

## CHAPTER 2: MISHNA 19: PART 3

*by Rabbi Shaya Karlinsky*

Rebbe Yehoshua also taught lessons of discipline to enable one to perfect himself, addressing each of three dimensions of the individual: "guf" -- the physical part of man and its associated elements; "nefesh" -- the emotional/spiritual part of man and its associated elements; and the uniquely human combination of these two forces. (Please refer back to what has been written on Mishna 16, where the Maharal explained the basic lesson of Rebbe Yehoshua. What follows is a further elaboration.)

"Ayin harah" (lit: evil eye; jealousy) deprives a person of his existence in this world, due to the defect in his "nefesh," undermining man's existence.

"Yetzer harah" (lit: evil inclination; pursuit of pleasure) also deprives a person of his existence, due to a defect in his "guf," the dimension of his physical existence.

Even an animal, whose existence is rooted in the physical dimension, has a "yetzer harah," drives which are motivated by the desire for self-gratification and lack of self-control. (See Bava Kama 2b.) The archetype for "yetzer harah" is the sexual drive, which emanates from the physical dimension, and -- when not controlled -- is viewed as the quintessential animalistic act. (See Rashi on Bamidbar 5:15 about the connection between adultery and animal acts. There is an additional perspective on the sex drive, which explains how it can emanate from man's creative forces. But at the core, it is built on a drive for eternity, to live on through one's children. This motivation is rooted in man's recognition of his finite existence due to his physical nature.)

"Ayin harah," jealousy, on the other hand, emanates from a deficiency in man's emotional/spiritual dimension, a dimension which does not exist in an animal. Whatever "nefesh" (life- force) an animal has is simply a more elevated part of its physical dimension, so an animal doesn't really manifest the trait of "ayin harah."

(Acts found in the animal kingdom that resemble "jealousy" can be traced to the motive of self-preservation, which is rooted in the physical. It is only among humans that we find acts done out of "jealousy," motivated purely by the insecurity of the ego caused by someone else having something that I don't have. This manifests a deficiency in the person's "nefesh.")

Finally, baseless hatred of others -- "sinath habrioth" -- reflects a deficiency in the uniquely human component of the individual. A person who recognizes and manifests the human perfection contained within him, cannot have hatred for other human beings who have that same uniquely

human potential.

There is a deeper principle that needs to be understood to fully grasp the lesson being taught in the fact that these three deficiencies take a person out of the world. Death results from a person deviating from the balance at the center, moving towards an extreme. The word "katze" is used to denote the edge, which is the extreme departure from the center. The root of the word "katze" is "keitz" which means end or termination, indicating death, which results from a lack of balance. Being centered is the source of life, which requires equilibrium and balance, as we explained in the introductory Mishna.

(Because of the importance of this idea -- and because we studied this Mishna over three years ago, when many of you weren't with us on this forum -- I have quoted below the section that we wrote at the time.)

(The Maharal writes the following in his explanation on the Introductory Mishna "Every member of the nation of Israel has a share in the World to Come": The power of the center is that it is the point where everything is in balance, not skewed towards an extreme or an edge. The Hebrew word for edge is "keitz" which also means a termination point, implying an end. The center, the point of balance, is where we find life and eternity, for this point is the most distant from any extreme, and it is the extremes that we find termination and death.

(We added: This idea appears in a number of places in the works of the Maharal. See Gvuros HaShem Ch. 46. The practical implications of this idea are enormous...It is a treatise for a life of balance and harmony, eschewing extremes and extremism in every area.) (The Maharal now goes on to elaborate in our Mishna.)

The [material] world which G-d created was created with a system of balance and equilibrium, and its continued existence doesn't allow for a digression from that balance. Stability and longevity are the result of equilibrium. This is indicated by the fact that the world was created in six days, for the letter "vav" (with the numerical value of six) indicates balance and equality. First, the structure of the letter has it standing as a straight, perfectly balanced upright line [with just a hint of a curve at its top]. It is pronounced as a repetition of itself (with no other elements intervening). And uniquely among [single digit] numbers, it has the greatest numerical equilibrium and inner integrity, as the Ibn Ezra has taught us (Shemoth 3:15). The sum of the numbers into which the number six can be evenly divided, equals six. ( $6/2=3$ ;  $6/3=2$ ;  $6/6=1$ ;  $3+2+1=6$ ) (The Maharal then goes on to demonstrate how this doesn't work with other numbers -- I leave the calculations to you.)

It is for this reason that the world was created in SIX days, for this number represents balance and equilibrium.

There is no creation in the world that is a more finely tuned and balanced creature than man. This is why man was created on the sixth day, indicating the equilibrium and balance in his humanity. Man embodies both a "guf" (physical body) as well as a "nefesh" (a metaphysical

emotional/spiritual/intellectual component) and these two components must be in equilibrium to ensure man's existence. Man is not supposed to act as a purely physical being, nor is he supposed to act as a purely metaphysical being, either of which would undermine his existence in this world. He must maintain a balance between these two aspects of his creation.

In addition, he is not supposed to act in a way that opposes mankind [in general], which would surely undermine that existence. Each of the three defects taught which remove a person from the world are deviations from the needed balance in one of these three spheres.

"Ayin harah" undermines man's existence due to an excess of the "nefesh," turning his emotional and intellectual dimension into a destructive force, through a negative and jealous attitude towards others. (Jealousy requires an emotional reaction to what others have and/or an intellectualization of your perceived lacking of that thing.) When the "nefesh" is not properly controlled and utilized, this creates one kind of imbalance which destroys man's equilibrium.

"Yetzer harah" undermines man's existence due to an excess of the "guf," causing his existence to become a purely physical one, which is another extreme which destroys man's equilibrium.

Each of these excesses "takes a person out of the world," since the world which G-d created requires balance, and man himself must be a balance between the physical and the metaphysical. One who deviates from this balance cannot have a stable existence in this world.

There is a third deviation which undermines man's existence in the world, when man opposes his own humanity as it was designed by G-d. A reaction of hatred towards other people indicates an opposition to other human beings and a preference that they not exist. Since every individual is really part of humanity, this opposition to others is a fundamental opposition to humanity, which undermines his own existence.

(G-d created humanity as a group of many diverse individuals. A frequent source of "baseless hatred" is the failure to appreciate those who think, act or are different than we are. This is one of the ways to understand the Maharal's intention in this section. Opposing others simply because they think or act differently than we do is a fundamental opposition to the nature of humanity as created by G-d. It really denies the legitimacy of our own individuality, which is a fundamental element of the uniqueness of man.)

Just as hating others undermines his existence, causing others to hate him also undermines that existence. This can be understood in text, since the phrase "sinath habrioth" can mean both one who hates others, as well as one who is hated by others. Any opposition to the nature of man undermines the stability of his existence.

In summary, deviating from balance towards an extreme in either direction subjects man to a lack of stability and perfection, undermining his existence, "taking him out of the world." The same result comes from man opposing the essence of his humanity.

This can be understood in an even deeper way. "Ayin harah" is a deviation towards the left. "Yetzer harah" is a deviation towards the right. And "sinath habrioth" is a deviation from man himself, who is the balance of these two extremes.

("Right" is representative of "chesed," kindness and giving. A "deviation towards the right" means too much "chesed", lack of self control. This is the root of sexual promiscuity and other lusts. "Left" represents "din," strict and precise judgment. A "deviation towards the left" indicates too much "din," which is usually the underlying emotion for jealousy and other manifestations of "ayin harah." "That person doesn't deserve it". "How come he has it and I don't?")

Rebbe Yehoshua has taught lessons of discipline for every aspect of man: For his "nefesh," (emotions and intellect) which is the source of "ayin harah"; for his "guf" (physical drives) which is the source of his "yetzer harah"; and for his humanity, which is compromised when he opposes the humanity of others. If he would be the human being HE is supposed to be, nothing could threaten his own humanity, and he would have no rationale for hating others or for causing others to hate him. (Anyone who knew or has heard stories of people who were famous for their love of others -- Reb Aryeh Levin and Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l are two that come to mind from recent times -- know that this love was built on their own perfection, self-confidence and serenity. They were the best human beings they could be, so they didn't feel challenged or undermined by others. This enabled them to be generous with their love and appreciation of others -- and it was reciprocated by all who came in contact with them.)

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