

לעילו נשמת: אריה ישראל בן מרדכי ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
Rabbi Elimelech
Biderman
Shlita*

Kedoshim

Compiled by
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לזכות רפואה שלמה מלכה בת רחל ומינצאל בן שלי

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Parshas Kedoshim

In this week's *parashah* it states (18:19), ואהבת לרעך כמוך, "Love your friend like yourself..."

Reb Akiva teaches, זה כלל גדול בתורה, "This is a primary pillar of the Torah."

When the Torah writes כמוך, it is literal. You should love your fellow man literally like yourself. As the Mesilas Yesharim (11) writes, כמוך בלי שום הפרש, "As yourself, with no difference whatsoever. כמוך בלי חילוקים, as yourself, without distinction. בלי תחבולות ומזימות, without devices and schemes. כמוך ממש, literally as yourself."

Several years after the *petirah* of the Beis Avraham of Slonim *zt'l*, a chassid wrote to his friend, "My mind still hears the echo of the Beis Avraham's call, when he impressed on us the immense privilege to do a favor for a child of מלך מלכי המלכים הקב"ה, the King of kings, Hakadosh Baruch Hu."

The Arizal taught that before davening one should say, הריני מקבל עלי מצות עשה, "I accept upon myself the mitzvah to love my fellow man like myself." Some people say these words while harming others. For example, someone comes into the beis medresh to daven *Shacharis*, and he sees there is no room for him to put down his tefillin bag on the table, so he shoves all the tefillin bags to the side carelessly, which will make it hard for the owners to find their bags, all so he can to put down his bag. He does this while the words הריני מקבל עלי... ואהבת לרעך כמוך are coming out of his mouth. This is because he says these words by rote, without truly internalizing its meaning.

Reb Daniel Frish *zt'l* was once in Belgium. He saw that before *Shacharis*, Rebbe Yankele of Antwerp *zt'l* went around to all the guests in the beis medresh, asking whether

he can serve them a coffee or help them in another way. Reb Daniel Frish watched this and was wondering why a man of such stature does that. "It isn't proper to speak before *Shacharis!*" he thought. When Rebbe Yankele approached him, and asked him if he wanted a coffee, etc., Reb Daniel Frish replied, "*Sha. Sha.*"

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

Years later, Reb Daniel Frish said this conversation changed him. For, although it is a very good practice not to speak before *Shacharis*, as that will help one daven with *kavanah*, this shouldn't withhold us from helping a fellow man in need.

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

Shidduchim

When a person hires a contractor to build a house for him, he plans exactly how many rooms he wants, how they should be set up, what type of windows, floor, light fixtures should be inserted, and so on, but he will never discuss with the contractor how strong the foundation should be. This is because it is obvious and self-understood that the house needs to be built on good, firm foundations. Without good foundations nothing can be built.

Reb Eliyahu Lopian *zt'l* said that this is the reason the Torah has 613 mitzvos, but it doesn't explicitly state that we must have good *middos*. Good *middos* are the foundations, which don't need to be

discussed, because without good *middos* there is nothing at all.

This lesson also applies to *shidduchim* and marriage. We seek *shidduchim* for the purpose of building an everlasting edifice; a Jewish home. The foundation of this edifice is good *middos*.

Someone asked the Tchebiner Rav *zt'l* what he should look for when seeking a *shidduch* for his daughter. The Tchebiner Rav replied, "Look for three things..."

The father said, "Hold on a moment. I want to take out pen and paper so I can write this down."

The Rav continued, "You don't have to write anything down. The three factors are (1) good *middos*, (2) good *middos*, (3) and 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 heard about the *bachur*. "He learns eighteen hours a day. He is a giant *talmid chacham*..."

"What about *middos*?" the Steipler asked.

The *shaliach* didn't know anything about the *bachur's middos*. He asked, "How could he possibly have bad *middos*? He's always learning Torah!" The Steipler replied, "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."

Reb Moshe Ungar *zt'l* wrote to his father-in-law the Divrei Chaim of Tzanz *zt'l*, about a *bachur* who was suggested for his daughter. The Divrei Chaim wrote back, "You wrote about the *bachur's* many qualities, but you forgot the primary. You didn't write whether he is a *mentch*. As the

Torah (*Devarim* 22:16), states Rebbe Avraham Elimelech of Karlin זt"l would say that *את בתי נחתי לאיש*, “I gave my daughter to a *mentch*...”¹ when you ask information

1. Reb Gad'l Eisner זt"l would say to the *bachurim* before their wedding, “There are *yungerleit* who want to become *malachim*, and the first thing they do is they become *אויס מענטשן*, inhuman (without good *middos*.)” Once, many people were waiting in line to receive a *brachah* from Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach זt"l. One person didn't want to wait in line, so he cut in before the others, and stretched out his hand to Reb Shlomo Zalman. Reb Shlomo Zalman replied, “I give you a *brachah* that you should be a *mentch*.”

To cushion the insult, Reb Shlomo Zalman asked him, “Why don't you wish me, *וכן למר*, (that I too should become a *mentch*)?”

Thirty years ago, a Yerushalmi *bachur*, who used to dress in the traditional Yerushalmi garb, befriended bad friends, and began wearing western clothing. The *shtreimel* was first to go. (Yerushalmi *bachurim* wear a *shtreimel*.) When people would see him in his jeans and tee shirt, they would cluck their tongues and nod their head in distress, seeing how he fell...

When he became older, and it was time to find a *shidduch*, he realized that it would be easier for him to find a *shidduch* if he wore the traditional garb, so he started wearing the Yerushalmi garb except for the *shtreimel*. He got married to a good wife, he stopped meeting with his bad friends, and began learning in *kollel*. Things were going in a good direction, but he still wasn't wearing a *shtreimel*.

One day, he came home with a \$2,000 *shtreimel*. He thought his wife would be pleased. She said, “I am used to you without a *shtreimel*. I don't need the *shtreimel*.”

“But I paid two thousand dollars for it!”

Their *shalom bayis* began to weaken over the *shtreimel*, and he went to Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach זt"l for counsel.

Reb Shlomo Zalman replied, “You have a good wife. In her merit, you improved your ways. You shouldn't allow two thousand dollars to ruin your *shalom bayis*.”

about a *bachur*, and you hear the one, and it becomes a he has good *middos*, you can large, impressive number. mark down in your notebook. However, if there are many a one. Every other quality you qualities, but good *middos* are hear about him is another lacking, all you are left with zero. Place those zeros next to are many zeros...²

“But what should I do about this loss of money?”

Reb Shlomo Zalman said he wanted to buy the *shtreimel* for himself, and he gave him two thousand dollars.

That Shabbos, Reb Shlomo Zalman wore the new *shtreimel* to beis kneses, but it was too large for him. When he came home, his wife asked him, “It is very good that you helped this couple with their *shalom bayis*, but why must you embarrass yourself with this *shtreimel*?”

He replied, “I am very happy with this *shtreimel*. I would want to be buried with it, because by buying it, I made *shalom bayis*.”

After the *chasunah* of Reb Yehudah Ades *shlita* (*rosh yeshiva* of Kol Torah, Yerushalayim), he asked his rebbe, Reb Shlomo Zalman what time a *yungerman* should come home, each night. Reb Shlomo Zalman replied, “The question isn’t when you should come home, rather how you should come home.” Because it is essential to return home with a happy disposition and with kind words. Good *middos* are more important than the details.

2. *Pirkei Avos* discusses good *middos*. Why is this *masechta* written in *Seder Nazikin*, which discusses financial damages and other money matters? The Tzaddikim of Belz *zt'l* explain, the greatest damages happen when people have bad *middos*.

Reb Yisrael Salanter *zt'l* said, a person with a sad face is a בור ברשות הרבים, a pit in a public domain, because his sad disposition makes others sad too. We can add that a sad face at home is like a שור נגון, a goring bull.

There was a *yungerman* who wanted to keep the Mishnah (*Avos* 1:5), אל תרבה שיחה עם האשה, “Don’t speak excessively with your wife” so he hardly spoke with her. She was very insulted by this. The matter was brought to the attention of the Maharil Diskin *zt'l*, who asked that the *yungerman* should come to him. The man arrived, stood in the Maharil Diskin’s study,

בצדק תשפוט עמיתך

Two wealthy people were standing on the *bimah* in Trisk, crying copiously. A large crowd was in the beis medresh, the women's section was also full. Everyone gathered to listen to what they had to say.

"We are business partners, and we run a lucrative business. We were traveling to a business fair, distant from our home, and we encountered a pauper walking with a heavy sack on his shoulders. We offered him to ride with us on the wagon, and he was happy to accept. We were traveling to the same area, and he thanked us immensely for our hospitality.

"He told us that he is a *melamed*. The only position he

found was in a distant town, far 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.

"When Shabbos was approaching, we stopped at a hotel. We paid for a bed and board for the pauper, too. He kept thanking us for our generosity, and we were also glad that we could help this poor person.

"Before Shabbos, we hid our large packet of money well, so thieves wouldn't find it. No one saw us hide it other than the pauper, who was with us in our room. We felt comfortable hiding the money in front of him, because he impressed us as being a G-d fearing person.

but the Maharil didn't raise his eyes to greet him. The man stood there, waiting, and the Maharil Diskin continued to ignore him. After a long time passed, the Maharil Diskin looked up from his Gemara, acknowledged him, and said, "Now you know how it feels to be ignored. That is how your wife feels. I hope you learned your lesson."

“On *motzei Shabbos*, we took out our money, counted it, and discovered that two hundred rubles were missing. We immediately suspected the poor pauper. Who else knew where the money lay? He was so poor; it wasn't far-fetched to assume that he would take some of our money for himself, due to desperation.

"At first, we spoke to him peacefully. We explained to him that we know he stole the money, and we aren't angry with him, but he must return the money. He swore that he didn't take anything, and he said that he was hurt that we suspected him.

"We didn't believe him, and we began speaking harshly to him. We said, 'We took you on the wagon, rented a hotel room for you, and then you steal two hundred ruble from us?!'

"He kept on saying that he didn't take the money, so we checked his belongings. The

lining of his coat was sewn up with red thread. That aroused our suspicion. We opened the lining and found two hundred rubles, exactly the amount we were missing.

'That's my money,' the pauper said. 'I earned it from the *melamodus*.'

“We didn't believe him. We asked, 'Isn't it a coincidence that you earned from your *melamodus* exactly the amount of money that we're missing—not a penny more and not a penny less?'

“The mistress of the hotel heard our loud voices and she came to see what the commotion was about. We told her we were robbed two hundred rubles, and we showed her the coat with the red thread, where exactly that amount of money was found.

"The mistress also suspected the pauper. She said, 'the pauper asked me for thread on *erev Shabbos*, and I gave him red thread...'

"All the evidence was piling up. Now we were certain the pauper stole the money. We beat the pauper, took the money back, left him there in the hotel, and continued on our own to the fair. The pauper remained behind bruised, injured, and shamed.

"We were not very distant from the hotel when a mailman on horseback caught up with us. He had a letter to deliver to us from our home. The letter was from my wife. She wrote, 'Before you left, I needed two hundred rubles urgently, so I took it out of your bundle. I didn't have time to tell you before you left, that's why I'm sending you this letter...'

"We then realized that we made a big mistake. We suspected an innocent man. We beat him and stole his money he worked so hard to earn. We quickly returned to the hotel, hoping to find the pauper. We wanted to beg him for forgiveness, return the money that was rightfully his,

and to amend our grave mistake. But the manager of the hotel told us that the pauper couldn't sustain the humiliation and the beatings. By the time a doctor arrived, he was already not among the living...

"So you hear, people of Trisk, we are guilty of killing an innocent person and accusing him of theft, and it is all because we didn't judge him favorably. We went to the Trisker Maggid and asked him what we should do for our *teshuvah*. The Maggid told us that our remorse atoned for a large part of the sins. 'And now,' the Trisker Maggid told us, 'accept on yourselves to support the *almanah* and her children for the rest of your life. When it's time for them to marry, marry them off as you would your own children. In addition, you must gather all the people of Trisk; men, women and children, the young and the old, and tell them the entire story. The shame this will cause you,

together with the *zikuy harabim* (for people will learn from you to judge others favorably) will atone for your sins."

Rebbe Aryeh Mordechai Rabinowitz *zt'l* would often repeat this story. He was present, in the Trisker beis medresh, when this episode occurred. He heard the story first hand from the two merchants. He would often recount this story, and his children repeated it to their children, so we can know how important it is to judge our fellow man favorably.

This is a mitzvah stated in this week's *parashah*, **בְּדֵק**
תְּשׁוּמֵ עֵמִידךְ.

Loyalty to Torah

There was a *rasha* who always sought to cause trouble for the Jewish people. He was a self-hating Jew. He would tattle to the government on his Jewish brothers at every opportunity.

When he was about to die, he

called for the *chevrah kadisha* to come to his bedside, so he could die as a Yid. The *chevrah kadishah* knew him to be a great *rasha*, and they were surprised by his request. This man never showed any interest in *yiddishkeit* and halachah before, so why does he want them now? But they went his bedside, as he requested. They thought that perhaps he was doing *teshuvah* in his final moments.

The *chevrah kadishah* came, and the man said that he sinned his entire life, and for atonement he requests that they bury him standing upright, like a donkey is buried, outside the walls of the cemetery. After stating his request, he died.

The *chevrah kadishah* didn't know whether to follow his request, as it is a mitzvah to do as the *niftar* asked, or not to bury him in that disgraceful way, because it states in *Shulchan Aruch (Yorah Dei'ah 362, Shach 2)* that it is

forbidden to bury someone like a donkey. So they asked Reb Moshe Feinstein *zt'l*, and he ruled that they mustn't follow his request. Reb Moshe explained that a person isn't in charge of his body, and he must also follow *Shulchan Aruch*, which prohibits this, therefore they must bury him as all Yidden.

A day after the burial, the police become involved in the case. They said that they heard that the Jewish community disgraced this person by burying him like a donkey, to take revenge from all the *lashon hara* and trouble he caused in his lifetime. They dug up his grave and saw that he was buried like a human being.

It became clear that the man wasn't doing *teshuvah*, as the *chevrah kadishah* perceived it. He was a *rasha* up to the last moment, and his final wish was part of a scheme to get even with the *chevrah*

kadishah, whom he hoped would abide by his request.

See how important it is to always abide by halachah, never transgressing any of its laws. Keeping *Shulchan Aruch* is always for our benefit; always the best way to go.

Reb Moshe's caution with halachah was the way he lived all his life. There is a story of told of a person davening *Shemonah Esrei* behind Reb Moshe, and Reb Moshe couldn't walk back the three steps until that person finished. He waited for a long time, but the person behind him was still davening. During this time, Reb Moshe's family informed him that he has a phone call from Eretz Yisrael. (In that era, it was rare to get a telephone call from Eretz Yisrael, and it was a sign that the matter was urgent) but Reb Moshe refused to answer it. He wouldn't walk back, when the person behind him was still in the middle of

Shemonah Esrei. By the time he got to the phone, the person had hung up.

Afterwards, people asked him why he didn't answer the phone, and he replied, "If there is a wall behind me, how can I walk back?" that is how he perceived the halachah, like an impenetrable wall, that one can never trespass.

Reb Elyah Roth *zt'l* told the following story: The Or HaChaim HaKadosh was once a guest in the home of simple people who excelled in the mitzvah *hachnasas orchim*. The Or HaChaim felt an aura of *kedushah* in their home, and he wanted to know the origin. "Could it be that they're hidden *tzaddikim*?" he thought, but after paying closer attention he saw they were just regular, good people. As the Or HaChaim was contemplating on the origin of *kedushah* in their home, he heard the family reminiscing about one of the guests that used to visit their home.

From time to time, an old, wealthy man would come to their home. The family honored him immensely — as they honored all their guests — and the old person would give nice gifts to each family member.

However, there was an issue that the family and the old man didn't see eye to eye. The family would serve Hashem with fervor, and the old man couldn't handle it. He believed the fervor should solely be inside one's heart. Externally, he felt, one should serve Hashem without any signs of enthusiasm. On one of his visits the old man said, "Why do you say *birchas hamazon* so loud? Hashem hears quiet *brachos* too. In addition, your extra zealous ways might make your guests uncomfortable and embarrassed, as they will feel that they aren't as *frum* as you are. In my opinion, it is wrong to say *birchas hamazon* loudly..."

The family accepted his *mussar* and *benched* in silence. The old man was pleased that they listened to him and gave each of them another gift.

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

The old man showed up once again on *erev Pesach*, and distributed presents to the family members. The *baal habayis* greeted him joyfully and invited him to the Seder. The old man replied, "I can't be at your Seder if you're going to start shouting and acting inhumanely. I will only join you if you agree to be silent at the Seder. Do as I

teach you: Keep the fervor in your heart. Don't show it on the outside."

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

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

The *baal habayis* was worried the old man would ask them to give back all the precious presents, but his wife saw things differently. She said to her husband, "Gather all the presents and give them back to him. I don't want them, and I don't want his false rebukes."

The Or HaChaim listened in astonishment, and said, "Now I understand why there's a holy aura in your house. That

man was the *yetzer hara*, trying to uproot your *temimus*. The *חכמת נשים*, the wife's wisdom, *בנתה ביתה*, saved your home."

Tefillah

An orphaned *chasan* came to the Satmar Rebbe *zt'l* on the day of his *chasunah*. The Rebbe put his hands on his head and prayed for him for a very long time. When the groom left, someone asked the Rebbe why he prayed so long for this *chasan*? The Rebbe replied, "Generally, the parents pray and bless their child before the chuppah, and these prayers and blessings accompany the couple throughout their married life. However, this boy's parents were killed in the Holocaust. There is no one to daven for him. That's why I blessed him at length...."

Once, people told the Satmar Rebbe about a c

ertain rabbi, that he's an *adam gadol* (a great person). The Rebbe asked, "How do

you know? Did you see him daven?" The Rebbe explained that the Midrash says that when Rivkah saw Yitzchak for the first time, Yitzchak's hands were spread out in *tefillah*, and she said *וְדָא אָדָם גָּדוֹל דְּוַי*, "He is certainly an *adam gadol*." So, we see that only someone who prays well should be called an *adam gadol*.

A barren couple in Eretz Yisrael went to many fertility doctors, but after twelve years of hoping, the doctors told them they would never bear children. That's when they decided to adopt a child.

When their child's class knew how to read, the cheder celebrated with a siddur party, and the adopted parents came to rejoice with their child, whom they loved like their own. At home, the parents noticed that their child was extremely happy, in a way they've never seen before. They asked him about that, and he replied, "I always

wanted a brother, and now that I will be davening with a siddur, I will pray that you have another child, so I can have a brother."

The father didn't want to break the child's heart, so he said, "Very good, begin davening."

Nine months later, they had a child. The *tefillah* and *temimus* of the child broke all barriers. Such is the power of *tefillah*.

People told Reb Yechezkel Abramsky about some person who needed a blood transfusion. Reb Yechezkel Abramsky *zt'l* said that when he says in *birchas hamazon* the words, *וְנָא אֵל תַּצְדִּיקֵנוּ ... לֹא לִידֵי* *מִתְנַת בִּשְׂר וּדָם*, he has in mind that he shouldn't ever need a *מִתְנַת... דָּם*, blood infusion donation. His students asked him, "Is that the meaning of this *brachah*?"

He replied, "When one says the *tefillos* and the *brachos* that *Chazal* instituted, one can intend in the words any prayer he desires."

Kedoshim Tehiyu

The *parashah* begins, *קְדוּשִׁים תְּהִיוּ*, "you shall be holy." How does one make himself holy?

The Chasam Sofer taught that one should *pretend* he is holy. Ask yourself, "How would a true *yirei shamayim* act in this situation?" and then act that way. It may not be the real you, you are only acting like a *tzaddik*, but by acting as a *tzaddik* you become one.

This is hinted at in the *pasuk* (*Vayikra* 11:49), *וְהִתְקַדְשְׁתֶּם* *וְהִיִּיתֶם קְדוּשִׁים*, pretend you are holy and you will indeed become so.

Another way to become holy is to take a small step towards *kedushah*. As *Chazal* (*Yoma* 39.) say, "A person makes himself a drop holy...from below and [Heaven] makes him very holy...from Above."

The *Toras Cohanim* translates *קְדוּשִׁים תְּהִיוּ* to mean *פְּרוּשִׁים תְּהִיוּ*, "separate [yourself] [from *gashmiyus*, material pleasures]." The *Ramban* explains that the Torah is

warning that one shouldn't be a *נבל ברשות התורה*, a low-life within the parameters of the Torah. Because one can drink good wines every day, eat the most expensive foods, have many wives, and live a very materialistic life, and he won't be transgressing any particular *לאו*, prohibition, of the Torah, but he won't be living in the spirit of the Torah that Hashem wants from us. The Torah therefore obligates us, in general terms, *קדושים תהיו*, be holy! Separate yourself from these matters!

The Ramban explains:

By studying the 613 mitzvos of the Torah, one receives the gist of what Hashem wants from us. For example, last week's *parashah* lists the prohibited marriages. The *parashah* before that (*תוריע מצורע*) discusses *tzaraas*, the punishment for speaking *lashon hara*. The *parashah* prior, *שמיני*, discusses kosher and non-kosher foods. After we have details such as these,

the Torah says in a general sense, *קדושים תהיו*, be holy. Make yourself holy in marriage, with your speech, and with your eating habits. Because, even when something is technically permitted, ask yourself whether this is in the spirit of the Torah.

The Ramban writes, "The Torah prohibits *arayos* (forbidden marriages) and forbidden foods, and the Torah permitted kosher marriages and the consumption of meat and wine. A *baal taavah* (someone who desires to indulge in physical pleasures) has room to live a decadent life...to guzzle wine and to gobble up meat, to speak disgusting speech. These aren't explicitly forbidden by the Torah. He will be a *נבל ברשות התורה*, a low-life within the parameters of the Torah. To prevent this, after the Torah stated the prohibitions, the Torah says in a general sense that one should be *פרושים*, *בן המותרות*, separate from the

permitted... One should guard his tongue from eating *achilah gasah* (overeating) and from foul speech (*nibul peh*)... This is the pattern of the Torah: to first to give the details and then a general rule to include everything that is similar. For example, after the Torah tells about the halachos of the courts system and business laws –the prohibition against stealing, cheating people, and other prohibitions – the Torah writes (*Devarim* 6:18), *ועשית*, *הישר והטוב*, ‘do that which is straight and good.’ This is a general statement, urging people to act properly towards his fellow man, as I will explain there. Similarly, regarding Shabbos, the Torah prohibits work on Shabbos, and then it states *תשבות*, a general mitzvah to rest on Shabbos, as I will explain.”

ועשית and *תשבות* and *קדושים תהיו* and *הישר והטוב*, aren't telling any specific law, but they tell us, in general terms, that one should live with holiness, act properly towards their fellow

man, and rest on Shabbos. The details of how to carry that out isn't told to us, but we know from all the other mitzvos of the Torah the Torah's will, and thereby we understand how to comport ourselves.

The Ramban on *ועשית הישר והטוב*, writes, "It is impossible for the Torah to teach every detail of proper conduct, such as: how to behave towards friends and neighbors, how to do business, how to establish community laws [and so on]. So after the Torah tells us many laws, such as the prohibition of *lashon hara*, taking revenge, holding a grudge... to stand up for the elderly, and the like, the Torah tells us in general terms, *ועשית הישר והטוב*, ‘do that which is straight and good...’ Everything that one does should be *ישר* correct."

There are no set rules of how to be holy, or how to be "correct and good." Therefore, the application of these mitzvos will vary according

to each person's level, needs, and circumstances.

About sixty years ago, at a *chasunah* in Teveria, the fish (which was the main course) spoiled, and there wasn't much to give to the guests. Reb Shlomo Zalman Aurbach *zt'l* was the father of the *chasan*. He went over to the caterer and said, "It's possible that my *mechuten*, Reb Werner (the *rav* of Teveria) will tell you he doesn't want to pay for the fish, since it spoiled. I came to assure you that if he doesn't want to pay, I will pay his share too."

The caterer smiled and said, "Reb Werner spoke with me a moment ago and said the exact same thing."

Were they obligated to pay for the spoiled fish? No. Where they obligated to pay their *mechutan's* share? Also not. But Reb Shlomo Zalman and Reb Werner went beyond the letter of the law to compensate the caterer. They understood *וְעִשִּׂית דְּיִשְׂר וְדַטוּב*, that the correct

and proper thing to do is to pay the caterer, so they did so.

Reb Moshe Kliers *zt'l* had a large *kollel* in Teveria. The *kollel* was behind in their payments, and the *yungerleit* didn't receive their stipend for several months.

Reb Moshe Kliers told the secretary (who was in charge of the money distribution) "Until all the *yungerleit* are paid, don't bring money to my home, either."

Rosh Chodesh came, and Reb Moshe Klier's *rebbetzin* saw that they didn't receive their monthly paycheck. She said to her husband, "How am I supposed to pay the grocer and other people I owe money? I promised I would pay them by *rosh chodesh...*"

Reb Moshe Kliers replied, "And what will Reb Chaim Lubiner (one of the *masmidim* of the *kollel*) tell the grocer? He also owes money to the grocer... I decided that until the students are all paid, we

shouldn't receive our share. That way, when the students complain to me I will understand them. And if they rebuke me and speak disrespectfully, I will know where it's coming from."

According to halachah, Reb Moshe Kliers could have taken his paycheck before the others, but not everything that's permitted should be done. There's a fifth *Shulchan Aruch*, an understanding of right and wrong that isn't explicitly spelled out in the Torah but implied by the

words *ועשית הישר והטוב*.³ The same is the message of *קדושים תהיו*. Not everything permitted should be pursued. It may be kosher, but it still isn't what Hashem wants from you, as we will explain.

Food

In Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz's *zy'a* older years, his voice was weak, and only the people who were near him could hear his *divrei Torah*. One chassid wanted to hear the Rebbe's *divrei Torah*, so he hid under the table before the *tisch* began.

3. *Shulchan Aruch* (*Yorah Dei'ah* 248:4) states that when collecting money, one can only accept a small donation from a woman. One may not accept a lot of money because perhaps her husband doesn't want to give so much money to *tzedakah*.

Once, a large donation came in the mail for a *kollel* in Yerushalayim. The donor wrote in the attached letter that they mustn't write her a receipt, and they mustn't write a thank you note to her for the money.

To the rabbanim who received the letter, it seemed obvious that she had given *tzedakah* without her husband's consent, and she didn't want him to know about it. They therefore wanted to send back the money, as stated in *Shulchan Aruch*. But Reb Yosef Chaim Zonnefeld *zt'l* said they should accept the money. He explained that if they send back the money, it could cause a rift in that couple's *shalom bayis*. Reb Yosef Chaim felt that for the sake of peace it is preferable to transgress that halachah in *Shulchan Aruch* and accept the large donation.

One of the *gabaim* saw him hiding under the table and demanded that he come out. He considered it a breach in protocol. When the chassid didn't listen, the *gabai* bent down and grabbed him, and tried to pull him out. The man under the table refused to leave his spot, and he bit the *gabai's* fingers. Just then, Rebbe Yissachar Dov came to conduct the *tisch*. He saw the commotion and he asked both of them for an explanation.

The chassid said, "I wanted to hear the Rebbe's *divrei Torah*, so I hid under the table. When the *gabai* tried to pull me out, I bit his hand."

The Rebbe replied, "Essentially, you are in the right. The *gabai* shouldn't force you to leave from under the table. However, my ancestors taught me, 'The essence of a Yid is seen precisely when he's in the right.'"

Even when something is right, kosher and permitted, it

doesn't mean that it is the correct thing to do. One must take into account whether your deed will cause a *machlokes*, and you have to take other considerations into account, and only then can you determine whether the deed should be pursued.

When it comes to eating, one can say that he doesn't understand why it is important to be *שׂוּף*. The food is kosher, so what is the problem. But as Rebbe Yissachar Dov taught in the name of his holy ancestors, "the essence of a Yid is seen precisely when he's in the right." You are correct, the food is permitted, but should you eat it? Ask yourself, what will be the result of eating this food? Will you have greater strength to serve Hashem? Will it make you feel stuffed and tired? Will it cloud your mind, and make it hard for you to daven and learn? Will it make you healthier in the long run, or will it make you weaker? You should ask yourself these

questions, and that will give you a gauge to know what Hashem wants from you.

The Yesod HaAvodah (2:9:24) writes, "It is very beneficial for *avodas Hashem* that a person shouldn't only think *is it permitted for me to eat this food... to go to that place... to do that deed...* rather with everything one does, one should think, *will this be good in Hashem's eyes?...*" For example, before eating food, one shouldn't only ask himself whether it is kosher, one should also ask, *will this meal lead me to study more Torah? Will it improve my health?*⁴

With this consideration in mind, he will know whether to proceed or not.

The Gemara says, "Two people roasted a *korban Pesach*, one ate it for a mitzvah and the other ate it *achilah gasah* (overeating). The one who ate it for the mitzvah [is a tzaddik]... the one who ate it as *achilah gasah* is a [sinner]" (*Nazir* 23).

The same food can be holy, or the opposite, depending on one's intention, mannerism, and needs.

Sometimes one needs good food for his peace of mind and happiness; sometimes one

4. When Eisav saw the red lentils that Yaakov Avinu was cooking, Eisav said, *הלעיטני נא מן האדום האדום הזה על כן קרא שמו אדום*, "Pour this red food into my mouth. Therefore, he was called Edom" (*Bereishis* 25:30). We can ask, why was Eisav called אדום? If it is because he said the words *האדום האדום הזה*, he also said *הלעיטני*, and he also said *נא*, and several other words Why isn't Eisav named for those words? Why only for the red lentils? We can answer that Eisav didn't call the soup by its name, עדשים (lentils), which implies that Eisav didn't know what was cooking on the fire. All he knew was that it was red, and he wanted it. But Eisav, if you don't know what it is why do you want it? Maybe it isn't healthy for you? Maybe it isn't food fit for human consumption? Therefore he is called אדום to denote his improper approach to eating.

needs good food for his health, but when eating good foods becomes a passion and an addiction, something has gone askew. This isn't *קדושים תדוו*, living in a holy way that Hashem desires from us.

Reb Hillel Kolemaia *zt'l* was once visiting Rebbe Avraham Yaakov of Sadigura *zt'l*. When Reb Hillel Kolemaia was about to leave, the Sadigura Rebbe said to him, "Reb Hillel, you are renowned for your inspiring *mussar* lessons. Please give me some *mussar*. What should I do to improve?"

Reb Hillel replied, "I see that the Rebbe doesn't give *mussar* to his chassidim, and that isn't

correct. Why don't you give them *mussar*?"

The Rebbe replied, "I teach my chassidim to eat properly, as a Yid should. If they will do so, all their deeds will automatically be as they should be."

The Sadigura Rebbe's son, the Pachad Yitzchak of Boyan *zt'l*, explained the halachah *אין קדוש אין קדושה*, *אלא במקום סעודה*, *kedushah* is attained *במקום סעודה*, at the meals. By eating properly, and by not indulging, one attains immense holiness. ⁵

Tosfos (*Kesuvos* 104.) writes, "Before praying for success in Torah, pray that

5. At the *chasunah* of one of the Pachad Yitzchak's children, a halachic question arose. The waiters hadn't yet served dessert, and it had already become morning. The question was whether they could serve the dessert before *Shacharis*. The *talmidei chachamim* who were present at the wedding debated the matter, and the Pachad Yitzchak told someone to go to Reb Dudyia Ortinberg (author of *Tehilah l'David*) to ask him. As they were waiting for the messenger to return with Reb Dudyia's ruling, someone said, "We're allowed to rely on the opinions that it's permitted to eat the dessert."
The Pachad Yitzchak replied, "How would we appear if we would do everything that's permitted?"

pleasurable foods shouldn't enter your body."

Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk (*Noach*) teaches, *כל האומר הקב"ה וותרן* whoever wants Hakodosh Baruch Hu should forgive his sins, *וותרו מוערי*, should forgo the *taavos* of his stomach.

The Vilna Gaon *zt'l* taught that when one eats with passion, his entire *neshamah* is in the food. And then, when he eats that food, it's like he's eating his own soul. Therefore, it states, *ולא תאכל* *הנפש עם הבשר*, "Don't eat your soul together with the meat" (*Devarim* 12:23).

These sources don't mean that a person shouldn't eat well. Each person must eat the amount he needs for his health, peace of mind, and to have strength to serve Hashem. But going beyond those needs is transgressing the mitzvah of *תדויו* *קדושים*.

In the generation of the Rambam, there were Yidden of a certain country who had

doubts in *תחיית המתים*, the resurrection of the dead in the future. The Rambam told them that their doubts are the result of their not being careful with how they eat.

The Degel Machaneh Efraim (*Eikev*) writes, "I heard from my grandfather [the Baal Shem Tov *zt'l*] that people from a certain country wrote a letter to the Rambam, [asking] that although the *Gemara* (*Sanhedrin* 96) derives from a *pasuk* the concept of *תחיית המתים*, the *pasuk* can be understood differently. The Rambam didn't want to answer them himself, and asked his student, Reb Shmuel ibn Tibbon, to reply. The following is a brief synopsis of Reb Shmuel ibn Tibbon's answer. 'When one is careful, and he doesn't eat non-kosher foods... he will have a pure heart and clear mind to grasp the source of life, Hashem, Who created the entire world. When one is even more careful, and he eats with

kedushah, by eating according to the ways of the Torah, his mind and all of his 248 limbs will be holy and pure. The opposite, *chas veshalom*, also occurs, because [when one isn't careful with what he eats and with how he eats he will have] a rusty mind, filled with foreign thoughts... He will not be aware that all life comes from Hashem. He is impure, and he thinks foreign and heretic thoughts. The *tanaim* and the *emoraim* were careful not to become impure by eating the bread of the *yetzer hara* and the *yetzer hara's* wine, therefore their minds were bright, and they had *ruach hakodesh* to explain every concealed phrase of the holy Torah. The spirit of G-d was with them... But these people [who questioned the veracity of *techiyas hameisim*] are certainly impure, and their blood is impure... This is the reason their thoughts veer towards heresy, and they cannot perceive the sweetness of the Torah, which is the

wisdom of the G-d of the world, the great King.'

"Reb Shmuel Ibn Tibbon concludes, 'Since they had so much chutzpah, and they left the Jewish camp, a murderer will soon come on them and destroy them and everything they own. Indeed, that is what happened, because a few days later, a great king came and killed them and took away all their wealth.'"

Torah

The Torah tells us קדושים תהיו, to be holy. How does one become holy? By studying Torah, because אין קדושה כתורה, no holiness compares to the holiness of Torah, and whoever devotes himself to studying Torah is sanctified, *kodesh kadoshim* (see Rambam end of *hilchos Shmitah v'Yovel*). Similarly, the Gemara (*Avodah Zarah* 3) states, "Whoever studies Torah, he is like the *cohen gadol* who entered the *kodesh kadoshim*. The Beis Yisrael ז"ל would say that man's mission

in life is קדושים תהיו, to be holy, and one doesn't acquire this sanctity without hours of uninterrupted Torah study.

In a letter, the Chazon Ish (1:13) writes, "Someone who merits knowing Torah... he walks among people, and people look at him and think he is a regular human, but the truth is he is a *malach*, living among human beings. He is living an exalted life, beyond all praises..." Although he has 248 limbs like all other human beings, nevertheless, since he is involved in Torah, he has been sanctified and is like a *malach*.⁶

The Chinuch (419) writes, "Every Yid is obligated to study Torah regardless of whether he is wealthy or poor, healthy or afflicted... Even a pauper who goes door to door for handouts, even someone

who has a wife and children [and has financial obligations], they are all obligated to have set times for Torah study by day and by night, as it states, והגית בו יומם ולילה. The very first judgment after one's demise is for *bittul Torah*... One shouldn't say that he will study Torah when he has free time, because that time may never come. As Chazal [Avos 2:4] say, ואל תאמר כשאפנה אשנה, 'Don't say I will study Torah when I have time, because that time might never happen.' One doesn't know what the future will bring. Every day new obligations pop up, which steer the person from one distraction to the other. He will end his entire life without anything at all, unless he forces himself to study Torah. Whoever does so... will earn assistance from Above, and Heaven will lessen

6. Boyaner chassidim were planning a trip together with their Rebbe, Rebbe Mordechai Shlomo of Boyan *zt'l*. As they were speaking about the details of the trip, the Rebbe said, "Really, we're already in the middle of a trip, because we're in the middle of *sefiras ha'omer* traveling towards *mattan Torah*..." We prepare for *mattan Torah* by studying Torah.

the hardships of life... He will be tranquil all his life in this world, and it will be good for him in Olam HaBa. Fortunate is the one who speaks to the listening ear..." This final sentence implies that the Chinuch is hoping that people will listen to his counsel and dedicate time to Torah despite all the hardships and obligations of life. And as he promises, when one does so, he will see that things will become easier for him.⁷

Rebbe Shmuel of Slonim *zt'l* said that when he has a problem, he studies a *daf* Gemara, and his worries go away. If it's a greater problem, he studies two *blatt* Gemara, and the problems don't bother him anymore. If he has extremely great

problems, he studies three *blatt* Gemara, and after studying three *blatt* Gemara, there isn't a problem in the world that can bother him. The joy that Torah places in his heart enables him to face, with joy, all situations of life.

One year, Rebbe Mordechai Dov of Hornesteiple, traveled the long way from Hornesteiple, Russia, to Tzanz, Poland, to be by his father-in-law, the Divrei Chaim of Tzanz for Pesach. Before returning home, the Hornesteipler Rebbetzin complained to her father, the Tzanzer Rav, how hard it is for Yidden to live in Russia under the Czar. She added, "Even in Mitzrayim, the Yidden didn't suffer so much."

7. The Midrash (*Bereishis Rabba* 92:1) states, "Everyone has *yesurim*.

Fortunate is the one whose *yesurim* is from studying Torah." This is the meaning of the *pasuk*, אשרי הגבר אשר תיסרנו י-ה ומתורתך תלמדנו (*Tehillim* 94:12) which can be translated, "Fortunate is the person who has *yesurim* by learning Torah." Learning Torah isn't always easy. For example, when one stays up late to study Torah, he is enduring *yesurim*. It isn't easy for him. But these *yesurim* will be in exchange of other *yesurim*, *chaililah*.

Her father corrected her, “In Mitzrayim, the Torah wasn’t given yet, and they didn’t have anything to give them solace. But we have the Torah, which comforts us amidst the greatest

strife.” As Dovid HaMelech said, לולי תורתך שעשועי או אברתי בעניי, “If it weren’t for Your Torah, my pleasure, I would be lost in my troubles” (*Tehillim* 119:92).⁸

8. A young man bought an expensive pair of shoes for two hundred dollars, but they were uncomfortable. He complained to the storeowner that the shoes hurt.

The storeowner explained, "It takes a couple of weeks before the shoes break in and become comfortable."

So the consumer put the shoes into his closet and waited two weeks. But when he put them on again, they still hurt. He returned to the shoe store once again, complaining that the shoes still weren't good. The storeowner explained, "The shoes become comfortable if you *wear them* for two weeks. If you leave them in the closet, they will remain uncomfortable."

The *nimshal* is, כל התחלות קשות, all beginnings are difficult. When a person starts out on the path of studying Torah it is hard, because he isn't accustomed to studying Torah. However, if he studies every day he will learn to love Torah, and Torah study will become easy and pleasurable. But that will only happen if he learns Torah every day. It will not happen if one only studies once every two weeks, or so.

The Chofetz Chaim (*Ahavas Chessed* 2:11) writes, "I heard from גאון אחד, a certain *talmid chacham* that a person should think the following three thoughts [and he will surely devote himself to Torah study]: (1) One should think he has only one more day to live. (2) He only has this one page of Gemara to study. (3) He is the only person in the world whom Hakadosh Baruch Hu commanded him to study Torah, and the existence of the entire world is dependent solely on him. [These contemplations will cause him to devote himself to Torah, because] (1) By thinking that he only has one day to live... he won't push off studying Torah for tomorrow. (2) Also, by thinking that he only has a small amount of material to study, he will not be lazy. Whereas when the *yetzer hara* gives him the notion that he still has a lot to accomplish, and that it will be a long time, and a lot of toil,

During the Holocaust, people were amazed to see Rebbe Pinchas of Ustila *zy'a* learning Torah with immense *hasmadah*. How could he put aside all the pain and devastation and delve into Torah study?

People asked him about this, and he replied, "People asked my father-in-law, Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz *zt'l*, this very same question during World War I. People couldn't understand how he had the peace of mind to study Torah

then. He explained that during hard times it's even more important to study Torah. The Mishnah says, 'When a person has pain...the *Shechinah* says, *My head hurts. My arms hurt.* Hashem, *keviyachol*, suffers together with us, and we must study Torah to give Hashem respite and joy. We are living in a time of a Holocaust, when Klal Yisrael is in distress, and Hashem is suffering together with us. It's our obligation to make Hashem happy, and nothing brings joy to Hashem like when a Yid learns Torah."

until he finishes the *sefer Mishnayos* or the *mishechta*, it will discourage him and take away his motivation. (3) When he thinks that the survival of the entire world is dependent on his Torah study, it will cause him to be swift [to do Hashem's service and to study Torah]... In my opinion" the Chofetz Chaim concludes, "these ideas are hinted to in *kriyas Shema*. בלבך בלבך, 'Love Hashem your G-d with all your heart...' How does one reach that level? והיו הדברים האלה, 'These words...' think that you only have to learn *these few words* — just one chapter, just one page — and nothing else. אשר אנכי מצוך, 'that I am commanding you.' Consider it as though Hashem has only commanding you. There is no one else in the world commanded to study Torah, other than you. היום, consider your obligation is only for today. על לבבך, keep these thoughts constantly in your mind," and you will devote yourself for Torah.



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