Thanks for listening! See you next time!