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[Music] for those of you who've studied rabbinic midrashic teaching the teachings of the rabbis both in the talmud and the midrash the non-legal material the we call midrashic or egotic material so we know that it's often not easy to grasp it's not always simple to understand the teachings of the sages but one thing emerges after a careful study of the midrashic teachings one thing that you see very clearly is that the rabbis were very careful and attentive readers of the biblical text they often notice

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things that might otherwise go unnoticed and many of their comments and observations and teachings are based upon a very careful reading of the text itself and unless you really understand what they saw in the text so the comments they're making often seem to be totally inexplicable even if you know what they're basing their comments upon their teachings are often hard to penetrate but the important thing to try to do when we're studying the midrashic teachings is to try to understand

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what prompted the rabbis to say what they said when the bible recapitulates the story of creation we all know that the creation story takes place in genesis chapter one but the bible recapitulates that story in genesis chapter two and in doing that the torah describes the origins of animal life and it says in the second chapter verse 19 hashem minha adama now the lord god had formed out of the ground every beast of the field and every bird of the sky twelve verses earlier in verse seven the torah recounts the

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creation of man and uses the same word hashem elokim and the lord god formed the man of dust from the ground now even though the word formed by itse in both verses seems the same and sounds the same the sages noticed that when describing the creation of animals one yud the word vayitzer is spelled with one yud but when describing the formation of man the the word vaitser is written with two uids now the unit is the smallest letter in the alphabet so you can understand how someone could very easily

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miss that not so easy to see and this difference in wording prompted rabbi nachman bharara vista to teach in the babylonian talmud tractate brachot 61a that the two yuds in the word that god formed in the creation story of man the two you would show that god created man with two inclinations one good and the other evil the word ser means god formed and so you could say that it's not a good inclination but a good formation a part of the human being that was formed with an inclination toward good and another part of the human being

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formed within inclination toward evil now there are other illusions in the biblical text that seemed to be more explicit in the passages leading up to the flood story in the beginning of the book of genesis so in the sixth chapter verse five we're told that god saw that man's wickedness was great on earth and that every formation every yatzer of the thoughts of his heart were evil all the time and then later in genesis chapter 8 verse 1 we're told the yatzer imagery or imagination of man's heart is

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evil from his youth now our sages teach that this destructive and self-destructive side to who we are this what we call the yetzer hara or evil incarnation is most dominant in our youth as the bible just said that the yetzer of man's imagination is evil from his youth and so it is strongest in our youth during the early years of our lives during those years you all remember i'm sure that we were very self-centered totally self-absorbed as little kids with very little impulse control and our good inclination is more or less

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dormant and doesn't really begin to come into its own we're told until the age of bar or bat mitzvah 12 year old 12 years old for a girl 13 year old 13 years old for a boy we know that the good inclination is rooted primarily in the intellect and draws us towards spirituality towards truth we know that human beings have an instinct for truth but that comes from our good inclination our good inclination also draws us to the ability and desire for self-control and for virtuous living our evil inclination is

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based and connected primarily with our bodies associated primarily not with our intellect but with our body with the physical part of who we are and with our fantasies another term that we see in our literature for the evil inclination is satan now that's a word that has so much baggage and so many misconceptions because of its association with another religion that very few people really understand the concept of satan within torah thought satan first of all is one of god's

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angels that word also has a lot of baggage what is an angel and we tend to have very immature or primitive concepts of what angels are but that's for another evening so we're told that satan is one of god's angels and the most well-known occurrence of satan the most famous appearance in the bible is in the book of job and there satan basically serves to challenge job to challenge eove eove was incredibly righteous and the satan senses that perhaps his great faith in god

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and his righteous living were never really tested properly the famous biblical commentary writing on genesis chapter 22 verse 1 about god's testing abraham at the al-qaeda by having abraham offer up his son as a sacrifice on mount moriah so nahmanis explains that tests trials are for the purpose of allowing people to actualize their potential and that's what the satan wanted eov to do if eove's greatness if job's righteousness and his closeness to god were never really tested well maybe he was never fully righteous

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now to better understand the idea of satan it would be helpful to look at and examine the first time the word appears in the scriptures of lublin the famous hasidic master who passed away in the year 1900 always taught that if you want to understand anything in the torah find the first time that it appears the first time anything appears either a word or a letter if you want to understand what is the meaning of the letter aleph the first letter of the alphabet find the first time that letter appears

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at the beginning of a word that's the headquarters and so the first time the word satan appears in the bible is in the book of numbers bamidbar chapter 22 verse 22 and there in the story of bilaam bilaam was a great non-jewish prophet and the king of moab wanted to hire him to curse the jewish people god was not too interested in having bilaam go and curse the jews and after a lot of wrangling and haggling god finally allows bilim to go with the messengers of the king of moab but he says you can only do what i tell

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you to do you can go with them but you can't do whatever you want you can only do what i tell you to do but on the way apparently god senses that bilaam has something else up his mind and we're told in numbers 22 22 that god's anger was kindled because he was going not just going accompanying these men but he was going along with them in the sense of he was really buying into their plans and so we're told that the angel of the lord took his stand in the road god sent an angel to stand

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in the road list satan lo you could translate that to be a satan to him obviously not a very good translation the better translation the correct translation is that this angel stood in the road to obstruct him to block him to be an obstacle to him and that is the meaning of satan the concept of satan in the bible is it's a force sometimes we call it an angel but it's a spiritual force that serves to obstruct us to block us to stand in our way this is one of the main functions of the satan

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and our sages identify our sages tell us that the satan basically is our yetza hara our evil inclination the satan is not so much some kind of outside malevolent malevolent force with a tail and a pitchfork and a red suit you can't get away from the satan because it lives within us when we have an impulse to do good there will be an automatic inner resistance that rises up to oppose us to stand in our way there's a story told of a very very poor rabbi and one day he suddenly comes upon out

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of nowhere 400 rubles he received a lot of money that he never expected that really was a lot of money for him and almost as soon as he receives this money is a knock at his door a very very poor person comes in crying that he needs to marry off his daughter and he can't do it unless he has 400 rubles what a coincidence so the rabbi immediately takes out the 400 rubles and gives it to the man and wishes him mazel tov i wish you the best the man leaves and maybe he's out the door for a minute

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and the rabbi gets up and chases after him and says can you come back here for a minute and the rabbi started thinking i got this 400 rubles unexpectedly that's a lot of money do i have to give all of it to this person you know i can give 400 different people a ruble a robot wasn't you know like a penny back then could probably buy a meal for a ruble so he started thinking he started having second thoughts about having given away all this money to this person just happened to knock on the door at that moment and he

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was about to ask for the money back and he caught himself and he said wait a second i had an impulse when this man came and explained to me his need i had an impulse to give him what he needed i came upon 400 ruble unexpectedly immediately someone comes to me needing that much money exactly so my yatzer hatov my good inclination told me sure you can help go and do it now when i heard that inner voice telling me well why does he have to get all the money maybe you can give it to 400 different people so he realized

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where that voice was coming from that voice of opposition was not coming from a healthy place now i once had a very similar experience years ago i used to run high holiday services they were actually learning services beginners learning services down at the anche mis mint synagogue in the kensington market section of toronto and it was a lot of work because i had to prepare at least two and a half hours worth of uh talks and then there were questions for a long time and then i would blow the chauffeur

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for everyone and by the end of this morning i was i was spent i was exhausted and one year rabbi shulman who was the chaplain at mount sinai hospital asked me if i would mind going to the hospital in the afternoon to blow the chauffeur for the patients in the hospital and i immediately said sure of course but then about a half hour later i said to myself why did he have to ask me there are a lot of people downtown that can blow a chauffeur and they didn't run an entire service all morning and already blow the chauffeur and they

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weren't exhausted and spent and tired and as i was playing this through my mind i remember doing this i said i know who you are i know exactly who you are i don't often have such clarity about the voice of my evil inclination speaking to me but he came through loud and clear at that moment the talmud in tractate sukkah 52 a teaches that the eight sahara has seven different names and one of them is safoni it's a phony if you remember from the passover seder right there's the part of the center

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called safun right which means it's can hidden because we hide the afikoman so the word sifoni is one of the names of the eight sahara and it means the hidden one the sahara is the hidden one and the morale from prague explains what this means is that the atahura is concealed very deeply in the innermost parts of our hearts and we don't really recognize that he's there it's not so obvious to us all the time that we're walking around with an evil inclination he sort of gets to lie low and and

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hide out for a large part of our lives and it's interesting that the sages were aware of this that our evil inclination is buried deep inside of us that long before sigmund freud our sages had an awareness of the subconscious realm the talmud also compares the eight sahara to a fly they compare our yate sahara to a fly in explaining this ravitzuk blaser one of the great balay moosa one of the students of israel cilantro wrote that god put into the animals the fear of men and he says that if you drive animals away first of

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all many animals won't even come near human beings they'll attack many other creatures but somehow they have an instinctual fear of humans but even if they don't if you drive an animal away they're not very quick to return but a fly he says keeps on coming back and coming back and coming back you can chase it away forever it's never going to give up and our yatsuhara never leaves us alone and it always seeks to trip us up our sages actually teach that we should never trust ourselves

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and grow complacent even until the day of our death should never fully trust ourselves they tell a story of a very old man on his deathbed and people heard him saying to his yetzer hara get out of here leave me alone and he looked at him here's a man that's 92 years old he can barely move he he's he's not he's basically dying what is he afraid of what is the eight sahara going to get him to do at this stage in his life so he said that the eight sahara is whispering in my ear

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that right before you die say my israel very loudly so everyone will think that you're very righteous and very pious here's someone that basically they have one foot in the grave and yet the lust for honor and for glory is still burning deeply in their hearts one of the great hasidic masters used to always teach that you should picture the eight sahara as a psychopath with a huge axe prepare to chop off your head so one of his students asked what if i can't imagine that so if simple said if you have a hard

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time imagining that it's an indication that he's already chopped off your head now anyone that's done some serious studying of jewish literature dealing with personal growth and self-improvement knows that there is a tremendous focus in this literature on understanding the nature of the myriad ways in which our yatesahara works to sabotage our lives and the virulent nature of its efforts to block our spiritual progress it's not a very well-known part of our literature but people that have studied this kind

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of literature and there's a massive amount usually it's called the mussar literature going back at least a thousand years this is a major focus of that literature understanding the wiles of our yatsahara its tactics how it tries to trip us up in so many different subtle kinds of ways and what we need to do to fight against our yatsuhara so in light of what we've learned up until tonight the following passage in the midrash to genesis might sound very shocking after the six days of creation the torah

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concludes the account in the last verse of the first chapter of genesis by saying and god saw all that he had made and behold it was very good in the midrash genesis rabba 9 7 rav nachman the son of shmuel said when the verse said behold it was very good this refers to the azer hatov this refers to the good inclination but the verse didn't just say hee nay behold it was very good heenay behold it was very good the verse says and behold it was very good and the midrash seems to assume that that

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word and the extra letter of is not really necessary in the verse and so raf nachman the son of shmuel says that this extra word and refers to the evil inclination credible that when at the end of the creation story we're told that god saw everything he had made and behold it was very good so we're told that this refers to the evil inclination is the re is the evil inclination really very good what does this mean how do we understand this idea this teaching that we should see the evil inclination

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as very good sir nachman continues in the midrash he says for if not for the evil inclination if it wasn't for our evil inclination a person would not build a house would not take a wife would not be get children and would not conduct business and so does king solomon say in his book of ecclesiastes kohelet chapter 4 verse 4 and i saw that all labor and all skillful enterprise spring from man's rivalry with his neighbor so this midrash clarifies that the eight sahara is not an urge to sin it's not an urge to sin

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or to do evil that's not what it is rather it is the entire range of normal human drives that we have for possessions for security for pleasure for honor for comfort our drives for ambition and honor and glory and success that's what our yetzer saharah is our yetzer harah might be described in Freudian terms as our id and ego these are not intrinsically evil however they can lead to evil they can lead us to evil if not properly channeled like nuclear power other kinds of energy our yetzer saharah is really neutral

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you can't say that nuclear energy is evil it depends on how it's used it's an energy and so our yetzer harah is an energy they are it's our drives therefore our evil inclination is not immoral it is amoral it's not intrinsically immoral but it's amoral the energy and potential within the instinctual drives of our yetzer harah are vitally vitally necessary for all normal areas of human activity and that's what the Midrash is teaching without this yetzer harah life would not really be possible

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and we can see this in a very famous passage from the Talmud tractate Yoma 69b this is an incredibly rich and challenging passage which describes the efforts of the men of the Great Assembly to eradicate the yetzer harah the evil inclination for idolatry here's what the Talmud says they cried out in a great voice to God what did they say to God so Rav said and some say it was Rav Yochanan who said they cried out to God concerning the evil inclination for idolatry whoa whoa it is this inclination that

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destroyed the temple and burned the sanctuary and killed all the righteous ones who perished as a result of that calamity and destruction and exiled the Jews from their land and it that evil inclination for idolatry it still dances among us so they said to God did you give it to us for any reason at all other than for us to receive a reward for overcoming it that must be the reason you gave it to us so the Rabbi said to God we do not want it nor do we want the reward of overcoming it and a note fell from them a note fell

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to them from heaven on which was written the word truth they then fasted continuously for three days and three nights and the evil inclination was delivered to them to subdue it was handed over to them obviously we have to not understand this story too literally what happened at this point the likeness of a fiery lion cub emerged from the holy of holies the talmud here has an image of the evil inclination for idolatry not as some grotesque horrible looking thing coming out of hell but as a lion

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lion is a glorious creature and this lion cub comes out of where it emerges from the holy of holies in the temple isn't that an odd place to be the residence of the evil inclination for idolatry the prophet said to israel this is the evil inclination for idolatry and they seized it and as they seized it a hair slipped from its mane and the fiery cub raised its voice in a mighty roar whose sound went out over an area of 400 parseos they said to the prophet what shall we do perhaps god forbid heaven will have

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mercy on it maybe god's not going to allow us to destroy this evil inclination for idolatry so the prophet replied cast the fiery cub into a lead cauldron and cover the opening with lead because lead absorbs sound then the men of the great assembly said since it's now a time of divine favor look what we're able to do we were able to capture the evil inclination for idolatry and lock it up so they said we're on a roll since at the time of divine favor let us also pray for the evil inclination

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for sexual immorality to be subdued before us so they prayed and it too was delivered into their hands whereupon the evil inclination for immorality said to them look if you kill me the world will become desolate so what did they do they imprisoned it for three days and during this time they tried to find a freshly laid egg throughout the entire land of israel and they were not able to find a freshly laid egg during those three days they with us in a quandary and they said what should we do shall we kill it no we can't kill it

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because the whole world will go desolate shall we pray that half the inclination be subdued meaning maybe we should pray that god should only subdue the inclination for forbidden sexual relationships but not forbid the inclination towards normal sexual relationships or permitted ones so the talmud says no heaven does not grant half measures once something's in force it's in force so what did they do they blinded its eyes and they released it and what did this accomplish it accomplished that a man does not

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become aroused to it aroused by it to sin with his forbidden relatives meaning at one time in history the evil inclination for having relations with close relatives was rampant and apparently they were able to ensure that that was no longer widespread that normal people that were not immoral that were not corrupt would not be attracted anymore by their close relatives so what do we see from this passage in the talmud that the impulse for forbidden sexual relationships is one and the same with the biological urge to reproduce

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and you can't separate them eliminating one eliminating this urge would destroy all life on our planet so what we see is that all of our drives and all of our emotions like jealousy and lust and competition and honor seeking and greed and ambition all of these drives that we have ultimately drive the world they are the engine that moves the world and they're the fuel in the tank of life and they allow for progress if they're harnessed properly someone once came to the prophet saying

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i spoke about the prophet's heim i believe in previous weeks he was a great sage who lived in europe and passed away around the year 1933 so someone once came to the prophet zhaim and complained he says what can i do about my eight sahara it hounds me all the time and doesn't give me a moment to rest so the time answered him you know what you're very fortunate to have a yate sahara you should be very happy because he said without its attempts to influence you and without all of the obstacles it puts

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in your way being righteous would mean nothing there's no virtue in choosing the good life when is no viable alternative if there's no viable alternative to the good life there's not much virtue in choosing it life would be meaningless the prophet saying tells him without your yate sahara and the khabichain went on to explain that we can be compared human beings can be compared to clocks each one of us is like a clock in a clock the sage said there were two movements in every clock at least in the clocks they had back

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then one movement drives the gears forward and the other holds them back and this ensures that they are moving forward in a controlled way and the prophet saying said it only it's the only the balance of these opposing forces that allows the clock to function properly with the hour and minute hands moving forward accurately in step with the passing of time so he said we too each one of us are caught between two opposing forces our yates or tov our good inclination pulling in one direction and our yate

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sahara our evil inclination pulling in the opposite direction when we resist the lure of the negative we're able to move forward but positively in our lives the babylonian talmud in tractate brachot 17a teaches the following rabbi alexandria would add at the end of his prayers each of the rabbis would tell us when they finished their formal prayers they added their own private personal prayer and the talmud tells us a number of these personal prayers so rabbi alexandria would add at the end of his prayer the following

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master of the universe it is clearly known to you that our wish is to do your will you know god that we really want to be nice boys and girls what then prevents us the yeast in the dough and our enslavement by the nations of the world the fact that the jewish nation is constantly persecuted by the nations of the world and makes it difficult for us to serve god properly but i want to focus on the first of what he says the yeast in the dough so we're told that the eight sahara is like the yeast

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in the dough when controlled the fermentation caused by the yeast creates bread which supports life but when uncontrolled the dough turns sour and inedible so too if man's drive for pleasure is properly harnessed that gives us the impetus to conquer nature and provide the means for us to have human life and to survive and prosper but if our drives for pleasure are left unharnessed then jealousy pleasure seeking and lust for glory will drive us out of the world our human personality will decay and

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disintegrate and this understanding of the evil inclination is also reflected in a passage from the talmud tractate kedushin 30b where it says the holy one blessed be he said to israel my son i have created the eight sahara the evil inclination and i have created the torah as its antidote if you involve yourself with the torah you will not be delivered into the hands of the eight sahara now this reading that i just shared with you is the way this passage in the talmud is normally read and it sees the eight sahara as a

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problem like a virus or a poison that needs an antidote right i've created the eight sahara and the torah is its antidote but that's not really an accurate translation of the hebrew the actual hebrew says that the torah is not an antidote but tavlin that's the word that's used the torah is tovlin to the eight sahara tavlin means spice kavlin are spices so what we see from this passage in the talmud is that the torah is not an antidote to the eight sahara rather the torah spices up

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the eight sahara what does this mean so in this analogy the torah is spice and the eight sahara is our food the eight sahara is not some disease or some poison the eight sahara is our food and the torah is a spice to spice the food as we've said our yet sahara is the entire range of our passions our drives and our desires and these are the fuel of our lives they're essential to life itself so what does spice do for food so it directs the food to a particular taste and it enhances flavor

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that's what spices do it will make a particular food taste a certain way you can spice the food to taste italian or indian or french the food is often malleable it depends on how you spice it similarly the torah gives direction to our drives and passions the torah gives direction to our yetzer hara to make it taste good that's what the torah is it's a spice for aryatsuhara to make it taste good to take the raw energy of our drives and to harness them in a positive direction the rabbis compare the relationship

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between our body and soul to the relationship between a horse and a rider and they basically say that our body is like the horse and our soul is like the rider what does the horse want to do the horse wants to be a horse it wants to eat and sleep and run around and play with other horses and have a great time that's what the horse wants to do what does the rider want the rider wants to give the horse direction the rider wants to take that horse and make it go in a particular direction it wants to harness the energy

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of the horse why is it that our yatsuhara is so incredibly important sato explains in several of his works including the dara hashem the way of god that god's purpose in creating mankind was to give us to bestow upon human beings the ultimate pleasure that we can have god is good god is a giver the nature of good is to want to give to want to bestow goodness and so god wants to give human beings not just any pleasure the ultimate pleasure and god wants to have human beings ultimately receive the ultimate pleasure

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that's possible in life it's not a big car and it's not dark chocolate it's not even a trip to fiji these are all wonderful things but there is a creator of all these things and every pleasure and every beauty in the world points above and beyond itself to its creator so if you think that the creations are pleasurable and wonderful imagine how much more incredible it is to connect with the source of all those pleasures and so what rabbi mushakhimusato teaches us is that we are put in this world

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to be able to have the ultimate pleasure possible in life which is to connect with god and to have a relationship with god to know god now the truth is that if god wanted to do this it seems he could have done it in a much more effective way than he did he put us in a world that's physical not spiritual where we have a physical body we live in a physical world where there are tremendous distractions tremendous obstacles to connecting with god there are many things that compete for our attention

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and so if god really wanted to give human beings the benefit of closeness with him so god could have simply created us and placed us in a totally spiritual existence what we refer to as the world to come or heaven meaning a place where we're not encumbered and waited down and distracted by our bodies and by the physical world around us that would be the most direct way of giving people the experience of ultimate pleasure so why did god put us in a physical world with physical bodies with a yet sahara that militates so

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strongly against spirituality and against spiritual growth so our sages say that the reason is because if we get something as a handout without working for it it's not pleasurable it's referred to in the kabbalistic literature as the bread of shame imagine two people who each are wearing an olympic medal one of them trained for 10 years and had to compete in semi-finals and finals and finally the finals in the olympics after years and years and years of preparation and competition and finally reaching the olympics they

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win the gold medal and now they're able to wear that with pride and imagine someone else who buys a gold medal on ebay they will not walk around with the same pride in that gold medal as a matter of fact they might feel foolish and embarrassed by it what did i do to deserve this nothing so when we get things that we didn't deserve we didn't work for them it's not pleasurable it's the opposite we're embarrassed by it that's why the evil inclination is so critically important

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it gives us the opportunity of living a life of choice where we're not born and created into a relationship with god we have to choose to have a relationship with god because a relationship that you don't choose a relationship you are forced into is not really a relationship and so we're in a world of choice we're in a world where the eight sahara seems to present seemingly viable alternatives to god's will repent pinchas karatsu the great hasidic rebbe said that there's no possibility of good

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without the possibility of at the same time choosing evil so our yet sahara plays a critical role to allow us to have free will and to choose a relationship with god and to choose a life a virtue and therefore thereby grow spiritually and to make ourselves into fitting vessels so that one day we will be able to live in a purely spiritual realm which we refer to as the world to come ultimately we know we can only grow spiritually when we overcome resistance much in the same way that we build our muscles in a gym by lifting weights

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we only grow spiritually by overcoming resistance when we encounter a spiritual obstacle when we run head on into something that obstructs our spiritual growth we are forced to climb over it and this isn't easy it can actually be incredibly difficult but the torah assures us that we are capable of doing it and it's through overcoming these obstacles that we're able to grow in the very beginning of scripture of the bible god says to cain in the fourth chapter of breishit in the seventh verse god says to him

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surely if you improve you will be forgiven but if you do not improve yourself sin will rest at the door its desire is toward you but you can conquer it god is telling cain and really all of humanity that we will always be tempted by sin sin will always be crouching at the door but god tells us we have the ability to rule over it we have the ability to master it we see similarly in the book of dvarim in deuteronomy chapter 30 god tells us that he places before us today life and good death and evil

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that's the choice we have before of us before us that which i command you today to love the lord your god to walk in his ways to observe his commandments his decrees his ordinances that you will live and you will multiply and hashem your god will bless you in the land to which you came to possess it and he goes on to say in verse 19 i call heaven and earth today to bear witness that i've placed life and death before you blessing and curse and you shall choose life so that you will live you

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and your offspring so god says to us we have a life of balance we have a good inclination we have an evil inclination and we are given the ability to choose it's not beyond our capability but again it can become very very difficult one of the stories in the bible where we see this is in the story of joseph joseph is referred to in our literature as yosef hatsaadik joseph the righteous one and in the 39th chapter of genesis we're told of this incredible trial that he was placed into we're told that joseph was someone

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who was handsome of form handsome of appearance and we're told that potiphar's wife his master's wife cast her eyes upon joseph and she said lie with me but he adamantly refused and he said to his master's wife look with me here my master concerns himself about nothing in the house and whatever he has placed in my custody there is no one greater in this house than i and he has denied me nothing but you since you're his wife how then can i perpetu perpetrate this great evil and sin against god and so it was

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just as she coaxed joseph day after day day after day she tried to seduce him and he was a young man he was a young man she would not listen to him and he could she would continue to try to coax him but he would not listen to her to lie beside her to be with her and then there was an opportune day when he entered the house to do his work no man of the household staff being there in the house so here it wasn't just her flirting with him here she was now totally alone with him and she caught him

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by his garment saying lie with me but he ran out and left the garment in her hand and he fled and went outside and in describing his resistance torah uses the word vayima ain that he refused all of her overtures taurus says he refused but was it easy so we have the trump of the torah the the musical notes of the torah only four times i believe only four times does this particular sound appear in the five books of moses it's called a shall shellette and it's a very long note i can't do it

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that well but the way it might sound is as if to say he was torn he went back and forth he was very tempted to be with her it wasn't easy it was a struggle and his back and forth struggle is reflected in this word that he refused it wasn't a simple refusal and so we're told that even though resisting the evil inclination can be very very difficult we're able to do it we don't only grow by the way from our victories over our evil inclination we can also grow from our defeats the

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book of proverbs king solomon says in chapter 24 verse 16 that the righteous person will fall down seven times but they will get up now people often understand this to mean that the nature of a righteous person is that even though they might fall seven times they'll get up but rafner the great russia shiva of high in berlin says that's not what it means what is teaching you is not what a righteous person does but how a person becomes righteous they become righteous through falling down seven times

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and getting up because they learn from their failures they grow from their failures and they correct their mistakes and it's through that process of picking themselves up after defeat and learning from their mistakes and growing from their mistakes that they grow and that's what helps them become a tsa dick a righteous person the eight sahara is like our personal trainer and it will keep on challenging us when you begin playing chess or any other game or sport your competition doesn't need to be on

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the greatest level you don't have a world champion playing against someone that's just beginning you normally play with people on your level so beginners will play with beginners but the better you get the more stiffer your competition will get the world champion is going to play people who are in a very very high level they're going to play the best players in the world their competition seeks to beat them but what they do is they bring out the best in their opponent the most famous chess competition

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rivalry in modern history was between anatoly karpov and gary kasparov they played dozens and dozens and dozens of games together and they were bitter rivals in his time they would say that gary kasparov was the greatest chess player of the age but what made him the greatest chess player of his time it was anatoly karpov his greatest enemy was ultimately his greatest friend his greatest beneficiary because without an opponent being able to play on that highest level against him he would not rise to the level that he

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ultimately rose to the talmud in tractate sukkah teaches us something amazing it says in the future time the holy one blessed be he will bring the evil inclination and slaughter it in the presence of the righteous and in the presence of the wicked to the righteous the evil inclination will appear like a high mountain that can hardly be scaled and to the wicked it will appear like a strand of hair that can easily be snapped these will weep and these will also weep the righteous will weep and say how are

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we ever able to overcome such a high mountain and the wicked will weep and say how were we not able to overcome this strand of hair the talmud cites afterwards a similar teaching the evil inclination initially resembles a spider's thread and ultimately it resembles the rope of a cart what the talmud is teaching is that in the beginning the evil inclination looks like a spider's thread it can be snapped very easily as the righteous person overcomes that thread it grows and it grows and it grows until the evil inclination

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for a righteous person becomes like a tall mountain a huge obstacle because the talmud tells us our yetzahara grows with us as we become on a higher level our competition has to become on a higher level but to the wicked person who never defeated their opponent in the beginning the eight sahara for them remains a thread so that when the eight sahara will finally be exposed in the front of their eyes the wit the wicked person will say how is it possible i was never able to defeat that and the righteous person will will

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marvel at how they were able to overcome a mountain in our daily recitation of the shema the great declaration of jewish faith we speak about serving god with all of our heart who loved and the holy in tractate 54 a teaches that this word can be understood to serve god with both of our hearts that we're supposed to serve god with both our yetzer tov and how is it possible to serve god with our evil inclination so what it means is that we're supposed to in the same way spice the eight sahara and we're

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supposed to be that rider to the horse so we're supposed to harness and co-opt we're supposed to harness and co-opt the passions and drives and energies of the evil inclination and use those energies and drives and passions to get closer to god and to grow spiritually for example each one of us has inside we get jealous we have to struggle with being jealous of other people or we have ambition competition we want to compete with others so the sages speak about cannot sophrim become jealous of other people's

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spiritual progress don't become jealous of their house or their possessions or other things but maybe become jealous of their spiritual accomplishments if someone you see or you know has accomplished tremendous things in studying the bible studying torah it's good to be jealous of them if that will spur you on to becoming a better student ultimately the sages teach us we should not see the evil inclination as an enemy there's a very wild passage in the talmud tractate conducion 81 where there was a sage

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named plimo and we're told that plimo used to curse satan every day saying an arrow in the eyes of satan so we're told that once on the eve of yom kippur the satan appeared to him in the guise of a poor man and the satan came and knocked on the door of plimo so plimo gave him some bread and the poor man said on a day like today when everybody is inside their home you leave me standing outside the home so plimo brought him into the house and gave him some bread to eat but the poor man said

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on a day like today when everybody sits around the table i should sit alone not with the rest of your family so he seated him at the table and as he was sitting there he caused himself to break out in festering sores and he behaved in an obnoxious manner so plimo said to him sit properly be quiet so he said let me have a glass of wine so plimo poured him a glass of wine and he vomited and spit up into the cup and plimo reprimanded him for this repulsive behavior and he then pretended to drop dead

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everyone inside the house heard people outside saying plimo has killed someone so ran away and hid himself in a toilet at the outskirts of the town don't forget this is the eve of yom kippur and plymouth now has to take refuge in a public toilet at the outskirts of the city and the satan followed him and when plimo saw him he fell down in front of the satan and when he satan saw how much plimo was suffering he revealed he revealed himself to him satan said this this is me i'm the satan i'm the eight sahara

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why did you curse me saying a curse in satan's eye an arrow in satan's eye why did you do that the satan asked him so plimo said what else should i say to prevent to prevent you from enticing me to sin and so the satan said you should rather say let the merciful one remove satan from his job meaning just ask god to let me off your back don't ask god to put an arrow in my eye don't see me as some horrible evil enemy the midrash even tells us that we as a people complain to god about having free will and we ask

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god to remove the eight sahara we don't want this and they complained and they said if a potter leaves a pebble in the clay and the jar jerks and leaks is the potter not responsible here you're making a pot and you left a pebble in the clay and the pot then leaks isn't the potter responsible so the israelites said to god you have left the evil inclination in us remove it and we will do your will we'll be able to serve you without any problems so god replied i'll do this in the time to come meaning

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in the afterlife when you don't need to have the eight sahara anymore that's when we'll take care of it but now we need to have our yetzer hara the truth is that our sages teach us that the eight sahara is wishing all along that we will resist it the eight sahara is rooting for us and hoping that we'll be able to best it in battle one of the places this is seen is in the famous passage in the book of bereshit in genesis chapter 32. we're told there that jacob was left alone and a man

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wrestled with him until the break of dawn who is this mysterious wrestling opponent it's certainly not clear but the midrash and our sages identify this man with the satan with the evil inclination and jacob has an all-night wrestling match with this satan now again this is obviously in many ways symbolic and is telling us that jacob engaged in an incredible battle with his inclination with his evil inclination that night that's a long fight all night long we're told that when the break of dawn came and he perceived

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he could not overcome jacob he struck the socket of his hip so jacob's hip socket was dislocated as he wrestled with him and then the angel said let me go for dawn has broken and jacob said i will not let you go unless you bless me what's going on here so the kojnitzer magette one of the great hasidic masters said that when the angel says to jacob let me go because i have to go ultimately and sing praises to god i have to sing shira because the angel is saying that my mission has been accomplished

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i wrestled all night with you i was hoping you would defeat me and you did i was not able to trip you up and so the angel says that i have a time of great joy now i'm thrilled the angel says to jacob because i have to go now and sing praises to god i've succeeded in perfecting a human being why is it that jacob wants to get a blessing from satan why is it that jacob wants the hate sahara to bless him so the bear mayam khayyim a great hasidic master says because jacob understands that he can only be blessed in life

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if he has an evil inclination to wrestle with that ultimately blessing comes to each of us not by having a life with no struggles not by having a life with no obstacles not by having a life with no difficulties but by facing our struggles and our difficulties and our obstacles and overcoming them jacob doesn't want to give up his hold on satan he doesn't want to let go and he says ultimately i want you to bless me because that's where blessing can come from in life [Music] [Music] [Music]

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you