

BITACHON WEEKLY

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פרק מ' משפטים-שקלים תשפ"ג

Avodas Hashem Starts with Self-Esteem

The *Eved Ivri* is built up so much, to the point that *Chazal* say: *כל קונה עבד עברני פקונה אדון לעצמו קידושין כ א* whoever purchases an *Eved* (a Jewish slave), is as if he has acquired for himself a Master. The *Eved Ivri* is also criticized with a hole in his ear, for being such a lowly: *שָׁפֵל Shafel* who doesn't respect himself. He wants to remain an *Eved* forever, and he forgets to be a proud *Yid* who heard at *Har Sinai* that we are only *Avdei Hashem* and we aren't inferior *Avadim* to *Bnei Adam* (humans). *Rabeinu Yonah* says: *הפטחה קראשון לעובזת ה שידע ערכו וערך אבוטוי* the front entrance to *Avodas Hashem* is to know your own greatness and the greatness of your forefathers. Notice how the giant *Parshas Mishpatim* which is loaded with lessons in human nature starts with self-esteem *Yesodos*.

And the same with *Har Sinai* which starts with: *וְאַתֶּם תָּהִיו לְמַלְכֹת פְּנָנִים וְעַם סֶגֶל* you are all a nation of: princes and: *עַם סֶגֶל* a special treasure. And even by Hashem, the *Az Yashir* starts with: *וְאַשְׁירָה לָהּ כִּי גָּאָה וְאַזְמָנָה* I will sing to Hashem who has become exceedingly great. **First** we say that Hashem is the greatest of the great, and only afterwards do we get involved in details.

This is the way every *Yid* should begin his day; with a proud *Shtempel*.

"I'm a *Tzaddik*, a *Gaon*, a *Zariz*", etc. Now your day will be *Gevaldig*. R' Nosson Wachtfogel *Zatzal* used to say that the way you **start** your day is a big *Ikar*. And R' Gershon Liebman *Zatzal* said the same idea.

"I Love Being Good Old Mr. Zero!"

However, sometimes a person should change his *Shtempel*, and instead of deciding I'm a big *Tzaddik* or *Talmid Chochom*, it is sometimes much more relaxing to decide: "I'm not such a great guy! I'm a simple nobody! So I'm not the greatest father, son, *Rosh Yeshiva*, *Chavrusa*, *Rebbe*, businessman, *G'vir*, or *Tzaddik*. I'm *Le'chatchila a Bedi'ived!*"

Sometimes you breath much easier by talking like this. You take the pressure off, and you may even end up going further! "So I'm not Mr. Nice Guy; so what!" (Of course you need a *Rebbe*).

"So what if I'm a messy housewife, and not the big: *חַזְקָעִין* sensation that everyone raves about! Who cares!" "I love being good old Mr. Zero!" This can *Mamash* be a lifesaver for many people. You can stick with your "zero" *Shtempel*, or change from day to day; depending on your

A Powerful Story

There is a famous picture of R' Ahron Kotler *Zatzal* sitting by a *Gemara* with his glasses on. Those who have the larger picture have R' Shneur Kotler *Zatzal* standing and waving his hand and looking agitated. There were also two *Gevir'im* with Irving Bunim *Zatzal* including a well-known Mr. K. who were having a meeting about getting sorely needed money for *BMG*.

The *Gevir'im* were asking R' Ahron *Zatzal* to pick his head up from the *Gemara* in order to pose for the picture, but R' Ahron ignored them since he was totally involved in his beloved *Gemara*! And R' Shneur was saying to stop coaxing R' Ahron and to allow him to learn. I just heard this story: *עד מפי עד* from someone who heard it first-hand, in the name of one of the *Gevir'im* who was there.

Look what became of Lakewood! Notice how a nonchalant attitude to *Hishtadlus* and wholehearted *Bitachon* in the *Melech Malchei HaMelochem HaKadosh Baruch Hu* and love for His *Torah* can do! How it pays off to spend lots of time and *Kochos* in learning *Torah* and *Bitachon*, and not "worship" your *Hishtadlus*, *Chas V'shalom*, and spend all your time and *Kochos* and mental energy in *Tevah* (nature). However, everybody is different, and sometimes it's a *Mitzva* to do more *Hishtadlus*, especially in *Ruchaniyus*.

The main thing is to somehow make Hashem the *Ikar* in your life. A practice would be to take breaks from your *Hishtadlus*, and be: *מעדיף* prefer some time with Hashem.

nature and your *Matzav*. "I don't have to impress the whole world!" "I love being second best, or Mr. Black sheep in the family, or Mr. *Bat'lan* (loafer)" (Of course you need a *Rebbe*).

You'd be shocked if you knew how many very *Chashuva* and successful people can use the above recipe for their sanity. Say: "You can be the big *Gaon* and *Tzaddik* and: **מְצִינָה** prodigy and good housewife and resounding success in *Ruchaniyus* and/or *Gashmiyus*. "I" like me EXACTLY the way Hashem made me, and I put blinders on my eyes and mind my own business."

There are two equal *Lavin* (prohibitions): **בְּלֹתֶן** do not add to the *Mitzvos*, and: **בְּלֹתֶרֶן** do not subtract from them. Adding to a *Mitzva* is just as bad as detracting. The same with people. Being a drop "more" or "better" than the way Hashem made me can be a disaster! **אַיִלְחָה עַשְׂרֵה הַשְׁמָה בְּחַלְקָה** Who is truly rich? One who is content with what he has. Of course, there is a time and place to decide you're going to *Shteig*. But not always!

They say in the name of R' Shlomo Wolbe *Zatzal* that **a person needs to be wary of self-criticism and trying all kinds of *Teshuva*. The best *Avodas Hashem* is appreciating yourself!**

Novardok

Did you ever meet a *Chassid* who is constantly supporting *Litvaks*, or a *Litvak* who is constantly supporting a *Chasid*? (Or a *Sephardi* with an *Ashkenazi*, etc.?). R' Nosson *Zatzal* told me about such a person, and he considered him the *Tzaddik HaDor*. He told me that he believed that he is alive because of this person's *Tefilos*. R' Meir Stern *Shlita* quoted the *Maharal* in *Pirkei Avos* that the *Yetzer Hara* for *Machlokes* is extremely strong.

It is hard to detect this *Yetzer Hara*, because if people can conquer it, the *Geula Shleima* would be here. **The Satan dances and enjoys any kind of putdown in any direction. Especially if you claim that a *Gadol* came out against a certain group; now a person can feel like a big *Tzaddik* going against them.**

The *Satmar Rebbe Zatzal* said: **אֵין אָדָם עֹזֵב עַבְרָה אֶלְאָ אַמְּן בָּה רָחֵח שְׁיטָוֹת** a person doesn't sin unless he gets a spirit of "Shitos" (religious principles). R' Nosson *Zatzal* used to dislike people with strong principles, whom you can't move since they're so bound to their stubborn principles.

People love their *Shitos* and opinions. *L'havdil, Rachmana Litzlan*, Hamas were raised from the cradle to hate and torture Jews, *Rachmana Litzlan*. It's not easy to change your opinion, even if you're an *Ehrlicher* person.

I knew a very *Chashuva* person who simply couldn't understand how a certain group davens. "That you call davening?? "I once had to spend *Yamim Nora'im* with a group that davens very different than my *Derech*, and it was murder. It had no *Ta'am* (flavor) to me.

In *Novardok* they said "Negi'a *Gaon*", which means that a person is a super genius proving that what he likes or what he's used to is the correct way. And he'll bring true proofs from: **כָּל הַתּוֹרָה פַּלְלָה** the entire *Torah*.

I knew a person who was fire against a certain way of learning. An *Adam Gadol* explained to me that this person is not good at learning that way, and that's why he *Passel's* (disqualifies) all those who learn like that.

A person would be shocked if he knew how much the Satan and Negi'os mix into all his Shitos. A big *Masmid* and a real straight-shooter once told me that he was told by someone that since it's his nature to be a certain way, he can't look down at other people who aren't the same. He was: **מַזְכִּים** agreed, since he is a *Tzaddik*.

And the same with *Chesed* and *Zikkui HaRabbim* and all kinds of *Shitos* and *Chumros*. **People very often believe anything that makes them or their group look good. Everyone else is inferior. Or "No, I'm broadminded. Everyone else is also okay, except that one group!"** Either way, the *Yetzer Hara* creeps in, *Rachmana Litzlan!* Some people have a *Negi'a* to love and respect everyone except themselves. They have the same *Yetzer Hara* of hating and looking down, just in a different direction. The true *Baalei Mussar* would encourage exercises in the opposite direction of a person's: **תַּבִּיה** tendency