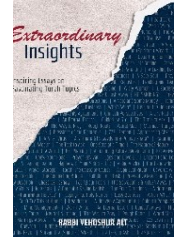
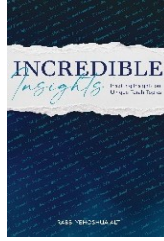
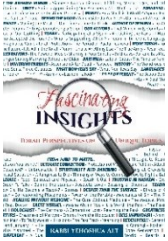


# Fascinating INSIGHTS

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## Kindling Candles

We know that when a woman lights Shabbos candles<sup>1</sup> it is a special time to daven. The Chazon Ish would comment that even a child who was not blessed with special intelligence but puts all his efforts into his learning and prospers is successful because of his mother's or grandmother's tefillos and tears shed at candle lighting.<sup>2</sup>

A young R' Moshe Sternbuch once related a novel Torah thought to the Tchebiner Rav. The Tchebiner Rav told R' Sternbuch "What you said now was not your original thought but rather it was your mother's. It was in the merit of your mother's tefillos at candle lighting that you were capable of constructing such a beautiful and novel Torah thought.

The Daas Moshe<sup>3</sup> writes that his father told him that the mother of R' Shmuel Kaidenover<sup>4</sup>—who authored Birkas Hazevach on Seder Kodshim and Birkas Shmuel on the Torah among other sefarim—didn't know how to daven at all.

<sup>1</sup> In the mid-1990s, a Jewish outreach professional wondered, what if the New York Times printed the Shabbos candle lighting time each week? Imagine the Jewish awareness and pride that might result from such a prominent mention of Shabbos each week. He contacted a Jewish philanthropist who agreed to fund this project which cost nearly two thousand dollars a week. And so for the next five years, every Friday, Jews around the world would see "Jewish Women: Shabbat candle lighting time this Friday is..." Eventually the philanthropist had to reduce the number of projects he was funding, and so, in June 1999, the little Shabbos candle lighting notice made its last appearance in the New York Times. At least that's what people thought. On January 1, 2000, the NY Times ran a Millennium edition commemorating the paper's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. This special issue featured three front pages: one contained the news from January 1, 1900, the second contained the actual news of the day, January 1, 2000 while the third front page, featured projected headlines of January 1, 2100. It included such stories as a welcome to the fifty-first state, Cuba, and a debate over the issue of whether robots should be allowed to vote. In addition to the creative articles, there was

However, at Shabbos candle lighting, she would pray in Russian that it should be the will of Hashem that her son Shmuel should be a Torah Scholar!

A child of a well-known non-observant Israeli personality was chozer b'teshuva and became a Torah scholar. When asked what merit spurred this man's return to Judaism, the Chazon Ish replied, "It was because of an ancestor who would daven at the Shabbos candles that her progeny merit to be righteous and G-d fearing Jews. Even one tefilla, one tear is never lost."<sup>5</sup>

A member of the Israeli family Moskowitz, which is renowned for their unmatched character and dedication to Torah and mitzvos, disclosed a family secret as to their success. "My grandmother was not religious but she always lit Shabbos candles and davened for the success of her children and grandchildren, as this is what her mother did back in Europe. Her husband, my grandfather, worked for then-Prime Minister David

one extra piece: On the bottom of the year 2100 front page was the candle lighting time in New York for January 1, 2100. Nobody asked for it or paid for it. It was just put in by the Times. The production manager of the New York Times, an Irish Catholic, was asked about this entry. His answer speaks to the eternity of our people. "We don't know what will happen in the year 2100. It is impossible to predict the future. But you can be sure of one thing: That in the year 2100, Jewish women will be lighting Shabbos candles."

<sup>2</sup> M'beer Hashabbos, p. 76.

<sup>3</sup> Parshas Teruma.

<sup>4</sup> R' Shmuel Kaidenover lived from 1614 until 1676 and was a rav in many communities. R' Kaidenover opposed the use of the Shulchan Aruch and its commentaries in deciding Jewish law, instead supporting the use of the Tur with the Beis Yosef commentary. He went so far as to tell another rabbi to sell all of his sefarim and buy himself a set of the Tur. R' Kaidenover's son R' Tzvi Hirsch was a rav in Frankfurt and the author of the Kav Hayashar. He printed much of his father's works.

<sup>5</sup> Maaseh Ish, Volume 7, p. 24.

Ben-Gurion and when he would arrive home every day, he would praise the Prime Minister. Impressed by these accolades, my grandmother davened every Friday night after lighting candles that her descendants be like Ben-Gurion. One day, the Prime Minister met with the Chazon Ish. After the meeting the Prime Minister called his staff together including my grandfather lauding the venerable sage's superlative penetrating brilliance deep perception in all subject matters. That day my grandfather arrived home and reported what Ben-Gurion said about the Chazon Ish. Upon hearing Ben-Gurion's praise for the Chazon Ish and how he never met such a giant of a man, my grandmother reasoned that if the Prime Minister held the Chazon Ish in such high esteem, she would start davening after lighting Shabbos candles that her progeny should be like the Chazon Ish."<sup>6</sup>

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### Caring Character

The Gra<sup>7</sup> tells us the purpose of life is to break our middos.<sup>8</sup> It of course no coincidence that מדה has a Gematria of 49, the number of days in sefira, as this is a time to work on our middos.<sup>9</sup>

The pasuk states וספרה לה שבעת ימים ואחר תטהר, she counts seven days and then she can be purified.<sup>10</sup> This also alludes to sefira as after we count seven weeks and improve our ways, then we can be pure!<sup>11</sup> Mesachta Keilim concludes<sup>12</sup> אשריך אשריך שוננכת 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.

There are many people from whom we can learn how to improve our behavior. 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.<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup> He is called like an

important officer before the king, Hashem.<sup>15</sup> 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!<sup>16</sup>

Someone who lived more recently that we can learn from is Shloime Gross. 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.

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<sup>17</sup> is a mitzva d'rabanan but wishing the students a good week ("a gut voch") is a mitzva d'oraisa as it says ואהבת לרעך כמוך, love your fellow like yourself.<sup>18</sup> "Therefore, if I would go to maariv, then I can exert myself to wish them a good week."<sup>19</sup>

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 reed<sup>20</sup> and not hard like a cedar.<sup>21</sup> 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."<sup>22</sup> Where are you?"

R' Binyamin Rabinowitz was careful to eat the Afikomon before chatzos.<sup>23</sup> 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 Afikomon before chatzos, R' Binyamin told them to take it slow because the Rebbetzin worked hard to prepare the meal. He explained that 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."<sup>24</sup>

Listen to the short Fascinating Insights podcast at <https://www.fascinatinginsights.com>, where it can also be downloaded! 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 three books including the recently released Extraordinary Insights, in addition to being the host of The Fascinating Insights Podcast. His writings, some of which have been translated into Yiddish, Hebrew, German and French, 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, 7:12]) where he studies, writes and teaches. The author is passionate about teaching Jews of all levels of observance.

<sup>6</sup> Tiv Ha'nissuin, p. 288.

<sup>7</sup> Mishlei 4:13. Also see Noam Elimelech in Tzeitil Katan and Poras Yosef in Lech Lecha.

<sup>8</sup> 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: והיה תמים, be perfect (Breishis 17:1). Moshe: ענו מאד, exceedingly humble (Bamidbar 12:3).

<sup>9</sup> The Kotzker Rebbe once commented, "It is not a miracle to change nature, because being that the letters of the Torah created the world, if you know Torah, you can change nature. It is however a miracle to change your nature (character)."

<sup>10</sup> Vayikra 15:28.

<sup>11</sup> 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.

<sup>12</sup> Keilim 30:4. It has been said, "Compare yourself to who you were yesterday, not to who someone else is today."

<sup>13</sup> Brachos 17a.

<sup>14</sup> Succa 28a.

<sup>15</sup> Brachos 34b.

<sup>16</sup> Michtav Meliyahu, volume 4, p. 246. 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.

<sup>17</sup> A proctor in a university gave a test which the students had one hour to complete. As the hour approached, there was one student that was finishing up. The proctor was adamant that he be finished by the end of the hour. A minute after the hour, the student came to hand in the test.

But the proctor refused. The student asked the proctor, "Do you know who I am?" the response: "I don't know and I don't care." The student exclaimed, "You don't know?" And then he shoved his test in the pile of completed tests before running off. This is the analogy given to understand the power of tefilla b'tzibur in contrast to davening b'yichidus. By yourself, you are exposed, but with a tzibur, your tefilla can ascend amid the pile.

<sup>18</sup> Vayikra 19:18.

<sup>19</sup> Marbtizei Torah U'mussar, volume 4, p. 100.

<sup>20</sup> 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.

<sup>21</sup> 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, etc. 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.

<sup>22</sup> The saying goes, "One who looks for a friend without faults will have none."

<sup>23</sup> Orach Chaim 477:1. R' Rabinowitz was a member of the Beis Din of the Eidah HaChareidis in Yerushalayim.

<sup>24</sup> 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 להבירו אדם. 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 להבירו אדם that Yom Kippur doesn't atone.