

SPARKS OF EMUNAH



HEICHAL HAKODESH BRESLEV WEEKLY NEWSLETTER
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PARSHAS SHMINI
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CHIZUK from the PARSHA

DEALING WITH FAILURE

Life is a dynamic experience. Each individual's *avodas Hashem* is an ever-changing kaleidoscope of both gratifying success and disheartening failure. The idea of a solely-upward climb is an impossibility; although we would all like to keep growing in our *avodas Hashem*, the journey to self-improvement inevitably includes regression, too. The Rebbe teaches (*Likutei Moharan 1:6*) that in order to ultimately be successful, a person must be a *בקי ברצוא* – an expert in going forward, as well as a *בקי בשוב* – an expert in retreating. Knowing how to handle failure is a crucial component in *avodas Hashem*.

It's a delicate balance. While we must always strive to grow and achieve, we must also know the right attitude to have when we fall. Falling back in *avodas Hashem* can potentially be very dangerous – not because of the actual regression, but because of what happens next. The *yetzer hara* doesn't allow us to just move on when we fail; instead, he hounds us and tries to break us by filling our minds with negative self-talk: *You'll never be good. You won't succeed. You're a loser. Whenever you try, you fail!*

The Rebbe teaches us not to succumb to the *yetzer hara's* negativity. We must fight back! We must tell ourselves, *It's true that I did something wrong, but Hashem still loves me. He's waiting for me to come back to Him!* By crying out to Hashem, our *teshuva* will bring us back to Him in a moment!

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



"כל אשר לו סנפיר וקשקשת במים בימים ובנחלים אתם תאכלו" (*Vayikra 11:9*)

In this week's *parsha*, we learn about the two features that kosher fish have, distinguishing them from non-kosher fish: fins, which help them swim well in the water, and scales, which protect them from predators. *Klal Yisrael* is compared to fish (*Bereishis 48:16*), and like kosher fish, we need to have these two characteristics to help us survive. We need to have "fins", so to speak; we must be sure not to become complacent but rather 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, which is more important? *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 Jew is the ability that scales represent, to keep going even after having fallen.

The greatest tragedy is when a person gives up on himself. One must hold on and keep going – even after falling, even when it feels like he is drowning. A person who can stay strong even in the face of failure will eventually succeed beyond his wildest dreams.

Toch Hanachal, Shemini 5769

MOHOROSH SPEAKS

ספירת העומר

The weeks of *sefiras haomer* are a transition between two special and holy times – Pesach, when we commemorate our *geula* from *Mitzrayim*, and Shavuot, the *yom tov* when we received the Torah. It is a time of self-improvement, a time to renew our commitment to perfecting ourselves and bettering our *avodas Hashem*.

The spiritual countdown to *kabbalas haTorah* has its roots in the times of *yetzias Mitzrayim*. Just moments before the *geula*, we were entrenched in the depths of impurity, at the forty-ninth level of *tumah*. Miraculously, Hashem redeemed us just in time and catapulted us to the greatest heights. We stood at the *Yam Suf* just a few days later, where even the simplest Jews experienced a level of *gilui Shechina* that the great Yechezkel Hainavi could not.

It is rather perplexing, then, that *Klal Yisrael* still needed to undergo forty days of preparation in order to receive the To-

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Dear ...

I received your letter.

It is a parent's responsibility to interest himself as to who his children's friends are. In general, a child usually repeats everything that happens in school, and a discerning parent can identify the positive influences in the class and encourage his children to be friends with classmates who are respectful and have good *middos*.

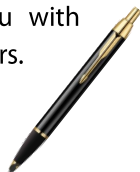
It isn't wise or even possible to spy on one's child 24/7 and listen in on every discussion he has with every classmate. However, a parent must be in touch with the teachers/*rebbeim* and show interest in who his child's friends are and in how the child is progressing.

The Rebbe says (*Sefer Hamiddos, Banim* 54), "By lighting *neiros Shabbos* and *neiros Chanukah*, a person is *zoche* to righteous children." Mohorosh explains this by quoting *Chazal*, who say (*Pesachim 7b*), וּפְסוּחַ מְנֵרוֹת וּנְרוֹת מִנֵּר – when a person is searching for a lost item, he must use the light of a candle. So too, in order to merit righteous children, a parent must "use a candle" and look out for the wellbeing of each child. He must take interest in who his children's friends are.

Most importantly, the key to raising *erliche* children is *tefilla*. Mohorosh used to relate the story of a man who came to the Chofetz Chaim *zt"l*, requesting a *bracha* for righteous children. The *tzaddik* picked up a *Tehillim* that was swollen with moisture and exclaimed, "This is my mother's *Tehillim* – each day she cried to merit *erliche* children. *Tefilla* is the way to merit righteous children."

May Hashem bless you with success in all your endeavors.

Adapted from *The Light of Emunah* #3, page 268



rah. Shouldn't the attainment of this – a level of *nevuah* superior to Yechezkel Hanavi's – have been enough of a spiritual accomplishment to have received the Torah right then and there? Why did they have to wait another seven weeks?

A Lesson for YOU

We all have aspirations and dream of levels we want to attain. Yet despite our best intentions, we often find ourselves falling short, sinning and doing things that further us from our goals. So we try again. We make more attempts at reaching perfection, but we inevitably fail once more. The *yetzer hara* then begins his attack, hounding us with despairing thoughts of, "That's it, you'll never succeed!"

Sadly, he often wins. How many of us have lost our motivation altogether, lost the belief that it's possible to come close to Hashem? How many people have given up on themselves and their ability to live meaningful lives?

The concept of *sefiras haomer* is a lesson for all of us. Our ancestors who watched Pharaoh and the *Mitzriyim* experience the mind-blowing *makkos*, the ones who left *Mitzrayim* with astounding *nissim*, those who pointed to the *Shechina* at the *Yam Suf* and proclaimed "זה קלי ואנוהו" – even they could not receive the Torah right away! They, too, had to **slowly inch their way up the *ruchniyus* ladder** until they reached the high level necessary to receive the Torah. They, too, had to work on themselves each day, growing, changing and connecting. *Kabbalas hatorah* didn't happen in an instant; it was a process they all had to work for.

Are you also yearning to leave your personal *Mitzrayim*? Did you firmly decide that "This time it's for real, I'm doing *teshuvah* and turning my life around"? Keep at it. Don't lose sight of your goal, and don't get disheartened by how far you seem to be. Rome wasn't built in a day; *Yiddishkeit* is a process. Take your time and count the days of *sefira*, one day at a time: חֲסֵד שְׁבַחֲסָד, גְּבוּרָה שְׁבַחֲסָד, תַּפְאֶרֶת שְׁבַחֲסָד... and ultimately you will reach great heights.

Yes, there will be difficulties each day; there will be tribulations at each turn. However, if you hold tight and try to grab as many *mitzvos* as you can, you will reach your goal of becoming close to Hashem and being truly righteous.

Making Each Day Count

Just like *Klal Yisrael* counted seven weeks until *kabbalas haTorah*, we need to do the same. Make each day count; see the potential in each day and maximize each moment to its fullest. Only then will you be ready for the Torah.

Berish woke up late – way too late. As he snarled at his wife for allowing him to oversleep, he tripped over his *negel vasser* and went sprawling across the room. Hurrying through his morning routine, he realized with mounting frustration that his shirt was buttoned wrong, his pants were torn at the seam and he had no clean socks to wear.

"Oh, what a day," he grumbled. "Today is a bummer. I'll try again tomorrow." Right then, at 8:57 AM, *Berish* climbed back into bed and waited for the next morning so that he could start over.



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The Rebbe said in reference to the abovementioned Zohar (*Sichos Haran 71*), “No one understands the true meaning of the Zohar, except me. It is always possible to do *teshuva*, even if a person has already sinned many times with this serious aveirah.” You may ask, “How can the Rebbe say that a person can do *teshuva* when all the *sefarim* say exactly the opposite?”

R’ Nossan asks the same question and answers very aptly (*Likutei Halachos, Tefillin 4:4*): In truth, he says, there is no *aveira* in the world for which a person loses his ability to repent. But because the *aveira* of *p’gam habris* is so terrible and causes a deep rift between the sinner and Hashem, when a person finally wants to repent he is presented with a tremendous *nisayon*. The challenge is that he is told, ‘You lost your chance! You lost the ability to do *teshuva*!’ A wise person says, ‘I will cling to Hashem no matter what! It makes no difference to me if Hashem desires my *teshuva* or not, Hashem and I will remain one forever. I take it upon myself to repent, and it makes no difference if I will succeed in becoming a *tzaddik* or if I will continue struggling with these *nisyonos* for the rest of my life.’ Such a person will be *zoche* to repent. It is a foolish person who says, ‘If I can no longer do *teshuva*, it’s all over for me,’ and thus he remains on the outside forever.

Therefore, I urge you to remain strong in the area of *shemiras einayim* and turn away from images that are unholy. Stand guard against the *yetzer hara* who wants to entrap you in *aveiros*. By doing so, you will atone for everything you have previously transgressed.

Additionally, establish regular *shiurei Torah*, because there is no stronger weapon that fights *kelipos* like the holy Torah can. When a person learns Torah, he battles the *kelipos* he created through his *aveiros* until they are completely obliterated, as *Chazal* teach us (*Yerushalmi Rosh Hashana 4:8*), “When a person takes upon himself the yoke of Torah, it is considered as if he has never sinned.”

Your first *shiur* should be in *Mishnayos*. The Rebbe says

(*Sichos Haran 19*) that even a person who lies deep in the mire of sin can extract himself from the *yetzer hara*’s clasp by learning a certain amount of Torah each day. The power of Torah is so great that it can extricate a person from the depth of impurity.

Next, establish a *shiur* in *Gemara*. The Rebbe said (*Likutei Moharan 1:214*) that the letters in the word תלמוד have the same numerical value of the name of the *kelipah* that causes a person to sin with *p’gam habris*, and learning *Gemara* subdues this *kelipah*. Even if at first you don’t understand what you are learning, if you can barely say the words or understand their meaning, be stubborn and don’t give up. The Rebbe states (*Sichos Haran 76*), “Even if one cannot comprehend what he is learning, he should say the words and eventually he will understand.”

Your next *shiur* should be in *Tikkunei Zohar*. A man once asked the Arizal for a *tikkun* on the many sins he had committed, and the Arizal told him to recite a few pages of *Tikkunei Zohar* each day. The words of this holy *sefer* cleanse a person’s *neshama* of all its impurities.

In conclusion, accustom yourself to confess your sins to Hashem. The Rebbe teaches us (*Likutei Moharan 1:4*) that when a person sins, his *aveiros* become etched in his bones (*Yechezkel 32:27*) and cause him much pain and suffering. However, when a person verbally admits his wrongdoings to Hashem, the *aveiros* are removed from his bones. Tell Hashem of the follies of your youth; share everything you did and don’t be embarrassed to include every last detail. Daven each day, **“Ribbono shel Olam, forgive me! I so badly want to be *erlich*; I deeply regret my past misdeeds and I promise You, Hashem, that I will no longer do them again. Have compassion on me and help me stand strong against my *yetzer hara*, who refuses to give up his battle with me.”**

Be *b’simcha* throughout the day, but once a day take a few minutes to pour your heart out to Hashem. By doing so, you will be *zoche* to completely atone for the actions of your past.

May Hashem bless you with success in all your endeavors.

Adapted from The Light of Emunah Pamphlet #35

MOHOROSH SPEAKS

(Continued from page 2)



Sometimes, we find ourselves halfway through a day that went totally off-track. Discouraged by our failures, we are tempted to stop trying and let the rest of the day follow the same downward path, because “I lost it anyway, today is a *goner*.” If we do that, though, we’ll look like *Berish*, foolishly giving up when so many opportunities lie ahead.

The *Gemara* says (*Pesachim 4*), מִקְצַת הַיּוֹם כְּכֹל – a small part of the day is like the entire day. It doesn’t matter how much of it has passed or how little time of it is left, because it is always possible to make a complete turnaround and transform even the most lousy day into a successful one.

Don’t think, “Oh well, tomorrow I’ll do better.” Grab the few minutes left of TODAY and try to steer yourself back onto the right track. Use the rest of the day properly – daven, learn and do *mitzvos*, and you will elevate the entire day and your entire life.

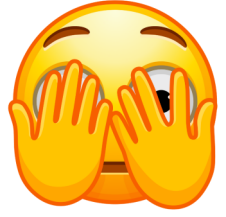
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HOW CAN I ATONE FOR MY SINFUL PAST?

Question:

To the Rosh Yeshiva shlita,

I am fortunate to have made a complete turnaround from a past that I am not proud of, to say the least. Thanks to the Rosh Yeshiva, I was able to break my bad habits in the area of kedusha and begin guarding my eyes, even though this is something I never believed I would be able to succeed in.



I recently read a kuntres from Mohorosh, in which he writes of the terrible consequences for the aveira of p'gam habris. He quotes the Rebbe who says that this aveira creates kelipos which pursue a sinner in This World and in Olam Haba. Is there a way for me to atone for my sinful past and eradicate the kelipos I have created, or is it too late?

Thank you.

The Rosh Yeshiva's Response:

Dear...,

Hashem had compassion on our generation and sent us the holy Rebbe Nachman of Breslev zt"l, who until this day can assist those who are held captive to the aveira of p'gam habris. With the Rebbe's eitzos, it is possible to extricate oneself from the mire of sin.

The aveira of p'gam habris is so terrible; it is worse than any other sin in the entire Torah (Shulchan Aruch, Even Ha'ezer 231). Chazal teach (Niddah 13) that when a person transgresses the sin of p'gam habris, it is as if he has committed murder and worshipped avoda zara, and he deserves to be killed. Even physically, this aveira inflicts tremendous damage upon a person – it causes one to lose his hair and his eyesight, causes a bad odor to emit from one's mouth, causes one to become weak and age before his time and brings much suffering upon a person (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 240:14). The Zohar teaches (Pinchas 244b) that sinning with p'gam habris also causes a person to lose his livelihood and fall into poverty.

All of the above is aside from the spiritual enemies a person creates with this aveira. When a person sins with p'gam

habris, he creates kelipos that pursue him, seeking revenge. The Rebbe states (Sefer Hamiddos, Niuf 26) that the kelipos formed with this aveira become embodied in people who oppose him and cause him much suffering.

Perhaps the greatest consequence of all is losing the light that illuminates one's life. P'gam habris causes a person to lose his emunah, as he no longer senses Hashem's presence and begins doubting the foundations of our faith. This sin fills one's life with darkness and he becomes so depressed until he loses the will to live. He begins to feel that which the Zohar states (Vayeishev 188, Vayechi 219), that there is no opportunity to repent from p'gam habris.

All this can be very discouraging. What can a person do if he **did** transgress in this area? What can he do to save himself from these terrible punishments? Where can he start?

The answer is that Hashem sent the neshama of the Rebbe to illuminate our generation. With his eitzos, he can extract us from the depths of impurity and bring us close to Hashem.

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