

A Desire Discharged

”[כל אחד] רוצה להיות מישראל ...”



”מאחר שהוא רוצה להיות מישראל רוצה הוא לעשות כל המצות ולהתרחק מן העבירות, ויצרו הוא שתקפו, וכיון שהוכה עד שתשש יצרו ואמר רוצה אני כבר גרש לרצונו.” (רמב”ם הל’ גירושין ספ”ב)

“*Since he wants to be a part of [am] Yisroel, he wants to perform all the mitzvos and eschew all the aveiros; it is only his evil inclination that presses him. Therefore, when he is beaten until his [evil] inclination has been weakened, and he consents [to the divorce forced by Beis Din], he is considered to have performed the divorce willfully.*” (Rambam, *Hilchos Gerushin* end of ch. 2)

A Hidden Flame

The analogy of the *neschama* to a candle is a familiar one.

Akin to a flame that consistently soars upwards—regardless of the way it is positioned—as though there is a magnet pulling it to its source, so too the soul in every Jew has a burning desire, an unceasing drive to cleave

to its source on high. To quench this thirst, however, there is only one “water” — the study of Torah and the fulfillment of *mitzvos*. This is the only way one can break past the barrier of the body and connect to Hashem. It is the access accorded to the finite, to allow a relationship with the Infinite.

It is therefore understood that at our essence we are always yearning to do the mitzvos of Hashem and can't bear the separation we suffer from the lack thereof. This is true of every single Jew, anyone with a spark of G-dliness inside them.

With this, we can understand the famous ruling of the Rambam quoted above. According to *halacha*, a *get* must be given willingly to be effective. If so, how can a *get* be given by force and yet be granted halachic recognition? Based on our preface, the answer is obvious. If the Beis Din decreed that he must divorce his wife, then that is what he truly wants to do. As for his resistance, that is due to the

yetzer hara's deception. His true self only wants to do Hashem's will.¹

While this idea is inspiring in its own right, its impact is not limited to inspiration alone. As you keep reading, we will analyze this *halacha* and we will uncover a surprising relevance it has to the *avoda* of every one of us.

Never Changing

We are always encouraged to take on new challenges in Yiddishkeit. We encourage others to do so as well. If they decline the offer, we offer again. Occasionally, they accept the challenge only after several methods of persuasion are used.

At times, we find it intimidating to offer someone to try a mitzvah for the first time, especially if he declares that he resolutely decided to pass on the opportunity.

The same challenge arises and hinders our own growth. It's tiring enough to keep up with our set standards, taking on new *hachlatos* is

Dedicated In honor of my wife
Rivka תחיל
And my children
Menachem, Laya, Bayla, Devori,
Nechama, and Yossi שיחיו
By Danny Fishman



daunting! Maybe we should take life a little easier...

We are taught, however, that such thoughts and decisions are only a facade. As the Rebbe insisted, time and again, the words of the Rambam are a *psak din*: The true wish of every Jew will always be that of his *neshama* deep inside of him. Simply put, what he wants—or more precisely, craves—is to be able to do the will of Hashem. Any other decisions or fancies (whether it is a passion towards something that negates Torah, or perhaps a philosophical barrier) are the result of outside influences, namely, his *yetzer hara* which can easily deceive a person at any given opportunity. That fervent desire may be buried deep in his core but it cannot be suppressed and will stay alive in any situation he is in.²

(As we often see, one may feel pangs of guilt after submitting to a forbidden impulse. If all he did was what he wanted to do, what is he feeling sorry about? Yet once we realize that he was only temporarily persuaded to transgress his own will this question is answered.³)

The Rebbe articulated this idea clearly one Sunday by “Dollars.” Rabbi Avraham Kanelsky of Bris Avrohom brought a Russian immigrant who had

a *bris* a short time previously. Together with them was another Chossid introduced as “the one who convinced him to have the *bris*.”

The Rebbe immediately replied: איר האט עם גיט געדארפט איינריידן, ער איז—You didn’t need to convince him, he is a Yid, *he* wanted to [do it]!”⁴

We never *convince* anyone to do a mitzvah. Nobody really refuses the offer; in fact, their *etzem* jumps at the opportunity! It is just that every now and then it takes some time and prodding to strip the soul of its coverings and to let our fellow Jew in on the truth: that he really, truly wants.

Far Reaching Sight

At a Sukkos meal on the balcony near the Frierdiker Rebbe’s apartment, the Rebbe requested of Reb Yankel Katz from Chicago to relate a heavenly incident he experienced in the Frierdiker Rebbe’s presence.

Reb Yankel began: “After he started reading the *nusach* that invites the *ushpizin* of Sukkos, the [Frierdiker] Rebbe turned to me and said, ‘We have other *ushpizin*. The Baal Shem Tov, the Maggid, the Alter Rebbe, the Mittlerer Rebbe, etc.’ He then began pointing at seats around the table saying, ‘Here sits the Baal Shem Tov, here sits the Maggid, etc. *he who has eyes, sees!*’” With that, Reb Yankel concluded his tale.

“Where can I find such ‘glasses’ to help me see?” asked an elderly Chossid present.

The Rebbe answered, “The Baal Shem Tov teaches ‘במקום שרצונו של’ — so all you need to do is want.”

“This must mean a very strong and powerful want.”

“Don’t limit the Baal Shem Tov. Especially since the Rambam says that internally everything is as it should be [so he already has this desire]. He only needs to ensure that it is the same on the outside as well.”

(*Toras Menachem* vol. 29 p. 38)



The True Origin

Drawing on the Rambam's *psak*, the Rebbe learned that the above-mentioned inner spark is not only an invisible reality hidden deep inside the Jew. As a matter of fact, it has a strong

association with the person's actions as well.

We see this from the legitimacy given to the *get*. This validity is dependent on the sincerity of the husband's will to give the divorce. Had

the husband's official pronouncement of "רוצה אני—I want" been mere speech without any intent, the *get*, which must be given by his own volition, would not be recognized by halacha. Clearly, the flogging is not the cause of his cooperation. It simply managed to repress the urge to defy the law of the Torah (in the words of the Rambam: "תשש יצרו—his inclination was weakened") whereas the true origin of his responsiveness is his *neshama* inside of him.⁵

Interestingly, the Rambam applies this idea to another area of *halacha*, Hilchos Korbanos. A *Korban Chatas* may be brought only when the owner is truly regretful of his misdeeds and seeks forgiveness. There are instances, however, that someone who does not want to bring the *korban* is pressured into saying "רוצה אני" and his offering is then offered in the *Beis Hamikdash* as if he voluntarily brought it (and we are not worried about offering *chullin* in the *azarah*)! This is because the coercion of Beis Din is merely a method of brushing off the dust that collected on his soul, preventing him from expressing the desire to connect to Hashem. The actual *korban* is

Thoughtless Impact

One year, a few months after the summer in the late 5700s*, the Friediker Rebbe received a letter from a rabbi in an American town.


In it the rabbi expressed his thanks for sending the Merkos Shluchim to visit his community. Until recently, the letter continued, he believed that his general practice of Torah and mitzvos was acceptable but the standards of Yiddishkeit that the *bochurim* displayed and the passion in which they delivered their message to his congregants had a profound effect on him. In fact, they showed him what it truly means to be a *frum* Jew. It was so revealing that he underwent a major change for the good.

In a *farbrengen* in 5711* the Rebbe told this story and commented that the said *bochurim* are not even aware of their accomplishment.

"But there's more. This rabbi was inspired by their *external behavior*, he had no idea what was going on inside them." The Merkos Shlichus they performed so energetically may have been completely superficial—מן השפה ולחוץ—with them remaining uninterested in their *hafatza* expedition, yet they still managed to achieve what they did.

"The truth is, the Rambam teaches that every Jew wants to do the right thing and these boys are no different. Deep down they had pure intentions and they sincerely wanted to bring about a positive change. While this wish was hidden and buried, it nevertheless assisted their outward expressions in bringing about the positive impact."

(*Toras Menachem* vol. 3. p. 265)



brought wholeheartedly and with the best of intentions.

So, too, any other mitzvah done is the expression of our essence, regardless of what one believes to be the reason for the decision.

This is not only true of *mitzvos* in the conventional sense but also of anything positive. During the farbrengen of Shabbos Bereishis 5743*, the Rebbe encouraged the printing of *chiddushei Torah* and rejected common excuses that would slow down the process of doing so. For instance, there were those that maintained that publicizing one's ideas in such a format is undesirable if it was motivated by inappropriate motives. The Rebbe unequivocally negated that idea, as no one actually has the wrong intentions. "As soon as the *kovetz* is printed," the Rebbe said, "it doesn't matter what got him to actually involve himself in it. The Rambam *paskens* that the *penimiyus* of a Yid is as it should be, but his *yetzer hara* overcame him... Once that pressure is rescinded, his true and essential desire is then revealed."⁶

A mitzvah done with zero thought or focus, is also caused by the *etzem hanefesh*. If someone loses a coin

which is then found and benefited from by a pauper, he fulfilled the mitzvah of *tzedakah*. While the owner did not realize it, the deed was done deliberately, initiated by the *ratzon* that is beyond a person's consciousness.⁷

Hidden Meaning

Not always do our fellow Jews understand what we do. Perhaps more often than not they are left with questions and raised eyebrows. *Mivtzoim* is a common example: What value is there in wrapping tefillin on someone who doesn't feel for it, can't understand what he is doing, and would decline the offer if he was just a bit more *chutzpadik*?

What they have yet to realize is that there is more to a mitzvah than what can be felt and understood. This action is not a dry or empty one. It is infused with a burning desire to connect with Hashem. True, there are external influences barring the person from feeling it. And yes, in his conscious self he sees no reason to give in to the young *bochurim* nudging him. But once the deed is done, we can rest assured that it is done with zeal and enthusiasm; not of the mind and heart, but of the essence of the soul.

עומק חסיד - רבי

"Every Chossid here is completely devoted to the Rebbe. Even those who are lacking in this, it is enough for them to just *say* that they are committed because internally they are truly dedicated to the Rebbe. This is similar to the Rambam's ruling that one only needs to say that he wants to give the *get*, and it is considered willingly given since that is his true *ratzon*."

(*Toras Menachem* vol. 2
p. 32)

With this expression happening steadily with each mitzvah a person does, he becomes more and more passionate about them. As time progresses the energy begins to seep out and affect the rest of his personality.⁸

Under Pressure

In a gesture commonly attributed to Reb Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev, the Rebbe used this quote from the

Modern Day Marranos



Knowing the Rebbe's passion for precious sefarim, Mr. Zalman Shazar (later President of Israel) sent the Rebbe a rare artifact, a pamphlet of tefillos printed in Amsterdam in the year 5447*. The following is an excerpt from a warm letter the Rebbe sent him in receipt of the gift:

"I do not know if the following [message] is what was intended when you gifted me with the booklet of *brachos* and *tefillos* [titled] "Me'ah Brachos" but there is certainly *hashgacha pratit* as well. This siddur of sorts was printed for the "Anusim" ["Marranos"], or maybe even [printed] by them after they came to a place of tranquility, where they were able to openly behave according to their true will on a daily basis.

"...From time to time when I look at this booklet [...] I automatically think of the idea that in reality, every single one [of us] is—to a certain extent—coerced [*anus*] and does numerous things as an outcome (either straightforwardly or indirectly) of the pressure of his environment. Like the words of the Great Teacher, in Rambam Hilchos Gerushin, that [the husband] is under the compulsion of his *yetzer hara* and 'He really wishes to be a part of [*am*] *Yisroel*, to do all the *mitzvos* and distance himself from *aveiros*."

(*Igros Kodesh vol. 10 p. 100*)

Rambam to defend the Jewish nation in an extraordinary way.

Halacha clearly rules that all Jews, in their natural condition want to follow the Torah, and would do so if not for the fact that "יצרו תקפר"—His *yetzer* [*hara*] overpowered him." Had he not been attacked, he wouldn't have failed. It is not his fault that he was put up against an imposing force, sometimes too formidable to overcome. Often the Rebbe would term it "יצרו אנסו"—His *yetzer* forced him"!

How much more so in the time of *galus*, when we don't see *Elokus* and the impulses are all the more tempting.

This is the inner reason, the Rebbe explained, why *dinei nefashos* ended with the start of *galus*. Today there is simply no sin punishable by death. No one can be categorized as a מזיד or even a real שוגג, rather, the contemporary "sinner" is actually an אנוס. He is manipulated by the darkness of *galus* and his *yetzer hara* but at heart he is wholly dedicated to Yiddishkeit.⁹

Therefore, while we are taught that ישראל עושים תשובה, ומיד הם יגאליים (Yidden will do *teshuvah* and immediately be redeemed), there is no need to wait for that. Our natural ties to *Elokus* were never severed, only hidden. Hence, Moshiach can come without delay for just by removing the external influences our true being is revealed, pure and perfect.¹⁰ 1

1. See e.g. *Toras Menachem* vol. 7 p. 238.

2. See e.g. *Toras Menachem* vol. 28 p. 42.

3. *Toras Menachem* 5743 vol. 4 p 1822.

4. *Living Torah* program 636.

5. *Toras Menachem* 5742 vol. 2 p. 614.

6. *Toras Menachem* 5743 vol. 1 p. 335.

7. *Sefer Hamamarim Melukat Tishrei-Cheshvan* p. 243.

8. *Sichos Kodesh* 5733 vol. 1, p. 347-353.

9. *Sichos Kodesh* 5736 vol. 2 p. 535.

10. *Sichos Kodesh* 5736 vol. 2 p. 69.