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[Home](#) > Droshos - Surviving Life's Pressures

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## Droshos - Surviving Life's Pressures

### ***The Egyptian Exile***

In the Egyptian bondage, our people were afflicted with terrible suffering – as it is written, *“And they embittered their lives with difficult labor.”*

Think about what any Jew must have felt like then. They knew of the prophecy made to Avraham Avinu that the Egyptian exile would last for 420 years. How could they take it any longer? How could anyone ever hope to get out of Egypt? Even if anyone there would have ran away from Egypt, they wouldn't be able to escape, because the Egyptians used their magic to hold back anyone from escaping. What did any Jew think back then – how could he cope with such suffering, knowing that it's going to take 420 years to be redeemed??

Imagine we are one of the Jews enslaved in Egypt. What would we do? How would we cope?

Would we just give up and say, “Enough of this -- I'm not working?”

When the people complained to Moshe of the suffering, Moshe entreated to Hashem, and Hashem told him to tell them, “Just like I was with the forefathers, so will I be with you by the other hard times. This pain is only temporary.”

Hashem was saying, It's true – it really is a very hard time that they are going through, but do not worry – it is only temporary, and I am with you, so don't worry. How are we to understand Hashem's response – “The pain is only temporary”?! How does this help them survive a 420-year exile?

### ***Our Problems***

This lesson shows us how we can deal with our own difficulties.

Is there anyone who hasn't gone through difficult times? There is no such person. Every single one of us has gone through hardship. Some of us came out of much of our past hardships, and some of us are still going through hardships. But what we all have in common is that all of us are still going through something hard, and we haven't fully come out of our difficulties. We are all still going through some difficulty in our life, one way or another.

When a person has a big problem, he usually convinces himself that it's the worst problem he ever had. He compares his new problem to his previous problems, and realizes that it's not the same kind of problem he is used to – it's a whole new problem he has never faced, and it doesn't seem to have a

solution.

What happens? Eventually, the problem goes away, and he forgets about it. Then a new problem comes, and again the person thinks that this is a problem that has no solution. The cycle repeats itself...

### **Remember How You Survived Your Past Problems**

But what people usually fail to remember is that their previous problems, which didn't seem to have a solution, went away at a certain point. We usually fail to recall all the difficulties that we *did* come out of.

When we're going through a difficult time in our life, we have the ability to calm ourselves down by remembering that just like our previous problem didn't seem to have a solution, yet somehow it went away, so there is a solution to our current problem, although we don't see how. We can realize that it is only our physical eyes that doesn't see a solution, but that doesn't mean there isn't a solution.

The Ramban says, "*Maaseh Avos Siman Labonim*" - "What happened to our forefathers is a sign for their children." Just like Hashem was with Avraham *Avinu* when he went down to Egypt and he saved him from his problem - this is when *Pharoah* abducted Sarah, and Avraham *Avinu* had no solution to his predicament - so do we now always have a solution to our problems, even though it seems like there isn't.

Although we ourselves don't know how to solve our problems, Hashem can take us out of it - just like He helped Avraham when he didn't have a solution, and just like He redeemed our people from exile when there seemed to be no way out.

This is what Hashem told Moshe to tell the people - "The pain is only temporary - Just like I took Avraham out of Egypt, so am I with you. Just there was no natural solution for Avraham, yet I was with him and took him out of his problem, so will I take you out of your problem even though there is no natural solution."

### **The Lesson Of Remembering The Exodus From Egypt**

Every day we leave Egypt. This is part of what we say every day in *Kerias Shema* - we remember how we were taken out of Egypt. We have many *mitzvos* as well where we remember how we were taken out of Egypt. On Shabbos and the Yomim Tovim, we say many times the words, "*Zecher L'yetzias Mitzrayim*" - a "remembrance" to our redemption from Egypt. Why must we remember the redemption? Is it merely to have a memorial day to remember the miracles of the past?

Many reasons are given for this, but for our discussion, it is relevant to say that the reason why we remember the redemption from Egypt so much is because it serves as the foundation for all our troubles. It shows that there is a way out from all our troubles - just like Hashem was with us then, so is He with us now.

Just like there was a public redemption, so is there a private redemption that can take place in each person's soul. When a person has a problem and he doesn't know the solution, yet he has *Emunah peshutah* (simple faith) in Hashem, he can experience his own personal redemption.

### **Use Your Experiences In Life To Increase Your Emunah**

The *Gemara* in *Kiddushin* says that there is an obligation to honor the elderly - even to honor an elderly non-Jew. Why? The *Gemara* says because he went through a lot of experiences in his life, and

this makes him deserving of respect. Simply speaking, an elderly person is wise from having gone through the experiences of life, and therefore, even an elderly non-Jew is to be honored for his wisdom about life.

But the deeper meaning behind this is that even a non-Jew has reached a deeper degree of *Emunah* in his life from all of the experiences he has gone through from many years of life. His *Emunah* has become stronger because of his difficulties he came out of - and this makes even a non-Jew worthy of honor.

### ***“This Is The Worst Problem I Ever Had”***

Most people, whenever they have a problem, think “this is the worst problem I ever had in my life.” A person, let’s say, is in debt, or he is sick, or he needs a *shidduch* - and he always feels like *this* is just the worst possible thing that he has ever gone through.

Let’s say a person can’t find a *shidduch*; he thinks that this is the worst problem he ever had in his life. What happens? He eventually finds his *shidduch* and gets married, and he moves on. He forgets that he ever had a problem finding a *shidduch*. Then he has children, and he goes through hardship with them, thinking that this is the worst problem ever. Life goes on, and then he encounters new kinds of difficulties; his difficulties in *shidduchim* and with his children are a thing of the past. As he encounters new problems, each time he thinks, “*This* is for sure the worst problem I have ever gone through!”

People usually forget that there was a point in their life in which they came out of their previous, “never-ending” problems. A person usually doesn’t look back and see how he overcame difficulty, and he goes through life thinking that every new problem he encounters is the worst problem ever. A person forgets that he ever came out of his previous problems - problems which had once been the “worst” problem ever.

### ***The Person Who Strengthened Himself From His Past Problem***

Once I knew someone who became very ill; the surgery he needed to have could have killed him. I knew him throughout the entire situation, and he was calm throughout his entire ordeal. He had to spend Pesach one time in the hospital due to his illness, and I asked him how he is. He told me, “*Baruch Hashem* I can feel like I am a *ben chorin* (a freed person) on Pesach.” This person, who persevered through his *Emunah*, was able to feel like a *ben chorin* in a hospital; the strength he showed was amazing. I asked him, “Is this the first ordeal you have gone through in your life?”

He told me, “When I was a *bachur*, I was having a hard time finding a *shidduch*. I got older and older, I was very disappointed to see all my friends getting married, while I remained alone without a *shidduch*. I went back and back to my *mashgiach* (spiritual mentor) to discuss my problem, and the *mashgiach* told me, “Keep waiting a little longer...it must be that the right one didn’t come yet.” I waited and waited, and it seemed to me like the worst problem of life. Then I realized - Why am I relying on my *mashgiach* for support? Is my *Emunah* in my *mashgiach*?!

“I realized that although I was having a difficulty, I need to realize that Hashem can take me out of my situation. *Baruch Hashem*, after this I found my *shidduch*. And just like I remember how Hashem took me out of my situation, which seemed to have no solution, so will Hashem take me out of my current difficulty.”

Because this person remembered how Hashem took him out of his seemingly impossible situation, he was able to face a scary ordeal and even spend Pesach happily in the hospital.

It is only when a person gives up hope that he feels broken from his situation and he will not be able to cope. But when a person is hopeful that he will come out of his situation, he will be able to survive his situation.

### ***Surviving This Long Galus***

The *galus* (exile) that we are in is very long. Do we have any hope to be redeemed from it? Is there anyone who really believes it will end?

We say in *Ani Maamim*, "And although Moshiach tarries, I still wait for him." Anyone who truly feels this way will not give up. Just like there will be a public redemption, so is there a private redemption that can take place in every person's soul. We can all have hope to our difficulties – that is, ***if we remember*** the times that we came out of our previous difficulties.

When our people left Egypt, where did they go? They went into a desert for forty years, and they had 42 encampments when they were there. Each of us as well goes through "42 encampments" in our lives (a statement of the Baal Shem Tov). How do we deal with our personal "42 encampments"?

The holy *sefarim* say that a person should deal with this by feeling like he is a "baby in his mother's lap", as Dovid *HaMelech* says in *Tehillim*. Just like a child who goes from place to place doesn't feel like he is going from place to place, because all he feels is his mother's arms – so can a person go from difficulty to difficulty yet not feel like he is being moved around, because he can feel himself in Hashem's embrace.

All of us go through a lot of "movements" in our life. Life is shaky and rocky, and the movements throw us around. The question is: Do we have something to hold us up as we are being thrown around?

### ***Developing A Stability For Life***

We need to uncover from within ourselves a source of stability to keep us strong when we go through shaky times. Just like a house that is built strong can withstand an earthquake, so do we need to fortify ourselves to withstand life's pressures.

All of us go through all kinds of emotional earthquakes. How can we survive the shaky situations in life?

There is an inner place in our soul which gives us stability to withstand hardship, and it is accessed if we are connected to our soul.

We need to acquire the power of stability. Many people are always moving from place to place; they never settle down to live in one place for a long time. They are constantly going through changes – and they lack stability in their life. They don't know how to feel settled.

If a person never tries to change, he is kind of dead. There are people who never move at all and never seek to change. I knew a person who was born on a certain street, got married to a girl who lived on his street, and bought a house on the same street – and he is still living in the same house today. That is one kind of problem, when a person doesn't move at all.

But the opposite problem of this is when a person is always seeking to change, because he has no stability in his life. We need to change sometimes and seek changes, but we also need to balance ourselves with a kind of stability.

Every person wants his life to work out, but such a life is not a life. What we really is to have an inner stability inside ourselves. This will help us deal with situations we have never been in before. We gain this stability when we are truly connected to Hashem and learning His Torah.

### ***Stability Involves Both Our Mind And Heart***

Some people only seek closeness to Hashem, but they are missing Torah in their life. Others only seek Torah, and Hashem isn't in their life. But we need to have both in order to feel stable.

The soul of a person wants to feel free; it wants to overcome its limits and be close to Hashem. But this need also has to be balanced with stability [as we will explain].

There are people who walk the streets at night and scream, "*Shema Yisrael!*" They mean it from the depths of their heart – but is this a good thing or not? (If there would be a group of people together doing this, that would at least open up their hearts a little...)

Such behavior lacks stability; such behavior shows that a person is very emotional, but that's it. It is not enough to be a very "feeling" person – our emotions don't **build** us. People who are overly emotional and feeling kinds of people would become *Gedolim* if only their minds would match their emotions! But because they don't have a balance between their mind and their emotions, they aren't stable, although their feelings come from the depths of their heart.

In order to have stability for life, we need our mind and our heart to be on an equal level with each other. If we only have a very feeling heart but we are far from our minds, this is a lack of stability.

I once asked someone, "How much Torah do you learn?" He answered me, "I learn a lot! When I sit down at the Shabbos table on Friday night, I look at all the *sefarim* on my shelf and feel that I wish I could know all of them." He has a lot of yearnings for Torah, but he doesn't learn Torah! He is full of feelings, but it isn't balanced with his mind. He lacks stability.

It is only when a person **learns** Torah – and constantly learns it in-depth – that a person's thoughts be immersed in Torah and have stability. When a person is immersed in Torah, it is only then that his heart is stabilized, and he will then be able to find *chizuk* (inspiration) in any situation. Without this stability, the "Torah remains in a corner" – and he always feels that his *chavrusa* (study partner) never works out for him...

### ***Major Questions In Life Come From A Lack Of Stability***

In fact, all major questions that people have about life comes from a lack of stability: "Where will I live?", or "When should I get married?" or "How will I earn a living?" etc.

Marital problems are also because there is no stability in a person. Many times a person gets into problems in his marriage because he thought that it would go as he planned. Such an attitude lacks stability. If he would only have more stability, he would be able to deal with the unexpected scenarios that marriage brings.

Without stability, a person's life is totally superficial. I know someone who converted to Judaism and became Chassidic. He keeps changing his Chasidic garb, because he has no stability in his life. His whole life is about superficial things, like which type of *levush* (clothes) he should wear.

No one knows what will happen to him in his life. But a person can survive whatever life will bring if he is always connected to his source of stability. A good example of stability is *Daf Yomi*. Every day, no matter what, people learn the same page of *Gemara*. This epitomizes stability.

Many people depend on their friends or surroundings for *chizuk* (inspiration). What happens when, later in life, a person isn't around his friends anymore, or he is in a different setting that he felt dependent on? He will fall apart. But if he is connected to his inner world, he will have the strength to go on.

### **Stability In Engagement And Marriage**

One of the big problems in a person's life is *shidduchim* (dating). Eventually, a person went through the anxieties of *shidduchim* and he gets married, his life brings changes, and now he has new problems. How does he deal with his marriage problems? It depends. If he remembers that when he got married, he had no idea that this would be the person he would marry – he will discover that he was only able to come to the decision of getting married, because he had stability. He had stability because he was connected to Hashem when he made his decision; this is what gives a person the strength to decide he will marry this girl whom he doesn't know.

But if a person thought that his decision to marry this girl only depends on his decision alone, such a person wasn't connected to Hashem when he made his decision. Such a person, when he encounters marital difficulties, will want to get divorced, because he feels that it's all up to *him* anyway. He doesn't have any stability.

No one knows what life will bring. A person shouldn't even depend on how he sees how others have changed in their life. Just because you saw others change should be a reason for you to change? Why should your life depend on how other people live their life? We all need to change, and it shouldn't be because we see that others are growing and changing.

When a person looks back at his whole life, he will realize that it was only Hashem who took him out of his situation. When he remembers this, he will be able to go through any situation.

### **This Is Life Itself!**

The words here are not nice "ideas" – rather, it is the meaning of how Torah is our very life. "*Ki heim chayeinu*" – "For the words (of Torah) are our life." The words here are coming to explain how we can actually make Torah into our life.

I also went through many hardships in my life, and the only thing that kept me going was how I remembered that it was Hashem who took me out of my previous struggles, together with my Emunah in Him and that He can take me out of my new problems. The more a person goes through life, he is able to look back at his previous struggles and see how it was Hashem who helped him out of them.

### **How To Get Menuchas Hanefesh (Serenity)**

One of the *Shabbos Zemiros* is, "*Yonah Motzoh bo manoach*" – "The dove could not find any rest." It is very painful for people when they don't have any *menuchas hanefesh* (serenity), when they feel that they have no rest from their problems.

Really, there is no *menuchas hanefesh* to be found on the physical world. But on the other hand, there is also no situation in which we cannot find how to have *menuchas hanefesh*. We can always find *menuchas hanefesh*, wherever we may be. How? Because *menuchas hanefesh* is something we can uncover from our inner world, no matter where we are.

Is there anyone who doesn't want *menuchas hanefesh* and who doesn't want to enjoy himself on this world? This is what we do our whole life – looking for peace of mind (*menuchah*), as well as enjoyment

(*oneg*). Our entire life is basically a search for peace of mind and enjoyment. But where can we find true peace of mind, and true enjoyment? In our very own soul. The inner kind of peace of mind we want to have isn't close to us, but it is not that far either, because it is found deep within ourselves. The *Gemara* (Berachos 3a) says, "Woe to the children who are exiled from their Father's table." The depth of this matter is that people are always moving around in life and constantly running about, so they don't have any rest.

The inner kind of life we need to have is found in the depths of our soul. Two people can do the same thing, yet only one of them will truly gain from it - the one who feels the inner world contained in something. Only when we are connected to our inner world can we utilize our inner world. When a person isn't connected to his *pnimiyus* - his inner world - he isn't able to utilize it, because he is only connected to superficiality.

Many times a person wants to express his love to someone, but he doesn't succeed in conveying his full love to the other person. Even if he tells the person "I love you", he still feels that he has not properly expressed his love enough. Why? It is because he isn't connected to his own inner world, so he can't express it. If he would be more connected to his inner world, he would be able to express to someone else about this deep emotion that he is feeling.

### ***How A Person Can Connect To His Inner World***

In order to connect to our inner world, we need to know what our strongest point is and then connect to it.

This doesn't mean that every person should read *sefer Orchos Tzaddikim* and learn *Shaar HaSimcha*, and attempt to connect to his *simcha*; this does not necessarily work, because if *simcha* (happiness) isn't his strongest point, he won't be able to connect to it. For some people, *simcha* is indeed their strongest point, and they can connect to their *simcha*. But if it isn't a person's strongest point, this is not how he will become connected to his *pnimiyus*.

How can you know what your strongest point is? See which points in your life are already **opened** to you. In order to be connected to our *pnimiyus*, we need to totally be connected to *pnimiyus*; if we try to connect to something that hasn't yet been opened in our own lives, we are only connected to the external layer of the *pnimiyus*, which isn't yet *pnimiyus*.

Once a person realizes what his strongest point is, how does he actually connect to it? The way to do this is to be connected to it totally, with all his soul. This is when a person is clear - both in his **mind** and in his **heart** - of **what he is doing, as** he does something. It is when a person does something that is his strongest point, with a **balance** between his mind and his heart - that his heart and mind are on the same page as he does something.

There is no one who does not have a strong point already opened to him in his life. All of us have some strong point that is already opened in our life, but we need to **connect** to it, and then **open** it up even more.

### ***In Conclusion***

I hope that the words here are not just a nice "derasha" to you; I don't want you to just say about this that you heard a nice speech from someone in *Eretz Yisrael* who came to speak here. I hope that these words not only help each person reach his true potential, but that they should actually help you deal with life: always be connected to Torah and mitzvos, and make sure you have a stability in your life - by realizing who helped you get to where you are today: Hashem.

With this, you will find the strength to deal with **any** problem in your life. We should be zoche to properly develop our souls.

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