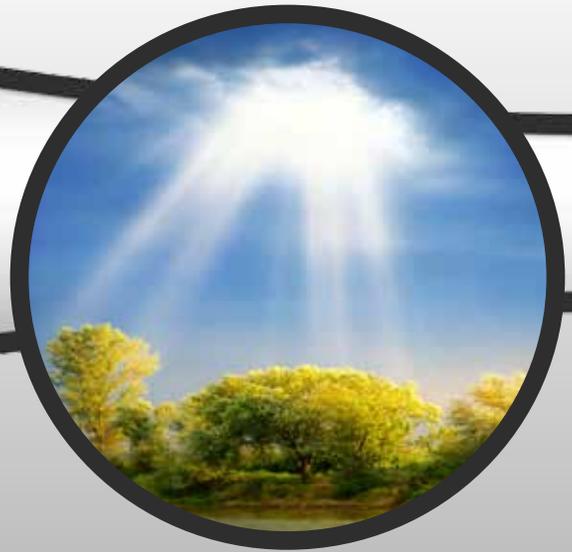


Monthly Rays

Chodesh Av
Breslov
Inspiration



Dear Readers,

In the heat of the summer, whether we're on vacation or at home, the Rebbe's light is sure to ignite the fire of our hearts and keep it burning, no matter what! His inspiration is always on the mark, exactly what we need to hear. All we need to do is open our hearts!

The Rebbe's famous teaching of Azamra shows us how to build relationships. Relationships with ourselves, relationships with others, and relationships with Hashem. Focusing on our own good keeps us in a positive mindset and lets us continue improving on that good and expanding it. Seeing the good in those around us has an amazing positive effect on them too, which creates an ever-lasting chain of positivity! And when we find those few mitzvos that we did do, we realize that we aren't so far from Hashem after all. That opens up the blockage and gives way for more words to flow forth, so that we keep on speaking to Him. What could be better? Let us sing to Hashem!

May we keep on singing all our lives, and seeing only good, being only good and receiving only good.

Faigy Kahane

Please send in your comments and suggestions for improvement to

raysof148@gmail.com



A Loving Letter

עלים לתרופה י"ב

Bezras Hashem, Friday erev Shabbos Parshas Vayigash 5585

Peace to my beloved son, the apple of my eye, Reb Yitzchak.

I received your letter, and it gave me much pleasure and happiness. But I am still hoping for salvation that a letter from you will arrive, saying that everything is completely okay, without any suffering and worries at all, and salvation is from Hashem.

For now, I warn you with a great warning that from now on, you shouldn't think or worry about this matter at all! Thoughts and worries on this matter are very, very damaging. Just throw yourself onto Hashem and He will complete everything for the good for your sake. And I trust in Hashem that everything is already alright. All thoughts on this matter are only depression and suspicions, which are very harmful... The tzarah is enough in its actual time; there's no need to think about it before and afterwards chas veshalom...

I already told you in the last letter that Baruch Hashem, you have many affairs to fill your day with, such as learning Shulchan Aruch, Gemara and a bit of Mikra, especially Chumash with Rashi, and to engage in the sefarim of the Rebbe. There's also the time for the set tefillos, and for saying tehillim, and for our tefillos and techinos, and for hisbodedus, meaning to talk to Hashem and pour out all your words to Hashem every single day. Some time is also needed for writing the sefer which is in your hands. And physical matters also take up lots of time, such as sleeping, eating, drinking, talking with other people in order to open your mind. The day is short and the work is plentiful. You don't have to complete the work, although you are also not free to release yourself from it, and all the more so

to spend any few minutes on such bad thoughts... On the contrary, strengthen yourself to rejoice with everything you can, as I already warned you very much about this. Trust in Hashem for He will not forsake you, and Hashem's mercy reaches you at all times, because Hashem is very great, He is full of rachmanus, and the whole world is full of rachmanus, as it is written in Likutei Moharan 49.

*Regarding your request that I should write you another letter like the first one; believe me my beloved son, I myself don't remember properly what I wrote there. I can only write to you what Hashem puts into my mind while writing. **But whatever you're missing can be found in the sefarim of the Rebbe,** and in the tefillos and chidushim that Hashem graced me with which you have. They shall guide you, tell you and strengthen you to constantly rejoice with Hashem and trust in His great kindness which will never cease. Ultimately, everything will change for the good.*

The general rule is that Hashem is very great, and we don't at all know the wonders and chidushim that are performed in the world every day and at all times; wondrous wonders... Because Hashem produces chidushim all the time, and there is an inyan that everything changes for the good. If you can't understand it and see it, you should at least believe it, chazak and be strong. You know a little of it, and the rest you should believe with emuna that it is a zchus and eternal yeshua that we merited being in the portion of the awesome Rebbe, which is impossible to comprehend in any mind of the world. Baruch Hashem Who separated us from those who stray, who oppose such truth and speak about the Tzaddik with arrogance and scorn. This is our comfort within our pain, this is our happiness. With this, you have what to rejoice with during everything that befalls you. He already promised us before his histalkus that he is going before us, and we have nothing to worry about. How fortunate we are that we merited hearing such words from his holy mouth on the night before his awesome histalkus, and there is no time to go on at further length now. Be very careful to guard my letters carefully, for they are forbidden for strangers who turn words of truth into mockery and so on, therefore be very careful to guard them from now.

Hashem should always make you happy, and strengthen your heart to engage in

Torah and tefilla every day. You should be zoiche to go on the path which the Rebbe taught us, and especially to greatly strengthen yourself in hisbodedus; to force yourself and fortify yourself with fresh hischazkus daily to start anew every day. Talk to Hashem just like someone would talk to their friend; express yourself to Him in detail. Don't let anything in the world discourage you, because whatever transpires with you and more than that happened to all the righteous, erliche people who entered avodas Hashem. If they wouldn't have encouraged themselves at all times, they would chas veshalom have stayed in their first place chas veshalom, as it is explained in Likutei Moharan 48, 49 . Pay attention to all that is said there, look and take careful note of every single word which is written there, for they are living words of Hashem which rejuvenate the soul. These conversations are referred by us chassidim as a 'letter', because they flow just like a letter which is written to a friend and student. There is no need for any better letter than that. Yet, I shall still see to write you every time words of truth which Hashem will put into my hands, and everything which pours from my pen will be holy, for all my words flow and arise from the Rebbe, the flowing brook.

You should know, my son, that it is said about all the Rebbe's words: ושאבתם מים בישועה הישועה "And you shall draw water with joy from the springs of salvation." For they are actual springs of salvation; just like a spring never ceases, so too his words are alive, existent, pleasant and faithful forever and ever, and his eitzos and yeshuos are endless. You can always derive chizuk from his awesome words no matter what, because he shone Hashem's greatness, abundant kindness and rachmanus into us, with which we shall be helped. 'Our hearts will rejoice in Him' – from wherever we are, we shall always rejoice and be happy with Him and His salvation.

The words of your father who is forced to cut short and conclude out of honor for His holy Name, because many thousands of sheets will still be insufficient to explain what there is to say about what I started touching at: Hashem's incomprehensible greatness. This is enough for now, may you be blessed with peace, like your desire and the desire of your father who seeks your peace, davens for you, and hopes to hear only good from you.

The small Nosson, son of Reb Naftali Hirtz of Breslov.



A Touching Tefila

ליקוטי תפילות צ

*Ribbono Shel Olam, You are filled with rachamim and want kindness; You look to the sinner and hope for him to return, constantly judging everyone favorably, full of kindness and increasing to do good. You lead the world with chessed and Your creations with rachmanus. Help me to be zoiche to the true path, in a manner that I should merit now too to search, seek and find within myself good points, and always judge myself favorably, so that I should merit making myself happy at all times, and truly enter the side of zchus. And through this, I should be zoiche to complete true teshuvah, and to daven with much kavana, with chiyus, fervor and much deep joy, and I should truly fulfil the verse אֲזַמְרָה לַאֱלֹהִי בְעוּדֵי *'And I will sing to Hashem with my little bit.'*...*

And with Your rachmanus, let me be zoiche to always judge everyone favorably. Even when I see a complete sinner, I should still search and seek until I'll find good points in him too, and I should merit judging him favorably and truly bringing him into the side of merit, and making him return in true teshuvah through this. Ribbono Shel Olam, in the zchus and power of the

true tzaddikim who always defend and say good about the Yidden, who toil and exert themselves with all their might to search, dig and find merit and good in every single Yid, be it the lowest of the low, in their merit and power, let me be zoiche to truly come to this too...

Master of the world, let me be zoiche to truly enter the side of zchus, in a way that I should merit returning to You from now in complete teshuvah through this. Let me merit in the zchus of all the true tzaddikim that were in every generation, and in the zchus of the true tzaddikim of this generation, help me and teach me true eitzos at all times so that I should be able to make myself happy at all times through the ways of this Torah, not to let depression enter me or touch me at all. I should just merit to always be truly happy with all my heart and soul; put joy into me through the ways of this Torah. I should be zoiche to always be only happy through every single good point that I ever merited doing to cause You nachas. Help me merit to make others happy, and teach me understanding so that I should merit making Yidden happy, and always judge them favorably, until they will all merit truly coming close to You with joy...



Painting the World Positive

ליקוטי מוהרן רפ"ב

Thinking good about ourselves – and others – is something that the Rebbe teaches is not just beneficial for ourselves, but it also actually sways people over to the good side. It is not just a helpful exercise, but a vital part of our lives!

Read on to see how it works...

Know that a person must judge every person favorably. Even if someone is a complete רשע, a person must search and find a bit of good in him, where in that little bit he isn't a sinner. And through finding a bit of good in him and judging him favorably, he really raises him to the side of merit, and he can make him return in teshuvah. This is the aspect of the passuk: "ועוד מעט ואין רשע והתבוננת על מקומו ואיכנו." *"Another bit and there is no rasha; you'll look at his place and he is no more."* This passuk cautions us to judge every person favorably; and

even if you see a complete sinner, you must still search, seek, and find a little bit of good where he isn't a sinner there. This is the ועוד מעט ואין רשע - that you need to find a bit of good that he still has in him, where he isn't a rasha. For even if he is a sinner, how is it possible that he doesn't have some good still in him? How is it possible that he never did a single mitzvah or good deed in his life? And through your finding still a bit of good in him where he isn't a sinner in that place and judging him favorably, you actually raise him from

the side of guilt to the side of merit, until he'll return in teshuvah through this. This is the *'another little bit and there is no rasha'*, through your finding the little bit of good where he isn't a rasha... *'you'll look at his place and he isn't there'* – you'll look at his place and level and you'll see that he isn't on his earlier place, for through finding a bit of good that he still has in him, some good point, and judging him favorably, one truly takes him from the side of guilt to the side of merit.

And so too, a person must find in himself, for it is known that a person must be very careful to always be happy, and to distance depression very much. And even if he starts looking at himself and he sees that there is no good in him; he's full of aveiros, and the yetzer hora wants to throw him into depression and gloominess through this chas veshalom, nevertheless, it is forbidden for him to fall from this. He just needs to search and find some good inside him, for it is impossible that he never did any mitzvah or good deed in his life. And even if when he starts looking into that bit of good, he sees that it's also full of wounds... which means that he sees that even the mitzvah that he merited doing is full of egotism, extraneous intentions and many defects, with all this it isn't possible

that there shouldn't be within that mitzvah a tiny bit of good, for at least however it is, there was some good point in the mitzvah and good deed that he did. For a person must search for and seek within himself some good, in order to enliven himself and come to simcha. And through the fact that he searches and finds still a little bit of good in himself he goes from the side of guilt to merit, and he can do teshuvah...

Once Reb M. of Teplik came to Reb Nosson, who asked him about a certain person in Teplik who was a bit mekurav to him. Reb M. answered him dismissively, as if there is no one to talk about. R' Nosson answered him, 'Listen to my words. If you want to view people in this light, you'll invalidate the whole world! Test yourself; picture all the inhabitants of your town, starting from the one who lives at the far end of town. Look at him carefully, and you'll surely find offense in him. Continue on house by house, until you reach your house. Are you the only erliche Yid in town?'

'I'm also not an erliche Yid,' replied the person.

'You're also not an erliche Yid?' repeated R' Nosson, surprised. 'If so, who then is an erliche Yid? But if you look at other people favorably, then even if you look at the worst person,

you'll find some good in him. Even more so in people who aren't that bad, and so in every single person and in you yourself too, you'll find good. In this way, you can find merit in the whole world."

(בוכבי אור י"ח)

Reb Nosson said, "I can find such merit in the worst Yid, that if I would write it down, it would take up several sheets of paper, according to what I know is done with a person in this world.

(בוכבי אור ע"ד סעיף טו)

Reb Nosson once spoke once again about this way of judging every person favorably, even the lowest of the low, and finding in everyone some little bit of good, through which one truly raises him to the side of merit until he can bring him to teshuvah through this, as it is mentioned at length in the Rebbe's sefarim. While he was talking about it, Reb Nachman of Tulchin was sitting next to him, and out of his heart's great yearning to hear these sweet words, he repeated every word after him in a whisper. Reb Nosson told him, "You think it's a simple and easy matter. I'll explain the difficulty of it: Don't forget the Rebbe's words that one truly rises to the side of merit through this and returns in teshuvah. If we would be able to fulfil this, we would be able to bring the whole world back in teshuvah!"

There was once a fire in Breslov. Afterwards, Reb Nosson was walking with some other people to the site of the fire, and they saw the owner of the house crying bitterly and searching for some pieces of wood or iron that he could use when he would build his house from new. He collected piece after piece, one by one.

Reb Nosson then said to his companions, "Do you see this person whose house was burnt down and he still isn't giving up from building it anew, how he's collecting all the pieces he'll still be able to use to rebuild? So too it is in ruchniyus. Even if the yetzer hora strengthens itself so much over a person and almost burns him completely, it is forbidden for him to give up hope. He just needs to collect and search for some good points from between his many sins that he stumbled into, and through this he'll be able to truly return to Hashem, as it says in the torah of azamrah (above).

(פרפראות לחכמה רפ"ה)

Once while Reb Nosson was talking about this Torah, he understood that it seemed repetitive to his talmid Reb Nachman of Tulchin, who had already heard it many times. Reb Nosson then told him, "To me, it's brand new!" (!שפיגל ניי) And he took every opportunity to teach it to others.

(באש ובמים פרק ט"ז)



Always There, Always Good...

By Tzipora B.

It's really all so great,
it always was, always will be
Just look beyond the surface, reflect, contemplate,
and the good you will see

When it all seems grey, stormy and dark
when hope is dimmed
edges sharp, pain so stark
He's there, of course, too

החסתרה שבתוך החסתרה (ליקוטי מוהר"ן ג"ד)
'He's with you, by you, near you' (ליקוטי מוהר"ן ס"ח)

Seek Him out, call and cry,
the clouds will part, light will peek through
you'll find Him if you only try.



Dealing with your Garbage

By Aviva Gross

Leah was a devil of a student. She had never really been evaluated, but she was probably suffering from ADD, ADHD, Asperger's (or all of the above). She did not participate at all in what we were learning. When I would test her in any way, she simply didn't answer; her blank eyes would just stare at me as if I was a wall. If it were only scholastically that she wasn't doing well, I would have let it go, but every recess, I ended up holding court cases to judge between Leah and the other girls.

Throughout the lesson, a bored Leah would pull girls' ponytails, or pinch those sitting next to her. One day, a little lizard found its way into our classroom. The girls shrieked

in terror, running up and down the classroom wildly. Leah jumped up and bravely caught the lizard by its tail. And then, no more and no less, she started chasing the girls with the lizard, teasingly waving it in their faces.

Trying to remain composed, I ordered Leah to leave the classroom with her newfound friend. Miraculously, she listened and left with the lizard, and order was instantly restored.

After twenty minutes, I felt bad for poor Leah stuck outside and went to call her. I asked her if she wants to come back in to the classroom or if she prefers to stay with her new friend. She answered, "I'm fine with my new friend," and that was it.

Later that week, I was doing a weekly assessment of the girls' behavior with the principal, and we reached Leah's name. To my dismay, I had absolutely nothing positive to say. The principal prompted me to talk, but I told her that I'm embarrassed to say that I can't find one good thing about her.

My mood that day was rattled. When the Rebbe said that 'through seeing the good in people, even the worst person, you generate baalei teshuvah, geirim, and you bring the whole world to good,' he surely didn't mean to exclude Leah.

I decided to do something. I took a new blue notebook and wrote Leah's name on the top right corner of the front page. Then I set a goal, but not for Leah, for myself. Every day, I needed to fill in five good points that I would find in this pure neshama who acted like a devil.

1. She apologized after damaging the wall poster.
2. She listened nicely during the math lesson.
3. She wrote neatly in her notebook without scribbling all over.
4. A friend spilled her recess bag and she didn't say or do anything to her in return.
5. When there was a fight in the making, she only fought a little and then quickly withdrew so as not to

make a major battle.

I didn't work on complimenting her, nor did I do any talking. I just 'noticed' tiny spots of positivity in her and wrote it down. At the end of the week, I sent it home with her to her parents, and that was it.

A few weeks passed, and she started participating in tests. The complaints during recess slowly faded, and then the miracle came: she actually asked a question in class! A few months went by, with the blue notebook constantly on my desk and filling up, and she got her first 100% score on a test that year!

She finished the year as an organized, normal girl. She even took part in several voluntary projects and was considered above average in every single way; socially, intellectually, and in everything! And that was without any therapeutic intervention or medication. During the yearly assessment with the principal of all the girls, I had plenty of good to say about her (even without looking in my blue notebook) because she really became someone else! When I search for that old Leah, she's not to be found.

* * *

One of the important tasks in our lives is to make sure that we put everyone around us in their place. We make

sure to show them the truth, 'simply out of rachmanus,' to show them how full their garbage is and teach them how to get rid of it. We analyze what they're 'suffering' from, and we remember stories of how people who suffered from these bad middos ended up... We want them just to understand that they should change themselves before it gets too late; it's that simple! So we'll remind them again and again, we'll convince them that they are mistaken and prove to them black on white that yes, their way of living is terrible!

It says that even Reb Akiva was wondering if there is anyone in *his* generation who knows how to do the job of tochacha correctly. Tochacha is dangerous. The Rebbe explains in Likutei Moharan 8 that if some foul-smelling object lies untouched, it doesn't smell. But if someone comes and shakes it, then it starts stinking. If a person has bad middos and you start dealing with it, you show him up and talk about it, then you make his neshama stink. This weakens his neshamah and takes away his strength to overcome his bad habit. (You need someone extremely holy and capable of doing the job for this holy task). What you *do* manage to accomplish is that the person gets convinced that he is indeed a bad person, and he loses the kochos to fight.

One day, one of the prosecuting angels in heaven met up with the Satan and asked him, "Why are you so down? How's business going?"

The Satan sighed and explained that the situation is very bad. It's a generation of baalei teshuvah; kiruv groups are sprouting up one after the other, and people don't really listen to him anymore. There are so many CDs, books and lectures available that the generation is just rudely ignoring him!

The malach said, "Let me try. Give the business over to me and we'll see how I manage."

A while later, the malach invited the Satan for a visit into gehinom, and the Satan couldn't believe what he saw. Thousands and thousands of all kinds and stripes of Klal Yisrael; young and old, frum and not, chassidish, litvish, yeshivish, the gehinom is overflowing! The Satan jumped up. "Tell me your secret! How did you manage?" But the malach refused to tell him, saying that once he reveals the secret, the game will be over. People will find out, and the gehinom will be empty. So he went on doing his job, and the business was growing rapidly, until one day the Satan couldn't manage anymore. "You have to tell me! I promise I won't reveal the secret to anyone!"

So the malach said, "I go over to a Yid, no matter who; young or old, big or small, religious or not, and I whisper

*one word into his ear and he is mine!
(But first, I disguise myself as a big
Rebbetzin...) I tell him, 'You're bad!
Hashem doesn't need you at all! See
what you look like! See what you're
busy with!' And that's enough, he
already runs after me and does
whatever I tell him to do. And that's
how my business runs like clockwork."*

Baruch Hashem, the Rebbe yells to whoever will listen, "It's not true!" There's no bigger aveira than atzvus - believing the yetzer hora that indeed, the situation is bad and you are bad too. That big 'mitzvah' of simply showing other people or yourself that you are bad, that you are treading the crooked path, is only another tactic of the yetzer hora, pretending to be a big tzaddik in the name of fixing the world and yourself.

Fixing the world and yourself is through one way only: Azamra. Searching for the tiny bit of good.

But isn't it dangerous? Won't I fall into the trap of believing that everything is fine, and I'll stop working on myself? I'll become lazy and all my bad middos will easily take over the reins.

Yes, it is dangerous. It is very dangerous and harmful to the yetzer hora! People will stop falling into depression and atzvus, which is his food for survival, and then he might die! (As the Rebbe says that depression gives food for the Satan).

But we are not afraid of that danger. Indeed, we daven for it to happen. The Rebbe said that 'even if he would have done the biggest aveira, he wouldn't pay it any attention.' He wouldn't sit down with a knife and fork and politely, in the name of teshuva, eat his heart alive. He would just continue being the same Yid, talking, acting and doing the same things further. 'But later, (when guilt and atzvus are not present) he would do teshuvah.'

* * *

You know! Bad news! There is a garbage can in your house which is quickly filling up with dirt and garbage. You're not scared? It's increasing all the time, and it's almost reaching the top! You're not worried? Maybe it will flow over! Maybe it will stay there for the next ten years! Make sure you check every five minutes that it's under your control. Analyze strategies to keep it in control, that it's not damaging the cleanliness of your home!

Nobody makes such a fuss about it. They know that when it fills up, someone will come and tie a knot and throw it out.

We all have a garbage can in our hearts, with garbage filling up there. There's no point in taking a chair and sitting down to analyze our garbage can; how it's filling up, where it's up to now...

שעה אחד לב נשבר ושאר היום תהיה בשמחה

Be broken-hearted one hour a day, and the rest of time, be happy. The Rebbe gives us a designated time to take care of that garbage can. And otherwise, throughout the day - ignore it. You're still concerned? The Rebbe reassures us:

מה לכם לדאוג מאחר שאני הולך לפניכם?
סמכו על כוחי הגדול!

"What do you have to worry about, seeing that I'm going before you? Rely on my great power!"

The Rebbe tells us, I'm taking care of your garbage! Not by telling us how much garbage we have, but the opposite, that even with all our garbage, our good is much stronger than it. Even just the tiniest bit of good!

Sit down and analyze the tiny little good deed. Blow it up, magnify it, let it take you over and let yourself believe that you are good. You are a tzaddeikes for doing this good thing. It shows that you are a good person, and with this little good, A. you served the great big Hashem. You gave Him nachas and He's proud of you. B. You'll get schar that will last forever and ever! You'll benefit from this schar for the next millions of years! Indulge in the excitement, let it overtake you, and eventually, it will switch you from 'I'm no good' mode, to 'I'm a piece of good' mode. All of a sudden, the bad person is nowhere to be found, all through finding the little

bit of good within you and letting that good convince you that this is what you are.

But we're scared. What will happen?

- Maybe all the bad I have will quietly pile up under the carpet and erupt as a volcano one day, when it will already be too late.

- Maybe I'll become a huge lazy baal gaava and the most frightening of all will happen: I (or the child) will stop working on myself!

- I'll just be a fat liar. It's not true! That's not me, I'm an honest person and I know that I'm totally not such a tzaddeikes. I don't want to fool myself...

- So many people I know and read or heard about didn't take care of themselves... I don't want that to happen to me.

But NO! The master of emotional wellbeing said, "A person must search and seek and find within themselves some bit of good."

It worked with Leah and it will work with all different sorts of Leahs in you and around you. Try it, it's guaranteed to work! Who in your life desperately needs to be changed? Buy a little blue notebook, write that name on the top right corner, and work slowly and steadily at filling it up (remember, no talking necessary). Watch the magic unfold before your eyes!



My Little Thief

A True Story by Chayale M.

“Where do you have these twenty spinners from?” I took my Rivka’le aside and questioned her strictly.

“I found it in the garbage - that big green dumpster next to the supermarket - when I passed by on my way home...” Rivka’le’s large green eyes were the picture of innocence.

Who puts twenty spanking new spinners in the garbage? But Rivka’le was perfectly sure of herself, she could tell me exactly where she had found it and what she had seen near it. I couldn’t point my finger to any wrongdoing. So we made a new rule: No taking anything from garbage cans, nor from ‘next to’ garbage cans.

That was far from the end of it. One day, I saw that her pencil-case looked suspiciously bulky. A simple check showed thirty new glittery pencils

and fifteen gleaming white erasers nestled within the many pockets, with another three shiny silver sharpeners at the side. The display window of the supply store conveniently located right next to her school winked at her every day on her way home and she just couldn’t resist...

We made her return to the store with the pickpocketed goods and apologize. The humiliation she felt was punishment aplenty; there was no need for us to say another word. Being a regular well-behaved talented girl, confessing to having stooped to such petty crimes was sheer torture! And we hoped that it would leave a long-lasting bitter taste in her mouth.

But our hopes were in vain. The phone rang one day with a strange voice at the other end. It was the nearby grocery manager on the line, with

an unpleasant surprise in store for us. “Your daughter ... a whole container of candies ... and I don’t know what else she took.” He demanded that I come down to the store and pay for whatever she had pinched. To my great shame, Rivka’le admitted to having taken several other goodies in the last few days.

I hurried to the grocery with my cheeks on fire. The manager wasn’t satisfied with me paying for the candies, he wanted another \$100 to cover whatever else she had pilfered. The degradation was too much for me. We had already scolded and threatened, punished and promised goodies – if she would only ask, instead of pocketing whatever she fancied. But all our efforts were futile.

We tried seeking advice from professionals and following their ideas, to no avail. Our children’s drawers were all fitted with locks. Rivka’le had already made 100 promises that she would no longer steal, and yet here she freely admitted to having taken candies and ices from the grocery every day.

The situation was pitiful, if not absurd. Rivka’le was desperate to keep to her hands to herself, but she simply couldn’t! They grabbed things as if on their own accord; she was trapped in some kind of helpless addiction which she couldn’t shake off. Her classmates started taunting her with embarrassing

nicknames, because they too weren’t safe from her slippery fingers.

Kleptomania, we decided. Therapy was the solution. We did our homework and researched the absolute best therapist for our darling suffering daughter. The long-awaited appointment finally arrived, and I approached the office with my heart in my hands, hoping against hope that salvation would arise. Gripping Rivka’le’s hand tightly as if to impress her with the importance of the moment, we knocked on the door and took our seats. The lady facing us seemed professional enough, I decided at first glance. Her eyes were calm and clear, and her whole manner bespoke a cool confidence. Before asking any questions, she set Rivka’le up with a paper and some crayons, and asked her to draw a picture. That was to be some kind of assessment, I realized, and waited to see what she would come up with.

Rivka’le drew a pretty girl, and I watched the therapist analyze the simple illustration. “I see from the abnormally large hands she drew,” she calmly brushed away a stray hair from her face, “that we’re talking about a problem with thievery.”

I was stunned. We had given no prior information about the reason for the appointment, yet she had hit the nail on the head with her first try! This was my angel in disguise. If she could diagnose

the problem so precisely, she could surely cure it too! All I needed to do was listen to her instructions, and the thievery would be a thing of the past. I leaned forward, ready to hear and accept.

“Rivka has very long arms. She doesn’t realize the difference between her own items and those belonging to others; it all seems the same to her.” She lectured on some more professional terminology and then gave me a list of books I was to buy and read. We stopped off at the bookstore on the way home, so eager was I to begin the magic. I sat all night bent over the textbooks; my forehead creased in concentration until my husband warned me that I would end up with permanent wrinkles. But I didn’t care, I wanted to be done with the problem. Indeed, I practiced all the exercises with Rivka’le, who was also serious about ridding herself of her unwanted habit. We made much progress and went through all the books.

Yet after all the bother, I was faced with another unpleasant grocery story. It was a deep disappointment. We had invested so much effort, and done everything humanly possible. But here the grocery manager was standing at my side and yelling. What should I do? What could I do? I grabbed Rivka’le’s hand and pulled

her through the aisles with a pen and paper while she told me what she had ‘taken’ the past few days. “10 of these ices, about 5 of these flavored chips, 2 bags of candies, 6 Klicks...” I added up the total, paid for the items and went home in despair. Rivka’le had no problem admitting what she had taken; she was filled with regret for stealing, but she still had no control over herself! Despite all the copious therapy, she was back to square one, or maybe she had just stayed there all along!

My trust in the therapist was sorely let down. I had been sure that if she was so spot-on with her diagnosis, her prescribed treatment would also be successful. I had diligently followed her instructions to the letter, yet it was all for naught. Completely disillusioned, I realized that therapy was not the solution. Although they had fancy assessments and could tell you exactly what was wrong until you were convinced that they were blessed with the gift of prophecy, that was where it ended. They did not have the tools to cure the problems, despite all their sophisticated books and methods.

Now I felt that the only solution would be medication. I needed a pill to cure her! Rivka’le was suffering, her siblings were suffering, and I was suffering. Her self-esteem was crumbling, she had no control over

herself, and nothing was helping. I started researching medication for Kleptomania.

In my dilemma, I met a friend and poured my heart out to her. I told her all about Rivka'le's addiction, and its awful consequences. I was just looking for an outlet, but after listening to my woebegone tale, she had a question for me.

"Did you use a bowl for every spoonful?"

I looked at her in surprise. "What do you mean?"

"The Rebbe says that for every spoonful of hisorerus, a person needs a whole bowl of hischazkus. For every admonition to a child, you need to give them a sea of love and verbal support."

My furrowed expression showed her that I was listening, but not quite getting what she meant. She further explained herself. "Every one of our words and actions throughout the day can be divided into two: The first category is **arousal/hisorerus**: demanding, warnings, scolding and punishing. Hisorerus is not only the real punishing, yelling or giving consequences. It is also much deeper and more subtle." She assumed a bossy mother's shrill voice, *"Put away your shoes! No, you can't have another one! Tuck in your shirt! I'm counting 'til five!*

Don't touch! Out of the kitchen, it's not safe!"

I put my hands over my ears, and laughed. "Okay, I get the picture. So what's the other side?"

"The second category is **encouragement/hischazkus**: compliments, treats, gifts and incentives. And even more subtle: *"I like what you chose! Yes! This is what I meant! Thank you! I'm so excited to see you! It's so nice to realize that you care. I see you tried! Wow! You were the one to..."*

"You can admonish as much as you want, but remember," she warned me, "for every word of category #1 you need at least 20 of category #2, so make sure you're ready for that!"

"So every time I tell my child anything negative, I need to accompany it with a shower of positive encouragement."

I realized that I had done the exact opposite; I had accompanied every compliment to Rivka'le with a shower of criticism. "See, you looked after the baby so well. If you would only apply your talents to other areas in your life, and use your capabilities for the right areas instead of finding ways to take things which don't belong to you..." My regular mantra played itself in my ears and I blushed. But I was still stuck. "How can I do it differently?"

I asked my friend earnestly. “What is there to compliment her on if she’s stealing? How can I tell her she’s a good girl if she’s constantly taking things which don’t belong to her?”

My friend didn’t see the problem. “Sure you can! I’ll show you. Take this for example: ‘Where is Chany’s sticker album? Rivka’le, did you take it? Go bring it out of your hiding place and give it back to her right now! I know you really didn’t want to take it from her, and you know what? I realized that the entire day passed and you didn’t take A, B, and C that were lying around the house freely (not in the locked drawers). You could have taken them but you didn’t! I’m sure they appealed to you! I’m sure you wanted them too! Wow, look how strong you are! Can you tell me about any other nisayon you had today in which you saw and wanted yet didn’t take? Wow, you see how much you’re growing and working on yourself...”

She then lowered her voice confidentially and said, “Let me tell you what happened in my family. I had a child who was a chronic liar. Figments of his imagination were like complete reality in his eyes, there was no way of knowing when he told the truth or not. Finally, I spoke to him seriously and told him like this: You are not a liar. You just have a big yetzer hora inside you who is forcing you to say lies, but it’s

not you at all. All you need to do is kill that yetzer hora. Every time you battle the urge to listen to him and you tell the truth, you admit to what you did, you give him a powerful kick in the ribs and you break his bones, until he’ll eventually die! And when he dies, we’ll make you a big seuda to celebrate your freedom from him.

He liked the idea, and agreed to get to work on the slaughter. To encourage him, I told him that his yetzer hora is now only a child, but if it stays alive it will grow and grow along with him until it becomes a ‘Tatty yetzer hora’ which is much harder to kill. And I admitted to him that I also have some ‘Mommy yetzer horas’ which pester me, and I need to work very hard to kill them. So began a long few weeks in which the project took off. We had to postpone the seuda several times, but we actually saw progress. His lies became less and less frequent, and we made a big fuss about every time in which he admitted to some wrongdoing, and punched his yetzer hora. Ultimately, after weeks had passed without a single lie, we celebrated the festive seuda. I baked a chocolate cake and covered it with red icing to show the spilled blood of the dead yetzer hora, we decorated the table, I made his favorite supper and at the end of the big occasion, we all lifted him up on his chair and sang, ‘כבה כבה יעשה’ - This is what is done to a boy

who kills his yetzer hora of lying!

The Rebbe tells us that if we focus on the good in a person, the bad disappears. ועוד מעט - if you look at the bit of good, ואין רשע - suddenly there's no rasha anymore," my friend finished her little speech.

Her story was adorable and I enjoyed hearing it, but I didn't feel it would make a difference with Rivka'le. She was too far along in her addiction; the only thing that would help would be some pills to cure her chemical imbalance. But there were no pills to be found, and the situation was only getting worse. With no alternative, I decided to try my friend's idea.

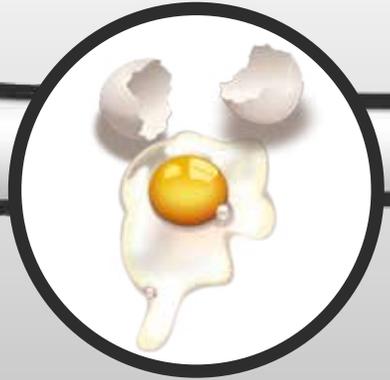
After a few months in which Rivka'le tried hard not to steal, and I tried hard to encourage her and find things to compliment her on, we reached an entire month in which there was no stealing incidents. The long-awaited day of her siyum was scheduled, celebrating the death of her yetzer hora of stealing. We hung up balloons and streamers, and decorated her chair beautifully. To add to the excitement, I ordered an edible sheet with a picture of Rivka'le, and had them put a vivid illustration of her with a sword, slaying the big bad yetzer hora. We put that on the cake, and brought it in to the accompaniment of lusty singing from all her siblings who joined the celebration and we had a massive siyum.

The atmosphere at home became much calmer and more positive. I could trust Rivka'le with money, and I didn't need to hide any valuables which would be too tempting for her. Everyone was happier, Rivka'le most of all.

But then Rivka'le gave me a terrible disappointment. True, it was only a little thing, and it was only from her sister and not from some random person on the street, but it meant that she hadn't even killed her yetzer hora of stealing! She was still taking things which didn't belong to her! I was too upset to say a single word to Rivka'le. Instead, I grabbed the phone and quickly called my friend for guidance. "It's already after the siyum, everyone knows that Rivka'le has 'killed' her yetzer hora, and now it happened again!"

She calmed me down and reminded me how far Rivka'le had progressed... She instructed me to encourage Rivka'le and tell her that it's not so terrible, she made a mistake. It's not that same yetzer hora, but a different, even harder one, which she has the power to kill! She can do it!

Today, we can already celebrate an entire year in which the children's drawers are all unlocked, and nobody needs to hide their possessions. You won't believe it, but I can even send Rivka'le shopping, and I can do it calmly! I guess I found the pill!



Food for Thought - Eggs

Based on Reb Y. M. Anshin

Every woman yearns and dreams of being perfect. Of raising her children correctly and providing them with all the necessary tools for a perfect life. To that end, we put immense effort into reading books, listening to shiurim, analyzing different approaches and struggling to find the right path in raising our children to be healthy and erlich, and in building ourselves emotionally and spiritually.

But the right approach seems completely unreachable. Should I be stronger, more demanding, and expecting, or should I be lax, accepting, and easygoing? It's so confusing! From one side, you see your neighbor acting with total acceptance and unconditional love, unwilling to demand any work from her children. Half of them are already in the streets, and the other half are 'at-risk.' There's also the friend engrossed in 'proper self-love,' almost sacrificing her shalom bayis

and the chinuch of her children with her endless shopping, trips and enjoyment, all in the name of 'knowing how to take care of herself.' And what about that girl who never stretches beyond comfort zone, because 'she tried' and it didn't work?

It all makes you feel like saying, "Shake up! Wake up! Start taking responsibility for yourself!"

But on the other hand, you hear about the boy who can't open a gemara ever again, or has a trauma every time he hears the Shabbos siren ringing, just from the overly critical and demanding youth he had. These people want to delete the term 'יראת העונש' from their dictionary, relegating it to something only relevant to the previous generations.

So what is the correct approach?

The Rebbe tells us:

על כל כף התעוררות, צריכים קערה של התחזקות

For every spoonful of awakening, you need a bowl of encouragement.

The question is not so much the exact measurement of critical versus easygoing, or when to use which. The point is how to live with simcha and יראת העונש, so that they should both be one aim, one goal, one package. To find a way to live with both of them together.

As long as we have one goal of 'take it easy, life is not meant for overworking' on one side, and the 'come on! Shake a leg! Be responsible!' on the other side, and we choose which we to use when, we are lost. Because every time we'll want to have a good time and be blissfully excited, we'll need to turn a blind eye to the יראת העונש approach. And every time we need to be mechanech our kids or ourselves, we'll have to forget for the moment about happiness and enjoyment. That turns into a big problem.

Reb Nosson explains the deeper significance of it, taking it out from the practical halacha in his wondrous way. This time, from the signs of a kosher egg. As we know, if both sides are rounded, or both sides are pointy, the egg is not kosher - a kosher egg needs to have one side rounded and one side pointy. So too, if someone is only happy or only sad, it's a sign of non-kosher. But if someone is also happy and also broken-hearted, that's a סימון טהרה.

As long as we have two separate eggs in our lives, one with two sides pointy and one with two sides rounded, then we actually have two non-kosher eggs... And even if we'll find out exactly when to use which egg and how much to use of each,

we are still eating treifa eggs.

The only correct option, the kosher option, (and in the long run, productive and flawless option) is to use the pointy and rounded egg approach. To find a way of living that will enable us to encompass the יראת העונש and true בושח, while at the same time also including a deep endless simcha. Strong powerful hisorerus, with the utmost hischazkus – a beautiful combination.

- Love yourself, take care of yourself all the way, while adhering to the strictest Torah guidelines all the time.
- Provide unconditional love and acceptance to your family, yet be frightened and deeply bothered by the slightest breach in halacha or tznius.
- Prepare 20 dips for Shabbos and teach your children all the grave hilchos Shabbos, but only with a happy, cheerful atmosphere.
- Strongly encourage your son's hasmadas hatorah with respect and admiration yet without ריבוי אור.
- Accept the child with all her excuses of 'she tried.' Admire it, but show her how much you count on her and how much you expect from such a special smart girl.
- Acknowledge how much you've grown, point out your strengths and realized how you've changed, but show yourself how much more such a yearning soul can achieve, and start davening for it.

Just like a true, growing, yearning, Breslover soul.



A Taste of the Rebbe's Treasures

Is it at all correct that I should pay attention to my good deeds, or should I ignore them and just continue doing?

You should certainly focus on whatever good you did, because that will give you the motivation to continue doing good.

As the Rebbe says in Likutei Moharan 282: "It is known that a person must be very careful to always be happy, and to distance depression very much. And even if he starts looking at himself and he sees that there is no good in him; he's full of aveiros, and the yetzer hora wants to throw him into depression and gloominess through this chas veshalom, nevertheless, it is forbidden for him to fall from this. He just needs to search and find some good inside him, for it is impossible that he never did any mitzvah or good deed in his life. And even if when he starts looking into that bit of good, he sees that it's also full of wounds... which means that he sees that even the mitzvah that he merited doing is full of egotism, extraneous intentions and many defects, with all this it isn't possible that there shouldn't be within that mitzvah a tiny bit of good, for at least however it is, there was some good point in the mitzvah and good deed that he did. For a person must search and seek within himself some good, in order to enliven himself and come to simcha."

But still, it sounds a little exaggerated to always remember my achievements, isn't a little anavah always necessary?

We must always follow this way, because forgetting it makes us far from Hashem – which is the opposite of modesty.

Reb Nosson says further there: "The Rebbe cautioned us very much to go with this

Torah, for it is a great foundation for whoever wants to come close to Hashem, and not lose their whole world chas veshalom. Because most people who are far from Hashem, their main distance is due to depression and gloominess, since they become discouraged because they see the damage that they have done with their misdeeds, every person according to how he himself knows the ails of his heart and his afflictions. Due to this, they fall into low spirits. Most of them give in to despair completely, and through this they can't daven with kavana at all, and they don't even do what they could still do.

Therefore, a person must be very wise with this, because all the dejection in his mind, although it come from the bad deeds which he indeed did, but despite it, the downheartedness and depression that it leads to is only the work of the yetzer hora who weakens his mind in order to make him fall completely chas veshalom. Therefore, a person must strengthen himself to go with this Torah; to search every time and seek some bit of positivity and good points, and through this he will enliven himself and come to joy, and he'll still hope for salvation, and he'll be able to daven and sing and thank Hashem, an aspect of 'אזמרה לאלקי' and through this he'll be able to truly return to Hashem."

Reb Nosson also wrote in a letter in Alim Litrufa 279: "You should know that not long ago, there was a great awesome holy tzaddik who sacrificed his soul at all times for the sake of the Yidden's main favors; to have mercy on them and bring them back to good, with wondrous awesome eitzos. And this is the main rachmanus on the holy Yidden.

With his wonders and deep hasagos, he revealed to us that a Yid should enliven himself and strengthen himself every day through every good point that he will search for and find within himself.

For several hours while lying in bed before I got up, I was thinking only about this, in order to respond to you, and to revitalize you from new with this, as the Rebbe warned us expressly to go with this. He gestured with his holy hand with wondrous yearning, that his desire is strong that we should go with this, as I already told you a little."

In Kochvei Ohr, Anshei Moharan 29, Reb Nosson writes, "Although the yetzer hora strengthens itself over a person, and almost burns him completely, nevertheless, it is forbidden for a person to despair. He must just collect and search some good points from between the many sins he stumbled into, and through this he'll be

able to truly return to Hashem.”

In another letter, Alim Litrufa 94, Reb Nosson writes, “You shouldn’t get confused from whatever transpires with you. Know and believe that all your good points are exceedingly precious to Hashem, and you can always enliven yourself with them, and truly enter the side of merit, an aspect of ‘ועוד מעט ואין רשע’. Remember these awesome words well, and they should never be old in your eyes, just repeat them again and again very well. They should be like new in your eyes every day.”

Reb Nosson also tells us in Likutei Halachos Techumim 6: “The main hischazkus is in what is written in the two holy Torahs: Azamra, and Ayeh. Because in the Torah of Azamra, it explains that when a person sees that he is very far from Hashem, and his deeds are very dreadful, he should still see to search and seek and find within himself some good point, because how is it possible that he never did any mitzvah in his life? And even if that mitzvah too is mixed with lots of bad, it still has some good point. And so, he should search and find within himself some more good points...”

How is it possible to improve the quality and level of my tefillos?

The level of your tefilla is according to how much you know and believe that Hashem is standing next to you and listening to every word.

The Rebbe says in Likutei Moharan 62: “In truth, if a person would know with his whole heart that ‘the whole world is full of His glory,’ and that Hashem stands and listens to the tefilla, a person would surely daven with great intensity and he’d be very careful to focus on the words. But because a person doesn’t know this with his whole heart, he doesn’t get such fervor, and isn’t so careful. According to a person’s knowledge and grasp, so is his fervor and caution.”

He also says further in Likutei Moharan 155: “If a person would have complete faith and he would believe that Hashem is standing over him and listening to every word that leaves his mouth and hearing his tefilla, he would surely not have any depression, laziness or heaviness while davening, and he would surely daven properly. But the main confusion in tefilla comes from a lack of faith. And therefore, a person is struck with

depression and laziness, and it confuses his tefilla.

How should my approach to davening be?

A person should daven with happiness.

So says the Rebbe in Sichos Haran 75: "A person should be very careful to daven with happiness, and accustom himself to daven with a happy tune. And he should see to make himself happy before davening, and enliven himself however he can. And he should search within himself for some good point, in order to merit happiness so that he should be able to daven with simchah."

What should I do if I can't make myself happy through finding some good inside me?

Pretend to be happy even if you don't feel like it, and then you'll come to true happiness.

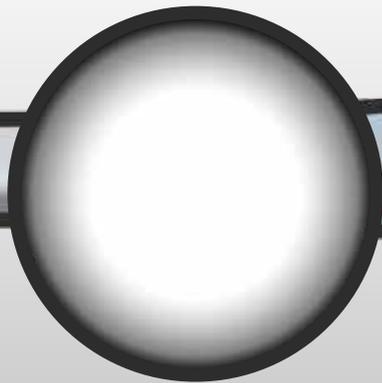
Like the Rebbe says in Sichos Haran 74: "If sometimes a person's mind is confused and he can't make himself happy in any way, then his advice is that the person should make himself as if he is happy. And even if when he starts, the happiness isn't yet truly in his heart, however, through pretending to be happy, he'll merit true simchah.

This advice is a great eitzah also for all holy things. In the beginning, one must pretend as if he is excited about that holy thing, and afterwards one merits it truly."

What should I do when I start thinking about other things during davening?

Continue davening without paying them any attention.

As the Rebbe says in Sichos Haran 72: "A person shouldn't pay attention to extraneous thoughts and confusions during tefilos. He should just do his thing, to daven in order, without looking at any confusions or other thoughts, just do his thing and not turn his face to look at these thoughts at all."



The Light of our Lives: Reb Nachman of Breslov

Chapter Two

After the passing of Reb Yisroel Baal Shem Tov, the Mezritcher Maggid had ascended his holy throne in an attempt to continue guiding the flock in his ways. But alas, the chassidim only merited precious little time to warm themselves from his glow, for he left this world after a mere twelve years. Several years passed in that bereft state, yet no replacement had shown up; no leader had appeared to take over the reins.

The holy assembly of talmidim included those who had still merited basking in the Baal Shem Tov's radiance. Their whole

yearning was to spread Hashem's name in the world, and they would come together from time to time to strengthen themselves in the ways of their holy Rebbe, the Baal Shem Tov.

Where was there a better place for these gatherings if not in Mezibuzh, the hometown of their great leader, in the very house of the Baal Shem Tov himself? That was the house in which the great and holy leader lived and spread light to the whole world; the house which exuded Torah, Yiddishkeit, chassidus, and love of Yidden in all the corners of the world; where so many Yidden

gathered in order to gaze at his holy countenance and hear some words of Torah, a lifegiving dew for their broken hearts. That was the place where the leader of the Yidden would practice his holy avodos and tefillos, bring Yidden close to Hashem and daven to Hashem for their sakes. There indeed was the proper place for these exalted meetings.

That was where his talmidim used to gather together, where the holy chain of spreading Torah and wisdom to Klal Yisrael was drawn. That was where they decided how to shine the holy Baal Shem Tov's light into the furthest, darkest corners of the world; to reveal to the descendants of the holy forefathers Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov their lineage, to let them know their mission on earth, and that wherever they might be, they should proclaim, "Hashem is G-d!"

These holy talmidim included Reb Baruch of Mezibuzh, Reb Efraim of Sodlikov, Reb Chaim of Krasny, and many more tzaddikim. Their meetings would take place when they came to Mezibuzh to the tzion of the holy Baal Shem Tov, or when they traveled to the eldest of their group, Reb Yaakov Yosef of Polna,

the author of the sefer 'Toldos Yaakov Yosef.'

On the tzaddikim's way to the Toldos, during their stops in the Baal Shem Tov's house, they would glance at the small child who was ever-present, listening with great diligence to every word which left their lips. Upon closer examination, they were mesmerized by his holy visage and righteous shining eyes.

"This small child will yet grow up to be very great, and he'll light up the world!" declared the tzaddikim amongst themselves.

Who was that wonder child, in whom the holy Tzaddikim saw such great things? Who was it who merited being raised in the Baal Shem Tov's holy home, and earned such exceptional praise from the greatest tzaddikim of the generation? Who was this shining luminary whom the tzaddikim proclaimed would light up the world?

None other than the one who was born in that holy house, the Baal Shem Tov's great-grandchild Nachman.

His mother Feiga once needed to leave the house, which required a babysitter for her infant. At that

time, Reb Chaim of Krasny was present, so it was arranged that he would take care of the baby so that she could go. After the mother left the house, Reb Chaim positioned himself at the head of the baby's crib, and gazed at the little infant. The clock ticked on, evening fell, yet Reb Chaim didn't budge. Listening to the baby's breathing, watching his expressions, Reb Chaim sat there deep in thought.

The clock chimed; midnight had arrived. Like all the Baal Shem Tov's talmidim, Reb Chaim would spend the holy hours of midnight saying tikkun chatzos, mourning the loss of the Beis Hamikdash and the exile of the Shechina. But tonight, instead of practicing his usual habit, Reb Chaim stood watch over the baby, his eyes never straying. In the morning, he told Feiga in amazement, "I skipped my daily practice of chatzos just so as not to move away from this wonderful child!"

As the years passed, the infant developed into a small child, who constantly made sure to be around when the talmidim visited. He swallowed their every word with great thirst, listening to the stories they told of the Baal Shem Tov with wonder and awe. Their holy words had a deep effect on him, it left a lasting impact.

When he had just turned five, he noticed the talmidim preparing to set out on a journey to the Toldos. With all his childish innocence, he pleaded with them to take him along. He so wanted to see the oldest of the Baal Shem Tov's talmidim, gaze at his shining countenance and listen to the holy words of his mouth. But his request was flatly denied. The way to Polna was far too long and difficult for such a small child, it didn't even come into consideration. However, he was insistent. He wanted to go to the tzaddik, and he was unmoved by the difficulties it would present. The talmidim considered the matter closed and arranged themselves on the wagon to start their journey. But they had yet to meet up with such insistence... A small leg stuck itself into the wheel of the carriage, unwilling to let them leave without him. Seeing such stubbornness, they were amazed at the determination and yearning for kedusha of such a small child. Reb Chaim of Krasny could refuse no longer; he swung the boy onto the wagon and sat him next to him, promising to take care of him during the journey and bring him back home. He couldn't ignore such a deep-seated desire.

The Rebbe was eternally grateful to him for the favor he did to him, giving him the zchus of seeing the

holy Toldos while he was still alive. The young boy's holy guts were long-remembered and discussed by the talmidim, and Reb Chaim of Krasny prided himself on having recognized the Rebbe's stubborn persistence in avodas Hashem when he was still little.

Indeed, this persistence and resolve showed itself from a very young age, not letting him give up no matter how hard his desired goal was, and spurring him to even greater heights. With tenacity and doggedness, the young child performed the mitzvos and served Hashem, starting with toiling in Torah, continuing with davening with devotion, until he reached astounding levels. He expended vast diligence and resolution to carry out the goals he set for himself, not being swayed by anything around him, and pouring his heart to Hashem with pleas for His help in crossing over the obstacles safely. He understood the idea of toiling in Torah at a very young age, and he put all his effort into learning, until his whole essence turned Torah'dig; he became one with the Torah.

The wood that kept the fire burning, the power that pushed him to strengthen himself over everything and continue onwards despite all hardships was his strong and passionate desire, his fierce

stubbornness.

Every little thing in avodas Hashem was terribly difficult for him. Sitting alone in a room and learning for several uninterrupted hours seemed almost impossible to him! But the hardship only made him even more determined to reach it, and he battled with himself until he actually got there.

His daily self-imposed tasks in avodas Hashem were too much for him to even think of! In order to lighten the burden, he resolved to only let himself think about the present. What need was there to worry about tomorrow's tasks? Today he only needed to achieve what he wanted to do for that day, and tomorrow was a completely separate story. This thought process aided him greatly, for no matter how hard something is, the knowledge that it is only temporary makes everything manageable. Just one day is always bearable. And so, with effort, insistence, tefilla and firmness, the Rebbe carried out his ambitions.

But rivers of tears were shed before any level was reached. Hours would pass, with the little boy sitting and crying. Nobody had any clue what the reason for his endless crying spasms were, but they had a certain quality to them which set them apart from the regular crying jags

of an overtired child. Since he was two years old, the child had already refrained from crying for mundane reasons such as a bruised leg or an empty stomach, all so as not to cause his parents any pain or anguish. What triggered his tears, the Rebbe revealed years later, was his deep desire for Torah. He would cry and beg Hashem to help him learn Torah.

Sitting over a mishnayos, while children his age were running around outside playing hide and seek, the little boy would try with all his might to understand, yet it seemed impossible for him to make head or tails out of it. But he wouldn't let go. 'How can it be that I shouldn't understand Hashem's holy Torah?' and the tears would start pouring... "Hashem! Please help me understand the Torah! Make the holy words light up for me!"

After enough of such tefillos, understanding would finally dawn on him and he would sit and learn with pleasure, thanking Hashem for the awesome zchus of letting him learn the holy Torah. The procedure would be repeated with every sefer he grasped in his holy hands. Only after buckets of tears had been filled, along with tefilos from the

depth of his precious little heart, would he merit comprehension. In that manner, he swam the sea of Torah like a skillful swimmer, delving into the mystical Zohar and the writings of the Arizal at an incredibly young age.

In cheder, his extraordinary love of Torah was clearly distinguishable amongst the other boys. He would swallow the words of learning with such thirst and fervor; it was obvious that the Torah was his only desire in life. The daily material they covered was far from enough for him! Earnestly, he approached the melamed in private with a special request. He would pay the melamed three groshen for every extra blatt of gemara that he would learn with him besides for what they learned in class. He had the money saved up from the little bits his mother would give him to buy sweets or fruit on special occasions, which he had no need for; his only desire was to learn more and more Torah! The impoverished melamed was happy to oblige and earn an extra income on the side, and both of them benefited from the deal. The little boy could now learn as much as he wanted!

To be continued...



The Cripple

Sippurei Maasios Story 3

Part Two

When he came, he stood far away from the two thousand mountains and saw that there were many thousands upon thousands, and myriads upon myriads of families of demons (for they multiply and have children just like people do and are very numerous). And he saw their king sitting on a throne, the likes of which no mortal ever sits on. He observed that they were engaged in mocking jest – one related how he had hurt a baby, another recounted how he had hurt someone’s hand, another told how he had damaged a foot, and others said other similar jest.

In the midst of this, he noticed a father and mother walking along and

crying, and they were asked, “Why are you crying?” They answered that they have a son, whose habit was to go out on his way, and he would come back at set intervals, but now it had already been a long time and he still hadn’t returned. So they brought the couple to the king, who commanded to send messengers all over the world to find him. As the parents were returning from the king, they happened to meet one who would often go together with their son. He asked them, “Why are you crying?” So they recounted the story. He answered them, “I’ll tell you. We had an island in the sea where we had our place. Then came the king to whom the island belonged, and he wanted

to build palaces there, and he had already set down foundations. So your son said to me that we should hurt the king, so we went and took away his power. He went to many doctors, but they couldn't help him, so he began to go to sorcerers. One of those sorcerers knew his family, but my family he did not know. Thus, he was not able to do me any harm. But his family he knew, and he caught him, and is torturing him severely."

Upon hearing this, the parents brought their son's friend to the king, and he told his story to the king. The king said, "Return the king's power to him!" He answered, "There was someone amongst us who did not have any power, so we gave the king's power to him." The king said, "Take the power away from him and give it to the king." He answered the king, "But he became a cloud." The king said that they should summon the cloud, so they sent a messenger to get him.

Now the son (who at the beginning was unable to walk, and who came here and saw all this) decided, "I'll follow them and see how one of these people can become a cloud." So he followed the messenger and came to the town where the cloud was, and asked the people of the town, "Why is this town covered

with a cloud?" They answered him, "To the contrary, there are never any clouds in this place, but now for some time this cloud has covered us." Meanwhile, the messenger went and called the cloud, so it left the place. The son decided to follow them to listen to what they were saying. He heard the messenger ask, "How did you come to be a cloud here?" The other answered him, "Let me tell you a story:

Once there was a wise man. The emperor of that country was an atheist, and he brought the whole country to become unbelievers. Then the wise man called together his whole family and said to them, "You see that the emperor is an unbeliever, and has drawn the whole country after him, and even a few of our family have also become unbelievers. Therefore, let us retreat to the desert, in order to preserve our faith in Hakadosh Baruch Hu." They agreed to the plan. Then the wise man uttered a name (that is, one of the holy names of Hashem), and it brought them to a desert. This desert didn't find favor in his eyes, so he uttered another name, and brought them to another desert, which was also not favorable to him. He uttered another name, and brought them to another desert, which he did find favorable. This desert was adjacent

to the two thousand mountains, so the wise man went and drew a circle around his family, so that no one could come near them.

Now, there is a tree, that if it were to be watered, there would not remain a trace of us demons. Therefore, there are guards there from among our people who stand day and night, digging around the tree and preventing water from reaching it.

The one listening to the story asked, "Why do they need to stand there day and night digging? Wouldn't digging one time be enough to prevent the water from flowing in?"

The teller of the story answered, "There are gossipers among us, and these gossipers go and create conflict between this king and another king, which causes wars. Through these wars, earthquakes happen, and the trenches that were dug collapse, and then water can come to the tree. Therefore, they stand guard and dig constantly. And when a new king arises among us, they boast of all their mischief before him, and everyone is merry. This one tells of how he hurt a baby, and how the mother is grieving over it, and another tells some other such story, and so many other similar mockeries. As the

king becomes more lighthearted, he goes and walks with his nobles, and tries by himself to uproot the tree. Because if this tree would be no more, it would be very good for us. The king strengthens his heart very much in order to uproot the tree, but when he approaches it, it screams fiercely and then fear falls upon him and he is forced to turn back.

One time, a new king was appointed, and they performed all their mockeries before him, as described above, and he became very merry, and fortified his heart very much. He greatly desired to uproot the tree completely, so he went out on a walk with his nobles. He girded his resolve powerfully and ran to the tree to uproot it completely. When he arrived, the tree let out a great scream, fear fell on the king and he turned back. He became very angry, and returned. On his way, he looked and noticed some men sitting (they were the wise man and his people), and he sent some of his men to abuse them, as was his custom always. When the wise man's people saw them, they became afraid, but the wise man said to them, "Do not fear."

When the demons came near them, they could not reach them because of the circle the wise man had drawn around them. The

king sent other men, and neither could they. He flew into a rage and went himself, but he could also not approach them. So he asked the wise man to let him in. The wise man responded, "Since you ask, I will let you in. and since it is not honorable for a king to go unescorted, I shall allow one other to come in with you." He opened an entrance for them, they came in, and he closed the circle again. The king now asked, "How did you come to settle in my place?"

The wise man answered, "Who is to say it is your place? It is my place!" The king said, "You aren't afraid of me." The wise man answered, "No." The king repeated, "You aren't afraid of me." And he extended himself and became very large, as high as the heavens. He wanted to swallow the wise man. But the wise man responded, "Even so, I am not afraid of you. However, if I want, you will become afraid of me." He went and prayed a little, and a great thundercloud with loud thunder developed. Thunder kills the demons, and all the king's nobles were killed, and only he and the companion that came into the circle with him remained. The king begged him that the thunder should stop, and it stopped.

The king now said to him, "Because you are such a unique man, I will give you a book with all the families of the demons. There are spiritual masters who only know of one family, and even that family they don't know completely. I will give you a book with all the families, for the king has the list with all the names. Even the newly born are on record with the king." The king sent the companion who came with him to go and bring the book. (It turned out to be a wise choice to let one companion enter with the king, for otherwise who would have gone to get the book?) He brought the book to him. The wise man opened it and saw written there thousands upon thousands of demon families. Then the king promised the wise man that they would never harm his family. He commanded to be brought the portraits of every member of his family. Even when a new child would be born, they should immediately bring him the child's portrait, in order that they should never harm anyone of the wise man's family.

Later on, when the wise man reached his time to pass on from the world, he called together his children and commanded them, saying, "I leave you with this book. You see that I have the power

to use this book in holiness, and nevertheless I do not use it. I simply put my trust in Hashem. Neither should you use it. Even if there will be among you someone who is able to use it in holiness, even so, do not use it, and rather trust in Hashem.” Then he passed away, and the book was handed down. It reached his grandson, who had the power to use it in holiness, but he had faith in Hashem and he did not use it, as the wise man had commanded.

The gossipers among the demons tried to tempt the grandson. “Seeing that you have mature daughters, and you cannot support them and marry them off, make use of the book.” He didn’t know that they were trying to tempt them, and thought that his own heart was advising him to do so.

He then traveled to the grave of his grandfather and asked him, “You commanded in your will that we not use the book, just rather to have faith in Hashem. But now my heart is drawing me to use it.” The deceased wise man answered him, “Even though you have the power to use the book in holiness, it is better that you should have faith in Hashem and not use it, and Hashem will help you.” And so he did.

There came a time when the king of

the country in which the grandson lived became ill. He went to doctors, but they could not heal him, because of the intense heat in that country which rendered medical treatments ineffective. The king of that country commanded that the Jews pray for him. Then our king (of the demons) said, “Seeing that the grandson has the power to use the book and yet he chooses not to use it, we need to do him a favor.” He commanded me to become a cloud there, so that the king should get healed from the medication he already took, and from the medication he is still to take. The grandson knew nothing of all this. And therefore, I became a cloud here (All this was the story that the cloud recounted to the messenger. And the one who previously did not have power in his legs to walk had been following after the two and listening).

The cloud was brought before the king of the demons and the king commanded that they should remove his power and return it to the king (whom they had taken the power away from, for he had built on their place). So they returned him his power, and the missing son of the demon couple came back. He was in a broken state, without strength, for they had tormented him exceedingly there. He was

burning with resentment at the sorcerer who had tormented him so, and he commanded his sons and family that they should forever haunt that sorcerer. But there were gossipers among them, who went and told the sorcerer to beware for they were planning to harm him. He devised a scheme, and called on other sorcerers who were familiar with the demon families, in order to be protected. The son and his family were enraged at these gossipers who had revealed his secret.

One time it happened that the family of the son and some of the gossipers served together on a shift guarding the king. The family of the son went and slandered the gossipers to the king. The king executed the gossipers, and their remaining friends were enraged. So they went and created dissension between all the kings. Famine, poverty, bloodshed and plague developed among the demons, and war broke out between all the kings. This caused an earthquake, and the earth surrounding the tree fell entirely, and the tree was totally watered. Nothing remained from the demons, and they became nothingness. Amen.

The essence of the story is hinted at in the first Kapitel of Tehillim: "Happy

is the man who did not walk in the advice of the evil ones, and in the path of sinners did not stand." This is the aspect of the paths in the story, on which the dust was sprinkled. "He will be as a tree planted by streams of water, giving fruit in its season, and its leaves will not wither, and all that he does will prosper." This is the tree which the demons tried to damage, all of whose fruit and leaves were effective for all kinds of maladies. Examine further and see other hints: "Happy is the man who did not walk," for at first he was not able to walk. "And in the path of sinners did not stand," for later on, he could not stand either. "And in the gathering of mockers did not sit," That is, the mockery in the story. All these are only a faint indication of the story's depth, that we should have some conception of the deeper significance. Yet these matters are still very hidden to the utter extent of concealment. For all the stories he told are far beyond human comprehension and hidden from the eyes of all living.



Women's Views

How does the Rebbe's light help us feel special when we're feeling low?

I call my sister, and I tell her "I'm having a yeridah now!" (not necessarily disclosing any other details), so we start some Milah dishtusah. We compose some silly chants and songs on the spot (about the yeridah) like: 'if you're down and you know it give a jump, if you're happy and you know it punch your nose.' We dance around over the phone with these chants and then we talk about how everyone has these downs and it will only bring a nice and strong up, giving value to the pain. She b"H usually manages to get me off the couch and back to work again. Thank you, Sis!

Name Withheld

Well, just the fact that I am aware of the Rebbe's light! What could ever make me feel more special?

The Rebbe CHOSE us as his chassidim!

And ONLY the Rebbe has the most wonderful eitzos to assist us in whatever "down" situation we might ever find ourselves in. Reb Nosson writes in a letter to his son that many Tzaddikim want to be mechazek but they don't have the keilim, the tools. We do have these wondrous, powerful tools- like Hisbodedus, Emunah and Simcha given to us as a gift. All we need to do is reach out for it and utilize it, and of course, to remember how lucky we are!

Baily Friedman, Brooklyn, NY

The Rebbe's unconditional love, and the "amazing toolbox" of eitzos for every situation, whether low, overwhelmed, lonely, scared, angry, or feeling hopeless (gevald zeit eich nisht meiyash!) etc . I utilize these simplest, most basic eitzos, in any situation I'm in.

I do whatever I am capable of doing, thinking, wanting, or even wanting to want, in that given moment and that makes me feel so special and taken care of. Reb Nosson says in the Likutei Tefillos: 'like a loving mother tending to her beloved child, caring, concerned, and holding your hands.' And as the Rebbe said וואס האט איר זיך צו זארגן? איך גיי פאר אייך

Hashem should help I should remember these things when I'm feeling low. Amen

Esty S. Yerushalayim

In times of hardship, the Rebbe Zt"l helps me, by giving me the awareness that whatever happens to me is from my Tatte in shamayim, Who loves me more than I can possibly understand what love means. The Rebbe helps me realize that the Sheluchim that make me feel low are sent from my dear Father because He wants me to grow through these hard times, rise in my avodas Hashem, and get even closer to Him.

S Berkowitz, Brooklyn, NY

I am b"H zoiche to do hisbodedus, so I never have to stay feeling low for too long, because I've learnt to use my feelings, whatever they are - low or high, happy or sad - to connect to Hashem.

Miriam Frank, Beis Shemesh

The first thing is to think of at least one good point that you have, a nekuda tovah, and then you already have what to feel good about yourself. And after a yerida always comes an Aliyah, which is also a comforting thought. The straight-out practical idea is to put on music and dance- even better if it's with your kids.

Yocheved Meyer, Manchester

For me, sichas chaverim is the key. Four and a half months ago, I gave birth to my second healthy baby boy Eluzer Mordechai (after Ruv Eluzer Mordechai Koenig zt"l). Prior to my bundle of joy's arrival, I was going through a hard time emotionally. A few of my close friends, also chassidistas of the Rebbe zt"l, constantly checked up on me, even at night when our husbands were learning in kollel. They also traveled short and long distances to give me words of encouragement from our dear Rebbe zt"l. My baby was born and he is such a light of simchah, just like his name sake. As his mother, I am so happy to be where I am and so proud to have a community of women who come together to stay tight and strong. As we all know the famous words of Reb Nosson before his petirah: "We must keep together and love one another."

Rochel Leah Gale, Brooklyn, NY