



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
מוהרא"ש זצ"ל
גלב"ע י"ז שבט, תשע"ה

CHIZUK FROM THE PARSHA

NEVER FORGOTTEN

ה'ש' ה' בקרבנו אם אין? ויבא עמלק וילחם עם ישראל

Is Hashem among us or not? And Amalek came to war with the Jewish People.

Chazal relate the following *mashal* (Rashi, Shemos 17:8):

Father and his Little Boy were on a journey, traversing many miles together. When Little Boy got hungry, Father bought food for him from a nearby vendor. When Little Boy complained of thirst, Father searched for and found a flask of water. When Little Boy got tired, Father lifted him onto his shoulders and continued the journey.

Soon, Little Boy saw a stranger approaching and asked him, from his vantage point high above, "Have you seen my father? I don't know where he is!" Father heard this and cast Little Boy off his shoulders, and a dog came and bit him.

When *Klal Yisrael* left Mitzrayim, Hashem did great miracles for them. Nonetheless, they asked, "ה'ש' ה' בקרבנו אם אין?" – Is Hashem with us? Has He forsaken us? Immediately, עמלק – Amalek attacked.

We Do The Same...

To us this seems outrageous. Hashem had just done great miracles for *Klal Yisrael*! He brought ten *makkos* upon their oppressors, redeemed them from a land which no slave ever escaped, split the sea and brought them through on dry land, gave them *manna* from Heaven and water from a rock. How could they have even thought that Hashem had forsaken them?

Yet we often do the same thing. Even if we'll never say it, how often does the following thought flit through our minds: "Why is my life so challenging? Has Hashem forgotten about me?" or anything along these lines...

These thoughts are just as outrageous, for we also experience endless miracles on a daily basis! We can breathe, see, think, walk, talk... And all this is only by Hashem's explicit command – every single day! How can we even think He has forsaken us? Hashem remembers the needs of every individual and runs His world with a precise *chesbon*. **Whatever occurs – for better or for worse – is coming from Hashem and is for our ultimate good.**

No Questions Asked

The Rebbe says (*Sichos Haran* 279) that the way to navigate life's hardships is with *bitul* – by submitting oneself to Hashem and surrendering one's will completely to Him. When R' Nossan asked how a person can reach this level, the Rebbe responded, "By closing one's mouth and one's eyes, that is *bitul*."

When a person does not question Hashem's ways and 'closes' his mouth, so to speak, and when he does not try to see or understand Hashem's calculations and 'closes' his eyes, so to speak, he has attained this exalted level. This is what we call *emunah peshuta* – pure, simple faith, and it provides the person with a deep sense of serenity despite his challenges. It is in this *zechus* that Hashem ultimately sends his salvation.

Do not despair; strengthen your *emunah* and you will see great miracles.

Adapted from the *Light of Emunah* Volume 2, page 258

MOHOROSH SPEAKS

TU B'SHVAT

While the winds howl outside and the trees stand bare, *Klal Yisrael* as a nation pauses to reflect and celebrate the *yom tov* of Tu B'shvat. Known as Rosh Hashana for the trees, this day reminds us that the barren branches will soon blossom and bear fruit again.

כי האדם עץ השדה (Devarim 20:19)

– Man is compared to the tree of the field. There is much inspiration that we can glean from this humble creation as it weathers the seasons and endures the harshest that the climate has to offer.

Life Lesson #1: Persevere

The tree stands in stoic silence throughout the bone-chilling winters, as rain, snow, hail and sleet attack her entire being. Leaves are torn from her branches as fierce winds try to send her crashing to the ground. In these harsh conditions, her future is shrouded in uncertainty. Will she make it through?

Despite it all, the tree stays strong, comforting

(Continued on page 2)





KEEP GOING!

Dear ...

I received your letter.

Not everything can be publicized. Nonetheless, since Mohorosh wrote in his *tzava'a*, לא היה לי יום אחד טוב בזה העולם בלי שום, and also instructed that the words, וסבל יסורים קשים, be inscribed onto his *matzeiva*, know that it is one hundred percent true.

What's the difference who, what, where or when? The exact details of his difficulties don't matter; what is relevant is the lesson for us – to **persevere no matter what**. Despite all that Mohorosh endured, he always radiated joy – by looking at him, you would never dream that he was going through any kind of suffering. Mohorosh was a paradigm of true happiness and complete submissiveness to Hashem. We must learn from him to be *b'simcha* and spread the joy to others.

Mohorosh used to relate R' Yisroel Karduner's story and how he found his way to Breslev:

R' Yisroel once found a page from a sefer in sheimos, in which a father writes a letter of chizuk to his son. The entire letter touched R' Yisroel's heart, but the ending blew him away. The father wrote, "I can't continue writing anymore because the policemen are outside, ready to arrest and imprison me..."

R' Yisroel couldn't wrap his mind around the fact that a person who was about to be locked up in jail could have the presence of mind to write such beautiful words of chizuk. He made up his mind that he must find out who this man was.

He began to investigate, and he soon found out that the letter originated from the sefer לעולם לתורה, but he was told that the sefer may not be read because it was written by R' Nosson of Breslev. R' Yisroel refused to listen to the people who tried to dissuade him, and this was the beginning of his connection to Breslev. Ultimately, he became among the greatest people in Breslev.

Mohorosh suffered even more than R' Nosson. **He had only tzaros in his life, but did not let his difficulties get him down;** he only sought to give more and more *chizuk* to others. By seeing him, one could not fathom what he was going through. (Even I, a few years after I came to Mohorosh, had no idea that he had any difficulties at all.)

We must take a lesson from this great *tzaddik* and learn to deal with the challenges that come our way. **We must not fall apart and chas v'shalom never start questioning Hashem's ways.** We must continue to believe in Hashem and remain faithful to Him, and even try to find the strength to help others.

May Hashem help us follow in Mohorosh's ways, and we will also be *zoche* to become *tzaddikim*.

herself with the knowledge that summer will come

and the sun will shine for her once more. With this encouraging thought in mind, she can pull through yet another day in the bitter winter.

When the summer finally does arrive, she realizes to her great consternation that her relief was premature. The intense heat drains her, threatening to dry her out completely. Hot, parched, and yearning for some invigorating rainfall, she endures, knowing that a change in seasons is just around the corner.

This cycle repeats itself year after year, and still she stands, strong and proud despite it all.

How much can we, from our own place of struggle, learn from the resilience of the unassuming tree?

Life is full of challenges. Rain, snow, hail and sleet attack us, threatening to uproot us completely. In these moments of hardship, we ask ourselves, *"Will I ever survive this? How can I possibly pull through?"* Like the tree, we comfort ourselves with the knowledge that better times are on their way... only to be bitterly disappointed when they bring along a whole new set of challenges.

Hot, parched, and yearning for reinvigoration, we feel like we are on the brink of despair. But we must hold on! We must not give up. Like the tree, let us remain strong despite the challenges, for one who refuses to despair will be *zoche* to see all the good that is to come.

Life Lesson #2: **Tit for Tat? Nope!**

The tree is subject to nonstop mistreatment. Passersby stop to lean on, kick, or spit on the tree, and she is showered with dirt and water constantly. Justice would demand retaliation, but the tree absorbs negativity in silence and continues to provide of her goodness to man. Despite any 'unfair' treatment, the tree still gives forth sweet fruits to nourish the very ones who hurt her.

For us, it can be excruciatingly difficult to swallow the painful words or actions of others – but it is possible. Not easy, but possible. Instead of retaliating, let's learn from the tree and train ourselves to bestow kindness upon the people in our lives, whether we have received kindness from them or the opposite.

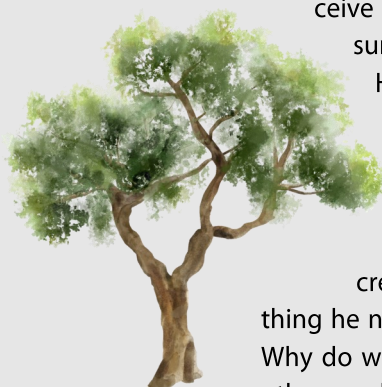
Who can be a better example of this *gadlus* than our *tzaddikim*? So many of our



they continued being a source of inspiration, endlessly giving to the very ones who caused them pain. They continued to encourage, teach and write *sefarim*, putting themselves and their feelings aside so that others would benefit. It is only to their credit that we have so much *chizuk* available to us in our times of need.

**Life Lesson #3:
 Don't Compare**

In His infinite wisdom, Hashem arranged for each plant to be nourished from its individual source: its roots. A tree cannot take rain that was supposed to be for his neighbor; a bush cannot receive a double dose of nutrition by taking sunlight that was intended for another.



How tall or fruitful each plant will be was predestined by Hashem, and there is no way to interfere with His design for each one.

So too, each and every person was created with a plan, as well as everything he needs to complete his mission in life. Why do we waste time and energy looking at others and comparing our lives to theirs? Why do we obsess over others' actions and how they affect us, when it really has nothing to do with us? Instead of getting upset when we see other people getting the very things we wish for, we should turn to the Source of it all and ask Him for whatever we need.

Rarely is it beneficial to compare ourselves to others. When our observations lead us to believe that other people are better than us, it damages our self-image and breeds negative self-talk, because, *"I have nothing good to offer – everyone else does things so much better than me."* This belief is fundamentally false. Every person, no matter how small, can contribute to the world in a way that no one else can.

Comparing can also lead us to think we are better than others, and our behavior then becomes aloof and haughty. We soon begin to expect honor, fame and attention – which is often not forthcoming. The obsessive thoughts of, *"Why isn't everybody recognizing my greatness and according me the honor I deserve?"* cause much unnecessary heartache.

We must stop comparing! Let us 'look at our own plates' and use our unique abilities to grow in *avodas Hashem*.

כי האדם עץ השדה – by remembering the life lessons learned from the tree and living our lives accordingly, we will merit tremendous good both in *Olam Haze* and in *Olam Haba*.



If you truly want to rectify the sins of your youth, listen to the Rebbe. Find a place where you can talk to Hashem in solitude, and pour out your heart to Hashem every day. Share your struggles with Him; tell Him how you must contend with the *yetzer hara* and how he sullies your mind with *aveiros* and entices you to sin.

You can speak to Hashem in your own words, or you can say the following *tefilla*:

"Hashem, I so badly want to be *erlich*, yet I keep succumbing to the *aveira* of *p'gam habris*. Sinning has become a habit for me and I just can't stop, no matter how hard I try. Every time I think I am finally out of the *yetzer hara's* clutches, I regress and fall right back into his grasp! Hashem, I am so lost – what should I do? I am being consumed by *ta'avah*, please save me!

"Hashem, I am so broken. Please have mercy on me and help me repent for all that I have transgressed all my years."

Speak to Hashem in this manner – don't hold yourself back from sharing every detail with Him, and you will ultimately extricate yourself from the *yetzer hara's* grip.

Instead of fasting, establish a *shiur* in Mishnayos. Learn Mishnayos each day, and if you have a hard time understanding what you are learning, just say the words of Torah and this will extract you from your *aveiros*. The Rebbe teaches (*Sichos Haran 19*) that even if a person has already fallen into the *yetzer hara's* clutches and has sunk to the depths of impurity, he can still be saved by learning Torah. No matter how low he has fallen, if he will learn a set amount of Torah each day, he will eventually emerge from his filthy state.

R' Nossan relates (*Chayei Moharan 573*) that after he heard the Rebbe say this, he asked if Torah learning can also help a person who has succumbed to the *aveira* of *p'gam habris* *R"l*. In response, the Rebbe cried out with passion, "Do you know how powerful the Torah is? Torah is stronger and greater than everything."

May Hashem bless you with success in all areas.

Q & A

HOW CAN I ATONE FOR THE MISTAKES OF MY YOUTH?



QUESTION:

To the Rosh Yeshiva shlita,

In my childhood, I was never taught about being vigilant in the area of kedusha, and I sinned with p'gam habris many times, just because I didn't know it is forbidden.

Later on, I learned about the gravity of this aveira and began the arduous process of breaking my bad habits. Baruch Hashem, by now I have managed to break free from this destructive behavior.

*I know that in these days of Shovavim, one can do teshuva for his sins, but how can I go about doing this? If the Rebbe taught us that fasting is not the way for us to repent, what **can** I do to atone for the mistakes of my youth?*

Thank you.

alone all his life. The Rebbe says (*Likutei Moharan 1:141*) that after the person's death, these *kelipos* follow him, crying and lamenting like actual children and causing him much humiliation and disgrace. May Hashem protect us from a bitter fate like this.

Woe unto the person who succumbs to *p'gam habris* and thereby cuts himself off from Hashem. The Zohar says (*Vayechi 219b*), "There is no sin for which *teshuva* does not help, besides for the *aveira* of *p'gam habris*; there is no sinner who will not merit to see the *Shechina*, besides for one who sins with *p'gam habris*." This demonstrates just how severe this *aveira* is.

Hashem had mercy on our generation and sent the holy Rebbe's *neshama* to us. The Rebbe can rectify all the *neshamos* that are held captive to the *aveira* of *p'gam habris*, and with his *eitzos* he brings them all back to Hashem. 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 *aveira*."

The Rebbe gave us a gift called *hisbodedus*. He said that a person should find a private place and pour out his heart to Hashem in his mother tongue, speaking to Him as one would speak to a close friend. He should talk to Hashem about everything that is on his mind and tell Hashem all the details of his struggles with the *yetzer hara*, how he tries so hard to be good but the *yetzer hara* keeps getting the better of him. When a person conducts himself in this manner, he removes all harsh judgment from himself.

(Continued on page 3)

THE ROSH YESHIVA'S RESPONSE:

Dear ...

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 us (*Niddah 13*) that a person who commits this sin deserves to be killed; R' Yitzchak and R' Ami say that it is comparable to murder, and R' Asi says that it is comparable to *avoda zara*.

The end for a person who does not do *teshuva* is very bitter. The *mazikim* he created with this sin don't leave him

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