

SPARKS OF EMUNAH



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PARSHAS VAYAKHEL
SHABBOS PARAH
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CHIZUK from the PARSHA

THE JOY OF SHABBOS

לא תבערו אש בכל משבתיכם ביום השבת

You shall not kindle a fire in any of your dwellings on Shabbos.

Parshas Vayakhel, a parsha that is almost exclusively dedicated to the building of the *mishkan*, unexpectedly begins with two *pesukim* about keeping Shabbos, specifically mentioning the prohibition against lighting a fire. Why did Moshe Rabbeinu have to give this introduction before teaching about building the *mishkan*? And why specifically this *issur* when there were 38 other *melachos* to choose from?

Shabbos is more than just a day of rest. The Rebbe says (*Likutei Moharan 2:17*) that during the week, our minds are in a state of *galus*. Occupied as we are by the pressures of day-to-day living, it is easy to lose our focus. We tend to forget that Hashem is the only One in control and attribute power to mere humans, thinking that they can help us and/or harm us. Shabbos offers not just a break from the mundane, but also the opportunity to liberate our minds from shackles of mistaken thinking. Shabbos takes our minds out of *galus*.

Joy on Shabbos enables us to achieve even more. The Rebbe says (*ibid.*) that by being very happy on Shabbos, a person can attain true *yiras Shamayim* – the certainty and clarity that Hashem is “running the show” and that absolutely nothing can happen without Him. Happiness liberates the mind, as the *passuk* says (*Yeshaya 55:12*), “כי לי לא אירא מה יעשה לי אדם – Hashem is with me; I am not afraid of anyone (*Tehillim 117:6*). Nobody can harm me because only Hashem is in control.



What was the purpose of building the *mishkan*? Chazal teach us (*Tanchuma Teruma*), נתאוו – Hashem desired a dwelling place in this world. Not only did He want the upper worlds know that He is the Almighty; Hashem wanted every person living in our very physical world to also know that there is no one but Him. Thus, the lesson of the *mishkan* and the lesson of Shabbos are one and the same: instilling *emunah* in us. Moshe Rabbeinu taught about Shabbos first, because this is what develops our *emunah* and allows the *shechina* to truly rest among us.

There are many acts that are forbidden Shabbos, but the prohibition against lighting a fire holds special significance in this case. The *Zohar* explains (*Tikunei Zohar 125*) that this refers to the fire of anger, a *middah* that is the antithesis of *emunah*. Anger can exist only when a person attributes power to people; forgetting about Hashem’s total control, he blames others when things don’t go his way. It is so easy to fall into this trap, yet we must remember that on Shabbos, anger is more dangerous than fire! If a person loses himself and gets angry on Shabbos, he brings poverty and suffering upon himself in the coming week.

It’s crucial to avoid any fighting on erev Shabbos and certainly on Shabbos itself. One must be smart and give in, doing everything in his power to make his home a happy place. Let us allow the *shechina* to rest in our homes! Let’s allow ourselves to feel the presence of Hashem and thus merit all the *yeshuos* that will inevitably come along.

Toch Hanachal, Vayakhel 5760

MOHOROSH SPEAKS

SUCCESS

“ We spend our lives chasing success, in the pursuit of the elusive state of happiness. It’s a mad race to complete the checklist. Get married. Buy a car. Have children. Secure a well-paying job. Buy a house. Invest money well. Marry off the children. Live happily ever after.

We would all love for our lives to be perfect – smooth, easy and problem-free. We wish to find the mystical formula that will enable us to sail through life and meet milestone after milestone without any glitches on the way. Sometimes in a quiet moment, we’ll stop and wonder if success is even attainable, if happiness is even possible. Is there any way to achieve it?

Tip #1: Shift your Mindset

No person is a stranger to disappointment. We have visions of the way things should be in order for us to be happy; inevitably, though, our carefully thought-out plans often

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Dear ...

I received your letter.

Even after a person does *teshuva*, he must keep in mind that the *kelipos* that were created with his *aveiros* will continue to chase him and attempt to drag him back to his past behavior. With a force that is almost cruel in its strength, the *kelipos* attack him again and again, causing him to fall back into his *aveiros* until he despairs of ever truly repenting. However, if the person will remain steadfast and again do *teshuva* each time he stumbles, continually pleading with Hashem to forgive him for his *aveiros*, he will succeed in eradicating all the *kelipos* that pursue him.

My beloved brother, listen to the *chizuk* the Rebbe imparts (*Likutei Moharan 2:48*): צריכין להיות עקשן גדול בעבודת ה' – one must be extremely stubborn when it comes to *avodas Hashem* and not be deterred even when he doesn't seem to be making any progress. The *yetzer hara* repeatedly pushes one down in order to cause him to despair of doing *teshuva*. Yet when a person is stubborn, and despite repeatedly succumbing to sin he returns to Hashem each time anew, then he will ultimately rise to great heights in *avodas Hashem*.

Remain strong and don't give up! You're not alone in your battle; the same happens to every person – as soon as one resolves to do *teshuva*, he encounters even stronger and more challenging *nisyonos* than before. The Rebbe states further (*ibid.*): "This is the tactic the *yetzer hara* uses when he sees he is losing control; when the person nearly enters the threshold of *kedusha*, the *yetzer hara* pulls out all the weapons in his arsenal to bring the person down so that he will despair."

This battle is your beauty and Hashem revels in it. He sees your *nisyonos*, how your *yetzer hara* is so, so strong inside you, and yet even after failing you still pick yourself up and return to Him. **One who falls yet cries out to Hashem, "Ribono shel Olam, I want to be *erlich* – have pity on me!" accomplishes something that even a *malach* cannot achieve.**

May Hashem bless you with success in all your endeavors.

Adapted from *The Light of Emunah #3*, page 85



go awry. However, one must keep in mind that the setbacks are not what define a person as a success or failure; rather, it is one's **thoughts** in those crucial moments which determine the outcome.

Sitting across from his therapist, Ezra bemoaned the many reasons for his misery. "My fourth grade teacher didn't like me and my principal never recognized my potential. I was rejected from the yeshiva I should have attended. I could have gotten engaged to a great girl but another guy did instead, so I married an incompetent wife who can't do anything right. In short," he sighed, "my life is a mess and it's everyone else's fault."

The first and most crucial technique for attaining success is to subjugate oneself entirely to Hashem. It's easy to blame others for our misfortunes; however, pointing fingers doesn't accomplish much. Instead of complaining, we must remember that everything in our lives was ordained by Hashem Himself.

*Chazal say (Chulin 7b) that all occurrences (and annoyances) are predetermined in *shamayim* – even the minor discomfort of a stubbed toe! This means that no one in the world can take anything that belongs to you – your job, your *shidduch*, or even your piece of cake. Hashem has a brilliantly designed plan with which nobody can interfere.*

When one makes the mistake of thinking that people have any power whatsoever, he lives in misery. Constantly looking over his shoulder, he thinks that everyone else has it all together. *Everyone in my shul owns a car, a house and a flourishing business*, he gripes. *Why am I the only one who is not successful? Why am I the only one who is struggling?* These harmful thoughts and lack of confidence in himself soon become a self-fulfilling prophesy and he becomes an unmotivated good-for-nothing.

The cure for this is *emunah*, remembering that Hashem is right here, guiding and directing every detail of our lives in the best way possible. This mindset shift is liberating and empowering, and it helps us succeed in all areas.

Tip #2: Watch your Words

"Before I speak, I am the master over my words. After I speak, my words become the master over me."

Almost all the problems we face are caused by words spoken carelessly. We often underestimate the power our words have, whether for good or bad.

"When I speak, I might later regret it; when I remain silent, I will surely never regret it."

One slip of the tongue can wreak havoc on our lives. If we would understand how much hardship and strife we can avoid by choosing to remain silent, we would leave a lot more words unspoken. Husbands would remain



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“ silent when their wives yell at them, wives would be quiet when their husbands berate them, employees would stay silent when their bosses reprimand them. So many arguments would be averted, so much anger would be avoided.

A wise person once explained how he had acquired his vast knowledge. "The less you speak and the more you listen, the less mistakes you make and the more wisdom you amass."

We all want to be successful. Training ourselves to weigh our words and use them sparingly is the key.



Tip #3: Keep your Secrets

Privacy is virtually nonexistent today. Oversharing is the norm; most of society will happily divulge very personal information to anyone who will listen. However, know that in order to be successful, secrets are best kept as they are: secret.

Whether it's the details of your finances, the mistakes of your youth or any information that you would not want the entire world to know, the wisest course of action is to just keep quiet. Once private information is shared with even one person, it is no longer private. There are countless stories of betrayal by those who were thought to be the most trusted – spare yourself the anguish and be careful with the words you say.

This is true even with close friends and family, and **especially** with one's wife. In order for a woman to be able to value and respect her husband, he must preserve his dignity at all costs. A man who speaks badly of himself – even just to evoke his wife's compassion – will ultimately cause her to look down upon him and treat him with disdain.

With this in mind, we can understand *Chazal's* directive of אל תרבה שיחה אם האשה (Avos 1:5), referring to one's wife. Of course it's important for husband and wife to converse with each other and enjoy good times together. The kind of talk that should be avoided is that of negativity and self-disparagement. Share your successes with your wife; share your problems with Hashem.

Looking to be successful? Fortify yourself with *emunah*; internalize that Hashem is in control and that He is the only One to turn to. Prevent problems by watching your words and safeguarding your secrets. Try it! Take this advice to heart and you'll see that with Hashem's help, you will succeed beyond your wildest dreams.



You ask how you can be *zoche* to feel the beauty of Pesach; know that without *tefilla*, you'll have nothing. No matter how much effort you put in, if you don't bring Hashem into the picture, you will taste only bitterness. The more you ask Hashem to give you a beautiful and joyous Pesach, the more enjoyable and uplifting your *yom tov* will be.

Every Pesach, Mohorosh used to tell the following story:

R' Dovid of Mikolev zt"l was a close talmid of the holy Baal Shem Tov. One year, he decided to make wine for his Rebbe for Pesach. How he toiled over the wine... He was busy with kavanos, inyanim and chumros, all so that the Baal Shem Tov should have extra-mehudar wine for Pesach.

R' Dovid guarded his precious barrel carefully as began his trip home. To his great dismay, the border police officer flippantly flicked open the barrel, rendering all the wine yayin nesech and unusable.

Empty-handed, R' Dovid returned to his Rebbe and brokenly told him the entire story. The Baal Shem Tov gently asked, "Did you remember to ask Hashem for it to work out well?"

The Baal Shem Tov was right. He had forgotten to daven for success, and that was why his efforts didn't bear fruit.

Without *tefilla*, everything else is a waste of time. Take a few moments each day to ask Hashem to grant you a joyful *yom tov* and protect you from eating *chametz*, *chas v'shalom*. This is how you will be *zoche* to a beautiful *yom tov*.

Below is a *tefilla* for you to daven every day:

"Hashem, please help me be *mekabel* the *yom tov* of Pesach with joy and protect me from even the tiniest bit of *chametz*.

"What should I do if *yamim tovim* fill me with so much tension? Every time *yom tov* nears, I become stressed and anxious; help me not get upset at my wife or children and make me love spending time with them.

"Hashem, please give me the gift of living with *emunah* and help me remember that You are always with me."

The Rebbe says (*Sefer Hamiddos, Simcha 1*) that when a person does a *mitzvah* happily, it is a sign that he is an *erliche* Yid. May you be *zoche* to do all the *mitzvos* of Pesach with joy.

HOW CAN I AVOID THE PRE-PESACH TENSION?



Question:

First of all, I wanted to thank the Rosh Yeshiva for changing my life. Thank you for awakening my neshama and making me taste the sweetness of Yiddishkeit.

As Pesach nears, I am once again filled with the stress that accompanies me each year in the weeks and months before yom tov. Since Tu B'shvat we've been busy with the anxiety-provoking job of getting the house chametz-free.



I would appreciate if the Rosh Yeshiva can give me some perspective on this matter and help me see the beauty of Pesach.

The Rosh Yeshiva's Response:

Dear...

I received your letter.

A person who lives with the guidance of a *tzaddik* lives a beautiful and meaningful life. *Yamim tovim* become enjoyable and uplifting for him, as the Rebbe says (*Likutei Moharan 1:135*) "He who has a connection to a *tzaddik* can feel the holiness of *yom tov*." Anyone who is truly *mekurav* to the Rebbe can tell you that once he started learning the Rebbe's *sefarim* and implementing his *eitzos*, *yom tov* was transformed from being stressful to joyful.

The *yetzer hara* works overtime to make *yom tov* full of tension and fighting, because these sacred times put his entire "career" at risk. All year, we are so busy with our everyday struggles that we lose our focus and forget what's really important. *Yom tov* is a time when we can disconnect from the world and reconnect with Hashem - this is what the *yetzer hara* is afraid of. When we prepare for the *yamim tovim* with joy and use the holy days to spend time 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.

The Tzanzer Rav *zt"l* told the following story:

Velvel was very disorganized. Mornings were a disaster for him - it took him hours to find his clothing and things and get his day started. One day, a helpful friend advised him to take a few minutes each night to write down where all his belongings are, and then he would find everything easily the next morning.

Excited with the idea, Velvel did exactly as he was told. He wrote everything on the list: My shirt is in the closet, my hat is on the couch, my jacket is hanging over the back of the chair, etc...

The next morning was a breeze. Velvel went through the list and actually found all his clothes right away. But soon he began to scream, "Oh no! I know where all my belongings are, but where am I?"

Foolish man. Yet we sometimes look the same way. When *yom tov* nears, we get very busy with all the "props" - cleaning, cooking, shopping, etc. But what is all of it worth if we are stressed and short-tempered, if we ourselves are "not there"?

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