

Kindly take a moment to study MISHNAS CHAYIM in the merit of
Yonah *bas* Shmuel *a"h*

a fellow Jew who passed away with no relatives to arrange Torah study on behalf of her *neshamah*

The Final Surge

PARSHAS VAYEILECH 5776

In one of the dramatic passages from the *Yamim Nora'im* liturgy, we recite: **כִּי תַעֲבִיר מִמִּשְׁקֶלֶת** זָדוֹן מִן הָאָרֶץ – “When You shall remove the **dominion of evil** from the earth.” What is this “*Memsheles Zaddon*” to which the prayer refers? Last week, we cited R’ Yeruchem Olshin’s explanation that it alludes to the Heavenly accusers, Celestial representatives of the nations of the earth. At this time, they join forces against Yisrael, aiming to persuade Hashem to reverse His selection of them as His Chosen People. We battle against them with prayer and ask Him instead that they be defeated.

From Without and Within

R’ Yeruchem offers an alternative explanation, identifying the *Memsheles Zaddon* as the general force of evil, which in most recent times seems to have had an astronomical rise. Underscoring the frightening surge we have witnessed in Satan’s power on all fronts, he writes the following in his *sefer Yerach L’mo’adim (Yamim Nora'im I, ma'amar 47, § 7)*:

“The situation has deteriorated to such an extent that even a blind man can perceive how the dominance of the *Memsheles Zaddon* has increased in the world. (This is apparent) from the hatred displayed by the ‘seventy wolves’ (nations of the world) against the ‘lone sheep’ that is Yisrael... as the former derive their power from the evil force of the *Sitra Achra* (Satan’s dominion).

Sadly, it is even more (apparent) in the upsurge of *ra* (evil) that has made inroads even within our own communities. Specifically, (this is manifest) in the formidable power of defilement inherent in the impure devices that – through the rapid technological advances as of late – proliferate and develop further on a daily basis... (This has accelerated) to the point that there is accessible a device – the size of the palm of one’s hand – which has the ability to destroy the Jewish soul, G-d forbid, and further its descent to the lowest abyss... And (this device) has produced many casualties.

All of this is a result of the upsurge of the force of impurity, which increases and escalates in front of our eyes. It leaves all astonished, with no one knowing what the next day will bring or when or how these *tzaros* will end... or how to prevent this horrific plague from spreading farther.

For this, we must increase and intensify our prayers and plead with our Father in Heaven to save us at the time of this terrifying war and ‘remove the *Memsheles Zaddon* from the land.’ For there is no greater *Memsheles Zaddon* than this.”

The *sefer* containing these words – *Yerach L’mo’adim* – was published toward the end of 5774 (almost a year to the day of this writing). What is particularly alarming is how much more has occurred since then, and how much the above-mentioned situation has further degenerated in so short a time. Such is the case regarding the looming threats of both our physical and spiritual welfare.

Landmark Decisions?

In the international arena, the president of the United States ended what had been a welcome respite – a tradition of friendliness toward the Jewish people. And he did so in a most nefarious and frightening way. Iran, a rogue nation across the globe, consistently and vocally calls for the annihilation of the Jews, who, in their words, are conveniently gathered in a small area. Thus, they refer to Eretz Yisrael as a “one-bomb country” (may Hashem protect us). And for reasons known only to him, the U.S. president felt it appropriate to make a deal with them, granting them legitimacy, billions of dollars and the license to produce a nuclear bomb.

And just when you might have thought the surrounding moral climate could not get much worse – it did. The “cause” for deviance has been championed for some time now; it has been discussed, lobbied for, celebrated, paraded, etc. But in an unprecedented move to bring the moral fiber of the country down yet another notch, these freakish relationships have been granted official recognition and enshrined into law. Thus, we have a situation where those who advocate decency and wholesomeness are derided and silenced, while those promoting perverseness are lauded and praised.

Indeed, it certainly seems reminiscent of the description of the state the world in the immediate pre-Messianic era, as Chazal describe in the Mishnah (*Sotah 9:15*):

בְּעֵקְבוֹת מְשִׁיחָא חֲצָפָא יִסְגָּא... הַמְלָכוֹת תִּתְּפֹף לְמִינּוֹת, וְאִין תּוֹכְחָהּ, בֵּית וְעַד יִהְיֶה לְזָנוֹת... יִרְאִי חֲטָא יִמְאָסוּ, וְהֶאֱמַת תְּהֵא נְעַדְרַת... פְּנֵי הַדּוֹר כְּפְנֵי הַכֶּלֶב...

“In the footsteps of Mashiach, *chutzpah* will increase... The government will turn to heresy, and none will protest; meeting places will be devoted to immorality... Those who fear sin will be despised; truth will disappear... The face of the generation will resemble that of a dog...”

But this, in itself, is the silver lining. At the same time as matters seem to be spiraling ever downward and the *Memsheles Zaton* increases in power and scope, we are reminded that its end is near. In this regard, R' Yeruchem (*ibid.* § 8) quotes the Chofetz Chaim, who reveals a most remarkable aspect about the nature of *ra*. Just as a candle flares up just before it is extinguished, and the night is darkest right before the crack of dawn, so does the power of the Sitra Achra surge right before its demise. As the Mishnah itself stated, such elements are the signs that Mashiach will soon arrive.

Based on all we have been only too shocked and saddened to witness – and armed with the knowledge of the Chofetz Chaim’s message – perhaps our prayers will take on new meaning during these Days of Awe. The Mishnah also adds a positive and hopeful note: על מי יש לנו: “Upon whom can we rely? Upon our Father in Heaven.” Let us then allow the words of the prayer to emanate, now more than ever, from the bottom of our hearts: וּבְכֹן תֵּן פְּחָדֶךָ ד' אֱלֹהֵינוּ עַל כָּל מַעֲשֵׂיךָ... וְעוֹלָמְתָהּ תִּקְפֹּץ פִּיהָ, וְכָל הָרָשָׁעָה פּוֹלֵה כְּעֵשֶׂן תִּכְלֶהּ, כִּי תַעֲבִיר מִמְּשַׁלֵּת וּבְכֹן תֵּן פְּחָדֶךָ ד' לְבָדֶךָ עַל כָּל מַעֲשֵׂיךָ – “And so, place Your fear, Hashem our G-d, over all of Your creatures... And may the mouth of vice be closed, and all of the evil shall dissipate like smoke, when You remove the *Memsheles Zaton* from the earth. And may You, Hashem, reign alone over all of Your creations...”