

Good Shabbos Everyone. As Reb Moshe passed the synagogue, he noticed a sign which caught his eye *"Attention: This coming Thursday night our guest speaker will be Dr. Aurel Stein, the prominent humanitarian physician. His topic: Judaism Superior. Don't miss it!"* Reb Moshe stopped suddenly. Where had he heard this name before? His mind led him back 35 years earlier to 1944 in war-torn Hungary. Reb Moshe now remembered. He knew Dr. Aurel Stein from their time together as forced Jewish laborers in the Hungarian army.

We read about war in this week's portion Ki-Setzei, as the opening verse tells us, *"When you go out to war against you enemy..."* (Devarim-Deuteronomy 20:1) This verse begins a discussion of some of the rules that a Jewish army must observe when battling the enemy. On a deeper mystical level, the holy commentator Ohr HaChayim explains that this verse is referring to a different battle: the battle which rages within every individual.

We are referring to the battle between the good and evil impulses. Every Jew is born with an impulse to do good and an impulse to do bad. The impulse to do good tells a Jew to do mitzvahs, to help others and to be a faithful servant of Hashem. The impulse to do bad tells a Jew not to do mitzvahs, to hurt others and to be a rebellious servant of Hashem, heaven forbid. Why did Hashem create us with both impulses? In order to answer this question, we must discuss the meaning of life according to the Ramchal, Reb Moshe Chayim Lutzatto, of blessed memory. (brought by Rav Amnon Yitzchok, Shlita)

The Ramchal explains that Hashem is good. The way of being good is by doing good for others. Hashem therefore created the world to benefit others.

In order for someone to feel benefit, he needs to be lacking something. For example, if you give a hungry person food to eat, you have not done him any favor. Therefore, in order for the creation to be able to feel the good that Hashem wants to give, Hashem created us with deficiencies. For example, we need to eat; Hashem gives us food; we appreciate Hashem because we need food to survive; and Hashem has therefore done good for us.

Now that we have determined that Hashem wants only the highest good for us, we must discuss the issue of what is commonly called in America *"a free lunch."* Most people are embarrassed to receive handouts. The same is true with us; if Hashem gave us everything for free without us having to put in any effort, we would be embarrassed; consequently, Hashem would not be doing good for us. Therefore, Hashem created us with two impulses: the good impulse and the bad impulse. If we were only created with an impulse to do good, we would have no free choice in life, we would always do good. We would be robots.

Because we have two competing impulses, we have an inner struggle to do the right thing according to the Torah or to violate the Torah, heaven forbid. Therefore, Hashem can reward us for choosing to do good and for doing the mitzvahs. The reward for doing Hashem's will is the highest good, because we have earned it; it is not a free lunch.

To recap: Hashem is good. The way of good is to do good for others. So, Hashem created the world. In order for us to feel the good, Hashem created us with deficiencies, because a hungry person receives no benefit from receiving food. In order that the good be on the highest level of good, it must be a good that we earn. Therefore, Hashem created us with both good and bad impulses. Consequently, the good that we receive for following our good impulses and for doing the mitzvahs, is the ultimate good, and it is a good that we have earned. This is the meaning of life, doing mitzvahs....

Reb Moshe's mind wandered back to some abandoned horse stables on the Hungarian plains nearly 35 years earlier. In April of 1944, Reb Moshe Holczler, of blessed memory, and many other unfortunate Jews were forced to work in the Hungarian army.

Jewish laborers enjoyed a relative safety in the Hungarian army; however, this safety was very fragile. At that point in War War II, nobody cared much about saving Jews. Among the Jewish workers was Dr. Aurel Stein.

Dr. Stein had come to the workers one Sunday afternoon to offer them a way out of the approaching German danger. *"His high honor the Prince Primate of Hungary is offering a helping hand,"* Dr. Stein began. *"The protective umbrella of Christianity."* There was a hiss among the assembled Jewish laborers. *"The holy Church guarantees safety from any further deportation procedures to anyone willing to enter its ranks and be baptized. Those who accept the loving hand of the Church... will be transferred to a different squadron together with me."* The air was filled with indignation and disgust at the offer to convert. Although not all the soldiers were observant Jews, none of them could bring themselves to commit such a treacherous act against the religion of their fathers. Dr. Stein quickly left the horse stable without anyone joining him.

Eventually, the war was over and the few survivors made their way out of blood soaked Europe. Moshe Holczler and his family eventually made their way to America where they rebuilt their shattered lives. 35 Years after his experiences in the forced labor camps, Reb Moshe had nearly forgotten about his horrible experiences as a forcer laborer. One day, Reb Moshe found himself walking down the street in the Flatbush area of Brooklyn, New York. As Reb Moshe passed by a synagogue, he noticed a sign which caught his eye *"Attention: This coming Thursday night our guest speaker will be Dr. Aurel Stein, the prominent humanitarian physician. His topic: Judaism*

Superior. Don't miss it!"

Reb Moshe could barely contain himself. Dr. Stein speaking the about the benefits of observant Judaism? The same Dr. Stein who had been baptized in the Church during the war? Reb Moshe showed up that Thursday night to hear Dr. Stein speak. Not wanting to embarrass Dr. Stein in front of others, Reb Moshe quietly made an appointment with Dr. Stein to speak with him about the developments of the last 35 years. Dr. Stein did not immediately recognize Reb Moshe as a fellow member of the forced labor brigade of 35 years ago.

Soon after, Dr. Stein and Reb Moshe were sitting together in Dr. Stein's office. By then, Dr. Stein was reminded that he and Reb Moshe had worked together in the Hungarian army during the war. Dr. Stein began to tell his story. Dr. Stein told how he initially had mixed feelings about his conversion. Soon however, after seeing the full extent of the death and destruction, Dr. Stein became a committed member of the Church. He was very thankful to the Church for helping to save his life during the war.

After the war ended, Dr. Stein embraced his new identity in the Church with full gusto, as Dr. Stein told Reb Moshe *"I diligently observed the ways of thinking of the gentiles and I wanted to assimilate myself to the best possible extent... My interest did not let me stop halfway. I wanted to see and understand everything about the church."* Dr. Stein proceeded to tell Reb Moshe about his trip to the Vatican in Rome, Italy, the largest and most important church in the world.

Dr. Stein recounted his mixed feelings as he entered the dark and musty church chambers. The highlight of the tour came when the group entered the main section of the giant church. There was a giant statue of an angel of marble with wings spread out from its back. As Dr. Stein examined the huge statue, he noticed that the angel held something in its marble hands. The hands of the gigantic statue were stretched out, pointing towards the throne of the Pope. Dr. Stein told Reb Moshe how he craned to see what was written on the tablet in statue's hands, he could see that there was something written on the tablet in golden letters.

Dr. Stein became very curious to read what was written on the tablet high above. He borrowed a fellow tourist's binoculars and focused in on the marble tablet. *"I was taken aback. I was startled to discover Hebrew letters on the tablet..."* Said Dr. Stein to Reb Moshe. Then I started to read the letters slowing, using my long-forgotten Hebrew knowledge *"Onochi Hashem Elokecha... I am Hashem, your Lord. The first of the Ten Commandments! And these words were facing the Pope's throne!?"* Dr. Stein was shocked. He quickly and quietly made his way out of the building.

Once out of the building, Dr. Stein paused to reflect on what he had just seen. So this is all their knowledge? They base their entire religion on the revelation of Hashem to the Jews? They have to put Jewish commandments in their holiest place? Why then should they be considered superior to the Jews?

A few days later, Dr. Stein arranged for a visit with the Chief Rabbi of Rome. Dr. Stein was told that the Vatican museum contained some of the utensils of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem which the Romans had destroyed almost 2000 years earlier. Dr. Stein returned to the Vatican museum and saw for himself ancient articles of the Holy Temple, including the Kohen Gadol's golden forehead plate engraved with the words *"Kodesh L'HaShem."* Dr. Stein left Rome with his faith shaken. Perhaps he had made a mistake in converting. Nevertheless, Dr. Stein continued in his assimilated lifestyle in the church.

A couple of years later, Dr. Stein made a trip to Israel. By then, he was disenchanted with his assimilated lifestyle and he was reconsidering his choices in life. As he approached the Western Wall, he became consumed with emotion. He began to cry uncontrollably. *"On that same day, I approached the Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem to discuss my problem and I returned to Judaism, never to part again."* (from Late Memories, Moshe Holczler, p.160-175)

Dr. Stein's amazing story of his return to the faith illustrates one Jew's victory in the war against the evil impulse. As Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur approach, we must follow Dr. Stein's lead and go to war against our evil impulses.

The evil impulse stands in the way of spiritual growth and happiness. We must therefore take up arms in battle against the evil impulse. By beating the evil impulse we can improve our lives and the lives of others. The best way to beat the evil impulse is by learning torah and by doing mitzvahs, as the Hashem tells us, *"I have created the evil impulse and I have created the Torah as a treatment against it. If you busy yourselves in Torah, you will not fall into its (the evil impulse's) hands."* (Kiddushin 30b)

By increasing our mitzvah observance, we will fulfill our true purpose in life and we will be able to receive the true Good that Hashem has in store for us. **Good Shabbos Everyone.**