

SPARKS OF EMUNAH



HEICHAL HAKODESH BRESLEV WEEKLY NEWSLETTER
BASED ON THE TEACHINGS OF MOHOROSH ZT”L
GIVEN OVER BY THE ROSH YESHIVA SHLIT”A

PARSHAS VAYEITZEI
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CHIZUK from the PARSHA

BELIEVING WITHOUT SEEING

וְשָׁבְתִי בְּשָׁלוֹם אֶל בַּיִת אָבִי וְהָיָה ה' לִי לְאֱלֹקִים

And I will return to my father's home in peace, and then Hashem will my G-d.

Who is a true *tzaddik*? A righteous person? A holy individual? A leader who brings others closer to Hashem? All true. One description that does *not* fit the bill is a “Conditional Jew” – one who serves Hashem only when life goes the way he wants it to. A person whose entire Yiddishkeit is based on Hashem’s “treatment” of him is surely not a *tzaddik* – he can hardly be called a *frum* Jew at all. This is why the above *passuk* is perplexing; how can it be that Yaakov Avinu, a paradigm of *avodas Hashem*, made this “deal” with Hashem: “If I make it through the next few years in peace, I will serve You as my G-d.” What can this possibly mean?

Life on this world is made up of a wide array of experiences, ranging from incredibly joyous to heartrendingly tragic. As Jews, we attribute every event to Hashem, reacting to good news with the *bracha* of הטוב והמטיב and to sorrow with the *bracha* of דיין האמת. *Chazal* teach us (*Pesachim 50*) that this will all change in *Olam Haba*. Mashiach will be the greatest *mashpia* of all time, teaching the world of Hashem’s boundless, infinite kindness. Before long, every Jew will have an iron-clad belief in Hashem, to the point that every piece of news – whether good or bad – will elicit the same grateful *bracha* of “הטוב והמטיב – How benevolent is Hashem!” No matter what occurs, we will know that it is all because of Hashem’s deep compassion for us. This is as David Hamelech says (*Tehillim 56:11*), באלקים, אהלל דבר – I will sing words of praise, whether I experience Elokim – *middas hadin*, or Hashem – *middas harachamim*.



In truth, living on this level is not exclusive to Mashiach’s times. The Rebbe says (*Likutei Mohoran 1:4*) that when a person has rock-solid *emunah*, knowing and believing that everything that happens to him is for his benefit, it is as if he is living in *Olam Haba*. Even here, even now, it is possible for a person to have the clarity of mind to always exclaim, ברוך אתה, ה' no matter if he is experiencing joy or heartbreak.

It isn’t easy. Life is full of hardships, and maintaining one’s focus can be an arduous task. Yet this is the very reason we were placed in this world. In *Olam Haba*, there will be no questions. Everything will be clear, Hashem’s kindness obvious. In this world, however, **our mission is to believe even when we cannot see**. Through all the difficulties, through all the hardships, we must believe that Hashem is our loving, caring Father Who plans every detail of our lives for our benefit. When a person merits this level of *emunah*, he “lives” in *Olam Haba* while still in *Olam Haze*.

This, the Rebbe says, is the meaning of *shalom* (*Likutei Moharan 1:33*). When a person recognizes Hashem’s loving hand in everything that occurs, he “fuses” Hashem’s *din* with His *rachamim*, attaining true peace. With this in mind, we can understand the words of Yaakov’s promise. Yaakov Avinu said, וְשָׁבְתִי בְּשָׁלוֹם אֶל בַּיִת אָבִי – When I will achieve this aspect of peace within myself, וְהָיָה ה' לִי לְאֱלֹקִים – to me, both *middas harachamim* (“Hashem”) and *middas hadin* (“Elokim”) will be one and the same; I will recognize even what seems to be harsh judgment as infinite mercy.” This is a *tzaddik*: he who not only serves Hashem unconditionally, but is unwavering in his belief that Hashem is a kind and benevolent G-d – even when life seems full of suffering.

May we be *zoche* to attain this level of *emunah*, too, and we will then live a life of Gan Eden on this world.

MOHOROSH SPEAKS

CLIMBING

“ In his heartwarming *tefilla* prior to the davening, R' Elimelech of Lizhensk zt”l includes a poignant request:

וממדרגה למדרגה תעלנו, שנזכה לבוא למעלת אבותינו הקדושים, אברהם יצחק ויעקב

May You raise us up higher and higher so that we should merit the level of our holy forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov.

The events in the lives of our avos are not merely stories for us to read and enjoy. Each detail in each story was revealed to us as guidance of how to conduct ourselves through our own (often challenging) journeys. Yaakov’s life, especially, teaches how a Jew in *galus* can endure his hardships.

In this week’s *parsha*, we read about Yaakov’s dream of a ladder that reached from the ground way up to the heaven. Profoundly inspiring to all those going through a spiritual slump, this dream teaches that there is always a possibility of rising once

(Continued on page 2)

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Dear ...

The holy Rebbe taught (*Likutei Moharan 2:24*) מצוה תמיד בשמחה להיות בשמחה תמיד – it is a *mitzva* to always be happy. R' Nachman Toltchiner used to say, "If the Rebbe said so, there must certainly be a reason for everyone to rejoice."

You ask how it is possible to remain happy when things don't go as planned – the answer is that it depends on how strong one's *emunah* is. When a person internalizes that nothing happens by chance and that Hashem arranges every detail of his life with an exact *cheshbon*, he will not be distressed when things don't turn out the way he wanted. Rather, he will remember that everything that occurs is for his benefit, and that the events of his life could not possibly have been different. The very fact that they have occurred is proof that they are for his good.

The simplest, most basic reason a person can rejoice is the fact that he was born a Jew. R' Tzadok HaKohen from Lublin *zt"l* relates a beautiful story involving the Kedushas Levi *zt"l* (*Pri Tzaddik Chag Hashavuos 13*):

The Kedushas Levi had a practice of reciting birchas hashachar aloud every day. One morning, as he was saying the brachos, he skipped the bracha of שלא עשני גוי. When his apparent error was pointed out to him, he remarked, "I already said the bracha! When I awoke this morning, I was so dejected and I could not find anything to cheer myself up. Finally, I said to myself, 'At least I was created a Yid!' I was instantly filled with such joy that I just couldn't contain myself and immediately said the bracha of שלא עשני גוי."

If this great *tzaddik*, whom the Rebbe gave the title of "פאר הדור", had nothing to cheer himself up with other than the fact that he was born a Jew, we simple people can certainly strengthen ourselves with this fact.

The Rebbe says (*Likutei Moharan 2:24*) that a person should exert himself to remain happy, even by behaving in a silly manner to do so. You can fulfill this *sicha* in the privacy of your home; you can behave in this manner with your children – dance and sing with them, and you can play silly games with them.

May Hashem bless you with success in all your endeavors.

Adapted from *The Light of Emunah* #2, page 77



again. Although at times a person may feel that he is at an all-time low, at "ground zero", he can always lift himself out of the depths and reach way up to Heaven top – all he needs to do is gather the courage to begin to climb.

A Ladder and a Voice

The Zohar teaches (*Chelek 3, 263:71*) that the word סלם – ladder has the same gematria as קול – voice. When a person uses his voice for *tefilla*, he enables himself to keep climbing to the loftiest spiritual heights.

The Zera Kodesh teaches another connection between a ladder and a voice. The letters of the word קול symbolize a ladder. The base of the letter ק is planted firmly in the ground and the upper section of the ל extends upward to heaven. The קול – one's voice, is the means for rising ever higher, overcoming all hurdles and reaching his full potential.

R' Nosson's journey toward Breslev was a treacherous path fraught with challenges and emotional turmoil. Before discovering the Rebbe, he was a part of a different chassidus which had a custom to gather for melave malka each week. To supply the food, they drew lots to choose one of the assembled people to buy bread for the rest of the chassidim.

Sure enough, one week R' Nosson's name was drawn. He dutifully headed out to the local bakery, when he was suddenly consumed by a profound feeling of futility. All his life he so badly yearned be close to Hashem, yet the reality of where he was headed seemed to mock him, giving him no rest.

"Is this what I was created for?" He thought desolately. "To buy bread?" In terrible distress, he ran into an empty beis medrash, grabbed a sefer Tehillim and burst into heartrending sobs. He tearfully recited the timeless words of David Hamelech, perek after perek, until he fell into a deep sleep.

While asleep, R' Nosson dreamed that he stood before a ladder, extending way up to the sky. He tried to climb it but lost his grip after just a few rungs, falling to the ground with a painful thump. He tried again, yet fell again. Over and over, he tried with all his strength to get to the top but just kept falling. On his last attempt, R' Nosson reached quite high, but he then tumbled to the ground with such tremendous force that he just gave up.

Bruised and despondent, R' Nosson glanced upward and saw a person at the top of the ladder calling down to him, "Keep going! Don't give up!"

R' Nosson met R' Nachman of Breslev for the first



(Continued on page 3)



time one year later. He immediately recognized the Rebbe as the person in his dream who had given him chizuk to keep forging onward.

They took a walk together, Rebbe and talmid, and R' Nossan opened his heart and told the Rebbe of all the trials he endured on his quest for spirituality. The Rebbe gently laid a hand on his shoulder and said, "It is good to talk to Hashem as one would speak to a close friend."

At that moment, R' Nossan finally understood the deeper meaning of his dream: Life is like a ladder, with many rungs to climb in order to attain true closeness to Hashem. The only way to succeed in this, despite the intense hardships along the way, is by constantly speaking to Hashem and telling Him of the many challenges one faces. This is the greatest empowerment, the greatest gift a person can own.

Down and Up

Not always is it an upward journey. Throughout our lives, we are constantly faced with obstacles that send us tumbling down, seeming to lose so much of the progress we thought we have already made.

Davened with minyan three times each day for two weeks straight... and then woke up late and missed shacharis.

Worked on my patience for months... and then had a weak moment and completely lost it at my wife.

Sat on the subway for over an hour, working so hard to guard my eyes... until I just couldn't control myself anymore.

Yes, it can be extremely frustrating when we keep on slipping, yet we must not let it discourage us. Regression is part of the unique tapestry of life— even after falling back, we must strengthen ourselves to begin again. Just. Take. One. Step. At. A. Time. Don't look forward; don't look back. Just keep going, one small step at a time.

Standing on a towering ladder in your ascent of *avodas Hashem*? Keep going! Don't give up! Talk to Hashem throughout your journey and you will ultimately succeed in reaching the *ראשו מגיע השמימה*.

Sichos Mohorosh Parshas Vayetzei



An important part of learning Torah is saying the words... If it is hard for one to 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...

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 anything...

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...

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.

May Hashem bless you with success in all your endeavors.

*Adapted from The Light of Emunah,
Pamphlet #35*

THE ROSH YESHIVA SAYS:

The Rebbe says (Likutei Moharan 1:69), עיקר העשירות באה בזכות האשה – a person's wealth is in the merit of treating his wife well. Speak to your wife kindly and be generous with compliments. Never argue with her and NEVER humiliate her by saying, "See? I was right!"

If you will keep your wife and her happiness as your top priority, you will merit bountiful parnassa.

LISTEN TO THE ROSH YESHIVA'S SHIURIM FOR YUNGELEIT

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Q & A

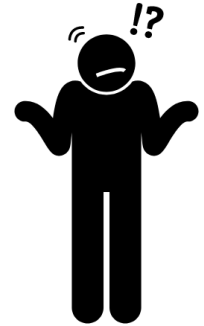


WHAT CAN I DO TO BUILD MY SELF-CONFIDENCE?

Question:

To the Rosh Yeshiva *shlita*,

I am a fourteen-year-old *bachur* and I gain so much *chizuk* from the *eitzos* of the Rebbe. I try to do *hisbodedus* and speak to Hashem every day and I see what a difference it has made to my life.



I struggle with low self-esteem. Wherever I go, I worry about what others think of me and what they might be saying about me. What can I do to build my self-confidence?

Another question: I have a very hard time making decisions. When I begin learning, I'm overwhelmed with uncertainty – I'll take one *sefer* to learn and then change my mind and choose a different one. All the while, I second-guess myself and wonder if I would perhaps do better learning something else entirely. Are there *eitzos* for me in the Rebbe's *sefarim*?

Thank you.

The Rosh Yeshiva's Response:

Dear...,

The only solution for a lack of self-confidence is to review the principles of *emunah* again and again. Constantly remind yourself of the following:

*Hashem created the world and everything in it.
He continuously runs His world with a precise plan.
Hashem is in control of every single occurrence.
Every דומם, דומת, צומח, חי and מדבר is merely an illusion.
No being other than Him has any power whatsoever.*

When a person reinforces his belief in these concepts, his view of others changes completely. No longer concerned about what they think or say about him, his self-esteem improves drastically.

Strengthen yourself with the *eitza* of *hisbodedus*. Find a quiet place to pour your heart out to Hashem. Speak to Him just as you would speak to your closest friend – share everything you are going through and unburden yourself to Him. Don't be ashamed to share your most private thoughts with him or to tell Him of your anxiety and fears. By doing so, you will gradually become more confident and at ease with yourself and with others, and you will no longer worry about what others think.

Regarding your second question, it would be worthwhile for you to begin learning with the Rebbe's *sefer derech halimud*. See what the Rebbe teaches about *limud hatorah* (*Sichos Haran 76*):

(Continued on page 3)

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