

The p'sukim in week's parasha which speak about the korban chatat (atonement sacrifice) open in the following manner¹: "Speak to Bnei Yisrael and tell them- a soul which sins by mistake from all of Hashem's mitzvot..." Chazal pay special attention to the unique phrase "a soul which sins- *nefesh ki techeta*." The Midrash² brings a parable from the Beit Midrash of Rabi Yishmael. There was once a king who had an orchard of beautiful fruit. At the entrance of the orchard he put two guards, one who has handicapped and one who was blind and commanded them to make sure that no one touches the fruit. As time passed, the handicapped said to the blind "There are beautiful, delicious fruits in the orchard." The blind responded "Let us go and indulge." The handicapped retorted that how can they get to the fruit, one cannot walk and the other cannot see! Together they found the solution; the handicapped rode on the back of the blind, and directed him where to go. One day the king came to check up on his fruits. To his great dismay, the fruits had been eaten! When he turned to the two guards, each responded "It couldn't have been us- one of us cannot walk and the other cannot see!" What did the king do? He placed the handicap on the back of the blind and exclaimed "This is what you did! This is how you stole my fruits!" So too, in the End of Days Hashem will ask the neshama "Why did you sin?", and the neshama will reply "Master of the World, it is not me who sinned, rather the body that You placed me in. Since I have left the earthly body, I am pure and holy." Hashem will then turn to the body and ask "Why have you sinned?" Similarly, the body will respond that it was the neshama that sinned, and since the neshama has left the body, the body has been thrown to the ground like stone. What does Hashem do? He puts the neshama into the body and judges them together.

The Sfat Emet³ calls this Midrash "words of the wise and their riddles". What is the depth behind comparing the neshama to a handicap and the body to a blind? The body resides in this world, which is likened to night⁴. The Godly light does not shine in a revealed manner; rather it is hidden within this world. Hashem so to speak condensed His light in order to create the world. In Hebrew, the word for world, "*olam*", comes from the same root as the word "*he'elem*", which means hidden or disappear.⁵ Godly truth is hidden away, and man is like a blind person who cannot see the truth. Why is it that Hashem created man in such a fashion? This was done in order to give man reward when he chooses good over evil. Good is not apparent to the naked eye- a person must seek it out and separate it from evil. Because of this, man is called "*mehalech*"- walking or progressing, for when he chooses good, he progresses and ascends higher and higher. The Kli Yakar explains⁶ that man is called "*mehalech*" because he is always moving from level to level. Angels, on the other hand, are called "*yoshev*", sitting, because they don't change levels. The Kli Yakar also explains that in Olam Haba, man is called "*yoshev*" because he has already attained his permanent level and does not move from there.

If man were to see the Godly truth in front of his eyes, he wouldn't be able to sin. There is a famous Midrash that when Hashem gave Bnei Yisrael the Torah, He uprooted Har Sinai and said that if they don't accept the Torah, He will bury them

¹ Vayikra 4, 2

² Vayikra Rabba 4, 5

³ Vayikra 5647 (1887)

⁴ Pesachim 2b

⁵ Tanchuma, Kedoshim 8

⁶ Vayikra 18, 4

under the mountain. The Meshech Chochmah⁷ explains that Hashem didn't threaten Bnei Yisrael, rather He revealed to them Heavenly Glory. After seeing such a thing, there was no possible way that Bnei Yisrael would sin; they had no more free choice. One who sees Hashem's glory has no free choice and can't do wrong. The power of choice comes from the fact that human beings are "blind" in this world; they are "*mehalech*", attempting to move closer to Hashem. Once a person arrives in Olam Haba, he is "*yoshev*"; he does not move because he has fulfilled what was required of him; he is like a handicap.

Juxtaposed to the body is the neshama. The neshama's source is in the upper worlds, and there it sees everything⁸. The neshama has no freedom of choice because everything is revealed to it. Therefore, the neshama is handicapped- it cannot move or progress from level to level. So too the melachim are called "*Om'dim*"⁹, standing, because they have no ability to move. In summary, the body is likened to being blind and the neshama is likened to being handicap. It is not possible to "see" and to "walk" at the same time because one who sees has no freedom of choice and therefore there is nowhere for him to progress. Rabi Yishmael teaches us that the neshama and the body complete one another. The neshama, which can see the truth, characterizes man's emunah, yearning and motivation to perform mitzvot. The neshama is a spiritual power that aspires towards revelation; it pushes man towards the spiritual world. The body, which does not see the spiritual, has the power of choice, the power of action, and the ability to perform and progress. The body brings to life the potential which resides within the neshama. The two of them together make up man.

The Midrash reveals the complexity and the depth that comprise creating man. Chazal, by listening to the words "*nefesh ki techeta*- a soul that sins", explain what it means for a soul to sin, who is it that sins, and from this they understand the essence of the creation of man. In order to create a being that on one hand lives in this world, yet on the other hand is required to choose good, two opposite forces are combined. Alone, each one of these forces cannot endure. The neshama is a Godly force that has no part in evil or in choice. Yet a body without a neshama is blind- it cannot see or move in any direction. The Ramchal explains¹⁰ that because the neshama is purely spiritual, all of reality is contained within it. The neshama sees everything. When man sees different things in this world, he is able to categorize and understand them because his neshama can see them, and without this, man's physical vision is useless. If all of reality wasn't imprinted within the neshama there is no way that man would be able to understand his surroundings; it's the neshama that gives content to what one's eyes take in. Without the neshama man is blind. The body has the power of action that is lacking from the neshama, and the neshama has power of vision which the body does not possess. Only by coming together does man have the capability to choose between good and bad.

The Midrash offers a different parable in the name of Rabi Chiya to explain the phrase "*nefesh ki techeta*". There was once a kohen who had two wives, one was a daughter of a kohen and the other was a daughter of a yisrael. This husband gave them dough to knead and one of them defiled it. When he inquired who made the

⁷ Shemot 19, 17

⁸ Berachot 10a

⁹ Zecharia 3, 7

¹⁰ Adir BaMarom p. 275

dough impure, each woman placed the blame on the other. The husband left the daughter of the yisrael alone and began to reprimand the daughter of the kohen. She responded back “Why did you single me out? Why are you placing all the blame on me?” He responded to her that his other wife is a daughter of a yisrael; she is not familiar with the laws of tuma and tahara, purity and impurity. Yet being a daughter of a kohen implies that she grew up learning and living out these laws. So too, at the End of Days when Hashem will come to judge man, He will put the body aside and judge the neshama. If the neshama responds “But we sinned together, as one,” Hashem will answer saying that the body is from a physical place. In this place it is expected that one would sin. But the neshama is from the upper worlds, where no sin or evil can be found. Therefore when man does wrong, it is the neshama that is judged.

There is a fundamental difference between Rabi Yishmael and Rabi Chiya. Rabi Chiya understands that man is his neshama and the body serves as a means to let the neshama dwell in this world. Therefore if man sins, the neshama is responsible. Rabi Yishmael views the neshama and the body as one unit. Together they build man and therefore they are both responsible for his actions.