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Teenage Clarity

CHAPTER 1

OVERCOMING NISYONOS

*The privilege and power of struggling
with – and overcoming – Nisyonos*



CHAPTER 1

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The privilege and power of struggling with – and overcoming
– Nisyonos

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PART 1 • Questions 1–5**Q1**

I sometimes feel so overwhelmed by where I need to get to in Ruchnius. So much is expected of us – but I am really just a teenager trying to get through the struggle. I can’t turn into a Rebbetzin overnight. How can I get through the overwhelm without just shutting it all out because it seems like too much?

A1 Imagine yourself coming up with some great invention. You work out how much it’s going to cost you – and the total comes to a whopping £5 million. You approach your rich friend, “Do you have the money to lend me?” He does – but on one condition: He needs it back within a year. You sign the contract and get the money.

A month later, you’ve sat with the producer and explained your model. Two months later, you have a 3D model. Another month, and you have the production line running, producing your invention.

Two months after *that*, a container full of your dream invention sits outside your house.

You’re six months into the contract.

Now it’s time to get on with the marketing. You’ve used £4 million so far. With the next million, you pay salespeople and marketers. Now you’re 10 months in, and calculate that when the year is over, you will have £3 million from revenue.

But when the year draws to a close, you only have £2 million to give your friend. You feel terrible. So you decide that you’ll take this £2 million, and reinvest it into your product, which will now be much cheaper to produce than it was in the initial stages, and within *another* year, you will have the £5 million to pay back.

But – you said you would pay him in a year – so it’s getting a little sticky.

First you ignore him, biding your time. But one day, there’s a knock at the door. It’s him. You swiftly leave the house from the back door so he doesn’t spot you. He hears the door slam and quickly follows you down the street. You walk faster. He continues to follow you. You’re now on the main road, and jump onto a passing bus. *Phew*, you think, *for today, I’ve shaken him off*.

To your bad mazel, a dustbin lorry appears right in front of the bus, and you see your friend running to the next bus stop. Gulp. How are you going to get out of this one?

You put on your headphones and turn the volume up as high as it will go. Next, you spot a 90-year-old lady in an aisle seat – perfect, no one will disturb this old lady just to get to you.

You arrive at the bus stop and your friend gets on. He tries to say hello, but he’s drowned out by your pounding music. He tries again. Then you hear a beep and a mechanical voice say, ‘Battery low.’ Uh oh.

Your headphones last for a few minutes before dying.

Now, silence fills the bus, as all the passengers turn to watch the scene. Even the granny next to you gets up and moves away, giving your friend the seat next to you.

You’re trapped. Your friend sits down and turns to you. “The year is up.” You play dumb for a minute before he says:

“The loan. The year is up; you owe me the money. **But** I believe in your product, I’ve bought one to try out. You can reinvest the money and pay me back over ten years.”

You're ready to jump for joy! Here you were, running away from him, turning the music up, drowning him out, *when all he wanted to tell you was that you have more time.*

We can take a powerful message from here: Every single person has been given a mission in this world. The automatic feeling we have is that **we have to pay it back in one go. Now.** And since we're never doing everything perfectly (or we wouldn't be alive!), we run away. We distract ourselves. We don't want to hear.

But let's take off our headphones, quiet the distractions, and listen to reality. **We do not need to pay it back all at once.** Our mission will take years. No one expects us to do it in one go. So instead of despairing, listen to the goals, even if you can't do everything **yet.** You can do it slowly!

Hashem is not asking you to give up everything in one go and become a Rebbetzin overnight. You need to be the girl that you are, with the Nisyonos that make you who you are, and you need to 'pay back' a small bit at a time. Every day, you'll reach a bit higher.

You don't have to become the 'perfect girl' today.

With that in mind, it's much easier. You don't need to give up everything today. You don't have to jump onto a bus and squeeze next to an old lady whilst turning your music up full blast.

You can just sit and listen, and understand that you will do it slowly. You won't make a million in a day, but you will make a thousand a day and eventually build up to a million.

But if you don't start today, you will never pay back. If you don't make a thousand today, you will never make a million.

Don't keep running away. Stop, reassess your life, and **see that change is possible.**



THE CLARITY

“You don’t have to become the ‘perfect girl’ today.”

In summary: Don’t get scared off by the pressure of perfection. All you need to do is take one step at a time.

Q2

Sometimes the struggle is so hard. It's so much easier just to give in. I feel like if I face my Nisyonos head-on, I am setting myself up for such a struggle! Why does it seem like the right thing to do is so hard, whilst just giving in and doing the wrong thing is so easy?

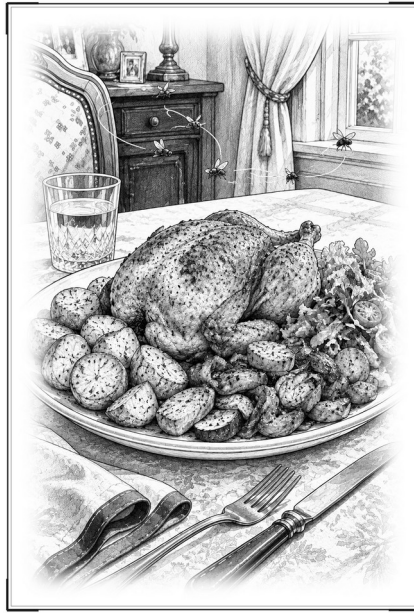
A2 People make a BIG mistake about struggle.

No one in the world has more or less struggle, or pleasure, than has been determined for them on Rosh Hashana. The Dubno Maggid gives a Mashal: you're having a meal, and there's a fly buzzing around.

No one in their right mind would think that a fly can steal their food. It doesn't have the ability to!

Says the Dubno Maggid, it's the same with pleasure: It's impossible to 'take' pleasure that's not meant for you. Doing something wrong *cannot give you more pleasure*. So, we have to be clear about something: **Giving in to temptation will not take away the struggle.**

Every person will have as much struggle as has been determined for them.



THE CLARITY

“It’s impossible to ‘take’ pleasure that’s not meant for you.”

In summary: A person’s struggles and pleasures are destined. Giving in to temptation will not mean you will have less struggle – so fight it, and win!

Q3

Why do some people struggle so mightily in Ruchnius while, for others, growth seems so easy? They don't seem to struggle at all.

A3 There was a Bachur I started helping five years ago. He struggled mightily through his high school years, and ended up completely off the Derech. This Bein Hazmanim, I was shocked to walk into a Shul and see him there, in his hat and jacket, davening. I called him over and asked him, “Am I dreaming?” I wasn’t sure if it was the right boy! But it was, and we had a conversation in which we made up to meet.

We met the next day and had a long conversation about his journey over the past few years. I asked if he wanted to learn together over Bein Hazmanim, and he agreed. We learnt solidly over the next few days – and I was super impressed by his clarity and focus.

On the last day of Pesach, he came over, quite obviously tired. We sat outside and had an open, candid conversation. At one point, I turned to him and asked the question that had been on my mind: “You were heading in a completely opposite direction, and you made such a quick U-turn. What caused this?”

He explained that he was sitting on his bed in his parents’ house one Friday night, eating takeaway and playing Xbox. It was getting boring, and he turned off his game, feeling quite disgusted. He looked around the room, feeling really down and bored, until his eyes fell on his younger brother’s chest of drawers.

His younger brother was a great boy, in Yeshivah, the pride of the family.

He pulled out his brother’s diary and opened up to the first page. It read: *Dear Hashem, I am struggling with Shemiras Einayim, especially in the following four areas... It’s becoming too hard for*

me. I am going to take on improving four other areas of my life, and please give me Siyatta Dishmaya to overcome this hard Nisoyon.

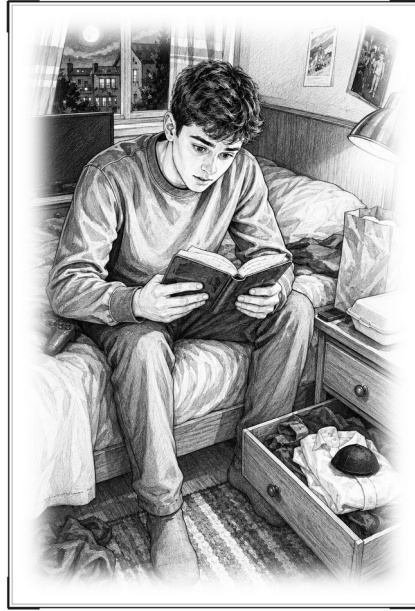
This boy was shocked. He thought that the only reason his brother was in Yeshivah and doing so well was because he didn't have Nisyonos. **He now realised that his brother also struggles.**

From that second on, he started keeping Shabbos.

This story was tremendously powerful to me. If you think you are the only one struggling with Nisyonos, you will just think that you are obviously bad, and will quickly give in to temptation. Don't think that anyone doesn't have struggles. **Everyone struggles** – even those you think are doing super well. Don't think you can't do well because you are struggling. The Nisyonos you have make you normal.

I want to tell you something that can give you Chizuk: Those who struggle as teenagers have it easier later on in life.

They have techniques for dealing with difficulties. The teenage years are an amazing training ground for the future.



THE CLARITY

“Every single person struggles in Ruchnius. Every. Single. Person.”

In summary: Every single person struggles in Ruchnius. Every. Single. Person.

Q4

But even if everyone struggles, why does it seem like some people have much harder Nisyonos than others? Especially with technology, some people's struggles seem really simple, while others face super-hard challenges.

A4 On a flight back from America right after I went to my Rebbe for Yom Kippur, I met two boys who were born into totally non-frum families. One of them, who was 19, worked in a band.

He turned to me and said, "Why can't I rap at night?" I looked at him, completely confused. He went on, "My Rabbi said I can't rap at night..." I didn't know what he was talking about until he went on and demonstrated wrapping Tefillin with his hands: "My Chabad Rabbi wraps Tefillin on me every Monday morning. One Monday, I woke up late and had to go straight to university. So, I went to put on Tefillin at night instead. But the Rabbi told me I can't put on Tefillin at night! So – is Hashem only 'available' in the morning? Why can't I **wrap** at night?"

We ended up having a long discussion about it, during which he asked me, "I only put Tefillin on Monday; am I going to be punished for the rest of the days when I *don't* put on Tefillin?"

My answer was based on the following: Each of us is **on a journey that started in a different place**.

People like you and me would be held accountable if we only put on Tefillin on Monday: we were born frum; putting on Tefillin is not our struggle – that's basic. We have other struggles, other places where we need to grow. But putting on Tefillin – that isn't a struggle for us.

This particular boy's point of struggle and growth is in a totally different place. Putting on Tefillin is *not a given at all* – so he will

get rewarded for starting to put on Tefillin! He started with nothing, and now puts on Tefillin one day a week! He's on his way up!

Everyone struggles – **but everyone starts at a different place.** You might start out closer to the top.

So, what might be easy for you may be incredibly challenging for the person going through it.

Everyone struggles on a different level. The same Nisoyon can hit two people very differently. The person you think doesn't have any struggles might be grappling with Nisyonos in ways you can never imagine.



THE CLARITY

“Everyone struggles – but everyone starts at a different place.”

In summary: Everyone’s journey starts at a different place, so you can never judge the intensity of another person’s struggles against your own.

Q5

If Nisyonos are there to make a person grow, why do people so often feel like it's too much for them? Why do they feel like it's so hard?

A5 When I was a young boy, I remember seeing two war survivors in Shul. They would sit together and discuss the war, sometimes with tears in their eyes. One Shiva Asar Betamuz, one turned to the other, “Do you remember the story of Tisha Baav and the sweets?” “Sure! It was with Baruch, Avrumi, Shloimele...” Whilst they were reminiscing, another man approached them. “Can you tell us the story?”

The man related how the trains came to the camps with new Jews every day. They stood in a long line, and were pointed to the right or the left. One Tisha Baav morning, a train arrived. They watched these poor Yidden come in and saw how those who were sent to life were brought to the barracks.

Suddenly, three Germans walked into the barracks with a big bag of sweets. They turned to one of the young boys who had just arrived, and offered him a sweet. He accepted. But as he opened his mouth, another Nazi standing at the door aimed right in and shot a bullet, killing him. The Nazis went from barrack to barrack doing this.

These two men went through the names of the boys they saw being killed, choked with emotion.

They described how the boys opened their mouths for a sweet and swallowed a bullet.

Let's flip this story around and relate it to struggles.

Every time we struggle, we think we are swallowing a bullet. However, Someone very far away is actually putting a sweet into our mouths. **The struggle you are facing is a sign that you're**

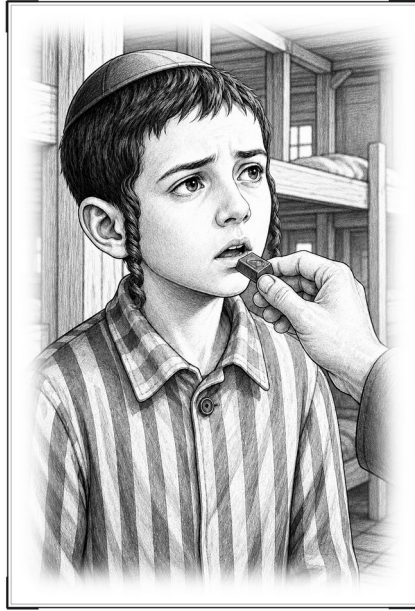
going to get a sweet. You think you are losing out, being restricted, being left out, *but what will enter your mouth in the end is a sweet.*

Why does it have to feel like we are swallowing a bullet? So that Hashem can give us Schar. If it were easy, there would be no Schar.

Imagine a computer game where the top level would simply open effortlessly. No obstacles, no ditches. How would the game feel? Boring. Purposeless.

The purpose of your life is overcoming struggles. Success isn't winning the lottery. It's working hard to make money. Many lottery winners don't even end up surviving the year.

It's part of Hashem demonstrating your strength to you – by making it hard, and then showing you that you can overcome it.



THE CLARITY

“The purpose of your life is overcoming struggles.”

In summary: The hardships in Ruchnius are there for our sake – to help us, benefit us and ultimately give us Schar.

PART 2 • Questions 6–9

Q6**Why is it not socially accepted to struggle if everyone does?**

A6 There was a slightly autistic boy who looked ordinary to the outside world – but to those who knew him – he wasn't. His parents needed to get him married, so they went ahead with a Shidduch, without saying a word. The day after the Chasuna, the father felt a bit uneasy, and wanted to check how things were going. He quietly crept up a pipe on the side of the house and looked in through the chimney hole.

A few minutes later, he carefully descended – only to bump into the Kallah's father, *doing exactly the same thing*. He, too, had got his autistic daughter married without anyone knowing!

The answer is: **It's socially accepted to struggle – alone.**

I can tell you one thing: Every single Jewish teenager in the world has Nisyonos. But part of what gets you out of bed on a hard day is the pride that no one knows. That's part of what keeps you going. That's the good part of these 'socially accepted norms.'

And you shouldn't think that the picture you give to the outside world is fake – it's real. You are a person made of many parts. Some parts of you are your struggles; other parts of you aren't.

Recognise yourself as a whole person. **Don't think that you are your struggle.** You are a growing girl; your struggles are only **part** of your journey.



THE CLARITY

“Recognise yourself as a whole person. Don’t think that you are your struggle.”

In summary: Everyone struggles, but we often struggle alone. Remember – your struggles are part of you, but they aren’t you.

Q7

Sometimes I feel like giving in to temptation fills up a need inside me. It's hard to hold back when I feel like giving in will help me feel full, and holding back is SO difficult!

A7 A Nisoyon can feel like a need in your heart that has to be filled – a void.

What is behind this temptation? This very temptation itself is actually Hashem calling you. The fact that a Nisoyon continues even while a person falls shows that Hashem still wants them to come close to Him!

Hashem creates a person perfect, but with a little gap. A void. A Nisoyon. In that gap, He wants you to look for Him. To find Him in this world.

For one person the gap may be the need to show off. For another person, it might be the struggle with technology. For yet another, it might be mighty temptations in other areas.

There are two ways to remove the gap:

1. To work on yourself, overcome and become a complete person.
2. To 'take away the hole'. To give in to temptation. To give in to the bad Middos. In that case,

the original hole is gone – ***but you now have a bigger one!***

Somehow, when we're young, we're not always ready for option one. A person says, "I had a temptation – but I filled it, I gave in – so now it's gone!" But they are wrong! **They are now left with an even bigger hole.** That is not to say that they are further away from Hashem, but the temptation is now even bigger. So, they go and fill *that* temptation to get rid of it. But it only grows... There is only one way to make the hole smaller. Not to make it disappear – that

won't happen in this world – we will always have Nisyonos. **But by holding back from temptations, that hole will actually get smaller and smaller – and you will be filled with pleasure.** Holding back from temptations may be hard, *but it will ultimately make you feel the happiest.*

And although it may seem crazy hard, you always have the Kochos inside you to match your Nisoyon.

Let's understand this:

Remember the non-frum boys I met on the flight? One of them worked in a band. During our conversation, he told me that there is a boys' band and a girls' band who meet up for a party once a year. He told me that he had a connection with one of the girls, which he broke off once he started becoming more frum.

This year, the party had been scheduled to fall out on Yom Kippur. Now, it was his first Yom Kippur, and he was going to fast, no matter what. But the party would go on all night – so straight after Yom Kippur, he took a taxi to go join them.

He arrived at the party – he was sober, they were all drunk. Before going in, he stood there, looking at what was going on. *'I just went through a whole Yom Kippur, fasting the whole day. I am in such a holy place inside myself.'*

He went into the room, and this girl came up to him. Things started spiralling out of control, and the temptation that came over him was huge. *'I've got to get out of here,'* he thought to himself. He ran out of the room just in time, and here he was, a few hours later, flying somewhere or other.

He was bothered by what had happened. "I was at the highest point of holiness in my life. I fasted for 24 hours. I gave up going to the party. I've done something for Hashem that I have never done before. And *now* Hashem gives me this Nisoyon? Why?"

I let his question sit for a minute before answering him. “It’s the other way around,” I told him. “You could never have faced that Nisoyon without this Yom Kippur behind you. *You could not have overcome it without being on this holy level!*”

It was a colossal Nisoyon. **But he had colossal Kochos to match.** He had the strength of a first Yom Kippur behind him.

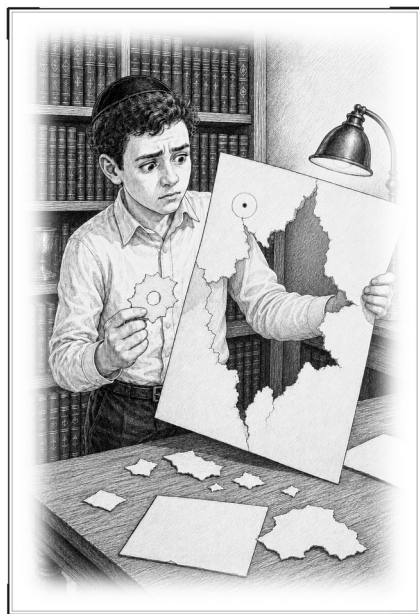
‘What is a Baal Teshuva?’ the Gemara asks. The answer is: ‘Same temptation, same situation, same scenario.’ A Baal Teshuva is someone who is faced with the *exact same* Nisoyon again – and overcomes.

This boy needed to be faced with this particular Nisoyon – and overcome it. But it was tremendously challenging. He wouldn’t have managed on Erev Yom Kippur. Only after his first Neila did he have the power to overcome. And he managed.

It might look like you have a greater Nisoyon than your friend. It might look like she has a greater Nisoyon than you. But really, the one who has the bigger Nisoyon has the bigger Kochos. **So your point of struggle is the same!** And this shows us that even a struggle that seems huge is possible to overcome – **a huge struggle comes with huge Kochos!** A person *never* gets a Nisoyon that he can’t overcome.

A little ‘hole’ is just as hard to get over as a big one. But had a person fought the small one, he wouldn’t have had the big one.

Now that he *has* the big hole, he should know that someone fighting a small hole is struggling just as hard. Everyone has the Kochos to match their struggle.



THE CLARITY

“And although it may seem crazy hard, you always have the Kochos inside you to match your Nisoyon.”

In summary: Overcoming a Nisoyon is the only thing that will truly fill you. And remember: each struggle brings with it the Kochos with which to overcome.

Q8

Does the fact that I have Nisyonos and am pulled to do bad things mean I am a bad person?

A8 This is a huge – and very common – trap of the Yetzer Hara. As a Yid, the opposite is actually true, but let's start from the beginning.

The truth is: **The fact that you sit in front of a computer and have a Nisoyon – something wrong that is tempting you – *that proves you are a Yid.*** If you are having a Nisoyon, that in itself means you are a Yid.

I spoke to a Sem in London when a girl questioned this. “So you are saying that there is no such thing as a Yid who doesn't have Nisyonos?”

“That's right,” I answered her. “I have spoken to over 4,000 teenagers and adults over the past few years, and no one has ever come over to me afterwards and said that they don't struggle.”

Everyone has Nisyonos – it means you are a Yid.

But it goes deeper than that. We have to realise something crucial about the way we look at challenges: **A challenge means Hashem wants us to connect to Him.**

R' Joey Haber says, ‘The struggle behind every solution comes from Hashem.’ Let's explore what this means.

Imagine you are desperately searching for a parking spot. There are none to be found. You Daven, and suddenly, a car pulls out. You have a spot! You clearly see Hashem's hand.

Here's another scenario: Someone gets knocked over by a car, flies in the air, and lands perfectly fine. Wow – an open miracle! Again, you clearly see Hashem's hand.

But we can ask a question – if the solution comes so clearly from Hashem, why couldn't I just find a parking space without the struggle? Why couldn't it have been that the car never knocked the person over in the first place?

Here lies an important perspective: **Hashem wants there to be a struggle, so that we can overcome the struggle and connect with Him!** He makes the person struggle to find a parking space, or be thrown into the air by a car, so that we will Daven and connect with Him. The **struggle** behind every solution **comes from Hashem!**

When you face a Nisoyon, it's a big mistake to think that you are only facing it because you are a bad person. The Nisoyon is actually from Hashem, with love, so *that you can draw close to Him*.

Still, we all have that little 'but' in our minds. '*But I am not there yet.*' '*But I fall sometimes.*' '*But, if only you would know what I have done...*' Let's learn a Midrash to gain clarity:

R' Yonason says: A pottery maker does not check on the bad pottery that he makes. Banging it won't help – it will crumble. Which ones does he check? The nice ones. Even though he bangs on them many times, they survive and are strong. So too, Hashem doesn't test the Reshaim; rather, He tests only the Tzadikim.

If you have ever had the privilege of having a 'bang' – a Nisoyon – you know you are a Tzadik.

But the Midrash doesn't stop there; it continues with another Mashal:

So too, a craftsman who makes clothes from flax. When he sees it's good quality, every time he smashes it, stamps on it or puts it through the press, it gets better. But when he sees it's crumbly, he doesn't work on it. So too, Hashem doesn't test the Reshaim; rather, He tests only the Tzadikim.

If Hashem gives you a Nisoyon, it means you are strong enough.

But the Midrash doesn't finish there either; it goes on with another Mashal:

R' Elozor says... a landowner has two cows. One is strong; the other is weak. On which one will he put the yoke? The strong one. He puts the yoke on the strong one because he is strong! So too, Hashem doesn't test the Reshaim; rather, He tests only the Tzadikim.

Why does the Midrash bring these three different Mashalim? Wouldn't one be enough?

There are three points to a Nisoyon:

1. The fact that you got a Nisoyon means you are strong enough. Hashem wouldn't have given

you a Nisoyon if you are 'weak'. That means that the girl who has more temptations, and more access to stuff that gives her temptations, is potentially a bigger Tzadeikes.

2. But it doesn't only prove you are a good girl – it makes you a better girl! Every time you beat

the flax, it makes it stronger. Every time you go through a Nisoyon, it makes you stronger!

3. We are here for one purpose – to give Nachas Ruach to Hashem. Hashem built us, and

created us, to serve Him. The purpose of a Nisoyon is to give us an opportunity to come close to Him.

With every Nisoyon, Hashem chooses a Tzadik, to make him better, so that he can fulfil his purpose better!

When you see a message coming into the chat that shouldn't be there, and you don't reply, or don't click on the link, not only are you becoming a better person, but you are also fulfilling the purpose for which you are here!

The above Midrash can make us realise something very powerful: Not only is it okay to have Nisyonos, it's not okay *not* to have Nisyonos!

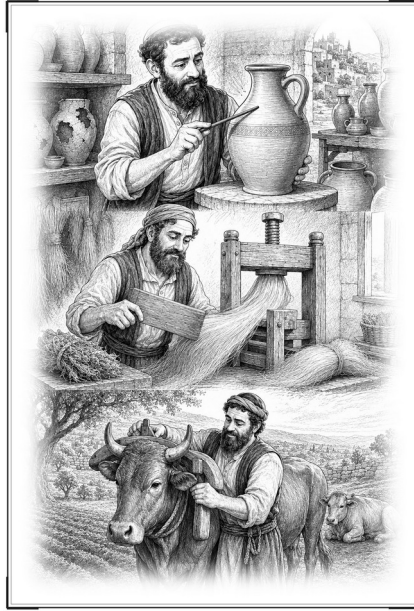
If you don't have Nisyonos, you are a weak pot. A crumbly piece of flax. A dying cow. And if you *do* have Nisyonos, you are a strong pot. Workable, soft flax. And a strong cow.

A Bachur went to a Gadol and asked, "My relative is getting married and it's going to be a mixed affair. Am I allowed to miss Yeshivah to go?" The Gadol said, "It's a mixed affair? How can you go?"

The Bachur shrugged. "I'm okay. B'H I don't have these Nisyonos." "Okay," said the Gadol. "I am giving you a sealed envelope with a number in it. Only open this when you get home from the Chasuna."

The boy went to the Chasuna. When he got home, he opened the envelope – and found a number for the local doctor's office. He called the Rosh Yeshivah, completely confused.

"If you don't have any Nisyonos," said the Rosh Yeshivah, "you need a doctor..." **It's not okay *not* to struggle.**



THE CLARITY

“If Hashem gives you a Nisoyon, it means you are strong enough.”

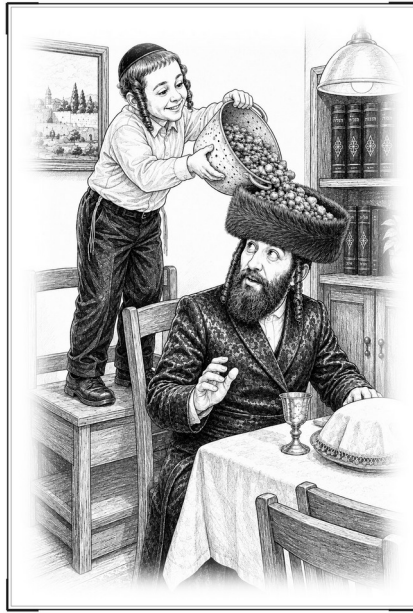
In summary: Being tested with a Nisoyon means Hashem is calling you to draw close to Him. It means you are strong; it's going to make you even stronger, and it's ultimately helping you fulfil your potential!

Q9

If overcoming a Nisoyon is so powerful, then why can't I overcome a Nisoyon, but then do other, less bad stuff? The Nisoyon I overcome gives me 'credit' ...?

A9 Imagine you go up to your mother or father with a pot of boiling hot cholent, and you say, "I love you" whilst pouring the boiling cholent on their heads. Well then, you don't love them. If we are truly overcoming a Nisoyon, **it means we are doing it because we love Hashem.** (See Chapter 2:

Question 4 for more on how overcoming Nisyonos means loving Hashem.)



THE CLARITY

“Truly overcoming a Nisoyon means doing it because we love Hashem.”

In summary: Truly overcoming a Nisoyon means doing it because we love Hashem.

PART 3 • Questions 10–13

Q10 When I give up doing an Aveira, I am giving up the worldly pleasure I would experience when doing the Aveira. I know I get Schar in the next world, but do I also get that pleasure paid back in this world?

A10 The Pasuk in Rus tells us what Boaz said to Rus after hearing what she had done for her mother-in-law:

‘Yeshalem Hashem Peolech’ – Hashem should pay you back for what you’ve done; ‘Usehi Maskurtech Shleima’ – your payment should be complete.

On this the Midrash says, ‘Don’t read Shleima, rather Shlomo.’ Your payment will be Shlomo Hamelech.

How is the reward of Shlomo Hamelech as a grandchild Middah Kneged Middah?

The Dubno Maggid explains by telling us a Halacha: Say you have a barrel of wine and your friend has a barrel of honey. In olden times, honey was more expensive than wine. Now, imagine you notice that your friend’s barrel is leaking.

Quickly, you decide to pour out all of your wine onto the floor, and pour his honey into your barrel. You’ve saved his honey – does he need to now pay you

for your lost wine? The Halacha tells us that he doesn’t. It was your choice. He has to pay you for your time, but not more than that.

The Dubno Maggid continues: Hashem ‘keeps the Torah’, Kivyachol. Imagine you hit upon a Nisoyon. You’re on a Google Drive group and a link comes through to a movie that’s below your standard. Or you get a link to a group that you know you shouldn’t

be part of. You might miss out if you overcome. You will be out of the Yach. People might look at you like a neb. You may miss a get-together because you aren't on the group. You lose the geshmak and the fun you would have had.

According to strict Halacha, Hashem doesn't need to pay you back for that pleasure which you lost.

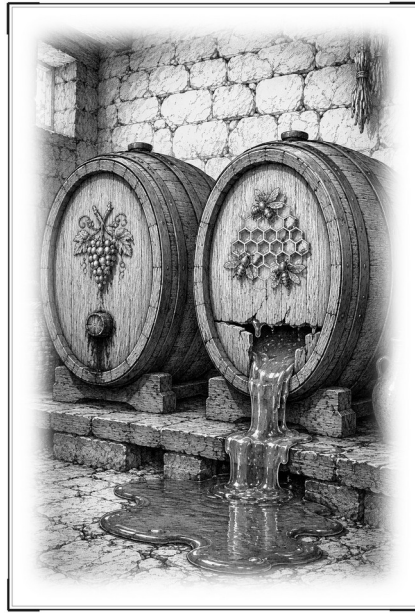
You chose to 'lose your wine'. You will get Schar for the Mitzvah you did, but the pleasure you would have had from the Aveira – it was your choice!

Said Boaz: Hashem doesn't work like that. **Whenever you lose some pleasure by overcoming a Nisoyon, Hashem pays you back – in this world.**

We know that the reward for Mitzvos comes in the next world – there is nothing in this world that can fittingly be the reward of a Mitzvah. However, Hashem pays you back in this world for any bit of pleasure that you would have had if you had done the Aveira! You *will* get that pleasure!

By becoming a Giyores, Rus gave up royalty. Her father was the king; she was a princess. Middah Kneged Middah, Boaz told her that her Schar will be Shlomo Hamelech. She gave up kingship, and was rewarded with kingship.

This is a very special realisation: **Whatever 'pleasure' we are losing from not doing Aveiros will be paid back to us in this world!**



THE CLARITY

“Whatever ‘pleasure’ we are losing from not doing Aveiros will be paid back to us in full.”

In summary: Besides the ultimate reward you will receive in Olam Haba, when you give up physical pleasure through overcoming a Nisoyon, you are paid back with physical pleasure in this world!

Q11

When I'm faced with a Nisoyon that seems so fun and geshmak, it's so hard to say no. I know it's wrong but honestly, the fun pulls...

A11 If you've ever seen a drive-through, you will notice three stages. First, you order your food on a screen. Second, you drive to the next window to go pay. Finally, you pick up your food. It's a one-way system with some space for cars to queue up so they don't end up blocking the road.

Now imagine an 85-year-old man slowly driving his car up. He's cautious and keeping to about 3 miles an hour. In the car behind him are four young, muscular men, starving after a full day of work.

They are super frustrated at being forced to crawl through the drive-through behind this old man, and vent all their frustration through beeping and shouting. That causes the driver behind them to start to get aggravated. Cars are piling up; a queue is building.

Finally, the old man reaches the screen and attempts to order his food. But he can't hear well, so he gets out of his car and tries pressing all the buttons on the screen. Eventually, a worker comes out to help him, and he moves on to the second stage.

There, he also hits a problem. He can't stretch out his hand far enough to pay. Again, he gets out of the car to pay, but realises he's forgotten his money in the car. Eventually, he pays.

The people behind him are fuming. They get out of their car and begin screaming. He barely hears them, but sees that they are really angry.

He's at the last stage now, picking up his food. It takes him a few minutes, but he finally makes it to his car and out onto the road.

The men are super impatient. They have waited so long. They drive up to the window to pay, but the worker surprises them. “That man in front of you paid for your food. You’re good to go.”

Instantly, the mood shifts. Suddenly, all their anger dissipates, replaced by understanding. *‘He’s older, he couldn’t drive quicker. He couldn’t hear well. He did his best... I wish we could say thank you.’*

They quickly drive to the next window to pick up their food and are in for a nasty surprise. “That man in front of you collected your food.”

Now they need to start queuing up from scratch. The old man had wanted to teach them a lesson.

The Yetzer Hara is an old and clever man. He makes us think that we are getting a free lunch.

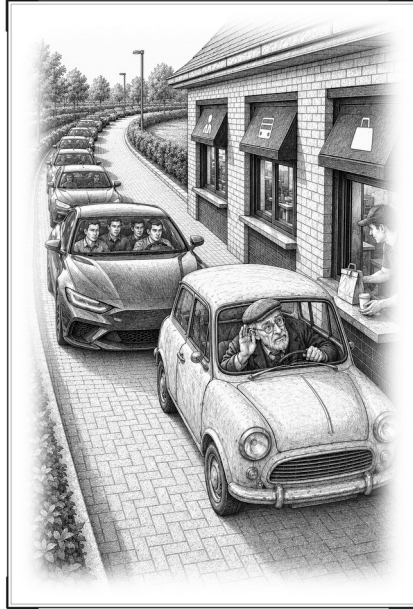
When we turn up at the payment booth, we are told that our order’s been paid for. But when we try to pick up our supper, we realise that it’s been taken. We now have to start all over again.

When you stand before a Nisoyon, the Yetzer Hara will lure you with pleasure. But if you do fall, you will realise that you only feel pleasure for a few minutes, whilst you do the Aveira. Even that small bit of pleasure is coloured by guilt. And after doing the Aveira, you are left with no pleasure and no fulfilment. **You thought your supper had been paid for, but in reality, you are left with nothing.**

And as we’ve said: If you *do* overcome, in addition to the reward you will get in the next world, you will also get back that pleasure you would have had from the Aveira – and this time it *will* be real! Your supper really *will* be paid for! You won’t have any guilt overshadowing your pleasure. The Yetzer Hara won’t pull you into a cycle of ‘You’ve anyway done wrong; you may as well do more

wrong...’ **You get the pleasure you missed out on – but this time, it’s real pleasure!**

The Yetzer Hara is an illusion. He gives you nothing and pays for nothing – it only *seems* like it. If you overcome, you get your Schar in Olam Haba, plus any pleasure you missed out on in Olam Haze.



THE CLARITY

“The Yetzer Hara is an illusion. He gives you nothing and pays for nothing – it only seems like it.”

In summary: The ‘pleasure’ you get from an Aveira is not truly real or lasting. By overcoming, you get the pleasure you thought you lost from not doing the Aveira – but this time, it’s real!

Q12 I know that part of life and part of growing means sometimes overcoming and sometimes falling. But my falls get me very down – and I find them overshadowing any successes I may have had. Are my successes still valuable if I fall afterwards?

A12 Sometimes we underestimate the value of being Omed BeNisoyon – even only once.

Here's a Mashal:

Take yourself back many years, and imagine a rich man on a train home from the annual market – obviously travelling first class. It must be a really expensive journey, because he is the *only one* who could afford to pay for first class. He's bored stiff.

"That's it," he grumbles to himself. "I'm not sitting here alone for all these hours. I'm going to get some company". Off he goes to the middle-class carriage, clutching his wallet.

He taps the first man he sees. "I am ready to pay for your first-class upgrade, plus a hundred roubles, if you come sit next to me for company." The man glares at him through narrowed eyes. "Do I look like I'm for sale?"

So he goes to the next person, and the next, and the next. But none of them accept his offer.

He's done. He just wants some company – and he's offering to pay!

He stomps his way down the train until he reaches third class. There, he taps the first tramp he sees and offers him a first-class ticket, plus a hundred roubles.

The tramp looks back at him as if he's just sprouted a horn. What good luck! Before the rich man can change his mind, he grabs his sack of belongings and starts walking to first class.

The poor man cannot believe his good luck. Completely overwhelmed by all the luxury, he tries out the bed first – *and promptly falls asleep.*

Indignant, the rich man pokes him with his gold-tipped cane. “Hey! Wake up! I want to talk to you!”

The tramp opens his eyes, and begrudgingly pulls himself out of bed.

Although they have nothing in common, they’ve got to talk, so the rich man starts with an innocent question. “I am here on business. Why are *you* travelling?” “I’m also here on business,” says the poor man. The rich man raises an eyebrow. “Really? What’s your business?” The poor man leans back on his plush seat. “I have a chicken which lays an egg each morning. I sell an egg a day as long as the marketplace is open. Then, I sell the chicken and make more profit. After that, I go home and start saving up to buy a new chicken. And what’s *your* business?”

The rich man smiles. “I deal in diamonds. All year, I work on collecting six or seven beautiful, quality diamonds. Then I come to the annual market, sell the diamonds, and start the process again for the next year.”

“How long does it take you to sell a diamond?” asks the poor man. The rich man strokes his moustache luxuriously. “Oh, it takes a day or two. I try offering it to many people before I find the right buyer.”

The tramp tips back his head in roaring laughter. “You call yourself a businessman? *I have never failed to sell my eggs to the first person I offer them to!* And you are turned down by so many people before you find a buyer for your diamond...!”

If you expect yourself to pass every single test, you think you are selling eggs. If you realise that every time you overcome, you have

sold a diamond, you will value every single small step. It doesn't matter if you only sell a diamond once a day – **because it's a diamond!** In this valuable business, there will be successes and there will be failures. But you will pick yourself up and succeed again, and *that's* the main part.

If life is easy, and Nisyonos are super easy to overcome, then all you are selling is eggs. And your 'profit' will reflect just that. But when you realise the value in *every single Nisoyon you overcome*, you won't feel like a failure if you sometimes fall. You won't fall into the trap of '*I'm a bad person anyway, I might as well just continue downwards...*' **Value each small win – because it's a diamond.**

BUT: Your Yetzer Hara might try to trap you with the following thoughts:

'It's all very nice,' you might think, 'but my mother, teacher or Mechaneches doesn't see it this way!'

The Mishnah in Avos says: 'Know before Whom you will ultimately give Din V'Cheshbon... Hashem.'

It doesn't say your teacher. Or mother-in-law. Or siblings. Hashem is the *only One* you need to give Din V'Cheshbon to.

Take a Bachur who grapples with an intense Nisoyon every time he walks past a smartphone shop.

He walks past there on the way to Yeshivah on Sunday. Then on Monday. Then on Tuesday... For twelve days, he overcomes – *without a single person knowing*. On the thirteenth day, he can't control himself. He walks in and buys a smartphone.

He comes to Yeshivah, gets caught, and is thrown out.

But in Shamayim, they know what really happened: **The twelve times he overcame.** The twelve times he walked past and *didn't*

buy it. Okay, he fell once – he’s only human. But he will pick himself back up again and throw the smartphone out!

Even though he fell in the end, those twelve times he overcame will never get lost.



THE CLARITY

“Even though he fell in the end, those twelve times he overcame will never get lost.”

In summary: In your spiritual journey, you are dealing with infinitely precious ‘merchandise.’ Like with anything valuable and worth acquiring, there may sometimes be falls, but every win is incredibly precious. And remember – Hashem knows about every single time you overcame – even when no one else does.

Q13**Is the above always true? What if I have gone through difficult periods where I fell – many times?**

A13 There's a Yid in America who's barely making ends meet. He pays \$30,000 in property tax – then come tuition and Chasunas. He has a 9–5 job, but it simply isn't enough. His wife is finding it very difficult to deal with. "You promised under the Chupa to support me!"

"I have a job," he tells his wife. "I work from 9–5, I can't work more!" But his wife simply looks at him flatly and tells him not to come home until he has a job that brings in \$50,000 a year.

He's out of the house with no extra job. 'I may as well have some fun in my spare time,' he thinks. So off he goes to the zoo.

He's strolling into the zoo when a sign catches his eye: 'Vacancies: We are looking to hire.' Now, this is an interesting job, but he needs a job desperately, so off he goes to apply.

The interview is a little interesting. Besides the normal questions, they measure his height and weight and check his teeth.

But they offer him the job: 9–4 each day, *for \$300 a day*. This is much more than his old job, and shorter hours! He's taking it – whatever it entails!

What's his job description? The gorilla, one of the zoo's main attractions, has died. His job is to put on a gorilla costume and act as a gorilla to keep the visitors – and the money – coming in.

'I'm wearing a mask anyway,' he thinks. 'Who cares?'

The costume fits him perfectly. He learns how to climb and crouch. He eats countless bananas. This is fun!

One day turns into another, and he gets used to the job. He spends his days pretending to be a gorilla, playing and climbing as people

watch. He's bringing home money, and his wife (who has no idea what his job is!) is happy.

On Chol Hamoed Pesach, his son turns to him. "Tatty, you work every day besides Shabbos and Yom Tov. Can't you take one day off?" He knows Chol Hamoed is one of the busiest days at the zoo. This is not going to work. "I can't take off work, but I can do something else for you. I have a friend who works in the zoo; I can get you free tickets!"

He goes to the zoo early that day, puts on his costume, and starts swinging and climbing. He's a pro by now. By the time 9:00 rolls around, his kids have turned up. He ups his show, wanting to give his kids an extra fun view of the gorilla. His kids are on a high! The gorilla is being hilarious!

But he goes a bit too far. With an extra high flip, he finds himself flying over to the next cage – *the lion's cage*.

He's frozen in place. Should he take his mask off? But – his kids are watching! *He's terrified*.

The lion doesn't wait for him to decide. He's advancing quickly.

Just before the lion attacks him, he shouts, "I love you!" to his kids, and then "SHEMA YISROEL!"

He's shocked out of his wits when he hears "Baruch Shem..." – *from the lion's mouth*. The lion pulls off his mask to reveal his friend from Shul.

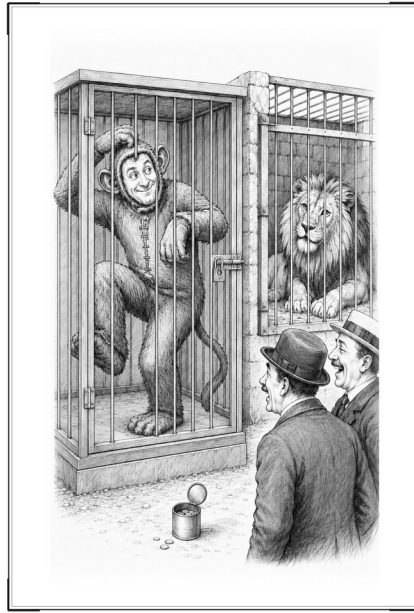
That day, two things happen. The gorilla gets fired; so does the lion. Now, imagine I asked you a question: Why are they getting fired? For 99.9% of the time, they were acting *exactly* like a gorilla and a lion. They said a few words – come on! That's not a reason to get fired!

The answer is obvious: A gorilla can't say Shema – *ever*. A lion can't say Baruch Shem – *ever*.

You can be acting like a monkey for a year, never messing up. But if you say Shema Yisroel *once* – you aren't a monkey.

If **you have** passed even **one Nisoyon in your life, that not only proves you are a Yid; it proves you are a Tzadeikes**. You could have messed up many times. Someone can act like a monkey for years. But just as one sentence proves that the monkey is a human, *so too overcoming even once proves you are a Tzadeikes*.

I am sure that you have been Omed BeNisoyon at least once in your life – whether in Shemiras Einayim, technology, or Lashon Hara. That Omed BeNisoyon proves to you that you aren't only a human being – *you are way above*.



THE CLARITY

“You can be acting like a monkey for a year, never messing up. But if you say Shema Yisroel once – you aren’t a monkey.”

In summary: Overcoming a Nisoyon even once is incredibly precious – and shows who you really are.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Don't get scared off by the pressure of perfection. All you need to do is take one step at a time. A person's struggles and pleasures are destined. Giving in to temptation will not mean you will have less struggle – so fight it, and win! Every single person struggles in Ruchnius. Every. Single. Person. Everyone's journey starts at a different place, so you can never judge the intensity of another person's struggles against your own.

The hardships in Ruchnius are there for our sake – to help us, benefit us and ultimately give us Schar. Everyone struggles, but we often struggle alone. Remember – your struggles are part of you, but they aren't you. Overcoming a Nisoyon is the only thing that will truly fill you. And remember: each struggle brings with it the Kochos with which to overcome. Being tested with a Nisoyon means Hashem is calling you to draw close to Him.

It means you are strong; it's going to make you even stronger, and it's ultimately helping you fulfil your potential! Truly overcoming a Nisoyon means doing it because we love Hashem. Besides the ultimate reward you will receive in Olam Haba, when you give up physical pleasure through overcoming a Nisoyon, you are paid back with physical pleasure in this world! The 'pleasure' you get from an Aveira is not actually real or lasting.

By overcoming, you get the pleasure you thought you lost from not doing the Aveira – but this time, it's real! In your

spiritual journey, you are dealing with infinitely precious ‘merchandise.’ Like with anything valuable and worth acquiring, there may sometimes be falls, but every win is incredibly precious. And remember – Hashem knows about every single time you overcame – even when no one else does. Overcoming a Nisoyon even once is incredibly precious – and shows who you really are.

PRACTICAL TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Feel proud and happy when you are presented with a Nisoyon
- ✓ Don’t let the Yetzer Hara get you down if you fall – get back up and keep going
- ✓ When you pass even one Nisoyon – remember its value and power
- ✓ Remember: You don’t need to do it all at once; you just need to take one small step at a time

THE 7-DAY DIAMOND PRACTICE

Choose one small area where you regularly face a Nisoyon. For the next seven days, do not aim to be perfect. Each day, look for one moment to pause and make the better choice. Record one small win – even if the day was difficult. If you fall, restart at the very next opportunity; your earlier diamonds still count.

My chosen area: _____

DAY	MY SMALL STEP OR WIN
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	

At the end of seven days: What helped me most, and what will be my next small step?

Teenage Clarity

CHAPTER 2

FROM RESTRICTION TO FREEDOM

*Understanding what genuine freedom
means – and learning how to choose it*



CHAPTER 2
FROM RESTRICTION TO FREEDOM

Understanding what genuine freedom means – and learning how to choose it

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Q1

What if I want to be different from my parents, but I feel locked up? They won't let it happen. It's eating me up inside – I feel like I can't break free! All I want is a little more allowance...

A1 It's normal to feel restricted. You might think your parents are so frum. Let's explore this for a minute.

Next door to the Cheder I went to was another Cheder – this one Lev Tahor/Neturi Karta/Anti-Ofsted.

We were the 'lighter' ones. In our school, there was an official football pitch; in their school, not only could you not play football, you couldn't *mention* football.

We would see the 'cool' boys from that school staring at us as we played football. They were desperate to play. Some would mask their jealousy by making fun of us; others would outright want to join.

But the cool boys in *our* school wanted more than just to play football – they wanted to follow football. They wanted to know the names of the teams. The scores. They wanted more.

There was another school down the road, where the families were more open. Football was part of their lives. They followed the scores. They knew the players. But they were Ehrliche families, and they didn't watch live matches. The cool boys in that school wanted more than what they already had – they wanted to watch live matches. Some went into pubs or watched it on their mother's old smartphone. But they would never dream of going to a football match.

There was another school, even more open-minded. (So open-minded that the brain almost falls out.) Football was totally okay; so was going to the occasional match.

Let me ask you a question: From a 13-year-old boy's perspective, what brings pleasure? What makes him feel 'free'? Is it playing football? Knowing the players' names? Watching a live match? Going to an actual football match?

The answer is: **It's always the next thing.** The thing just beyond your boundaries.

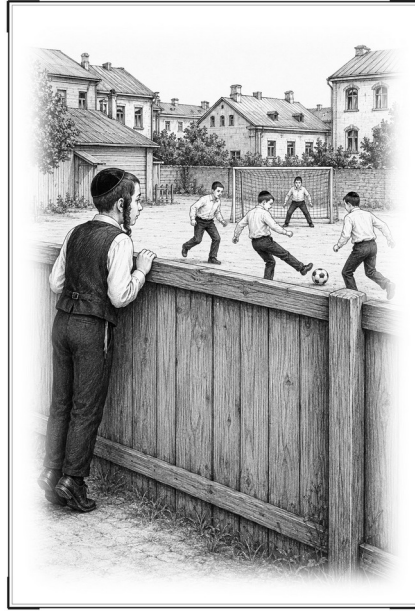
If you are brought up in a home where you can't mention football, you want to play football. If you are brought up in a home where you can play football, you want to *watch* football... When you want to 'break free' from your parents, that is what you are doing. You want *just a bit more than what they are giving you.*

I once gave a Shiur to a group of more open girls. They were allowed to watch whatever type of movies they wanted. But all they wanted was to be allowed on social media. That was what they were desperate for.

The day before, I had given a Shiur in a very frum girls' school. They did not have much access to technology. They wanted something very small to make them happy – they didn't need access to movies – all they wanted was 20 minutes a day on the computer.

What makes a girl happy? Again, we see this concept: **Everyone wants to push beyond the boundary they are currently at.** The girls who had access to all the movies in the world weren't happy – they needed that bit more.

You have to realise – you will never be truly happy by going that one step further than what your parents allow. There is only one thing that will make you truly happy: Doing the right thing.



THE CLARITY

“The answer is: It’s always the next thing. The thing just beyond your boundaries.”

In summary: We sometimes think that if we were allowed that bit more, we would be happy. But after every ‘that bit more’ comes the next bit more...

Q2

I sometimes feel so frustrated – I keep coming up against things I can't do. How can I feel less restricted and make the struggle easier?

A2 I once took a walk with two boys along a river. They were both super into bird-watching.

One of the boys brought along a list of hundreds of birds, with all the birds he had already seen ticked off. He knew exactly which birds he would see in this area, at this time of year and at this time of day. He'd narrowed it down to three birds, which they were both *super excited* to see. The mood on the drive there was high.

I was more than happy to go along with these boys, even though I am not at all into bird-watching.

We were walking along the river, the two boys looking out for birds. I was enjoying myself, calm, in tune with nature, having a good time.

On the other hand, the two boys were getting more and more anxious as time ticked on. We soon had to be back, and they still had not seen any of the three birds! Their mood was becoming more and more sour; mine was becoming more and more calm.

They didn't end up seeing any birds, and on the way back, the mood in the car was super glum – but inside, *I* was very happy! I had just spent an hour in nature, calm as anything.

I realised something very powerful: We had all had the same experience and spent the same hour walking the same steps. Why were our feelings at the end so different? ***It was because our goals for the walk were different.*** My goal was to get some fresh air, to spend some time with these boys and give them some attention. *Their* goal was to sight those three birds.

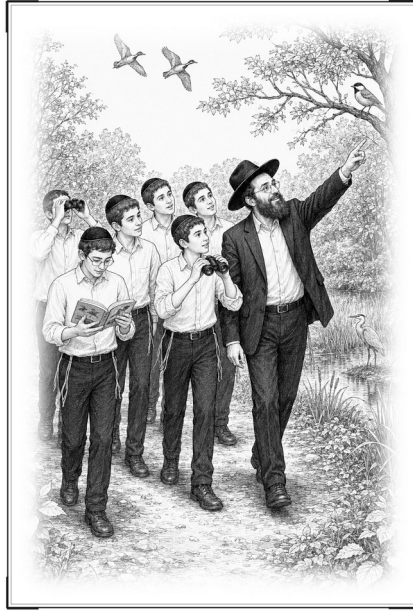
With every step I took, I was fulfilling my goal. With every step they took, they were becoming more anxious – *where are those birds?* And they didn't see any birds in the end!

If your 'goal' is to 'break free' and be different from your parents, or to go against what your school says, then everything you do in life will make you frustrated: "*Uch, when am I just going to be able to do what I want?!*"

But if your goal in life is to do what Hashem wants, then everything you do in your day will bring you satisfaction – you are fulfilling your goal!

With both of these attitudes, you could be doing the same thing: Being 'good' and following the rules.

But when you actively choose – "This is my goal; I am doing this because I want to" – then you will have tremendous fulfilment from everything you do!



THE CLARITY

“But if your goal in life is to do what Hashem wants, then everything you do in your day will bring you satisfaction – you are fulfilling your goal!”

In summary: With a small perspective shift, we can change our lives. We are ultimately here to do what Hashem wants, and that knowledge will help us feel constantly motivated instead of constantly frustrated.

Q3

People keep telling me what to do and what not to do, and that makes me want to rebel. I find it very hard to accept authority!

A3 That's part of the teenage years! The hardest thing for a teenager to do is to admit defeat and follow someone else.

Eventually, you will grow up. You will be an adult Eved Hashem. Many times, no one in the world is even going to know what you are choosing – *you will choose just for Hashem*. But now, as a teenager, is when you are learning to **accept authority**. The authority you are accepting now, whether from your school or your parents, is a Mashal for the authority you will accept later on in life. **The urge to rebel is in itself a Nisoyon – overcome it!**

The following story is powerful – and has a strong message on accepting authority.

There was a Bachur who was thrown out of Yeshivah for misbehaving. He went to a Yeshivah for 'Bachurim out of Yeshivah', and was thrown out of that one too. So, he went to a third Yeshivah... He was only *15 years old* and already through the system so many times... This boy's father was so lost. He had spent all his money on this child, gone to every Mechanech possible – and nothing had happened. His friend told him about this top Mechanech in Lakewood, but he was completely burnt out and sure it wouldn't help. His friend continued to convince him, "You've got nothing to lose! *Just try it!*"

So, the father, who feels like he's been everywhere, goes to this Mechanech, who looks him in the eye and says, "What I am going to tell you to do will seem very hard, **but the results will be worth it.**

“The summer is coming up – go on holiday with your son for two months, but before you go, tell your son that you will tell him *nothing* when you are away. You won’t tell him what he’s doing wrong, you won’t tell him what to do – *nothing*! He can do what he wants!”

The father is shocked – who knows what his son will get up to? But the Mechanech is adamant – just let him do whatever he wants.

The father borrows money to be able to go away, but no one really thinks it’s going to make much of a difference. Then they hit an issue: the father can’t tell the boy that they are going away because they aren’t speaking to each other.

So the Mechanech calls up the boy. “Listen here, I have a deal for you. Do you want to go away for the summer? And it gets even better – whilst you are away, your parents won’t say a word to you!”

The boy laughs: that’s simply impossible! But the Mechanech promises him that his parents won’t tell him a thing. The boy is ecstatic – *two months where he can do what he wants!*

The family piles into the car to leave, and the boy sits down in his mother’s seat. The mother doesn’t say a word, just sits in the back with all the other kids. Then, he pushes his father to drive faster and faster, which the father does. They arrive in the countryside at record speed.

The boy is thinking about the next mischief he will get up to, when he notices that his father has gone swimming. He takes his father’s car keys, jumps into the car, and zips off. He drives and drives, hair whipping in the wind, on top of the world. He’s powering on when eventually, he realises that he’s gone very far from home. Fun aside, *he’s a little scared.*

He tries pulling into a petrol station but struggles mightily with the parking. After all, he's never driven before. He tries driving forwards, but doesn't manage. He tries reversing into the space, no go. Suddenly, he sees blue lights behind him. *Uh oh.*

Thinking quickly, he jumps out of the car and goes up to the policeman. "Please can you help me – my father is just in that shop over there and left me in the car. I tried driving out, but now can't get back in! Please can you help me get back in so he won't shout at me?"

The policeman parks the car – but holds the keys. "It's dangerous for you to have these. Go and call your father." The boy is stuck.

He runs into a nearby shop and goes up to a frum man he sees there. "Please – I need help, can you be my father?" He explains the whole story to him, and even though this boy doesn't look like a Yid at all, the man agrees.

He begins shouting, "Are you crazy? Do you know what you could have done?! You could've knocked someone over!" The whole shop is staring at them, and the 'father' is so angry that the security guard comes to intervene, with the police following behind. The 'father' keeps shouting at the boy really angrily, and the police realise, 'Wow, *this kid really had a reason to be afraid of his father.*'

They go up to the father and say, "You know, you don't have to be so harsh with him. He did something wrong, but it was small... you don't have to react like this." But the father continues on, "And wait until you get home to Mammy... I can't punish you here, but when we get home – you just wait!" The police are quite shocked, and when they give the keys back to the 'father', they slip the number of some helpline into the boy's hand.

When they're finally back in the bungalow colony, the man hands the keys back to the boy and says, "I'm not going to tell anyone what happened, I'm just going to take a taxi back and that's it."

The next morning, the boy turns up to Shacharis – *not just on time, but early!* His father walks into Shacharis and sees his son putting on Tefillin – he is shocked!

He quickly calls up the Mechanech. "How did this happen so fast? What's going on?" The Mechanech says that he doesn't actually know what happened – but the father should still not say a word!

The father bites his lip and doesn't say anything, until the son comes over after davening and says, "Hi, can we have breakfast together?" The father is shocked.

They're sitting there and eating, and finally the father blurts out, "Tell me – what on earth happened?"

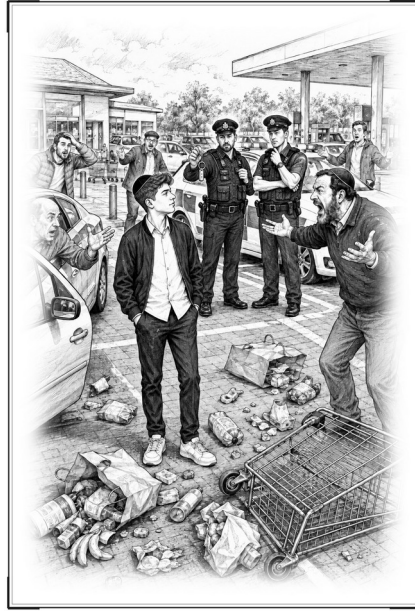
"Did you swallow a pill or something?"

The son looks at his father and tells him what had happened the night before.

"When that man was screaming at me, I realised three things. One, how proud I am to be Jewish.

"Only a frum Yid would agree to do such a thing for another Yid. Two, I realised that just like this man was screaming at me to protect me, **every time you put boundaries in place or told me off, it was because you cared for me.** And three, I realised that I can't drive..." If you want to have the best, most enjoyable life, it's by following rules. And if that is hard for you, then **that is your Nisoyon.**

But slowly, slowly – first with your parents, then with the school – you can face that Nisoyon and control it.



THE CLARITY

“The following story is powerful – and has a strong message on accepting authority.”

In summary: As a teen, it’s super hard to accept authority. But you can overcome this Nisoyon – and ultimately realise that every boundary comes from care and love.

Q4

Sometimes I feel like I am holding myself back and saying no to my temptations again and again and again. Is this sustainable? Will I pop at one point when it gets too much?

A4 I was once at a Bar Mitzvah when someone who is not fully socially aware approached me. He had made a certain Neder, and he now wanted to be Matir Neder. He wanted to know if, together with two other people, I could be Matir the Neder. What was the Neder? A year ago, he'd taken on not to drink lemonade. I was more than happy to be Matir the Neder, and after I did so, I watched something really interesting unfold.

He went over to the lemonade bottle, poured a whole cup, and downed it. This was followed by another, and then another. He proceeded to finish the whole bottle. But it didn't end there. He went to the next table. *By the end of the Bar Mitzvah, he'd finished three bottles.*

This person was deprived of lemonade. He felt super restricted. The minute his Neder was over, he went right to the lemonade and couldn't stop drinking.

If we keep saying no to ourselves, it will be very hard not to pop. We will feel super restricted. But there is another way to go:

Here lies the key: ***Don't say no.***

Instead of saying 'no', say 'yes'. Let's explain:

The Torah says (Nitzovim 30:15): ***'I am putting before you today life and good, and death and bad...'*** We have two things in front of us: Good and bad.

But when we have a Nisoyon, we don't seem to see two things. Sometimes we see only the bad, the hamburger, the phone or the device. In that case, where is the good? Sometimes we see only

good, the Gemara in front of us, our Tzitzis. In that case, where is the bad? **Where is the good *and* bad in each choice?**

We have to redefine what Nisyonos are, and the choice of good and bad that each Nisoyon offers us.

To get there, we need to explain what the ‘good’ the above Pasuk refers to is.

The next Pasuk tells us what the ‘good’ in every choice is: ...*to love Hashem your G-d*... So, in every choice we see in front of us, the ‘good’ is *not* saying ‘no’ to the device, as we would have thought.

It’s saying ‘yes’ to loving Hashem! And how do we love Hashem? In every choice, we choose to love Hashem by ‘giving Him’ the smartphone, hamburger, whatever it is. *That* is actually saying ‘yes’ to the Nisoyon – the device was only put in front of you so that you can ‘give it’ to Hashem!

When you overcome, you aren’t saying no to the screen or the phone. You are saying yes to coming close to Hashem. Every Nisoyon is sent by Hashem so you will come close to Him. Say yes!

This mindset shift has changed my life – and the lives of many people I have told it to. It’s huge.



THE CLARITY

“We have to redefine what Nisyonos are, and the choice of good and bad that each Nisoyon offers us.”

In summary: Adopt the mindset shift that will change your life. Don't say 'no' to the temptation, say 'yes' to your Father, Hashem, whom you love!

Q5

The fact that I face lots of Taavos and desires really gets me down and depressed. What's the right perspective on this?

A5 There were two married couples who didn't have children. They decided that they would go around together, getting Brachos and doing Segulos, to see who would be blessed first. They ended up by an elderly man in a cave in Tzfas, where they both got a Bracha that they would have a son within a year. The first man was told he would have to name his baby Reuven, the second one Shimon. They both promised that they would.

But there was another condition: Both men had to bring their sons back to this cave before they turned three. They agreed.

Lo and behold, a year later, they both had sons. Reuven and Shimon. When the boys are two and a half, the fathers discuss going back to the cave in Tzfas.

They arrived there, and the man put both children on his lap. He put his hands on Reuven's head and said, "You are blessed with a holy Neshama. You will only want to do good, will love learning, and always be pulled after the right things." Reuven's father was on cloud nine.

Then, the elderly man turned to Shimon and placed his hands on *his* head. "You have a bad Neshama in you. You will always be pulled towards bad, to do the wrong thing." Shimon's father was shocked – should he believe this man? But, how can he not?

They travel back together, without exchanging a word about what the elderly man said. Neither of them tells his wife what had happened. The years pass. Now the boys are both fifteen-year-old boys. And how have they turned out?

Reuven is a lazy boy who doesn't do much. Shimon? A growing Talmid Chacham who is always learning.

One day, the fathers spoke to each other and had it out. "Something doesn't make sense here!

"Maybe we called the boys the wrong names or something? *How can this be?*"

The Dubno Maggid teaches us: **If you have no drive for Gashmius, nothing will pull you to the Beis Midrash.** *We actually need our Taavos to help us do good.* It's our Taavos that help pull us to the Beis Midrash.

If a three-year-old weren't pulled to Gashmius, e.g. a lolly as a reward, what is going to pull him to the Beis Midrash? Nothing will get him to the Beis Midrash. Then you have a three-year-old who is pulled to Gashmius: he wants the lolly which is offered as an incentive to get him to learn.

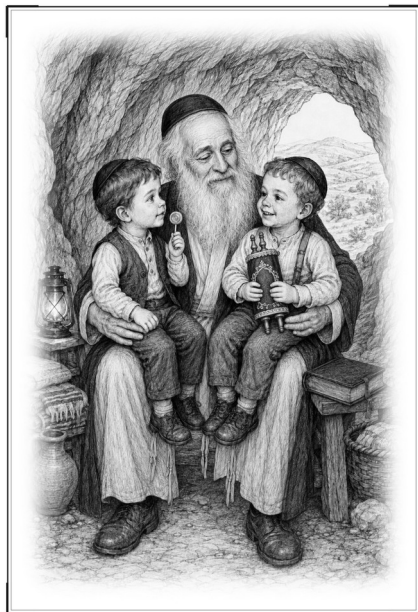
He will go to the Beis Midrash so that he can get the lolly, but eventually, the power of the Torah will take over! *His desire is actually what got him to learn!*

If you want to be a Reuven – well, good luck with a very dry and boring life. But don't worry: no one in the world was created as a Reuven.

We all have parts of Shimon inside of us – that's a fact. But if we have the attitude of ignoring this 'bad side of us', and only connecting with the good in us, then what is going to get us to the Beis Midrash? *We need the pull to Taavah to actually pull us to the Beis Midrash.* Of course, once we are there, the Reuven takes over and shoots ahead. But we must know that it's the struggles and pulls inside of us, the part of ourselves that we try to deny, that's actually the part that makes us grow!

The temptations are what tempt us to do *good!*

So, let's get something clear: Taavos, the pull towards bad, struggles – don't deny them. *They are what enable you to actually grow!*



THE CLARITY

“So, let's get something clear: Taavos, the pull towards bad, struggles – don't deny them. They are what enable you to actually grow!”

In summary: Without Taavos – desires – as part of our makeup, we wouldn't have a desire or pull to grow either. So don't let the fact that you have Taavos get you down!

Q6

I've been taught that real freedom is not doing what you want; it's doing the right thing. Can you explain to me why?

A6 Let's talk about Bechirah – **choice**.

Here are two statements that sound exactly the same, but are actually worlds apart:

1. **'Eye** want to do what **I** want to do.'
2. **'I** want to do what **eye** want to do.'

Sometimes, we think that a free person is someone who can do what he wants. *It's not so*. He is doing what his 'eye' wants to do. He is making no decisions; he has no control over himself. **He's following where his desires force him to go**. His is a life of **'I want to do what eye want to do.'** No choices, no decisions. His 'eye' is totally leading the way.

Freedom and choice mean doing what **I** want.

Here's an interesting observation: If your mother comes to wake you up, even if you might have got up on your own, something inside you says, "Now I want to stay in bed for another hour." You want to choose. Because you have been *told* what to do, you suddenly don't want to do it. You want to make your own choices.

So where is that pull to making your own choices, when a voice inside of you tells you to do something you shouldn't? Why, then, do you not say, "I'm not going to just listen to what you tell me!

"I want to choose on my own!"

When you are faced with a Nisoyon, stop for a second, and **make your own choice**! Don't just follow what you've been 'told' to do by your desires, and say, "Yeah, whatever, I'll just do what I want."

Because simply following your desires is not actually doing what you want. It's not making a choice.

You can actually make a choice.

R' Sholom Mordechai Rubashkin describes being in solitary confinement. All he had in a tiny room was a bed, cupboard and bathroom. That's it. The challenge was enormous – how could he feel freedom locked up in this tiny room?

He took a piece of chalk, and on the floor, he made a mark for each day of the week until Shabbos.

And he made a decision that on Sunday, he would not stand on the space marked with Sunday.

On Monday, he would not stand on the place marked with Monday. And so on for all days of the week.

The fact that *he was making decisions* – that is what gave him freedom! He wasn't being told or forced – he was actively *choosing* where to be!

It doesn't make a difference how big your Nisyonos are – it could be that right now, you feel that you are in 'solitary confinement' in a Ruchnius sense. You might be finding it very hard to connect to Ruchnius. But *wherever* you are, you always have a space of **choice**. You can always choose what you don't want to do.

I spoke to a boy who was feeling very low. He wasn't doing much with his day; he was on his phone a lot. We spoke, and got to the bottom of things: he wasn't feeling good because he wasn't *doing* much. I asked him, "What do you want to do? Don't think of anyone around you; what do you want to do? I'll help you do what you want to do." We made a plan: he wanted to do some learning; he also wanted a new phone and a few other things.

Time went on, until one day, he asked me for social media. Now, I had an agreement with this boy about how he used his phone, and it didn't include social media. When I reminded him of this, he was very upset. "What do you mean? You said I can choose what I want to do!" I invited him over for a conversation to work through it, and together, we discovered that by asking for social media, he was actually not doing what **he** wanted to do; he was doing what his desires were forcing him to do!

And even though he was in 'solitary confinement' in Ruchnius – he was barely learning or davening – **he could choose to say no to this!**

Just because he was in this hard place, and this decision may not be in line with his other decisions – **he could still decide to choose.** By choosing, he could still be free!



THE CLARITY

“Freedom and choice mean doing what I want.”

In summary: Real freedom is when you are able to fully utilise your Bechirah – not just blindly follow your desires.

Q7

Many of the things we are told we can't do aren't forbidden by the Torah. Why do we have so many extra restrictions?

A7 Let's talk about boundaries.

A boundary is a Geder – גדר. If you ask a teenager what this stands for, they will say **Gehinnom**, **Disaster** and **Restricted**. A teenager might feel that boundaries are restrictive, turning every fun situation into a disaster, and making life really boring.

Let's change what restrictions mean for us.

I'm going to describe a building to you, and I want you to think of what it is: It's a tall, stone building, with thick walls and covered windows. Armed guards stand outside every entrance. If someone dares to come in – or go out – without permission, they get shot. There is a watchtower overseeing everything. The people inside don't mingle with the people outside – if the people inside do emerge, it's always accompanied by other people.

What is this building?

It's either a prison – or a palace.

A prisoner is heavily guarded by walls, gates and guards. A prince is also surrounded by walls and guards. He cannot come and go as he pleases – for the most part, he does not mingle in the outside world.

But there is a difference – and that difference is the **key**.

The protection around the prison is to keep the outside world safe from the prisoners.

The protection around the palace is to keep the royals inside safe from the outside world.

In fact, there was actually an American president who decided that it wasn't fair that the White House was so inaccessible, set apart and guarded. On the first day of his presidency, he opened the doors to everyone – *and almost got shot*. They closed the doors.

There is a reason why there is a wall around a palace – **it's to protect those inside.**

A teenager will see restrictions and boundaries as a prison. Another boundary. Another restriction.

Before we speak about Gedarim, we have to change our mindset – **we are not in a prison; we are in a palace.** And there is only one person who can change your mindset – **you.**

You're going to be inside the Gedarim anyway. **It's your choice whether you look at it like a prison or palace.**

When a prisoner looks out of his window, jealousy flares in his heart – he sees people doing what they want, when they want, how they want. That freedom is denied to him – and he wants it!

Contrast that to a prince. When he looks out of the window and sees people going about their daily lives, he isn't jealous! He knows that he is a *prince*!

This mindset can make boundaries sweet!



THE CLARITY

“A teenager will see restrictions and boundaries as a prison. Another boundary. Another restriction.”

In summary: Boundaries are there to protect us – because we are princes!

Q8**Do we get Schar for these extra safeguards which we don't actually need to do?**

A8 There's a Pasuk in Shir Hashirim that says as follows:

הדודאים נתנו ריח ועל פתחינו כל מגדים חדשים גם ישנים דודי צפנתי לך

Looking at the end of the Pasuk:

חדשים גם ישנים דודי צפנתי לך

'New, as well as old, I have hidden for You.' This is referring to Mitzvos – the 'old' is the actual Mitzvah whilst the 'new' is the Gedarim that are made later to safeguard and protect the Mitzvah.

The Maharsha asks (on very similar words in Eiruvim), **why does it say 'new' first?** Usually we mention *old* first – the old Mitzvos are there first; then the new ones get **added** to the old.

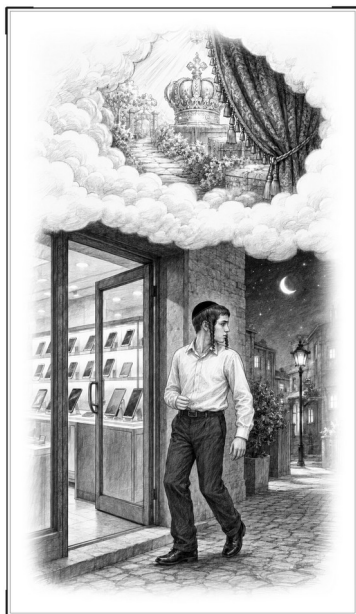
Says the Maharsha, we have Gedarim, safeguards, that are put around Mitzvos to protect them.

Then, when a person wants to sin, he looks not at the actual sin, *but he looks to break the Geder*. A person doesn't look to do the worst thing – *but he looks at breaking the boundaries that are there to protect it*. So, we have to concentrate on the 'חדשים', on the safeguards, with the actual Issur in the background, so that if we Chas Veshalom fall, we won't be 'falling off a cliff' – we won't be breaking an Issur. That is the power of Gedarim.

The Pasuk finishes with דודי צפנתי לך – we tell Hashem we have hidden Mitzvos for Him. On these words, the Midrash concludes: Hashem said to Klal Yisroel, "You hid Mitzvos, so too I will hide for you a treasure **worth more than any good in the world!**"

We '**hide**' the Mitzvos in Gedarim. Says Hashem, "I will **hide** for you a treasure..." When we create Gedarim to safeguard the actual Issurim, we are showing Hashem how important the Mitzvos are to us! We're not only doing this because we have no choice; we are doing this because we want to get close to Hashem!

And Hashem will give us Schar for overcoming the Aveiros that we never even thought of – *because we put the Gedarim in place to protect them!*



THE CLARITY

"We're not only doing this because we have no choice; we are doing this because we want to get close to Hashem!"

In summary: Gedarim are there to safeguard us from coming close to the Aveira – and we will get richly rewarded for keeping them.

Q9

Why are we always encouraged to take the ‘safe route’ and surround ourselves with boundaries? Isn’t there something good in taking a riskier path, and showing that you can still overcome?

A9 The Dubno Maggid gives a Mashal: Imagine you come to a fork in the road, split into three paths.

On one of them, you see, “Entry, but no exit.” You are *not* going down there. On the middle one it says, “Enter at your own risk.” The third one says, “3 miles to the exit.”

Any sane person will choose the third route. Entering at your own risk means you might encounter crocodiles, bandits, uncrossable rivers. Although it might take you to the exit in a very short amount of time – you wouldn’t enter. You *might* come out okay, **but the risks are too great.**

In the same way, you could take a risk, without Gedarim, and you might end up being okay. But you are entering a life of “Enter at your own risk.” There are **real pitfalls.**

If you surround yourself with boundaries, taking the safe route, it might take you a while longer to walk, but you know that you are safe – you will walk out at the end.

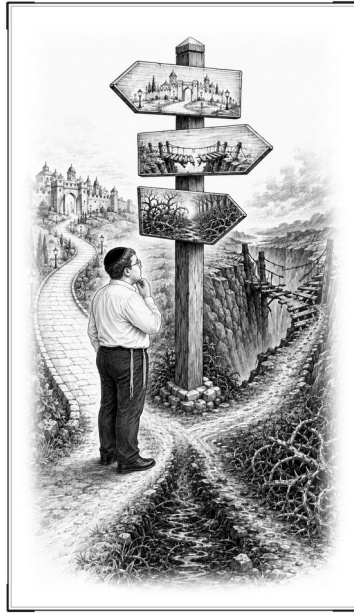
You are all in your teenage years now. You want to ‘exit on the other side’ – safe and ready to build an Ehrliche home. **Taking the safe route means making boundaries.** And even though it may be hard, you know that you will IY’H exit safely on the other side.

There is a spiritual war going on against Klal Yisroel. You can’t afford to take risks. You can’t afford to do stuff just because of peer pressure. (That’s like being around people who starve themselves, and saying “I also won’t eat.” No – you must eat if you want to survive!) You need to protect yourself, live life in a healthy and safe

way – and then you are on the road of guaranteed success – and happiness.

Give it six or seven years, and if you have made strong Gedarim, **you will look back with pride and happiness at the decisions you made.** You might very well see the impact much earlier than that!

Even if your friends look like they are having more fun now, in six or seven years even they will agree that you did the right thing.



THE CLARITY

“Even if your friends look like they are having more fun now, in six or seven years even they will agree that you did the right thing.”

In summary: Taking a riskier path is just that – risky. Following Gedarim and keeping safe is the way you ensure you are on the road to happiness and success.

Q10

I look at my friends who are doing what they want and breaking boundaries. They look like they are having so much fun. I don't want to be like them, but sometimes I feel a little twinge inside, as though I'm missing out on all the fun and freedom.

A10 You might look at others who look like they are having fun. They might look so free.

Here's a powerful Mashal which puts freedom into its *real* perspective:

There's a man who wants to make money quickly. He decides that a bank robbery might be the way to go, so he reads every sensational book and magazine about bank robberies. But after a while he realises that in all the stories he's read, *the robber got caught*.

But he still wants to do this, so he does his research, digging deep into bank robberies. He reads all the articles he can. He buys a book called *Bank Robberies for Dummies*. Finally, he comes across an article in which the bank robber wasn't caught! 'Perfect!' he thinks. 'This happened a while ago – I can totally do the same thing!'

He sets his plan into action: First, he researches to find a policeman that looks similar to him in size, build and colour. In the dead of night, he goes to that policeman's house, gags him and ties him to his bed. He then takes his ID, gun, uniform and car keys.

The next morning, dressed exactly like a policeman, he steps into the bank. When he gets to the front of the line, he holds up a paper that says, 'Put £20,000 in the tray now. I have a gun.' The bank teller looks him straight in the eye without flinching. She doesn't budge. He pulls out another paper: 'If I have to, I will use my gun.' She doesn't move. He takes out his gun so only she can see it, and

in a flash, she does two things: She puts £20,000 on the tray and presses the panic button.

The bank doors automatically lock, but he's a policeman, so he is unstoppable. He flashes his ID at the guard, who wrenches the door open. Outside, he sees police swarming around, and neatly slips into his car. After all, he's a policeman too.

But there was something he didn't realise.

To his terrible mazel, the person behind him in the queue was an off-duty policeman. He saw the entire story. He managed to get out of the bank after this fake policeman and watched him speed off in his car, blue lights flashing.

He gets into his car and starts zooming after this police car. He's trained to speed; the fake policeman isn't. The chase is getting hot, and they find themselves on the motorway. They both pick up speed, but there's a difference: The undercover policeman is trained how to chase; the fake one isn't.

The undercover cop suddenly overtakes the police car, which crashes into it. But the robber isn't ready to surrender. "You are under arrest for speeding," he tells the undercover policeman. But the undercover cop isn't deterred. "Show me your ID," he says, fingering the handcuffs in the pocket of his plain clothes. As soon as the robber comes close enough, he slaps one cuff onto his wrist, and the other onto his own. They are stuck to each other now. The fake policeman can't get away.

He drags the robber to his car, throws the damaged briefcase onto the floor and begins driving to the nearest police station. As they are driving, the robber makes a plan – as soon as they arrive at the station, he'll scream "I've got him! Come help me!" After all, they are handcuffed to each other – no one knows who's who!

Meanwhile, the police are all on high alert: There is an escaped bank robber somewhere!

They get to the police station, where his plan works like a charm. The policemen all surround them, cheering him on. “You caught the robber! You got him!”

The real policeman stays silent through it all.

But then he hits a hitch that will cost him his freedom. “Open the handcuffs!” the policemen say to him. He looks right and left, and realises that he is completely stuck. **He doesn’t have the keys to the handcuffs.** And that’s when the *real* policeman opens his mouth and says, “Let me tell you the real story.”

You can see a teenager who looks completely in control: They’re driving at 180 miles an hour with blue lights flashing. They are having fun, doing what they want, and it all seems to be going super well.

But every human being will face times in their life when they get ‘stuck’. They might face pain, or confusion.

You, being Ehrlich and on the right path, **have the keys to get through it.** They do not.

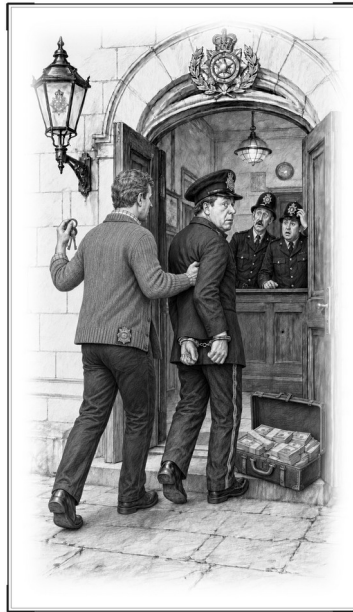
Your key is connection to Hashem. Davening. Doing the right thing. With those tools, you will get through those moments of feeling lost.

They don’t have the keys. They will need to run away. They will stay tied up and not find the peace they wish for.

Freedom isn’t having fun. It’s having the ability to ‘unlock the handcuffs.’

I can tell you one thing based on emails, calls and questions I get from deeply struggling teens: ***The pain of ‘the freedom of no***

restrictions’ is far worse than the bit of pain you will have from standing up to your Yetzer Hara.



THE CLARITY

“Freedom isn’t having fun. It’s having the ability to ‘unlock the handcuffs.’”

In summary: Teenagers living unrestricted lives might look free and as though they are having fun – but the real freedom is only found in a life of doing what’s right.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

We sometimes think that if we were allowed that bit more, we would be happy. But after every ‘that bit more’ comes the next bit more... With a small perspective shift, we can change our lives. We are ultimately here to do what Hashem wants, and that knowledge will help us feel constantly motivated instead of constantly frustrated. As a teen, it’s super hard to accept authority.

But you can overcome this Nisoyon – and ultimately realise that every boundary comes from care and love. Adopt the mindset shift that will change your life. Don’t say ‘no’ to the temptation, say ‘yes’ to your Father, Hashem, whom you love! Without Taavos – desires – as part of our makeup, we wouldn’t have a desire or pull to grow either. So don’t let the fact that you have Taavos get you down!

Real freedom is when you are able to fully utilise your Bechirah – not just blindly follow your desires. Boundaries are there to protect us – because we are princes! Gedarim are there to safeguard us from coming close to the Aveira – and we will get richly rewarded for keeping them. Taking a riskier path is just that – risky.

Following Gedarim and keeping safe is the way you ensure you are on the road to happiness and success. Teenagers living unrestricted lives might look free and as though they are having fun – but the real freedom is only found in a life of doing what’s right.

PRACTICAL TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Make serving Hashem your goal; then keeping the Gedarim won't feel difficult
- ✓ Remember, you are a prince, surrounded by safeguards to protect your royalty.
- ✓ Never beat yourself up for having Taavos – deal with them properly, because ultimately, you need the Taavos to do good!
- ✓ You will only feel real freedom when you choose – and choose what is right.

THE 7-DAY FREEDOM CHALLENGE

Choose one boundary that sometimes feels restrictive. For seven days, write down what it protects and make one small, deliberate choice connected to it. Do not measure success by whether the struggle disappeared. Measure it by whether you paused and chose.

My chosen boundary:

What it protects:

DAY	MY SMALL STEP OR WIN
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	

At the end of seven days: When did I feel most genuinely free, and what is my next safe step?

Teenage Clarity

CHAPTER 3

THE UNIQUENESS OF THIS LAST STRUGGLE BEFORE MASHIACH

*How we can survive – and thrive – in Milchemes
Gog Umogog, using the tremendous tools inside us
to connect to Hashem.*



CHAPTER 3

THE UNIQUENESS OF THIS LAST STRUGGLE BEFORE MASHIACH

How we can survive – and thrive – in Milchemes Gog Umogog, using the tremendous tools inside us to connect to Hashem.

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PART 1 • Questions 1–5

Q1

The Nisoyon of technology that our generation is facing is described as unprecedented. Can you explain what is so unique about it?

A1 There's a Midrash Tanchuma in Parshas Emor that will answer this:

The Reshaim in this world all came up with different ideas of how to destroy Klal Yisroel. Esav said, "Kayin was a Shoteh, he killed his brother when his father was still alive. His father can have more sons. When my father passes on to the next world, I will kill my brother Yaakov." Came Pharaoh and said, "Esav was a Shoteh. He waited until his father was no longer alive, but by then his brother already had generations! Take the babies when they are small, kill them right away." Came Haman and said, "Pharaoh is a Shoteh. You kill only the boys – the girls can have Klal Yisroel running just from them." And Haman planned to kill every single Yid.

This is all referring to the past; now the Midrash refers to the future. It is a pure Nevua of what will happen.

*Even in the times of Gog Umogog, they will eventually say the same thing as all the other Reshaim. "The previous Reshaim were stupid. They thought they would come up with plots to kill the Yidden. Do they not know that they have a **Saviour in Shamayim?**"*

Imagine you were walking along the road with your mother, and someone came along and insulted your mother. You would immediately stand up for her! And the same would happen if someone came and insulted you – your mother would stick up for you!

The same is with us through Galus: Hashem, our loving Saviour, doesn't allow us to be destroyed. And we, His loving children, will never leave the ways of the Torah – we'd rather be killed! They are fools, because they will never be able to wipe us out, and they will also never be able to take our Yiddishkeit away from us.

The Midrash continues:

*So, Gog Umogog will try a different way. **They will try to disconnect us from our Saviour in Shamayim!***

They don't do this obviously. They don't forbid Bris Milah, or forbid keeping kosher. We wouldn't listen – we love our Father! We are connected to our Father! Instead, **they go to that connection – and try to break it!** They make us focus on other things, they keep our emotions busy with other things, so that we **lose that connection with Hashem.** Slowly, slowly our connection is severed.

And to an extent, this worked! **How many of us spend our time and energy with the 'cloud', instead of with the 'sky'?** How many of us see things and do things that take us away from Hashem?

By breaking the connection between us and Hashem, Gog Umogog have caught us. They have broken this special connection between us and our 'Saviour in Shamayim'.

There is something different about this war. Something that's never happened before: Gog Umogog don't come openly against us, instead, they try to *erode our connection from Hashem* by turning our focus, our emotions and our passion to other things. With movies. With social media.

It makes the war so much harder to fight. When there is no connection, we don't care. There is no passion in the war. When our

emotions are taken up by movies, it distracts us from directing those emotions to Hashem. It disconnects us.

There's a very famous story of the Chafetz Chaim after WW1. In WW1, thousands of Yidden died – soldiers, prisoners, from starvation. The Chafetz Chaim said to his Yeshivah Bachurim, “Do you think this war was bad? There's going to come a second war, which will make the first war seem like child's play.” Then came along WW2 – with a horrific Holocaust openly against Yidden.

One of the Talmidim, R' Yechezkel Levenstein, was later a Mashgiach in Mir. He told his Talmidim – broken Neshamos who had faced incredible loss, “I heard this from the Chafetz Chaim. I lived through both wars. Trust me, WW2 was so bad, I forgot about WW1. And do you know what the Chafetz Chaim said next? That there will be a third war, that will be so bad, it will make the second world war look like child's play.” The boys in Yeshivah – who had been through this excruciating war – fell to the ground and fainted.

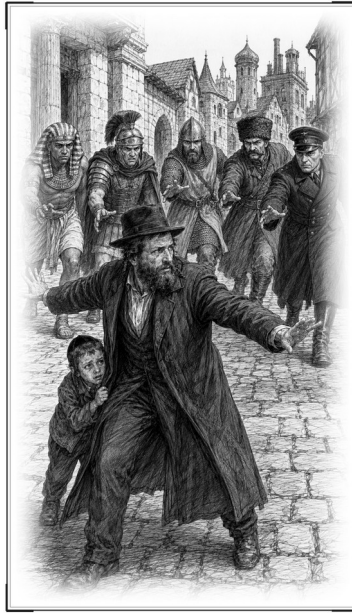
After reviving them, R' Yechezkel continued, “But the Chafetz Chaim said that the third war won't be b'Gashmius. It will be b'Ruchnius.”

And it will be this war that makes WW2 look like child's play. The ideas of Gog Umogog for Klal Yisroel will be so bad, we'll almost forget the pain of WW2.

There was WW1. Then WW2. And then, www. The web.

BUT: the Midrash doesn't end there. After describing how this war will be different, the Midrash goes on:

Hashem says to Gog Umogog, “Rasha, you think you will disconnect Me from Klal Yisroel? I promise you that I will go out to war with full force.” Says the Pasuk, “Hashem K'Gibor Yotzei K'ish Milchomos.”



THE CLARITY

“They will try to disconnect us from our Saviour in Shamayim!”

In summary: This Nisoyon isn’t about death, destruction or forced conversion. It’s about eroding the very connection between us and Hashem.

Q2

So are we doomed? How are we meant to deal with this Nisoyon that threatens our very connection with Hashem?

A2 That’s an excellent question. And the good news is, just like this Nisoyon is extraordinary, we have also been given an extraordinary tool to fight it with.

Before answering the question, I actually want to make it stronger. In addition to the Nisoyon of technology, we seem to have another huge problem in 2026.

The Gemara in Sotah says that before Mashiach comes Chutzpah – boldness – will increase. And nowadays, Chutzpah has increased. People just have more Chutzpah. In the olden days, if adults told children what to do, they listened. Just like that. Nowadays... At first glance, we might think, “Oy! Mission impossible just became even more impossible! We are faced with technology – and we are full of Chutzpah!”

Let’s delve into this together:

There was a fascinating court case at the Old Bailey concerning seven SAS soldiers who fought in the Afghan War.

SAS soldiers are comparable to American SEALs: they are among the most elite soldiers. They undergo years of training and are taught to withstand extreme conditions and act with precision under intense pressure. They are trained to carry out their commanders’ instructions with extraordinary discipline, even when emotions are running high.

SAS soldiers don’t engage in regular combat – they are sent out for very specific missions, like killing an enemy commander or spying. They go out in small groups and act with extreme precision – with

every detail of their plan being vital. Each split second makes a difference.

Now, seven of these soldiers were being brought to trial. During the Afghan War, these seven soldiers had walked past a cave which was full of mothers and children seeking shelter and safety.

Those seven soldiers – who were apparently bored – went ahead and shot into the cave, killing close to 100 people.

They were now being put on trial – because even in wartime, there are rules. And those rules need to be kept, even when one is in enemy territory.

If I were on the jury of that court case, I would have an objection. I would turn to the judge and say, “Who taught these people to kill? Who taught them to so easily disregard human life? Who trained them to act like robots, without any room for feeling or emotions? Was it not the British Government? So, what do you want them to do in their spare time – play Monopoly?

“When they go past a cave full of enemy women and children, what do you expect them to do? Even if they have moral reservations, they can justify it to themselves by saying that these children will one day grow up and become a real enemy! *It’s your fault!*”

If I were on a jury for young adults nowadays, I would say, “It’s not fair – it’s mission impossible!

“Who put us in this world where no one will know what I do? I can hide behind a pen name and no one will know. There is no shame in certain things which have become so normal! I didn’t choose to be born into this generation! Why am I to blame?”

Let’s go back to the SAS soldiers’ court case. If I were on the other side of the jury, *against* the SAS soldiers, I would turn to the judge and say, “It’s true – it really is mission impossible for these soldiers, who have been trained to kill. It’s not their fault. BUT. The

same training they went through which taught them that human life is worthless *also taught them something else*. **It taught them that you cannot make a single move without the commander.** It taught them that their lives and their brains are only extensions of their commanders. Otherwise, each mission would fail.”

We look at the ‘training’ we’ve been given – the Chutzpah – and we think it’s a bad thing. But we have to know that it’s the other way around: ***Chutzpah – boldness – itself will get us through this Nisoyon.***

Just like you have the boldness in you to be Chutzpadik and do what you think, you have the boldness in you to say to your parents, “I can’t come into the house until there is a filter on the device.” You have the boldness to say to your friend, “No, I am not going to bring my family device with me when we go out.” Boldness means standing up for what’s right with confidence – not caring what others think. Channel your boldness! Instead of using it against your parents and against authority, use it against the Yetzer Hara!

So now we understand that the only way for us to survive is *with* this Chutzpah, this boldness! We have the boldness inside of us when we want to do whatever we want. Now let’s use **this exact boldness** to say, “I know what I want to do – and I’m going to do it even if everyone thinks I’m crazy!”

When we face the Nisoyon of technology, which is full of peer pressure, the Chutzpah we’ve been given is our greatest gift.

There is also another part to boldness: Boldness also means to just say no – to cut off – without long, internal discussions and decision-making. Without internal debates and arguments. Just leave.

Just do it. Just cut off from the bad. **That’s bold.**

Sometimes, you want to discuss it with friends and think hard about the Nisoyon.

You might try to think about whether you will be affected by it (you will), or if you will be strong enough. Don't do that. Be bold and go for it. In fighting our Nisyonos, we are told two things: be **Az – bold like a leopard** – and **Gibor – strong like a lion** – to serve Hashem.

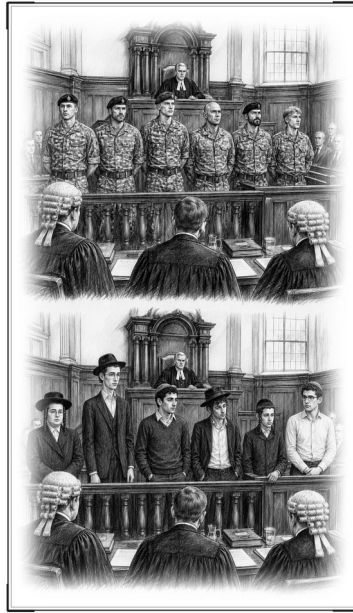
Sometimes, says the Chiddushei Harim, being strong doesn't work. In that case, where you don't have the strength, you have to use the **boldness of a leopard**. You have to use your Chutzpah to help you overcome!

And if you use your Chutzpah, then as the Pasuk in the Midrash says, '*Hashem **K'Gibor** Yotzei K'ish Milchomos*' – Hashem will be the Gibor – and you will win!

It's true that it seems like mission impossible. It's true that we may not have the strength to fight it.

But: *If we use **boldness**, Hashem will be our **strength**.*

We have an answer to Gog Umogog: They think that they will manage, but they don't realise that they are also fools: **they may try to sever our connection with our Saviour, but we will use Chutzpah to cling to Hashem until Mashiach comes.**



THE CLARITY

“In fighting our Nisyonos, we are told two things: be Az – bold like a leopard – and Gibor – strong like a lion – to serve Hashem.”

In summary: The extra Chutzpah our generation has been given can be our biggest asset in helping us overcome this Nisoyon – if we use it right.

Q3

I've always thought that Chutzpah is intrinsically a bad thing. This concept that it can be used for good is a new one for me. Can you explain this concept a bit more?

A3 It takes thought to change our mindset when we've always thought that Chutzpah is inherently bad. But the following Mashal, from the Dubno Maggid (in relation to other Middos), can help show us how precious Chutzpah can be.

When someone buys diamonds on his travels, he won't put them in his pocket – because if he does, he risks them falling out. Instead, he will carve them into a piece of wood. Even though a rough piece of wood is not the right setting for these beautiful gems, he needs to put them in there so that when he arrives home, none of them are lost. Then, he can set them in a beautiful crown!

We all have Middos. In 2026, one of the Middos we all have is Chutzpah – boldness. If we were born with that Chutzpah already set in its 'crown' as a clearly positive Middah, the Yetzer Hara would fight to stop us from using it correctly. So, we are given Chutzpah as a 'bad Middah', a 'piece of wood.' But: after it has grown inside of us, we must put it in its right place, in its 'crown'! We must realise it can be used for the good, and use it for the good!

Now's the time to take this bad Middah and put it in a crown! **Our Chutzpah itself will help us get through these times** before Mashiach!

Remember: It's true that this Nisoyon seems 'mission impossible.' The social pressure is enormous!

BUT: There is another part of you, **the Chutzpah that you were born with.** The innate boldness that you each have. The boldness that is in more abundance in this generation than ever before. You

always thought it was a bad thing; now you realise that Chutzpah itself will get us through. ***Use it for the right reasons!***

I was telling this to a group of boys recently, and a boy showed me the following, from the Kerem HaZvi.

The Mishnah in Avos says, ‘Az Panim L’Gehinnom, Boshes Panim L’Gan Eden.’

‘Oh no!’ we might think. ‘We were born in a generation where we are given Azus – boldness!’

But if we look at how the Mishnah carries on, we will notice something interesting. The Mishnah continues by saying, ‘Yehi Ratzon Sheyibaneh Beis Hamikdash...’

What’s the connection?

Says the Kerem HaZvi: Until the time before Mashiach, the Az Panim goes to Gehinnom. Once it comes to 2026, you need the Az! You need the Chutzpah! You need to use it right!



THE CLARITY

“Remember: It’s true that this Nisoyon seems ‘mission impossible.’ The social pressure is enormous!”

In summary: You may have thought that Chutzpah is intrinsically a bad Middah – but it’s time to change that perspective and use it for the good.

Q4

I feel like this Nisoyon of technology attacks and tests our very personality – not just our money or ideology – in a very deep way. Can you explore that?

A4 You're right – Gog Umogog tests our very personality, especially as a teenager. Here are the tools Gog Umogog uses. Let's understand them, so that we can conquer them.

1. Number one is **peer pressure**. Peer pressure is real, and powerful. It can take something

useless, and make you beg for it. Boys, girls, old, young, we're all affected by it. 'Everyone has it, so why can't I?'

Let's look deeper and understand what peer pressure does to us. *Peer pressure is not a reason to have something – it's a reason to **want** to have something.* In essence, peer pressure creates a Bechirah – a 'want'. Once you have that 'want', you now need to make a choice about it.

This realisation can be very powerful. How? Because it helps you work through the Nisoyon and actually make a choice. Try this: without making any decision, clear away the peer pressure just for a moment – is it actually right, or is it wrong? When the voices around me are quietened, what do *I* think about it?

2. Tool Number Two is **distraction** and **boredom**. Whatever the Nisoyon was throughout the ages, distraction and boredom made people want to do things they shouldn't.

But now, it's much easier to actually do it. Movies and videos help you avoid thinking and just pass the time.

And the Yetzer Hara *works* on making you bored – so that you will be tempted.

The solution? Planning. If you know you will be bored, plan beforehand so that you will either have something to do, or be far away from the technology that will tempt you.

There's a boy I know who has been on a long journey in Avodas Hashem. After a long while of overcoming and resisting temptation, he found himself falling – using a fellow Bachur's phone. We spoke, and it took us a long time to work something out: The Nisoyon isn't when he's on the phone. *It's when he's in his bedroom, bored, before he gets the phone.*

When he's bored, he looks for unkosher entertainment. So now he knows – that's the time he needs to tackle.

We need to take real precautions to tackle this, to make sure we are actively walking on the path of life and goodness.

3. The final tool Gog Umogog uses (which might be number one for boys!) is our sense of identity – feeling cool and 'shticky'.

A feeling of, 'If I don't do this, have this or know this, I'm the neb. If I don't know the lyrics of a non-Jewish song or the characters in a movie, I'll be totally out of it.'

These feelings are actually the Yetzer Hara. You might not even *want* to hear the song or see the movie; the Nisoyon is often simply to be 'with it'. That is what you are tackling – and it's very helpful to know that. **It helps you make your choice of who you want to be.**

One last point:

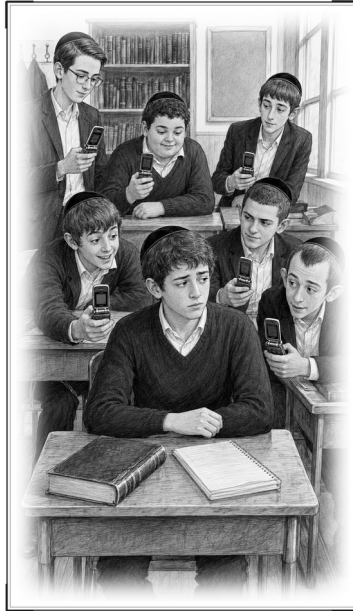
Before a candle goes out, it flares very brightly.

We are at the end. Technology is the last Nisoyon. The Neshamos of this generation are very great.

Great enough to face this mighty Nisoyon.

Yes, there are so many pitfalls. But there is also an enormous amount of potential to grow.

The enormity of this Nisoyon doesn't tell us that we are bad people – it tells us that we are very pure people.



THE CLARITY

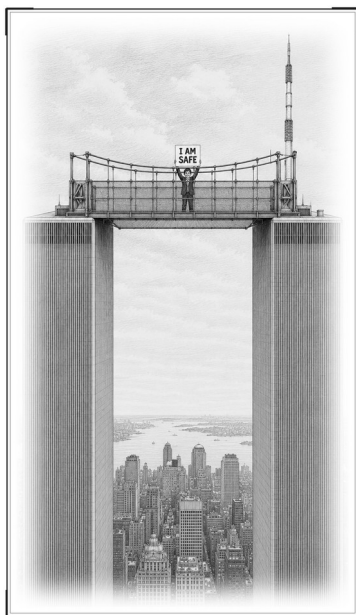
“Yes, there are so many pitfalls. But there is also an enormous amount of potential to grow.”

In summary: If we identify the tools Gog Umogog uses in this last war – peer pressure, distraction/boredom, and our sense of identity – we can begin to overcome them.

Q5**Can a person ever feel fully safe from technology?**

A5 For sure – if you have the right boundaries protecting you. If you do the right thing, you can feel safe.

No one can guarantee that you will never have a Nisoyon or fall – because you are human! But you can feel safe.

**THE CLARITY**

“No one can guarantee that you will never have a Nisoyon or fall – because you are human!”

In summary: If you have put the right boundaries into place, you’ve done what you need to and can feel safe.

PART 2 • Questions 6–9

Q6**Technology is a major catalyst for Chessed, and even Shidduchim. What is the right balance?**

A6 When your parents taught you to walk, did they put you on a tightrope? When they taught you to ride a bike, did they put you on a tightrope and say, “Ride”? Definitely not.

But we all know that it’s possible to walk on a tightrope. We all know that it’s possible to ride a bike on a tightrope.

It may be possible to walk or ride on a tightrope, but it’s not possible to *learn* to walk and ride on a tightrope.

You are young. You are learning how to live. **Don’t learn on a tightrope.** The risk, if you fall, is very big. While you are learning, *especially* in your teenage years, you cannot ride a bike on a tightrope. Now, while you are ‘learning to walk’, it is not the time to use this tightrope. You need more Gedarim.

These Gedarim protect you. (And you *always* need Gedarim through life, because you are *always* learning and growing.) Are *you* the one making a Charidy campaign? Are *you* the one finding a Shidduch online?

For you – **the right balance is to stay away from it.** You are now in your critical formative years, where you are ‘learning to walk’, so to speak. When you are older – ask Gedolim.



THE CLARITY

“It may be possible to walk or ride on a tightrope, but it’s not possible to learn to walk and ride on a tightrope.”

In summary: In these critical years, when you are ‘learning to walk’, you need more Gedarim to be successful. It’s not the time to get involved, even if you think you can do good with technology. When you are older – ask Gedolim.

Q7

We are always taught that technology is bad for our Ruchnius, but I see some people who have smartphones and internet whilst living a Torah life. How can it be? Do the two not contradict each other?

A7 This is a very powerful question. It bothered me for many years, and I have discussed it with many Gedolim.

Remember the story (Chapter 1: Question 4) of the boy who wanted to know why he couldn't 'wrap' at night? Who asked me if he is going to get punished for only putting on Tefillin on Monday?

There we explained that we all started our journey **at a different place**. People like you and me would be held accountable if we only put on Tefillin on Monday: Putting on Tefillin isn't a struggle for us. Our struggle will be somewhere else.

This boy, who had been brought up non-frum, was going from not putting on Tefillin at all to putting it on once a week. For him, that was going up!

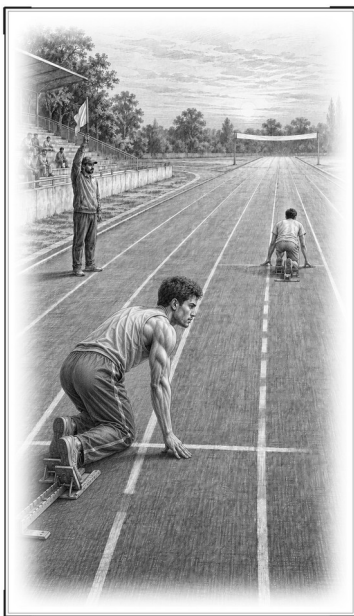
Everyone starts at a different place with technology as well. You might start out closer to the top.

You can't go backwards, but *they* can go forwards! For you, it wouldn't be right to do what they are doing, but at their point in the journey, it could be a step up from what they were doing before.

I can't tell you what everyone who has a smartphone is doing on it. (My father is a computer technician, and someone once asked about the whole fuss around filtering technology and why it needed to be so strict, etc. My father said to him, "You know what? I can get around the back of your phone and read out the history to everyone here..." The person ran away.) But some of them might actually be moving up on their own journey.

Are the people who have smartphones as Ehrlich as you? Maybe not yet. But are they all wrong?

It could be that some are not – it depends where they are starting from. But for you, the same thing would be considered wrong.



THE CLARITY

“Everyone starts at a different place with technology as well. You might start out closer to the top.”

In summary: Every person’s journey starts and develops at their own pace. What would be considered wrong for you might not be wrong for someone else who’s on their own journey.

Q8**So much good can be done with technology, so why is it looked at as bad?**

A8 Unfiltered internet is like a **fire in your home**, which will burn everything in its path. Children will not be allowed near fire even when it's just a small gas flame – they don't know how to use it! When they get older, they use it in small amounts. So too with the internet: when a person is developed, with boundaries, they will sometimes *need* to use the internet to do things – (although it must always be filtered). Nowadays that's how it is.

But a teenager can't say to themselves, "I have boundaries; I can use it right," because Hashem has told us not to trust in ourselves *until the day of our deaths*.

We must trust the people on top of us and the boundaries they make – they know better.



THE CLARITY

“We must trust the people on top of us and the boundaries they make – they know better.”

In summary: The internet can be compared to a fire. When you are young, stay as far away from it as possible. When you are older, use it where you need to, in small amounts.

Q9

I know that for boys, learning Torah helps them overcome the Yetzer Hara. As a girl, without the Mitzvah of Limud Torah, what fills that role?

A9 This is an excellent question. Before I answer it, I want to strengthen it with a story that happened to me recently.

I was in the middle of a convention when my phone rang with an unfamiliar number – not a very opportune time. But when the person called again, and then again, I knew something was up. I sent a quick text, *‘Can you text me – I can’t speak now.’* The reply was fast: *‘Can you call me ASAP. My son has done something terrible.’*

When that text was followed by another one, this time from the Bachur’s Mashgiach, I knew that I needed to leave the room and call the mother.

The call wasn’t pleasant. The boy had actually done something terrible. A normal boy, with Nisyonos. After speaking with the Yeshivah, I pieced together the story. Now I had to speak to the boy.

After speaking for almost an hour, and after the boy had made a plan to break off what he was doing, the boy turned to me. “I want to learn. I love learning, I love spending my time in the Beis Hamidrash. I know that learning can’t go together with what I have done, so I am stopping.”

And he stopped.

I was amazed by his words. It was the first time I had heard a boy use his Bechirah – *and choose Torah*. Not choosing because he didn’t want to get into trouble or ruin his life, **but choosing because he loves learning**. I was blown away.

When I spoke to his mother, who was broken, I told her, “I’ve had the most Nachas from this boy. He actually chose Torah. He actually chose Hashem.”

But that got me thinking.

A boy has a Nisoyon, whatever it may be. He knows that he won’t be able to learn as well if he keeps it up.

But what pulls a girl? A girl doesn’t have to learn. Boys have an advantage – they have the Torah they learn, which every boy knows he can’t do as well if he’s watching the wrong stuff, listening to the wrong stuff, or has bad friends.

And it seems like there’s a further disadvantage to the girl.

When boys do well, they enjoy their learning. They get much, much more enjoyment from learning than from watching a movie. Ask them. They feel positive, good and elevated.

What fills that in for a girl?

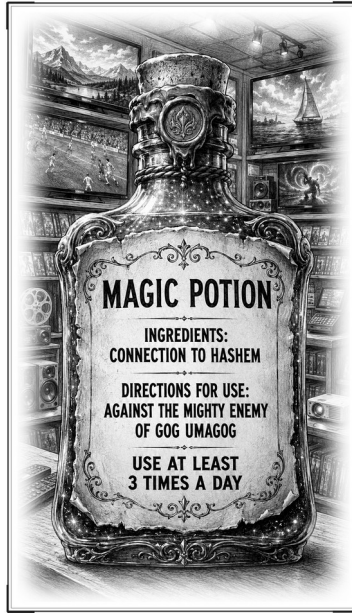
To answer the question, I want to go back to what we discussed about the unique goal of Gog Umogog – to sever our connection with Hashem (Chapter 3: Question 1). To attack our emotions, our closeness, our relationship with Hashem. To make us jaded, unfeeling, and numb.

In this Nisoyon, not only are girls not disadvantaged, but they actually have an advantage in this Nisoyon:

They are naturally closer to Hashem than men. They are naturally more emotional and more connected. They are the Eim Habayis, at home, innately bringing up the next generation.

Especially in this part of the war, where we’re not being destroyed, but rather *disconnected*, girls have a real advantage. They are more in tune with connection. When they choose right, they are instantly connected to Hashem.

In short: Girls have more of this ‘magic potion’, **this connection**, to get rid of Gog Umogog, **whose weapon is to disconnect us from Hashem.**



THE CLARITY

“A boy has a Nisoyon, whatever it may be. He knows that he won’t be able to learn as well if he keeps it up.”

In summary: In this battle that threatens our connection to Hashem, girls, who are more emotional and connected, have a unique advantage.

PART 3 • Questions 10–13

Q10

When we look at Nisyonos of past generations, they seem so clear-cut. Don't work on Shabbos. Don't serve Avodah Zara. Why is there so much confusion in this Nisoyon – it's so hard to know what's right and wrong for each person, and where to draw the line in technology?

A10 It's true that there is a tremendous amount of confusion around technology. That's one of the hardest parts of the Nisoyon. But I want to reframe your question in reference to past Nisyonos:

Here's an obvious question: In the times of Mitzrayim, the Yidden SAW Hashem. Open Nissim. The 10 Makkos. Pharaoh falling to the feet of Moshe Rabbeinu. *How could only a fifth leave?* After seeing clearly that what Moshe said came true, where was their Emunah?

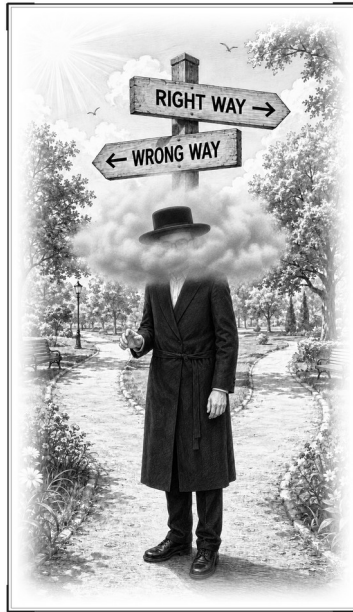
The answer is very telling. It's because *that was their Nisoyon*. Their Nisoyon was Emunah. Things that looked simple were blurred by their Nisoyon.

Nisyonos blur the facts to give a person a choice.

There are things about the Nisyonos of technology that would be basic and clear for previous generations – after Mashiach comes, our grandparents will ask 'For this four-fifths of Klal Yisroel were lost? For this moving screen? Could they not just have unplugged it and separated themselves from all the Tumah?' (It is written in the Gemara [Sanhedrin 111a] that four-fifths of Klal Yisroel will be lost before Mashiach, too.)

But for us now – *this is the Nisoyon*. The facts are blurred.

But this is what we are here for. To see through it and to fight it. Let's see Hashem through the fog and overcome.



THE CLARITY

“Nisyonos blur the facts to give a person a choice.”

In summary: Whenever someone grapples with a Nisoyon, the facts become blurred. Our job is to see through it and fight it.

Q11**Everyone speaks about technology: What can you actually do about it?**

A11 There's a saying: 'If there's a problem you can't solve, don't make yourself part of it.'

It's a problem we can't solve. But I *have* made myself part of it, and I will tell you something: **I have seen countless teenagers solving it.** This is something not all parents and Mechanchim believe, but **you actually have the Kochos to fight it!**

There was a Yid who lost his son in the Meron tragedy – his name is Greenbaum. He was on the bus, on the way to the morgue to identify his son. Travelling with him was the uncle of another one of the Kedoshim, going to the same place. This uncle was in tremendous turmoil; in contrast, R' Greenbaum was calm.

"I don't understand!" the uncle asked. "It's your *son!* How are you so calm?" R' Greenbaum answered with an amazing point: He said that because it was his son, his direct Nisoyon, **he had got the Kochos for it.** The uncle, who was further removed from the Nisoyon, had it harder in a way, because he wasn't given the same Kochos.

Your generation has been placed in this Nisoyon. **But you've also been given the Kochos to overcome it.**

I've seen it with my own eyes. Boys and girls who have had the strength to overcome.

Change your perspective from 'Oh no! We're in trouble!' to 'We will fight this Nisoyon!'

We have to realise an important point: **technology isn't here to ruin Klal Yisroel. Technology is here to help us grow.** To choose Hashem.

We can't give Hashem anything – everything we have is from Hashem. Hakol Bidei Shamayim Chutz MiYiras Shamayim.

A Nisoyon is given to us as a chance to come closer to Hashem. It is our only chance to 'give' something.

With this positive outlook, you won't think that technology is the end of the world. You will realise that it's the beginning.



THE CLARITY

“A Nisoyon is given to us as a chance to come closer to Hashem. It is our only chance to ‘give’ something.”

In summary: We have to replace the negativity and panic around the Nisoyon of technology with positivity, hope and pride at having been chosen to overcome.

Q12

Is it the Ratzon Hashem for there to be such a thing as the internet and smartphones? Why did Hashem give people the Chochma to make it?

A12 For about 5,000 years, the world worked perfectly without electricity, cars or phones. Which is interesting, considering that the IQ of the people in the times of Shlomo Hamelech was obviously higher than the IQ of the inventor of the lightbulb.

Inventions are created with Daas sent down from Shamayim, at the time when the world needs it.

The internet could have come down 2,000 years ago, but it wasn't the right time.

Take a husband and wife who have just got married. On their first day together, they won't be able to behave the way a couple who have been married for 20 years can. After 20 years, when the Shalom Bayis is strong and they are secure with each other, she can be in a bad mood and nothing will happen. Their marriage is strong. But if she behaves like that on Day One... So too with a new friendship. When you are shmoozing with a girl you've met an hour ago, you aren't going to pour out all of your troubles and deepest secrets. That comes with time. With investment in the friendship. With a build-up of trust. When you *do* share more with her after a year or two, your trust in her is strong – you know she will be there for you. You know she won't drop you.

There is a connection of love between Hashem and Klal Yisroel.

When Klal Yisroel said Naaseh V'Nishma, there was a tremendous strengthening of this love. It was an incredible moment. They chose to say yes to the Torah – without knowing what was inside!

We can ask a question on this: After the Makkos, Yetzias Mitzrayim, Krias Yam Suf, the spoils and riches... why would Klal

Yisroel not have said yes to the Torah? If my father calls me and asks, “Can you do me a favour?” – I would say yes without knowing what he wants! I know he loves me and won’t ask something that I can’t do!

Let’s delve deeper into the greatness behind Naaseh V’Nishma.

One year, before Shavuot, I got a call from my father. “Can you do me a favour?” I said yes, and then asked what it was. “I want you to come for Yom Tov.” “Okay,” I said. “I’ll check with my wife.”

As I hung up, I realised something. I can’t say, “Naaseh V’Nishma,” to my father – because I am committed to my wife. I have to check with her first. My commitment to my father is incomplete.

At the time when Klal Yisroel said Naaseh V’Nishma, they had a Yetzer Hara. (We know that they had fallen in Mitzrayim.) But by saying Naaseh V’Nishma, they were proclaiming: We will never have to ‘check’ with our Taavos before saying yes to You. **We are ready to take on any Nisoyon that will come, and choose Hashem over the Nisoyon.** Even though we have a Yetzer Hara, our commitment to our Father is complete!

We were ready to say ‘yes’ to the Nisoyon of Shmad. To the Nisoyon of Shemiras Shabbos. To all the Nisoyons throughout the generations.

And we also said yes to the Nisoyon of technology. The hardest Nisoyon. The Nisoyon that takes place in private. Between us and Hashem.

This Nisoyon wasn’t given in the olden days. It was kept for now, for our generation. Right at the end. We have over 3,000 years of love behind us. Instilled in us. *Now we’re ready.*

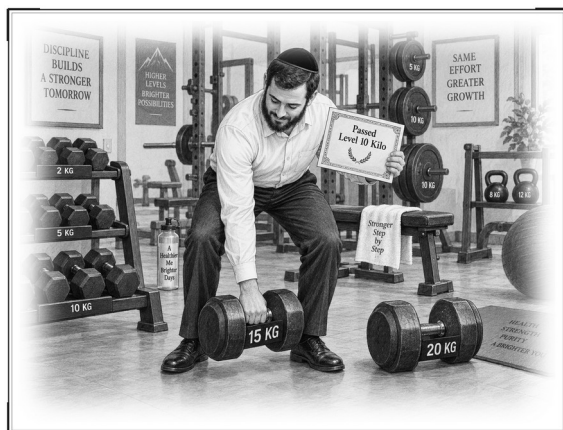
The question is not how Hashem allowed the internet into this world. **Hashem wanted the internet to come down to this world – but only now.**

Now is the time we're ready to fight the Nisoyon.

Yeshivahs and schools call me: "How are they going to get through this Nisoyon? How?" **But they do.**

They overcome it with Kochos the adults don't always realise they have.

The Nisoyon of technology isn't a tragedy for Klal Yisroel. It's the opposite – it's another opportunity for Klal Yisroel to come closer to Hashem. **It's part of the plan.**



THE CLARITY

“We were ready to say ‘yes’ to the Nisoyon of Shmad. To the Nisoyon of Shemiras Shabbos. To all the Nisyonos throughout the generations.”

In summary: Hashem waited until now to test Klal Yisroel with this unique Nisoyon of technology, when we have over 3,000 years of love and closeness to Hashem instilled within us.

Q13**Why are there so many more Nisyonos at night than during the day?**

A13 Very simple – Hashem created the world like that. The nights are harder.

And here comes the important part – if you know that at night you have it harder – *use the daytime to plan!* If you know that when 11 o'clock hits, the Nisyonos come rushing at you – plan. You can secure yourself during the day to protect yourself at night!

Build walls around yourself in strong times, so that in weak times, the enemy can't attack.



THE CLARITY

“Very simple – Hashem created the world like that. The nights are harder.”

In summary: Fighting the Nisoyon of technology might seem harder at night – so make sure you prepare by day, when the world is light and everything seems easier.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The extra Chutzpah our generation has been given can be our biggest asset in helping us overcome this Nisoyon – if we use it right. You may have thought that Chutzpah is intrinsically a bad Middah – but it’s time to change that perspective and use it for the good. If we identify the tools Gog Umogog uses in this last war – peer pressure, distraction/boredom, and our sense of identity – we can begin to overcome them.

If you have put the right boundaries into place, you’ve done what you need to and can feel safe. In these critical years, when you are ‘learning to walk’, you need more Gedarim to be successful. It’s not the time to get involved, even if you think you can do good with technology. When you are older – ask Gedolim. Every person’s journey starts and develops at their own pace.

What would be considered wrong for you might not be wrong for someone else who’s on their own journey. The internet can be compared to a fire. When you are young, stay as far away from it as possible. When you are older, use it where you need to, in small amounts. In this battle that threatens our connection to Hashem, girls, who are more emotional and connected, have a unique advantage.

Whenever someone grapples with a Nisoyon, the facts become blurred. Our job is to see through it and fight it. We have to replace the negativity and panic around the Nisoyon

of technology with positivity, hope and pride at having been chosen to overcome. Hashem waited until now to test Klal Yisroel with this unique Nisoyon of technology, when we have over 3,000 years of love and closeness to Hashem instilled within us. Fighting the Nisoyon of technology might seem harder at night – so make sure you prepare by day, when the world is light and everything seems easier.

PRACTICAL TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ When you're 'learning to walk', in these teenage years, it's not the time to 'play with the fire' of technology.
- ✓ Remember: When you're in a Nisoyon, the facts are blurred.
- ✓ Girls don't have the pull of Torah learning. But they have the extra emotions to help them, especially in this Nisoyon that's attacking the emotions.

THE CONNECTION AND CLARITY WORKSHEET

Use this page to uncover what is creating the cloud around a decision and to choose one clear, practical step that protects your connection with Hashem.

1. The situation in which I feel most confused or pressured:

2. What is creating the cloud – peer pressure, boredom, curiosity, identity, or something else?

3. When the pressure is quiet, what do I honestly know is the right direction?

4. One boundary I can put in place before the Nisoyon arrives:

5. One bold action I will take, and one trusted person who can support me:

MY 7-DAY CONNECTION PRACTICE

For seven days, record one moment when you paused, saw through the cloud and chose connection over distraction. A small, honest choice counts.

DAY	MY SMALL STEP OR WIN
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	

CHAPTER 4

REPENTING AND RECONNECTING

What real Teshuvah means and
how to get up after falling



CHAPTER 4

REPENTING AND RECONNECTING

What real Teshuva means and how to get up after falling

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PART 1 • Questions 1–7**Q1**

Someone who does an Aveira is on a level that he wasn't on before. If he watched something he shouldn't have, it's now in his mind. So how can we say that a Yid always intrinsically remains a pure Tzadik? He has done something that has affected his Neshama!

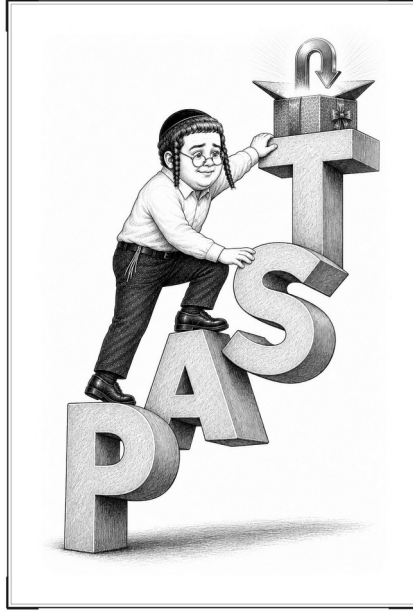
A1 When I was 19, I went to R' Yakov Meir Schechter, one of the Gedolim in Eretz Yisroel, and asked him if I could make a deal with him: I felt guilty about some of the things I had done. If I promised never to do it again, could he promise me that I would not get punished for what I had already done? That would help me get out of my guilt and make a real commitment to stop.

He looked at me with a big smile and said, "Why would you want that?" "Because I want to turn over a new leaf so I can move forward, and I am finding it hard to move forward after what happened in the past," I replied. He looked at me again and said, "But why would you want that? Do you not realise that those moments in your life were the best that could have happened to you?"

I looked at him – shocked. Had he heard what I had said? He continued, "If you are going to do Teshuva from Ahava, then everything you have done turns into a Mitzvah. And if you do Teshuva from Yirah, then it will also be to your benefit – because it was this Aveira that put you on a U-turn to change things in your life! That is the biggest present Hashem could have given you!"

When you use the bad things you did in your youth as stepping stones to move on, they become part of your journey upwards!

There is no excuse for doing what you want – that’s not growing. But the times you *do* fall, don’t get too dragged down – use them as **stepping stones** to grow!



THE CLARITY

“There is no excuse for doing what you want – that’s not growing. But the times you do fall, don’t get too dragged down – use them as stepping stones to grow!”

In summary: If you do Teshuva and use your falls as stepping stones, they become part of your journey upwards.

Q2

But how can we say that a girl is the same after she sins? Aveiros change a person!

A2 On the Gemara that says, ‘You can’t make yourself a Rasha before Hashem for even one hour’, the Ben Ish Chai asks: What does ‘an hour’ mean? Why does it say you shouldn’t be a Rasha before Hashem for even ‘Shaa Achas’, ‘one hour’?

The Rambam teaches us that between the sun and the world, there are Mazalos – ‘lucks’ or ‘stars’, which are constantly changing. (In the olden days, people used to serve the stars – Ovdei Kochavim, because they wanted to ‘manipulate’ the energy there.)

The Ben Ish Chai tells us why Hashem did this: Take a person who’s done an Aveira and impacted his connection with Hashem. An hour later, the Mazel between him and Shamayim has changed – **and he has a totally new connection to Hashem.** *If all the Mazalos were the same, he would remain a Rasha for all his days.*

When the Mazel changes – his slate is clean. It doesn’t mean he doesn’t need to do Teshuva. But it *does* mean that his connection to Hashem is pure – as if he has not sinned. Of course, his Neshama was affected by Pgam due to his Aveira, so let’s explain how this works.

When you sell a slave, you sell it according to its worth. In Masseches Erchin, the Torah discusses clear guidelines for how much people are worth. There are different categories of value according to age. The question is asked: How do we categorise according to age, when one 50-year-old can be much stronger than another 50-year-old?

The Rishonim explain that from Hashem’s perspective, at any second, everyone’s value is the same – because from this moment on, *they can do anything*. The potential of future good inside them

is endless. **And everyone has the same potential to choose that good going forward.** (Of course, there is a discussion about past choices, which can make it harder for a person to move on.)

When the hour changes, and with it the Mazel, it's as if you haven't sinned. Your connection to Hashem is there. Your potential is there. **And your Neshama is ready for anything.**

Of course, there is Teshuva that you have to do. And you can *never* say that it's okay to do Aveiros because you could just do Teshuva for them afterwards. The Rambam says that if someone sins with the plan to do Teshuva afterwards, that Teshuva does not work.

The Gemara speaks about certain Aveiros for which there is no Teshuva. R' Tzadok HaKohen, in the Tzidkas HaTzadik, says: There is no such thing as an Aveira for which there is no Teshuva. So what does the Gemara mean?

It means that for some Aveiros, there is no Teshuva MiYirah. Teshuva MiYirah means that you 'unpack' each Aveira on its own, do Teshuva, and then 'pack' yourself back up, without the Aveira. Some Aveiros are too big for that – if you have fear, you should have feared it before.

But Teshuva MiAhava is always possible. There is no Aveira in the world that is unforgivable.

Let's dig a little deeper into the words of R' Tzadok HaKohen, which explain Teshuva MiAhava:

The core of everything is Hashem. The Ratzon Hashem is everything.

When you do an Aveira, it's Hashem's Ratzon that's giving you the strength to do it. Your eyes don't turn blind when you want to look at something you shouldn't! Your feet don't stop when you go somewhere you shouldn't!

If you manage to tap into the Ratzon Hashem that was a part of your Aveira, the Aveira becomes a Mitzvah. The only way you can tap into that is by doing Teshuva MiAhava. By saying “I love Hashem so much, and He loves me so much, that even in the Aveira, I recognise Him.” That recognition within the Aveira now turns into a moment used positively – it turns into a Mitzvah!

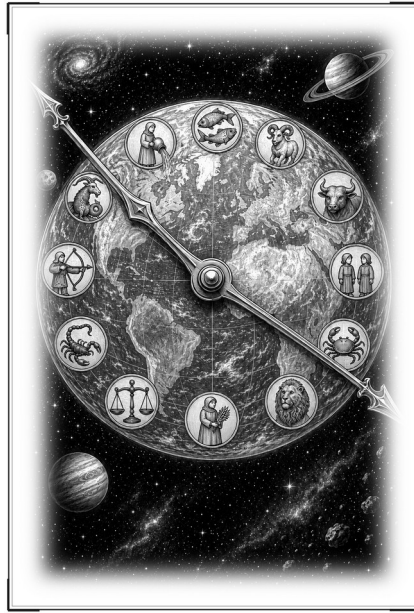
Hashem is there in *every second* of your life. You just have to notice Him. You have to tap into the Ahava.

BUT: You can never say this before doing an Aveira. That doesn’t work. (To explain it according to R’ Tzadok HaKohen very briefly: When you try to go back to that moment when you sinned, and connect to Hashem in that moment, it’s a certain bit of Avodah Zara – because you *weren’t* recognising Hashem in that moment. You were sinning with the thought of doing Teshuva.) Whether we understand it or not, it doesn’t work.

Let’s go back to the question: Is a person damaged by the Aveiros he has done? I don’t like the word ‘damaged’. **A person is never damaged.**

On Purim (when I was probably a bit drunk), one of my students asked me for a Bracha. “Whatever anyone tells you,” I told him, “You are not a bad boy.” I wanted him to internalise that there is nothing wrong with him. He is normal. He faces normal Nisyonos. “That’s not true,” he said. He then continued to tell me a whole complicated piece about why *I* thought he was a bad boy. For months, this boy had been going around thinking that I thought he was a bad boy!

You have to change your mindset. You are not damaged. If you did an Aveira, you do Teshuva MiAhava and you *carry on*.



THE CLARITY

“But Teshuva MiAhava is always possible. There is no Aveira in the world that is unforgivable.”

In summary: Teshuva is real. You can never plan to do Teshuva before the Aveira, but once a person has fallen and then done Teshuva, they have a clean slate. They can move on.

Q3

What if someone does have the attitude to do the Aveira and then do Teshuva? Does that mean he can never do Teshuva if he later wants to?

A3 Imagine you buy a lottery ticket – and it’s the winning one! You’ve won £3 million! You go to school and show it to everyone, convincing them that it’s actually real. You show your parents. You show everyone around you.

Your mother offers you a lift to go and claim the prize, and you reply, “No, it’s fine. I’ve got 12 months. I’ll go tomorrow.”

The next day, your friends come running over. “Let’s do something fun – you are a millionaire!” “I haven’t picked it up yet,” you answer.

The days go on, and you find yourself desperate to go away with some friends. You go over to your mother. “Please can I have £200 to go away with friends?” Your mother looks at you. “You are a millionaire! You can pay for it!” But you beg and beg, until she relents.

Time marches on until it’s the end of the season. You beg your mother for new clothes. She turns to you in exasperation. “You have all the money in the world!” But you beg and beg, until she gives you the money.

Your friends think you have gone insane. Your mother doesn’t know why you won’t just claim the prize.

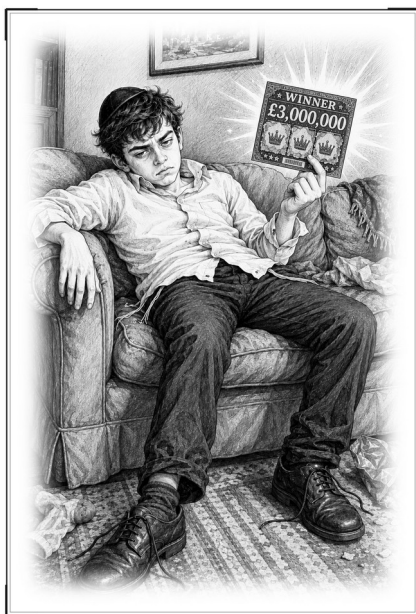
Finally, the day before the deadline, you go and get your money.

This story might sound insane, but it actually recently happened in America. A lottery winner – for the staggering amount of \$1.2M – claimed his prize *a week before the deadline*. I don’t have the foggiest idea why he would do that.

Doing Teshuva is winning the lottery. Connection to Hashem is Olam Hazeh – not only Olam Haba! Why wait? Why push it off? **You can have it now!** You are losing out with every minute...

But Teshuva is always possible going forward. Wherever you are – you can go forward from there. Even an hour before death.

If you do Teshuva later, you might not be able to ‘get out of jail scot-free’, but you will be able to move forward from there.



THE CLARITY

“Your friends think you have gone insane. Your mother doesn’t know why you won’t just claim the prize.”

In summary: Teshuva is always possible. But doing Teshuva is like winning the lottery – do it ASAP!

Q4

Even if you do Teshuva, aren't there aftereffects of the Aveira – especially with images? If you saw something you shouldn't have, it remains with you. You still have those images in your mind. How can you delete them?

A4 The Yetzer Hara is clever. It constantly brings up guilt, creating a 'black hole' whenever you think about what you've seen. The images keep you trapped in guilt. Every time you want to do something good, the images pop into your head, reminding you that they are still there and not planning to leave that easily.

I spoke in a Yeshivah where there was a boy who was extremely attached to football. He was on his phone literally all day. He knew everything there was to know about football. His life was football.

After my speech, I got a call. It was him. We had a long conversation, and later met. We decided that specifically for him, the best way to let go was cold turkey.

For 4.5 months, he didn't have anything to do with football. He was extremely strong. We touched base every day, and I sent him Chizuk and Shiurim to listen to.

After a while, I stopped getting phone calls from him. I thought that maybe he was doing better. But out of the blue, he called. Defeated, he admitted that he was back to square one. He was back to being the same 'bad boy.'

"One second," I said. "How long do you spend on football every day?" "Oh, I don't know," he answered. "I know all the scores and everything." "Okay," I carried on. "Do you go into pubs to watch live games?" He was shocked. "No, no! I wouldn't go into pubs now! I'm a good boy!" I asked him one last question. "Do you listen to the radio right before you go to bed?" Again, he answered

in the negative. “So why do you think you are back to square one?!” I asked him. “Well,” he said, “I know all the scores and everything...”

He was feeling so guilty over his slip that in his mind, he was brought right back to his original Aveira.

That’s a trap of the Yetzer Hara. A trap that the Yetzer Hara also uses in relation to images.

If you have done proper Teshuva for your Aveira, **you will never fall back to where you were before.** But the Yetzer Hara makes you think you haven’t moved past the Aveira you did. You could be three months after the Aveira. You could be three months without watching. But the Yetzer Hara will come and say, ‘The image is still in your head. You may as well watch another one. You are a bad girl anyway.’

You have to know where you really stand. You did the Aveira. But you did Teshuva. *You’ve moved on.*

You may be facing another test now. Your Nisoyon is to say, “I won’t watch this video. Yes, the images from the last thing I watched are still circulating in my mind. But I am past it. Nothing is going to happen because of an image in my head.”

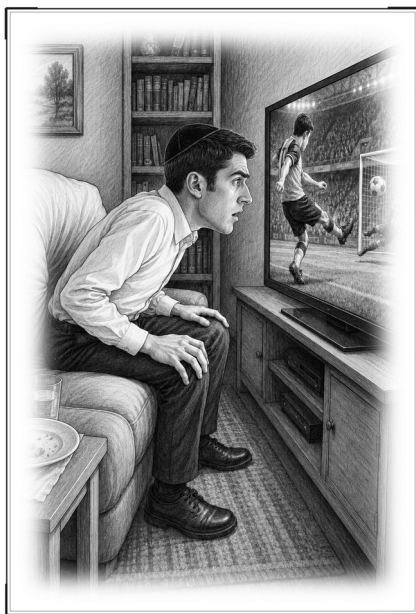
Yes, it was wrong to watch that video. But you have done Teshuva. And the fact that the images have stuck with you – at this point, that is not your choice. Carry on. The best thing to do when there are images that don’t leave you alone is to distract yourself. (Obviously, if it becomes obsessive, it’s a different story.)

If every time an unwanted image pops into your mind, you get pulled into the cycle of “Uch, that was such a bad thing to do; these images are so bad...” the Yetzer Hara will take you back there. Back to the place where you fell. ***But you are not there anymore.***

You are not a bad person because you have bad thoughts. You're not acting on your bad thoughts; they are simply running through your mind. So just move on.

With time, the images can fade. There is no fixed timetable for this. (Of course, when you are in a low moment, you might notice them popping back.

If they keep disturbing your day-to-day life, speak to someone qualified to help.) (See also Chapter 5, Question 4.)



THE CLARITY

“You have to know where you really stand. You did the Aveira. But you did Teshuva. You’ve moved on.”

In summary: Guilt is the trap of the Yetzer Hara, who will try to drag you back down to a low place, making you unable to move on. If you have done Teshuva – you are not in the same place. You have moved on!

Q5

**Isn't the purpose of guilt to make me do Teshuva?
How can we say that guilt is the trap of the Yetzer
Hara?**

A5 This is a good question. We just said guilt is the trap of the Yetzer Hara. But you can ask: without guilt, will you ever do Teshuva?

I want to tell you the truth: **With guilt, you will never do Teshuva.**

For example, let's say that when you were 14, you were part of a chat group you shouldn't have been in. For a full year, you saw what you shouldn't have. You did what you shouldn't have.

You have two options:

- You feel super guilty. You can't move on. In a way, you remain there – in that low place.
- You realise that through grappling with this Nisoyon, you grew. You feel Charatah – **regret** – as part of the Teshuva process. But you aren't consumed by **guilt**.

Let's explore the difference between regret and guilt:

Guilt: You did something really wrong. It's eating you up inside. You turn into a bad person because of it. The soundtrack plays in your mind – 'I am a bad person.'

Regret: You did something really wrong. You now have something behind you that you need to fix before you get to Shamayim. You regret what you've done and do Teshuva.

You can regret what you've done and do Teshuva without feeling guilty!

If you've done Teshuva, the Aveira is not on you. Hashem took it. After Yom Kippur, we go home happy. Our Aveiros are gone. **Teshuva brings light, not darkness.**

We say ‘Vehoser Satan Milfaneinu Umeachareinu’ – ‘Remove the Satan from before us and from behind us.’ We ask Hashem to help us before we fall into Aveira, *but also afterwards*. Because sometimes the biggest trap lies after we do the Aveira – the darkness of guilt.

The Sefarim tell us that very often, the Yetzer Hara isn’t only the Aveira itself. *It’s how you react after your fall*. It’s dealing with the endless cycle of guilt the Yetzer Hara tries to put on a person, which makes him sin again and again.

Don’t get locked in by the Yetzer Hara. Carry on with life. Do Teshuva with Ahava.

But once we are saying ‘Do Teshuva MiAhava’, what does that actually mean on a simple level?

There was a boy whom I got to know when he was only 12 years old. Even then, I could see that something was going downhill. I invited him and a few other boys over for Cholent, and it became a weekly thing. Eventually it dwindled to only him, and we created a beautiful connection.

He struggled mightily. He wasn’t doing well. For two years, I thought my job was to reconnect the father and the son. I tried many, many times. Nothing doing.

After a while, he went on his own path. I didn’t see him as often. A month or two passed, and I got a call from him, “Can I come over?”

He came over, sat in the hammock and spoke. Suddenly, he said, “I want to speak to my father. I want to make it up again.” I was shocked. “What do you want from me?” I asked him. He knew exactly what he wanted. “I want a proper meeting. Can you set it up? If you arrange it for an hour from now, I will spend the time until then writing a letter to them and thinking about what I want to say.”

Of course, I agreed. But deep in my heart, I was sure he'd call a minute later to cancel. But he didn't. I called the father, who was even more shocked than me. We both knew that he might not end up showing up. We also both knew that we still had to try our hardest.

We set up a place and time: 8:00 in a local office. The boy wanted me to be there, so I arrived with the parents. 8:00 came and went. We waited. 8:15 came and went. We kept waiting.

The room was thick with tension. No one spoke. Suddenly, my phone broke the silence. It was him, waiting downstairs, wanting to speak to me.

I went downstairs and there he was, leaning against a car. "I'm not ready to go upstairs yet." I waited with him as time ticked on. Finally, he was ready. It was 9:00 by now. He started going up the stairs.

It was a very hard moment for me. I had invested an incredible amount of time and energy in this boy, and right then, felt very emotional. I wanted to stay downstairs, but he refused.

We went upstairs and walked down the corridor. Suddenly, I stopped. It was too much for me. "I'll stay right outside the room. If you need me, call my name."

He went ahead himself; I was just outside. What happened next shook me to the core.

He went right up to his father, gave him a huge hug, and they both started crying. Loudly. He then went up to his mother, gave her a huge hug, and between sobs said, "Sit down." The boy had not spoken to his father in two years. All his mother had heard from him was "Pick me up" or "Come fetch me."

Now, they sat down opposite him. He pulled out his phone and started reading. "Dear Daddy, I want to say sorry for..." and he

continued by listing every wrong thing he had done in the past two years. With tears streaming down his face, the father kept saying, “It’s fine, you don’t need to keep on reading,” but he just went on and on. Then he turned to his mother. “Mammy, I want you to know that every time you gave me a lift and I got angry, every time you sent me in a sushi platter and I sent you a video of me throwing it on the floor, every time...” He went through all the love his mother had shown him, and how he had reacted in anger.

I was there, and I can tell you one thing: There was Teshuva MiAhava going on in the room. There was so much Ahava – it was palpable. The father didn’t need to keep saying, “It’s fine, it’s fine, you don’t need to keep going...” The Ahava in the room was enough to show that.

When he was writing this letter, this boy felt guilt. He felt regret. It was sincere Teshuva. But there was no Ahava yet.

Once he was in the room with his parents, that’s when the Ahava happened. The second he gave his parents a real hug, and he shed real tears with them, *that* was Teshuva MiAhava.

That’s what R’ Tzadok HaKohen says: Teshuva MiAhava is coming back to Hashem and saying, “I want to be close to You! I want to come back!”

After this story, I felt a tremendous connection to this boy. He had transformed. I expected him to call me all the time. But he didn’t call me once.

When he came to me on Purim, we were both a bit high. “You should know,” I told him, “that at first, I was very upset with you. I poured so much into you, and then, when you reached that better place, when you reconnected with your parents, I didn’t hear from you anymore. You were gone. But then I realised something: When you were struggling, I was there to replace your father. You didn’t

have a father, so I stepped in. I was your support. Your listening ear. Your backbone. **But now that you have a father – you don't need me anymore!** And that is the biggest compliment for me!"

We have so many distractions in our lives that are taking away from our connection with our Father. Music. Groups. Bad friends. Movies. Any pleasure you've gained in the wrong way is filling in for the good pleasure you could have had.

Connection to Hashem, Yiras Shamayim and being an Ehrliche Yid is meant to give pleasure and meaning to every minute of your day. We aren't on that level, and we feel that we need other fun in our lives or we'll feel empty. But in reality, all our fulfilment can come from Kedusha.

Now let's go back to Teshuva MiAhava. If we realise how much Hashem loves us, and how much we love Hashem – and we truly contemplate and are mindful of that moment – that is Teshuva MiAhava. That is like the boy reconnecting with his father. He was accepted into his father's arms instantly.

You want to do Teshuva? You truly want to move on? You can do that through Teshuva MiAhava. Reconnecting to Hashem.

Yiddishkeit is not like Christianity where you give a priest £3,000 and all your sins are gone. You have to mean it for real. You have to do Teshuva MiAhava. But once you do that, you have truly moved on.



THE CLARITY

“You want to do Teshuva? You truly want to move on? You can do that through Teshuva MiAhava. Reconnecting to Hashem.”

In summary: Remember Who we are returning in Teshuva to – our Father who is waiting for us to return. Rather than guilt, which brings you down, work on regret, which uplifts you.

Q6

How do I relate to the ‘dark part’ of myself – the parts of me that are always making me want to do bad? The parts that are always getting me into trouble?

A6 There is a Midrash in Megillas Esther: Haman was going to hang Mordechai on a tree. Hashem saw that, and knew that what would actually happen would be the opposite: Mordechai would hang Haman on a tree. So Hashem went to all the trees and said, “Who wants the privilege of hanging Haman?” Each tree came forward with a reason why it should be chosen. A fig tree said it should be chosen, because Klal Yisroel are compared to figs.

A pomegranate tree said it should be chosen, because Klal Yisroel are compared to pomegranates. Many trees came forward, until the thorn bush spoke. “I am a thorn bush. I have nothing positive. Use me to hang the Rasha who has nothing positive. Use the thorn to hang up the thorn.” Hashem took it immediately and said, “I am taking you, because you were prepared from Sheishes Yemei Bereishis for this purpose.”

There is a stark question here: If this tree was prepared from Sheishes Yemei Bereishis, why did Hashem go to each tree and ask them? Why didn’t Hashem go straight to the thorn bush?

Every single person has different ‘trees’ inside them. An Esrog tree that helps them do Mitzvos. A fig tree that helps them feel good.

And somewhere, deep down, they have a thorn tree. A tree that makes them do bad.

A person thinks: I will serve Hashem with my Esrog tree. I will do Mitzvos with my fig tree. *I will serve You with every tree I have.* But my thorn tree is going to stay quiet – I can’t serve You with that.

That's not right. You *can* use your thorn tree – to kill the thorns. You *can* use the bad inside of you – to kill the bad.

The bad inside you isn't there to make you do bad. *It's there to make you kill the bad.*

Hashem didn't go to the thorn tree and ask it if it wanted to be used. That Bechirah was left up to the thorn tree itself – if it hadn't come forward, another tree would have been used. It was up to the thorn tree.

But when the thorn tree chose to come forward, then it was told “For this you were created!”

You didn't get the thorn tree inside you to fall. **You got it to grow.**

You don't get Nisyonos to fall. **You get Nisyonos to draw close to Hashem.**



THE CLARITY

“You don’t get Nisyonos to fall. You get Nisyonos to draw close to Hashem.”

In summary: The stuff inside you that you think is bad is there for a good purpose – so that you can overcome it.

Q7

If Teshuva is so powerful and can return the person to the level they were on before the Aveira – or higher – then why is a girl thrown out of school when a smartphone is found in her pocket?

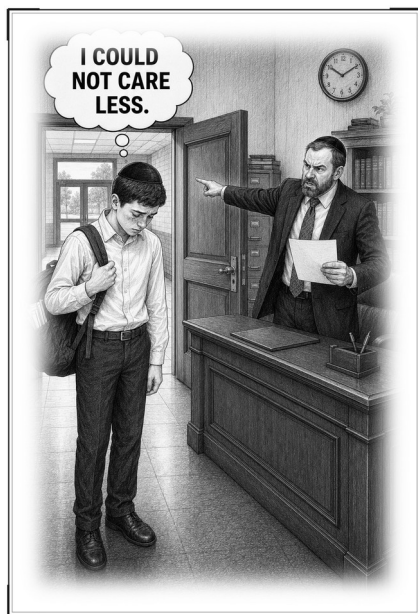
A7 I spoke to the Hanhala of a Yeshivah recently about this. “Look,” I said to them. “If you find a boy with a smartphone, what will you do? You will throw him out. What message does that give him? It gives him the message that he is a bad boy, that he is a failure. Do you think he is then going to go home and overcome the Nisoyon? He will go out and buy another smartphone! Instead, say to him, ‘You fell. It’s okay to fall.

If you are ready to grow from this, I am here for you. If not, we have a responsibility to the school. You have your Nisyonos, and I don’t devalue you for them, but the person sitting next to you is not meant to have the Nisoyon of a smartphone. So, unless you are ready to do everything you can to overcome this now, it won’t work for you to be here.’”

I am not ready to work with people who think that a child is not allowed to struggle. You are allowed to struggle – as long as you realise that you grow through your struggles if you view them properly.

In answer to your question: Sometimes a pupil is thrown out because the school doesn’t know what to do.

Other times, the school is worried about the other pupils. And still *other* times, the pupil is so chutzpadik and unworkable when asked about it, that it seems like there is no one to work with.



THE CLARITY

“You are allowed to struggle – as long as you realise that you grow through your struggles if you view them properly.”

In summary: There are many parts to every story, but remember: You are allowed to struggle.

PART 2 • Questions 8–14

Q8

Is it wrong to have opposing thoughts? To want to do Teshuva, and at the same time be pulled to continue doing the Aveira?

A8 Well, it's not *wrong* to have opposing thoughts; it's just *human*. Take a teenager who genuinely wants to do Teshuva. Although they truly want to move up, they might simultaneously want to continue the fun they've been having.

It's like a kid sucking a lolly on the way to the dentist. She knows she's going to have a filling, but she can't stop herself from licking that lolly.

The fact that you want to do bad tells you one thing: Congratulations, you're human. The fact that you want to do good tells you something else: You're a Yid.

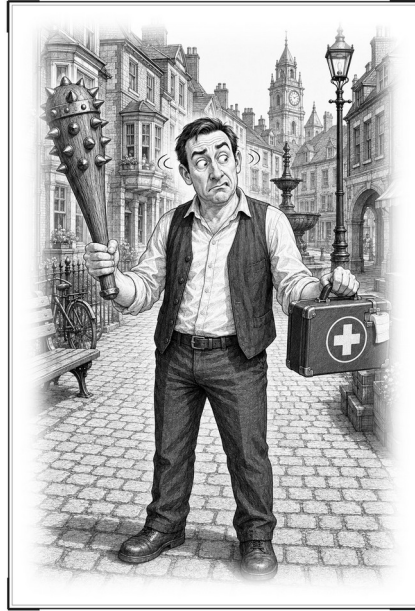
Do you have a split personality disorder? Do you lead a double life? No – you don't have a double life, *you have a Yiddishe life*.

Your Yetzer Tov is telling you to do Teshuva; your Yetzer Hara is telling you not to. You aren't your Yetzer Hara or Yetzer Tov – but you have both of them *in you*.

You also have to realise a strong point: **Your thoughts aren't you**. Of course, you have to try to build boundaries. You have to try to do what you can. Without going too deeply into it, I can tell you one thing: You aren't your thoughts, and when you do have a bad thought, you should push it aside so it doesn't become part of you.

(But here's the funny thing: **Really, the Yetzer Hara and Yetzer Tov are taking you to the same goal – towards Hashem**. It's the Guf that translates the Yetzer Hara's pull away from Hashem.)

It's completely normal to have opposing thoughts. It's part of having Nisyonos, and you will *always* have Nisyonos. But you can keep being Mechazek yourself to keep going.



THE CLARITY

“The fact that you want to do bad tells you one thing: Congratulations, you’re human. The fact that you want to do good tells you something else: You’re a Yid.”

In summary: Being pulled to both good and bad isn't leading a double life – it's simply being human. You will always have Nisyonos, but remember that your thoughts aren't you. Keep going.

Q9**What about someone who has influenced others to do bad? How do they do Teshuva?**

A9 That is one of the things for which the Gemara says there is no Teshuva. But we need to understand this.

Imagine someone stuck in a ghetto in wartime, starving. One day, they find a few scraps of potatoes outside. They are ecstatic! Then they stumble upon a person lying on the ground – taking their last breath from starvation. If they know that they themselves won't survive without these potatoes, they follow the rule of Chayecha Kodmin – a person's own life comes first. They eat the potatoes.

In every generation, there is a different Nisoyon Hador. A different war. In some generations, it was Shemiras Shabbos. Even though some individuals nowadays might struggle with Shemiras Shabbos, it's not the Nisoyon Hador – it's not our *generation's* war.

Our war is largely in the technological and visual arena – what we see. What we are part of.

Say there was a girl who brought a smartphone into the dorms. She watched. Her friends watched. Some of *them* went and bought a smartphone.

Now she wants to do Teshuva. But four of her friends have phones. What does she do next?

Take a smaller example. A teenager watched a movie over Bein Hazmanim. They loved it. They told all their friends about it, and then *they* went and watched it. Now this teenager wants to do Teshuva, but how can they do so when their four friends have that video in their minds?

Now, I say this with care, because it has to be understood. But in moments of war, of life and death, *you come first*.

You drop it. You do well. You carry on. When your friends see that, they will follow.

About someone who kills someone else, the Torah says, ‘Megalgelim Chov Al Yedei Chayav.’ ‘That person was meant to die, and the killer was chosen to kill him.’

Of course, he is still responsible, and the concept of Yediah and Bechirah is one that we will never fully understand. But that person was meant to die.

To start with, you have to worry about yourself. Once you are in a better place – a *much* better place – you might want to go up to those friends and say, “I’m sorry about what I caused, I feel really guilty. Do you want to go on a journey together?”

You don’t have to go and snitch on them. That’s not fair – they’ll get into trouble. You can talk to them. You can try to get them to see your new point of view. **But the main thing is that you continue growing.**



THE CLARITY

“Now she wants to do Teshuva. But four of her friends have phones. What does she do next?”

In summary: Even if you have influenced others to do bad and are finding it hard to move on, drop it and move onwards and upwards.

Q10 What about someone who has experienced so many low moments, someone who is very far away from where they should be? Teshuva can feel so daunting!

A10 Sometimes a person feels very far gone, and they want to make their way back. Imagine someone walking somewhere who has gone past where he was meant to stop. He's missed it – but he wants to get back! There are two ways back. Either he can go the long way – walk and walk straight ahead. Since the world is round, he will eventually reach it. But there's a much quicker option – he can simply **turn around**. That will get him back much faster! (Dubno Maggid)

So too, sometimes a person is very far gone; he's cut the hole inside him so many times. **But if he makes a decision to change**, it might not take a day, but he's on the path to success. **All it takes is a real decision to change, to turn around**. Because really, when you feel like you've gone so far away from Hashem, He is right behind you.

Three years ago, you might have felt like the most special girl ever. You davened Shacharis, Mincha and Maariv every day. But you fell. And now you feel so far away. But you desperately want to get back to that place. 'It might take me 20 years,' you think, 'but I will get back there.' But at every step during that long, hard struggle, you will feel like a failure. You still haven't reached it.

All that is if you do Teshuva MiYirah.

But you have another choice.

You can do Teshuva MiAhava. You can turn around, cry and 'hug' your Father. Then, you will get back to where you started.

A Nisoyon and an Aveira are not physical things. They're spiritual. And you have to believe that when you've done Teshuva MiAhava, *it's actually gone!*

I was once at the Kever of R' Meilich of Lizhensk with 15 boys. These boys had each done Aveiros. They all had stuff they'd done wrong. I sent out all the other staff that were there, and I sat with these boys for two hours, working upwards and upwards and upwards. I have probably never been on such a spiritual high with these boys. At the end of the two hours, we felt a tremendous clarity. It felt like we could never do an Aveira again. It was magic.

At that moment, a thought popped into my head: I am still going to struggle with my Yetzer Hara. People will still test my patience. I will still have to work on myself. *How would I cope with that?*

I turned to the boys around me, all on such a high. "You have to know that when you are on such a spiritual high, *that is the real you!* You feel a tremendous connection to Hashem. It's a gift. **But now you have to continue living!** You can't live your whole life on such a high. But know that it's there, and when you are in a moment of Nisoyon, tap into it."

Teshuva MiAhava doesn't mean you will turn into a Rebbetzin overnight. It means you will live *your* life – with more meaning and purpose and connection.

The Pasuk tells us about Teshuva: 'Ki Karov Eilecha Hadavar Meod, Beficha Ubilvavcha Laasoso.' **Teshuva is easy. Just do it.** It has to be real. But you can do it.

You've had low moments. But let's try to reframe them – they might not be as low as we think – because we can connect to Hashem from *wherever* we are:

The Dubno Maggid gives us another Mashal: Imagine you are lowering a bucket into a well. You lower it and lower it and lower it – but never hit any water. Your patience runs out, and you give up. In that case, every bit of lowering went to waste. You didn't get anything from it!

But if you had kept going, lowering and lowering the bucket, until you hit water, then that water is very precious! It's worth a lot! You spent so much time reaching it!

If you've found connection to Hashem in your very low moments, that connection is very powerful, meaningful and longer-lasting. That is why a Nisoyon is so meaningful.

That's one of the reasons that addiction is so powerful – because a person has connected to it in a very low moment. He's created a void in himself that's huge. He will have to get over that extreme low moment that started him on the drugs, before overcoming the addiction.

On the flip side, if you take a low moment to connect with Hashem, your connection to Hashem will be extremely powerful!

I am going to tell you something very powerful – something you need to carry in your heart always:

The Tzidkas HaTzadik says: 'Just like we are all commanded to believe in Hashem, so too, every person has to believe in himself.'

The Tzidkas HaTzadik continues by explaining: The reason you should believe in yourself is because Hashem believes in you. He created you for a purpose. At no moment in your life are you 'useless' to Hashem.

Emunah means believing in something, even if we can't see it. So too, even if everyone around you sees you as a failure, and in certain ways, you are, **you have to believe in yourself!**

The most important thing a person has to have after Emunah in Hashem is Emunah in himself. **You are here for a purpose – you can fulfil that purpose – and your life is not a mess because of what you might have done.**



THE CLARITY

“A Nisoyon and an Aveira are not physical things. They’re spiritual. And you have to believe that when you’ve done Teshuva MiAhava, it’s actually gone!”

In summary: Once you have made the decision to do Teshuva and turn around, you are on the path to your Father. Teshuva is easier than you think – and no matter how low a person feels, he can utilise that very low moment to come very close to Hashem.

Q11 But for someone very far gone, will it take a super long journey of Teshuva to make it back? Because that would feel so overwhelming...!

A11 The Dubno Maggid says that Hashem relates to us like a mirror. If you look into a mirror, you will see a person in the mirror. If you take one step back, the person in the mirror will also, so now you are two steps apart. If you take another step back, you are four steps apart. Another step back, you are six steps apart. **But: how many steps forward do you need to take to bridge the six steps? Only three.**

As soon as you start moving forward, the mirror image comes forward also.

We just need to start moving forward, no matter how far we've fallen, and we will see that the way back is quicker than we imagine. Sometimes we feel so far from Hashem. But when we start retracing our steps, Hashem is there, waiting for us.

He hasn't moved further away; as with a mirror, it only appears to us that we are so far apart.



THE CLARITY

“But when we start retracing our steps, Hashem is there, waiting for us.”

In summary: Even if someone is very far gone, once they start doing Teshuva, the gap closes quicker than they can imagine.

Q12 What happens if you do proper Teshuva on an Aveira, but a few weeks later fall back into that Aveira again? What then?

A12 After Neila, everyone is sure they are never going to sin again. They are sure they will stay pure for the rest of their lives. Somehow, Purim comes around, and...

Is it fake? Is it real?

We've done this every year on Yom Kippur. But somehow, we do fall.

Sometimes, you are doing something wrong on your computer, and you feel really guilty. Then and there, you promise yourself – never again. For the next month, you keep to your word. The month after that, you do the same. But a few months later, you find yourself in the same situation.

Was the promise real?

First, on a simple level: The Satmar Rebbe tells us that if you never wash your clothes... you won't have any friends. When you put your soiled clothes in the washing machine, you know they will get dirty again. So what's the point of washing them?

Because if you don't continue to clean them, the dirt will get deeper, more ingrained, and eventually, impossible to remove.

Whenever you do proper Teshuva – whether on Yom Kippur or any other time – you are going in the washing machine. You come out with a clean slate.

Secondly, whenever you do Teshuva, it's as if you've closed a link in the chain, and started a new one. You will never have a life without Nisyonos. Compare it to a computer game: When you do

Teshuva, it's as if you've reached level 2. But there will be new Nisyonos in level 2!

Hashem gives Nisyonos to Tzadikim. Hashem gives Nisyonos to those He wants to draw close. **So having Nisyonos after you have done an Aveira is a good thing – Hashem wants you to come even closer.**

You aren't a fake. Your Teshuva was real. You said you won't do it again – and you won't – because you won't do the same Aveira with the same intention as last time. You might fall. You might do something you don't want to. But when you promised yourself that you won't do it again, you were saying "I don't want this." And you *don't*. Hashem gave you the Nisoyon again, and you fell. But your Teshuva was not in vain. You aren't back at square one. Even if you fall again, **your Teshuva remains!**

R' Tzadok HaKohen says: When you build a tall building, and at the end, you fall off, **the building doesn't come down with you!** The building stays standing.

Life's a journey with ups and downs. **But the Teshuva you do, the connection you work on, that stays forever.** The good you have done is yours forever.

It's a normal thing to fall. But you have to remember – you aren't back at the same place you were. You are on a higher level, struggling with something else.

When you go swimming underwater, you come up every few minutes to breathe. Why do you come back up again if you keep going back under? Because if you want to survive underwater, you have to continue breathing! If you want to survive in this world, you have to continue doing Teshuva!

Everyone is a Baal Teshuva – if you aren't one yet, become one! (The Kotzker.)



THE CLARITY

“So having Nisyonos after you have done an Aveira is a good thing – Hashem wants you to come even closer.”

In summary: Life is full of ups and downs, but sincere Teshuva is real and remains forever.

Q13

We are told by teachers that someone who does wrong and falls will end up going to Gehinnom. Is that true?

A13 This is a hard one.

I can tell you that it's all fine, you can do what you want, then just give a little krechzt and you will be fine – out of Gehinnom. I can go the other way, and tell you that for every wrong thing you do, you will go to Gehinnom.

I don't want you going home and thinking you can do what you want. But I also don't want you going home depressed.

Point 1: There will be a point in your life when you will realise that you have fallen. You will need to get back up again and try again. At this point, it would be very bad to fall into a pattern of guilt and hopelessness. *'I have fallen anyway. What's the point of getting up now? I have done something really wrong, and I will anyway end up falling again...'*

Like we said – we wash the clothes that we wear, even though we know that they're going to get dirty again. We don't just leave them to get dirtier and dirtier until they reach a place of filth. We know they will get dirty again – but we still keep cleaning them.

In your journey through life, there will be falls. **But you need to keep coming up to clean yourself.**

Point 2: Ultimately, the One we will need to give Din V'Cheshbon to is Hashem. And Hashem knows **everything**. He knows all the times you *didn't* watch, you *didn't* pick up the phone, you resisted the temptation to watch a movie. Your teacher only knows the time you fell.

The 'downs' are part of your growth through the teenage years. I'm sorry to break it to you – but until age 24 you are not totally

mentally developed. **You will fall.** And those falls will build your resilience for life. They will help you when IY’H you are a parent of children and have had a baby keeping you up all night, little kids who need breakfast at 7:00 and a teenager driving you mad from the couch – all at once.

At your stage, it’s natural to want to do bad. It’s natural to fall.

But here’s the key to dealing with the falls:

As long as you get up and move forward after falling, you don’t need to feel guilty about what you have done. You will do Teshuva on Yom Kippur. You must continually push aside and move past the falls, and **move forward.**

Yes, you might have fallen and watched something you shouldn’t have. You might have done something you shouldn’t have. **But now, put it aside, keep strong and MOVE FORWARD.**

This way, you will move way beyond what you have done. But if you stay stuck with what you have done, and your fear of Gehinnom stops you moving forward, you will do worse and worse – why not? You are a bad person anyway.

Try this on one of your little siblings who is disturbing your Shabbos Shluff. If you turn them into a bad kid who’s always annoying you, they will do worse and worse. But if you turn them into a good kid and treat them with positivity, they will live up to that.

Treat yourself positively after you fall – and move on.

I once helped a boy who was struggling very hard. Once he was in a better place, I asked him a question. “I am now starting to help a boy who struggles very hard with technology. Tell me, of all the things we spoke about, what was the most powerful? What helped you most?”

The boy's reply was very telling: "You told me that a Nisoyon means that Hashem wants to connect with me. While I am struggling, and sometimes falling, Hashem keeps giving me Nisyonos – even then, *Hashem keeps wanting to connect with me!*"

When we face a Nisoyon, it's Hashem asking us to connect with Him. And even if we fail, another Nisoyon will pop up. Hashem will never give up on us – He will keep giving us Nisyonos, even when we fall. Hashem **always** wants us to come close and connect with Him – He gives us opportunities to come close to Him through Nisyonos, *even when we have fallen!* By the fact that the temptation continues, you know that Hashem wants you **in your current state**, after you have fallen!

When we are struggling in a Nisoyon, it can be very powerful to remember this. **The actual Nisoyon is *from* Hashem, Who wants us to come close.**

Instead of thinking about Gehinnom, think about this!

Gehinnom is for people who fall and don't come back. For people who don't care about Hashem Chas Veshalom.

It's true that you fall. But you care about Hashem. And you get up after you fall. You might get punished for bad stuff. But if you use your lows to continue growing, then why would you go to Gehinnom? When you use the bad things you did in your youth as stepping stones to move on, they become part of your journey upwards!

If you have ever gone into a fancy doctor's office, they have all the diplomas up on the wall; first the high school one, and then all the ones that followed. Why do they put the high school one up – aren't they embarrassed? But no, the high school one was stage one, after which all the others followed. **Don't be embarrassed by stage one!** *That's what brought you to where you are today!*

There is no excuse for doing what you want – that’s not growing. But the times you *do* fall, don’t get too dragged down – use them as stepping stones to grow! Why would you go to Gehinnom for using it to grow? Gehinnom is for those who die bad.

Sometimes you might feel yourself falling and falling. But remember: It’s like a bucket being lowered into a well. It’s lowered, and lowered, and lowered. But eventually, it hits water. Then, if it gathers up the water and makes its way back up, *every bit of lowering was for a purpose*. But if it simply stays there, then the lowering was truly for no purpose. How a person uses their falls is **their choice**.

Real growth can happen in low moments.

We spoke about the Parsha of Erchin, where the Torah tells us the worth of a person, depending on his gender, age, etc.

If you had a ‘top’ girl who never does anything wrong, she would pay the same amount as someone who struggles, does things wrong and falls. They will pay the same amount even if she has just finished watching a movie she shouldn’t have, whilst the other girl just finished learning Hilchos Shabbos for 10 hours. Why? How can they be worth the same?

When you buy a cow, or a car, you don’t buy it based on the work it’s done; you buy it based on **the work it can do – its potential**. To Hashem, at any given moment, you are worth the same as a girl who has never done something wrong. Why? **Because you both have the same potential**. However low you have fallen, your potential is the same. You can grow as close to Hashem as anyone else. You just have to pick yourself up, gather yourself together, and grow.

Use this as a springboard for growth – wherever you are. When you are in pain and feel low, you can jump very high. **When you use**

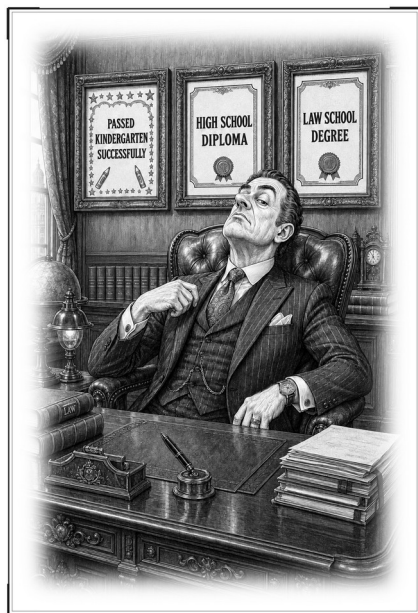
pain to reach new heights, those are much longer-lasting. The pain acts as a glue – keeping you really close to Hashem.

If you knot a string to pull someone out of a low place, the lower he is, the tighter the knot will become as you pull him out. Your connection to Hashem from a low place ‘tightens the knot’ in your connection to Hashem.

This is not an excuse to do what you want, and then plan to get close to Hashem afterwards. (As we said, the Rambam says that a person who does Aveiros knowing he will do Teshuva will not be given the opportunity to do Teshuva.)

Here we are talking about someone who falls because they couldn’t control themselves, not because they don’t love Hashem. If someone doesn’t love Hashem, that’s the worst thing, and they get the curses in Parshas Ki Savo.

But if someone is in a place where they can’t control themselves, and falls, and then finds the strength to come back up again, the connection will be **very tight** – and **very real**.



THE CLARITY

“When we are struggling in a Nisoyon, it can be very powerful to remember this. The actual Nisoyon is from Hashem, Who wants us to come close.”

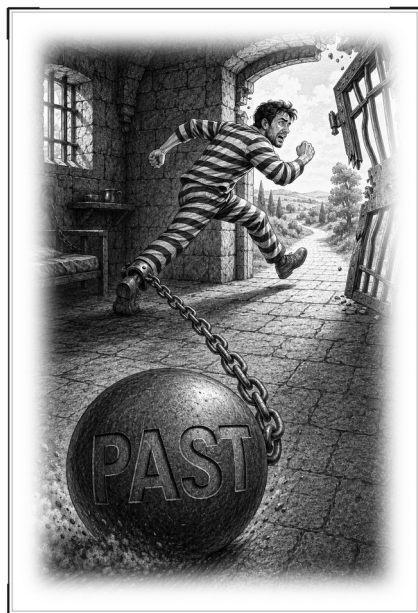
In summary: Don't let the Yetzer Hara get you down with endless thoughts of Gehinnom. You fell? Get up. Move forward. And always remember: Nisyonos are from Hashem, Whom you love, and Who loves you.

Q14

How do I stop my past from stopping me from growing? I messed around in high school, but now I'm going to Yeshivah and want a new start...

A14 If you don't accept your past, you can't have a future. Nothing that ever happened will stop you from growing – *unless you don't accept that it happened*. If you don't accept it, it will always bog you down. It doesn't mean you were a Tzadik for doing what you did, but now, do Teshuva and move on.

There is Teshuva for a reason, and we have to believe in this power of change.



THE CLARITY

“There is Teshuva for a reason, and we have to believe in this power of change.”

In summary: Accept your past, believe in the Teshuva you have done, and move forward.

PART 3 • Questions 15–21

Q15

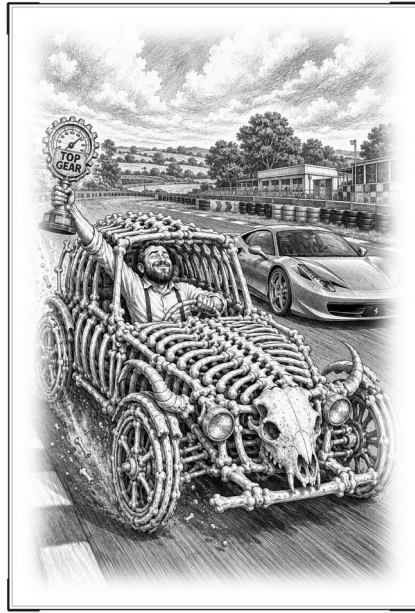
But what if you are ready to accept your past, do Teshuva and move on, but the people around you are not?

A15 If you know what Top Gear is, you might know that one of the contests is to create a car from scratch, out of whatever material the participants want. One person made a car completely out of animal bones. One person made it out of grass.

Now, imagine if one of those contestants was driving their car made of animal bones and saw a friend driving along in a new Tesla. Their car looks quite horrible, and their friend looks at it in disgust: ‘Could you not rather walk? Or bike? This thing is horrible!’

But he will turn to his friend and say, “I don’t care that it’s horrible. *With this car, I won a Top Gear race.* I am trying to prove that in *this* car, which I made from animal bones, I can drive! That’s my point – to drive *this* car with tremendous pride!”

If you know yourself, and accept your journey 100%, then other people will accept you. And even when they don’t, you will be fine with it, because you *chose* this mission. You know it’s your mission.



THE CLARITY

“Their car looks quite horrible, and their friend looks at it in disgust: ‘Could you not rather walk?’”

In summary: Accept yourself, and your journey, fully. Then others will accept you, and even if they don’t, it won’t bother you!

Q16

But what if the fact that people aren't recognising that I want to change is impacting me, for example, hurting my chances of getting into Sem/Yeshivah?

A16 You always need to know that whatever people say about you or your past, whatever happens is in Hashem's hands.

Here's a Mashal that can help you when others don't recognise how you have changed, and it's affecting you, e.g., getting into Yeshivah.

Let's say you're stranded in the desert with a friend. For miles and miles, all you see around you is desert. You each have one drink bottle. You're walking and walking in the endless expanse, when your friend turns to you. "I need some space, you're literally the only person around, and I've spent hours with you. Can I go on ahead a bit?" You nod your consent and watch as she goes on ahead. Suddenly, you see a bottle of water on the floor.

You pick it up; it looks exactly like your friend's bottle! You run ahead and say, "Could this be your bottle?" Your friend holds out her hand – "Yes!" "Wait a second," you say, "give me a sign that this is in fact your bottle." Your friend stares at you – incredulous. There is literally no one else around. It's obviously her bottle; who *else's* could it be?

So too, you have to know: When something happens in your world, **it's either you who chose it, or it's from Hashem**. Through the choices you make, you are the **only** person who can affect your life. And if it's not something that you chose, then it can only be Hashem. We need to know that this is obvious – there is simply no one else it can be.

But what if you feel you are being rejected from a place that you feel is best for your growth?

After the war, a survivor made his way to America. When he got there, someone asked him, “You don’t read or write a single word of English – how are you going to find a job?!” He shrugs.

A few days later, he sees a sign in Shul, in Yiddish, that reads, “We are seeking a Shamash to clean the Shul.” This sounds perfect for him, and he meets with the president of the Shul, who asks him if he knows any English. “Um – no, I don’t know English,” he answers, “but that’s why I am here! This is a job I can do without speaking English!” The president looks down. “I’m so sorry, but we simply can’t have a Shamash that doesn’t know English. We need to liaise with Goyim, and also with American Yidden who come in without knowing Yiddish. I apologise, but it’s not going to work.”

The man leaves, fuming. Here’s a job that would be perfect for him. *What’s he going to do now?*

He goes to the marketplace and buys two spoons with the few coins he has. He shines them, and then resells them. With the money he made, he buys some more cutlery, and sells it on.

He does this again and again, building himself up. Eventually, he opens a cutlery factory. His factory becomes bigger and bigger, and he keeps employing more and more workers, all Yidden.

Eventually, he gets older, and wants to sell his factory. He meets with a very professional company in Manhattan, which is super impressed with his business.

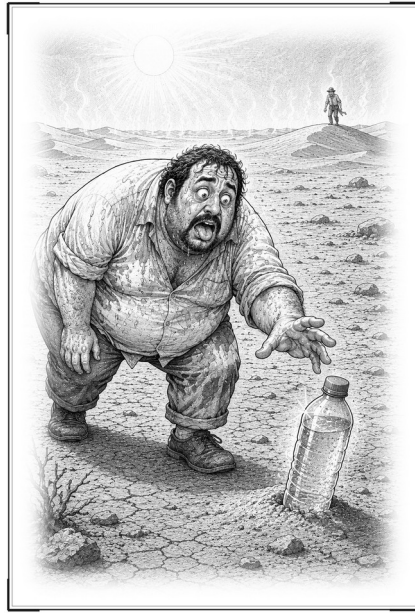
They both want to close the deal, and the company hands this man a paper to sign, which he does instantly. The company is shocked – “You’ve not read it through; how do you know what you are signing?!” He answers, “Actually, I don’t read English.” They look at him, incredulous. “If this is the success you saw without knowing English, imagine how successful you would be if you had known English!”

The man smiled. “If I had known English, I would be a janitor in a synagogue!”

You have **no idea** what Hashem’s plan is for you. This man was super upset when he didn’t get the job in the Shul. But Hashem had a much bigger plan for his Parnassah!

Especially when things are not in your control, just know that Hashem has the best plan for you! You still have to choose right – if this man had said, “That’s it, I’m going to bed. I didn’t get the job in the Shul, so I’m not doing anything,” that would be his bad choice. But he picked up and made the best of it – and realised that Hashem was waiting to send down so much Bracha from a different source.

It’s your choice how to take Hashem’s plan, ***but it’s Hashem’s plan***. No one else can affect you, no matter what they think of you.



THE CLARITY

“But what if you feel you are being rejected from a place that you feel is best for your growth?”

In summary: No person in the world can affect you, no matter what they think of you. Hashem is planning your life so you can become the best version of yourself.

Q17 I want to do Teshuva, but honestly, I've watched really bad stuff, and the images won't leave me alone. I feel like I haven't moved forward because my head can't seem to move on even though I want to...

A17 When boys speak about this, it's often because they can't learn after they watch. Girls don't need to learn. But their past can keep haunting them still.

Firstly, as we've said, moving past these images can take time. There is no fixed timetable. But how long was Yosef HaTzadik in prison?

When you take the plunge and stop doing something bad, **you have to know that it might take time**. You will struggle. The images will drive you crazy in your mind. You will feel like you are falling anyway, so you might as well watch.

But you have to know that there isn't only light at the end of the tunnel – ***there is light in the tunnel***. When you are struggling through and overcoming these thoughts, *that is your point of connection with Hashem*.

You've dug yourself a pit. But you want to get out of it. No one would say, "I have so many more steps to take that I might as well fall back down right now." **You want to get out.**

Take this time as a growth journey. The images will come back to you. You will struggle. But you will grow.

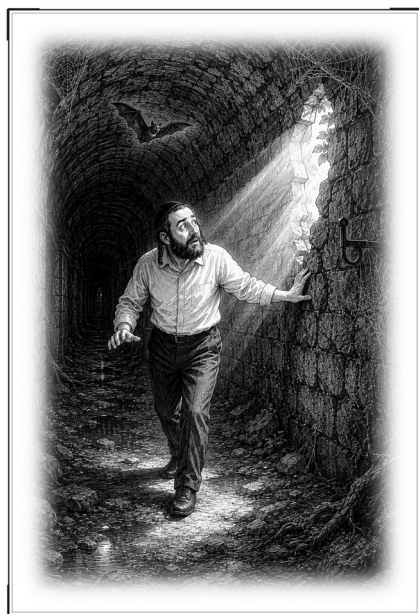
The Gemara says that true Teshuva is when you come to the exact same scenario, and overcome it. When the images and videos play in your mind, you are overcoming them and doing real Teshuva.

Eventually, you will be so proud of yourself, and the connection you gained during this struggle will remain with you always.

R' Tzadok HaKohen says: When you build a building, and then fall, the building doesn't come down with you.

Even if you fall two months in, the two clean months will be yours forever! You won't need to start again.

This time of struggle will be incredibly cleansing to your soul. And remember: There is **an end to the struggle** – and **a purpose to the struggle**.



THE CLARITY

“Take this time as a growth journey. The images will come back to you. You will struggle. But you will grow.”

In summary: Cleansing your mind from stuff you want to forget might take time and effort. But this time and effort is a beautiful part of your journey that will be yours forever.

Q18**We are told that someone who does bad things with their eyes won't merit Mashiach. Is that true?**

A18 Again, if someone continuously does bad things with their eyes, and doesn't care, and doesn't do Teshuva – I don't know if they won't merit Mashiach – but they will end up in a very bad place.

Struggling is not called doing bad things. Falling when it's not in your control is not called doing bad things. It's part of growing – if you pick yourself up and carry on. As part of our journey, we will sometimes fall. But don't let your falls make you keep falling.

Do Teshuva for what happened in the past – and that is possible no matter what happened.



THE CLARITY

“Do Teshuva for what happened in the past – and that is possible no matter what happened.”

In summary: Struggling is part of being human. It’s part of your journey. Don’t let your falls make you keep falling. Teshuva is open for everyone – do it!

Q19 **How can one do Teshuva when it feels hard to feel Hashem's love? People find it hard to connect to Hashem when the love is not physical. It's hard to feel love.**

A19 This is one of our struggles as Yidden – to love Hashem and do things for Him, when the love is not physical.

Ahava – love – comes from the word ‘Hav’, to give. **Love comes from giving, not from taking.**

But here we have a problem – how can I give anything to Hashem? Hashem is in control of everything! Hashem runs the world – there is nothing that we have that wasn't given to us by Hashem!

The answer is very simple: The Gemara tells us ‘Hakol Bidei Shamayim Chutz MiYiras Shamayim’ – everything is in the hands of Hashem, except for one thing – **our Yiras Shamayim.**

As a human being, you can only give to Hashem by doing one thing: Overcoming a Nisoyon.

Imagine you want to open a grocery store. You borrow £100,000 and invest in making this grocery the nicest one of its kind. The lights are shiny and show welcoming messages. There are robots scooting around to help customers shop. You advertise wildly – everywhere possible.

Opening day arrives, and with it a huge queue waiting outside for the ribbon-cutting ceremony. But you are nowhere to be found.

Your phone rings non-stop. Everyone's waiting for you!

You pick up your phone reluctantly and explain your absence: “I am so sorry, I spent all the money I borrowed on the décor and programming of the shop – I didn't have any left to buy food! The shelves are empty!”

You invested so much into the shop, but completely forgot about the only thing that was truly important.

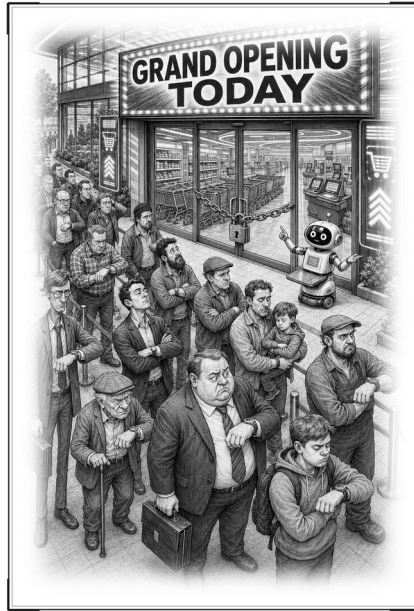
In your life, you want to try to control everything: What your friends think about you. What your parents think of you. How much you learn. How much you earn.

But when it comes to the only thing we *can* control, suddenly we can't be bothered.

There is only one thing you can control in your life: Your Yiras Shamayim. Everything else is controlled by Hashem. Your Yiras Shamayim is the *only thing that really matters*.

We have to realise – *the whole purpose of our life is to overcome Nisyonos*. Everything else is in Hashem's control.

There is only one thing in the world that we can give to Hashem: Our Yiras Shamayim. And the more we 'give', the more we will love. The more we overcome, the more we will love Hashem.



THE CLARITY

“This is one of our struggles as Yidden – to love Hashem and do things for Him, when the love is not physical.”

In summary: Giving brings love. There is only one thing we can ‘give’ to Hashem – our Yiras Shamayim. The more we overcome Nisyonos and work on ourselves, the closer we will become to Hashem.

Q20**Can someone who fell, but did Teshuva, ever be on the same level as someone who never fell?**

A20 No – the one who did Teshuva will always be higher. ‘B’Makom Sh’Baalei Teshuva Omdim, Ein Tzadikim Gemurim Ycholim Laamod’ – ‘In a place where Baalei Teshuva stand, even complete Tzadikim can’t stand.’

‘It’s not fair,’ you might think. ‘The Baal Teshuva did the Aveira, how come he is higher than the Tzadik who didn’t?’

The Pri Megadim explains: The Baal Teshuva has a harder time – he struggles harder.

Take a Baal Teshuva who used to eat in McDonald’s. Every time he goes past one of the big, yellow ‘M’ signs, he struggles. Or take a Baal Teshuva who used to be addicted to gambling. Every time he goes past a casino, there’s an internal struggle in his heart.

I don’t struggle when I go past a McDonald’s. I don’t struggle when I go past a casino.

He gets Schar for overcoming these constant Nisyonos – I won’t get that amount of Schar. It’s not as hard for me.

But we have to remember the most important point – **we can ALL become Baalei Teshuva in our own lives.**



THE CLARITY

“The Pri Megadim explains: The Baal Teshuva has a harder time – he struggles harder.”

In summary: A Baal Teshuva is on a higher level – he struggles harder and gets more Schar. Let’s all go on the path of Teshuva in our own lives.

Q21 Are my successes still counted if I fall afterwards?

A21 We all know of the famous fight Yaakov Avinu had with the Malach. We are called Klal **Yisroel**, Bnei **Yisroel**, after the name Yaakov Avinu received after this fight.

I want to ask you something: Imagine you witnessed a fight. You would see one man emerge strong, unaffected, uninjured. You would see the other man emerge injured, with a black eye. Who won?

Yaakov Avinu walked out of the fight with the Malach limping. So, it would seem like the Malach won! How can we say that Yaakov won?

And if we look closely in the Psukim, we will see that the Malach said to Yaakov Avinu, “I fought with you the whole night, and I didn’t manage. Let me at least do something...” And he struck Yaakov Avinu in the Gid Hanasheh. Why did he not do this earlier? If he was going to manage to do something to Yaakov Avinu, why not do it at the beginning of the fight?

The answer is very simple: Our aim with the Yetzer Hara is not to win the fight. **It’s to continue fighting.** The Malach can win if he wants to. *But your job is to continue fighting.*

If the Malach had not hit Yaakov Avinu’s hip, we would not have known that the Malach could have done this all along. We would not have got this message – that all we need to do is continue fighting, not worry about winning.

The name Yisroel represents not victory, but the fight. ‘Ki **Sarisa** Im Elokim’ – ‘you **fought** with the Malach.’ **We are not winners – we are warriors.**

It's a fight. You will win some, you will lose some. If you can't accept your lows, you won't have highs.

If you catch yourself in a low, remember – you aren't dead. You've fallen, but now get up and continue fighting. **Then you've won.**



THE CLARITY

“You would see one man emerge strong, unaffected, uninjured.”

In summary: Our job is not to win – it's to continue fighting. Keep going even when the going gets tough – then you have won!

CHAPTER SUMMARY

If you do Teshuva and use your falls as stepping stones, they become part of your journey upwards. Teshuva is real. You can never plan to do Teshuva before the Aveira, but once a person has fallen and then done Teshuva, they have a clean slate. They can move on. Teshuva is always possible. But doing Teshuva is like winning the lottery – do it ASAP!

Guilt is the trap of the Yetzer Hara, who will try to drag you back down to a low place, making you unable to move on. If you have done Teshuva – you are not in the same place. You have moved on! Remember Who we are doing Teshuva to – our Father who is waiting for us to return. Rather than guilt, which brings you down, work on regret, which uplifts you.

The stuff inside you that you think is bad is there for a good purpose – so that you can overcome it. There are many parts to every story, but remember: You are allowed to struggle. Being pulled to both good and bad isn't leading a double life – it's simply being human. You will always have Nisyonos, but remember that your thoughts aren't you. Keep going.

Even if you have influenced others to do bad and are finding it hard to move on, drop it and move onwards and upwards. Once you have made the decision to do Teshuva and turn around, you are on the path to your Father. Teshuva is easier than you think – and no matter how low a

person feels, he can utilise that very low moment to come very close to Hashem.

Even if someone is very far gone, once they start doing Teshuva, the gap closes quicker than they can imagine. Life is full of ups and downs, but sincere Teshuva is real and remains forever. Don't let the Yetzer Hara get you down with endless thoughts of Gehinnom. You fell? Get up. Move forward. And always remember: Nisyonos are from Hashem, Whom you love, and Who loves you.

Accept your past, believe in the Teshuva you have done, and move forward. Accept yourself, and your journey, fully. Then others will accept you, and even if they don't, it won't bother you! No person in the world can affect you, no matter what they think of you. Hashem is planning your life so you can become the best version of yourself. Cleansing your mind from stuff you want to forget might take time and effort.

But this time and effort is a beautiful part of your journey that will be yours forever. Struggling is part of being human. It's part of your journey. Don't let your falls make you keep falling. Teshuva is open for everyone – do it! Giving brings love. There is only one thing we can 'give' to Hashem – our Yiras Shamayim. The more we overcome Nisyonos and work on ourselves, the closer we will become to Hashem.

A Baal Teshuva is on a higher level – he struggles harder and gets more Schar. Let's all go on the path of Teshuva in our own lives. Our job is not to win – it's to continue fighting. Keep going even when the going gets tough – then you have won!

PRACTICAL TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Teshuva is possible for everyone. Do Teshuva MiAhava and you are a completely new person.
- ✓ Our goal is not winning – it's fighting. So keep at it!
- ✓ Build up your love for Hashem through overcoming Nisyonos.
- ✓ You may have seen things that are hard to move on from. Don't let the Yetzer Hara draw you down with guilt – remember that it may take time, but this cleansing is a beautiful part of your journey.

CHAPTER 4 WORKSHEET

TURNING A FALL INTO GROWTH

You do not need to write private details. The purpose is to choose one honest step forward.

1. What is one area where I still feel pulled backwards by the past?

2. What would helpful regret tell me to do – and what would unhelpful guilt tell me?

3. What strength or lesson can I carry forward from this struggle?

TURNING A FALL INTO GROWTH • CONTINUED

4. What is one practical step of Teshuva I can take now?

5. What person, boundary or routine can help me keep going?

MY ONE STEP TODAY:

Date: _____ Review date: _____

Teenage Clarity

CHAPTER 5

RELATIONSHIPS AND TECHNOLOGY

*The impact my friends have on me,
and the impact I can have on them*



CHAPTER 5**RELATIONSHIPS AND TECHNOLOGY**

The impact my friends have on me, and the impact I can have on them

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Q1**What can I do if my friend is struggling, especially in the area of technology, and I want to help her?**

A1 This is a delicate question. It depends on many things.

But there is one point that you have to realise: They are doing what they are doing from a place of **pain**.

Imagine if, Chas Veshalom, someone's friend was diagnosed with Yenah Machlah.

There are different levels of friends: Someone who is not so close to her and just crosses paths with her might try to avoid her. Someone who is a bit closer might empathise a little bit, letting her friend know she feels for her. Someone very close will properly empathise, spend more time with her – not especially talking about her illness, but just being there for her.

A teenager struggling with tech is in pain. If you are a good friend, don't entice them. Don't give them attention for what they are doing. **It hurts them more than it helps them.** They are not happy, but if you make them feel cool about what they are doing, they will do more and hurt themselves more. Give them no attention for what they are doing. Don't talk to them about it.

If you are not a close friend, you can just leave it alone. If you only say hi to her once in a while, just keep going with that. You are not so close, so it doesn't matter that much; you don't need to get involved. If you are a close friend, **first, get your parents involved.** You have to have support. Never talk to her about her device. Even if she starts, try to get out of it.

As a good friend, I would tell her, "I can see you are in pain. I am here if you want to talk." It can feel really awkward to say this to a girl who just bought a brand-new device, **but a real friend cares.**

If she tries to tempt you with the device, use your full Az – boldness – and do it as soon as possible. You can say, “I appreciate the fact that you are in pain, **but I cannot.**” Or, “I appreciate the fact that you are in pain, but I have my boundaries.” She might smirk, but deep down, she knows you are right.

If you don’t say this at the beginning, you will regret it later.

If it’s a sibling, or a cousin who is close to you, that’s a different question, with different factors. Then you have to realise something deep:

When a parent has a child who is struggling, they have to realise that there are two people going through a Nisoyon here: The struggling child, **and the parent.**

When someone has a struggling sibling, they have to accept that, besides their sibling’s suffering, **this is a Nisoyon for them too.** There is someone in their home who is struggling, and it affects them. It hurts them. They are going through something. They can find someone to talk to about it.

It’s not wrong to feel down and crushed when someone close to you is struggling.

It’s hard to live in close proximity to someone who struggles: A sibling, an aunt, a cousin. Accept that this is a Nisoyon **for you**, separate from their struggle.



THE CLARITY

“Accept that this is a Nisoyon for you, separate from their struggle.”

In summary: A friend struggling with Yiddishkeit is in pain. If you are a close friend, support them, but don’t give them attention for what they are doing. Making clear boundaries is vital. Remember, when someone close is struggling – it’s a struggle for you too.

Q2**If someone close to me is struggling, do I need to involve my parents or my school/Yeshivah/Sem?**

A2 The worst thing you can do is simply to tattle on your friend and make them into a ‘bad girl’ or ‘bad boy’. But what *do* you do? You need to be responsible! You want to help them, and you want to keep yourself safe!

1. In such a situation, if you give attention to your friend for what they are doing, you are really, really hurting them. They would never admit it to you – but deep down, they are upset about where they are. They wish they weren’t there.

By making them feel cool, you are actually making their pain worse. **If you are a good friend, don’t give them that attention.**

It might sound cringe, but the best thing is to be open and say, “I really care about you. Obviously, what you are doing is out of pain. I want to stay your friend, so can we put some boundaries in place? I won’t see your phone. I won’t hear about it – so that I can remain your friend.”

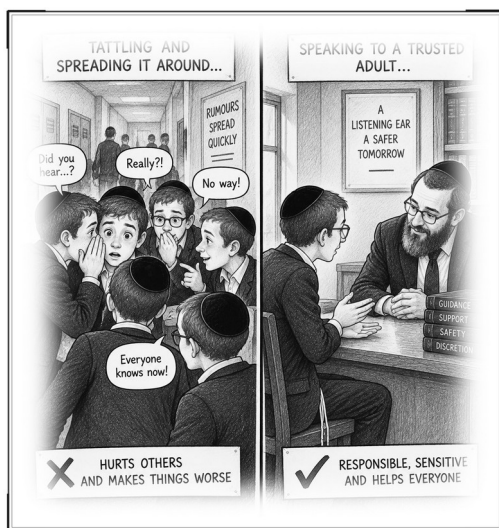
If they say no, you don’t want to remain their friend. But if they say yes, you’ve protected yourself.

2. To keep yourself and your surroundings safe, you also need to speak to a trusted adult – e.g. your parent.

3. This adult should then call a member of staff whom they know will be non-judgemental and will help keep your friend – and everyone else – safe, without just blackening anyone’s name. This is different from you simply spreading this around – rumours and bad names grow quickly, especially in a Sem, Yeshivah or school environment. It has to be handled properly. It has to be dealt with, but in a discreet, healthy way.

When you first realise that your friend is doing something wrong, you should make yourself a deadline – e.g. in a week, a member of staff needs to know.

You should build up a plan, with your parents, to help this friend, not harm them. Remember – they are doing this out of pain.



THE CLARITY

“If they say no, you don’t want to remain their friend. But if they say yes, you’ve protected yourself.”

In summary: An adult does need to be told about your struggling friend – but choose someone non-judgemental who will handle it in a discreet way.

Q3**Why does a member of staff actually need to be told? And does it always need to be this way?**

A3 I can't take responsibility for this girl not harming anyone else.

This girl might be in too much pain to give up her smartphone cold turkey. She needs to be dealt with properly – she needs someone to care about her pain.

If you just tell every member of staff, this girl will instantly get a bad name, and will likely be thrown out, in order to protect everyone else.

But if you, or your parent, tell a member of staff who you know is non-judgemental and will approach this in a non-judgemental way, that's perfect: you've protected yourself and also helped this girl.

It's not snitching; you actually care! To see if the member of staff will be non-judgemental, you can even ask them in a respectful way, "There is a girl in Sem who has a phone; what would you do with her if I told you who it is?"

You have to be careful about the adult you choose to tell. When I help a boy who is struggling in Yeshivah, I tell the Yeshivah that they will have to trust me with this boy. If I go and report everything this boy tells me back to the Yeshivah, he will lose trust in me – and it will be very hard for him to build that trust with someone else.

Be careful who you tell – that is super important. It has to be someone who will deal with it properly. It can't be someone who makes the girl into a 'case' – she might be numb and in pain, but she's a person!

You can also go straight to this girl and say, "I know you are in pain; can we go to someone to speak about this? It can be someone outside Sem..." Once she has a mentor helping her, you can back

off. The mentor can make the decision whether or not to tell Sem/Yeshivah.

Bottom line: If you know someone is in pain and doing something wrong, an adult must know. But do it because you care for them.

Now I want to speak to someone else – to the boy or girl who has a smartphone that no one else knows about: Find someone who you can trust, who won't look down on you for having temptations.

Because you aren't a bad girl for having temptations. You have to repeat that to yourself until you believe it.

You got caught up in this Nisoyon for some reason or another. You fell. Maybe it was because you were too young to stand up to the temptation. Maybe a friend brought you in. The important thing to realise now is that there is a bright future ahead.

And going on that path to that bright future doesn't mean giving everything up. It means taking a safe, secure and supported journey.



THE CLARITY

"I can't take responsibility for this girl not harming anyone else."

In summary: Yes – an adult must know about a teenager who is struggling. If it's someone non-judgemental, they will support and care for them in the best way. And if you are the one struggling in the dark, find someone you really trust – it will change your life.

Q4

How do I deal with peer pressure, when others around me tell me that something I shouldn't really do or get is really good?

A4 Do you know what Griven is? It's chicken skin (with the hair still on), fried in oil. People can eat the whole box in a go. It looks quite disgusting. If you are sitting with a group of people who are trying to convince you that it's good, it's not going to work.

I understand that here it's a little different. You *are* tempted. **The peer pressure is very real.**

If I were a principal, I would kick everyone out of school. Then, the problem of 'everyone' would disappear. Because when 'everyone' has an iPod touch, or 'everyone' has Google Chat, it's a big issue.

The line 'Everyone has it' can really bug you. But try this: Take a paper and write down who *actually has it*. Is it truly *everyone*? You will see that it's *not* actually everyone. It might be a lot of girls, it might be the 'cool' girls and it might be your group of friends. **But it's not actually everyone.**

The Mishnah in Avos says, '*Distance yourself from a bad neighbour, don't connect to an evil person and don't give up on punishments.*'

A bad neighbour is one who does damage and disrupts your life. The Mishnah says we should **distance ourselves** from them. But when speaking about an evil person, the Mishnah uses a different expression: **Don't connect to them.** Why is this?

Let's delve into an incident in Divrei Hayamim which will help us understand peer pressure.

The story unfolded between Yehoshafat, king of Yehuda, and Achazya, king of Yisroel. Eretz Yisroel was split, much like today, with Achazya ruling over the Jewish-ruled parts of Eretz Yisroel as

we know them today (and Gaza), and Yehoshafat ruling over Beis Lechem, East Jerusalem etc.

Yehoshafat was the good king, whilst the Pasuk tells us that Achazya did bad things.

Yehoshafat wanted to rebuild Eretz Yisroel, but needed gold, which was found outside of Eretz Yisroel, in Tarshish. He befriended Achazya and they built boats to transport this gold together. That night, a Nevua came to Eliezer ben Dodovoi: ‘Because you became friends with a Rasha to build the boats, Hashem will destroy the boats, and you will not be able to get the gold.’ And that is what happened.

The Meforshim say about this: Spending time with a bad friend isn’t only when you do bad things with them. ***It’s even when doing permissible things with them.***

When you are facing peer pressure, it’s too late. **You have to stop the ‘peer’ before it gets to peer pressure.** Stop connecting with bad influences, and then you won’t get pressured at all. No one gets pressured by the ants on the street: They are totally not on your level.

That’s the key to avoiding peer pressure: **Stop the peer; then you won’t have the pressure.**

Peer pressure is intensely difficult to live with – especially for girls.

Here’s a realistic scenario:

You have a friend you’ve been really close to since childhood. In fact, your parents have been friends since before you were born. You are on similar levels in Yiddishkeit; really similar in so many ways.

She comes up to you one day and says, “I’ve got hold of some movies. Let’s watch.” Now, you aren’t connecting to a Rasha here,

because you've been close friends since forever. But she might be in pain, or influenced by siblings, and she's asking you to watch movies that are totally beyond your boundaries.

You know these movies are beyond your boundaries – but it's so *immensely difficult*.

Or take another scenario: You're away with five friends, and they are all sitting down to watch a movie that you don't want to see. **It's so difficult.**

I remember grappling with peer pressure when I was an 18-year-old boy. I was in camp, and a few of us had sneaked off on our own hike. We were far away from camp and anyone else, and I remember standing outside some café. Every single one of my friends was smoking, but they each only had one cigarette – for themselves.

The peer pressure to smoke was mounting. They wouldn't sell us any cigarettes, even though we were 18, so I went up to a Goy with a £10 note and asked if he would buy me a box of cigarettes. He ran for his life.

I didn't get my cigarettes.

After we got home, I was truly happy that I hadn't smoked. Hashem helped me stand my ground. But I felt, in this situation and many others, **the real pressure in peer pressure.**

I believe that by the time you are sitting with friends, already under peer pressure, it's often too late. **The Nisoyon is before – it's all about how you *prepare* for the situation.**

And as we said before, I would **choose my peer** rather than **fight the pressure**. Not everyone needs to be your best friend. If someone is doing bad stuff, it doesn't mean she's a bad girl – it could mean that she was born on a different level from you. This feels hard to accept: If she can do it, why can't I? But we've got to

understand that we are all on different levels, and it would be wrong for you to do anything less than your level. Dropping below your level is always wrong.

You have to remember: Rising up against peer pressure will bring you **unimaginable Schar**. It means going against your very nature, especially if you are a girl.

To sum up: Peer pressure is real. I can't give you a trick to take it away. But through **making clear boundaries** and **choosing your friends well**, you can make the Nisoyon that bit more manageable to overcome.



THE CLARITY

“But through making clear boundaries and choosing your friends well, you can make the Nisoyon that bit more manageable to overcome.”

In summary: Peer pressure is powerful. Choose your peers well, so you won’t have the wrong pressures.

Q5

The fact that my friend and I are on different levels confuses me. How can something that is so terrible for me be okay for her? How come she comes out alive on the other side after doing what she does?

A5 The story is told of a father and son who were travelling. The boy was involved in illegal smuggling, and so wanted to take a roundabout, deserted route where they wouldn't meet anyone. The father wanted to take the main route.

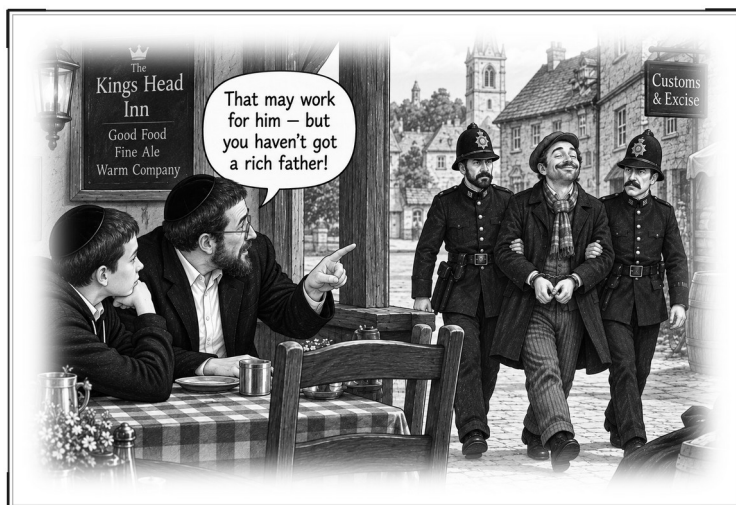
The father had his way, and on the way, they stopped at an inn, where they were shocked to see a handcuffed man being led away by two policemen.

"Why were you arrested?" they asked him. "Oh, I was caught smuggling. But don't worry, I will be out of prison in no time. My father has enough money to make sure of that!"

Wanting to teach a lesson to his son, the father said, "You see what happens to someone who smuggles?!" But the son just laughed. "He will be out of prison before you know it! His father is rich!" The father became angry. "That might be true for him, but you don't have a rich father! If *you* are caught..."

It might be true. Someone you know might be doing stuff that would be wrong for you, and somehow, they come out okay on the other side.

But that's only true for them, because what they are doing might not represent a drop in Avodas Hashem at their level. But if you do it, it could be a harmful drop for you!



THE CLARITY

“But that’s only true for them, because what they are doing might not be a drop in Avodas Hashem on their level.”

In summary: Something that might be okay for your friend could be wrong for you – you are on different levels and journeys!

Q6**If you have a struggle, is it better to keep it to yourself or should you tell someone?**

A6 This is a good question – and needs to be handled with care. Here are some points to consider:

- When it comes to telling someone about something you’ve done wrong, **trust is gold**. You’ve done something bad, but you truly regret it. You want to be good. If that person is going to look at you as a bad person, you’ll feel put down.
- It also depends on the reason you are sharing. If you are sharing with a friend just so you can show that you don’t care about what you’ve done, then it’s wrong.

But if you want to share with a friend to become better, it might be different – if you tread carefully.

- It’s not much use sharing it with someone who is in the same mess as you. It is better to share it with someone like your mother or older sister.
- There’s a saying, ‘A secret is something that’s told to one person at a time.’ If you did something bad that you don’t want your friends knowing about, don’t say it to even one of them.

The bottom line is: **keeping it inside you is not going to help**. It will make you think that you are a bad girl. It’s much healthier to share it with someone trustworthy.

There’s nothing wrong with sharing what you’ve done wrong, **as long as you are sharing it for the right reasons, with the right person**.



THE CLARITY

“Something bad that you don’t want your friends knowing about – don’t say it to even one of them.”

In summary: Sometimes it is the right thing to share – but with the right person, for the right reasons.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

A friend struggling with Yiddishkeit is in pain. If you are a close friend, support them, but don't give them attention for what they are doing. Making clear boundaries is vital. Remember, when someone close is struggling – it's a struggle for you too. An adult does need to be told about your struggling friend – but choose someone non-judgemental who will handle it in a discreet way. Yes – an adult must know about a teenager who is struggling.

If it's someone non-judgemental, they will support and care for them in the best way. And if you are the one struggling in the dark, find someone you really trust – it will change your life. Peer pressure is powerful. Choose your peers well, so you won't have the wrong pressures. Something that might be okay for your friend could be wrong for you – you are on different levels and journeys! Sometimes it is the right thing to share – but with the right person, for the right reasons.

PRACTICAL TAKEAWAYS

✓ A friend struggling with Yiddishkeit is in pain. If you are a close friend, support them, but don't give them attention for what they are doing. Making clear boundaries is vital. Remember, when someone close is struggling – it's a struggle for you too.

✓ Yes – an adult must know about a teenager who is struggling. If it's someone non-judgemental, they will support and care for them in the best way. And if you are the one struggling in the dark, find someone you really trust – it will change your life.

✓ Peer pressure is powerful. Choose your peers well, so you won't have the wrong pressures.

✓ Something that might be okay for your friend could be wrong for you – you are on different levels and journeys!

CHAPTER 5 WORKSHEET

FRIENDS, BOUNDARIES AND PEER PRESSURE

1. Is there a friendship or situation where I feel pressure to lower one of my standards?

2. What is my boundary before I am actually in the pressured situation?

3. If a friend is struggling, how can I show that I care without encouraging the struggle?

CHAPTER 5 WORKSHEET • CONTINUED

4. Who is one trusted, discreet adult I can speak to if I need help?

5. When I say “everyone is doing it,” who actually is – and who is not?

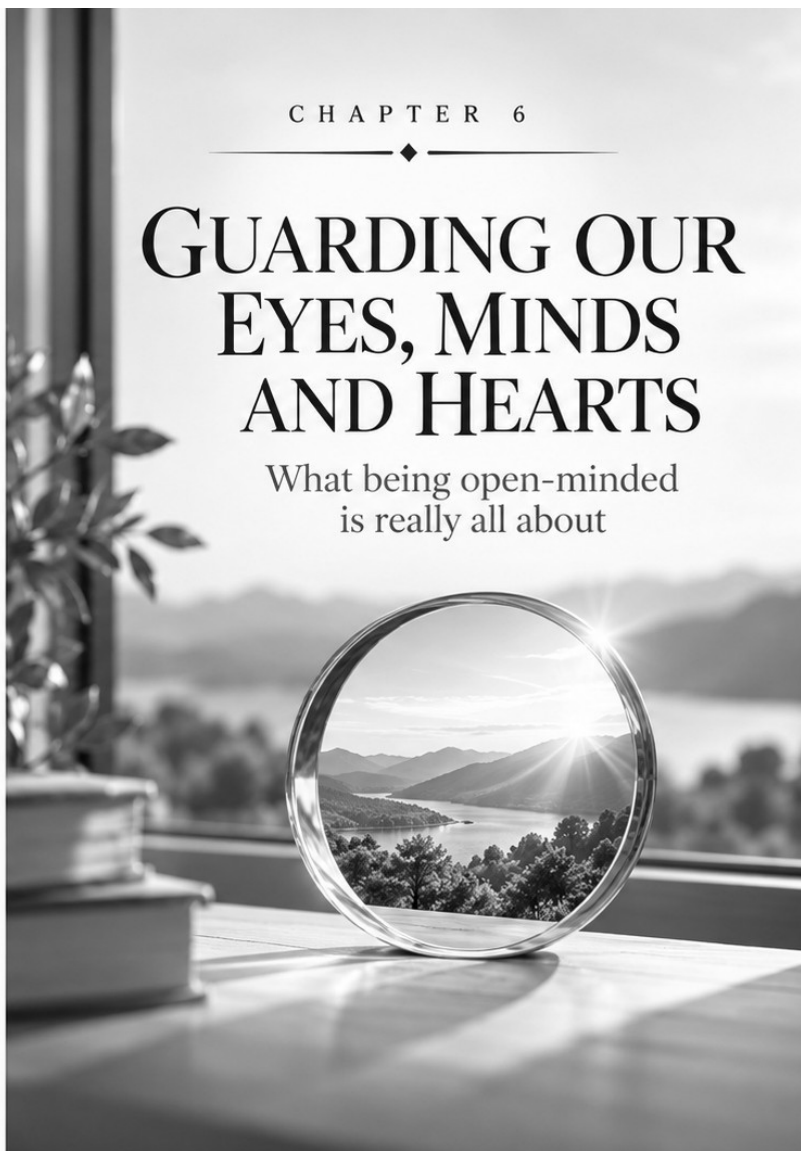
MY ONE BOUNDARY I WILL PREPARE NOW:

Date: _____ Review date: _____

CHAPTER 6

GUARDING OUR EYES, MINDS AND HEARTS

What being open-minded
is really all about



CHAPTER 6

GUARDING OUR EYES, MINDS AND HEARTS

What being open-minded is really all about

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Q1

I sometimes feel so closed-minded – I can't watch this, see that, read the other. Why can't I be open-minded, see stuff, and then decide for myself what to go with?

A1 This is a great question with a deep answer.

To answer this question, let's delve into what Shemiras Einayim actually means.

The Rambam says, *'This Mitzvah warns us not to stray after our hearts, for if we do, we will start believing things that are the opposite of what the Torah requires us to believe. Instead, narrow your mind and put boundaries around your mind... What are the boundaries? To keep the Mitzvos.'*

To keep the Mitzvah of Lo Sosuru, we have to be 'narrow-minded' in some way.

Also, how does being 'narrow-minded' help us in our journey of Shemiras Einayim?

Let's uncover the key to Shemiras Einayim.

The following is a Mashal based on a Midrash in Parshas Vayechi which will help us understand what 'narrow-minded' means:

There was a powerful king with three sons. In his time, the king ruled over the entire country, and if someone didn't like the king, he attempted to kill him.

This king looked at his three sons, ascertaining who would be best to rule next. The oldest son was a bully. The country would hate him and rebel. The youngest son was too soft to rule the country. If he were king, the criminals would take over and the country would be run by the underworld. The middle son was perfect to rule. But:

If he were crowned king, the older and younger sons would band together and rebel against him.

So, the king took his three sons and told them: “I want to tell you a secret. After 120 years, whoever has my crown is king. I want you all to sign a paper agreeing to this. Now, to rule a kingdom, you need to be clever, educated and wise. So, I am going to hide my crown, and whoever finds it is obviously the cleverest, most educated and wisest – deserving of being king.”

Each one agreed and signed that they would not rebel against the person who finds the crown. The king continued, “I have an island which is a natural, beautiful place. The crown is hidden on that island. When I say go, you can run and begin your search. But – you must agree: Whoever finds the crown first is king.”

With the word ‘Go!’, the princes run off. But the king motioned to the middle son. “Stay here for a moment – I want to tell you something. When you go to the island, ***don’t look for the crown.***” The son was flabbergasted. “But Daddy, why not? Do you not want me to be king?” The king looked at his son. “I *do* want you to be king. And that is why I am telling you – don’t look for the crown! Instead, **look for the highest place on the island.** Your brothers will go with spades and metal detectors, but I am telling you – all you need to look for is the highest spot on the island.”

The prince goes off to join his brothers, who see him empty-handed. “Where are your tools, your spades?” they ask him. “How will you find the crown without them? We have all the tools we need!” They are digging and sifting, and they see their brother going on a walk with binoculars around his neck. “We don’t understand you – you can save your sightseeing for when you are king – *why are you not using your time now to search?*”

But he continues walking and walking – he isn’t looking for the crown; he is looking for the highest place on the island. As he

climbs, scaling peak after peak, his brothers, busy searching, laugh at him. He keeps going, and after a few days, reaches the highest point on the island. **There, in plain sight, is the crown.** He places it on his head; he is king.

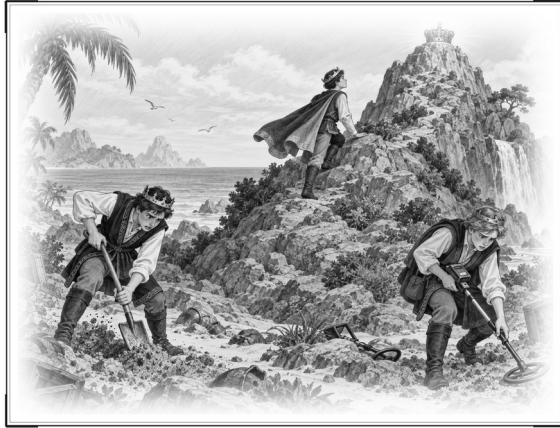
The Midrash says: A Yid comes down to this Gashmius world, with its temptations. His soul naturally seeks Kedusha. But his eyes and heart are drawn after this world – ‘digging downwards’. If he does not ‘narrow his mind’, as the Rambam says, *he will fail!*

The Goyim are also ‘looking for the crown’. They also want purpose and meaning. But the issue is, they are searching for the crown down below. They are digging downwards, following their desires, their heart and eyes. Hashem tells us, “Don’t look for the crown. Don’t look down here for pleasures. Narrow your mind – look towards Kedusha, towards the highest point. **There – the crown is found!**”

We have to ‘narrow our mind’ and look towards the highest point. We must surround ourselves with Mitzvos. Real pleasure is only in one place – **the highest spot.**

Someone who looks at a Yid and thinks ‘He is only looking in one place; he is so narrow-minded’ is forgetting that the crown **is only in one place.** And to find the crown, you *have* to be ‘narrow-minded’.

If someone is too broad and goes after all his heart’s desires, he will never find the crown!



THE CLARITY

“Let’s uncover the key to Shemiras Einayim.”

In summary: Being ‘narrow-minded’ is the only way we can reach our goal. A person who is too ‘open-minded’ will never reach the actual path to happiness and spiritual success.

Q2

The Pasuk tells us ‘Lo Sosuru Acharei Levavchem V’Acharei Eineichem.’ So much of what I know about Shemiras Einayim is related to what I can look at, yet the heart is actually mentioned first. Where does the heart come in?

A2 I want to actually add to your question to help answer it.

We said above that the Rambam tells us that this Mitzvah is actually very closely related to our **minds**.

R’ Elchanan Wasserman asks the following: If this Mitzvah is to keep our **minds** clear (as the Rambam tells us), then why does the Pasuk say ‘don’t stray after your **heart** and **eyes...**’? It should say ‘don’t stray after your mind’?

We can answer this through another question R’ Elchanan Wasserman asks: How can a young Jewish boy keep ‘Lo Sosuru Acharei Levavchem V’Acharei Eineichem’ – not to look for pleasures in the ways of the world, when professors and scientists have been grappling with the meaning and purpose of this world for years on end?! For 5,000 years, the Goyim have not managed to figure out the meaning of the world, and I have to work this out myself?

R’ Elchanan Wasserman answers: There is an Aveira in the Torah against bribery. If a judge is given a bribe, it will warp his judgement. So too, if a person has a desire to do bad things, **his mind will be bribed by what his heart wants to do**. Our hearts and eyes are naturally tempted to do the wrong things. *Because of that, our minds can’t think straight: They are being clouded and bribed.* If there were no heart and eyes, our brain would automatically think correctly.

Without the heart and eyes clouding his thoughts, a Yid – even a young one – intrinsically knows that Torah is Emes. It's only a Goy who has been following his pleasures for years and years who is so 'bribed' that he cannot see the truth at all! He eventually turns to Apikorsus, because he wants to justify what he is doing wrong.

Most times when someone believes in something wrong, or does something wrong, it is because of his heart's desires bribing his mind. That is the answer to why the Pasuk says **heart** and **eyes**, not **mind**.

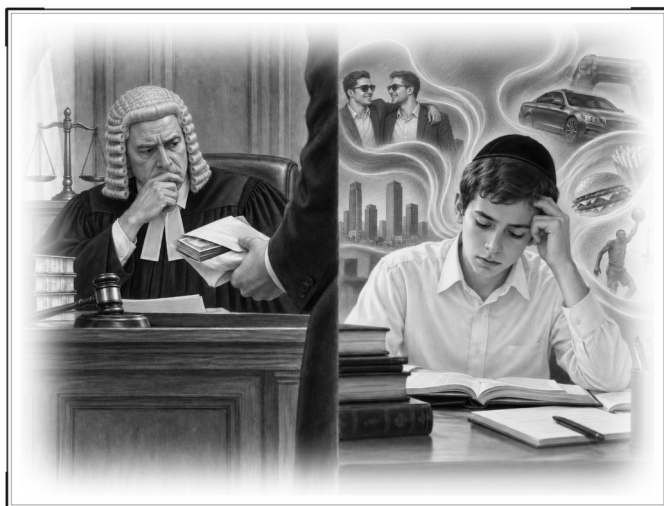
I once sat with a boy in my car, who was sadly very far from where he should have been. He told me that he had just spent three hours watching videos on the theories of the Big Bang.

I worked with him to understand why he was watching this in the first place. We came to a core realisation: He was feeling that it's hard to be a frum Yid, so he went and searched for an 'alternative'.

The scientist who made this video didn't understand the implications of what he himself was saying. He wasn't saying this theory because of what his **mind thought** – he was saying it because of what his **heart felt**. His heart had desires, and those desires clouded his mind. Then, he could justify whatever he wanted to do wrong.

We are told and warned not to follow our **hearts'** desires. It's natural to have desires, but we are not allowed to follow them. We are not allowed to let them bribe and cloud our minds from the right path.

The heart, eyes and mind are closely connected. And it's actually our hearts' desires that cloud our minds to do wrong. **By working on our hearts' desires, we are actually protecting the purity of our minds.**



THE CLARITY

“We said above that the Rambam tells us that this Mitzvah is actually very closely related to our minds.”

In summary: It’s our hearts and eyes that try to pull us and blind our minds. By working on overcoming the desires of our eyes and hearts, we can return natural clarity to our minds.

Q3

I understand that we can't see or do what we want. But I struggle to feel proud of this. Especially when I 'go out into the world' and feel like I'm 'behind' because I am a Yid.

A3 Let's talk about how the Goyim actually look at us Yidden.

This picture here shows a sculpture in York, opposite one of the biggest churches in all of Europe. York was an extremely Christian place, and this sculpture shows a 'Yid' with half-closed eyes, holding upside-down Luchos and a broken stick – naïve, backwards and broken. Then you have the image of the Christian, strong and powerful, with eyes open wide.

This image is 66% right – let's explain why:

The Midrash tells us: 'At a time when you are doing the Mitzvos – being 'narrow-minded' – you are pure, and the Ovdei Kochavim will fear you. But if you leave the Mitzvos, and look elsewhere, you will feel inferior and be embarrassed in front of the Goyim.'

Looking at the sculpture in York, we see an image that's made to make Yidden look inferior. As the Midrash just said, they did some things right in this picture – when our Luchos are held upside down, and we leave the Mitzvos, then we *are* downtrodden amongst the Goyim.

BUT: They got one thing completely the wrong way around: They made the Yid's eyes closed – as if our 'narrow-mindedness' makes us inferior. We have to know one crucial thing: ***In reality, it's the opposite.*** When our eyes are covered – and we only look at what we are meant to – *that is* when we are strong, looked up to and in our rightful place.

When we 'open our eyes' and look elsewhere, that is when we are looked down upon amongst the Goyim.



THE CLARITY

“Let’s talk about how the Goyim actually look at us Yidden.”

In summary: Although it may not always seem that way, we are actually strong and looked up to when we are ‘narrow-minded.’ It’s when we try to be open-minded that we end up being looked down upon.

Q4**Does Shemiras Einayim apply to girls?**

A4 Shemiras Einayim definitely does apply to girls, just in a different way from boys. **It means keeping away from whatever takes you away from Hashem.** And it means something different for every person.

Shemiras Einayim can bring its own challenges to girls, for whom the emotional side – the heart – can have a very strong pull. But boys have *their* own challenges. And, whatever it is, it is a mission that we must fulfil.



THE CLARITY

“Shemiras Einayim can bring its own challenges to girls, for whom the emotional side – the heart – can have a very strong pull.”

In summary: Shemiras Einayim does apply to girls – it means keeping away from whatever keeps us away from Hashem.

Q5

There are so many interesting and useful tools and stuff around – especially online. If I stay on my little ‘narrow’ path and don’t learn about them, might I be missing out?

A5 Being ‘narrow-minded’ *is the only way* we can achieve our mission in this world. The following Mashal shows how:

Imagine someone who lived 300 years ago, who had a burning desire to come to Eretz Yisroel. He tried to scrape the funds together, but it was too much for him. He couldn’t make it. Still, he learnt the Halachos that pertain to Eretz Yisroel, trying as much as he could to connect to Eretz Yisroel.

After 120, he got up to Shamayim and said, “It’s not fair: I tried as much as I could to go to Eretz Yisroel, but I didn’t manage!” He was told that he could come back down in 2025, where going to Eretz Yisroel will be much easier. He can’t believe his luck!

He is given **one day in this world** – just to go to Eretz Yisroel for one day. He arrives at the airport and is flabbergasted: Trolleys, hoovers, cars! He then sees someone put a coin into a machine and SNAP – out comes a coffee. He is totally shocked: *How can this metal turn into coffee?* And then he sees the man drinking it! Pure magic.

He takes the £200 he was given for his ticket, and goes to the money changer. There, he changes it for 200 coins. For the next few hours, he makes endless coffees, giving them out free to passersby. He has totally forgotten about going to Eretz Yisroel – when he gets back to Shamayim, he will tell them about the coffee machine!

He gets to Shamayim, where he is asked how his day in Eretz Yisroel was. He says, “I didn’t get to Eretz Yisroel, but let me tell you about this most amazing thing! A coffee machine!” They ask

him, “But what about Eretz Yisroel?” When he realises what a chance he has wasted, he feels so foolish!

In this world, there are many ‘machines’. They are all there to distract us from our real mission. They fascinate us – whilst we are busy with them, we actually think they are amazing! (Teens have asked me about using Copilot for fun. This Mashal can help us understand what a sad distraction something like Copilot can become. A real ‘coffee machine’.)

Now, imagine someone came over to this person in the airport and said, “I am covering your eyes, you won’t be able to look anywhere – I am taking you straight to Eretz Yisroel!” Is this man being nasty? No – the opposite! By covering his eyes, *he is actually enabling him to fulfil his dream!*

V’lo Sosuru – keeping on the ‘narrow-minded’ path – is actually the **best for us**, helping us achieve our REAL mission in life! If you want to go straight and right in life, make sure that it’s the Torah that you follow, not distractions or pleasures. The path of pleasures is endless – and does not bring you true satisfaction.

Like the Dubno Maggid says: Imagine you are walking along with someone, for miles and miles. Your feet feel like they are falling off... You turn to the person with whom you are walking and ask, “Where are we getting to?” He answers you, “I am walking as far as my eye can see...”

A person who walks as far as his eyes can see **will never stop walking!** A person who follows his heart and his eyes **will never be satisfied!**

As the Rambam says – you must ‘narrow your mind’ and control yourself. That’s the only path to true satisfaction. (Also see Chapter 6: Question 1.)



THE CLARITY

“A person who walks as far as his eyes can see will never stop walking! A person who follows his heart and his eyes will never be satisfied!”

In summary: There are so many distractions around that try to distract us from pursuing our real, worthwhile goal in life. Keep on the ‘narrow’ path so that you can fulfil the real mission you are here for.

Q6**Does being narrow-minded mean that I can't ask questions?**

A6 Being narrow-minded does *not* mean you can't ask questions. A Yid can ask whatever questions he wants – but to the right person.

I was in a taxi recently with a Christian driver who was busy explaining the type of Christian he was, as opposed to the other types. “Are you allowed to ask questions?” I asked him. He told me that no, they were not allowed to ask questions, because if they *did*, it meant they didn't believe.

A Yid is allowed to ask questions.

You have to know that if you're asking a question as an *excuse* to do something you want to – that's not the right way. Rather, ask how to get rid of that Taavah itself! But if you are asking a question because you really want to understand, there is no problem. The Torah is full of answers.

I was having a discussion recently with a 13-year-old boy who was grappling with questions. I told him, “Yiddishkeit is true. That is a fact – and deep inside you – you will feel it. Deep down, you don't want bad. Okay, if you have questions, the answers are there. Once you get rid of your desires, *you yourself* will *feel their truth*! In fact, when you get rid of the Taavos, you won't need the answers to all your deep questions.”

As we said (Chapter 6: Question 2), it's your desires that 'bribe' your brain so that you have an excuse to do what you want!

But as a Yid, you have to know that you can always ask.



THE CLARITY

“Being narrow-minded does not mean you can’t ask questions. A Yid can ask whatever questions he wants – but to the right person.”

In summary: A Yid can ask questions in order to understand. Remember that Taavos can ‘blind’ your mind, so get to the root of your Taavos and work on those!

Q7**As a girl, why am I to blame if a boy has a Nisoyon with Shemiras Einayim?**

A7 The point is that Lo Sosuru is not simply about avoiding things you are not meant to look at. Lo Sosuru includes things that take you further away from Hashem. For a girl, Lo Sosuru can mean attracting attention to herself through dressing in a way that is not Tznius!

That *is* the Lo Sosuru for a girl, no matter what the boy is doing.

So, when a girl takes care not to attract inappropriate attention, she is fulfilling **her very own V'lo Sosuru** – totally independent of anyone around her!



THE CLARITY

“So, when a girl takes care not to attract inappropriate attention, she is fulfilling her very own V’lo Sosuru – totally independent of anyone around her!”

In summary: By a girl ensuring that she does not attract inappropriate attention, she is fulfilling her V’lo Sosuru, independent of those around her.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Shemiras Einayim is not simply about what our eyes physically see. V'lo Sosuru is about protecting our eyes, our hearts and ultimately our minds. The Rambam teaches us that sometimes we need to 'narrow' our minds and put boundaries around ourselves. That is not weakness or being small-minded. It means knowing where we are going and refusing to be distracted from the destination. Like the prince who ignored all the digging and searching and simply climbed towards the highest point, the crown is only found in one place.

Our hearts and eyes have tremendous power over the way we think. A person may believe that he is looking at something objectively, when really a Taavah is bribing his mind and making the wrong thing seem reasonable. By controlling what our eyes see and what our hearts chase after, we protect the natural clarity of our minds.

We therefore do not need to feel embarrassed about being 'narrow-minded'. In reality, when a Yid protects himself and remains loyal to his Mitzvos, that is when he is strong. When we open ourselves to everything around us simply because the world tells us to, that is when we begin losing our own identity and direction. Shemiras Einayim applies to every Yid, although the practical Nisoyon may look different for different people.

The modern world is full of fascinating ‘coffee machines.’ technology, entertainment and endless new things can look so interesting that we completely forget where we were actually trying to go. Keeping our eyes focused is not stopping us from living – it is allowing us to fulfil the mission for which we are here. And being focused does not mean that a Yid cannot ask questions. A Yid can ask whatever he genuinely wants to understand. The important thing is to ask the right person and to make sure that the question is really coming from a desire to understand – not from a Taavah searching for an excuse.

PRACTICAL TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ V’lo Sosuru includes anything that takes you further away from Hashem – not only something that you physically look at.
- ✓ Before deciding that something ‘makes sense,’ ask yourself: Could a Taavah or desire be bribing my mind and taking away my clarity?
- ✓ Technology and fascinating distractions can become our ‘coffee machines’ – interesting enough to make us forget our real destination.
- ✓ Being ‘narrow-minded’ does not mean being unintelligent. It means being focused enough to know where your crown is.

- ✓ Shemiras Einayim applies to everyone, although what needs guarding can look different from person to person.
- ✓ A Yid is allowed to ask questions. Ask because you genuinely want to understand, and ask someone who can give you a real answer.

CHAPTER 6 WORKSHEET

GUARDING MY EYES, HEART AND MIND

You do not need to write anything private. The purpose of this worksheet is to notice what can cloud your clarity and to choose one practical step forward.

1. What is one area where I sometimes feel that I am ‘missing out’ because of my boundaries?

2. What is the real destination – the ‘highest point’ – that I actually want to reach in this area?

3. Is there a Taavah, curiosity or desire that might sometimes be ‘bribing’ my mind and making the wrong choice look reasonable?

CHAPTER 6 WORKSHEET • CONTINUED

4. What is one ‘coffee machine’ in my life – something interesting that can distract me from where I really want to go?

5. What is one practical boundary that could protect my eyes, heart or mind before I am actually in the Nisoyon?

6. Is there a genuine question about Yiddishkeit or my boundaries that I would like answered?

7. What is one small choice I can make this week that says: ‘I know where I am going’?

MY 7-DAY CLARITY PRACTICE

For seven days, notice one moment each day when something tries to pull your eyes, heart or mind away from where you really want to go. You do not need to win every struggle. Simply record one moment when you noticed the pull and made a conscious choice.

DAY	MY SMALL STEP OR WIN
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	

At the end of seven days: What helped me stay focused on the “highest point”?

Teenage Clarity

CHAPTER 7

YOUR GUIDE TO GROWING

*How to keep your journey realistic,
achievable and sustainable*



CHAPTER 7

YOUR GUIDE TO GROWING

How to keep your journey realistic, achievable and sustainable

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PART 1 • Questions 1–7**Q1****How do I know where my boundaries stand in different areas of technology?**

A1 Let's discuss three levels:

1. Things that you don't do.
2. Things that you are totally used to doing.
3. Things that you struggle with.

No one, besides yourself, knows where your levels are. I can't tell you where your boundaries should be. Boundaries should be helping us slowly, slowly move back. If you are moving forward and opening yourself to more stuff, your boundaries are in the wrong place.

On a practical note, when you are in a good and happy place, a 'high', take a paper and write down a set of boundaries for yourself. Work out clearly:

1. The things you don't do. These are not boundaries; you just don't do them at all. The 'no-go zone'.
2. The things you do.
3. The areas you struggle with. **Here** is where you should put your boundaries.

So, if you are watching for an hour a week (sadly), the boundary should be 10 minutes less, only in front of an adult etc. Make a boundary **in the area of struggle**. Slowly, slowly, you will become more and more in control.

But it's something you have to do for yourself – only you can know where you are up to.

Try to revisit this list once a week or once every two weeks. Or once a month if that's what you can do. See where you are – have you dropped, which may mean you've gone into the no-go zone? Then you need to work on growing again.

If you've remained where you were, it's okay, it's all good. And if you've grown, you know that you have moved higher and you can expect higher of yourself.

This list will help you gauge yourself and your growth.

Another powerful gain of this list of boundaries is that **you will have a clear set of 'no's'** – which will really help you when facing a Nisoyon.

I'll tell you a story to illustrate this:

I have two friends who travelled to the same Rebbe as me for Yom Kippur. They travelled back together to London; I travelled to Manchester.

One of them told me that he was very disturbed; they didn't sit next to each other but he saw the other one watching movies the entire way home! After the most uplifting time in the year – Yom Kippur with the Rebbe!

I saw this person later on in the year, and I asked him how his journey was. He admitted that he had watched movies. "I didn't really want to watch," he said, "but I started with games and then the movies came up..."

Here you have two people in the same scenario – on a plane with a device in front of them. But the first person had a boundary – he did not touch unfiltered devices. **It was a no-go zone that he wouldn't step into.** That had kept him strong, and ensured that he did not fall to watching non-Jewish movies.

Make a realistic no-go zone – something that you can keep. For some people, a no-go zone might be that they don't watch non-Jewish movies. For others, it may be that they don't watch Netflix.

Your no-go zone will act as a **powerful protection** and **help you overcome**. If you were to go away with five other girls, and one of them turns on Netflix, it will be much easier for you to say no once you have a boundary in place. (Your boundary doesn't need to come from an 'over-frum' place; it can simply be what you do.

And people will respect you for that.) But if you haven't come prepared, and you are already in the Nisoyon, it's very hard to choose right then.



THE CLARITY

“It was a no-go zone that he wouldn’t step into.”

In summary: Identify your point of struggle and make your boundaries there. Keep revisiting them, keep improving. Remember – having clear boundaries and ‘no-go’ zones will make your journey easier.

Q2**What can I do to keep myself from getting addicted?**

A2 The word addiction is misused. I highly doubt you will get addicted; I wouldn't call someone an addict so quickly.

I would reframe the question as: 'What's the best way to keep myself from getting used to something it will be hard to stop?'

The best way is *by not doing it*.

It's like someone who wants to smoke, but not get addicted to cigarettes. So don't smoke.

For someone *who is already caught up in it* and wants to stop themselves getting too used to it, **the only way to stop yourself going forward is by going back.**

A girl emailed me that she is addicted to Google Drive: How can she stop? There are ways to stop. If you are not ready to stop cold turkey, you can make a Geder: For the first ten minutes that I am on my device, I will not go on Google Drive.

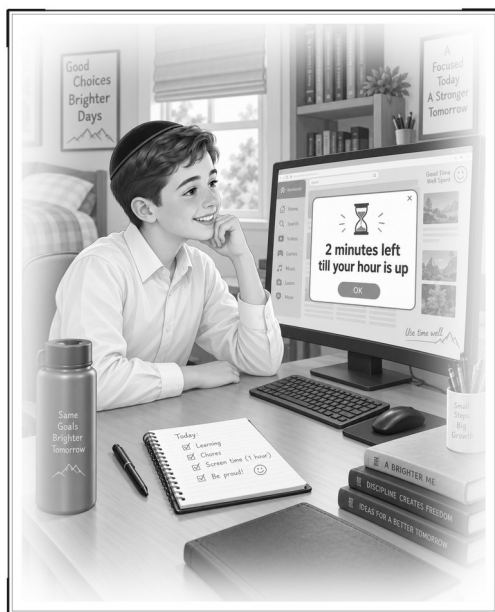
If you are watching too much, make a Geder: One hour, and then it goes off. Even if it's at the climax.

If you have an hour of computer time (hopefully you don't), set a timer to take a break in the middle.

There is a key to these Gedarim: **Plan it *before* you are on the device.**

Through these Gedarim, **you stay in control.** And slowly, you can drop more and more, until you find yourself in a good place once again.

Again, the ultimate answer to this question is: Don't do it. That's the best way to save yourself.



THE CLARITY

“The only way to stop yourself going forward is by going back.”

In summary: If you don’t want to get too used to something – don’t do it. If stopping cold turkey is not a workable option, put pre-planned, defined Gedarim in place.

Q3**For someone who is already addicted to something, how can I get out of it?**

A3 Someone once went to R' Ovadia Yosef and asked if he can smoke on Shabbos. R' Ovadia told him that his father used to smoke, and the way he stopped was by cutting each cigarette in half, and eventually even smaller, until he completely stopped smoking.

When fighting addiction, don't decide to stop forever. **Rather, hold back just the next time.** After that, just the *next* time. That way, it's much easier. If you say you will stop forever, it will be very, very difficult to take that jump, because you know this is saying no forever. Go bit by bit – say no *for now*. (Obviously some things you have to give up right away, and a real addiction has to be dealt with through the 12-step programme.)

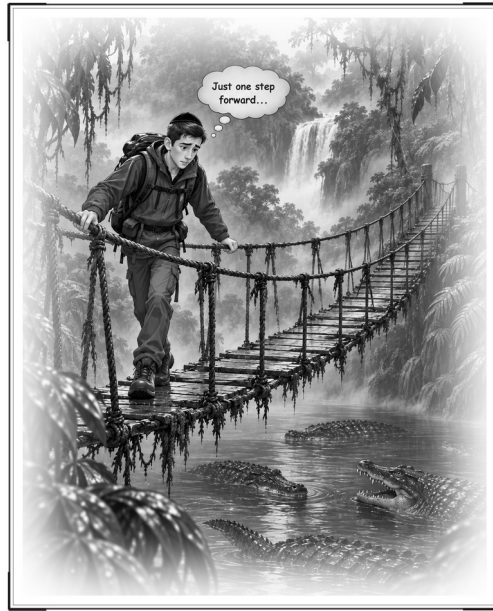
Again, addiction is a strong word. It means doing irrational things to fulfil the addiction.

You are probably not addicted – you are used to it.

As we said above, **small steps, but sure steps.** If you can't drop it cold turkey – maybe you can – then take small steps. For the first ten minutes, you refrain. You take breaks in the middle.

If you are listening to music that you know you shouldn't be when you go to sleep, for the first ten minutes, don't listen. Small steps, but sure steps. Switch it off in the middle of listening.

The more you stay in control, *the better you will feel!*



THE CLARITY

“Small steps, but sure steps.”

In summary: When trying to break a habit, take it step by step. Hold back ‘just this time’ to make it more manageable, and keep going...

Q4**What should I do when I see something I don't want to? How can I get the image out of my mind?**

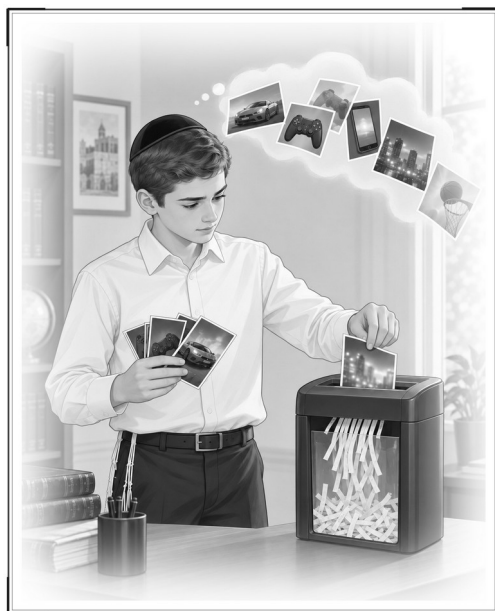
A4 This question can mean two things: Either you are seeing things, or you once saw something.

If you once saw something, unintentionally, which means you didn't choose or want to see it, then don't worry. It will pass; it will go. Let time do its magic.

If, on the other hand, you have temptations and you actually did something, or are doing something, then you have to actively *want* the opposite.

The easiest answer to this – if it's something you do irregularly – is to stop, **and give it time**. Distract yourself when it comes to your mind, and give it a few months. It will go with time, and even if you will sometimes have flashbacks, it won't disturb your life day to day.

If it's really disturbing you, speak to someone about it.



THE CLARITY

“If it’s really disturbing you, speak to someone about it.”

In summary: Disturbing images will fade with time – especially if you once watched something unintentionally.

Q5**Is there a point in trying to grow if, when I ‘break’, it ends up backfiring in a very big way?**

A5 We can look at this like someone who fasts the whole day – but then overeats when he can. In that case, would it be better for him to simply eat the whole day, but never overeat?

There are two points to the answer.

Number one, life is not a game, where there’s an ultimate choice between trust and pleasure. You feel like you have two choices in front of you: either watch every day, or withhold, but then you break and you end up watching much more.

Often when we are faced with such a choice – **there is actually a third option**. And we know the third option may actually be right for us; it’s actually the Yetzer Hara telling us that there are only two options. If you dig deeper inside yourself, you might be able to find option three. Option three will probably be the hardest one, but *that* is your Nisoyon.

To explain the second point, I want to go back to the boy who I met on a flight from America (Chapter 1: Question 7) who had a big Nisoyon right after his first Yom Kippur.

As we said, he was bothered by what had happened – he couldn’t understand why he got a Nisoyon specifically when he was at the highest point in his life.

In my answer to him, I told him the following: “Let’s backtrack for a minute: The fact that Hashem gave you such a strong Nisoyon shows that Hashem feels close to you in a very strong way and wants to feel even closer! You’ve done your best to be close to Hashem, in return, He is giving you an opportunity to build an unbreakable connection with Him.”

Going back to the question: You might feel ‘I’ve been so good. I haven’t watched for three weeks! And now Hashem gives me a major Nisoyon? Is it not better that I don’t get close to Hashem, so that the Nisyonos won’t come?’ But it’s the opposite: when you are on a high level in Kedusha, Hashem will give you an opportunity to come even closer – through a Nisoyon!

And it’s important to know that even if you do fall then, the high levels you have achieved are **still there!** They are not lost!

So, if you feel that you are doing so well, but it’s getting harder and you might ‘Platz’, remember, that is Hashem asking you to stay with Him – to grow even closer to Him. You can’t always win, but at least see Nisyonos as opportunities to become close!

So, should I stay strong if the Nisyonos keep coming and sometimes I even ‘Platz’ and fall? The answer is a resounding YES!

And when you feel like you are ‘Platzing’, take option three: Fight the Nisoyon! Knowing that a Nisoyon is an opportunity to get even closer to Hashem will give you the courage to overcome.

At one point I was learning with a really good boy – who had *really* strong struggles. Someone once commented to me, “It’s so nice that you also learn with boys who don’t struggle.” Now, I knew that this boy struggled terribly, and he also happened to be known as a top boy. The assumption that he didn’t struggle was really ironic.

This boy was really overcoming his struggles for a while, when at one point, he fell. He was consumed by guilt over what he had done – but I told him that the fact that Hashem had given him such a hard Nisoyon **actually indicated his high level.** Okay, he didn’t make it. But the fact that he had such a big Nisoyon showed that Hashem felt close to him and wanted him!

Don't let the fact that you've fallen make you fall again. Keep growing and overcoming Nisyonos, and you can even wait for the next Nisoyon to come – because it *will* come.

But you will be prepared, and when it comes, you will try again, and be ready to connect to Hashem.



THE CLARITY

“Don't let the fact that you've fallen make you fall again.”

In summary: When we are faced with two options, both of which are not great, there is often actually a third option we should go for. And remember, a big Nisoyon is an indication of your high level in Ruchnius – Hashem is giving you an amazing opportunity!

Q6**How can I help myself keep to my boundaries?**

A6 Your boundaries have to be realistic. If you make a boundary when you are in a great mood, but it's actually too big for you, it will be very difficult to keep to.

Make a boundary that is just outside your comfort zone. Then do a little bit more. And more. Be consistent.

Small, but consistent, is much bigger than big, but inconsistent. You can have a huge bucket and a small cup. But if the bucket has holes in it, it won't hold water. And the cup might be small, but it's whole, and will hold water.

If you make huge Gedarim, you're being unrealistic. You won't be able to keep them. Rather, make small Gedarim which are secure and **possible to keep**. You might fall sometimes, but it's a Geder that you can realistically keep to.

Think of it this way: Imagine you are at a fundraising dinner that really touches your heart. You want to donate. You can either promise £50,000, swept high on the emotions of the moment, or promise £5 a month for a year. The difference between the two? The first one sounds huge and impactful, but when you get home, you will fall to reality with a thud: *You don't have £50,000 to give*. The second one sounds more modest. Almost like it won't make a difference. ***But you will actually keep to it!***

Another key in making Gedarim: **Choose who you tell.**

You could be really happy with a Geder you made, but if you tell your friend – and she dampens it by saying “You are so frum!” or “Come on, you really care about that?” – you will always remember her contempt. You will no longer feel good about your boundary.

You might have a close friend who you share it with for encouragement. But don't share it with a friend who may make fun of you. No one has to know about your Gedarim apart from you.

And don't worry if you sometimes fall with keeping your boundary – that is why it's there. So that you are training on the ground, instead of on the tightrope. So that if you fall, you don't do anything terrible.

And then, you stand up and try again.



THE CLARITY

“Small, but consistent, is much bigger than big, but inconsistent.”

In summary: Make your Kabbalos realistic and sustainable. Keep them small so that you will actually keep them. And only tell those who will applaud your growth, not those who might dampen it.

Q7 When I give up something in technology, I am scared about what's going to happen next – somehow the Nisoyon doesn't always disappear neatly when I give up a device or something – what should my mindset be on this?

A7 After overcoming a Nisoyon – which is tremendous – there can still be a struggle. The story will sometimes 'end neatly', and sometimes won't.

Someone shared a story with me recently. She gives a course in her field of work, and had a course scheduled over six weeks in Antwerp – over Zoom. She put an immense amount of work into the arrangements, which took months. She hadn't discussed the Zoom part with her husband, and the night the course was meant to start, she told him, "I will be out tonight delivering a Zoom course." Her husband was not happy with her doing this, and told her that Zoom was a boundary they wouldn't cross.

She was now in a real pickle. Cancelling the course, which she had worked so hard on, would be extremely difficult. She tried discussing it with her husband, who really felt that this was their boundary that they shouldn't cross. She admitted that within herself, she knew this wasn't really on their standards, but thought that for Parnassah – this course would make £1,400 – she could do it.

He suggested that she call a Rav and ask, but she said that if this was their boundary, she doesn't want to be the one to break it. She gathered up her courage and sent out a text: *'I am so sorry, but my husband does not feel comfortable with me giving a course on Zoom. I'm offering to give the course over the phone instead...'*

The next day, her husband got an email from Universal Credit (one of the benefits systems) that they had made a mistake over the last

three months and had paid them too little. They would be transferring £1,400 into their account shortly. £1,400 – *the exact same amount she would've made in her course!*

This is a story in which everything wrapped up neatly in the end.

Let's contrast this to another story – the story of Yosef HaTzadik.

We look at the story of Yosef HaTzadik, who waited for **years** in prison before seeing the fruits of him overcoming the ***hardest Nisoyon a human being ever faced***. For 12 years he was in a Bor in the ground.

Imagine if a girl had very bad friends on Google Chat. With tremendous strength, she decides to close her account. The next day, she comes to school, and she gets caught by her teacher, who punishes her severely. She gets kicked out of school and struggles mightily through the next few years. She can't find a Shidduch easily. When she does find a Shidduch, it isn't the boy of her dreams. She then struggles to get her kids into school... How long will she be able to keep strong and say to herself, "But I overcame the Nisoyon. I closed my account. Even though everyone around me is saying I'm bad, I know that I'm great." How long?

Yosef HaTzadik overcame the Nisoyon. But then afterwards, he overcame *12 years of struggle* before becoming viceroy in Mitzrayim – seemingly *because* he was Omed BeNisoyon. And we know that during those years, he was upbeat and happy. It's unbelievable.

So, being Omed BeNisoyon means giving it up **without expecting the story to end super neatly right away**.

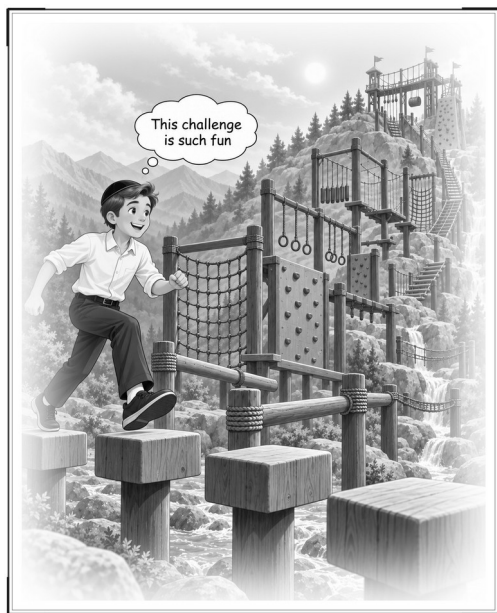
A girl might struggle hard – and decide to give up her smartphone. The next day, she walks past a phone shop, and the struggle starts again. A girl might delete a link to certain movies, after a 20-

minute-long inner struggle. Later that day, her friend sends her the link again!

In the end – everything turned around for Yosef HaTzadik. He became the viceroy to Pharaoh. His two sons became Shevatim. In his Zechus, Klal Yisroel had food, and came down to Mitzrayim... But that was after years of suffering.

In a way, the best gift you can have after overcoming a Nisoyon is another Nisoyon. It's like when you are playing a computer game. When you win a level, they give you another challenge – on a higher level! How is that fair – you have worked so hard to win level 1 – and all that got you was 'Well done – you have unlocked level 2!' But obviously – that is the game! *That is the challenge!*

So too, in life, we are always working to attain the next level. You continue playing as you go up in level. It's not going to get easier – but it's going to get more geshmak!



THE CLARITY

“Being Omed BeNisoyon means giving it up without expecting the story to end super neatly right away.”

In summary: There can still be a struggle after you overcome a Nisoyon. It’s a gift, an opportunity to up your game and climb to the next level!

PART 2 • Questions 8–14

Q8

How do I get rid of an iPod? It hasn't got much bad on it and it entertains me when I am bored. And if I get rid of it, then when I am bored, I will do worse things, e.g. watching.

A8 You say that if you give up your iPod, you might come to a worse option when you are bored.

It's almost like you feel you only have two options, with both of them being bad. But, as we said, maybe you have a third option? Maybe you can overcome both? It could be that you will give up an iPod touch and not have it easy afterwards. It could be that you will be bored. Like we said, after overcoming, it could be that you will struggle.

The Dubno Maggid gives a Mashal that can help us reframe boredom in our minds:

There was an old man of 70 who lost his wife. He wanted to get remarried, so married a divorcee who had been divorced 50 years earlier. Now, this divorcee had plenty of time to think about what she wanted in a husband, and had high expectations. The husband on the other hand, had been married for 50 years. All he wanted was peace and companionship. They got married for totally different reasons.

The wife wanted to go places and do things, so they flew away on holiday, went shopping and went out. He was exhausted. This went on and on until the wife realised: If he sees how much money they've spent, that will be the end of their fun! She decided on a plan: She would keep him so super busy that he wouldn't have time to check the bills!

And that was what she did – every time he sat down to work out the finances, she jumped in with a trip, visit or shopping spree.

The Yetzer Hara does a very similar thing to us. He keeps us so, so busy. We have to know that **boredom is a healthy thing – that is when we grow.** The book ‘Life’s Too Short’, by Rabbi Dr A. J. Twerski, can be an amazing and practical help in dealing with boredom. In the book, Rabbi Twerski notes that boredom is when you are alone with yourself.

If you can’t face yourself and simply be with yourself, how can you expect your friends to be with you? How can you expect to be a good friend if you can’t enjoy your own company?

Think about it: Do you always have to be doing something? Can you just spend time with yourself, thinking? Imagine, daydream, plan? Boredom can be healthy. It can help you connect to Hashem and grow.

Of course, you can do other things instead of being on your iPod touch. You can go walking, exercise, go out with friends, listen to music...



THE CLARITY

“Boredom is a healthy thing – that is when we grow.”

In summary: Keeping us constantly busy is one of the traps of the Yetzer Hara. Learn to simply be – enjoy your own company and development. If used right, boredom can sometimes be a catalyst for growth!

Q9

I have a device that I know is wrong and pulling me down. I want to stop using it, but I am finding it hard to totally get rid of it. Can I keep the device whilst deciding not to use it, and get rid of it sometime, when I find it easier?

A9 I want to tell you a story:

Before the war, there was a furniture producer who lived in Poland: He owned forests of trees and the factories that turned the raw wood into high-end furniture. He was one of the richest Yidden in Poland. He was married before the war, and had one son – Naftali.

Then he read *Mein Kampf*, the book that Hitler Ymach Shmo wrote, detailing his plan for the final solution. He felt the antisemitism heating up all around. He saw what was coming, and realised his money was at stake.

He went up to the highest-ranking Goy in his company, and said, “Here’s a proposal. I am happy to sell **everything** I own to you – my house, my business, my contacts – for half its value. But with two conditions: One, I remain employed by the company, so I still receive enough money to live. And two, if in 10 years, the Nazis have not arrived, I get everything back, for full price.”

This was an amazing deal for the Goy – for ten years, he would have all the money to do what he wanted with, and afterwards, he would get back double what he paid! They closed the deal, and with all the money, the Yid bought a diamond, which he sewed into his shoe. He continued living this life for years – he had a job, and even though he wasn’t a rich man, he had a roof over his head and food to eat.

This went on until the Nazis invaded Poland and put all Yidden into ghettos. Now, he had no job or food, but he still had a diamond in his shoe.

One day, his wife was shot dead when looking for food in the bins. After burying her, he realised that he needed to take care of his two-year-old child – Naftali – on his own.

So, he stayed up with the child every night, and when the child fell asleep, he went to his forced labour. One day, he walked into the house, and saw a chilling sight: An empty cot. His child had been taken by the Nazis. He went straight to the Gestapo office, and told the Nazi, “I have something worth millions – if you get me back my child, it’s yours.”

The Nazi officer refused. He said that he had a certain quota of Jews that he had to hand in daily, and he needed the baby to reach his quota. “But,” he said, “If you bring me another child, I will swap the two and give you back your baby.”

He was desperate with a father’s love – he needed to save his Naftali! But, how could he take someone else’s child? He went to his neighbour’s house and lifted up the baby – but then dropped him, shaken. How would he face his neighbour every day? So, he started walking further away, maybe he could take a child from a family he didn’t know...?

He was torn in conflict – *how could he, but how could he not?* His own child would be killed! Yes? No? Yes -

Suddenly, he ripped the diamond out of his shoe and hurled it away. Peace overtook him: He could no longer redeem his child. **His inner conflict – gone.**

He survived the war. He married again. And he had another son, whom he named Naftali.

“I never regretted that moment when I hurled away the diamond,” he later said. “I knew I had done the right thing. But as long as the diamond was in my shoe, I really felt that I must save my child! ***I had to throw away the diamond.***”

We have things in our lives that we think are diamonds. It could be our phone, or a USB filled with movies. Access to something. As long as you have it, you feel that the best thing to do is use it. You can’t say that you don’t want to use it – you do! *The right thing to do is to **get rid of it.*** Then – suddenly – things will change.

A boy came to me recently; he had a Timkoo full of movies. “R’ Klein,” he said, “I want to get rid of this. Can we talk?” I stopped him. “You’ve just watched movies for weeks. It’s hard to discuss it when your head is in the Schmutz. Give it to me for a week, and then we’ll talk, when you have a clear head. I won’t touch it or do anything to it.” When you still have the device and are in the Schmutz, you can’t make the right decisions.

Honestly, this device you want to stop using is your ‘diamond’. Get rid of it. I know it might be super hard, but that’s the way you will be able to regain clarity. You *want* to be good – but you can’t be when your diamond is still in your shoe!

If you are in a Google Chat group: just leave. Once you leave, and live without it for a week, you can then think straight.

As long as you are in possession of the diamond (which can be a device, a relationship, a group etc.), you can’t think what is really the right thing to do. **As soon as you get rid of it, conflict will disappear and be replaced with clarity.** Get rid of the diamond, and start living.

Do it because you are bold.



THE CLARITY

“As soon as you get rid of it, conflict will disappear and be replaced with clarity.”

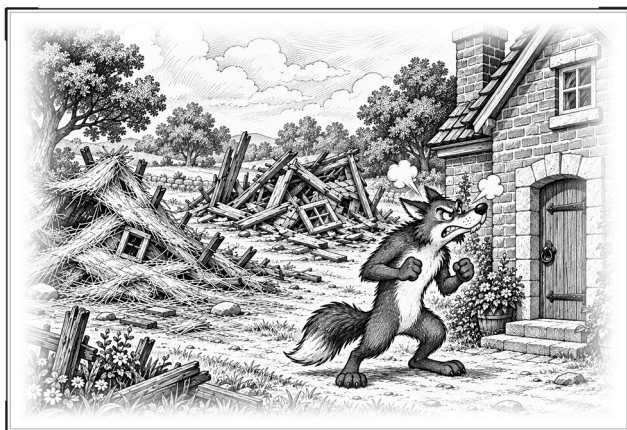
In summary: When you are still in possession of/have access to a device or group, your clarity is actually clouded. Give up the device and regain your true clarity moving forward.

Q10 I was brought up in a home that was quite ‘closed’. Does that mean I am at a disadvantage – I have had far fewer Nisyonos in technology than most of my friends...?

A10 For those who have been brought up in homes with less access to technology: Consider yourself lucky. Gog Umogog didn’t enter your home. You still have that strong connection; it has not been broken.

People think it’s easier if you are open – but that is wrong. Wherever we are open, we are leaving cracks for Gog Umogog to get through.

If you want to have Ehrliche kids, the less ‘open’ you are, the more Kochos your kids will have in them to overcome Nisyonos.



THE CLARITY

“If you want to have Ehrliche kids, the less ‘open’ you are, the more Kochos your kids will have in them to overcome Nisyonos.”

In summary: Having a more sheltered upbringing is a gift. Your connection to Hashem has not been tested by Gog Umogog and has real strength!

Q11 Sometimes in Ruchnius I'm sailing high and doing well. It feels great. Other times, I'm stuck in a low, and that feels pretty depressing. How can I accept and move through both parts of my journey?

A11 As we are on our journey to overcoming Nisyonos, we have to remember something important: **Life comes with ups and downs.**

If you've ever seen a heart monitor, you'll know that when the heartbeat is showing up as a zigzag, going up or down, the person is alive. If there is only a straight line, it means the heart is dead. **Our lives go up and down – that's life. That's living.**

Anyone who runs a business will know that there are ups and downs. That's okay – as long as at the **end of the year**, he's made a profit.

In your life, you will have ups and downs. As long as at the end, you've conquered yourself, you've grown, it's okay to have those downs. In fact – *those downs are what allow you to have the ups.*

Within these highs and lows, we have to remember something crucial: You have to accept **both** the highs and the lows as part of your life, as part of your journey.

If you deny or don't accept the 'lows', you won't be able to grow. You won't be able to appreciate the highs. You have to accept this realisation: 'I am not bad if I fall sometimes. This simply means I am a human.'

Two boys who I know well once showed up at my door with a daring question. They were very despondent and told me that their friend had just bought a smartphone: Could I call this boy?

I felt a bit awkward – I didn't want to cold call. I texted him with an offer to meet if he would want to, and told him where I would be if he would want to meet. He showed up, and we spoke. After filtering

his phone and speaking through where he was holding, we parted. Time passed, life went on.

Now he's in a much better place, and I recently asked him, "Why did you turn up to meet me? You had just bought a new phone – and you knew I wasn't going to offer you some apps. You knew I wasn't going to help you do what you wanted. *Why did you show up...?*"

His reply was a lesson for me. "I had just bought a phone, and wanted recognition for being a 'bad boy'. So, anyone who would give me that attention, I would take." He knew he had done something bad, and ***actually wanted to feel like a bad boy who needed help.***

Here lies something very powerful: If when you fall, you *see yourself as a bad person*, you will keep doing bad.

You need to see yourself as a **whole** person – yes, you might have had a low, but you've also had highs.

This brings us to the next point – accepting our **highs** as ours.

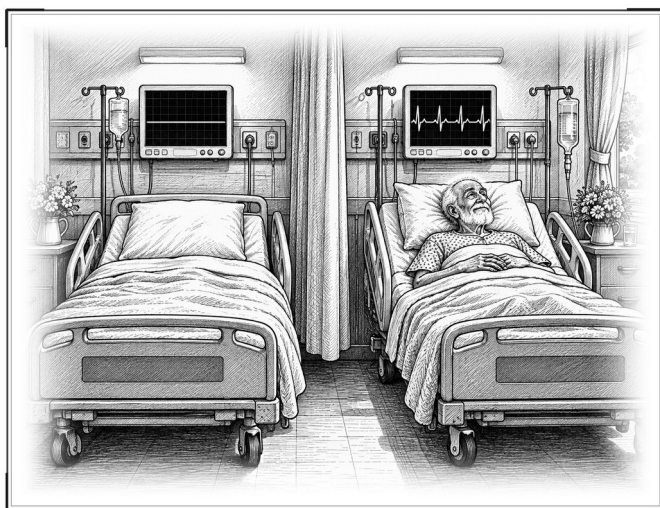
You have to know that the highs you achieve are the **real you**, just like the lows are you.

It's 100% okay to struggle. *But it's also 100% okay to do well.* Accept your journey – but accept **both** parts of it. If you are the person who struggles hard and likes to test boundaries, you have to also acknowledge the growing parts inside you that are doing well. Don't deny them.

It's not that you are still two people – one bad and one good. You are a **whole** person – with both highs and lows. You are the zookeeper. You have a Yetzer Hara and a Yetzer Tov, ***but you yourself are the Neshama.***

And if you truly accept yourself – both parts of yourself – you will often find that although sometimes you are in a low, your highs feel much higher than others who don't struggle as much. Until you accepted your highs as much as your lows, you didn't feel there was any point in working for the highs. You felt like a 'bad girl' who struggles. But now you know that just like the lows are yours, so too when you feel strong and can overcome a Nisoyon – ***that is also yours!***

You are a whole person, with highs and lows, and with Kochos that Hashem gave you, and the struggles that Hashem gave you.



THE CLARITY

“He knew he had done something bad, and actually wanted to feel like a bad boy who needed help.”

In summary: Life has ups and downs. Accept your lows – they're part of being human. Accept your highs; they are yours!

Q12

I know this is not something all teens struggle with, but on my level, with my background, I really struggle to find good Jewish entertainment. Can I cross the border to non-Jewish entertainment if I feel that I need just that bit more...?

A12 I assume that what you are really asking is “There is nothing good out there that is Kosher, so what do you expect from me?”

Take a girl who has never really been exposed to movies or stuff like that. A sheltered girl who hasn’t used much technology in her life. If you send her on holiday with some of the most primitive, old-fashioned videos possible, she will be hooked. She’ll watch them for hours.

If you take the *same videos*, they will hurt your eyes after just a few minutes. Poor quality, old, unsensational. You won’t be able to watch them.

Why is this?

With anything in Gashmius, the sensation wears off. You enjoy it for a bit – but then need more.

Kosher entertainment is good up to a certain point – but will then get boring. So, you go to non-Jewish ‘Kosher’ entertainment, but *that* will get boring at a certain point. So you go to non-Jewish ‘semi-Kosher’ music... It goes on and on – **you will always want that bit more than what you have.**

There is no way to stop that – it’s the way Hashem made us. We can’t run away from the Nisoyon. **We have to face it.**

If someone puts petrol into an aeroplane, it can take them very high. But if they take that same petrol and swallow it, it will also take them very high – *but they won’t come back...*

With a Nisoyon, and especially a Nisoyon in technology, it can go either way. If a person ‘swallows’ it – gives in to the Nisoyon and just gives up – then it will take them to very low places. **But if a person faces the Nisoyon, and accepts that they sometimes might fall, but they will keep trying, then it will take them to very high places.**

There was a Rav who went through an exceptionally difficult time in WW2. He survived the war and built up a huge Kehilla in America.

His Kehilla later asked him how he managed to come to America after so much suffering and then fight against the Chillul Shabbos in his Kehilla and build it up.

“I’ll tell you a story,” he replied. “The Nazis went after the Rabbanim first, in order to demoralise the people. My father was a Rav in Poland, and they came after him, beating him viciously. After he was beaten, he stood up straight and tall again. Furious, the Nazis started beating him again, and he fell down to the ground, broken and bruised. But once again, he gathered his strength and stood back up.

The beating continued, but my father summoned all of his remaining strength to stand up. The Nazis then beat him until he collapsed and fainted onto the ground...”

The Rav continued. “That was the last time I saw my father, and that was the parting lesson that stayed with me: **As a Yid, you continue fighting until you fall to the floor with exhaustion.**”

This Nisoyon has ups and downs. There will be times when you feel like you don’t care, like you just want to do what you want. You will then have times of inspiration, of growth. You have to realise that *they are both parts of growth*. The lows are not failure.

Going back to the question – once you cross the border from Jewish movies to non-Jewish movies, you have taken a step that will make it harder for yourself. The boundary will be crossed. It's never too late to come back, but the point is, you are allowing yourself to cross a boundary, and the point is that **even that will eventually get boring!** So you might as well fight the Nisoyon now.

Wherever you are up to – fight the Nisoyon *there*. Don't give in! There will be ups and downs, but you won't be giving in to the Nisoyon. Giving in to a Nisoyon won't help you – there will be another Nisoyon waiting for you there.

Fight wherever you are at, and even though you will have 'downs', don't let that make you give up – just come back up and grow.



THE CLARITY

“But if a person faces the Nisoyon, and accepts that they sometimes might fall, but they will keep trying, then it will take them to very high places.”

In summary: Giving yourself ‘a little bit more’ Gashmius won’t help. You will just want even more. Fight the Nisoyon where you face it, continue fighting and with Hashem’s help, you will succeed!

Q13 After I hear a speech or Chizuk about technology – or really anything – I am so inspired, I feel ready to take on the world. But the next day, the Chizuk is gone and I’m back to square one?!

A13 If you’ve ever gone to visit an attraction, adventure park or zoo, there will be a gift shop somewhere near the exit. There, you will find stuffed animals, pens, or keyrings, all with the attraction’s logo. A stuffed giraffe for £19.99. A pencil for £4.90. A keyring for £5. Even though they sell for ridiculously high prices, visitors buy them. Why? You can buy the same thing for 50p elsewhere!

Visitors have just had a smashing day out. They’ve enjoyed themselves – and want to keep those warm feelings and memories inside them. They aren’t paying for the stuffed giraffe – **they are paying for the feelings and memories condensed in it.** Whenever they look at this giraffe, those warm feelings will come up again.

When you live through something and experience it, **you can create a reminder that will bring you back there.**

When we’re inspired by a speech or inspirational experience, if we create even a small Kabbala in relation to that experience, we can carry the Chizuk with us.

I was once stuck taking a taxi from London to Manchester on Friday afternoon, because of station closures. Time was ticking on, and it was getting uncomfortably close to Shabbos. Then, like an unfolding nightmare, traffic slowed to a halt. There had been an accident. Waze now said we would arrive *10 minutes after the Zman*. I was in touch with my Dayan on how to proceed, and then spoke to a boy about a Melaveh Malka that was meant to happen that Motzai Shabbos. I told him what was going on, and he said to

me, “Why don’t you take on a Kabbala, and turn this into a Vayimoen video!”

“Will you do it for me?” I countered back. We decided to each take on a small Kabbala. I spent about 15 minutes thinking about a good Kabbala to take on. Although this sounds unreal, *the road immediately opened up.*

I ended up arriving 15 minutes before Shabbos.

Every time I keep the Kabbala I took on in that tight spot, I once again feel gratitude to Hashem for getting me home on time. The Kabbala became sweet – another thanks to Hashem for saving me from that tight spot.

If you can take on a small Kabbala *when you are feeling the Chizuk of the Shiur*, the Kabbala will serve as a constant reminder of the Chizuk you felt. Of the power you felt. And this will make it easier to overcome.



THE CLARITY

“They are paying for the feelings and memories condensed in it.”

In summary: Create a small Kabbala when you are feeling inspired. That will act as a ‘souvenir’, a reminder of the Chizuk you felt then.

Q14 **Bein Hazmanim is crazy hard for me. No framework, no structure. So many Nisyonos. Any tips to help me through? I don't want to fall!**

A14 With all the fun, Bein Hazmanim can be the hardest time in Ruchnius.

A Mashgiach called me recently, and as we were talking, bemoaned the fact that Bein Hazmanim was always a fall for Bachurim.

“I want to give you a change of perspective,” I said. I then told him the following Mashal.

There was a prison that had a breakout – all the prisoners escaped. After chasing them wildly, the guards managed to get them back. The head guard was furious – and also worried. He hadn't managed to do his job. That very day, they secured all exits, ensuring that this would never happen again.

But it did. This time, the prisoners escaped through the pipework.

The guards realised that security needed to be even tighter. The head guard's nerves exploded. How were they going to keep the prisoners inside? They worked on traps and electric gates, on alarms and systems.

Still, the head guard couldn't calm himself. *‘What if they get out?’* He kept thinking. *‘What if they manage?’*

Then, the day arrived. There was a breakout attempt. But this one ended very differently. The head guard came speeding towards the scene – only to see four prisoners hanging off the electric gate.

For the first time, the head guard was calm. **Now that they had tried to escape – and failed – he knew he had succeeded.**

For many, Zman is an easier time in Ruchnius. They are sailing along with their friends, doing well. But then comes the real test – the ‘breakout’: Bein Hazmanim.

You might have had Nisyonos last Bein Hazmanim. You might have fallen. But now, a few months stronger, you have another opportunity. And when IY’H you do pass the test, *that’s* when you know you have succeeded!

Sometimes we think that it’s a fact: Bein Hazmanim, we fall. But we can change our mindset. The prisoners don’t have to escape this Bein Hazmanim. We can be strong.

And I want to give you a key to help you succeed:

When you are in a Nisoyon, it’s very hard to see clearly. The key is to **plan before**. Yosef HaTzadik taught us this.

When Yosef HaTzadik interpreted Pharaoh’s dreams, he gave him an idea: Prepare in the years of plenty, for the years of famine. Pharaoh was amazed.

We can ask a question here – wouldn’t we have thought of this plan? What was the novelty of this idea?

There is something very deep here.

We all know that the wife of Potiphar kept trying to get Yosef HaTzadik to sin.

For an entire year, she kept coming, and she almost managed – but never quite got there. That night, when no one was home, she planned to finally succeed. But Yosef HaTzadik fought the Nisoyon and fled. **He knew the Nisoyon was coming, and prepared an exit plan.** In ‘good times’, when the Nisoyon wasn’t in front of him, he planned what to do in the hard times.

Let's link this back to Pharaoh's dreams. Pharaoh now knew that he would have seven amazing years. But Yosef taught him that good times are not just for now, they are for later also.

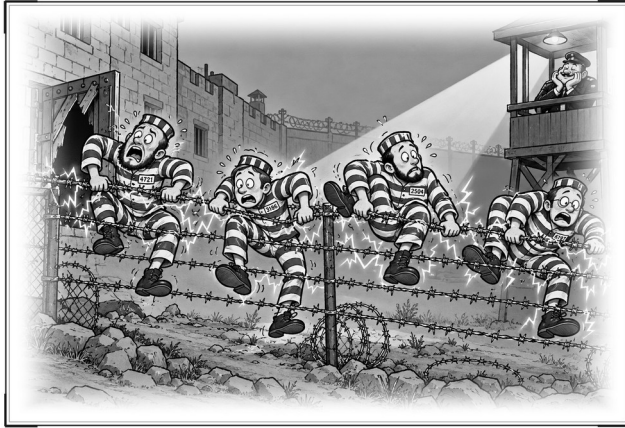
You can have an amazing Zman. But then you come home, out of the protection of Yeshivah. Out of the protection of Sem. How are you going to manage? **Through using the good times to prepare.**

The problem of hunger doesn't start in the years of famine. It starts in the years of plenty. Because that's when you prepare and put away food. **You have to work on overcoming your Bein Hazmanim when you are still in Yeshivah/Sem.**

Take a piece of paper and write down what you struggled with last Bein Hazmanim. Choose the 4–5 areas you want to work on. Then, plan how you are going to work on them *now*.

You might want to delete stuff. Stop access to stuff. Have a talk with a friend, explaining how you've changed.

You might want to have a talk with your parents. This preparation will help you come to Bein Hazmanim strong.



THE CLARITY

“You have to work on overcoming your Bein Hazmanim when you are still in Yeshivah/Sem.”

In summary: Want to have a successful Bein Hazmanim? Prepare in advance.

PART 3 • Questions 15–21

Q15 What's the point of holding back if I know that eventually, I am going to get a smartphone?

A15 Firstly, when you do get a smartphone, you will make sure it's filtered. (Otherwise, there is not much point in getting married. You are already married – to your phone. Put it this way: You definitely don't want a spouse with an unfiltered smartphone. They are already married to their phone and don't need you...)

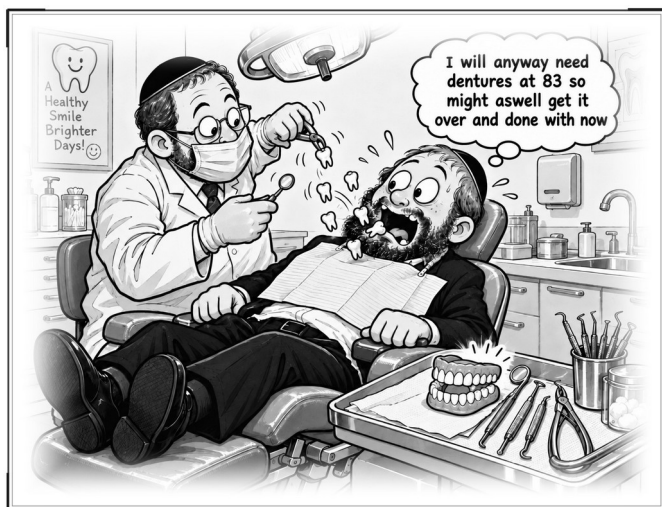
But in answer to your question: **A phone in two years is not a phone now.** What you will do on the phone in two years is very different to what you will do on the phone now.

In two years' time, you will be able to say no to stuff you can't say no to now.

You always have to grow from where you came. If Hashem put you in a background where having a smartphone is the norm, that is the starting point that is meant for you. You have to start from there – but then grow. Slow growth. Steady growth. *Real* growth.

But that is never a reason to say, “I will have a smartphone in a few years anyway; I may as well just have one now...” There is a reason why you will only have one in a few years.

And the fact that you will only have it when you are older is **crucial** to your growth and life journey.



THE CLARITY

"A phone in two years is not a phone now."

In summary: It's crucial not to get a device too early in life, even if you know you will end up getting it later. These years of growth will give you so much – for life! Don't let them slip through your fingers by having access too early.

Q16 How does a person know when they have reached the level of addiction?

A16 A person has reached the level of addiction when they are doing dangerous or irrational stuff – like stealing – to get the thing they are addicted to.

It's usually something people fall into when they have a 'big black hole' inside of them – which is tremendously difficult to live with.

**THE CLARITY**

“A person has reached the level of addiction when they are doing dangerous or irrational stuff – like stealing – to get the thing they are addicted to.”

In summary: Addiction is when someone resorts to dangerous or irrational things to access what they are craving.

Q17 I have recently found myself being a bit obsessed with playing Snake on my phone. How do I get myself to stop wasting so much time on it – I can't seem to stop even though I want to?

A17 This is such an enlightening question. It shows us something really powerful – that it doesn't matter if we are talking about Snake or Minecraft: A teenage brain just wants distraction. It doesn't want to deal with the moods and thoughts that are constantly coming up, so looks for something else to fill it.

The solution to this is to set up 'clean hours', e.g. 'From 8:00–10:00 on Tuesday night, I don't play, **no matter what.**' Give yourself six hours a week of the strongest dedication – literally Mesiras Nefesh not to play. Slowly build up the number of hours and watch as you get your life back.

A man called me up recently to share his amazing journey. From 15 years old, he struggled with technology – completely unsupported. After years of ups and downs, of struggles and falls, he wanted to break clean. At this point, he was already a father of three.

He devised a plan: Tuesday afternoons would be his 'clean' day. Week in, week out, he kept to it.

At first, he couldn't sleep on Monday night – he was too nervous. He couldn't concentrate on Tuesday morning – he was too nervous.

But he did it. For one afternoon a week, he was clean.

One afternoon turned into two. Two turned into three.

His life changed.

If you are struggling to break free, **this can be an incredible path forward.** Choose **one time a week when you stay away** – and this is

not a contradiction to the rest of the week. **It's the beginning of your path forward.**

Creating this time – if it can't be an afternoon, make it an hour, or ten minutes – can be your anchor from where you will grow.



THE CLARITY

“It’s the beginning of your path forward.”

In summary: If you find yourself spending too much time on your phone/device, the key is to make clear, non-negotiable ‘clean’ times, which will help ease you out of the bad habit and break free.

Q18 I really prefer not to shop on the internet, but sometimes I cannot get the thing that I need elsewhere. What should I do?

A18 If you are being truly honest when you say you don't want to go on the internet, then there are ways around it.

You can ask your parent or another adult to go for you – and if they don't know what you want, you can stand next to them. They are older – they do it in a healthier way.



THE CLARITY

“If you are being truly honest when you say you don't want to go on the internet, then there are ways around it.”

In summary: Remember – you can ask a parent or other adult to go on the internet for you when going online seems like the only option.

Q19 What's better: Heavily filtered internet in the house, that my parents give me free use of, or very lightly filtered internet that my parents don't give me as much freedom with?

A19 I was speaking to a packed audience recently when a man got up. "R' Klein," he asked, "What would you prefer to have in your house – cats or mice?" The answer was obvious to me: "Cats, because they can take care of the mice."

"No," he said to me. "You are wrong. The answer is: None. **You don't want the cats or the mice.**" He continued, "I wish everyone in the room would understand that if you want a Yiddishe house, you don't want the mice, which are technology, and you don't want the cats, which are the filters. You want none." This man – who was middle-aged – went on and said that he smashed laptops, broke USBs and tried dealing with his technology – until he realised that *you don't want the cat or the mouse.*

You want to set up a Yiddishe home? You want to live as a true Yid? **If you can, life is better without the cat or the mouse.**

With questions like these, the answer often is – **you don't want either.** Someone once asked me, "Is it better to have a Qin phone with full internet on or a totally filtered smartphone?" The answer is: None. You don't want the cat or the mice.

Parents giving their children free access to a device – even if it is heavily filtered, the total free access is wrong. But parents who give their children access to very unfiltered internet for even 5 minutes – they will regret it for the rest of their lives.

You might think that 5 minutes is too short for anything to happen. But try parking your parents' car in the fast lane on the motorway for just 5 minutes. No garage will even try to fix it after that...

Our Neshamos are always fixable. But I can tell you that a parent will regret giving their child *any* time on unfiltered internet.



THE CLARITY

"If you can, life is better without the cat or the mouse."

In summary: Best is to grow up with as little access as possible, but having access to unfiltered internet will truly be something you will regret.

Q20 **Why is it fair that some people are born into a frum family whilst others aren't? They don't have as many opportunities to do Mitzvos and have to make a massive life change to become frum.**

A20 It's interesting – usually this question is asked the other way around: 'It's not fair, they are having more fun than me. They have so many more allowances which are okay for them on their level.'

We can't see Hashem's plan. Hashem told Moshe Rabbeinu, "You can't see the front of Me, only the back." We have no idea of Hashem's plan. We only see the meaning of things in hindsight.

We have no idea what Tikkun our Neshama is doing in this world. For one person, it may be returning to Hashem and coming back to Yiddishkeit. That's what their Neshama needs.

Hashem put us in the exact place we belong to fulfil our Tikkun.

Imagine if you go into a shop selling 20 different types of Dubai chocolate. You only like one flavour – and that's the one you are going to buy. But when you come in, all the bars are covered in the same foil, without labels! "I like the strawberry one," you tell the saleslady. "I'm sorry, I have no idea which one is which," she apologises. "You'll have to taste each one until you find it." You have to go through all the chocolates – (which you really don't like, even though they are called Dubai chocolates) until finally, when you are up to chocolate 17, you hit strawberry.

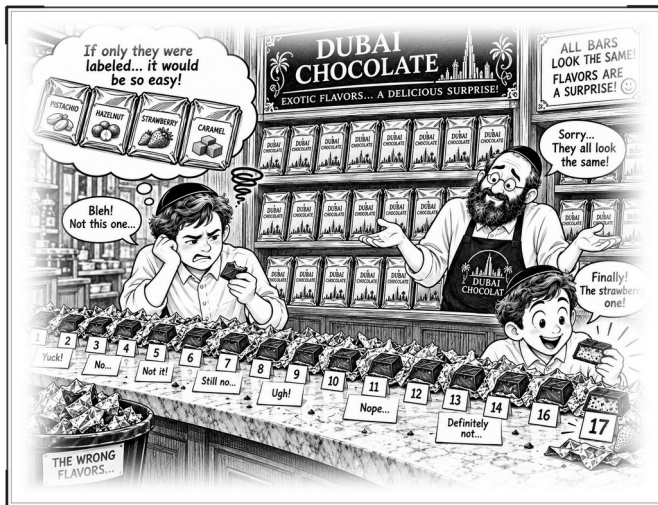
A much, much easier option would just be for the shop to label the chocolates – so you can instantly get to the one you want!

Hashem could have put us all in the same world – same parents, same finances, same level. You would spend 50 years just finding out what your specific Tachlis is – and by then so much of your life would be gone!

Instead, Hashem put a ‘wrapper’ on you. Your specific circumstances. Your Nisyonos. The areas you have to work on.

You might have stronger temptations than your friends. You might face more peer pressure. *But that’s exactly the Tachlis you personally need to fulfil!*

Your ‘wrapper’ is the biggest gift to you. It’s an insight into your mission!



THE CLARITY

“Your ‘wrapper’ is the biggest gift to you. It’s an insight into your mission!”

In summary: We all have a different mission in life, and Hashem has put us in the exact right circumstances to fulfil it.

Q21 Sometimes I feel like my personality really holds me back. I'm trying to work on stuff but my natural tendencies like laziness keep getting in the way!

A21 Let's be honest and realistic with ourselves as we delve into how our struggles work.

If you've ever gone to a zoo, you'll know that there are different cages for different animals. A lion put into a snake's cage will suffocate; a snake put into a lion's cage will escape. They are each put into the cage meant for them.

Hashem created us all with 'animals' inside us. Like the Mishnah in Avos says we should be 'Oz K'Nomer, Kal K'Nesher...' We are all made up of lots of Middos and personality traits. Each person is built of different things – different 'animals' inside them.

But there's a key here – which every person has to realise.

You are not the lion. You are not the bear. You are not the animal – you are the zookeeper.

You can't ignore the animals inside you. You can't kill or deny them; they are there. Instead – **make 'cages' for them.** As the zookeeper who has put the animals into their cages, you now have the keys to those cages – to use the good parts of each 'animal' where needed.

The teenage years are when you discover the animals inside of you – and also when you put them into cages. Until you discover the lion inside of you, it might be running wild. Then, as you define it, you can put it into a cage. When it's in its cage, **it can become your strength** by being used right.

How do we define the animals inside us, and how do we put them into cages?

The Nisyonos we face are our animals. **Being Omed BeNisoyon is putting them into cages.**

Once we put the ‘animal’ into a cage a few times, we will be stronger, and when the Nisoyon comes again, we will be the zookeeper with the keys rather than having the animals overrun us.



THE CLARITY

“You are not the lion. You are not the bear. You are not the animal – you are the zookeeper.”

In summary: You are not the ‘animals’ inside you; you are the zookeeper. Remember, you can control the different Middos inside of you and they can become your strengths.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Real growth begins by knowing where you stand and making realistic boundaries at your actual point of struggle. Take small, sure steps; prepare before the Nisoyon; accept both the highs and lows of the journey; and never let a fall make you stop growing. Clear no-go zones protect your clarity, while steady Gedarim help you remain in control and keep moving closer to Hashem.

PRACTICAL TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Identify your real point of struggle and place your boundary there.
- ✓ Plan Gedarim before you are using the device or facing the Nisoyon.
- ✓ Choose small, realistic and sustainable steps rather than dramatic promises.
- ✓ Create clear no-go zones and revisit them regularly as you grow.
- ✓ Accept both your highs and lows, stand up after a fall and keep moving forward.

CHAPTER 7 WORKSHEET

MY BOUNDARIES AND GROWTH PLAN

1. One area that is completely outside my boundaries – my no-go zone:

2. One area that I am used to and can manage responsibly:

3. The area where I presently struggle and need a realistic Geder:

4. The small boundary I will put in place before the Nisoyon:

5. The trusted person I can speak to for encouragement:
