

HOLY NATION

A Guide for Shmiras Habris

Preventing and rectifying the
severe sin of wasting seed

Including the Tikkun Haklali
with an Interlinear Translation



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In Memory of

יהודה ליב בן נפתלי הרץ

מרים בת שמחה

and

מאיר שמחה בן ברוך שמואל

May their souls have a continuous ascent

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PREFACE

This pamphlet contains information on the severe sin of wasting seed. Our sages, leaders, and holy tzadikim of every generation, revealed and taught the crucial importance of guarding the *bris*. They expounded on both the loftiness and beauty of guarding the *bris*, and the damage and devastating consequences caused by disregarding the *bris*. *Shmiras Habris* is one of the most basic tenants of our faith. Much of the information sourced in this pamphlet is compiled from the teachings of Rebbe Nachman of Breslov. Rebbe Nachman foresaw that future generations would be very distant from holiness and that the world would be steeped in this temptation. He therefore conveyed its foremost importance, explaining how it is directly intertwined with all the other facets of serving Hashem. He taught that this is the single most important challenge that we as the nation of Yisroel have to overcome. Never before has sexual temptation been so accessible to its generation. With an inner burning desire, surrounded by an enticing, permissive world culture, where does one turn? Rebbe Nachman offers powerful insight, advice and endless motivation in the constant struggle against this temptation. The most important thing is to be informed. Knowledge is half the

battle. One can then train oneself to confront and overcome one's desires. —

Rebbe Nachman's teachings contain fascinating insights and tools for everyone. Specifically geared to our generation, his words offer joy, hope, and boundless strength to face all of our ongoing battles. They teach us how to serve Hashem with vigor and passion. Rebbe Nachman speaks to everyone individually regardless of one's background and present spiritual standing. The role of a tzadik is to show that even one who is very low in spirituality is in fact still very close to Hashem, and even one who is strong in one's service of Hashem may still be very distant. —

Much of the information in the pamphlet is taken from the *Sefer Likutey Eitzos* (The Compilation of Advice) which summarizes thoughts from both the *Sefer Likutey Moharan* (The Teachings of Rebbe Nachman), and from the *Sefer Sichos Haran* (Conversations of Rebbe Nachman). Two other books that are occasionally quoted are *Sefer Hamidos* (The Book of Traits), and *Meshivas Nefesh* (Revival of the Soul). The information sourced in this pamphlet may be loosely translated, summarized, or paraphrased for organizational and clarification purposes.

WHAT IS SHMIRAS HABRIS?

The Jewish nation has always been separated from the other nations. We are the very purpose of creation. We can reach the highest levels and can achieve a direct connection to Hashem. However, when we sin and abandon our efforts to be holy, we cause great damage to our souls. Our holy sefarim reveal that the most damaging of all sins are those associated with impurity. The most common of these sins is wasting seed. When Avrohom Avinu was promised that his descendants would have the opportunity to reach the highest spiritual heights, it was on the condition that the Jewish people would be shomer habris (would guard the covenant). The most basic level of Shmiras Habris (guarding the covenant) required of every Jew, involves not committing any physical act of wasting seed, guarding one's speech and hearing from impure conversation, controlling one's thoughts, and guarding one's sight. The low level of our generation has caused this topic to be ignored. As a result, many people are oblivious to the severity of this sin. In addition, many people do not know how to combat their desires or rectify their earlier sins.

The Severity of the Sin

Tortured souls

Spiritual energy is everywhere. Someone who studies Torah and develops a firm connection to Hashem can feel it very strongly. But someone who damages the *bris* loses the ability to perceive holiness. —

The Arizal writes that one draws down souls every time one spills seed. These souls are considered one's children. The forces of evil then capture these souls and torture them, stealing their energy for themselves. These souls are greatly agitated and despise their father for doing this to them. They seek revenge on him causing him much suffering. —

The forces of evil use the soul's energy to give birth to *lilim* (demon like entities), which surround a person stealing one's energy. They befuddle and implant in one's mind confusing, impure thoughts, thoughts about denying Hashem, or worthless thoughts which clutter a person's mind for hours on end. They also influence one's dreams, causing *keri* (nocturnal emissions) (*Sha'ar Hakavanos*, Part 2, *Sukkos*; *Taharas Hakodesh*).

The ultimate challenge

Every one of the 70 nations has sunken into one particularly bad trait or temptation. However,

sexual temptation is the all inclusive evil, within which the evil of all the nations unite. This evil is the raging fire of temptation that burns within us. Hashem separated us from the nations and exalted us. It is our obligation to separate ourselves from all their evil traits, especially sexual temptation. This is the main difference between the Jewish people and the nations of the world. —

The main way the Jewish people come closer to Hashem is through rectifying the *bris*. The main test and challenge of every Jewish man in this world is to battle this temptation. *Shmiras Habris* is the main source of Yisroel's holiness. Every Jew has to strive to be holy and pure and guard oneself to constantly stay away from the very scent of sexual temptation. Sin is not the natural state of the children of Hashem (*Likutey Moharan* 19, 29, 36; *Likutey Moharan* II 32; *Sichos Haran* 115).

Tikkun Habris (rectifying the *bris*) is the ultimate purpose of man (Vilna Goan-*Tikuney Hazohar*, *Tikkun* 23, Folio 76, Column 3).

A variety of sources on the severity of the sin
Wasting seed is a sin from the Torah, and according to the Gemara one that deserves death from heaven. Halacha teaches that it is more severe than any other sin in the Torah (R' Moshe Feinstein-*Igros Moshe*, *Even Haezer*, Section 3:14, Page 437).

Sexual temptation is the sin that brought about the *mabul* (flood). This was the sin of Er son of Yehuda, as it says, "Er... was evil in the eyes of Hashem, and Hashem caused him to die" (*Bereishis* 38:7). The Gemara greatly elaborates on the severity of this sin. It is also known from the holy *sefarim* that wasting seed causes poverty and sometimes the death of children (Chofetz Chaim-Machane Yisroel, Article *Dvar Be'ito*).

Even though all transgressions inhibit the flow of spiritual blessings to this world, transgressions whose punishment is *kares* (a severe decree of separation from heaven) such as wasting seed cause the most damage (Ba'al Hatanya-Igeres Hateshuvah, Chapter 6).

There is no sin in the world which provokes the anger of Hashem as damaging the *bris* (*Zohar Hakodesh* 66-67).

Desecrating the *bris* is considered as if one has desecrated all the mitzvos (*Sefer Hamidos*, *Niuf* 22; Cf. *Sanhedrin* 99a).

Wasting seed is considered as if one sacrificed one's children to *avodah zarah* (idolatry) whose punishment is stoning (*Ibid.* 48).

Spilling seed is more severe than any other sin. It defiles one's soul in this world and in the world

to come. One does not merit seeing the glory of the *Shechinah* (heavenly presence) (*Zohar Vayeshev*).

The generation of the flood committed every possible act of evil; however their fate was not sealed until they threw their blood down on the floor, meaning they would spill their seed on the ground (*Zohar Bereishis*).

From all the sins in the Torah there is none that creates demons like the sin of spilling seed. All the souls who were to be one's children now intermingle with the *sitra achrah* ("other side" referring to evil forces). One transforms holiness into impurity, good into evil (*Kaf Hachaim* 240).

Wasting seed is a Torah prohibition according to all authorities (*Niddah* 13a).

R' Yochanan said "All those who waste seed are punishable by death." Rav Ami said "It is as if one sheds blood." Rav Ashi said "It is as if one worships *avodah zarah*" (*Medrash Hagadol, Vayeshev*).

"There is a type of sexual immorality that is quite common among young people, wasting seed. This comes from ignorance of how damaging this act is. It is an obligation to warn everyone, young and old, about the severity of this matter until they tremble from fear. Every city should appoint men to teach the people to stay away from this sin" (*Pelah Yoetz, Os 7, Znus*).

When one damages the *bris*, the *sitra achrah* takes away all of one's Torah and mitzvos (*Sefer Ohr Layesharim*, Analysis A).

Gazing at unclean images

The Torah forbids a man to look at a married woman to fulfill one's desires. This is based on the *possuk* (verse) said 3 times daily "You shall not stray after your heart and after your eyes" (*Bamidbar* 15:39). The heart and eyes are the two agents of sin. Once the eye sees, the heart desires, and then the body commits the sin (*Tanchuma Shelach* 15). In addition, it is forbidden to look at unmarried women in this way (*Rabeinu Yona*, *Igeres Hateshuvah* 11).

The Gemara teaches that the *yetzer hara* prefers to make one sin through sight rather than through a physical act. The logic is as follows: Physical sins cause one to feel remorse which will motivate one to do teshuvah. Sins of sight are not considered that serious, therefore one is far from regret and teshuvah (*Yoma* 74b).

Every time one gazes at a forbidden image such as a woman whom one is not permitted to look at, a large frightening *klipah* ("husk" the kabbalistic term for evil) is created, along with an evil spirit (*Taharas Hakodesh* 3).

There is no escape from the judgment of *gehenim* (hell) even for one as great as Moshe Rabbeinu if one indulges in looking at forbidden women.

One's actions arouse the evil impulse and cause wasted seed (*Sha'arei Kedushah*, Part 2, Section 5).

Even looking at women without the intention of committing a transgression, causes the images to become engraved in one's mind damaging one's soul (*Chessed Leavrohom*, Nahar 33).

The sins of one's youth should cause one to be terrified and tremble. Forbidden images once gazed at, become fixed in one's mind. The evil inclination regularly brings these images before one's eyes causing one to waste seed (*Chok Leyisroel*).

Impure thoughts

The Torah warns us "You shall not stray after your heart" (*Bamidbar* 15:39). This is a commandment not to have impure thoughts. One should tremble with fear and awe when one realizes that Hashem sees one's innermost thoughts (*Sefer Chareidim*, *Mitzvos Lo Ta'aseh Min Hatorah Hataluyim Baliev*, Os 30).

The Gemara teaches that thoughts of sin are worse than the actual sin. (*Yoma* 29a, See Rashi). Sins of thought can be multiplied without restraint, while actions are dependent on a variety of circumstances. Many times one will abandon a sinful action due to shame or fear of others which is not the case with sins involving thought (*Derech Pikudecha*, Introduction 7).

There is a terrible spiritual calamity when one has unclean thoughts. One's soul burns in the temples of *tumah* (impurity) surrounded by impure *klipahs* and blemishes lowering it to the level of an idol (*Shulchan Hatahor*, Page 201).

One who brings oneself to a sexual fantasy is not brought into the proximity of Hashem (*Niddah* 13b).

Intentional sexual thoughts violates the Torah prohibition, "And you shall guard yourself from everything evil" (*Devarim* 23:10), (*Avodah Zara* 20b; *Sefer Mitzvos Gadol*, *Mitzvah Lo Ta'aseh* 126; Ramban, *Chulin* 37b).

The Power of Shmiras Habris

Shmiras Habris is the source of everything

Shmiras Habris has a direct affect on all that happens in one's life and in the world. All the actions of the world, all the blessings and influences, are all dependant on *Shmiras Habris* (*Likutey Moharan* 31).

Faith is through Shmiras Habris

The only way one can truly establish one's faith is through *Shmiras Habris*. Through *Shmiras Habris* one merits love and longing for Hashem (*Ibid.*).

Blessings come from Shmiras Habris

Through *Shmiras Habris* one is saved from the forces of evil, which manifests themselves in the temptation for money, idol worship, sadness,

depression, darkness, and death. One bonds to Hashem and merits Hashem's light (*Ibid.* 23).

Controlling one's evil inclination prevents one's children from going astray, brings a blessing of wealth, and saves one from many challenges (*Sefer Hamidos, Bunim* II 16).

One who is *shomer habris* will receive protection while traveling (*Likutey Moharan* 31).

Tikkun Habris gives one strength, and nullifies sadness and laziness (*Likutey Moharan* II 83).

One who does not look at women will merit that one's children will compile explanations on the Torah (*Sefer Hamidos, Niuf* II 19).

Revealing Torah

Through *Shmiras Habris* one merits greater revelations in Torah, devotion to Hashem, peace, and can draw the entire world to the service of Hashem (*Likutey Moharan* 23).

The more one breaks this temptation the more one is able to reveal Torah teachings. Therefore before one merits revealing Torah knowledge, one must pass the challenge of this temptation (*Ibid.* 36).

An all inclusive rectification

It is very difficult to rectify all of one's sins. Negative commandments contain many details

each of which is a sin. There is no guarantee that one will succeed in rectifying all of these minute details. *Tikkun Habris* is the all inclusive *tikkun* (rectification) which rectifies all of our sins down to the smallest “crack and cranny” that normally defies rectification (*Ibid.* 29).

The hardest challenge

One who breaks this temptation can easily break all other temptations (*Ibid.* 36).

Marital Relations

Marital relations done in holiness and purity between a husband and wife are very precious to Hashem. This holiness gives one the merit to understand the Torah in depth, and allows one to break away from one’s animal soul. In addition, one merits children who live long and healthy lives (*Ibid.* 39; *Likutey Moharan* II 32).

The Zohar on the power of Shmiras Habris

(From the *Sefer Taharas Hakodesh*)

- The entire world was created and exists because of those who are *shomer habris* (*Bereishis* 56a, *Tikkunim* 64b).
- When the nation of Yisroel is *shomer habris*, no other nation can rule over them (*Bereishis* 66b).
- One who is *shomer habris* is considered as if one has kept the entire Torah (*Bereishis* 193a; *Vayikra* 13b).

- The *Shechinah* is constantly in the presence of one who is *shomer habris*, both in this world and the next (*Lech Lecha* 94b).
- Light radiates from one who is *shomer habris*. After death, the body of one that is *shomer habris* does not decay and is not eaten by worms. One will merit ascending levels that “no eye has seen” (*Shemos* 3b).
- One who is *shomer habris* is called a mighty warrior (*Beshalach* 61b).
- Hashem Himself heals one who is *shomer habris* both physically and spiritually (*ibid.*).
- Hashem rejoices every day over the ones who are *shomer habris* (*Shelach* 165b).
- One who is *shomer habris* is called a tzadik similar to Yosef who was *shomer habris* (*Bereishis* 59b; *Vayera* 53a).
- When Hashem sends energy down to the world, it first passes through the ones who are *shomer habris* (*Bereishis* 162a).
- One who is *shomer habris* merits having holy children who will also be careful in *Shmiras Habris* (*Lech Lecha* 93b).
- The angel *Duma* stands at the entrance of *gehenim* along with thousands of afflicting angels. They are not allowed to harm one who was *shomer habris* in this world. It says (*Eruvin* 19a) that Avrohom Avinu saves those who are *shomer habris* from *gehenim*. Any one that is

shomer habris does not enter *gehenim*. Any punishment that one deserves is worked off in much lighter *tikkunim* (*Bereishis* 8a, 94a).

- The Red Sea split only in merit of Yosef Hatzadik who was *shomer habris* (*Pinchas* 213b).
- Before the coming of Moshiach much destruction will come to the world. One who is *shomer habris* will be saved (*Tikkuney Zohar* 54b).
- Only one who is *shomer habris* can receive the full spirit of Shabbos (*Vayikra* 19a; *Tikkunim* 70a).
- One who is *shomer habris* is in the form of Hashem, causing fear in both humans and animals (*Tikkunim* 65b).
- Someone who is *shomer habris* is protected from harm and enemies (*Shelach* 165a).
- The *ayin hara* (evil eye) has no control over one whose eyes are guarded (*Tikkunim* 28a).
- One who is *shomer habris* merits feeling divine delight and pleasure in Hashem's service (*Pinchas* 225b).
- Passing near wicked people brings impurity on oneself. If one is *shomer habris* this impurity has no affect (*Tikkunim* 58a).
- The final redemption of Moshiach will only come in the merit of *Tikkun Hayesod* (rectifying the damage to the *sefirah* [heavenly sphere] of *Yesod*, often caused by sexual sins). Today, the situations involving sexual transgressions are worse than ever. Those individuals who stand

up and are *shomer habris* in this generation are the ones who will bring the redemption (*Tikkunim* 48a; *Bereishis* 94a; *Noach* 72b).

- Someone who is *shomer habris* will be in a constant state of happiness (*Tikkunim* 63a).
- One who rectifies the *bris* will merit attaining complete faith in Hashem (*Vayera* 93b).

Practical reasons to be shomer habris

Shmiras Habris is the foundation for a healthy holy life. Seed is the energy of the body and when it is excreted excessively and wrongly it not only affects one physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually, but affects one's fortune in life. One becomes sad, depressed, angry, easily agitated, nervous, and unable to concentrate fully or utilize one's mental capacity. On the other hand, one who is shomer habris becomes strong and emotionally stable, filled with confidence and joy. One feels alive, present, can concentrate properly, and is free from fears. One's spiritual connection becomes sweeter and much more real. The tides of life turn in one's favor (Cf. The Light of Ephriam).

Physical manifestations

Seed is the strength and life of the body, the light of its eyes. If one emits seed excessively one's body and strength come to an end, costing one their very life. Many physical ailments are due to wasting seed. One becomes fatigued quickly and sight weakens. One gets bad breath and hair and teeth fall out easily. The hair of one's legs and armpits become thick. These are just a few examples of the many ailments that occur (*Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 240:14; Rambam, Madah, De'os 4:19*).

Mental manifestations

Sexual temptation causes one's mind to become damaged. This manifests itself in a decrease in knowledge, confusion, a lower level of functioning, and even insanity (*Likutey Moharan 60*).

Sexual temptation causes a loss of memory (*Sefer Hamidos, Zechirah 7; Cf. Yeshaya 57:8, See Rashi*).

Emotional manifestations

Shame and embarrassment are the result of not being *shomer habris*. Guarding the *bris* brings one respect. Most of the embarrassments and humiliations that one has are a result of the seed wasted in one's youth (*Likutey Moharan 19; Sefer Hamidos, Kavod 11*).

One who closes one's eyes from seeing bad is saved from embarrassment (*Ibid., Niuif II 14*).

Spiritual manifestations

Being *shomer habris* allows one an easier connection to spirituality. There will not be any restrictions to one's Torah learning, so that one will now be able to understand in great depth. One will have much more access to one's prayers and is able to taste the sweetness of the words. One can truly understand and grasp the words of tzadikim and not corrupt them because of the crookedness of one's heart. One who is not *shomer habris* has a hard time learning Torah and praying, and can easily stumble from the words of tzadikim (*Likutey Moharan* 2, 19, 33, 36, 50).

Finding a wife

One who is not *shomer habris* has a very hard time finding a wife. Even if one does find a wife, their relationship will be very shaky. *Shmiras Habris* allows one not only to find a wife easily, but also ensures that she will be very suitable (*Likutey Moharan* II 87).

Earning a living

One who is not *shomer habris* has a very hard time earning a living. All of one's business ventures and efforts will not succeed. One earns money only through bitterness, and will be poverty stricken. Through *Shmiras Habris* one is able to earn a livelihood without much burden (*Likutey Moharan* 11, 29, 31; *Sefer Hamidos, Niuf* 56).

Halacha

One who spills seed in waste, not only commits a major sin, but also places oneself in a state of excommunication. It is considered as if one killed a person. Sometimes, as a punishment for this, *chas veshalom*, one's children die young or end up becoming evil people. This also causes poverty (*Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* 151:1).

It is prohibited to waste seed. This is the most severe transgression in the Torah. One is not allowed to purposely cause an erection or bring oneself to think impure thoughts. One should be careful not to watch animals mating. One should never sleep on one's stomach or back but rather on one's side (*Shulchan Aruch, Even Haezer* 23:1-3).

It is prohibited to waste seed. Those that do so, place themselves in excommunication and it is equivalent to murder (*Rambam, Kedushah, Esuray Biah* 21:18; *Tur, Even Haezer* 23:1).

One has to distance oneself from women. It is forbidden to look at a woman's beauty, at her body or clothing in any way that leads to arousal. One should never walk behind a woman but should move to the side (*Shulchan Aruch, Even Haezer* 21:1-2).

It is forbidden for a man to bring himself to think about forbidden sexual matters. If a sexual thought enters his mind, he should turn his

heart away from it and focus on matters of Torah (*Rambam, Kedushah, Esuray Biah 21:19*).

One should never touch one's *bris*. An unmarried man should never touch his *bris* even when urinating, and should refrain from touching the area of his body below his belt. A married man however may touch his *bris* while urinating (*Ibid. 21:23*).

It is very praiseworthy not to look at one's *bris* (*Shulchan Aruch, Even Haezer 23:7*; See Shabbos 118b).

HOW DO I FIGHT IT?

Even though Shmiras Habris may seem very difficult at times, there are many effective ways to keep it. Through time and practice this battle can be fought successfully. Many people both married and unmarried are fighting this battle successfully. It is important to read and review these words of advice, stay focused, and to build a will to succeed.

Methods for facing the challenge

Pain, faith, and our true purpose

All the pain, afflictions, and challenges of this world (e.g. earning a livelihood, family or health issues) come from a lack of *da'as* (knowledge/understanding). *Da'as* refers to recognizing Hashem, His constant supervision in our lives,

and understanding our true purpose. Suffering is a kindness from Hashem to awaken us to repentance bringing us closer to achieving our true purpose. Suffering only occurs because of sins (Shabbos 55a). When one is in pain and feels helpless, one is forced to reconsider one's preconceived notions about the world and turn to Hashem for help. One then feels Hashem's presence and realizes that this whole world is but a fleeting moment. One realizes that one's main focus and energy should be used in serving Hashem through learning Torah, tefillah, and doing mitzvos. One then reaches a higher level of *da'as*. —

During painful times one is blinded to the truth and one can miss the signs that Hashem is sending. Instead of turning to Hashem, one turns to other means, damaging one's *da'as* by not fully believing that everything happening is from Hashem and for the best. Then all the suffering becomes real and unbearable. One should never despair or stumble due to the pain. Since the evil inclination is very strong during this time, one can sin very easily, escaping from pain through physical pleasures. —

When one's *da'as* is complete and one's faith is strong, one will fully understand that Hashem is merciful and is supervising every little detail in life, and that everything that happens is for the

best. One will not be fazed by the suffering and pain of this world, but realize instead that it is a wake up call from Hashem. One heeds the call by making serving Hashem one's main priority in life. One now has the strength to cope with the adversities in life and repent for past deeds. One can fight sin, through confidence and joy, knowing that Hashem is guiding one with compassion and love (*Likutey Moharan* 4, 21, 250; *Sichos Haran* 32, 53, 102, 308).

Purity of thought

Controlling and rectifying one's thoughts is the key to *Shmiras Habris*. Thoughts, intellect, and knowledge define one's essence and one's soul. When one leaves this world, it is one's thoughts that continue on into the next world. The challenge of free choice revolves around thought. Good thoughts are the *yetzer tov* (good inclination) while bad thoughts are the *yetzer hara* (evil inclination). All sin comes from thought. Intentional sin first starts with sinful thoughts. The most basic and sound way that one can battle temptation is through thought control. One needs to guard oneself from foreign and unholy thoughts. Instead, one must always have clean thoughts and think thoughts of Hashem, Torah, and *avodah* (G-dly service). —

Control over one's thoughts creates mastery over one's actions which can win any battle. One

who has no control and is subject to unclean thoughts is easily prone to sin. Protecting one's mind protects the *bris* (*Likutey Moharan* 21, 35, 49).

When one is overwhelmed with unclean thoughts it is best to try to ignore them altogether. The more one tries to get rid of these thoughts, the more the thoughts will intensify (*Ibid.* 72).

It is not possible to have two thoughts at once. One can drive away an unclean thought by thinking about another thought in its place (e.g. Torah, *avodah* or even business) (*Ibid.* 233).

One can direct one's thoughts exactly where one wishes. It is very comparable to steering a horse that veers from the road. One simply grasps its reins forcing it back onto the right path (*Likutey Moharan* II 50).

The lust for impurity can only be removed by distancing one's sight and thoughts from this subject (*Sefer Hamidos, Niuf* 9).

Eyes

The main instigator of sexual temptation is one's eyes. Even one who has reached a high spiritual level can stumble suddenly from not guarding one's eyes. The mitzvah of tzitzits is a protection against this. One should be very careful with this mitzvah. When donning the tzitzits and saying the blessing, one should have in mind that the merit

of this mitzvah will help one to be *shomer habris*, and to receive sound advice (*Likutey Moharan* 7).

The evil inclination only has the ability to rule over what one's eyes see. If one guards one's eyes one will succeed in battling the evil inclination (*Sefer Hamidos, Hirhurim* 42).

Torah

One cannot claim that the evil inclination forced one to sin. Hashem created the evil inclination yet created the Torah as its antidote. Learning Torah removes thoughts of sin. One is therefore not helpless. The evil inclination can be overcome through Torah study (*Baba Basra* 16a; See Rashi; Cf. *Mesilas Yesharim*, Chapter 5).

Learning Torah is so strong it can take one out of the lowest levels of impurity. One who consistently sets time to study Torah every day will merit the ability to free oneself from sins (*Sichos Haran* 19).

Through Torah study one attains *da'as*. Strong *da'as* allows one to fight sin (*Likutey Moharan* 56).

The *yetzer tov* is given the power to overcome the *yetzer hara* when one learns Torah intensely for its own sake, to draw closer to Hashem and bring Him joy (*Ibid.* 1).

One's thoughts turn towards lewdness, if one does not set times to learn Torah (*Sefer Hamidos, Limud* 52).

Bris and Torah are interdependent. By guarding the *bris* one merits great growth in Torah and vice versa. That is the meaning of the statement in *bentching* (after-blessing on bread) “And for the *bris* that You sealed in our flesh, and for the Torah that You taught us...” (Rabbeinu Chaim Phalagim-*Nefesh Kul Chai*).

The Rambam writes that one frees oneself from inappropriate thoughts through words of Torah. Immoral thoughts only enter a heart that is devoid of wisdom (*Tiferes Bachurim*, Article 3).

Tefillah

The main weapon in the fight against the *yetzer hara* is tefillah. All battles and challenges can be overcome through prayer. Excessive prayer and requests are necessities to draw one closer to Hashem (*Likutey Moharan* 2).

One type of tefillah is *hisbodedus*, secluded personal conversation with Hashem in one's mother tongue. One should set aside time every day and pour out one's heart to Hashem requesting all of one's needs, and voicing one's pains and challenges. One should do this in a private setting, such as a private room or even under one's talis. It is very effective and stirring to do this in nature, in the fields or woods. One can talk to Hashem anywhere, even in public places. One can do this in a way that is not recognizable, such

as pretending to read from a *sefer*. One should try to open up to Hashem as if one is talking to a good friend, and cry out passionately like a child begging his father. *Hisbodidus* is a very lofty and powerful way to draw close to Hashem and to connect to one's true purpose. During *hisbodidus* one should judge oneself and review and examine one's actions. *Hisbodidus* instills in one fear only for Hashem and one will not fear people, events in the world, or anything else. In addition, it will help one achieve high levels in Torah and tefillah (*Ibid.* 15, 31, 52; *Likutey Moharan* II 11, 25).

Suffering or a materialistic life can cause one to feel completely blocked from prayer. It is very important at these times that one needs to call out to Hashem. Many of Dovid Hamelech's prayers begin when he was in a state of affliction and oppression. Through these prayers he reached high levels of connection to Hashem. This concept is represented by the blowing of the shofar which is narrow at its bottom and wide on top (*Likutey Moharan* 279).

One who feels overwhelmed by the *yetzer hara* should set aside a private area to do *hisbodidus*. One should seek mercy from Hashem, calling out from the depths of one's heart. Hashem will hear one's plea. He is simply waiting for us to come to Him (Chofetz Chaim-*Tenuos Hamussar*, Section 3).

Holy Speech

The way to subdue and break all temptations, specifically sexual temptation, is by saying words of holiness such as Torah, tefillah, and *hisbodidus*. Holy speech and *Tikkun Habris* are dependent on each other. It is important to guard one's tongue from speaking unholy things such as profanity and slander. One should always call out to Hashem and speak with friends about truth. Speech has a powerful strength to remind one of Hashem. Proper speech gives one strength even in the darkest places (*Likutey Moharan* 19, 78).

Happiness

The main reason the *bris* is damaged is due to sadness and depression. Sadness is very damaging and gives strength to the evil one. The main way to guard the *bris* is through joy. One must try very hard to make oneself happy at all times. One's main strength comes from happiness. —

One can achieve happiness by focusing on one's positive aspects (See below, Finding the good points), rejoicing in the fact that one was not created a gentile, but created a Jew who has a lofty connection to Hashem, or that one merited to draw near men of truth. A very helpful way to be happy is to act playfully or silly. If one falls from a level of happiness, one needs to strengthen

oneself. One needs to remember that the levels one once achieved can be achieved again. —

One must force oneself with all one's strength to merit being happy. Being truly happy is more difficult and challenging than any other service (*Likutey Moharan* 25, 169, 222, 282; *Likutey Moharan* II 10, 24; *Sichos Haran* 129).

Through Torah and tefillah one merits joy (*Likutey Moharan* 22).

One has to be stubborn and strong in one's spiritual pursuits. One should not be dissuaded by any scorners or mockers. One's main strength is through happiness (*Ibid.*).

Sadness is very damaging and Hashem hates it (*Likutey Moharan* II 48).

One needs to make oneself happy even if it involves mundane activities. These seemingly unimportant actions can bring one to sincere happiness (*Sichos Haran* 177).

When one is happy then Hashem Himself, protects one from damaging the *bris* (*Ibid.* 20).

Fear of heaven

The main service of Hashem should start with fear of punishment, otherwise it is impossible to even begin serving Hashem. Even tzadikim

need fear of Heaven. Since those who serve Hashem out of love are very few. Not everyone merits the higher level of fear which is fear of Hashem's awesomeness. The main service for most people should just be from fear of punishment (*Sichos Haran 5*).

All the pain in this world combined, even the most painful physical ailments, are all better than one moment of *gehenom* (*Ibid.* 236).

Spirit of foolishness

In reality, all temptations are truly pointless and never satisfying. The strong urges one has are foolish. These seemingly "real" and "important" urges can be compared to the following parable. A man raced through a crowd of people shouting "*See what I have in my closed fist!*" Everyone ran after him thinking that all their desires were contained in that clenched hand. In the end, the man opened his fist and it was empty. So too, all our desires seem to have substance, but in the end we find that they are all empty dreams (*Ibid.* 6).

One's mind is the ultimate weapon in this battle. One needs to flee from temptation, which is a spirit of foolishness, into *da'as*. Even the smallest amount of *da'as* which is inherent in one's soul is enough to overcome the most powerful temptations. When one meditates on Hashem, one's purpose in life, and the fleeting reality of this

world, one realizes how foolish and insane our desires truly are. The Gemara says “A person does not sin unless a foolish spirit enters him” (*Sotah* 3a), (*Ibid.* 51; *Likutey Moharan* 72).

For a small pleasure lasting but a short moment one can lose all of this world and the next (*Likutey Moharan* II 108).

Secular world

Great care needs to be taken by one who is involved in the secular world. The dangers are great. In order not to get caught in the web of sin and learn its ways, *chas veshalom*, one constantly needs to remind oneself of one’s holiness as a Jew (*Likutey Moharan* 244).

Charity

Giving charity to proper people glorifies Hashem. Hashem is greatly glorified through this act. The merit of charity overcomes the *klipahs* that try to attach themselves to every stage of one’s growth (*Ibid.* 25).

Charity saves one from unclean thoughts. However, one should not talk excessively to women and rely on the merit of one’s charity for protection. One should only talk to women the minimum which is needed for the situation at hand. Then, one’s charity will protect from impure thoughts (*Ibid.* 242).

Today is the only battle

One can get disheartened by looking at the long struggle ahead. It is a tremendous challenge to be *shomer habris* day after day, month after month. It seems an impossible task to take on. One must realize that every day is its own world and its own battle. One should view every day on its own and not worry about the future. Today is one's only struggle (*Ibid.* 272).

Forgetfulness

Forgetfulness is a very wonderful thing. If one would remember all the painful things that happened in the past and one's sinful actions, then it would be impossible to muster the strength to serve Hashem. Forgetfulness has amazing use in the service of Hashem. One is constantly overwhelmed with thoughts of worry, fear, regret, business, family or past misdoings, that make it very hard to focus on serving Hashem. One has to use the power of forgetfulness when these thoughts attempt to enter one's mind. To serve Hashem properly one needs to let these thoughts pass right out of one's mind, completely ceasing to think about the matter. Hence, one uses the natural ability of forgetfulness to eliminate disturbing thoughts (*Sichos Haran* 26).

Finding the good points

One who begins self examination and sees many flaws and sins, can become very disheartened

and lose motivation. One must search for the good in oneself. It is impossible that one has not done at least one mitzvah or one good deed in one's life. After finding the good in oneself one can still become disheartened since there are likely to be many flaws within one's good. Nonetheless within all the flaws and deficiencies there has to be at least one good point. One must keep searching for these good points in order to sustain and strengthen oneself. One will become joyous with this realization and can then pray and sing to Hashem. —

This is a very important rule for one who wants to draw near to Hashem. Coming close to Hashem requires overcoming the natural inclination to be sad and depressed, because one constantly sees the flaws in oneself and one's actions. Sadness and depression are the main causes that distance one from Hashem (*Likutey Moharan* 282).

Getting Married

It's very important to get married as soon as one can. Our sages teach that one should get married when one turns eighteen and certainly by the time one turns twenty (*Aruch Hashulchan, Piryah Virivyah* 1).

When one gets married one's sins become "closed up" (*Shulchan Aruch, Even Haezer* 1:1, See *Ramah*; Cf. *Yevumot* 63b).

An unmarried man over 20 is living all his days with sinful thoughts (*Sefer Hamidos, Hirhurim* 43; Cf. *Kedushin* 29b).

Alcohol

Getting drunk causes a person to damage the *bris*. When one's *Shmiras Habris* is not complete one has to distance oneself from alcohol. The over consumption of alcohol increases one's inappropriate desires (*Likutey Moharan* 29; *Sefer Hamidos, Shikrus* 7).

Helpful advice

Keep Busy

One should keep busy. The busier one is, the better. The Steipler writes that wasting time causes all of one's impure thoughts (*Keeping Holy, Chapter 6*). It is important to make a schedule and keep to it. Lack of structure creates free time and boredom. Make goals big or small, spiritual or ordinary. Put energy into reaching those goals, in order to be structured and busy. Chazal (our sages) teach that a busy schedule with both Torah and work prevents sin (*Pirkei Avos* 2:2).

Make Fences

Chazal have taught that one must make fences to guard the Torah (*Pirkei Avos* 1:1). By making boundaries one is guaranteed to stay far away

from temptation. Where there are fences around sexual immorality, there is sanctity (*Vayikra Rabah*). The evil inclination is very tricky and can convince one that pursuing sin is the best thing to do. The way of the evil inclination is to start by convincing one to break a small infraction one day and the next day break something worse (*Shabbos 108b*). One has to be very strong and not to listen. One can never say “*I will sin once to cool the passion.*” Once one sins, one will automatically want more and more. One should commit to break away from sin completely, to “starve the body,” it is the only way (*Sukkah 52b*). —

One can make 10 boundaries between oneself and sin. Breaking one’s boundaries is a clear indication that there is trouble ahead. One should then double one’s awareness of the potential danger. When walking outside in the street, glasses can be removed in immodest areas. One should avoid situations where it is easy to sin, such as living alone, or spending excess time in the bathroom or bedroom. It is often very helpful to put one’s plan of action into writing.

Push off the sin

When overcome with temptation it is much easier to push off the sin than to give it up for good. One should keep pushing it off continuously until one gains control over one’s desires. One should

continue to exert oneself beyond one's comfort zone by pushing away the thoughts of temptation over and over again.

Replace the sin with an alternative desire

Desires such as eating are not nearly as destructive. Pass the desire onto food instead.

The first 40 days

The first 40 days of *Shmiras Habris* are the most difficult. Afterwards the battle becomes easier.

Build a holy dwelling place

In today's world, homes are filled with hundreds if not thousands of objects containing impure material. Even families that don't bring movies or internet into their homes may still have many books and pamphlets containing impure pictures and writings. One cannot truly break free of one's temptations and cling to Hashem as long as one is still holding on to this kind of material. The more one allows this material into one's life the less room there is for holiness and appropriate material.

Internet

The internet is the ultimate enemy in the battle of *Shmiras Habris*. In a matter of seconds one can be captured by sin. **The internet should really never be used.** The reality is that the internet is a great aid and tool for many people, especially

in earning a livelihood, and can be a source for Torah or very useful information. However, one must realize that one simply cannot fully begin to fight the battle of Shmiras habris when one has full access to the internet. Therefore where one finds the use of the internet essential, one must limit one's internet use to the greatest extent possible, accessing specifically those websites one needs. One must completely refrain from entering any website that has any sort of unclean material, no matter how minor. It is critical that one have a very good filter. There are many viable filters available for the Jewish individual or family, for both computers, and mobile devices. The filters create a system with different boundaries; some limit internet access to very specific sites, others send a report of all the sites one visits to a close acquaintance, who can supervise one's browsing. These filters can be purchased for a minimal annual fee. It is one of the most meaningful investments one can ever make. One should ask family and friends for their recommendations. —

Generally while browsing the internet, one can completely block images, advertisements, and flash banners. Two very effective free browser extensions are [Adblock Plus](#) which blocks advertisements, and [Flash block](#) which blocks flash banners. A great way to block images is by

turning off the 'Show images' selection from the settings menu. For example in Google Chrome one can click the Tools icon on the top right and go to 'Settings', click 'Show advanced settings', under Privacy click 'Content settings', and under Images click 'Do not show any images'. It is easy to add exceptions and view images on specific sites by clicking the designated icon to the right of the URL. One can always go back to the 'Content settings' to manage the exceptions.

HOW CAN I DO TESHUVAH?

A very important part of the process of Shmiras Habris is repenting from and rectifying all the damage one has done through earlier actions. The sin of wasting seed is a transgression like all Torah transgressions. However it is much more severe in its devastating influence, causing far greater damage than other prohibitions. Nonetheless, one is very fortunate that there are many ways to repent and many rectifications that can be done.

Teshuvah

One can always do teshuvah

One can do teshuvah (repentance) for any and every sin. This is true for even the terrible sin of wasting seed and other forms of damaging the *bris, chas veshalom*. There is repentance for everything (*Sichos Haran* 71).

Guarding the mind

The main aspect of teshuvah is to guard oneself from foreign and unclean thoughts. Instead, one should think good thoughts, try to understand the purpose of life, and to think of ways to return to Hashem. Because all the sins that one does come from impure thoughts, the *tikkun* is to purify one's thoughts (*Likutey Moharan* 35, 49).

True teshuvah is done when unclean thoughts enter one's mind and one breaks temptation and dismisses them. This teshuvah removes the sparks of holiness from the *klipah* that were scattered there due to one's sins, and merits fixing the *bris* (*Likutey Moharan* 27).

In order to have pure thoughts one has to purify one's mind. This is done by hearing stories about tzadikim (*Ibid.* 234).

Tehillim

One who wants to merit repentance should be accustomed to always saying Tehillim. There are many reasons why one may not repent. One may not be aroused at all to teshuvah, one may not know how to repent or one may not be granted access to repentance. By reciting Tehillim one becomes aroused to repentance and Hashem grants one the ability to find the gate of repentance that is unique to one's soul. Everyone can find oneself in Tehillim (*Likutey Moharan* II 73).

Regret

One needs to constantly speak to one's Creator sincerely and be embarrassed by the extent of one's sins against one's Master and Ruler who is the basis of the entire world (*Likutey Moharan* 38).

By truly feeling the pain of one's sins and feeling regret, returning to Hashem with true repentance, one circumcises the "foreskin" of one's heart. Then all the hearts of all the drops of seed one spilled, who are considered one's children and were drawn to unholy places, will also circumcise their hearts. A commotion will be made amongst them and they will all be awakened to repentance (*Ibid.* 141).

Yearning

When one falls from one's level descending to very dark and dirty places filled with unclean thoughts and overwhelming confusions, where it seems impossible to find Hashem, one should cry out "*Where is the place of His glory?!*" The lower the level, the more one should continue to plead and cry out "*Where!*" This seeking and longing for Hashem is very holy and the main part of repentance and it can draw one out from the lowest places (*Likutey Moharan* II 12).

Hearing one's embarrassment

The main way to do teshuvah is through humility. When one is embarrassed by others, when one

hears one's disgrace and is silent, suffering embarrassment and blushing, then one lessens the blood in the left hallow of the heart that arouses one to sin, and slaughters one's evil inclination (*Likutey Moharan* 6).

Torah insights

Teshuvah depends on learning Torah and working hard to understand the deeper meanings, and by creating Torah *chidushim* (Torah insights) for the sake of heaven. This is complete teshuvah (*Ibid.* 11, 74; *Pelah Yoetz, Chidush*).

Same place same time

Total repentance happens when one passes those very same places where earlier one had sinned, has the very same temptations, but now turns away from them conquering temptation by refraining from sin (*Likutey Moharan* 8, 27, 49; *Rambam, Madah, Teshuva* 2:1).

Strengthening others

One should strengthen one's friends even if one is not holding in a strong place, as the Gemara says "It is easier to untie someone else than to untie oneself" (*Berachos* 5b). By motivating others, one can become motivated and can merit repentance returning to Hashem's holy service (*Sichos Haran* 99, 120).

Tikkunim

The rectification is according to the challenge

The stronger the temptation, the greater the *tikkun* is for one who overcomes it (*Likutey Moharan* II 5).

Torah study and Mitzvos

The *tikkun* for one who has fallen in *Shmiras Habris*, is to increase one's Torah study for the rest of one's life. One will be protected by the merit of Torah, as it says "If one sins and deserves death at the hand of heaven, what can one do to save oneself and live? If one is used to learning one chapter, one should learn two; one page, then two. If one does not know how to learn, one should perform charity and good deeds. One should learn to practice what one learns, then one's learning has the power to protect" (*Medrash Tanchumin*), (*Mishnah Berurah* 615:2 Note 3).

Holy speech

Rectifying one's *bris* is achieved through holy speech such as Torah, tefillah and *hisbodidus* and abstaining from profanity and slander (*Likutey Moharan* 19).

Crying out loud

Crying out loud to Hashem from the depths of one's heart is a *tikkun* for damaging the *bris*. Saying the Haggadah out loud on Pesach is also a *tikkun* for the *bris*. *Tikkun Habris* is the

main reason we were redeemed from Egypt. The essential reason for the exile of Egypt was due to damaging the *bris* (*Ibid.* 20; Cf. *Reishis Chuchmah, Sha'ar Hakedusha*).

Charity

Charity given to the right people is a very great rectification for damaging the *bris* (*Ibid.* 264).

Giving charity secretly, unknown to the recipient, is a *tikkun* for *keri* (*Ibid.* 83).

Shema

As a *tikkun* for occasional unclean thoughts, one should say the first verse of the *Shema* and *Baruch Shem* at any given time. If, *chas veshalom*, one is accustomed to these thoughts and cannot escape from them, then one needs to shed tears while saying these verses (*Ibid.* 36).

Bedtime Shema

The heartfelt recital of the *Krias Shema Al Hamitah* (bedtime *Shema*) before retiring to sleep is a powerful *tikkun* for rectifying the *bris*. It uplifts all of the souls that have fallen into the realm of impurity through one's wasting seed and returns them to holiness (*Ben Ish Chai*, Section 13, Part 1).

Spreading the light

Bringing people to repentance is a *tikkun* for wasting seed (*Sefer Hamidos, Niuf* 41).

Helping people achieve self-introspection and fear of heaven that awakens in them a desire to do teshuvah is a *tikkun* for *keri* (*Likutey Moharan* 14).

Israel and tzadikim

The land of Israel is a *tikkun* for damaging the *bris*. The graves of tzadikim have the same holiness as the land of Israel, providing a similar *tikkun* (*Ibid.* 109).

Happiness

At times nocturnal emissions are caused by eating certain foods. Happiness is a *tikkun* for this (*Ibid.* 5).

Tikah Beshofar

The Arizal teaches that when saying the tefillah of 'The dispersed of Israel' in *Shemoneh Esrei* (which begs Hashem to gather all the Jews from the four corners of the earth), one should meditate strongly on *Tikkun Habris* and to gather all the sparks of holiness that one sent into the *klipah*.

Shavuos

Through proper observance of Shavuos, *da'as* is drawn down to one from heaven to rectify this temptation (*Likutey Moharan* II 1).

Mikvah

The mikvah is an important part of the purification process. Its importance and benefit has been written and spoken about by many holy sources throughout the ages from the earliest sages to

great tzadikim and leaders of our times. One should try to go often to the mikvah, especially before Shabbos and holidays. One who experienced keri or damaged the bris should immerse in the mikvah as soon as possible. One should dip at least twice. The intention of the first dip should be to cleanse one's soul and remove the impurity. The intention of the second dip should be to draw in holiness. On Erev Shabbos one should dip a third time in honor of Shabbos. When one immerses in the mikvah, the evil forces lose their control and all of one's demons fly away.

The Ohr Zarua writes that all sins bring upon the sinner a measure of impurity. One needs immersion in order to purify oneself as part of the teshuvah process (See *Berachos* 112).

Immersion helps remove the blemish of sins, especially those pertaining to the sanctity of the *bris*. When one enters the mikvah with intention to start anew, one shows regret and the desire to repent. Hashem imbues one with heavenly strength to prevail. One's soul becomes cleansed, and it is considered as if one is born anew (*Shelah Hakadosh-Shaar Haosiyos* 9, 100).

The Torah teaches that one wishing to become purified can only do so through immersion in water. Impurity is loathsome. It is not the way of the pious to remain steeped in impurity.

Purification uplifts and refines the human soul (*Sefer Hachinuch*, Mitzvah 173, 175).

One who is stringent about going to the mikvah is blessed. Many times one is saved from sin because of it (*Berachos* 26b).

The mikvah allows a person to connect to Hashem and His service. When the body is in a state of impurity, the soul is adversely affected, making it difficult to pray hampering true *dveikus* (feelings of closeness) to Hashem. When one immerses in a mikvah, the spirit of impurity is removed and one's soul is restored to its proper state. One will feel a new spirit within and will bond to Hashem (*Reishis Chochma*, *Sha'ar Ahavah* 11).

Immersing in the mikvah delivers one from all pain. It purifies all impurities and sins (*Likutey Moharan* 56).

The more times one submerges under water the more holiness one draws on to oneself (*Yesod Veshoresh Ha'avodah*, Gate 8, Chapter 1).

Introduction to the Tikkun Haklali

The earlier books of kabbalah bring down many *tikkunim* that must be done to fix the damage caused by this sin. These *tikkunim* are very harsh and involve fasting and self imposed afflictions. Hashem in His mercy sent our weak generation the holy tzadik Rebbe Nachman of Breslov who

gave us a much easier way to fix our actions and attain high spiritual levels. Rebbe Nachman said about himself that he reached a level where he was entirely clean of these desires. Due to his lofty level he was able to reveal and teach many wondrous things. Among Rebbe Nachman's most important accomplishments was the revelation of the Tikkun Haklali. —

King Dovid reached a very high level of holiness and called witness upon himself that he had completely conquered his evil urge. When King Dovid composed the Tehillim, a spirit of *ruach hakodesh* (heavenly insight) would descend upon him. King Dovid was able to capture the entire essence of creation, its manifestations from the *Sefiros* (heavenly spheres) and compress it into the letters and words that make up the Tehillim. Every chapter of Tehillim has a different unique power. When one recites Tehillim, even without concentration, one brings out the power of the letters and great *tikkunim* are accomplished. These *tikkunim* have even more power if one concentrates and has the proper *kavanos* (intentions). —

The kabbalists knew that there were ten specific chapters in Tehillim that correspond to the ten types of song that are the root of the Tehillim. Reciting these ten chapters consecutively would be a very great *tikkun* for the attribute of *Yesod*

which would rectify spiritual damage, especially damage caused by the sins of damaging the *bris*. *Yesod* is the *sefirah* that all energy must pass through before a person can receive it. One's sins damage this *sefirah*, especially those sins damaging the *bris*. The Tikkun Haklali is a general rectification that repairs every type of sin, especially damage done to the *bris*. —

Many kabbalists over the years tried to reveal the ten chapters. There were those that did not fully understand the mysteries involved and were unable to discern which ten they were. Others figured out part of them but passed away before their time, since they delved into mysteries that were not yet ready to be revealed. Rebbe Nachman, who had perfected the attribute of *Yesod* was able to extract the exact ten chapters needed for the Tikkun Haklali. Knowing that the world was on a very low level and that it would only continue to deteriorate, Rebbe Nachman knew that it was time to reveal the Tikkun Haklali. These ten chapters of the Tikkun Haklali are **16, 32, 41, 42, 59, 77, 90, 105, 137, and 150**. Now any one looking to repent can receive this great *tikkun* just by reciting these chapters. The effectiveness of the *tikkun* depends on the intensity that one says the verses. Nevertheless, reciting the verses of the Tikkun Haklali is beneficial to all regardless of their understanding and concentration. —

Rebbe Nachman stated that one who sees *keri*, should immerse in a mikvah and recite the Tikkun Haklali. If one does this, then one has nothing to worry about. If one is unable to make it to the mikvah that day, one should still recite the Tikkun Haklali. In truth, everyone should recite these chapters daily. Reciting the Tikkun Haklali will often help someone who is having trouble being *shomer habris* by removing temptation and impure thoughts. —

Towards the end of his life, Rebbe Nachman called over two witnesses. He then declared that he would use all his efforts to help and rectify the sins of anyone with true remorse who visits his grave, gives charity and recites the Tikkun Haklali, no matter how steeped in sin one is.

WHY DO I KEEP FALLING?

It is crucial to know that falling is part of the cycle of drawing closer to Hashem. One has to continue fighting and picking oneself up over and over again no matter how many times one falls. The first time for anything is always the hardest. When one is introduced to the idea of being shomer habris it will be extremely challenging. One needs to muster every ounce of strength and become a powerful warrior to break free from the chains of desire. As one slowly builds the tools to face this battle, it becomes easier to cope with.

Understanding the growth process

Aliyos and Yeridos

When one wants to draw close to Hashem one **must** go through countless *aliyos* and *yeridos* (ups and downs). Knowledge of this fact is essential. In fact, before every spiritual ascent there must be a descent. The whole purpose of the descent is only to enable one to ascend. Once one reaches a level, the only way to reach the next level is by being challenged all over again. —

Everyone who wants to enter the service of Hashem needs to ascend from level to level. Every time that one moves from level to level the *klipahs* come and attack with different temptations, imaginations, thoughts, confusions, and preventions. This happens so that one can renew one's strength and service to advance to the next level. However one can fall from one's level when it seems that the same old challenges have come up again. One may assume that one has indeed fallen, because of one's sins. **In reality this is not a fall at all!** It is a sign from heaven that it is time to move on to the next level. —

One should never be disheartened by all these fallings and descents. One needs to be strong and to never despair. If one does not pay attention to descent in any form, one will merit that all

descents will turn into ascents. One's descents will be the means to ascend from level to level. —

Everyone should understand this cycle and should not despair when one falls. It is not because of sins that one falls. One is being challenged just as tzadikim are constantly challenged. The greatest challenges begin when one is stirred to repentance and desires to pursue the ways of Hashem. It is specifically then that the challenges intensify, stronger than ever. The more one wants to draw close to Hashem and the higher level one is on, the stronger the battle will be. Everyone gets challenged according to their level. One must constantly strengthen oneself against the new challenges that arise (*Likutey Moharan 22, 25, 46, 72*).

The role of the Evil Inclination

It is a blessing that one has an evil inclination. It is only through the evil inclination that one can serve Hashem by overcoming one's urges and continuing in one's G-dly service. If one did not have this challenge, then one's service would be robotic and without meaning. This is the main reason why Hashem created the evil inclination. —

Even though inevitably the evil inclination brings one to many sins and causes great damage, nevertheless it is all worth it for Hashem. Every good action or thought one does while battling

one's urges is dearer to Hashem than if one had served Him for a thousand years without the evil inclination. The whole world was created for the purpose of overcoming one's evil inclination. One is never deserted by Hashem. In fact, Hashem Himself helps one face the challenge of fighting the evil inclination (*Likutey Eitzos, Hischazkus* 37).

When one is very close to the gates of holiness, practically about to enter, the evil inclination attacks with great strength. One has to be very strong then, not to pay attention to the falls and confusions, and continue to do one's best (*Likutey Moharan* II 48).

Whatever level one is on, the more one wants to enter into G-dly service and the more good is awakening in one's soul, the more the evil inclination strengthens the battle. It is comparable to two men wrestling. As soon as one man sees that the other is strengthening against him, he musters all his strength to overpower him (*Sichos Haran* 10).

The evil inclination confronts one constantly. If one turns away from the evil inclination and ignores it, it comes back over and over again. If one is strong willed and stubborn, and does not heed it at all, then it eventually turns away and leaves (*Likutey Moharan* II 51).

Obstacles create longing

When one is set on achieving lofty goals then obstacles to these goals will be created. These obstacles come about entirely to increase one's longing for that goal. The more something is withheld from someone the more they want it. Before one can merit attaining any achievement in serving Hashem, one must develop a proper longing and desire for that achievement. Therefore, obstacles are sent from on high as an opportunity to increase their longing. One should know that there is no obstacle in the world that cannot be broken if one so wishes. When one develops an appropriate and strong enough longing for his lofty aspirations, he will certainly succeed in performing it. The greater the *avodah* the greater the obstacle. —

In order to develop and strengthen one's longing and desire for lofty goals one has to voice his wishes to Hashem. One should request, pray and beg Hashem to have mercy and fulfill one's true longings and desires, and to overcome these obstacles (*Likutey Moharan* 31, 66).

Essential tools for the growth process

Running and Returning

One has to be an expert in running and returning. Running means constantly reaching higher levels and drawing closer to Hashem. Even if one

reaches a high level one should not be satisfied, but should strive to achieve more and more. Returning means that when one has descents, one should never despair. One has to begin over and over again, no matter how low one has fallen. It is crucial to understand these two conditions in order to remain strong and continue serving Hashem whether in an ascent or descent. —

It is very important to be an expert in “Halacha” to know what to do or not to do during an ascent or descent. When one is in a descent and the challenges are overwhelming one will know what to do and what not to. One will use this knowledge to prevent falling to even lower levels and giving up completely *chas veshalom* (*Likutey Moharan* 6).

Stubbornness

It is only possible to be a real Jew and serve Hashem properly through holy brazenness and stubbornness. This is because everyone entering into Hashem’s service will encounter countless ascents and descents, fallings and failings. And each time he wants to draw near he is cast down. If one is not extremely stubborn, one will find it impossible to stand one’s ground. One needs to strengthen oneself many times using great stubbornness (*Ibid.* 22, *Likutey Moharan* II 48; *Meshivas Nefesh*, Part 3, 21).

One may feel unwanted by Hashem because of all the damage one has done and since one may not currently be following Hashem's will. Nevertheless one has to beseech Hashem for mercy to draw near to His service and say "*Even so, I still want to be a Jew!*" It is as if one wants to "win over" Hashem, so to speak. Hashem has great joy from this (*Sichos Haran* 69).

Starting anew

When one is in a descent, it is important to start the service of Hashem anew, as if one has never started before in one's life! The service of Hashem requires that every single day one needs start afresh as if one has never started before. This process may have to be done many times in a single day. Without practicing this technique it is not possible to be righteous and draw close to Hashem (*Likutey Moharan* 261, *Ibid.* 48).

One should not pay attention to all of one's shortcomings, and give up hope. Even if one feels that one has grown old in one's sinful routine and cannot break free, one should never lose hope. One has to know and believe that every day, and at every moment, one has strength to start anew and be a completely new creation. Hashem renews the world every day and no given moment is similar to the next. One has to forget completely what one did until this

point and start anew. Every day one is a new creation as attested to in many of our morning blessings (*Meshivas Nefesh*, Part 3, 6-7).

Know your own strength

Our inner strength

Know that every Jew has a very precious holy soul that has amazing strength to stand up against the evil inclination and its legions. If one did not have the strength, Hashem would not give one the challenge. Hashem does not give challenges that cannot be overcome (*Avodah Zarah* 3a). One sins because of the wrong beliefs. One is in a constricted mindset that does not allow one to believe in oneself or understand the loftiness of one's soul and great inner strength. One believes that it is impossible to face this temptation. One's main strength is in the heart. One has to be like a warrior whose heart is strong, fears nothing, and runs to fight great battles. This is the way of service to Hashem. A strong heart can resist all the temptations in the world. We find many tzadikim and righteous people who believed in and understood their inner strength and holiness. With the proper mindset and *da'as* they were able to rouse their inner strength and withstand amazing challenges. —

The mind is the soul. The soul of every Jew, even the lowest, can stand against all the temptations in the world. Therefore it is forbidden to minimize one's mind and say, "*Unlike tzadikim I do not have a lofty soul*". This false humbleness causes one to fall into temptation. One has to believe in the loftiness and holiness of one's soul. One has to feel that with such a soul it is inappropriate to go after temptation and sin. One must know that every Jewish soul's root is completely distant from sin, and can withstand every temptation (*Ibid.* 25; *Likutey Moharan* 249).

Everyone can be a tzadik

One may think that tzadikim were born with a special soul without which they could not reach their level. The truth is, they had endless challenges and only reached their level through their endless efforts, their longing and by never giving up. One must know that every Jew has a very lofty soul and has the potential to be a tzadik (*Likutey Moharan* II 48; *Sichos Haran* 165).

It's now easier

Today it is much easier to stand up to the challenge. The many tzadikim and kosher people that faced many powerful battles with this temptation shattered its *klipas*. Now one can easily stand against this challenge (*Ibid.* 114).

NEVER GIVE UP!

There is no such thing as despair! There is always hope no matter how many times one has fallen, no matter how weak and broken one feels, and no matter how dark and painful life may seem. There are times where it seems that even with all the holy advice, and the tremendous efforts one is putting forth, one is still having heavy descents. What can one do when nothing seems to help? It is important never to despair! One must continue striving to keep to the holy advice and do one's best to continue fighting the battle over and over again. One should trust in Hashem, be strong, and rejoice in the knowledge that Hashem will assist one's battles. Everything will get better.

Despair does not exist

The Lowest places

It is especially through sinners that Hashem is most glorified. The main greatness of Hashem is that even those who are the farthest from Him can also draw close to His service. The returning of sinners causes Hashem's Name to be made very dear and raised (*Likutey Moharan* 10).

Hashem is glorified even through the lowest of the low, the greatest sinners. One who is Jewish should have personal gratification that Hashem glorifies in him. It is completely forbidden for one

to despair even if one sinned enormously, *chas veshalom*. The dearness Hashem has for one never ends, so one can always return to Hashem (*Ibid.* 17).

One can always draw oneself near to Hashem regardless of where one is holding. Even in the lowest places Hashem is found. Even from these low places one can draw oneself to Hashem. Hashem's glory fills the entire world. One involved with secular business cannot say "*I can't serve Hashem properly due to the materialism and impurity that is constantly surrounding me.*" In all materialistic things, and all the languages of the world one can find G-dliness. Without G-dliness materialistic objects would have no "life force" and could not exist. The more materialistic something is, the more hidden and reduced the force of G-dliness is in this object. —

Even if one is stuck in a very low generation and has fallen into the deepest depths of sin one should never despair. Even if it appears to one that it is impossible to draw near to Hashem due to one's low level, one should never ever despair. Even from a very low place it is possible to find Hashem and return with complete repentance. It is completely forbidden to despair (*Ibid.* 6, 33; *Likutey Moharan* II 12).

Falling to the lowest depths

Sometimes, one has to be subdued by sin and fall to very low levels to stir one's heart and be awakened to complete teshuvah. Sin gnaws away until finally it reaches the inner core of one's soul's holiness. This inner core sees that the evil inclination wants to swallow it completely. The soul musters all its strength overpowering the evil inclination, and repents completely. —

One however cannot sin relying on the soul's last ditch effort to save itself. Chazal say that one who says "*I will sin and do teshuvah*," the teshuvah is no good (*Yoma* 85b). The evil inclination is very strong and may swallow the soul completely! There are many evil people who never repented. One must flee from sin in every sense. This process is part of the hidden ways of *bechirah* (free choice) that no one is fully capable of understanding (*Meshivas Nefesh*, Part 3, 25).

Hashem's mercy

Even if one clearly fails the challenge, one should never give up. One should turn to Hashem's endless mercy. The reality is that due to Hashem's greatness and tremendously lofty stature any small act one does against His will is deserving of punishment. However, Hashem is full of kindness and the world which is very dear to Him is filled with His mercy. Chazal tell us everything turns out for the best. One should

never cease to hope in Hashem. He is good to everyone always, and His deliverance can come at any moment (*Likutey Moharan* II 49).

One needs to strengthen oneself and wait and hope for Hashem's deliverance even when one is still completely distant from serving Hashem. One's waiting and hoping will merit complete salvation from Hashem (*Meshivas Nefesh*, Part 3, 119).

Don't compare

Sometimes, one can become disheartened by comparing oneself to one's friends. One may think "*I have worked so much harder than my friends, yet they are on a higher spiritual level, and have so much more than me.*" It is forbidden to question Hashem's ways. One has to have faith that Hashem is good to everyone always. No one knows where others really stand, or what the rewards are for their actions. Everyone is very different and has different purposes and challenges. —

One should act as if there are no other people in the world and not pay attention to anyone else. One should focus on serving Hashem with simplicity and always be happy, regardless of how challenging life is and how flawed one's service may actually be. Any good thing that one does should be dear to oneself. One should thank Hashem that one was able to merit this good deed (*Ibid.* 51).

Continuous prayers

One may pray excessively for days or even years and it may seem as if all of one's prayers have gone unanswered. One shouldn't *chas veshalom* think Hashem isn't listening. One should have complete faith that Hashem listens to every single word. Every prayer makes an impression arousing Hashem's mercy every time. It is comparable to water dripping on a rock, over a long period of time it makes an impression. The Gemara teaches that tefillah needs to be constantly strengthened. If one's tefillah is not accepted one should return and pray again (*Brachos* 32a, See Rashi). If one is persistent in one's prayers time and time again, and does not give up, Hashem's mercy will be aroused by the abundance of prayers. Hashem will fulfill one's wishes and draw one near (*Likutey Eitzos*, Tefillah 3; *Sichos Haran* 234).

Finding one's soul mate

Being *shomer habris* can be especially challenging for well meaning single men searching for their soul mate. When the process takes very long it can be very disheartening. One needs complete faith and trust that Hashem will bring one to the exact person one is meant to be with. One should work on being happy always. One's salvation can come in the blink of an eye. We are taught that Hashem determines one's soul mate 40 days before the formation of one's embryo (*Sanhedrin* 22a).

Never give up!

When one is ready and the time is right, Hashem in His mercy will send one's destined soul mate. One must battle the evil inclination and remember that serving Hashem and guarding the *bris* are the best efforts one can do to find a wife. (See above, Very practical reasons..., Finding a wife)

Be strong!

Will

If one really wants to overcome the challenges, but seems unable, one should know that the longing and inner desire to sanctify oneself are by themselves very lofty. One must always try one's best, and yearn to serve Hashem as much as one can. Even if it seems that one is not succeeding in sanctifying oneself, nonetheless one should do what one can, and what is good in Hashem's eyes He will do (*Sichos Haran* 12, 27, 51, 260).

Distance

One can get encouragement from the very fact that one feels distant from Hashem. It is a level to realize that one is distant. One could be so distant that one does not even realize any more how lost one is. Even if it is true that one is very distant, the fact that one understands this is very dear to Hashem (*Likutey Moharan* II 68).

Repentance

One gets discouraged because one sees how one was inspired many times to draw near to

Hashem but fell time after time. Why should one despair from this? Even the greatest sinners, who sinned their entire lives without remorse, who repented at the very end of their lives, were forgiven (*Kedushin* 40b). Certainly someone who falls and repents over and over again has hope to return to Hashem (*Ibid.*).

One sin less

One can despair after having fallen many times. It is very challenging to serve Hashem. One can give up, make excuses, and rationalize one's actions by saying "*I really want to do what is right but my evil inclination is just too strong.*" —

One has to keep in mind that at the end of one's life, one will have to account for one's sins. Despair is due to the evil one who wants to ruin one completely. One should be satisfied that even if all of one's efforts and longings save one from a single aspect of one sin, even once in a lifetime! It is worth it to have one sin less to account for. In the end, all one has left for all one's efforts is how one saved oneself from sins and one's success in snatching a mitzvah and good deed here or there (*Meshivas Nefesh* Part 3, 105).

Believe in your efforts

If you believe that you are able to damage, believe that you are able to fix (*Likutey Moharan* II 112).

One can be very far from Hashem and sin continuously against Hashem. However, the slightest move to escape from materialism and temptation is great and very dear to Hashem. One runs with this thousand upon thousands of steps in the higher worlds (*Ibid.* 48).

All of one's efforts, even the slightest movement towards good in action or thought, are never lost (*Baba Kama* 141b). When one succeeds in completing the righteous act that one was striving to complete, overcoming all obstacles, then very holy and lofty things are formed in heaven, from all of one's earlier actions and thoughts (*Sichos Haran* 11).

All of the efforts one exerts to draw close to Hashem count. They all combine together and come to assist one in times of dire need (*Likutey Moharan* II 48).

Someone may draw close to Hashem and then become distant. Even in that situation, the drawing close that one once did is very precious to Hashem, even though afterwards one does what one does (*Sichos Haran* 123, 288).

Impure thoughts

One should not despair if one is overcome by impure thoughts. On the contrary, this is one's *tikkun* and chance to repent. Overcoming unclean thoughts is one's main *tikkun* and teshuvah (*Likutey Moharan* 27).

Keri

Even if one puts great effort to be *shomer habris*, one can still be having nocturnal emissions. This can be very disheartening. One may feel as if one has no control during sleep. Know that one has complete control. Nocturnal emissions happen only because one has not fully committed to guarding one's eyes and thoughts during the day. One is forbidden to look at sexually arousing images during the day lest one come to *keri* at night (*Niddah* 13a). When one completely guards one's eyes and thoughts during the day, unclean thoughts will not enter one's mind at night. Even if these thoughts do enter one's mind, Hashem will help overcome them even while one sleeps. Chazal tell us, that "One who comes to purify oneself, Hashem helps" (*Shabbos* 104a), (Cf. *The Light of Ephraim*).

Sometimes *keri* is caused by the food one eats, or tiredness. In such a case, it is nothing and one should not become disheartened by this (*Sichos Haran* 141).

One step at a time

The challenges to drawing close to Hashem are many. One cannot expect to immediately overcome these challenges. One needs great patience to succeed, one step at a time (*Ibid.* 27).

Never give up!

The *yetzer hara* can trick a person into having an over abundance of enthusiasm to draw near to Hashem. The *yetzer hara's* goal is to cause one to reach one's limits quickly. Consequently this causes a lack of desire to continue to strive to do the will of Hashem. One must be very wary of this (*Likutey Moharan* II 5:7).

Another kind of faith

One has to not only have faith in Hashem but have faith and confidence in oneself to believe that one is very dear to Hashem (*Sichos Haran* 140).

The main thing is not to sin

Many times one is confused about how to best serve Hashem. One is hampered by thoughts that one could be serving Hashem in stronger ways. One should not become overwhelmed by this. The main service of Hashem is to refrain from sin (*Ibid.* 269).

Do not fear

One's journey in this world is similar to crossing a very narrow bridge. The most important thing is not to fear! (*Likutey Moharan* II 48).



RELATED WORKS

*This pamphlet covers only a limited part of this subject
Below is a list of related Sefarim for further reference*

English sefarim

- Rebbe Nachman's *Tikkun*: An Introduction to and a translation of the Tikkun Haklali - published by the Breslov Research Institute.
- The Light of Ephraim: Kabbalistic explanations about damaging the *bris* and its rectifications - published by Moznayim.
- Keeping Holy: A compilation of letters gathered from the Steipler which discuss the importance of *Shmiras Habris*.

Hebrew sefarim

- *Taharas Hakodesh*: Covers the subject of *Shmiras Habris* in detail, discussing the different types of *tikkunim* - R' Aharon Rutah.
- *Shmiras Hamachshavah*: Explains the damage caused by impure thoughts, the reward for guarding one's mind, and advice how to keep away impure thoughts - R' Daniel Frish.
- *Minchas Yehudah*: Relevant stories and a number of *tikkunim* for *Shmiras Habris* - R' Yehudah Fetayah.
- *Takanas Hashavim*: Extensive thought on *Shmiras Habris* - R' Tzadok Hacohen of Lublin.
- *Tzipurin Shamir*: A section of the *Sefer Avodas Hakodesh*, discusses different *tikkunim* - the Chida.
- *Tikkun Kares*: Staying up at night and reciting this *tikkun* removes one's *kares* - the Chida.

- *Zerah Kadosh: Kavanos for Tikkun Habris* - the kabbalist Moshe ben Menachem.
- *Sha'ar Ruach Hakodesh: Different tikkunim* for various sins - the Ari.
- *Sefer Chasidim*: Includes many sections dealing with *Tikkun Habris* - R' Yehuda Hachasid.
- *Lashon Chachamim: Tikkunim* - the Ben Ish Chai.
- *Tiv Hateshuvah*: Expounds on *Shovavim* (an annual several week period addressing *Tikkun Habris*), - R' Gamliel Rabonovitch.
- *Yesod Yosef*: On damaging the *bris*, with a number of commentaries - Yosef ben Shlomoh Calahora.
- *Taharas Yom Tov*: Discusses the subject of *Shmiras Habris* at length - R' Chananya Yom Tov Lipa Deutch.
- *Reishis Chuchmah, Shaar Hakedushah*: Extensive teachings on the subject - R' Eliyahu de Vidas.

Sefarim from the teachings of R' Nachman

- *Likutey Moharan*: R' Nachman's main work. A fountain of novel, empowering teachings illuminating the soul, and expounding on the essence of Torah and Judaism.
- *Sichos Haran*: A collection of insightful teachings and wisdom from R' Nachman's conversations, as well as noted stories illustrating his devotions.
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