



GROWING IN TORAH AND RUCHNIYUS DURING SEFIRAH

STRENGTHENING OUR RUCHNIYUS MUSCLES

We began to study the steps based on pesukim in Mishlei 2:1-3 that are required during *yemei sefiras haomer* to bring out and connect us to our spiritual dimension. Not only is the dimension of *ruchniyus* of a person separate from the physical dimension, but it is also much more real and powerful. It endures *lanetzach netzachim*. The *gashmiyusdike* side does not endure at all. However the “muscles” that a person builds up in his spiritual dimension is what determines his true and real strength.

Have you ever seen a guy who looks like an *oisgeklyapt* (beaten-up) *hoishanah*? You could think of some people like that right now. They look like they are barely hanging on by threads. Their physical color is not good. Their strength doesn't look good. Their weight doesn't look good. And your heart feels bad for them. But you should feel much worse when you see a person who is spiritually “deformed.” If the guy has got melted spiritual muscles, do you know what that looks like? “Come, let's learn,” you tell him. “Oh, I can't,” he tells you. “Why not?” you ask again. “I don't have the strength to learn,” is his reply. That is what's called melted spiritual muscles. “Come, let's go *daven*.” “Oh, I can't do that either.” That is a *rachmanus*. A person can't sit by a *gemara*. A person who can't get into a *gemara*. A person who lost his spiritual will. That is a tragedy of tragedies. That is a person who is *shaku'ah*, who has already sunk into the physical world and does not have any *ruchniyusdike tzad* to himself.

The days of *sefirah*, the *yemei hamatmonim*, are the days when you exercise and “stress,” your *ruchniyus*. This is the time to bulk up one's *ruchniyus*. The heart of *ruchniyus*, where the lifeblood of a person who is connected to *ruchniyus*, are *emunah* and *bitachon*. These are functions of one's *lev*. They are the foundations of the whole building of *yahadus*, of *ruchniyus*.

When *Chazal* say that רשעים בחייהם קרואים מתים - “The wicked, during their lifetimes are called dead” (Berachos 18b), you have to view that *kipshuto* (literally). When you look at a person who is not living a spiritual life, a person who is not a *shomer Torah umitzvos*, you are looking at literally a *meis* in a box. And if he is a barebones *shomer Torah umitzvos*, I view him as if he's on his way to the hospital. He looks like a guy in a coma who has machines around him keeping him alive. That is what it looks like. It's a most disheartening feeling. It's a most depressing feeling.

When I see a *bachur* who is combing his hair and thinks that if he wears the cool pants, the silly socks, that now the guy feels like he's *mamash shtady* guy - to me, it looks like a child with a doll who thinks he found *shamayim*, that he has his best friend. It's *pashut*, he's disconnected; it's *nituk!*

These are the *yamim* - the 49 days Hashem gave us during the year to “bulk up” spiritually. There are *ruchniyusdike* legs. There are *ruchniyusdike* hands. There are *ruchniyusdike* backs. Each physical limb helps you for your spiritual dimension.

SIX STEPS TO SPIRITUALITY (1-5)

We saw the steps that precede a person being *zocheh* to the *matmonim* (i.e., referring to the word וכסמונים from the pasuk in Mishley 2:4, which also means “hidden gems”).¹

Step number **one** is a decision to want to make a move to take תקה the words of Hashem (בני אם תקח אמרי ומצותי תצפון אתך). I want to become a *shtikel shoilet* - I want to be in control over my *ruchniyus*. Then, step **two**, we said, whatever *ruchniyus* you have, you've got to have a sense of its value, so that you guard it and you review it תצפון, and don't let it become *farshpilt*. Number **three**, you have to learn how to listen להקשיב intently to *ruchniyus* (להקשיב להקמה אגוד תשה לבך לתבונה). Listen very closely to what the *passuk* is saying, or to what the *gemara* is saying. Most people listen very *shvach*. Step number **four** was to delve into the *tevunah* תשה לבך לתבונה to *binah*. To try to analyze and understand what you're learning. Step number **five** was כי אם לביתה תקרא לתבונה תתן קולך, which means, you should **call out** to Hashem and ask him to help you strengthen your *cheishek*. “Hashem, help me be *matzliach*.” You have to *daven* for it.

R' Leizer Yudel Finkel (1879-1965), was the *rosh yeshivah* of the Mir. He was the son of the Alter from Slabodka (R' Nason Tzvi Finkel, 1849-1927). He came from Europe and transplanted Mir Yeshivah in Yerushalayim. He would daven *birchas hatorah* in the morning with passion. The way a person davens the *brachah* of *birchas hatorah* in the morning is an indication of a person's degree of value, a person's degree of *cheishek*, a person's degree of *ratzon*. Hashem is going to say, “You know, you never asked me once to have a *geshmak* in Torah.” You're going to say, “Hashem, when was I supposed to ask you that?” And Hashem will answer that *Chazal* instituted that everybody should say: והערב נא - “Please, Hashem, make the words of Your Torah pleasant in our mouths.” Beg Hashem, plead with him. והערב נא means “make it sweet, make it *geshmak* for me. I want to taste it in my mouth.” Try asking Hashem for this. This should be the most important *tefilah* that you have.

Chazal knew that most people would be sleeping by והערב נא and they would be saying it with one eye open, and their mind shut down, and no heartfelt desire. So what did Hashem do? He did us a big *tovah*. He said, “Let's go for a repeat.” Let's go for “take two.” Where is this “take two”? What is the second time we say *birchas haTorah*? In אהבה רבה אהבתנו. We beg you, Hashem: עלינו ותן בלבנו ולהשפיל לשמע - “Our Father, merciful Father, Who acts with compassion, have compassion on us and put into our hearts to discern, to comprehend, to listen, to learn, and to teach, etc.” Enlighten me, Hashem!! Please, I beg you!! But I'm sure there are many people who subconsciously say

¹ תספרו חמישים יום. כי נ' שערי בינה הם, מ"ט ימים מונים, כנגד מ"ט שערים שמסר הקב"ה למשה, לכך מונים עד נ' ימים וכמ"ט מונים תחפשה על פ' "אם תבקשנה ככסף וכמטמונים תחפשה" (ספר הרוקח הגדול, סוף סימן רצד)

to Hashem, “Hashem, don’t take me too seriously. I don’t really mean to beg you לְהַבִּין וְלִהְשֵׁבֶל - ‘to comprehend and to discern.’ Ay, but I’ve got to say it?

So I’ll say it in the *davening*, but I don’t really mean it, Hashem.”

CANCELING OUR DAILY APPOINTMENTS

I’ll never forget hearing the great *maggid*, R’ Shalom Schwadron (1912-1997) who laid it down about the *schnorrer* who one day had to make a *chasunah*. He’s walking in the street and suddenly he meets his old friend, R’ Yossel. “*Shalom aleichem*, R’ Yossel, how are you?” “How are you?” R’ Yossel says. “Yeah, I’m *shlepping*,” says the *schnorrer*. “*Baruch Hashem*,” Yossel says, “I was *matzliach*.” “What do you do?” “Business, I’m *matzliach* and *baruch Hashem* I help a lot of people,” R’ Yossel says. “Could you help me?” asks the *schnorrer*. “Sure, what’s the *safeik*?! Your are an old friend!” “What should I do?” asks the *schnorrer*. R’ Yossel says, “I’ll give you an appointment. Come tomorrow at 11 o’clock. I’m going to clear my calendar. 11 o’clock, special for you.” “Thank you, thank you!!” says the *schnorrer*.

Comes 11 o’clock the next day, and the *schnorrer* figures, “R’ Yossel is probably a busy man. My visit is probably not that important. *Ich vill noch gein in mikvah*, I still want to eat my bagels, I’ve got to eat my breakfast, *es is doh a bris du*. I want to *chap arein* a little lox over here. *A por kichelech* and maybe a little herring in *mitten voch*, *ah, si sein mamash olam habo*.” So the *schnorrer* delayed doing other things and he missed the meeting.

A couple of days later, he was walking in the street and he met his friend again. Yossel the *gvir* says to him, “What happened to you?!” “Aw, I was busy. Could you give me another meeting? Please give me another meeting.” R’ Yossel says to him, “You know, my schedule is very tight. But I’ll make you another meeting. Come tomorrow at 11 o’clock.” *Selbe zach*. The same thing happens again. Comes 11 o’clock tomorrow morning and the guy doesn’t show up. A couple of days later, the *schnorrer* meets R’ Yossel in the street. He says, “What happened to you?” “I got busy. Please, Yossel, *noch amol*, can you?” “Okay, I’ll make you an appointment for 5 o’clock. At the end of the day, come 5 o’clock.” The same thing happens a number of times. Finally, Yossel says, “No more appointments. Obviously, you don’t need the money. I’m making you an offer and you don’t show up.”

So here’s a *yid* comes every morning, he says, and he begs Hashem, אָבִינִי הָאֵב הַרְחֵקוּן הַמְרַחֵם רַחֵם עָלַי, have *rachmanus* on us, Hashem! When do you usually say “Hashem, have *rachmanus*?” You see a child with cancer, *rachmana litzlan*. *Hot rachmanus*, have mercy, Ribono Shel Olam. A guy gets into a car accident, *hot rachmanus*. A guy gets a terrible sickness, *hot rachmanus*.

Hot rachmanus, have mercy to help you learn? Every morning you beg Hashem. You know what Hashem says? “I’m so proud of you, you finally asked a good question. The answer is, yes. I’m going to give it to you. Show up in the *beis medrash*, sit down and start to learn! I’m going to give you everything you asked for!” But you get busy, you get sidetracked, and you don’t show up. The next day you come again, Hashem, *avinu av harachaman, noch amol*. And every day, the same thing. “I told you yesterday yes. What is with you?”

A person has to understand, if you’re not *mevakesh hatzlachah* in Torah how will you have it? I am sure people *daven* for cell phones. I have no *safek* about it. People *daven* for jobs. I’m sure if you go into a *balabatishe beis medrash*, if you turn the volume up on the *bakashos*, you will hear: *parnasah, hatzlachah, brachah*, a bigger house, a bigger car, more money. “Hashem, *geb a bissel gelt*, Hashem, that’s what I’m asking from You. I’m *mistapek bemuat*, just give me gelt.” It will be embarrassing if that is what people asked for. Not one *bakashah* for *ruchniyus*!

So if *Chazal* wouldn’t insert these requests for *ruchniyus* into the *nusach hatefillah*, we would never ask for it! They wanted to make sure we put it in there. At least it hits the guy in the face once in a while. A person has to be *mevakesh* from Hashem - “Please Hashem, I want!” And if you want, you’re going to get answered. You’re going to see *hatzlachah*.

THE SIXTH STEP: CRYING OUT LOUD

The **sixth** thing is, לְתַבֵּן תְּתוּ קוֹלְךָ - “cry aloud for discernment” (ibid). You’ve got to call out loud. You’ve got to cry out. You’ve got to cry for it. *Kolecha* means you’ve got to raise your voice. There is one guy who wants a little *hatzlachah* in some *inyan*, so you tell him “*Hatzlachah*.” And then there are certain things you must cry out for. You’ve got to be *motzi* your *kol* (express it).

R’ Aryeh Levin (1885-1969) related an amazing *ma’aseh* in the name of R’ Zalman Sender Shapiro (1851-1923), who was the father of Dvar Avraham - the last Kovno Rov. He was known as a tremendous *gaon, talmid chacham* and a *tzaddik*. This became a famous *ma’aseh* in certain *krisen* (circles). I saw it brought down in a number of sources. It was a story about a *pashute baal agalah* (wagon driver). The guy was either a *baal agalah* or a water carrier. In the more reliable place I saw that he was a *baal agalah*. To be a *baal agalah* was a very simple position. It wasn’t a *davar chashuv*.

One night, R’ Zalman Sender was poring over his sefarim, when he suddenly heard the sounds of clanging pails outside his windows. He peered out of the window and he saw the *shtetle’s* water carrier, *Zimmel*, coming to his door. The Rav looked up at the clock, surprised that *Zimmel* was coming at that hour, “What in the world is *Zimmel* doing here? There are no water deliveries made at this hour,” he thought. Water carriers always came in the morning to deliver the water. But the Rav could hear *Zimmel’s* heavy footsteps getting louder, and sure enough, before long he heard his knocking.

The Rav opened the door and *Zimmel* asked if he could have a few words with the Rav. With a surprised tone in his voice, the Rav asked *Zimmel*, “Nu, so tell me - what’s the reason you came tonight?” *Zimmel* began to speak, and he said the following: “From a young age, as the Rav knows, I was an orphan. All my friends were able to sit and learn in the *cheder* with the Rebbi. I already had to go to work and I began to carry water, a very menial task. I recently heard a *Maggid* who came to town and gave a beautiful *drasha* about the beauty and the life of a *lomed* Torah, a *talmid chacham*, a person who is *zoiche* to sit and learn Torah.” At that point *Zimmel* began to cry and he said to the Rav, “Rebbi, what should I tell you?! I have this tremendous desire to learn! I know that I am not a young man anymore - I am getting on in years - but I have this *gevaldike ratzon* to learn Torah! What can I do, Rebbi?!” The Rav answered him with a question, “So what do you want from me? How can I help you?” *Zimmel* said, “I want a *brochah* and some guidance. How can I be *zoiche* to learn Torah?” When R’ Zalman Sender heard this request, tears welled up in the corners of his eyes. He looked at this heartbroken *Yid* who was involved with manual labor all his life, and he said to him, “Repeat after me three times the following sentence, and *im yirtzeh* Hashem, your *bakasha* will be fulfilled. There is only one condition - you have to say it *b’kol ram* (out loud). Say the following: ‘I want to learn Torah! I want to learn Torah! I want to learn Torah.’ Nu, nu, *Zimmel* - say it now and you will see *yeshuos*!” *Zimmel* thought he just won the sweepstakes and with all his might he cried out: “*Ich*

vil lernin Torah.” The Rav stopped him, “No, Zimmel, say it even louder!” “*Ich vil lernin Torah! Ich vil lernin Torah!*” The neighbors heard this shouting and ran into Rav’s house where they saw it was none other than Zimmel - the water carrier who was saying, “I want to learn Torah!” The Rav told him, “Go with the *ko’ach* you have now, sit down and start learning Torah. You can come to me with any question.”

And R’ Aryeh Levin said that he could be *me’id* (testify) on this person. R’ Zalman Sender took Zimmel to the local *shul* where the people were all learning and he instructed people: “You teach him this, you teach him that.” He arranged for the guy *rebbeim*. And he told Zimmel, “Learn and do *chazarah* on everything you learn and don’t stop! And he *vakst ois an adam gadol*, he grew to become a *gadol batorah*, R’ Aryeh Levin said. He *steiged ois moradig*. Why? Because he cried out - “this is what I want.”

SHREI’ING FOR RUCHNIYUS

You hear people going to places and they *shrei* (cry) and they *daven* for a shidduch, *kolos*, with loud voices. You have parents davening for their children for a shidduch. *Amol* grandparents *shrei’ing* for a shidduch. They go to *kevarim*. If somebody is sick, I’m telling you what people do, they travel to the Baal Shem of Michelstadt, to the Baal Shem from Mezhibuzh. They travel to R’ Baruch, to R’ Nossan. They travel to R’ Nachman. Wherever you’ve got a *kever*, they are going. And they are being *mishtatei’ach* and they are crying their eyes out!

Aval letvunah (but to daven for the sake of understanding), to be a *talmid chacham*, I doubt you’ll see too many people doing that. Not too many people value that. But that is what a person has to do. You have to understand that these are the exercises – it says “*az tavin yiras Hashem.*” Then you’re going to understand what *yiras Hashem* means. You have to be *mevakesh* it. You have to seek it. Then you’re going to see Hashem more than you see ‘reality.’ *Gedolim* who have a sense of what *yiras Hashem* means, of what *ruchniyus* means, who live in the *ruchniyusdike* world, have such awareness, such a sense, it’s unbelievable! You know, their life source comes from *ruchniyus*.

THE REAL SOURCE OF LIFE

We always think that we know what our life source is: good health, eating healthy, physical exercise, cardio exercise, weight exercises, muscle building - that’s what we think gives a person *chiyus*. But these things give *beheimos chiyus* also. Human beings have another source of *chiyus* and that *chiyus* is *ruchniyus*.

You know, it’s unbelievable. If you go watch *tzaddikim*, they boggle your mind. They spend years of their lives in deprivation. They are so *shikkur* to learn Torah and do *mitzvos*, that they give away their whole physical life for that, *mamash* like a *shikkur*! And they learn and they *daven*. You would think they should not make it past 30 years old! There are *tzaddikim* who fast *taaneisim* for years! And they stay up around the clock. I think if I’d fast one of their *taaneisim*, I’d fall asleep in a second. I used to be amazed that the Alter Skulener Rebbe (R’ Eliezer Zusia Portugal, 1898-1982) *fiering tisch*, (leading his tisch) until two or three in the morning! How can a person not be, *pashut*, falling off their chair from sheer exhaustion? It’s unbelievable! What *kochos* they had! You know where it comes from? *Ruchniyus*. That’s where the *kochos* come from.

R’ Chatzkel Levenstein (1885-1974) writes in a letter that he was *zoiche* to see R’ Simcha Zissel from Kelm (1824-1898), the Alter from Kelm, who was a very sick man. He had leukemia for over 20 years, R’ Chatzkel writes. *Lemaaleh me’esrim shanah*. His red blood cells were shot. He had no *kochos*, he was pale and white. He looked like he had no strength. Yet he was a lion. And on every single Shabbos, everybody would testify, it was *nikar lakol*, his face became flaming red! Flaming red every Shabbos! This is a testimony from R’ Chatzkel Levenstein! Everybody witnessed what it meant that *ruchniyus*, Shabbos gives a person *chiyus*.

The Telshe Yeshivah was one of the last if not the last *yeshivah* that had a *mizrach vant* - in America, they had a large *mizrach vant* of a bunch of old *zekeinim*, people who had seen their youth long ago. And they would sit and learn. I used to watch them. I used to marvel at them, and I used to look at them and think, what did they do? What kind of dietary habits do they have? They used to eat *yeshivah* breakfasts. Margarine. Government-donated margarine. That stuff that is supposed to turn your arteries into rocks. They *shmeared* their bread with it. They didn’t eat whole wheat bread. They ate simple white processed flour bread, a few slices. And they ate cereal full of sugar, a couple of eggs. It was *mavhil harayon*! I used to marvel at that. Then they came back for lunch. They ate soup, margarine-based soup. That’s what makes it look like chicken soup, with the fat floating on top, except that it wasn’t from the chicken because there was no chicken in that soup.

I once went into the kitchen, I remember asking the *goyishe* cook, I said to her, “Tell me, what’s the base of the *cholent*?” She showed me this big block of margarine. I said, “Are you serious?” She said, “You’d better believe it. I put it into everything,” she says. I said, “Like what?” She said, “You liked that cholent? I put a couple of these blocks in that cholent. Straight up.” They weren’t giving out oil. Pure margarine went in the cholent. That was the base.

And the *roshei yeshivah* ate it. I remember going to an *adam gadol me’od*. After a very long day, he was going home to eat supper. I asked him if he minds if I accompany him. He said, “No.” I came into his house, his kitchen. His wife said, “I have supper for you.” She gave him these two big, very unpleasant-looking hot dogs. They looked like rubbery hot dogs! He sat down and he ate them, with *mamash geshmak*. If people would see this, they would think, “*Shrek.*” And he outlived all those health nuts and *baruch Hashem*, he’s still living. People don’t realize this. *Ruchniyus* gives you life. *Ruchniyus* gives you *kochos*. What do you think Rav Shach ate? What kept him going? What kept R’ Chaim Kanievsky, and the Steipler going? Trust me, they don’t have a nutritionist. It looks like he’s already fasting for the last 60 years. They look very unhealthy.

There used to be a fellow that used to come here, a total health nut. The first time he walked past, I called him over to the side and said, “What’s the matter? What’s the sickness?” He said, “What do you mean?” I said, “You look very sick. Pale, white. You’re stooped. What’s your problem?” And this guy was into exercise. He was one of these food nuts, exercise nuts. I told him he looked like morgue material. “You don’t look healthy. Why don’t you try eating normal food? Maybe you’ll look healthy then, and you’ll feel healthy.” Na, he knows better. People don’t understand that. *Ruchniyus* is the source of life.

TRAVELING TO SEE A SHINING FACE

R’ Shimshon Pincus (1944-2001) - people don’t know this story, but he had a *minhag*. He lived in the south of Eretz Yisrael in a place called Ofakim. Way south. And in Elul, he would drive every single day to Bnei Brak to go to the *shiur* of the great *gaon* and *tzaddik*, Harav Yisrael Yitzchak Kalmanovitz. So they asked him, “Why do you travel all the way, *aza* trip, to hear a *shiur*?” I mean, he was a *rosh yeshivah* himself. He was an *adam gadol* himself. You know what he said? He said, “Every day in Elul, his face shines more than yesterday. I must see that sight. I’m not going for the *shtickel* Torah, I’m not going for his *pshat* in Rashi.” Although he had a good *pshat* in Rashi also, he was a big *lamdan*, a big *talmid chacham*. Harav Yisrael Yitzchak Kalmanovitz was an *adam kadosh*. He was a man that learned in a room without windows from

Motzei Shabbos until *erev Shabbos*. That is when he would come home. *Tallis* and *tefillin* all day long. He learned with such intensity. He put out *sefarim*. His *sefarim* look like R' Baruch Ber's *sefarim*. His first *sefer* that came out was a very hard *sefer* to understand. When it came out, it made waves in the *yeshivah* world, in Bava Kama. It was unbelievable. It made a *mahapeicha*. He had a *talmid* who knew how to write over his *shiurim* well, so they printed them. Very *lomdish*, very intense. With all the *tena'im*. You see the *tefilah*, Torah, etc.

He lived in a world of *ruchniyus*. That is what he lived in. And R' Shimshon Pincus saw it on his face. That means it was a reality.

The *gemara* (Sanhedrin 14a) says that there were *talmidei chachamim* who would come before *goyim* and the *goyim* would say, בְּרִיךְ אֱלֹהֵיךָ, that's what they would say. They said, "Your face shines." The *goy* saw on the *Yid* a shining face. That is *kedushah*. That is *ruchniyus*. That is what *ruchniyus* does. It gives you red cheeks. It's not from the cosmetics. It's not from the exercise, the chewing, that gives red cheeks. No. Red cheeks, a glowing face, come from *ruchniyus*.

WHAT IS RUACH HAKODESH?

I was thinking recently, what does *ruach hakodesh* mean? Somebody asked, "What is *ruach hakodesh*?" He said, "Is it like *nevuah*?" I said, "I'll tell you what it is." I said, "We have two dimensions. There is a physical dimension and a spiritual dimension. If you live in the spiritual dimension, that is a dimension of *kedushah*. It's a whole different *ruach*. The *ruach*, the manifestation of living in that world, what somebody sees in that world, what somebody hears in that world, what somebody senses in that world - is a sense that only comes from living in the *ruchniyusdike* world. That is what *ruach hakodesh* is."

The Arizal says that if a *gadol baTorah* goes somewhere, even for a short time, it's impossible for him not to leave a *roishem*, an impression. You know what that is? When I had the *zechus* of having Rav Matisyahu Salomon, he should live and be well, and his *rebbetzin* come here for a Shabbos, I was tickled pink. I threw all the furniture out of that room. I went and bought a brand new bedroom set. I bought new armoire, I bought new carpet, I bought new beds, I bought new bedding. I bought everything new, mattresses. Until today, this room is called Rav Matisyahu's room. That's the room he slept in. I think some of the subsequent guests ruined the mattresses, but the *roishem* is still there. It's impossible for a *gadol baTorah* not to leave a *roishem* where he stays or lives.

There was a fellow in Volkimir, a famous city in Lithuania, who was an *avel*. When a person becomes an *avel*, the minhag is that he moves his seat in shul. So he moved his seat. And when he moved his seat, he felt his *tefilah* was "turbocharged." Something happened to his *tefilah* that was not normal. So he went and he did research. How could this seat and that seat be different? And after being *choker* (investigating), you know what he found out? That when the Vilna Gaon went into *galus*, he passed through this place, and that was where he stood in *davening*. Decades later, it still made a *roishem*! That person was able to *daven* better. That is real life. And it works the other way too.

A SMELL OF GA'AVAH

The *Kav Hayashar* brings down that Eliyahu Hanavi was once walking with a chassid and they passed a carcass of an animal that was really putrefied. And the chassid covered his nose. He couldn't handle the smell. Eliyahu Hanavi didn't bother. A little while later, they encountered a person and this chassid was very welcoming and Eliyahu Hanavi held his fingers over his nose. He couldn't handle the smell. So the chassid said, "I don't understand. By the carcass, you weren't bothered. How come you're bothered now, when nothing smells?" He said, "This smells much worse. The *gaavah* coming off of this person is so intense, the smell is so pungent, I can't handle it. The carcass, I couldn't smell at all. It's just an animal. *Gornisht*." You know what that is?!

Here you are, thinking you are standing next to a *rasha*. The guy gave himself a "Spanish shower" and he now smells like perfume and you're thinking, you have a *shaileh*, you're *klering* if you should make *borei minai besamim*. You're not sure what *brachah* you have to make on this person. Comes along a *tzaddik*, gets near the other person and tells you, "I'll tell you what *brachah* to make here - *asher yatzar*. That is the *brachah* you should make on this person." That is the only *brachah* that is *ro'oy* to make on this person because he is a *rasha*.

The Chazon Ish was taking a walk in Bnei Brak one time. All of a sudden, he stopped. The person he was walking with asked him why he stopped. You know what he said? "Yesterday, Torah was spoken in this place." And he stopped to bask in that. That is *ruchniyus*. That is *kedushah*. If you live in the world of *kedushah*, you have *kedushah*.

R' Yisrael Salanter's *talmid* was once sleeping in a house and he couldn't sleep well. He was twisting and turning the whole night. In the morning, he *chapped* that it was the 30th day and he didn't put *mezuzos* on the house yet. So he came to his rebbe, R' Yisrael and he told him what happened. R' Yisrael said, "Yeah, *avada* - it makes sense that you couldn't sleep because of that." So, a guy who raised money for the yeshivos was there, and he said, "*Vos dreist du akop*," he says. "I've slept in so many houses without *mezuzos* and I sleep like a rock." So R' Yisrael said, "*Der vos lebt mit hashgachah* is shown *hashgachah*." Animals sleep comfortably everywhere. A person who lives with the Ribono Shel Olam, the Ribono Shel Olam lets him know, he can sense something is missing in this place.

A SMELL OF TUMAH

In Telshe Yeshivah, there was an executive director for many years. His name was R' Abba Zalka Gewirtz (1917-2012). He related that in 1938, when R' Elchanan Wasserman (1874-1941) came to America, he was *zocheh* to drive R' Elchanan around in New York City. R' Abba took him to Manhattan to the offices of some *guirim*. R' Elchanan was *noheg* that he never raised his head. He always looked down. All of a sudden, when they were in Manhattan, R' Elchanan started to fidget. And he said, "I can't take it, I can't take it. What is going on here? What is going on here?" He became *gantze* perturbed. R' Abba said, "I looked where we were and I saw it was Times Square. 42nd Street." This was 1938, you understand? He said, "I looked around, I didn't see anything bad there. But R' Elchanan *pashut* felt it." That is called having a sensitivity to *kedushah*. Hashem says, "You want to get a sense of *kedushah*?"

Now, there were *groisse gedolim* who couldn't shake people's hands because by shaking their hands, they would feel something was off. You know, would you shake a guy's hand if you knew he just had gooeey, gobbly slime that came from old fish - would you shake his hand? You would excuse yourself and say, "Sorry, I hope you don't mind. Nothing personal." The *alter* Belzer Rebbe used to use a towel. That is how he shook a hand. So I am sure there were *shotim* who said, "Oh, he was a sensitive person." When my *rebbe* (Rav Meir Halevi Soloveichik) was a *bachur* and came to say *shalom aleichem* to him, the *gabbai* said, "He is *der zun fun* Brisker Rav." He took the towel, he threw it away! He took my *rebbe*'s hand, "*Shalom aleichem!*" He knew this was *kedushah*. My *rebbe* was only a young boy then. This was *kedushah*.

People who live in a world of *kedushah* sense it. You can sense a person is in turmoil. You can feel if the guy is carrying around "dirty diapers." You know, a mother is sensitive to her children. Sometimes you see a kid, you come over, he's going in the corner. And everybody is

saying, "What's the matter, what's the matter?" The mother says, "Eh, he probably has a 'melly? (i.e. a dirty diaper). Do you have a 'melly?" What do you have, *ruach hakodesh*? No. A mother knows her child and knows how to determine what it is. The *tzaddik* sees you and he also sees the "melly." But he can't change it for you, so he keeps his hands to himself.

USE THE SEFIRAH TO BECOME A MEVAKESH

Rabbosai, in these 49 days we have to build up our *ruchniyusdike tzad*, but you have to be *mevakesh* it. You have to want it. You have to want to feel Hashem, and then you're going to feel so empowered! You will feel such a *koach*! You're going to feel so free. You're going to feel such a heightened sensory perception. You're going to be able to look at people and look at things and see them in a whole new light. It's amazing what a person could see. I used to sit and watch my grandfather (Rav Avigdor Miller) and wonder, "I wonder what he's seeing." I used to sit next to my *rebbe*, for hours sometimes, and watch him perceive people, perceive things, and think. And I used to think, "I wonder what he perceives. I wonder what he is seeing that I can't begin to see."

Hakadosh Baruch Hu should help us start this *zman* off right. There are not many days left. We're holding on day number 17 now - hopefully by day 49 we will have revealed some *matmonim*. Push yourselves. Don't give in and allow yourselves to fall by the wayside. I'm telling you, it's going to be payday like you've never experienced. You're going to feel and sense it.

I once had a fellow, a *ba'al teshuvah*, whom I pumped up for Shavuos like nobody's business. And he came, he spent Shavuos with me. We were learning *retzifus* throughout the night, and at one point during the night - for maybe five minutes - he fell asleep. Then in the middle of *mussaf* - we were *davening mussaf* in the *yeshivah* - he called me out into a back room. I followed him into the back room. I was pretty tired by then. And I looked at him and he just burst out crying. It was the biggest tear I ever saw from a person in my life, coming out of his eye! It looked like a glob of a tear. I was shocked! I said, "What happened?!" And he said, "I fell asleep." "So what?" He said, "By *kabbalas hatorah*. By *kabbalas hatorah*!" I said, "Wow. Let me give you a *brachah* right now, that you should never lose this sense of value, of worry and of feeling!"

And a person has to know that if we'll work on that and we'll bring out that dimension from ourselves, we're going to have experiences of a new dimension, to the point that people will start to ask you, "What are you doing? Are you imagining things?! Who do you think you are?" "No, this is what I see."

You know, a blind man asks the guy who is sighted and he says to him, "What do you see?" He says, "I see red." He says, "How do I know

THE BOTTOM LINE

The real source of our *chiyus* is, of course, *ruchniyus*, not just following a healthy diet and getting a daily workout in the gym, as the world around us might have us believe. The days of *sefirah* were given to us to "bulk up" on our *ruchniyus*, so that come Shavuos we'll be prepared to receive the Torah. Being disconnected from this lifeline of *ruchniyus* takes on different forms for different people, but at its core, it's a disheartening and depressing feeling when a Yid is not fully invested in Torah and mitzvos. In fact, when Chazal say: רשעים בחייהם קרואים מתים, we need to understand it *kipshuto*. To be connected to this lifeline, to live for *ruchniyus* and be *mevakesh* it, requires calling out and crying out to Hashem to grant it to us. That is why Chazal, in their wisdom, understood that we need daily reminders to reawaken within us this *cheshek*, and that is why they placed key *tefillos* and *brochos* - like וְהִתְעַרְבָּנָה of *bircas haTorah* and אֲהַבְתָּהּ רַבָּה of *bircas Krias Shema* - into our siddur. In the remaining day of *sefirah*, I will, *bli neder*, review the six steps of acquiring Torah from Sefer Mishley. And when I will say these brochos, I will say them slowly and with a deep desire to learn and understand Hashem's Torah. And by investing in this small kabbalah - when Shavuos comes - I will be *zoiche* to experience a real *kabbalas haTorah*, at last!