



# The Orthodox Union's Shavuot Self-Guided Torah Study Experience

Created by Community Rabbis from across the country  
Compiled by Rabbi Yechiel Shaffer  
& The Synagogue Services Department of the Orthodox Union

## Editor's Note:

Contained within this packet are 10 self-guided studies for an enjoyable and engaging Torah study experience. Each topic will offer a unique Torah study experience, with some of our authors offering more specific guidance, and others leaving the subject-matter more open to your reflection and interpretation. The essential style, structure submitted by each Rabbi has been maintained to offer a differentiated learning experience, and to celebrate the diversity of *Limmud Torah* approaches in *Batei Kanessiyot* across the country.

Should you wish to submit any reflections, or ideas following the conclusion of Shavuot, please contact Rabbi Yechiel Shaffer ([shaffery@ou.org](mailto:shaffery@ou.org)), the editor/compiler of this issue.

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# Waving at the Shabbat Candles: Why?

By Rabbi Yechiel Shaffer, Rabbi, Pikesville Jewish Congregation, Regional Director, OU Midatlantic

**Introduction:** There are two customs that relate to the beginning of Shabbat, that is specifically observed by women, and raise some significant questions about the observance of Shabbat and other Halachot. The custom for women to light candles, to welcome Shabbat, on Friday evening is far reaching, and widely observed.

## Major Questions on the practice to light Shabbat candles:

- Why do we light these candles?
- Why is there a custom to light 2 candles?
- Why does Shabbat begin with the lighting of candles?
- Why do women have the custom to wave their hands before the *Neirot Shabbat*?

אורח חיים רס"ג:ב'

Shulchan Arukh, Orach Chayim 263:2

אחד האנשים ואחד הנשים חייבים להיות בבתיהם נר דלוק בשבת אפי' אין לו מה יאכל שואל על הפתחים ולוקח שמן ומדליק את הנר שזה בכלל עונג שבת הוא:

2. An individual man or an individual women must have in their houses an ignited lamp on the Sabbath; even if they have not what to eat they must beg at doors and take oil and light the lamp because this is within the **generality Sabbath Enjoyment**.

## Questions to Consider:

- According to the Shulchan Aruch is the purpose of Shabbat candles to add to the honor (Kavod) of Shabbat or the joy (Oneg) of Shabbat?
- What do you think the differences are between *Oneg* and *Kavod Shabbat*?

אורח חיים רס"ג:א'

Shulchan Arukh, Orach Chayim 263:1

יהא זהיר לעשות נר יפה ויש מכוונים לעשות שתי פתילות אחד כנגד זכור ואחד כנגד שמור:

Be particular to make a beautiful candle and some have the intention to make two wicks one corresponding to Zachor and one corresponding to Shamor

**This Shulchan Aruch explains why we have two Shabbat candles - to celebrate two features of Shabbat - *Zachor* and *Shamor*.**

## Questions to Consider:

- This explains the reason behind we have the custom to light two candles. Does it add anything to our understanding of the *Kavod vs. Oneg Shabbat*?
- Is the Mitzvah to light Shabbat candles a fulfillment of *Kavod Shabbat* or *Oneg Shabbat*?

משנה תורה, הלכות שבת ה':ג'

Mishneh Torah, Sabbath 5:3

המדליק צריך להדליק מבעוד יום קדם שקיעת החמה. ונשים מצוות על דבר זה יותר מן האנשים לפי שהן מצויות

The Sabbath lights should be lit during daytime, before sunset. This duty is assigned to women rather than men, because women are usually at home doing housework.

בביתם והן העסוקות במלאכת הבית. ואף על פי כן צריך האיש להזהירן ולבדוק אותן על כך ולומר להן ולאנשי ביתו ערב שבת קדם שתחשוך הדליקו את הנר. ספק חשכה ונכנס השבת ספק לא נכנס אין מדליקין:

Nevertheless, the man should caution them, asking them about it, and telling them and the other members of his household, every Friday before it gets dark: "Light the lights!" If it is doubtful whether darkness has already fallen or not, whether the Sabbath has or has not begun, the lights may not be lit.

#### משנה תורה, הלכות שבת ל'ה'

מסדר אדם שלחנו בערב שבת ואף על פי שאינו צריך אלא לכזית. וכן מסדר שלחנו במוצאי שבת ואף על פי שאינו צריך אלא לכזית. כדי לכבדו בכניסתו וביציאתו. וצריך לתקן ביתו מבעוד יום מפני כבוד השבת. ויהיה נר דלוק ושלחן ערוך לאכל ומטה מצעת שכל אלו לכבוד שבת הן:

#### Mishneh Torah, Sabbath 30:5

One should spread his Sabbath table on Friday, even if he requires no more than an olive's bulk of food; so too, he should set his table at the end of the Sabbath, even if he requires only a minute amount of food, in order to honor the Sabbath both at its entrance and departure. One should also set the house in order on Friday before sunset in honor of the Sabbath. A lamp should be lit, a table spread, and a bed properly arranged. All these are marks of respect for the Sabbath.

**The Rambam offers some context to why women have adopted the custom to light the Shabbat candles.**

#### Questions to Consider:

- What is the Rambam inherently saying about the role of these candles?
- How would the Rambam classify the Shabbat Candles, as *Kavod* or *Oneg Shabbat*?

#### משנה תורה, הלכות שבת ה'א'

הדל [ק] ת נר בשבת אינה רשות אם רצה מדליק ואם רצה אינו מדליק. ולא מצוה שאינו חייב לרדף אחריה עד שיעשנה כגון ערובי תצרות או נטילת ידים לאכילה אלא זה חובה. ואחד אנשים ואחד נשים חייבין להיות בבתיהן נר דלוק בשבת. אפילו אין לו מה יאכל שואל על הפתחים ולוקח שמן ומדליק את הנר שנה בכלל ענג שבת. וחייב לברך קדם הדלקה ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו להדליק נר של שבת. בדרך שמברך על כל הדברים שהוא חייב בהם מדברי סופרים:

#### Mishneh Torah, Sabbath 5:1

The lighting of Sabbath lights is not of free choice, to light or not to light as one chooses, nor is it the kind of religious performance that an individual is not called upon to make a special effort to render, such as preparing an *eruv* in courtyards or washing the hands before eating. It is rather a duty, binding on men and women alike; they are obligated to have lamps burning in their homes on Sabbath eve. **Even if one has nothing to eat, let him go begging at the doors, buy oil, and light a lamp, forming an integral part of Sabbath delight (*oneg shabbath*).** Before lighting, one should recite a blessing: "Blessed art thou, Lord our God, King of the universe, who hast sanctified us with thy commandments, and commanded us to light the Sabbath lights." This is on the same principle that one recites a benediction over all duties introduced by the sages.

### Questions to consider:

- What does the Rambam hold? Is *Hadlakat Neirot* a Mitzvah of *Kavod Shabbat* or *Oneg Shabbat*?

ביאור הגר"א על שולחן ערוך אורח חיים תקכ"ט:א:ה'

(ה) שזהו כו'. לשון הרמב"ם בפ' ל' מהלכות שבת ארבעה דברים נאמרו בשבת שנים מן התורה ושנים מדברי סופרים והן מפורשין ע"י הנביאים שבתורה זכור ושמור ושנתפרשו ע"י הנביאים כבוד ועונג שנאמר וקראת לשבת עונג ולקדוש ה' מכובד איזהו כבוד כו' שימנע אדם מן המנחה ולמעלה מלקבוע סעודה כו' ור"ל עונג הוא בשבת עצמו וכבוד הוא בע"ש וכן כסות נקיה ע"ש וז"ש בשבת ענג ובי"כ כבוד לבד וכנ"ל:

### Summary of the Gr"a's position:

*There are two Halachot that are applied to Shabbat, medivrei sofrim, the Halachot of Oneg and Kavod. Kavod applies to all the preparations we make in advance of Shabbat (like clean clothes for Shabbat or setting the Shabbat table). Oneg Shabbat refers to that which we do on Shabbat that enhances our Shabbat experience (like eating delicious food).*

### Why do women wave their hands before reciting the blessing on the *Neirot Shabbat*?

אורח חיים רס"ג:ה'

Shulchan Arukh, Orach Chayim 263:5

הגה יש מי שאומר שמברכין קודם ההדלקה ויש מי שאומר שמברך אחר ההדלקה (מרדכי סוף ב"מ) וכדי שיהא עובר לעשייתו לא יהנה ממנו עד לאחר הברכה ומשימין היד לפני הנר אחר ההדלקה ומברכין ואח"כ מסלקין היד וזה מקרי עובר לעשייה וכן המנהג (מהרי"ל):

*RAMA: There is one who says that we bless before the ignition and one who says that we bless after the ignition (Mordechai). And in order that it be "before your act" you should not benefit from it until after the blessing; therefore we put a hand in front of the candle after the ignition, and then we bless, and afterward we remove the hand—this is called "before the act" and such is the practice. (Mahari"l)*

### מרדכי מסכת שבת פרק במה מדליקין

הגה"ה רבינו משולם לא היה מברך על הדלקת הנר משום דאמרינן פרק התכלת [מנחות דף מב ב] כל מצוה שאין עשייתה גמר מלאכת מצותה אין מברכין עליה ונר שבת אין גמר עשייתה אלא בשעת אכילה כדאמרינן בערבי פסחים [פסחים דף קא א] ור"י אומר שיש לברך ולא קשה מהתכלת דגמר מצותה היא שרואין בה לשמש בבית ולישא הכלים על השולחן

Rabbeinu Meshullam would not recite a blessing over the lighting of [Shabbat] candles, because we said in Chapter "*Ha-tekhelet*" (*Menachot* 42b): "Wherever a mitzvah is not completed by a single act, one does not pronounce a blessing over it. And [the mitzva of lighting] Shabbat candles is only completed at the time of eating." (*Mordekhai, Shabbat* 294)

### Concluding Thoughts:

**Bringing together *Kavod* vs. *Oneg Shabbat* & the Mordechai's comment:**

Perhaps, we can suggest that *Hadlakat Neirot* fulfills both *Kavod* and *Oneg*. The fact that we have to light and prepare the candles before Shabbat fulfills the *Halacha* of *Kavod Shabbat*, and the candles remaining lit over dinner fulfills the *Halacha* of *Oneg Shabbat*.

## An analysis of the Role of the Oral Torah

Rabbi Elisha Friedman, Keshet Israel Congregation - Harrisburg, PA

The Torah we have is composed of two distinct parts: The Written Torah - including the 24 books of the Tanach (Bible), and the Oral Torah - which includes everything else, but primarily refers to the Mishna, Talmud and the many collections of rabbinic traditions in the Tosefta and Midrashim. As the Talmud (Gittin 60b) pointed out, percentagewise most of the Torah is Oral, the Written in fact constitutes the smaller section.

Thus, did Rabbinic law and the Oral Torah become largely synonyms.

According to Jewish tradition, these two sections were both given to Moshe at the Revelation at Mt. Sinai. Rashi (**Vayikra 25:1**) records a rabbinic tradition which finds allusion to this in the words of the Torah itself.

### Rashi, Vayikra 25:1

<sup>1</sup> **בהר סיני. מה ענין שמטה אצל הר סיני? והלא כל המצוות נאמרו מסיני? אלא מה שמטה נאמרו כללותיה ופרטותיה ודקדוקיה מסיני אף כן נאמרו כללותיה ודקדוקיה מסיני, כן שנויה בת"כ; ונראה לי שכן פרושה:**

### *[And the Lord Spoke unto Moses] on the Mount Sinai —*

*What was the matter of the Sabbatical year to do with Mount Sinai that Scripture felt compelled to expressly state where it was commanded? Were not all commandments given on Sinai? But this statement is intended to suggest the following comparison: How is it in the case of the law of Shemittah? Its general rules, [its specific prescriptions] and minute details were ordained on Mount Sinai! So, also, were all commandments with their general rules and their minute details ordained on Mount Sinai. Thus it is taught in Torah Cohanin (Sifra, Behar, Section 1 1) (Translation from Sefaria.org)*

Rashi explains the technical exegesis of this Midrashic statement, but the meaning is clear:

The details to the Torah's text were related, not written, to Moshe at Sinai and he passed them along orally.

But it was not just the books of the Torah and the major compendiums of rabbinic commentary and halacha, which were given at Mt. Sinai. An intriguing comment from the fifteenth century Italian rabbi, Rav Ovadia Bartenura, whose Mishna commentary is considered one of the most important of them all, indicates that Moshe received theological and ethical insights at Revelation as well. Bartenura wrote this in his first comment on Pirkei Avot - a tractate which deals not with halacha, but entirely with ethics and theology.

## Bartenura, Avot 1.1

מֹשֶׁה קִבֵּל תּוֹרָה מִסִּינַי. אָמַר אֲנִי, לִפִּי  
שְׁמִסְכֶּת זֶה אֵינָהּ מִיִּסְדֵּת עַל פְּרוּשׁ מִצְוָה  
מִמִּצְוֹת הַתּוֹרָה כְּשֶׁאֵר מִסְכָּתוֹת  
שֶׁבַּמִּשְׁנָה, אֲלָא כָּלָה מוֹסְרִים וּמִדּוֹת,  
וְחֻכְמֵי אֲמוֹת הָעוֹלָם גַּם כֵּן חִבְּרוּ סִפְרִים  
כְּמוֹ שֶׁבָּדוּ מִלֵּבָם בְּדַרְכֵי הַמוֹסֵר כִּי־צַד  
יִתְנֶהג הָאָדָם עִם חֲבֵרוֹ, לִפְיָךְ הַתְּחִיל  
הַתָּנָא בְּמִסְכֶּת זֶה מֹשֶׁה קִבֵּל תּוֹרָה מִסִּינַי,  
לִוְמַר לָךְ שֶׁהַמִּדּוֹת וְהַמוֹסְרִים שֶׁבָּדוּ  
הַמִּסְכָּתָא לֹא בָּדוּ אוֹתָם חֻכְמֵי הַמִּשְׁנָה  
מִלֵּבָם, אֲלָא אֵף אֵילוּ נֶאֱמָרוּ בְּסִינַי:

*Moshe received the Torah from Sinai: I say: Since this tractate is not founded on the exegesis of commandments from among the Torah's commandments, like the rest of the tractates which are in the Mishna, but is rather wholly morals and principles, and whereas the sages of the (other) nations of the world have also composed books according to the fabrication of their hearts, concerning moral paths, how a person should behave with his fellow; therefore, in this tractate the tanna began "Moshe received Torah from Sinai," to tell you that the principles and morals which are in this tractate were not fabricated by the hearts of the Mishna's sages; rather, they too were stated at Sinai.*

*(Translation from Sefaria.org)*

The Oral Torah then consists of commentary on the Written Torah, halachic rulings and ethical guidance.

One of the great divides throughout our history has always been concerning this dogma. Many groups have broken with the Rabbis over the years over the issue of whether the Oral Torah in fact originated at Mt. Sinai or was it a creation of the Rabbis. The Karaites were the best-known historical group who rejected the authority of the Oral Torah, and for centuries throughout the medieval period they were a dominant force in the Jewish world, although in the contemporary world their numbers and influence are hardly noticeable. Some historians believe the Karaites developed out of an earlier sect, the Sadducees, an ancient group who had defected from Rabbinic Judaism in Mishnaic times. But this is not certain. Either way, the point remains the same: the Karaites were hardly the first Jews to question the Rabbinic tradition, and certainly not the last either. In the modern world, Conservative Judaism has inherited the mantle of those who question the authority of Rabbinic law.

Of course, the Rabbis themselves did not claim that every law they formulated or every line in the Talmud was Divine in origin. There were many *takanot*, or decrees, which were unquestionably Rabbinic in origin, and still included in the Oral Torah. When the Rabbis disagreed, which was a



common occurrence, it seems likely that not every opinion had originated at Sinai, although a minority school of thought argued precisely that. Even when the rabbis based their rulings on a careful reading of the Biblical text, a *drasha*, there is some debate amongst medieval authorities whether all of those instances originated with God or not.

The important point for us is not whether every Rabbinic law or statement was given at Sinai, but that some of it was given at Sinai. Even if the rabbis added to it, or disagreed over the exact tradition, traditional Judaism is clear that in addition to the written texts of Judaism, Moshe was given a Divine supplement to the Written text, and that was the Oral Torah. In addition, God had given the Rabbis the authority to add to the Torah as they saw fit in their generations, and so that too was included in the scope of the Oral Law.

One of the great medieval Jewish thinkers and anti-Karaite polemicists, Yehuda Halevi (*Sefer Ha-Kuzari* 3:35), pointed out how obvious this dogma becomes once you reflect on the matter.

### Sefer HaKuzari 3:35

רְצוֹנִי לְהַשְׁתַּדֵּל וְשִׁיבוּנִי תְּשׁוּבָה  
מִסִּפְקַת כָּאֲשֶׁר אֲשָׁלֵם עַל מֶה שִׁיִּתִּיר  
הָחִי לֶאֱכֹל, וּמֶה עֲנֵן הַזִּבְיָה, וְשִׁמָּא  
הִיא נֶחֱרָה אוֹ הָרֵג כָּאֲשֶׁר יִזְדְּמוּ, וְלָמָּה  
נֶאֱסְרוּ זִבְחֵי גוֹיִם, וּמֶה הוּא שִׁישׁ בֵּין  
זִבְחֹו וְהַפֶּשֶׁט וְשִׁמְעָר מִלֵּאכָתּוֹ, וְהִיִּיתִי  
רוֹצֶה שִׁיִּבְאָר לִי הַחֵלֶב הָאֲסוּר, וְהוּא  
דָּבֵק עִם הַמֶּתֶר בַּמַּעֲמִים וְהַקִּיבָה, וְזוּלָת  
זֶה מִנְקוֹר הַבָּשָׂר, וְשִׁמְסָר אֵלֵי הַגֶּדֶר  
שֶׁבֵּין הַמֶּתֶר וְהָאֲסוּר, כְּדִי שֶׁלֹּא יִהְיֶה  
חֵלּוּף בּוֹ עִם חֵבְרוֹ, וְכֵן הָאֵלִיָּה הָאֲסוּרָה  
אֲצִלָּם, הֵיִשׁ לָהּ גֶּדֶר? וְשִׁמָּא הָאֶחָד יִסֵּר  
קֶצֶת הַזֵּנֶב וְאֶחָד יִסֵּר הַכֶּף כְּמוֹ שֶׁהוּא.  
וְהִיִּיתִי רוֹצֶה שִׁיִּבְאָר לִי הָעוֹף הַטָּהוֹר מִן  
הַטָּמֵא, זוּלָת הַמִּפְרָסִים, רְצוֹנִי לִוְמֶר:  
בְּיִינָהּ אוֹ תוֹר, וּמֵאַיִן הוּא אוֹמֵר שֶׁאֵין  
הַתְּרַנְגְּלָת וְהָאֵז וְהַקּוֹרָא וְאֶלְבְּרָכִיָּה  
מִהַטָּמֵאִים. וְהִיִּיתִי רוֹצֶה שִׁיִּתֵּן לִי גְבוּל

*I further wish to be instructed on the question as to what makes an animal lawful for food; whether 'slaughtering' means cutting its throat or any other mode of killing; why killing by gentiles makes the flesh unlawful; what is the difference between slaughtering, skinning, and the rest of it. I should desire an explanation of the forbidden fat, seeing that it lies in the stomach and entrails close to the lawful fat, as well as of the rules of cleansing the meat. Let them draw me the line between the fat which is lawful and that which is not, inasmuch as there is no difference visible. Let them explain to me where the tail of the sheep, which they declare unlawful, ends. One of them may possibly forbid the end of the tail alone, another the whole hind part. I desire an explanation of the lawful and unlawful birds, excepting the common ones, such as the pigeon and turtle dove. How do they know that the hen, goose, duck, and partridge are not unclean birds?*



Kuzari's point here is straightforward. The Torah issues many commandments which provide no real details as to how they are to be performed. In this example he wonders how to observe the laws of kosher with only the scanty statements recorded in the Written Torah. One would have so many questions that they could not possibly perform the ritual properly. The same applies to making tefillin, building a Succah, the prohibited activities of Shabbat, and many other laws of the Torah which appear in brief, terse commands in the Torah, but which require pages of elucidation to perform properly. We are then left with the choice between either accusing God of irrationally giving us a written work which was woefully inadequate for practical purposes or acknowledging there must have been a commentary which came together with the Written text.

This proof points to the existence of a commentary but does not resolve the question of why God set it up this way. Could not God, in His infinite genius, have figured out a way to give the Torah perfectly complete, so that it would be a self-contained document and not require any oral commentary or elaboration? In explanation of this, many approaches have been offered. But most of all, we should not make the mistake of thinking that God gave an Oral Torah out of weakness. In fact, the halacha originally was that one was not permitted to write down the Oral Law (Gittin 60b). It was by design, not accident or imperfection, that God introduced an oral component to the Torah, and this has much to teach us about the essential nature of Torah study.

If we were to choose one approach to reflect on to explain why the Oral Torah is of central importance, I suggest the one offered by Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch (**Rav S.R. Hirsch Commentary on the Torah, Shemot 34:27 and earlier commentaries**):

*God did not want people to study Torah through books, but from a human being. As the proverb quoted by Kuzari (2:72) states: "From the mouths of scholars, but not from the mouth of books." The Torah is not for autodidacts, it is geared at those who seek to form another chain in the historical transmission of the tradition from generation to generation, connecting us all directly back to the moment of Revelation at Sinai. One approach to guard against self-study is for it not to be recorded, to force the student to seek out a rebbe (Torah teacher) in order to be initiated.*

This is a radically new way to think about Torah study. In our world where this model has fallen apart, everything has been written down and many people are Torah scholars through their own book study, it is hard to imagine the alternative. When we think of Torah scholars, we imagine large volumes of print Hebrew works, with someone studying for hours a day. Our impression of Torah study and Torah greatness is completely intertwined with the image of immersion in books and printed pages.

To be a Torah giant in the age of the Oral Law one had to know not books, but people, one spent their day not with printed pages, but with living, breathing mentors and colleagues. The *rebbe*

passed on to his students not only information and modes of analysis, but also how to be a human being, how to be a *mensch*. And the *rebbe* had discretion over who he taught, so a student who asked for only facts but was not interested in ethical guidance, would not be taught either. The idea of a Torah scholar who was not also a *mensch* and a fully developed social personality would have been foreign to them.

It was this ideal which allowed Rav Chaim of Volozhin, the father of the modern yeshiva system which stressed the near constant study of books, to interpret the Mishna (**Avot 6:6**) which states that Torah must be studied “with a listening ear” to mean that Torah is better studied through audio than reading books. “Because the sense of hearing [and] what you hear from a person, will accomplish more than what you read in books.” (***Ruach Chaim Commentary on Avot***) Of course almost the entirety of the yeshiva curriculum is based on reading printed Talmud and commentaries, not listening. But Rav Chaim understood that was not the ideal, the printed volumes were a concession. Ideally we study Torah from another human being by listening.

Had the ideal continued we would think of Torah scholars as some of the most socially advanced humans, spending their days and nights immersed in relationship building with teachers of Torah, imbibing their living tradition. But alas, the original model was not to be. As with so much lost throughout Jewish history, it was primarily anti-Semitism at fault. When the Romans occupied Israel, it became apparent that the Oral Torah would not survive those difficult times, and so the leader of Israel at the time, Rabbi Judah Hanasi (the Prince) committed the Mishna to writing (Rashi, Baba Metzia 33b, Rambam, Introduction to Mishneh Torah). The Mishna was not thorough, but rather contained broad legal principles, and so some centuries later the rest was recorded in the Talmud.

From now on the Oral Torah would all be written down, available for anyone willing to commit the time and energy to study it. Of course we still encourage people to seek a *rebbe* as much as possible, but the halacha recognizes that practically this rarely happens. The books are now our primary teachers, say modern halachic authorities (***Lechem Mishna, Laws of Torah Study 5:4, Pitchei Teshuva, Yoreh Deah 242:3, and others***). Some things have improved, such as the ease of access to the Oral Law, which is now readily available, and growing even more accessible through translations and commentaries and online classes. And, by extension, there are now more people than ever studying it, so there have been improvements.

In any case it is totally different.

## To Rebuke or Not Rebuke: That is the Question

By Rabbi Jonathan Muskat, Young Israel of Oceanside

תלמוד בבלי מסכת ערכין טז:

מנין לרואה בחבירו דבר מגונה שחייב להוכיחו שנאמר (ויקרא יט, יז) (הוכח תוכיח הוכיחו ולא קבל מנין שיחזור ויוכיחו תלמוד לומר תוכיח מכל מקום יכול אפי' משתנים פניו ת"ל לא תשא עליו חטא תניא א"ר טרפון (תמיהני) אני אם יש בדור הזה שמקבל תוכחה אם אמר לו טול קיסם מבין עיניך אמר לו טול קורה מבין עיניך אמר רבי אלעזר בן עזריה תמיהני אם יש בדור הזה שיוודע להוכיח... עד היכן תוכחה רב אמר עד הכאה ושמאל אמר עד קללה ורבי יוחנן אמר עד נזיפה כתנאי רבי אליעזר אומר עד הכאה רבי יהושע אומר עד קללה בן עזאי אומר עד נזיפה

From where is it derived with regard to one who sees an unseemly matter in another that he is obligated to rebuke him? As it is stated: “You shall rebuke [*hokhe’ah tokhiah*] your neighbor.” If one rebuked him for his action but he did not accept the rebuke, from where is it derived that he must rebuke him again? The verse states: “You shall rebuke [*hokhe’ah tokhiah*],” and the double language indicates he must rebuke in any case. One might have thought that one should continue rebuking him even if his face changes due to humiliation. Therefore, the verse states: “Do not bear sin because of him”; the one giving rebuke may not sin by embarrassing the other person. It is taught in a *baraita* that Rabbi Tarfon says: I would be surprised if there is anyone in this generation who can receive rebuke. Why? Because if the one rebuking says to him: Remove the splinter from between your eyes, i.e., rid yourself of a minor infraction, the other says to him: Remove the beam from between your eyes, i.e., you have committed far more severe sins. Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria says: I would be surprised if there is anyone in this generation who knows how to rebuke correctly, without embarrassing the person he is rebuking. ... The Gemara asks: Until where does the obligation of rebuke extend? Rav says: Until his rebuke is met by hitting, i.e., until the person being rebuked hits the person rebuking him. And Shmuel says: Until his rebuke is met by cursing, i.e., he curses the one rebuking him. And Rabbi Yohanan says: Until his rebuke is met by reprimand. The Gemara points out that this dispute between these *amora'im* is like a dispute between *tanna'im*: Rabbi Eliezer says: Until his rebuke is met by hitting; Rabbi Yehoshua says: Until his rebuke is met by cursing; ben Azzai says: Until his rebuke is met by reprimand.

### Questions to consider:

- What is the limit of my requirement to rebuke someone who is sinning?
- How might the statements of Rabbi Tarfon and Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah impact on the halacha of our responsibility to rebuke?
- What is the advantage of constantly rebuking someone if he doesn't listen the first time and what is the disadvantage?
- Why might you be allowed or required to stop rebuking once the person being rebuked hits you, curses you or reprimands you?

### תלמוד בבלי מסכת שבת נד: - נה.

כל מי שאפשר למחות לאנשי ביתו ולא מיחה - נתפס על אנשי ביתו, באנשי עירו - נתפס על אנשי עירו, בכל העולם כולו - נתפס על כל העולם כולו... אמר ליה רבי זירא לרבי סימון: לוכחינהו מר להני דבי ריש גלותא. אמר ליה: לא מקבלי מינאי. אמר ליה: אף על גב דלא מקבלי - לוכחינהו מר

**Anyone who had the capability to effectively protest the sinful conduct of the members of his household and did not protest, he himself is apprehended for the sins of the members of his household and punished. If he is in a position to protest the sinful conduct of the people of his town, and he fails to do so, he is apprehended for the sins of the people of his town. If he is in a position to protest the sinful conduct of the whole world, and he fails to do so he is apprehended for the sins of the whole world....** With regard to the issue of reprimand, it was related that **Rabbi Zeira said to Rabbi Simon: Let the Master reprimand the members of the house of the Exilarch, as Rabbi Simon had some influence over them. Rabbi Simon said to him: They will not accept reprimand from me. Rabbi Zeira said to him: Let my master reprimand them even if they do not accept it.**

### Questions to consider:

- *Do you think that the Gemara's view of protesting sinful conduct is consistent with secular society's view and why?*
- *Why do you think Rabbi Zera told Rabbi Simon to reprimand the house of the Exilarch even though they won't listen and what might that indicate about the responsibility to rebuke someone?*

### תלמוד בבלי מסכת יבמות סה:

ואמר רבי אילעא משום ר' אלעזר בר' שמעון כשם שמצוה על אדם לומר דבר הנשמע כך מצוה על אדם שלא לומר דבר שאינו נשמע רבי אבא אומר חובה שנאמר (משלי ט, ה) אל תוכח לץ פן ישנאך הוכח לחכם ויאהבך

The Gemara cites other statements made by Rabbi Ile'a in the name of Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon. **And Rabbi Ile'a said in the name of Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon: Just as it is a mitzva for a person to say that which will be heeded, so is it a mitzva for a person not to say that which will not be heeded.** One should not rebuke those who will be unreceptive to his message. **Rabbi Abba says: It is obligatory for him to refrain from speaking, as it is stated: "Do not reprove a scorner lest he hate you; reprove a wise man and he will love you" (Proverbs 9:8).**

### Questions to consider:

- *Why might you not be permitted to rebuke someone if you know that he won't listen to you?*
- *How does this Gemara seemingly contradict the previous two Gemarot that we learned?*
- *How might we reconcile this Gemara with the previous two Gemarot that we learned?*

## תלמוד בבלי מסכת ביצה ל.

א"ל רבא בר רב חנין לאבבי תנן אין מטפחין ואין מספקין ואין מרקדין והאידנא דקא חזינן דעבדן הכי ולא אמרינן להו ולא מידי אמר ליה ולטעמך הא דאמר (רבא) לא ליתב איניש אפומא דלחיא דלמא מגנדר ליה חפץ ואתי לאתויי (ד' אמות ברה"ר) והא הני נשי דשקלן חצבייהו ואזלן ויתבן אפומא דמבואה ולא אמרינן להו ולא מידי אלא הנח להם לישראל מוטב שיהיו שוגגין ואל יהיו מזידין הכא נמי הנח להם לישראל מוטב שיהיו שוגגין ואל יהיו מזידין והני מילי בדרבנן אבל בדאורייתא לא ולא היא לא שנא בדאורייתא ולא שנא בדרבנן לא אמרינן להו ולא מידי דהא תוספת יום הכפורים דאורייתא הוא ואכלי ושתו עד שחשכה ולא אמרינן להו ולא מידי:

**Rava bar Rav Ḥanin said to Abaye: We learned in a mishna: The Rabbis decreed that one may not clap, nor strike a hand on his thigh, nor dance on a Festival, lest he come to repair musical instruments. But nowadays we see that women do so, and yet we do not say anything to them. He said to him: And according to your reasoning, how do you explain that which Rava said: A person should not sit at the entrance to an alleyway, next to the side post that has been placed at the edge of an alleyway in order for it to be considered a private domain, as perhaps an object will roll away from him and he will come to carry it four cubits in the public domain, thereby transgressing a biblical prohibition? But don't these women take their jugs, and go, and sit at the entrance to an alleyway, and we do not say anything to them? Rather, the accepted principle is: Leave the Jews alone; it is better that they be unwitting sinners and not be intentional sinners.** If people engage in a certain behavior that cannot be corrected, it is better not to reprove them, as they are likely to continue regardless of the reproof, and then they will be sinning intentionally. It is therefore preferable for them to be unaware that they are violating a prohibition and remain merely unwitting sinners. **Here, too, with regard to clapping and dancing, leave the Jews alone; it is better that they be unwitting sinners and not be intentional sinners.** The Gemara comments: There were those who understood that **this principle applies only to rabbinic prohibitions but not to Torah prohibitions**, with regard to which the transgressors must be reprimanded. **However, this is not so; it is no different whether the prohibition is by Torah law or whether it is by rabbinic law, we do not say anything to them.** For example, on the eve of Yom Kippur, there is an obligation **that** one begin the fast while it is still day, before sunset, as **the extension of Yom Kippur**. During this time, one must observe all the *halakhot*. This mitzva of extending Yom Kippur **is by Torah law, and yet people eat and drink until darkness falls but we do not say anything to them**, as we know they will pay no attention.

### Questions to consider:

- *What is the reason why we don't rebuke those who dance on a Yom Tov, sit at the entrance of an alleyway next to a Lechi on Shabbat, or do not observe Tosefet Yom Kippur (extending the prohibitions of Yom Kippur before sunset)?*
- *How might we reconcile this Gemara with the first two Gemarot that we learned?*
- *It seems from the end of the Gemara that we don't rebuke those who are committing a sin unintentionally with respect to a Mitzva D'oraita (Torah obligation.)*

- *Might there be a distinction between a Mitzvah like Tosefet Yom Kippur which is not explicit in the Torah and one like eating non-Kosher food that is explicit in the Torah and why?*

שלחן ערוך אורח חיים תרח: ב

נשים שאוכלו ושותו עד שחשכה והן אינן יודעו שמצוה להוסיף מחול על הקודש אין ממחין בידם כדי שלא יבואו לעשו' בזדון: הגה והוא הדין בכל דבר איסור אמרינן מוטב שיהיו שוגגין ולא יהיו מזידין ודוקא שאינו מפורש בתורה אע"פ שהוא דאורייתא אבל אם מפורש בתורה מוחין בידו (ר"ן פרק ד' דביצה והרא"ש בשם העיטור). ואם יודע שאין דבריו נשמעין לא יאמר ברבים להוכיחן רק פעם אחד אבל לא ירבה בתוכחות מאחר שידע שלא ישמעו אליו אבל ביחיד חייב להוכיחו עד שיכנו או יקללנו (ר"ן ס"פ הבע"י):

Women who eat and drink until dark, and they do not know it is a command to add from the weekday to the Holy day, we do not contest their actions in order that they do not so willingly. *Note (Rema): Similarly, every matter it is better a prohibition done negligently and not done purposefully. This is specifically when it is not explicit in the Torah even though it is a Torah command. But if it is explicit in the Torah, we do protest in the (transgressor's) action [Ran Chapter 4 of Beitzah, and Rosh in the name of the Ittur]. And if it is known that his words will not be listened to, do not say publically to rebuke except once, but don't increase rebuke since he knows that they won't listen to him. But privately, a person is obligated to rebuke until hit or cursed (by the transgressor) [Ran end of Chapter].*

**Questions to consider:**

- *How does the Rema seem to reconcile the various Gemarot that we learned?*
- *What is our responsibility to rebuke those who sin intentionally versus unintentionally? Individual versus a large group?*
- *Why do you think that there should be a difference if the prohibition is explicit in the Torah or not?*
- *Do you think the responsibility to rebuke someone should be the same if the person is generally Torah observant (keeps Kosher, observes Shabbat, etc.) versus if he is not?*



### Summary of the Topic:

We live in a generation in which people generally do not like to be told what to do and therefore, admonishing others seems to be counter-productive. The Gemara (**Arachin 16b**) pointed out that this isn't a 21<sup>st</sup> century problem. Rabbi Tarfon questions whether anyone in his generation knows how to accept rebuke and Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah questions whether anyone in his generation knows how to effectively rebuke others. At the same time, the Torah (**Vayikra 19:17**) commands us to rebuke those who sin.

Different Gemarot seem to provide different guidance as to the parameters of our responsibility in this regard. The Gemara (**Arachin 16b**) cites a three-way debate as to whether you must continue rebuking your friend until he hits you, curses you or reprimands you<sup>[1]</sup>. Additionally, the Gemara (**Shabbat 54b-55a**) holds us responsible if we have the ability to protest sinful behavior and we do not protest and we are responsible to do so even if those listening will not accept our rebuke. However, the Gemara (**Yevamot 65b**) also states that we should not rebuke someone if we know that they won't listen and the Gemara (**Beitza 30a**) states elsewhere that we should not rebuke people who are sinning unintentionally who will not accept our rebuke because it is better for them to sin unintentionally than to sin intentionally, i.e., if we make them aware of their sin.

The Rema (**Orach Chayim 608:2**) reconciles the seemingly different opinions in the different Gemarot by arguing that they are discussing different situations. The Gemara in Arachin discusses a typical case, where your friend, an individual, is sinning intentionally and you have a responsibility to try to rebuke him up to the point where it's clear that he definitely won't listen to you and any further rebuke will be counterproductive. What is that point? The Tannaim and the Amoraim provide three different standards: Until he hits you, curses you or reprimands you. The Rema rules that you must rebuke him until he hits you or curses you, but in the Mishna Berura (**MB 608:11**) and the Shaar Tziyun (**SZ 608:13**), the Chafetz Chayim rules that you only need to rebuke him until he reprimands you, at which point you should not rebuke him anymore.

The Rema likely bases his understanding of the Gemara in Shabbat (**54b-55a**) & Yevamot (**65b**) on the Nimukei Yosef<sup>[2]</sup> and the Ra'ah<sup>[3]</sup>. According to the Nimukei Yosef and the Ra'ah, the Gemara in Shabbat (**54b-55a**) discusses a case where you are required to rebuke a group of people (the household of the exilarch) when they are sinning intentionally and you know that they won't listen. However, you only need to rebuke them once. Why once? Maybe you are wrong and maybe they will indeed listen to your rebuke. The Nimukei Yosef also reasons you must rebuke them once so that they can't claim later on that you knew what they were doing and you condoned their behavior. The Gemara in Yevamot is also discussing a situation where a group of people sin (even though it is not obvious from the simple reading of the Gemara) intentionally, and when the

Gemara states that there is a mitzvah not to rebuke them, it means that you should not rebuke them constantly, i.e., more than once.

The Gemara (**Beitza 30a**) discusses a case where someone is sinning unintentionally and you know that they will not accept your rebuke, in which case it is better that you don't rebuke them so that they continue sinning unintentionally rather than sin intentionally. However, this leniency only applies if they are committing a sin that is not explicit in the Torah, like Tosefet Yom Kippur. If the sin is explicit in the Torah, then you must rebuke them. The Mishna Berura (**MB 608:6**) explains that if the sin is explicit in the Torah, we can't make the argument that they are sinning unintentionally. Because the sin is explicit in the Torah, they must be sinning intentionally, and therefore, we have a responsibility to rebuke them.

In sum, the Rema, as qualified by the Mishna Berura, rules that:

· If an individual sins then:

- Rebuke him until he reprimands you if the sin is either intentional, explicit in the Torah or if you believe that he may accept your rebuke.
- Do not rebuke him if the sin is unintentional, not explicit in the Torah and you believe that he will not accept your rebuke.

If a group of people sins then:

- Rebuke them once if the sin is either intentional, explicit in the Torah or if you believe that they may accept your rebuke.
- Do not rebuke them if the sin is unintentional, not explicit in the Torah and you believe that they will not accept your rebuke.

There are a few final points that we may wish to consider. The Biur Halacha (**BH 608:2 d”h: Chayav l’hochicho**) rules that we are only obligated to rebuke our friends with whom we have a relationship, but we should not rebuke someone with whom we do not have a relationship lest that person hate us or take revenge on us. This ruling may be based on Rabbi Tarfon and Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah's statement in Arachin (**16b**) that nobody knows how to rebuke or accept rebuke nowadays. The Biur Halacha (**BH 608:2 d”h: Aval**) also rules that we need not rebuke those who have thrown off the yoke of Torah and mitzvot completely, like those who publicly violate Shabbat or eat forbidden foods as an act of rebellion against Hashem. The Biblical obligation of rebuking someone only applies with reference to someone who generally observes Torah and mitzvot.

In Tenuat Ha-Mussar (**Volume 1, p. 184**), the following story is told attesting to Rabbi Yisrael Salanter's greatness in drawing people closer to Torah and mitzvot. “Before Rabbi Yisrael [Salanter] came to Memel, Judaism was in a very bad state, as in the rest of the cities of Germany during that period. Jewish stores were open on *Shabbat*, and the merchants, most of whose business was connected with the port, would load and unload their merchandise on *Shabbat* as during the week. Rabbi Yisrael's attitude toward them and the moderate and graded manner in which he

influenced them are very typical of his approach. When he came for the first time to the synagogue where the merchants and port agents would pray in order to preach about *Shabbat*, he asked whether there were any Lithuanian Jews present. When they told him that such people were indeed present, he refrained from preaching and returned home. The next week he came a second time, and when he was told that no Lithuanian Jews were there, he began to preach. After explaining to them the value of *Shabbat*, in their style and according to their spirit, he reached the conclusion: Dealing with the freight that arrived in the port on *Shabbat* may be necessary, but writing is unnecessary. The merchants accepted what he said and agreed not to write. Sometime later, Rabbi Yisrael delivered another sermon in that synagogue, saying that unloading their merchandise on *Shabbat* may be necessary, but loading their merchandise on *Shabbat* is certainly unnecessary. The merchants accepted this as well. Later he arrived once again, and forbid unloading as well. In this way, he influenced the community step by step, until finally he effected a total upheaval.” May we all be inspired to strengthen not just ourselves, but those around us, in their commitment to Torah and mitzvot in a loving manner that engenders peace, goodwill and a strengthening of our commitment to Torah and mitzvot.

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[1] The Gemara also prohibits you from humiliating your friend while rebuking him, generally assumed to mean embarrassing him in public and the commentaries debate as to the limits of this prohibition. See Rambam, Hilchot Dei’ot, 6:8, who rules that this prohibition does not apply to sins between man and Hashem and the Magen Avraham (600:3), who rules that this prohibition does not apply to sins committed in public.

[2] Yevamot 21b, *b’dapei Ha’Rif*.

[3] Chiddushei Hameyuchas la’Ran, Shabbat 55a.

## What Happened at Sinai?

By Rabbi Herschel Becker, Young Israel of Kendall

We refer to the holiday of *Shavuot* in *Kiddush* and *Tefillah* as *zman matan Toraseinu* - the time of the giving of our Torah. What do we refer to when we say we received the Torah on *Shavuot*? Was it the scroll as we know it? Did that include Torah *sheb'al peh* - the Oral Law? Was it the *Luchos* - the Tablets? Did we actually receive anything at that time? Is it the time we were given ten commandments? If so, what happened to the other 603?

The Torah states that three days after the splitting of the sea, the people of Israel reached a place called Marah.

### Rashi, Beshalach 15:25

(כה) שם שם לו. במרה נתן להם מקצת פרשיות של תורה שיתעסקו בהם, שבת ופרה אדומה ודינין

*At Marah the Mitzvos of Shabbos, honoring father and mother, the laws of the Parah Adumah (red heifer) and civil laws were presented to the people (Rashi, Beshalach 15:25).*

### Ramban, Beshalach 15:25

והיה זה להרגילם במצות ולדעת אם יקבלו אותם בשמחה ובטוב לבב

The Ramban explains that the laws were not meant to be binding at that time, but rather build familiarity with the Torah and help the Jewish people see it as a source of study.

In *Mishpatim* (**Mishpatim 24:3**) Rashi explains that on the fourth day of the month of Sivan, Moshe repeated to B'nei Yisrael the *Mitzvos* of Marah as well as the Noahide laws.

### Rashi, Mishpatim 24:3

ויבא משה ויספר לעם. בו ביום. את כל דברי ה'. מצות פרישה והגבלה. ואת כל המשפטים. שבע מצות שנצטוו בני נח, ושבת וכבוד אב ואם ופרה אדומה ודינין שניתנו להם במרה

In verse 4 the Torah states, "And Moshe wrote all of the words of Hashem."

Rashi (**Mishpatim 24:4**) explains that Moshe wrote the text from *Breishis* until the giving of the Torah as well as the *Mitzvos* they were commanded in Marah.

ויכתוב משה. מבראשית ועד מתן תורה וכתב מצות שנצטוו במרה. וישכם בבקר. בחמשה בסיון

In verse 7 it states, "He took the *Sefer Habris* - the book of the covenant - and read it within earshot of the people." Rashi (**Mishpatim 24:7**) explains this took place the next day, on the fifth day of Sivan. Moshe read to them from *Breishis* until the events of Sinai as well as the *Mitzvos* from Marah.

ספר הברית. מבראשית ועד מתן תורה ומצות שנצטוו במרה.

**Summary of position 1:** According to the explanation of Rashi, sections of the Torah that preceded the events at Sinai, were written and read before the Revelation at Sinai.

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In Yisro (**Shemot 20:1**) the Torah states: “G-d spoke all of these statements, saying.” Rashi (**Shemot 20:1**) explains that Hashem stated all of the ten commandments in one utterance.

את כל הדברים האלה. מלמד שאמר הקב"ה עשרת הדברות בדבור אחד, מה שאי אפשר לאדם לומר כן.

The people could not comprehend all of the words said together, and therefore Hashem repeated the first two commandments. Hearing the voice of Hashem, though, was overwhelming, so Moshe related the other eight commandments.

Since Hashem knew the statements would be incomprehensible, why were they uttered in one breath in the first place? The Gur Aryeh (**Shemot 20:1 on Gur Aryeh super-commentary on Rashi**) explains that this was done to teach us that the Torah is one unit, not individual concepts. Each element is an integral and inseparable part of the whole.

**Summary of position 2:** Hashem uttered all ten commandments simultaneously, then stated the first two and Moshe finished the rest.

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At the time of Revelation, were ten commandments given or 613?

Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch (**Shemot 20:1**) states:

*The ten utterances do not have any greater holiness or importance than any other Mitzvos from the Mitzvos of the Torah. They do not include all of the Mitzvos of the Torah, and are not more sanctified than the other Mitzvos.*

*The Almighty clearly proclaimed these ten utterances only as an introduction, as a prelude to all of the important edicts that would follow as it states (Exodus 19:9) “Behold! I come to you...so that the people will hear as I speak to you, and they will also believe in you forever.”*

*This states clearly that the purpose of standing at Sinai was to prepare the hearts of the people for receiving all of the other Mitzvos that would be given to them in the future through Moshe and to make certain in their hearts and to remove all doubt as “Hashem spoke to the congregation” (Deuteronomy 5:19) as they saw with their own eyes. Because of this they will accept the other Mitzvos as well - as Hashem spoke through Moshe, and they will fulfill them with complete faith, so that they are firmly established forever.*

**Summary of position 3:** Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch explains that only ten Mitzvos were given at the time of Revelation. The other Mitzvos were told to Moshe afterwards when he ascended above Mt. Sinai.

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The Talmud (**Berachos 5a**), referring to Shemos (**24:12**), explains that the Mishneh, Prophets, Writings and Gemara as well, were given to Moshe at Sinai. This took place after hearing the Ten Commandments as he was told to ascend to receive the *Luchos*.

Talmud (**Megillah 19b**) states that the Holy One, Blessed is He, showed Moshe the fine interpretations of the Torah and the fine Rabbinic interpretations and what the Sages would innovate in the future. And what is it that the Sages would innovate in the future? The Mitzvah of reading the Megillah.

The **Tosfos Yom Tov (in his introduction to the Mishneh)** says that the Talmud is very careful in its choice of words. Hashem “showed” Moshe the fine interpretations, not that they were presented to Moshe. The distinction indicates that Moshe was to see these lessons, but not necessarily transmit them.

שאני אומר שזה לא היה מוסר משה לאחרים כלל. ודקדוקי לשונם כך הוא שאמרו מלמד שהראהו ולא אמר שמסר לו או שלמדו...כאדם המראה דבר לחבירו לראותו ואינו נותנו לו. וזה דקדוק נאה וענין אמתי

Even though the Oral Law was to be transmitted, it was to be done with discretion. For example, Moshe was aware of the reading of Megillah to take place in later generations, but was not to transmit the fact that the Jews will be saved through Mordechai and Esther on Purim.

**Summary Step 4:** Moshe ascended Mt. Sinai to receive the *Luchos* and learn the secrets of the Torah and the Oral Law, to be transmitted with discretion.

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It is noteworthy that in the Biblical and Talmudic text the phrase ten “commandments” is nowhere to be found. They are referred to as the ten *dibros* - utterances or sayings. Even though these commandments were chosen as introduction, Judaism is a religion of 613 and not 10 commandments.

But why were these 10 chosen to be the introduction?



Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch explains:

*If you analyze the order that these basic laws follow, you will find truth shedding light on the concepts of G-d's Torah. The first half starts with "Anochi" - "I am" and concludes with "Honor" (thy father and mother). The second half starts "You shall not kill" and ends with, "You shall not covet." The commandment to recognize the oneness of the Creator begins with a search of one's heart "You shall not have" (another god). But it doesn't end there. One is demanded to exhibit control regarding: that which comes from the mouth "You shall not say in vain"; one's work "Remember the Shabbos"; and family "Honor". The societal edicts begin with demands dealing with action and speech "You shall not kill", "You shall not commit adultery", "You shall not steal", "You shall not bear false witness". It does not stop there, for the heart and mind are also to be controlled "You shall not covet".*

*This is the truth that is stated here. All matters of religion and that which is called the service of G-d with truth of heart and mind, are considered worthless if one can not control that which comes from the mouth and one's actions in dealing with family and friends. Only with our actions can we indicate that we are truly and sincerely serving G-d. The opposite holds true as well. Any trait of goodness in the life shared with others is considered naught if the intent is only to do that which appears to be proper in the eyes of others, if it is unaccompanied by sincerity of the heart and purity of thought. For only Hashem can see what is in the heart and judge one's thoughts. Every action of goodness should emanate from the heart, and every good feeling of the heart should result in action, provided that a person looks to Hashem, for that is the root and source for each good thought. This is the spirit that hovers over the foundations of the Torah, and is this spirit that binds the two Luchos - the Luchos of laws between man and G-d, and the Luchos of the Mitzvos between man and man - until there is no distinction between them.*

Simply put, in choosing these ten utterances the Torah is presenting a formula to be carried through in our fulfillment of all the *Mitzvos*:

**Action and Speech**  
coupled with  
**Heart and Thought**  
in service of Hashem  
and in our dealings with those around us.  
This is the formula for our *Kabalas Hatorah*  
Receiving the Torah on this day,  
and for every day of our lives.

## Tikkun Leil Chatzot

By Rabbi Dovid Asher, Knesseth Beth Israel, Richmond, Virginia

אורח חיים א"ג:

רואי לכל ירא שמים שיהא מיצר ודואג על חורבן בית המקדש

### **Shulchan Arukh, Orach Chayim 1:3**

*It is fitting for every person who has fear of Heaven to be anguished and concerned regarding the destruction of the Temple.*

### **Questions to Consider:**

- *What is it specifically about the churban (destruction) that requires us to be regularly pained by its absence in our life?*
- *How would having the Beis Hamikdash today change the Jewish community?*
- *How would having a rebuilt Yerushalayim change your personal relationship with the Almighty?*

ברכות ג' א"א

אמר רב יצחק בר שמואל משמיה דרב שלש משמרות הוי הלילה ועל כל משמר ומשמר יושב הקדוש ברוך הוא ושואג כארי ואומר אוי לי שבעונותיהם החרבתי את ביתי ושרפתי את היכלי והגליתים לבין אומות העולם.

### ***Berakhot 3a:11***

***Rav Yitzhak bar Shmuel said in the name of Rav: The night consists of three watches, and over each and every watch the Holy One, Blessed be He sits and roars like a lion, because the Temple service was connected to the changing of these watches (Tosefot HaRosh), and says: "Woe to Me, that due to their sins I destroyed My house, burned My Temple and exiled them among the nations of the world."***

### **Questions to Consider**

- *Why are there certain parts of the night that lend itself to unique prayer?*
- *Why did Hashem destroy "My house" if it would have such a negative impact on the chosen people?*
- *Which aspects of assimilation today motivate us the most to recite prayers of mourning or "tikkun chatzot" as it relates to consideration of Hashem saying "oy li" regarding the current state of the Jewish people?*

רא"ש סימן ב

וראוי לכל ירא שמים שיהא מיצר ודואג באותה שעה ולשפוך תחנונים על חורבן בית המקדש כמו שנאמר קומי רוני ...  
"בלילה לראש אשמורות

### ***Rosh, Siman 2***

*And it's appropriate for all G-d fearing individuals to be pained and worried at the same moment (described by Rav above) and to pour out their supplications regarding the*

*destruction of the Beis Hamikdash (Jerusalem Temple) as it states (in Eicha) "Arise, cry out in the night At the beginning of the watches"*

### **Questions to Consider**

- *Why would Rabbeinu Asher elucidate our gemara as practical Halacha, when perhaps it should be looked at as merely agadda that informs our perspective and informs on the primacy of the Beis Hamikdash within Torah tradition?*
- *In your opinion, why can't the State of Israel exist in its most ideal state without a Beis Hamikdash?*

ביאור הגר"א על שולחן ערוך אורח חיים א'ג:א  
סעי' ג ראוי כו'. כמ"ש בב"ב ס' ע"ב מכאן אמרו כל המתאבל כו' כמ"ש אם אשכחך ירושלים כו' וע' ספ"ג דב"ב

### **Beur HaGra on Shulchan Arukh, Orach Chayim 1:3:1**

*As is written in Tractate Bava Basra 60b from where we learn, "that all who mourn the destruction of Jerusalem will be able see its joy." And as it states, "if I forget thee Jerusalem, let my right hand wither"*

### **Questions to Consider**

- *Why can't people celebrate what they missed? Would one be able to adequately join in with the inauguration of a rebuilt Beis Hamikdash when it happens regardless of whether the individual ponders it's meaning or it's loss?*
- *Is the gemara quoted by the Vilna Gaon an ultimatum or a threat for how we have to conduct ourselves to achieve redemption?*
- *Why should the right hand be at risk of losing function if we mentally block out Yerushalayim? What is the metaphor?*

ימשנה ברורה א'ט  
(ט) ראוי לכל וכו' – והמקובלים האריכו מאוד בגודל מעלת קימת חצות כי רבה היא. וכבר נדפס בסידורים סדר )  
ההנהגה על פי כתבי האר"י ז"ל. וזמן חצות הוא תמיד באמצעות הלילה ממש בכל מקום, ואפילו בלילות הארוכות או  
הקצרות. והיא י"ב שעות אחר חצי היום. והעת להתאונן על החורבן נכון יותר שיהיה קודם חצות מעט, ומחצות ואילך  
יעסוק בתורה, ובסוף הלילה יבקש צרכיו... חבורה שנתחברו יחד לומר תיקון חצות בציבור, אין למונעם, ואדרבה,  
ברוב עם הדרת מלך. וטוב יותר שיאמרו את התיקון בבית הכנסת משיאמרוהו בחדר הסמוך לו, דבית הכנסת קדיש  
טפי, וגם שיהיו מעשרה הראשונים. וצריך ביחוד להזהר מאוד מאוד משיחת חולין בניעורם בלילה. ומי שאינו יכול  
להשכים קודם אור הבוקר, מחמת שהוא חלש בטבעו, או שהוא יודע בעצמו שאם יקום באשמורת יישן בעת התפילה,  
מוטב לישן כל הצורך. ומכל מקום יהיה זהיר מאוד לקום שעה, ולפחות חצי שעה, קודם קריאת השקש לבית הכנסת,  
כדי שיהיה יוכל להכין עצמו להתפלל בציבור ובנקיות

### **Mishnah Berurah 1:9**

*And the mystics elaborated greatly on the significance of rising at midnight. It was already written down in the siddurim that had been based on the writings of the Arizal. And the*

*time of midnight is always the midpoint of darkness, even for long nights and short nights. This is 12 hours post midday. And the time to mourn the destruction is most appropriate slightly before midnight. And from midnight onward, one should be involved with learning and at the end of the night he should request his needs (pray)...A group gathered together should say tikkun chatzot communally, do not protest this, and on the contrary, rather it is a fulfillment of "the more people then then the more praise for the King." And it's best to say it inside a shul rather than a private room because a shul is more holy, and also (it's good to be) of the first ten present (for shachris minyan). If saying it privately, be very very careful to refrain from mundane speech while awake (in the middle of) the night. And whoever is not able to rise so early before the light of the day because of his physical weakness, or if he knows that if he rises for chatzos he'll be asleep at the time of davening, then it's better for him to sleep as much as he needs. And in any event, one should be very careful to get up an hour or at least a half hour, before the call of the shamash (to attend) shul, in order that he should be able to prepare himself to daven with the congregation cleanly.*

### **Questions to Consider**

- If the "mystics" stressed the practice of actively engaging in prayers and tehillim recitation for the churban, then what is a practical way for us today to follow through on this tradition being relayed to us by the chofetz chayim?
- Even if a person decides not to take part in tikkun chatzot, what can they do to follow through on the spirit of the law? (Hint: one idea is presented at the end of the paragraph)
- What kind of groups might be able to gather together regularly to have a more robust communal experience for *tikkun chatzot*?

### **Concluding Thoughts:**

Hopefully, we can be better informed about *Tikkun Chatzos* as codified by Rav Yosef Karo. The *Mishna Berura* understands that many sources lead one to conclude that the Shulchan Aruch is authorizing *Tikkun Chatzos*. *Tikkun Chatzos*, as alluded to by the *Mishna Berura*, is a series of passages meant to evoke great emotion as we consider the tragedy that continues to be the *churban*. Interestingly, the *Mishna Berura* continues his commentary by telling us that Torah study and davening should be done with great joy following recitation of *Tikkun Chatzos*. In contrast, *Tikkun Chatzos* is done with levels of sadness so that the Almighty sees our desire to return to a rebuilt Yerushalayim. The *Mishna Berura* continues by quoting the *Shelah* that we ought to recite "*On the Rivers of Babylon*" during the weekdays and "*A Song of Ascents*" on *Shabbos* and days without *tachanun*. This *halachah* underscores that our hearts should comprehend and contemplate that we say these preliminary paragraphs to be in fulfillment of the *Shulchan Aruch's* standard of being agonized by the *churban*. By focusing and appreciating the loss, we'll be a part of the *tikkun* of fixing the errors of *Am Yisrael's* past.

## Why do we read Megillat Ruth on Shavuot?

by Rabbi Dovid Kaplan, Congregation Ohav Zedek, Wilkes-Barre, PA

Our Rabbis offer a multitude of reasons for the connection between Shavuot and Megillat Ruth. I want to share with you an approach that will hopefully redefine Shavuot for you in a new and different light.

There are few verses in the Torah that are more moving and poetic than those that we find in the first chapter of Megillat Ruth. Naomi begins a transformative journey back from the fields of Moav to Israel. Naomi has lost everything: her family, her youth, and her hope. So desperate is Naomi to leave Moav, that she even travels on Pesach, when such travel is forbidden. Naomi's daughters-in-law Ruth and Orpah accompany her. Naomi attempts to dissuade them from coming with her by using some very direct and even harsh words. Orpah kisses Naomi good-bye and departs; Ruth clings to Naomi and refuses to leave.

Ruth then expresses her love for Hashem, the Jewish People, and Naomi through the following magical pesukim:

### **Book of Ruth 1:16-17**

וַתֹּאמֶר רוּת אֶל־תִּפְגַּעֵי־בִי לְעֹבֶדָה לְשׁוּבָה מֵאֶחָרָיִךְ כִּי אֶל־אֲשֶׁר תֵּלְכִי אֶלֶף וּבְאֲשֶׁר תִּלְיִנִי אֶלֶין עֲמָדָה עִמִּי וְאֶל־הָ אֱלֹהֵי: בְּאֲשֶׁר תִּמּוּתִי אָמוּת וְשָׁם אֶקָּבֵר כֹּה יַעֲשֶׂה יְיָ־נָה לִּי וְכֹה יוֹסִיף כִּי הַמּוֹת יִפְרִיד בֵּינִי וּבֵינָהּ:

*And Ruth said, "Do not entreat me to leave you, to return from following you, for wherever you go, I will go, and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people and your God my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. So may the Lord do to me and so may He continue, if anything but death separate me and you."*

The poetry and majesty of Ruth's words are magnificent! The Talmud however, sees Ruth's words in a much less poetic way and explains that her words, her declarations of love, are in fact her responses to Naomi's repeated attempts at dissuading her from conversion.

### **Talmud Bavli, Masechet Yevamot 47B**

אמרה לה אסיר לן תחום שבת באשר תלכי אלך אסיר לן יחוד באשר תליני אליו מפקדינן שש מאות וי"ג מצות עמך עמי אסיר לן עבודת כוכבים ואלקיך אלקי ארבע מיתות נמסרו לב"ד באשר תמותי אמות ב' קברים נמסרו לב"ד ושם אקבר:

*Naomi: "On Shabbat, it is prohibited for us to go beyond the Shabbat limit."*

*Ruth: "Where you go, I shall go."*

*Naomi: "It is forbidden for us to be secluded with a man."*

*Ruth: "Where you lodge, I shall lodge."*

*Naomi: "We are commanded to observe six hundred and thirteen mitzvot."*

*Ruth: "Your people are my people".*

*Naomi: "Idol worship is forbidden to us."*

*Ruth: "Your God is my God."*

*Naomi: "The court has the authority to execute sinners in four ways".*

*Ruth: "Where you die, I shall die."*

*Naomi: "Two burial grounds were handed over to the court for those executed."*

*Ruth: "And there I will be buried." (Talmud Bavli, Masechet Yevamot 47B)*

Why exclude Naomi's dialogue from the *Megillah* and leave it to the Talmud (and most Midrashim) to fill in the blanks for us with a less than inspiring Halachic approach? The *halachot* of how and when we can accept a convert are based upon these pesukim, so why is half the conversation absent in the *Megillah* itself? Incredibly, both the Rambam and the Shulchan Aruch follow the *Megillah*'s approach when discussing the Halachic parameters and rules of how we accept a convert. They specifically do not follow the Talmud's exegesis.

### **Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Laws of Issurei Biah 14:1-2**

כיצד מקבלין גרי הצדק. כשיבוא אחד להתגייר מן העכו"ם ויבדקו אחריו ולא ימצאו עליו. אומרים לו מה ראית שפאת להתגייר. אי אתה יודע שישאל בן זמן הזה דוויים ודחופים ומסחפים ומטרפין ויסורין באין עליהן. אם אמר אני יודע ואני כדאי מקבלין אותו מיד: ומודיעין אותו עקרי הדת שהוא יחיד השם ואסור עכו"ם. ומאריכין בדבר הזה. ומודיעין אותו מקצת מצוות קלות ומקצת מצוות חמורות. ואין מאריכין בדבר זה.

*What is the procedure when accepting a righteous convert? When one of the gentiles comes to convert, we inspect his background. If an ulterior motive for conversion is not found, we ask him: "Why did you choose to convert? Don't you know that in the present era, the Jews are afflicted, crushed, subjugated, strained, and suffering comes upon them?" If he answers: "I know and I do not consider myself worthy of joining", we accept him immediately. We then inform him of the fundamentals of the faith: the unity of God and the prohibition against the worship of idols. We elaborate on this matter. We inform him about some of the easy mitzvot and some of the more severe ones. We do not elaborate on this matter. (Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Laws of Issurei Biah 14:1-2)*

The Rambam says that we are not permitted to have a long, involved *Halachic* discussion with the potential convert ala Naomi and Ruth in the Talmud. Once we exclude any ulterior motives for conversion, we question the convert's sanity, "Why on earth would you ever want to join the most maligned and persecuted Nation in the World?" If the convert responds, "Yes, I know all about the dark history of the Jewish People, if only I was worthy to join them", we must convert them on the spot! Only after converting them do we even inform them that they can no longer worship idols and must believe in one God. The Rambam's words parallel those of Ruth. Hashem doesn't want a cerebral covenant based on Halachic minutiae; He wants our hearts! These are Ruth's own words to Naomi, "I am joining the Jewish People no matter what you say! No law or rule could possibly matter to me, for they are mere details. Whatever it takes and whatever it may mean for me, I am in!"



Ruth's words should be very familiar to each of us, for they echo the words that we said on Shavuot to Hashem: "And Moshe took the Book of the Covenant and read it within the hearing of the people, and they said, "All that the L-rd spoke we will do and (then) we will hear." Hashem asked us on Mt. Sinai, "Do you want to know what is written in My Torah?" We responded, "No, we are in, we love You and we want a relationship with You, tell us the details tomorrow."

It is nigh but impossible for us to even imagine what it really means to accept Hashem and His Torah. Ruth allows us to see ourselves from without, through her magnificent eyes, to help us fully appreciate the enormity of Hashem's gift, the privilege of being a member of Israel. May Ruth always inspire us and help lift us to new heights this Shavuot!

### Questions to ponder:

- What circumstances and dynamics have occurred over the centuries that necessitated the current model?
- Does Israel's right of return policy impact World conversion standards?
- How does *Klal Yisrael* view those who convert? Are we more like a Boaz or a *Ploni Almoni*?

## Measuring Success Jewishly

By Rabbi Dr. Mordechai Schiffman, Kingsway Jewish Center

How do you measure success in the realm of Torah study? Is it about getting a good grade on a test? Remembering pages of Gemara? Chapters of Tanach? Answering parsha questions at the Shabbat table? Coming in first place at a Kahoot Jewish trivia contest?

### **PART 1 - PRIMING QUESTIONS**

As we read the following two mishnayot from Pirkei Avot related to different types of students, let us think about the following questions;

- 1) Within each Mishna, what are the different qualities being described?
- 2) If relevant, what are the conclusions made about each quality?

<p><b><u>Avot 5:12</u></b></p> <p>There are four types of disciples:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Quick to comprehend, and quick to forget:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. his gain disappears in his loss;</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Slow to comprehend, and slow to forget:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. his loss disappears in his gain;</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Quick to comprehend, and slow to forget:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. he is a wise man;</li> </ol> </li> <li>4. Slow to comprehend, and quick to forget,             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. this is a bad portion.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<p><b><u>אבות ה:יב</u></b></p> <p>ארבע מדות בתלמידים.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. מהר לשמע ומהר לאבד,             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. יצא שכרו בהפסדו.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. קשה לשמע וקשה לאבד,             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. יצא הפסדו בשכרו.</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. מהר לשמע וקשה לאבד,             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. חכם.</li> </ol> </li> <li>4. קשה לשמע ומהר לאבד,             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. זה חלק רע:</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
<p><b><u>Avot 5:15</u></b></p> <p>There are four types among those who sit before the sages: a sponge, a funnel, a strainer and a sieve.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A sponge, soaks up everything;</li> <li>2. A funnel, takes in at one end and lets out at the other;</li> <li>3. A strainer, which lets out the wine and retains the lees;</li> <li>4. A sieve, which lets out the coarse meal and retains the choice flour.</li> </ol>	<p><b><u>אבות ה:טו</u></b></p> <p>ארבע מדות ביושבים לפני חכמים. ספוג, ומשפך, משמרת, ונפה.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. ספוג, שהוא סופג את הכל.</li> <li>2. משפך, שמכניס בזו ומוציא בזו.</li> <li>3. משמרת, שמוציאה את היין וקולטת את השמרים.</li> <li>4. ונפה, שמוציאה את הקמח וקולטת את הסלת:</li> </ol>

### **REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS**

- 1) In comparing the Mishnayot, what is the difference between the categories presented in the first Mishna versus those presented in the second Mishna?

*More directly, how would you fill in the blanks: The first Mishna is presenting four categories of students in relation to how well they \_\_\_\_\_, while the second is discussing how well they \_\_\_\_\_.*

*2) How did the students get to be so different? Is there anything they can do to change?*

*3) What is the purpose of these Mishnayot? They seem to just be descriptive – should we be learning anything from them?*

After thinking about these questions, let us now see how Rabbi Simeon ben Zemah Duran (14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries), addressed these issues in his commentary to the second Mishna.

<p>Those with these traits are not described as being pious or wicked, because it is not within their control to improve them. The same was mentioned for the students described in the context of memory and forgetting. This Mishna is not discussing memory and forgetting but is describing those who have the ability to reason accurately and discern what is incorrect. This trait is a gift from G-d and is not in the hands of the individual, therefore there is no judgment of piety or wickedness.</p>	<p>אלו המדות אין ראוי להקרא בהם האדם חסיד ורשע, כי אין בידו להיות לו מדה יותר טובה ממה שיש בו. וכבר זכר זה בתלמידים ארבע מדות שהן לענין הזכרונות והשכחה. וזאת המשנה לא באה לפרש ענין הזכרון והשכחה, אלא לפרש מי שיש כח בידו לברור הדעת הנכונה ולהניח את שאינה נכונה. וזאת המדה היא מתת אלקים שהיא טובה ואינה ביד האדם, ואין בזה חסיד ורשע. וארבע מדות יש בהם</p>
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Before reading further, see if you can answer the reflection questions from above, based on Rabbi Duran's commentary.

According to Rabbi Duran, the first Mishna is addressing memory and the second is referring to the ability to reason and think clearly. In both Mishnayot, unlike others in the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter of Avot, there is no character judgement, as these abilities are not within one's control. The students can only be evaluated and held responsible if the traits were in their control, and the assumption is that their memory or ability to reason is not totally in their control and depends on Hashem.

What do you think? Does a student have the ability to improve his or her memory or reasoning? Should one be judged or graded based on those abilities?

## **PART 2**

Being that our memory and reasoning skills aren't completely in our hands, does it make sense to judge our success in Torah learning based on tasks that require memory and reasoning skills? If not, is there a way to assess success? What are the ramifications for how we judge ourselves, our students, our children?

With these questions in mind, let us reflect on another question. One of the verbs commonly used to describe learning Torah is עמל – to toil. What is the significance of this word choice?

Rabbi Yosef Yavetz (14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries), in his commentary on **Avot 6:4**, writes as follows;

I have already written numerous times, that Hashem does now require of us knowledge of Torah, only according to each individual's potential. That is why the word "labor" is used, because according to the pain is the reward, not according to the learning retained...	כבר כתבתי פעמים רבות, כי לא ידרוש השי"ת ממנו ידיעת התורה כי אם כפי הכנת כל אחד ואחד. ולזה כיון באומרו עמל, כי לפום צערא אגרא לא לפי הלימוד...
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Hashem does not judge us based on how much knowledge we know compared to anyone else. It is a subjective judgement related to our abilities and based on how much effort we input. The word עמל is used to highlight that the essence of learning is toil, effort, and grit, not objective results.

On a similar note, when Rabbi Tarfon's states that "if you have studied much Torah, you shall be given much reward" (**Avot 2:16**), Maharal (16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries) is so troubled by the possible reading that reward is given for the amount of Torah learned, that he argues fervently that this cannot be what the Mishna means!

Rather, we can suggest that we are talking about effort. If you learned, (meaning) you toiled immensely, you receive rewards based on the toil and the difficulty... But for sure, if one person has amassed more knowledge over the course of a year's worth of effort, and one person attained less knowledge with the same effort, they are both equal.	ואפשר לומר בכאן לענין העמל נאמר, שאם למדת תורה ונצטערת עליה הרבה נותנין לך שכר הרבה לפי העמל והטורח... אבל בודאי אם אחד למד תורה הרבה בשנה אחת על ידי עמל שנה, ואחד למד תורה מועטת בעמל שנה שניהם שווים
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Torah learning is not judged based on information amassed, but on effort exerted!

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## CONCLUSION

Recent educational and psychological research indicates that success in learning doesn't necessarily flow from innate intelligence. Our effort, passion, and perseverance can propel those with lesser innate abilities to success. Conversely, lack of effort, passion, and perseverance can stunt the success of those who are innately talented. Celebrating effort is more effective than praising results.

This has been the rubric for grading Talmud Torah for millennia.

Success in learning Torah is not measured based on information attained, but rather on how much effort we put in. Some people can think more clearly or more in depth than others. Some people have better memories than others. We shouldn't judge ourselves or others either positively or negatively based on how much knowledge we have. Instead we should focus our energies on increasing our effort, passion, and perseverance, the true measures of success.

"קנאת סופרים תרבה חכמה"

## Re-examining Chavruta Learning in the Era of Social Distancing

By Rabbi Dovid Zirkind, Riverdale Jewish Center, New York



*The Bookworm*



*A Discussion of the Talmud*

Carl Schleicher (19<sup>th</sup> Century)

### RABBIS AND TALMUDISTS IN SCHLEICHER'S PAINTING (WIKIPEDIA)

A part of Carl Schleicher's plastic production is closely related to Judaic studies and Ashkenazi art. The exchange of ideas and interpretations among the Talmudist rabbis was a subject to which Schleicher dedicated a considerable number of oil paintings. Loaded with anecdotal material, such paintings constitute a valuable record of the uses and customs of Ashkenazi Jews in Europe...

The theme addressed by Schleicher concerns both the Jewish dialectical-exegetical experience and modern art. Schleicher's paintings are characterized by being not only descriptive, but also by sharply capturing the atmosphere of study that governed the life of the Talmudists: study certainly not without seriousness and dedication, and including interesting dialogues and surprising ideas, but also of problematic contradictions, endless discussions and humor.

The goal of this study guide is to offer some learning on how we learn; reflecting on the history and philosophy of interactive Torah study. Much like Carl Schleicher's art from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century featured above, the dynamics of Torah learning, passionate chavrutot and raucous *Batei Midrash* are an essential piece of how our tradition has been passed down from generation to generation.



Shavuot celebrates the *Kol Torah* – the booming voice of Torah study that has inspired our heritage. As you study this Shavuot please consider some of the following:

- What exactly does Chavruta mean? Where does the term originate?
- How does studying alone differ from learning in groups?
- How might the Torah we have today be different if Chavrutot were not a part of our history?

### Section 1: Rav Yochanan

*Two stories involving Rav Yochanan teach us a great deal about what a Chavruta is and why it is essential to leading a meaningful life of learning. Let's study what Rav Yochanan taught about the power of friendship and how it manifested in his amazing career.*

תלמוד בבלי מסכת תענית דף כג עמוד א  
אמר רבי יוחנן: כל ימיו של אותו צדיק היה מצטער על מקרא זה "שיר המעלות בשוב ה' את שיבת ציון היינו כחולמים."  
אמר: מי איכא דניים שבעין שנים בחלמא? יומא חד הוה אזל באורחא, חזייה לההוא גברא דהוה נטע חרובא, אמר ליה:  
האי, עד כמה שנים טעין? - אמר ליה: עד שבעין שנים. אמר ליה: פשיטא לך דחיית שבעין שנים? אמר ליה: האי [גברא]  
עלמא בחרובא אשכחתי, כי היכי דשתלי לי אבהתי - שתלי נמי לבראי. יתיב, קא כריך ריפתא, אתא ליה שינתא, נים.  
אהדרא ליה משונתא, איכסי מעינא, ונים שבעין שנים. כי קם חזייה לההוא גברא דהוה קא מלקט מינייהו. אמר ליה: את  
הוא דשתלתי? - אמר ליה: בר בריה אנא. אמר ליה: שמע מינה דניימי שבעין שנים. חזא לחמריה דאתיילידא ליה רמכי  
רמכי. אזל לביתיה, אמר להו: בריה דחוני המעגל מי קיים? - אמרו ליה: בריה ליתא, בר בריה איתא. אמר להו: אנא חוני  
המעגל. לא הימנוהו. אזל לבית המדרש, שמעינהו לרבנן דקאמרי: נהירן שמעתתין כבשני חוני המעגל, דכי הוי עייל לבית  
מדרשא, כל קושיא דהוה לרובנן הוה מפרק להו. אמר להו: אנא ניהו, ולא הימנוהו, ולא עבדי ליה יקרא כדמבעי ליה,  
חלש דעתי, בעי רחמי ומית. אמר רבא, היינו דאמרי אינשי: או חברותא או מיתותא.

Rabbi Yochanan said: "This righteous man [Honi] was troubled throughout the whole of his life concerning the meaning of the verse, A Song of Ascents: When the Lord brought back those that returned to Zion, we were like dreamers. [Honi asked] Is it possible for seventy years to be like a dream? How could anyone sleep for seventy years?"

One day Honi was journeying on the road and he saw a man planting a carob tree. He asked, "How long does it take [for this tree] to bear fruit?" The man replied: "Seventy years." Honi then further asked him: "Are you certain that you will live another seventy years?" The man replied: "I found carob trees in the world; as my forefathers planted those for me so I too plant these for my children." Honi sat down to have a meal and sleep overcame him. As he slept a rocky formation enclosed upon him which hid him from sight and he slept for seventy years.

When he awoke he saw a man gathering the fruit of the carob tree and Honi asked him, "Are you the man who planted the tree?" The man replied: "I am his grandson." Thereupon Honi exclaimed: "It is clear that I have slept for seventy years." He then caught sight of his

donkey which had given birth to several generations of mules, and he returned home. There he inquired, "Is the son of Honi the Circle-Drawer still alive?" The people answered him, "His son is no more, but his grandson is still living." Thereupon he said to them: "I am Honi the Circle-Drawer," but no one would believe him. Next he returned to the beit ha-midrash and there he overheard the scholars say, "The law is as clear to us as in the days of Honi the Circle-Drawer," for whenever he came to the Beit Hamidrash he would settle for the scholars any difficulty that they had. Whereupon he called out, "I am he!" But the scholars would not believe him nor did they give him the honor due to him. This hurt him greatly and he prayed for mercy, and he died. Raba said: "Hence the saying, **'Either companionship or death.'**"

תלמוד בבלי מסכת בבא מציעא דף פד עמוד א

יומא חד הוה קא סחי רבי יוחנן בירדנא, חזייה ריש לקיש ושוור לירדנא אבתריה, אמר ליה: חילך לאורייתא! - אמר ליה: שופרך לנשי! - אמר ליה: אי הדרת בך - יהיבנא לך אחותי, דשפירא מינאי. קביל עליה. בעי למיהדר לאתויי מאניה - ולא מצי הדר. אקרייה ואתנייה, ושווייה גברא רבא. יומא חד הוו מפלגי בי מדרשא: הסייף והסכין והפגיון והרומח ומגל יד ומגל קציר מאימתי מקבלין טומאה - משעת גמר מלאכתן, ומאימתי גמר מלאכתן? רבי יוחנן אומר: משיצרפם בכבשן, ריש לקיש אומר: משיצחצחון במים. - אמר ליה: לסטאה בלסטיותיה ידע! - אמר ליה: ומאי אהנת לי? התם רבי קרו לי, הכא רבי קרו לי. אמר ליה: אהנאי לך דאקרביןך תחת כנפי השכינה. חלש דעתיה דרבי יוחנן, חלש ריש לקיש. אתאי אחתיה קא בכיא, אמרה ליה: עשה בשביל בני! אמר לה: העזבה יתמיד אני אחיה. - עשה בשביל אלמנותי! - אמר לה: וואלמנותיך עלי תבטחו. נח נפשיה דרבי שמעון בן לקיש, והוה קא מצטער רבי יוחנן בתריה טובא. אמרו רבנן: מאן ליזיל ליתביה לדעתיה - ניזיל רבי אלעזר בן פדת, דמחדדין שמעתתיה. אזל יתיב קמיה, כל מילתא דהוה אמר רבי יוחנן אמר ליה: תניא דמסייעא לך. אמר: את כבר לקישא? בר לקישא, כי הוה אמינא מילתא - הוה מקשי לי עשרין וארבע קושייתא, ומפרקינא ליה עשרין וארבעה פרוקי, וממילא רווחא שמעתא. ואת אמרת תניא דמסייע לך, אטו לא ידענא דשפיר קאמינא? הוה קא אזיל וקרע מאניה, וקא בכי ואמר: היכא את בר לקישא, היכא את בר לקישא, והוה קא צוח עד דשף דעתיה [מיניה]. בעו רבנן רחמי עליה ונח נפשיה.



One day R.Yochanan was bathing in the Jordan, when Resh Lakish saw him and leapt into the Jordan after him. Said R. Yochanan to him, 'Your strength should be for the Torah. 'Your beauty,' he replied, 'should be for women.' 'If you will repent,' said he, 'I will give you my sister [in marriage], who is more beautiful than I.' He undertook [to repent]; then he wished to return and collect his weapons, but could not. Subsequently, [R.Yochanan] taught him Chumash and Mishnah, and made him into a great man.

Now, one day there was a dispute in the Beit Midrash with respect to the following; a sword, knife, dagger, spear, hand-saw and a scythe — at what stage [of their manufacture] can they become unclean? When their manufacture is finished. And when is their manufacture finished? — R. Yochanan ruled: When they are tempered in a furnace. Resh Lakish maintained: When they have been furbished in water. Said he to him: 'A robber understands his trade. Said he to him, 'And wherewith have you benefited me: there [as a robber] I was called Master, and here I am called Master. 'By bringing you under the wings of the Shechinah,' he retorted. R. Yochanan therefore felt himself deeply hurt, [as a result of which] Resh Lakish fell ill. His sister came and wept before him: 'Forgive him for the sake of my son,' she pleaded. He replied: 'Leave thy fatherless children. I will preserve them alive. 'For the sake of my widowhood then!' 'And let thy widows trust in me, he assured her.

Resh Lakish died, and R. Johanan was plunged into deep grief. Said the Rabbis, 'Who shall go to ease his mind? Let R. Eleazar b. Peda go, whose disquisitions are very subtle.' So he went and sat before him; and on every dictum uttered by R. Yochanan he observed: 'There is a Baraitha which Supports you.' **'Are you like Reis Lakisha? he complained: 'when I stated a law, Reish Lakisha used to raise twenty-four objections, to which I gave twenty-four answers, which consequently led to a fuller comprehension of the law; while you say, "A Baraitha has been taught which supports you:" do I not know myself that my rulings are right?'** Thus he went on rending his garments and weeping, 'Where are you, O son of Lakisha, where are you, O son of Lakisha,' and he cried thus until his mind was turned. Thereupon the Rabbis prayed for him, and he died.

### Reflections:

Rav Yochanan offers us a window in the psychology of friendship and collegiality. In telling the story of Choni HaMaagal in tragic fashion Rav Yochanan highlights the power of social bonds and the importance of connection. In the Gemara's recounting of his personal story, we see it was more than friendship that Rav Yochanan sought. Reish Lakish, was his friend, his brother-in-law but also his greatest challengers. For him, Chavruta was an amalgamation of all these relationships. In its purest form, Chavruta made Rav Yochanan into the sage he became.

### Section 2: Healthy Competition

*Chazal encourage us to compete hard for that which is most precious. But they also expect that we know where to draw the line...*

תלמוד בבלי מסכת בבא בתרא דף כא עמוד ב

אמר רב יוסף: ומודי רב הונא במקרי דרדקי דלא מצי מעכב, דאמר מר: עזרא תיקן להן לישראל שיהו מושיבין סופר בצד סופר. וניחוש דילמא אתי לאיתרשולי. א"ל קנאת סופרים תרבה חכמה. אמר רב נחמן בר יצחק: ומודה רב הונא בריה דרב יהושע ברוכלין המחזירין בעיירות דלא מצי מעכב, דאמר מר: עזרא תקן להן לישראל שיהו רוכלין מחזירין בעיירות, כדי שיהו תכשיטין מצויין לבנות ישראל. והני מילי לאהדורי, אבל לאקבועי לא.

**Rav Yosef said: And Rav Huna, who said that a resident of an alleyway can prevent another from setting up an additional mill, concedes with regard to those who teach children that one cannot prevent, as the Master said: Ezra instituted for the Jewish people that they establish one teacher alongside another teacher, to raise the standard of teaching. And let us be concerned lest they will thereby come to be negligent. Rav Yosef said to them: Jealousy among teachers increases wisdom.**

תלמוד בבלי מסכת סנהדרין דף כד עמוד א

אמר רבי אושעיא: מאי דכתיב "ואקה לי שני מקלות לאחד קראתי נועם ולאחד קראתי חובלים", נועם - אלו תלמידי חכמים שבארץ ישראל, שמנעימין זה לזה בהלכה. חובלים - אלו תלמידי חכמים שבבבל, שמחבלים זה לזה בהלכה. "ויאמר אלה שני בני היצהר העמדים וגו' גושנים זיתים עליה." יצהר אמר רבי יצחק: אלו תלמידי חכמים שבארץ ישראל, שנוחין זה לזה בהלכה כשמן זית, ושנים זיתים עליה - אלו תלמידי חכמים שבבבל שמרורין זה לזה בהלכה כזית.



"Quit worrying about corroborating your sources—it's not as if anyone's going to take all this literally."

Rabbi Oshaya says: What is written: "And I took for myself two staves; the one I called Graciousness, and the other I called Binders" ([Zechariah 11:7](#))? "Graciousness"; these are the Torah scholars in Eretz Yisrael, who are gracious to one another in *halakha*. "Binders [*hovelim*]"; these are the Torah scholars in Bavel, who injure [*shemehabbelim*] each other in *halakha*, i.e., they speak harshly to each other when they disagree.

מהרש"א חידושי אגדות מסכת בבא בתרא דף כא עמוד א

דקנאת סופרים תרבה כו'. לא אמר קנאת חכמים תרבה חכמה כי המגיע כבר למעלת החכם לא יתקנא בחבירו והחכמה נוספת בו ממילא כמ"ש ישמע חכם ויוסיף לקח אבל הסופרים דנקט הם שעדיין לא הגיעו למעלת החכמים כמו המקרי דרדקי קנאתם בחבריהם תרבה להם החכמה להגיע למעלת חכם וק"ל:

The Talmud does not say that the jealousy of "sages" enhances wisdom because one who reaches the level of a *Chacham* will not be jealous of his fellow. Moreover, his wisdom will continue to flourish as it states: "The wise one will listen and add possessions." Scribes

[Sofarim] that are referred to here have not yet reached the level of wisdom. They are simple teachers of children that are jealous of one another. In such a case their jealousy of one another propels them to reach the level of the sage.

### **Conclusions:**

The way in which Torah has been studied throughout the ages impacted the individuals who studied it as well as the way Torah was accepted and disseminated. There is little doubt that Chazal's decision to highlight Machloket rather than deny it emerges from a celebration of dispute and discussion in the first place. Our love of Machloket is not only an instinct but a marker of how rigorous Torah debate has produced the ideas we benefit from to this day. Orit Kent conducted research for Brandeis University about the learning benefits of studying with a Chavruta. To close, I share the final the paragraph of her thesis:

*It is through a deliberate learning relationship such as a havruta that participants can create the space to notice and respond to another. Carini seems to suggest that it is in such responsive space that we begin to see not only others better but also ourselves and our own ideas, and that through this process of seeing and relating, we create meaning. Perhaps it is the power of this responsive space to which the Talmud alludes when it tell us that when two people listen to each other when studying halakhah, the Shekhinah--God's essence on earth--listens to them.*

## Angels and Demons: Managing Our Good & Evil Inclinations

By Rabbi Avi Heller, OU Regional Director for New Jersey

In the comic books, the bad angel stands on one shoulder with a pitchfork and the good angel on the other with a halo. In Judaism, we call these two influences the “*yetzer ha-tov*”, the inclination to good and the “*yetzer ha-ra*” the inclination to evil. But those urges and desires are not imposed upon us from without; they are part of who we are and how Hashem created us. If God created us this way, there must also be a way to succeed in life with both the good and evil parts within us. With your *chavruta*, make your way through the following few sources. *(The sources should take you around 30 minutes to read through and discuss.)*

**STEP 1: Read these 2 verses about the creation of human beings from B’reisheet 1:27 and 2:7:**

וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם:

**(1:27)** And Elohim created mankind in (h)is image, in the image of Elohim He created him, male and female He created them.

וַיִּצְרֶה אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָדָם עָפָר מִן-הָאֲדָמָה וַיִּפַּח בְּאַפִּיו נִשְׁמַת חַיִּים וַיְהִי הָאָדָם לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה:

**(2:7)** And Hashem Elohim formed mankind as dust from the ground and He blew a soul of life into his nostrils, and the man became a living spirit.

**Navigator: A few starter questions to discuss:**

- What does it mean that Elohim created us in “his image”? Is it “His” image or “his” image?
- Note that the first word of the second source (*vayeetzer*, וַיִּצְרֶה) has two yods. This is the only time it is ever spelled this way. We will see below what chazal thought was the meaning of these two yods. If each “yod” stands for something, what else in this verse might they correspond to?
- In pasuk 2:7, What do you think is the difference between “soul” (*neshama*) and spirit (*nefesh*)?

**STEP 2: Now, read what God says about the human beings He created, in B'reisheet 6:5 and 8:21. For context, this is right before God brings the Flood, the mabbul.**

וַיֵּרָא ה' כִּי רָבָה רָעַת הָאָדָם בְּאָרְץ וְכָל־יֵצֶר מַחְשַׁבַת לִבּוֹ רָק רָע כָּל־הַיּוֹם:

6:5 - *And Hashem saw that great was the evil of mankind and that all the inclinations of the thoughts of his heart were only evil all day long.*

*mankind, for the inclination of the heart of man is evil from ... - 8:21*  
*his youth*

Navigator: As opposed to praising human beings for being created in Hashem's image, this view seems to see them – and their yetzer -- as evil and bad from the beginning. Perhaps this next source, from the Talmud, Sukka 52a, can balance the two views:

אתא ההוא סבא תנא ליה כל הגדול מחבירו יצרו גדול הימנו אמר רבי יצחק יצרו של אדם מתגבר עליו בכל יום שנאמר (בראשית ו, ה) רק רע כל היום אמר רבי שמעון בן לקיש יצרו של אדם מתגבר עליו בכל יום ומבקש להמיתו שנאמר (תהלים לז, לב) צופה רשע לצדיק ומבקש להמיתו ואלמלא הקב"ה שעוזר לו אינו יכול לו שנאמר' (תהלים לז, לג) ה' לא יעזבנו בידו ולא ירשיענו בהשפטו

*...Whoever is greater than his friend, his evil inclination is greater [as well.] Said R. Yitzchak: the inclination of a man overpowers him every day as it says "only evil all day long". Said R. Shimon ben Lakish: the inclination of a man overpowers him every day and tries to kill him and were it not that the Holy One, Blessed be He, assists him - he would not make it, as it says "God will not abandon him into its hand and he will not incriminate us in his judgment." ...*

Navigator: The greater a person's good yetzer, the more evil yetzer they have in them. These things should be in natural balance, but the gemara seems pessimistic about this; it is only with Hashem's help that our good yetzer can prevail.

### **Questions:**

- *The sources in step 1 introduce the sin of eating the forbidden fruit. The sources in step 2 introduce the sin of the flood. Do you think it is inevitable that human beings will sin? What can we do to stop it from happening?*
- *Is it bad or good that God created us with a strong evil inclination? On what might it depend?*



**STEP 3: How do we fight against the *yetzer hara*? Read the following and ask whether or not they help prepare us to take a stand. Each source suggests at least one strategy for fighting the *yetzer hara*.**

### **1) Berachot 61a**

R. Nachman the son of R. Chisda expounded: Why is it written ‘And Hashem Elohim formed mankind’ with two *yods*? [Because] the Holy One created two inclinations in him, one good inclination and one evil inclination. R. Nachman the son of R. Yitzchak attacked this saying: If so, an animal -- where “and He formed” is written with only one *yod* -- must not have an [evil] inclination, yet don’t we see animals that cause willful damage, bite and kick? Rather, [the explanation is like the opinion of] R. Shimon b. Pazi, who says: “Woe is me from my maker {*yotzri*} [if I sin] and woe is me from my inclination {*yitzri*} [if I don’t sin].

### **2) Sukka 52a**

In the future, the Holy One, Blessed Be He, will bring the evil inclination and slaughter it before the righteous and before the wicked. The righteous -- it will seem to them like a high mountain. The wicked - it will seem to them like a single hair. These will cry and those will cry. The righteous will cry and say “How were we ever able to conquer this huge mountain” and the wicked will cry and say “How were we not able to conquer this little hair? and even the Holy One will be amazed with them...Said R. Assi - at first, the evil inclination appears like a weaver’s thread (*i.e. very thin*) and in the end it seems like a cart rope (*i.e. very thick*)...

### **3) Kiddushin 30b**

So says the Holy One, Blessed be He, says to Israel: “I have created the evil inclination and I have created the Torah as an antidote. If you busy yourselves with Torah, you will not be given into its power as it says “If you will do well, you will be lifted up”, and if you do not busy yourselves with Torah, you will be given into its power, as it says: “at the doorway crouches sin” and not only that, but all of its business will be with you, as it says “to you will be its desire” but if you want, you will rule it, as it says “and you may rule it.”

### **4) Shabbat 105b**

R. Shimon ben Elazar said in the name of Chilfa bar Igra, who said in the name of R. Yochanan ben Nuri: One who tears his clothes in anger, or breaks something in anger, or who wastes his money in anger - it should be in your eyes like he is one who worships idols; for this is the artistry of the evil inclination, today he tells you ‘do this’ and tomorrow he says ‘do that’ until he tells you to worship idols and you go and worship them. Said R. Avin what is read “You shall not have a strange gods within you and do not bow down to

a foreign God”, which is a strange God that is within the body of a man - say this is the evil inclination.

### 5) Maimonides, Laws of Repentance 3:3

...a person should view himself the whole year round as if they were 50% worthy and 50% guilty. And [they should view] the whole world as 50% worthy and 50% guilty. If he commits one sin he could tilt himself and the whole world to the side of guilt and cause destruction. If he performs one mitzva he could tilt himself and the whole world to the side of worthiness and cause salvation and succor as it says “the righteous one is the foundation of the world, i.e. the one who does *tzedeq* tilts the whole world to worthiness and saves it.

**STEP 4: Final thoughts: it may be impossible for a person to always choose good over evil and always follow their good inclination. But every day is a new day and every decision is another opportunity. In this next source, the gemara suggests that when we make good decisions, such as honoring Shabbat, even “bad angels” bless us to keep doing more *mitzvot*.**

### Shabbat 119b

אמר מר עוקבא כל המתפלל בערב שבת ואומר ויכולו שני מלאכי השרת המלוין לו לאדם מניחין ידיהן על ראשו ואומרים לו וסר עונך וחטאתך תכפר תניא רבי יוסי בר יהודה אומר שני מלאכי השרת מלוין לו לאדם בערב שבת מבית הכנסת לביתו אחד טוב ואחד רע וכשבא לביתו ומצא נר דלוק ושלחן ערוך ומטתו מוצעת מלאך טוב אומר יהי רצון שתהא לשבת אחרת כך ומלאך רע עונה אמן בעל כרחו ואם לאו מלאך רע אומר יהי רצון שתהא לשבת אחרת כך ומלאך טוב עונה אמן בעל כרחו

*Said Mar Ukva: Anyone who prays Friday night and says “va-yechulu” the two ministering angels who accompany each person place their hands on his head and say “Let your sins and transgressions depart!” It was taught in a Baraita: Rabbi Yosi the son of Rav Yehuda said: two ministering angels accompany a person home from shul on Friday night – one good and one evil. When they come to his house and find a lit candle, a set table and a ready couch, the good angel says “May it be His will that it be like this next Shabbat.” And the bad angel answers Amen against his will. And if not, the bad angel says: “May it be His will that it be like this next Shabbat.” And the good angel answers Amen against his will.*

Navigator: Rambam says that these two angels ARE the good and evil inclinations inside of us. In addition, as the following final source suggests, our good inclination is always getting stronger as we get older and more mature. By doing good actions and becoming wiser, we can build up spiritual momentum for the good.

### **Maimonides – Guide for the Perplexed - Book 3, chapter 22 (Friedlander)**

The theory of the good and evil inclinations is frequently referred to in our religion. Our Sages also say: “serve God with your good and your evil intentions.” (*Berachot 57a*) They also say that our evil inclination we receive at our birth; for at the door sin croucheth” (*Gen 4:7*) as is distinctly said in the Law, “and the imagination (ed. yetzer) of the heart of man is evil from his youth” (*Gen 8:21*) The good inclination, however, comes when the mind is developed...it is to the good and the evil inclinations that they refer in their well-known words, “Every person is accompanied by two angels, one being on his right side, one on his left.: In the Babylonian Gemara (*Shabbat 119b*) they say distinctly of the two angels that one is good and one bad.

#### ***Navigator’s Final questions:***

- *What techniques do you have for defeating your yetzer ha-ra?*
- *What new techniques would you like to develop?*

## Machshirei Ochel Nefesh

By Rabbi Nisan Andrews, Congregation Sons of Israel, Allentown Pennsylvania

It is well known that the preparation of food is allowed on Yom-Tov. This is, in fact, established within the text of the Torah itself (ז"ב ט"ז שמות י):

וּבַיּוֹם הַרְאִשׁוֹן מִקְרָא־קֹדֶשׁ וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מִקְרָא־קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם כָּל־מְלָאכָה לֹא־יַעֲשֶׂה

בָּהֶם אֲךְ אֲשֶׁר יֵאָכֵל לְכָל־נֶפֶשׁ הוּא לַבְדּוֹ יַעֲשֶׂה לָכֶם:

*You shall celebrate a sacred occasion on the first day (of Pesach), and a sacred occasion on the seventh day; no work at all shall be done on them; only what every person is to eat, that alone may be prepared for you (Exodus 12:16).*

This means that all manner of מלאכה (labour or work) which would typically be prohibited on שבת (Shabbat), like cooking food, kneading dough, etc. would be permitted on Yom-Tov.

The question is how many degrees of separation from the preparation of food is still considered food prep. For example, while finely chopping food is definitely considered נפש אוכל and permitted on Yom-Tov, despite its Shabbat prohibition, is sharpening a knife also covered by this exemption? We call this facilitating food preparation מכשירי אוכל נפש.

In truth, this was an argument found in the Talmud (ביצה כח):

דרש רב חסדא ואיתימא רב יוסף אחד סכין שנפגמה ואחד שפוד שנרצם ואחד גריפת תנור וכירים ביום טוב באנו למחלוקת ק אמר ט"ז דת"ט לשבת אלא אוכל נפש בלבד ר' יהודה מתיר אף מכשירי אוכל נפש מ"ר' יהודה ורבנן דתניא אין בין יו ק הא כתיב "קרא (שמות יב, טז) הוא לבדו יעשה לכם הוא ולא מכשיריו ור' יהודה אמר קרא לכם לכל צרכיכם ות לכם אמר לך ההוא לכם ולא לנכרים ואידך נמי הא כתיב הוא אמר לך כתיב הוא וכתוב לכם ולא קשיא כאן במכשירין ט"ז כאן במכשירין שאי אפשר לעשותן מערב יו"ש אפשר לעשותן מערב יו

**Rav H̄isda taught, and some say it was Rav Yosef who taught: A knife that became nicked on a Festival, a roasting skewer [shappud] that was crushed on a Festival and its point broke off, and the sweeping of the coals in an oven and a stove on a Festival to prepare them for baking, with regard to all of these we have arrived at the dispute between Rabbi Yehuda and the Rabbis. As it is taught in a Baraita: The difference between a Festival and Shabbat is only with regard to the preparation of food. Rabbi Yehuda permits even actions that facilitate preparation of food on a Festival. The Gemara explains: What is the reason of the first Tanna for prohibiting actions that facilitate food preparation? The verse states: "Save that which every person must eat, that alone may be done for you" (Exodus 12:16), from which it may be inferred: "That" may be done on a Festival, but not actions that facilitate it. And Rabbi Yehuda adduces proof for his view from the fact that the verse states: "For you," indicating: For you, for all your needs, and that which facilitates food preparation is also a need. The Gemara asks: And according to the first Tanna, is it not written: "for you"? What does he learn from this phrase? The Gemara answers: That Tanna could have said to you that that phrase comes to teach: For you, but not for gentiles. The Gemara asks: And according to the other Tanna, Rabbi Yehuda, too,**

**isn't it written: "That,"** which indicates a limitation? The Gemara explains that Rabbi Yehuda could have **said to you: The limiting word "that" is written, and the expansive phrase "for you,"** indicating all your needs, **is written** as well, **but this is not difficult, and no contradiction is involved. One can say that here, it is referring to actions that facilitate food preparation that can be performed on the eve of the Festival;** the Torah prohibits these on a Festival. **There, it is referring to actions that facilitate food preparation that cannot be performed on the eve of the Festival.** The latter may be performed even on the Festival itself, as they too are part of the preparation of food, similar to cooking. (Beitzah 28b)

The implication from a previous page of the Talmud is that the Halacha follows the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda and facilitating food preparation נפש מכושירי אוכל is permitted:

ל רבא לרב חסדא דרשינן משמך הלכה כרבי יהודה אמר ליה יהא רעוא דכל כי הני מילי מעלייתא תדרשון משמאי"א

**Rava said to Rav Hisda: We teach in your name that the halakha is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda. He said to him: May it be God's will that you teach in my name all outstanding matters like this. In other words, Rav Hisda was pleased that this teaching was attributed to him, as he too agreed with it.**

Seemingly, this discussion should conclude as the Shulchan Aruch (Rabbi Yosef Karo C16th), Arba'ah Turim (Jacob ben Asher C14th.), Rosh (Asher ben Yechiel C13th), and Smag (Rabbi Moses ben Jacob of Coucy C13th.) all decide following Rabbi Yehuda's lenient opinion (ע"ש) (ה'א"תצ).

כל מלאכה האסורה בשבת אסורה ביום טוב חוץ ממלאכת אוכל נפש וחוץ מהוצאה והבערה וכן מכושירי אוכל נפש שלא הי' אפשר לעשותם מאתמול

*All work that is forbidden on Shabbos is prohibited on Yom Tov, except for work of preparing food, and except for carrying and igniting, and also tasks facilitating food preparation that were not able to be done the day before. (Shulchan Aruch 495:1)*

We also see from various cases mentioned in the Talmud that, according to Rabbi Yehuda, the Halacha would be lenient. Three notable examples would be: 1) Sharpening a knife (ibid) 2) extinguishing a fire to prevent the pot from becoming smoky (22a) and 3) extinguishing a light for a wife and husband to be intimate (ibid) as intimacy is considered an extension of נפש as it is a similar bodily need.

The problem arises in that all of the aforementioned cases, the Shulchan Aruch decides against the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda:

ד א"ו אין מכבין הבקעת אפי' כדי שלא יתעשן הבית או הקדירה או כדי לשמש מטתו: תקי

ט"פ שהוא יכול לפשטו בידו אין מתקנין אותו: תק"שפוד שנרצף אע

The only case the Shulchan Aruch decides following Rabbi Yehuda's lenient opinion is with regards to shovelling out coal from the floor of the oven to make enough room to place a pot of food and thereby extinguishing the flames.

How can we explain this glaring contradiction in the Shulchan Aruch? How can he decide the Halacha to be according to Rabbi Yehuda, only to decide against him in most situations?

Rabbi Yechiel Michel Epstein (1829–1908), in his work, the Aruch Hashulchan explains as follows. The Talmud itself is not clear if the Halacha follows Rabbi Yehuda's opinion. Despite all that we have read until now, the Gemara states (כז:):

ואמר אביי הוה קאימנא קמיה דמר והוה קא מעבר סכינא אשפתא דרחיא ואמרי ליה לחדדה קא בעי מר או להעביר שמגונתה ואמר לי להעביר שמגונתה וחזיתי לדעתיה: דלחדדה קא עביד וקסבר הלכה ואין מורין כן

***Abaye said: I was standing before my Master and teacher, Rabba, and he was running a knife over the edge of a millstone on a Festival. And I said to him: Does the Master wish to sharpen it, or is he doing this in order to remove its fat? And he said to me: To remove its fat. And I perceived his intention, that he did so in order to sharpen it, but he holds: This is the halakha, but a public ruling is not issued to that effect. (Beitzah 28b)***

The Gemara appears to be ambivalent or unsure. That, however, is an untenable and unsatisfactory conclusion. It is so unacceptable that the Rambam himself provides a novel interpretation that undoes any contradiction.

He writes (משנה תורה, הלכות שביתת יום טוב א' ח):

אָבֵל לִישׁוֹן וְאוֹפִין וְשׁוֹחֲטִין וּמִבְשְׁלִין בְּיוֹם טוֹב. וְשֵׂאֵם עֵשָׂה אֵלָיו מִבְעָרָב יֵשׁ בְּקֶדֶד הַפֶּסֶד אוֹ חֲסָרוֹן טַעַם. וְשֵׂאִין לֶחֶם חֵם אוֹ תַבְשִׁיל וְשִׁבְשֵׁל הַיּוֹם כִּלְחָם שֶׁנֶּאֱמָרָה מֵאֲמִישׁ וְכַתְּבִישִׁיל וְשֶׁנֶּתְבִשֵּׁל מֵאֲמִישׁ. וְלֹא בָשָׂר שֶׁנֶּגְשַׁחֵט הַיּוֹם כִּבְשָׂר שֶׁנֶּגְשַׁחֵט מֵאֲמִישׁ. וְכֵן כֹּל כִּיּוֹצֵא בָאֵלוֹ. וְכֵן מִכְשִׁירֵי אֶבֶל נִכְשׁ שֵׁשׁ בְּהֵן חֲסָרוֹן אִם נַעֲשׂוּ מִבְעָרָב עוֹשִׂין אוֹתָן בְּיוֹם טוֹב. כְּגוֹן שְׂחִיקַת תַּבְלִין וְכִיּוֹצֵא בְהֵן

*But we may knead, bake, slaughter and cook on a festival. For if one did these from the eve of the holiday, there is a loss or a lack [in the] taste with it. As bread that was baked yesterday or food that was cooked yesterday is not the same as hot bread or as a food that he cooked today. And likewise, anything that is similar to these. And also, may we do [work] on a holiday that facilitates one to prepare the food of [any] person, about which there will be a lack if they are done from the eve—such as pounding spices, and that which is similar to them (Mishneh Torah Yom-Tov 1:8).*

The Rambam, similar to the Shulchan Aruch, decides in most cases of facilitating food preparation, מכשירי אוכל נפש, against the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda except for shovelling out coal from the floor of the oven to make room to place food to cook. In the above quote in the Rambam, where he states that the Halacha follows Rabbi Yehuda, he contextualises it כְּגוֹן שְׂחִיקַת תַּבְלִין וְכִיּוֹצֵא בְהֵן (such as pounding spices, and that which is similar to them). This means that facilitating food preparation, מכשירי אוכל נפש would only be permitted if it is similar to grinding spices, i.e. directly connecting to the food itself.

Spices, while still not consumable after grinding, are themselves eaten after being added to food. So, the grinding, while not food prep itself, is being performed on a consumable item. Likewise with shovelling out the coal. The purpose is to prevent the coals from singeing the food. The preparation, while not being performed on the food itself, will have a more direct connection to the food.

This is not the case with regards to sharpening a knife. This preparation here is being performed on the blade. The quality of the knife is being affected, which will then go to better prepare food. However, this act is not altering or modifying the food itself.

Thus, according to the Shulchan Aruch, as well as the Rambam, kneading dough, cooking, baking, etc., would all be permitted as examples of **נפש אוכל**, food prep.

Activities that are a preparation for the preparation of food **נפש אוכל**, like fixing a roasting spit, shortening one that is too long, or sharpening a dulled knife, while necessary for making a meal, are tasks that are separated from food quality by an additional degree. One is affecting the quality of a cooking implement, which will then go on to prepare the food. However, the sharpening or shortening itself will not affect food quality.

In situations where the preparation, while not being performed on the food itself, but, will still affect the quality of the food, such as removing coal to prevent burning the dish, or the grinding of spices (Halacha does not consider spices the food itself) would still be permitted.

Thus, we see that while the Shulchan Aruch decided the Halacha like Rabbi Yehuda, this is not a carte-blanche to allow any sort of facilitation of food preparation (**נפש אוכל**). Only in specific situations where the task can be seen to be directly related to food preparation would Rabbi Yehuda's leniency be allowed.



# Out of This World: The Value of Higher Goals in Judaism

By Rabbi Moshe Hauer, Incoming Executive Vice President, Orthodox Union

**Opening Question:** What motivated Ruth to convert? Why is she considered the model for all who join the Jewish people and accept Torah?

## I. The Ideal Path – Seeking a Higher Goal

### **Rambam Mishneh Torah Hilchot Teshuva Chapter 10**

אל יאמר אדם הריני עושה מצות התורה ועוסק בתקומתה כדי שאקבל כל הברכות הסתובות בה או כדי שאצטקף לחיי העולם הבא, ואפרש מן העבירות שהזהירה תורה מהן כדי שאנציל מן הקללות הסתובות בתורה או כדי שלא אפטר מחיי העולם הבא. אין ראוי לעבד את ה' על הדבר הזה, שהעובד על דרך זה הוא עובד מירצה ואינה מעלת הנביאים ולא מעלת החכמים...

*Let no man say: "Behold, I perform the precepts of the Torah, and engage myself in its wisdom so that I will receive all the blessings described therein, or so that I will merit the life in the World to Come; and I will separate myself from the transgressions against which the Torah gave warning so that I will escape the curses described therein, or so that I will suffer excision from the life in the World to Come". It is improper to serve the Lord in such way, for whosoever serves the Lord in such way, he is a worshiper because of fear, which is neither the degree of the prophets nor the degree of the sages...*

העובד מאהבה עוסק בתורה ובמצות והולך בנתיבות החכמה לא מפני דבר בעולם ולא מפני יראת הרעה ולא כדי לירש הטובה אלא עושה האמת מפני שהוא אמת וסוף הטובה לבוא בגללה. ומעלה זו היא מעלה גדולה מאד ואין כל חכם זוכה לה. והיא מעלת אברהם אבינו שקראו הקדוש ברוך הוא אוהבו לפי שלא עבד אלא מאהבה. והיא המעלה שצונו בה הקדוש ברוך הוא על ידי משה שנאמר (דברים ו ה) ואהבת את ה' אלהיך. ובזמן שיאהב אדם את ה' אהבה הראויה מיד יעשה כל המצות מאהבה:

*The worshiper because of love, engages himself in the study of the Torah and the observance of precepts and follows the paths of wisdom on no account in the world, neither for fear of evil nor in order to inherit the good; but he does the true thing because it is true, and in the end the good comes because thereof. That degree is a great degree, indeed and not every scholar attains it; for such was the degree of Abraham our father, whom the Holy One, blessed is He! called His beloved, because he worshiped not, save because of love, and it is, furthermore, the degree concerning which the Holy One, blessed is He! commanded through Moses, saying: "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God" ([Deut. 6.5](#)); for, when man will love the Lord with a proper love, he will momentarily perform all of the commandments because of love.*

## II. Kiddush Hashem – Living for a Higher Goal

### **Rambam Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah Chapter 5**

כל העובר מדעתו בלא אנס על אחת מכל מצות האמורות בתורה בשאט בנפש להכעיס הרי זה מחלל את השם. ולפיכך נאמר בשבועת שקר ([ויקרא יט יב](#)) "והללת את שם אלהיך אני ה'". ואם עבר בעשרה מישראל הרי זה חלל את השם בריבים. וכן כל הפורש מעברה או עשה מצוה לא מפני דבר בעולם לא פחד ולא יראה ולא לבקש פבד אלא מפני הבורא ברוך הוא כמניעת יוסף הצדיק עצמו מאשת רבו הרי זה מקדש את השם:

Whosoever willfully, without duress, will transgress one of the commandments of the Torah, because he despises it and does so spitefully, behold, he is blaspheming the Name. Therefore, it is said of false swearing: "Thou hast hereby defiled the name of thy God; I am the Lord" ([Lev. 19. 12](#)). And if he commits the offense in the presence of ten Israelites, he is guilty of public blasphemy. Conversely, if one abstains from sin, or fulfills a commandment without ulterior motive, not because of terror or fear, nor in pursuit of honor, but merely for the sake of the Creator, blessed is He! Even as Joseph the Pious did resist the temptation of his master's wife, behold, he doth sanctify the Name of God.

**Question: Did Yosef really make a Kiddush Hashem? What were the headlines in the next morning's Cairo Times?**

### III. Joining the Jewish People: The Journey to a Higher Goal **Rambam Hilchot Issurei Bi'ah Chapter 13-14**

... אלא סוד הדבר כך הוא. שהמצוה הנכונה פשיבא הגר או הגירת להתגיר בודקין אחריו שמא בגלל ממון שיטל או בשביל שררה שיזכה לה או מפני הפחד בא להפנס לדת. ואם איש הוא בודקין אחריו שמא עיניו נתן באשה יהודית. ואם אשה היא בודקין שמא עיניה נתנה בבחור מבחורי ישראל. אם לא נמצא להם עלה מודיעין אותן כבוד על התורה וטרח שיש בעשייתה על עמי הארצות כדי שיפרשו. אם קבלו ולא פרשו וראו אותן שחזרו מאהבה מקבלים אותן שנאמר (רות א יח) "ותראה כי מתאמצת היא ללכת אמה ונתחנל לדבר אליה":

The proper way of performing the mitzvah is when a male or a female prospective convert comes, we inspect his motives for conversion. Perhaps he is coming for the sake of financial gain, in order to receive a position of authority, or he desires to enter our faith because of fear. For a man, we check whether he focused his attention on a Jewish woman. For a woman, we check whether she focused her attention on a Jewish youth. If we find no ulterior motive, we inform them of the heaviness of the yoke of the Torah and the difficulty the common people have in observing it so that they will abandon [their desire]. If they accept [this introduction] and do not abandon their resolve and thus we see that they are motivated by love, we accept them, as [indicated by [Ruth 1:18](#)]: "And she saw that she was exerting herself to continue with her and she ceased speaking with her."

לפיכך לא קבלו בית דין גרים כל ימי דוד ושלמה. בימי דוד שמא מן הפחד חזרו. ובימי שלמה שמא בשביל המלכות והטובה והגדלה שהיו בה ישראל חזרו. שכל החוזר מן העפ"ם בשביל דבר מהבלי העולם אינו מגרי הצדק.

For this reason, the court did not accept converts throughout the reign of David and Solomon. In David's time, [they feared] that they sought to convert because of fear and in Solomon's time, [they feared] that they were motivated by the sovereignty, prosperity, and eminence which Israel enjoyed. [They refrained from accepting such converts, because] a gentile who seeks to convert because of the vanities of this [material] world is not a righteous convert.

כיצד מקבלין גרי הצדק. פשיבא אחד להתגיר מן העפ"ם ויבדקו אחריו ולא ימצאו עלה. אומרים לו מה ראית שבאת להתגיר. אי אתה יודע שישראל בזמן הזה דוויים ודחופים ומסחפין ומטרפין ויסורין באין עליהן. אם אמר אני יודע ואיני כדאי מקבלין אותו מיד:

*How do we accept righteous converts? When one comes to convert from being a Gentile and they examine him and they do not find any ulterior motive, they say to him: What did you see that made you want to convert? Don't you know that Israel in these times is rejected, swept away, disturbed, and afflictions come on them. If he says, "I know, and I am not worthy" they accept him immediately.*

**Question: So why did Ruth convert? What is the proper motive for conversion?**

#### **IV. The Path to Eternity: Out of This World**

##### **Rambam Commentary to Mishnah Makkot 3:10**

רבי חנניא בן עקשיא אומר רצה הקב"ה לזכות את ישראל... מעקרי האמונה בתורה כי כשיקיים אדם מצוה מתרי"ג מצות כראוי וכהוגן ולא ישתף עמה כוונה מכוונת העולם בשום פנים אלא שיעשה אותה לשמה מאהבה כמו שבארתי לך הנה זכה בה לחיי העולם הבא ועל זה אמר רבי חנניא כי המצות בהיותם הרבה אי אפשר שלא יעשה אדם בחייו אחת מהם על מתכונתה ושלמותה ובעשותו אותה המצוה תחיה נפשו באותו מעשה וממה שיוורה על העקר הזה מה ששאל ר' חנניא בן תרדיון מה אני לחיי עוה"ב והשיבו המשיב כלום בא מעשה לידך כלומר נזדמן לך לעשות מצוה כהוגן השיבו כי נזדמנה לו מצות צדקה על דרך שלמות ככל מה שאפשר וזכה לחיי העוה"ב. ופירוש הפסוק (ישעיהו מ"ב:כ"א) ה' חפץ למען צדקו לצדק את ישראל למען כי יגדיל תורה ויאדיר:

*It is among the fundamental principles of the Torah that when an individual fulfills one of the 613 commandments in a fit and proper manner, not combining with it any aspect of worldly intent but rather doing it for its own sake, out of love, then they merit the World to Come through this single act. This is what R' Hananya meant - being that the Holy One have us so many commandments it is impossible that in a lifetime one not do a single one in a full and proper manner, and in doing so their soul will live through that act. When R' Hananya ben Tradiyon's asked 'will I merit to life in the coming world' and received the response 'have you ever done anything?' this also indicated the same principle. The answer he received meant 'have you ever had the chance to do one of the commandments properly?' His answer was that he once had the chance to give tzedaka in a wholehearted fashion, as much as is possible, and it was through this that he merited to life in the World to Come.*

#### **V. Addendum: Speaking to G-d: Prophecy and Prayer**

##### **Prophecy: Rambam Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah Chapter 7**

מיסודי הדת לידע שֶהָאֵל מְנַבֵּא אֶת בְּנֵי הָאָדָם. וְאֵין הַנְּבוּאָה חֻלָּה אֲלָא עַל חֶכֶם גָּדוֹל בְּחֻמָּה, גָּבוּר בְּמַדּוּתוֹ, וְלֹא יֵהָא יִצְרוֹ מִתְגַּבֵּר עָלָיו בְּדִבְרֵי פְעוּלָם אֲלָא הוּא מִתְגַּבֵּר בְּדַעְתּוֹ עַל יִצְרוֹ תְּמִיד. וְהוּא פֹעֵל דְּעָה רַחֲבָה נְכוֹנָה עַד מְאֹד. אָדָם שֶהוּא מְמַלֵּא בְּכָל הַמִּדּוֹת הָאֵלּוּ שֶׁלֵּם בְּגוּפוֹ, כְּשִׁיכָנֵס לַפְּרָדֵס וְיִמְשֹׁק בְּאוֹתָן הַעֲנִינִים הַגְּדוֹלִים הַרְחֹקִים, וְתִהְיֶה לוֹ דְּעָה נְכוֹנָה לְהִבִּין וְלִהְשִׁיג וְהוּא מִתְקַדֵּשׁ וְהוֹלֵךְ וּפּוֹרֵשׁ מִדְּרָכֵי כָּלל הָעַם הַהוֹלְכִים בְּמַחֲשַׁבֵּי הַזְּמַן. וְהוֹלֵךְ וּמִזְרֵז עֲצָמוֹ וּמַלְמֵד נַפְשׁוֹ שֶׁלֹּא תִהְיֶה לוֹ מַחֲשָׁבָה כָּלל בְּאַחַד מִדְּבָרִים בְּטָלִים וְלֹא מִהֲבִלֵי הַזְּמַן וּתְחַבּוּלוֹתָיו. אֲלָא דַּעְתּוֹ פְּנוּיָה תְּמִיד לַמַּעֲלָה קְשׁוּרָה מִסַּת הַפֶּסֶק לְהִבִּין בְּאוֹתָן הַצּוּרוֹת הַקְּדוּשׁוֹת הַשְּׁהוּרוֹת, וּמִסַּתְפֵּל בְּחֻמָּתוֹ שֶׁל הַקְּדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא כְּלָה ... וְיִוָּדַע מִקֵּדוֹ, מִיָּד רֹחַ הַקֹּדֶשׁ שׁוֹרָה עָלָיו. וּבַעֲת שֶׁתִּגָּנוֹס עָלָיו הָרוּחַ תִּתְעָרֵב נַפְשׁוֹ בְּמַעֲלַת הַמַּלְאָכִים הַנִּקְרָאִים אִישִׁים וְיִהְיֶה לְאִישׁ אֲחֵר וְיִבִּין בְּדַעְתּוֹ שֶׁאֵינוֹ כְּמוֹת שֶׁהָיָה אֲלָא שְׁתַּעֲלָה עַל מַעֲלַת שְׁאָר בְּנֵי אָדָם הַחֲכָמִים, כְּמוֹ שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר בְּשָׂאוֹל (שְׁמוּאֵל א' י') "וְהִתְנַבֵּית עִמָּם וְנִהְפַכְתָּ לְאִישׁ אֲחֵר":

*It is a fundamental part of religion to acknowledge that God bestows prophecy upon the sons of men. But prophecy does not descend save upon a wise man, eminent in wisdom, of sterling character, never subdued by worldly passion, but conquering it by an ever-*

present will-power, broadminded and settled to the highest degree. A man, endowed with all these moral principles, of sound physique, when he enters the Vineyard and is carried away with the current of these great and remote subjects, and possessed of a mind ready to understand and attain, he continuing to gain in saintliness, separated from the general public which follows the dark paths of the times, continuing to take care of himself, **training his soul to heed no thought in idle affairs nor in the vanities and phantasies of the time, but his mind be constantly ready and directed Upward**, connected to the Throne Beneath, to understand the Holy and Pure Intelligences and to penetrate the scope of Wisdom of the Holy One, blessed is He! ... to know from them His greatness—immediately the Holy Spirit will rest upon him. And, when the Spirit will rest upon him his soul will be mingling with the Angels of the degree of the Sphere called Men, and will be transformed into another being, and will understand his own intelligence that he is not as he was, but that he was elevated above the degree of other wise sons of man, as it is said of Saul: "And thou shalt prophesy among them and thou shalt be turned into another man" ([1 Sam. 10.6](#)).

**Prayer: Talmud Berachot 30b**

אין עומדין להתפלל אלא מתוך כוון ראש. חסידים הראשונים היו שוהין שעה אחת, ומתפללין, כדי שיכוונו לבם לאביהם שבשמים.

**MISHNA:** One may only stand and begin to pray from an approach of gravity and submission. There is a tradition that the early generations of pious men would wait one hour, in order to reach the solemn frame of mind appropriate for prayer, and then pray, so that they would focus their hearts toward their Father in Heaven.

**Prayer: Iggeret HaRamban – The Ramban's Letter to His Son**

והסר כל דברי העולם מלבך בעת התפלה, והבן לבך לפני המקום ברוך הוא. וטהר רעיוניך....

*Remove all worldly concerns from your heart during prayer. Prepare your heart before God, purify your thoughts....*