

DEDICATED

לזכר נשמת

ר' משה דוד זצ"ל בן הרב ירוחם שליט"א

IN LOVING MEMORY OF

R' MOSHE DOVID KATZ,

WHOSE LIFE EXEMPLIFIED

יפה תלמוד תורה עם דרך ארץ

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

INSTILLING A
LASTING EMUNAH
IN A
CHANGING GENERATION

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FOREWORD

Of recent, a problem that has been festering for quite some time, has been coming to public attention. Tragically, significant numbers of "*frum*" adults, married and with families, are drifting from a Torah-observant lifestyle. We find them in a variety of situations. Some get divorced. Others stay married and go through the motions, at least in front of their families, and yet others openly exhibit their violations of *Halacha*. The sad truth seems to be that we are only becoming aware of a small part of this problem and the numbers seem to be growing.

The good news is that we have witnessed reversals in this phenomenon, with the proper intervention. These interventions have taught us two things: Firstly, we have gotten some understanding of what is bothering the people in these situations, and second, that they can be helped to return with positive feelings and genuine commitment to Yiddishkeit.

The logical conclusion would seem to be that we must inform educators and parents that these issues do in fact exist and guide them to be better equipped to prevent them in the future.

Based on significant experience listening to what people have claimed as the causes of their disenfranchisement with Yiddishkeit and the experience gained from trying to help them, it would seem that it could be beneficial to share these ideas with parents and teachers. It should be noted that their ideas of causes may very well be excuses, but in order to help them return, which should be our one and only goal, we must address the excuses as well.

Here is a sampling of what they are saying:

1) We always had too many unanswered questions, but we did not feel safe enough to ask them.

2) We never really understood what Yiddishkeit is all about. We didn't have a context with which to appreciate it and there was so much that didn't seem to make sense on the surface.

3) So much time was spent and emphasis was put on davening and learning, but we never really appreciated it or understood why.

4) We feel a certain emptiness inside, we never felt a close relationship with the Creator that might have been able to alleviate this feeling.

5) We felt pressured to go with the flow and didn't feel that we made decisions on our own.

6) We constantly felt restricted and never realized the privilege and benefit of doing Mitzvos. We didn't understand how it would make us happy in life and now it doesn't.

7) We didn't feel loved enough for who we were, rather for what we did.

8) We didn't feel enough space to express our individuality; everyone was expected to be the same.

9) The suffering of the righteous confused us, as did sometimes the behavior of the "so called" righteous.

10) We really never had clarity about what happened at Har Sinai and we are confused about how the Torah was transmitted and very confused about the Oral Torah.

These are some of the things that they are saying. There are also some things that they are not saying. They may be emotionally and psychologically unhappy in general and

blaming the *Yiddishkeit*. They may be experiencing problems in their lives, but choose to blame their unhappiness on *Yahadus*.

Efforts at prevention of this phenomenon from arising, should address the issues that they claim to have problems with. Even before we begin, a definition of the process of *Chinuch* is important. In *Parshas Lech Lecha, Perek 14, Pasuk 14, Rashi* defines the word *Chinuch* as, "The beginning of the entry for a person to an occupation that he is destined to remain in." Two points are critical. First that it is only the beginning of the entry, which means that we must set him up to complete the rest of the entry himself. Second, it should last a lifetime. It seems that we must impart the tools for a person to be able to continue his growth process on his own and the lasting inspiration and understanding to do so.

A primary concern in the *Chinuch* must be the happiness of our children. "*Osher*" seems to be the highest form of happiness. The root of the word means, "validation." We must see to it that our children and students feel good about themselves. If we show love and respect for them, we help to validate them and if we help them to feel good about themselves, we have great influence on them. As per their expressed feelings, we see that love and respect for who

they are, not just what they do, is necessary. In this area, teachers can do even more than parents. A parent's love has limited validation power, since love is an appreciation of the beloved's qualities. They are genetically programmed to love their children and therefore their love has more limited validation power than a teacher. However, the constant criticism of a parent can have very detrimental effects on their children, since there is a feeling of, "If the genetically programmed person doesn't understand and love me, I must really be trash." We should also let them know that we believe in them. The message of, "I believe in you" can often have life-altering effects.

Religious pressure can be overwhelming to many young people, due to the fact that our relationship with Hashem is the most important relationship in the world and failure to appreciate it leaves no alternative to fill that void. We must teach our children to take advantage of the opportunity that we have to rejuvenate the relationship that each and every one of us has inside. By focusing on the attention that Hashem gives to each of our lives, we create a stepping stone to a deep and loving relationship.

We must find every possible means to deal with each child or student as the unique individual that he or she really is. Just like everyone in the world has a unique physical

makeup, each individual has their own emotional makeup, and we must allow our children to excel in their own unique way. This can avoid a major cause of frustration and really help them to feel good about themselves.

It is very important to create an environment where they feel safe to ask questions. We should really even be encouraging certain types of questions. Above all, one of the most important pieces of advice, in this whole entire matter is to listen, listen, listen, whenever they talk. Empathetic listening, as opposed to sympathetic listening, can be extremely validating and even therapeutic.

Truth be told, *Yahadus* has an overwhelming appeal to the *Yiddishe Neshama*, when presented in full context and with painstaking detail. We must know that we cannot afford to take anything for granted, when it comes to the *Chinuch* of our precious children. Although in this forum we cannot go into the proper detail in each of the following areas, we should not assume that they know and understand the basics of *Yiddishkeit*. *Yahadus* is so relevant, meaningful and satisfying, but we must deal, in detail, with the many basic concepts. We must be able to articulate the purpose of creation, the benefits of a life of Torah and *Mitzvos*, and the testimony, evidence and the accuracy of the transition process of *Maamad Har Sinai*,

to this day. They may have difficulty processing all of this information, until they have a standard for judging truth, which is “beyond a reasonable doubt,” – as sure as I can be that my mother is in fact my mother. In reality, we all want to have *Emunah*, *Bitachon* and a meaningful and close relationship with Hashem.

We must be able to address all of the causes and, maybe more accurately, the excuses that are given and exhibit great love, respect and patience in the process.

Rav Yisrael Salanter told the Alter of Slabodka, when the latter was embarking upon establishing his Yeshiva, that the goal of a Yeshiva is, as the *Navi Yeshaya* says in *Perek 57, Pasuk 15*, "To revive the spirit of the downtrodden and revive the heart of the crushed." And this was for the Slabodka Yeshiva, which produced the Torah giants of the American Yeshivos!

Please note the following advice from Rav Meir Shapiro ZT'L:

“At a gathering somewhere outside Glina, he once had occasion to speak, and he tried to drive home the overriding need for a good teacher training institute. ‘Just think,’ he said: ‘How many qualifications do we demand from a shochet before he will be accepted to do the ritual

slaughtering in even the smallest shtetl, to provide the little community with kosher meat? He must know well all the relevant laws, down to the last detail. He must have those laws well in mind when he does his work, and his hands must move efficiently, so that he doesn't make any blunders. In addition, he must be a devoutly observant Jew, or else we won't trust him. ... Then after all that, what do we put into his hands? What do we entrust him with?- an ox!"

"Consider, then, what qualifications a melamed should have – a teacher in a classroom – when we entrust to him our children, the young souls who will build and form the future of our people. The children are the foundation of Jewry's next generation; and that makes them the most precious possession we have..."

Although of course *Emunah* is part of our lifeblood as a nation, the *Mesillas Yesharim* says that even concepts that are familiar and obvious to us need to be reviewed again and again. For so many of those students who struggle with questions about *Emunah*, discussing this vital topic is essential in saving many *neshamos* that could otherwise fall by the wayside, *Rachmana Litzlan*.

Emunah is neither a purely intellectual exercise nor a purely emotional feeling. If we try to inspire *Emunah* using logical arguments and proofs we cannot succeed, as *Emunah* is affected by our emotional attitudes in many ways. Similarly, inspiring *Emunah* through feelings and emotions is also bound to falter, as *Emunah* cannot be based on one's feelings and moods, which can change quickly. Rather, *Emunah* is based on a combination of both logic and emotion. As it says in *Birchos Krias Shema*, “*Emes v'yatziv...v'nechmad v'na'im*”— “The Torah is true and firm, desirable and pleasant.” *Emunah* can be established and strengthened when one knows that the Torah is both true (logic) and good and that it is a source of happiness for us (emotion).

Strength of commitment to Torah comes from this combination. As humans, we are constantly searching for happiness, looking for the source that will let us live a good life. When a person realizes that happiness can only come through Torah and *Emunah*, he can be open to them both and willing to hear what the Torah has to say about how he should lead his life. But this alone is not enough. If the Torah is the source of happiness but it is not true, then a person might reason that although Torah is good for him today, tomorrow he might find something better that will

bring him more happiness. Therefore, we must inform our students that the Torah is the *only* source of true happiness and fulfillment, and then they will be open to appreciating that it is the only truth in the world.

DEVELOPING A RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR STUDENTS

Simply combining the two important factors in educating our students, that the Torah is true and good, is not the only prerequisite in bringing out the *Emunah* embedded in them. We live in a generation of emotional frailty and often times, this can interfere with the process of learning and internalizing these truths. We need to be able to address those issues in order that our students can overcome the blockages that can get in the way of their *Emunah*.

The *Sefer HaChinuch*, when speaking about the *lav* of appointing a non-Jew as a king, states that a *ger tzedek* cannot be a king, as a king must be able to be “*machnia lakol b'chol asher yedaber*”—humble himself before everyone in everything that he does, in all of his pronouncements, edicts and decrees. This is only possible, to the extent necessary for a king, says the *Chinuch*, if the king stems from *rachmanim bnei rachmanim*, for only one who has true *rachmanus* on others can truly humble himself before others. Even a *ger tzedek*, who accepted

Torah on himself and gave up everything to join a nation that values *rachmanus*, does not stem from *rachmanim bnei rachmanim*, and therefore does not have the proper make up to be a king.

Indeed, *rachmanus* is a requirement for any form of leadership, not just that of a king. Any parent, teacher or head of a *chinuch* institution must have humility in order to be successful in leading others. Humility can only come through *rachmanus*, through seeing our students or children as struggling with whatever issues they may be dealing with, as suffering from whatever difficulties they may face. This attitude causes us to speak to them with humility, without talking down to them. Rather we will treat them with the respect and gentleness that they deserve as children of Hashem. We know that the *Gedolei Olam* have always dealt with people this way, resulting in the acceptance of their words.

Love is tremendously powerful. The *Ralbag* says that we see the power of love from the way *Yaakov Avinu* prepared for his meeting with *Esav* as he was coming toward him with four hundred generals. The way to melt the heart of even a terrible enemy is through friendship. *Yaakov* sent *Esav* gifts and a message of friendship, and even though *Esav* hated *Yaakov*, as it says, “*Halacha hi beyadua*

sheEsav sonei l'Yaakov—It is a known Halacha that Esav hates Yaakov,” *Esav* was pacified even though he might have assumed that *Yaakov* was tricking him for a third time. How much more so is the power of real, deep and genuine love, or even friendship to one deserving of it? It can melt anything; it can break any barriers. It is the key to the heart.

That may be *pshat* in the *Rambam* when he says, “*Mitzvas assei min haTorah lehidabek b'talmidei chachamim*—it is a mitzvah from the Torah to cleave to *talmidei chachamim*.” One should have a connection with *talmidei chachamim*, eat with them, do business with them, and marry their daughters. The *Sefer HaMitzvos* says that this is in order to learn from them and “*l'ha'amin amitius shel divreiheim*—to believe the truths of their words.” By creating that relationship, that connection, with our students, we will have the key to their accepting that which we have to offer them which will result in our ability to influence their lives.

When a *Rebbe* or teacher treats a child with respect and shows warmth, friendship, care and love, it is incredibly validating to a child. A child who knows that his *Rebbe* or parent wants to hear what he has to say, respects his

opinion, and wants to spend time with him, is a child who feels good about himself.

We should realize, that as *Rabbeim* and teachers, we are better equipped to provide that validation than parents are. A parent's love toward his child is a given—it is inborn and genetic. In order to effectively cause a child to feel good about himself, a parent needs not only to love, which a child senses is natural, but also to *respect* his child. For a parent, respecting a child is more validating than loving him is. However, when it comes to teachers, who don't have the natural love for their students, love is extremely validating. If, as parents and teachers, we are the source of their validation and happiness, then the children become open to hearing what we have to teach him.

THE TRUE SOURCE OF HAPPINESS

Once we forge a positive relationship with a student, we can show him that Torah is the true source of happiness. The world is constantly pursuing happiness. Today, more money, time, books and workshops are spent on the topic of happiness than ever before, yet the world is full of depression, addiction, divorce and suicide. Why is the world such an unhappy place?

Many people do not know what happiness means. *Dovid HaMelech* said, “*Achas sha’alti me’eis Hashem...shivti beveis Hashem*—One thing I ask of Hashem...to sit in the house of Hashem.” Later in Tehillim, Dovid describes, “sitting in the house of Hashem” as “*Ashrei yoshvei veisecha*—Fortunate are those who sit in Your house.” The root of the word “*ashrei*” is *ishur*—validation. The source of happiness is feeling validated, feeling good about oneself. Many people think that happiness comes from pleasure, but the truth is that pleasure seeking is antithetical to happiness, because pursuing pleasure means that happiness can only be found *outside* of oneself.

Yet in truth, true happiness can only be achieved when a person is happy with who he is *inside*. This can be achieved when he knows that he has a purpose in life, and he works toward achieving that purpose. Darwin created a concept that people, and indeed the world, have no purpose, because if creation was an accident then it has no meaning. If this is true then what purpose can we possibly have in this world? This explains why so many people are lacking happiness, if they tragically subscribe to Darwin's theory.

If someone walks into a therapist's office, and tells the therapist that he has no purpose in living, then as far as he's concerned, the client should be on suicide watch. If we can't give our kids a sense of true purpose, then they will search for it elsewhere. Some will conclude that their purpose is to have a good time, or they will find other false, sometimes ridiculous, purposes. But we can, and should, articulate to our children that we do have a purpose, and that purpose was revealed to us at Har Sinai by the Creator Himself!

THE PURPOSE OF CREATION

Through talking with many young people throughout the years, we have come to realize that a lot of them have a concept of Hashem that is based on the *Pasuk*, “*Kel nekamos Hashem* — Hashem is the G-d of vengeance,” a G-d of punishment. This is terrible, as some kids remain *frum* only because they are afraid of Hashem’s punishment, but eventually their resolve cracks as it is too painful. They need to be taught a fuller picture of who the *Ribbono Shel Olam* is. So who is He?

We can find the answer by looking at why Hashem created the world. He did not need the world for Himself, nor did He need us or our *mitzvos*. He created the world with the concept of “*Olam chessed yibaneh*”—the world was created for the purpose of doing *chessed*. As the *Derech Hashem* explains, the greatest *chessed* Hashem could do for man is to give him pleasure through the work of his own hands. In other words, the biggest *chessed* is *mishpat* (justice). When a person works to achieve his reward, he experiences a greater form of pleasure than one who

receives pleasure without working towards it. Hashem created the world so that man can, through his efforts, overcome his challenges and do *mitzvos*, thus earning his just reward.

This can be compared to the difference between the wealthy gentleman, Mr. Rockefeller Sr. and his son. Both of them used the same driver to drive them around, but while the son would tip the driver twenty-five dollars, the older Mr. Rockefeller would give him only five. When asked why, Mr. Rockefeller Sr. answered, “I did not have a rich father. I worked for this money, I earned it by the sweat of my brow and I therefore appreciate its value. My son, however, received this money without putting in any effort, therefore he cannot appreciate its worth.”

Yet, the world could not have survived on only *mishpat*, because in order to earn the ultimate reward we were given a *yetzer hara* to overcome. As a result of that, often times people make poor choices and sometimes fail. Therefore, Hashem incorporated *rachamim* and *chessed* into the *mishpat* and created a world that is *kulo chessed*.

In order to allow us to earn *sechar*, the ultimate of which is, as David HaMelech said, “*Kirvas Elokim li tov*” — “Closeness to Hashem is good for me,” He created a system

where we can earn that closeness. How do we achieve that? By becoming like Hashem, transforming ourselves into G-dly beings. Chazal say that *mitzvos* were given to us “*letzaref bahen es habrios*”—to refine our characters and make us into G-dly human beings so that we can then be “*misaneg al Hashem*”—experience pleasure through closeness to Hashem, thus fulfilling the original goal of creation, “*Olam chessed yibaneh.*”

The *Mesillas Yesharim* states that the real place where we will experience this ultimate pleasure is *Olam Haba*, as only there will we be free of the limitations that the body imposes on connecting to spirituality. I remember how my grandmother lived with this concept that the ultimate pleasure is in the Next World. She once got a burn from a pressure cooker and was laid up in bed for months, in tremendous pain, and all the while she said, “*Oy, in yenne velt vet zein gut*—in the Next World it will be good.”

However, many of us have a hard time waiting until the Next World. We want to experience pleasure here and now. And we can. *Ruchniyus*, connection to Hashem and *Bitachon* in Him, can be experienced and enjoyed in this world as well.

Rav Meir Simcha of Dvinsk writes in the *Meshech Chachmah* that “*ubo sidbak*”—and you shall cleave to Him, refers to the mitzvah of *Bitachon*, because *Bitachon* causes us to connect to Hashem, as we realize the extent to which we need Him for everything in our lives. *Bitachon* teaches us to rely on Hashem, to count on Hashem, to turn to Hashem. It is all about Hashem; there is nothing else. We come to realize that He is in control of everything, He does everything, and it is all *chessed*. We count on Him to take care of us, and we should feel that *hishtadlus* is just going through the motions. We can feel this connection in *this* world, and that is so satisfying. It is validating on two levels: because it is our true purpose as revealed to us on *Har Sinai*, and because we can have such a close relationship with Hashem. To have such a relationship with Hashem, we must be like Him in His *middos*.

Being like Hashem, trying to imitate His ways, is an incredible experience. “*Mah Hu, af attah*”—like He is, so should you be. If this is the purpose of creation, then we can be truly happy, because it feeds into our need to feel good about ourselves, and we even experience a measure of that happiness in the here and now, without needing to wait until *Olam Haba*.

THE MEANING OF MITZVOS

There are many steps involved in emulating Hashem's ways. There is *v'halachta bidrachav*—you shall go in His ways, *mah Hu rachum af attah rachum*—just as He is merciful, so should you be a merciful, *v'ahavta l'rei'acha kamocho*—love your friend as yourself, and the performance of all Mitzvos: Shabbos, *Yom Tov*, Tzitzis, Tefillin, Sukkos, etc. There are so many *mitzvos* and responsibilities!

By teaching our students the meaning behind many of these *mitzvos* and how we benefit from them, we increase their desire for a connection with Hashem and doing the right thing. For example, how is keeping Shabbos connected to our purpose on this world? Shabbos reminds us that Hashem created the world, and therefore life has a purpose. Shabbos contributes directly to our feeling that we have a purpose in the world, and therefore significantly contributes to our happiness.

The *Sefer HaChinuch*, in discussing the mitzvah of not bringing honey on the *mizbe'ach* in the *Beis HaMikdash*, states that he does not know the explanation of the mitzvah. Of course, we must fulfil the *mitzvos* even if we do not know the *ta'am*, but Rav Gifter, Zt"l said that a *ta'am*, which also means taste, makes the mitzvah “taste” better. The *Chinuch* says that he is afraid not to give a *ta'am* for every mitzvah because otherwise, the Torah would be like a *sefer chasum*—a closed book for his son and his friends, and they might rebel against the *mitzvos*, *chas v'shalom*, and leave the Torah forever. This took place five hundred years ago, when the world was a much better place, and his sons grew up in the house of a *Rishon*. Furthermore, the *Beis HaMikdash* was not even standing anymore at that point, so the *Mitzvah* was not going to be put into practice! Yet, the *Chinuch* knew that not explaining the meaning of even one mitzvah could have had such a devastating effect!

The *Ralbag* says that if you want to convince a loved one to do something that is strange, bizarre or painful, first tell him the benefits of doing so, and only then tell him what the act entails. In this way, his motivation to get to the benefits will mitigate any inconvenience or pain associated with the act.

He learns this from the way *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* told *Avraham Avinu* about the mitzvah of *bris milah*. Hashem did not start off by telling Avraham about the operation and the pain involved in performing a *bris milah*, rather He started by telling *Avraham* that he will enter into a *bris* with Him and inherit *Eretz Yisrael* and merit to have generations come forth from him. Only afterwards did Hashem tell him about the operation and discomfort involved in performing the mitzvah.

Our students have to know the benefit of *Mitzvos*. If they feel that everything we do has a benefit and a *hashpa'ah* (influence), and is all part of this master plan, which will bring us to *shleimus* and happiness even in this world, then they can feel a true sense of purpose in all that they do.

THE TRUTH OF TORAH M'SINAI

We must take this one step further. Even after teaching our students that they have meaning and purpose in the world, and that this will bring them happiness and fulfillment, we need to show them that all of this is not just good but also *emes* (truth). We need to teach them the concept of *mesorah*, of the Torah being passed down from generation to generation, dating all the way back to *Yetzias Mitzrayim* and *Ma'amad Har Sinai*. In *Mitzrayim* we saw a clear revelation of Hashem's existence and control over the creation as we watched the ten *makkos* and all of the *nissim* that took place in *Mitzrayim: Krias Yam Suf*, the *Mitzriyim's* punishment. There were millions of eye witnesses to Hashem's existence and *Hashgacha Pratis*.

All of these miracles climaxed with the revelation at *Har Sinai*, when Hashem said, "*Anochi Hashem Elokecha*"—I am Hashem, your G-d, I am the One Who performed all of these *nissim* and created the entire world. For what purpose? The Manufacturer Himself presented us with the Torah, a User's Manual, at *Har Sinai* in front of millions of

eyewitnesses. Hashem spoke directly to the nation, and then He clarified and expounded on the *mitzvos* through his prophet Moshe Rabbeinu. “*V’gam Bcha Yaminu Leolam*”—and also in you they will believe forever; as He appointed Moshe Rabbeinu in front of the entire nation. Afterwards, everything that the nation was taught at Sinai was written down so that we could have a clear record of what happened there.

The *Aseres HaDibros* are sandwiched in the Torah between two critical *pesukim*: “*Atem re’isem asher asisi b’Mitzrayim*”—You have seen what I have done in Egypt, precedes the *Aseres HaDibros*, and the *pasuk* “*Atem re’isem ki min hashamayim dibarti imachem*”—You have seen that I spoke to you from the heavens, follows the *Aseres HaDibros*. We see from the setup of the *Pesukim* that we are not expected to believe in the Torah blindly; we as a nation actually witnessed these *nissim* and have been passing this down from generation to generation ever since. In many cases, we can actually trace the path of the *mesorah* from *Ma’amad Har Sinai* to an individual living today. By passing the Torah on to their children, the first generation testified that they didn’t just choose to believe, rather they were actually eye witnesses.

Rashi says in *Parashas Behar* that just as the *mitzvah* of *shemittah*, with all of its details, was given at *Har Sinai*, so too were all the rest of the *mitzvos* given at *Har Sinai*. Rav Moshe Feinstein asks, why was the *mitzvah* of *shemittah* used as an example? Why not *Tzitzis* or *Shabbos* or any other *mitzvah*? He answers that *shemittah* is a proof that the Torah was given to us at *Har Sinai* by the Creator Himself, for when the nation learned about *shemittah*, they asked, “*Mah nochal...hein lo nizra*”—What shall we eat if we will not plant? *Moshe Rabbeinu* did not answer with a technical solution like saving up grain in the sixth year or importing produce from abroad. Instead he said, “*V’tzivisi es birchasi lachem bashanah hashishis*”—I [Hashem] will bless the sixth year with enough for 3 years. Nobody, except for the Creator of the world, could promise such a thing.

The effectiveness and success of our *mesorah* is mind-boggling. All around the world, despite those who have unfortunately drifted, millions and millions of chains of *mesorah* exist. The Torah has been repeatedly given over from father to son and *rebbe* to *talmid*. Generations sit down to the Pesach Seder everywhere you go, and all *Sifrei Torah* throughout the world are identical! *Teiman* was separated from the rest of *Klal Yisrael* for close to two

thousand years, yet the only difference between their *Sifrei Torah* and ours is one letter, *hei* instead of an *alef*.

Besides for the generation that stood at *Har Sinai*, the Torah is full of evidence that only Hashem could have written it. For example, the *Medrash* promises that the *Kosel HaMa'aravi* will never be destroyed. How can a human being promise such a thing? We see that over the years, *Yerushalayim* was destroyed nine times and the *Kosel* is still standing. Between 1948 and 1967, ninety-nine out of one hundred shuls were destroyed, but all that the Arabs were able to do to the *Kosel* was make a garbage dump next to it.

A couple that came to an outreach seminar many years ago was enamored by this statement. The husband said, "If the rabbis can make such a statement, it must be that they have a real source of information," and he became religious. The wife took a different tactic. She decided to gather all of her friends and try to destroy the Wall. This was thirty years ago. Needless to say, the Wall is still standing.

Similarly, the *Navi* says that *Bavel* will never be rebuilt, and indeed, though most of the metropolises of the ancient world have been rebuilt, *Bavel* has not. Sadaam Hussein

said he was going to rebuild *Bavel*, but we know what happened to him in the end.

The testimony to *Torah Min HaShamayim* is *Ma'amad Har Sinai*, passed down through *mesorah*. For those who still need more, all of the *nevuos* and promises in the Torah that have come true throughout the generations serve as further evidence. Rav Moshe Feinstein, Zt"l states that even in earlier generations when great *tzaddikim* walked the face of the earth, people needed *chizuk* in *Emunah*, as seen in the concept of *shmittah*. Certainly our generation can benefit from learning these vital concepts.

We can teach a struggling student that there is a Creator. The Creator revealed Himself. There is a purpose to his existence, and we know what the purpose is, for He taught it to us in a public forum, and this purpose can be achieved in great measure in the here and now. We love and validate this student, becoming the most important person in his life. The conditions are now ripe for the student to succeed in forging a lasting commitment to Torah and Mitzvos.

DEALING WITH RESISTANCE

But what if a student resists our efforts? In the fifth *Perek* of *Shir HaShirim*, the *chassan* comes to his *kallah* in the middle of the night, banging on her door and saying, “*Pischi li achosi ra’ayasi*,” open up the door, for it is cold and wet, let me back into your life. And the *kallah* answers callously, “*Pashati es kutanti eichachah elbashelah, rachatzti es raglai eichacha atanfem*”—I have gotten undressed, how shall I get dressed again, I have washed my feet, how shall I make them dirty. Then “*Dodi shalach yado min hachor*”—he puts his hand through the hole, the *kallah* sees his hand in addition to hearing his voice, and suddenly, “*umei’ai hamu alav*”—my intestines churn for him,” she is filled with love for him, and “*kamti ani lifto’ach l’dodi*”—she gets up to open the door with a full heart.

What happened? How did she go from being so callous and insulting to going to open the door so full of love?

The answer is that the love was there all along; it was buried underneath layers of callousness and rejecting

behaviors. When the *chassan* stretches out his hand, when he homiletically reaches out to her, the love comes to the fore and she responds in kind. And so it is with *Klal Yisrael*, who, despite all of the callousness, loves *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* and really wants that closeness.

The story in *Shir HaShirim* continues with the *chassan* leaving, and the *kallah* telling everyone she meets that if they see her *chassan*, they should tell him “*shecholas ahavah ani*”—that I am sick with love for him. Why doesn’t she apologize for her actions to him? Where does being sick with love come in?

The answer is that she is explaining her actions. When someone is sick with love, but the love doesn’t work out, he has to build a wall of callousness, of hatred, around himself in order to mitigate the pain.

Negativity and rebellion come from the fact that a person is frustrated that the relationship with Hashem is not working out, that he is having a hard time connecting. This might be due to his circumstances, a tragedy in the family or any other issue. However, most of the time, the more anti-religious that he/she may be, the more he cares about *Yiddishkeit* deep inside. We must remember this and never give up. It is often the most rebellious kids that end up

bringing us the most *nachas*. There is a boy that I taught who was so anti-religious and so rebellious, and not long ago he contacted me, asking if I could write him a note for the fire department, where he works, that he cannot shave on *Chol HaMo'ed*. He had made a complete turnaround—he is *shomer Shabbos*, he keeps the *mitzvos* and he doesn't even shave on *Chol HaMo'ed*.

Often a child blames his parents, his *Rebbe*, or his life circumstances, and hates them for having wronged him and ultimately causing him to lose his desire for *Yiddishkeit*. Yet inside, the child may actually be blaming himself, feeling that he deserves the pain or is somehow to blame. A parent or *Rebbe* can literally save him by validating his pain, telling him “Yes, it hurts, you did not deserve that.” That does not mean you need to tell the child that his parents or *Rebbe* or whoever harmed him are evil—they may have hurt him inadvertently, but the pain is there whether they meant to hurt him or not. If you tell him that he did not do anything to deserve the pain and he is not guilty, it can be a life changer. Rare, if not nonexistent, is the child who cannot be reached through love. Though the process may take a long time and a lot of patience, it is well worth it. Once the child's sense of validation and happiness

is restored, he will accept from you what you want to teach him since you are the source of his happiness.

FINDING MEANING IN SUFFERING

Another important issue that we will need to address is that of *yissurim*, suffering. The world is full of suffering and many of our students have unfortunately experienced it often. A *ma'amin* might think, *If I believe that everything comes from Hashem, then this pain, too, comes from Hashem. How can that be?* Therefore, it is important to preempt this train of thought by teaching our children all about the goodness of Hashem, how He watches over us with *Hashgachah Pratis*, and is constantly looking out for us and doing *chesed* for us. If we inculcate this belief in our children when they are still young (though of course it is never too late), then this will be their baseline, and when *yissurim* do occur, they will know that there is an explanation for them. Even if they cannot understand the reason, they will already have a solid, deeply-rooted belief in Hashem and His *chesed*, as well as a relationship with Him, making it much easier to accept the difficulties.

As we know, when someone is sitting *shivah*, that is not a good time to start teaching them that Hashem is good and

everything is for the best. However, if this concept is part of our children's *chinuch*, then even if they are not on the level of saying, like Dovid HaMelech, "*Chessed umishpat ashira*," meaning "*al chessed v'al mishpat ashira*"—I will sing when Hashem bestows upon me kindness *and* when He deals with me with His *middah* of judgement; at least they will be able to say and believe, "*Baruch Dayan Ha'Emes*—blessed is the True Judge."

Regarding the mitzvah of "*V'ahavta eis Hashem Elokecha*—And you shall love Hashem, your G-d," Rashi says that *Ahavas Hashem* is learning *Torah*. However, the Rambam says differently: He states that *ahavah* is "*misbonen b'peulosav*"—noticing and thinking about His actions, looking at the magnificence of creation, gazing up at the heavens and thinking about Who created everything in this complex and beautiful world. And yet He has time to take care of each of us individually, to provide us with all our needs.

There is a beautiful *meshal* told to illustrate this point: There was an *almanah* who used to support her family by making bagels and selling them in the market every day. One day, she stood in the *shuk* the whole day, but she could not sell even one bagel. It was getting dark; it was time to go home to her kids, yet she had no money. On the way

home, somebody stopped her and asked, “What do you have in the basket?” When she answered that she had bagels, he asked her how many she had, and told her that he needed to buy them all.

As she continued walking home, she said, “Ribbono Shel Olam, *bist dach azoi farnumen mit dein gantze velt*—You are so busy with Your whole world. Where do You find the time to look and see what is going on in this little *almanah*’s basket?”

“*Ki ereh shamecha ma’aseh etzbe’osecha...mah enosh ki sizkirenu?*”—I see Your skies, the work of Your Fingers...who is man that You remember him? This is, according to the Rambam, the “*pesach le’ehov es Hashem*”—the opening through which one can love Hashem. Therefore, in order to reconcile Rashi’s and the Rambam’s views on what *ahavas Hashem* is, we can say that the *mitzvah* of *ahavas Hashem* is in fact *limmud HaTorah*, because “*mitoch kach atah makir*”—through that you recognize — the *limmud Torah* brings us to recognize Hashem and is therefore an expression of an inspiration for love of Hashem.

However, how can we inspire someone to come to want to learn Torah? Through looking at creation and

recognizing the *Hashgachah Pratis* in our lives, noticing how Hashem runs the world with all its complexities, yet finds the time to look into our little baskets and provide us with all our seemingly insignificant needs at all times.

Through the constant recognition of the *Hashgacha Pratis* in our lives, we can become emotionally prepared to see the good even in the seemingly bad situations that we find ourselves in.

COPING WITH SUFFERING

When a child has suffered a lot in his life, we can look to *Sefer Iyov* for guidance on how to approach him. *Iyov* was a *tzaddik*, a giant of giants. He lost everything he had — his ten children, his vast wealth, his health and he was a broken man. His friends came to be *menachem avel*, but they sat in silence for seven days, for *Iyov* was speechless, and they could not address him before he addressed them. Afterwards, they discussed everything that happened for thirty-eight *Perakim*, analyzing and trying to understand.

In the 38th *Perek* Hashem said to *Iyov*, “*Eifo hayisa b’yasdi aretz*”—Where were you when I created the world? Do you know what this world is about? Do you know which *neshamos* had to come back, and to whom? This world is like a needlepoint, where if all you see is the back, it looks like a lot of messy strings, but the front is a beautiful picture.

Why did Hashem wait until this point to tell this to *Iyov*?

I think we can learn from here that when someone is experiencing pain, it is permissible for him to try to understand the meaning of what is going on, to try to make some sense out of it. It is only when he has tried to understand but he is frustrated because he cannot, that he is ready to hear and accept “*eifo hayisa b’yasdi aretz,*” that there are some things he cannot understand. Telling him upfront, before he goes through this process, can be too harsh and may not be accepted.

It is important that our children know that even when we do not understand, there is a reason. A menahel once invited a *rav* to speak to a group of girls in Los Angeles at a *melaveh malkah*. He told a story about a couple that did not have children for many years. They went to a Rebbe, who gave them a *brachah*, and they had a child. Five years later, the child died. They returned to the Rebbe heartbroken, and asked him for an explanation. The Rebbe explained that the child was a *neshamah* of a *ger tzedek* who was born a prince and lived in a palace. At five years of age he became enamored with his Jewish tutor, and ran away from the palace to join the Jewish people. He lived a life of *tzidkus*. When he got to *shamayim*, he was told that though he was a *tzaddik* and certainly deserved to go to a very high place in *Gan Eden*, he first needed to go back to

this world to rectify the five years that he had lived as a non-Jew. This was the child that the couple bore.

Two weeks later that Menahel was on a plane with his wife, on the way to Eretz Yisrael to bury their son. All of a sudden, he turned to his wife and said, “He was talking to us.” Though of course no one can know exactly the reason for their son’s death, this was a big *nechamah* for them and really gave them *chizuk*.

Hashem’s *chesbonos* might be otherworldly and beyond our limited understanding. They may be global or communal. The *Mishnah* says, “*Ein b’yadeinu lo mishalvas haresha’im v’lo miyensurei hatzadikim*”—It is not in our hands [to understand], neither the serenity of the *resha’im* nor the suffering of *tzaddikim*. Sometimes there is a need to try to make some sense out of something, but ultimately *gam zu l’tovah*—this too is for the good, it is *already* good—it is part of the salvation.

This *mehalech* can help us cope with the concept of the Holocaust as well. The Holocaust is about suffering and pain, but it is also about *Hashgachah Pratis*. Many, many people were saved in amazing ways. The story of the Holocaust is also full of instances of *mesirus nefesh* of the many, many individuals who gave up food, energy, and

their very lives for others and in order to keep *mitzvos*. Obviously, this cannot be told to someone who went through the Holocaust without deeply sympathizing with the pain that they went through, but it is true nonetheless.

In general, trying to understand the meaning behind *yissurim* is an emotional process, not an intellectual one. If the questions were logical, it would be like asking Albert Einstein a question on the theory of relativity when you have no idea what the theory is all about. Therefore, the answers to these types of questions have to address the emotions as well.

Rashi says, “*Vayarek es chanichav, techilas kenissas adam...she’asid la’amod bo*”—*chinuch* is a process, it is the beginning of the entry of a person into something he is going to maintain in the long term. *Chinuch* takes time; it takes patience. But that is our job, and of course Hashem helps.

THE POWER OF TEFILLAH

Today, even in the best of homes that provide their children with all of their needs, children often feel like they need even more, whether a new bike, a trip, or anything else. In addition, even if the child has all of his physical desires, there are so many people in the world who are suffering from sicknesses and tragedies, and our children know about it. We need to teach our children that *tefillah* is their opportunity to ask Hashem for anything that they want or need. The *Chayei Adam* writes in his *tzava'ah* (will) to his family members that before they step back from *Shemoneh Esrei*, they should ask Hashem for something personal. A child can ask for a new bike, a toy or a *refuah* for someone, in any language. Very often Hashem will grant his request. Even if He does not, Hashem knows what every person wants in his heart, and it is possible that what the person requested is not what he really wants—i.e. it is not really good for him. Or the answer might be “not now,” rather than absolutely no.

Tefillah is an amazing way of connecting to Hashem, and we even get many of our wishes fulfilled in the process! Without *tefillah*, connecting to Hashem can be difficult, because though our *neshamah* craves that relationship, our body craves *gashmiyus*. Hashem created a system where we connect to Him by asking Him to fill our bodily needs and wants, whether with *refuos*, *parnassah* or anything else we desire. With every *tefillah* we deepen our relationship with Hashem. Every time we praise Him and every time we ask Him for something, we come closer, thus fulfilling our purpose in creation and feeling happy even in this world.

LEARNING TORAH: THE KEY TO A MEANINGFUL LIFE

Another concept that we should articulate to our students is why we need to learn Torah. Many people do not really know why we learn. In fact, there was a man a few years ago who was going around asking everyone this question—he said his son asked him why we learn and he did not know the answer. He asked his father, the boy’s grandfather, and he did not know the answer either. He asked his *Rebbe* and even he could not answer. So now he was asking everyone he knew.

So why do we learn? What is the benefit? What is the purpose? Like any meaningful concept, this needs to be discussed on various levels.

The Sefer HaChinuch says that our actions affect our inner being. “*Adam nifal lefi peulosav*”—a person’s actions can change who he is. So when we hold back from speaking *lashon hara*, when we do *chessed*, when we do a mitzvah, we become innately greater people, more similar to

Hashem. Psychologists have only recently discovered a similar idea to this. They now know that behavior modification in a patient with OCD can change his brain chemistry the same way that medication does.

When a *Yid* learns *hilchos gezeilah*, the laws of stealing, *al m'nas la'asos*, in order to act upon what he learns and fulfil the mitzvah, it affects his actions not only in a tangible way by teaching him not to steal, but also in a spiritual way, by connecting him to Hashem. It changes the way he *davens Shemoneh Esreh* and it affects him as a person, because he is *osek in devar Hashem* in order to be able to fulfil His word.

When we teach our students Torah, even if we are not teaching them *al m'nas la'asos*, the actual *halachos* of what we should be doing, we are teaching them important skills that will enable them to learn *al m'nas la'asos* their whole lives. These are invaluable tools.

Additionally, Chazal say, “*gadol limmud*”—learning is great, because it is “*meivi lidei ma'aseh*” — it brings us to action, because it instills in us a subservience, to Hashem. It says in *Parashas Behar*, “*Avadai hem asher hotzeisi osam me'Eretz Mitzrayim*”—they are My servants for I took them out of Mitzrayim. Rashi quotes a *Sifri* that says

that this refers to a Jew who was sold to a non-Jew as a slave, “*shelo tomar ‘mah rabi oved avodah zarah af ani kamohu, mah rabi shofech damim af ani kamohu, mah rabi mechallel Shabbos af ani kamohu’...avadai hem*”—You should not say, just as my master serves *avodah zarah*, so will I, just as my master engages in murder, so will I, just as my master desecrates the Shabbos, so will I...they are My servants.

This is difficult to understand. Why would the Jewish slave want to serve *avodah zarah*, murder and desecrate the Shabbos just because his master does?

The answer is something that modern psychology refers to as “Stockholm Syndrome.” When a person is subservient to someone else, he automatically learns to identify with him and develops a desire to emulate him. In the same way, when a person learns Torah *al manas la’asos*, and he learns the skills and tools necessary to be able to understand and incorporate the *halachos* in his life, he becomes subservient to his Master and tries to emulate him, fulfilling the dictum of *mah hu af attah*. Thus he fulfils the purpose of creation.

With this understanding, we see that even in cases where there is a *machlokes* (a difference of opinion) in the Torah

regarding a *halacha*, it does not affect what is gained from learning Torah. The reason that there is sometimes *machlokes* is because as the generations progressively weaken, each one sees the *halacha* through his perspective.

We can compare this to the way different cultures describe the same sound. For example, Americans describe the sound of ringing bells as “ding dong.” Israelis describe it as “tzil, tzil, tzil” and Russians as “boom, boom, boom.” They are all describing the same bells! In *Halacha* as well, when the generations got weaker and the *talmidim* were only able to see a piece of the picture, each one came to a different conclusion that directly affected how we keep *halacha*. But if learning Torah is about being *meshabed* oneself to Hashem, then it makes no difference what *halacha* we come out with from learning, as long as it was done according to the rules.

Torah has the power to change us to the point that it is “*mishkachs avon*”—it causes us not to even contemplate to sin. When we learn *hilchos gezeilah*, we become people who do not even *want* to steal. The moral fabric of *Klal Yisrael* comes from the Torah. When the media speaks about something negative that a Jew did, as upsetting as it is, they are right in the sense that as Jews more is expected of us, because *limmud Torah* generates morality within us.

Rav Yisrael Salanter said that the reason we start *Gemara* learning with our boys with *Eilu Metzios* or *Bava Kama* is because we want to inculcate in them these values from the beginning. It becomes part of their personality as they delve into *Torah MiSinai* and the system of the Oral Torah.

Rashi says in *Shir HaShirim* on the *passuk* “*Yishakeini mineshikos pihu*” that we are “*Mishta’ashe’a baTorah v’sham mazkirin dodav miyayin*”—when we delight in the Torah, we relive *Ma’amad Har Sinai*, both Hashem’s love for us at the time and the love that we showed for Him by saying “*na’aseh v’nishma*” and fulfilling “*lechtech acharai bamidbar*” - following Hashem through the desert and trusting completely that He will provide us with our needs. Thus, we rejuvenate our whole relationship with Hashem, bringing us to *Ahavas Hashem*.

The essence of *Kol haTorah Kulah* is our relationship with *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. Torah is the greatest vehicle for that relationship. By learning Torah, we are connecting with values that are implanted within us and the love between Hashem and His nation as we relive *Ma’amad Har Sinai*. And if we and our children can have that relationship with Hashem, that is the ultimate validation and the ultimate purpose of creation.

SUPPLEMENTAL READINGS

לעילוי נשמת

הרבנית גיטל בת הרב אליעזר מנוח ע"ה

THE PURPOSE OF HUMAN EXISTENCE

The definition of happiness is feeling validated. Nothing can be more validating than a sense of true purpose; nothing can be more devastating than the feeling of not having any sense of purpose in one's existence. Our Sages in *Pirkei Avos* (2:8) advise us, "If you have learned much Torah do not feel self-righteous, for it is for this purpose that you were created."

In the context of Jewish tradition, this statement begs for expanded explanation. Our Sages also teach us that the Creator created the entire universe to bestow kindness. Despite the fact that He always existed as a perfect and totally complete Being, the essence of His being is *chesed*, kindness, and as such, He found it appropriate to create a world including the highest level being of creation, man, to bestow His kindness upon. The purpose of the creation of man was to bestow kindness on a being who was designed to most appreciate that gift. The material existence in the world provides untold opportunity for the Creator to bestow His kindness on man, much of which offers

pleasure to his body. There definitely exists the opportunity for spiritual pleasure in this world, but too often the material existence of the body detracts from the fullness of spiritual fulfillment. Our Sages tell us that the place of the total ultimate spiritual pleasure of being in an intimately close relationship and connection with the Creator is in the World to Come, a world devoid of physical influences and a place for only the soul's existence.

To complete the kindness, and to offer the ultimate, truest pleasure, the Creator instituted a system of opportunity to earn and deserve the ultimate reward. This is achieved through our efforts which are constantly being challenged by our bodies and material existence. He gave us directives to follow which uplift ourselves spiritually and mold our characters in His image (i.e. kind, compassionate, patient, truthful, etc.). This is in order to earn the reward of eternal closeness to Him and to be able to appreciate that special relationship, since we have molded ourselves to be like Him and focused our existence on emulating His characteristics. Although so much of this connection can happen in this world, the ultimate experience of closeness to Him is in the next world, which is designed solely for this purpose without material interference.

Our Sages tell us that, “The Torah and *mitzvos* were only given for the purpose of refining human character.” In light of the above, the refinement and purification of character serves a dual role: allowing us to deserve and earn the ultimate reward of closeness to the Creator and molding us in His image to enable us to better connect with Him.

The question arises, which of the two ingredients is the most critical, or the essence of this process of character refinement: the study of Torah or the observance of *mitzvos*? The Rambam (Talmud Torah 3:3), based on the *Gemara*, tells us that learning Torah is greater than performance of *mitzvos*, because it brings to action. It seems from the Rambam that the action that he is referring to is not a specific action, not even all of the actions, but rather the sense of subjugation and obligation that studying Torah inspires. When a Jew studies Hashem’s Torah, he recognizes his obligation to his Creator and deepens his sense of commitment and subjugation to Him. This feeling of overriding obligation to follow His directives seems to relate to the main focus of our existence.

As related by the revered *Rosh Yeshiva* of the famed *Navardok Yeshiva*, Hagoon Harav Yaakov Yaffen, zt”l, the *Talmud Yerushalmi* in *Brachos* (7B) seems to indicate that Torah study is our primary pursuit, rather than the

performance of mitzvos. We are, however, totally obligated to perform all of the mitzvos in order that our Torah learning should be *על מנת לעשות*, focused on generating obligation and subjugation to Hashem. This state of subjugation to Hashem seems to be the ultimate goal and accomplishment in this world. As the same *Yerushalmi* says, “One who learns not for the purpose of action would have been better off not being created.” He may still be doing *Mitzvos*, but the unique opportunity of *ללמוד על מנת לעשות* has been neglected, and therefore he loses the ultimate opportunity to fulfill his true purpose in this world.

We can better understand this with a comment of our Sages in the *Sifri*, cited by *Rashi* at the end of *Parshas Behar*. The *Sifri* states that the Torah writes a special admonition for a Jew who, for some reason, is sold as a slave to a non-Jew. The Torah writes a specific warning that he should not think that just as his non-Jewish master serves idols, violates Shabbos or does other inappropriate behaviors, so too he may identify with and emulate his master and do the same. Why should a Jewish slave to a non-Jew crave to identify and emulate his master? It cannot be assumed that his non-Jewish master always treats him with total respect, kindness and sensitivity.

After all, he was bought as a slave. It seems that our Sages are sharing with us a novel psychological phenomenon. We crave to emulate one who subjugates us. We want to identify with that individual and model ourselves after his behavior and character.

With this concept, we can better understand the emphasis on Torah study. Torah study brings us to the observance of mitzvos, but since we are studying in order to perform the mitzvos, Torah study generates within us a sense of subjugation to our Creator, the author of the Torah. This feeling of obligation, subjugation and servitude inspires within us a desire to emulate our Creator and identify and connect with Him. We therefore mold our character, develop our sensitivities and pattern our actions after Him, enabling us to reach a level of refinement worthy of infinite reward. It also enables us to be better prepared to connect with Him. Being more like Him allows us to forge a closer and more intimate relationship with Him and thereby experience the ultimate pleasure and fulfillment.

This idea allows us to better understand the existence of halachic disputes between our Sages. The Talmud tells us that Talmudic disagreement arose only when there was a generation of students who did not put in the fullest efforts, to their maximum capacity, to understand the words of

their teachers. Even though all of the disparate students' conclusions were taught by Hashem to Moshe at Sinai, they were only different perspectives of a unified concept and not the total picture. As partial perspectives, they were legitimized by Hashem's teaching them to Moshe, even though they lacked the total unified perspective. Since they differed about the appropriate halachic action, each one advocating another halachic course of action, sometimes the opposite of each other, the question arises: How can they both be halachically valid? Which approach is the proper one as willed by Hashem?

In the light of the above, this question resolves itself. Since the essence of Torah is Torah study, and the performance of *Mitzvos* is for the purpose of actualizing the study, allowing us to subjugate ourselves to Hashem, then as long as a halachic position is derived from the proper source and by the proper system, then the specific actions can be in dispute and both can be considered *halachically* valid: אלו לאלו דברי אלקים חיים.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF EMUNAH

The human being is composed of body and soul, mind and heart. As one observes the human condition, he can't help but to realize that for the best motivation and functioning, all of these elements must be actively involved and their needs satisfied. Addressing the needs of the body without addressing the needs of the soul, leaves the human in a condition disturbed by a spiritual emptiness that frustrates, and often depresses, the individual. The opposite is also true. When the needs of the body are not fulfilled, even with spiritual fulfillment, the bodily cravings disturb the total human balance. This is often true not only for neglected bodily needs, but even for some unfulfilled bodily desires.

The same applies to the mind and the heart. They must work together in order for a person to fully accept, believe or even properly carry out a directive emanating from one or the other. Many people mistakenly believe that the mind has a "mind of its own" and don't realize that the heart, the emotions, and through them, the body, often have

overwhelming influence on what we call intellectual decisions.

What this means is that our religious beliefs and convictions are not based on intellectual understandings alone, but rather are strongly and often overwhelmingly influenced by the biases and desires of the body and the heart. Thus, if our goal is to inspire and inculcate belief, knowledge and conviction we must use an approach that appeals at least as much to the body and heart as it does to the mind and the soul. Even before a person begins to consider the truth of a religious claim, he must have some positive motivation for body and heart to want to recognize that reality. If he does not, it likely will not really penetrate intellectually. He might just not focus, he might rationalize or he might openly fight it. Either way he is not a very receptive audience and will likely utilize various defense mechanisms to ward off the influence of even the most powerful arguments. In fact the more powerful the intellectual argument is, the harder he may fight to resist its strength.

This does not in any way detract from the crucial need and importance of the intellectual arguments. Even with strong motivation, without the intellectual information he will be lost, with no idea where to go with his motivation.

Besides, if convictions are based on emotion, he can wake up one day and think maybe there is something out there that can be even more fulfilling for my body and heart. Therefore, one must have both the emotional and intellectual insights to maintain a real, true, truly meaningful and lasting commitment to religious convictions.

This is true even for light religious commitment, in religious doctrine that doesn't demand much of a person. How much more so, a religious doctrine as demanding as is Torah MiSinai. Therefore to inspire the acceptance of the truth of Torah MiSinai, it requires, besides for extensive exposure and familiarity with the testimony and evidence that is very intellectually compelling, extensive work to appreciate the beauty, relevance, benefits and source of pleasure and true happiness that Torah and a life of Torah and *Mitzvos* reliably provide for its adherents.

It goes without saying that *Chazal* were keenly aware of this aspect of human psychology, as they were of everything in creation. And, the Torah and *Chazal* addressed these concerns in numerous ways, to assure that *Klal Yisrael* is capable of overcoming the obstacles that are referred to above, which exist as challenges to allow us to earn the benefits of Torah living, rather than having it come easily.

In truth, this is not just an issue for *Kiruv* and influencing those with shaky commitments. We see from the Torah itself and from *Chazal* that this issue is relevant to all and an ongoing, endless challenge for a lifetime.

When *Moshe Rabbeinu* addressed *Klal Yisrael* before his passing he tells them, "*veyadata hayom vehashevosa el levavecha ki Hashem who HaElokim*". The *Targum* explains that it means that you should know today and return it to your heart that Hashem is G-d. Why does he have to tell the generation that lived with constant miracles to return it to your heart? They just ate the *Man* for breakfast, and they lived in *Ananei Hakavod*, how could they have lost it? The answer is that the proper realizations of Hashem and His Torah are constantly contested by the *Yetzer Hara*. Even spiritual giants need to review this knowledge again and again to maintain their own level of knowledge and spiritual achievement.

We all beseech Hashem daily "*v'sen b'libeinu l'havin ul'haskeel*." We ask for the ability to understand to be placed in our hearts. The heart is an active participant in our understanding and if our heart is not primed to understand we won't be able to "listen, to learn and to teach."

Chazal tell us, "*Emes veyatziv d'oraisah*". In those words that we say daily, we remind ourselves and repeat the concepts that the basic tenets of *Yahadus* are true and beloved and good and beautiful. Everyone needs daily, repetitive reminders of the fact that Torah is good and it is true. The realization of one without the other leaves a serious void.

We see from *Rashi* in *Parshas Yisro* that before Hashem began to tell us what he expects of us, He begins by reminding us of His *Chesed* that He did for us in *Mitzrayim*. From the *Mechilta* that the *Ramban* brings there, it seems that there must be a *Kabala ol Malchus Shamayim*, before we are focused on the specifics of the demands. If we were focused on the specifics of the burden, it would be very difficult to keep the *Mitzvos*. Once however, we have a general *Kabala* then it is much easier to observe the obligations. That's why, in the *Mashal* of the *Mechilta*, the king tells the people who asked for laws "if you don't accept my kingdom how will you be able to keep my laws?" They asked for the laws, but even so, if they had heard the laws before making an abstract *Kabbala*, the king says that they won't be able to keep the laws. They will be too overwhelming. Serious demand and obligation are

heavy burdens and therefore need psychological efforts to soften the burden.

Most people know that Judaism demands serious obligations. Those with yeshiva backgrounds certainly are keenly aware of it. For those that are weak in their commitments or going off the derech, this is a major factor. It must be mitigated by insights into an attractive, positive, relevant and loving Judaism that one can realize will make him welcome and most importantly, will make his life happy.

Happiness is the most desired and searched for state of being. More books, seminars, lectures, etc. are about finding happiness probably more than any other one topic. Yet, judging by the state of society, divorce rates, suicide rates, rates of addiction and the rates charged by mental health professionals, the world does not seem to be a very happy place. How could there be such a quest for happiness and so little success at its achievement? It may be because our society has a mistaken idea, or for some no idea at all, as to what constitutes happiness.

In *Lashon Hakodesh* the three letter *Shoresh* of the word indicates its meaning. "*Osher*" is possibly the highest form of happiness (*Dovid Hamelech* only wanted to sit in the

house of Hashem and he calls that "*Osher*"). The three letter root, *alef shin reish*, references the concept of validation. Happiness is about feeling good about oneself, a feeling of validation. Many people think that pleasure is what happiness is all about. It's just the opposite. When I rely on imbibing outside pleasure to feel good, it makes me feel bad about myself. I'm not good enough myself; I need outside factors to feel temporarily okay. That thought is personally very invalidating. If this most coveted state of being is about a feeling of validation, how can I possibly have that feeling of self-worth without a sense purpose? If we don't know our true purpose, how valid and worthy can we feel?

If a person can come or be brought to this realization, he is now far more receptive to hear that the only one who could really know our true purpose is our Creator, our Maker. Our Maker has given us a manual in which He has revealed the true purpose of creation. We now are excited to know about creation and Divine revelation, because it can bring us true happiness.

This, however, is not enough. The difficulty of the burden often coupled with many other obstacles makes it almost imperative to introduce other elements into this process. The willingness to accept ideas, even testimony and

evidence, is also a factor of the relationship between the giver and the receiver. The *Ralbag* in the *Toeliyos* in *Parshas Vayishlach* tells us that Yaakov sent a message and some gifts to melt the hatred of his brother Esav. Esav felt that Yaakov had fooled him twice already. Why would this show of friendship melt the heart of this mortal enemy? Maybe, once again, he's fooling him. It seems, that friendship and love are so powerful that even the possibility of them being real could melt the most stubborn resistance.

From the *Rambam* in *Hilchos Deios*, in reference to the *Mitzvah* of clinging to *Talmidei Chachamim*, it seems that the social relationship is more effective in creating a willingness to accept the truth of the *Chacham's* words, even more than sitting thirstily at his feet to imbibe each word. (See also *Rambam Sefer Hamitzvos* in that *Mitzvah*). Our relationship, love and friendship, with those who we wish to convince of the truth of Torah MiSinai and all of the compelling testimony and evidence that exists, is a very critical factor in the success of our efforts.

There is another important factor in assuring or enhancing success in this process and that is the benefits and personal relevance of Torah and *Mitzvos*. The *Sefer Hachinuch* was afraid to leave out the *Ta'am* and *Toeles* of one *Mitzvah* (the prohibition of bringing leaven and honey

on the *Mizbeach*, see *Parshas Vayikra*). He writes there that he was afraid that his son and his friends would rebel and go off the derech if he left out the benefit and reason for even one of the 613 Mitzvos. In addition, we must be able to explain benefits that can be appreciated in the present, not just the distant future or the next world. People don't have the patience to wait too long for the benefits.

In general, knowing that the purpose of creation is to achieve human perfection through the observance of Mitzvos, which Hashem wants in order to be able to bestow upon us a kindness of which we will not be embarrassed, rather appreciate it, due to the fact that we earned it, is validating on two levels. We have a real true purpose and since that purpose is perfecting ourselves, we can feel good about making our own perfection, a very validating feeling.

There is another issue which is very relevant to this conversation. Truth is a very scary word and concept. When faced with truth there is very little room to maneuver. There is a tendency to fight the truth and put up defenses to protect ourselves from its overwhelming impact. Part of the natural state of man is the yearning to be free. Truth compromises his freedom and as such is a serious threat. This is all the more so when a person realizes

that the truth of Torah is G-d given and therefore absolute. This remains a problem at least until one can appreciate that Torah, in reality, makes one truly free.

We must therefore be very careful in using the word truth or proof. These words evoke defenses and resistance. Truth should be presented in a gradual way, with the least powerful arguments presented first. Only after there is some adjustment to the possibility of facing truth, only then can stronger arguments be shown. Then they will be much more effective. Never say I'll prove it, an understatement works better to help bypass defense mechanisms.

It is also very critical to develop and agree upon a standard for truth. Otherwise, the person really has no context or measurement by which to evaluate truth and therefore can deny it or remain skeptical. People must be given to understand that any truth that we accept as truth is only established as such, beyond a reasonable doubt, not beyond the shadow of a doubt. We only need be as sure of anything as we are that our mother is our mother, beyond a reasonable doubt.

Even after implementing these strategies, the need to evoke an urge, a yearning for truth is very important. The ideas mentioned above about happiness, etc. should be

linked with the concept of truth, to create an urge for truth. If my reasons for validation are not true, how valid can I feel? If the purpose that I believe is my purpose is not the truth, how validating can that purpose be? There are many other ways to evoke an urge for truth. For example, fooling your wife with a ring of cubic zirconia would be a fatal mistake. A relationship which is fake is very painful when discovered.

Everyone wants a relationship with the Creator, with the Boss. To really inspire an acceptance of the truth of Torah MiSinai, one must be able to see how that acceptance will bring him a passionate and uplifting relationship with his Creator.

The concept of a positive relationship with the Creator sometimes poses difficulty, despite the reality that most people would want such a relationship very much. People understand human relationships, with their interaction, give and take and communication. These elements seem lacking in a relationship with the Creator. Also, oftentimes people see the challenges and difficulties of life as a reflection of the Creator in a less than positive and kind attitude towards us and therefore it can interfere with a positive relationship. We must educate early on about Hashem's love, His *Hashgacha Pratis* and that everything

that He does is for the best, even before people meet up with the difficult challenges. If they already have a positive concept of Hashem's love and kindness it will be easier to put challenges in a better perspective.

It is also important for the developing and maintaining of a relationship with Hashem, that the person not be overwhelmed with fear of Hashem. He is a merciful, kind and forgiving G-d, one should learn to trust Him to counterbalance the fear that one might have.

These are some of the issues in the psychology of *Emunah* that should precede any effort of convincing anyone of the truth of Torah MiSinai. If these strategies are put to proper use then a presentation of the unique system for the transmission of the testimony of eye witnesses to the miracles of *Mitzrayim* and the *Midbar*, will have far more profound and lasting effect. When to this is added the extensive evidence in the form of prophecies and scientific information that no human could have known at the time the Torah was written, the results will most likely be an acceptance of the truth of Torah MiSinai and an embracing of Torah and Mitzvos and it will most likely have a much better chance of lasting for a lifetime. Then, the goal of recognition, acceptance and lifelong commitment to a life

of Torah and Mitzvos, based on a strong realization of its truth and relevance, will have been accomplished.

Some suggestions to help implement these ideas:

- Study of Shir Hashirim with Rashi
- Share extensive insights into the meaning of Tefillah, Bitachon and Hashgacha Pratis.
- Discuss some of the specific benefits of Torah and Mitzvos
- Discuss the uniqueness of our claim versus that of other religions
- Present the testimony and evidence for the Revelation at Sinai

WHAT HAPPENED AT HAR SINAI?

There are only five religions that make the claim that the Creator appeared to millions of eyewitnesses and revealed His purpose in Creation. They are: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism and Bahai. Interestingly, they all claim that this event took place only with the Jews at Sinai.

Judaism is therefore the only religion that claims that the Creator and Almighty Master of the Universe revealed Himself publicly at Sinai to them, to the entire Jewish people, and gave them His Divine directives. This claim is substantiated through a combination of factors, which indicate, beyond any reasonable doubt, the truth of the claim.

The key words in this process are testimony and evidence. Our Torah includes in itself a system for recognizing and transmitting the testimony of the original generation of eyewitnesses to the revelation at Sinai, down to this very day. An understanding of this system, provides a very credible basis for the truth of Torah from Sinai

The second word, evidence, refers to the fact that the Torah, both the written and the oral Torah, is full of information that no-one other than the Creator and Ruler of the Universe could have known at the time the document was written. The Torah is also replete with indications of the Creator's control of the world.

Both of these concepts are unique amongst the religions of the world, only to be found in Judaism. Even though the other major religions came after Judaism and copied so much from it, no religion ever dared to claim eyewitness testimony to a public event of revelation by G-d, in front of millions of live witnesses. This can only be understood by the realization that this claim is extremely difficult to fabricate and if, in fact, it did not happen, then it will not be accepted or believed.

In fact, the major religions, in a desire and need to base their religion on more than the claim of one person to a private revelation, also acknowledge that the only public revelation was by the Creator to the Jews at Sinai. They then go on to claim, however that G-d changed His mind about Torah and the Jewish people.

This claim, of course, is very tenuous, because G-d Himself, commanded in the Torah, that no prophet, even

with the performance of amazing miracles, could be believed to change the Torah or lead us astray.

The other major religions do not fare better when it comes to evidence for the truth of Torah. Most of their pronouncements refer to future events in the world-to-come or very vague statements, not very testable in this world. The Torah, however, is full of very specific information and prophecy of future events in this world that no one can deny.

This information is so compelling that the Talmud states, in *Chullin*, that this type of information, that no human could have known at the time, serves as an answer to anyone who would question whether or not the Torah is from G-d.

To properly convey the dual concepts of testimony to the events of Sinai and evidence for the Divine truth of Torah requires a detailed, sophisticated analysis of a wide range of material, which is beyond the scope of this work.

For the purpose of this work, some highlights of the basic concepts are presented here with the advice to the reader to do further research and be exposed to further information in this area.

The unique position of the first generation of actual witnesses to the Divine Revelation at Sinai can be better understood by a simple story. A Chassidic Rebbe passed away and left two sons. They were conflicted about who would be their father's successor. All of the Chasidim got involved and took sides. One day the younger son walks into the shul and announces that the conflict is resolved. "Father appeared to me in a dream," he said, "and proclaimed me as his successor." The other brother and his supporters responded, "If father truly wanted you to be his successor, he should have appeared to us and told us directly."

The only religion that claims a revelation in front of an entire nation, millions of witnesses, is Judaism, the others, if they claim revelation, like Islam and Christianity, claim a private revelation to one person with no other witnesses. This story underscores the difference in credibility between the two approaches. Anyone can claim that he had a private revelation; no one can claim a public revelation unless it, in fact, really happened.

The Torah, which describes this public revelation in detail, clearly states that the people of that generation witnessed these events and heard G-d speaking to them

and to Moshe. The fact that they all passed this document on to their children is a powerful testimony to these events.

Parents do not lie to their children, millions of parents certainly don't tell the same lie to their children. If a parent tells a child that a certain event took place, then the child knows that his parent honestly believes that the certain event took place. If a parent says, "I saw that event take place" then the child knows that, in fact, it did actually take place.

The Torah was passed from generation to generation, always publicly read and always prohibited from even the slightest change. Not only was the document passed down and preserved, but it was always read and studied by a nation that performed many observances, generation after generation, based on the text. To date, the text survives, all over the Jewish world without differences in text of any significance, unlike the New Testament, which has hundreds of significant differences in text. This process can be seen in action when a Torah reader makes a mistake in the public Torah reading; the listeners yell out corrections and never let a reading mistake go by. If and when there is a written error or peeling of the letter in the Torah, the Torah is put away, with the *gartle* (belt) on the outside, announcing its inappropriate status and must be fixed

within thirty days. This system has preserved the Torah throughout the ages.

The Torah abounds with evidence of its Divine authorship, in the form of information both prophetic and scientific that no author could have known when the Torah was first given over 3300 years ago. Secular historians as well admit that the Torah was given at least approximately 2,250 years ago based upon documented historical evidence of the Torah's translation into Greek.

The Torah prophesizes the events of the destruction of the *Bais Hamikdash*, the exile, the return to Israel, and more in intricate detail, leaving no room to question the prophetic ability of its author. The Torah gives us vast amounts of modern scientific information, both in the written and oral Torah, no human could have known without Divine revelation.

That fact that there will never be a species of fish that has scales but does not have fins could not have been known to *Moshe Rabbeinu* without Divine revelation. Nor could he have known that.

Who could have dared to say that the Western Wall of the *Bais Hamikdash* will never be destroyed and who could have known that during the 20th Century, our enemies will

use poisonous gas against us (See *Malbim* on the *Pasuk* of “*Miktav Yishud Tzaharaim*” *Tehillim* 91.)

Who could have known, thousands of years ago, that the final determination of whether an embryo is male or female only takes place after the 40th day after conception?

It goes on and on. This is what the Talmud says in *Chullin* that the scientific information that no one could have known at that time, serves as an answer to anyone who would say that Torah is not from Heaven. Our Rabbis do not say this is how we know the truth of Torah, but rather, an answer to anyone who might question its veracity. We know Torah is Divine, because of the unbroken chain of testimony from generation to generation, with no skipping of a generation. However, if anyone still harbors any doubts, how can he explain the extensive, detailed and accurate information that we find in our Torah that could not have been known to a human author so many years ago?

