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WITH

R' AVIGDOR MILLER זי"ל

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

Struggle and Motivations

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Part I. Motivations of The Mind

The Queer Nuns

In this week's *sedrah* there is a small *parsha*, just two *pesukim*, that appears to be set off from the *pesukim* around it. I'm talking about וַיְהִי בְּנִסְעַ הָאָרֶץ וַיִּשְׁרָאֵל וַיֹּאמֶר מִשָּׁה שׁוֹבָה הַשֵּׁם רַבּוֹת אֵלַי יִשְׂרָאֵל until וַיִּשְׁרָאֵל וַיֹּאמֶר מִשָּׁה. You know these *pesukim* because we say the first *posuk* when the *sefer Torah* is taken out of the *aron kodesh* and the second one when we put it back.

And if you look in the Chumash you'll see something that you won't find anywhere else in the entire *sefer Torah*; you'll see that there's an upside-down *nun* before these two *pesukim* and an upside-down *nun* right after. It's a queer thing.

So the Gemara (Shabbos 115b) explains that this *parsha* doesn't actually belong here - it belongs somewhere else, only that Hakodosh Boruch Hu ordered it to be written here for a purpose and so it was taken from there and placed here. That's why there are two backward *nuns* there, one before and one after. They are put there to show that this *parsha* does not belong here.

Two Misfortunes

Now, the question is why was it moved here? To move *pesukim* from one place to another, Hakodosh Boruch Hu must have had a good reason for that. Why did He move these verses?

And on that, the Gemara says, כְּדֵי לְהַפְסִיק בֵּין פּוֹרְעָנוֹת לְפּוֹרְעָנוֹת - it's to make a division, a break, between one misfortune and another misfortune. It means there were two sad events in this week's *sedrah*, and Hakodosh Boruch Hu had mercy on us; He didn't want that while we're hearing *krias haTorah*, we would read about one misfortune and then right away another misfortune, so we might feel faint; we might have to run out to get some fresh air and then we'll miss *krias haTorah* altogether. And so He put in between a little rest, an intermission,

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to let us recuperate from the effects of the first misfortune before we read the second.

Now, what misfortunes are we talking about? The second one most of us here are familiar with. **וַיְהִי הָעָם כְּמַתְאֲנָנִים** – *And the nation made themselves into complainers.* That's when the people complained that they weren't getting good enough service in the *midbar*. They complained that Hakodosh Boruch Hu wasn't feeding them well enough. So something happened. They were punished for that; people died. A big misfortune – that we understand.

What was the first misfortune, however? We look in the *pesukim* before **וַיְהִי בְּנִסְעֵהָ אֶרֶץ** and don't see anything there that we would describe as a misfortune, something that the nation should be embarrassed about. It's talking there about the Am Yisroel traveling in the Wilderness; how the Aron *Bris Hashem* traveled ahead of the camp and they had with them the *Anan Hashem*. We don't see any trouble, anything we would be embarrassed about at all.

Leaving Sinai

So along come our Sages and they tell us that the misfortune was this: **וַיִּסְעוּ מֵהַר הַשָּׁמַיִם** – *They departed from the Mountain of Hashem* (Behaaloscha 10:33). When they left from Har Sinai, that was the great setback, the misfortune.

What happened? The Am Yisroel had been encamped at Har Sinai for a full year after Matan Torah. They built the Mishkan, the House of Hashem, there at the foot of the mountain. And the entire camp became a full-time *kollel*. They were studying Torah all day long; everybody was busy. It was unequalled in the history of our nation and certainly in the history of any nation. It was a national *kollel* in the best place possible – right near the mountain where they received the Torah.

But as the world says, all good things come to an end. Finally, Hakodosh Boruch Hu gave the signal and they were commanded to set forth on their travels. And they did. And so our Sages tell us that it

was this event, when the Am Yisroel left Har Sinai – when they traveled away from that place where the greatest event in the history of the world took place – that was the misfortune where we sinned against Hashem.

The Americans are Forced to Leave

Now the question is, what do you want of the Am Yisroel? They didn't leave because they wanted to. All of their travels were *al pi Hashem*. **עַל פִּי הַשָּׁמַיִם יָחֲנוּ וַיִּסְעוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל פִּי הַשָּׁמַיִם יָחֲנוּ** – *They started out when Hakodosh Boruch Hu gave the order and they stopped and made camp when He gave the order* (Behaaloscha 9:18). So what's the problem here? To stay at Har Sinai forever, who wouldn't want such a thing? But finally, the time came when Hashem gave the order, "It's time to move on" and they had no choice.

I remember in Slabodka when *bein hazmanim* came everybody went home. But we, the American boys, didn't have any home to go to so we sat in the yeshiva. The yeshiva was empty – everybody went home for Pesach – but we sat in the *beis medrash* learning. Finally a few days before Yomtiv the *shamash* came. Once a year he made a thorough cleaning because the boys were always there. So he came in before Pesach and he was washing the floor and he was spreading sand on the floor and he was doing whatever was necessary.

So we had to get out. We had no choice. Nobody is going to blame us for leaving the *beis medrash*. And that's exactly what happened by Har Sinai too – they had no choice. So what was wrong?

Not Sad Enough

So listen to what the Gemara (*ibid.*) tells us: **כְּתִינוּק הַבּוֹרָח מִבֵּית הַסֹּפֵר** – *They left Har Sinai like a boy going home from the yeshiva.* It's not that they left – it's *how* they left.

Now you can be sure they didn't skip and hop away; you can be sure that they went away with regret. Everybody knows that when our forefathers received the Torah, they did it with very great enthusiasm. Hakodosh Boruch Hu praised them

greatly for this enthusiasm. And so there's no question they regretted leaving this great place. Har Sinai! That's the place of our greatness! Never again did any nation experience such a greatness! There's no question they left with regret!

But Hashem has a different set of Eyes than we do. He's *יְרָאָה לְלִבָּב* – He searches out the depths of the mind of a person (Shmuel I, 16:7). And when Hashem probed into the minds of the Am Yisroel, He wasn't satisfied. He saw that they didn't leave with *enough* regret. They should have been still more sad.

Motivations Matter...

Now, this subject is a very great preface to all that we do in this world; our motivations and inner thoughts are everything. The Chovos Halevavos (Yichud Hamaaseh ch. 6) explains it like this: *רְאוּי לָךְ שֶׁלֹּא תִתְעַלֵּם לְפָקֹד מִחֻשְׁבֹתֶיךָ וְרַעֲיוֹנֶיךָ כִּי רַב הַהֶפְסֵד וְהַתְקוּן בְּמַעֲשֵׂים לֹא יְהִיָּה כִּי אִם מִחֻמָּתָם* – *It's important not to neglect to examine your thoughts and the inner motives of your mind, because your acts are primarily valued according to the quality of intent and motivations that accompany them.*

Now, this preface about how important your motivations are needs another preface. Before we continue we must first make clear to ourselves one of the fundamental principles of Torah, and that is the greatness of man! *Gadlus ha'adam!*

Now, we're not talking about Mankind in general. *Gadlus ha'adam* means the greatness of *each* individual. And not only all the acts of his life, a conglomerate of everything he did over 120 years; oh no! It means the greatness of a *single* act of a human being is more important to Hakodosh Boruch Hu than all the other events of history.

Let that sink in! The deeds of one man are more important than the entire history of an empire! In the Eyes of Hakodosh Boruch Hu, a man is the most important of all objects in the universe! And so the slightest act of one person outweighs the greatest event in the history of the heavens. If stars would

explode and disintegrate, if millions, if billions of tons of matter would fall apart in the distant heavens, if many worlds would collide and be smashed into bits and disappear, all this would mean nothing in comparison to the single act of a human being!

...Because You Matter

The truth is, the subject of man's greatness is so wide that it requires a lifetime of work to study. But that's not our subject right now – we have to realize that because of our immense greatness, because of the tremendous importance of Mankind, that's why our minds, our motivations, and thoughts, will be probed.

Every motivation that is attached to a deed will be analyzed by Hakodosh Boruch Hu and analyzed with a fine-tooth comb. We may want to live superficially – it's easier that way – but that's not what we're here for. Not only are we judged on our actions but we're judged on our thoughts. And not only our superficial thoughts – Hashem looks deep inside our minds.

Now I know that some people when they hear this, so right away they are not interested. After all, we're good people; we're Orthodox Jews and we're doing all the *mitzvos* and Torah and *chesed*. And we're raising big families too. *Kein yirbu! Kein yirbu!* Wonderful! No question the Am Yisroel is accomplishing! We're a very successful nation, absolutely!

And here, along comes Rabbi Miller and he says that it's not enough, that we have to search deeper and study our motivations. But, my friends, what can I do? I shouldn't tell you the truth? That this business of the mind, of purity of thought, is very important. It's the kind of mind you earn in this world that's going to go with you in your whole lifetime and in the World to Come. Because that's what Olam Habo is all about – that's all it is, a mind business.

Basement of the Mind Business

Now, imagine you have a man who has a store and in the store, he's doing a legitimate business. He's selling *seforim*, let's say. Very nice! But underneath in the basement, he's renting it out to people who are selling dope to children. But he never looks to see what's doing; he doesn't bother checking it out. They pay the rent on time and so he's not interested in anything else.

Now, one day the police come barging into his store and he's standing behind the counter, he says, "What do you want from me? I'm innocent – I'm running a legal business."

So they say, "No, no. We want to go down in the basement and see what you're doing there."

Oh, now he's in trouble! Once the police open up that basement door he's finished.

Now, this, you have to know, actually is more than just a *mashal*. It's exactly what's going to happen to us. Hakodosh Boruch Hu is going to come knocking. He wants to see what's doing in the basement.

Part II. Struggle of Kayin

Revealing the Secrets

Now, we never imagined such a strict *din v'cheshbon*! That Hashem wants to know what's doing down below in the subconscious of our minds?! We didn't realize such a thing! That's why the Gemara (Pesachim 54b) says that עוֹמֵק הַרְיָן, *the profundity of Hashem's judgment* is מְכֻסִּים מִבְּנֵי אָדָם, *it's hidden from people*. It means that people don't realize how much Hakodosh Boruch Hu will demand from us on the Yom Hadin! And Rashi says הָרַב טוֹעִים בּוֹ, *most people are in error*. Most people!

You know what that means? It means that unless people are willing to dig into their consciences – unless we do that – we are deceiving ourselves. A person has to be willing to dig into the subterranean

basement of his mind to find what really motivates him. Not only do we have to think about our deeds, we have to think about our motivations. What are our real motivations? If we knew, we'd be amazed at what's at the bottom of it.

I'm telling you now one of the great secrets of the Torah. You should listen with great *derech erez* to this because it sums up one of the great secrets of history. You'll say if it's a great secret how do I know it? The answer is I was told. I had great teachers and my *rebbe* told me what he heard from his *rebbe*. They didn't tell it only to me – I was listening as they were saying it to everybody else.

One of the great *rebbeis* of Slabodka, the Alter, said that nothing is done with *seichel*; nothing is done with pure rationale. There always is some motivation of character. It's either anger or retaliation. Or it's envy; a desire for glory or a desire for power or some other character inclination.

Vegetarianism and Math

Even the biggest movements that were started in the world, he said, were started because of hidden *middos* of character. You know, we think that a movement starts because of some idea. Somebody sat down and thought out a new idea and he thought the idea was "tzadik v'yashar"; so righteous and so correct. 'So righteous' means it was decent and 'so correct' means it was mathematically perfect. He decided that's the way things should be and therefore he started a movement.

So the Alter, *zichrono levrachah*, said no. All the movements that were started in the world were started because of some hidden motivation, some character flaw. As an example – he said it in jest to make an example – he said the one who started the movement to avoid eating any living things, the vegetarians, was a man who had a business of a *milchige* restaurant. He had a *milchige* business, a dairy business, so he started a movement that it's wicked to slaughter animals and eat their flesh.

War and Peace

Everything in the world, everything that a person does has some character flaw mixed into the decision. If there was a war between the North and the South – I'm speaking now; this the Alter didn't say – the Civil War wasn't because of the idea of freeing the slaves. Forget about it. Entirely different motivations caused the war. They would never fight over such a thing. Nobody was interested to fight over freeing slaves. That you can tell children, but it's not the truth.

Don't think that Harriet Beecher Stowe, when she wrote that big book called Uncle Tom's Cabin and inflamed the minds of the people against slavery and caused the Civil War, don't think it was done with pure intentions. Don't think for a second that the generals and soldiers were not motivated because of bad character. They were hotheads, people who were looking for glory and power and there was anger and arrogance mixed into the stew.

Now don't tell this outside but there's no question the war was not caused only by idealism. No war is the result of idealism. Now, I'm not blaming our country here for going into war because sometimes it's important. I'm not saying pacifism is a principle. Even pacifism you have to know is a result of character flaws. But when Abraham Lincoln signed the declaration of war, I don't know if he spent hours and hours studying his character beforehand.

Kayin the Inventor

But all that doesn't bother us now. I'm not worried right now about Abraham Lincoln's character; I'm just mentioning it as a *mashal* for ourselves so that we understand what Hashem is demanding from us. And so let's leave Abraham Lincoln alone for now and let's talk about somebody much greater.

In Parshas Bereishis we read about a great event in Mankind's history: וַיָּבֵא קַיִן מִפְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה מִנְחָה לַיהוָה – Kayin brought from the fruit of the earth an

offering to Hashem. At that time, Kayin pioneered a new undertaking and he invented a form of service to Hashem which had never been done before.

Now, such a thing didn't come on a whim. Kayin was a person who went around thinking of ways and means of serving Hakodosh Boruch Hu: "What could I do to demonstrate my love to the One who created me?" That was a worry that consumed him always. And so when Kayin decided to show his love for Hakodosh Boruch Hu by bringing some of what grew out of the ground as an offering, it was a result of much thought and great devotion.

That's something new to people. It's not like we were taught as little children that Kayin was some kind of low character. Forget about that! Kayin was a great man and he was the inventor of a new form of service of Hashem.

Surpassing the Inventor

What happened? Kayin's younger brother, Hevel, was more gifted, more talented than Kayin. That, the Kuzari tells us. Hevel had been given by Heaven more acuteness of mind. And the Medrash tells us that he also possessed more physical strength than his older brother; all around, he was a more perfect man. It means Hevel was stronger than Kayin. It's important to remember that.

Now this younger brother, when he saw what Kayin had accomplished, so he took his older brother as his teacher, as his model. As it states "וְהֵבֵל הֵבִיא גַם הוּא – and Hevel, he too brought a korban". הוּא גַם הוּא means he also followed suit; he was only following in his brother's footsteps.

Not only did Hevel learn from his brother but he brought even better than his brother. הֵבֵל הֵבִיא גַם מִבְּכֹרוֹת צֹאנוֹ – And Hevel, he too brought a korban, מִבְּכֹרוֹת צֹאנוֹ – from the fattest of his flocks. Hevel made a step forward beyond what Kayin had accomplished.

And therefore, וַיִּשַׁע הַשָּׁם אֶל הֵבֵל וְאֶל מִנְחָתוֹ – Hakodosh Boruch Hu showed His favor to Hevel and to his offering. By means of going beyond what

even his brother had done, Hevel gained Hashem's favor.

What's the REAL Reason

And so וַיַּחַר לְקַיִן מְאֹד – Kayin was troubled exceedingly. Not merely he was disturbed. וַיַּחַר means he was exceedingly upset by this! Because that's what he wanted! There was nothing Kayin sought in this world more than the *ratzon Hashem*. That's why he had thought days and nights until he had contrived a form of serving Hashem by bringing his beloved produce, what his hands had toiled over, what he had taken out of the earth with his sweat. And here his younger brother who was only his disciple, a follower in his footsteps, had outdone him and gained Hashem's favor.

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל קַיִן – and then the prophecy came to Kayin. They were great men then; their minds were pure and unsullied and so Hashem spoke to Kayin, He said: לָמָּה חָרָה לְךָ – Why has this vexed you?

Now, what's the question? Didn't Hashem know what was bothering Kayin? He needs Kayin to tell Him? Now pay attention to the answer because this is what we're talking about tonight. Hashem was saying, "What really is it that is vexing you? What's the true reason for your frustration?" Hakodosh Boruch Hu was calling Kayin's attention to the necessity of analyzing his feelings. לָמָּה means, "What is the *real* reason that you are vexed? Is it because it distresses you that Hevel achieved the perfection of *ratzon Hashem* that you really could have achieved? Or maybe it's because you are plain jealous?"

Fights and Fratricide

And so Hashem made something happen, an altercation, a test. וַיֹּאמֶר קַיִן אֶל הֶבֶל אָחִיו – Kayin said something to his brother. What he said is not reported in the Torah, but we can supply from our own imagination what he said. "Look, my younger brother; you shouldn't forget I was the one who thought of bringing offerings. I'm the older brother; I was your *rebbe*. So don't you think you're somewhat

wrong in doing what you did? Isn't it מוֹרָה הַלְכָה לִפְנֵי? You're undertaking something that I as your older brother and your teacher didn't do. It's fitting for a younger brother to be more restrained. Maybe it's too much ostentation? It would have been good enough if you would have repeated what I had done."

And Hevel, I'm sure, had words to answer. Hevel had a better head than Kayin and there was an argument. Finally, Hevel became so displeased with his brother who was trying to hinder his growth in serving Hashem, so he stood up and he floored him. It's a Medrash. Hevel gave Kayin a knock and now Kayin was sitting under his brother and he was afraid he would be the first murder victim in history.

So Kayin said, "Hevel, my brother, remember I'm your brother. Have pity on me. Don't destroy me."

So Hevel said, "You're trying to throttle my progress. You're blaming me and hindering me."

So Kayin said, "I'm sorry, my brother. I won't do it anymore. But have *rachmanus*."

So Hevel allowed Kayin to get up.

And now Kayin thought, "This time he spared me. What will happen the second time?"

וַיִּקָּם קַיִן אֶל הֶבֶל אָחִיו, so Kayin said, "I must do something now to save my life because this brother has murderous intentions towards me." So Kayin arose against his brother Hevel and he slew him.

Purpose of the Story

And once again Hakodosh Boruch Hu spoke to Kayin, "Where is your brother Hevel?" Again we understand that Hashem was teaching us something here; He was talking about motivations.

So Kayin said – I'm supplying the conversation; it could be that the conversation was better than what I am attributing to them. So Kayin said, "It was self-defense. Hevel was going to come back at me again and there's a rule הַבֹּא לְהַרְגֶנּוּ הַשֶּׁבִים לְהַרְגוֹ – If you know someone wants to kill you tomorrow morning,

so you get up earlier in the morning and kill him.” That’s a Torah rule (Sanhedrin 72a).

So Hakodosh Boruch Hu said, “True, it was self-defense, but wasn’t there also a motive of getting rid of your opponent, of your competitor? Do you mean to say that when you were destroying your younger brother you did not have in mind also the thought that from now on you won’t be consumed by envy? And if you had an ulterior motive, even though you had, in addition, a justified motive, then you’re considered as a shedder of blood. Forever and ever, you’ll be remembered as the first murderer in the world!”

Now, that story is told to us for a purpose. We’re expected to learn *chumash*, not with the head of *cheder* boys. It’s a big problem when grown people, adults, don’t study *chumash* again with adult heads because all of the intended lessons go lost.

And so even though this story is interesting on its own merit, but it’s more important than that. It’s intended as an illustration of human nature – of my nature, of yours – of how easily a person can make errors in their true motivations and how easily it can lead to sins, even the greatest of sins. Because here we have the first murderer in the world – a great man, a *tzaddik*, an *oved Hashem* – who was judged not because of the murder but because of what was doing in the basement of his thoughts.

Part III. Motivations of Struggles

Desire and Separation

Now, one of the places where this problem crops up most in our lives is in our dealings with other people. And who doesn’t deal with other people? It’s a problem that all of us have to begin taking more seriously.

Here’s a man who tells me that when he sees his *mechutan* in the street, he walks away to the other side of the street to avoid meeting him. He’s telling me the story of how the relationship

disintegrated and as I listened I was thinking, “You’re all wrong!” He was saying this and that, showing me how right he is and how it’s a *machlokes lisheim shomayim*, but I was thinking that he’s all wrong because he doesn’t know what’s doing in his basement.

There’s a *posuk* in Mishlei (18:1): לְתַאֲוָה יִבְקֶשׁ נַפְרָד, because of some desires, יִבְקֶשׁ נַפְרָד, that’s why he separates.

Why does a person go away? People go away. All of a sudden somebody gets up let’s say from a *yeshivah* and leaves. Or two *chaveirim* are studying Torah together and then we hear that one gets up and breaks off. Partners break up. Sometimes a son in a family moves away. A husband goes away; a tragedy. And Shlomo Hamelech analyzed this and he said it’s because he wants something. לְתַאֲוָה יִבְקֶשׁ נַפְרָד, it’s because he seeks a certain desire, that’s why he separated.

Weakness of Character

Now there could be a lot of desires to explain this. Sometimes it’s his anger. He lives in anger and he wants to avenge his anger. He finds no other means of showing it except leaving. I’ve seen it. When a man leaves your *shul* suddenly, he’s angry. Sometimes it’s envy. He felt he wasn’t recognized. “Recognized” is another word for getting glory, recognition is glory. Or some other desire, some other character flaw, but there is always *something* hiding under the surface that is the motive that causes people to break away.

And therefore, when people have *machlokes* with somebody else, it’s an obligation on them – the first thing is to suspect yourself. Maybe you’re wrong! I say maybe. It’s not maybe. Look into the matter, look into your heart and you’ll see it’s not what you thought.

I don’t mean to think for a minute. You have to be *mefashfesh b’maasov*. “What’s the reason, what’s the real reason for my opposition, for my anger, my hostility?” And if you’ll search, you’ll discover. In many cases, you’ll discover that you are wrong. And

even if you're not *all* wrong, you'll find that a very big part of it is exaggerated because of your *middos*; jealousy, anger, and other things.

And therefore in all *machlokes*, in every case, we should know that it's nothing but a weakness of character that has misled us to become hostile to our fellow Jews.

Money, Kovod, and Advice

Now, once we know that – it's an axiomatic truth that Hashem teaches us in His Torah – so you begin to understand that in any case of dispute even though you seem to be fully justified, even though you have reasons, good arguments on your behalf, you should always know that it's perilous to make any decisions.

That's why the best thing is to always avoid any friction, any hostility. Never make any kind of a break with anybody unless you have a special *heter* from somebody. And even though you think you're justified, have somebody besides yourself to tell you that you're justified.

Never make a fight with your daughter-in-law. No matter what! Never criticize your son-in-law, no matter what! No matter what! Don't give your son-in-law any advice. You can give him money, you can give him *kovod*, but don't give him any advice.

So many lives have been ruined, so many people have lost a big part of their *Olam Habo* because of hidden motives by which they deceived themselves. But if you know beforehand – if you're prepared with the awareness that there's such a thing as self-deception in motivation, then you're always ready to think, "Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe the other party is right. And what can I lose if I give in? What can I lose if I make *shalom*? What can I lose if I don't talk about it? What can I lose if I act friendly despite what I think he did or thought he did to me?"

Success in Both Worlds

And therefore, the way of success in life is the way of *shalom* with people. When you train yourself

to get along with people even though many times you think you may be justified, you have avoided a most perilous form of behavior. For many people *sinas chinam* can be the greatest mistake in their lives – good people, even *talmidei chachomim*, are *yoreish Gehenom* because of this mistake. And therefore the *derech* of *shalom*, of *anavah*, is always the safest.

At least let us say, "We are *moichel*. We overlook it." That's the secret to success. And that perfection of character will be the very best preparation for our great success in the World To Come.

Yes; I'm talking about the World to Come. Of course, you'll live more happily in this world too. Absolutely. This lesson that we're learning today is so necessary because our relations with our fellow Jews, that's our success in both worlds. *Mitzvos bein odom l'makom* are extremely important; learning Torah, very good! **אֲשֶׁרִי מִי שֶׁבָּא לְכָאן וְתִלְמִידוֹ בְּיָדוֹ!** Absolutely! A great achievement! And of course, even when it comes to all those things, motivations are very very important. But the most difficult of all tests is our dealings with our fellow Jews. That's where the most serious errors are committed. Only that no one thinks; no one is spending time thinking that maybe he is the guilty one.

Now, I know that even as you're hearing this you don't believe it. You're thinking that the other one should be *mivateir*; that *he* should be the one listening to this. You'll tell me that you thought about it, that you thought about your motivations. But it's not true. Did you ever spend five minutes – five minutes on the clock – thinking digging into your motivations, your *middos* that may have caused you to come to *machlokes*?

The Best Type of Friend

You're not capable? Ask someone else. Ask a Rav. If you ask a Rav, he doesn't have your motivations. Let's say you're a daughter-in-law and you know that your mother-in-law is wrong; she's the guilty party. But your Rav, he's not her daughter-in-law so he can talk from a more balanced perspective. Or

ask a *chaver*, someone who's wise, someone with some experience. If you're lucky he'll tell you the truth about yourself.

That's why it states in Pirkei Avos (1:6) עֲשֵׂה לָךְ רַב, you must make for yourself a teacher. Everything is so complex. Everything is so intricate that it's a big mistake to think that you can do everything yourself. You must have a teacher. Not only a teacher in *halachah*. You need a teacher in worldly matters. You need a teacher in health, in *parnasah*. You need a teacher in how to get along with your family at home. Men need teachers and women need teachers. Everybody needs a teacher. You need a teacher for how to deal with the tricks of the *yetzer hara*. So number one on the list is עֲשֵׂה לָךְ רַב – Make for yourself a teacher.

And then the second injunction is וּקְנֵה לָךְ חֲבֵר – get for yourself a comrade. When you're by yourself, when you're alone then you won't remain standing. You'll fall down. You must have an environment. You must have *chaveirim*, good friends who have the same ideals. And the best friend is the one who will tell you the truth; he'll help you recognize your motivations. That's a real friend – it's a rare bird but that's the best thing you can find, someone who will tell you the truth when you ask him.

The Alien Amendment

Now, is that enough? A Rav and a friend? That's the whole program? No, the Sages put in an amendment. They tacked on a third condition. וְהוֹי דִּן אֶת כָּל הָאָדָם לְכַף זְכוּת – judge every man for the side of the merit. It means to give every man the benefit of the doubt. How does that fit in? It looks like a third thing that is alien; it's strange to the whole subject.

The answer is it's not. It's part of the first two because it's not enough to make yourself a *rebbe* and to get a *chaver*. The problem is how to hold on to him. The problem is how to get along with everyone!

If you're going to find faults, you'll interpret one act as a lack of respect for you and another act as a lack of appreciation; you'll be jealous sometimes, you'll get upset. He's bossing you. He's too domineering, too critical. So sooner or later we know what's going to happen. So therefore עֲשֵׂה לָךְ רַב וּקְנֵה לָךְ חֲבֵר but hold onto them. How will you hold on to your relationships? וְהוֹי דִּן אֶת כָּל הָאָדָם לְכַף זְכוּת – you have to make it your business in life to judge everyone in the best possible way. And the best way to judge others *litovah* is to realize that there's a lot doing in the basement of your mind that you're not aware of.

Remember the Lesson

Now that's good advice when it comes to remaining married. A wife is a *chaver*. A husband is a *chaver*. But when people are always letting their *middos* get in the way then we know what's going to happen. In every case of a husband and wife, many times there are serious quarrels – it shouldn't happen – and sometimes it becomes very, very serious because each one as he or she tells the story, is perfectly right.

Here's a case of a husband who told me his story; sounds good to me. She tells me her story; sounds good to me. How can they be both right? The answer is each one is not telling the real motivations. If they would dig down, they would discover how wrong both of them are. That's usually the case. Both are usually wrong; sometimes one more than the other, but both are wrong.

And therefore, when you start dealing with other people, the first rule is to remember that whatever you're thinking, whatever you're certain about, is far from certain. The truth is that you have selfish motivations and you're constantly covering up the true ideas that you have in the bottom of your mind. And it's because people don't want to study themselves that's why many times they're headed for a collision. That's why today so many people who go to the wedding hall are really headed for the divorce court. So many people! It's

remarkable! But if you remember this lesson so when things come up, you won't allow that ship of your marriage to be shipwrecked on an iceberg for nothing!

Not only marriage and neighbors and friendships. It's everything you're busy with – if the Am Yisroel was criticized because of their motivations, their subconscious thoughts when they left Har Sinai that's because Hakodosh Boruch Hu wants you to know that He's *yirah laleivav*, that He's judging you always on your hidden motivations. And because every Jew is so important, because every action is so tremendous and so eternal, that's why every thought of ours is also tremendous and eternal. That's what we're here for – to make our one chance in this world as perfect as possible.

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

Investigating the Basement

Although it doesn't seem to us that we should be embarrassed by the verse “*they traveled from the Mountain of Hashem*”, we are taught that Hashem investigates what is doing in the basement of our minds, deep in our subconscious, and we are judged accordingly. This week I will *bli neder* take one minute each day to review one of my actions and try to see beyond the story I'm telling myself, to reach down into the depths of my subconscious and see my true motivations. I will also make an effort to run any big decisions by my Rebbi or a wise Chaver.

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

שאל אביך ויגדך זקניך ויאמרו לך

Q:

Should one send his son to the English classes in high school? Don't they teach *apikorsis* there?

A:

And the answer is that they do. And that's why it's a very important question you're asking.

First, there's a separate question: Should your children learn the language of the land? And the answer to that question is yes. It's valuable because a person should teach his son an *umnus*, a trade. It's a Gemara that a man should teach his son to make a living. And even though we don't know what he's going to do, but he'll have to know how to read and write and calculate; so he's going to need a certain amount of education.

Now, I'm not saying that if a person wants to send his son to a place where there's no *limudei chol*, that he's doing something wrong. But the people who are sending their children to *limudei chol*, if they're doing it *lisheim shamayim*, they should know that it's a good thing too; no question about it. You have to make a living in this world. You have to support a wife and children. And therefore when a young man has some kind of a preparation, so it's like teaching him an *umnus*.

However, the problem that you mentioned of teaching *apikorsis*, that's a very important problem, and you have to be very careful. And therefore in some *yeshivos*, they have a *hashgacha* on what the teachers are saying, and you can rely on them.

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