

# chosen words

## Personal Growth

### The 48 Essential Qualities for Learning

*If you want to acquire Torah, all you have to do is study. Right? Surprisingly, Pirkei Avos tells us that study is just one of 48 qualities necessary to successfully acquire Torah.*

Among the others named in the Mishnah are joy, modesty, slowness to anger, a good heart, and closeness with peers.

According to Rav Chaim Volozhiner, you attain Torah in direct proportion to your efforts in developing these traits. Without them, Torah can't be fully grasped. Quality #8 — Bearing the Yoke of One's Fellow

No Jew reaches the spiritual peak by climbing alone. The Torah makes it impossible to excel spiritually by separating ourselves from our people. It commands us to love each other, provide loans, care for the poor, tend to communal needs, and so forth.

But the wording of this verse, "bearing the yoke," offers an additional dimension, says Rabbi Irving Bunim in *Ethics of Our Fathers*. We must

actually place another's burden on our own backs and see how it feels. Only then will we treat another's problem as if it were our own.

This is the quality that was Moshe's prime qualification for leadership, as Rabbi Michel Berenbaum of Mesivta Tiferes Yerushalaim explains. He first exhibits this trait while still living as an Egyptian prince. Chazal explain that the words, "he

## Better Relationships

### Picture This

*Thirteenth in a Series on Loshon Hora-Free Living*

Part of the difficulty in avoiding loshon hora is that we can't see what the words are doing. But if you draw a mental picture of what's really happening when you speak loshon

## Torah Tools for Personal Growth

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went out to his brethren and observed their burdens," mean that Moshe worked alongside the Jewish slaves to feel their oppression.

As Moshe shows us, Torah doesn't exist in isolation. To truly acquire it, it has to be expressed in the way one interacts with his community and responds to those in need. Shabbos Table Discussion:

How does, "bearing the yoke," apply in your everyday life?

—CCHF

## Effective Prayer

### Separate Paths

In the opening blessing of Shemoneh Esrei, we call Hashem in the names of our forefathers: "G-d of Avraham, the G-d of Yitzchak, and the G-d of Yaakov." Why is each listed separately, as if each had his own G-d?

The wording teaches that each had his own pathway to G-d, as does every Jew. Avraham's route was chessed — helping others and bringing them close to Hashem. Yitzchak's trait was "gevurah," strength, expressed through his fear of sin and a drive to perfect his character. Yaakov is identified with "emes," truth. He combined the attributes of kindness and strength to come to a middle path that integrated both.

When we speak each name of the Avos, we can connect to that individual's path toward serving Hashem. We can find these aspects of avodah within ourselves, and summon them up to help us reach out to Hashem in our prayers. And we can gain encouragement from knowing that each path has been walked by history's greatest tzadikim, and each leads straight to the Heavenly Throne.

*Continued on back*



"Star witness for the prosecution."

hora, and conjure up that picture when a damaging comment is on the tip of your tongue, you might find it easier to stop yourself.

What is really happening? Perhaps one of the most dramatic effects of loshon hora is that it gives the Soton, the prosecutor, a corroborating

testimony. As in an earthly Beis Din, the Heavenly Beis Din requires two witnesses to make a case.

The Soton is one witness; the speaker of loshon hora is the second.

So imagine. There you are, a spectator at a

*Continued on back*



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# Mad At Me

*Eighth in a Series on Anger*

You decide one morning to spend an extra 20 minutes hibernating under the quilt. You can spare the time and you need the rest, you assure yourself. An hour later, already late for your appointment, you're dashing around looking for your car keys. You arrive at your appointment a half-hour late, and the person you were to have met has gone.

"Why didn't you wait?" you ask later on the phone. "You knew I'd be coming!"

"To tell you the truth," he says, "I always end up waiting for you, and today I decided that I shouldn't have to throw my whole day off just because you can't get anywhere on time."

At this point, the average person would lash out in self-defense. But he isn't really angry at the person criticizing him. He's angry at himself. The critic has turned the spotlight on his shortcoming, forced him to face it squarely

and admit that, in this regard, he is inconsiderate.

If we take time to examine our own angry reaction to criticism, we often find that we're angry because the comment has "hit a nerve," calling into question a trait or action we disapprove of in ourselves. An indication of the truth of this theory is that most people don't get angry when a comment is totally irrelevant to them. They simply dismiss it. Only when there's a grain of truth do we respond. If we think about the actual message contained in a criticism, minus its emotional content, it's often possible to use it as a guidepost for our own self-improvement.

**Shabbos Table Discussion:**

Why is anger a natural reaction to criticism? How does it prevent us from taking responsibility for our faults? Why do you think that when something hits close to home, anger is generated?

[Note: At times another person's disapproval can be excessive or destructive. If this seems to be so, it is certainly worthwhile to get an objective opinion.]

*Adapted from "Anger, the Inner Teacher," by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin, with permission from the author*

## Picture This

*continued from front*

session of the Heavenly Court. Your neighbor, a generally good person, is being tried for his lack of attention to a particular mitzvah. As the prosecutor brings his case, you become filled with anguish for your friend's plight. Now the prosecutor introduces the second witness, and... it's you—your exact words that you have spoken about this neighbor. It's your loshon hora that seals the Soton's case. You now realize you're not at all a sympathetic spectator. You are the star witness, and your loshon hora, far from being a few harmless words, is the final cause of a decree against your neighbor.

*Adapted from "Strategies," an upcoming publication of the Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation*

# The Ultimate Weapon

Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Schneerson, zt"l, was arrested by Communist Russia's infamous KGB in an effort to get him to inform on important members of his community. Even under continuous, harsh interrogation, he gave only his own name and address.

Finally, the interrogating officer pulled out what he thought would be his trump card—his gun.

"We have a terrifying toy that gets us what we want," he stated menacingly.

"For those who believe in two gods and one world, this toy makes a difference," said the Rabbi. "But not so for those who believe in one G-d and two worlds!"

To the KGB officer and those like him, the gun held the power to obliterate a person's existence. There was no cause, no "god" that gave their deeds a purpose, and no world beyond the one in which they lived. But to the Rabbi, every action was dedicated to serving the will of one G-d, and departure from this world only meant passage to the Next World. The Rabbi knew that only good could come of following Hashem's will.

—CCHF

## An Answer at Your Fingertips...

### The Shmiras Haloshon Shaila Hotline

To say or not to say? Whether it is for a shidduch, a job referral, or just among family or friends, the wrong words can do irreparable harm. And sometimes, so can silence. Our Shaila Hotline puts you in contact with expert rabbonim so that before you speak, you can be sure. **Call (718) 951-3696 from 9:00 to 10:30 p.m. Monday thru Thursday and Saturday nights.**



## Separate Paths

*continued from front*

**Shabbos Table Discussion:**

What is your particular "derekh" in serving Hashem? What gives you the strongest feeling of connection to Hashem?

*Adapted from "Shemoneh Esrei," by Rabbi Avraham Chaim Feuer, with permission from Mesorah Publications*

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