

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 TETZAVE
SHABBOS ZACHOR
8 ADAR, 5785
ISSUE #41

CHIZUK from the PARSHA

DESTROYING AMALEK

תִּמְחָה אֶת זֵכֶר עַמְלֵק מִתַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם לֹא תִשָּׁכַח

Wipe out the memory of Amalek from under the heaven – you shall not forget!

Adar is a month that is full of talk about destroying Amalek. Yet we must first understand – what is Amalek? What is its power and what are we so bent on wiping out?

The letters of עמלק have the same *gematria* as ספק, because Amalek and *safek* are one and the same. Amalek's goal is to bring doubts into our minds; he makes us wonder (*Shemos 17:7*), "הִישׁ ה' בְּקִרְבָנוּ אִם אֵין" – *Is Hashem with us? Has He forsaken us?*" By fooling us into thinking that the world runs by the laws of nature, Amalek robs us of what is most precious: our *emunah*.

The Rebbe says (*Sichos Haran 53*), חיינו חיים, מי שיש לו אמונה, *emunah* makes it possible to live a happy and successful life. With the belief that absolutely nothing happens by chance, a person can survive and thrive despite his challenges. *Chazal* teach us (*Chulin 7*) that a person cannot stub his finger unless it was pre-ordained by Hashem. If a small bruise on a pinky is pre-destined, "bigger deals" certainly are, too. Health issues, *parnassa* problems, *shidduchim* struggles, etc... *Emunah* tells us that everything is part of Hashem's precise plan, yet Amalek tries to make us doubt that.

Safek is all about questioning, wondering. We can combat Amalek by filling ourselves with the certainty that Hashem is in control and that He runs the world in the best possible way. The Rebbe says (*Likutei Moharan 2:44*) that *emunah* is dependent on one's speech, as the *passuk* says (*Tehillim 89:2*), "אודיע אמונתך בפי" – I will make *emunah* known with my mouth." By speaking about Hashem and His greatness in our conversations with others, we fight the voice of doubt and strengthen our *emunah*. The more we speak about Hashem, the more we remove *sefeikos* from our minds.

Amalek fills us with other doubts, too – **self-doubt**. He causes us to think defeatist thoughts of, "Can I still do *teshuva* after everything I've done?" "Who needs me anyway?" "Are my *tefillos* even heard?" These doubts paralyze us, causing us to give up on ourselves and our *avodas Hashem*.

In order to destroy Amalek, we need to strengthen our *emunah* in **ourselves**. We need to remember that yes! We **do** make a difference! Yes, every small *mitzvah* counts! Yes, every little thing we do gives Hashem a *nachas ruach*! Appreciating our worth propels us forward in *avodas Hashem* and allows us to achieve even more.

Only after getting rid of the Amalek inside us can we feel true happiness and experience the joy of Purim. This *Shabbos Zachor*, let's remove every bit of doubt from our minds and destroy Amalek once and for all. Let us remember that Hashem runs the world and takes care of us at every moment, and that every *mitzvah* we do has enormous value.

Let's get ready for a real *simchas Purim*!

Ish Yehudi, Shabbos Zachor U'michiyas Amalek



MOHOROSH SPEAKS

מרבין בשמחה!



At last, Purim is fast approaching!

The light and joy of Purim is palpable from the beginning of *Adar*. The Gemara says (*Yerushalmi, Megilla*) that *Megillas Esther* can be read all through the month of *Adar*. Consequently, if a person goes on a long journey and will be away for Purim without a *megilla*, he can be *yotzei* the *mitzvah* of *mikrah megilla* from *Rosh Chodesh Adar*. The entire month is somewhat like Purim itself.

משכנס אדר מרבין בשמחה!

These words are said, sung and hung on signs all over. Joy is such an essential part of Purim and all of *Adar*. Yes, it is a *mitzvah* to be happy all year (*Likutei Moharan 2:24*), but in the month of *Adar*, **מרבין** בשמחה – we must **increase** our *simcha*, doing everything in our power to be happy. We hang up signs as a reminder to do whatever possible to remain happy, no matter what. By being happy in *Chodesh Adar*, we tap into all the spiritual benefits of these special days.

The Gemara says (*Beitzah 15b*)
הרוצה שיתקומו נכסיו
"one – יטע בהן אדר"

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Dear ...

I received your letter.

I beg of you, don't have any association with non-Jews and certainly don't mess around with them. If you would only know how strongly a goy hates a Yid, you would definitely keep your distance. Chazal quote Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, who states (*Sifri Behaaloscha 69*), "It is a well-known *halacha* that Eisav despises Yaakov." Mohorosh points out that this "*halacha*" is an undisputed one; everyone agrees with Rabbi Shimon's stance.

Do not place yourself in harm's way by going to a park where non-Jews convene. Always maintain your suspicion of them and do not form any connections with any of them, for otherwise they will surely end up beating you... or worse. All too often, the news tells of tragedies in which Jews were beaten or killed by their non-Jewish counterparts, *Hashem yishmereinu*.

Regarding your question about *shemiras einayim*: as you leave your home each day, place your hand on the *mezuzah* and plead with Hashem to help you keep your eyes pure. Say the following *tefilla*: **"Hashem, please help me protect my eyes from looking at what is forbidden. Please help me keep my eyes holy!"** When you feel temptation burning in you, turn to Hashem and beg Him, **"Hashem, please protect me from looking at things which contaminate my *neschama*! Save me, Hashem! I so badly want to be *erlich* – please help me remain pure!"**

A person who is careful to guard his eyes merits a wonderful marriage in which he and his wife relish every moment together. On the other hand, one who does not guard his eyes loses everything dear to him. Marriage becomes boring and all the pleasure in life is snuffed out.

Remain strong with being *maavir sedra* and learning Mishnayos and Gemara every day. Gemara protects a person from all the forces that seek to harm him.

I hope you will obey everything written in this letter – by doing so, you will merit a blessed life in This World and in Olam Haba.

Adapted from *The Light of Emunah #2*, page 165



who wishes to yield a good crop should grow the plant called "*Adar*."

What is this *Adar* plant? Why will it make a person be successful? The Rebbe teaches (*Sefer Hamiddos, Simcha 2:1*) that he who is happy will always be successful. This is what the Gemara is teaching us: הרוצה שיתקיימו נכסיו – if you would like to be successful both in *ruchniyus* and in *gashmiyus*, יטע בהן אדר – instill in yourself the *simcha* of *Chodesh Adar*. Your happiness will bring with it tremendous *hatzlacha*.

Am I Really Happy?

How can a person know if he is really happy?

The nature of joy is that it spreads. Real, internal happiness is contagious – it spills forth and expands to include others, making them happy as well.

Adar, the month of joy, personifies this. It's a month full of *chessed*: first is *Shabbos Shekalim*, which teaches us to give *tzedakah*, followed by the *minhag* to give *tzedakah* on *erev Purim*. Then *Purim* itself is full of *tzedakah* and *chessed*: we give *mishloach manos* and *matanos l'evyonim*, we invite family and friends for the *seuda*, and we even begin collecting money for *kimcha d'pische*! We do so much *chessed* this month because when we are truly happy, we want to give to others so that they should taste the joy as well.

Okay, But How?

"Be happy" is very easy to say but hard to actually achieve. Every person has hardships that can break his spirit to the point that he can't even put a smile on his face. The truth is, however, that being happy when everything goes well is nothing special; true greatness is to remain happy **despite** the difficulties. If you can strengthen yourself to be *b'simcha* even when times are tough, that is a sign that you are truly great.

Such emotional fortitude is only possible with *emunah*. Remind yourself of the basics: Hashem is always with you. Everything He does is with tremendous *rachmanus*. Absolutely nothing happens by chance. Taking this to heart will keep you strong in the face of life's difficulties, and you will be able to stay happy in all circumstances.

Here's another way to bring yourself joy: think into the *mitzvos* you do each day, most of which come so naturally. They are all part of the Torah that we have the special privilege to keep – this is a reason for unending celebration! How long are we in this world for? Just a few short years... How happy we must be that we can fill our days with *mitzvos* that'll carry us forevermore!

Do you keep Shabbos? Do you eat kosher food? Do you have a *mezuzah* on your door? Dance and sing! You are following a commandment given by Hashem Himself – to little you! How much luckier can a person be?

When a person rejoices with each *mitzvah*, he



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demonstrates his belief in the Master of the world and in His Torah.

In Part One of Haman's wicked plot to annihilate all of *Klal Yisrael*, he said the following (*Esther 3:8*): "ודתיהם שונות מכל עם" – their religion is different from every nation." R' Nosson explains (*Likutei Halachos, Nefilas Apayim, 4*) that Haman informed Achashveirosh that keeping the Torah makes the *Klal Yisrael* different from all other nations. Not because they have *mitzvos* – every nation has a set of laws that they must follow – but rather because of the **way** they follow *halacha*. The laws that governments put into place are always played around with; the people come up with many ways to sidestep them. There's definitely no joy there. The Jews, on the other hand, rejoice in doing the *mitzvos* – to the fullest extent! That's what bothered Haman so much. In his wickedness, he couldn't handle that we do *mitzvos* happily and we are connected to Something Higher.

Mitzvos should be a source of joy for every Jew.

Today is Not Forever

Hardships come up. We all have days when life drags us down and it's hard to be happy. Remember, though, that this day will soon be history and this challenge will be just a memory. Don't let it get you down! Don't waste your time on this world moping.

Chazal say (*Tanchumah Shemini*) לא כל השמחה ממתנת לאדם, מי ששמה היום שמה למחר – don't wait to become happy because happiness is fleeting; it isn't sustainable unless you work on **making yourself** happy, no matter what you are going through. Don't push off happiness for tomorrow – you don't know what tomorrow will bring! Work on being happy **today!**



Your happiness is not dependent on your circumstances. The choice of how to live life is in **your** hands. The *passuk* says (*Devarim 11:26*), ראה אנכי נתון לפניכם היום ברכה וקללה – Hashem gives you **the day itself**; you choose what to do with it; will you make it a ברכה or a קללה? By choosing to focus either on the positive or on the negative, you make it a happy day or a sad one. ובחרת בחיים – choose the good life, the happy life. The successful life.

Getting There

Working on yourself? Don't do it alone!

A fundamental concept in Breslev is *hisbodedus* – talking to Hashem in your own words. Tell him all that is on your mind: all that you are grateful for, all that bothers you and all that you are struggling with. We sometimes think that self-improvement is "on us" and is our responsibility, but the truth is that we could and should ask Hashem for help in **all** areas of our lives, including self-improvement.

The Rebbe says (*Likutei Moharan 1:52*) that when a person asks Hashem for help in his *avodas hamiddos*, the proper way to go about this is by focusing on one area at a time. He should ask and plead and beg for help with one specific *middah*, only moving on to the next after he succeeds in conquering the first one. The obvious question arises: which *middah* should be first? When we are full of negative character traits, where should we begin?

Mohorosh says that the first area to work on is *simcha*. All other bad *middos* stem from sadness and depression; through happiness, we will improve in all areas.

Fortunate is he who is happy in the month of *Adar* – and all year long. *A freilichen tamid!*

Sichos Mohorosh 16, Chodesh Adar, Simcha 7, 8, 10, 13



THE ROSH YESHIVA SAYS:

"The yetzer hara works overtime to fill each yom tov with tension and fighting, because these sacred times put his entire "career" at risk. **Yom tov is a time when we can disconnect from our day-to-day struggles and reconnect with Hashem** – and this is what the yetzer hara is afraid of. When we prepare for yom tov with joy and use the holy days to connect with Hashem and with our families, all his work from the entire year is for naught. Therefore, he ensures that yom tov will come with so much negativity that we will not be able to maximize these precious days.

Take a few moments each day to ask Hashem to grant you a joyful yom tov and protect you from the ugly middah of anger. This is how you will be zoche to a beautiful yom tov."

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Q & A



MY SON DOES MITZVOS WITH TOO MUCH PRESSURE

Question:

To the Rosh Yeshiva shlita,

Thank you for all the shiurim and chizuk – they bring me clarity and reignite my connection with Hashem.

I wanted to ask for guidance on how to deal with my eight-year-old son. Recently, he began doing mitzvos with an enormous amount of pressure. He washes his hands frequently out of fear that they might be tamei, he constantly worries and wonders if he perhaps he did any particular aveira and does teshuva every few minutes, and he asks his friends and siblings for forgiveness multiple times a day. All this is done with a terrible pressure and anxiety.

What can I do to help him?



The Rosh Yeshiva's Response:

Dear...,

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 ac-

tions 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 your endeavors.

Adapted from The Light of Emunah #3, page 36

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