



# SPARKS OF EMUNAH

HEICHAL HAKODESH BRESLEV WEEKLY PUBLICATION

PARSHAS VAYIKRA  
3 NISSAN, 5786  
ISSUE #85

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  
מרים חנה בת ר' דוד צבי הלוי  
יוכבד בת ר' אליהו נתן

CHIZUK  
FROM THE  
PARSHA

## PAIN RELIEF

If you would be offered a life free of pain, how much would you be willing to give up to achieve that? It seems like a dream, but it's actually possible to rid oneself of suffering — even while living on this world.

The Rebbe says (*Likutei Moharan 1:250*) that when a person lives with *emunah*, he experiences no *yissurim*. Sure, every person gets a hefty dose of the pain that's inherent to living in this world, but when a person knows that Hashem is the One behind it all and that everything that occurs is for his benefit, the intensity of his pain lessens dramatically.

Most of the pain we experience on this world is not physical, but is of the emotional variety: blame, guilt, shame, envy, sadness, anger... The underlying cause of this kind of suffering is a lack of *emunah*. When a person forgets that Hashem is running the show and he thinks — for even one moment! — that life is a series of coincidences, then the smallest mishap can knock him off-balance. He spends his life in a perpetual state of aggravation, constantly in a state of emotional distress.

### Just "Happened"?

וַיִּקְרָא אֶל מֹשֶׁה – and He called to Moshe.

The letter א in this *passuk* is smaller than the other letters, teaching us this important lesson. If one were to read the word as "ויקר" (without the א), it would mean, "And it happened." This is the attitude of those who forget about Hashem — every moment "happened"; every disappointment "happened"; every tragedy "happened"...

In contrast, when a person adds the א — Hashem, the אלוהים של עולם Who is concealed in everything, he can interpret every moment in his life with the word "ויקרא" — and He called. He knows that even the smallest mishap is Hashem calling out to him, entreating him to do *teshuvah*. **When a person realizes that Hashem is in control and nothing at all happens by chance, he can succeed in not just minimizing his emotional pain, but actually preventing it altogether.**

### Attention, Attention!

The Rebbe says (*Sichos Haran 52*), "מכל הדברים צועק כבוד ה' יתברך" — Hashem's glory cries out from all things. Everything that happens is the voice of Hashem, calling out to the person to return to Him. Rashi says (*Vayikra 1:1*) that when Hashem called out to Moshe Rabbeinu, the voice of Hashem was heard — by Moshe alone. Hashem spoke, but nobody else heard.

Hashem speaks to every person all the time. Every occurrence is like *nevuah*, in a sense. **This is the purpose of all hardships — to awaken the person to return to Hashem.** We must only be wise enough to listen and take a message from it.

When a person works on his *emunah* and internalizes that everything is from Hashem, he can be like Moshe Rabbeinu, standing among thousands of people but the only one who can hear the voice of Hashem calling out to him. *Emunah* is the key to a connected life, a pain-free life, a joyful life in *Olam Hazeh* and in *Olam Haba*.

Zos Hatorah, Vayikra 2

MOHOROSH  
SPEAKS

## KEEPING FOCUS

The race is on.

Anticipation is high as the clock ticks ever closer to the finish line. Jewish homes worldwide are a frenzy of cleaning, shopping and cooking in these last few days before Pesach, perhaps the most preparation-intensive *yom tov* on the Jewish calendar. With less than two weeks left, there is still lots to do to ensure a *chometz*-free Pesach.

The *Arizal* teaches that a person who abstains from eating *chometz* the entire Pesach will be protected from doing *aveiros* all year. Each year, we invest superhuman energy in cleaning our houses of *chometz*, rubbing and scrubbing until we are absolutely positive that there is not a crumb to be found. Yet how many people can say with absolute certainty that they did not commit even a single *aveira* the entire year?

The truth is, the *yetzer hara* has a tough job. Every Jew is inherently good and wants to do the right thing — how is he supposed to get a *Yiddishe neshama* to succumb to sin?

One of his favorite methods is by making us feel small

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## MUSIC LESSONS FOR CHILDREN

Dear ...,

I received your letter.

When children come home from *cheder*, they are usually tired out from a long day. **There is no *mitzvah* to burden them with extra things to learn.** When parents look to give their children lessons in any area, very often it's not so much because they want the children to succeed, but rather because they are looking for a way to get rid of them for another hour. **Children are children — they need time to play and unwind. They're not machines that must work productively twenty-four hours a day.**

### To Teach or Not To Teach?

It is not a bad thing to teach a child to play music and the like, but it depends on the nature of the child. Every child is a world of his own. Some children love to read and can sit quietly for hours, lost in their books, while other children don't have patience to read and enjoy jumping and running around — but parents don't like that. When parents see their child full of life, jumping, running, and roughhousing, they think the child is bored and needs something productive to do. They send him for lessons or to tutors, or they even put him on medication and turn him into a "case," just so they shouldn't have to deal with him. **In reality, there is nothing wrong with him — energy and liveliness are signs of a healthy child.**

On the other hand, there are children who ask for these things — they **want** to learn music, writing, painting, etc... There's no problem with sending such a child for lessons to learn a skill. (Of course, one must know who the teacher is and make sure he is only teaching the skill and not instilling his own outlook into the children, as doing so can be very harmful.)

### How Can One Merit Good Children?

The most important thing is to daven for *erliche* children. A Breslever *chassid* was once asked how he was *zoche* to such good children. He replied, "What do you think, that good children can be picked off a tree? Every day, I cried to Hashem for *erliche* children. I cried and cried until I washed my face with my own tears. That's how I was *zoche* to children who daven and learn Torah."

I am writing this to you so that you and your wife will cry to Hashem each day to be *zoche* to בניי בניי עוסקים בתורה ובמצוות. This is the way you'll have true *nachas* from them, and you'll see the fulfillment of the *passuk* (*Tehillim* 128:3), "בניך כשתילי זיתים סביב לשולחןך."

May Hashem bless you with success in all areas.

Adapted from *Atzaso Emunah* #2, page 93

and worthless, because when our morale is low, it's easier to get us to sin.

How does he get us to feel badly about ourselves? He downplays our *mitzvos* and highlights our *aveiros*, blowing them up to mammoth proportions so that in comparison, our good deeds seem to be few and insignificant. By persistently whispering discouraging messages into our ears, he breaks our resolve and accomplishes his goal — we sin even more because, "I'm a failure anyway; look at how many *aveiros* I've done."

The Rebbe teaches us (*Likutei Moharan* 1:242) to be aware of this tactic and constantly counter this force of negativity by focusing on the good in ourselves. *Chazal* tell us (*Brachos* 57) that even the lowliest Jew is filled with *mitzvos* like the seeds of a pomegranate. We must realize that even the "smallest" *mitzvos* we do carry tremendous weight and bring much *nachas* to Hashem!

So how can we be included in the *Arizal's* promise and be protected from *aveiros* all year? **The secret is not so much in what we do, but rather in how we do it.** If we would feel the joy of having eaten *matzah* on Pesach all year, we would be protected from the *yetzer hara*.

### Loser, Loser, Loser

The Noda B'Yehuda *zt"l* had a *talmid* who had strayed far from *Yiddishkeit*, to the point that he had converted to Christianity and had even become a bishop. In tremendous pain from this tragedy, the *tzaddik* tried to find his wayward student and to bring him back to the Torah path. The Noda B'Yehuda eventually succeeded in tracking down his former student, and the *talmid*-turned-bishop told the following story:

"It all started when I was a young *bachur* learning in a *yeshiva* far from home.

"One Erev Pesach, a kind family invited me for a meal. (The *yeshivos* in those days didn't provide meals for their students, leaving the budding *talmidei chachamim* to fend for themselves. They worked out a system called "teg" – days; every day, each *bachur* ate his only meal of the day at a different family in town.) There wasn't much to eat since it was past *sof zman achilas chometz*, but I was glad not to go hungry.

"When I arrived to the house, I was greeted to the aroma of fresh potato *kugel* wafting through the air and I couldn't wait to quiet my grumbling stomach. Before we could even start eating, a shout was heard. Someone had spotted a kernel of wheat in the *kugel*! Unsure of the status of the *kugel* at that point in the day, they sent me to my *rebbe* (the Noda B'Yehuda) to ask a *sheila*.

"The *tzaddik* listened to me asking the question

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and deliberated, quoting the sources who ruled the kugel to be permissible, as well as those

who ruled it to be forbidden. Eventually, he concluded with his opinion: the kugel was assur and needed to be discarded immediately.

*“I was so hungry. I hadn’t eaten a thing all day, and to wait until the seder to put a bite into my mouth was impossible. The tantalizing aroma of the kugel tickled my nostrils and teased my empty stomach, so I began to rationalize.*

*“Really, there are many poskim who say it’s okay,” I told myself. ‘My rebbi was just being machmir. It isn’t such a big problem...’ So I sat down and polished off the entire kugel. When I returned to my hosts, I told them that the kugel was assur and that I had burned it on my way back.*

*“I immediately regretted my actions. ‘What a sinner you are,’ a voice in my head told me, “transgressing an issur kareis by eating chometz!” These thoughts bombarded me, replaying over and over in my head until I became depressed and withdrawn.*



*“That was just the beginning,” the bishop continued. “That night, I couldn’t bring myself to say krias shema. ‘Sinner, sinner, sinner,’ my yetzer hara taunted me. ‘Who needs your mitzvos? You’re cut off from Klal Yisrael anyway at this point!’”*

*“This voice in my head continued through the seder and all through the night. The next morning, I just couldn’t bring myself to daven or sing hallel along with all the other bachurim in shul. One thing led to another until I rejected the Torah completely, and here I am today.*

After hearing his *talmid’s* unfortunate saga, the Noda B’Yehuda sat with him for hours, comforting him and working to reverse the negative thought patterns that had caused his downfall. Eventually, the bishop left his bad ways and returned to *Yiddishkeit*.

**WARNING: Trap Ahead**

The *yetzer hara* is shrewd and cunning. He knows that we want to be good and knows exactly how to get us down. By magnifying our shortcomings and reminding us of all the “terrible” things we’ve done, he makes us feel so hopeless that we just give up. However, **if we focus on our mitzvos instead and allow ourselves to rejoice in them, we can achieve tremendous spiritual growth.**

It’s not too late to inject *simcha* into your preparations! In this last week before Pesach and during all the eight days of *yom tov*, focus on each *mitzvah* you do and feel the joy in doing *ratzon Hashem*. In this way, you will have the tools to battle the *yetzer hara* and be *zoche* to be successful and happy all year.



**Rich or Poor?**

What do you think a person takes with him to the Next World? A beautiful voice? Musical talent? A house? Money? A successful business? What **is** true wealth?

Chazal say (*Shabbos 120a*) that a person who doesn’t learn Chumash, Mishnayos and Gemara is the ultimate pauper. They also teach us (*Nedarim 41a*), “אין עני אלא בדעת” — Who is a poor man? One who lacks wisdom. **A person who doesn’t ever contemplate the purpose of life is poorest of all.**

No matter how rich, successful, or talented a person may be on this world, if he does not learn Torah every day, he’ll be destitute when he passes away. One cannot take money or a house to the grave; one cannot take a beautiful voice or musical skills there. The only things that come along with a person are Torah and *mitzvos*.

I don’t understand why you are so dispirited. Why do you feel like a failure among your friends because they can lead *tefillos* or play music while you “only” know how to learn Chumash and Mishnayos? **If you have the zechus to learn every day, you are infinitely wealthier than all your so-called friends!**

**Friends: an Illusion**

I want to ask you another thing: is this kind of behavior normal? You write that you get together with your friends regularly, at night and for *melave malka* — why do you go out to spend time with friends when Hashem has given you the beautiful gift of a home, a wife and children? Why don’t you spend that time at home with your family? Why waste your years with friends who are here today but will turn their backs on you tomorrow?

**There is no such thing as a “friend.”** Mohorosh used to say that a person has only one friend — his wife. These people you waste time with, who are just looking to escape their homes and their lives, are not really your friends.

Who is a true friend? One who encourages you when you’re going through a hard time. One who gives you *chizuk* when you go through pain and humiliation. When no one else even wants to look at you, that’s when you can see what a real friend is. Look closely at your own life and you’ll see a pattern emerge — every so often you thought you had a new set of “best friends” who’d be at your side forever, but it never lasts too long. Things change fast and friends disappear in the blink of an eye.

May Hashem bless you with success in all areas.

# Q & A

## I AM THE LEAST SUCCESSFUL FROM ALL MY FRIENDS



### QUESTION:

To the Rosh Yeshiva shlita,

For over six years now, I have been part of a group of more than thirty wonderful young men. We speak often and get together regularly on Motzei Shabbos for melave malka.

Out of the entire group, I am the biggest loser. Many of my friends have been very successful in business, while I struggle just to make ends meet. A lot of them are smart and can learn well, whereas I learn only Chumash and Mishnayos with the seder derech halimud but I don't understand much. Some of my friends can play instruments or daven for the amud, but I can't sing, can't play music, can't daven for the amud and can't lein. Most members of the group have already bought their own houses, but I live in a small rented apartment.

Every time we get together, I am the only one with nothing to contribute to the conversation. I feel like a complete failure.

What can I do to bring myself to a better place?

Thank you.

### THE ROSH YESHIVA'S RESPONSE:

Dear ...,

I received your letter.

Forgive me, but I don't understand why you are so broken. Hashem has blessed you with a wife, children, and *parnassa*, but instead of thanking Hashem for the miracles He performs for you, you are searching for reasons to complain.

#### **Rotten Jealousy**

It is foolish to be jealous of others, because it's impossible to really know what's going on in another person's life. To an outsider, it can look like a particular person has it all — *shalom bayis*, *nachas* from his children, and lots of money — while in reality, his life may be falling apart. It may seem rosy on the outside, but that is just a façade.

Chazal teach us (*Shabbos 152b*), "כל מי שיש בו קנאה, עצמותיו מרקיבין" — When one is jealous of others, his bones rot. Simply understood, this refers to the time when the person is no longer alive — jealousy that he felt during his lifetime causes his body to decompose and rot after his death.

Mohorosh explains that this also occurs when the person is still alive. **When a person is jealous of others, his bones begin to "rot"** — figuratively speaking. All his life, he eats himself up, consumed with thoughts of, "Why don't I have a life like his?" "Why isn't my wife like his?" or "Why don't I have a house like his?" — all while the subject of his envy might actually be suffering tremendously, only appearing to be successful from the outside! And even if the other person really does have a good life, there is still no reason to be jealous; the right thought process to have is, "**If Hashem gave me this wife, these children, this kind of home, etc. — I must believe that this is exactly what's best for me and it could not have been any better!**"

The Rebbe teaches (*Likutei Moharan 1:34*) that every individual has a unique quality that sets him apart from every other person in the world. Envy has no place, because every person was created for a specific purpose, and every person has his own special way in which he brings *nachas* to Hashem.

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