

ב"ה

ליקוט דא"ח

על שמירת

קדושת הברית

Teachings from Chassidus
On Guarding the Holiness
of the Bris Milah

Two teachings from the Rebbeim on this topic:

- 1- A *sicha* of the Lubavitcher Rebbe from Sukkos 5714
- 2- A maamar from the Alter Rebbe in Maamarim Ketzarim

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ב"ה

With Hashem's help, we present to Anash two teachings from the Rebbeim on guarding the holiness of the Bris Milah.

The first is a sicha from the Rebbe on Sukkos, 5714. There, the Rebbe notes that although the traditional custom in Chabad was not to discuss this issue publicly, we now need to do so for the benefit of those struggling with it.

The Rebbe describes the great spiritual light of Hashem that is created by guarding the Bris, and offers some basic advice on how to deal with the struggle.

This sicha is recorded, and you can listen to it on the Ashreinu app at <https://go.ashreinu.app/0jbzz57ru3u6>, or scan this QR code:



The second is a maamar (or letter) of the Alter Rebbe, printed in Meah Shearim and in Maamarim Ketzarim. The Alter Rebbe explains at length the proper approach to this struggle. His primary emphasis is on the need to remain joyous in the service of Hashem at all times, even while doing Teshuva. He says that Teshuva itself, since it is a mitzvah, must be done with joy. He also says that a Yid always has a reason to be so joyous and happy in connecting with Hashem, so there should be no more room for depression to overtake him.

The *sicha* was initially translated by Rabbi Yehuda Altein and later edited by Rabbi Avraham Katz.

The *maamar* of the Alter Rebbe was translated and explained by Rabbi Avraham Katz.

With Hashem's help, we are also working on a Likkut of guidance on this topic, culled from halacha and the teachings of the Rebbeim, especially from the Rebbe's letters and other teachings.

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“Creating Light by Guarding the Bris”

Sichah of 19 Tishrei, 5714,

(*Toras Menachem*, vol. 10, pp. 65–68. Translated by Rabbi Yehuda Altein, and edited by Rabbi Avraham Katz.)

In the early years of the Rebbe’s leadership, he would *farbreng* every year on Sukkos for yeshiva bachurim. This *farbrengen*, held on Chol Hamoed Sukkos, was connected to Simchas Beis Hashoeivah, the theme of Chol Hamoed Sukkos.

In the following *sicha*, the Rebbe begins with a discussion of a Gemara related to Simchas Beis Hashoeivah in the Beis Hamikdash. However, this leads to a broader discussion of a topic highly relevant to yeshiva bachurim, namely, guarding the holiness of the *bris milah*.

Although it was not the custom of any of the previous Rebbeim of Chabad to publicly discuss this topic, the Rebbe states that, nowadays, we need to override this custom and (occasionally) discuss it publicly because of the positive results that will follow.¹

¹In a letter dated 8 Iyar 5714 (the same year as this *sicha*), the Rebbe again states clearly that although in the past it was not the custom in Chabad to publicly discuss this issue of guarding the *bris milah* etc., the situation nowadays demands that we do so, since if we do not, it will only make it worse for the bachurim. (Unlike in past generations, when it wasn’t so necessary to discuss it publicly, and it only drew unwanted attention to this topic.)

To quote from the letter (translated from the original Hebrew):

“Although it has not been the custom among our community (Anash) to print special books discussing this transgression, and even not to single it out for public discussion—one may suggest the reason for this, based on the words of my great-grandfather, the Tzemach Tzedek zt”l: that brooding over the matter and fearing the sin can, by nature, bring about an involuntary emission (k’ri), similar to how sinful thoughts can bring this about (see Responsa of the Tzemach Tzedek, Sha’ar HaMilu’im, siman 62; see there).

However, in this country—where a terrible breach has spread regarding this sin in certain circles, and they view the matter as something entirely commonplace—what is more, some of the doctors... even instruct those who come to them to do this and to conduct themselves in it regularly, G-d forbid; they, G-d forbid, even mock those who refrain from it... And, sadly, no one opens their mouth to protest, object, or expose their shame...

The Wicks of the Simchas Beis Hashoeivah

בְּדַבְרֵי הַמִּשְׁנָה אוֹדוֹת "אוֹר בֵּית הַשְּׂוֹאֵבָה" שֶׁנַּעֲשֶׂה ע"י שֶׁמֶן וּפְתִילוֹת - הֵנָּה בְּנוּגַע לְ"שֶׁמֶן", לֹא נִתְפָּרֵשׁ סוּג וְאִיכוֹת הַשֶּׁמֶן, אֲלֵא רַק כְּמוֹת הַשֶּׁמֶן ("כַּדָּיִם שֶׁל שֶׁמֶן שֶׁל מֵאָה וְעֶשְׂרִים לֵג"); אֲבָל בְּנוּגַע לְ"פְתִילוֹת" - נִתְפָּרֵשׁ בַּמִּשְׁנָה שֶׁנַּעֲשׂוּ (מִבְּגָדֵי כְהֵנָּה, וּבָהֶם גּוּפָא) "מִבְּלָאֵי מְכַנְסֵי כְהֵנָּה וּמֵהִמְיָנִיהָן".

The Mishnah describes how the Ezras Nashim was lit for the Simchas Beis Hashoeivah: large basins filled with oil were prepared, and wicks were placed inside and lit. The Mishnah tells us how much oil was inside each basin (120 *log*), but it doesn't tell us what type of oil was used. But with the wicks, the Mishnah gives us more information: they were made from the Kohanim's worn-out pants and *gartelach* (plural for "gartel").²

וְהַקְשׁוּ הַתּוֹסְפוֹת: "תָּמָה דְלֹא חָשִׁיב נְמִי כְתָנִת". וּבְתוּרֵי"ט מוֹסִיף עַל קִשְׁיַת הַתּוֹסְפוֹת: "וְלִי קִשְׂהָ גַם מִצְנַפֵּת".

In addition to pants and *gartelach*, the Kohanim also wore long shirts and turbans. Tosfos asks: Why doesn't the Mishnah mention the long shirts? And the Tosfos Yom Tov adds: Why aren't the turbans mentioned either?

וְהַקְשִׁיאַ מִתְחִזְקֵת יוֹתֵר ע"פ הַסְּגִיא בְּמִסְכַּת שֶׁבֶת: "מִבְּלָאֵי מְכַנְסֵי כְהֵנָּה

This question becomes stronger when you look in Maseches

Therefore, there is room to say that one should print and publicize about the great severity of the sin and the damage it causes, and to discuss this matter publicly—provided it is for the sake of saving the souls of Jewish young men from descending [to spiritual destruction]. And especially: to thereby strengthen and increase the attentiveness of the teachers, the Roshei Mesivta, and the Roshei Yeshiva (may they live long) to the situation in this area—for to a certain significant extent the matter depends upon them to correct this negative situation; and accordingly, the responsibility rests upon their necks, and "whoever can protest [and fails to do so, is himself liable, to a certain extent]."

Now, this letter was written over 70 years ago; today, in 5786, the moral challenges of the youth are significantly greater, and if even then the Rebbe encouraged public discussion of this issue, how much more so nowadays.

² Sukkah 51a.

וּמֵהַמִּיָּיִהָם הָיוּ מִפְּקִיעִין וּמֵהָן
מְדֻלֵּקִין (אֹרֶךְ בֵּית הַשְּׂוֹאֵבָה) ..

(וּמִיד לֵאחֲרָי) בְּגָדֵי כְהֵנָה שְׂבֻלָּה
מִפְּקִיעִין אוֹתָן וּמֵהָן הָיוּ עוֹשִׂין
פְּתִילוֹת לְמִקְדָּשׁ -

דְּכִיּוֹן שֶׁב' הַמִּימְרוֹת הוֹבֵאוּ בְּחֻדָּא
מִחֻתָּא, בּוֹלֵט יוֹתֵר הַשְּׁנַיִ בֵּינֵיהֶם,
שְׂבֻנוּגָע לְפִתְלוֹת דְּהַמְנוּרָה נֶאֱמַר
"בְּגָדֵי כְהֵנָה" סֵתָם, וְאֵלוּ בְּנוּגָע
לְפִתְלוֹת דְּאוֹר בֵּית הַשְּׂוֹאֵבָה
נִתְפָּרְשׁוּ מִכְּנָסִים וְאַבְנֵט דְּוִקָּא,

וְעַכְצ"ל, שְׂאִין זֶה בְּאִפְּן ד'תְּנָא
וְשִׁיר", אֶלָּא שְׂאוֹר בֵּית הַשְּׂוֹאֵבָה
צְרִיךְ לֵהוּיֹת מִפְּתִילוֹת שְׂנַעְשׂוּ
מ'מִכְּנָסֵי כְהֵנִים וְהַמִּיָּיִהָן" דְּוִקָּא.

Shabbos.³ There, the Gemara quotes the above statement, that the worn-out pants and *gartelach* were used for the Simchas Beis Hashoeivah.

Immediately after this, the Gemara quotes another statement: "When the Bigdei Kehunah would wear out, they would tear them to make wicks for the menorah."

Placing these two statements side by side emphasizes their difference: for the menorah, it says "Bigdei Kehunah," whereas for Simchas Beis Hashoeivah it specifies "pants and *gartelach*."

So you can't say the Mishnah is just giving examples. For the Simchas Beis Hashoeivah, you specifically needed wicks made from pants and *gartelach*.

Protecting the Bris

- ע"פ נְגֻלָּה אֶכֶן קֶשֶׁה: מֵאִי שְׂנָא
בְּלָאֵי מִכְּנָסִים וְאַבְנֵט מִבְּלָאֵי כְּתֻנֹת
וּמִצְנָפֹת!?

At a basic level of understanding the Gemara, we have a question: What is the difference between the Kohanim's pants and *gartelach*, and their long shirts and turbans, [that only from the pants and *gartelach* could they make wicks for the Simchas Beis Hashoeivah lamps, and not from the long shirts and turbans]?

³ 21a.

ולעת-עתה לא מצאתי בספרי נגלה
 תרוץ מחנך על זה.

I have not yet found a clear answer
 to this question in Nigleh *sefarim*.

ויש לבאר ענין זה ע"פ חסידות
 ומוסר:

Here is an explanation based on
 Chassidus and Mussar.

ובהקדים הידוע חמר הענין הקשור
 עם החטא הראשון (הקשור גם עם
 דור הפלגה) שזוהי גם הסבה
 לאריכות הגלות (החל מגלות
 מצרים שהיא השרש לכל הגלויות)
 - שכל זה קשור עם הענין דשמירת
 אות ברית קדש, שעל זה נאמר בזהר
 ש"כל מאן דנטר האי ברית .. זכה
 דאקרי צדיק", ובה תלוי ביאת
 משיח, וכל זמן שעדין לא בא, ה"ו
 סימן שעדין לא נתתקן ענין זה.

First, let's take a few moments to
 focus on the importance of
 protecting the holiness of the *bris*.
 The Zohar says that whoever
 protects his *bris* is called a
tzaddik.⁴ Conversely, failing to
 protect it is very severe. This was
 the sin of Adam Harishon, which
 was connected to the *dor*
haflagah.⁵ This is why the *golus* is
 so long (beginning with *golus*
Mitzrayim, the origin of all later
galuyos). Moshiach's coming
 depends on this. If Moshiach is not
 yet here, that means it still needs to
 be fixed.

- מעולם לא שמעתי, לא אצל כ"ק
 מו"ח אדמו"ר, ולא אצל שאר
 הרבנים, שידברו אודות ענין זה
 ברבים, ובמלא, אין גם רצוני לעשות
 כן;

The Rebbeim never spoke about
 this in public—neither the
 Friediker Rebbe nor the other
 Rebbeim—so I wish that I also
 didn't need to talk about this.

אלא, שבנוגע לצד הטוב שבזה
 (בדלקמן), שאני.

However, for the benefits this will
 bring, I will depart from the usual
 practice and discuss it publicly.

⁴ Vol. I 59b.

⁵ Kabbalah explains that throughout the 130 years when Adam Harishon separated from Chavah, he would release *zera levatalah*. The *neshamos* this *zera* contained later returned to this world as the *dor haflagah* (Shaar Hapesukim, Miketz 51:55).

Pants and *Gartelach*

וְנִקְדַּת הַדְּבָרִים - שְׁצָרִיכִים לְדַעַת
שֶׁהַשְּׂמִיחָה הָרִאשׁוֹנָה שְׂבָאָה לְאַחֲרֵי
הַכִּפּוּרָה דְיוֹהֵכ"פ (שְׂמִיחַת בֵּית
הַשְּׂוֹאבָה) קְשׁוּרָה עִם "בְּלָאֵי מַכְנָסֵי
כְּהֻנִּים וְהַמִּינִיָּהוּ" שְׁעוֹשִׂים מֵהֶם
פְּתִילוֹת שְׂמֹדְלִיקִין אוֹתָם בְּבֵית
הַמִּקְדָּשׁ:

Now let's return to the wicks of the Simchas Beis Hashoeivah. This Mishnah teaches us the heights you can achieve by protecting the *bris*: The Simchas Beis Hashoeivah was the first celebration after the atonement of Yom Kippur. What helped illuminate the Beis Hamikdash for this great celebration? Wicks made from the Kohanim's pants and *gartelach*.

עֲנִינוּ שֶׁל אַבְנֵט (הַמִּינִיָּהוּ) - שֶׁלֹּא
יְהֵא לְבוֹ רוֹאֵה אֶת הָעֲרוּהָ, וְעַל יָדוֹ
נַעֲשִׂים גַּם הַמַּכְנָסִים - "מַכְנָסִיָּהוּ שֶׁל
כְּהֻנִּים", בְּגָדֵי קוֹדֶשׁ.

A *gartel* or belt separates your heart from your private parts.⁶ Wearing a *gartel* symbolizes the protection of the holiness of the *bris*. By doing so, even the pants, a garment related to the *bris*, become holy.

זוֹהִי הַהוֹרָאָה שֶׁ"מַבְּלָאֵי מַכְנָסֵי
כְּהֻנִּים וּמַהֲמִינִיָּהוּ מֵהֵן הָיוּ מִפְּקִיעִין
וּבָהֵן הָיוּ מוֹדְלִיקִין" -

This is the lesson from the worn-out pants and *gartelach* of the Kohanim, which they would use as wicks to give light:

שְׁגַם לְאַחֲרֵי מִשְׁךְ זְמַן רַב, לְאַחֲרֵי
שְׂכָבָר בְּלוּ ("מַבְּלָאֵי כו'"), צְרִיכִים
הֵם (הָאֲבָנִיט, וְעַל יָדוֹ גַּם הַמַּכְנָסִים)
לְהִשָּׂאֵר בְּמַעֲמַד וּמַצֵּב שֶׁל קִדְשָׁה,
עַד כְּדֵי כָךְ, שְׁגַם מֵהַ"מַּכְנָסִים"
יְכוּלִים לַעֲשׂוֹת פְּתִילוֹת שְׂמֹדְלִיקִים
אוֹר בְּבֵית-הַמִּקְדָּשׁ וּבִירוּשָׁלַיִם
כְּלָה!

Even after a long time since he started wearing these pants and this *gartel*, and even though they are worn out from age, they still need to remain at the same level of holiness as when he first wore them, to the extent that he can use these pants to make wicks to create light in the Beis Hamikdash and throughout the entire Yerushalayim!

⁶ See Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Aruch 46:2 and 91:2.

Meaning, a Jewish man needs to preserve the holiness of the *bris milah*, represented by the pants as protected by the *gartel*, to the point that even many years after his bar mitzvah, his *bris* is on the same level of holiness as when he had a *bris milah* at eight days old. If he were to do so, he could create spiritual light that would fill the entire world.

The Key to Spiritual Success

וזהו גם המענה לאלה שמתאוננים שאינם רואים הצלחה בלמודם ובתפלתם, מ'לערנט און מ'זעט ניט אין דערויף קין הצלחה, מ'דאוונט און מ'זעט ניט אין דערויף קין הצלחה":

This also answers the question of those who complain that they learn but don't see success in their learning. They daven, but they don't see success in their davening.

תורה - היא בדגמת בית המקדש, עליו נאמר "ועשו לי מקדש ושכנתי בתוכם", כמוכן ממארו"ל "מיום שחרב ביהמ"ק אין לו להקב"ה אלא ד' אמות של הלכה".

Torah is like the Beis Hamikdash. As Chazal say, from the day the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed, the "four cubits of Halachah" replace that Presence of Hashem.⁷

- לא יפלא אפוא למה לא נדלק אור ("פארוואס צינדט זיך ניט אן קיין ליכטיקייט"), כאשר ה' מכנסים" ו"ה"אבנט" הם שלא כדבעי!...

So if your "pants and *gartel*" are not as they should be, what's the surprise that your Torah learning is not illuminated?

ועד"ז בנוגע לתפלה, שכיון שענינה "דע לפני מי אתה עומד", מקום שעליו נאמר "לא יגורך רע", הינו, שאין שם מקום לענין דהפך הטהרה,

When you daven, you are standing before Hashem. Hashem doesn't tolerate any form of bad or the opposite of purity.

לא יפלא אפוא שלא רואים הצלחה בתפלה, כל זמן שלא יכולים

So if you can't create light with your pants and *gartel*, what's the

⁷ Berachos 8a. See the Rambam in his introduction to his commentary on Mishnayos.

לְהַדְלִיק וְלְהַאִיר הַ"מְכַנְסִים" וְהַ"אַבְנֵט" ...! surprise that you don't see success in davening?

Why Chassidus Doesn't Talk About It

וְלַהֲעִיר: הַטַּעַם שֶׁלֹּא הָאֲרִיכוּ בְּעֵנִין זֶה בְּסִפְרֵי חֲסִידוּת, As a rule, Chassidus doesn't talk much about this topic.

- לְמִרוֹת שֶׁבְּסִפְרֵי הַתְּנִיָּא מֵאִים שֶׁ"חֲמֹר .. וְגִדּוֹל עֹנֵנוּ .. בְּמֵאֵד מֵאֵד" שֶׁלֹּא בְּעֶרְךָ לְגַבֵּי שְׂאָר עֲנִינִים, וּמִבְּאֵר שֶׁהִתְקוֹן לְזוֹה אֵינוֹ אֶלָּא "בְּתִשׁוּבָה נְכוֹנָה וּבְכוֹנָה עֲצוּמָה בְּקִרְיַת שְׁמַע שְׁעַל הַמְּטָה". אֲבָל, גַּם כָּאֵן מְדַבֵּר בְּזוֹה בְּמִסְפָּר שׁוֹרוֹת בְּלִבְד, וְכֵן שׁוֹרוֹת סְפּוֹרוֹת בְּפִרְקִים שֶׁלֹּא ח"ו (שׁוֹהוּ עֵנִין שֶׁמִּפְסִיק וּמוֹנֵעַ מִתְּשׁוּבָה, לְמוֹד הַתּוֹרָה וְקִיּוּם הַמִּצְוֹת), וּבְזוֹה יוֹצֵא י"ח - In Tanya,⁸ the Alter Rebbe writes that this *aveirah* is worse than any other *aveirah* related to the *bris*. He continues that the only way to fix it is through proper *teshuvah* and intense *kavanah* when saying Krias Shema al Hamitah. However, he devotes only a few lines to this topic. Similarly, when he touches upon it in later chapters⁹ (explaining that it gets in the way of doing *teshuvah*, learning Torah, and doing *mitzvos*), he makes do with just a couple of lines.

הוּא מְפִינֵי שְׁשִׁיטַת תּוֹרַת הַחֲסִידוּת הֵיא, שִׁיְהוּדִים יַעֲסֻקוּ בְּעֵנִינִים שֶׁל אֹר, וְהַעֲסֵק בְּעֵנִינִים שֶׁל אֹר יוֹצֵא אוֹתָם ("אֲרוֹיֶסְשֶׁלְעַפֵּן") בְּדֶרֶךְ מִמִּילָא שֶׁלֹּא יֵהִיוּ שִׁיכִים לְהַפֵּךְ הָאֹר;

אֲבָל זֹאת צְרִיכִים לְדַעַת, שׁוֹהוּ עֵנִין שְׁבוּ תְלוּי מַעֲמָדוֹ וּמִצְבּוֹ בְּלִמּוּד However, you must recognize its significant effects. Your ability to

⁸ Chapter 7.

⁹ Chapters 29 and 42, and Iggeres Hateshuvah Chapter 4.

הַתּוֹרָה, בְּקִיּוּם הַמִּצְוֹת וּבַעֲבוּדַת הַתְּפִלָּה,

learn Torah, do *mitzvos*, and daven depends on it.

וְלֹא עוֹד אֵלָּא שְׂבוּזָה תְּלוּי' יִצְיֵאת כָּל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִהַגְלוֹת.

Moreover, it is directly linked to the *geulah* of every Jew from *golus*.

How to Fix It

וְהַתְקוּן לָזֶה הוּא בִּירוֹ וּבְכַחוֹ וּיְכַלְתוּ שֶׁל כָּל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד, שְׂבִשְׁעָתָא חָדָא וּבְרִגְעָא חָדָא יִכּוֹל לַעֲשׂוֹת (לֹא רַק תְּשׁוּבָה סֵתָם, אֵלָּא) "תְּשׁוּבָה .. עֲצוּמָה" שֶׁתַּעֲבִירוּנוּ מִן הַקְּצָה אֶל הַקְּצָה, עַד כְּדֵי כָּךְ שִׁיּוּבֵל לְהַדְלִיק וּלְהֵאִיר (לֹא רַק מִ"בְּגֵדֵי כְּהֵנָה" סֵתָם, אֵלָּא דְוָקָא) - כִּיִּתְרוֹן הָאוֹר מִן הַחֹשֶׁךְ - מִ"מְכַנְסֵי כְּהֵנִים וְהַמִּינִיָּהוּ".

Every person can fix his failings in this area. In one moment, you can do the type of *teshuvah* the Alter Rebbe prescribes in Tanya, shifting yourself to the opposite extreme in *kedushah*. And when you do that, you create a higher level of light, a light that comes from darkness. You take those same “pants and *gartelach*” and use them to make light.

וּמֵהַעֲצוֹת לָזֶה - הַזְהִירוֹת בְּטְבִילַת עֲזָרָא (לְכָל הַפְּחוֹת),

Here are some of the things you can do to fix this: 1- Go to the *mikvah*, at least when required according to Ezra's *takanah*.¹⁰

וְכֵן הַזְהִירוֹת בְּבְרִית הַלְּשׁוֹן, שְׂמִסְעַת לְשִׁמִּירַת הַבְּרִית.

2- Guard your speech. Protecting the “*bris*” of the tongue helps protect the *bris*.¹¹

וְעוֹד עֲנֵן עֲקָרֵי בִזָּה - שְׁלִילַת הָעֲנָן דְּמָרָה-שְׁחֹרָה, שֶׁלֹּא זֶה בְּלִבְד שְׂאִינוּ מְסִיעַ, אֵלָּא אֲדַרְבָּה, מְקַלְקֵל יוֹתֵר, כִּי אִם עֲבוּדָה בְּשִׂמְחָה דְוָקָא,

3- An important guideline: Don't get depressed. Not only does it not help, but it only makes things worse. Instead, serve Hashem with joy.

¹⁰ I.e., after becoming a *baal keri*, whether unintentionally while asleep, or intentionally *levatalah*, G-d forbid.

¹¹ See Reishis Chochmah, Shaar Hakedushah, Chapters 11 and 17. Shaloh, Shaar Ha'osiyos, Os Shin.

וְכַמְבָּאָר בַּאגַּה"ת ש"מָה שְׁכָתוּב
וְחֻטְאֵי נְגִיד תְּמִיד, אֵין הַמְכוּוֹן
לְהִיּוֹת תְּמִיד עֵצֵב, דְּהָא כְּתִיב בְּתֵרִי
תִּשְׁמִיעֵנִי שְׁשׁוֹן וְשִׁמְחָה, אֶלֶּא נְגִיד
דִּיקָא, מְרַחֵק, וְהַמְכוּוֹן רַק שִׁיְהִי
לְזִכְרוֹן בֵּין עֵינָיו שְׁחֻטָּא כּו", אֶבֶל
בְּאִפְּן שְׂאִין זֶה מְבַלְבֵּל לְשִׁמְחָה שֶׁל
מִצְוָה וְשִׁמְחָה שֶׁל תּוֹרָה.

As the Alter Rebbe explains in *Iggeres Hateshuvah*¹², although you're supposed to remember your sins so you will be constantly on guard and remain humble, it doesn't mean you should always be sad about them. Instead, you should remember them "from a distance," at the back of your mind, not in a way that could distract you from doing *mitzvos* and learning Torah with joy.¹³

וְעִי"ז מְתַקְנִים אֶת הָעֵבֶר, וּמְכַאֵן
וְלִהְבֵּא הוֹלְכֵת וּמִתְמַעֵט הַשְּׂכִיחַת
לְעֵינַיִם אֱלֹהִים,

By implementing these measures, you will fix the past. Slowly but surely, your association with this *aveirah* will fade.

כִּךְ שְׁחוֹסְכִים אֶת הַדְּבוּר בְּזֶה, וְאִפְּלוּ
אֶת הַמַּחְשְׁבָה בְּזֶה.¹⁴

There will be no need to talk about it or even think about it.¹⁵

וְלֵאחֲרֵי הַתְּקוּן - מְדַלִּיקִים אֶת
הַמְּנוֹרוֹת שֶׁל בֵּית הַשּׁוֹאֵבָה
בְּפִתְלוֹת שְׁנַעֲשִׂים מ"מִכְנָסֵי כְּהֵנִים
וְהַמִּינִיָּהוּ", בֵּינָן שְׁנִמְצָא בְּמַעַמַּד
וּמְצָב שְׂאִין לְבוּ רוֹאֵה אֶת הָעֵרֶוּה

After you have fixed this, you can make wicks from the "pants and *gartelach*" and bring light to the Simchas Beis Hashoeivah, since his *bris* is now at the proper level of holiness for prayer and Torah study (represented by the idea of

¹² Chapter 11.

¹³ In the recording of the Sicha, the Rebbe references two teachings from the Alter Rebbe on the topic of avoiding depression, both from the sefer "Meah Shearim," one on page 21 and the other on page 24. The second teaching of the Alter Rebbe is also printed in Maamarei Admur HaZakein Ketzarim, page 476. This teaching is the maamar translated here after the sicha.

¹⁴ [שְׁחִיחָה גְּרוּעָה יוֹתֵר מִן הַדְּבוּר, כִּד שְׁצָרִיד לְהִיּוֹת הַסַּח הַדַּעַת מְקַלְלוֹת הָעֵינָן - כּוּלֵּל גַּם מִתְקוּן הָעֵינָן - לְפִי שְׁעָה.]

¹⁵ [Tangentially, we should note that, in fact, thinking about it is worse than talking about it. That is why sometimes a person needs to temporarily stop themselves from even thinking about fixing this issue, since even thinking too much about fixing this is also not so good.]

;כו' the separation of his heart from his *bris*, which is accomplished through pants and a *gartel*).

וכיון שְׁכָבֵר נִתְבַטֵּל הָעֵנִין הַבְּלָתִי-
 רְצוּי שְׁמִבִּיא אֲדָה"ז בְּתִנְיָא מִסְפָּר
 חֲסִידִים - אֲזִי יָכוֹל לְעַבְדַּ עֲבוֹדָתוֹ
 לְהַקְבִּ"ה (לְהַתְּפַלֵּל, לְלַמֵּד תּוֹרָה
 וּלְקַיֵּם מִצְוֹת) מִתּוֹךְ שְׂמֻחָה
 אֲמֵתִית!

Since the adverse effects of this *aveira* (mentioned in Tanya in the name of Sefer Chassidim) no longer exist,¹⁶ **now** you can serve Hashem—daven, learn Torah, and do *mitzvos*—with true joy!

¹⁶ I.e., *aveiros* create a division between you and Hashem, making it difficult to develop *yiras Shomayim* and feel Elokus (Tanya Chapter 42 quoting Sefer Chassidim §35). By fixing this *aveira*, that spiritual barrier is now removed.

LESSONS IN
THE ALTER REBBE'S
❧ **MAAMARIM** ❧

PRECIOUS TEACHINGS THAT AWAKEN THE HEART
TO DIVINE SERVICE FROM THE HOLY MASTER
❧ **RABBI SHNEUR ZALMAN OF LIADI** ❧
TRANSLATED AND EXPLAINED

מאמרי אדמו"ר הזקן

הקצרים

דבור המתחיל

חטאות נעורים

“Balancing Teshuva with Joy”

www.LEARNCHASSIDUS.com

A Teaching of the Alter Rebbe:

חטאות נְעוּרִים¹⁷

“Balancing Teshuva with Joy”

(א) Chapter 1

עצה כללית אודות חטאות נְעוּרִים: **General advice regarding “the sins of the youth”:**

The Alter Rebbe wants to advise us on how to deal with the sin of zera levatalah, known as “sins of the youth.”¹⁸

הוא שלא לעצב כלל בשעת הרהורי תשובה ועזיבת החטאים, **The advice is: Do not become depressed at all when thinking about doing Teshuva and abandoning this sin.**

אלא ישבר לבו, **Instead, he should temporarily become brokenhearted,**

לראות פחיתות ערכו, **by seeing how low he has fallen by committing this sin,**

¹⁷ נדפס בספר מאמרי אדמו"ר הזקן הקצרים ע' תעו, וספר מאה שערים ע' כד.

בשיחת שמחת בית השואבה תשי"ד, מביא כ"ק אדמו"ר ב' תורות מאדמו"ר הזקן מספר "מאה שערים", סימן א' וסימן ג' ממדור "אמרות קודש", ע' כא וע' כד. בה"אדיו" של השיחה הוא מצדד אם תורות אלו הם מאמרים או אגרות.

באתר: <https://go.ashreinu.app/xxfzmwc0cznz> 7 מינוט ו35 רגעים תוכל לשמוע איך מביא כ"ק אדמו"ר ב' תורות אלו מ"מאה שערים". והתורה הב' שם הוא התורה שלפנינו.

¹⁸ The phrase “חטאות נְעוּרִים-sins of the youth” is based on the verse (Tehillim 25:7) – ‘חטאות נְעוּרֵי וּפְשָׁעֵי אֵל תִּזְכֹּר כַּחֲסָדְךָ זָכַר לִי אַתָּה לְמַעַן טוֹבֶךָ הִ”ה” Do not bring to mind the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions, remember me in accordance with Your lovingkindness, because of Your goodness, Hashem.” In Torah literature, the phrase “sins of the youth” refers to the releasing of zera-semen for the wrong reason, in Hebrew “zera levatalah.” Because this sin is mainly done by young (unmarried) men, it is therefore referred to as “sins of the youth.”

וְתִכְף לְשִׂמְחָה יוֹתֵר וְיוֹתֵר, עַל כִּי
הוּא חִפֵּץ בְּתְשׁוּבַתְּן שֶׁל
רְשָׁעִים,

and immediately afterwards he should
rejoice intensely, by realizing that
Hashem desires the Teshuva of those
that have sinned,

וְשׁוֹלַח לָהֶם הַרְהוּרֵי תְשׁוּבָה
וְחִרְטוֹת.

and Hashem is the one who sends
them thoughts of Teshuva and regret
over their bad deeds.

In other words, Hashem greatly desires our Teshuva, which is why He gives us the desire to regret what we have done wrong and do Teshuva. Therefore, the fact that Hashem cares so much about us that He brings us close to Him through Teshuva should make the person very happy. In addition, since the person is making Hashem happy through his Teshuva, that itself is a reason to be happy.

וּבְיָדָאֵי אִם יִרְגִישׁ הַשָּׁב בְּעִצְמוֹ
עֲצֻבוֹת עַל אֵיזָה זְמַן מָה,

Now, certainly, if the person doing
Teshuva feels depressed for a long
time,

יָדַע בְּנַפְשׁוֹ שֶׁכָּל זֶה הוּא מֵצַד
הַגָּאוּה,

he should know well and take to heart
that this depression is a result of his
own ego.

שְׂאִין כְּבוֹדוֹ שִׁיהִיָּה רָשָׁע,

Since he thinks he is so great that it is
not befitting for him to be on the level
of someone who sins,

וּמִזֶּה נֶעְצֵב לָמָּה אֵינוֹ צָדִיק
וְיִשְׁמְרוּהוּ מִלְּמַעְלָה.

and therefore, he is depressed because
he isn't a Tzadik who has special
protection from Hashem Above to
prevent him from sinning.

וְאִדְרָבָה, יִתְבוּנֵן [ב'] מֵאֲמַר
רְבוֹתֵינוּ זְכוּרֹנָם לְבִרְכָה:

Really, he should realize that the
opposite is true, which can be done by
reflecting on the teachings of our
Sages:¹⁹

¹⁹ See Tanya, chapter 1.

שֵׁשׁ ג' בְּחִינּוֹת: צְדִיק גָּמוּר
וּבִינּוֹנֵי וְרָשָׁע .

There are three levels: A complete²⁰ Tzadik, a Beinoni, and one who sins.

אִם הוּא צְדִיק גָּמוּר אֲשֶׁר הָרַע
כְּפֹנֶף לוֹ, אֲזִי יִשְׁמְרוּהוּ
מִלְמַעְלָה .

If he were a complete Tzadik, then the unholiness of his animal soul would be completely overwhelmed and nullified by his Divine soul, and then Hashem would protect him from Above from sinning.

וְאִם הוּא בֵּינּוֹנִי, אֲזִי עַל פִּי דֶרֶךְ
הַטְּבַע אֶל כָּל אֲשֶׁר יַחְפֹּץ וַיִּבְחַר
יִטְנוּ .

But if he is just a Beinoni, then, according to the natural way Hashem made man, a person's heart and actions will turn to whatever he desires to choose.

וּלְכַתְחֻלָּה, אִין לוֹ שְׂמִירָה
מִלְמַעְלָה אֶלָּא סִיוַע יֵשׁ לוֹ, אִם
בָּא לְטַהֵר .

However, when a person begins serving Hashem, he does not receive special protection from Above, but rather assistance to help him when he comes to put in his own effort to purify himself.

Hashem made us such that we are unable to be a Tzadik through our own efforts, and we remain with a yetzer hara, no matter how hard we work.²¹ This means that, for almost everyone, we must work hard throughout our lives, struggling to overcome the yetzer hara. Therefore, if someone is

²⁰ Translator: The original text says "צ"ג, which can mean צדיק גמור or צדיק גדול. Either way, the emphasis here is not on the type of Tzadik, since any Tzadik doesn't feel his yetzer hara at all and is protected by Hashem from committing aveiros. I do not know why the Alter Rebbe specifically writes צדיק גמור גדול instead of just saying צדיק. However, I believe the intention here is to refer to any Tzadik, not just the level called צדיק גמור in Tanya.

²¹ In Tanya ch. 14, the Alter Rebbe explains that only if Hashem gives someone a gift of a special type of love of Hashem can he become a Tzadik who has no yetzer hara. But regular people are not usually granted this gift. In ch. 27, he explains the reason: Hashem takes special pleasure in people who have a yetzer hara and fight it. Hashem doesn't receive that enjoyment from a Tzadik, since he doesn't have a yetzer hara to fight with. Hashem wants most people to have a yetzer hara throughout their lives, so they can fight it, since the process of fighting the yetzer hara is tremendously precious to Hashem.

depressed because he is a human with a yetzer hara and not a Tzadik, that is only his ego. If he fails in his struggles and sins, it doesn't mean he is a terrible person; it just means he is a normal person, not a Tzadik who never sins.

So, instead of feeling bad about himself because he isn't a Tzadik, the opposite is true. He should be honest with himself that he is very much able to sin and is being pulled to sin.

The fact that he is doing Teshuva is extraordinary, not the fact that he sinned. This explains why feeling bad about yourself for sinning is just ego and, therefore, completely false.

Now the Alter Rebbe gives another reason why someone shouldn't get depressed and feel bad about himself because he sinned:

וּבְכֹל אָדָם יֵשׁ ב' כְּחוֹת: כַּחַ
הַמְעַצֵּר וְכַח הַדּוֹחָה.

In each person, there are two opposite physical forces working in the body: The body's ability to keep things (like urine or zera) inside, and the body's ability to push these things out.

וְאִם יַעֲצֹב, אֲזִי יִחְלֹשׁ יוֹתֵר כַּחַ
הַמְעַצֵּר,

If the person is depressed, then his body's ability to keep things inside will become weaker.

וְיִוָּצֵא זֵרַע לְבִטְלָה, חֵס וְשְׁלוֹם,
רַחֲמָנָא לְצַלְן;

And this can cause the zera to come out for the wrong reason, G-d forbid.

When a person is happy, his body functions better, including his body's ability to hold back the zera from coming out. But when he is depressed, this ability becomes weaker, so that the zera is more likely to come out even when he doesn't want it to.

עַל פִּי רַב בְּחִלּוֹם, וְאִפְשָׁר גַּם
בְּהִקְיָן.

This usually happens when he is asleep and dreaming about not-tznius things, but it can also happen when he is awake and thinking about not-tznius things.

הֵגַם שְׂאֲנוּס הוּא בְּדַבָּר,

Even though this zera levatalah is unintentional,

וְכִמוּ הַשֶּׁתֵּן יִחָשֵׁב לוֹ, **and therefore, this zera is considered like urine,**

Meaning, in this case, there is no sin involved in the zera being expelled from the body, just as there is no sin in urine being expelled from the body.

וְאִין בּוֹ אֵלָא טַמְאָה כְּמוֹ זָב, **And the only thing that happens to him is that he becomes tamei, like a zav,**

A zav is a man that has a liquid (like zera but not the same) that flows out of his bris milah against his will.²² He becomes tamei, but it isn't considered a sin for this liquid to flow out of him. Similarly, if someone's ability to hold back zera is weakened, it is not considered a sin if the zera comes out of him against his will. However, he does become tamei, like a zav, who becomes tamei, even though his flow is unintentional.

וְתִקְוֵנוּ בְּטַבִּילָה, **and to correct this tumah he should immerse in a mikvah,**

Even though it's not his fault that it happened, he still must go to the mikvah to remove the tumah.²³

אָף עַל פִּי כֵן, הוּא גָרַם לְדָבָר . **Nonetheless, even though he is not directly at fault, he is still somewhat responsible for indirectly causing it to happen.**

שְׂמֵחָת עֲצָבוֹת שְׁלוֹ מִתְגַּבְּרִים
הַתְּאוֹוֹת וְהַרְהוּרִים רְעִים עָלָיו,
וְנַחֲלֵשׁ כַּחַּ הַמְעַצֵּר , **Because it is his choice to remain depressed, and this depression causes him to have stronger physical desires and more immoral thoughts coming into his mind, and it weakens his body's ability to hold back the zera from coming out.**

עַל כֵּן, קִצַּת תְּהִיָּה עֲבָרָה בְּיָדוֹ
מִחֲמַת זֶה. **Therefore, it is partially his fault although only indirectly.**

²² ראה פרשת מצורע, טו:ב-ג.

²³ See Likutei Torah, Ki Savo 43b, where the Alter Rebbe discusses the importance of a baal keri going to the mikvah before davening.

אָר, אַם הוּא יִבְקֵשׁ רַחֲמִים, הוּא
מִרְבֵּה לְסַלּוֹחַ הַרְבֵּה פְעָמִים .

However, if he asks Hashem to have mercy on him and forgive him for this “partial sin,” then Hashem will forgive him even if this happens many times, since He is very forgiving.

וְאִם אֵינוּ בְּבַחֲיִנַת אַחְטָא וְאָשׁוּב,
אֲזַי בְּוִדְאֵי יִמְחַל לוֹ ,

And if he is truly sincere in his commitment to do Teshuva by serving Hashem joyfully and not letting himself be depressed, then Hashem will certainly forgive him,

בְּנֵאמַר: "מָחִיתִי כְעָב פְּשָׁעֶיךָ",
וְכָתִיב: "כָּרַב רַחֲמֶיךָ מִחַה פְּשָׁעֵי
כוּ."

As it says (Yeshaya 44:22): “I [Hashem] have wiped away your sins like a cloud [that is blown away by the wind],” and it is written (Tehillim 51:3): “In keeping with Your abundant compassion, erase my transgressions.”

הַגַּם שֶׁהָיָה הַדְּבָר מִחֲמַת
הַרְהוּר ,

Even though his own improper thoughts caused it, he is still not considered directly responsible for the zera levatalah.

מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהָרְהוּרִים שְׂאִינָם מִן
הַרְצוֹן, רַק כְּמוֹץ יְעוּף, אֵין
הַקב"ה מְצַרְפֵּם לְמַעֲשֵׂה ,

Because thoughts that come into the mind unintentionally are insubstantial, they are only like “flying chaff,” and Hashem does not connect them with the resulting action of the zera levatalah, and doesn’t hold him accountable for it.

וְאֵין מוֹדָה עֲצָבוֹת כָּלֵל.

Therefore, there is no reason to be depressed about this at all.

Now, this was only regarding zera levatalah that happened unintentionally. Because of his depression, his ability to hold back the zera is weaker. Therefore, when improper thoughts come into his mind, even though he doesn’t intentionally dwell on them, they can cause the zera to come out. In this situation, a person shouldn’t be sad about this zera levatalah for two reasons:

It is not really his fault, and he shouldn’t feel guilty about it.

Being sad will only make it worse, and cause the zera levatalah to happen more often, G-d forbid.

Therefore, he should simply go to the mikvah and make sure to be happy, not depressed, about this. He should not carry around feelings of guilt; instead, he should push the whole thing completely out of his mind (after going to the mikvah), and serve Hashem with joy.

However, if someone intentionally releases zera levatalah, then he must do proper teshuva, including regretting his decision to do this sin. There is a certain degree of guilt that he should feel, since he should feel bad about how he did. However, as the Alter Rebbe will go on to explain, this feeling of guilt should not stop him from moving forward in serving Hashem, and he shouldn't dwell on it consciously since he must also serve Hashem with joy.

(ב) Chapter 2

אָלָא, שְׂצָרִיךְ עַל חַטָּאוֹת נְעוּרִים
תְּשׁוּבָה עֲלֵאָה טוֹבָה ,
However, for the “sins of the youth” of intentionally releasing zera levatalah G-d forbid, he must properly do Teshuva, especially the “higher level” of Teshuva.

In Igeres HaTeshuva²⁴ the Alter Rebbe explains two levels of Teshuva:

The “lower level” is a person regretting doing the sin, and accepting upon himself not to repeat this behavior.

The “higher level” is to repair the spiritual damage in its connection to Hashem caused by the sin. This is accomplished by increasing his Torah study, intensifying his prayer experience, and adding in Mitzvah performance, especially in acts of charity and kindness.

The Alter Rebbe explains here, like what he says in Igeres HaTeshuva, that for intentional zera levatalah, he needs to do both levels of Teshuva. But with a special emphasis on the “higher level of Teshuva.”

וְלָשׁוּב "אֶל הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר עָמַד
שָׁם" בְּתַחֲלָה לְפָנֵי ה',
Figuratively speaking, he needs to “return to the place where he originally stood before Hashem,” i.e., bring himself back to the level of

²⁴ ראה אגה"ת פ' ד, ו-י.

connection with Hashem that he had before doing this sin.

ולְהוֹסִיף עַל שְׂקִידַת הַתְּמִדָּה לְמוֹדוֹ וְעַל תְּשׁוּבַת תְּפִלָּתוֹ. **This is accomplished by adding diligence in his in Torah study, and adding passion into his prayer.**

In Torah study, one can simply study more diligently and for longer periods, thereby achieving a deeper connection with Hashem.

However, regarding prayer, he must add more kavanah, thinking about the meaning of the words he already says and about Hashem's greatness (as explained in Chassidus), until he becomes excited about Hashem. In prayer, he needs to add depth and passion to deepen his connection with Hashem.

These two things help bring him back to the level of connection he had before doing this sin.

וְאִם יַעֲצֵב עַל זֶה , **But, if instead of pushing himself to add in learning and praying with passion, he will just be depressed about himself,**

אֲזִי הוּא הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר אָנוּ אוֹמְרִים בְּיָדֵינוּ : **then he is also doing the sin we mention in our "confessional prayers" of Viduy.²⁵**

"אֲשֶׁר הִקְלַתְּ הַחֲמִרְתִּי, וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר הַחֲמִרְתָּ הִקְלַתִּי." **"Hashem, I sinned because I took what You said to not make a big deal out of it, and instead I did make a big deal out of it, and what You said to take seriously, I didn't take seriously."**

In other words, Hashem said that he should take learning Torah and davening seriously, and that this should be his focus for correcting the bad things he did. But if, instead of that, he makes a big deal of the fact that he committed this sin of zera levatala and dwells on it and gets depressed, that itself is another sin. Because that's not what Hashem said to do to correct this sin.

²⁵ וידוי שמויחס לרבינו נסים, גם נקרא "וידוי הגדול". יש קהילות שאומרים אותו ביום כיפור עצמו, או ביום כיפור קטן.

So, on the one hand, he shouldn't dwell on the fact that he sinned and get depressed about it, since his main "correction" of the sin is through increasing in Torah study and prayer with joy and liveliness.

However, at the same time, he can't pretend that nothing happened or that he doesn't need to push himself into that positive corrective process. In the back of his mind, he needs to remember that he must push himself to serve Hashem much more now than before he sinned. Even though Hashem forgave him for the sin after "the lower level of Teshuva" of regret and a commitment to change his behavior, he still isn't fully connected to Hashem as he was previously without "the higher level of Teshuva." Therefore, he must constantly push himself to improve and advance in his Torah study and prayer. The Alter Rebbe will now say two reasons why he must always continue doing "the higher level of Teshuva":

וְהָגַם שְׁבוּדָאֵי נִמְחַל לוֹ
בְּהִרְהוּרֵי תְשׁוּבָה אֲמֵתִית,
Even though when he truly thinks about doing Teshuva, Hashem already certainly forgives him,

Hashem already forgives him when he does "the lower level of Teshuva." Meaning, even by just thinking about how he sincerely regrets his sins and mentally commits not to repeat that behavior, Hashem already forgives him. So why does he need to constantly push himself to do "the higher level" of Teshuva if he is already forgiven?

אֶף עַל פִּי כֵן, צָרִיךְ הוּא תָּמִיד
לְדַפֵּק בַּפִּתְחֵי תְשׁוּבָה עֲלָאָה
בְּנִזְכָּר לְעֵיל,
nonetheless, he still needs to constantly "knock on the doors of," meaning push his way into, the "higher level" of Teshuva, as mentioned above,

וְלָבוֹא לְעֵמֶד לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ
כְּבָרָא שׁוֹנֵה.
so that he can "come and stand before the King" on the same level of connection as he was originally connected.

כְּמוֹ לְמִשְׁל: בֶּן מֶלֶךְ שִׁחָטָא,
וְאַחַר כֵּן מְחַל לוֹ אָבִיו,
For example: When the son of king sins against his father, and afterwards his father the king forgives him,

שְׁבוּדָאֵי מְחִיב הוּא לְעֵמֶד
וּלְבַקֵּשׁ לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּתַמִּידוּת
מִחֲמַת ב' טַעֲמִים:
the son is certainly required to constantly stand in service before his father, the king, and to seek ways to

find favor before him, and this is for two reasons:

הא' - שְׁבִהֶ֫עֶדֶר רְאוֹת פְּנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ,
יָבוֹא שְׁנִית לַיָּדֵי אוֹתוֹ הַחֲטָא
וּמְרֵד.

First, if he does not come close to see the face of the king, he may end up sinning and rebelling against the king once again.

By constantly being in the king's presence, he keeps himself out of trouble and protects himself from the kind of behavior that could lead to rebelling against the king.

וְהִב' - אִם הוּא עוֹמֵד תָּמִיד לְפָנָי
הַמֶּלֶךְ, אֲזִי נֹכַח בְּקִשְׁת מְחִילָתוֹ
בְּלֵב וְנַפֶּשׁ תָּמִיד.

Second, if he is constantly standing in the service of the king, that will show that his original request for forgiveness was sincere, and that he really meant it the entire time.

His constant service will validate the sincerity of his asking forgiveness.

וְגַם הַמֶּלֶךְ שְׂרוּאָה שְׂמֵשֶׁתוֹקֵק
תָּמִיד לְעַמְד לְפָנָיו,

And when the king sees that his son is constantly yearning to come close to him and serve him,

אֲזִי אֶמֶת נֹכַח הוּא תְּשׁוּבָתוֹ,
וְשֶׁהוּא אֵינּוּ רוֹצֵה עוֹד בְּמֵרֵד
וּבְמַעַל אֶפְלוּ מְעַט,

then he knows his son's Teshuva is true and proper, and that his son doesn't want to rebel and go against him in any way whatsoever,

רַק רְצוֹנוֹ לְמִלְאוֹת רְצוֹן אָבִיו.

and that his son only wants to fulfill the desires of his father.

וְהִנְמַשֵּׁל מוֹכֵן, שְׂכֵמוֹ כֵּן צָרִיךְ
הַשֵּׁב לְלִמּוֹד וּלְהִתְפַּלֵּל,

The lesson of this can be simply understood: That someone who does Teshuva needs to take a similar approach, by increasing in his Torah study and passionate prayer,

כְּדֵי לְקַשֵּׁר ג' לְבוּשֵׁי הַנֶּפֶשׁ שֶׁהֵם
מְחֻשְׁבֵּה דְבוּר וּמַעֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹ
שֶׁנִּדְחוּ מֵאוֹר פְּנֵי מֶלֶךְ חַיִּים,

These two things will light up his Neshama, and as a result, this will reconnect with Hashem the three "garments of his soul," which are his thoughts, his words of speech, and his actions, which were "banished from

connecting to the ‘shining face’ of Hashem, the Living King,”

וְכַעַת צָרִיךְ לְהֵשִׁיבָם.

and now he needs to return them to their original level of connection with Hashem.

וְזֶהוּ 'תְּשׁוּבָה' תְּשׁוּבַה ה' אֶתְרוּנָה
שְׁבָשָׁם הָי' בְּרוּךְ הוּא.

This is the meaning of the word “תְּשׁוּבָה”: “to return the letter ה',” meaning, the second letter ה' of Hashem’s blessed Name of י-ה-ו-ה to the previous three letters of י-ה-ו.

In Igeres HaTeshuva²⁶, the Alter Rebbe explains how the two levels of Teshuva correspond to two types of “returning the ה'”:

The lower level of Teshuva, which is about regretting the sin and committing to not repeat it, causes Hashem’s life-force that was invested in us and dragged into unholiness to return to holiness. This is symbolized by the letter ה' of Hashem’s Name, Malchus, how Hashem gives us life, returns to the other letters of His Name, meaning, returning to Atzilus, where Hashem’s holiness shines.

The higher level of Teshuva, which is about correcting the spiritual blemish through coming closer to Hashem in Torah and prayer, causes our mind and heart to return to feel Hashem’s closeness. This is symbolized by the first letter ה' of Hashem Name returning to the י', since that ה' is Binah, understanding and feeling, and it is coming back to י', which is Chochma, bittul-transparency/humility that allows Hashem’s Light to shine into us and enable us to feel His presence.

The life-force from Hashem that He invested in us and our thoughts, speech, and actions was “banished” from holiness through our sins. We need to do Teshuva to reconnect that life-force to Hashem.

Here, the Alter Rebbe teaches us that even this process is not complete just by regretting our sins and committing not to repeat them.

To complete this process, we also need to increase our learning of Torah, performance of mitzvos, and deepen our passion while praying.

In other words, not only do we need to increase in Torah and prayer to reconnect our mind and heart to Hashem (the first letter ה'), but even to

fully reconnect our thought, speech, and action (the second letter ה') to Hashem, we also need to increase in Torah and prayer. (Although they are somewhat reconnected just through truly regretting our sins and committing to not repeat them.)

וּבְפֶרֶט בְּאוֹרֵי תָא, שְׂאוֹרֵי תָא
וְקוֹדֶשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא כּוֹלָא חַד.
In this process of reconnection with Hashem, learning Torah is especially important, since the Torah and Hashem are completely united as if they were one and the same.

כְּמוֹ הֵבֵת קוֹל עַל מַחֲלֻקַּת בְּעַלֵּי
הַתְּלִמוֹד:
This concept of the unity of the Torah with Hashem is like what the Heavenly Voice proclaimed regarding the different opinions in the Talmud:

"אֵלוּ וְאֵלוּ דְבָרֵי אֱלֹקִים חַיִּים"
מִמֶּשׁ, **"Both conflicting opinions are actually the Words of the Living Hashem,"**

שְׁהֵם דְּבוּרוֹ וְרִצּוֹנוֹ מִמֶּשׁ, **Meaning, that both opinions are actually Hashem's Words and Will.**

What do we mean that they are Hashem's "words," they aren't prophets saying over Hashem's messages?

What we mean is that they are faithfully expressing Hashem's will, just as if He had directly said those words.

שְׁלֵה דְּבוּרֵהּ מִגְּלַה רִצּוֹן שְׁלֵה
הַמְדַבֵּר. **Since, a person's words are meant to express what he wants.**

So too, their words accurately express what Hashem wants.

Meaning, even though there are different opinions in the Talmud and other areas of Torah, they are all considered "Hashem's Words." This is because Hashem wants to have various opinions and multiple interpretations available to us for understanding. Since all these opinions and interpretations are according to Hashem's Will, the words of the Sages that explain those opinions are also considered "Hashem's Words" that are completely united with Hashem.

Therefore, in all parts of the Torah, we unite with Hashem. Even in areas of Torah where it seems there are different opinions, the words of the

Sages are also considered “Hashem’s Words, and we become united with Hashem by studying their words.

עַל כֵּן, מֵה לֹא לְהֵעָצֵב וְלִגְרוֹם לֹא
הַפֶּסֶד עַל עֵבֶר וְעַל לְהֵבֵא כְּנֹכַח
לְעֵיל .

Therefore, why should he be depressed about the past, which will cause him to lose out in the present and in the future from properly connecting to Hashem? As explained above, the depression itself can bring about even more zerah levatalah, G-d forbid.

Instead, he should push it out of his mind and serve Hashem with joy.

וּבִפְרָט, שֶׁתְּשׁוּבָה הִיא עֲבוּדַת ה',

This is especially true, that he should not be depressed about his past sins, since Teshuva itself is a form of serving Hashem,

וְצִרִיךְ לְהִיּוֹת בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבְטוֹב
לֵבָב,

and therefore, it should be done with joy and gladness of heart,

כְּמוֹ שֶׁכָּתוּב: "תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר לֹא
עֲבַדְתָּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּשִׂמְחָה
וּבְטוֹב לֵבָב מְרֵב כָּל, וְעֲבַדְתָּ אֶת
אֱיִבֶיךָ כו", כְּנֹכַח לְעֵיל.

as it is written (Devarim 28:47-48): “Since you did not serve Hashem your G-d with joy and gladness of heart, therefore you will serve your enemies instead,” as explained above.

In other words, since serving Hashem must be done with joy, not being happy to serve Hashem is itself a sin. This applies even to doing Teshuva: Doing Teshuva is a way of serving Hashem. Therefore, it must be done with joy. Being depressed while doing Teshuva is itself a sin, since we must do Teshuva with joy, like any other mitzvah.

אֲלֵא הָעֵצָה כֵּן הוּא :

Rather, instead of being sad, the correct advice to cleanse himself from the negative effects of his sins is as follows:

שְׂיִמְעֵט בְּעַת הַצְּטָרְכוֹת, לְהִכִּיר
אֶת מְקוֹמוֹ .

When he needs physical things, such as eating and drinking, he should limit himself from overindulging. This will help him recognize his spiritual

condition and his need to humble himself because of his past sins.

In other words, instead of being sad, he should be happy while acting with humility and self-restraint. By limiting himself from indulging in physical pleasure unnecessarily, this will help him remember to be humble and stay focused on continuous Teshuva.

When a person overindulges in physical pleasure, they are building up their ego. He thinks that he deserves to have whatever he wants, whatever he enjoys. By restraining himself from overindulgence, he is telling himself that he shouldn't have things just because he enjoys them. He should have them only if he needs them and if they will help him serve Hashem better. Because his whole life is just about serving Hashem, not about making myself feel good. This helps with humility.

In addition to helping with humility, restraint from overindulgence also helps deal with the cause of this sin:

In Kuntres HaAvoda (Ch. 2, p. 14), the Rebbe Rashab explains: The coarse physical desires of the animal soul, which also produce immoral thoughts and desires, are strongly connected to how much someone indulges in eating purely for physical pleasure. When a person overindulges in eating for enjoyment, this strengthens all his coarse physical desires, and makes it more likely to have immoral thoughts and desire for women coming into his mind.

When he refines himself by eating in a holy manner – by telling himself that the purpose of eating is to have strength to serve Hashem, and he refrains from overindulging in eating for enjoyment, this will weaken his coarse physical desires in general, and these immoral thoughts will be less frequent and less intense.²⁷

²⁷ This doesn't mean a person should never enjoy eating or other physical things. A person needs a certain amount of physical enjoyment to function well. But he should be able to derive pleasure from eating what he needs to stay healthy (or at least feel satisfied) and from doing the other things he needs to do to take care of his body. But after someone eats and is satisfied, he doesn't need to eat more just for enjoyment, since he already had the pleasure of the food he ate. Now this eating is just plain overindulging. In addition, even when eating what he needs, he must think before eating. He should tell himself in his mind that the purpose of his eating is to have the strength to serve Hashem, and that he wishes that his enjoyment would come from the life-force from Hashem invested in the food, and

וּבִיעַת זְכוּרוֹ אֶת חַטָּאָיו, יִשְׁבַּר לִבּוֹ
וַיִּכְבֵּר אֶת מְקוֹמוֹ מִחַמַּת חַטָּאָיו,

When he remembers his sins, his ego will be subdued, and he will further realize that, because of his sins, he is in a negative spiritual situation that requires correction.

וְתִקְּףָ אַחֵר זֶה יִשְׂמַח לִבּוֹ וַיִּגַּל
כְּבוֹדוֹ, כַּנּוֹכַר לְעֵיל.

But immediately afterwards, his heart and soul should greatly rejoice in his great merit to serve and connect with Hashem, as explained above.

In Igeres HaTeshuva²⁸ the Alter Rebbe describes this as “remembering his sins from a distance,” i.e., in the back of his mind, just enough to remain humble, practice self-restraint, and continue pursuing Teshuva. But he shouldn’t dwell on it to the point that it hampers his ability to serve Hashem with joy.

וְאִם תִּזְדַּמֵּן לוֹ אֵיזָה מְרָה שְׁחֵרָה
וְעֵצְבוֹת מִמְּלֵי דְעֻלְמָא,

And if he becomes sad or depressed because of painful things in his physical life,

אֲזִי יִקְשֹׁר בְּזָה גַם חַטָּאָיו, כִּי הֵם
גָּרְמוּ לוֹ הָעֵצְבוֹת מִמְּלֵי דְעֻלְמָא.

then, in his mind, he should connect that suffering to his sins, since they are what caused the painful things in his physical life,

וְהֵן הַיְסוּרִים הַנִּגְזָרִים מֵה' עַל
חַטָּאָיו.

since they are the painful cleansing process that Hashem decreed upon him, to cleanse him from his sins.

עַל כֵּן, כְּשִׁיזְדַּמֵּן לוֹ אֵיזָה יְסוּרִים
וְעֵצְבוֹת מִמְּלֵי דְעֻלְמָא,

Therefore, when he has sadness from suffering in his physical life,

אֲזִי יִתְּלֶה בְּחַטָּאָיו וַיִּשְׂמַח בָּהֶם
כְּשֶׁהוּא מִמְּרָקֵם בְּיְסוּרִים.

then, he should tell himself that this is happening because of his sins, and he should be happy that Hashem is cleansing him from his sins through this suffering.

not the coarse physical aspect of it. See Tanya Ch. 7 on this topic.

In Igeres HaTeshuva²⁹, the Alter Rebbe explains:

When a person suffers in this world, this is a spiritual cleansing process for his soul. The only other way to effect that cleansing would be to go through the Gehinom cleansing process, which is (at least) 60 times more painful than any physical pain a person can experience in this world. Therefore, being spiritually cleansed in this world saves a person from tremendous suffering in Gehinom. Because a small amount of suffering in this world cleans the soul more than a much greater amount of suffering in Gehinom would clean it. Therefore, in reality, suffering in this world is a great kindness for the soul, saving it from enduring an infinitely more painful and difficult cleansing process in Gehinom. With this in mind, a person can see his suffering in this world as a kindness rather than a punishment. And he can still be happy, even if his life is difficult.

When a person sees physical suffering as a spiritual healing process rather than a punishment, he can be happy, at least to some extent.

By associating all the suffering in his physical life with his sins, he is creating the possibility of being even happier. Because now he sees a purpose to the pain, a very important spiritual healing process.

וּמַחֲמַת הָעֲצֻבוֹת יִהְיֶה נֶכֶר שֶׁלֹּא
הַתְּחִיל עֲדִין לַהֲיֹת יְהוּדִי,

But, if instead of being happy to serve Hashem, **he will be depressed** about his sins or his physical suffering, **this will show that he never even started to experience what it really means to a Jew,**

וְלֹא לָמַד וְלֹא הִתְפַּלֵּל בְּשׁוּם פְּעַם
מִיּוֹם הַוָּלְדוֹ, אֶפְלוּ פְּעַם אַחַת
בְּאֻמַּת.

and that he never truly experienced what it means to connect with Hashem through learning Torah and prayer, not even one time in his entire life.

In Tanya (ch. 31, 34), it explains that although one should be upset with his animal soul's ego and coarseness, he should not allow that to interfere with his Divine soul's joy in connecting with Hashem. A Jew has such tremendous joy in connecting with Hashem through Torah, prayer, and mitzvos that nothing in this world can compare to it. If someone won the lottery for a billion dollars, and at the same time had a mosquito biting him, he wouldn't even notice the mosquito at all because of his joy. More

than that, a Jew's joy in connecting with Hashem is beyond anything comparable to the pleasures and pains of this physical world. Similarly, his joy in connecting with Hashem is so great that even his past sins and his spiritual situation don't pull him down. He is so focused on connecting to Hashem today that he has no mental space to feel bad about what he did in the past (except at certain limited times, when he chooses to focus on it as part of his service to Hashem). If someone would truly experience that full connection with Hashem that a Jew has when learning Torah and praying, there would be no room in his mind and heart for constant sadness all day. If he is always sad about himself, that proves that he never fully experienced that deep connection with Hashem on a conscious level, not even once in his entire life. Because if he did, he would be able to pull himself out of his depression, out of his desire to connect with Hashem.

Another way of saying this: If he is always sad, that means that he feels he has nothing in his life worth being happy about. If he would experience the happiness of connecting to Hashem through Torah, prayer, and mitzvos, he would realize that he always has something to be happy about, since every day he has the special opportunity to connect with Hashem, for real and forever.

עַל כֵּן, מְאֹד מְאֹד יִהְיֶה זְהִיר בְּנֶה, וְדִי לְמִבִּין.

Therefore, he should be exceedingly careful regarding this so as not to become depressed over past sins (or anything else). **These words should be enough for one who is wise.**

Summary and Lessons:

- 1- Even if a person sinned with intentional zera levatalah, he should not become depressed at all. He should momentarily be upset with himself for his bad choices, but immediately afterwards rejoice in the knowledge that Hashem loves it when he does Teshuva, and helps him to do Teshuva.
- 2- If someone is depressed all the time because of his sins, this is pure ego. Because, according to the nature of how Hashem made him, he is likely to sin all the time. And the fact that he controls himself and rarely sins is a great accomplishment. If he is depressed, that means he thinks he is a Tzadik, or should be a Tzadik, who has no connection to sin. But that's not the reality, and it's only ego to think that way. He should be humble and know that Hashem made it very likely for him to sin all the time, but also gave him the power to control himself through hard work. But the novelty, the chidush, is the fact that he usually controls himself, not the fact that he sometimes sins. And he should be happy to live as Hashem made him, while working to control himself.
- 3- Not only does depression come from the ego (which is already a bad thing), but it can cause additional sinful behavior. When someone is depressed, this causes two things in the body: 1- It increases his physical desire for immorality, 2- it weakens his body's ability to hold in the zera from coming out for the wrong reason.
- 4- Therefore, by being depressed, he makes it much more likely to have immoral thoughts gather in his head. Because of the weakness in the body created by depression, the mere gathering of immoral thoughts in his head can cause the zera to come out unintentionally, whether in his sleep or even while awake. This is considered partially (indirectly) his fault, since he chose to be depressed, which made this more likely to happen.
- 5- But since the actual release of zera was unintentional, he doesn't need to feel bad about it. The fact that the zera came out isn't considered a sin, since it was out of his control.

- 6- Because the zera coming out makes him tamei, he needs to go to the mikvah to remove the negative effect of this occurrence.
- 7- Since his depression was an indirect cause of this happening, he should ask Hashem to forgive him for this unintentional occurrence. Hashem will immediately forgive him, but he needs to cheer up and not be so depressed.
- 8- Regarding unintentional zera levatalah, he shouldn't worry about it at all. He should just go to the mikvah, ask Hashem for forgiveness for his unholy and depressing thoughts, and immediately cheer up and forget about it completely. However, if someone intentionally releases zera for the wrong reason (levatalah), then he needs to do Teshuva.
- 9- First, he must do the basic "lower level" of Teshuva, which is to sincerely regret what he did and commit to not doing that again.
- 10- But more importantly, afterwards, he needs to focus on the "higher level of Teshuva." This means increasing his devotion to learning Torah diligently and getting more excited about prayer by adding kavanah and depth to make it more meaningful.
- 11- Especially important in this process is learning Torah, which unites the person, and his "garments of the soul," with Hashem. Even the different opinions in the Mishna and Gemara etc., are all the Will of Hashem, and His Words, and unite us with Hashem by studying them.
- 12- This higher level of Teshuva is needed not only to bring his mind and heart back into a state of connection with Hashem, but also to fully reconnect his thoughts, speech, and actions with Hashem.
- 13- In addition, there are two reasons why he needs to focus on the "higher level" of Teshuva: 1- Now that he sinned, he needs that extra involvement in Torah and prayer as a protection so that he won't fall back down again into sin, 2- this greater devotion in serving Hashem will prove that his desire to do Teshuva and his asking forgiveness was true and sincere.

- 14- Since Teshuva is itself a mitzvah, and every mitzvah must be done with joy, then Teshuva itself must be done with joy! A person should be happy and rejoice at the opportunity to reconnect with Hashem!
- 15- What should he do to cleanse himself and remain spiritually focused, if he is supposed to be happy all the time? How will he prevent himself from falling back into sin if he is always so happy instead of serious? Three suggestions: 1- Limit himself from overindulgence in physical enjoyments. 2- From time to time, remember that he has sinned and therefore he needs to humble himself before everyone. 3- If Hashem brings upon physical suffering, he shouldn't be sad and complain, but look at it as a gift from Hashem to spiritually cleanse him and save him from future suffering.
- 16- If someone is constantly depressed, that shows that they never fully experienced what it means to be a Yid. He never experienced the connection with Hashem that deep Torah learning and passionate prayer create. If, even once in his life, he had truly experienced that connection with Hashem, he would realize that he always has something to be happy about. He would be so happy and excited to connect with Hashem through Torah, prayer, and mitzvos that there wouldn't be room for depression and feeling bad about himself all the time. Even if a Yid does an aveira, he picks himself up and looks forward to the next opportunity to connect with Hashem with joy.

Additional Note:

In connection with this last point, that a Yid should always be so happy to serve Hashem that he has no room for sadness over aveiros:

In Tanya Ch. 28, the Alter Rebbe emphasizes that we need to create a separation in our mind between the "real" person, his Neshama, and the "fake" person, the yetzer hara.

These are like two opposing forces. The “real” person is the fact that he is a Yid, he is connected to Hashem, and he always wants to do what Hashem wants. Even when he falls into an aveira, he is still connected to Hashem. The fact that he did the aveira was from the “fake” self, which fights against him and pulls him down. But the real person, the Yid, is holy, is pure, is always connected to Hashem; nothing can ever change that or take that away.

There is a difference between being in pain and being depressed. Yes, it's painful to have to fight with the “fake” self, with the yetzer hara. It's painful when we fall into an aveira and need to climb back up. It's painful to feel far from Hashem.

But pain isn't a reason to be depressed. Depression comes from feeling hopeless, feeling like I'm a bad person. But that's just not true. You're not hopeless; you are exactly where you are supposed to be, and you always have the strength to do what Hashem wants from you today. Hashem gives you that strength. And you are not a bad person. You are an amazing and holy person. Because if not, you wouldn't care about this in the first place. If not, you wouldn't even be in any pain.

We can't confuse pain with sadness.

We can be joyous and happy that we are Yidden, and that we connect with Hashem forever, even if we are in pain from our struggles.

But sadness has no place in the life of a Yid. Even in pain, he isn't sad because he knows that the pain has a purpose and is ultimately for his own good.

Therefore, he can always serve Hashem with joy, no matter how hard he struggles with the yetzer hara.

Because the yetzer hara isn't him, it doesn't define him.

His connection with Hashem defines him.

And that connection contains unlimited joy.

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