

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
Rabbi Elimelech
Biderman
Shlita*

Achrei - Kedoshim



Torah WELLSPRINGS

CONTACT INFORMATION

Mail@TorahWellsprings.com
718.484.8136

Weekly bulk orders in USA:
Wholesale@BeerEmanah.com

Weekly in your email free!

SUBSCRIBE TODAY!

Lashon Kodesh

באר הפרשה

subscribe+subscribe@beerhaparsha.com

English

Torah Wellsprings

Torah+subscribe@torahwellsprings.com

Yiddish

דער פרשה קוואל

yiddish+subscribe@derparshakval.com

Spanish

Manantiales de la Torá

info+subscribe@manantialesdelatorá.com

French

Au Puits de La Paracha

info+subscribe@aupuitsdelaparacha.com

Italian

Le Sorgenti della Torah

info+subscribe@lesorgentidellatorah.com

Russian

Колодец Торы

info+subscribe@kolodetztory.com



USA OFFICE Mechon Beer Emanah
1660 45th St, Brooklyn NY 11204
718.484.8136

ERETZ YISROEL OFFICE

מכון באר האמונה
רח' דובב מישרים 4/2
עיה"ק ירושלים תובב"א
025 688 040

יו"ל ע"י מכון באר אמונה

COPYRIGHT 2023 כל הזכויות שמורות

Duplication of this gilyon in any format, for any sales or marketing purpose, without written permission by Machon Be'er Emanah, is against the law and Halacha.

Table of Contents

Torah Wellsprings - Achrei - Kedoshim

Parashas Kedoshim – A Fundamental Parashah.....	4
Revenge.....	5
Judging Favorably.....	7
Until You Reach His Place.....	9
Going Down to their Level	10
The Root of the Problem.....	11
No Worries.....	12
<i>Bitachon</i> and <i>Hishtadlus</i>.....	13
Good <i>Middos</i>.....	14
<i>Ahavas Yisrael</i>.....	15

Torah Wellsprings - Achrei - Kedoshim

Parashas Kedoshim – A Fundamental Parashah

There are many mitzvos in Parashas Kedoshim. Hashem told Moshe (19:2) דבר אל כל עדת בני ישראל, that he should say this parashah to the entire congregation of Bnei Yisrael.

Rashi writes, מלמד שנאמרה פרשה זו בהקהל מפני שרוב גופי תורה תלויין בה, "[This] teaches us that this Parashah was stated in the assembly [of Bnei Yisrael] because most of the fundamental teachings of the Torah are dependent on it."

The Mizrachi clarifies that the entire Torah was said before the entire Jewish nation (see Rashi, Shmos 34:32). The uniqueness of Parashas Kedoshim is that everyone heard the parashah from Moshe together, unlike the rest of the Torah that was taught in groups (group after group). Another explanation is that Moshe taught most of the Torah to men, but Parashas Kedoshim was also taught to the women and children.

The Maharal says that for Parashas Kedoshim, everyone had to be present, unlike the rest of the Torah, that if a person was busy or unavailable to attend, he didn't have to come.

This is all because of the importance of the mitzvos of this week's Parashah, which are foundations for the entire Torah.

The Zohar HaKadosh (Kedoshim 81.) states: "Rebbi Abba said: 'This Parashah (Parashas Kedoshim) encompasses the entire Torah (כלל דאורייתא היא). When the scholars began studying this Parashah, they were happy.'"

An example of a fundamental mitzvah stated in this week's Parashah is (19:18), ואהבת לרעך כמוך, "You shall love your friend as yourself." Rashi writes, אמר ר' עקיבא: זה כלל גדול, "Reb Akiva taught, this is a fundamental principle of the Torah."¹

Many other mitzvos *bein adam l'chaveiro* are mentioned in this week's Parashah. Among them are (19:17) לא תשנא את אחיך בלבבך, "You shall not hate your brother in your heart," (19:16) לא תלך רכיל בעמך, which is the prohibition against speaking lashon hara.²

It is certainly the right time of year to discuss *mitzvos* of *bein adam lechaveiro* because we are in the days of *sefiras haomer*, which is a time when we mourn the demise of Reb Akiva's students who were *niftar* because they didn't honor each other properly. The Chida (Lev Dovid, 30:12) writes, "During the days of Omer, one must be extra cautious... with the sin of *sinas chinam* (vain hatred) one must be extremely cautious, for we know what happened to Reb Akiva's students between Pesach and Shavuot."³

1. When the Torah writes כמוך, that you should love your fellow man as you love yourself, it is literal. The Mesilas Yesharim (11) writes, כמוך בלי שום הפרש, "As yourself, with no difference whatsoever.... כמוך ממש, literally as yourself."

2. Lashon hara is punished with tzaraas. When one has tzaraas, he has an urge to scratch himself. But as he rubs his wounds, they only become worse. This same occurs when one speaks lashon hara. At first, he thinks he will feel better by speaking lashon hara, but it is like scratching an infection that only becomes more irritated when scratched.

3. The Belzer Rav zt'l once heard someone insult another Yid. The Belzer Rav admonished him, "If the requirement to speak respectfully to others would be a minhag, you would certainly be cautious not to shame your fellow man" (as it is the way of people to be very cautious with customs, even more than they are careful with halachos).

The Bnei Yissaschar (Iyar 3:1) writes that לב טוב (good heart) is the *gematria* of 49, the same number of days that there are in the *omer* because during these days we must acquire a heart that cares about our fellow man.

The forty-eight *kinyanim* (acquisitions) of Torah (mentioned in Pirkei Avos ch.8) allude to the first 48 days of the *sefirah* (and the 49th day is a review of all of them). The 32nd acquisition is אהב את הבריות, to love people. When one attains that level, he will honor his fellow man. This can explain why the students stopped dying on the 33rd day (ל"ג בעומר). After they reached the level of loving their fellow man, they honored them properly.

Revenge

One of the mitzvos of this week's parashah is (Vayikra 19:18) לא תקום, that we may not take revenge.

The Sefer HaChinuch (mitzvah 241) writes: "It is the way of most people to avenge those who caused them trouble or distress. They seek to give back the pain and anguish that

they received. However, Hashem doesn't permit us to do so. "Lo sikom"[don't take revenge]. The reason for this prohibition is for us to acknowledge that everything that happens- the good and the bad - comes from Hashem. No one can harm his fellow man if it isn't part of Hashem's plan. Therefore, when someone hurts you, know that your sins caused it, and Hashem Yisbarach decreed it. The perpetrator isn't guilty; sin is.⁴

So, according to Sefer HaChinuch, the reason for the prohibition is for us to believe that everything that happens is from Hashem, and there is no reason for revenge.

The Chinuch continues:

"Also, this mitzvah (of avoiding revenge) has a great potential to stop fights and to remove hatred from people's hearts. And when there is peace among us, Hashem will bring peace onto us."

We've seen, so far, two reasons for the prohibition: (1) Everything comes from

Chazal say that Reb Akiva's students were punished שלא נהגו כבוד זה בזה "because they didn't act with honor towards one another." We can explain (*b'lashon tzachus*) that the problem was שלא נהגו, that honoring one's fellow man is a halachah and not a minhag. People might have been more cautious with it if it had been a minhag.

4. When Shimi ben Gera cursed Dovid, Dovid said (Shmuel 2, 16:11) הנהו לו ויקלל כי אמר לו ה', "Let him curse because Hashem told him to do so." He recognized that everything is from Hashem, so there is no reason to be upset. The Chinuch writes this pasuk as a source that one shouldn't be upset when someone refuses to help him or when someone harms him. There is no reason to be angry. This was Hashem's plan.

The Chofetz Chaim explains this with a mashal:

Someone enters a beis medresh looking for Moshe Katzelenboigen. He asks the first person he finds, "Is your name Moshe Katzelenboigen?"

"No," the man replies. "My name is Aharon."

He goes over to a second person, "Is your name, by any chance, Moshe?"

"No. I'm Shimon."

Would he be angry at them for not being Moshe Katzelenboigen? Is it their fault that they aren't the person he seeks?

Similarly, the Chofetz Chaim explains, why should you be upset when someone doesn't help you? Hashem determined who should help you; this person is obviously not the one. He is not the person whom you seek.

Hashem, and therefore there is no reason to blame your fellow man for the bad that he did. (2) Avoiding revenge will increase peace.

The Rambam (Hilchos Deos 7:7) has a third explanation for this prohibition. He explains that one shouldn't take revenge because, anyway, the matter is trivial and unimportant. He writes: "One should be *maavir al midosov* [let things pass] when [people harm him] because for the wise, these are all foolishness, and not worth taking revenge for."

The Kli Yakar elaborates:

"It isn't proper to take revenge on any Yid because generally the revenge is regarding material matters... [such as] that he caused you a financial loss, etc., and these matters aren't that important that it's worth taking revenge. The Torah doesn't want us to take revenge for anything related to the body. This can be compared to a child who took playing blocks and built a house. Someone came by and broke it. The child cries bitterly to his father, wanting his father to take revenge on the person who committed the terrible crime of destroying his house. But the father ignores the child's tears. With his small mind, the child is convinced that the person did something terrible, but the father understands that it is nothing. Similarly, people's small minds think everything related to this world is significant. When their honor is slighted, or when they suffer damage to their body, possessions, or money, they think that a terrible thing happened to them, and they cry out to their Father in heaven to take revenge. But Hakadosh Baruch Hu doesn't always pay attention to their calls because, in Hashem's eyes, all matters of this world are like child's play. Hakadosh Baruch Hu doesn't pay attention to their cries unless the matter that happened will cause *bitul Torah* or will prevent them from keeping a mitzvah. In such situations, Hashem will take revenge."

The Kli Yakar concludes, "The Torah says לֹא תִקּוּם, 'Don't take revenge,' because all matters of Olam HaZeh are not important to Hashem Yisbarach, and it is as though no

one did anything at all. Therefore, it is wrong to seek revenge."

The Mesilas Yesharim (ch.11) writes, "It is very hard to escape from taking revenge because a person has much distress when humiliated, and revenge is sweet like honey. It is his only relief. To forget what was done to him is for *malachim*, not human beings. But this is the King's decree."

Some advice in helping to overcome the urge to take revenge is to do *chesed* specifically to the people who harmed you. The Imrei Yosef of Spinka zt'l would do this. His son, the Chakal Yitzchok, writes, "There were several episodes of my father doing kindness to those who hurt him, with the motivation to uproot any bad *middah* that may still be in him."

Once, the Imrei Yosef was extremely kind to a certain Rav. He invited him to eat breakfast with him and helped him in several ways. The Imrei Yosef's son (the Chakal Yitzchak) was surprised because the kindness he bestowed on this Rav was more than what his father would generally do for others. The Imrei Yosef explained that he had reason to be angry with this Rav because he was once in his city, collecting money, and this Rav didn't help him at all. So, to uproot any negative feelings that he might feel towards him, the Imrei Yosef honored and helped the Rav immensely.

Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz zt'l had a list of poor people he wanted to support. Periodically, his *gabbaim* would deliver money to them.

When Rebbe Yehoshua was *niftar*, and his son Rebbe Yissachar Dov became the Belzer Rebbe, the *gabbaim* showed him the charity list. Showing him the list was mostly a formality because they were sure Rebbe Yissachar Dov would want to continue performing the tzedakos his father was involved in. However, he surprised them when he crossed off one of the names. "You don't have to send him money anymore," he told them. "He isn't poor. My father used to

support him in order to uproot any negative feelings he felt towards him because he had once gone out against my father. But he never harmed me, so I have no special reason to send him money."

When the Sfas Emes zy" a of Gur was a newly married yungerman living in Biala, he had a neighbor who was very cruel to him. After the First World War, this person needed money and assistance, and the Sfas Emes helped him continually. The Sfas Emes's *rebbetzin* told him: "He didn't do that much bad to you, that he should deserve all this kindness." Because this was the way of the Sfas Emes; instead of avenging the bad that people did to him, he sought to do them kindness, thereby improving his own middos.

Someone came to Reb Moshe Feinstein zt'l and asked for a letter of approbation that he is fitting to be a *shochet*. Reb Moshe gave him this letter, and then Reb Moshe rebuked him. He said, "A month ago, you were upset with my decision in a *Din Torah* you were involved in. You called me up and spoke very disrespectfully. I want you to know it isn't proper to speak that way."

The man didn't understand what Reb Moshe was referring to. He said that he had never called him.

It turned out that someone impersonated him and called to complain about the outcome of the *Din Torah*.

Reb Moshe said he was very happy that he passed this test because otherwise, he would have held a grudge against someone who didn't deserve it.

Judging Favorably

One of the mitzvos in the Parashah is (19:15) בצדק תשפוט עמיתך, "You shall judge your fellow man with righteousness." This means if you aren't sure whether someone did an *aveirah*, judge him favorably, grant him the benefit of the doubt, and assume he didn't commit the sin.⁵

Rebbe Aharon, the Belzer Rave zy" a said: "My grandfather, Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz, enjoyed the *pilpul* style of learning Torah, because with *pilpul* one can answer a difficult Rambam, and with *pilpul*, one can also explain a difficult Yid."

The *Mishnah* says, והוי דן את כל האדם לכף זכות, "Judge every person favorably." Literally, לכף is a spoon. When someone wants to find a good piece of meat or kishke in the cholent pot, he searches with a spoon until he finds what he is looking for. Similarly, one should hunt and search to find the good in others until he finds it.

The Pnei Menachem of Gur zy" a explained לכף, a spoon, to be the shoehorn used to help put on shoes. The shoehorn doesn't make the shoe larger. It simply helps push the foot inside. This is what we must do when we seek to judge our fellow man favorably. Sometimes we must push an explanation.

Two businessmen stood at the *bimah* in Trisk, Poland, and cried copiously as they told the community about the severe *aveirah* they had committed. They related that they were wealthy business partners, and recently, as they traveled to a business fair, they picked up a poor man who was walking with a heavy sack on his shoulders.

"He thanked us for taking him on the wagon. His destination was almost the same

5. We wrap our arms with tefillin seven times. Some people count the seven times (to make sure that they did it correctly) while thinking the pasuk, ואתם הדבקים בה' אלקיכם חיים כולם היום because this pasuk has seven words. It discusses being attached to Hashem, which is the essence of tefillin. I heard that Rebbe Itzele of Pshversk zy" a would instead think the *Mishnah* והוי דן את כל האדם לכף זכות, to judge everyone favorably, because these are also seven words.

as ours. As we traveled, he told us he has a large family and works as a *melamed*. The only position to be a *melamed* that he found was in a town, distant from his home. He was there for several years until he gathered a substantial amount of money, and now he was traveling home to marry off his daughters.

"Shabbos was approaching, so we stopped at an expensive hotel. We paid for the poor man's Shabbos meals and his hotel stay. The poor man kept thanking us for the kindness we bestowed on him.

"On Motzei Shabbos, we took out our package of money (which we had concealed over Shabbos) and began counting it to ensure nothing was missing. We discovered that two hundred rubles were missing. We immediately suspected that the poor man had stolen it from us. It made sense to us; he was so poor and really needed the money.

"With polite and soft words, we asked him to return the money. He promised that he didn't take anything and said that he was insulted that we suspected him.

"We said, 'We took you on our wagon, rented a hotel room for you, served you three good Shabbos meals, and then you steal from us?!'

"He repeated that he didn't take any money. We checked his clothing. The coat's lining was sewn up with red thread. We opened the lining and found two hundred silver rubles, precisely the amount we were missing.

"'This money is mine,' the poor man insisted. 'I earned this money from the *melamdu*,' but we didn't believe him. It was hard for us to imagine that, coincidentally, he earned the exact amount of money we were lacking.

"The hotel owner heard our loud voices and came to see what it was about. We told

her our suspicions and showed her the coat with the red thread, where we found the money.

"The owner said, 'Erev Shabbos, this poor man borrowed red thread from me.'

"We were now certain that the *melamed* was the thief. He took our money and sewed it into his coat. We hit him, took the money, and continued to the business fair. The poor man remained behind in the hotel, bruised and injured."

The entire community of Trisk listened spellbound as one of the wealthy people finished the tale. He said, "We didn't travel far from the hotel when a mailman caught up with us. He had an urgent letter sent to me from my home. My wife wrote: 'Before you left on your trip, I urgently needed two hundred rubles. I took it out of your package. I didn't have the opportunity to tell you before you left, so I'm sending you this letter...'

"We were devastated. We realized we had suspected, hit, shamed, and stolen from an innocent, poor man. We quickly returned to the hotel to return the money and beg for his forgiveness. But, unfortunately, the owners at the hotel told us that the poor man couldn't sustain the shame and the beatings and had died."

The businessmen stood at the *bimah* before the community and cried and said, "We went to the Trisker Magid and asked him what we can do to atone our terrible *aveirah*. Worst of all, we killed an innocent man. The Trisker Magid told us that our remorse has already atoned for much of the *aveirah*, and to attain *teshuvah sheliemah*, the Trisker Magid advised that we generously support the *almanah* and her *yesomim* for the rest of our lives, and he said that we must marry off their children, as we would do for our own children.⁶ In addition, the Trisker Magid told us to gather all the people of

6. Some say that the Trisker Magid also told them they must go out to *galus*.

Trisk: men, women and children, and tell them this story. The shame we have from doing so, and the *zikuy harabim* (because people will learn to judge others favorably) will atone for our sins."

Rebbe Aryeh Mordechai Rabinowitz zt'l (a grandson of the Yid HaKadosh zt'l) was in Trisk when this story occurred. He would repeat this story, and after him, his son Reb Yehoshua would repeat it to his children, so they should know and remember how important it is to judge our fellow man favorably.

Until You Reach His Place

Sometimes, you must judge someone negatively and deem him guilty. This is when you know what occurred, and there is no doubt. It is certain that he sinned, so you have no choice but to call a spade a spade and to recognize that an *aveirah* was committed.

Nevertheless, part of the judgment is to measure the severity of the deed. This aspect of the judgment one isn't capable of discerning. About this, the Mishnah states (*Pirkei Avos* 2:5) אַל תִּדּוֹן אֶת חֲבִירְךָ עַד שֶׁתִּגַּע לְמִקּוּמוֹ, "Don't judge your friend until you reach his place." The Sfias Emes writes, "And you will never get to your friend's place because it is impossible to get to his place..."

Let's say he speaks nasty words. Recognize that he might be going through difficult times. He doesn't mean you. This is his way of coping with his hardships.

This isn't an excuse. There is no excuse for bad behavior. But it is a compassionate realization that the test was difficult, and it is likely that you, in the same situation, may have reacted the same way.

A Yerushalmi Yid was crying copiously at a *levayah* in New York. After the *levayah*, people asked him, "How did you know the *niftar*?"

"I don't know the *niftar*," he admitted. "I'm not related. I'm not even a friend."

"So why are you here? And why did you cry?"

He told them he came to America a month ago to collect money for his child's upcoming *chasunah*. He raised enough money and was about to return home, but all the money he had raised was stolen. "I needed a place to shout and cry, so I came here. It isn't natural to cry and to rant among people, but at a *levayah*, I can do so."

We brought this story to help us realize that we must strive to understand people when they say nasty and cruel words. They could be suffering from *shalom bayis* problems, financial difficulties, or any other issues. Their shouts and offensive comments aren't intended to hurt anyone in particular. They were just expressing hardship.

I heard the following story:

At the end of Napoleon's war, Napoleon asked a Yid to hide him and to protect him because the Russians were approaching. The Yid accepted Napoleon into his home and hid him under many mattresses and blankets. The Russians arrived, and they began removing the blankets and mattresses. After removing several layers, they assumed Napoleon wasn't there and went to look for him elsewhere.

Napoleon thanked the Yid effusively for saving his life. The Yid asked Napoleon, "My master! My king! How did you feel when the Russians were taking off the mattresses?"

Napoleon said, "It is disrespectful to speak to me that way. You will be hung for your impudence." He called for his guards to arrest him and to prepare the gallows.

The rope was fastened around the Yid's neck, it was just a moment before it was too late when Napoleon ordered, "Loosen the rope."

Napoleon told the Yid, "You wanted to know how I felt when they removed the mattresses on top of me. I felt the same way

you felt with the noose around your neck. I wanted to explain it to you, but I knew I couldn't explain it to you with all the words in the world. So, therefore, I had you experience it so that you will understand."

Similarly, we cannot know what others are going through. It is simply impossible. And therefore, we should judge everyone with compassion. If we were in their place, we would likely act the same.

Reb Elyah Roth zt"l would say, "When you see someone acting wrongly, you think he has a crooked mind. So, if you agree he has a twisted mind, what do you want from him? If you had his mind, you would behave the same way. If he had your mind, he would act as you do. With this in mind, you can judge everyone favorably."

Going Down to their Level

A bachur, who frequented the beis medresh of Rebbe Henoch of Alexander zt"l, lost his mind. He would say things like, "I am Moshiach... You are Rabbi Akiva," and pointing at someone else, he would say, "and you are Rabbi Tarfon..." It was comical, and people would ask him: "Who am I?" to see what he would answer, and they laughed at his imagination.

The parents, crushed by shame, discussed their plight with the Rebbe of Alexander. The rebbe asked them to bring the bachur to him.

When the bachur entered the rebbe's room, the rebbe immediately asked him: "Who am I?" The bachur replied: "You are Alexander Rebbe!"

The Rebbe said, "Do you think I don't know everything you know? I know just as you do. The difference is that I also know how to remain silent. You should do the same and not reveal everything you know."

The chasidim of Alexander related that the bachur became almost normal. The rebbe succeeded in helping him because he went down to this bachur's confused level, and from there, he could help him.

Nachman Blecher was a yungerman who worked as a blecher [tinsmith] in Slonim. He was plagued by hallucinations and claimed he saw demons [*sheidim*]. People brought him to the Yesod HaAvodah zy"a, the first rebbe of Slonim. Nachman Blecher cried before the rebbe, "I see *sheidim*. I don't know what to do. It is terrible. It's frightening..."

The rebbe asked him, "Tell me, Nachman, when you see the *sheidim*, are they wearing a gartel?"

"Yes, Rebbe," he answered.

The rebbe instructed him, "The next time you see a demon, grab him by the gartel, and tell him in my name, Avraham ben Sarah, that he must come to me."

"Thank you so much rebbe!" Nachman said, relieved.

A couple of weeks later, Nachman came to the rebbe. "Did you bring one of the *sheidim* with you?" the rebbe asked.

"No," Nachman answered. "A wonderful thing has happened. Whenever I say the rebbe's name, all the *sheidim* disappear."

"Do you think this was a *mofes* [a miracle]?" the Yesod HaAvodah later said to his students. "No, not at all. I realized that I couldn't tell Nachman his illusions were false because he wouldn't believe me. One can't debate with someone who hallucinates and thinks they are real. So I asked him to grab onto the *sheidim*'s gartel. This is a tangible deed, something that he couldn't just imagine. He is still looking for the gartel..."

These stories are often repeated regarding chinuch, to teach parents to go down to their

child's level and try to understand what they are going through.⁷ But we can also use these stories to understand that we must go down to another person's place to judge him favorably.

The Root of the Problem

The Meor Einayim (Vayeira) teaches:

"The way a person is determines how he sees things. A tzaddik doesn't see bad... Goodness resides in him, therefore, wherever he looks, he only sees good. The rasha, on the other hand, sees evil wherever he turns. He sees what he is."

Some people find fault wherever they turn and are angry with everyone. But if you see only evil, you should suspect that the fault isn't where you look but in your own self.

We will explain this idea with a few mashalim:

A fool brought the hands of a clock to a clockmaker. "They aren't working," he tells the artisan. "Please fix them."

"Where's the clock?" the clockmaker asks.

"The clock isn't the problem," the man replies. "It's the hands that aren't moving."

But we understand that if there is a problem with the hands, there is a problem with the clock. Similarly, one must suspect that if he consistently finds faults with

others, that they aren't the root of the problem. Instead, the problem lies within him.

There was a small town that had but one baker and one dairyman. The baker suspected that the dairyman was cheating the people of the town, so he began weighing the produce he bought from him. He discovered that the products weighed less than what the dairy farmer claimed. For example, what the dairyman called a "kilo of butter" weighed 950 grams, and a kilo of cheese was 800 grams. "He is cheating me and all the people of our small town," the baker fumed, and summoned him to court.

The judge asked the dairyman, "Do you own a scale?"

The dairyman replied that he had a scale, but he didn't have weights.

"So how do you know how much a kilo is?"

"I buy a kilo loaf of bread from the baker and weigh the produce against that!"

So, it turned out, it was the baker who was the thief. He claimed that others were the problem, but the problem was him.

The lesson, once again, is that when one finds a problem with others, it is time to look closely at himself....

Here's another parable:

7. Rebbetzin Adler, a granddaughter of Rebbe Shlomke Zvhiler zy" a, lived in California. Once, my father a" h was visiting them in California, and she asked my father: "When your daughter asks for money to go to the theatre, what do you do?"

My father was shocked by the question and didn't know how to respond. She told him, "When I was young, living in Yerushalayim, I asked my grandfather, Rebbe Shlomke Zviller zy" a, for money to go to the theatre. All my friends were going, and I wanted to go too. My grandfather, Rebbe Shlomke, took money from his pocket and gave it to me. When I was at the door, he called me back by my name and said: 'You see, you asked me for money, and I gave it to you. But you should know my heart is torn to pieces because you are going there.' I quickly put the money on the table and said: 'Zeide, I'm not going.'"

He understood his granddaughter's challenges, went down to her level, and that is how he prevented her from going to the theatre.

An elderly man came to a health clinic and requested hearing aids for his wife.

"From what distance does she hear well, and from what distance is it hard for her to hear?" the technician asked. The old man didn't know. So the technician instructed him, "Go home and test her hearing and report back to us."

He gets home, and from a distance, asks his wife, "What did you make for dinner?" There was no reply. He walked a meter closer and asked again, "What did you make for dinner?" Once again, there was no reply. *This is more serious than I thought*, the old man thinks. *She really doesn't hear*. He approached another meter: "What did you make for dinner?" Again, no reply. By the fifth time, he had already entered the kitchen and shouted, "What did you make for dinner?"

She screams, "I told you four times already – soup with lokshen. Why don't you hear me?"

He thought she was hard of hearing, but it was he who had that problem.

The truth is that, to some extent, we are all guilty of this. We find fault in others, and we blame them for the disputes they cause, while we fail to realize that often, we are the ones who need to improve.

Rebbe Ben Tzion of Bobov zy" a said: It is a long trip between Otvosk and Warsaw, but as soon as one gets on the train in Otvosk, people say, "He is on the Warsaw train." Similarly, we must board the train of judging favorably, of seeing the good in others. Even if there is still a long way to go, we have at least begun the journey.

No Worries

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

"Worry doesn't help at all – it only harms. To worry about something that has already happened is insanity. The Chachamim

taught us: All worries are forbidden. The only worry permitted is to ask yourself, "Why am I worried?"

Contemplating these important lessons will help us overcome our worries. So 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. Had worrying helped, people would worry so much more." So why worry? It doesn't accomplish anything!

(2)"It only harms."

Not only does worrying not accomplish anything, it causes more trouble. It causes the very thing we worry about 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), ואשר יגרתו יבא לי, 'What I dreaded has come to me' (see *Brachos* 60.). When one is afraid of something, he considers himself smaller and weaker than the matter he fears, which gives strength to that matter to overpower him... The early scholars say that the same occurs with fear of falling. Place a beam across a river and try crossing the river on the beam. Chances are you will fall off it. Place the same wooden beam on the ground, and you can walk it easily without falling. 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' צלך, "Hashem is your shadow." The Baal Shem Tov explains: Just as a shadow mimics man's movements, Hashem mimics man's ways. 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, Hashem will do so. But if a person constantly worries about his *parnassah*, this will cause his *parnassah* to

decline. Fortunate is the person who trusts in Hashem because Hashem will be his shadow and provide his *parnassah*."

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

The *Pele Yoetz (Daagah)* writes, "A wise scholar said, *העבר אינן, העתיד עדיין, דאגה מנין, קום שתה*, 'The past is gone. The future hasn't come yet. Why worry? Go drink wine.' If it already happened, what will worrying about it help? It is bad enough that it occurred. Why add to your troubles by worrying and being distressed? Keep it out of your mind. And regarding the future, if there is something you can do, do it. 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."

In a letter, Reb Ben Tzion of Bobov *zt'l* writes, "The Chachamim told us to do *hishtadlus* for *parnassah*, but who gave you permission to worry?"

Consider worrying a forbidden thought, which will help you overcome those thoughts.

(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 overcoming worry is *bitachon*. When you know Hashem is helping you, you have nothing to fear.

Reb Leib Chassid of Kelm *zt'l* was waiting in line to buy a train ticket. A student saw Reb Leib and told him, "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 replied that he didn't have money.

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

When the student returned with the ticket, he asked, "Why did you come to the train station if you don'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 wasn't a sufficient reason not to make this trip. So I did *hishtadlus*. I went to the train station and waited in line. And as you see, Hashem helped."

A youngster 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 enterprises, but they all ended a disaster.

He told the Skulener Rebbe (Rebbe Yisrael Avraham) *zt'l* that he thinks that Hashem is telling him to give up and instead, he should 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. You saw that on your own, you can't earn *parnassah*. Nevertheless, everyone is obligated to make *hishtadlus*. After you knew all of this, and you made one more *hishtadlus*, Hashem gave you *parnassah*."⁸

8. 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 that he, too, was a Yid. He told them

Rebbe Yisrael Salanter taught the following three ideas:

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

In all aspects of life, for *parnassah*, and in *ruchniyus* pursuits, we must do *hishtadlus*, but success isn't in our hands. It is Hashem's decision whether we 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.’

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; 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 taught 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 he can free himself from all worries.

Good Middos

Reb Eliyahu Lopian *zt'l* said that the Torah contains 613 mitzvos, but it doesn't explicitly state that one must have good *middos*. The reason is that good *middos* are the foundations which don't need to be discussed because, without good *middos*, there is nothing at all.

The same applies to *shidduchim* and marriage. The foundation of the holy edifice of a Jewish home is the *middos*.

Someone asked the Tchebiner Rav *zt'l* what he should look for when seeking a *shidduch* for his daughter. The Rav replied, “Look for three things: (1) good *middos*, (2) good *middos*, and (3) good *middos*.”

The Steipler Gaon *zt'l* sent a messenger to gather information about a certain *bachur* who was suggested for his granddaughter. The *shaliach* returned and relayed the wonderful things he had heard about the *bachur*. “He learns eighteen hours a day and is a great *talmid chacham*...”

“What about *middos*?” the Steipler asked. “Until now, all he had to deal with was his *shtender*. When he marries, he will have to deal with a wife. You must find out whether he has good *middos* because, without good *middos*, it is a disaster.”

I know a *yungerman* with poor *middos*. He wouldn't even turn on or off the lights for

that he studied Torah before he was drafted into the army and had led a regular Jewish life. But now, in the military, 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 his difficulties.

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 Him because Hashem knows 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?”

his wife – he only had himself in mind. Not surprisingly, his marriage didn't last. He is a scholar, but without *middos*, there was no foundation.

Reb Moshe Unger *zt'l* wrote to his father-in-law, the Divrei Chaim of Tzanz *zt'l*, about a *bachur* who was suggested for his daughter and listed all the qualities he heard about the *bachur*. The Divrei Chaim wrote back, "You wrote about the *bachur's* many qualities, but you forgot the most important thing. You didn't write whether he is a *mentch*. The Torah (*Devarim* 22:16) states, אֵת בְּתִי נָתַתִּי לְאִישׁ, "I gave my daughter to a *mentch*..."

Reb Gad'l Eisner *zt'l* would tell *bachurim* before their wedding, "There are *yungerleit* who want to become *malachim*, and the first thing they do is they become אוֹיִם מְעַנְטְשֵׁן, inhuman (without good *middos*)."

Once, many people were waiting to receive a *brachah* from Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach *zt'l*. One person didn't want to wait, so he cut the line and stretched out his hand to Reb Shlomo Zalman. Reb Shlomo Zalman replied, "I give you a *brachah* that you should become a *mentch*."

To cushion the rebuke, Reb Shlomo Zalman asked him, "Why don't you wish me, וְכֵן לִמֵּךְ (that I too should become a *mentch*)?"

Rebbe Avraham Elimelech of Karlin *zt'l* would say that when you ask about a *bachur* and hear he has good *middos*, you should mark down the number 1 in your notebook. Every other quality you hear about him is another zero. Place those zeros next to the one, and it becomes a large, impressive number. However, if there are many qualities but good *middos* are lacking, all you are left with are many zeros.

When the Vilna Gaon *zy'a* was a young child, he played on a see-saw with friends but didn't play for long.

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

Reb Yisrael Salanter once saw two children debating who was taller. Finally, one child pushed the other off the curb and shouted, "I win. I'm taller."

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

Pirkei Avos discusses good *middos*. Why is this *masechta* written in *Seder Nazikin*, which primarily deals with financial damages and other money matters? The Tzaddikim of Belz *zt'l* answered that the most significant damage happens when people have bad *middos*.

Ahavas Yisrael

As we wrote above, this week's *parashah* discusses the mitzvah of (19:18), וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ, כַּמּוֹךְ, "Love your neighbor as you love yourself."

A convert asked Hillel to teach him the entire Torah while he stood on one foot. Hillel replied, "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.).

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

(When he requested that he learn the entire Torah on one foot, he meant, "Teach me the entire Torah in one sentence, in a condensed form.")

Hillel taught him the mitzvah וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כַּמּוֹךְ אִנִּי ה'. This pasuk has two principles – *ahavas Yisrael* and belief in Hashem – which are the foundations of the entire Torah. Loving your fellow man is the basis of all mitzvos *bein adam l'chaveiro*, and belief in

Hashem is the basis of all mitzvos *bein adam l'Makom*. ואהבת לרעך כמוך, "Love your fellow man" is the foundation of keeping the mitzvos *bein adam l'chaveiro*, and אני ה', remembering our *emunah* in Hashem is the foundation of the mitzvos *bein adam l'Makom*.

The Arizal taught that before davening, one should say, הרניי מקבל עלי מצות עשה, "I accept upon myself the mitzvah to love my fellow man like myself."⁹

The Tanya (ch.32) writes, "When...his primary joy is his *neshamah* (and not his body), it is a straight and easy path towards fulfilling the mitzvah ואהבת לרעך כמוך, to love every Jewish soul, from the greatest to the smallest. Because the *neshamah* - who can imagine its greatness? Especially since we all have the same Father, thus Bnei Yisrael are all brothers. They are brothers because the roots of their souls are with the One Hashem. It is only their bodies that separate them. But for those who consider the body primary and the soul secondary, it is impossible for them to feel true love and brotherhood."

Rebbe Dovid of Lelov *zt'l* said, "If people would ask me for counsel on how to fear

Hashem, I won't know what to tell them. But if they ask me how to love Hashem, I will respond that the path is through loving your fellow man."

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

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 wanted to walk. However, the driver insisted he comes on the wagon, so Reb Moshe acquiesced.

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

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 haven't yet done *chesed*. That's why I wanted you to ride with me." He didn't want the day to pass without doing *chesed*.¹⁰

9. Some people say these words before a tefillah while harming others. For example, someone comes into the beis medresh to daven *Shacharis*, and he sees there is no room to put down his tefillin bag, so he shoves all the tefillin bags to the side carelessly, making it hard for the owners to find their bags. He does this while the words הרניי מקבל עלי... ואהבת לרעך כמוך are coming out of his mouth. This is because he says these words by rote, without truly internalizing their meaning.

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, asking whether he could serve them a coffee or help them in some another way. (This was before Rebbe Yankele became the Rebbe.) When he came to Reb Daniel Frish, Reb Daniel rebuked him and said, "It is improper to speak before *Shacharis*!"

Reb Yankele replied, "Yungerman, do you think that when the *poskim* say one should say הרניי מקבל עלי מצות עשה before davening it is merely a mantra? It means you should keep this mitzvah literally!"

Years later, Reb Daniel Frish commented that this conversation changed his entire outlook. For although it is an excellent practice not to speak before *Shacharis*, as that helps one daven with *kavanah*, this shouldn't stop us from assisting a fellow Yid in need.

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

10. The renowned tzaddik Reb Zelig Braverman *zt'l* made a *kabbalah* with his Rebbetzin to bake and distribute *challos* for free on *erev Shabbos* to the poor of Yerushalayim.

Once, a very poor person came to his door late on Friday afternoon asking for two *challos*. Reb Zelig replied, "I'm so sorry, but I gave out all the *challos* already. Nothing is left."

Heating that, the poor man smacked Reb Zelig twice across his face. 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 asked Reb Zelig, "Why did you give away our *challos*? We need them for the *seudah*. And does he deserve to get 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 then there would be a serious *shalom bayis* problem in their home.)

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

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 from your own to others?" He rebuked himself for not giving to the poor immediately.