



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

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

CHIZUK FROM THE PARSHA

SEEING OR BELIEVING?

וְשָׁבְתִי בְּשָׁלוֹם אֶל בֵּית אָבִי וְהָיָה ה' לִי לְאֵלִיקִים

And I will return to my father's home in peace, and then Hashem will be my G-d.

Diplomacy is all about negotiation. "If you will release the hostages, we will release your terrorists," "If you will stop this war, we will lift the trade embargo," etc. This behavior is not limited to politics; we do this all the time in our own lives: "If you will study hard for this test, I will give you extra credit," "If you will clean up all the toys, I will let you go outside until bedtime," etc.

In *Yiddishkeit*, however, this attitude has no place. Hashem gave us a Torah that we **must** fulfill – no matter what. Whether Hashem orchestrates events to our liking or not, whether life goes the way we want it to or not, we must continue to serve Hashem. For this reason, the above *passuk* is perplexing. How can it be that Yaakov Avinu, a paradigm of *avodas Hashem*, made this "deal" with Hashem: "If I make it through the next few years in peace, I will serve You as my G-d." What can this possibly mean?

Life on this world is comprised of a wide array of experiences, ranging from incredibly joyous to heartrendingly tragic. As Jews, we attribute every event to Hashem, reacting to good news with the *bracha* of *הטוב והמטיב* and to sorrow with the *bracha* of *האמת*. *Chazal* teach us (*Pesachim 50a*) that this will all change in *Olam Haba*. Mashiach will teach the world of Hashem's boundless, infinite kindness, until every Jew will develop an iron-clad belief in Hashem. At that point, every piece of news – whether good or bad – will elicit the same grateful *bracha* of *הטוב והמטיב*. No matter what occurs, we will know that it is all because of Hashem's deep compassion for us. This is as David Hamelech says (*Tehillim 56:11*), "בְּאֵלֵקִים אֶהְלֵל דָּבָר, בָּה' אֶהְלֵל דָּבָר" – I will sing words of praise, whether I experience *Elokim* – *middas hadin*, or Hashem – *middas harachamim*.



Living on this level is not exclusive to Mashiach's times. The Rebbe says (*Likutei Mohoran 1:4*) that when a person's *emunah* is strong and he knows with certainty that everything that happens to him is for his benefit, it is as if he is living in *Olam Haba*. Even in *galus*, it's possible for a person to always exclaim, "בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' הַטוֹב וְהַמְטִיב" no matter if he is experiencing joy or heartbreak.

It isn't easy. Life is full of hardships, and maintaining one's focus can be an arduous task. Yet this is the very reason we were placed in this world. In *Olam Haba*, there will be no questions. Everything will be clear; Hashem's kindness will be obvious. In this world, however, **our mission is to believe even when we cannot see**. Through all the difficulties, we must believe that Hashem is our loving, caring Father Who plans every detail of our lives for our benefit. When a person merits this level of *emunah*, he "lives" in *Olam Haba* while still in *Olam Haze*.

This, the Rebbe says, is the meaning of *shalom* (*Likutei Moharan 1:33*). When a person recognizes Hashem's loving hand in everything that occurs, he "fuses" Hashem's *din* with His *rachamim*, attaining true peace. With this in mind, we can understand the words of Yaakov's promise. Yaakov Avinu said, וְהָיָה ה' לִי, וְשָׁבְתִי בְּשָׁלוֹם, אֶל בֵּית אָבִי – When I will achieve this aspect of peace within myself, לִי, וְהָיָה ה' לִי – to me, both *middas harachamim* ("Hashem") and *middas hadin* ("Elokim") will be one and the same. I will recognize even what seems to be harsh judgment as infinite mercy.

This is what it means to be a *tzaddik*: to not only serve Hashem unconditionally, but be unwavering in one's belief that Hashem is a benevolent G-d – even when life seems full of suffering.

May we be *zoche* to attain this level of *emunah*, and we will then live in *Gan Eden* on this world.

Toch Hanachal, Vayeitzai 5765

MOHOROSH SPEAKS

CLIMBING

In his heartwarming *tefilla* prior to the davening, R' Elimelech of Lizhensk zt"l includes a poignant request:

וממדרגה למדרגה תעלנו, שנזכה
לבוא למעלת אבותינו הקדושים,
אברהם יצחק ויעקב

May You raise us up higher
and higher so that we should
merit the level of our holy
forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchak
and Yaakov.

All through *Sefer Bereishis*, we learn about the events in the lives of our *avos* in full detail. These are not merely stories for us to read and enjoy; each detail in the Torah was revealed to us as guidance for how to conduct ourselves through our own (often challenging) journeys. Yaakov's life, especially, teaches how a Jew in *galus* can endure his hardships.

In this week's *parsha*, we read about Yaakov's dream. In his heavenly vision, he saw a ladder that reached from the ground all the way up to *shamayim*. Profoundly inspiring to all those going through a spiritual slump, this dream teaches that no matter how low a

(Continued on page 2)



A REBBI'S POWER

Dear ...

Mohorosh was a *melamed* for many years. His goal was to inculcate *emunah* into his students and he demanded complete *derech erez* from them at all times. Mohorosh's *talmidim* relate that in his classroom, Hashem's presence was tangible. The davening and learning were exemplary; it always seemed as if a special guest had come to observe the class's diligence.

There is a story told (*Sefer Parnassa Tova, Sichos V'hischazkus* 41) about a man who once needed a favor from Mohorosh. He went to meet him in the *cheder* where Mohorosh taught and arrived in middle of class, just as they were learning the *passuk* (*Bereishis* 28:16), ויִיקַץ יַעֲקֹב מִשְׁנֵתוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר אֲכֹן, יֵשׁ ה' בְּמִקְוִם הַזֶּה וְאֵנֹכִי לֹא יָדַעְתִּי.

Watching and listening from the other side of the door, the man heard Mohorosh explaining the *passuk* as follows, "And Yaakov awoke from his sleep and said, 'Surely Hashem is present in this place, and I did not know!'" When Mohorosh said the words "present in this place," he pointed to the walls of his classroom, and when he said "and I did not know," he pointed to himself. Mohorosh passionately repeated these words over and over. The man later said that these powerful words made him feel as if the *passuk* was speaking directly to him! This lesson awakened a deep yearning in him; he felt as if his *neshama* was roused from sleep. He thought, "I didn't realize that Hashem is *במקום הזה* – right here with me! I can speak to Him at any moment!" With every lesson, Mohorosh infused the children with pure, unadulterated faith.

A *melamed* must imbue his students with *yiras Shamayim* by telling them stories of *tzaddikim*. The Rebbe teaches (*Likutei Moharan* 1:248) that relating stories of *tzaddikim* is a very powerful tool, since these stories awaken one's heart to serve Hashem. When a person sees what a *tzaddik* achieved by withstanding his challenges, he yearns to become a *tzaddik*, too. This is especially true with children; because of their innocence, they absorb much more.

The Sanzer Rav *zt"l* once asked his children's *melamed* if he learns *mussar* with them. At his affirmative response, the Sanzer Rav pressed him further, "What do you teach them?"

"*Sefer Chovos Halevavos*," the *melamed* replied.

"That is not what I mean by *mussar*," was the Sanzer Rav's rejoinder. "I wanted to know if you tell them stories of the *tzaddik* Rebbe Elimelech from Lizhensk and his brother, the *tzaddik* R' Zusha. Stories about *tzaddikim* will awaken a yearning in them to also grow up to be *erlich*."

If you will teach your *talmidim* Torah and *yiras Shamayim*, you will accrue immeasurable *zechusim*, as the *passuk* says (*Daniel* 12:3), "וּמִצְדִּיקִי" – "הַרְבֵּים כְּכֹכְבִּים לְעוֹלָם וְעַד" – Those who teach righteousness to the multitudes will shine like the stars forever and ever. Chazal expound on these words (*Bava Basra* 8b), saying that this is referring to those who teach Torah to children. *Melamdim* are likened to the stars that illuminate the night sky; just as it is impossible to count the stars in the sky, so too are the *zechusim* of a *melamed* innumerable.

May Hashem bless you with success in all areas.

Adapted from *The Light of Emunah* #3, page 194

person may have fallen, there is always a possi-

bility of rising once again. Although at times one may feel that he is at an all-time low, at "Ground Zero", he can always lift himself out of the depths and reach way up to Heaven. All he needs to do is gather the courage to begin to climb.

A Ladder and a Voice

The *Zohar* teaches (*Chelek* 3, 267a) that the word סולם – ladder – has the same gematria as קול – voice. When a person uses his voice for *tefilla*, he enables himself to keep climbing to the loftiest spiritual heights.

The *Zera Kodesh* teaches another connection between a ladder and a voice. The letters of the word קול symbolize a ladder. The base of the letter ק is planted firmly in the ground, and the upper section of the ל extends upward to heaven. Using one's קול is the means with which one can rise ever higher, overcoming all hurdles and reach his full potential.

R' Nosson's journey toward Breslev was a path fraught with challenges and emotional turmoil. Before discovering Rebbe Nachman of Breslev, R' Nosson was part of a different *chassidus* which had a custom to gather every *Motzaei Shabbos*. Each week, they drew lots to choose one *chassid* to go buy bread for *melave malka*.

One week, R' Nosson's name was drawn. He dutifully headed out to the local bakery, when he was suddenly consumed by a profound sense of futility. He so badly yearned to be close to Hashem, yet the mundanity of where he was headed seemed to mock him, giving him no rest.

"Is this really what I was created for?" He thought desolately. "To buy bread?" In terrible distress, he ran into an empty *beis medrash*, grabbed a *sefer Tehillim* and burst into heartrending sobs. He tearfully recited the timeless words of David Hamelech, *perek after perek*, until he fell into a deep sleep.

While asleep, R' Nosson dreamed that he was standing before a ladder that extended way up to heaven. He tried to climb it but lost his grip after just a few rungs, falling to the ground with a painful thump. He tried again, yet fell again. Over and over, he tried with all his strength to get to the top but just kept falling. On his last attempt, R' Nosson reached quite high, but then tumbled to the ground with such tremendous force that he just gave up.

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Bruised and despondent, R' Nosson looked hopelessly toward the

top of the ladder. There, he saw a man with a luminous countenance calling down to him, "Keep going! Don't give up!"

One year after he had this dream, R' Nosson met R' Nachman of Breslev for the first time. He immediately recognized the Rebbe as the face at the top of the ladder who had given him chizuk to keep forging onward.

They took a walk together, Rebbe and talmid, and R' Nosson opened his heart and told the Rebbe of all the trials he endured on his quest for spirituality. The Rebbe laid a hand on his shoulder and said, "It's good to talk to Hashem as one would speak to a close friend."

At that moment, R' Nosson finally understood the deep meaning of his dream: Life is like a ladder, with many rungs to climb in order to attain true closeness to Hashem.



The only way to succeed despite the intense hardships along the way, is by constantly speaking to Hashem and telling Him of the challenges one faces. This is the greatest empowerment, the greatest gift a person can own.

Down and Up

It isn't always an upward journey. Throughout our lives, we're constantly faced with obstacles that send us tumbling down, and we seem to lose so much of the progress we thought we already made.

Davened with minyan three times each day for two weeks straight... and then woke up

late and missed shacharis.

Worked on my patience for months... and then had a weak moment and completely lost it at my wife.

Sat on the subway for over an hour, working so hard to guard my eyes... until I just couldn't control myself anymore.

Yes, it can be extremely frustrating when we keep on slipping, yet we must not let it discourage us. Regression is part of the unique tapestry of life – even after falling back, we must strengthen ourselves to begin again.

Just. Take. One. Step. At. A. Time. Don't look forward; don't look back. Just keep going, one tiny step at a time.

Standing on a seeming-never-ending ladder in your ascent of avodas Hashem? Keep going! Don't give up! Talk to Hashem through your journey and you will ultimately succeed in reaching the ראשו מגיע השמימה

For Your CHILD's Sake -12-

Translated from לב אבות על בנים, a kuntres written by Mohorosh zt"l

PART 5: FEEL THEIR PAIN, CONTINUED

Last week, we shared a story of the rav who was collecting tzedaka for a poverty-stricken member of the community. When he came to the gvir of the town, the rav insisted on conversing with him at length outside, in the bitter cold. The purpose of this was simple yet brilliant: in order for the gvir to feel the pain of the poor man who had no money for firewood, he had to experience the icy wind on his own flesh. Once the gvir was able to empathize with the poor man, he gave the generous donation that the rav had hoped to elicit.

True empathy is nearly impossible unless a person is in the same situation as the one who is suffering. Think about Motzaei Tisha B'av – just five minutes after breaking a long fast, it isn't possible to feel the discomfort of an empty stomach, even though the sensation was so very real just a few minutes before!

This is also true of any other hardship or lack – when a person is in a difficult situation, he understands it all too well and can deeply relate to others who are also struggling. Nonetheless, as soon as the problem disappears and he finally experiences relief, the memory of his anguish quickly fades. Before long, the person loses that sense of kinship with his former "co-sufferers" and can hardly even empathize with their pain anymore.

The pain of singlehood is very quickly forgotten. How many married people can really remember what it was like to be a פלג גוף – half a person – the apt term Chazal use to describe one who is single (Zohar 3, 7b)? Just a few short months into married life, the vividness of that anguish fades from his memory. How much more is this the case by the time one's own children are grown and in that same single state – by then, it is impossible for him to remember how it felt to be alone.

Without even realizing it, the once-single-now-parent-of-singles adopts the attitude that *his* parents had and that he so despised: the approach of waiting... and waiting... and waiting... Be it for the child to reach the specific age designated by "society"... or for the "perfect" *shidduch* with *yichus*, money, honor and the like... or for the state of his finances to settle so that ridiculously inflated wedding expenses won't empty his bank account completely... or for a host of other reasons that don't actually make any sense when set into perspective. If a person would put himself in his children's shoes and truly empathize with their pain – even when it is so many years since he felt it "on his own flesh" – he would disregard these nonsensical excuses and actually do what's best for his children.

Parents, try to remember the loneliness and despondency *you* felt when you were single. Your children feel that same pain – and even more! Put your arrogance aside and stop making excuses; have pity on your children and get them married!

To be continued next week, be'ezras Hashem.

Q & A

ADVICE FOR TALKING TO HASHEM AND FOR COMBATING LAZINESS



QUESTION:

To the Rosh Yeshiva shlita,

Thank you for all the shiurim. I enjoy listening to them in my free time (and not-so-free time) and they give me so much chizuk in my day-to-day life.

I understand the importance of tefilla and of speaking to Hashem in my own words and asking him for everything I need. As a mother of young children, there is so much I need to daven for; however, no matter how many times I resolve to do so, I can't seem to put this into practice. Each time I hear a shiur on the topic of tefilla and hisbodedus, I am inspired to finally start speaking to Hashem, but since I lack the feeling of connection, I never actually do so.

Is there a solution that will help me implement tefilla in my daily life?

I am also very lazy and I'm looking for guidance on how to overcome this negative trait.

Thank you.

THE ROSH YESHIVA'S RESPONSE:

Dear ...,

I will begin by answering your second question first.

The Rebbe teaches (*Likutei Moharan* 1:189) that we must be very careful to avoid sadness and laziness, because the yetzer hara's power is primarily in these two areas. This is as the *passuk* says (*Yeshaya* 65:25), "יָנַחַשׁ עֵפֶר לַחֲמוֹ" – earth shall be the snake's food. The snake refers to the yetzer hara, and his specialty is earth – the origin of both sadness and laziness.

The yetzer hara tries to implant these two bad middos inside us in order to gain control over us.

When a person finds that he is struggling with depression and/or laziness, he must adopt the *aitza* R' Nosson reveals to us (*Likutei Halachos, Tefillin* 5:40), the *aitza* of *emunah*. *Emunah* also originates from earth, but from holy earth. The *passuk* says (*Tehillim* 37:3), "שֹׁכֵן אֶרֶץ וְרַעַה אֲמוֹנָה" – dwell in the land and nourish yourself with faithfulness. When a person has *emunah*, he gains strength and vitality. He considers his life to be purposeful and he has a drive to accomplish, to grow and to succeed. ***Emunah* motivates a person, lifts his spirits and infuses him with life.**

If you are indeed lazy and unmotivated, work on strengthening your *emunah*. Listen to songs of *emunah* and speak to yourself and others about *emunah*; in this way you will strengthen your spirit and begin living with passion and joy.

Emunah is also the answer to your first question. **When a person knows with certainty that Hashem is always with him, talking to Hashem is a natural result.** If a person truly believes that Hashem is standing right near him and hears every request, he would say every word carefully and with concentration. The reason why people neglect to daven properly is because they are lacking the *emunah* that Hashem is with them at all times. As the Rebbe teaches (*Likutei Moharan* 1:62), that if a person were to know with certainty that Hashem is standing near him as he davens and listens to every word, he would surely daven with great enthusiasm and be meticulous to focus on the words he is saying.

May Hashem bless you with success in all areas.

Adapted from The Light of Emunah #3, page 57

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