

# Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts  
from  
Rabbi Elimelech  
Biderman  
Shlita

Kedoshim



בס"ד

# Torah WELLSPRINGS

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# Torah Wellsprings

## Kedoshim

### **Ahavas Yisrael**

This week's *parashah* (19:18) discusses the mitzvah of וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ, "Love your friend like yourself." Reb Akiva says, "This is a great rule of the Torah" (*Rashi*). A convert asked Hillel to

teach him the entire Torah while standing on one foot. Hillel told him, "Don't do to your friend what you wouldn't want others to do to you. That is the entire Torah. The rest is commentary - go study it" (*Shabbos* 31.).<sup>1</sup> This teaches us

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1. Why did the *ger tzedek* request that Hillel teach him the entire Torah while he stood on one foot? The Kli Yakar explains that he sought one principle to always keep in mind that would help him remember to keep the entire Torah. He explained to Hillel that as a convert, Torah and mitzvos are new to him, and it is likely that he would forget to keep parts of it. He wanted to keep in mind one idea that will remind him to keep the entire Torah.

(When he requested that he teach him the entire Torah as he stood on one foot, he simply meant, "Teach me the entire Torah in one sentence, in a condensed form.")

Hillel taught him the mitzvah וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ אֲנִי ה'. This pasuk contains two principles - *ahavas Yisrael* and belief in Hashem - the two concepts that are the foundation of the Torah. Loving your fellow man is the basis of all mitzvos *ben adam l'chaveiro*, and belief in Hashem is the basis of all mitzvos *ben adam l'Makom*. וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ, "Love your fellow man" is the foundation of keeping the mitzvos of *ben adam l'chaveiro*, and אֲנִי ה', remembering our *emunah* in Hashem is the foundation of fulfilling the mitzvos of *ben adam l'Makom*.

that the main principle of the Torah is *ahavas Yisrael*.<sup>2</sup>

The Tanya (ch.32) writes, "When a person's primary joy is his *neshamah* (and not his body), it is a straight and easy path towards fulfilling the mitzvah לרעד כמוך, וואהבת, to love every Jewish soul, from the greatest to the smallest. Because who can imagine the *neshamah*'s greatness? Especially since we all have the same Father, thus all of Bnei Yisrael are brothers. They are brothers because the roots of their souls are from Hashem. Therefore, it is only their bodies that separate them. But those who consider the body

primary and the soul secondary cannot have true love and brotherhood."

Rebbe Dovid of Lelov *zt'l* said, "When people ask me for advice on how to fear Hashem, I don't know what to tell them. But when they ask for advice on loving Hashem, I respond that the path is to love your fellow man."

A Slonimer chassid wrote to his friend, "My mind still echoes with the Beis Avraham's call impressing upon us the immense privilege to do a favor to a child of the King of kings, Hakadosh Baruch Hu."

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2. When the Vilna Gaon *zy'a* was a young child, he was playing seesaw with friends, but he didn't play for long.

His father asked him why he stopped. The Vilna Gaon replied that he doesn't want to go up by causing his friend to go down.

Reb Yisrael Salanter once saw two children arguing over who is taller. One child pushed the other one off the curb, and shouted, "I win. I'm taller."

Reb Yisrael Salanter rebuked the child and said, "It's terrible *middos* to make oneself greater by making his friend smaller."

How would you feel if a human king asked you to do his son a favor?

Well, then, how should we feel when Hakadosh Baruch Hu, the King of kings asks us to love and help His children, Bnei Yisrael. How fortunate we should feel!

We should seek to do *chesed*. It should be on our minds because the privilege is so great. A wagon driver saw the renowned Slonimer chassid, Reb Moshe Minder *zt'l*, walking along the roadside, and offered him a ride. Reb Moshe replied that he preferred to walk. The wagon driver insisted

that he come on the wagon, so Reb Moshe Minder acquiesced.

On the wagon, Reb Moshe Minder asked, "Why was it so important for you that I ride with you on the wagon."

The wagon driver pointed to his ears and said, "These ears heard from Rebbe Moshe Kobriner that a day you don't do *chesed* is a *geshtorbiner tug*, a dead day. The day is almost over, and I didn't do *chesed* yet. That's why I insisted you ride with me." He didn't want the day to pass without doing *chesed*.<sup>3</sup>

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**3.** We will tell three stories of people who excelled in doing *chesed*, each in their own way.

The Divrei Shmuel of Slonim *zt'l* told one of his chassidim that he needs two hundred rubles. This chassid was poor, but he wanted to do his Rebbe's bidding, so he went to the Slonimer chassidim and told them that the Rebbe requested two hundred rubles. Everyone gave something, and it didn't take long, and he was able to give the Rebbe the money he requested.

The next time he came to the Rebbe, the Rebbe asked him for another two hundred rubles. The chassid raised the money as he

had done the previous time, and he brought the money to the Rebbe.

This happened a third time, too. The chassid wondered why the Rebbe asked specifically him for money. There were wealthy chassidim, why didn't the Rebbe ask them for the two hundred silver rubles?

Soon afterwards, this chassid realized he had a major problem. His daughter reached the age of *shidduchim*, but no one agreed to marry her because he didn't have money to pay for a dowry. He came to the Slonimer Rebbe to ask for advice.

The Rebbe handed him six hundred rubles, the exact amount the chassid had collected for the Rebbe. That amount was enough his daughter's dowry.

The Rebbe knew that this chassid wasn't saving up for his daughter's dowry, so the Rebbe wisely asked him to money. The chassid collected the money among fellow chassidim in a respectable manner, as a messenger of the rebbe. The money was prepared and ready for him when he needed it.

The renowned tzaddik Reb Zelig Braverman *zt'l* and his Rebbetzin would bake and distribute *challos* on *erev Shabbos*, to the poor of Yerushalayim.

Once, a poor person came to his door late on Friday afternoon and asked for two *challos*. Reb Zelig replied, "I'm so sorry, but all the *challos* have been distributed. Nothing is left."

The man got angry and smacked Reb Zelig on his face, twice. Reb Zelig immediately took the two *challos* that were on his table for the Shabbos meal and gave them to the poor man.

When the poor man left the house, the family members asked Reb Zelig, "Why did you give away our *challos*? We need them for the *seudah*. And does he deserve anything after he slapped you?"

Reb Zelig explained that if this poor man slapped him, he probably needed the *challos* desperately.

Reb Zelig understood that the poor man's wife would be angry if

he came home without *challos*, and there would be a serious *shalom bayis* problem in their home.

"As for us," Reb Zelig said, "we can manage this week with some matzos."

Then, Reb Zelig closed himself in his room, and from outside the door, people heard him say, "Zelig, why did you need to be slapped twice before you learned that you must give away from yourself to others?" He rebuked himself for not helping this poor man immediately.

The following story happened to the Perl family of Yerushalayim, who are renowned for their devotion to the mitzvah *hachnasas orchim*.

One evening, Mrs. Perl had just returned from a trip overseas. Exhausted, she was looking forward to a good night's sleep, but then their doorbell rang. The children looked through the peephole and rushed to tell their mother that "the *veibel*," an older, bitter lady who often came to their home for a meal, was at the door. They told their mother to answer the door. "You're tired...and the *veibel* will anyway not be satisfied with what you give her. She always complains that something isn't good enough."

But the mother answered the door. She wanted to show her children that a good deed should be kept under all circumstances. And she also wanted to teach them the rule: "What you do for others, you do for yourself."

As the *Zohar* teaches, "When Hashem wants to do someone a favor, he sends him a poor person."

And Chazal say, "More than the wealthy do for the poor, the poor do for the wealthy," because in the merit of taking care of the poor, you receive many *brachos*. "We will only gain by helping this poor woman," their mother assured them.

The woman ate supper, and she took home some food for breakfast.

The family was settling down for the night when the ten-year-old daughter came running to her mother. "There's a snake on your bed," she said, alarmed.

The Arizal taught that before davening, one should say, *הריני מקבל עלי מצות עשה*, "I accept on myself the mitzvah to love my fellow man like myself." Unfortunately, some people say these words while harming others. For

example, someone comes into the beis medresh to daven *Shacharis* and sees there is no room for him to put down his tefillin bag on the table, so he shoves all the tefillin bags aside - making it hard for everyone else to find their bags - all

"It can't be a snake," the mother said. "Maybe it's a rat or perhaps a lizard. Snakes rarely get into houses."

"No, it's a snake. I'm certain."

"How do you know? Did you ever see a snake before?"

She said that she saw pictures of snakes, and she is certain that it is a snake.

The father wasn't home then (he was in *chutz le'aretz*), so the twelve-year-old brother was sent to the room to check. He returned in panic. Yes, there was a large snake on the mother's bed.

They shut the bedroom door closed and placed a towel at its foot, so the snake couldn't crawl under the door.

They called an exterminator, who caught the poisonous snake.

Had the mother gone to sleep earlier that night, her life would be in danger.

They saw that when you do for others, you do for yourself, and that when Hashem wants to do you a favor, he sends a poor person to your home.

There are many chasadim that one can do. Fortunate are those who find the chesed that is fitting for them and utilize the opportunity.

so he can to put down his bag. He does this while the words *הריני מקבל עלי ואהבת לרעך כמוך* are on his lips. This is because he says these words by rote without knowing what he is saying.

Reb Daniel Frish *zt'l* was once in Belgium and saw that before *Shacharis*, Rebbe Yankele of Antwerp *zt'l* went around to all the guests in the *beis medresh* offering them a cup of coffee or help in some other way. When Reb Yankele offered Reb Daniel a coffee, Reb Daniel reprimanded him, "It is improper to speak before *Shacharis*!"

Reb Yankele replied, "The *poskim* write that one should say, *הריני מקבל עלי מצות עשה ואהבת לרעך כמוך* before davening *Shacharis*. Do you think it is merely lip service? It means to keep this *mitzvah* literally!"

Years later, Reb Daniel Frish commented that this conversation was a life-changer for him. Although it is a good practice not to

speak before *Shacharis*, as this helps us daven with *kavanah*, this shouldn't stop us from helping another *Yid*.

Rebbe Eliezer Mendel of Lelov *zt'l* said, "Helping your wife get the children dressed and ready for *cheder* is the best preparation for davening *Shacharis*."

A wealthy man came to the *Chidushei HaRim zt'l* to request a *brachah* for children. Reb Bunim *z'l* (the *Chidushei HaRim's gabai*) greeted the wealthy guest and told him that the Rebbe wasn't available to see people at the moment.

The wealthy visitor became angry with Reb Bunim and smacked him across the face. Reb Bunim went to the *Chidushei HaRim*, and without saying any names, told him what happened. "Why do I deserve this?" he complained. "I'm simply trying to keep order in your court so people

shouldn't disturb you at all hours of the day."

Later that day, Reb Bunim told the wealthy visitor that the Rebbe was ready to see him. When the rich person entered the Rebbe's room, the Chidushei HaRim immediately understood that he was the person who smacked the *gabai*. The Chidushei HaRim said, "I will not see you until you ask Reb Bunim forgiveness."

The wealthy man asked Reb Bunim for forgiveness, but Reb Bunim told the Chidushei HaRim, "I will not forgive him until the Rebbe promises him healthy, *erlicher* children."

The Rebbe responded, "Since you requested it, I promise that he will have a healthy child within a year." A year later, this person's first child was born.

Rebbe Dovid of Lelov *zt'l* was walking through the forest between Lelov

and Lizensk to go to Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk *zt'l* but got lost and didn't know the way out of the woods. He met an elderly person in the forest who walked with him and showed him the way out. Before taking leave from one another, this Yid told Rebbe Dovid: "A person has two eyes: one to see his own faults and the other to see the qualities of others. And when a carpenter wants to put together two pieces of wood, and there is a knob in one of them, he doesn't cut off the knob. Instead, he makes an indentation in the other piece to make place for the knob." (This means that instead of trying to change your fellow man, find a place in your heart to accept your fellow man as he is.)

After saying these lessons, the old man disappeared, and Rebbe Dovid Lelover realized that this old man was Eliyahu HaNavi. He came to teach

him these crucial lessons in *ahavas Yisrael*.

Reb Yitzchak, a poor man, asked Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin *zt'l* for a *brachah* for *parnassah*. The Rebbe gave him some money and told him to go buy two meals and eat them at home. "But don't share any food with your wife and children. Eat the meals all by yourself. Then come back to me, and I will give you a *brachah* for wealth."

Reb Yitzchak brought the food home and started eating. His wife and children stood next to him at the table, watching him eat, but he couldn't give them anything. It was a very painful experience for Reb Yitzchak and his family.

Reb Yitzchak returned to Rebbe Moshe Kobriner, and Rebbe Moshe told him, "I will bless you with immense wealth, but there's a condition: Whenever you sit down to eat, you must remember how you felt when you ate

those two meals in front of your children. You must remember that there are hungry people who aren't financial well off as you are."

Reb Yitzchak was traumatized by the experience of eating in front of his hungry family, so he told the Rebbe that if he had to experience that feeling again every time he ate, he would prefer to forgo the blessing for wealth.

He returned home and told his wife about his decision.

She quickly went to the Rebbe and pleaded that he should nevertheless grant them his *brachah* for wealth despite her husband's reservation.

Rebbe Moshe Kobriner replied, "Don't worry. You will become wealthy."

It took just a few days, and Rebbe Yitzchak became fabulously wealthy. He would join the poor in the local soup kitchen, so he

would never forget the plight of the poor as he ate. He only ate at home when he made a *chasunah* for one of his children. At those times, he opened his door wide for all poor people. Everyone was welcome to celebrate and eat a meal together with him and his family.

It states (*Mishlei* 16:4), כל ,פעל ה' למענהו, "Everything Hashem made, He made it for His sake." Everything can and should be used for Hashem's honor. The Yosher Divrei Emes asks how can one use *apikorsus*, heresy, and atheism for Hashem's honor?

He replied, when a poor person asks you for financial aid, now it is the time to implement the attitude of *apikorsus*. Your *emunah* tells you that the poor person's plight is for his good, it is *bashert*, and that his poverty is certainly saving him from worse

troubles. So you wonder, "Why should I help him? It is for his best!" Now it is time to use the attribute of *apikorsus* in a positive way by having pity on this poor man. And with this thought in mind, you will help your fellow man compassionately.

Most of the *birchas hashachar* are written in plural form. For example, פוקח עורים, מתיר אסורים, מלביש ערומים, are all in the plural, and we praise Hashem for the *chasadim* He does for all mankind. The exception is ,שעשה לי כל צרכי, "Hashem does for me all my needs." Why is this *brachah* an exception?

Rebbe Moshe Leib of Sasov zy'a answered that one must thank Hashem for giving him all his needs, but regarding others, he should think that they don't have all their needs, for this will prompt him to help them.<sup>4</sup>

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4. The Imrei Chaim of Viznitz *zt'l* would say that wealthy people

## Torah

The *parashah* begins with the words קְדוּשִׁים תְּהִיוּ, "You shall be holy." How does one become holy? It is by studying Torah.

The Chazon Ish (Letter 1:13) writes, "Someone who merits knowing Torah and walks among people, those who see him think he is a regular human, but he is in fact a *malach* who lives among humans. He lives an exalted life, beyond all praise."

He appears like all other human beings, nevertheless, since he knows Torah, he is like a *malach*.<sup>5</sup>

The Gemara (*Avodah Zarah* 3) states, "Whoever studies Torah, is like a *kohen gadol* who enters the *kodesh kadoshim*."

The Beis Yisrael *zt'l* would say that man's mission in life is קְדוּשִׁים תְּהִיוּ, to be holy, and one doesn't acquire this sanctity without hours of uninterrupted Torah study.

The *Yaaras D'vash* writes that we should occupy ourselves with Torah study because that is the only means of kedushah that we have left. He writes, "Strengthen yourself to study Torah. Due to our sins, we don't have *nevuah*, the Beis HaMikdash, the

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know all the Gemaras that instruct the poor to do their best not to beg for money. And the poor people know all the Chazals that obligate the wealthy to give tzedakah. Both are experts in the obligations of the other, and they both don't want to know their personal obligation.

5. Boyaner chassidim were discussing a trip they were planning to take together with their Rebbe, Rebbe Mordechai Shlomo of Boyan *zt'l*. Their Rebbe told them, "We're already in the middle of a trip because we are in the days of *sefiras ha'omer*, which is a trip towards *mattan Torah*..."

aron, the *urim v'tumim*, the *mizbeich* that would bring us atonement, the *kohanim's* service, the kings of Yisrael, the *sanhedrin* and so much more. All that remains is the Torah, the source and origin of all of the above. We lost the details (פרטים), but we were left with the origin (כלל). Therefore, we should pay attention to Torah, exalt it, study it, and rejoice with it. Compare it to someone who lost all his children besides one child. The love he will display for his remaining child will be constant. The child will never leave his embrace. The child will sleep in his room. This is how we should be with Hashem's Torah, for this is the only matter that remained."

When one studies Torah, all problems of life vanish.

The Chinuch (419) writes, "Every Yid is obligated to study Torah regardless of whether he is wealthy or poor, healthy or afflicted. Even the destitute who go

door to door for handouts, even someone with a wife and children [and many financial obligations], are all obligated to set times for Torah study by day and at night, as it states, והגית בו יומם ולילה. The very first judgment after one's demise is about *bittul Torah*. One shouldn't say that he will study Torah when he has free time because that time may never come. One doesn't know what the future will bring. Every day new obligations crop up. He will end his entire life without anything at all, unless he forces himself to study Torah. Whoever does so will merit assistance from Above, and Heaven will lessen the hardships of life. He will lead a tranquil life in this world, and it will be good for him in Olam HaBa. Fortunate is the one who speaks to the listening ear."

The Midrash (*Bereishis Rabba* 92:1) states, "Everyone has *yesurim*. Fortunate is the one whose *yesurim*

comes from studying Torah." The Midrash proves this from the *pasuk* (*Tehillim* 94:12), אשרי הגבר אשר תלמדנו, which can be translated as, "Fortunate is the person whose *yesurim* are from learning Torah."

Rebbe Shmuel of Slonim *zt'l* said that when he has a problem, he studies a *daf* Gemara, and his worries go away. If it's a severe problem, he learns two *blatt* Gemara, and if he is experiencing many hardships, he studies three *blatt* Gemara. After studying three *blatt* Gemara there isn't a problem in the world that can bother him.

Rebbe Mordechai Dov of Hornesteiple's Rebbetzin *zt'l* told her father, the Tzanzer Rav *zt'l*, about the hardships the Yidden were suffering in Russia under the wicked Czar. (She knew firsthand about all those problems because she lived in Russia. She and her family had come to Tzanz, Poland, solely for Pesach, and this conversation

was held before they headed back to Russia.) She said, "Even in Mitzrayim, the Yidden didn't suffer so much!"

Her father corrected her. "In Mitzrayim, the Yidden didn't have Torah yet, so they didn't have Torah study to give them solace. But we have the Torah, which comforts us." As Dovid HaMelech says (*Tehillim* 119:92), לולי תורתך, שעשועי אז אברתי בעניי, "If it weren't for Your Torah, which is my pleasure, I would have perished in my affliction."

During the Holocaust, people were amazed to see Rebbe Pinchas of Ustila *zy'a* studying Torah with immense *hasmadah*. "How could he put aside all the pain and devastation and relish in Torah study?" they wondered.

He replied that people asked his father-in-law, Rebbe Yissacher Dov of Belz *zt'l*, this very same question when they saw

him studying Torah during World War I. They couldn't understand how he had the peace of mind to study Torah during those hectic times. He explained that it's even more important to study Torah in hard times. The Mishnah says, "When a person has pain...the *Shechinah* says, 'My head hurts. My arm hurts.'" *Keviyachol*, Hashem suffers together with us, and we need to study Torah to give Hashem respite and joy.

Reb Pinchas Ustilla said that this is the reason he is

studying Torah. He explained, "We're going through a Holocaust, Klal Yisrael is in distress, and Hashem is suffering together with us. It's our obligation to make Hashem happy, and nothing brings Hashem joy like when a Yid studies Torah."

People were also shocked when they saw the Ahavas Yisrael of Viznitz zt'l studying Torah during the First World War. He replied, "Where can one find solace if not with the Torah?"<sup>6</sup>

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6. A young man bought a pair of shoes for two hundred dollars, but they were uncomfortable. He returned to the store to complain.

"It takes two weeks to break into the shoes," the storekeeper replied.

So the consumer put the shoes into his closet and waited two weeks. When he put them on again, they still hurt. He returned to the storeowner and said, "Two weeks passed and the shoes are still uncomfortable!"

The storeowner explained, "The shoes become comfortable when you *wear them* for two weeks. They won't become comfortable when you leave them in the closet."

This story is a good example of how one can attain love for Torah. Chazal say, כל התחלות קשות, all beginnings are difficult. It is hard to

The Chofetz Chaim (*Ahavas Chessed* 2:11) writes, "I heard from a *talmid chacham* that a person should think the following three thoughts and he will be able to devote himself to Torah study: (1) I only have one more day to live.<sup>7</sup> (2) I have only one page of Gemara to study.<sup>8</sup> (3)

Hakadosh Baruch Hu commanded only me to study Torah, and the existence of the entire world depends on me."<sup>9</sup>

"In my opinion," the Chofetz Chaim concludes, "these ideas are hinted to in *kriyas Shema*. וְאֵהָבֵת אֶת ה' וְאֶלְקֵיךְ בְּכָל לֵבְךְךְ, 'Love Hashem

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change old habits and to begin devoting yourself to studying Torah. At first, one doesn't yet experience the joy in Torah. However, if you study every day, perhaps in just two weeks you will love Torah and you will want to study it at every opportunity. But if you store the *sefarim* away, and you don't look at the Torah for two weeks, how do you expect to begin loving the Torah?

7. The Chofetz Chaim explains:

"By thinking that he only has one day to live... he won't push off studying Torah until tomorrow."

8. The Chofetz Chaim explains:

"When you think that you only heavy one page to study you won't be lazy. The *yetzer hara* causes people to feel overwhelmed by making them focus on how much they need to study, and how long it will be until they finish a *masechta* or a *seder* Mishnayos... This discourages them. By making the goal smaller, like to finish just one page, you will not feel overwhelmed, and you will be able to do it."

9. The Chofetz Chaim explains:

"When one thinks that the survival of the entire world is dependent on his Torah study, he will be swift and eager to study Torah... "

your G-d with all your heart.' How does one reach that level? והיו הדברים האלה By 'These words...' think that you only have to learn *these few words* – just one chapter, just one page – and nothing else. אשר אנכי מצוך, 'that I am commanding you.' Consider it as though Hashem has commanded you and no one else. היום, consider your obligation is only for today. על לבבך, keep these thoughts constantly in your mind," and you will devote yourself to Torah study.

### ***Kedoshim Tehiyu***

It states in this week's parashah, קדושים תהיו, "You shall be holy." A similar *pasuk* is (Vayikra 11:49), והתקדשתם קדושים, "Sanctify yourself, and you shall become holy." The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* translates the latter *pasuk*, והתקדשתם, "Pretend you are holy, קדושים, and you will become holy." This is an important piece of advice. Above we have discussed becoming

holy through Torah study. The Chasam Sofer tells us another way to reach this. One should pretend that he is holy, and he will be holy.

Think about how those who fear Hashem would act and act that way as well. It may begin *shelo l'shmah*, but Chazal say מתוך שלא לשמה בא לשמה, eventually it will be *l'shmah*.

The *Chinuch* (mitzvah 16) writes, "Don't ask me, my children, why Hashem gave us so many mitzvos to remember the miracles of *yetzias Mitzrayim*? Wouldn't one mitzvah be sufficient to commemorate the miracle and that the memory never cease from our children? This isn't a wise question. Your youthfulness brought you to ask such a question. Now, my son, pay attention and listen to what I tell you. A person becomes what he does. His heart and thoughts follow his actions, whether good or bad. Even a total *rasha*

whose thoughts are corrupt all day long, if he devotes himself to studying Torah with *hasmadah* and to keep the mitzvos, even when his intentions aren't *l'shem Shamayim*, he will immediately change, and he will begin becoming righteous. This is because the heart is drawn after one's deeds. If a person is a perfect tzaddik, his heart is pure and straight, he desires Torah and mitzvos; however, if he is busy doing corrupt deeds, even if only by force, with time, he will abandon his righteous ways and become a total rasha. It is known and true that a person is influenced by his deeds. Therefore, Chazal (*Makos* 23:) say, 'Hakadosh Baruch Hu wanted to give merits to Bnei Yisrael, so He gave them a large Torah with many mitzvos.' This is so we will always be occupied with Torah and mitzvos, and then it will be good for us in the end. The good deeds will make us righteous, and we will

inherit eternal life. Therefore, pay close attention to what you do because your deeds influence you and draw your heart. After you know all of this, you won't ask me why we have many mitzvos to remember *yetzias Mitzrayim*. We do many deeds in memory of *yetzias Mitzrayim*, which will cause us to remember, as we explained."

Rebbe Yochanan of Stolin *zt'l* said that this *Chinuch* is the foundation of chassidus. As the Chasam Sofer taught, "Pretend that you are holy, and you will become holy." Your good deeds will influence how you think and who you will become.

The Or HaChaim was once a guest in the home of simple, G-d fearing people, and he couldn't understand why he felt a strong aura of *kedushah* in their home. At first, he thought they were from the thirty-six hidden tzaddikim, but he soon realized that it wasn't

so. "So where did this holiness come from?" he wondered.

One day, the family was reminiscing about a wealthy guest who visited their home.

The guest was an old, wealthy man, and the family would honor him immensely. Every time he came, the elderly man brought valuable gifts to each family member.

However, there was one issue with which they didn't see eye to eye. The family enjoyed serving Hashem with passion, and this upset the elderly man. He believed fervor should be inside one's heart. Externally, he felt, one should serve Hashem without any signs of enthusiasm.

On one of his visits the old man said, "Why do you say *birchas hamazon* so loud? Hashem hears quiet *brachos* too. Furthermore, your zealous ways make

your guests feel uncomfortable and embarrassed because they feel they aren't as *frum* as you are. In my opinion, it is wrong to say *birchas hamazon* so loudly."

The family accepted his *mussar* and *betnched* in silence.

The old man was pleased that they listened to him and gave each of them another gift.

Sometime later, the old man returned, and as always, he gave costly gifts to each family member. On Friday night, the family began to sing *Shalom Aleichem* joyously and loudly, and the old man became edgy once again. "There's no reason for all this fervor!" he shouted. "Say it silently!" and the family obeyed.

The old man gave them some more presents.

One year, the old man showed up in their home on *erev Pesach*, and he

distributed presents to the family members. The *baal habayis* greeted him joyfully and invited him to the Seder. The old man replied, "I can't be at your Seder if you're going to shout out the hagaddah and act silly. I will only join you if you agree to be silent at the Seder. Do as I teach you. Keep the fervor in your heart. Don't show it on the outside."

The *baal habayis* said that he'd have to ask his wife. She said, "When he stole our *birchas hamazon*, I was quiet. Then he took away our *Shalom Aleichem*, and I also forgave him. But I refuse to give up the Seder night."

The old man said, "I shouldn't have given you all those presents since you don't listen to me."

The *baal habayis* was worried the old man would ask them to give back all the fancy presents he had given them over the years, but his wife saw things

differently. She said to her husband, "Gather all the presents and give them back to him. I don't want them, and I don't want to hear his false rebukes."

The Or HaChaim listened in astonishment as the family repeated this story. He said, "Now I understand why there's a holy aura in your home. That man was the *yetzer hara* trying to uproot your *temimus*. The חכמת נשים, the wife's wisdom, בנתה ביתה, saved your home."

It is important to show enthusiasm and excitement for the mitzvos. Even if initially, you are pretending that you are excited with the mitzvos, this will influence your heart. It is possible that sometimes the family didn't have genuine fervor when they benched, sang *Shalom Aleichem*, and made the Seder. Still, their actions demonstrated enthusiasm and excitement, which opened their hearts until it became genuine.

The *Mesilas Yesharim* (ch.12) writes, "Acting with *zerizus* will create *hislahavus*. When one feels himself doing a mitzvah with eagerness, it will ignite a fire in his heart. If, however, he moves about sluggishly, his spirit will die down and be extinguished. Experience testifies to this. You know that the most preferred *avodas Hashem* is with the heart's desire and the longing of the *neshamah*, as it states (Tehillim 63:2), צמאה לך נפשי כמה לך בשרי, 'My soul thirsts for You; my flesh pines for you.' If this feeling isn't burning in his

heart, it is good for him to act with *zerizus* because this will rouse the yearning in his heart. His outer deeds will awaken his inner feelings."

This is the lesson of ,והתקדשתם והייתם קדושים and קדושים תהיו. Act like those who are holy, like those who desire the mitzvos, and it will become your reality.

### ***Chinuch for Hislahavus***

When children see their parents excited and happy with the mitzvos, they will also attain this passion.<sup>10</sup>

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**10.** A frustrated father couldn't understand why his son wasn't able to remember Mishnayos by heart. Every day, the father learned Mishnayos with his son, but by the next day, he forgot it. He figured that his son had a weak memory.

One Friday morning, the father went with his son to the marketplace, and on Shabbos afternoon, the father overheard this son chanting, "Get your sweetest melons here... We have the best prices..." The father realized that his son was able to repeat word for word everything he heard from the vendors. The father didn't understand: His son *does* have a good memory, so why can't he remember Mishnayos? He asked his rav about it.

The wise rav explained, "You don't have to worry about your son.

A concerned father told the Yismach Yisrael of Alexander *zt'l* that his son wasn't saying *birchas hamazon*. The Yismach Yisrael replied, "If you say *birchas hamazon* with *kavanah* and joy, your son will do so, too."

It isn't necessary to rebuke the child, and it isn't required to hold long conversations with him about the importance of *birchas hamazon*. The child will want to *bentch* when he sees his father's zeal and caution with *birchas hamazon*.

Rebbe Asher of Stolin *zt'l* once overheard a *melamed* teach his son the following *Rashi* (*Bereishis* 24:50): רשע היה וקפץ להשיב לפני אביו, "Lavan was a *rasha* because he jumped in to answer before his father."

Rebbe Asher said to the *melamed*, "With such teaching, how do you expect to bring *yiras shamayim* into the child?"

The *melamed* didn't understand what Rebbe Asher was referring to. He had translated *Rashi* correctly.

Rebbe Asher said, "This is how you should read the *Rashi*, 'Lavan was a *rasha*!' Rebbe Asher's emphatic tone expressed scorn toward Lavan. "He jumped in and spoke before his father!"

He said the exact words as the *melamed*, but he said the words with feeling, with emotion, and that makes all the difference.

A young six-year-old child was stealing from his classmates, and the rebbe

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He has a good memory. If you will learn *Mishnayos* with your son with the same passion and excitement as the merchants sell their wares, he will remember every word of the *Mishnayos* as well."

called his parents to discuss the issue with them.

"What can we do about it?" the rebbe asked the parents. "It will be terrible if this becomes a habit." The parents promised they would speak with their son.

The parents called their son into their room and began discussing the severity of theft with him. But, before confronting him with accusations, they wanted to hear what he thought about stealing.

The boy replied, "But Bubby steals. And even Mommy steals."

"What are you talking about?" the parents scolded.

The boy explained, "Every night, around midnight, I see Bubby getting out of bed to steal cookies from the kitchen. And then Mommy comes to our room early in the morning, and she steals the cookies back. They think

I'm asleep, but I'm awake, and I see what's happening."

Everything was becoming clear. The grandmother lived with them and slept in the child's room. She had diabetes and couldn't eat sugar. But due to her old age, she didn't completely grasp her situation. At nighttime, when no one was around, she would sneak into the kitchen and "steal" some sweets and conceal them in her drawer. In the morning, when the elderly grandmother was asleep, the mother would secretly open her drawers and "steal" the snacks back.

The child watched this day after day and developed a habit of opening up other people's property and taking what they shouldn't. That is how he acquired his bad habit of stealing.

Children learn from what they see. Parents should show their love for the mitzvos, and then the

children will love the mitzvot.

There are two ways to clear the lungs from phlegm. One way is through medications that clear up the patient's throat. Another method is that the patient should go into a heated room with spices and incenses. The smell of the herbs and incense combined with the heat will clear up the phlegm.

These two paths of healing represent two ways to conquer the *yetzer hara*. One is with medicine, and the medicine is to study Torah. As Chazal (*Kiddushin* 30) say, "I created the *yetzer hara*, and I created Torah as its remedy." And Chazal (*Succah* 52) say, "If you are confronted with the *yetzer hara*, draw him to the *beis medrash*. If the *yetzer hara* is hard as a stone, he will

melt. If he is like iron, he will shatter."

Torah is always the first and best remedy people should use to overcome the *yetzer hara*.

But what should women, who aren't obligated to study Torah, do? They don't have Torah for their cure.

There is another cure, and that is a warm home, where the sweet scents of Torah and *yiras Shamayim* prevail. Like the heated room with incense will clear up phlegm, a warm, loving home with an atmosphere of *yiras Shamayim* cures us of the ills of the *yetzer hara*.

This can be the reason the Torah calls women *בית יעקב*, "the house of Yaakov" (see *Shemos* 19:3).<sup>11</sup> It is because the home is so

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11. It states (*Shemos* 19:3), *כה תאמר לבית יעקב ותגיד לבני ישראל*, "So shall you say to the house of Yaakov and tell Bnei Yisrael." If men are called *בני ישראל* shouldn't women be called *בנות ישראל* or perhaps *בנות יעקב*? Why are they called *בית יעקב*, the house of Yaakov? House is

important for the Jewish woman. That is where she receives her strength to combat the *yetzer hara*.

The Gemara (*Succah* 56) says, "A story took place with Miriam, the daughter of Bilgah, an apostate woman who married a Greek minister (during the story of Chanukah). When the Greeks came into the *heichal* of the Beis HaMikdash (to defile it), she kicked the *mizbeiach* with her sandal and said, 'Lukos! Lukos! (Greek for fox). How long will you devour the money of the Jewish people?' When the *chachamim* heard that she disgraced the *mizbeiach*, they punished her entire family."

The Gemara asks, why should the entire family be

punished? It was her sin, not her parents.

The Gemara replies, "What a child speaks in the market she heard from her father or mother." The *chachamim* understood that if Miriam bas Bilgah kicked and disgraced the *mizbeiach*, she must have acquired this attitude from her parents.

This is because a child's impressions are based on what they see and hear at home. Therefore, one should fill his house with Torah and *yiras shamayim*, joy, and passion for *avodas Hashem*, and this will influence the children to follow in this manner.

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mentioned because the house is so important for women, as we explained.

The Gemara (*Kiddushin* 3) states, כל שבה נעורים לאביה, *B' derech remez*, this phrase implies that it is the *בית אביה*, the father's home, permeated with Torah and *yiras shamayim*, which brings forth כל שבה נעורים, the goodness and the righteousness of the Jewish girls.

## No Worries

How does one live a worry-free life?

The Ralbag (a student of the Ramban, on *Mishlei* 12:25) offers the following thoughts:

"Worry doesn't help at all; it only harms. To worry about something that already happened is insanity. The Chachamim taught us that all worries are forbidden. The only worry permitted is to ask yourself, 'Why am I worried?'"

Contemplating these important lessons will help you overcome your worries. Let's repeat the points:

(1) "Worry doesn't help at all."

The Kotzker *zt'l* said, "It's a good thing that worrying doesn't help. People worry so much, although it doesn't help at all. If worrying helped, they would worry so much

more." So why worry? It doesn't accomplish anything!

(2) "It only harms."

Not only does worrying not accomplish anything, worrying causes us more trouble. It causes the very thing we were afraid of to occur.

The Maharal (*Bava Metzia*, ch.1, (ד"ה כל המקיים) writes, "When a person is afraid of poverty, he is giving place for poverty to take hold of him. As it states (*Iyov* 3:25), וַאֲשֶׁר יִגְרָתִי יָבֵא לִי, 'What I dreaded has come to me' (see *Brachos* 60.). When one is afraid of something, this means he considers himself smaller and weaker than the matter which he fears, and that gives strength for that matter to overpower him. The early scholars say that the same occurs with falling. Fear can cause it to happen. Take a beam of wood and put it across a river. You will likely fall off it if you try to cross the river. Place the same

wooden beam on the ground, and you can walk over it without falling. Why does he fall when it is over a river? It is because thinking about falling causes it to happen. The mind has this power. It is even more so when one is afraid of poverty. The fear causes it to happen."

It states (*Tehillim* 121:5), ה' צלתי, "Hashem is your shadow." The Baal Shem Tov explains that just as a shadow mimics man's movements, Hashem mimics the ways of man. Hashem acts with us in the manner that we act.

The Kedushas Levi (Bishalach) adds, "Based on the above, if a person trusts that Hashem will grant him all his needs, Heaven will do so. But if a person will constantly be worried about his *parnassah*, this will cause his *parnassah* to lessen. Fortunate is the person who trusts in Hashem because Hashem will be his shadow and prepare his *parnassah*."

(3) "To worry about something that already happened is insanity."

The *Pela Yoetz* (*Daagah*) writes, "A wise scholar said, העבר אין, העתיד עדיין, דאגה, 'The past is gone. The future didn't come yet. Why worry? Go drink wine.' This is because if it already happened, what will worrying help? It is bad enough that it occurred. Why do you add salt to the wound by worrying about it and being distressed? Keep it out of your mind. And in regards to the future, if there is something you can do, do so. And if not, what will it help to worry? Trust in Hashem. This is a great counsel to free yourself from worry."

(4) "The Chachamim taught us: All worrying is forbidden."

Reb Ben Tzion of Bobov *zt'l* writes in a letter, "The Chachamim told us to do *hishtadlus* for *parnassah*,

but who gave you permission to worry?"

Consider worries to be a forbidden thought. It is forbidden to worry, so banish the worries from your mind.

(5) "The only worry that is permitted is to ask yourself, 'Why am I worried?'"

Think about these matters, and you will overcome your tendency to worry.

### ***Bitachon and Hishtadlus***

Another primary counsel to overcome worries is to have bitachon. When you know Hashem is helping you, there is nothing to fear.

Reb Leib Chassid of Kelm *zt'l* was waiting in line to buy a train ticket. A student told Reb Leib, "It isn't proper that you should stand in line. Give me the money, and I will buy the ticket for you."

Reb Leib Chassid told him that he didn't have money.

"I will buy the ticket with my own money," the student said.

When the student returned with the ticket, he asked, "I don't understand. Why did you come to the train station if you didn't have money to buy a ticket? And why were you waiting in line?"

Reb Leib Chassid replied, "I have to make this trip. It isn't something I can push off for later. I decided that lacking money isn't a sufficient reason not to make this trip. So, I did my hishtadlus. I came to the train station, and I waited in line. And as you see, Hashem helped."

A yungerman tried hard to earn parnassah for his family, but each attempt failed. He had taken counsel from financial advisors and successful businessmen, and tried his hand at various businesses, but they all ended in a disaster.

He told the Skulener Rebbe (Rebbe Yisrael Avraham)

zt'l that he thinks that Hashem is telling him to give up and to spend his days in beis medresh. "Why should I make hishtadlus for parnassah if nothing will come from it?"

The Skulener Rebbe advised him to do *hishtadlus* one more time.

He followed this counsel, and this time he succeeded.

The Skulener Rebbe explained, "Hashem

wanted you to know that *hishtadlus* doesn't bring *parnassah*. *Parnassah* comes from Hashem, alone. And indeed, you saw many times the truth of this statement. Nevertheless, everyone is obligated to make hishtadlus. After you knew all of this, and you made one more hishtadlus, Hashem gave you *parnassah*."<sup>12</sup>

Rebbe Yisrael Salanter taught the following three ideas:

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**12.** Reb Boruch Yehoshua and Reb Moshe Dovid'kes (chassidim of the Yesod HaAvodah zt'l of Slonim) were waiting for a train when a Russian soldier approached them and revealed to them that he was also a Yid. He told them that before he was drafted into the army, he studied Torah and led a regular Jewish life. But now in the army, it was so hard for him to live as a Yid, and he described to them the difficult tests he endures.

The two chassidim sighed deeply when they heard all the hardships he endures.

The soldier said, "Don't feel bad for me. I'm certain that whatever is happening to me is for my benefit. This is how I see it: Hashem would gain much more if he let me serve Him. Nevertheless, Hashem put me in a situation where I can't serve Hashem because Hashem knows that this is better for me. So, if Hashem's compassion is so great that He prefers to do kindness for me even when He is losing out, why should I complain?"

1] "*Men darf teen un nisht uf-teen*," we must do. We aren't obligated to succeed.

In life, for *parnassah*, and in *ruchniyus* pursuits, we must do *hishtadlus*, but success isn't in our hands. That is Hashem's choice whether we will succeed or not. Our obligation is to do, not necessarily to succeed.

2] "*Men darf teen un nisht up-teen*" we must do, and not 'to get it finished and over with it.'

Sometimes, people's primary intention is to finish. This often occurs with *tefillah*, where people's thoughts are "When will I finally finish?" This isn't how one should think. Each moment of *avodas Hashem* is precious. Instead of trying to finish, our goal should be to cherish every moment.

3] "*Men darf teen un nisht noch-teen*" we must do, and not copy.

Hashem created everyone differently, and therefore, each person should find his unique way to serve Hashem. He should live a life of truth, not a charade of imitating others.

Reb Yisrael Salanter gave these three counsels, and we will add a fourth counsel of our own:

4] "*Men darf teen un nisht far-teen*" We must do, without getting carried away.

Regarding *parnassah*, we shouldn't be *far-teen*, totally involved and engrossed in it. Remember, *parnassah* comes from Hashem, and not from the *hishtadlus*. So, even as one works, he can think about Hashem, Torah and mitzvos, and be free from all worries.