

עצה למחנך

*Advice For The Mechanech*



*A Priority-1 Publication*

# Priority-1 Literature Resources



***The Priority-1 literature resource is a unique collection of books, pamphlets and articles that address pressing modern day issues with a fresh perspective.***

## **Torah Min Hashamayim**

Through ideas based upon the weekly Parsha, Torah Min Hashamayim is a remarkable work that presents thought provoking ideas that provide convincing support to the truth of Torah Mi'Sinai.

## **Inspiration: Inspiring Words & Encouraging Thoughts**

Easy-to-read and impossible to forget, this delightful collection of thoughtful essays and lectures expounds on the beauty and meaning of selected Mitzvos and Jewish experiences. It is a vehicle to help every reader learn to recognize the joy and inspiration present everywhere.

## **Reflections of the Heart**

A collection of essays on Jewish life and its meaning in the modern world. Includes sections on the holidays, Bitachon and a special section on parenting and at-risk youth.

## **Securing Our Future - A Primer for Parents and Teachers**

An introduction to effective prevention, detection, and crisis intervention for at-risk teens. Contains innovative ideas, articles and essays to inspire more positive parenting.

## **Pray with All Your Heart - A Guide to more Meaningful Tefilah**

This book presents the Shemonah Esrei as an easy to understand prayer that can address all of our needs. It is an excellent way to add some new meaning and sincerity to your Tefilah.

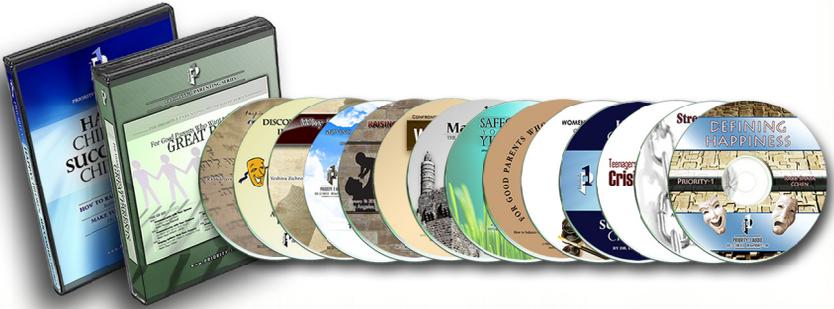
## **Advice For The Mechanech**

A powerful collection of eye opening material that provides fresh perspective on the fundamental issues of Chinuch and gives valuable insight into what matters most in Chinuch today.

**Booklets** - The Secret of True Happiness, Nothing Besides Hashem, Tzedaka: Keys to the Gates of Mercy, Facing the Unknown: Patient's Guide to Bitachon, Life's Difficulties: A Source of Strength, Bitachon in Business, and more.

*To purchase these or other Priority-1 publications please visit our website [www.priority-1.org](http://www.priority-1.org) or call 516-295-5700.*

# Priority-1 Audio Resources



**The Priority-1 Audio resource is a refreshing collection of Audio, available on CD and online that provides an innovative outlook on the issues of today.**

## **Audio CD's**

- Make Your Child Shine
- How to Raise a Happy Child
- Maximizing the Israel Learning Experience
- For Good Parents Who Want to be Great Parents- 3 CD Set
- For Good Parents Who Want to be Great Parents- 5 CD Workshop Set
- Living Inspired for Parents
- Are You Worried about Your Son?
- Living with Bitachon
- Are your children Tech-Safe?
- Teacher Training Seminar Series
- Parenting Mini Series
- Happy Children, Successful children
- Strengthening Emunah In the Classroom
- Living Inspired for Parents
- Commonly Asked Hashkafa Questions and Answers
- The Secret of Jewish Immortality
- Confronting the Challenges of Wall St.
- Loving Yiddishkeit
- And Much More...

*To purchase CD's or other Priority-1 publications please visit our website [www.priority-1.org](http://www.priority-1.org) or call 516-295-5700.*



# PRIORITY-1

**PRIORITY-1** - IS A MULTIFACETED ORGANIZATION WITH OVER 40 EMPLOYEES, 150 STUDENTS AND THOUSANDS OF FAMILIES WHO HAVE BEEN HELPED TO ADDRESS THE MANY CHALLENGES THEY FACE. PRIORITY-1 HAS GROWN TO SEVERAL DIVISIONS, ENCOMPASSING A WIDE RANGE OF EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN THE TORAH COMMUNITY. PRIORITY-1 IS COMPRISED OF VARIOUS PROGRAMS INCLUDING:

**TORAH ACADEMY** - IS PRIORITY-1'S FLAGSHIP ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOL FOR TEENS AT-RISK, LOCATED IN FAR ROCKAWAY. IT HAS HELPED HUNDREDS OF BOYS OVER THE PAST DECADE.

**COMMUNITY TRAINING INITIATIVE** - PROVIDES TRAINING SEMINARS, CLASSES, LECTURES AND RESOURCES TO PARENTS AND TEACHERS IN COMMUNITIES AROUND THE COUNTRY AND INTERNATIONALLY.

**YESHIVA ZICHRON ARYEH** - HAS GROWN TO OVER SEVENTY STUDENTS. THE YESHIVA IS KNOWN FOR ITS FOCUS ON THE INDIVIDUAL, AN IN- DEPTH DERECH HALIMUD, AND A FOCUS ON MUSSAR. THE WARMTH AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE REBBEIM CREATES AN OPTIMAL ENVIRONMENT FOR PERSONAL GROWTH AND ACHIEVEMENT.

**KOLLEL NER YEHOShUA** - IS DISTINCTIVE IN ITS FOCUS ON PREPARING YOUNG MEN WITH EXCEPTIONAL EDUCATIONAL TRAINING. THIS PROVIDES THEM WITH A SOLID PERSPECTIVE ON THE ARRAY OF ISSUES FACING OUR COMMUNITIES TODAY AND UNIQUELY QUALIFIES THEM FOR POSITIONS SERVING THE JEWISH COMMUNITY AS TEACHERS, RABBIS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS.

**YESHIVA OHR HATZAFON, JERUSALEM** - IS A BEIS MEDRASH PROGRAM IN ISRAEL, WHICH IS MODELED ON YESHIVA ZICHRON ARYEH AND PROVIDES AN OPTION FOR STUDENTS INTERESTED IN LEARNING IN ISRAEL FOR A YEAR OR TWO, AND LOOKING FOR A PROGRAM WITH THE UNIQUE QUALITIES OF YESHIVA ZICHRON ARYEH.

**MESIVTA YAM HATORAH** - IS A MAINSTREAM YESHIVA HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM. FOUNDED IN 2008 ON THE LESSONS LEARNED FROM TWO DECADES OF EXPERIENCE IN ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF TORAH EDUCATION, IT IS DEDICATED TO PROVIDING A HIGH STANDARD OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE WITH SMALL CLASSES ALONG WITH FOSTERING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN STAFF AND STUDENTS THAT WILL LAST A LIFETIME.



עצה למחנך

*Advice For The Mechanich*

---

To dedicate this publication  
please contact the Priority-1 office at  
516-295-5700 x17

---



*A Priority-1 Publication*



# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction – Advice For The Mechanech .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction – Torah Study Skills and Techniques .....</b>	<b>5</b>
Torah Study Skills Techniques .....	7
Developing a Mussar Insight .....	25
Important Ingredients for a Yeshiva High School .....	29
Fundamental Principles of Learning B`lyun .....	37
<b>Readings</b>	
The Purpose of Human Existence <i>Rabbi S. Cohen</i> .....	41
What Happened at Sinai <i>Rabbi S. Cohen</i> .....	45
Without Happiness We're All At-Risk <i>Rabbi S. Cohen</i> .....	51
The Power A Teacher Has <i>H. Ginott</i> .....	55
<b>A Piece of Advice From ל"ט ן .....</b>	<b>57</b>



# INTRODUCTION - ADVICE FOR THE MECHANECH

This collection of advice and ideas for Mechanchim is an outgrowth of the efforts of Priority-1 to improve and enhance the effectiveness of our Yeshiva Day School educational system.

The suggestions are based on over two decades of experience and successful training programs and seminars to help Mechanchim to increase their effectiveness and influence on the lives and the futures of their students.

For further information, questions, or comments please feel free to contact Priority-1 at **516-295-5700** or visit us on the web at ***www.priority-1.org***



# INTRODUCTION - TORAH STUDY SKILLS AND TECHNIQUES

This brief introductory guide was prepared by a group of experienced Mechanchim and is only meant as a brief introduction to the focusing on and development of Torah study skills techniques.

These skills can serve to excite our students with the depth, exacting standards of truth, and sensitivity of Torah and inspire them to continue their pursuit of Torah study. The mastery of skills will encourage them to continue to advance and remain committed to serious Torah learning.

This is not meant as a comprehensive listing of all appropriate skills and techniques, rather a sample of some of them. Although a gifted student might be able to internalize the technique by merely seeing it used in the lesson, for most students, explaining the dynamic of the skill or technique being used will be essential.

As in any learning process, the best results are achieved through interactive learning, where the teacher can see how the student is grasping the concepts and, when necessary, to help clarify any confusion or mistake. In the

words of the master pedagogue, and Gaon Harav Dovid Leibowitz, שליט"א, “the job of a Rebbe is not spoon feeding information to his students but rather creeping into their heads to see how they understand the concepts and information and straightening out their thinking.”

## TORAH STUDY SKILLS & TECHNIQUES

The development of basic Torah study skills is essential for the student to be able to appreciate Torah study and to be capable of self-study in Torah subjects.

The following is a partial list of some of the basic skills and some examples of their application.

1. Ability to discern when commentary is translating a word, explaining the Pshat, or offering a Drush.
2. Ability to discover what is the problem that is concerning the commentary and leading him to make his explanation, e.g. what is bothering Rashi in the words of the Torah to necessitate this comment.
3. Ability to see a comment of Chazal in its total perspective and with relevant surrounding information, to gain clearer and deeper insight into its message and meaning.
4. Ability to discern an answer from the question and to focus on how the answer does in fact answer the question.
5. Ability to focus on a dispute and analyze the difference between the logic (מברא) of the two positions, and why

each holds as it does and does not hold the other position.

6. Ability to make sure that a logical position offered fits into all of the pieces and steps in the specific text in question.
7. Where a proof is brought, the ability to test out other alternatives to make sure that they are not valid and, therefore, to prove that the proof is valid.

## **1. ABILITY TO DISCERN WHEN COMMENTARY IS TRANSLATING A WORD, EXPLAINING THE PSHAT, OR OFFERING A DRUSH**

It is very important to be able to know exactly what a commentary intends to do in the comment that he makes. Often he is simply translating a word. Other times he is explaining the Pshat, which means the basic meaning of the text, the point that the text means to convey. This Pshat must fit in with all of the other aspects of the text as it is to be understood in learning Pshat. Sometimes the commentary is offering a Drush. This means that the explanation is not of the basic type, offering a simple explanation of the text. This Drush is something hinted to by the text or some variation in the text and does not necessarily fit completely into the simple story of the text.

- a. For example in רש"י, שמות ב', ה' – ותשלח את אמתה offers the definition of the word “maidservant” which is also the Pshat. He offers also a Drush that אמתה also hints to her “hand” referring to the idea that her hand became lengthened to reach out into the river. This is not the simple meaning of the story but rather a Medrash hinted to by the use of the word אמתה.

**פרשת ויקרא כ"ה, כ"ו: "איש כי לא יהיה לו גואל"**

"וכי יש לך אדם בישראל שאין לו גואלים, אלא גואל שיוכל  
לגואל ממכרו" – רש"י

- b. “Is there anyone in Israel who has no redeemers (relatives) but it means he has no redeemer who can afford to redeem him.”

The word גואל means redeemer (referring to a relative). However since the simple Pshat cannot be and makes no sense since every Jew must have someone, the Pshat is to be understood as referring to a person who cannot afford to redeem.

## **2. ABILITY TO DISCOVER WHAT IS THE PROBLEM THAT IS CONCERNING THE COMMENTARY AND LEADING HIM TO MAKE HIS EXPLANATION, E.G.**

## WHAT IS BOTHERING RASHI IN THE WORDS OF THE TORAH TO NECESSITATE THIS COMMENT

Oftentimes, we find רש"י and other commentaries expounding on a given subject beyond what the text superficially seems to indicate. The student quickly justifies that the remarks being made by the commentary must be emanating solely from some Divine inspiration that the commentary was gifted with, due to the lofty spiritual heights he was able to reach as an individual. Even a fleeting look at the classical commentaries written on the commentary of רש"י will quickly dispel this misconception. The remarks offered by רש"י and other commentaries emanate from a desire to understand the text, and solve difficulties that the thinking student would be faced with after carefully studying the text.

**פרשת נח, פרק ז', פסוק ז': "ויבא נח ובניו ואשתו  
בניו אתו אל בתבה מפני מי המבול"**

- a. "And נח went in, and his sons and his wife and the wives of his sons, with him into the ark, because of the waters of the flood."

מפני מי המבול רש"י comments of the words

"אף נח מקטני אמנה היה, מאמין ואינו מאמין שיבא המבול  
ולא נכנס לתיבה עד שדחקהו המים"

“Even נח was of those lacking perfect faith, he believed and did not believe that the flood would come and he did not enter into the ark until the waters forced him.”

רש"י is perplexed by the words in the “because of the waters of the flood”: פסוק: “מפני מי המבול”. Isn’t it superfluous to add that they were entering the ark because of the impending flood? רש"י therefore explains that the פסוק means it in a very literal, sense that they entered only because of the flood waters, i.e., the flood waters had to force them to enter. Therefore, רש"י concludes that there must have been something lacking in נח’s אמונה that in fact there will be a מבול.

- b. פ' וירא פרק יח', פסוק א': "וירא אליו ה' באלני ממרא והוא ישב פתח האהל כחם היום"

And ה' appeared to him (Abraham) in the plains of ממרא and he was sitting in the door of the tent in the heat of the day.”

רש"י ד"ה פתח האהל: "לראות אם יש עובר ישב ויכניסם בביתו"

“To see if there is a passerby whom he might take into his house.”

רש"י is concerned why would an old man of 99 years, so soon after undergoing a circumcision, be sitting by the

door of his tent in the heat of the day. Isn't remaining in bed the more common and prudent behavior of an individual in such a situation? רש"י, therefore, is compelled to explain that אברהם must have had a specific and lofty purpose justifying this deviation from expected behavior. Only his great yearning and love for helping others could have caused him to behave in this unusual fashion.

- c. שמות פרק ב' פסוק כג': "ויהי בימים הרבים ההם וימת מלך מצרים ויאנחו בני ישראל מן העבודה ויזעקו ותעל שועתם אל האלקים מן העבודה"

"And it was during those many days, and the king of Egypt died, and the children of Israel sighed from the bondage, and they cried, and their cry went up to G-d from the bondage."

"ויהי שועתם אל האלקים מן העבודה" רש"י comments on the words  
נצטרע והיה שוחט תינוקות ישראל ורוחץ בדמם

"He became leprous and he used to slaughter the infants of Israel and bathe in their blood."

רש"י's intent is not to inform us of the health condition of פרעה preceding his death, nor to tell of his great

cruelty in his lifetime. This would be shedding no light on the specific text רש"י is commenting on and therefore would not be in the confines of רש"י's work. רש"י's intent is to interpret the word וימת in the פסוק not as actual death but instead as "deathlike" (See: נדרים סד).

"ד' חשובין כמת עני ומצורע וסומא ומי שאין לו בנים"

"Four are considered as dead: a poor person, and a leper, and a blind person, and one who is childless." פרעה did not actually die, but instead became leprous which is considered like dead and therefore can be referred to as death.

The question presents itself: what forced רש"י to change from the more common interpretation of וימת - actual death. The שפת תורה explains that רש"י was troubled by a sequence of events expressed in the פסוק. The תורה indicates that immediately after וימת מלך מצרים, the cries of the children of Israel increased. If וימת meant the actual death of the king of מצרים, the opposite should have been true. The death of the cruel, ruthless leader of מצרים should have given them more hope. רש"י therefore felt we must interpret the וימת in a fashion where greater depression and hopelessness of the children of Israel would be the natural result. וימת, meaning becoming leprous and thereby slaughtering Jewish infants and bathing in their blood to cure his

disease, makes it very understandable that the reaction of the children of Israel to that וימת was one of feeling even greater pain and of increasing cries.

### **3. ABILITY TO SEE A COMMENT OF CHAZAL IN ITS TOTAL PERSPECTIVE AND WITH RELEVANT SURROUNDING INFORMATION, TO GAIN CLEARER AND DEEPER INSIGHT INTO ITS MESSAGE AND MEANING.**

Too often there is a tendency to view the idea of a מפרש as an isolated concept dealing with the פסוק on which he comments. We read each פירוש independently, forgetting the background and context upon which it is based. If we would just maintain an awareness of the surrounding facts we already know, we could see new dimensions and implications to these very same words. This is particularly true of the ראשונים who wrote their interpretations with כל התורה כולה in mind.

The רמב"ן (וישלה לה' כב' ד"ה וישמע) says that Yaakov knew of Reuven's sin and would have cut him off from the מנין השבטים were it not for Yaakov's great ענוה. A study of this in isolation yields one level of understanding. Obviously Yaakov would not consciously allow personal feelings of hurt to affect such an important and far-reaching

פסק. Yet, the רמב"ן shows us that if there wasn't total humility, if there was any slight sense of personal affront, Yaakov might have misjudged the right פסק in what must have been a terribly difficult decision to make. This is the result of an independent reading. If, however, we broaden our focus to bring to mind the great love Yaakov must have had for this בכור, we can see whole new insights. Why didn't the רמב"ן assume that this abundant love was the counter force to bring Yaakov to see all of the possible reasons for a lenient ruling? In this context we can now see how the רמב"ן teaches us the need for ענוה even in the most loving relationship. There is a dimension added by humility which even love cannot generate. All of Yaakov's love for Reuven would not have had enough power to prevent him from cutting Reuven off. He had to have the ענוה to bring about the right פסק. Humility was here the dominant factor which spelled the difference between eternal גדלות or total excommunication.

#### **4. ABILITY TO DISCERN AN ANSWER FROM THE QUESTION AND TO FOCUS ON HOW THE ANSWER DOES IN FACT ANSWER THE QUESTION**

The Talmud is not a compilation of facts. The Talmud consists of halachic opinions, questions and answers; and again questions on those answers, eventually culminating

into law. It, therefore, requires an astute ability to understand the new facts and concepts that are introduced by the תרצן (The one who is answering).

However, in the course of understanding these new concepts, we must be careful not to lose sight that the question be fully removed. It is not unusual that in the course of these mental acrobatics, one could be so amazed and excited about a new outlook, that there may be no focus on the logical attack of the question. It is essential to concentrate on the problem that is posed with a certain opinion, and on exactly what changes, that the question, therefore, falls away. This skill includes the full understanding of the question, the many factors that are necessary for the question to be sustained, and which of those factors are changed, sometimes ever so slightly, to produce a satisfactory answer.

a. For example - שבת קלד: -

רב is of the opinion that oil is permitted to be applied directly to a wound on Shabbos. The Gemara asks on רב, from a law that states “that oil may not be applied to a cloth that is directly on the wound”, from which we see that direct application is forbidden. The גמרא answers that it is forbidden, for fear of squeezing, which is prohibited on Shabbos.

But the fact still remains that it can't be applied to the cloth which is directly on the wound; the facts that made

up the contradiction remain. To what would we attribute the answer?

The answer lies in the understanding that the contradiction was based on the assumption that the איסור was because the cloth was directly on the wound and would thereby be considered as applying directly to the wound. The answer changes that understanding, and states that where the cloth is placed is not the factor but rather it is coincidental to this איסור. The factor that makes it forbidden is that it's applied to the cloth, a material that can be squeezed, which is a forbidden act on Shabbos. רב is discussing a case where סחיטה is not applicable, so this problem would not apply.

- b. We see in רב פפי, פסחים ז' that the ברכה that's said prior to לבער חמץ בדיקת חמץ is על ביעור חמץ because על connotes past, having already done it, while in fact he didn't do the בדיקה yet.

The גמרא asks from ברית מילה, where the bracha is also said prior to the ברית, and still the מוהל says על המילה; according to רב פפי he should say לימול instead.

The גמרא answers that by לימול, מילה is impossible because it would have a wrong meaning. It would mean that the מברך was the one commanded to do this מצוה, but the מוהל is the מברך, not the father.

The answer by itself makes sense. You can't say לימול if it will have a wrong meaning. But we must remember

that the *ברכה* is said *על המילה*, according to *רב פפי*, has the same disqualification, a wrong meaning. The question was not answered. We cannot be satisfied with understanding the logic of the fact that the *תרצן* puts forth. We must remember that there is a question to be answered.

## **5. ABILITY TO FOCUS ON A DISPUTE AND ANALYZE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE LOGIC (מברה) OF THE TWO POSITIONS AND WHY EACH HOLDS AS IT DOES AND DOES NOT HOLD THE OTHER POSITION**

The underlying principle here is that a dispute between sages of the Mishnah, Talmud or their commentaries is one between scholars of the greatest magnitude. Neither side can be suspected of a simple error or oversight. The basis for their difference of opinion must therefore be the presence of an area or question (in halacha) in which there is room for different lines of reasoning, one sage's Torah understanding dictating one position, another's the other. We attempt to explain their dispute in a manner that the two positions are very close to one another, thereby reducing in the eyes' of each the degree of error contained in the opinion of the other.

One example is the dispute between ר' יוחנן and ריש לקיש in בבא קמא כב. If a person lights a fire which travels with the aid of a wind and does damage, he is held responsible for that damage. ר' יוחנן holds it is as if he had thrown the fire onto the damaged article, like shooting an arrow, where the damage is attributed directly to the person's action. (He could then conceivably be punished for killing a person with capital punishment as if he had shot the person.) ריש לקיש holds the obligation for damage done by a fire that one lit is only as damage done by one's property (i.e. if one's ox entered another's field and ate or trampled upon the fruits of the field.) One's fire is like his ox, and therefore carries only a monetary responsibility, for the damage is not considered to have been done by the person who made the fire but only by the fire itself.

Here, the גמרא itself says ריש לקיש argues with ר' יוחנן because an arrow travels by the force of the one who shot it whereas the fire travels on its own and burns articles at a great distance from where it was lit. Therefore the person cannot be considered to have done the damage but can only be held responsible for what the fire did.

ר' יוחנן's position is one's placing a fire in a position where it will be carried by a wind and will travel from one object to another is akin to throwing it because he's harnessing those forces that cause the fire to travel. It's not necessary for the person to actually impart the energy to the fire which

causes it to travel (as where one shoots an arrow); putting it where it will inevitably be moved by other forces is considered utilizing and controlling those forces to transport the fire. It is a form of throwing.

Another interpretation is given concerning the dispute of ר' יוחנן and ריש לקיש. Perhaps ריש לקיש would agree by some substance other than a fire; however, the dispute arises because of the following dilemma: Why should the one who lights the fire be held responsible at all? Actually the fire which “hits the target” and does damage is not the fire which he lit, it’s a new fire that has been created by a burning article which in turn was lit by the one which preceded it, and so on until the initial fire. The initial fire set off the chain reaction but did not do the burning itself, so why is there a monetary obligation? (Certainly the one who lit the fire caused the damage but since it was not a direct result of his own action or the action of the fire he created, there should be no obligation that can be claimed in court.) ר' יוחנן says the most logical understanding of this halacha in the Torah is that because the chain reaction of one stalk burning another is so direct and certain, it’s considered that the initial fire (or the hot coal which started the fire) is traveling to the damaged items itself. There is no other explanation for the responsibility for the fire.

ריש לקיש holds it is more reasonable to say that the Torah obligated the one who lit the fire because he was the

original cause of the direct chain reaction for damage done by the last fire as if that fire were his. It cannot be considered his own action because after all the original fire did not do the damage but only created a second which created a third, etc. until the נִיזָק was reached.

## **6. ABILITY TO MAKE SURE THAT A LOGICAL POSITION OFFERED FITS INTO ALL OF THE PIECES AND STEPS IN THE SPECIFIC TEXT IN QUESTION**

The משנה at the beginning of Succah (דף ב) brings a מהלוקת between ר' יהודה and the חכמים as to a succah that is above twenty אמות. The חכמים say it is פסול and ר' יהודה contends that it is kosher.

The גמרא offers three explanations for this מהלוקת. The middle interpretation is that of ר' זירא, who says that the reason for the פסול is based on the פסוק that says וסוכה תהיה לצל. The פסוק indicates that a succah must provide for צל and above twenty you aren't sitting in the shade of the roof, but rather in the shade of the walls.

The question that arises is, if so, what is the reason of ר' יהודה that is מכשיר? Similarly, one can ask, if so, what is the position of those that argue with ר' זירא and don't hold of this פסול?

At first glance, you might say that ר' יהודה reasons that צל provided by דפנות is also good. This is difficult because later, on דף יב' the משנה says that all פסולים are kosher for דפנות, so we see that the essence of the succah is the סכך and the צל should have to be provided by the סכך.

If we are to look further we will see that the גמרא says that the אמוראים disagree with ר' זירא because the ימות המשיח is referring to וסוכה יהיה לצל: פסוק סוכה דמצוה. רש"י explains that the גמרא is saying that the צל is not for סוכה. לכאורה, we can use this reasoning for ר' יהודה also.

This is very difficult because the משנה says בפירוש in the סיפא that המתה מרובה מצלתה is פסול and ר' יהודה doesn't argue there. So we see clearly that the סכך of a succah is indeed meant to provide צל.

To answer these questions we must refer to the חי' הריטב"א's interpretation of ר' יהודה. He explains that ר' יהודה also agrees that סכך qualifies as סכך because it provides for צל but he holds that it doesn't have to actually provide צל in the position that it is in but rather as long as it could potentially provide shade in a lower position it gets a שם סכך and is kosher. This means that סכך doesn't have to provide צל, it has to have the כח of providing צל. This would also be פשט in the גמרא according to the other אמוראים and possibly פשט in רש"י. The פסוק of

צל means actively providing וסוכה תהיה לצל. Therefore ר' זירא can prove from there that it's not enough to have the כה to provide צל rather it must למעשה provide צל. The גמרא then needs to explain the other אמוראים who don't hold of the פסול of not having צל למעשה that they hold the פסוק of צל וסוכה תהיה לצל refers to ימות המשיח. This can explain ר' יהודה's opinion as well that סכך above 20 אמות is כשר because you don't need צל למעשה only the כה to provide it and when רש"י says מצוה אינה לצל he means it isn't intended to actually provide צל but it does get שם סוכה since it could potentially provide צל.



## Suggestions For Developing A Mussar Insight From Chazal And Rishonim

The Torah is the most accurate and complete source of true knowledge. As it says in the משנה at the end of פרקי אבות:

”בן בנ בנ אומר, הפוך בה והפך בה דכולא בה”

Chazal and the Rishonim were masters of drawing out these truths correctly (*See אנגרות משה חלק א' סימן קנ"ז*). They were also true אנשי אמת and every word they wrote was written with painstaking precision to ensure the full accuracy of what they were writing. This allows for precise analysis of their writings and enables a person to tap into the full extent of what Chazal and the Rishonim saw as true (*See the introductions of the רמח"ל and מהרש"א to אנגרות and the אמת ליעקב על אבות ו:ג*).

It becomes clear that someone who wants to gain insight into the true רצון ה' must draw out ideas with fidelity and strong grounding from the text of the sources themselves.

The following are some suggestions to developing Torah true insights from Chazal and the Rishonim.

- Find a *chazal* or *Rishon* that appears to contain an insight (*chiddush*) in a *mussar* thought, and read it **very, very carefully**. Find out what it may be telling us. Sometimes it may tell us something directly, and sometimes indirectly. It may be telling us the motivation of an action, the cause of an event, or it may be telling us the extent of a particular action or feeling that was pursued. The insight you wish to derive may even be secondary to the point that the *chazal* came to tell us.
  
- Examine the Torah personalities or situations and context that are being referred to. Quite often there is more than one. Examine what we know of the person or situation carefully. Did he or she excel in any area of personal conduct or trait that may have to do with this area? Focus on specific past events in his or her life. Was this person a tremendous *tzaddik* or a terrible *rasha*? Examine the particular context in which the subject is participating. Was there any significant event or matter that the subject experienced immediately prior to this? Focus on the aspects of the subject's personality that may contrast the theme being developed.
  
- Now examine the words of the *chazal* in light of what we know of the subject and the context being

discussed. Are these words now a *chiddush*? Is there an insight to be gained?

- Analyze the insight a few more times. Is it obvious? Is it perhaps wrong? Is there another manner in which to read the words of the *chazal* that would invalidate the insight? Is the application that was drawn correct?
- There might be a problem with the text that you have an answer for but you must be certain that that answer is the only correct one, fits all details and there is no room for any other answer, both in logic and in the language of the text. Preferably, the answer should be coming out of the text and clearly indicated by the text once you think of it.



# Important Ingredients for an Advanced Level Yeshiva High School Program

Note: Special attention to the following outline is very important for Rebbeim and those preparing for a position in Chinuch.

## I. GOALS OF PROGRAM

1. Student to develop reading skills, tools and clarity of thinking to be able to master any text on his own and acquire a Derech in learning.
2. Student to develop skills and general ability to study, understand and apply basic Mussar texts and concepts.
3. Student to develop deeper appreciation, feeling for and understanding of Tefillah and relationship with Hashem.
4. Student to develop deep sensitivities to relationships Bein Adam L'chaveiro and Middos.
5. Student to develop deep appreciation for Torah Hashkafa, relevance of Mitzvos to better the quality of our daily lives, giving us sense of purpose and happiness, truth of Torah Mi Sinai and Chashivus HaTorah.
6. Students to develop sense of responsibility for Klal Yisroel and dedication to Harbotzas Torah.
7. Students to develop close relationships and friendships with Rebbeim.

## II. MEANS TO ACHIEVE THESE GOALS

### A. Development of Gemara Skills

1. Together with constant practice in reading, delve into the depths of the Tosafos to understand the Pshat. Scrutinize the language, read and re-read it to draw understanding and clarity from within the Tosafos etc. rather than to say things on our own, from the outside. It is as if the text is teaching us the ideas rather than superimposing our ideas on the text.
2. To enter in the essence of an Inyan, we should pay special attention to the places where the Meforshim argue. They argue in the main points and since the differences between them are very fine and the dispute is always in a very narrow point, when we get in between the two positions, we get to the essence of the concepts.
3. Success in learning can only be achieved through "Ameilus." There are no geniuses in this system. Each person must toil diligently to reach his own capacity even if he already has many "Chiddushim" to say.
4. Talmid must spend much time going over the Shiur to understand and master the Shiur, with the help of the Rebbe, to his fullest capacity.
5. Bekius is important for understanding of concepts in Iyun Seder, therefore, in Bekius must learn Tosafos and major commentators, especially Maharsha.

6. Because of the great distance between us and the Rishonim, it is very hard to rely on our own Sevarah to explain them and to be sure we have not left the Derech HaYoshor, we must learn the Achronim to explain and elaborate on the comments of the Rishonim.

7. The goal of the Shiur is not to present information to the Talmid; he should be expected to learn and do that on his own. Rather, the purpose of the Shiur is to reveal to the Talmid a deeper, clearer, and straighter understanding of the Pshat. This understanding must be beyond what the Talmid could achieve on his own and must emphasize the development, on the Talmid's part, of the tools and techniques, to do it himself everywhere else. Only through a Rebbe can a Talmid truly develop the ability to learn Pshat clearly and with Yashrus on his own. Therefore, the Shiur must not be a finished presentation for the students to listen to and absorb; but rather, the Shiur should be a partnership effort between Rebbe and Talmidim. To develop the Inyan by going back and forth together, with questions and answers, suggestions and rebuttals, to enable them to experience and internalize every aspect of the learning process. They must see how the Rebbe got to his conclusion and they must eventually be able to do the same themselves, without the Rebbe. In a similar vein, Rav Dovid Soleveitchick is quoted to say that a Shiur is like a Cholent. A person can eat Cholent for 60 years and be the biggest "Mavin" of a good Cholent, but he won't have a clue how to make a Cholent. However, a five year old girl who sees her mother prepare the Cholent each week will know how to make a Cholent herself.

8. Since this process is so important, the Rebbe must encourage his Talmidim to argue and fight with him. The Alter from Slabodka used to encourage his Talmidim to argue with him about his Mussar Shmuesin, to encourage a clear understanding and development of the process.

However, Talmidim must be dedicated to finally understand the Rebbe at the end of the process, rather than just argue to contradict the Rebbe and remain thereby with the Talmid's own limited (if not incorrect) understanding.

9. To develop Yashrus Haseichal in each Talmid, the Rebbe must get into Talmid's head to see how he is thinking and straighten his thinking out, when needed. Each question a Talmid asks is an opportunity to see how he is thinking and straighten out, pinpoint and correct his mistakes.

10. A Rebbe must never lose patience with a Talmid who keeps asking and asking and must treat all Talmidim equally and with love and respect.

11. A Talmid's question can bring out clearer what the Rebbe means and thereby benefit all the Talmidim. The Rebbe himself needs the questions of Talmidim to help him bring out and clarify the depth of his own words, even for his own better understanding.

12. For any new concept that is introduced (Chidush) the Rebbe must show the Talmidim the method of checking out its truth. That includes fitting into all relevant language of text, fitting into all steps and sequences in the particular Inyan.

13. The pace of learning must, per-force be slow to train students in in-depth learning. In-depth Iyun does not mean

more Meforshim, rather it means scrutiny and going back and forth in one text to dig deeper into its essence as described above

14. Tosafos, should be the primary text. Maharsha should be used frequently, as it digs into the steps of Tosafos, back and forth.

15. Work on getting in between two differing opinions (Machlokes) and the Hava Aminos of text, to better understand and appreciate the depth of the concepts, by analyzing the slight differences between the Hava Aminos and the Maskonahs. Always assuming the Hava Amina was very real and accurate except for the one slight improvement made by the Maskanah.

#### B. Additional program requirements

1. Basic texts to be studied, with Rebbe showing students Mussar insights beneath the simple text and showing students the method of finding these insights and how to be sure that they are actually what the text means (i.e. close attention to the nuances of language, picturing the entire scene being described, analyzing the exactness of a comparison being made and more). These techniques can only be internalized by regular exercises in this methodology. When students participate in the process there are a number of benefits. They discover the mussar concepts on their own, recognize their absolute truth and have a certain excitement in their realization, which enables them to better appreciate the messages. Students must also be inspired to set a regular daily Seder for learning Mussar and Cheshbon Hanefesh.

2. Regular program of Biur Tefillah in a relevant, practical and down-to-earth manner rather than a philosophical approach. The in-depth study of Shiur Hashirim with Rashi can be used to understand the dynamics of the relationship between the Creator and Klal Yisroel and to develop and expand the emotions of that relationship. Emphasis in understanding the concepts of Hashgocha Pratis and Bitachon are also critical to the development of a relationship with Hashem. If we wish to really emphasize the concept of a relationship with Hashem and spirituality, there must not be overemphasis on materialism, ie. material covered as opposed to internalized, material of clothing worn and outside appearances, materials of one mold that everyone must fit, etc.

3. Great constant emphasis must be placed on Mitzvos Bain Adam L'chaveiro as seen through the super-sensitive eyes of Chazal and especially on Midos, specifically truth, integrity and chesed. The concept of V'halachta Bidrachav, emulating Hashem, is crucial for this development.

4. The Sefer Hachinuch in Mitzva 117 clearly states that youth that do not have an appreciation for the reasons and benefits of all the mitzvos are in danger of forsaking mitzvah observance. The benefits must be appreciated as bringing to life purpose, meaning and lasting happiness. There should be regular exposure to Arachim type material to strengthen basis for understanding of Torah Mi Sinai.

5. Being surrounded by a vibrant post high-school Bais Medrash with Bochrin and Yungeleit, preparing for and dedicated to a life of Harbotzas Torah and service of Klal Yisroel can inspire these feelings in high school students.

They should also be exposed to some rudimentary leadership and teacher training given on a high school level.

6. Rebbeim must be inspired to develop closeness with students, exhibiting to them warmth, friendship and respect. They must be able to spend time talking to each student individually and invite them to their homes for Shabbos, maybe even eating a meal with them regularly during the week. Rebbeim must be guided not to be overly strict on their own kovod. Their students will give them kovod if they will exhibit respect for their students.

### III. SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR A MORE MEANINGFUL AND WELL-ROUNDED PROGRAM

1. Presentation of Arachim-style material to strengthen understanding of basis for truth of Torah Mi Sinai.
2. Involve the families of students in the educational development process.
3. Yeshiva summer camp for continuity.
4. Small class size.
5. Individual educational programs to recognize individual differences and develop programs catering to them.
6. Secular teachers to be observant and role models.
7. Ongoing teacher training and parenting workshops.
8. Full-time Mashgiach to talk to and work with students.





## Ten Fundamental Principles of Learning B'Iyun

---

1. Repeatedly read and analyze the *Rishonim* on the *Sugya* as precisely and accurately as possible. The primary goal is to bring out as much information as possible and understand the depth contained within their words. To achieve this, one should analyze the continuity of their words (*Hemshech*) and attempt to take note of what other ways the idea could have been expressed. Careful observation of *Lashon* is one way to help clarify why the *Rishon* chose to express the concept in the form that he did.
2. Focus specifically on the area(s) where *Rishonim* disagree. The fundamental principles (*Yesodos*) of a *Sugya* can generally be found by closely examining the *Machlokes Rishonim*. An important part of this process is to try and explain precisely where the *Rishonim* disagree. It is vital that the disagreement be expressed in a way that minimizes the difference between the two views. *Rishonim* were giants in Torah, and it is unlikely that such great Torah minds saw the same concept in vastly different ways.
3. Clarify the change in understanding between the question and the answer. Because of their broad knowledge of all of Torah, it is understood that a *Rishon* who asks a question is not just making casual conversation. It is crucial to

understand exactly why he asked his question, and what unique *Chiddush* he is expressing in his answer. For example, when a *Rishon* brings another Gemara as proof to his answer, we have to determine how he understood that Gemara before his question, since he was surely aware of the Gemara when he asked his question.

4. Work on *Tosfos* and relevant *Mefarshim* as building blocks for a *Sugya*. Many of the core concepts in a given *Sugya* will often be centered around *Tosfos*. *Achronim* focus on explaining *Tosfos*, so extra clarity can therefore be attained. There are many important strategies necessary to learn *Tosfos*, such as when *Tosfos* brings two answers, there must be a reason why the first one was somehow insufficient. Also, if *Tosfos* asks a question from another Gemara, it means that there would be no problem in this *Sugya* if not for the other Gemara.
  
5. Study *Gedolei Achronim* along with *Rishonim*. Reaching greater depths in understanding *Rishonim* requires using *Achronim* to prevent us from straying from the correct approach in a given *Sugya*. The commentaries of the *Achronim* are often written at greater length and spell out certain concepts more clearly. *Achronim* also frequently quote necessary information from other places in *Shas*.

6. To extract the fundamentals of the *Sugya* from the words of the *Sugya* itself. The ideal way to break down a *Sugya* is to delve in primarily at its main location. Avoiding the introduction of outside *Sevaros* into the words of the *Sugya* and *Mefarshim* is preferable. Rather, the key is to see what the *Sugya* “says to you” when viewed more independently.
  
7. Learn under an expert Rebbi. The path to grow in learning *B’Iyun* can be found only by following a Rebbi who guides *Talmidim* on their respective levels. An *Iyun* shiur should be constructed so that *Talmidim* are motivated to work hard on the *Sugya*, while staying within their range of comprehension and ability. An active back-and-forth discussion between Rebbi and *Talmidim* is an essential component of the shiur and crucial for growth in clarity and *sevara*. A Rebbi should train *talmidim* to identify a “*Sevara Yeshara*” that can “be said”, and by contrast, a *Sevara* that “cannot be said.” He should guide them to differentiate between subtle shades of similarity in *din* to establish the truth precisely.

Harav Dovid Leibowitz, zt”l, used to say that the job of a Rebbi is not to feed information, but rather to get inside the Talmid’s head to see how he is perceiving and understanding the information and, when called for, to straighten out his thinking. If a Talmid constantly hears good *sevaras* from his Rebbe, he may

eventually be able to say a good *sevara*. But unless there is enough interaction between them for the Talmid to say and the Rebbe to show him when he's mistaken, he may never learn to distinguish between a good *sevara* and one that is not.

8. When a question and answer is followed by another question and answer. This first *teretz* must make sense without the second *teretz*. *Tosfos* must have had an answer to the second question which he then asks on with the second question.
9. If a question in *Tosfos* seems unrelated to the previous discussion in that same *Tosfos*, even if both pieces belong under the same heading, there must be a connection (based on the previous idea this concept is difficult.) If there was no connection, then *Tosfos* would have given two separate headings even if they are the same phrase in the Gemara.
10. One should review again and again the sequence of steps in the *Tosfos*. If the *Mahar"sha* has a question on the *cheshbon*, we should be *mechaven* to it before looking at *Mahar"sha*, then we'll appreciate *Mahar"sha's* question.

# The Purpose of Human Existence

By Rabbi Shaya Cohen

The definition of happiness is feeling validated (See article “Without Happiness We’re All At-Risk” pg. 49). Nothing can be more validating than a sense of true purpose; nothing can be more devastating than the feeling of not having any sense of purpose in one’s existence. Our Sages in *Pirkei Avos* (2:8) advise us, “If you have learned much Torah do not feel self-righteous, for it is for this purpose that you were created.”

In the context of Jewish tradition, this statement begs for expanded explanation. Our Sages also teach us that the Creator created the entire universe to bestow kindness. Despite the fact that He always existed as a perfect and totally complete Being, the essence of His being is *chesed*, kindness, and as such, He found it appropriate to create a world including the highest level being of creation, man, to bestow His kindness upon. The purpose of the creation of man was to bestow kindness on a being designed to most appreciate that gift. The material existence in the world provides untold opportunity for the Creator to bestow His kindness on man, much of which offers pleasure to his body. There definitely exists the opportunity for spiritual pleasure in this world, but too often the material existence of the body detracts from the fullness of spiritual fulfillment. Our Sages tell us that the place of the total ultimate spiritual pleasure of being in an intimately close relationship and connection with the Creator is in the World to Come, a world devoid of physical influences and a place for only the soul’s existence.

To complete the kindness, and to offer the ultimate, truest pleasure, the Creator instituted a system of opportunity to earn

and deserve the ultimate reward. This is achieved through our efforts which are constantly being challenged by our bodies and material existence. He gave us directives to follow which uplift ourselves spiritually and mold our characters in His image (i.e. kind, compassionate, patient, truthful, etc.). This is in order to earn the reward of eternal closeness to Him and to be able to appreciate that special relationship, since we have molded ourselves to be like Him and focused our existence on emulating His characteristics. Although so much of this connection can happen in this world, the ultimate experience of closeness to Him is in the next world, which is designed solely for this purpose without material interference.

Our Sages tell us that, “The Torah and *mitzvos* were only given for the purpose of refining human character.” In light of the above, the refinement and purification of character serves a dual role: allowing us to deserve and earn the ultimate reward of closeness to the Creator and molding us in His image to enable us to better connect with Him.

The question arises, which of the two ingredients is the most critical, or the essence of this process of character refinement: the study of Torah or the observance of *mitzvos*? The Rambam (Talmud Torah 3:3), based on the Talmud, tells us that learning Torah is greater than performance of *mitzvos*, because it brings to action. It seems from the Rambam that the action that he is referring to is not a specific action, not even all the actions, but rather the sense of subjugation and obligation that studying Torah inspires. When a Jew studies Hashem’s Torah, he recognizes his obligation to his Creator and deepens his sense of commitment and subjugation to Him. This feeling of overriding obligation to follow His directives seems to relate to the main focus of our existence.

As related by the revered Rosh Yeshiva of the famed Navardok Yeshiva, Hagaon Harav Yaakov Yaffin, zt”l, the Talmud Yerushalmi in *Brachos* (7:) seems to indicate that Torah study is our primary pursuit, rather than the performance of *mitzvos*. We are, however, totally obligated to perform all of the *mitzvos* in order that our Torah learning should be *על מנת לעשות*, focused on generating obligation and subjugation to Hashem. This state of subjugation to Hashem seems to be the ultimate goal and accomplishment in this world. As the same Yerushalmi says, “One who learns not for the purpose of action would have been better off not being created.” He may still be doing *Mitzvos*, but the unique opportunity of *ללמוד על מנת לעשות* has been neglected, and therefore he loses the ultimate opportunity to fulfill his true purpose in this world.

We can better understand this with a comment of our Sages in the Sifri, cited by Rashi at the end of Parshas Behar. The Sifri states that the Torah writes a special admonition for a Jew who, for some reason, is sold as a slave to a non-Jew. The Torah writes a specific warning that he should not think that just as his non-Jewish master serves idols, violates Shabbos or does other inappropriate behaviors, so too he may identify with and emulate his master and do the same. Why should a Jewish slave to a non-Jew crave to identify and emulate his master? It cannot be assumed that his non-Jewish master always treats him with total respect, kindness and sensitivity. After all, he was bought as a slave. It seems that our Sages are sharing with us a novel psychological phenomenon. We crave to emulate one who subjugates us. We want to identify with that individual and model ourselves after his behavior and character.

With this concept, we can better understand the emphasis on Torah study. Torah study brings us to the observance of *mitzvos*, but since we are studying in order to perform the *mitzvos*, Torah study generates within us a sense of subjugation

to our Creator, the author of the Torah. This feeling of obligation, subjugation and servitude inspires within us a desire to emulate our Creator and identify and connect with Him. We therefore mold our character, develop our sensitivities and pattern our actions after Him, enabling us to reach a level of refinement worthy of infinite reward. It also enables us to be better prepared to connect with Him. Being more like Him allows us to forge a closer and more intimate relationship with Him and thereby experience the ultimate pleasure and fulfillment.

This idea allows us to better understand the existence of *halachic* disputes between our Sages. The Talmud tells us that Talmudic disagreement arose only when there was a generation of students who did not put in the fullest efforts, to their maximum capacity, to understand the words of their teachers. Even though all of the disparate students' conclusions were taught by Hashem to Moshe at Sinai, they were only different perspectives of a unified concept and not the total picture. As partial perspectives, they were legitimized by Hashem's teaching them to Moshe, even though they lacked the total unified perspective. Since they differed about the appropriate *halachic* action, each one advocating another *halachic* course of action, sometimes the opposite of each other, the question arises: How can they both be *halachically* valid? Which approach is the proper one as willed by Hashem?

In the light of the above, this question resolves itself. Since the essence of Torah is Torah study, and the performance of Mitzvos is for the purpose of actualizing the study, allowing us to subjugate ourselves to Hashem, then as long as a *halachic* position is derived from the proper source and by the proper system, then the specific actions can be in dispute and both can be considered *halachically* valid: "אלו ואלו דברי אלקים חיים".

# What Happened At Sinai?

*By Rabbi Shaya Cohen*

There are only five religions that make the claim that the Creator appeared to millions of eyewitnesses and revealed His purpose in Creation. They are: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism and Bahai. Interestingly, they all claim that this event took place only with the Jews at Sinai.

Judaism is therefore the only religion that claims that the Creator and Almighty Master of the Universe revealed Himself publicly at Sinai to them, to the entire Jewish people, and gave them His Divine directives. This claim is substantiated through a combination of factors, which indicate, beyond any reasonable doubt, the truth of the claim.

The key words in this process are testimony and evidence. Our Torah includes in itself a system for recognizing and transmitting the testimony of the original generation of eyewitnesses to the revelation at Sinai, down to this very day. An understanding of this system, provides a very credible basis for the truth of Torah from Sinai

The second word, evidence, refers to the fact that the Torah, both the written and the oral

Torah, is full of information that no-one other than the Creator and Ruler of the Universe could have known at the time the document was written. The Torah is also replete with indications of the Creator's control of the world.

Both of these concepts are unique amongst the religions of the world, only to be found in Judaism. Even though the other major religions came after Judaism and copied so much from it, no religion ever dared to claim eyewitness testimony to a public event of revelation by G-d, in front of millions of live witnesses. This can only be understood by the realization that this claim is extremely difficult to fabricate and if, in fact, it did not happen, then it will not be accepted or believed.

In fact, the major religions, in a desire and need to base their religion on more than the claim of one person to a private revelation, also acknowledge that the only public revelation was by the Creator to the Jews at Sinai. They then go on to claim, however that G-d changed His mind about Torah and the Jewish people.

This claim, of course, is very tenuous, because G-d Himself, commanded in the Torah, that no prophet, even with the performance of amazing miracles, could be believed to change the Torah or lead us astray.

The other major religions do not fare better when it comes to evidence for the truth of Torah. Most of their pronouncements refer to future events in the world-to-come or very vague statements, not very testable in this world. The Torah, however, is full of very specific information and prophecy of future events in this world that no one can deny.

This information is so compelling that the Talmud states, in “Chullin”, that this type of information, that no human could have known at the time, serves as an answer to anyone who would question whether or not the Torah is from G-d.

To properly convey the dual concepts of testimony to the events of Sinai and evidence for the Divine truth of Torah requires a detailed, sophisticated analysis of a wide range of material, which is beyond the scope of this work.

For the purpose of this work, some highlights of the basic concepts are presented here with the advice to the reader to do further research and be exposed to further information in this area.

The unique position of the first generation of actual witnesses to the Divine Revelation at Sinai can be better understood by a simple story. A Chassidic Rebbe passed away and left two sons. They were conflicted about who would be their father's successor. All of the Chasidim got involved and took sides. One day the younger son walks into the shul and announces that the conflict is resolved. "Father appeared to me in a dream," he said, "and proclaimed me as his successor." The other brother and his supporters responded, "If father truly wanted you to be his successor, he should have appeared to us and told us directly."

The only religion that claims a revelation in front of an entire nation, millions of witnesses, is Judaism, the others, if they claim revelation, like Islam and Christianity, claim a private revelation to one person with no other witnesses. This story underscores the difference in credibility between the two approaches. Anyone can claim that he had a private revelation; no one can claim a public revelation unless it, in fact, really happened.

The Torah, which describes this public revelation in detail, clearly states that the people of that generation witnessed these events and heard G-d speaking to them and to Moshe. The fact

that they all passed this document on to their children is a powerful testimony to these events.

Parents do not lie to their children, millions of parents certainly don't tell the same lie to their children. If a parent tells a child that a certain event took place, then the child knows that his parent honestly believes that the certain event took place. If a parent says, "I saw that event take place" then the child knows that, in fact, it did actually take place.

The Torah was passed from generation to generation, always publicly read and always prohibited from even the slightest change. Not only was the document passed down and preserved, but it was always read and studied by a nation that performed many observances, generation after generation, based on the text. To date, the text survives, all over the Jewish world without differences in text of any significance, unlike the New Testament, which has hundreds of significant differences in text. This process can be seen in action when a Torah reader makes a mistake in the public Torah reading; the listeners yell out corrections and never let a reading mistake go by. If and when there is a written error or peeling of the letter in the Torah, the Torah is put away, with the "gartle" (belt) on the outside, announcing its inappropriate status and must be fixed within thirty days. This system has preserved the Torah throughout the ages.

The Torah abounds with evidence of its Divine authorship, in the form of information both prophetic and scientific that no author could have known when the Torah was first given over 3300 years ago. Secular historians as well admit that the Torah was given at least approximately 2,250 years ago based upon documented historical evidence of the Torah's translation into Greek.

The Torah prophesizes the events of the destruction of the Bais Hamikdash, the exile, the return to Israel, and more in intricate detail, leaving no room to question the prophetic ability of its author. The Torah gives us vast amounts of modern scientific information, both in the written and oral Torah, no human could have known without Divine revelation.

That fact that there will never be a species of fish that has scales but does not have fins could not have been known to Moshe Rabbeinu without Divine revelation. Nor could he have known that.

Who could have dared to say that the Western Wall of the Bais Hamikdash will never be destroyed and who could have known that during the 20th Century, our enemies will use poisonous gas against us (See מלבים on the "מקטב ישוד צהרים" in פסוק "מקטב ישוד צהרים" (תהלים צ"א). Or who could have known, thousands of years ago, that the final determination of whether an embryo is male or female only takes place after the 40<sup>th</sup> day after conception. It goes on and on. This is what the Talmud says in "Chullin", that the scientific information that no one could have known at that time, serves as an answer to anyone who would say that Torah is not from Heaven. Our Rabbis do not say this is how we know the truth of Torah, but rather, an answer to anyone who might question its veracity. We know Torah is Divine, because of the unbroken chain of testimony from generation to generation, with no skipping of a generation. However, if anyone still harbors any doubts, how can he explain the extensive, detailed and accurate information that we find in our Torah that could not have been known to a human author so many years ago?



# Without Happiness, We're All At-Risk

By Rabbi Shaya Cohen

You've seen those aimless, listless Jewish kids walking the streets and avenues. What's behind their anger? Rebelliousness and hopelessness? Drugs? Alcohol? Addiction to pleasure?

Sorry. These are not the problem, but merely devastating symptoms of an inherent lack of happiness: the common denominator among children we call "at-risk."

*The shoshon, root, of the word osher, fortunate (and advanced manifestation of happiness), is asher – validate. In Lashon Hakodesh, the shoshon defines the essence of a word. Indeed, here, Hakadosh Baruch Hu, the architect of Lashon Hakodesh, hints to something of unfathomable value: validation is the root of happiness. If we feel validated, if our lives have validity – then we feel happy.*

Validation is the essence of the human spirit. A person who doesn't feel validated sees little purpose in his or her existence – as a result, he or she senses a deep void. Ultimately, without intervention, this void gets filled with addictive substances, pleasure seeking and fierce rebellion.

Several occurrences predispose children to feeling invalidated. Knowing what they are helps us recognize the risk, and define solutions – before it's too late.

Learning disabilities: Children who have difficulty learning feel acute failure, which is excruciating and debilitating. They stand out. They feel inferior. They feel no validity.

Divorce/death/family conflicts: Disrupting the sanctuary of the home leads to deep feeling of uncertainty, guilt and invalidity. Questions such as “Why me?” or “Did I cause this?” can have devastating consequences on a child’s self esteem, confidence and personal validity.

Psychological/medical issues: Children with psychological or medical issues (ADD and ADHD are common examples) are predisposed to behaviors that, if not addressed and treated early, may lead to chronic feelings of invalidity.

Overly demanding, critical or controlling parents and teachers: Children who are constantly criticized, corrected and rebuked don’t feel secure or validated.

Intense, unrelenting pressure: Parents or teachers who demand that children perform past their threshold of personal ability create a pressure-cooker environment, feelings of inadequacy, and a predisposition to failure and invalidation.

So how do you recognize problems early on? Is the child engaging in behaviors uncharacteristic in this age? Such behaviors can be recognized as early as five years old. Crying, tantrums and rebelliousness are the symptoms to look for.

How do you prevent problems from spiraling out of control? Seek, find and work with appropriate mental health professionals. Concurrently, seek, find and work with appropriate religious leaders. Why? Because children feeling frustrated with their religious community suffer the ultimate invalidation. After all, for a child failing History or Science, there's always Math. But a child who isn't good at being Jewish, where can he run? This frustration ultimately becomes rebellion and estrangement. Conversely, a child who feels secure and satisfied with his home and family, friends and religious environment, won't need or seek outside temptation.

Religion is a critical factor to happiness in Jewish children. Being part of a meaningful system is the ultimate validation. Kids have to feel *successful* at *Yiddishkeit*. They have to feel loved and valued by Hashem. That is how they can feel ultimate validation.

How do we help children feel connected to Hashem? Talk. Listen. Answer questions. Identify the presence of Hashem in the world. Elevate the concept of *Hashgacha Pratis*. Rejoice in *mitzvos*. Demonstrate joy in being Jewish and serving Hashem. Without these, children sense

pointlessness and purposelessness to the whole religion – and invalidity.

Your listening to what goes on in their minds helps them feel comfortable discussing how they feel – even when their feelings deviate from “acceptable” behavior. And when they do, don’t criticize. Talk – *without judgment* – to explain your point of view, while showing respect, validating their feelings and making them feel loved and valued.

Our experience with “at-risk” teens shows that these children do not feel validated. They do not feel happy. But we, as parents and educators, can start making a difference by becoming educated.

Just as young couples attend *chosson* and *kallah* classes before marriage, and just like expectant parents go to Lamaze classes, we must popularize parenting classes for new Jewish parents.

Priority-1 has developed a series of courses that easily demonstrates how to implement the ideas contained above. Through such lessons, parents and teachers will have a chance to reduce the risk that we face, as Jews, as parents, as teachers and as individuals. After all, if we can’t create happiness, then we are all truly at risk.

*By Author and teacher H. Ginott:*

**בענין השפעת המורה בכיתה:**

באתי למסקנה המבהילה שאני בעל ההחלטה בכיתה. הגישה האישית שלי היא הקובעת את האווירה בכיתה, מצב הרוח היום-יומי שלי קובע את האטמוספירה. כמורה, מצוי ברשותי כח עצום לעשות את חיי הילדים מרים או שמחים. אני יכול להיות מכשיר עיניים או כלי מרומם. אני יכול להעליב או להלהיב, להכאיב או לרפא. בכל מצב, התגובה שלי היא הקובעת באם המשבר יתדרדר או יתוקן, והילד יהפך לבעיה או יתפתח לאשיות.

“Concerning a teacher’s influence in the class:

I have come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It’s my personal approach that creates the climate. It’s my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child’s life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor. Hurt or heal. In all situations. It is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or de-humanized.”



## A PIECE OF ADVICE FROM ר' ז"ל

Rava said if you have seen a student whose learning is as hard (as difficult) as iron, it is because his Rebbi/teacher has not smiled at him as it is written "And one has honed the edge (literally: spoiled the face)

"רבא אמר אם ראית תלמיד שלמודו קשה עליו כברזל – בשביל רבו שאינו מסביר לו פנים, שנאמר "והוא לא פנים קלקל" (קהלת י:י) מאי תקנתיה ירבה עליו רעים (תענית ח.)

Rashi: He showed him an unfavorable countenance.

ופי' רש"י: שפנים קלקל. שהראה לו פנים רעות:

*What is his solution?*

Let him increase his friendship to appease him so that he will show him a good countenance

ירבה עליו רעים. לפיכך הימנו שיסביר לו פנים:

In order to learn children must know that they have their teachers love and support.

"And you should draw them (students) to the Torah with words of favor and grace" (Bnei Yissaschar)

"וימשיכם אל התורה בדברי חן ותחנונים" (בני יששכר בקונטרס תמכין דאורייתא סימן ג סעיף ב)

As the waters reflect the face shown to them, so does the heart of man reflect the heart of his fellow man (Proverbs 27:18)

"כמים לפנים כן לב האדם לאדם" (משלי כ"ז י"ח) ...ההיא בדברי תורה כתיב (יבמות דף ק"ז)

Rashi: If his Rabbi smiles at him he will gain in wisdom and if not he will not gain in wisdom from this Rabbi. (Tractate Yavamot)

ופי' רש"י: "אם רבו מסביר לו פנים הוא מחכים, ואם לאו אינו מחכים מרבו:" (רש"י ביבמות דף ק"ז)

When his student has difficulty the teacher should see that as his own problem and be personally pained by it. Thus we find the teacher in Tractate Taanit (27B) telling us about his students who had difficulty in learning a full verse of Torah at a time as was prescribed by Halacha:

I had much pain by the Great Rabbi Chanina and he allowed me to split a posuk in half only for school children because they need to learn.

צער גדול היה לי אצל ר' חנינא הגדול ולא התיר לי לפסוק אלא לתינוקות של בית רבן הואיל ולהתלמד עשויין (תענית כז ע"ב)

Rashi: I exerted myself and returned to him many time and again so that he should allow me to split the verse in two for children who are learning, because they cannot learn an entire verse.)

ופי' רש"י: צער גדול. הרבה מרהתי וחזרתי עליו שיתיר לי לפסוק הפסוק לשנים לצורך תינוקות שלומדים לפני שאינן יכולין לקרוא פסוק כולו:

And when the Rabbi encourages him and shows him that he believes in him the student does blossom, as related in Tractate Bava Metzia (85A):

Rebbi (Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi) arrived at the town of (the late) Rabbi Elozor the son of Rabbi Shimon (Bar Yochai). He asked the townspeople did the tzadik (Rabbi Elozor) leave a son? They answered yes, he has a son but the son is unworthy of Rebbi's attention because he has strayed far off the righteous path. Rebbi nevertheless sought him out. He ordained him and called "Rabbi"

Rashi: So that all would call him Rebbi and he should thus become jealous and devote himself to Torah (in order to live up to his title.)

When he grew older he learned in Rabbi Shamei's Yeshiva... and he became the great Amora Rabbi Yossi.

איקלע רבי לאחריה דר' אלעזר בר' שמעון א"ל יש לו בן לאותו צדיק אמרו לו יש לו בן וכל זונה שנשכרה בשנים שוכרתו בשמנה... אתייה אסמכיה ברבי... (בבא מציעא פ"ה ע"א)

ופי' רש"י: אסמכיה ברבי, שיהו קורין אותו רבי כדי שיתקנא וישים (אל) לבו על ת"ת:

...כי גדל אתא יתיב במתיבתא דרבי שמעיה... קרי עליה פרי צדיק עין חיים זה ר' יוסי בר' אלעזר בר' שמעון (בבא מציעא פ"ה ע"א)

## A PUBLICATION OF THE PRIORITY-1 RESOURCE CENTER

The Priority-1 Resource Center is an exhaustive collection of print, audio, and video resources on positive parenting, educational methodology and techniques, child and adolescent psychology, as well as Torah works. The Resource Center publishes and disseminates its own series of resource works as well as those of others. These tools are available via mail, on-site and on the web at [www.priority-1.org](http://www.priority-1.org).

The Resource Center is a division of the Priority-1 Community Training Initiative, which is comprised of courses, workshops, and continuing education for parents and educators on forming and sustaining productive relationships with children and students. This initiative was created on the recommendation of the Posek Hador, Maran HaRav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv shlita and has two tracks:

1. **Priority Parenting Institute:** Providing parents the skills to identify youth challenges that may lead to "at-risk" behavior and teaching proactive methods to prevent behaviors from spiraling out of control.
2. **Priority Teaching Institute:** Training educators to circumvent, detect, and effectively intervene when youth are faced with challenges that lead to alienation and estrangement from their heritage and community.

Priority-1 also has a family resources department designed to provide families, educators and youth with a wide range of services and materials. The Priority-1 Consultation & Crisis Intervention Service provides family, educational and religious counseling services for parents, teachers and students. Thousands of individuals and families have been serviced through this program over the past two decades.

*For more information or other Priority-1 publications please visit our website [www.priority-1.org](http://www.priority-1.org) or call 516-295-5700.*



### PRIORITY-1

P.O. Box 486, 26 Columbia Avenue Cedarhurst, NY 11516  
800-33-FOREVER • 516-295-5700 • Fax: 516-295-5737  
[www.Priority-1.org](http://www.Priority-1.org) • [info@priority-1.org](mailto:info@priority-1.org)