



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"A

נתנדב על ידי
הרוצה בעילום שמו
לזכות זרע של קיימא

CHIZUK FROM THE PARSHA

THE MIDDLE WAY

Balance is very difficult to achieve.

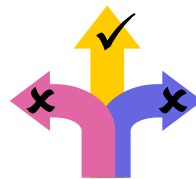
Human nature is inclined to extremes — raising children with excessively strict discipline, or letting them do whatever they want; keeping to a rigorous diet or overindulging in any and all food; sitting and learning for hours each day or not opening a *sefer* at all; and so on... However, the Rambam teaches (*Hilchos De'os* 1:4) that a person must always choose the *derach ha-mizvot* — the middle path — and never veer too much to the right or to the left.

Extremes are never a good thing, and especially in areas of *avodas Hashem*. When a person is consumed with extreme spiritual fervor, he is liable to detach from the world completely in order to devote himself to serving Hashem. The problem with this is that it's not sustainable — since the person is driven primarily by emotion, **he is in danger of losing everything if he just loses his momentum.**

At the same time, one must beware of the opposite extreme as well. **When a person loses his inner drive and allows hopelessness to overcome him, his entire *avodas Hashem* is in danger.** Unenthusiastic and unmotivated, he is likely to drop everything.

Double Protection

The Rebbe says (*Likutei Moharan* 1:61) that the only way to keep oneself on the middle path is by having *emunas chachamim*, by heeding the words of *tzaddikim*. The *passuk* says (*Devarim* 17:11), “לא תסור מן הדבר אשר” — “Do not budge from the words that they tell you, neither to the left nor to the right. The Rebbe explains this to mean that the ***tzaddikim* protect us from the danger of both extremes — the “far right” (ימין) of doing too much, and the “far left” (שמאל) of losing interest and giving up.**



This is the lesson in this week's *parsha*. The *passuk* states as follows:

לא תוסיפו על הדבר אשר אנכי מצוה אתכם ולא תגרעו ממנו לשמור את מצות ה'... אשר אנכי מצוה אתכם

You shall not add to the word that I command you and you shall not subtract from it, to observe the commandments of Hashem... that I command you.

The words in the *passuk* seem to be repetitive. Wouldn't it be enough to say “That I commanded you” just once for both parts of Hashem's command?

With the Rebbe's teachings in mind, we can understand the *passuk* on a deeper level: **לא תוסיפו על הדבר** — Don't add to the Torah with your passion. Don't be overzealous, because this may cause you to ultimately go against Hashem's will. Now, how can one achieve this level of balance? Only with **אשר אנכי מצוה אתכם** — by listening to Moshe, the *tzaddik*.

The opposite attitude is also detrimental. **ולא תגרעו ממנו** — don't give up on yourself and stop trying to achieve your spiritual goals, consequently “subtracting” from the *mitzvos* of the Torah. The *passuk* then repeats the words **אשר אנכי מצוה אתכם**, because we also need the *tzaddik* to be able to keep going when we feel despondent.

May we be *zoche* to always heed the guidance of *tzaddikim*, and in this way we will become truly *erliche Yidden*.

Zos Hatorah, Va'eschanan 4

MOHOROSH SPEAKS

EMOTION-LESS

Human beings are very good at talking. The power of speech is what distinguishes people from animals, and we personify this ability exceptionally well.

The Rebbe teaches (*Likutei Moharan* 2:25) that the same way a person speaks to a good friend — easily, frequently and naturally — he should also use his power of speech to talk to Hashem. This is called “*hisbodedus*” and is a fundamental concept in Breslev.

As anyone who tried it can attest, *hisbodedus* is gratifying. When a person is overcome with yearning or overflowing with emotion, talking to Hashem is easy and feels good. Yet the challenge begins when one's heart is dry and cold — when saying even one word to Hashem takes immense effort. Yet the Rebbe teaches (*Likutei Moharan* 1:99) that a person should push himself to keep doing *hisbodedus*, regardless of the presence or absence of emotion.

Double Talk

In this week's *haftarah*, the Navi says (*Yeshaya* 40:1), “נחמו נחמו עמי” — Be consoled, be consoled, My nation. The double consolation teaches an important lesson about *tefilla* and *hisbodedus*.

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CONTROL YOUR ANGER

Dear ...

Try with all your might not to lose your temper. The Rebbe says (*Sefer Hamiddos, Os Ka'as*) that a woman who is prone to anger destroys her home. When children see their mother constantly being short-tempered and irritable, they develop anxiety and low self-esteem. Additionally, the Rebbe says that angry parents will have children who are fools. Mohorosh explains that constantly shouting at and belittling children frightens them and causes them to become withdrawn, and they therefore grow up emotionally lacking.

Heed the Rebbe's advice for controlling anger. Start your day with a nourishing meal — a mother must realize that in order to be calm, she cannot be hungry. The Rebbe says (*ibid.*) that when one eats bread in the morning, it will protect him from succumbing to anger. Start today – wash on bread for breakfast and eat well, and you will remain calmer all day.

Above all else, a person must daven to Hashem to be protected from the *middah* of anger. This is especially important on *erev Shabbos*, a time when short tempers and angry words are all too common. *Shabbos* is the source of all blessing, and one must be sure not to spoil the day with anger. The *Chida* writes (*Sefer Avodas Hakodesh 4:140*) that on *erev Shabbos*, the *yetzer hara* has a mission to create arguments and tension between husband and wife, in order to ruin the atmosphere in their home for the entire *Shabbos*. He works overtime to create conflict and friction in every Jewish home on *erev Shabbos*, because he knows that when a husband and wife live together in harmony, he has no control over them and cannot lure them to commit *aveiros*.

Tefilla is a crucial component in overcoming the *yetzer hara*. Daven to be able to look the other way and not be triggered every time things don't go your way. This is the primary way to be protected from the *yetzer hara*, whose only goal is to create strife, as the Rebbe says (*Sefer Hamiddos, Os Meriva*), "The *yetzer hara* is found in a place of arguments and conflict."

May Hashem bless you with success in all areas.

Adapted from The Light of Emunah #2, page 50

Start your day with a nourishing meal — in order to remain calm, you cannot be hungry!

All the pain we experience in *galus* is rooted in our perceived distance from Hashem. When we forget about Hashem, every mishap causes frustration, every hardship causes misery, and every challenge causes despair.

This is *galus* — *galus* of the mind. *Galus* of forgetting that Hashem has never left us and that He is holding our hands every single moment.

Redemption from this *galus* is only possible through *hisbodedus*. Talking to Hashem brings us close to Him, renewing our belief in His never-ending love and kindness. **Since our relationship with Hashem is so important, it cannot wait for a time when we feel inspired.** We must talk to Hashem constantly, whether our minds are at peace or in turmoil, and whether our hearts are impassioned or impassive.

This is the meaning of the double "נחמ" in the *haftarah*. Our solace is having a connection with Hashem, which is developed by talking to Him all the time. Although dry, disconnected *tefillos* may seem worthless to us, the time will come when we will have a **two-fold** consolation, when we will see the value of all *tefillos* — **both** the fervent and the forced.

First Without Feeling, Then With Feeling

Furthermore, the Rebbe teaches (*Likutei Moharan 1:99*) that when a person persists in his *hisbodedus* even when he feels nothing, his emotions will eventually follow. Additionally, all his past *tefillos* will automatically be elevated.

Parshas Va'eschanan begins with Moshe Rabbeinu's pleas to enter Eretz Yisrael. The Rebbe explains the first *passuk* of the *parsha* as follows: 'וְאֶתְחַנּוּ אֵלָּה' — One must talk to Hashem constantly, regardless of what he does or doesn't feel. What will follow is **בְּעֵת הַהוּא** — ultimately, the time will come when **לֵאמֹר** — the words will be easy for him to say because his heart will have opened up to feel the connection to Hashem.

This is true in all areas of *avodas Hashem*. As we try to fulfill Hashem's *mitzvos* in the most ideal manner, we forget that **even mitzvos done halfheartedly have value**. In a way, they have even more value than those done with passion and excitement, because Hashem looks at the effort we invest — it's much harder for a person to daven, learn and do *mitzvos* when his heart is not in it; therefore, when one exerts himself to keep up his *avodas Hashem* despite his lack of passion, his actions are even more cherished by Hashem.

Seeing or Believing?

Chazal tell us (*Megilla 6b*), "אם יאמר לך אדם יעתי ומצאתי, תאמין" — If a person tells you that he tried and succeeded, believe him. But wouldn't success be quite evident? That which can be **seen** does not require **belief** — why must we **believe** when a person says that his efforts bore fruit? Can't we just look and see?

R' Nossan explains (*Likutei Halachos Birchos Hapeiros 5*) that in spiritual matters, success isn't always apparent. No matter

Ultimately, his heart will open up and he'll feel a powerful connection with Hashem.

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how much effort we invest in our *avodas Hashem*, it doesn't always seem that we accomplished our goals.

Still fighting to daven each *tefilla*.

Still struggling to learn.

Still battling the same *taavos*.

Still grappling with the same bad *middos*.

We must remember that **investing effort in *avodas Hashem* is already a success**. Even when the results are not visible, we must believe that we have succeeded. No good deed is ever lost — every attempt to improve (and even just the desire to improve!) is added to our spiritual treasury. We must only have patience and stamina to keep going, and ultimately, we won't just have to **believe** in our success — we'll be able to **see** it, too.

Plus One More

A man once came to seek the counsel of R' Dovid Moshe of Tchartikov. He confided that his father-in-law had recently stopped going to shul and had dropped davening altogether. Knowing that his father-in-law deeply respected the tzaddik, he asked if R' Dovid Moshe could perhaps intervene.

R' Dovid Moshe called the father-in-law to his home and gently inquired about the veracity of this report. Shamefacedly, the father-in-law admitted that it was true, *tefilla* for him was a thing of the past. "For months, each time I prepared to daven, my mind wandered to improper thoughts and unfiltered territory," he defended himself. "No matter how hard I battled these thoughts and tried to refocus, I was unsuccessful. I decided that I should rather skip davening altogether than send such unbefitting *tefillos* to Hashem."

The tzaddik listened but disagreed. "If you'll continue to daven despite your struggles," he said, "the obstacles will eventually disappear and your *tefillos* will ultimately be completely pure. However, if you give up, there will be nothing left of your Yiddishkeit at all."

He explained this with the *passuk* (Tehillim 87:7), "ה' יספר בכתוב עמים" — Hashem's method of counting is the same as the nations of the world. In Lashon Hakodesh, numbers are written out in words: *אחד, עשרה, מאה* ... In Yiddish, too, they are written in words: *אינס, צען, הונדערט* ... However, in the languages of the non-Jews, numbers are usually written in digits: 1, 10, 100... That's the way Hashem counts.

"You may rate your davening as an uninspired, useless zero. Day after day, you see yourself as a complete failure, adding numerous zeroes to your spiritual bank account. However, the day will come that your heart will be awakened and you will begin to feel a closeness to Hashem. Then, the *אחד יחיד ומיוחד* will join with all those zeroes, and where you previously had 000000000, you will have 1,000,000,000!"

All good deeds are worthwhile, no matter how poorly they were performed. Even when they seem small and insignificant, these "uninspired" *mitzvos* are enormously valuable.

May Hashem give us the strength to persevere even when we are devoid of emotion, and grant us the ability to keep going even in the face of apparent failure, and with this we will merit immeasurable benefit in this world and in *Olam Haba*.

"Mistreatment" is when parents shame their children and tear them apart. For example, if a mother asks her daughter to help out, and the daughter tries to avoid the task (as all healthy children do), attacking the child with, "You're so lazy!" or, "You'll never be able to get married!" is called abuse. Or if a father wants to train his disorganized son to be more put-together, berating him with, "You slob!" or "Disgusting!" is called abuse. When parents belittle their children like this, the children will not only go off the *derech* — they will also grow up to be emotionally unstable adults.

Comparing children and demanding that they measure up to others is also mistreatment. A parent should not reproach a child by saying, "Why can't you be well-behaved like your brother?" or "Why can't you look normal and put together like the neighbor?"

Constantly criticizing children is damaging and dangerous, whereas **having expectations of children and requiring them to help is 100% okay and necessary.**

Most Importantly...

The most important component of *chinuch* is to daven for good children.

The story is told of a Breslevar chassid who was very successful with his children. When he was asked how he was *zoche* to such *erliche* children, he said, "What do you think — that children are apples that you can pluck from a tree?! I shed many tears that I should merit to see *nachas* from them. I used to cry every day to Hashem that He should give me *erliche* children, and that's why I was *zoche* to raise such a beautiful family."

May Hashem grant you *nachas* from your entire family.

Q & A

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO "GIVE CHILDREN LOVE"?



QUESTION:

To the Rosh Yeshiva shlita,

Am I supposed to be afraid of my own children?

Let me explain:

I've heard the Rosh Yeshiva speak many times about the importance of raising children with warmth and love, because otherwise they might turn their backs on Yiddishkeit. Since then, I realized that I'm actually afraid of my children — every interaction I have with them is dominated by my fear that they'll go off the derech if I'm not careful with the way I treat them — and to that end, every single word I say is carefully measured.

I try my best to give them love, but I think I'm doing it only out of my anxiety. Whenever a child of mine is upset about anything, I become extremely frightened — I don't show it, but I think to myself, "Oh no! Maybe I'm not giving him enough love, and he might go off the derech later on!"

The Rosh Yeshiva often says that in regard to chutzpah, a parent must never look the other way and rather be stern with the child to correct his behavior. I was wondering — is this only with chutzpah? What about when a child behaves badly in other areas — am I allowed to tell him, "I don't let you do this, and you must obey me"?

In short, can the Rosh Yeshiva clarify the proper balance between knowing that it's okay if a child is upset, while also being careful not to mistreat him because that might cause him to abandon Yiddishkeit?

Thank you very much for everything.

THE ROSH YESHIVA'S RESPONSE:

Dear ...,

A wise man once said, "Part of being careful is not to be too careful." See to invest a great deal of warmth into your children so that they should enjoy being at home and feel good around you. Make every Shabbos seuda an enjoyable affair — schmooze with your children, tell them nice stories, and listen to their stories, even if they're not particularly interesting to you. Make sure Torah and mitzvos are a source of joy in your home — not something associated with tension or criticism.

Nothing Wrong with Saying "No"

Don't take it too far.

Giving a child everything they ask for is not called "love" — it's called "weak". Parents who can't say no show their own weakness, and are setting their children up for disaster.

Children who get everything they want lack the most important thing of all: the ability to deal with life. When they grow up, and for the first time are faced with the reality that not everything goes the way they want, they simply fall apart.

What is Abuse?

You're mixing up two unrelated things. If a parent tells a child what to do and the child gets upset, that's not called "mistreatment". Where does it come in to be afraid that he'll go off the derech because he's upset? The opposite is true. **If a parent is not mechanech his children and lets them do whatever they want — that's when they go off the derech.** Therefore, I don't understand your question at all.

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