



# Navigating Shovevim Week 6 “Dissolving Despair”

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Week Six- Dissolving Despair -discussing what is despair and ways to cut it down to size and knock it out. Tikun klali, believe in it and get the yeush off your head-simple technique. **Knocking out the avar-you live every second in the hoveh, and maybe even the asid-because you want to change and get close to H-shem. Making a spiritual insurance plan** dissolves yiush-is always the last point that is immutable. What is teshuva-making teshuva much easier to kick out yeush-e.g. **not looking is teshuva-right then you're doing teshuva.** Letter to the future. File cabinet-renewal. **What is yiush. How to measure change. Pie chart of different parts of a person. Teshuva only by sha'as hakosher, hisbodedus-one hour a day for lev nishbar and only if 23 hours a day bisimcha. How to use the mikva-it's a sign of hope, not a sign of failure-reframe mikva. An angry G-d or a loving Go-d-framing G-d in a useful way-baki biritzoh, baki bishov, vascilitating back and forth. Stuff on page 103 from she'eris yakov breslov.**

Many, or maybe *most* people entangled with acting out feel **despair** that things will never change, and that Hashem doesn't like them anymore.

In order to dissolve “*yiush*” or despair, let us first ask the question “what is despair?” or “why do people despair?”

Answer: Perhaps people despair because they feel **nothing or they themselves will ever change**, they will be stuck in this bad habit forever; another reason for despair might be that **they construct in their minds that Hashem no longer likes them**, and **they therefore conclude that he will no longer help them** and they are now helpless.

Based on this, let's see how to dissolve the despair.

## **Myth: They will never change**

One of the first ways to dissolve despair is to learn how to accurately measure change. Our Yetzer Harah tells us that  
a) we have never moved even a centimeter towards kedusha and  
b) we never will move towards kedusha.

To punch out this Yetzer Harah, we need to buy a measuring tape with centimeters on it and start noticing the small changes that we have made; once we can notice the small changes we already made, we can begin to feel that we actually are changing, even in tiny steps, and will continue to change towards kedusha in the future.

Example: Man is depressed that he's been working on anger for two years and still gets angry. He can begin to measure "last year I got angry 260 times, this year I got angry only 200 times. Last year I got angry immediately, this year I got angry after holding it in for 2-3 seconds.

**Zohar: "Every single effort made towards kedusha is noticed, treasured, and accrues to a large amount up in heaven".**

## **You are like an XXL pizza Pie!**

A pizza pie has many pieces, some bigger, some smaller, some with more cheese and some with less. A person too has many parts to himself. He is not only “a person who acts out”. He is many different things. For example, acting out is only one piece of his pizza, but he may also be a chavrusa, son, brother, Jew, yeshiva bochur, good macaroni cook, lifeguard, doodler, lamdan, friend, basketball player, oveid Hashem.

The idea here is that the Yetzer Hara wants us to identify ourselves as defunct, perverted, & sick. It’s not true because the problem he is doing is only one part of who he is-he is actually much bigger than just that one role or slice of pizza. By shifting our identification from being messed up to being “Shmulik”, this can knock out this type of yiush.

Exercise: Make a list of all the different roles you have. You’ll see that acting out is just one part of your whole pizza pie.

## Doing teshuva can give despair if done wrong

- Teshuva is not supposed to be done all day, every moment. This leads to depression. Many famous Jewish figures such as the Ari”zal and Baal haTanya, teach about doing teshuva only “bisha’as hakosher”, an appropriate time. The reason behind this is simple-when doing teshuva, we are magnifying our faults & errors. This is okay if we can handle it & are prepared for being in this state. However, if one keeps in this state for longer than he should, he can lose his homeostasis, or healthy center of balance, and slip into a state of depression and negative self-judgment.
- The “appropriate time” is a state where you feel good about yourself and can look objectively at your errors, with the intent of self-correction and getting closer to Hashem. This is called in sefarim “lev nishbar”, a broken heart. An unhealthy emotional state is described as “atzvus”, which is depression.
- The Tanya suggests doing teshuva when your intuition senses that it is a good opportunity. Perhaps you just heard a Carlebach story and are inspired. R’ Nachman of Breslov suggests trying to be happy 23 hours a day, saving only one hour a day for your time to do self reflection & no more.

The Mikva—a place for stabbing out your eye with a rusty fork,  
or for renewal & resilience?....

Most people who struggle with lust consider going to the mikva. Going to the Mikva is a very great thing; often, people associate the mikva with *being* a bad person. Maybe their inner dialogue is this: “Why am I in the mikva? Because I acted out again. I failed again, and am dirty. I need to clean myself off again from this tumah”. The mikva, in this dialogue, is like an electric chair, firing squad, or a place for cleansing problematic people and perversion.

Let’s reframe the mikva to be a place for renewal & resilience. We can try this new inner-dialogue: “Why am I in the mikva? Because I want to jump back onto my horse and start again. I can go into the mikva now and renew my existence. There’s always hope—just go to the mikva and keep walking forward!”

R’ Nosson of Breslov (sefer Kochvei Ohr, end) interprets the word “mikva” to mean “place to create hope”, since the root of mikva is “kaveh”, or hope, and the “prefix” in the word mikva is “mem”, which means to create or do something.

# Is God an angry God or loving God? Understanding God in a *useful way*...

- For many of my clients, they relate to God as an angry judgmental God, and this is found to be **unhelpful** for them. So whether or not we hold a long philosophical discussion about this, we know that right now, the way Shmulik is relating to God is making his life even more unhealthy and dysfunctional. So just for the sake of health, let's frame God in a useful way towards health & recovery.
- To do this, one does not have to reconcile all the zohars and gemaras that is causing him to despair-all he simply has to do is believe that if God is really as great as he is made out to be by the Torah, then he will always have patience and room for you to come back and return to him. This is like the message of the pasuk "*ligdulaso ein cheiker*", *his kindness is unlimited*.
- To prove my point, consider this-do you think Hashem would rather have you believe whatever you are believing now which causes you despair & acting out, **OR** would God prefer you stop acting out and get closer to him by willing to let go of & replace some of your beliefs & interpretations of things? Doesn't the Torah say "*diracheha darchei no'am*", the Torah is pleasant? So how can it cause depression?



## God is angry with you? Are you sure? How much?....

Not only should you reframe God in the name of good health like we just said, but let's also challenge this "angry God" idea itself.

Where did you get this belief from? Did it come from a Torah source-and even if it did, perhaps there are several ways to interpret that source-what gives you the right to pick an interpretation that causes you to act out and stay depressed, if you can choose to interpret it in a way that promotes keeping the Torah better & saving your life?

Also, why do you assume he's angry with you? Was this assumption at all influenced by feelings of shame & guilt that you had from acting out, or is this a true objective opinion based on honest & healthy research? Also, who draws the line between what is considered sickness & what is considered sin? How are you so sure of your answer? And perhaps, even if it is sin at the beginning, perhaps from a certain point onwards it is considered un-wellness? So if you really can't say you absolutely know the answers to these loaded questions, then you might want to just LET GO and adopt a healthier Torah view for your wellbeing!

## The road to Gehinom is paved with good assumptions...

- Being depressed due to Torah concepts about acting out-this is a type of cognitive distortion based on many untrue assumptions. One of the assumptions that causes depression is that “I have to reach xyz level of holiness by xyz time” or “I have no results to show for myself for the world to come-I keep trying to stop acting out and am never successful”.
- By making such assumptions, we are entirely forgetting to take into account a major Torah concept that actually refutes all such types of thoughts. That is, the Torah asks of you to produce results, but once you have actually tried to produce those results, whether you are successful or not, you are judged by your efforts. In other words, Hashem doesn't measure you up by “did Shmulik act out or did he not act out”. Hashem values a person by “did Shmulik make a reasonable effort or not to refrain from acting out”.
- To summarize this, Hashem only talks about results when giving you the instructions, and he uses results as a way to measure your effort. But he does not look for results in the post-evaluation of whatever it was that he asked you to do.

# **Baki Birotzo, Baki Bi'shov-vacilating back & forth**

**The gemara says “Yagahti Umatzasi, Taamin”....**

**Not looking IS already the main form of teshuva**

## Making a spiritual insurance plan

Knocking out the “avar”/past

Knocking out the “hoveh”/future



# Letter to the future

## The more you rely on your teshuva, the less despair

When we put money into the bank, we relax, because we “know” that we just put aside money for the future. It’s a belief, because you don’t really “know” that you have any money unless you are holding it in your hand-maybe the bank lost you’re money, maybe you put it in someone else’s account by accident, etc. Nonetheless, we believe that we have this money and rely on that belief, and it is relieving to us.

The same is true with teshuva. We do not necessarily know with lots of clarity what things will be like for us in the world to come, or what exactly our status is in this world either as far as “am I considered having done teshuva now” or “