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**Rebbe Shmuel Shmelke**

**Of Nikolsburg**

**By [Boruch Twersky](https://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/20226/jewish/Twersky-Boruch.htm" \o "Browse more articles by Twersky, Boruch)**



Rebbe Shmuel Shmelke Horowitz (1726-1778) was a renowned scholar and leader of the second generation of the Chassidic movement. Reverently known as “The Rebbe Reb Shmelke,” he studied under Rabbi Eliyahu, the Vilna Gaon, before becoming a student of Rabbi DovBer, the Maggid of Mezritch, successor of the Baal Shem Tov.

His young brother was Rebbe Pinchas, rabbi of Frankfurt, renowned as “The Hafla’ah.” Their mother was known to say, “One of my sons never says nighttime Shema and one never says Grace After Meals.” What did she mean? That Rebbe Shmelke hardly slept and Rebbe Pinchas hardly ate!

Rebbe Shmelke opened a yeshivah in Ritshval (Ryczywół), which he ran for 10 years, with a rigorous[1](javascript:doFootnote('1a5371076');) daily schedule:[2](javascript:doFootnote('2a5371076');)

14 hours of Torah study, 4 hours for the three daily prayers, ½ hour break (during which he taught them Chovot Halevavot; ½ hour for eating; 4 hours for sleeping, 1 hour for personal needs

Many of Rebbe Shmelke’s students became beloved Chassidic leaders, including: Rebbe Yisrael, the Maggid of Kozhnitz; [Rebbe Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/1007604/jewish/A-Brief-Biography.htm); Reb Mendel of Rimanov; and the renowned Talmudist, Reb Mordechai Benet.[3](javascript:doFootnote('3a5371076');)

**One of His Students was the Chozeh of Lublin**

He subsequently led a [yeshivah](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/4407857/jewish/What-Is-a-Yeshiva.htm) in Shinov (Sieniawa), with the Chozeh (“Seer”) of Lublin among his students. “If you ever see me so engrossed in [Torah](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/1426382/jewish/Torah.htm) that I forget G‑d, pull my sleeve to remind me,” he requested. The Chozeh said that only once did he feel the need to tug on his master’s sleeve, and when he did, Rebbe Shmelke told him, “My son, my son, I remembered on my own.”[4](javascript:doFootnote('4a5371076');)

“When the *yetzer hara* (evil inclination) convinces you to stop learning because you are tired, Rebbe Shmelke taught, “shout at it*,* and strengthen yourself to overcome it. Break your nature, and learn more than you would otherwise!”[5](javascript:doFootnote('5a5371076');)

Once, Rebbe Shmelke was visiting Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk, and Rebbe Elimelech convinced Rebbe Shmelke to sleep. He wanted to show him how much he could accomplish by being well rested.

The following morning, Rebbe Shmelke enjoyed a wonderful morning service. When the community came to Az Yashir (the Song of the Sea), Rebbe Shmelke aroused them to feel as though they were singing praise right after the Red Sea had parted. People even lifted their hems as they imagined the waters of the sea around them.

Rebbe Shmelke thanked Rebbe Elimelech for facilitating the experience, but he didn’t change his custom of staying awake as much as possible. “Sleeping is very good,” he said, “but who has time for it?”[6](javascript:doFootnote('6a5371076');)

According to another version, he said, “Sleeping is very good, but who can risk it?”[7](javascript:doFootnote('7a5371076');)

**Attraction to Chassidism**

When he was in Ritshval, Rebbe Shmelke said to his brother, Rabbi Pinchas, “I heard that in Mezeritch there is a holy scholar who teaches people how to serve [G‑d](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/433240/jewish/God.htm). Let's go there. Perhaps he can teach us as well.”

They arrived on Friday, but the Maggid told them that he didn’t have time to speak with them then, as he was busy preparing for Shabbat.

Disappointed, the brothers thought, “If he is so holy, why didn't he recognize that we are Torah scholars and honor us accordingly?”

At each of the three Shabbat meals, they were disappointed. They expected deep discussions in Talmud, to which they were qualified to contribute. But the Maggid spoke of Chassidic teachings, in a manner they weren't accustomed to.

Feeling the trip had been a waste, they prepared to leave, but first wanted to take leave of the Maggid.

They came to him that night, and the Maggid said he would soon call for them.

On Tuesday, the Maggid blessed them, said goodbye, and advised them to also take leave of [Rebbe Zusha of Anipoli](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/4285539/jewish/15-Facts-About-Reb-Zusha-of-Anipoli.htm).

They found Rebbe Zusha in the study hall, where he told them: “The sages[8](javascript:doFootnote('8a5371076');) say that one should seek a teacher who is like an angel. But we’ve never seen angels. So how can we know whether the teacher is similar to an angel? The explanation, my brothers, is as follows: An angel is hidden from all eyes, and we should seek a teacher whose greatness is concealed from all.”

Rebbe Zusha was implying that the Maggid's ways were concealed from them, but that he was truly angelic.

The brothers said to one another, “If the student has Divine inspiration, and he knew what we were thinking about his master, certainly the Maggid must be inspired!” and they decided to remain.[9](javascript:doFootnote('9a5371076');)

In one of their early meetings, the Maggid asked the brothers, “Why should righteous people like yourselves travel so far to come to me?” After praising them, he also rebuked them and taught them to be humble.

Inspired, the brothers replied, “You are correct. We shouldn't have ridden here. We should have come here by foot!”[10](javascript:doFootnote('10a5371076');)

**Nikolsburg**

In 1772 (5532), the brothers returned to Mezeritch for another visit. They had been invited to take up rabbinic posts in Nikolsburg and Frankfurt, and they wanted to receive the Maggid’s blessing. They also wanted to receive his counsel, because the communities hadn’t specified which brother should go to Nikolsburg and which to Frankfurt.

They stood outside the Maggid’s home, each brother wanting to honor the other by allowing him to enter first. The Maggid called out, “Let the Rav of Nikolsburg come in first, because he is the older brother,” thereby letting them know that Rebbe Shmelke should be the rav of Nikolsburg.[11](javascript:doFootnote('11a5371076');)

It was during this visit that the brothers were shown the first completed sections of the Shulchan Aruch (Code of Jewish Law), then being worked on by their colleague, Rabbi Schneur Zalman, the founder of Chabad. They praised his work and encouraged him to continue, “Be strong and complete the [Shulchan Aruch](https://www.chabad.org/calendar/view/day_cdo/aid/156753/jewish/Shulchan-Aruch-Completed-Orech-Chaim.htm), because you are fitting for this mission. The merit of Torah will protect you, your children, and all Jews.”[12](javascript:doFootnote('12a5371076');)

Enroute to Nikolsburg, the Rebbe Reb Shmelke stopped in Krakow for Shabbat. The Jews of Krakow were overjoyed with their distinguished guest, and asked him to speak.

He shared the advanced Talmudic analysis he had prepared to say upon his arrival in Nikolsburg, thinking he could simply repeat it again when he got there.

He soon realized, however, that several prominent community leaders from Nikolsburg had come to Krakow to accompany him to his new home, and he understood that he would have to prepare something new to say once he arrived.

But so many people came to greet him that first week, he was let with no time to prepare

**The Candle Blew Out Early.**

Before Shabbat, he lit a large candle, which would allow him to study all night and prepare a new discourse. But alas, the candle blew out early.

The following morning, with a prayer on his lips, he asked for a Gemara, any one, and he read a few lines from a page he randomly opened. After reading the [Gemara](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/2537389/jewish/Talmud.htm" \o "Talmud), he asked many questions, and the scholars of Nikolsburg added many of their own, until they had come up with 130 questions.

Reb Shmelke then went through the questions and answered them in 72 ways. The exercise took several hours. Everyone was astonished by his genius, and they rejoiced that they had merited such a rabbi.[13](javascript:doFootnote('13a5371076');)

Located in Central Europe, at the nexus of the east and west, Nikolsburg was a religious city with many Torah scholars, but there were also followers of the nascent Enlightenment, who valued sciences over Torah study.

As such, for the first seven weeks that Rebbe Shmelke was in Nikolsburg, in his weekly Shabbat speech, he discussed the seven wisdoms (mathematics, music, medicine, geology, etc.), covering another science each week.

After demonstrating his proficiency in the sciences, he was able to convince them that studying Torah was far more important.

He explained that if a rabbi speaks about the importance of Torah study over studying the sciences, people will say, “How does he know? He only knows Torah. He never studied the wisdoms of the world.” But when a rabbi knows these sciences, and nonetheless recognizes the supremacy of Torah, that is a convincing argument.[14](javascript:doFootnote('14a5371076');)

He went on to remain in Nikolsburg, the city that will forever be associated with his name, for five years. While there, he served as chief rabbi of the region of Moravia.

**His First Week in Nikolsburg**

As mentioned earlier, Rebbe Shmelke spent his first week in Nikolsburg meeting the locals. Here are some anecdotes from that time:

A grand reception was prepared in his honor. Before it began, Rebbe Shmelke asked to be alone in a room. Someone peeked through the keyhole and saw the newly appointed rabbi put out his hand, like he was greeting an imaginary person, and he heard the Rebbe say, “Shalom Aleichem holy Rebbe. We feel honored that you came to our city.” He continued to pretend he was being greeted by others, imagining what they might say.

Later, the man asked the Rebbe about his behavior. The Rebbe explained that no one feels honored when he honors himself, and he wanted to train himself to be numb and unaffected by all the praises he would receive at the reception.[15](javascript:doFootnote('15a5371076');)

Another day, during his first week in Nikolsburg, Rebbe Shmelke was invited to the home of a wealthy person. The host served him a cup of coffee and a saucer filled with cream.

Rebbe Shmelke asked, “Where's the cream?”

The host pointed to the saucer.

A few minutes afterwards, Rebbe Shmelke asked again, “Where's the cream?”

The host understood that something must be wrong with the cream, so he hurriedly went to ask about it. He discovered that, accidentally, the gentile maid had milked the cow without Jewish supervision, which rendered the milk not kosher.

The host apologized to Rebbe Shmelke, and he asked, “But why didn't you tell me that the cream isn't [kosher](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/113424/jewish/Kosher.htm)? Why did you ask, ‘Where's the cream?’”  
Rebbe Shmelke replied, “It states in Jewish law,[16](javascript:doFootnote('16a5371076');) ‘Milk that was milked by a non-Jew and *a Jew doesn't see it*, it is forbidden.’ Hinted in these words is that when something isn't kosher, a Jew doesn't see it. I didn't know the cream was forbidden; I simply didn't see it.”[17](javascript:doFootnote('17a5371076');)

**His Humble Ways**

Throughout Reb Shmelke’s life, he was loved by his students and by (most of) his community, because he loved them and he led them in a fatherly way. In Nikolsburg, he faced his share of opponents who didn't want a Chassidic leader, but his humble and pleasant ways won them over.

On the eve of Yom Kippur, shortly after his arrival in Nikolsburg, a wealthy person brought a bottle of old wine to Rebbe Shmelke and poured him cup after cup.

This man, who resented the new Chassidic rabbi, wanted to make him drunk, sure that when the rabbi showed up to synagogue intoxicated his reputation would be forever ruined.

But on [Yom Kippur](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/4687/jewish/Yom-Kippur.htm) night, Rebbe Shmelke was totally sober.

In front of the community, Reb Shmelke beseeched, “G‑d! I have enemies who want to harm me, but I forgive them. Please! Don't punish them…” He spoke about this for some time, and the entire community wept.

The wealthy man understood that the Rebbe was pleading on his behalf, and that surprised him. Not only was the new rabbi not taking revenge, he was trying to free him from punishment!

In front of everyone, the wealthy man fell before Rebbe Shmelke and asked for his forgiveness.

“Do you think I accepted the leadership of this city because I want honor?” asked Rebbe Shmelke. “It isn't so, my son. I would be glad if I was embarrassed tonight, because that would atone for many of my sins. Much good would come from it!”

Upon hearing this, the man cried some more, and from then on, they were very close.[18](javascript:doFootnote('18a5371076');)

After Rebbe Shmelke's passing, he was succeeded by his student Reb Mordechai Benet, who said, “I won't be like Rebbe Shmelke who remained silent in the face of disrespect. I am not like him.”[19](javascript:doFootnote('19a5371076');)

Few people can emulate Rebbe Shmelke's humble ways. Indeed, humility is the primary focus of his book, *Divrei Shmuel*.

**Love for Others**

The houses in Nikolsburg were made of wood with thatched roofs, and were prone to fires. Once, people told Rebbe Shmelke that a fire had broken out in the city and Rebbe Shmelke was very worried.

Soon they returned to report that the fire was far from the Rebbe's home.

The Rebbe calmed down, but after a moment his face turned white again.

He explained, “When you told me there's a fire, I was worried that my home might catch fire. Then you told me the fire was distant, and this calmed me, because my home wasn't at risk. But our sages say, 'Your fellow’s money should be precious to you as your own,'[20](javascript:doFootnote('20a5371076');) and I realized that I still have not attained that level; I care more for my home than for other people's homes. That's why I became frightened again.”[21](javascript:doFootnote('21a5371076');)

On another occasion, a man suffering from poverty asked Rebbe Shmelke to pray for him. Rebbe Shmelke replied, “Tomorrow I can pray for you, but today, I have already taken upon myself to feel the pain of another Jew. I've seen that when I feel the pain of my fellow, and I pray for him, G‑d answers my prayers. Today I'm feeling his pain, but tomorrow I will feel your struggles and pray on your behalf.”[22](javascript:doFootnote('22a5371076');)

Rabbi Avraham Chaim of Zlotchov related that when he was young, he asked Reb Shmelke how it is possible to love someone who harmed him.

Rebbe Shmelke explained, “If you accidentally hurt yourself with your hand, would you beat your hand because of that? Of course not, because your hand is part of you. All Jews are one. To hurt your fellow is ultimately to harm yourself. Why would you do that?”[23](javascript:doFootnote('23a5371076');)

Although Torah study took a primary place in his life, he never forgot the needs of his fellow people.[24](javascript:doFootnote('24a5371076');) At times, he would travel to collect money for the poor, and was known to say, “For a Jew one must have self-sacrifice.”[25](javascript:doFootnote('25a5371076');)

Like many of his colleagues (fellow students of the Maggid of Mezeritch), he made sure to distribute all of his money to charity.[26](javascript:doFootnote('26a5371076');)

**His Passing**

On the 1 Iyar, 5538 (1778), he called his students and said, “Today I will die.” The students cried.

“Know, I have the soul of Samuel the Prophet, with whom I share a name,” he told them. “He was a Levite and I'm a [Levite](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/4254752/jewish/Who-Were-the-Levites.htm). He passed away at age 52, and today I became 52 years old. If people would call me Shmuel, I would be like Shmuel HaNavi literally.” And his soul ascended on high, while he was still sitting on his chair.[27](javascript:doFootnote('27a5371076');)

He left behind two sons, Rabbi Yaakov Horowitz and Rabbi Tzvi Yehoshua—rabbi of Treibitsch (Třebíč); and a daughter, Toiba, whose husband, Rabbi Yaakov Horowitz, was the rabbi of Kaltburg, along with a cadre of students who went on to lead Jewish communities all over Eastern Europe, spreading the light of Chassidic teachings.

**FOOTNOTES**

**[1.](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/5371076/jewish/Rebbe-Shmuel-Shmelke-of-Nikolsburg-1726-1778.htm" \l "footnoteRef1a5371076)** Reb Meir Karinsbaplir, a scholar from that era, writes that he wanted to join the yeshivah in Ritshval. Rebbe Shmelke told him that he was welcome, provided that he could keep up with the vigorous learning schedule. Reb Meir tried, but on the third day, Rebbe Shmelke asked him to bring a certain sefer. Reb Meir went to the next room. There was a bed there, and the exhausted young man fell asleep.  
When Rebbe Shmelke heard, he asked, "Is there a pillow under his head?"  
"Yes." Rebbe Shmelke said, "If he would have collapsed and fell asleep, that isn't his fault. But if he took the pillow, that means he went to sleep..."  
Reb Meir understood that the yeshivah was too hard for him, so he bade Rebbe Shmelke farewell and returned home (Yad HaMeir).

**[2.](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/5371076/jewish/Rebbe-Shmuel-Shmelke-of-Nikolsburg-1726-1778.htm" \l "footnoteRef2a5371076)** Beit Pinchas (23). [**3.**](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/5371076/jewish/Rebbe-Shmuel-Shmelke-of-Nikolsburg-1726-1778.htm#footnoteRef3a5371076) Ibid. [**4.**](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/5371076/jewish/Rebbe-Shmuel-Shmelke-of-Nikolsburg-1726-1778.htm#footnoteRef4a5371076) Zichron Tov (Deveikut 20). [**5.**](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/5371076/jewish/Rebbe-Shmuel-Shmelke-of-Nikolsburg-1726-1778.htm#footnoteRef5a5371076) Beit Pinchas, Hanhagot 52. [**6.**](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/5371076/jewish/Rebbe-Shmuel-Shmelke-of-Nikolsburg-1726-1778.htm#footnoteRef6a5371076) She'arit Baruch (p.5). [**7.**](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/5371076/jewish/Rebbe-Shmuel-Shmelke-of-Nikolsburg-1726-1778.htm#footnoteRef7a5371076) Mamaar Mordechai. [**8.**](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/5371076/jewish/Rebbe-Shmuel-Shmelke-of-Nikolsburg-1726-1778.htm#footnoteRef8a5371076) Moed Kattan (17a).

**[9.](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/5371076/jewish/Rebbe-Shmuel-Shmelke-of-Nikolsburg-1726-1778.htm" \l "footnoteRef9a5371076)** Ibid. [**10.**](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/5371076/jewish/Rebbe-Shmuel-Shmelke-of-Nikolsburg-1726-1778.htm#footnoteRef10a5371076) Maasei Tzadddikim p.21; Shemen HaTov (Ibid.). [**11.**](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/5371076/jewish/Rebbe-Shmuel-Shmelke-of-Nikolsburg-1726-1778.htm#footnoteRef11a5371076) Shemen HaTov (vol.2 60). [**12.**](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/5371076/jewish/Rebbe-Shmuel-Shmelke-of-Nikolsburg-1726-1778.htm#footnoteRef12a5371076) Introduction to Shulchan Aruch Harav by the sons of the author. [**13.**](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/5371076/jewish/Rebbe-Shmuel-Shmelke-of-Nikolsburg-1726-1778.htm#footnoteRef13a5371076)

Shemen HaTov (vol.2 31). [**14.**](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/5371076/jewish/Rebbe-Shmuel-Shmelke-of-Nikolsburg-1726-1778.htm#footnoteRef14a5371076) Emunas Chachamim (77). [**15.**](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/5371076/jewish/Rebbe-Shmuel-Shmelke-of-Nikolsburg-1726-1778.htm#footnoteRef15a5371076) Maasei Tzaddikim. [**16.**](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/5371076/jewish/Rebbe-Shmuel-Shmelke-of-Nikolsburg-1726-1778.htm#footnoteRef16a5371076)

Yoreh Deah 115. [**17**.](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/5371076/jewish/Rebbe-Shmuel-Shmelke-of-Nikolsburg-1726-1778.htm#footnoteRef17a5371076) Introduction to Smichat Moshe. [**18**.](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/5371076/jewish/Rebbe-Shmuel-Shmelke-of-Nikolsburg-1726-1778.htm#footnoteRef18a5371076) Shemen HaTov (vol.2 49).

**[19.](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/5371076/jewish/Rebbe-Shmuel-Shmelke-of-Nikolsburg-1726-1778.htm" \l "footnoteRef19a5371076)** Ohel Yitzchak. [**20.**](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/5371076/jewish/Rebbe-Shmuel-Shmelke-of-Nikolsburg-1726-1778.htm#footnoteRef20a5371076) Avot 2:12. [**21.**](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/5371076/jewish/Rebbe-Shmuel-Shmelke-of-Nikolsburg-1726-1778.htm#footnoteRef21a5371076) Kitvei R' Yashe Shub (p.99, #15). [**22.**](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/5371076/jewish/Rebbe-Shmuel-Shmelke-of-Nikolsburg-1726-1778.htm#footnoteRef22a5371076) Niflaot HaRebbe Reb Shmelke (p.24). [**23.**](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/5371076/jewish/Rebbe-Shmuel-Shmelke-of-Nikolsburg-1726-1778.htm#footnoteRef23a5371076) Orach LaChaim (Shemini) [**24.**](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/5371076/jewish/Rebbe-Shmuel-Shmelke-of-Nikolsburg-1726-1778.htm#footnoteRef24a5371076) Degel Machaneh Yehudah (14). [**25**.](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/5371076/jewish/Rebbe-Shmuel-Shmelke-of-Nikolsburg-1726-1778.htm#footnoteRef25a5371076) Maamar Mordechai (Reb Moshe Leib Sassov). [**26.**](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/5371076/jewish/Rebbe-Shmuel-Shmelke-of-Nikolsburg-1726-1778.htm#footnoteRef26a5371076) Korot HaIttim.

**[27.](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/5371076/jewish/Rebbe-Shmuel-Shmelke-of-Nikolsburg-1726-1778.htm" \l "footnoteRef27a5371076)** Introduction to Nezir Hashem.

**Rabbi Berel Wein**

**On Parshas Mishpatim**



The Torah presents us with great moral principles and a profoundly unique value system. These are meant to propel us through life and make us feel that we are members of a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Yet, we are all aware that perhaps the most difficult challenge in life is translating our core beliefs and high moral aspirations into practical daily behavior.

In a world where there would be no desire for undue riches or the accumulation of vast property, it would be simple to understand that one should not steal, cheat, or covet. In the practical world that we live in, there exists the desire for acquisition of wealth and goods, power and influence, fame, and fortune, all built within our basic DNA structure.

Stealing, cheating, and coveting all require no specific legal definition to be of value in the practical world. And because of this element of human nature, there exist all the great moral values that are represented in the Ten Commandments, which should define our lives.

All sorts of questions arise as to what the true definition of theft is. How does advertising and persuasive sales techniques fit into the moral world that we are trying to construct and live in, and does this describe theft? What about stealing to be able to survive? And countless other questions that undoubtedly arise when we approach the problem of defining behavior that we wish to accompany our lofty moral goals.

All the laws that appear in this week's Torah reading are discussed at length (and width) with precise analysis in the tradition of the Oral Law that governs Jewish life. It is in those large volumes of scholarly research and opinion that the practical flesh and sinews of Jewish law are draped upon the skeleton of the moral world that we hope to attain.

We live in world where mistakes happen, whether they be the products of negligence or pure happenstance. How are we to judge liability and responsibility in that massive gray area where most human behavior finds itself? The Oral Law is a continuing process that deals not only with an ox that gores a cow, but also teaches us how to deal with issues in air travel and even ventures into space. Without clear definition of the original value system upon which the moral code of Judaism is based, human behavior can be seen as merely a collection of good intentions and human platitudes.

The study of the Oral Law, beginning with the books of the Talmud and continuing through the latest works of Jewish legal scholarship of today, become the necessary foundation to creating a just and moral society that we all endeavor to live in.

I have always maintained that when we proclaim ourselves to be the people of the book, that book is not necessarily the Bible itself, but, rather, it is the Talmud, which makes the Bible alive, practical, relevant, and trustworthy throughout all generations.

*Reprinted from this week’s website of rabbiwein.com*

# Rav Avigdor Miller on

**Yiddishkeit and Happiness**



# Rav Avigdor Miller on Yiddishkeit and Happiness

**QUESTION:** **How can one have simcha in serving Hashem?**

**ANSWER:** I’ll ask another question: How can one have simcha when he goes to the bank and he puts a thousand dollars into his account? What will he get out of it? In return for that he gets a half a drop of ink in his bank book. And in most cases, that’s all he ever will have from it.

However. it’s a promise; it’s a promise of future good times – maybe someday he’ll enjoy it. So I’ll tell you that the man who invests in Hakodosh Boruch Hu is going to get more than a drop of ink.

And Hashem repays His servants in this world too. Now, don’t make any mistake – there’s Olam Haboh and that’s where the keren kayemess is paid. But there’s no question that those who serve Hashem are encouraged in this world with good times.

There’s good health as a result of keeping the Torah. There is prosperity in financial matters by keeping the Torah. You’re going to have recognition from people. You’ll get more honor, acclaim, for keeping the Torah.

If you look in Mishlei constantly you’ll see, and you’ll understand that it’s so. And if I had time now, I would demonstrate it – how the Torah pays in this world.

Now, you have to disregard the pitui hayetzer. The yetzer horah is always trying to tell you something opposite. But today it’s so easy to see how unfortunate are those who don’t keep the Torah.

**The Tragedy of Sending Children to Public Schools**

On all sides you see ruined lives; you see parents without children. Now, parents without children are unfortunate parents but today parents with children are sometimes even more unfortunate — as a result of the public school that makes children into ingrates. Children are ungrateful to parents; they don’t respect their parents. And sometimes the parents are so disappointed in their children they don’t want to know about them. They become tramps today. On all sides we see the ruination of the hopes of parents.

When you see a woman in pants, a young woman wearing pants holding a baby in her arms, it’s a great pity. Because she’s going to send that baby to the public school and she is going to be bitterly disappointed in that baby. Tragedies are waiting for the irreligious today.

So, we don’t need too much to convince us today. But even in the olden days, when people were more decent, and they expected more from their children, life was a disappointment for them.

**The Many Pleasure of Shabbos**

For the frummeh, immediately you start getting repaid. Shabbos is a pleasure. If you have a family and a loyal wife and oneg Shabbos and oneg Yom Tov. Ahh! You’re living together with your children and you come together to the beis haknesses together. Together the family enjoys these holy days; with Shabbos and Yom Tov it’s one sixth of your lives that you live in real happiness while you’re young enough to enjoy it – not when you’re really old and broken and you retire to a lonely, isolated life.

And so, the shomer Torah lives a community life with good friends in his kehilah. And he lives a life of temperance; he doesn’t do things in the wrong way to harm himself. He doesn’t get diseases that the wicked get. Boruch Hashem, there’s no question today; it’s easy to see how the frummeh are rewarded.

Only they have to watch out for the yetzer horah that tries to deceive them that others are having a good time; they’re not having a good time, this I can tell you. You don’t have much to know much to see that.

And so, when in Spring Valley a young girl opened the back door of her house to let in two bums from her high school, two friends, in order to get even with her parents who denied her some pleasure. So first, the two bums, goyim, beat her father to death and then they took the mother and drowned her in the bathtub. That’s the nachas he had from her. That’s the nachas from public school children.

**The Danger of Wicked Children Harming their Parents**

Or the tycoon whose fourteen-year-old son came with a gun and shot his father dead and he inherited all his money right away. That’s nachas. On all sides it’s that way. Wicked children are wreaking havoc on their parents.

Here’s a Russian girl who beat her father to death; she killed her father. Of course, she was exonerated by a female judge. She believed all the things that the daughter said against her father — there was no evidence — and she was set free.

And so today, boruch Hashem, we don’t have to look far; we can look and see what’s happening among the frieh.

Here’s a father who has to support his daughter. What’s his daughter doing? She’s living alone some place and she’s bringing in strange men into the apartment. She’s a prostitute who works without money. And the father is supporting her.

Is that one case? There are thousands of such cases! Thousands of such cases! I get phone calls all the time with these stories.

And irreligious Jews too – here’s a woman who told her husband, “Whenever I go to King’s Plaza, there’s an Italian man who accosts me; he starts speaking to me. I can’t get rid of him.”

So, the husband calls me up — he’s an irreligious man but he calls me; someone gave him my number. “What should I do?” he said.

I told him, “Tell her to stop going to King’s Plaza!”

But I understood right away what was going on. Finally, I discovered it’s not King’s Plaza. He lives next door to her, this gentile. An Italian bachelor who lives next door to her, and she’s carrying on an affair with the man next door. That’s nachas of the irreligious Jews — and modern Orthodox Jews heads too. It’s a ruined life. And therefore, it’s easy to see that.

So, when you serve Hashem, you’re making the best investment for yourself. The most selfish thing you can do is to be a frum Jew. And after it’s all finished, when you’re leaving this world, the best is yet to come: הקרן קיימת לעולם הבא.

So how can a Jew not be with simcha? When you put on tefilin you should chuckle like a man chuckles when he picks up $100 in the street. I know you’re a rich man, but still, you’ll bend down for a $100, won’t you? And you’ll chuckle. Oh yes, you’ll chuckle!

And so, you’re putting on tefilin, and you’re shaking the lulav, you’re putting up a mezuzah, you’re saying birkas hamazon, you’re keeping Shabbos, your wife goes to the mikveh, you’re doing everything. Everything is an investment. A woman who goes to the mikveh is making the very best investment. You’re getting wealthy from day to day in this world and the principal is accumulating in the World-to-Come.

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**Why Was Only Yitro Inspired**

**By the Miracle of the Sea Split**

**From the Talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

**Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, Zt”l**



This week's Torah portion, Mishpatim, begins with the verse, "And these are the judgments which you shall set before them (lifneihem)."

Our Sages learn a number of lessons from the word lifneihem:

"Before them" --- before Jews. If ever there is a disagreement among Jews, they must go to a Jewish court to resolve it, rather than bring their case before a gentile judge. A Jewish judge will render judgment according to the laws of the Torah.

Rabbi Shneur Zalman, the first Chabad Rebbe, explains the word "lifneihem" as "lifnimiyutam --- before their inner essence --- penimiyut." G-d's wisdom must penetrate even the most hidden levels of the soul.

The mitzvot are divided into three categories: statutes - Chukim, testimonies - Edut, and judgments - mishpatim.

Statutes are commandments that are beyond our comprehension. We obey them simply because G-d has commanded us to do so, with acceptance of the yoke of heaven.

Testimonies are mitzvot which, although we would not have discerned them on our own, have a rationale we can nonetheless comprehend.

Judgments are commandments which all people can readily understand. These mitzvot are laws which are compelled by human logic, and which all mankind deems necessary for the good of society.

A question is asked: Why is it precisely the rational commandments we would have observed anyway, about which the Torah states "you shall set before them"?

A person would never consider bringing "statutes" and "testimonies" before a non-Jewish court. Statutes and testimonies are particular and unique to Torah, commandments that are derived from G-d's will rather than human understanding; thus, it is obvious that they pertain solely to Jews. However, a person might think that because non-Jews understand and obey rational laws it is permissible to be judged by them in certain instances. For this reason, our Sages insisted: "Before them --- and not before gentiles."

All of the Torah's commandments were given by G-d. We observe them solely because He wants us to, not because they make sense to us. Just as statutes and testimonies are performed with faith in G-d, so too must our observance of judgments have the same motivation.

Furthermore, it is precisely concerning judgments that the word "penimiyut" most relates, for the Jew must awaken the innermost recesses of his soul to obey them properly. Merely understanding the Torah's rational laws is not sufficient.

In this way we will come to obey all of the Torah's commandments with all of our individual strengths.

*Adapted for Maayan Chai from Likutei Sichot vol. 3*

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