



KUNTRES

HAVINEINI



**פרשת
וישלח**
תשפ"ד

YEAR 2
ISSUE 52

SHIURIM OF

**HARAV SHIMON
SPITZER SHLIT" A**



לעילוי נשמת

האי גברא יקירא רודף צדקה וחסד רב פעלים
הרה"ח משה יוסף בן ר' יעקב ז"ל בראכפעלד
מקסיקו יצ"ו
גלב"ע בשם טוב ו' חשון תשס"א לפ"ק



**HAVINEINI
HOTLINE**

US - 718.686.8300

E"Y - 072.257.7726

UK - 0204.586.2115

BE - 03.300.0223

Also available on:



Sign up to receive daily shiurim
and weekly publications or to
send feedback:

Tel: 718.387.1122

Email: info@machonhavineini.com



.....

Contents

.....

The Danger of Seeking Truth in the Midst of Emotional Turmoil..... 5

*Moshe Hid His Face ❖ Lifesaving Lessons ❖ What Not to Think About
❖ The Rebbe's Advice – Move On! ❖ Don't Dig a Pit for Yourself ❖
Save Me from Negative Thoughts ❖ Thoughts and Emotions ❖ Pain vs.
Truth ❖ The Fragility of Reason ❖ Pain-Based Conclusions ❖ Us vs.
Them ❖ Avoid Arguments! ❖ The Lesson of Ashrei ❖ Painful and
Joyous ❖ Change the Topic ❖ How to Bentch*

The Danger of Seeking Truth in the Midst of Emotional Turmoil

The *Tiferes Shlomo* (*Parshas Chayei Sarah*) quotes a puzzling Midrash on the words, וַיָּקָם אַבְרָהָם מֵעַל פְּנֵי מֶתוֹ (Bereishis 24:7).

“This teaches us that the angel of death tried to provoke Avraham Avinu.”

The *Tiferes Shlomo* wonders what difficulty Chazal found in the *pasuk* that might have hinted to this provocation. He then explains that the Midrash reacted to a gap in the story. The previous *pasuk* said, וַיָּבֵא אַבְרָהָם לְסַפֵּד לְשָׂרָה וּלְבַכְתָּהּ - *Avraham came to eulogize Sarah and to cry over her*. However, the Torah doesn't tell us that he actually did say a *hesped* and cry. The next *pasuk* begins וַיָּקָם אַבְרָהָם מֵעַל פְּנֵי מֶתוֹ - *Then Avraham got up from before his deceased*. This implies that although he intended to eulogize Sarah and cry over her, he changed his mind and simply left. Why would he do that?

This is the difficulty that the Midrash is coming to resolve. When the Midrash says that the angel of death tried to provoke Avraham, it is explaining why he left before giving a *hesped*. What was the nature of the angel's attack?

The *Tiferes Shlomo* explains that the *Malach Hamavess* tried to take advantage of Avraham Avinu's pain and suffering by getting him to question the justice of Sarah's death at that time. He wanted Avraham Avinu to dwell on the fact that the *tzadekes Sarah*, who spoke with *ruach hakodesh*, who was the mother of the future Am Yisrael, and whose son Yitzchak had just ascended to great levels of *kedushah* at the *akeidah*, had died suddenly. All of this greatness failed to prevent her death.

When Avraham identified the *malach's* tactics, he immediately changed his plan to eulogize and cry. Instead, he simply moved on.

Moshe Hid His Face

The Tiferes Shlomo references a *pasuk* in *Shemos* (3:6), describing Moshe Rabbeinu's reaction to the burning bush.

וַיִּסְתֵּר מֹשֶׁה פָּנָיו כִּי יָרָא מִהֵבִיט אֶל הָאֱלֹהִים – *And Moshe hid his face for he was afraid to look at Elokim.* The simple explanation of the *pasuk* is that Moshe wanted to look, but because the light was so strong, it caused him to be afraid and hide his face.

The Tiferes Shlomo explains the *pasuk* with a new and different approach. The name *Elokim* represents *Middas HaDin*. As part of their *avodah*, tzaddikim try not to focus on *dinim* such as punishment or suffering. That is why Moshe hid his face.

The Tiferes Shlomo goes on to explain why tzaddikim don't want to look at *dinim*.

Even if an individual or a community is struck by the *Middas HaDin*, tzaddikim don't focus on trying to understand the nature of the *tzarah*, so that their hearts won't begin to ask why Hashem caused such pain. They want their hearts to remain confident that everything Hashem does is just and correct, that no evil comes from Hashem, and that everything that occurs is *l'tovah*.

When Moshe Rabbeinu saw the burning bush that represents *galus*, he didn't want to concentrate on it and try to understand its nature and wonder why it had to take place. He hid his face to avoid looking at the revelation of *din*, because he was afraid that attempting to understand *din* at that time would lead him to question Hashem's judgment.

In fact, when he began his *shlichus*, and did focus on Bnei Yisrael's suffering, he couldn't bear it. He cried out, למה הרעות – *Why have You afflicted this nation?* Chazal state that he was in fact punished for asking that question.

The Tiferes Shlomo utilizes this idea to explain the *pasuk* (*Tehillim* 34:13)

מי האיש ההפך חיים אהב ימים לראות טוב - Who is the tzaddik who sees that everything that happens is exclusively *tov* that comes from Hashem? Someone who sees the world that way will then fulfill *מרע* *לשונך*, never saying anything negative, because nothing Hashem does is bad in his eyes.

Lifesaving Lessons

This teaching of the Tiferes Shlomo contains many fundamental principles that each of us must internalize. Doing so can save us, especially in times like these when each day brings news of death and tragedy.

Admittedly, this idea isn't so easy to accept. At first glance, he seems to be telling us to ignore suffering and tragedy, because if we think about it, we come to question or complain about Hashem's actions. A person may mistakenly take this *peirush* as confirmation that there are only two options: staying glued to the news and losing our minds and hearts, or ignoring current events, thereby forgoing the *middah* of participating in the suffering of Am Yisrael.

What Not to Think About

The main point of the Tiferes Shlomo is that even though a person must constantly think about Hakadosh Baruch Hu, even while involved in *parnassah* and other matters, he should divert his thoughts from the aspect of *din*.

Hakadosh Baruch Hu interacts with the world through various *middos*. He has arranged these actions systematically. As Chazal explained, the *pasuk* *כִּי רָגַע בְּאֶפְסוֹ חַיִּים בְּרִצּוֹנוֹ* means that Hashem constantly sends the world an abundance of revealed *chasadim*. However, there are moments when *middas hadin* is active. even in those moments, there are hidden *chasadim* in the *middas hadin* itself, as well as revealed *chasadim* that surround the *din*.

In all circumstances, Hashem is speaking to each person, and to the world as a whole. Through Hakadosh Baruch Hu's interactions with

the world, we can determine the nature of people's deeds, because there is reward and punishment.

If someone dwells excessively on the painful aspects of life, the pain will lead him to question Hashem. After experiencing or witnessing Hashem's *din*, a person should try to understand the message, and then immediately shift his attention exclusively to *chasadim*.

Moshe Rabbeinu saw the burning bush and understood that Bnei Yisrael were in a state of *galus*, and then looked away. Once the message is clear, we don't keep dwelling on it. Constantly reviewing the manifestation of *din* while you are in pain will inevitably lead to incorrect, negative thoughts and conclusions.

We must be aware of the constant danger of falling into those negative thought patterns. The *yetzer hara* uses tactics that he knows can trap us in his net. Once a person enters an anxious, "this is terrible!" mode of thinking, the *yetzer hara* says, "Ah! Now is the time to lead him to thoughts of fear, כחי ועוצם ידי - reliance on his own strength, *kefirah*, and sadness." The *yetzer* is always on the lookout for such openings. When a person dwells on his problems, thought patterns that began by thinking of Hakadosh Baruch Hu end up leading people to very unhealthy places.

Therefore, in times of difficulty, a very difficult form of *avodas Hashem* is demanded of us. A person has to tell himself, "You already know what happened. Now, stop thinking about it. Think only about Hashem's goodness." This *avodah* takes work, but it will enable him to live as he should.

The Rebbe's Advice – Move On!

Rav Yaakov Yosef of Skver didn't want bereaved parents to do too many things for the benefit of their child's *neshamah*. He certainly felt that it was important and positive to do something, but he discouraged constant involvement in saying *Kaddish* at every opportunity, lighting candles, and other good deeds.

Why? Because even the involvement in such positive endeavors leads people to dwell on their *tzaros*. The Rebbe would even advise parents not to say *Kaddish* themselves but to assign that task to someone else. The Rebbe would point out that after the plague that struck Bnei Yisrael in *Parshas Pinchas*, the *pasuk* begins וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי הַמִּגְדָּה. Those words are then followed by a gap before the conclusion of the *pasuk*. That is the **only** place in the Torah where there is a gap in the middle of the *pasuk*. The Rebbe explained that this comes to teach us an important lesson: after a tragedy (such as a plague), we must stop thinking about it and then move on to something else. There is no need to analyze what happened and speak about it constantly. It's not healthy. Instead, we have to avoid being trapped by those thoughts, and go on to serve Hashem *b'simchah*.

Once the Rebbe summoned the *Av Beis Din* of New Square, Rav Moshe Neuschloss, to discuss the question of women fasting on all the fast days in the calendar. At one point, the Rebbe said to R' Moshe, "I will tell you a story.

Once, a woman came to the Ohev Yisrael of Apta. She had accidentally smothered her baby, leading to its death. The distraught woman asked the Rebbe to guide her in the process of *teshuvah* and *tikkun* for her *neshamah*.

The *sefer Sifsei Tzaddikim* quotes the *piskei haGeonim* who instruct people in such cases to fast for eighty-four consecutive days (only eating a bit at night), and afterwards, to fast Mondays and Thursdays until twelve months have passed. But the Ohev Yisrael recommended something else.

He asked the woman, "Why would a person have to fast? Clearly, because a *tikkun* is needed. Let's think about what requires *tikkun*. There was a *neshamah* in this world, and you caused it to leave the world. The world is now missing the life of that child.

"The most essential *tikkun* is called *teshuvas hamishkal*, repenting in a way that is a counterbalance to the *aveirah*. If a child has left

the world, you must give birth to more children! If you fast, you won't have the strength to give birth to more children. Therefore, the main *tikkun* you have to do is to eat nutritious food, and strengthen yourself, so that you can bring more children into the world."

Don't Dig a Pit for Yourself

When the Tiferes Shlomo discourages us from over-involvement in *tzaros*, it's important to realize that his reasons go beyond the danger of sinking into depression. He wants us to understand that when an event or a situation has caused us to be in a state of pain, we shouldn't even try to understand what happened, or to read books on the subject. There may be a time and place for that process, but only after we are no longer in pain.

Let's return to the example of Avraham Avinu. The process of *hesped* is something the Torah obligates us to do. If a *gadol* passes away, and he is not eulogized as befits his stature, we are held accountable for that shortcoming, with frightening repercussions.

Sarah Imeinu was certainly a person of *gadlus*, and there was a Torah obligation to say *hespeidim*. How could Avraham Avinu decide to forego saying a *hesped*? The answer is that everything has its proper time. Avraham Avinu was in a state of pain, and he didn't want to say a *hesped* while suffering that level of pain. When emotional turmoil is so strong, it isn't possible to think straight. A person is plagued by questions of "How could this have happened? Why did I deserve to suffer like this? It doesn't make sense!"

That is why that time of intense pain is not the time to learn that *sugya*. At that stage, a person has to follow in the footsteps of Aharon Hakohen after the death of his sons Nadav and Avihu. וַיִּדָּם אֶהְרֶן - *And Aharon was silent*.

After he has calmed down, once he can see that his emotions are no longer controlling him, only then can he deliver a *hesped*, and he must deliver a *hesped*.

Save Me from Negative Thoughts

Unfortunately, we are living through a period when one *tzarah* is followed by an even bigger one. As people struggle to deal with multiple tragedies, this *avodah* is particularly relevant.

It should be clear that the *hesech hadaas* of people who simply don't want to know what is happening has nothing to do with the *hesech hadaas* recommended by the Tiferes Shlomo. Blissful ignorance is not a thought-out program of *avodah*; it's an attempt to avoid discomfort. Of course, there may be people who don't have the strength to hear reports of tragedies. News reports could endanger their health, so they do need to insulate themselves from current events.

However, the proper approach for most people is to be aware of whatever is happening. We should process the information, and understand that the situation is difficult and that a great *yeshuah* is needed. We also need to realize that we must increase *teshuvah*, *Torah*, and *tefillah*.

Nevertheless, all that can be accomplished by a quick glance at the burning bush. There is no need to engulf ourselves in thoughts about the tragedy, because it will inevitably lead to negative thoughts. When a person spends too much time thinking about atrocities committed by evil people, he is actually immersing himself in a noxious environment of evil.

Of course, *ra* itself has a root that is good, for it was created by Hakadosh Baruch Hu, the source of all good. Yeshayahu (45:7) says that Hashem is יוֹצֵר אוֹר וּבוֹרֵא חֹשֶׁךְ עֹשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם וּבוֹרֵא רָע - *The One Who forms light and creates darkness, Who makes peace and creates evil*. Nevertheless, as human beings we view a situation from our own limited perspective and understanding. If we continue to agonize and examine the events while in a state of emotional turmoil, we can end up in a very negative place of questions and accusations.

It is a waste of mental energy, because this is the wrong time to take on the *sugya* of suffering.

Thoughts and Emotions

If a person learns something new while he is in a state of great joy, he will experience joy each time he thinks of the knowledge he gained at that moment.

For example, let's imagine a group of *ovdei Hashem* who traveled to the *tziyun* of Rav Elimelech in Lizhensk. While there, somebody spoke and inspired everyone to *teshuwah*. He also imparted a teaching of the tzaddik. Everyone was inspired and moved, some even to the point of tears, by that saying of the tzaddik.

All of these listeners will remember that saying, even years later, because it entered their world together with powerful positive emotions and pure thoughts of *teshuwah*.

We need to understand that the opposite is true as well. Let's imagine a person who is going through a hard time. In the midst of his sorrow and bitterness, he decides to learn a *sugya* that is totally new to him. He is learning material that he hopes will give him *chizuk* and help him understand what is going on. Unfortunately, this process is destructive rather than constructive. He opens one *sefer* after another, but his emotions distort his understanding. And because he is so emotional, the mistaken conclusions become deeply embedded in his heart and mind.

A qualified judge may strive to think things through and determine the truth; however, the bribe he received distorts the way he will process information and reach conclusions. Emotional weight can unbalance our perception just like a bribe.

In addition, when someone attempts to process information while under the influence of his emotions, the emotions implant the misunderstandings deep in his heart and mind. Even after the situation changes and the emotions are calmed, those mistaken conclusions remain. If someone mentions the topic that he was studying then, he will immediately draw on his old emotionally-influenced conclusions.

Pain vs. Truth

Sometimes a group of people are discussing a beautiful *dvar Torah* that can provide so much *chizuk*. However, one person mocks what is happening with a cynical comment or a supercilious smile. His reaction has the power to cancel all the positive influence that could have resulted from that discussion. Someone tells a beautiful story about an act of righteousness, and everyone listens intently. One person's thoughtless comment that the story is "ridiculous and probably made up" takes the wind out of everyone's sails.

To be honest, we all have a tendency to be skeptical, and to reject or cast aspersions on what we hear. However, someone who has experienced pain in a certain area will try to take apart any source that addresses those issues in ways that don't match his conclusions. If someone quotes a *pasuk*, he will say, "It doesn't really mean that." If someone points out that Rashi explains the *pasuk* in a certain way, he will respond, "Others disagree with Rashi." His friends may be shocked by his responses. They have to realize that he reached his conclusions about that topic under the influence of pain and strong emotions.

These mistakes can be avoided if a person learns to tell himself, "The facts of what happened will keep. There will be time to say *hespedim* and process the events. Right now, I need to focus on *טוב ה' לכל ורחמי* על כל מעשיו - *Hashem is good to all and has mercy on all of His creations.*" It's a time to review and reinforce this fundamental truth that he has known all his life, so that it doesn't get lost in this time of crisis.

This applies both private and public crises. We may be unaware how much bitterness seeps into us, and leads us to baseless conclusions, while we are upset.

The Fragility of Reason

As we said above, emotions can influence the way we process information and reach conclusions, in the same way that a monetary bribe can. The Gemara in *Maseches Kesubos* tells us that even a bribe in the form of kind words can require a *dayan* to recuse himself. The

Gemara tells the story of Shmuel, who was crossing a bridge. Someone helped Shmuel walk by holding his hand. When Shmuel heard that the man was on his way to a *din Torah* in Shmuel's *beis din*, Shmuel declared himself disqualified to deal with the case.

The Gemara also tells the story of R. Yishmael ben R. Yosi, whose sharecropper would bring R. Yosi's share of the produce every Erev Shabbos. Once, the sharecropper delivered the basket of produce on Thursday. When R. Yishmael asked him about the change, he responded that he was on the way into town because his case was going to be judged in R. Yishmael's *beis din*. He'd decided to deliver the produce on this day so that he wouldn't have to make two trips. R. Yishmael recused himself.

We have to think about these and many similar stories. The *dayanim* in these stories were giants! Angelic figures whose *kedushah* is beyond our comprehension. Nevertheless, they took this concern extremely seriously. They taught us that no matter how great a person may be, the influence of emotion can prevent even the greatest mind from determining the truth. No one can claim that he is immune to such influences and can remain objective.

This applies not only to cases in *beis din*, but to each person's Torah learning. Someone who learns a topic that he is not emotionally invested in finds it easier to think clearly and reach true conclusions. Just as *shiurim* will sometimes skip a *sugya* in the Gemara because *talmidim* who are beginners won't be able to understand it, everyone needs to be honest and admit that while under the influence of emotion, there are topics he should set aside for later.

For example, many people experience a lot of pain related to the topic of *kibbud av va'eim*. If someone tries to speak with them about that topic, it bothers them and they try to change the subject. That pain renders them incapable of listening to a nice *shiur* on the great reward one receives for honoring parents.

Pain-Based Conclusions

Let's consider another example. A couple has been childless for years. When a neighbor speaks about the topic of childbirth near them, they get angry, and conclude that the person is insensitive. Why do they get upset and reach that conclusion? Because they are in pain.

Why don't they give the neighbor the benefit of the doubt and assume that they didn't realize that mentioning the topic would be hurtful? It's possible that the neighbor should have been more careful; *l'maaseh*, they weren't. This is especially common in gatherings of women who share experiences and ideas related to child-rearing. They may not realize that the one woman in the group who has been waiting for years to have a child is feeling excruciating pain as they chat. That intense pain may cause her to hate the women who unintentionally hurt her.

A person must look to the Torah for guidance in all situations, and this question of emotion and judgement is no exception. He needs to take a moment to ask himself why he has suddenly become so angry. Hopefully he'll realize that he is extremely sensitive to certain topics, and any time someone mentions them, it hurts intensely. That pain, not the speaker's wrongdoing, is triggering his anger. The moment he discovers this inner truth, he enters a different world.

He can begin to control his reactions. It becomes clear to him that it's best to refrain from drawing conclusions about anyone or anything while the pain is so intense. He understands that he is in no condition to think about an issue from more than one perspective. Pain and emotional turmoil influence a person's thinking just like a monetary bribe, but even more powerfully. A person who receives a bribe still sees both sides of a question, although the bribe causes him to be drawn to one side of the decision instead of the other.

People are constantly influenced by their *negios*. It changes the way they see things and the way they tell a story. However, when a person who is suffering approaches the issue that causes him pain, he cannot

even see two sides, because he stands to lose something vital if he even hears another viewpoint. Hearing someone express that opinion feels like being stabbed with a knife. His reaction is rooted in the powerful instinct of self-preservation; it feels like he cannot survive unless he insists vehemently that only his viewpoint is correct, and others are entirely wrong.

Us vs. Them

We often see this behavior when two people argue about different *hashkafos* or the approach of different *kehillos* or Rabbanim. A person often defines himself by his membership in a certain community. He declares with confidence, “This is my *kehillah*, this is the way we dress, and the way we behave. I am proud to be part of this community!”

Someone mentions to him that there is another *kehillah* that, in one aspect of *avodas Hashem*, surpasses his *kehillah’s* accomplishments. That *kehillah* devotes more time and energy to a certain *avodah*, and therefore have accomplished much more. The proud member of community A has a hard time accepting that statement. He automatically thinks, “Even if what he says is true, there is a long list of areas in which our *kehillah* accomplishes much more than community B.”

When this is the argument, a competitive spirit isn’t so bad. However, sometimes the argument centers on one *kehillah’s* insistence that something **must** be done, and the other *kehillah* feels just as strongly that it **must not** be done.

Here, the Tiferes Shlomo would tell enthusiastic members of either group not to delve into the topic. There is no way for you to objectively examine the other approach. Deep inside, you feel that if your investigation were to reveal that the other side is correct, your world would be destroyed. Your examination starts with the conviction that the other side’s position is wrong. Now, you just want to prove why it is wrong. No matter what, you know that you are right, they are wrong, and you daven that one day Hashem will help them see the error of their ways.

It is very unhealthy to examine an opinion with the pre-determined purpose of proving it to be wrong. You can file away the information that another *kehillah* disagrees with yours regarding a certain issue, then move on to your busy schedule of *avodas Hashem*. There is no mitzvah for you to start investigating, arguing, and proving. Since you are emotionally invested, you will certainly reach erroneous conclusions. Spend your time and energy thinking about what more you can do to serve Hashem, or how to improve the way you are *chozer b'teshuvah*.

Avoid Arguments!

Tzaddikim have instructed us to retreat in time when negative arguments develop. The Divrei Chaim of Sanz spoke about the danger of arguments that develop between *chavrusas* in the midst of learning. He warned his *talmidim* never to learn with the approach of *nitzuach* – the desire to defeat your opponent and win. When you ‘talk in learning,’ pleasantly discussing the *sugya* while building each other’s understanding, that’s wonderful! However, the moment that you feel that the discussion has become an argument, you need to end the discussion. Announce that you aren’t interested in pursuing the truth right now. Why? Because you feel the need to win, and approaching learning that way will never lead you to the truth.

This is even more dangerous when discussing fundamental topics like *emunah*, *bitachon*, and *temimus*. If you look into those topics while suffering, you may end up weakening your connection to those fundamentals of Yiddishkeit. Take a break. Let yourself calm down. In the meantime, don’t sit doing nothing; focus on the *tov* and *chesed* that Hashem does for you.

The Lesson of Ashrei

A Jew is supposed to say *Ashrei* three times a day. Let’s look at one aspect of that *perek*. In the second paragraph of *Krias Shema* we learn that if we follow the Torah, we will be rewarded, and if we don’t we will be punished. There is one *pasuk* in *Ashrei* that refers to this concept. צַדִּיק ה' בְּכָל דַּרְכָּיו וְהַסִּיד בְּכָל מַעְשָׁיו – *Hashem is just in all of His ways, and*

righteous in all of His deeds. However, this is the only *pasuk* in *Ashrei* that addresses the issue. All of the previous *pesukim* teach us what state of mind we should be in when we discuss the justice of Hashem's ways. Those *pesukim* describe Hashem's goodness, *chesed* and *rachamim*. Only when our emotions are aroused by thoughts of Hashem's goodness and kindness can we also declare that all of Hashem's ways are just.

Ashrei teaches us the proper proportions for speaking about different topics. We say one *pasuk* about Hashem's justice, in the midst of an entire *perek* that describes His kindness. In life, there are specific times when we are required to say the *brachah* ד"ן האמת. It's always true that Hashem is the *Dayan Ha'emes*, but we aren't meant to discuss that aspect all day in our everyday conversations. The majority of our thoughts and discussions should focus on Hashem's *chesed*.

Painful and Joyous

Let's imagine two *yeshivah bochurim* who are twenty-three years old. One comes from a community where a *bachur* isn't supposed to think about becoming a *chassan* at the young age of twenty-three. A boy that age is supposed to be sitting and learning!

Conversations about marriages don't cause that boy any pain. He can calmly listen to someone describe the wedding of a boy five years younger. He thinks, "If he wants to get married before he understands anything, I wish him the best. It's not for me."

Another *bachur* comes from a very different community. He is also twenty-three but he started saying *Shir Hashirim* forty times when he was seventeen! He has been tortured by his single status for years. The entire topic of marriage is very painful for him. When someone mentions *shidduchim* and weddings he finds himself questioning Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

Clearly, being an unmarried twenty-three year old isn't objectively painful. The second *bachur's* emotions have made it a very painful topic. If he tries to think about topics like the justice of Hashem's ways

in the context of his suffering, how can he imagine that he will discover the truth?

We need to be honest with ourselves. All of us have many topics that are very painful for us. Some people try to put on a brave face and tell people that they can talk about any topic at all. They announce that they are totally fine, and nothing bothers them. In nearly all cases, it simply isn't true, and if these people insist on maintaining that facade, they will end up misunderstanding basic principles of Yiddishkeit.

There is always something that hurts. At different stages in life, the topics will be different, but you have to admit your sensitivity. Pay attention to your reactions, and to other people's reactions. If you are surprised when your friend lashes out at you in the middle of a discussion, you should understand that he doesn't really want to insult you. You should realize that you must have touched on a very sensitive issue and his reaction simply reflects how much pain he felt.

Change the Topic

If you did inadvertently step on your friend's toes, change the topic! Try to discuss topics that won't arouse your friend's anger and hatred, but will lead to something constructive. If someone knows that each time he meets you, he is going to be criticized, he will avoid you. You will only be able to express some constructive criticism if at least eighty percent of your discussions are warm and loving. Once he really believes that you admire and value him, he may be open to accepting the occasional critical comment.

There is nothing wrong with your friend. Hashem created the world that way. Look at the many *pesukim* in *Ashrei* that extol Hashem's kindness and goodness. The Lechovitcher said that we need to praise other people's strengths and abilities. With that encouragement, he will believe in his ability to improve.

How to Bentch

Let's apply this to *Birkas Hamazon*. In the first *brachah* we praise Hashem for sustaining us. In the second, we thank Hashem for so many

things that we might otherwise overlook: the goodness of Eretz Yisrael, the *bris*, the *chukim* of the Torah and more. Then, we reach the *brachah* of *Rachem Na* asking Hashem to have mercy on us and save us from our *tzaros*. We certainly need His mercy. Nonetheless, after that *brachah* we move on to the fourth *brachah* which once again thanks Hashem for His goodness, declaring *הוא הטיב, הוא מטיב, הוא יטיב לנו*.

Birkas Hamazon, Ashrei, and Shemoneh Esrei are all constructed this way, teaching us how to balance our emotions and thoughts, and become healthy, happy *ovdei Hashem*.



842106199994