

The *Mesilas Yesharim* explained to us that *zehirus*, watchfulness, being alert, being attuned, asking myself am I going to be happy with these actions, with these ways, two years from now, five years from now, ten years from now, that is the first of the building blocks, the first rung in the ladder of spiritual perfection, *zehirus*.

In the fourth *perek* the *Mesilas Yesharim* is explaining to us the motivational systems. I get it, I understand that I have a few short years, I understand that these actions will make me into who I'll be forever, but how do I get motivated, how do I get driven, how do I keep myself focused.

And *Mesilas Yesharim* explained to us there are three groups of people. The *shleimei hadas* just see the result in themselves. They see themselves in that future world, they see their future self there, it's me. and I understand that it's exactly what I shape myself into, if a person would ever really get that, if a person were ever to really feel that, that alone would be the most motivating, most driving force in existence.

The *shleimei hadas* are those people who really are there, they get it. They're few, far between, great *tzaddikim* but the concept applies to us in the sense that we can relate to it. Thirty percent, twenty percent, whatever it may be.

The next group of people are motivated by their position. As my position in this world is dependent on many different situations, many different things, my position in the world to come will be as well. We're social there, it's not me alone but it's me with the people that I been *zocheh* to be amongst, and who I am, my position there is based on what I made myself into.

And then the *Mesilas Yesharim* explains what he calls for the *hamon am* the common folk. The common folk would be motivated, would be driven by the *schar vu'onesh*, the extent of the

reward and punishment and there are many times when Chazal used expressions when describing the *schar* and *onesh* that are really maybe even a bit frightening.

The *Mesilas Yesharim* says his expression is “*buros omek hadin*” when a person sees the depth of judgment, “*ad hechan magia*” to what extent it goes, “*bu’emes*” in truth “*ro’u lihzdazeah*” it’s appropriate for a person to be trembling, “*ulehischared tamid*” and to be constantly filled with fear “*ki mi yamod*” who is it who’ll stand “*byom hadin*”.

Who could stand on *yom hadin* and be clean, “*vuyitztadek lifnei boro*” who’s going to be righteous in front of his Creator “*asher hashkafaso*” when Hashem’s *hashkafah*, when Hashem’s vision and Hashem’s perspective is *mudakdek al kol davar katan vugadol*, on every issue large or small and then the *Mesilas Yesharim* gives us an example “*affilu sichah kallah bein ish lu’ishto*” even light conversation between a husband and wife, small little points, small little innocent remarks that have no great implication, every conversation, every action, every thought of my life weighed, measured, scrutinized, but it’s not just the action, it’s the action, it’s the intention behind it, it’s the implication.

It’s the ramifications, what did that do to me, to the world, to others, how did it impact the future? Every single action of my life weighed, measured and then I stand judgment for each.

And when you begin studying the various punishments in the *Torah*, for an *asei* there’s no punishment. Once you get to the category of a *lo sasei*, any negative prohibition automatically, by rights it should get *malkus*, public whipping, and then there’s *kares* which is being cut off in the world to come.

Then there’s *misas beis din*, there are four of them and when you read on and on description and you read the extent that great *tzaddikim* were judged and held accountable. When you see people

like Avraham *Avinu* who didn't come clean in *din*, you see Yitzchak, Yakov, when you see the great *imahos*, every one of them had something that they had to answer for, explains *Mesilas Yesharim* when you read this, you should be filled with trembling and dread.

And with that I'd like to introduce a very important concept. A little while ago I was in Manchester, in England and a gentleman had a question for me. He said this question has been plaguing him, it's been bothering him for years and he cannot answer it.

He said imagine the following, imagine a third grader is given a *bechinah*, a test, but he's given a test on twelfth grade curriculum. You take a third grader and you give him the test of a twelfth grader and lo and behold he fails, and then you punish him for failing the twelfth grade curriculum test.

You'd say that's absurd. You don't ask a third grader to perform twelfth grade mathematics. You don't ask a third grader to read a *ktzos*. It's just beyond their capacity and you don't test them on what they're obviously not capable of. This man's question was isn't that his world? We know there's such severe punishments and we know each of us is held accountable, so isn't it just like asking a third grader to pass a twelfth grade test, we can't do it. We're not going to come clean and obviously we're going to be *omed* in *din*, so it's not fair.

It's literally like taking a third grader and when he fails the twelfth grade test, punishing him for everything he did bad, it doesn't make any sense?

This was the man's question and he was very troubled by it. So I'd like to share with you what I believe the answer to this question is. And to do that, let's focus on a line the *Derech Hashem* says. Before writing the *Mesilas Yesharim*, the *Mesilas Yesharim* wrote many other books, the

Ramchal, one of the *sefarim* the Ramchal wrote is the *Derech Hashem* and in it there's a line that for years troubled me.

*Derech Hashem* explains that ultimate *reshaim*, when you have the real, real wicked people, they are snuffed out. When they're done their job in this world, they just disintegrate, they're obliterated, no longer here.

And many, many years ago, I read that and I was troubled by it, it didn't make sense. I don't get it, Hitler, Stalin, Chmielniki, Titus, Nevuzeraden, you mean these people are just done? Where's the justice? I know Hashem is patient, I know Hashem waits but there's supposed to be an end of the day, there's supposed to be a time when they stand judgment, there's supposed to be a time when Hashem actually takes the vengeance, the revenge due to them, I don't understand what does it mean that *reshaim*, truly wicked people, are just blotted out, it didn't make any sense.

And I'd like to share with you what I believe the answer to that question is, and hopefully we'll understand a little bit better the concept of *onshim* in the *Torah* and to do that let me share with you a question:

What could you do to make Hashem angry? What could you do?

Imagine one day you get up and you're really fed up, Hashem I've had it, that's it, I'm done, and you make up to get Hashem as angry as you possibly could. So here's the question what could you do to get Hashem really, really, really angry?

And the answer is nothing. Nothing. Why? First of all because to be quite honest with you, you're just not important enough. Let me just put this into perspective. On this little planet that we occupy, there are approximately seven and a half billion people, eight thousand miles across

this way, twenty four miles in circumference and it's a teeny tiny little speck because once you go out towards the milky way galaxy, it's a hundred billion stars, of vastness of size that's unimaginable and there are a hundred billion galaxies, each as large or larger than our milky way galaxy.

And if you'd like to understand Hashem's relationship to the physical world, let's start with the *passuk* in *chumash*. The *passuk* says “*vayera Hashem el Avram*” Hashem appeared to Avraham.

Now very nice, when you read that *passuk*, it reads quite simply, Hashem appeared. Meaning imagine I come to Chicago, I wasn't there yesterday, I flew in a plane and I appeared suddenly I appeared in Chicago. I wasn't there, I now appeared, I'm now here, *shukoach*, very nice.

The only problem is that that's *kefirah* because Hashem fills the entire world and if you look at *unkelus* on that *passuk*, what *unkelus* says is “*vu'isgalei Hashem lu'avram*” Hashem revealed Himself to Avraham. Of course Hashem was there, Hashem is everywhere but not always can we know that.

Hashem revealed Himself, Hashem made it so clear, cut away the layers and layers of physicality that normally block a person, and Avraham *Avinu* was able to perceive Hashem on a much greater level.

That concept is the very basics of our belief system. One of the names of Hashem is *makom*, place because if there is a place, Hashem is there. Every single particle of physicality across the hundred billion galaxies, wherever you see physicality, Hashem is there.

And if you take this huge, huge cosmos, thirteen billion light years of ever expanding space and you try to understand the size of the earth in it, it's not even a speck, it's not even a dot. And

somewhere on this tiny, tiny dot of a planet is you, one of seven and a half billion people and you think you're going to get G-D angry? You're not exactly *bar plupta*, you're not exactly on the same level, you're not exactly people who are competing one with the other, I get angry with you because you're my level, a mother doesn't get angry with a three month old, a mother maybe loses patience, but the mother and the infant are not exactly on the same level, how dare you, he's soiling his diaper again, I'm so angry with you.

Hashem doesn't get angry there's nothing that you could do to get Hashem angry because again, number one you're just simply not important enough to get the Creator of the heavens and the earth angry. But there's a second reason why you're not going to succeed in getting Hashem angry:

You see anthropomorphism is the concept of taking human attributes and attributing it to none human things. The wind howled with anger, the wind never got angry and never howled. It's a way of describing, we attribute, we euphemistically use the expressions, mountain glared menacingly, the mountain didn't glare, it wasn't menacing but it's a way of sort of expressing things.

And that's okay. But you have to recognize that anytime that we relate to Hashem almost by definition we're going to use human phrase and by definition we're going to be completely, utterly wrong. You see, Hashem is not limited by anything physical, Hashem is boundless, limitless, beyond all descriptions, beyond all understanding.

When Hashem acts with *middos*, it's so that we can relate to Hashem on some level. But Hashem doesn't get angry, if you'd like to really fundamentally understand Hashem's relationship to physicality I have a very important *mashal* that it think defines it.

Imagine it's a cold February night and imagine I'm waiting for the bus and I'm shivering to the bone, so I just close my eyes and I imagine a beautiful big scene, aah, white sand, blue oceans, cloudless sky, suddenly one lone seagull gently wafts across the sky. The bus comes splash, gone is the sand, gone is the ocean blue, gone is the seagull.

I am the dreamer of the dream. As long as I think about the seagull, the seagull is there. As long as I concentrate on the sand, the sand is there. The minute I cease thinking about it, it ceases to exist.

That is a *marshal* to Hashem's relationship to physicality. When Hashem created this physical world, it's vastly different than any creative act than you or I will create in. We euphemistically use the word creative act, I built a house. You did nothing. You took some wood, you took some nails, things that were already in existence, you shuffled them around, you repositioned them but you created nothing.

One of the concepts of *Shabbos* is *Shabbos* is "*zecher lumaseh bureshis*" the theme of *Shabbos* is to remember that Hashem is the Creator, we don't engage in *melachah*. The *melachos* are creative acts where I show some level of dominion, some level of control over nature. On *Shabbos* we cease any acts that on some level control nature, why? Because we're supposed to recognize that one reality that Hashem is the Creator of the world.

But Creator of the world doesn't mean just created the world, you see from absolute absence of anything, Hashem said "*vayehi*" and everything came into existence. And if you think about that, you'll quickly recognize that it's physically impossible. You see if I have sand, I can make that sand into bricks. If I have electrons, I guess I could make molecules. If I have molecules I could make, I could make cells, I guess I could make a body.

But before Hashem created the physical world, there was absence of physicality, there was nothing, no sand, no corks, no molecules, no nothing. From absolute absence of anything, Hashem said “*vayehi*” and everything in existence came into being.

But that act of creation is vastly different than any act that you and I will ever engage in. You see when I take two pieces of wood and nail them together, if I walk away, the wood will still be there and the nail will still be there. And if I build a shack and I leave it for twenty years it may be a bit worn by the wind, and it may get rained upon and weathered a bit, but if I come back in twenty years, I fully expect the shack to still be there because I created nothing, I took things in existence, reshuffled them and most likely they’ll be around.

When Hashem took absence of physicality and created this physical world, that type of creation requires not just an existence but it requires *mishaveh*, it requires Hashem to constantly keep it in existence.

One of the names that we refer to Hashem is *elokim, bal hakochos kulam*, the energy source of all of creation meaning to say, when I look at a rock I see Hashem. Why? Because that wasn’t just Hashem created a rock, Hashem sustains that, keeps it in existence, not only is Hashem the Creator of the world, not only does Hashem orchestrate all of the interchanges and interplays of human beings, but Hashem keeps everything in existence, Hashem is *mishaveh*, constantly infusing energy, constantly keeping things in existence.

If for a moment Hashem were to be angry with someone, or a nation, or something, Hashem wouldn’t have to bring a nuclear holocaust, Hashem would just cease infusing energy into it, much like I to the dream, if I no longer want the sand, poof it’s gone, if Hashem were ever angry,

Hashem would just cease giving that entity, existence. Hashem would cease infusing energy into it and it would cease to exist.

So if you ever get in the mood and you decide you're going to get Hashem angry, number one you, with all due respect, teeny, tiny, one little argument of one tiny little speck of a planet amongst hundreds of billions of stars, hundreds of billions of galaxies, you're just not that important. But number two you have to recognize that anger is a human dimension, anger is a frustration of my lack of power. You violated my will, you went against what I wanted, I'm angry with you.

There's nothing under the sun, nothing in existence that could violate Hashem's will. It's only because Hashem keeps it in existence, and only because Hashem keeps me where I am and gives my hand where it's supposed to be and if for a moment Hashem truly wished for something not to be, much like I to the dream, I'm the keeper of the dream, I'm the dreamer of the dream, Hashem is the infuser of energy into physicality and if Hashem ever wanted something not to be, it would cease to be.

The concept of anything violating the will of Hashem, is patently foolish because nothing could exist without Hashem, nothing can violate the will of Hashem, it would be sort of akin to imagine that you might dream, imagine I'm dreaming and there's my beautiful seagull and suddenly the seagull turns eastward and starts flying that way and I say, seagull turn around, I want you to fly west.

No, I don't want to go west, I want to go east. Hey I said turn around. No, yeah, no, no, hey seagull I'm the dreamer you gotta do what I said.

I'm the dreamer of the dream, the seagull can't violate my wishes. If I want him to fly west, he's flying west. The concept of *bechirah*, of freewill is that Hashem allows us with His permission, under His dominion, with His concept keeping us in existence and constantly allowing us to do certain things within limited parameters, but the concept of violating the will of Hashem is patently foolish, it's philosophically impossible.

Number one you're not going to get Hashem angry, because again, Hashem is just so much more vast, more larger, we're not on the level of Hashem that we're going to get Hashem angry. But number two, anger is a human limitation, it's a human dimension. Throughout the *Torah* we'll see expressions, Hashem acted *bucharon af*, with anger. Hashem isn't angry, it's a way for a human being to relate to Hashem, *lushaver ha'ozen*, it's a way for us to somehow, on some level, some dimension, relate to Hashem, so Hashem will act with *middos*, will act with character traits.

But the concept of Hashem being angry is foolish. And I believe that's the answer to the *Derech Hashem*.

You see Hashem does not need to seek vengeance against the wicked, finally He'll get retribution, they're puppets, Hashem uses them, Hashem allows them, Hashem directs them and Hashem doesn't have to get vengeance against Titus, and Nevuzeradan, Hashem used them as pawns, Hashem directed them and guided them to accomplish His goals.

And the concept of getting Hashem angry and Hashem seeking vengeance is foolish. *Reshaim* are toast, they're obliterated, that's the ultimate punishment. The reason Hashem created this world was to allow us to be *nehnim miziv hashchinah*, to be close to Hashem and when we're

done our job here, as much as we accomplish, we're *zocheh* to be close to Hashem, to enjoy the ultimate benefit and *reshaim*, true *reshaim*, are snuffed out.

Which is the greatest punishment. Hashem doesn't have to even out the scales, get back for everything you did wrong, Hashem ran the world every moment that *rasha* was in existence. As a matter of fact, Hashem wrote that script before the *rasha* was born, as a matter of fact that wicked person just filled in the role that Hashem scripted and if it wouldn't have been him, it would have been someone else, if it wouldn't have been Hitler, it would have been a holocaust done by pestilence or disease or typhoon or whatever.

There are many, many ways that Hashem will accomplish what Hashem wishes to happen. But this powerful, evil Adolf Hitler did nothing, a pawn, a puppet and one of the basic concepts of *bitachon* is underscored by that.

If you'd like to really grow in *bitachon*, I have an interesting *mashal*. Imagine you take your little child to a puppet show and imagine you see the puppets and there's one puppet there, evil king and all the other puppets are scared of him and they're terrified. And then the puppet show's over and the puppeteer puts down the puppets and you take your little child backstage and he sees the king now lying lifeless because it's just a marionette, it's just strings, but your child's afraid the the the, king, the bad kkkking puppet. Because in the child's immaturity, the child sees the puppet as dangerous and the child doesn't realize there was a puppeteer pulling the strings and the puppet is lifeless, inanimate, the puppet is nothing.

Understanding that every wicked person that threatened mankind, threatened the Jewish people is but a pawn in the hand of Hashem, but a puppet that Hashem uses. There's what to be afraid of, the One Who's pulling the strings, but not that little puppet on the stage.

And that's one of the basics of *emunah*. And understanding this, the *Derech Hashem* says when a *rasha*, when a really, truly wicked person is done, there are no scales to be balanced, no retribution to be repay him back for what he's done, he was a puppet that Hashem used to accomplish Hashem's goals and now the worst punishment ever he's toast.

And I believe that's also the answer to the third grader being tested with a twelfth grade test. No human being is ever asked to do more than what he or she can do. One of the mistakes that you and I make on a regular basis is we forget how much it is that we can truly do. We look at ourselves as *bassar vudam*, regular flesh and blood. What can I do anyway, how much could He expect from me, I'm just a regular person.

Hashem did not take any *neshamah*, not a single *neshamah* from under the *kisei hakavod*, put it into the world and said whatever, you know, you do a little bit, you know you do some *mitzvahs*, don't do too many *averos* then it'll be good. You come up afterwards and it'll all be good.

Hashem took a *neshamah* from under Hashem's *kisei hakavod*, throne of glory and Hashem put us into this world to grow, to accomplish, to reach stellar heights. The capacity of a human is well, well beyond our understanding. And in a certain sense it's true, it's true that we have a third grade appreciation of our capacity and so we look at challenges with oh my, well above my pay scale, I mean you're asking me to do twelfth grade calculus, I can't even think about that.

And it is true that my version of me, my limited understanding of me is such, that I view myself like a third grader and you're right, I can't expect that of me, the only thing is Hashem knows a little bit better than you and I, what it is that we can do.

And when you see the punishments in the *Torah*, it's not because Hashem is seeking vengeance and certainly not because Hashem is angry, it's because that is the capacity of the human. When

Hashem put us into this world, Hashem gave us vast, vast abilities. My abilities are not to be the richest guy in Monsey, the wealthiest guy in the US of A, it's not to be famous, my capacity is to change the essence of me, to do things that may not be noticeable to you or I, but when I actually work on my character traits, when I actually learn to trust Hashem, when I actually learn to be kind and considerate, I'm changing the essence of me, I'm changing the upper worlds and I'm reaching stellar heights.

The capacity of a human is something we probably will never understand. One of the methods, one of the ways we can come to understand it, is to understand the punishments of the *Torah*, Hashem is not wreaking vengeance, Hashem is not punishing us, what's happening is we begin to get a clue to how much a human being is accountable for.

But it's ever important to remember, Hashem isn't angry, Hashem can't angry, it's foolish, the whole concept is well, well within the human framework but it doesn't apply to Hashem. And if a person says oh that's good news I can get complacent because Hashem's not angry, Hashem doesn't really get mad so that's really good news. It is good news except for one problem, Hashem wants us to succeed and Hashem will make sure that we succeed and there are various ways that Hashem will ensure that fact in this world, in the world to come, and Hashem directs a person along a certain path.

The vast majority of human beings don't have a clue to their ability, to what they can do and then they look at the world to come, they look at this world and they say it's well, well beyond me, I can't do it. What's well, well beyond is your current perception you have to change your perception. What the *Mesilas Yesharim* is sharing with us is, when you look like people like

Avraham, Yitzchak, Yakov and you see that they were held accountable, it's not because Hashem is vengeful and not because Hashem is mean because that's what a human being can do.

And that's how much a human being is held accountable, held responsible but as I mentioned previously it's so much more so on the reward and more than anything, I have to recognize that at the end of the day, Hashem isn't angry, Hashem isn't mad and I'll share with you one more observation that I think is very important.

There are many, many people who it's true, won't reach their potential, but I want you to imagine a man who has eighty billion dollars. Eighty billion dollars. Now keeping in mind that a billion is a thousand million and keep in mind is that a million is a lot of money, eighty billion dollars is an awful lot of money.

And let's say you find out that man could have made two hundred billion, wow, it's true, he could have done a lot more, but eighty billion isn't that bad. One of the balances that you and I have to acquire is this understanding, I have to be driven, I have to set my sights high and at the same time I have to recognize I'm not going to really get all the way there, most likely I'm not going to get there, but eighty billion ain't too bad.

If I know I'm growing, I'm accomplishing, if I'm changing the essence of me, if I'm learning *Torah* and I'm growing and I'm really using the *Torah* as I'm supposed to, I'm *davening* and I'm working, but I'm really, really growing, okay. There's going to be a lot to answer for and I'm certain that there are many, many things that I could have done much greater, and there are many things that I could have done to a much greater extent and I'll never know.

But understanding that Hashem doesn't ask something that's impossible, Hashem doesn't expect anything from me that I can't do, so can I be complacent? Certainly not, because there's far more

that I can do, but at the end of the day if I'm growing, I'm accomplishing, I set my life path the right way, I trust Hashem will help me succeed, Hashem will be there for me, I think what the *Mesilas Yesharim* is sharing with us, is an eye opening perspective, that perspective is no matter how great you thought you are, there is far more than you could accomplish. If you find me the most arrogant human being on the face of the planet, find me a Paroh he says "*li ye'ori va'ani asisosani*" I made the Nile, he sells himself short.

The true greatness of a human being is well beyond the capacity of even the biggest *bal gavah*, the most arrogant fool to imagine. But it's true greatness, true accomplishments and when you see the punishments of the *Torah* "*rou luhispared*" it's proper to be filled with fear, trepidation because I know that there are many things that I'm not doing right, and there are many things I could be doing to a much greater extent and many things I'm missing out on altogether.

And that should fill you with a sense of dread, not dread because Hashem's going to be angry, vengeful and hit me with a big stick, dread because oh my goodness there are millions and billions, I could earn more and more, my world to come could be even greater, what am I doing, why am I wasting my time? And will I have to answer? The answer is I will.

And that should be a hugely motivating driving force, not dread or *oy vey* G-D's going to hit me, dread that I might disappoint the Creator of the heavens and the earth, I disappoint myself. If you spend your life trying to perceive your greatness, spend your life trying to understand what you can do, you'll never even come close. But sometimes studying the *Torah* and seeing the punishments, could give you an eye glimpse, can give you an understanding, ultimately that's one of the motivating systems to drive you to accomplish, to become what you were put on the planet to do.