



The Path To Follow

EIKEV

300

August 8th 2009

18 Av 5769

Publication

HEVRAT PINTO

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GUARD YOUR TONGUE!

Revealing a Secret is Forbidden

If a person tells you something and asks you not to mention it to others, even if he tells other people the same thing in public, it is Lashon Harah for you to reveal it, even by mistake. Even if two of the speaker's listeners have not heeded his warning, having revealed his secret to others, a third must not reveal it, even by mistake. There is no difference in the terms that the person uses in issuing this warning, whether he says: "Don't speak about it again" or "You don't know anything about it." You are still forbidden to tell others what he said to you, especially if telling someone will result in everyone knowing about it.

– The Chafetz Chaim

HUMILITY IS THE SOURCE OF PEACE, JOY AND TORAH

(BY RABBI DAVID HANANIA PINTO SHLITA)

In this week's parsha we read, "And it will be, if you hearken to these ordinances and you observe and perform them, the L-RD your G-d will safeguard for you the covenant and the kindness that He swore to your fathers" (Deuteronomy 7:12). From here we learn that it is not enough to simply hear words of Torah from a person who is greater than us in Torah and wisdom. The essence of Torah success lies in annulling ourselves and going to study Torah from a person who is not as great as ourselves, for we automatically tend to not listen to people at a lower level than ourselves in Torah and wisdom.

This idea is alluded to in the verse, where the term vehaya ("and it will be") is used, a term that always denotes joy (Vayikra Rabba 11:7). The expression "if you hearken" means that the essence of self-annulment and humility lies in listening to words of Torah from people who are at a lower level than us in Torah and the fear of Heaven. The result is that we will annul our opinion before theirs so that strife does not increase, which will please and bring satisfaction to Hashem. We find something similar to this in Rashi's commentary on the verse in question: "If you hearken to the minor mitzvot that one tramples upon with his heels."

It seems that this is referring to a person who feels that he is great and powerful because he is truly competent in all fields of Torah; it is as if he were actually trampling upon it with his heels. If he senses this, he will never heed the voice of the Torah because the Torah is only acquired through humility. On the other hand, when he conducts himself with joy and humility, listening to the words of each person and accepting them with joy, then the Holy One, blessed be He, "will safeguard for you the covenant and the kindness." In his book Pituchei Chotam, Rabbeinu Yaakov Abuhatzera Zatzal explains the juxtaposition of Parshiot Eikev and Re'eh. The idea behind it is that a person must always have the end in sight, for the primary thing that prevents him from growing in Torah and the fear of Heaven is a failure to reflect upon the fact that he will eventually die and leave his possessions to others. When he reflects upon it, he will see (re'eh) the heel (eikev), meaning his end, which is to heed every word of Torah.

According to this explanation, it seems that we do not understand the order of the parshiot. They should have been reversed, meaning first Parsha Re'eh and then Eikev, for according to the above explanation we must first "see" the "end." Therefore why are the parshiot not arranged in this order?

It appears that the Torah is teaching us a great and important lesson here. We know that in serving Hashem, a person has two ways to spiritually awaken himself and come closer to the Creator. The first is to realize that a miracle has been done for him, for him or someone close to him, in which case he will experience a great awakening and repent. He will sense G-d's greatness and his own insignificance.

There is another way for a person to awaken himself by his own strength, which is to find a path that does not depend on external factors. Instead, by yielding and annulling himself before G-d, he will sense just how insignificant he is, and he will constantly recall that his final day is approaching. The result is that he will merit seeing the perfection of Hashem, which will enable him to grow.

This is why the order of the parshiot is Eikev followed by Re'eh.

This teaches us that bringing satisfaction to the Creator lies mainly in the fact that a person undergoes a spiritual awakening by his own strength, without having to perceive miracles, and by returning to Hashem with all his heart. By the strength of his own humility, he will see the greatness of G-d.

To achieve such a degree of self-annulment, a person must set aside a fixed time for studying Torah. Thus it is written eikev, a term formed by the same letters as kava (permanence). This means that we must permanently fix a time for studying Torah. It also requires a person to realize that the Torah must be accompanied by "his hand grasping the heel" (Genesis 25:26). In other words, it is not enough to study alone – a person must encourage others to participate in it as well. It must be as if he were "grasping" and supporting others, watching over and teaching them Torah. As such a person can attain humility and bring joy and satisfaction to the Creator.

In this way we will be ready to give our lives for the performance of every mitzvah, even one of rabbinic origin, which was common among the Sages. Rabbi Akiva was once imprisoned, and his servant Rabbi Yehoshua was allowed to bring him a small quantity of water every day. One day the prison guard said to Rabbi Yehoshua, "You're bringing too much water today. Maybe you're trying to dig a tunnel!" He then spilled half of his pitcher of water to the ground. When Rabbi Yehoshua reached Rabbi Akiva, the latter said to him: "Don't you realize that I'm old and that my life depends on you?" When Rabbi Yehoshua explained what had happened, Rabbi Akiva replied: "Give me the remaining water so I can wash my hands." He said, "There's not enough water to drink, and you want to wash your hands with it?" Rabbi Akiva responded, "What can I do? Better that I should die than transgress the words of my colleagues!" Rabbi Akiva therefore didn't touch any food until he was given water to wash his hands.

If we fail to set aside a fixed time for learning Torah, but simply listen to what other people say we should do or not do, we will always have doubts in our service of Hashem, for we will sometimes do things one way, and sometimes in another.

In truth, all of King David's joy came solely from the holy Torah, as it is written: "Had Your Torah not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction" (Psalms 119:92). He sensed that without a fixed time for the study of Torah, he would not have experienced joy in life. He would have been like a poor person who has nothing. What gave him joy was fixing times for the study of Torah in every difficult situation that he faced. Actually, we see some people who study Torah and yet feel so overwhelmed by their problems that they become depressed, and they wonder why the merit of the Torah has not helped them. The answer is quite simple: They are content on learning Torah without fixing regular times for studying it. If they had fixed such times for themselves, they would have experienced self-annulment before Heaven, and even when faced with difficult problems, they would have accepted them with joy, without protesting in any way.

The Torah's power demonstrates itself when words enter the ears with humility through a fixed program of Torah study, in which case a person will not feel any material lack. As the Sages said, "The whole world draws its sustenance due to [the merit of] Chanina my son, and Chanina my son suffices himself with a kab of carobs from one Shabbat eve to another" (Taanith 24b).

MUSSAR FROM THE PARSHA

The Tribe of Levi: Set Apart to Safeguard the Torah

It is written, "At that time the L-RD set apart the tribe of Levi" (Deuteronomy 10:8).

Rashi comments, "During the first year of your departure from Egypt, when you erred with the calf, although the sons of Levi did not err as such, the Omnipresent separated them from you." Here we learn that the tribe of Levi was set apart not simply as a reward, but as a consequence of prior events. If an entire people who had witnessed the exodus from Egypt and the passage through the Sea of Reeds, and who received the Torah on Mount Sinai, were still able to err by making the golden calf, it meant that in order to safeguard the original truth, what was needed was a tribe that was completely devoted to the study of the Torah, one that would stand before Hashem. This tribe was to be the faithful guardian of the unadulterated truth, without any embellishments. In fact the making of the golden calf did not stem from the people's desire to revolt or replace the service of Hashem with an idol. Rather, it was an error that they committed in their way of serving Hashem. We know what the Beit HaLevi said about this subject, for he went to great lengths to explain just how the makers of the golden calf were hoping to attain the same goal as that of the construction of the Sanctuary. They saw the golden calf as a way of coming closer to Hashem. It was precisely because of this, precisely because such a tremendous mistake could occur, that it was impossible not to consider it as a precedent for further such mistakes in the future. If the Torah were placed in everyone's hands, who could guarantee that more errors would not occur in the future? The only way that similar incidents, creating a new Torah and new mitzvot, could be avoided was the existence of the tribe of Levi, a tribe set apart to carry the Ark of the Covenant. Amid the tents of the camp of Levi, the Sefer Torah would remain exactly as it was given at Sinai. Here, among those who study and taste the sweetness of Torah, we could discover the truth and light of the Torah intellectually. And here every attempt to err by means of various substitutes for the Sefer Torah would disappear. Thus we read, "But the Kohanim, the Levites, the sons of Zadok, who kept the charge of My sanctuary when the Children of Israel strayed from Me, they shall draw near to Me to serve Me, and they shall stand before Me...says the L-RD G-d" (Ezekiel 44:15).

– Ouva HaLevi

A Pearl From the Rav: Humility Leads to the Fear of Heaven

On the verse, "Now, O Israel, what does the L-RD your G-d require of you, only to fear the L-RD your G-d" (Deuteronomy 10:12), the Sages explain that everything is in the hands of Heaven except the fear of Heaven. This depends on the individual, and it is what Hashem requires of us. Hence the fear of Heaven is something that is easy to obtain, and this easy thing is what Hashem requires of us.

By this we must understand that the fear of Heaven, as everyone knows, is a very great thing, for it is man's goal in the world, and of this very thing it is said: "except the fear of Heaven." Since a great deal of effort is required to attain it, why does it follow from the verse that it is something that can be easily obtained? Even if the Gemara in Berachot states that it was easy for Moses to obtain, for the Children of Israel it is something that is very difficult. In fact Hashem has only the fear of Heaven among His treasures, as it is written: "The fear of the L-RD is His treasure" (Isaiah 33:6).

We must explain this to mean that if a person wants to attain the fear of Heaven and be sinless, he must acquire humility. It is only through this characteristic that he can fear Heaven, as alluded to in the verse: "Now, O Israel, what does the L-RD your G-d require of you." This evokes the expression "what are we" – a reference to humility – for this is precisely

what Hashem requires of us. Furthermore, the term mimcha ("of you") has the same numerical value, including the term itself, as the expression adam anav ("a humble man"). This means that Hashem requires humility from you, and through humility you can attain the fear of Heaven.

Let us say that it is true, the fear of Heaven is not something that is easy to attain. Nevertheless, Hashem gave us the means to do so. This means is humility, which we can acquire if we truly desire. By being humble, we can definitely attain a true fear of Heaven. In fact we learn two things from the term mimcha. The first is humility, which shares the same numerical value. The second is that the fear of Heaven must come from a person himself, for Hashem can give him everything except the fear of Heaven. This must come from him alone; he must not wait for it from Hashem. When a person begins, Hashem will certainly help him, as the Sages have said: "If one comes to purify himself, he is helped" (Shabbat 104a). Hashem will help him so that all his deeds are appreciated by Him.

The Spirituality Contained in Food

It is written, "For man does not live by bread alone" (Deuteronomy 8:3).

The soul does not live from material sustenance, and yet we see that when a person eats, he lives and his soul continues to exist. Conversely, he will die if he does not eat. How can the soul live from material sustenance, since materiality does not nourish it? The answer is that it is nourished by spirituality, nourished by the blessing that is recited over food. This is what we read, that man does not live by bread alone; it is the soul, for it is not material. However through a blessing, the soul is nourished. This is what constitutes, "By everything that emanates from the mouth of the L-RD does man live." Hashem placed the blessings in our hands, and as such food contains spirituality. This was decreed by Hashem at the creation of the world for man and everything in the vegetable and mineral kingdoms. This spiritual force is drawn into everything, spirituality that goes towards the soul. Thus it is written, "For man does not live by bread alone, but by everything that emanates from the mouth of the L-RD" – each soul lives from the spirituality that emerges from it.

– The Arizal

Measure for Measure

It is written, "These ordinances" (Deuteronomy 7:12).

Rashi states, "If you hearken to the minor mitzvot that one tramples upon with his heels...He will keep His promise to you."

The Sages have said, "There is no reward for a mitzvah in this world." Therefore why does the Torah often mention a reward in this world (e.g. "I will provide your rains in their time," "I will provide rain for your land," and other such material blessings)? The Rambam explains that this does not constitute a reward, but rather a promise from Hashem that He will provide us with favorable conditions in which to fulfill the Torah, for poverty and hardship make people lose their minds.

On the verse, "You shall safeguard My charge" (Leviticus 18:30), the Sages have explained: "Provide a charge to My charge" (Yebamot 21a). This means that a person must create fences for himself in order not to sin. If he makes an effort to create fences for himself so as not to neglect the mitzvot, Hashem will pay him back measure for measure by removing obstacles from before him. These include poverty and hardship, which are liable to turn him away from the Torah.

The verse is therefore stating: "If you hearken" – if you observe the simple mitzvot, meaning the fences that are simple for man; "and you observe and perform them" – if you make for yourselves a "guard" in order to fulfill all the mitzvot; then "the L-RD your G-d will safeguard for you the covenant and the kindness" – Hashem will pay you back measure for measure, spreading goodness and kindness upon you so that you encounter no obstacles in the observance of the Torah, as you truly desire.

– Imrei Shefer

The Secret to the Fear of Heaven

It is written, “Now, O Israel, what does the L-RD your G-d require of you, only to fear” (Deuteronomy 10:12).

The Gemara asks whether the fear of Heaven is such a small thing, given that Moses used the expression “only to fear.” It replies, “Yes, for Moses it was a small thing” (Berachot 33b).

This is quite surprising. Just because the fear of Heaven was an easy thing for Moses, why did the entire Jewish people have to be told this?

The Maggid of Dubno explains this according to what he heard from his Rav, the Vilna Gaon. He said, “When I was in Vilna with my teacher, the saintly and pious gaon, our teacher Eliyahu of Vilna, I asked him the following question: ‘How does this outpouring occur? How will the tzaddik pour out his fear on those of his generation?’ He answered me, ‘It is like a large container that is surrounded on all sides by small containers, with someone constantly pouring liquid into the large container. When the large container becomes full, it must necessarily overflow and spill its contents into the containers around it. However as long as the large container is not completely full, absolutely nothing will spill into the small containers.’”

When is it easy for a person to attain a fear of Heaven? It is when he draws closer to the great tzaddik, who is overflowing with the fear of Heaven. Thus “for Moses it was a small thing,” meaning that because Moses was overflowing with the fear of Heaven, to the point of inundating everything around him, it was easy for his generation to attain a fear of Heaven.

Humility is the Foundation of the Fear of Heaven

The gaon Rabbi Yitzchak of Volozhin said that his father, Rabbi Chaim, was so humble and self-effacing that he claimed to have not attained a fear of Heaven. Rabbi Itzele explained this by saying that these two middot depend on one another. A person who is humble does not sense his humility, and on the contrary he considers himself to be arrogant and those around him to be humble, which is why he still believes that he is far from the fear of Heaven. This is how we can explain the teaching in the Gemara that “for Moses it was a small thing.” Moses, the humblest of all men, considered himself to be like an arrogant person, whereas he considered all the Children of Israel to be humble and self-effacing. Hence with regards to Moses, who considered all the Children of Israel as being humble, he saw that for them the fear of Heaven was easy to attain. In fact it is written, “The result of humility is fear of the L-RD” (Proverbs 22:4). Moses believed that they certainly feared Hashem. Such was not the case for him, given that he considered himself to be like an arrogant person, and therefore the fear of Heaven was a great thing.

– Introduction to Nefesh HaChaim

Overview of the Parsha

Parsha Eikev recounts Moses’ review of past events and his words of Mussar to the Children of Israel. It continues by linking the inheritance of the land to the observance of mitzvot. The parsha reviews the miracles that occurred during the Children of Israel’s journeys, as well as their rebellion in the desert. At the end of the parsha, after reviewing past events, Moses ends his admonitions by drawing a lesson from the fear of Heaven and cleaving to Hashem.

REASONS FOR THE MITZVOT

Everything Depends on Good Middot

In his introduction to the book Ahavat Israel, the Chafetz Chaim discusses an apparent difficulty found within this week’s parsha. At the beginning of Parsha Eikev we read: “You shall keep the commandments of the L-RD your G-d, to walk in His ways and to fear Him” (Deuteronomy 8:6). Here walking in His ways is mentioned before the fear of Heaven. Further on in the parsha, however, we read: “Now, O Israel, what does the L-RD your G-d require of you, only to fear the L-RD your G-d, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him” (ibid. 10:12). Here the Torah changes the order of things by mentioning walking in His ways after the fear of Heaven and before loving Hashem. Finally, at the end of the parsha we read: “You will observe this entire commandment... to love the L-RD your G-d, to walk in all His ways, and to cleave to Him” (ibid. 11:22). Here the Torah places walking in Hashem’s ways after loving Him and before cleaving to Him. These differences need to be explained. The Chafetz Chaim writes that the Torah teaches us that a person cannot merit any spiritual level before having trained his soul to walk in the ways of the Holy One, blessed be He.

This is why it is first written, “To walk in His ways and to fear Him.” This teaches us that in order to attain a fear of Heaven, we must first “walk in His ways.” Next, we must not think that to advance and progress in the love of Hashem, we only need to reflect upon the fear of Heaven, the greatness of G-d, and study the holy Torah – all while ignoring other people who may need our help. Certainly not! The Torah continues with the phrase, “Fear the L-RD your G-d, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him.” This means that even one who has merited a fear of Heaven, a person who must progress and elevate himself to the level of loving G-d, still cannot achieve a love of G-d before walking in His ways. This means that he must be kind, merciful, and do good. At the end of the parsha, the Torah teaches us that even a person who has merited the fear and love of Hashem – a person who desires to constantly cleave to Him, and who gathers all his strength for this goal – must still fulfill: “You will observe this entire commandment... to love the L-RD your G-d, to walk in all His ways, and to cleave to Him.” Even to merit the level of cleaving to Hashem, he must strengthen himself in good middot, in mercy and goodness, the merit of which will lead him to cleaving to Hashem.

EISHET CHAYIL

Without Your Torah, I Would Have Perished

A terrible incident occurred to the widow of the Netivot HaMishpat, whose daughter was about to get married. They accompanied a Christian to town in order to purchase clothes that they needed for the wedding. This Christian knew about it and tricked them into coming to his home. He then summoned his friends, who took their money, tied them up, and lit a furnace in order to burn them. In the meantime, they put their money on a table and discussed how they were going to share it. Suddenly, the door opened and a German officer entered the house. The murderers fled, and the officer freed the woman and her daughter. He then gave them back their money and brought them to a local inn. During the night, the Netivot HaMishpat appeared to his daughter in a dream.

He said to her, “When I learned of your anguish, I ascended to a very high place and begged for mercy on your behalf. However it was useless, for you had transgressed the commandment against remaining alone with a Christian. I then ascended to an even higher place, and I pleaded for the merit of the Torah that I taught in Israel by my book Netivot HaMishpat to speak on my behalf, and I saved you. From now on, be very careful about the prohibition of yichud.” – Netzach Israel

IN THE LIGHT OF THE HAFTARAH

Everything is for the Good

It is written, "Zion said: The L-RD has forsaken me" (Isaiah 49:14).

The Sages state, "How can a man complain against Him Who lives eternally? If a man wishes to complain, let it be about his sins. Rabbi says: They are the children of complainers. [G-d said:] 'After all the favor that I showed to Adam, he complained before Me and said: "The woman whom You gave to be with me" [Genesis 3:12]. Jacob acted similarly: I exerted Myself to make his son king in Egypt, and he complained and said: "My way is hidden from the L-RD" [Isaiah 40:27]. ... Zion also behaved in this way, namely: "Zion said: The L-RD has forsaken me" ' " (Eicha Rabba 3:13). Let us examine this comparison. Placed in the Garden of Eden, Adam complained after having seen all the wonders that Hashem had done for him. This very same accusation applied to Jacob, who in his pain protested to the Creator by saying: "My way is hidden from the L-RD." He too is accused of protesting, and the Torah calls him a complainer. In other words, he was the son of Adam, who complained to his Creator. Likewise for the protests of the generation of destruction, the generation against which the wrath of Hashem was unleashed, and which stood accused before Hashem. The Sages reveal the secret behind this by stating, "I exerted Myself to make his son king in Egypt, and he complained and said, 'My way is hidden from the L-RD.'" Scripture also mentions the Babylonian exile: "For I know the thoughts that I am thinking for you, says the L-RD, thoughts of peace and not evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jeremiah 29:11). For every measure that Hashem applies to man, even with all the suffering that detracts (even for an instant) from the notion of Hashem's love for Israel, it is written: "I have loved you with an everlasting love" (ibid. 31:2). However there is revealed love and hidden love. Great is Hashem's love for the Temple, even when destroyed. It is precisely when Hashem hides, when His wrath is revealed, that a mask exists. Accordingly, if a Jew in his anguish senses that Hashem's face is hidden, and yet he ignores Hashem's love, this is a sin of protest from complaining children. – Daliut Yechezkel

YOUR EYES SHALL BEHOLD YOUR TEACHER

Rabbi Yoel Sirkis – The Bach, Author of Bayit Chadash

The Chazon Ish Zatzal recounts that the Bach, Rabbi Yoel Sirkis, promised a daily portion of meat to his son-in-law the Taz when he married his daughter. A few years later, the Bach became poor, and his daughter, the wife of the Taz, was forced to cook her husband lung instead of beef. In a surprising turn of events, the Taz summoned his father-in-law to the Beit Din because of this, but the court ruled that lung is also considered meat. When the Taz was asked why he brought his father-in-law to court for such a trivial reason, he said that the first time he ate a meal of lung, he felt somewhat weakened, and it affected his Torah study for a brief instant. At that point, an accusation arose in Heaven against the Bach's family, and therefore the Taz brought his father-in-law to court so it could decide whether lung is also considered meat. If it were, it would mean that the Bach had not broken his promise, and there would be no reason to accuse him. The Chazon Ish states that from here we learn just how much Heaven values even a single moment of intense Torah study. When the Bach brought his book Beit Chadash to be printed, the author of Megaleh Amukot went to the printer and asked him to delay its printing for as long as possible. The Bach was greatly upset by this, and he held a grudge against the Megaleh Amukot. Hence the son of the Megaleh Amukot became so ill that his life was in danger. Eliyahu HaNavi appeared to the Megaleh Amukot and told him that his son had fallen ill because the Bach held a grudge against him. Furthermore, his son would die if he didn't make peace with the Bach. The Megaleh Amukot therefore went to the Bach and asked him for forgiveness. The Bach asked him what he had found so questionable in his book, and the Megaleh Amukot said that there was nothing wrong with it. Rather, he had heard a proclamation in Heaven that if he gave his approval for the book and it was published, the Bach would leave this world. The Bach then said, "Why do you concern yourself with the ways of Heaven? My soul came into this world in order to write and publish this book." The Megaleh Amukot immediately gave his approval for the book, even ordering the printer to publish it as quickly as possible. The Bach then grew very weak and no longer wanted to answer Halachic questions or reside over a din Torah. However he commanded the dayanim to organize dinim Torah at his home.

Near the end of his life, the Bach wanted to travel to Eretz Israel (as his son mentions in the introduction to the Bach in Ohr HaChaim), but it was not to be. He passed away on Adar 20, 5400 in Krakow, where he was buried.

THE DEEDS OF THE GREAT

Respect for Others

Rabbi Eliezer [ben Hyrcanus] decreed a public fast during a time of drought, but it failed to rain. Rabbi Akiva decreed a fast and it did rain. In order for people not to question Rabbi Eliezer's stature, Rabbi Akiva entered the Beit Midrash and said to them, "I will tell you what this is like. A king had two daughters, one insolent and the other righteous. When the insolent daughter wanted something from her father, the king said: 'Give her what she wants. The main thing is that she leaves, for I don't want to see her any longer.' However when the righteous daughter wanted something, he did not rush to give her what she had requested, for he loved to see his beloved daughter and hear her voice. Similar to this is the difference between Rabbi Eliezer and myself!" The Sages asked him, "Is Rabbi Akiva allowed to scorn the honor of his Torah in this way, comparing himself to an insolent daughter?" He replied that he was allowed to do so in order for the stature of Rabbi Eliezer not to be questioned in the eyes of the people, or for them to say, "Look, he prayed but wasn't answered!" This would have resulted in a desecration of the Name of Heaven. (From the Yerushalmi, Taanith 3:4).

People who have perfected their middot will annul themselves for the honor of others, whereas ordinary people wish to remain honorable in the eyes of others, even if it means humiliating people.

– Peninei Chochma 238

Better to be Prudent!

In order to reach the Beit Midrash, Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair had to cross the River Ginnai. One day the river was overflowing, which made it impossible to cross. Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair said to it, "Ginnai, Ginnai, will you prevent me from going to the Beit Midrash?" The river immediately split before him, allowing him to cross. Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair's students asked him, "Can we also cross this river, now that it has split?" He replied, "A person who knows deep inside that he has never scorned the honor of any Jew can cross it without danger. Otherwise he should not cross." (From the Yerushalmi, Demmai 1:3).

From this story, it follows that nature will yield before a person who has never scorned anyone in his life.

– Hatzlachat HaNefesh 19a

A TRUE STORY

Bringing Joy to a Widow's Heart

It is written, "He carries out the judgment of the orphan and widow" (Deuteronomy 10:18).

The following story is told about Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld during his youth. As people left the yeshiva's hall to eat the Shabbat meal in various homes where they had been invited, Rabbi Yosef Chaim would disappear for a moment and then secretly return to rejoin his friends.

When his friends noticed what was happening, their curiosity grew. One Shabbat, right after he left, two boys secretly followed him. They were surprised by what they saw, for Rabbi Yosef Chaim would weave his way through one of the alleys in a poor area of Pressburg, go down some steps towards a basement home, and knock on the door of a widow. His face beaming, he would wish her Shabbat Shalom in her modest apartment, and then return to his friends.

Unable to contain themselves, his friends asked him: "What's your connection to this widow? Is she your aunt?" Rabbi Yosef Chaim replied, "I bring joy to her heart by wishing her Shabbat Shalom." This was something that he did every Shabbat while he lived in Pressburg. Rabbi Yitzchak Shlomo Blau added, "This widow was my grandmother, and when I was a young boy of about six or seven years old, we would eat at her home every Friday night. We would also wait outside to announce, 'The boy is coming!'"