

Fascinating INSIGHTS

ד' אייר תשפ"א

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EXCITING NEWS: I am happy to announce that the book **Incredible Insights** is available for purchase and delivery at <https://www.amazon.com/dp/Bo8VCH8Z7T> where you can also see the reviews. It can also be bought from the author by sending an email to yalt3285@gmail.com. The essays contained in this book, written from a Torah outlook, deal with a wide array of assorted topics that are unique, inspiring, interesting, thought-provoking, encouraging, enlightening, and transformational. The book includes Haskamos from R' Shmuel Kamenetsky, R' Yisroel Reisman, R' Moshe Wolfson, R' Yitzchak Breitowitz, R' Zev Leff and R' Yitzchak Scheiner. Over the last number of years these insights have inspired thousands around the world, in more than forty countries. This read is for all ages. It has something for everyone, for beginners and scholars, and students and teachers. It makes a great gift for friends, relatives, business associates, and learning partners. *Please spread the word about it.*

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Caring Character

The Gra¹ tells us the purpose of life is to break our Middos. It of course no coincidence that מדה has a Gematria of 49, the number of days in² Sefira,³ as this is a time to work on our Middos.⁴

¹ Mishlei 4:13. Also see Noam Elimelech in Tzetil Katan and Poras Yosef in Lech Lecha.

² Shavuos coming after Sefira follows the dictum לתורה קדמה לתורה (Tanna Dvei Eliyahu, 1), as we work on our Middos (דרך ארץ) and then we have Shavuos (Torah). In this light we can understand התקן עצמך ללמוד תורה, fixing up your Middos precedes learning Torah (Avos 2:12).

³ Rabbeinu Bachaye (Yisro 18:21, s.v. בא) writes that *wisdom is not what is of main significance but rather good character is*. This is just as a tree where its fruit is the main significance. With this we can explain why when the Torah praises great people it doesn't describe their wisdom rather their righteousness and character. Concerning Noach, it states איש צדיק תמים, righteous man, perfect... (Breishis 6:9). Regarding Avraham, ורדיה תמים, be perfect (Breishis 17:1). Moshe: ענו מאד, exceedingly humble (Bamidbar 12:3).

⁴ The Kotzker Rebbe once commented, "It is not a miracle to change nature, because since the letters of the Torah created the world, if you

The Pasuk states *והספרה לה שבעת ימים ואחר תטהר* and she counts seven days and then she can be purified.⁵ This also alludes to Sefira as after we count seven weeks and improve our ways, then we can be pure!⁶ Mesachta Keilim concludes *אשריך כלים שנכנסת בטמאה ויצאת בטהרה*, happy are you, Keilim, that you entered in impurity and departed in purity (referring to the opening and closing words of this Mesachta). This can also be said of one who refines and purifies himself in this world.

A man from Yerushalayim came to R' Shmuel Rozovsky, Rosh Yeshiva of Ponovitch, to discuss a potential Shidduch for his daughter since the boy was in his Yeshiva. The man inquired if the boy is a Masmid, smart and so on. After receiving positive answers, R' Shmuel told him that your daughter would like to know if he is a *mentch*: does he thank the cook? Does he look for ways to help others?⁸ When he enters his dorm room, is he careful not to wake up his roommates? This is what you should do research on!

The Gemara relates that it was said about Rabban Yochanan Ben Zakai that no one ever greeted him first, even a non-Jew in the marketplace, as he would be sure to offer the first greeting.⁹ That is Rabban Yochanan Ben Zakai, who was a Nasi (leader) in the period of the Churban Habayis and the needs of the Jewish people were placed upon him. The Gemara relates that he mastered Chumash, Mishna, Gemara, Halacha, speech of Malachim and more.¹⁰ He is called like an important officer before the king, Hashem.¹¹ In spite of all this, it never happened that he was too busy that he forgot to say hello first to a non-Jew even in the market!¹²

In Yerushalayim in 1969, a few weeks before he passed away, R' Yechezkel Sarna (1890-1969) was extremely weak. Nevertheless, he exerted himself to go to his yeshiva to daven Maariv. As he walked up the stairs, R' Sarna and his attendant who accompanied him realized the yeshiva had just completed Maariv. Nonetheless, R' Sarna continued up the steps. He explained that davening with a minyan is a *mitzva d'rabanan* ("Rabbinical commandment") but wishing the students a good week ("a *gut voch*") is a *mitzva d'oraisa* ("Biblical commandment") as it says *ואהבת לרעך כמוך*, love

know Torah, you can change nature. It is however a miracle to change your nature (character)."

⁵ Vayikra 15:28.

⁶ We must realize we are each diamonds. Just as a diamond can be dirty but it is still a diamond as it just needs to be cleaned off, the same is with each of us.

⁷ Keilim 30:4.

⁸ There were times when the real estate mogul Shloime Gross had the opportunity to earn large sums of money but opted to allow someone else to invest so that the person could establish a successful livelihood for himself.

⁹ Brachos 17a.

¹⁰ Succa 28a.

¹¹ Brachos 34b.

¹² Michtav Meliyahu, volume 4, p. 246.

your fellow like yourself.¹³ “Therefore, if I would go to Maariv, then I can exert myself to wish them a good week.”¹⁴

One way we must work on ourselves is to be flexible and not get upset when things don't go our way. Indeed, the Gemara instructs us ...לעולם יהא אדם רך כקנה... one should be soft like a reed¹⁵ and not hard like a cedar.¹⁶ A wise person once said, “A man was born gentle and weak. At death, he becomes hard and stiff. Stiffness is a companion in death whereas flexibility is a companion in life.¹⁷ Where are you?”

R' Binyamin Rabinowitz was careful to eat the Afikomom before Chatzos.¹⁸ One year, they began the meal (Shulchan Aruch) only 20 minutes prior to Chatzos. As his children rushed the meal so they could eat the Afikomom before Chatzos, R' Binyamin told them to take it slow. He explained that the Rebbetzin worked hard to prepare the meal so she may be upset if it is rushed without being enjoyed. Then R' Binyamin commented, “All the stringencies of the Seder aren't worthwhile if it causes another Jew to groan.”¹⁹

At times when we work on ourselves and go the extra mile, we realize that we actually gained from it. R' Yechezkal Landau, author of the נודע ביהודה (1713-1793), was once walking the streets in Prague when he saw a ten-year-old non-Jewish boy crying. The child explained that he would sell rolls from his father's bakery daily. On that particular day, someone mugged him and stole all the rolls. The נודע ביהודה gave the poor child some money and continued on his way. Eight years later, late one night when the נודע ביהודה was learning, he heard a knock at the door. The visitor came to warn him that the non-Jews were aware Pesach is approaching and that it ends on Monday. All the non-Jewish bakeries came together to poison the bread of the Jews. What did the נודע ביהודה do? He instituted an extra day of Pesach that year saving many Jewish lives.²⁰ Who was that visitor that related the

news to the נודע ביהודה with the intention of saving the Jews? The non-Jewish child who the נודע ביהודה helped.²¹

Here is one more incredible story on this topic. It was a Thursday night in August 2017 when R' Mendy Segal, the Chabad emissary of Phuket (an island off the southwestern coast of Thailand) received a phone call that two Israelis were in a Thai prison on drug charges and needed his help to bail them out. The call came at the worst time as Chabad Phuket had a series of events planned that coming weekend in conjunction with the opening of a new \$4 million facility where many were coming from around the world to celebrate. Although very busy, he still was planning on heading to the police station the next morning to offer his assistance. However, later that night he was informed that the two men arrested were actually Arabs with Israeli passports. Unsure now whether to go, he sought counsel from the chief rabbi of Thailand in Bangkok, R' Yosef Kantor, who advised him to go. So, on Friday morning R' Segal headed there and helped the two men get released on bail. In the process, he met one of their friends, another Israeli named Vadim. R' Segal started to talk with him and learned that his mother is Jewish. Vadim, whose father was Arab, had never been in a synagogue before as he was afraid it would cause tension in the family. R' Segal convinced Vadim to come to Chabad where he put Tefillin on for the first time in his life! Soon after, he returned for Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur!

Defective Angels

The Mishna²² says that one who commits even a single sin gets himself a single accuser. So a malach is created from a sin one does. R' Zusha of Anipoli (1718-1800) remarked that he never saw a perfect malach created from a sin. This was because the malach created is in accordance to the sin that was done. If one commits a sin and feels bad about it, has regret and the like, then the malach created is defective. What type of Jew would do a sin wholeheartedly?! A Jew may slip but he surely didn't commit a sin perfectly. As it has been said, “A Jew may perform a mitzva b'simcha but he won't commit a sin b'simcha.” Therefore, malachim created from sins are flawed.

In this way, the Divrei Chaim explained the words לא יבית און ביעקב...ותרועת מלך בו²³ (“Hashem perceived no iniquity in Yaakov and saw no perversity in Israel. Hashem is with him and the friendship of the King is in him”): Hashem doesn't see a whole, perfect sin among the Jewish People because תרועת מלך בו, they have a broken heart to Hashem when they sin.²⁴

Rabbi Alt merited to learn under the tutelage of R' Mordechai Friedlander ztz"l for close to five years. He received Semicha from R' Zalman Nechemia Goldberg ztz"l. Rabbi Alt has written on numerous topics for various websites and publications and is the author of the books, Fascinating Insights and Incredible Insights. His writings inspire people across the spectrum of Jewish observance to live with the vibrancy and beauty of Torah. He lives with his wife and family in Kiryat Yearim (where the Aron was for 20 years [Shmuel 1, 7:1,2]) where he studies, writes and teaches. The author is passionate about teaching Jews of all levels of observance.

¹³ Vayikra 19:18.

¹⁴ Marbtzei Torah U'mussar, volume 4, p. 100.

¹⁵ It has been said not to confuse spring cleaning with Pesach cleaning as a woman who was preparing for Pesach was told that dust isn't Chametz and the children are not the Karbon Pesach.

¹⁶ Taanis 20a. It is said from the Baal Shem Tov that this also refers to Avodas Hashem, as one shouldn't think I always have to learn, daven, make food for Shabbos now and the like. At times a matter may arise, dealing with a child, your wife needing you and the like, and at that time the will of Hashem is to interrupt your regular schedule.

¹⁷ The saying goes, “One who looks for a friend without faults will have none.”

¹⁸ Orach Chaim 477:1. R' Rabinowitz was a member of the Beis Din of the Eidah HaChareidis in Yerushalayim.

¹⁹ When a Rav isn't certain of a Halacha, the tendency is to rule stringently because this seems safer as no one will be transgressing the Halacha. It is said from the Shevet Mussar that by being unnecessarily stringent, one may be transgressing on להבירר. So being stringent, and causing someone a loss or distress may be an even more severe sin than the transgression he attempted to avoid. When a question regarding Kashrus was brought to Reb Moshe Kliers, the Rav of Teveria, he was careful to rule correctly as he would repeat the Shevet Mussar's lesson and would say that if he makes a mistake ruling the food isn't kosher, he may be causing a poor person to lose money. That is a sin בין אדם לאדם that Yom Kippur doesn't atone.

²⁰ It also caused these villains to lose lots of money.

²¹ A wise man once remarked that when you choose to be pleasant and positive in the way you treat others, you have also chosen (in most cases) how you are going to be treated by others.

²² Avos 4:13.

²³ Bamidbar 23:21.

²⁴ תרועת can be broken as in Tehillim 2:9.