

SPARKS OF EMUNAH



HEICHAL HAKODESH BRESLEV WEEKLY NEWSLETTER
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CHIZUK from the PARSHA

DEALING WITH FAILURE

כל אשר לו סנפיר וקשקשת במים ובימים ובנחלים אתם תאכלו
You may eat all fish with fins and scales.

Life is a juggling act. In our *avodas Hashem*, we experience both successes and failures, and the Rebbe teaches that we must be *בקי ברצוא ובקי בשוב* and know how to handle each one. (*Likutei Moharan 1:6*)

It's a delicate balance - on the one hand, we must always strive to grow and achieve, yet we must know the right attitude to have when we fall. The *yetzer hara* doesn't allow us to just move on when we fail. He hounds us and tries to break us, filling our minds with negative self-talk: *You'll never be good. You won't succeed. You're a loser. Just look! Whatever you try, you fail!*

The Rebbe teaches us not to succumb to the *yetzer hara's* negativity. Fight back! Say, "It's true that I did something wrong, but Hashem still loves me. He's waiting for me to come back to Him!" Cry out to Hashem. Your *teshuva* will bring you back to Him in a moment!

A person must always strive to live with this balance. *אם אסק שמים שם אתה* (*Tehillim 139:8*) - When a person is exalted and holy, he must remember that Hashem is even greater and he should strive even higher. Yet even if he has fallen to the depths of impurity, *ואציעה שאול הנך* - he must know that Hashem is right there with him. It takes but a moment to make a change for the better, just one groan, one sigh, one cry of yearning to return.



This is the lesson that the *parsha* teaches us. We Yidden are compared to fish (*Bereishis 48:16*) who swim in oceans of Torah and *tefilla* (*Yeshaya 55:1 and Eicha 2:19*). A kosher fish has two characteristics which distinguish him from non-kosher fish: fins, which help him swim well in the water, and scales, which protect him from predators. As Yidden, we also need to be masters of these two abilities. We need to use our "fins" and remember to keep "swimming," keep progressing in our *avodas Hashem*. Yet we also need "scales" to be "kosher" - we must protect ourselves from our most dangerous predator - the *yetzer hara* - and not allow him to break us even when we've done wrong.

Of these two qualities, the more important one is to be able to keep going even after having fallen. *Chazal* say (*Chullin 66b*) that all fish with scales are kosher because they surely have fins as well. So too, the most basic need for a Yid is the ability that scales represent, to keep trying even when the *yetzer hara* tries to knock him down.

Don't give up. Even when you fall, even when you feel like you're drowning, hold onto the words of *tzaddikim*. If you can stay strong even in the face of failure, you will *be'ezras Hashem* succeed beyond your wildest dreams.

Toch Hanachal, Shemini 5769

MOHOROSH SPEAKS

REFRESH. RENEW.

“ Trees are blossoming, flowers are blooming, the grass is slowly peeking out of the ground. The breeze carries the sound of birds chirping, announcing their return after a long and harsh winter. The pleasant weather seems to nod in agreement - spring is finally here! Surrounded by so much renewal, we too, want to join the world in its rebirth and start serving Hashem afresh.

It's not by chance that this time of year coincides with *Chodesh Nissan*, the month of *החדש הזה לכם ראש חדשים*, ראשון הוא לכם *לחדשי השנה*. Mohorosh explains that the multiple usage of the root word *חדש* implies that this is an opportune time for *his-chadshus*, renewal, in *avodas Hashem*.

The Rebbe: A Chidush

The Rebbe was born on *Rosh Chodesh Nissan*, because renewing oneself was a fundamental concept by the Rebbe; he constantly began anew in his *avodas Hashem*. (*Shivchei Haran 6*)

In his youth, the Rebbe burned with a passion and a fierce desire to come close to Hashem and

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Dear ...

I received your letter.

How fortunate are you and how great is your reward that you sacrifice your time and energy to help save other Yidden.

You must remember, though, that helping others can't come at the expense of your wife and children. When your wife is relying on your help, you cannot disappear with the excuse that you were helping others.

Daven to Hashem for the clarity to know when to respond and when to leave the *mitzvah* for others. When a life is in danger; for example, a person is unconscious or isn't breathing, then of course you must respond immediately. However, if the call isn't so serious; for example, someone cut himself or fractured a bone, then you must assess the situation at home first. If your wife is depending on your help, stay home.

Most of all, take the Rebbe's *eitzah* of *hisbodedes*; find a time to talk to Hashem and tell Him everything you are going through. Share your accomplishments with Him, as well as your difficulties. When a person talks to Hashem regularly, he is blessed with the clarity and presence of mind to know how to react in every situation.

May Hashem bless you with success in all your endeavors.

Adapted from *The Light of Emunah* #2, page 38



the first time."

attain new spiritual goals. Sometimes he succeeded right away and other times he didn't, yet he never gave up on himself. Even when he tried to scale another lofty level but fell through, he said, "I'll pretend I never made any attempt before and I'll start again as if it's

This happened numerous times a day, but still the Rebbe lifted himself up and started yet again. His arduous toil resulted in a towering spiritual giant, a *tzaddik hador* who left a stunning legacy of *sefarim* filled with *chizuk* for every one of us.

Renewing by Forgetting

"I forgot to do my homework." "I forgot my umbrella in shul..." "I completely forgot about that appointment!"

Forgetfulness is annoying and frustrating. We see it as a problem, but the Rebbe views it differently. "The world thinks that forgetfulness as a flaw, but I consider it a virtue." (*Sichos Haran 26*)

The ability to forget is crucial for success - without it, it would be impossible for us to serve Hashem. Constantly reminded of our past failures and hardships, we would be too beaten to try again. Forgetting is what enables us to persist and not give up.

Let yourself forget, thereby letting yourself start anew. Every moment brings the opportunity of change, regardless of what has been and regardless of what will be. At this moment, you can make a complete turnaround and become a new person. Focus on the present and make the most out of each day.

Parshas Hachodesh

The Jewish calendar is based on the lunar cycle as opposed to the solar cycle, hinting that we Yidden are comparable to the moon. Just as the moon grows smaller as the month nears its end and then renews itself and grows bigger again, so it is in our lives as Yidden. Many times, it seems that we are falling, failing, fading away; we feel like we're drifting further from Hashem. Yet we can always renew ourselves, we can always start again and grow bigger once more.

The *mitzva* of *kiddush hachodesh* celebrates this cycle of waning and then waxing, starting anew no matter how low we have fallen. While you hear *Parshas Hachodesh* this Shabbos, take a few minutes to talk to Hashem in your own words and ask him to grant you the ability to renew yourself. **"Hashem, please help me acquire the *middah* of *hischadshus*. Help me not stay stuck in thoughts of the past or fears of the future. Help me focus on the present so that I can accomplish all that You want me to."**

Hischadshus and Hisbodedus

The grass and trees follow this cycle, too; they become completely bare in the winter and start blooming again in the spring. The Rebbe says (*Sichos Haran 247*) that this time of year is a golden opportunity for each person to jump onto the bandwagon and refresh himself spiritually, just like all the newly blossoming buds.

Spring is a time when the outdoors beckon. Go outside, surround yourself with nature and talk to Hashem. *Hisbodedus* is an essential



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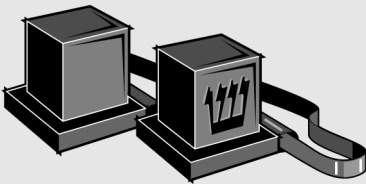


concept in Breslev, and now is an opportune time to renew it in our lives.

Talking to Hashem in the fields brings great benefit to a person - the grass and trees actually “help” you do the talking. It’s so much easier to pour your heart out to Hashem in the serene outdoors. Nonetheless, don’t limit yourself to talking to Hashem only when you can seclude yourself somewhere among nature. The whole world is like one big field! Talk to Hashem whenever you can and wherever you are; He is listening intently to every word.

Like the First Time

A toddler gets up unsteadily and takes his first wobbly steps. Everyone shouts and applauds. The toddler beams.



A brand-new *bar mitzva bachur* puts on *tefillin* for the first time. Carefully, he wraps the straps on his arm, basking in this first mark of adulthood.

A young *kallah* strikes a match and lights the Shabbos candles for the first time. Tears well up in her eyes as she covers her face, davening for *shalom bayis* and *ehrliche* children.

Fast forward a few years... or even a few weeks. Where’s that excitement, the sense of purpose? Where’s the enthusiasm that accompanied the first time?

Imagine how our *ruchniyus* would look if we would do each *mitzvah* as if it’s the first time. Imagine how our lives would feel if we would remain vibrant and new. We would embrace each *mitzvah* with such joy!

Try it! Look at each *mitzvah* as a brand-new opportunity, one that has never happened before. On your way to daven *shacharis*? Imagine it’s your first time. Sitting down with a *Gemara*? Pretend you’ve never done it before. Feel the joy of a beginner. Fill yourself with the wonderment of a first-timer. Life will be so much more fulfilling and your connection to Hashem will stay alive.

Refresh. Reset. Renew.

If we allow ourselves to grow jaded, the joy of life drains and we are left bored, bitter, burnt out. *Parshas Hachodesh* teaches us the *middah* of *hischadshus*, which prevents our perception of *Yiddishkeit* from growing old. By starting anew and viewing each moment as a new opportunity, we can maximize every day and remain alive and energetic.

Strengthen yourself! Refresh yourself! Put a smile on your face and see each aspect of your life as the new opportunity that it is, and with Hashem’s help, you will be *zoche* to a life of *simcha* and fulfillment.



make mistakes while learning. Now that we can all learn from *sefarim*, it isn’t a problem to learn alone, especially if learning with a *chavrusa* results in schmoozing and wasting time.

You ask if it’s possible to become a *talmid chacham* by just saying the words of Torah - remember what the Rebbe teaches about *limud hatorah* (*Sichos Haran* 76):

The most important part of learning Torah is just saying the words... Even if a person does not understand what he is learning, he should not be deterred; rather, he should continue to say the words of Torah and in the end he will comprehend...

The pressure to understand what he is learning actually prevents him from grasping any of it. There are people who have stopped learning completely because in-depth learning was too difficult, and they were left with nothing...

If there are still things that remain beyond his comprehension, he should not allow this to discourage him. He must remember that learning a lot is more valuable than understanding each word...

*A person who gets used to learning consistently and quickly will achieve so much more, because he ends up reviewing everything multiple times. He will be *zoche* to learn the entire Torah, and will eventually become a great *talmid chacham*.*

It would be worthwhile for you to look up this *sicha*, as the Rebbe explains it in much more depth.

Fortunate is he who listens to the Rebbe with *temimus* and follows the *seder derech halimud*; he will ultimately understand everything he has learned and will become a great *talmid chacham*.

May Hashem bless you with success in all your endeavors.

CAN I BECOME A TALMID CHACHAM BY SAYING THE WORDS?

Q & A



Question:

First, I must thank you for the *shiurim* that have affected so much positive change in my life and the lives of my wife and children.

Until I was introduced to Breslev, I've never been successful in *limud hatorah*. I come from a *litvish* family and the *litvish* way of learning has never worked for me. Since I began the Rebbe's *sefer derech halimud*, though, I've found a new passion for learning.

I don't get overwhelmed or frustrated by a *sugya* that is difficult to understand because I know that I can just say the words and keep going. I also now use every spare minute to learn, because I no longer have to wait for my mind to be clear and focused, and I don't need to wait for a *chavrusa* to show up. I now learn whenever I can, wherever I am and no matter what circumstances I find myself in.

I have two questions that I hope the Rosh Yeshiva can answer. Firstly, I know that *Chazal* tell us not to learn without a *chavrusa* - is this a contradiction to the Rebbe's *sefer derech halimud*?

Also, I know that the Rebbe teaches that even just saying the words of the Torah is enormously valuable. I have already completed a few *masechtos* with this method, but I don't feel that I'm more learned than I was before I began. Is it possible to become a *talmid chacham* by learning this way?

Thank you.



The Rosh Yeshiva's Response:

Dear...

I'm happy to hear that your life improved once you started living with the guidance of the Rebbe. If people would only know what the Rebbe has to offer and how their entire life can change for the better, they would all listen to the Rebbe's *eitzos* and follow his *derech*.

So many people have misconceptions about Breslev. The Rebbe once said (*Sichos Haran 182*), "The people who speak against me do not oppose **me**; they are against a person they formed in their imaginations based on the *lashon hara* they heard. I also oppose the person they are fighting." If

those who speak against Breslev would know what it's really about, they would come close to the Rebbe and even encourage their friends and family to do the same.

Regarding your questions: It's true that *Chazal* warn us not to learn without a *chavrusa* (*Taanis 7a*), because learning alone can cause a person to interpret the Torah incorrectly and come to sin. However, the *Chazon Ish* rules (*Sheilos U'teshuvos, Teshuvos V'hanhagos 1:542*) that this directive was applicable only before the *Torah Sheba'al Peh* was written down. Then, it was vital to learn with a *chavrusa* so as not to

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