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Parshas
Re'eh
5784

// THE LADDERS & CUSHIONS OF ELUL

Elul! An atmosphere of intense spiritual revival.

Teshuva repentance and elul usually conjures up images of spiritual cleansing and hard work. But in truth this is only half the picture.

A person can hear a wonderful shiur that fills him with immense inspiration, desire, and will, almost to the point of losing free choice. Then, he steps out into the street and finds himself facing a reality where the world still follows its usual course... The spiritual trials and tribulations haven't disappeared.

If he doesn't prepare "cushions" to absorb the the fall, the impact might shatter him.

The Rebbe revealed to us a wonderful lesson about the secret of the month of Elul, how a person can build ladders to rise and also prepare cushions below, so that no fall will break him.

// TWO DIRECTIONS

The quintessential avoda of the month of Elul is to become expert in the 'to and fro' pendulum of repentance:

The novi describes the angel's devotions as "advancing and retreating". The Rebbe guides us to emulate them, becoming "Proficient in advancing and proficient in retreating" - how to progress and how to reverse (Likutei Moharan Part 1, Chapter 6).

Do you want to be able to return to Hashem? Then you'll need to be an expert in this two-pronged course. No one would buy a vehicle that only has forward gears and can't reverse. A vehicle that can't turn backward won't bring you to your destination. The same is true of spirituality.

Do you want to continually renew yourself?

Then, on the one hand, work hard towards coming close to Hashem and his torah. Keep on yearning and praying: "Master of the Universe, I want to be an ehrliche Yid, a truly righteous person!"

And at the same time, arm yourself with the tools that will ensure you don't get broken while things are going backwards.

This approach will give you strength in all the various situations that you'll go through.

"Ani le'dodi - I am my for beloved" - this is the part of advancing; I'm always trying to progress and run to my beloved - Hashem.

And on the other hand, even if I feel distant and I'm being pushed away from holiness, I need to remember "ve'dodi li - my beloved is for me" – Hashem is here, searching for me and wants me – whatever my level is. The Rebbe says that these are the initials of Elul, for this is the essence of the avoda of elul and repentance!

// WHY IS A CURSE NEEDED?

Re'eh! "See! I set before you today a blessing and a curse."

In sifrei Chassidus 'brochoh'

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Gemstone

We don't dictate to others how to behave.

Instead, we encourage people to daven and converse with Hashem, 'talking through' their confusions and doubts. This will get them to receive the answers they need. (L"M 156)

If you accustom yourself to discuss your matters with Hashem, your mind and heart will become purified, receiving the wisdom to give advice to your own soul.

(Asher BaNachal 7133)

Questions and Answers

is it possible to be both a "Breslover" and a "Chabadnik"?

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בעזרת השי"ת FRIDAY,
EREV SHABBOS
KODESH P. BEMIDBAR,
26 IYAR 4Ist OF THE
OMER 5782

Dear…

I received your letter a while back, but didn't manage to answer until now. Since I heard that you are soon to be Bas Mitzva my reply is particularly timely…

… As to your question whether it is possible to be a "Breslover" while simultaneously following a different Chassidus. Both approaches seem suited to you, but you are worried that, by identifying with another group, you may be "betraying" the Rebbe….

The answer, my dear daughter, is thus: once it becomes clear to you just what it means to be "a Breslover" and just what being a follower of our Rebbe is all about, you will immediately realize that there is absolutely no contradiction between the two; you may study Chitas, read all the seforim of Chabad and enjoy the Farbrengen etc. and this is no betrayal whatsoever of the Rebbe, chas v'sholom.

The Rebbe instils in us happiness and satisfaction with life. He teaches us how, when a person appreciates all that he has and thanks Hashem for every single detail, he starts to experience a wonderful sweetness in everything he does and he begins to recognize and appreciate the importance and value of every single Yid. A true Ahavas Yisroel is kindled within him, and wishes only to focus on what is great and good about them, without the slightest trace of bias or discrimination.

The Rebbe opens up the gates of Simchah for us. He shows us how to be happy with our lives, to accustom ourselves to doing mitzvos and maasim tovim and to act with kindness and charity to every human being. And the more we occupy ourselves with mitzvos, tzedokoh and acts of kindness, the stronger will be our sense of happiness and contentment with life and our awareness of just how fortunate and blessed we are. We will be consumed with a longing to see everyone enjoying such happiness and we will wish them all to know of these wonderful eitzos!

And, above all, the Rebbe opens up our mouths. This is the greatest gift that we have received from him – that, no matter when or where we may find ourselves, we are able to open our mouths and speak directly to Hashem, conversing with Him informally, with total simplicity. When a person accustoms himself to this holy avodah, making it a routine part of his day, he is zocheh to a wonderful, everlasting life in both this world and the next, for all eternity – for he maintains a constant

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connection with Hashem Yisborach. Every happening in his life prompts a Tefillah, becoming the basis for a discussion with Hashem. In this way, he transforms all his yeridos and negative experiences into aliyos and great heights of perception and understanding. There is nothing in the whole world that can distance him from Hashem!

With this in mind it is self-understood that a true follower of the Rebbe will not be bothered by the views or ways of any other Kehillah or Chassidus; on the contrary, he will recognize the good in everyone, and will appreciate and value what they do. At the same time, he will also try to make them aware of the Rebbe's wonderful eitzos and teachings, so that they, too, may begin to enjoy the Hidden Light of our Rebbe z"l, availing themselves of the wonderful happiness that the Rebbe helps us attain.

So, don't confuse yourself for a single minute – you can be a devoted Chabadnik and make the most of all the valuable things that Chabad has to offer. And, at the same time, you can be a devoted Breslover – a tzadekes, who behaves with yashrus, derech eretz and the utmost tzenius – and revitalize yourself with the wonderful teachings that the Rebbe revealed to us. In this way you will be zocheh to true Simchas Hachaim!

Wishing you brochoh and hatzlochoh in all that you do; may you grow up to be a Tzadekes….

Rabbi Yitzchok Leser

Sparks

What is there to argue about?!

R' Yisroel of Tirhovitza, zt"l, was a great oved Hashem. In the town of Teplik, there was great machlokes between the followers of different Rebbes. One day, they decided to bring in R' Yisroel to smooth things over and reconcile the sides. As soon as he arrived, all the opponents surrounded him with their arguments. He answered them with simplicity:

"What is there for us to argue about?! Doesn't your Rebbe want you to draw closer to the Hashem, and study Torah? The other Rebbe also wants us to draw closer to Hashem, and study Torah. So, let's talk about this point that we all agree on: Hashem - His glory fills the whole earth. Hashem is right here with us, let us speak with Him, converse with Him in our own language."

They all sat with their mouths agape; they had never heard such words before. They had completely forgotten their argument.

He proceeded to introduce them to the Rebbe's unique method of Torah learning: that everyone on any intellectual level can study and become great in Torah learning. As the Rebbe guarantees that if they just follow his method (Sichos HaRan 76), eventually their mind and understanding will open, and they be filled with a true desire for Torah.

The end result was that all the people of that town drew close to the Rebbe.

We see from this that there's no need to enter into arguments about whether your path is true or not, but rather to speak only of the Truths which all agree on, i.e., the words of the Rebbe.

(Asher BaNachal, Letter 7177)

Treif!

The Rebbe R. Mordechai of Neshchiz was traveling on the long road to visit his Rebbe, R. Yechiel Michel of Zlotchov. As he neared his destination, his soul soared with anticipation of the warm, inspiring words of his Rebbe that would guide him in avodas Hashem.

But though his spirit rose with each mile, his body grew weary and demanded sustenance. R. Mordechai had a custom never to ask anyone for food, but now he was in danger, gripped by intense hunger, and had to seek nourishment to revive himself.

By the roadside stood the large, impressive house of a wealthy Jew. Rabbi Mordechai knocked on the door, hoping that the homeowner's would be moved to offer him food.

Unfortunately, the rich man, did not recognize R. Mordechai. Thinking he was merely a lowly beggar, the wealthy man not only refused to give him anything to eat but chased him away with terrible insults.

Rabbi Mordechai gathered his last remnants of strength and pressed on with his journey.

When he finally reached his Rebbe's house, he received nourishing food and slowly regained his strength. After he finished eating, Rabbi Yechiel Michel said to him, "I've been invited to a tenoyim. Come, let's go together."

When they arrived at the celebration, R. Mordechai saw that the host was none other than the harsh-faced rich man who had mercilessly turned away a hungry yid... But still, he followed his Rebbe inside.

The table was set with fine dishes. a servant entered carrying a large tray laden with delicacies for the guests.

Suddenly, the servant tripped. the expensive tureens shattered, spilling their entire contents.

The wealthy man apologized profusely: "I'm so sorry, honored guests. I had prepared rich, choice meats for you. I'll go and ask them to quickly bring some more."

The meat was brought to the table, but suddenly the shochet burst into the room and cried out: "I regret to inform you all that a serious shaaleh has arisen regarding the kashrus of the animal whose meat was just served to you. I cannot guarantee that it is kosher..."

Immediately, Rebbe Yechiel Michel instructed his student, R. Mordechai, to rule whether the meat was kosher or not.

The Rebbe of Neshchiz declared in a loud voice: "The meat is certainly treif! And not just the meat is treif, but this entire house is treif! Let's flee from this house quickly, lest we be caught in the net of this treif house!"

All the guests fled for their lives, and shortly after, the entire house went up in flames, Heaven help us...

The nature of a yiddish heart is to love and help every yid. If someone doesn't want to - it's a sign that other things are also not in order with them...

(Toch HaNachal, Rosh Hashanah 5774)

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refers to the blessing of spiritual closeness, while 'kloloh' denotes the opposite – being distanced from Hashem.

One might ask, why are curses – heavenly distancing - needed at all? Doesn't Hashem prefer blessings – to simply draw us close to him?

The answer is: through the curse - the distancing, we come to fully appreciate the blessing – the times when Hashem draws us close. When we've known darkness, the light seems even brighter. Before every ascent, there must be a descent (Likutei Moharan 1:22). When we have experienced the bitter taste of being distanced from Hashem, it deepens our appreciation of his closeness.

With this in mind, it's a completely different story. Falls are only temporary. Just have the patience to hang on tight. Don't run away. From every fall, from the lowest place you've fallen to, run back to Hashem. The deeper the fall the closer you'll get!

(Ishei Yisrael, Re'eh 5783)