



SPARKS OF EMUNAH

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AS TAUGHT BY MOHOROSH ZT"L AND THE ROSH YESHIVA SHLIT"A

נתנדב על ידי
הרוצה בעילום שמו
לזכות פרנסה בשפע

CHIZUK
FROM THE
PARSHA

FIRE AND WATER

Why would a person ever do an *aveira*? Sinning makes no sense — why would one consciously do something that cuts him off from Hashem and brings pain in its wake?

The answer is simple. We don't choose to sin — or at least, we don't think we do. The *yetzer hara* uses a host of strategies to make us think we don't have control over our actions, and that's how he gets us to do *aveiros*. Without a way to combat him and his wily tactics, it's very difficult to remain true to Hashem and to the Torah.

Burning or Burned Out?

The first tactic of the *yetzer hara* is "אש" — he sets one's heart afire and thereby causes him to sin. Smoldering with fury, inflamed with jealousy or burning with desire, he finds himself doing *aveiros* almost against his will. He usually knows that his behavior is wrong, but he feels trapped in the *tum'ah* and sees no solution.

The *yetzer hara's* other approach is the exact opposite: a lack of fire, the absence of emotion. He convinces the person that Hashem is not interested in him, thereby smothering the person's passion for *Yiddishkeit*. As a result, the now-apathetic Jew skips *tefillin* (occasionally), misses davening (more often than not), and doesn't even open a *sefer* to learn (for weeks on end).

Although this doesn't seem as dramatic as the outcome of the *yetzer hara* of אש, it's perhaps more damaging — because the person can sin repeatedly without even realizing that he has a problem.



Battling Both

The Rebbe teaches (*Likutei Moharan 1:4*) that the *aveiros* a person commits become deeply etched in his bones, causing many physical and emotional afflictions. However, just as it is possible for a person to do damage, so too is it possible for him to repair (*Likutei Moharan 2:112*) — we just have to know the way to do it. The *passuk* in this week's *parsha* says:

כָּל דָּבָר אֲשֶׁר יִבֵּא בְּאֵשׁ תַּעֲבִירוּ בְּמַיִם וְכָל אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִבֵּא בְּאֵשׁ תַּעֲבִירוּ בְּמַיִם

The way to purify a *keili* depends on the way it was made impure. If it was defiled using heat, it must be purified with heat. If no heat was used, it must be purified with water. So too, the way to fight the *yetzer hara* depends on the tactic he used to cause one to sin.

כָּל דָּבָר אֲשֶׁר יִבֵּא בְּאֵשׁ — When the *yetzer hara* uses אש, burning in us and inciting us to sin, תַּעֲבִירוּ בְּמַיִם — we must fight his fire with the fire of emotion, by turning to Hashem begging Him to help us change.

וְכָל אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִבֵּא בְּאֵשׁ — But when the *yetzer hara* extinguishes our fire and we feel cold and apathetic, תַּעֲבִירוּ בְּמַיִם — we must **continue to serve Hashem — even without fire, even without fervor**. If we will stay strong and persist with our *avodas Hashem*, we'll ultimately regain our passion for *Yiddishkeit*.

May we be *zoche* to remove all impurity from our hearts and truly return to Hashem.

Toch Hanachal, Matos-Masei 5766

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 drunk had better get out of my way!"

The car came closer but *Shmerel* refused to move even one inch out of his lane. "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 words on his gravestone: היה איש צדק ומת בצדקתו

Peacemaker

The *Mishna* teaches us (*Avos 1:12*), "הוי מתלמידי של אהרן אוהב שלום" — "Be among the disciples of Aharon, loving peace and pursuing peace."

Aharon HaKohen was the quintessential "marriage counselor" who worked wonders on even the most hopeless cases.

How did he accomplish this?

Chazal teach us (*Avos D'Reb Nosson 12:4*) that Aharon HaKohen never told a husband, "You're

(Continued on page 2)



NO PRESSURE

Dear ...,

I received your letter.

One must be very careful when he is *mechanech* children, especially when it comes to teaching them how to perform *mitzvos*. It is so important that *mitzvos* be taught in a way that will not instigate pressure or anxiety when fulfilling them. The Rebbe says (*Likutei Moharan 2:44*) that when it comes to *mitzvos*, a person must be very careful to stay away from *chochmos* – thinking too deeply into the intricacies of each *mitzvah* – because these are nonsensical obsessions that ultimately cause one to abandon everything.

Those who are busy with *chochmos* are constantly doubtful as to whether or not they fulfilled each *mitzvah* correctly. They always live with doubt and uncertainty, and their *chumros* cause them to go around depressed and miserable.

In your situation, when your son is already under enormous pressure to fulfill the *mitzvos* correctly, the only way you can help him is with patience and wisdom. You can't make fun of his conduct or tell him to stop because **it will not help**. Instead, work on building his self-esteem and praise him for his behavior. By commending him for his actions and telling him how proud you are that he tries so hard to be good, his obsessions will lessen until they stop entirely.

When he washes his hands repeatedly, tell him what the Rebbe says (*Sefer Hamiddos, Emunah 27*), "By constantly washing one's hands, a person washes his heart from impurities." When he makes a *cheshbon hanefesh*, praise him for living with a purpose and being close to Hashem. When he asks his siblings for forgiveness, praise him for caring about other's feelings. If you will lift him up and help him feel good about himself, his anxiety will gradually disappear. Pressure and *simcha* don't work together; *simcha* is more powerful and it pushes away angst and depression.

Of course, it would have been better if he had internalized the correct way to do *mitzvos* in the first place, but now that the situation has spiraled out of control, you must find another way to battle his "frum" yetzer hara. Try your best to help him with wisdom, compassion and understanding.

May Hashem bless you with success in all areas.

Adapted from The Light of Emunah #3, page 36

wrong! You shouldn't have done that to your wife!" and he never told a wife,

"You're wrong! You shouldn't have said that to your husband!"

So how did he make *shalom*?

He told each spouse separately, "You're right. You're 100% right." And then he would gently say, "But it's not worth a fight. **You're 100% right — now, be smart.**"

A wise person doesn't look at who is right and who is wrong. He moves aside, he gives in, he gives up his comfort and his honor — anything to stay alive, anything to emerge in peace. That is *shalom*; that is the trick of the "Lover of Peace and Pursuer of Peace." Yes, you may be right, but it's better to be smart.

Chazal teach us (*ibid.*) that by the time Aharon HaKohen was *niftar*, there were thousands Aharon's in *Klal Yisrael*, all named after this wise and venerated *tzaddik* who had saved their parents' marriages from crumbling.

The Third Time

The Rebbe considered *vatranus* to be a fundamental *middah* and was careful not to be stubborn about anything. He never pushed his opinion on others or held his ground about a matter that another person felt strongly about.

A *chassid* once came to visit the Rebbe and saw that the entire house was filled with smoke. He knew he needed to act fast. The Rebbe had been suffering from a lung ailment at that time, and smoke inhalation could have been fatal. The *chassid* went to 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 sitting 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 short and succinct: "First, a person asks politely. Then he says it again, louder. The third time, he gets angry... I didn't want to get to the third time, so I didn't ask the first time..."

In life, it's inevitable that people will sometimes "rub you the wrong way" or do things that you feel are wrong or unfair. Your neighbor's car is blocking

(Continued on page 3)



your driveway... again. Your spouse came home late... again. Your son left his belongings scattered all over the house... again.

Thinking that all you need to do is explain yourself again? Say it a little louder? Show him that you're serious? Bad idea. Not only won't it solve the problem; it is likely to make it worse.

Even if you're right, be smart! Let go! No struggles, no anger. The end.

In the Home

The ability to be *mevater* is crucial in order to have a healthy, happy home. Obstinace from either the husband or the wife causes everyone to suffer — either the other spouse is stubborn in response, and the home becomes one that is filled with tension and anger, or the other spouse breaks down from the pressure of living with such an obstinate person.

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. Nonetheless, *chinuch* must be with a lot of patience and *vatranus*. Parents who are too strong with their children can lose them entirely.



And How About You?

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 get what he wants, but his life is not a happy one. On the other hand, when a person gives in in order to accommodate others, he sees many benefits in his own life. He who is *mevater* always wins.

Is it against your nature? Can't imagine always being the one to give in? Ask Hashem for help. 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*.



mitzvah — whether a *mitzvas asei* or a *mitzvas lo sa'asei*; whether it was intentional or unintentional — he must do *teshuva* and confess the sin to Hashem.

Okay, But How?

How does one perform *vidui* (confession)? The Rambam states that a person should say as follows: I beseech You, Hashem, I have sinned before You and I have done such and such. Hashem, I regret what I have done and am ashamed of my actions, and I take it upon myself never to do this sin again.

This is the essence of *vidui*. The Rambam concludes, “וכל המרבה להתודות ומאריך בענין זה, הרי זה משובח” — One who confesses extensively is praiseworthy.

Gaining Affection

If you're looking for a way to become closer to your wife, speak to her kindly and pleasantly, and this will increase her affection for you and cause her to love you. Shlomo Hamelech says (*Mishlei 27:19*), “כמים הפנים לאדם, כן לב האדם, כן לב האדם לאדם” — Just as when one looks into water with a smiling face, he sees a smile reflected back, and when one looks in with an angry face, he sees an angry face reflected back — so it is with a wife. If you'll speak kindly to your wife and give her warm words, she will speak kindly to you in return and provide you with love and affection. Likewise, if you'll help out at home, she'll see that you're sensitive to her needs, and this will bring the two of you closer together.

Gaining Respect

See to learn a bit at home every day. When a woman sees her husband learning, she looks up to him immensely. The Rebbe gave us a *derech halimud* that is easy and sweet (*as explained in Sichos Haran 76*) — even if one struggles to comprehend what he is learning, he should nonetheless keep learning the words of Torah and he will eventually understand. Start learning *Mishnayos* and *Gemara* consistently and quickly, without a strong focus on comprehension.

If your wife will see you learning your *shiurim* at home, and she'll see that you're meticulous about going to daven three times every day, she will look up to you, take pride in you, and treat you with respect.

May Hashem bless you with success in all areas.

Q & A

HOW OPEN SHOULD I BE WITH MY SPOUSE?



QUESTION:

To the Rosh Yeshiva shlita,

What is the right level of openness that should exist between a husband and wife? Is a person supposed to hide things from his wife?

I'm not referring to things that affect one's spouse or their relationship. My question is about one's own shortcomings and/or weaknesses in Yiddishkeit — can a person have an open conversation with his wife from time to time, where each spouse would share their own struggles and insecurities? The idea would be to preface such conversations with an agreement that everything will be laid out openly, and that neither spouse will look down on the other as a result of the discussion.

I believe this can foster a tremendous sense of closeness and create a comfortable, completely open relationship. Does this approach make sense?

Thank you for everything.

Chazal teach us (*Avos 1:5*), “אל תרבה שיחה עם האשה” — Don't engage in excessive conversation with a woman, and this is referring to one's own wife. This advice is perplexing, because who should a person speak with, if not for his own wife?

Mohorosh explains (see *Bartenura*, *ibid.*) that with this *mishna*, Chazal are teaching us that **a person should never speak negatively about himself to his wife**. If a woman hears that her husband is not as smart, capable, or *erlich* as she thought, she begins to look down upon him, and this ultimately leads to conflict.

What kind of things **is** a person supposed to say to his wife? Only positive words. A husband must encourage his wife and try to make her happy, and share positive things about himself — his successes both in *ruchniyus* and *gashmiyus*, complimentary things that others say about him, and the like — and his wife will then respect him and hold him in high esteem. Sharing the *aveiros* one has done or still struggles with, only causes problems.

Shh! It's a Secret!

Don't tell other people about your struggles and failures — rather, discuss it only with Hashem. Chazal teach us (*Berachos 34b*) that a person must not recount his *aveiros* to another, as the *passuk* says (*Tehillim 32:1*), “אשרי נשוי פשע כסוי” — praiseworthy is he who conceals his sins.

All this applies only to disclosing one's sins to people. However, regarding Hashem, it's a *mitzvas asei* to relate every bad thing a person has done — in thought, speech, and action. The Rambam states in clear and explicit detail (*Hilchos Teshuva 1:1*), that if a person has transgressed any

(Continued on page 3)

THE ROSH YESHIVA'S RESPONSE:

Dear ...,

It's not advisable to tell others about your *aveiros* — or “weaknesses in Yiddishkeit,” as you call them — and certainly not to your own wife. While it may seem that doing so will create a sense of comfort and closeness in the relationship, but the truth is that it will only make things worse.

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