

# SPARKS OF EMUNAH



HEICHAL HAKODESH BRESLEV WEEKLY NEWSLETTER  
BASED ON THE TEACHINGS OF REBBE NACHMAN OF BRESLEV ZT"l  
GIVEN OVER BY MOHOROSH ZT"l AND THE ROSH YESHIVA SHLIT"l

PARSHAS MISHPATIM  
24 SHEVAT, 5785  
ISSUE #39

## CHIZUK from the PARSHA

## SOMEONE IS LOOKING

אם המצא תמצא בגידו הגנבה... שנים? שלם

*If the stolen goods are found in his possession... he must pay double.*

The Baal Shem Tov sat in the back of his wagon with his eyes closed, absorbed in his avodas Hashem. Alexei, the wagon driver, sat up front and steered the horses. As they passed through an orchard of luscious apples, the tantalizing aroma tickled Alexei's nostrils and whet his appetite. He stopped the wagon and walked up to the nearest tree, about to grab a handful of apples, when he heard the Baal Shem Tov's voice call out, "Alexei, someone's looking!" Startled, Alexei made an about-face and fled to the wagon, settled in his seat and resumed his drive.

Soon the scene repeated itself: While traveling through another orchard, Alexei stopped the wagon, dismounted and began to pick apples when the Baal Shem Tov suddenly called, "Alexei, someone's looking!" and Alexei hurriedly returned to the wagon and rode on.

After the third time this occurred, Alexei could not contain himself and asked the Baal Shem Tov, "But nobody's even here!" To which the tzaddik responded, with a finger pointed upward, "Hashem is watching."

The Torah teaches us that a *gazlan* (one who robbed in broad daylight) must repay the exact amount he stole, but a *ganav* (one who robbed at night) must repay double. Why? Chazal explain (Bava Kama 79b) that the additional crime of the *ganav* was that he relegated the eyes of Hashem to be like those of a human being; he stole at night because he did not want to be seen, yet he forgot that Hashem is always watching, during the day as well as at night. The *ganav's* sin is two-fold and his punishment is therefore two-fold as well.

All *geneiva* is rooted in a lack of *emunah*. The Rebbe says (Sefer Hamiddos, Geneiva U'gezeila), "As soon as one allows himself to steal from his fellow, he is likely to do every other sin as well," because a person who doesn't believe that Hashem knows everything and sees everything can very easily fall into many other *aveiros*.

Of course, most religious Jews do not ordinarily rob a bank, pick pockets or pilfer from grocery stores, but less typical forms of *geneiva* are surprisingly prevalent. Borrowing money and not repaying one's debt, using others' belongings or property without permission, dishonestly inflating prices on merchandise or services – just to name a few.

*Parshas Mishpatim* is full of *halachos* in dealings with other people. It's not so hard to have *emunah* when it comes to spiritual pursuits, but sometimes we forget that Hashem comes with us when we leave the doors of the *beis medrash*, too. No matter where, no matter when – at home, in the office or sitting in a café – Hashem is always with us and there are *halachos* that we must abide by at all times.



Sichos Mohorosh Volume 13, Erech Geneiva

## MOHOROSH SPEAKS WHO'S RIGHT?

“ Shmerel was driving home after a long day of work. Suddenly, he saw a black Avalon veer into his lane from the other side of the highway, speeding straight toward him!

Heart pounding, Shmerel checked the road signs. *I'm going in the right direction. This guy had better get out of my way!*

The car came closer but Shmerel refused to move. *I'm right! He's wrong! He's driving in the wrong direction – it's my lane!*

Shmerel was right. Dead right. Visitors to the cemetery could read the inscription on his gravestone: היה איש צדק ומת בצדקתו.

Often in life, you may find yourself in situations where you're one hundred percent right, but it's usually better to be smart. The *middah* of *vatranus* (giving in to another) is the smart way. A person who knows how to give in will spare himself lots

(Continued on page 2)

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Dear ...

I received your letter.

Many people make this same mistake of counting the days that they were “clean” and did not succumb to temptation. This is their source of strength to continue; they calculate in their minds, “It’s been ten weeks that I have not sinned.” Or, “It’s already three months that I have been *shomer habris*.” However, this is not the Torah approach and it causes tremendous damage. People are not angels; when a person does fall and breaks the chain of “good days”, he becomes so broken that he gives up and stops trying to improve.

The Rebbe’s way is to constantly strengthen oneself and begin anew. Even after falling, a person must immediately lift himself up and again start serving Hashem. The Rebbe once said (*Chayei Moharan 453*), “If I would *chas v’shalom* commit the greatest *aveira*, it would not discourage me even one bit. I would continue to be the same *erliche Yid* as before and I would then do *teshuva*.” A person must not let anything break him – even if he does find himself succumbing to *aveiros*, he must nevertheless continue to serve Hashem.

Learn the beginning of the *sefer Shivchei Haran* and you will get a glimpse into the manner in which the Rebbe conducted himself. R’ Nossou writes (*Shivchei Haran 5:6*), “The Rebbe always started anew. Whenever he fell from one of his *madreigos*, he did not give up; instead, he said, ‘I am starting anew’ as if he had never even attempted to attain that *madreiga* in the first place. Each time this happened, he began all over again. He would often begin anew, many times in a single day.” This is the Torah approach, the way a person can be *zoche* to become a *tzaddik*.

The method of counting days is something that has seeped in from the non-Jews, from programs that supposedly help people emerge from the mire of sin. However, this approach is futile. Only the Torah’s way, only the path that *tzaddikim* paved for us, is what can extract a person from the clutches of his *yetzer hara*.

May Hashem bless you with success in all your endeavors.

Adapted from *The Light of Emunah #3, page 202*



of trouble in his relationships, be it with his spouse, children, parents, siblings, neighbors, friends, fellow *mispallelim* – you name it! Even with himself, he must know how to give in.

### The Third Time

The Rebbe considered *vatranus* to be a fundamental *middah*, and he was careful not to be stubborn about anything. He did not push his opinion on others or demand that things be done his way.

A *chassid* once came to visit the Rebbe and saw that the entire house was filled with smoke. The Rebbe had been suffering from a lung ailment at that time, and smoke inhalation could have been fatal. The *chassid* knew he needed to act fast. He looked around the kitchen and saw a smoking pot on the fire, the food inside burnt and smoldering. Quickly, he removed the offending pot and opened all the doors and windows to air out the house.

Once the danger was taken care of, he noticed the Rebbe’s *shamash* slumbering on a chair. The *shamash* had been hired to assist the Rebbe – how dare he fall asleep on the job? The visiting *chassid* shook the *shamash* awake, screaming, “How dare you sleep? You’re being paid to take care of the Rebbe and you know he’s not well! How could you allow this to happen?”

Fuming, he entered the inner chamber and saw the Rebbe lying in bed peacefully, as if nothing had happened. He asked in wonderment, “I don’t understand. Why didn’t the Rebbe wake the *shamash* and tell him to get rid of the smoke?”

The Rebbe’s response was a lesson that we must all take to heart. He said, “First we ask politely. Then we shout. The third time, we get angry... I didn’t want to get to the third time, so I didn’t even ask the first time...”

### Just Let Go!

Holding firm in your own opinions – especially when others do not agree with you – will only lead to bad feelings. In life, people will sometimes “rub you the wrong way” or do things that you feel are wrong or unfair. Your neighbor’s car is blocking your driveway **again**. Your spouse came home late **again**. Your son left his books all over the room **again**.

Thinking that all you need to do is explain yourself again? Scream a little louder? Show him/her that you’re serious? Bad idea. Not only won’t it solve the problem; it is likely to make it worse. It can even explode into a terrible fight from which everyone will pay the price.

(Continued on page 3)





Be smart and let go. A *vatran* gives in right at the beginning. No struggles, no anger. The end.

When it comes to *shalom bayis*, the ability to give in is absolutely critical. If either the husband or the wife is too stubborn to give in, everyone suffers. Either the other spouse fights back and the home fills with so much tension and anger that it ends in a divorce, or he/she will have a nervous breakdown from the pressure of living with such an obstinate person. However, when a person is smart and gives in, much heartbreak can be avoided.

The same is true when dealing with children. Granted, *chinuch* is very important. It is every parent's obligation to teach his children the proper way to behave, but *chinuch* must be with a lot of patience and *vatranus*. If you are too strong with your children, you can lose them entirely.



*Vatranus* comes into play with neighbors, too. There are neighbors who are at each others' necks because of the silliest things: this one put the garbage in the wrong place, that one parks in my spot, the other one's children are too noisy... It's so important to be on good terms with neighbors. Some people live so close to the neighbors next door, and if they don't get along, it's bad news for both. By being quick to give in, everyone benefits.

**And How About You?**

The typical "*mevater*" situation looks like this: We are two people – I want one thing, you want something different. One of us gives in.

Sometimes, though, there is only one person in the story. One person who so badly wants to **be** good, so badly wants to **do** good. Each day, he makes new resolutions and tries so hard to be perfect, but he quickly discovers that it's too hard to do everything. Unwilling to relinquish his image of perfection, he cannot come to terms with the fact that he can't do it all. Dejected and defeated, he gives up on everything. *If I can't do everything, I'm a loser. Forget it.*

The Rebbe teaches us to be *mevater* even to ourselves! We need to understand our own weaknesses and accept that we can't always accomplish everything we want to. We must be happy with what we **do** have and be proud of what we **can** do. We must focus on the good in ourselves and not be upset when we fall short of our own expectations.

**Be a Winner!**

A stubborn, selfish person who insists on getting his way destroys his relationships. He might often get what he wants, but his life is not a happy one. However, when a person tries to make it good for others, he benefits as well. He who is *mevater* always wins.

Is it against your nature? Can't imagine always being the one to give in? Ask Hashem to help you get rid of your bad *middos*. Daven to be on good terms with everyone. Ask Him to help you give in to others – and to yourself! – and then it will be good for you in This World and *Olam Haba*.



hamper them; rather, these children were taught to serve Hashem to the best of their abilities and they became great *tzaddikim*.

If you will have patience with your son, he will grow up to be a healthy and confident adult. You will see much *nachas* from him as he will use his strengths properly. However, if you will denigrate him and highlight his weaknesses, you'll only succeed in destroying him completely.

Daven every day that your children should grow up to be *erlich*. Include a special *tefilla* for this child, in your own words, that he should be able to focus and should gain an interest and appreciation for learning. By doing so you will see wonders. *Chazal* relate (*Chagiga 3*) that Rebbi Yochanan ben Gudgeda's grandchildren were also deaf. They used to sit in the *beis medrash* during R' Yehuda Hanasi's *shiur* and would sway back and forth and mouth along with him. R' Yehuda HaNasi davened that they should be healed until they miraculously began to hear! Take a lesson from this story and do the same; at every opportunity, daven for all your children and this child specifically, and through this you will see miracles.

Once again, I implore you – be careful never to humiliate your child or hit him.

May Hashem bless you with success in all your endeavors.

## HOW CAN I DEAL WITH MY UNFOCUSED CHILD?



### Question:

To the Rosh Yeshiva *shlita*,

I must begin with thanking you for all the *shiurim*, especially for the *chizuk* on learning with the *sefer derech halimud* – every *shiur* I hear strengthens me anew to learn Torah.

I have been blessed with a wonderful son who struggles with focus. He is a dreamer by nature and can sit in one place for hours, absorbed in his own imagination. His *rebbe* never complains about him because he behaves and is obedient in *cheder*, but when it comes to learning, he almost never knows his work.

I try learning with him at home but I'm up against a brick wall. It's only when I'll yell at him that he starts to focus, but only for a short while; soon afterwards, he once again becomes distracted by his thoughts. This infuriates me to no end, but I feel helpless. I know he is not at fault, as he was born with this nature, but I don't want him to grow up to be an ignoramus. What can I do to help him?

Thank you.



### The Rosh Yeshiva's Response:

Dear...

You must be very careful with your son's feelings. As a parent, your role is to praise him and applaud him; only by doing so will you see progress. If you will humiliate, belittle or hit him, you will only break him completely.

Shlomo Hamelech, the wisest of all men, gave us a method to deal with even the most difficult natures. He said (*Mishlei 22:6*), "Teach the child according to his way; even when he grows old, he will not swerve from it." Every child has a unique personality, a unique way of thinking, and a unique way that he grows and develops – one

child's mind is sharp and another's mind is straight; one child's mind is quick while another's works more slowly and takes longer to grasp new concepts... It is a parent's obligation to deal with every child according to his individual needs.

This was the way of our *tzaddikim*. Rabbi Yochanan ben Guedgeda's children were all deaf, yet despite their disability, they were responsible for all the *taharos* in Yerushalayim (*Tosefta Terumos 1; Yerushalmi Terumos 1*). The *Tannaim* encouraged their children so that handicaps didn't

(Continued on page 3)

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