

# GATES OF EMUNAH

A Weekly guide for those seeking the Gateway to Practical Emunah



לע"נ משה חיים בן יונה ו"ל  
 לע"נ יצחק בן משה חיים ו"ל  
 לע"נ ביילא בת שלמה גרשון ו"ל  
 לע"נ ראסה בת משה יצחק ו"ל  
 לע"נ מאיר ניסן בן אברהם הלוי ו"ל  
 לע"נ פרידא לאה בת אריה חור ו"ל  
 לע"נ רפאל צבי בן אריה ו"ל

## The Purifying Effect of the Red Heifer - A life of Divine Providence

The night of the Pesach Seder, a little after midnight, Reb Chaim sits in the company of his family around a table laden with silverware and delicacies. His eyes are becoming heavy and making their way with great difficulty through the text. *Nishmas*, *Hallel*, *Hodu La'Shem*, one page after the other. He is struggling to articulate the words of the story; they seem heavy, as if each one weighs a ton. He searches for a melody to arouse his heart but this too evades him. A sigh of distress escapes from inside him: 'what's happened to me, what is missing? I prepared so well and performed all the Mitzvos meticulously, nothing was missing, neither physically nor spiritually...'

The truth is that from the very commencement of the *Seder* things weren't going smoothly. The heart simply refused to take part and nothing in the story touched him in particular. He sincerely tried to do what he could, made use of insight, searched in the commentaries for an idea - something to create a connection. Yet his heart only sank even deeper - it just wasn't interested and nothing seemed to speak to it. When nothing happened by Kiddush, Reb Chaim was sure it would come by the telling of the story and when nothing got moving there either, he placed his hope in the eating of the Matzah - surely then, at such an auspicious moment, something would happen.

When his heart refused to budge even then, Reb Chaim raised his hands in despair; until now he was somewhat patient but what the continuation of the story after Benching demanded of him, was just too much. The songs and praises appeared one after the other as if they would never end. 'Seriously,' he bitterly thought, 'what do they want from me? I have no connection to all this - it doesn't speak to me - I'm just not in the right frame of mind for this whole celebration.'

Suddenly a more logical thought entered his mind: 'where did this whole story begin, wasn't it by the actual exodus from Mitzrayim? The original Pesach was a result of the Jews leaving Mitzrayim. They experienced firsthand the suffering and the miraculous redemption that followed, they surely rejoiced with all their hearts. If I would have seen the ten plagues and splitting of the sea, I too would have sung the songs and praises with tremendous liveliness and passion. But NOW, what do they want from me, how can they demand of me in the middle of real life, amidst a sea of problems and troubles, to forget everything and celebrate freedom, I'm not at all there!'

Honestly, what do they want from our dear friend...?

Okay, so let's try and tell this same story with a few minor changes:

On the outskirts of a quiet town stood a small house built of mortar sunk halfway into the ground with its roof stooping to the ground. In it lived Reb Chatzkel the wagon driver, together with his twelve sons. Reb Chatzkel's Shabboses were as destitute as his weekdays - anything rather than to be dependent on others. Spring arrived, and with it the *Chag* of Pesach, but there was not too much work to be done in the house whose floors had never seen bread crumbs. Yet just as a crumb of bread was not to be found, neither was a crumb of Matzah; wine and other necessities were not even a dream. The eve of Pesach arrived and Chatzkel the simple Jew, put his faith in Hashem. Already at midday he donned his 'Yom Tov clothes', took his *Machzor* and made his

way to the *Beis Ha'knessess*. Then, as in all good stories, out of nowhere - a horse and wagon appeared and stopped next to his house. Rugged porters emerged from the wagon carrying baskets filled to the brim with meat, fish, wine, *Matzahs* and more. The family members stood mesmerized with their eyes peeled wide open and when the wagon went on its way they heard the echoing call of the wagon driver: "More work to be done, hurry, sunset is on its way..."

That wondrous Pesach night, Reb Chatzkel looked like one of the great Tzaddikim. His face radiated with a heavenly light, Kiddush was made with a loud and passionate roar, with awe and trepidation, and with tremendous joy. The ancient story of the Exodus from Mitzrayim flowed from his lips with a sweetness from another world. The wine tasted as if it was from the finest of wineries and the Matzos seemed to come from the jar of Mann that was kept in the Holy Ark. During the recitation of the *Hallel* the whole family came close to *Hispashtus Ha'Gashmiyus* (Shedding of Physicality) and during *Nishmas* it was as if every limb took part in the praises.

Let us look closely and see what is the difference between Reb Chatzkel and Reb Chaim.

It's very simple. The night of the Seder it supposed to take us to another world completely - to the pinnacle of emunah to which Klal Yisroel were uplifted at Yetziyas Mitzrayim, to the place where the *da'as* (holy awareness) is freed from the chains of nature and *Chametz*-like thoughts. Every Jew is obligated to see himself as if he left Mitzrayim. The problem is that it is impossible to attain this when the heart is overloaded with *Chametz*.

*Chametz* is a heavy load. It weighs down the soul and doesn't allow it to spread its wings and ascend to clear emunah.

This is exactly the purpose of the Mitzvah of eradicating *chametz*. Klal Yisroel fulfills this with tremendous meticulousness and G-d forbid to suspect a Jew like Reb Chaim of making light of such an important Mitzvah. Even from the day after Tu B'Shvat his family members are toiling in eradicating *Chametz*. Reb Chaim puts no limit on the time and money involved - anything to make sure that his home has no trace of *Chametz*. Every room, shelf and corridor is checked, cleaned and scrubbed. Reb Chaim works with all his strength yet he doesn't know that the *Chametz* has found its hiding place in his heart and mind.

This is how Reb Chaim sat down to his *Seder*, with his house clean to the extreme, but his heart clogged with *Chametz*.

The *Chametz* that accumulates in the mind and heart is the most stubborn of all, being rigid and sticky. It seems as if it is impossible to get rid of it. Everyone knows how hard it is to rid oneself of a bothering thought. These thoughts visit our minds every day and they take over to the extent that the person thinking them becomes unsure of who really is in charge.

So what can be done?

The true problem with *Chametz* is that it is rooted in *tumas meis* (the impurity of the dead). *Chametz*-like thoughts defile the soul with *tumas meis* - with lifelessness, low-spiritedness, sadness and

heaviness. It is absolutely impossible to receive Pesach with *tumas meis*. A good and pure thought revives the soul with a spirit of purity and happiness, and conversely a negative thought envelopes the soul with a spirit of *tumah* (impurity), sadness and despair.

For *tumas meis* there is only one solution – the ashes of the *Parah Adumah* (Red Heifer). But where can this be found?

This necessity can be found on one day only – Purim. The Rebbe explicitly teaches (Likutey Tinyana 74): “**For originally all beginnings were from Pesach and this is why all the Mitzvos are in commemoration of the exodus from Mitzrayim, but now....**” (The Rebbe did not finish his statement).” The intention is, as is evident from the lesson, that now all beginnings are from Purim. Why? Because from ‘*Purim*’ is created the ‘*Parah*’ (The root of both the word *Parah* and *Purim* is the two letters *Pey Reish*). The tremendous light of Purim reveals that even in the greatest darkness and concealment Hashem can be found. Purim paves the way for Pesach, for if not for it, we would have no connection to the celebrations of Pesach. For how can it be demanded of us to see ourselves as if we left Mitzrayim - we cannot even imagine such a thing? We can, however, be spoken to in the language of Purim, one that penetrates **into** nature and shows that everything is truly a miracle.

Once the beginning was from Pesach - when did this change? In the days of Mordechai.

When Mordechai saw the frightening troubles, he knew that Pesach would not help as everyone was already sunk in utter despair. There was no option - it was necessary to reveal to them an entirely new illumination, to show them that absolutely everything is guided by Hashem, not that which is above nature but nature itself too.

If Mordechai had not written the Megillah, the story could have slipped by as a completely natural sequence of events, nothing more than politics. The king killed the queen, took another in her place, got frustrated with his minister, had him hanged and a wise man like Mordechai was just the natural choice to fill the position. Yet when we read the Megillah, we see that everything was perfectly orchestrated to the finest detail, everything perfectly timed. This is how the miracle of Purim took place, completely within the course of nature. **Mordechai reveals and illuminates the world with the knowledge that there is no nature and miracles, but *only* miracles; miracles outside of nature and miracles within nature.**

Baruch Hashem we merited to Purim and now as we approach the holy days of Pesach, let us not forget that in order to ascend to where this *chag* is supposed to take us, we must purify ourselves of *tumas meis*. The ashes of the *Parah* we take from Purim, from the knowledge that the Tzaddikim reveal that there is no nature at all and that everything is only *Hashgacha* (divine providence) and miracles. This knowledge envelopes the soul with a spirit of purity, cleanses the mind and the heart of the stubborn and sticky *Chametz*, and implants the elated feeling of living on miracles.

It is pleasant to think about the story of Chatzkel the wagon driver, but we are more like Reb Chaim - we specifically need the story of Purim. **Our simple everyday lives are filled with miracles**, the influx of bounty doesn't have to come on a mysterious wagon on the eve of Pesach. Even if it arrives through completely natural means, it is no less of a miracle.

And if we thought that we covered the expenses from our own pockets, let us be careful not to cover the miracles with nature.

## Weekly Halacha Series

By HaRav Shimon Anshin *shlit"e*

### Laws pertaining to Preparing the House for Pesach - Part I

Many people are mistaken in regards to preparing the house for Pesach in that on the one hand, they clean more than is necessary according to the Halacha, yet on the other hand, they overlook those areas that are halachically obligated to be cleaned. In the upcoming weeks we will B"EH try to clarify these points.

#### General rules

i) The goal of cleaning the house for Pesach is specifically for the preparation of the Mitzvah of “*Biur Chametz*” (“Burning the Chametz”). And since it is impossible to remove all the Chametz in one short period of time, we need to start preparing by cleaning the house well in advance. Therefore, in preparing for the mitzvah it is appropriate only to clean in those places that are likely to have Chametz, and it is certainly *not* necessary to clean or check those places where there is no chance of Chametz.

That being said, our sages give us the guidelines as to which places are most likely to contain Chametz, thereby to check and clean in those places specifically, and which places that are not likely to contain Chametz and can be ignored without checking or cleaning.

ii) The mitzvah of *Bedikas Chametz* (“checking for Chametz”) is on the night of 14<sup>th</sup> Nissan and it is possible to bring forward the search up to thirty days before Pesach. Since today we have significantly larger homes with many cupboards etc the need for checking versus that of previous generations, makes it very difficult to remove all the articles from these places for the requirement of checking on the night of the 14<sup>th</sup> Nissan, as is required. Therefore, it is not merely good advice to start checking in advance, it almost becomes an obligation. And so, there are definitely places that one can check early in advance and which do not have to be re-checked on the night of the 14<sup>th</sup> itself.

#### iii) Checking for Chametz must meet three conditions:

1. It must be at night.
2. It must be by the light of a candle.
3. One must guard the place that was checked so that no Chametz will have a chance to enter there again. If one does not guard this place after checking, one will need to re-check it on the night of the 14<sup>th</sup>. (For example, those places where small children go, need to be securely sealed. That being said, if it is impractical to protect the place appropriately, then one needs to check it as close to Pesach as possible.)

iv) Checking for Chametz as we mentioned needs to be done with a lit candle. However, any search that is performed before the 14<sup>th</sup> can be performed *l'chatchila* (to begin with) using a flash-light! In fact, it would seem preferable when performing a check before the 14<sup>th</sup> to use a flash-light, since checking with a candle makes it difficult to check appropriately due to the fact that people are afraid to burn/damage fabric or char the walls etc. On the 14<sup>th</sup> however, we must check with a candle as we have no power to chance the decrees of our Sages.

**Note:** One cannot rely on the light of the room itself when performing the checking, because it does not adequately illuminate the corners of the room, or under/between the furniture, and these places specifically are the main places halachically obligated for checking.

#### v) For what does one need to search and remove?

According to the Poskim, it appears that one is Halachically obligated to remove even small “clean” (edible) crumbs. However, crumbs that are “dirty”, where “there is no concern of them being eaten” do not require checking or removal. And so, crumbs that are found on the floor are not obligated by the Halacha for removal. Also, crumbs that are “not clean” and which are found in cupboards do not need removal either. However, cupboards that contain food or vessels that are specifically used for Pesach, one would need to remove even such “dirty” crumbs because we are concerned that they may end up in the food and one will eat them inadvertently. Therefore, only where such crumbs would not be considered “fit for a dog to eat” would we not need to remove them.

#### vi) Can one rely on the cleanliness of a place without having to perform *Bedikas Chametz*?

In practice, there are various types of cleanliness:

1. General cleanliness of a place does not nullify the obligation.
2. If the place is cleaned with specific attention to there not being any crumbs, one does not have to perform *Bedikas Chametz* there. Therefore “smooth” places that are cleaned well, would not require *Bedikas Chametz*.
3. With regards to places that have holes and grooves like corners of a cupboard, drawer, or window sill, it would not suffice to rely on cleanliness and not perform a check. However, if these places were cleaned with a needle or cleaning-cloth in such a way that deem the crumbs inedible, then it would in fact help in removing the obligation to check such a place.

That being said, one who is stringent about *Bedikas Chametz* in respect to those places that have holes and grooves, even though they were cleaned well before, will find Blessing and the Poskim write that the reason for this is that, even though we are sure that we have cleaned there in an appropriate way, our Sages obligate us to ascertain that the cleanliness is in fact valid (in the same way that for example, a factory needs to perform “Quality Assurance” on its products after manufacturing.)

Next week, I"YH we will clarify what is considered to be a place that has had Chametz in it and that which is not.

#### TRANSLATOR'S NOTE:

As this is a translation of the original Hebrew, if you are unclear on any of the Laws outlined herein in any way whatsoever, please consult with a Halachic Authority.





## Sefer Meshivas Nefesh - elucidated

There are fallen souls that need to be revived with all types of encouraging words which restore the soul. Words which can revive and restore these fallen souls come about through the sparking of the mind, which is an aspect of Tefillin which is merited to by breaking lustful thoughts.

*Meshivas Nefesh 28, based on Likutei Moharan II 5*

### The Ways of Encouragement of the Tzaddikim

It seems to some people that the guidance and encouragement which the Rebbe teaches are good ideas which can help those who are involved in healing the soul, by providing thought patterns and ways in which a person can be successful if he will only change the direction of his thoughts to a healthy way of thinking of hope and happiness. It would seem that the success of Hischazkus is through the means of brainwashing oneself with positive ideas and approaches, in order to remove any other thought which throws down morale and weakens the frame of mind.

But in truth, all the ways of Hischazkus which are mentioned in the teachings of Tzaddikim, are a divine flow from the source of Divine Mercy, which are drawn from the roots of the Torah in a wondrous way known only to the Tzaddikim. Therefore, true success in following these paths is dependent on the extent of closeness to them.

### The Holiness of Tefillin Produced Specifically from Animal Skin

The refinement of the thought process comes about when a person understands that the same way the holy Tefillin are made out of animal skin, so too a person can achieve holy thoughts expressly through tests of prideful thoughts and lack of refinement in the area of the Bris Kodosh. The main rectification of the mind occurs when one takes his body which has fallen into a situation of “sealed flesh”, a metaphor for having fallen into “fleshiness” and sensuality, and transforms it into a “seal of holiness”— that the mind should spark with holy thoughts, an aspect of the Holiness of Tefillin.

When a person knows this fundamental idea, he doesn't get confused or fall when he encounters a trial. Instead, he goes and screams out to Hashem from the depths of his heart that He should reveal to him how he can merit Emunah in his situation. Thus, he discovers guidance and paths through which to transform every thought to holy ones of closeness to Hashem.

The ability to enter into this Avodah comes about when one comes close to Tzaddikim who teach the true ways of thinking, of how to transform every trial and every fall into holy thoughts of closeness to Hashem. Every thought which enters the heart has a negative side which we must abhor and distance from ourselves, as well as a holy side. Through cleaving to Tzaddikim, we learn to understand how we can be close to Hashem in every place and situation,

### The Sparking of the Mind

When one is involved in serving Hashem in such a

fashion, discovering Emunah from within the depths of trials and failures, a person comes to what is referred to as a “sparking of the mind”. The mind is like a lit candle, which needs fuel to burn, which is the moisture and oil of the body. To transform every thought of “sealed flesh” to a holy thought is to elevate the body to become fuel for the mind.

Now, every holy thought about Hashem and all the knowledge of Hischazkus, to be close to Hashem always, do not remain in the category of just being ideas, but rather they become thoughts of Emunah and closeness to Hashem which have a real life force. His mind is lit up with wondrous sparks from these teachings of the Tzaddikim.

If he merits being diligent in this, he then merits to hold strong in Emunah even at low times, even when the Emunah doesn't shine properly. The impression left over from the times when the mind sparks continues to shine for him even when his mind “sleeps”. This is an aspect of “a dream through an angel.” Just like by actual sleep if someone's mind was clear during the day, then his dreams are pure. So too, when a person works at elevating his mindset throughout his down times, he merits that even when he is in a spiritual “slumber” he will be able to hold strong in Emunah.

### Words Which Restore the Soul

When a person toils to remain strong in Emunah by searching by the Tzaddikim for the true ways of Emunah which have the ability to transform “animal skin” to holy thoughts, he comes up with words of encouragement which have the ability to restore a soul. He can then provide encouragement for friends who have fallen, to uplift them with his words. He can properly convey those words in a way that his friend will be able to be uplifted by them and use them to go further and progress from one level to another in serving Hashem.

A person is successful in having what he has learnt come alive with the ability to enter his friend's heart, when he himself actualizes it in a fashion in which he elevates fallen thoughts into holy thoughts.

Even the person who is hearing the words of encouragement should know this, and understand that even though he himself is right now on a level of “sealed flesh”, he must still take these words of the Tzaddikim which he is hearing and enter with them into the seal of holiness, however much he can. With this, he can rectify his mind and he will become able to withstand difficult situations with his Emunah in Hashem.

[This piece is based on Likutei Moharan II, 5, which is the longest discourse on Likutei Moharan, and the thread which connects the whole lesson is difficult to understand. What we have explained over here can be used as a short introduction to help understand the general idea of the lesson.]



לרפואת פיגה בת רחל

לרפואת רינה בת מיכל ברכה

לרפואת אברהם משה בן מרים טובה



# REBBE NACHMAN'S STORIES

## The Daughter of the King

PART 32

"You must now search for a mountain of gold and a castle made of pearls and there you will find me."

"A mountain of gold and a castle made of pearls"

The topic of Teaching # 6, one of the most famous teachings of Rebbe Nachman, deals with the *kavanot* of the month of Elul. In this wondrous teaching, Rebbe Nachman discloses the secret behind the *Kavanot* and *Yechudim* - Kabbalistic divination and meditation techniques - that need to be performed during this special month as taught by the holy Ariz"l

The actual divinations and meditations as prescribed by the Ariz"al, are meant for those worthy of them. But Rebbe Nachman has continued to dig deeper and construct such *Kavanot* and *Yechudim* that are fit for us, allowing us to engage in this loftiest of regimen in our day-to-day living.

Generally, the *Kavanot* of Elul are meant to open the gates of mercy. The *Kavanot* are spiritual "mechanical tools" used for drawing down - הסדים - influx of divine compassion - that, in turn ameliorate verdicts and constrictions in the world. The need for this, quite obviously, isn't limited just for the month of Elul. Rebbe Nachman explains that these *Kavanot* are available to anyone who is interested in purifying his soul and going back home to holiness.

This is the 'ways and means' the princess now puts in the hands of the viceroy. After he has gone through a long period of trials and tribulations, it is now time for him to enter the regimen of Elul and gain proficiency in keeping his equilibrium "going in and going out".

The *Kavanot* of Elul deal with the axis between ascent and descent. 'Being proficient' - בקי - means being able to guide oneself between the two. In fact, all the problems we have stem from the inability to properly gauge the two. 'Up' and "Down" naturally intermingle and interchange in our lives. Sometimes the oscillations are subtle and other times they are typified with momentous highs and lows.

If we thought that these changes are due to changing morale or state of mind, we're set straight by Teaching # 6. It teaches us that these oscillations actually comprise the essence of rectification and teshuva.

That secret is concealed in the numeric value of the terms בקי (proficient), which has the numeric value of 112. That is the exact numeric value of the word דרך or "Way". 'Proficiency' paves the 'Way' of *teshuvah* and repentance. That way makes Hashem hold out his hand to us and accept us back into His home.

The word בקי itself is the acronym of - יחוד, ברכה, קדושה - "unification", "blessings" and "sanctity". These are the three portals of the influx of holiness and הסדים into the reality of this world. First, one needs to **sanctify** himself and prepare the soul to receive the light. Every nuance towards sanctification automatically causes a supernal **unification**. That unification results in an influx of **blessings**.

The *Kavanot* call for meditating on the word יבק twice - once for the proficiency while ascending and once for expertise during descent. The *Kavanot* of the two names require interlacing of different expressions of חסד and גבורה - "kindness" and "might", represented by different names of the Holy One Blessed be he.

### A mountain of gold

The princess draws the viceroy a road map. She tells him that he must take upon himself the regimen of Elul if he wants to find her. Only when he can expertly navigate himself while "rising" or "falling", can he locate the divine presence.

A mountain of gold signifies the proficiency during descent. The root of gold is in the mighty Sefira of *Gevura*. This is the essence of this world - might and the "feeling of being", as it were. Reality can seem like a mountain of hardships. But if you learn how to scale that mountain it turns to gold. Obstacles, once mastered, become tools for bigger and better things to follow.

Every obstacle can become a new beginning. Anyone who constantly starts all over again never looks at the past but only at the future. He concentrates on the current yearning he has for Hashem, not his past mistakes or glory. He becomes rich with a wealth of new beginnings.

This regimen is accomplished by combining the names of Hashem that express kindness and might. When you do that, you discover that even the harshest obstacle is really but mercy in disguise. This is how you become proficient in keeping a presence of mind while going down.

### A castle of pearls

This is the expertise to keep one's head straight during prosperity. The pearl is white, alluding to the whiteness of the mind and of holy thoughts. When you turn the mountain into gold you exit constricted consciousness and enter an expanded state of mind. You can find the light hidden in the darkness. You then turn the mountain into a castle of pearls.

The trial is that materialism looks as safe and comforting as a fortress. This can become its own kind of jail, a place of the "not good" with the three vices of "Pretty, orderly, and well appointed." When you elevate your mind and expand it, you enlarge *Emunah* and reveal how everything is really pure G-dliness after all.

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