

GREAT FOR SHARING
AT THE SHABBOS TABLE!

בשבת



אור ישראל

Self Inspired

PARSHAS
METZORAH

BY RABBI AVICHAI BENSOUSSAN
RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT
RABBI NAFTALI ZIONS

RACING AGAINST ONESELF

Parshas Metzorah is mostly about the *metzora*, a person who has become *tamei* due to an *aveirah* that causes *tza'aras*. At the end of the purification process, the *metzora* must bring three animals as *korbonos*, but the Torah differentiates between one who has means, and one who does not. If one is wealthy, they bring three lambs, otherwise, one brings one lamb and two birds.¹

It goes without saying that if one were wealthy, but decided to bring the poor man's offering, the offering would be invalid. After all, if one has the capability to bring more, how can they expect they can get away with less?²

This *halacha* seems obvious and logical to all, yet, points out the Chofetz Chaim³ (Reb Yisrael Meir HaKohen Kagan, 1838–1933) there seems to be a disconnect between this *passuk* and our own personal lives.

We often measure our spiritual success by the yardstick of those around us. If those around us have been studying for one hour, and we learned Torah for two, or those around aren't careful about *lashon horah*, and we only speak *lashon horah* sometimes, we feel accomplished and pleased with our behavior.

But if we are blessed with greater skills, education, or natural proclivities, we are like the rich person compared to the poor person. We have greater obligations, based on our greater potential. And just like we can all understand that one who can afford more, simply cannot fulfill their obligations with means meant for one less fortunate, one should also hold oneself to a higher standard regarding other areas of Torah and *mitzvos*. If one can accomplish more, one *must* accomplish more.

Of course, a person can be, and indeed should be, satisfied with their accomplishments, but there is a difference between satisfaction and complacency. When we measure our success against others' we are actually selling ourselves short. We are pushing ourselves to the limits of what others can accomplish, not what we ourselves can accomplish.

When we free ourselves from the shackles of comparison, we can soar in our *avodas Hashem*, greater than what we previously thought possible.

1 Vayikra 14:10-21

2 Negaim 14:12

3 Chofetz Chaim al HaTorah on Vayikra 14:21

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...but there is a difference between satisfaction and complacency.

Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

One of the challenges in living up to one's potential is that many of us don't truly know what our potential is! How can I live up to something that doesn't have a clear definition?

The reality is, from a young age, we are often comparing ourselves to others, both in how we appreciate our accomplishments, and in how we push ourselves. If our peers and friends are acting a certain way, it doesn't even dawn on us to act any differently. We may very well be unaware that we can be more charitable, learn longer, *daven* better, and so on, but we don't even think about it.

What, then, is the solution? Very simple. Try it!¹ Try *davening* with more *kavanah*, try taking out a *sefer* after *maariv* when everyone else leaves, try giving just a bit more *tzedakah*, and so on.

When we push ourselves a bit out of our comfort zone, we may find that we actually enjoy this new place we find ourselves in, and have discovered a hidden talent we never knew we had.

1 As heard from Rabbi Binyomin Luban, Rosh HaYeshiva of Yeshivas Toras Chaim

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Every generation has new challenges, therefore every generation needs its own Mussar sefer... - R' Chaim Kanievsky, zt"l, Introduction to Orchos Yosher

MAKING AN ACCOUNTING

Noson Tzvi* peeked his head through the office door, looking for Rabbi Max, the principal. “Mr. Wagner! What a surprise, it’s nice to see you here.”

Mr. Wagner, Nosson Tzvi’s neighbor, looked up from the computer he was sitting in front of, and smiled. “Hello, Nathan. It’s nice to see you too.”

Nosson Tzvi wasn’t sure what to say. His elderly neighbor, Mr. Wagner, did not come from an observant home, and had very little Jewish education. To see him sitting in the office of the local *yeshiva* was quite the surprise, but Mr. Wagner looked as comfortable as any of the other office staff.

“You seemed confused Nathan, I bet I know what’s on your mind.”

Nosson Tzvi smiled. He always got along with Mr. Wagner, and ever since Mrs. Wagner passed away almost a decade ago, Nosson Tzvi made sure to visit, or run some errands, or help out however he could.

“You’re probably wondering what I’m doing here. Well, I’ll tell you. A bit less than a month ago, I turned seventy-five. Years ago I decided to retire at seventy-five, and so I did.”

“You left your accounting firm?”

“Well, Jack — you know Jack, my son, right? Well, Jack is running it, and he’s been there for over twenty years, so I know it’s in good hands. Anyway, I retired, and like most of my friends, I was looking into moving down to Florida.

“But it’s been really bothering me. I’ve spent years in the accounting business, and frankly, I’m very good. Was all of that experience going to go to waste? What am I going to do in Florida anyway, how long can someone sit on a beach?

“And for years, I watched the boys from this *yeshiva* walking past my house, every morning and afternoon. I never sent my children to a *yeshiva*, I wasn’t really familiar with what a *yeshiva* was. But looking back, I wish I did — I see how the boys act, and it’s something special.

“And you, Nathan. You’ve been so kind to me, and I know that you teach here. All of that came together, and I made my decision. I’m not going to Florida, there’s too much work here to be done. I called a few days ago, and volunteered my services. I offered to go over their books, and sort out any accounting headaches they may have. Oh boy, you should have heard the joy over the phone!”

“Wow. But what about your friends?”

“My friends? Eh. They can bake in the sun. It’s not for me. I have knowledge to share, and it won’t happen on the beach.”

“I have knowledge to share, and it won’t happen on the beach.”

**Adapted from a true story.*

DID YOU KNOW?

- Torah that comes easy leaves easy as well. Torah is only remembered when one pushes one’s upper limits to obtain it.¹
- *Moshe Rabbeinu* was a true *eved Hashem* — everything he did, he did with Hashem in mind. The Rambam writes that, in this regard, every person has the capability to be just like *Moshe Rabbeinu*.²

¹ *Berachos* 63b

² *Rambam Hilchos Teshuva* 5:2, *Kovetz Ma’amarim* Vol. I, pg. 56

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