



SPARKS OF EMUNAH

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BASED ON THE SEFARIM OF REBBE NACHMAN OF BRESLEV ZT"l
AS TAUGHT BY MOHOROSH ZT"l AND THE ROSH YESHIVA SHLIT"l

לעלוי נשמת
מרים חנה בת ר' דוד צבי הלוי
יוכבד בת ר' אליהו נתן

CHIZUK FROM THE PARSHA

SOMEONE IS LOOKING

אם המצא תמצא בידו הגנבה... שנים ישלם

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

The Baal Shem Tov sat in the back of his wagon, 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 scent of ripe fruit 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 fruit when the Baal Shem Tov suddenly called, "Alexei, someone's looking!" Alexei did not see anyone, but he nonetheless hurried to the wagon and they rode on.

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

The Torah teaches us that different kinds of thieves are punished differently: a *gazlan* – one who steals during the day – must repay exactly the amount that he stole, and a *ganav* – one who steals only at night – must repay twice the amount of what he stole.



Chazal explain (Bava Kama 79b) the reason for this seemingly unfair punishment:

A person who steals during the day is fearless. He doesn't care who will see him or what will be done to him if he is caught. One who steals at night is different. He is afraid of being seen by others, so he waits for the cover of darkness to break the law. Chazal say that in doing so, he "demoted" the eyes of Hashem to being like the eyes of a human being, paying no heed to the fact that Hashem is always watching, whether it is day or night. The *ganav's* sin is two-fold, and his punishment is therefore two-fold as well.

How does this apply to a regular Jew, who never comes close to robbing banks, picking pockets or pilfering from the grocery store? While we would never actually steal, other forms of *geneiva* are surprisingly prevalent: inflating prices on goods or services, borrowing money and not repaying it, using others' belongings or property without permission...

All these examples (and more) are not "just" dishonesty, they are actual theft! Doing so is forbidden, and also leads a person to do many more *aveiros*, as the Rebbe says (*Sefer Hamiddos, Geneiva*), "As soon as one allows himself to steal from his fellow, he is likely to do every other sin as well." A person who doesn't believe that Hashem sees everything will also succumb to his *yetzer hara* in other areas as well.

How can we avoid falling into dishonesty and theft? All *geneiva* is rooted in a lack of *emunah*. One does not steal unless he forgets about Hashem and the fact that Hashem knows exactly what everyone is doing at all times. We must therefore keep Hashem at the forefront of our minds and remember that He is with us all the times, and in this way we will be protected from all sin.

Sichos Mohorosh Volume 13, Erech Geneiva

MOHOROSH SPEAKS

שבת שקלים

Chodesh Adar is in the air! This week is Shabbos Mevarchim, marking the imminent arrival of the long-awaited month of Adar.

This Shabbos is also called Shabbos Shekalim and is the first of the Arba Parshios. The Arba Parshios are Shabbosim with a special *maftir*, and are weeks with great potential for achieving closeness to Hashem.

In the *parsha* of *shekalim*, we read about the *mitzvah* for every male between the ages of twenty and sixty to give a *machatzis hashekel* (half a *shekel*). These coins were used to count *Klal Yisrael* and then used for communal expenses.

Complete with Hashem

The instructions that were given regarding the *machatzis hashekel* were very specific: every person was to give **half** a *shekel* – no more and no less. The lesson here is simple yet profound: alone, a person is incomplete. We cannot do anything without Hashem.

Chazal say (*Kiddushin 30a*) that none of us can fight the *yetzer hara* alone. We all need Hashem in order to win the battle. When a person realizes that he alone is

(Continued on page 2)





DON'T LET GO

Dear ...

I received your letter.

R' Nosson had a talmid called R' Shaul from Teplik zt"l, who served Hashem with immense passion and joy. He awoke early each morning, immersed in a mikvah and davened and learned diligently all day. On a visit to Teplik, R' Nosson observed his talmid's conduct up close and saw the tremendous fervor that R' Shaul displayed. R' Nosson remarked, "Shaul, Shaul, I don't have pleasure from your avodos yet. My nachas will be when I see that you can continue with your avodas Hashem even after you fall."

Avodas Hashem includes both successes and failures. The Rebbe teaches (*Likutei Moharan 1:6*) that if one wants to return to Hashem, he must know the right way to go about it. It isn't always an upward path – rather, it's a journey full of roadblocks and setbacks. In order for a person to accomplish his goal, he must know how to move forward **and** he must know how to "retreat," too. Otherwise, his inevitable regressions will cause him to fall apart and give up entirely.

Now is the time for you to strengthen yourself and continue serving Hashem with the abilities you have now. Don't forego *shacharis*, *minchah* or *ma'ariv*, and make sure you learn some Torah each day. Learn *Chumash* with *Rashi* and *Targum*, as well as *Mishnayos* and *Gemara* each day, whether you understand or not. Just say the words of the holy Torah – even if you can't focus – and you will give Hashem immense pleasure and joy. As R' Nosson said to his talmid, "You will give me *nachas* when I'll see you remain strong even in the face of difficulties."

You write about the intense pressure you feel before and on *yamim tovim* – do as the Rebbe did. You will find his advice to be encouraging and empowering. The Rebbe said (*Sichos Haran 2*), "Each morning, I give over the entire day to Hashem – every moment, every occurrence, and every one of my actions and those of my children – and I trust that Hashem will guide me to do as He sees fit. Before Shabbos or *yom tov*, too, I place myself completely in His hands. Then, no matter what happens, I can be calm and joyful; I don't have to worry as to whether I did right or not."

My dear brother, stay strong! Don't let go; don't neglect your *neshama*. Try your best to serve Hashem with the abilities you have **now**, without comparing yourself to the way you've been in the past.

May Hashem bless you with success in all areas.

Adapted from The Light of Emunah 3, page 275

only half and begs Hashem for help in his day-to-day struggles, he becomes complete and can then truly be successful.

The Sea and The Coin

The *Gemara* says (*Yerushalmi Shekalim 2:3*) that those who crossed the *Yam Suf* had to give a *machatzis hashekel*. What's the connection between the two?

When *Klal Yisrael* stood before the *Yam Suf*, they were trapped with no way out. In those critical moments, they suddenly realized that they needed Hashem for their very survival and they turned to Him with a desperate plea for mercy. What followed was wondrous *nissim* that we speak about until this day.

The *machatzis hashekel* reminds us of this same concept: we can do nothing alone. We need Hashem's help every moment.

Dramatic *nissim* weren't only for those times – today we also need *nissim* on the level of *krias Yam Suf*. Both *parnassa* and *shidduchim* are compared to the splitting of the sea (*Pesachim 118a, Sotah 2a*) – both are difficult, daunting, and impossible to handle alone. Just like the Jews at the *Yam Suf* came to the realization that they were totally lost without the help of the Master of the world, every Jew today must realize that he is incomplete and incapable without Hashem.

Complete with Others

The *machatzis hashekel* also teaches us to live in harmony with others. One person alone is only half – he becomes whole when he stands with others in unity.

In the story of Purim, Haman said (*Esther 3:8*), "ישנו עם אחד" – מפוזר ומפחד – There is one nation that is scattered and divided, in constant conflict with each other. The discord among *Klal Yisrael* set off the decree of annihilation, and that's why Esther told Mordechai to gather the Jews **together** – with *achdus*. Their new state of unity rectified their previous state of conflict and brought about the *yeshua*.

A person is only whole when he lives in peace with others – especially with his family. Harmony in the home is crucial both for one's *ruchniyus* and *gashmiyus*. Without *shalom bayis*, a person is incomplete – his mind is confused and scattered and he cannot live a meaningful life. One must do whatever he can to maintain *shalom* in his home, because only by living in harmony with one's wife and children can he lead a happy and fulfilling life.

All Forms of Tzedaka

What practical application does *Parshas Shekalim* have for us today?

(Continued on page 3)



to start serving Hashem properly. The Shulchan Aruch says (*Yoreh De'ah 249:14*) that one should give money to the needy before davening, teaching us that *tzedaka* is where *avodas Hashem* begins.

The Rebbe teaches (*Sefer Hamiddos, Tzedaka*) that the *machatzis hashekel* protects a person from the *yetzer hara*. This refers both to hearing *Parshas Shekalim* (which is like giving the *machatzis hashekel*) and to giving *tzedaka*. Both protect a person from falling into the *yetzer hara's* clutches.

This is true of mere financial assistance – even as little as one dollar – and all the more so for providing spiritual sustenance. What can be greater than giving a person a will to live? What can be greater than giving a person guidance for dealing with his day-to-day struggles? Giving *tzedaka* to print and distribute *sefarim* that bring people back to Hashem certainly provides the giver with tremendous benefit. When a person helps save others from their *yetzer hara*, Hashem acts *middah k'neged middah* and saves him from his *yetzer hara* as well.

A True Tzaddik

Parshas Shekalim also hints at the importance of connecting to a *tzaddik* that can bring a person close to Hashem.

When Hashem gave Moshe Rabbeinu the command to count *Klal Yisrael* with the *machatzis hashekel*, He said, "כי תשא את ראש בני ישראל – count the Jewish People." These words can also mean to **lift up** the Jews. Just like Moshe Rabbeinu, the *tzaddik* of his generation, brought *Klal Yisrael* to lofty levels in *avodas Hashem*, so too, every generation has *tzaddikim* who can elevate their followers and bring them close to Hashem.



The Rebbe says (*Likutei Moharan 1:111*) that there are two types of leaders. One kind of leader is referred to by the *roshei teivos* of ישראל – כי תשא את ראש בני ישראל – this *rosh* elevates his followers by encouraging them to live with Hashem and follow the Torah. The other kind of leader doesn't help his followers at all. He is referred to in the *passuk* (*Shmuel 1 2:9*) ידמו ב'שעם' – the wicked (i.e. his followers) remain in darkness. He doesn't change them at all; they remain wicked and in darkness.

Hearing the words כי תשא את ראש בני ישראל in *Parshas Shekalim* should inspire us to daven for a connection to the kind of *rosh* who will lift us up and teach us to serve Hashem.

A Time for Tefilla

In the times of the *Beis Hamikdash*, the *shekalim* were used to purchase the *korban tamid*. We don't have the *Beis Hamikdash* or the *korban tamid* anymore; instead, we have specific *tefillos* that we daven each day. The reading of *Parshas Shekalim* is an opportune time to ask that the *tefillos* we daven throughout the year should be accepted.

This is also a time to daven for all the things we learned from *Parshas Shekalim*. Let's ask Hashem for help to become complete with Him and with each other – especially with our families. Let's daven for *shefa* so that we should be able to give *tzedaka* generously, and that we should be *zoche* to help other Jews connect to Hashem to the Torah. Let's also daven for a connection to true *tzaddikim* who can elevate us and bring us close to Hashem.

what you are saying at first, because a person who is depressed can't focus enough to understand. This is especially true after one has fallen into the trap of the *yetzer hara* and succumbed to *p'gam habris R"l* – a person who has sinned in this area completely loses his intellectual capacity. Despite all this, continue to say the words of the Torah and ultimately, Hashem will help you emerge from the clutches of the *yetzer hara*.

Regarding your difficulty in waking up on time, there is one tip I can tell you about which Mohorosh advised many people in your position to do: **Go to sleep on time.** This is a method that's guaranteed and is absolutely free. If you go to sleep on time, you'll wake up on time, whereas if you stay up late, you'll wake up late.

Bachurim love to stay up late. Many *bachurim* waste entire nights just sitting and schmoozing about nothing and everything. Afterwards, they fall into bed exhausted, without saying *shema* or preparing *negel vasser*, going to sleep without *yira'as Shamayim*.

The *yetzer hara* is the one responsible for all this. He's the one who leads people into keeping this distorted schedule of sleeping during the day and staying up at night, because this is how he manages to ruin a person's entire day. A *bachur* with good sense establishes a routine for himself and goes to bed on time, making sure to say *shema* and prepare *negel vasser* before going to sleep.

May Hashem bless you with success in all areas.

Q & A

IS THERE A WAY TO OVERCOME DEPRESSION?



QUESTION:

To the Rosh Yeshiva shlita,

I have been struggling with depression for some time now. I haven't gotten an official diagnosis or anything, but I often feel gloomy and dejected to the point that I can't bring myself to do the regular things that other bachurim are busy with.

Another problem I've been having (probably related to the first one) is that I have a very hard time waking up in the morning. Although I really want to wake up early and daven with a minyan, I just sleep the morning away and can't wake up for anything in the world. This bothers me a lot now, but I'm even more worried about how this will affect me after I get married.

I keep davening for a yeshuah in both of these areas and I will keep davening, but I feel like I need a practical solution as well. Since the Rosh Yeshiva is not a fan of therapy, I was wondering if there is another solution for me?

Thank you.

strengthen oneself with all one's might not to be depressed, וכל החולאת הבאין על האדם כלם באין רק מקלקול השמחה – because all ailments stem from a lack of *simcha*. The Rebbe says that even doctors agree on the fact that all illnesses are rooted in a depressed state of mind.

Therefore, my dear brother, strengthen yourself to be happy. **Thank Hashem for all the good He has given you and will yet give you.**

There was a Breslev chassid by the name of R' Aharon Kublitcher who was known to be an exceptionally joyful person. He was never seen without a smile on his face, even when he was in such dire financial straits that there was literally nothing to eat in his house.

His wife used to constantly ask him, "Aharon, why are you happy? We have nothing!"

His reply was always as follows: "Don't you believe that things will be good someday? Well, I'm borrowing joy from that future time for today. It's true that we have nothing now, but things will soon be good and then we'll have reason to rejoice. All I'm doing is borrowing a little of that future joy for today."

Another solution for overcoming depression is *limud haTorah*, because learning Torah fills a person with joy. The Rebbe gave us an easy and sweet way to be *zoche* to learn and complete the entire Torah – he says that even if one doesn't understand what he is learning, he should continue to simply say the words of the holy Torah (*Sichos Haran* 76).

Listen to the Rebbe and start learning Mishnayos. Say one *perek* after another even though you won't understand

(Continued on page 3)

THE ROSH YESHIVA'S RESPONSE:

Dear ...,

I received your letter.

The Rebbe says (*Likutei Moharan* 2:24), מצוה גדולה להיות – it is a great *mitzvah* to constantly be happy, בשמחה תמיד – and to ולהתגבר להרחיק העצבות והמרה שחורה בכל כחו

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