

## Look Up

Sarah was really a bright, talented, and attractive individual. She, however, didn't think so. While others praised and complimented her, she always put herself down. If she made a list and forgot one item, Sarah would say, "Oh, I am so dumb!" If she looked special, all dressed up for a happy occasion, she might comment, "My hair is a mess!" Somehow she could always find something negative to say about herself.

Our *Yeser Hara* (Evil Inclination) tries to use our mistakes against us. When we slip, he tries to attack by instilling in us feelings of discouragement.

All human beings have intrinsic value, regardless of how they behave. There is no greater danger than feeling discouraged and losing self-esteem.

Rather than getting depressed when you make a mistake, strengthen yourself and elevate yourself above the misdeed. Focus on your great potential, not on your failures. Remember, no matter what you have done in the past, Hashem is waiting for you to repent and grow.

We were put on this earth as imperfect beings trying to achieve greatness. Some people are afraid to accomplish because they might make mistakes along the way.

From now on, start each day with the expectation that you will make mistakes. When a slip-up occurs, be prepared to regain your balance rather than fall into despair. Pick yourself up and change your life from one of low self-image to one of growth. (One Minute With Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

## The Deciding Factor

It was a difficult decision to make. A wealthy benefactor of the *Pnei Menachem*, the previous Gerrer Rebbe, approached the Rebbe with a desire to donate an apartment to a needy but prestigious Gerrer Hasid. The Rebbe had thought about it for days and had whittled down his list of prospective beneficiaries to two. Ironically, these two prominent, esteemed individuals lived near each other and were actually good friends. Sadly, both were living in dire straits and had large families for which to provide. The Rebbe was trying to decide who was the more deserving of the two and was having quite a difficult time.

He thought about which family was larger. They were identical in size.

He contemplated which one had more needs. Both were equally needy.

He pondered which family was more prominent. But once again both were alike.

Finally he determined that he would decide by finding out which man had been the better student when he was younger. After some inquiries, the Rebbe had his answer. Smiling, he said, "Give the apartment to the one who was not the better student. If he developed into a *talmid Hacham* it means that he persevered and put tremendous effort into his learning. He showed true *yegiah baTorah* (toil in Torah). That renders him a more accomplished *talmid Hacham* because it was a more challenging journey to get to where he is today. And that makes him more deserving."

Although the Rebbe felt that he had given the apartment to the more deserving fellow, he felt terrible that the other one had lost out. For days the Rebbe was burdened with the disappointment of not having been able to help both families. An apartment for a needy family drastically changes the family's life, and unfortunately he had been unable to do that for both of them.

But Hashem guards over all His children. Three days later another wealthy *hasid* approached the Rebbe. Providentially he had just fallen into some extra money and he wanted to know if the Rebbe had an accomplished *talmid Hacham* who was in need of an apartment. The Rebbe smiled. He knew just the right fellow. (One Shining Moment)

*The Lorraine Gammal A"H Edition*

לְעִילּוֹי נְשָׁמַת לְאָה בַּת בְּהִיָּה

בס"ד

## Congregation Magen Abraham

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שַׁבַּת רֵעִה כֹּהֵן וְכֹהֵנִית

Haftarah: Yeshayahu 54:11-55:5

**AUGUST 14-15, 2020 25 AB 5780**

Candlelighting: pm

Morning Shema by: am

Evening Shema after: pm

Shabbat ends: pm (R"Y) pm

**Watch for an email for full Shabbat schedule of minyanim**

**Rosh Hodesh Elul will be celebrated on Thursday & Friday, August 20 & 21.**

**Condolences to Nathan & Richie Shalom on the passing of their father, Mr. Abie Shalom.**

## A Message from our Rabbi

(Debarim 15:10) "וְלֹא יִרַע לְבָבְךָ בְּתַתֵּךְ לוֹ"

"Give to him, and do not feel distressed when you give him."

Rabbi Yitzchak Zilberstein shares with us a great story with a huge lesson. On a fundraising trip abroad for his yeshivah, Rav Yosef visited the home of a wealthy donor. The donor, Mr. Silverman, showed great interest as the *Rosh Yeshivah* described the diligence, piety, and good character of the students. Mr. Silverman was very impressed. "Please wait here for a moment while I go and get my checkbook," he said. In the meantime, the Rabbi asked permission to learn from the *Gemara* that was sitting on the table.

The Rabbi was so immersed in the *Gemara* that he didn't notice that Mr. Silverman had returned, check in hand, and was watching him with a sad frown on his face.

Then Mr. Silverman coughed to get his attention. "Excuse me, but I'm afraid I have changed my mind and I cannot donate to your yeshivah," he said.

"But why?" asked the Rabbi. "What happened? Did I do something to offend you?" "I can't explain," Mr. Silverman stammered. "It's an unpleasant point for me to discuss. I don't want to hurt your feelings."

Just before he left empty-handed, the Rabbi turned to Mr. Silverman and asked one last time, "Listen, you don't owe me anything, and I have no demands of you. But please just do me a favor and explain the reason for your sudden refusal to support my yeshivah. Perhaps there was some mistake."

"Well, if you insist, I'll tell you. I cannot donate to someone who pretends to be a

*Rosh Yeshivah*, but does not even know how to read!”

“Don’t know how to read? What do you mean? Why do you think that I don’t know how to read?” asked the *Rosh Yeshivah*.

“When I came back just now with my checkbook, I was watching you learn from the *Gemara* upside down! If you don’t even know which way to hold a *Gemara* how can you claim to be a *Rosh Yeshivah*?” Mr. Silverman was sure that he was just some scam artist posing as a *Rosh Yeshivah*.

Rav Yosef then asked for just one more minute to explain. “I was born in Yemen, where I first learned how to read. Because there was a shortage of Hebrew books, we had to share one book so we had to learn how to read upside down, and from the right side of the book and from the left side of the book. So I learned to read upside down. I could also read right side up. But it’s just as easy to read upside down. The *Gemara* was upside down, so it was just as easy for me to read it upside down.”

Rav Yosef saw Mr. Silverman was skeptical. “I’ll tell you what, let’s make a test,” said Rav Yosef. “Take out two copies of the same book. You hold yours right side up. I’ll hold mine upside down, and I will read to you line by line.”

Mr. Silverman agreed, and saw that Rav Yosef was right. “I have never seen anything like that. I’m so sorry I doubted you,” said Mr. Silverman with tears in his eyes. “Please sit down and I will write you a check that is fitting for a *Talmid Hacham* like you.”

The story teaches us how important it is to judge people favorably. Even if it seems obvious that the person did something wrong, give him a chance to explain. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

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## *The Meat of the Matter*

In this week’s portion, the Torah allows us to partake in our material desires, but only according to Torah proscriptions. The Torah clearly allows the consumption of meat, albeit with a few caveats. “Only be strong not to eat the blood -- for the blood, it is the *nefesh* -- and you shall not eat the *nefesh* with the meat” (*Debarim* 12:23).

*Nefesh* has various meanings, simply stated it is the life force of the animal, perhaps what we would call the soul of the matter. Clearly, the consumption of blood is a despicable act in the Torah view (a fact conveniently overlooked by the centuries of libelers who had us drinking, mixing, baking and cooking with it.) In addition, the process of extricating all blood from the animal is clearly and intricately defined through the *Talmud* and *Shulhan Aruch*. However, delineating the prohibition as one of combining the consumption of the *nefesh* with the meat surely goes beyond the prohibition of eating or drinking blood. Surely there is a deeper connotation to the prohibition of the strange concoction of *nefesh* and meat.

Rav Yehuda Laib Chasman was considered to be one of the luminaries of the *mussar* movement. Before he immersed himself completely in the world of Torah and *mussar*, he had a business that sold flour to bakers. He would devote a portion of his day to his business and the remaining time he would spend at the famed *Talmud Torah* of Kelm under the tutelage of Rabbi Simcha Zissel Ziv, the illustrious Alter of Kelm. One day on the way into the Yeshiva, Rav Ziv called Reb Yehuda Laib over to the side and pointed to the white powder that covered the sleeve of his jacket. Rabbi Chasman took this observation to be a clear moralistic evaluation.

Rabbi Ziv is pointing out that the flour is becoming part of me. If it is already all over my garments, and it is still with me when I leave my store, then it has become too much a part of me.

With that, he made a personal decision that changed his life completely. He

returned home, and figured out together with his wife that the amount of their current assets would more than cover any outstanding debts and allow them to sustain themselves. They sold the business, and Rabbi Chasman enrolled full-time at the Volozhiner Yeshiva, eventually emerging the great luminary whom we all revere.

Some of us like meat: whether it is the actual beef or the proverbial materialistic affairs in which we indulge. And that’s OK to a point. After all, we are only human.

But the Torah tells us to be careful to separate the soul from the meat. The holy from the mundane. It wants us to understand that other than the quest for the prime rib, which we wish to consume, there are more noble pursuits that should consume us. Therefore, the Torah tells us to clearly delineate the difference and tells us that although we may indulge in worldly pleasure we should be careful not to allow the soul to become devoured with the meat. Thus, it clearly commands, Do not eat the *nefesh* with the meat. A good meal is totally permissible. It even lifts the spirit. However, materialistic indulgences as such should surely never become our obsession or sole desire. For then, it will become part of our *nefesh*. It will become tantamount to our soul desire. (Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky)

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## *Positive First*

“The camel, the hare, and the hyrax, for they bring up their cud, but their hooves are not split — they are unclean to you; and the pig, for it has a split hoof, but not the cud — it is unclean to you” (*Debarim* 14:7-8)

The Torah’s listing of kosher and non-kosher animals, which seems somewhat technical, contains many lessons beyond the details of what we may and may not eat.

Rav Noach Weinberg, *Rosh Yeshivah* of *Aish HaTorah*, would point out (based on a *Gemara* in *Hulin* 60b) that there is proof that an all-knowing G-d wrote the Torah from the verses listing the animals that chew their cud but do not have split hooves, and the animal that has split hooves and does not chew its cud. Would a human put his credibility on the line by predicting that at no point in the future would a single animal that is not on that list be found somewhere in the world?

And indeed, some 3000 years after the Torah was given, and with all the searching science has done for unknown species, not a single such animal has been found!

Aside from strengthening our faith, however, these verses also teach us a lesson in how to view, and relate to, other people. The point of the verses listing the animals that have only one kosher sign is to teach us that they are not kosher. It would seem appropriate, then, to list the sign that causes them to be non-kosher first. Yet we see that the Torah lists them as the camel, the rabbit, and the hyrax, which chew their cud but do not have split hooves, and the pig, which has split hooves, but does not chew its cud. Why does the Torah list the kosher signs of these animals first if the non-existent signs are the only ones we really need in order to label these animals non-kosher?

A *Midrash* explains that the Torah is trying to teach us that even when something is not kosher, we should find a way to mention something praiseworthy about it first. Even something as unkosher as pig deserves to have its positive trait pointed out.

If the Torah does so for non-kosher animals, how much more do we have to learn to have this consideration with regard to people? Bosses, employees, children, students, co-workers, and neighbors will invariably have some negative traits. It might be our job, from time to time, to deliver a negative message.

This *Midrash* is teaching us that even when we have to deliver a negative message to others — to tell them that they are “non-kosher” in some way — we should always find a way to point out their positive attributes or qualities first. (Rabbi Yissocher Frand)