

# chosen words

## Effective Prayer

### With Love

*Twelfth in a Series on Preparing for Prayer*

Every moment, our every breath and heartbeat depends on Hashem's compassion.

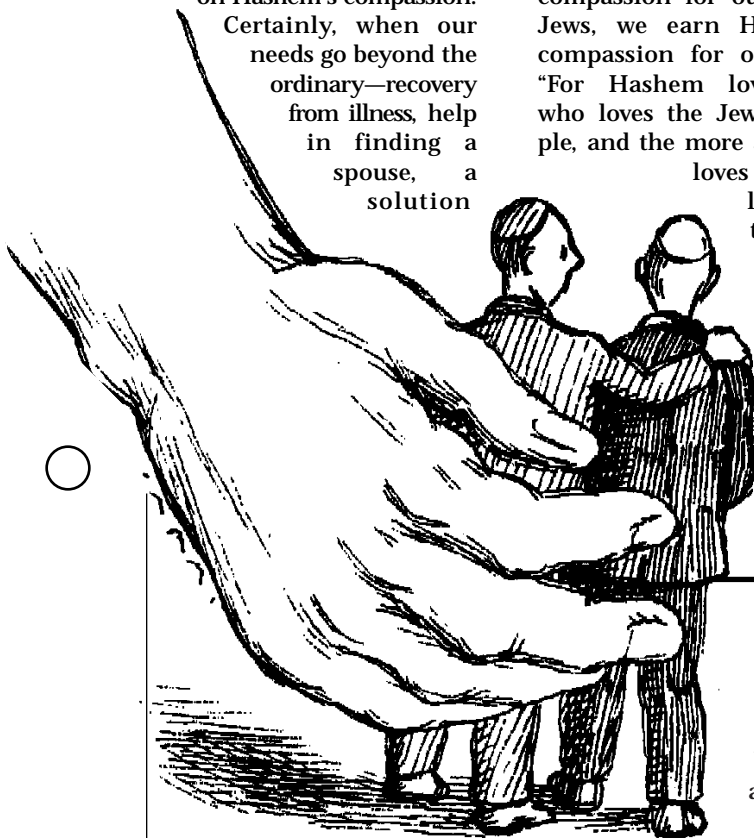
Certainly, when our needs go beyond the ordinary—recovery from illness, help in finding a spouse, a solution

you get.

When we show love and compassion for our fellow Jews, we earn Hashem's compassion for ourselves.

"For Hashem loves one who loves the Jewish people, and the more a person

loves his fellow Jew, the greater is the



*"Opening your heart to others opens Heaven to your tefillah."*

to financial problems—our need for Hashem's compassion is even more apparent. By what merit, we may wonder, do we deserve that these miracles, major and minor, be performed on our behalf?

The one sure source of that merit is love of one's fellow Jew. "V'ohavta l'rayecha k'mocha," "Love your neighbor as you love yourself," is the key to opening Hashem's store of compassion. That is because Heavenly justice works on the principal of "middah k'neged middah," "measure for measure." What you give,

ing as we wish. The challenge arises when someone hurts us, disappoints us or acts in a manner that needs to be addressed and corrected. Everyone—parents, teachers, children—face such situations every day at home, school or work. The Torah teaches that reproach should always be given in a way that it will be accepted, but how does one find that way?

Hashem Himself teaches us how to approach a wrongdoer. "Where is Hevel, your brother?" he asks Kayin after he kills his

## Torah Tools for Personal Growth

### Inspiration

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love that Hashem showers upon him." (Mesillat Yeshorim 19) That is why the Arizal recommended that, before davening, one should state aloud, "I hereby accept upon myself the misvah, 'V'ohavta l'rayecha k'mocha.'"

**Shabbos Table Discussion:** What are specific ways to build a feeling of Ahavas Yisroel in yourself? How can tefillah itself help foster this feeling?

—CCHF

## Personal Growth

### Open Lines

It's easy to be calm and kind when everyone is behaving

as we wish. The challenge arises when someone hurts us, disappoints us or acts in a manner that needs to be addressed and corrected. Everyone—parents, teachers, children—face such situations every day at home, school or work. The Torah teaches that reproach should always be given in a way that it will be accepted, but how does one find that way?

brother. The question, Rashi explains, was meant to keep the lines of communication open with Kayin, to give him a chance to repent. Were he to feel crushed by Hashem's wrath, he'd have no avenue to return. Kayin in essence killed off one quarter of the world's population. But even for this grave crime, Rashi points out that Hashem came to Kayin with calm words, with a question, not an accusation. By emulating Hashem's approach, we preserve the dignity of those we reprove. It's that self-respect that ultimately makes the person feel capable and worthy of fulfilling his potential.

—CCHF

## Better Relationships

### Overheard

You're at the wedding of a friend's son. Some young men are reminiscing about high school, and you hear your son's name mentioned. "He was the worst," says one young man. "He was always in outer space." Then he tells a few anecdotes to illustrate the point, much to the group's delight.

What would you think? No doubt, you'd be hurt and ashamed for your son, angry at the people laughing, and furious at the person ridiculing him. How different would it have been to overhear the speaker talking to your son privately, with concern, saying, "I know you had trouble concentrating back in high school. How are you doing now? Are you still learning?"

We all have a Father who is always listening. He, too, suffers when He hears the names of any of His children disparaged in front of others. The more His constant presence becomes a reality to us, the more likely we are to watch what we say about His children, not just because Hashem sees the aveirah, but because He feels His children's pain.

*Continued on back*



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# The Good Way

Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai, in Pirkei Avos, tells his five students to go out into the world and determine "which is the good way to which man should cling." Each was impressed by a different trait, which he felt was the key to one's ability to live a life of Torah and mitzvos. This is the final segment of a five-part series examining these traits.

Said Rabbi Elazar:  
A Good Heart

A good heart, a "lev tov," is a heart that seeks out what is good, loves what is good and intuitively grasps the good in every situation. This, said Yochanan ben Zakkai, is the trait that encompasses all others. A person who clearly perceives

what is good and has the innate desire to head in that direction has the roadmap to spiritual achievement. He is someone who won't get sidetracked or confused by competing priorities.

"The Torah sees the heart as the seat of freedom, from which our decisions are made."

Given the heart's emotional nature, void of intellect or logic, it would seem to be the wrong vessel to carry out our most important spiritual function. But the Torah sees the heart as the seat of freedom, the location in which our decisions are made. Ultimately, when all the facts have been processed through our brains, it's our hearts that decide.

But how can one cultivate a good heart? How can one be sure that the decisions his heart makes will be good

ones? By "educating" the heart, though performance of mitzvos. Every time a person does a mitzvah, he is training his heart in goodness, teaching it to see the good and strengthening its desire to do good.

**Shabbos Table Discussion:**  
What is the difference between being a "nice person" and having a "good heart?"  
*Adapted from "Ethics From Sinai," by Rabbi Irving Bunim with permission from Feldheim Publishers*

## The Best Response

Reb Yisrael Salanter, the renowned father of the Mussar movement, was known for a fear of Heaven that pervaded his every thought. One day in Vilna he spent quite a while in idle conversation with a Jew on the street, even telling jokes to get him to laugh. As this seemed to be greatly out of character, one of his disciples worked up the courage to question his rebbi's actions. Reb Yisrael responded that this Jew was depressed and embittered. There was no better response than to take the sting out of his sadness.

# The Holiest Tzitzis

Rav Mordechai, who lived in Neschiz in the 1700s, longed for some tangible connection to Eretz Yisroel. He decided to obtain a piece of wool from the Holy Land; the fabric would be made into tzitzis.

He saved his money and, undeterred by the difficulties, arranged to obtain the wool. When at last it arrived, he entrusted the fabric to his student to be fashioned into tzitzis. The student, in his nervousness, didn't notice that the fabric was folded in half. He cut the opening for the head, and to his horror, discovered that the garment now had two holes.

In misery he went to the Rav to confess his mistake. Tears filled the Rav's eyes, but he quickly wiped them away and smiled kindly. "Obviously," he said, "these tzitzis were meant to have two holes. One to put my head through, and one to test my control over my emotions."

*Adapted from "Positive Parenting," by Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski, M.D. and Ursula Schwartz Phd. with permission from Mesorah Publications*

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HaRav Shmuel Kamenetsky, shlita, Chairman Rabbinical Board

Rav Naftoli Jaeger, shlita, Rabbinical Editorial Supervisor  
Michael Rothschild, Director

6 Melnick Drive  
Monsey, NY 10952

**Chosen Words**  
Editorial Supervisor: S. Appelbaum  
Writer: C. Nestlebaum  
Graphic Artist: H. Ort  
Illustrator: Giora Carmi

**We welcome your comments!**  
Letters to the Editor  
Chosen Words/CCHF  
6 Melnick Dr.  
Monsey, NY 10952

## Overheard

continued from front

**Shabbos Table Discussion:**  
What might you have said or done if you were in the group listening to the stories about the poor student?

*Adapted from "Chofetz Chaim: A Lesson a Day," By Rabbi S. Finkelman and Rabbi Y. Berkowitz, with permission from Mesorah Publications*

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