

# Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts  
from  
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Yisro



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# Table of contents

## Parshas Yisro

Emunah – Torah and Mitzvos Bring <i>Emunah</i> .....	<b>1</b>
Bein Adam LeChaveiro - Help Your Fellow Man.....	<b>6</b>
Chinuch – Each Child is the Only One .....	<b>9</b>
Hislavvus - Fervor .....	<b>15</b>

## Torah Wellsprings - Yisro

**Emunah – Torah and Mitzvos Bring Emunah**

The Noam Elimelech (לקוטי שושנים ד"ה ויש) (נוחלין) writes: "It is essential that one studies the holy Torah *lishmah*, because then he will know Hashem, recognize His greatness and wonders, and be connected with Hashem. As it states (20:1), וידבר... את כל, "Hashem taught...the entire Torah so people will be able to say, אנכי ה' אלקיך, 'I am Hashem, your G-d...' Because with Torah, one can proclaim, 'You are our G-d.'"

Also, in this week's *parashah*, the Noam Elimelech writes, "With Torah, a person can attain *deveikus* to Hashem. As it states, את כל הדברים לאמר, the purpose of the Torah is אנכי ה', that a person should have *deveikus* and *emunah*."

In *mussaf* of Rosh Hashanah we say, ובתורתך, כתוב לאמר שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד. Rebbe Yechezkel of Kozmir *zt'l* explained, "Everything written in Torah, לאמר, is so

שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו, "I am Hashem, your G-d...". Yidden can proclaim, ה' אחד, that Hashem is One."

*Emunah* is the purpose of the entire Torah. Therefore, the Zohar calls the mitzvos תרי"ג, 613 counsels, because they are 613 counsels for attaining *emunah*.

The Meor V'Shemesh (*Ki Savo*) writes, "I heard from the Rebbe of Neschiz *zt'l* that people go to tzaddikim for various reasons. Some go to tzaddikim to learn to pray with love and fear. Others go to tzaddikim to learn to study Torah *lishmah*. And there are those who want to reach high *madreigos*. But these aren't the primary reasons we go to tzaddikim. The primary purpose is to know Hashem and to be aware of His presence. There is no limit to this awareness. The more one knows of Hashem, the more he realizes that he doesn't know anything. Every day, he will seek to increase this awareness, more and more."<sup>1</sup>

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1. The Midrash (*Devarim Rabba* 4:5) states, אמר הקב"ה שומע לי, שאין אדם שומע לי ומפסיד, "Hashem says, listen to Me, because no one ever listened to Me and lost." By listening to Hashem's will, one always gains.

The following stories are examples of that principle:

A community near Monsey was renovating their beis medresh. They decided, "If we're spending thousands of dollars to make our beis medresh more beautiful, it would be proper that we should also invest in checking and beautifying the sefer Torah."

A *sofer* reviewed the *sefer Torah*, and discovered that it was *pasul*. He said it would cost five thousand dollars to fix it.

The *rosh hakahal* (financial president of the community) refused to give so much money. "I'll pay you five hundred dollars, but not a penny more."

It didn't really make sense. He was paying tens of thousands of dollars to beautify the beis medresh,

but for the most important part of the beis medresh – the *sefer Torah* – he wasn't ready to spend money.

The *sofer* explained to the *rosh hakahal* the immense work involved in fixing the *sefer Torah*, but he didn't care. He refused to pay more than five hundred dollars.

The *sofer* called up a colleague and requested help towards correcting the *sefer Torah*. He said, "This community is using a *pasul sefer Torah*, and if we don't fix it, they will continue using it. Let's work together to make the *sefer Torah* kosher. We will only be paid five hundred dollars — but we'll do it for Hashem's sake... For a mitzvah."

His friend agreed.

On the day they completed fixing the *sefer Torah*, satisfied that they were able to do this mitzvah, they began their trek home to Monsey.

Walking back to Monsey, they needed the restroom. The only restroom in the area was in a Christian cemetery, so they went there.

The guard stationed at the entrance asked for their name, address, and telephone numbers. The men gave the information and went inside.

A few weeks later, they received a phone call from a lawyer. At first, they were afraid that they were being accused of some crime, but the lawyer was telling them that they would receive \$62,000. On that day they were in the cemetery, a funeral of a wealthy person was taking place. This wealthy man didn't leave any heirs, so he stipulated in his will that his money should be distributed among those who attended his funeral. Being that they had registered with the guard at the entrance, they were endowed with this large sum of money.

This story is an example of *איין אדם שומע לי ומפסיד*, "No one ever listened to Me and lost out." They were *moser nefesh* to help a congregation have a kosher *sefer Torah*, and Hashem paid them for their dedication.

In communist Russia there was a Yid whose job was to polish diamonds. One day, on the way to work, he passed a beis medresh — one of the only ones left in the country. Usually, the beis medresh was empty during the week, but that day, someone was outside, pleading with him to come inside to complete a minyan. "It's my father's *yahrtzeit* today and I need a minyan to say Kaddish..."

The diamond polisher made a quick calculation. *If I help him, I can still be on time to work*, so he entered the beis medresh.

He thought he would be the tenth man, but as it turned out, he was the eighth. They had to wait some time until ten people were gathered. After the first Kaddish the diamond polisher headed towards the door.

The person with *yahrtzeit* begged him to stay for the entire *tefillah*. The diamond polisher didn't want to break this man's heart, so he said he would stay as long as he could.

He kept his eye on the clock, and stayed until the end of the *tefillah*.

When they finished davening everyone was invited to enjoy some cake and vodka *l'iluy nishmas* the *niftar* whose *yahrtzeit* was that day, but the diamond polisher explained that he can't be late for work and couldn't stay any longer. He raced to the diamond center, but before he got there, an acquaintance who worked with him in the diamond center stopped him in the street. "You must run away from here! Everyone inside was arrested!"

He escaped, and managed to come to Eretz Yisrael.

### Taking in the Entire Picture

Life experiences also teach people to recognize Hashem. They see Hashem's *hashgachah* leading their lives, and they are astounded by the wonders they perceive.

However, often, one episode of *hashgachah pratis* isn't sufficient for them to recognize Hashem. They think that it happened by nature, by chance. But when they take into account everything Hashem does for them, they become astounded by the wonders and they recognize Hashem.

Therefore it states, וישמע יתרו... את כל אשר, "Yisro heard...*everything* Hashem did for Moshe and for Yisrael..." One miracle wouldn't be enough. But when he took in the entire picture: *kriyas Yam Suf, milchemes Amalek*, and all the other miracles Hashem performed for the Jewish nation, he knew without a shadow of a doubt that it is all from Hashem.

In contrast, Pharaoh looked at each supernatural event independently, and thought it happened by nature, or by witchcraft. That is why he didn't recognize Hashem's providence. For example, during *makas barad* the crops were destroyed, but Pharaoh saw that some crops remained. (The soft grains weren't broken by the *barad*.) Therefore, Pharaoh hardened his heart and didn't release the Yidden. He thought, "If it were from Hashem, everything would be destroyed. Some grains remained, so it must be by chance." After that came *makas arbeh*,

which devoured all the remaining crops. If Pharaoh would connect the episodes, he would recognize Hashem. But he looked at each case individually, and he didn't see Hashem's hand. Yisro, in contrast, saw את כל אשר עשה ה', everything Hashem did. He took in the entire picture and recognized Hashem.

On the words, וישמע יתרו, Rashi writes, מה זכה וישמע יתרו, "What did Yisro hear and come? קריעת ים סוף ומלחמת עמלק, He heard that the sea split and he heard about the war against Amalek."

Was Yisro the only person who heard about these miracles? The entire world heard them. Rebbe Dovid Lelover *zt'l* explained, אלע, האבן געהערט און ער האט דערהערט, "Everyone heard, but he understood." Yisro added up the data and reached the obvious conclusion that there is Hashem. Others heard about the wonders, but they didn't make the calculation, so they didn't recognize Hashem.

### Emunah Peshutah

Reb Zalman Brizel *zt'l* was once pondering whether he should go to a certain place or not. In the end he went and he broke his foot there. He said to the person who took him there, "You see, it is good that we came here. It was destined that I should break my foot, but how could that happen if I didn't come here?" This story is an example of living with

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This story is another example of, אין אדם שומע לי ומפסיד, no one ever loses out when obeying Hashem's will.

*emunah peshutah*, to believe in Hashem without asking questions.

When one has *emunah peshutah*, life is always good for him. He accepts everything that happens to him with a happy heart. One who doesn't have *emunah peshutah* won't have this happiness and tranquility.

It states (18: 9), ויחד יתרו על כל הטובה אשר עשה ה' לישראל ויחד? What is the translation of

Rashi writes, וישמח יתרו זהו פשוט, "Yisro was happy. That is the פשוט, simple translation.

ומדרשו נעשה בשרו חרודין חרודין is that his flesh became prickly...."

I heard from a talmid chacham that this Rashi hints to the principle that *emunah peshutah* results in happiness. Rashi writes, וישמח יתרו זהו פשוט, when one follows the פשוטה, the simple approach of *emunah peshutah*, this results with happiness. ומדרשו, but when one darshens, and he asks questions on Hashem's *hashgachah*, his flesh becomes prickly and he hurts all over. He is left with questions on Hashem's *hashgachah*, and the answers don't satisfy him.

### **Belief in Hashgachah Pratis**

The Rosh (*Orchos Chaim* ב"ו אות א' יום א' אורח ב"ו) writes, "Believe in *Hashgachah pratis*.... Believe that Hashem's eyes are looking at the entire world. Because if one doesn't believe in אשר הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים, that Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim, he also doesn't believe in אנכי ה' אלקיך, 'I am Hashem your G-d.' ... This is the foundation of the Torah."

Because belief in Hashem means that (a) Hashem exists, (b) everything happens by His decree. The belief in אנכי, that Hashem exists and that Hashem created the world isn't sufficient without the belief אשר הוצאתיך that Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim and, similarly, everything happens by His *hashgachah*.

The primary rectification of Shovavim is to believe in Hashem with all your heart. As Reb Tzaddok HaCohen (*Tzidkas HaTzaddik* 156) writes, "The rectification [for severe sins] is to believe that there is no מקרה, happenstance. Everything happens by Hashem's divine providence... The *aveiros* are called (*Vayikra* 26:27), אם תלכו עמי קרי, 'If you will go with Me by chance,' ... So, when one believes that everything happens by Hashem's *hashgachah*, that corrects and fixes all *aveiros* and *dinim*..."

Perhaps this is the reason the Arizal teaches that one should be cautious with ברכת נהנין, *brachos* over food, during Shovavim. *Brachos* over food remind us that nothing happens by chance. Even the foods that end up on our plates were given to us by Hashem. This *emunah* in *hashgachah pratis* atones for all *aveiros*.

### **Tefillah brings Emunah**

Someone asked Rebbe Shalom of Belz ז"ל for a counsel for *emunah*. Rebbe Shalom replied, "You don't need counsel. Just daven."

This is because when one a person sees his tefillos answered, he received a very profound lesson in *emunah*. He saw,

firsthand, that (a) there's Hashem, (b) Hashem listens to our tefillos, and (c) He even listens to my tefillos.

A tzaddik taught: To pray, one must have three beliefs: (a) Hashem wants to help. (b) Hashem has the ability to help. (c) And even my tefillos are effective.

It states (*Tehillim* 81:10), לֹא יִהְיֶה בְךָ אֱלֹהִים זָר, "Don't have a foreign god." The Kotzker *zt'l* explained, you shouldn't think Hashem is like a stranger who isn't interested in your pleas. Rather, believe that Hashem desires to hear your *tefillos* and He will answer them. As it states (*Devarim* 4:7), מִי גוֹי גָדוֹל אֲשֶׁר לֹא אֱלֹהִים קְרוּבִים אֵלָיו כֹּה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, בְּבַל קְרָאנוּ אֱלֹהֵי מִי גוֹי גָדוֹל אֲשֶׁר לֹא אֱלֹהִים קְרוּבִים אֵלָיו כֹּה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, "Who is the nation who has god close to them like Hashem our G-d who is close to us whenever we call out to Him."

The Midrash (*Devarim Rabba* 2) tells:

"There was a ship sailing through the ocean. Everyone aboard was idol worshippers, besides for one Yid. When they arrived at an inhabited island, the goyim gave the Yid some money and asked him to go ashore to buy food and drinks for them. The Yid replied, 'I don't know anyone here. I'm just like you.' They replied, '[You aren't alone] because wherever you go, Hashem is with you. As it states, אֲשֶׁר יֵשׁ לֹא אֱלֹהִים קְרוּבִים אֵלָיו, "Hashem is close to them..." This is said for every Yid. Hashem is close, and desires to hear his tefillos.

People asked Reb Akiva Eigar to daven for an ill woman, שְׂרָה בַת רַבֵּקָה. In a letter,

Reb Akiva Eigar writes (*Igros Sofrim* p.74) "I davened for שְׂרָה בַת רַבֵּקָה and my *tefillos* weren't answered. I don't know why that happened, since I davened a lot for her. Therefore, check the name for me. Perhaps this isn't the exact name, and that's the reason my *tefillos* weren't answered." They checked and discovered that indeed, the name was רַבֵּקָה בַת שְׂרָה.

And it isn't only Reb Akiva Eigar (and other great tzaddikim) who had the power of *tefillah*. Everyone has the power of *tefillah*.

As the Chazon Ish (*Kobetz Igros* 2) writes, "The main thing is to get acquainted with the idea that you don't need a *shaliach* for *tefillah*. Everyone can attain goodness through *tefillah*... *Tefillah* is a staff of strength in everyone's hands. Everyone has the ability to abolish harsh decrees with his *tefillos*."

It states at the end of the *parashah*, לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה לִּי אֱלֹהִים כֶּסֶף וְזָהָב, "Don't make with me a god of silver, or a god of gold..." The Rabbeinu b'Chaya explains, לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה לִּי אֱלֹהִים, when you are standing before Me in *tefillah*, you shouldn't be thinking about your gold and silver. If you do, I will consider it like you made a god made of gold or silver." Rather, when davening, keep your *kavanah* on the *tefillah*, and not on anything else. You are standing before Hashem who is close to you and who desires your *tefillos*. Even your tefillos are essential. Therefore, your entire focus should be on the *tefillos*.

**Bein Adam LeChaveiro - Help Your Fellow Man**

The Aseres HaDibros concludes with וכל אשר לרעך, "Everything that belongs to your fellow man." The final words imply that this is the purpose of the entire Aseres HaDibros: to care for your fellow man, to think about what they need and to help in any way you can.

The Rishonim say the Aseres HaDibros is an abridged version of the entire Torah. Thus, the final words are saying: The purpose of the entire Torah is to help your fellow man.

The Smag writes that there are 613 letters in the Aseres HaDibros (not including the final two words אשר לרעך). Each letter of the Aseres HaDibros represents another mitzvah. Thus, the final two words seem to be saying that the entire Torah with all the 613 mitzvos is about doing favors for your fellow man.

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 31.) tells: Someone came to Shamai and requested, "Convert me, on the condition that you teach me the entire Torah while I stand on one foot."

Shamai pushed him away.

He went to Hillel with the same request. Hillel converted him, and then he told him, דעלך סני לחברך לא תעביד, זו היא כל התורה בולח ואידך פירושה הוא זיל גמור, "What you would hate if it were done to you don't do so for your fellow man. That is the entire Torah. The rest is commentary. Go study."

He taught him the entire Torah in one

sentence: the entire Torah is about helping your fellow man, and being cautious not to harm them.

And to a large extent, we see that it is so. As Rashi writes on this Gemara: בגון גזילה, גניבה ניאוף ורוב המצוות, most mitzvos are about being cautious not to harm your fellow man.

Hashem gave us two *luachos*. Written on the first *luach* are the mitzvos בין אדם למקום, obligations between man and Hashem, and the second *luach* states the mitzvos בין אדם להבירו, requirements between man and his fellow man. Many words are written on the first *luach*, and very few words are on the second *luach*. The Mabit (*Beis Elokim, Shaar HaYesodos* ch.12) teaches that the words on the second *luach* were written in very large letters, so those few words would fill the entire second tablet.

Large letters shout, "Be careful and don't miss these lessons." They were written largely to emphasize the importance of the mitzvos *ben adam lechaveiro*.

Let's study some other examples from this week's parashah, which teach the importance of friendship and unity, and the caution we must have never to harm our fellow man:

It states (20:23), ולא תעלה במעלות על מובחי, אשר לא תגלה ערותך, "Don't use stairs to go up to the *mizbeiach*, so you won't reveal yourself..." Rashi explains, "This would be a disgrace [for the stairs]. Using a *kal vechomer*, we learn an important lesson from this: Stones don't have feelings; they aren't

upset when someone disgraces them. Nevertheless, the Torah says that since they serve a purpose you shouldn't disgrace them. Your fellow man was created in the image of your Creator and he is upset when he is disgraced. You must certainly be cautious."

It states (19:2), ויהן שם ישראל באגודה אחת, בנגד ההר, "The nation camped there in unison opposite the mountain." The mountain can represent the *yetzer hara* (see *Succah* 52.). Reb Akiva Eigar *zt'l* and Rebbe Moshe Kobribner *zt'l* explain that the *pasuk* is saying, ויהן שם ישראל באגודה אחת, when the Jewish nation are in unison, that is their strength בנגד ההר, against the *yetzer hara*. The *yetzer hara* can't lure them into sins when the nation is united.<sup>2</sup>

It states (20:12), כבר את אביך ואת אמך למען, יאריכון ימיך, "Honor your father and your mother so you will live long..." Chazal say that living long means in Olam HaBa. The Seforno says that the reward for long life in Olam HaBa is for all of the first five commandments: for believing in Hashem,

not worshiping idols, honoring parents, etc. The Torah writes it by *kibud av ve'eim*, which was at the bottom of the first *luach*, but the implication is for all mitzvos stated on that *luach*.

The Seforno writes, "But with regards to the next five commandments, that we shouldn't harm our fellow man, not his body, honor, or money; not with deed, speech, or thought, keeping these mitzvos will protect him from punishment in this world and in the next world."

This is as Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil *zt'l* would say: The sins of *ben adam lamakom* are punished in Olam HaBa. The sins *ben adam lechaveiro* are punished in this world.

### ***Bikur Cholim***

One form of *chesed ben adam lechaveiro* is visiting the sick. It is discussed in this week's *parashah*, as it states (18:20), והודעת להם את הדרך ילכו בה, "Teach them the way they should go..." The Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 30:) explains that this refers to visiting the sick.<sup>3</sup>

2. This is something that is known: When a person is a member of a beis medresh where there is unity and friendship, this is a very strong protection against the *yetzer hara*. The *yetzer hara* can't draw him away from this stronghold, where he wants to be.

3. Apparently, it is called ילכו, 'to go,' because one goes to visit the sick. There is another explanation, taught by Baron Rothschild. This is the story:

For many years, the Ksav Sofer *zt'l* and Baron Rothschild went to the same vacation and health resort, and the Baron spent a lot of time listening to the Ksav Sofer's *divrei Torah*. One year, the Baron cut his visit short and prepared to leave. The Ksav Sofer asked him why he wasn't staying longer.

The Baron replied, "Chazal call visiting the sick ילכו, 'to go.' Why? This is because when you visit the sick, you have to recognize when you should leave. Your visit might be a burden for the ill person, or perhaps the ill person is embarrassed to be seen in such a state. Therefore, the Torah says ילכו, one must know when to leave..." The Ksav Sofer often repeated this *vort* he heard from Baron Rothschild.

According to some Rishonim, visiting the sick is a mitzvah from the Torah. As the Gemara (*Nedarim* 39:) says: "A hint from the Torah to the mitzvah of *bikur cholim*: It states (*Bamidbar* 16:29), אִם כָּמוֹת כָּל הָאָדָם יָמוּתוּן אֱלֹהִים וּפְקוּדַת כָּל אָדָם יִפְקֹד אֱלֹהִים לֹא הִיא שְׁלַחְנִי, "If they<sup>4</sup> will die like all people, and they are visited like all people..." Rava explains, "If they will die like all ill people who lie on their beds and people come to visit them..."

As the (פסקיו לנדרים ה"ג אות ב') ריא"ז writes, "*Bikur cholim* is a mitzvah from the Torah, as it states, וּפְקוּדַת כָּל אָדָם יִפְקֹד עֲלֵיהֶם. It is a great mitzvah. The life of the ill person depends on it, because the visit makes the illness lighter. Furthermore, by these visits, they can offer counsel regarding his treatment, they can encourage him, and they can calm him, and these matters grant him life. If no one comes to visit, sometimes the ill person becomes bored, the illness becomes unbearable, and then he dies, and that would be counted as murder."

The Gemara (*Nedarim* 40.) tells, "One of Reb Akiva's student was ill and the scholars weren't visiting him. Reb Akiva visited him. He swept and washed the floor, and this revived the spirits of the ill student. He said, 'Rebbe, you granted me life.'

"Reb Akiva went out and taught his students, 'Whoever doesn't visit the sick, it is like murder.' ... Whoever visits the sick causes him to live..."

The Seder HaYom writes, "*Bikur cholim* is the from highest forms of *gemilus chasadim*. As Chazal (*Nedarim* 39:) write, 'אֵין לוֹ שִׁיעוּר *bikur cholim*, there's no limit.' ... Because sometimes with his clever, encouraging, and kind words, he can revive the ill person, and enable him to live... We saw this many times, because sometimes a person visits the sick for an hour or two and the ill person says 'I feel like a new person. My *neshamah* came back to me' and we see that the illness became lighter."

A primary part of *bikur cholim* is to bring joy to the ill person. We know that a positive spirit and hope have a large part in a person's ability to fight off his disease. Therefore, the Rambam (in his *sefer* on health) writes, "Tell an ill person happy stories that will gladden his heart. Tell him interesting news that will take his mind off his illness and that will make him – and the people taking care of him – laugh. When you choose someone to be with the ill person, choose someone who can make him happy, because this is needed for all ill persons." Sodi Razyah (attributed to the Rokeach) writes, "When one visits the sick, he should speak to his heart, words of solace." These encouraging words will bring joy, and at times, the *refuah*, too.

It states (*Tehillim* 41), אֲשֶׁרִי מִשְׁכִּיל אֵל דָּל, "Fortunate is the person who takes care of the poor..." The Gemara (*Nedarim* 40.) explains, אֵין דָּל אֵלָא חוּלִי, "the translation of דָּל is ill..." Thus, the chapter is referring

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4. Referring to Korach's family and followers

to the mitzvah of *bikur cholim*, and the chapter tells his rewards:

ה' ביום רעה ימלטו ה' "He will be saved from a bad day." The Gemara explains that this means he will be saved from Gehinom.

That's his reward in the next world. The following are the wonderful rewards that he will earn in this world:

ה' ישמרהו ויחייהו ואושר בארץ ואל תתנהו בנפש אויביו "Hashem will protect him, grant him life, happiness in the world, and he won't be given over into the hands of his enemies."

The Gemara explains:

ישמרהו: Hashem will protect him from the *yetzer hara*.

ויחייהו: Hashem will save him from afflictions.

ואושר בארץ: Everyone will honor him.

ואל תתנהו בנפש אויביו: He will have good friends who help him with good counsel. He will be protected from bad friends who harm him with their bad counsel.

The *meforshim* explain that these rewards are based on the concept of *מדה כנגד מדה*, Hashem repays measure per measure. The way he helped the ill person, is in exchange, the reward that he receives.

For example, the Gemara says *ויחייהו* means that by visiting the sick, one is saved from afflictions. This reward is *מדה כנגד מדה*, measure per measure. He saved the ill person from afflictions therefore he is rewarded that he won't be afflicted.

We can add that he will definitely be saved from the type of illness that the ill person had. Just as he helped the ill person overcome that illness, Hashem will help him that he won't be afflicted with that illness.

### ***Chinuch* – Each Child is the Only One**

The Midrash (*Shemos Rabba* 2:2), says that Hashem tests *tzaddikim* by seeing how they care for sheep and goats.

The commentary *יפה תואר* explains: "If he leads the lowly cattle with care, patience, and compassion, this proves that he will certainly lead the exalted human beings properly."

The Midrash elaborates, "Hashem tested Dovid with sheep and found him to be a good shepherd... Dovid would bring out the young sheep to pasture first, so they could eat the soft grass. Then he brought out the middle-aged cattle, so they could

eat the medium hard grass. And then he brought out the old sheep to eat the hard grass. Hakadosh Baruch Hu said, 'Someone who knows how to tend to sheep according to their strength, he should be the shepherd for My nation...'

"Moshe was also tested by cattle. When Moshe was a shepherd in the desert, one goat ran away. Moshe ran after it... until the goat came to a stream of water, and stopped to drink. Moshe caught up and said, 'I didn't know you were running because you were thirsty. You're tired.' Moshe carried the goat back on his shoulders. Hakadosh Baruch Hu said, you have compassion on

sheep and goats, I swear you will be My shepherd for My **יִשְׂרָאֵל**, the Jewish nation."

This Midrash can be used for a lesson in *chinuch*, because in a way, each parent is a shepherd. Hashem appointed the parents to take care of His children, the Jewish nation.

The Midrash teaches that a primary characteristic of a shepherd is compassion. When a child is thirsty, bring them to water; when a child is tired, carry them so they don't have to walk back. Because a compassionate parent does whatever is necessary to take care of his children. This devotion makes him a fitting shepherd for Hashem's children.

Reb Avraham of Strikov *zy'a* adds: Moshe went out of his way to take care of one, singular, sheep. This is also a lesson in parenthood. Each child is precious, and each child deserves all the care and compassion. Even if one has many children, this shouldn't cause one to lose sight of each child.

Stating the names of Moshe Rabbeinu's children, the Torah says, **שֵׁם הָאֶחָד גֵּרְשׁוֹם... וְשֵׁם הָאֶחָד אֱלִיעֶזֶר**, "The name of one was Gershom... The name of one was Eliezer."

Reb Shamshon Refael Hirsch *zt'l* notes that it should have said, "The name of one was Gershom... The name of the *second* one was Eliezer." Why are both sons called **אֶחָד**, one?<sup>5</sup>

The *pasuk* is teaching that parents must consider each child as though he is their only child. Moshe had two sons, but each one was a "one" like his only child.

If a person had only one child, how much effort, prayer, and devotion would be invested in that child! That amount is what should be invested in every child. No child should be ignored and unconsidered, due to the shuffle.

### Teachers and Rebbe'im

These ideas are also directed to teachers and rebbes. Those who work in these positions are like shepherds. Hashem appointed them to care for the children and to help them reach their full potential. To fulfill one's role in being a loyal and devoted shepherd, one has to have compassion on his students.

It is important that the teacher care for *all* his students. It isn't sufficient that he helps most of them, or the best ones. Each of his charges is an entire world, entrusted to him by the Almighty Hashem. Therefore, each student deserves attention, care, and devotion.

The Brisker Rav *zt'l* said: If you ask a cheder rebbe, "Which student is most on your mind," he'll tell you about his best student, the one who knows everything he teaches and never caused him any trouble.

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5. By the *korban tamid* it states, **אֶת הַכֶּבֶשׂ הָאֶחָד תַּעֲשֶׂה בְּבֹקֶר וְאֶת הַכֶּבֶשׂ הַשֵּׁנִי תַעֲשֶׂה בֵּין הָאַרְבָּעִים**, "Sacrifice one sheep in the morning, and sacrifice the *second* sheep in the afternoon." So why doesn't it similarly state here, "One son was Gershom, and the second son was Eliezer"?

But a parent is different. If you ask a parent, "Which one of your children is most on your mind," the parent will tell you about the child who is going through hard times in school (or in other areas).

The Brisker Rav explained that the Torah calls students "children" as it states (*Devarim* 6:7), חֲנֹךְ לְנֶעֱר עַל פִּי דַרְכּוֹ, ושננתם לבניך, because teachers should consider their students as though they were their own children. Because then they will be devoted to help all of them –not solely the more successful students.

### "Educate a Lad According to his Way" חֲנֹךְ לְנֶעֱר עַל פִּי דַרְכּוֹ

שם האחד גרשום... ושם האחד אליעזר, "The name of one [of Moshe's children] was Gershom... The name of one was Eliezer." We explained that a parent should consider each one of his children as though he were אחד, the only one. The amount of energy and devotion that goes into raising an only

child should be invested into every child, regardless of how large the family is.

אחד also means unique, because each child needs a unique approach to *chinuch*. As it states (*Mishlei* 22:6), חֲנֹךְ לְנֶעֱר עַל פִּי דַרְכּוֹ, גם כי יזקין לא יסור ממנה, "Train the youth according to his way, so when he is old, he will not abandon it."<sup>6</sup> The approach that works for one child might not work for the other. Parents must learn to adjust and to raise each child in the way that's best for the child.<sup>7</sup>

Someone has one hundred keys, but only one of them will open the lock on a door. He tries ninety-nine keys, and the door remains locked, so he breaks the down door. Why did he do that? He should have tried the one hundredth key. The same is with *chinuch*. If you tried many approaches, and you weren't able to open up the child's heart, that's because you didn't find the

6. The Vilna Gaon *zt'l* (on this *pasuk*) writes, "A person can't change the way he was born... If a person was born with a bad nature, he has free will to use his tendencies to be either a *tzaddik*, a *rasha*, or a *בינוני* (somewhere in between). As the Gemara teaches, 'A person born in the *mazal* of *maadim* has the nature of spilling blood... He will either be a *mohel*, a *shochet*, or a thief.' ... He has the negative nature is to spill blood, but he has freedom to choose to be a *tzaddik* and use this tendency for a *mitzvah*, to be a *mohel*; or he can be a *בינוני*, and be a *shochet*; or he will be a thief, someone who spills blood in its literal sense .... This is the meaning of the *pasuk*, חֲנֹךְ לְנֶעֱר עַל פִּי דַרְכּוֹ, educate a child according to his way – in accordance to his *mazal* and nature. Accordingly, you should educate him to do *mitzvos*. If you do so, he will not leave it when he is older. But if you steer him away from his nature, he will listen to you now, because he is afraid of you and he obeys you, but later, when he isn't under your surveillance, he will leave this path, because it is impossible for one to change his nature."

7. In the *Hagadah shel Pesach* we say, חֲנֹךְ לְנֶעֱר עַל פִּי דַרְכּוֹ, ואחד חכם ואחד רשע ואחד תם, "The Torah speaks about four children: One is wise, one is a *rasha*, one is a simpleton, and one is the child who doesn't know how to ask questions." The word אחד is repeated four times here to remind parents to consider each child like a one and only child, and to find the individual approach of *chinuch* that works for each child.

right key yet. But don't give up. Think about the nature of the child, and seek the key that will work for him.

We'll add that sometimes you should continue using the same approach of *chinuch* again and again, and in the end, you will succeed. Like a key that sometimes doesn't open the lock the first time you try, but then you jiggle the key around, until eventually the lock opens.

My father was once in Los Angeles, in the home of Reb Eliezer Adler *z'l*. Rebbetzin Adler asked my father, "If your daughter asked you for money to go to the theatre, what would you tell her?" My father never encountered anything like that before and he didn't know what to say.

She said, "When I was growing up, in Yerushalayim, my friends were going to the theatre, and I asked my grandfather, Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil *z'l*, for money for the entrance fee. My grandfather gave me the money, and as I was about to leave the room, he called me back and said, 'You asked me for money for the theatre, and I gave you. But you should know that my heart will break if you go there.' I immediately told my grandfather that I won't go to the theatre; not then, and not ever."

Reb Shlomke practiced an individual path of *chinuch* for his granddaughter, which helped her change. Other children will need other approaches. The trick is to find the right key to each child's heart.<sup>8</sup>

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8. There was a *bachur* who befriended bad friends, and one weekend, when his parents were away, he invited his friends to his home. The rowdy *bachurim* caused tens of thousands of dollars in damages to the home. When the father returned home, he told his son in a fit of anger, "Leave the house. When you pay for the damages, you can come back home." The *bachur* moved out, and lived with his bad friends, which caused him to fall even further. The father regretted what he said, and he tried to call his son back, but his son remained distant. The father hired an expert who deals with such *bachurim* and this *mechanech* found an approach that worked for that child. One day, he reported to the father that there were signs of *teshuvah*. The father couldn't contain his joy, and he called his son, but the son didn't accept his calls. So he came to his apartment, and knocked at his door. He saw someone looking through the looking glass, but the door remained closed.

The father asked the *mechanech* to help him get in contact again with son.

The *mechanech* told the *bachur* that his father is trying to contact him. The *bachur* replied, "My father told me that until I give him tens of thousands of dollars, I have no reason to go home. I can't go back to my father until I pay back the debt."

The *mechanech* said, "Forget about the debt! Do you think your father wants your money? He wants you! He wants a connection with you!"

This story has a *nimshal*. There are people who withhold from doing *teshuvah* because they think, "I have too many sins. Hashem isn't interested in me, as I am now. First, I have to do *teshuvah* and pay up all my debts, and then I can have a connection with Hashem..." But they don't realize that more than anything, Hashem wants the closeness with His children. Hashem says, "Forget about the debts, just be close to Me."

A father once asked a *rosh yeshiva*, "Who is the best *bachur* here? I want the best *bachur* for a son-in-law."

The *rosh yeshiva* replied, "I have seventy best *bachurim*." There were seventy *bachurim* in his yeshiva, and each one was best in his own way.

This is how parents should value each one of their children. They should consider each child their best child, since each child is great in his own way. And when parents value their children, the children know it. That will help them value themselves and reach their potential.

### Finding Your Individual Way

We discussed that each child deserves a custom-tailored approach for *chinuch*. This also applies to the path one should choose in *avodas Hashem*.

It states (*Koheles* 11:9), והלך בדרך לבך, "Follow the way of your heart." The Netziv (*Ha'amek Davar*, end of *parashas Shelach*) explains, "People serve Hashem in different ways: Some toil in Torah all day long, others are occupied in *tefillah*, and others are busy doing *gemilus chasadim*, and all of these paths are *leshem Shamayim*. Even in the realm of Torah study, not all people should study the same way. Also, regarding mitzvos, people vary [where they place their emphasis]. As the Gemara (*Shabbos* 118) teaches that the *amoraim* would ask their friends, 'Which mitzvah was your father most cautious with?' One said his father was most cautious with *tzitzis*, another said that his father was most cautious with

*Shabbos*. Also, in *gemilus chasadim* people aren't the same. If one will ask: Since there are so many ways to serve Hashem, which is the correct path? What is the correct way to study Torah, keep the mitzvos, do *chesed*? *Koheles* answers: הלך בדרך לבך, see where your heart pulls you. Your heart will show you where your strengths are," and that is the path you should follow.

One *Shabbos*, Reb Meir Shapiro *zt"l* was visiting his Rebbe, Rebbe Yisrael of Chortkov *zt'l*, and the Rebbe asked him to daven at the *amud* (the *שבת מברכים* and *mussaf*). After the *tefillah*, the Rebbe invited Reb Meir Shapiro to eat the *Shabbos seudah* together.

People saw Reb Meir Shapiro's face beaming with joy when he left the Rebbe's room after the meal, and they asked him what happened at the meal.

He told them as follows:

"As soon as I came in, the Rebbe said to me, 'Ah! Reb Meir! Your *tefillah*! Your *rosh chodesh benching*! It was so beautiful.' The Rebbe repeated this several times during the meal. I said to the Rebbe, 'If the Rebbe enjoys my *tefillah* so much, perhaps I should leave Sanik, where I'm the *rav*, and I should become the *chazan* here?'

"The Rebbe became serious, and he told me a story of Rebbe Zusha of Anipoli *zt'l*..."

This is the story:

Rebbe Zusha would go to *galus*, traveling from one place to another. One time, he came upon the city where the *gaon* Reb Yusfa *zt'l* lived. Reb Yusfa was a great

*talmid chacham*, knowledgeable in all parts of the Torah, and Reb Zusha went to hear his *shiur*. After the *shiur* Reb Zusha told Reb Yusfa, "It was worth traveling the long distance from my home, just to listen to this sweet *shiur*..."

Rav Yusfa said to Reb Zusha, "I have no difficulty understanding why you were happy with my *shiur*, but I can't figure out why I'm so impressed by you? On first impression, you look like a standard pauper; someone who goes from city to city collecting money. But I perceive that the *Shechinah* rests on you. You must be a great *talmid chacham*."

Reb Zusha answered, "Not at all. I'm an *am haa'retz*<sup>9</sup>.... But perhaps it's because I know how to daven..."

Rav Yusfa was surprised, "The people who live here don't know how to daven?"

Reb Zusha replied, "They know how to daven, but I know how to daven before the Ribon HaOlamim [Master of the World]."

Rav Yusfa asked, "Maybe you can teach me how one davens 'before the Ribon HaOlamim'?"

"I can teach you, but not in front of everyone. Let's go into a room and I'll teach you."

Reb Zusha taught the rav the secrets of *tefillah*; how to pray properly before Hashem. Rav Yusfa was very inspired. He said, "Perhaps I should leave my *rabbanus*

and my yeshiva, so I can go with you and always daven properly?"

Reb Zusha told Rav Yusfa that he shouldn't leave his position. He explained, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu created billions of people, and everyone looks different. The differences in appearance represents their differences in thought and approach. As Chazal say, 'Just as their faces are different, so are their minds different.' Hashem wants each person to serve Him according to his own way, in accordance with his strengths and talents. Therefore, you should continue in your path of *avodas Hashem*, to teach Torah to Yidden, and I will continue along my path, the path of *tefillah*."

The Chortkover Rebbe finished this story and said to Reb Meir Shapiro, "Hashem wants you to teach Torah to Yidden. This is the reason he gave you the talents, willpower, intelligence and all other traits needed to succeed in that field. You should do your service and teach Torah to Yidden, and I will do my service, to daven to Hashem."

It is told that after this conversation, Reb Meir Shapiro was inspired to open Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin, where he could channel all his abilities to teach Torah to Yidden. He understood that this was his life's calling, and he invested all his energies to succeed on his own individual path.

When Reb Meir Shapiro was *rosh yeshiva* of Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin, he was offered a post in the Polish government,

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9. Reb Zusha said this because of his humility, but he was a great *talmid chacham*, and in his younger years he served as a rav in a city for several years.

where he could, potentially, do a lot of *chesed* for Polish Yidden. He wrote a letter to the Chortkover Rebbe to ask his opinion on this matter. The Rebbe replied, "From the talents that Hashem grants a person, one can know the mission he came to the world to perform. I hear that you are good at teaching students, so this is certainly what

Hashem wants from you. Nevertheless, this new position that you were offered is an important job. It's possible that you can do a lot of *chesed* from that post. Therefore, my counsel is that you don't do anything to get this job. If they come after you, and hire you, that is a sign that this is what Heaven want from you now."<sup>10</sup>

### *Hislahavus - Fervor*

The Torah writes (19:18), וְהָרַם סִינַי עֵשֶׁן כּוֹלוֹ מִפְּנֵי אֲשֶׁר יָרַד עָלָיו ה' בְּאֵשׁ וַיַּעַל עֲשָׁנוּ כַּעֲשָׁן מִן הַהָר מְאֹד "Har Sinai was smoking immensely, because Hashem went on the mountain in fire. The smoke went up like the smoke of a furnace, and the entire mountain trembled immensely."

The Torah was given this way to teach us that *avodas Hashem* should be performed with a fire, with fervor, with *hislahavus*. It shouldn't be performed lazily and disinterestedly.

*Chinuch* should also be with 'fire,' with *hislahavus*. You should train your children to be passionate about Torah and mitzvos.

Rebbe Asher of Stolin ז"ל hired a teacher to teach Torah to his son, the Beis Aharon ז"ל. One day, Rebbe Asher listened in. He

heard the *melamed* read the *pasuk* (*Bereishis* 24:3), וַיַּעַן לָבָן וּבְתוּאֵל, "Lavan and Besuel answered..." And Rashi writes, רָשָׁע הִיָּה וְקָפֵץ לְפָנֵי אָבִיו, "Lavan was a *rasha*, and he jumped to speak before his father."

The *melamed* taught this *Rashi* very serenely, and Rebbe Asher was displeased, "By teaching that way, how do you expect to bring *yiras shamayim* into my son?" The *melamed* didn't know what he did wrong. He had explained Rashi correctly. Rebbe Asher told him, "This is how you should read the Rashi: רָשָׁע הִיָּה, 'Lavan was a *rasha*!' He read these words with obvious disdain at Lavan and his ways. קָפֵץ לְפָנֵי אָבִיו, "He jumped to speak before his father!" Rebbe Asher said the words emphatically. He said the very same words as the *melamed* had, only he put in emotion,

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10. The Midrash (*Yalkut Shimoni Mishlei* 932) tells that Chiya, the nephew of Reb Elazer had a beautiful voice, and Reb Elazer would always encourage him to sing. He would tell him, "Chiya, my son, stand up and honor Hashem with the talent Hashem gave you."

Reb Elazer told him, "Navos (mentioned in *Sefer Melachim*) had a beautiful voice. When he would go up to Yerushalayim for the yomim tovim, all of the Yidden would gather around him to listen to him sing. They said it was worth coming to the Beis HaMikdash, even just to hear Navos singing. One year he didn't go up to the Beis HaMikdash for *yom tov*. He was punished for this sin... because he didn't serve Hashem with the talent he had."

so the student will grasp how wrong it is to speak first, before one's father. *Hislahavus* makes a strong impression on a child. The same lesson takes on entirely new meaning, when the *hislahavus* is added.

A certain father studied a chapter of Mishnayos with his son each day, but the child didn't remember anything. By the next day, when the father asked the child to repeat what he learned, he wasn't able to. The father assumed that his son was born with a weak memory.

One day, the father and son passed through a marketplace where each vendor was shouting out their wares. When they were back at home, the father heard his son repeating the vendor's chants – word for word. He saw that his son has a good memory. So why doesn't he remember Mishnayos? He discussed this matter with one of the *gedolim* of Yerushalayim. The *gadol* replied, "If you learn Mishnayos with your son with the same passion the vendors announce their wares, your son will remember the Mishnayos."<sup>11</sup>

Reb Avigdor Miller *zt'l* was once speaking to his students about the problems of

television, and one student was ready to take action. When his father was upstairs, smoking a cigarette and reading the paper, the boy was downstairs, smashing the television with a hammer. The father ran downstairs, livid with his son. The son continued with his *avodas hakadosh*, hammering away at the set, and explained that Reb Avigdor Miller taught him that television is bad for us.

The father called Reb Avigdor Miller. "How dare you turn my son against me! I demand that you come here right now and pay me for the damages..."

The father carried on and on, and Reb Avigdor Miller listened in silence. Then Reb Avigdor Miller said, "I always wondered where your son gets his passion from, and now I see that it comes from you, as you are also very passionate in your own ways."

The father realized that it was true. His son had inherited his temper and passion. This realization pacified the father. The father eventually developed a relationship with Reb Avigdor Miller, and became one of his followers and financial supporters.<sup>12</sup>

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**11.** A father told the Yismach Yisrael of Alexander *zt'l* that his son doesn't *bench* after meals. The Yismach Yisrael told him that he doesn't have to worry about that. "Just you be cautious to *bench* properly, and you will see that your son will do so as well." Because when a child sees his parent's dedication, he will follow and do the same.

**12.** Fervor is important, but one must be cautious that the fervor shouldn't *chas veshalom* turn into anger.

Rebbe Refael of Barshid *zt'l* yearned to wear tzitzis made from Eretz Yisrael wool. (Products from Eretz Yisrael were rare in that era, and he wanted to perform the mitzvah of tzitzis with wool from Eretz Yisrael.) He received the wool, gave it to a tailor to make it into a *talis kattan*, but the tailor cut in the middle of the cloth when the cloth was still folded over. Now there were two

holes in the *talis katan*. He gave the *talis katan* to Rebbe Refael, as he asked forgiveness for what he did. Reb Refael said, "There's no problem. This *talis katan* needs two holes. One hole is to wear, and the other hole is so Refael should control his anger."

The Imrei Chaim of Viznitz *zt'l* would repeat this story, often.

Once, the Imrei Chaim was invited to be *sandak* at a bris. The father asked the Imrei Chaim to come early, because the bris would be held early in the morning. The Imrei Chaim replied, "Usually I daven in the yeshiva, but on the day of the bris I will daven at an earlier minyan, so I can come on time."

The Rebbe arrived on time, but the bris didn't take place until much later, because the *mohel* was late. As they waited, the Rebbe repeated the story of Reb Refael of Barshid, and said "The bris had to be late, because it is to test me. Therefore, I must be cautious from anger."

Friday nights, the Imrei Chaim's *tish* went on for seven or eight hours. One Friday night, after his *tish*, it was raining and cold, and when the Rebbe arrived home, the door was locked. The *gabbai* had the keys, but he was late for some reason. It took time until the *gabai* opened the door, and in the meanwhile the Rebbe stood there in the cold rain. At this time, the Rebbe repeated the story of Rebbe Refael once again (hinting that this was a test). Then the Rebbe said, "This level is *kodesh kadoshim*. How does one reach such levels?! This story has a greater impact on me than a story about the miracles the great Rebbes performed."