

chosen words

Personal Growth

The Taste of a Mitzvah

A "chok," such as the law of the Parah Adumah (the red heifer), is usually defined as a mitzvah we perform with no understanding of its reason. The fact that Hashem commanded it is the sole motivation for performing a chok.

But the term used to describe the "reasons" for mitzvos, "ta'amei mitzvos," shows us that in reality, every mitzvah is done solely to fulfill Hashem's will. The literal translation of "ta'amei mitzvos" is the "taste of mitzvos."

What is meant by the taste? The obvious comparison is food. We eat to nourish our bodies, without knowing why Hashem built us to use certain nutrients. However, Hashem wanted the process of feeding our bodies to be pleasant. So, we have taste buds, and food has a pleasant taste. Still, it could never be said that the reason we must eat is to experience pleasant tastes.

Even if our taste buds were destroyed, we would still have to eat

to maintain our physical health.

Mitzvos are the food of our spiritual health. Just as we have no idea why human beings were built with a need for potassium or iron, we have no idea why our souls have the need for any particular mitzvah. That wisdom resides solely with our Creator. However, Hashem wanted the performance of mitzvos to be palatable to us. So, he gave each mitzvah a taste—a concept or lesson—that we can understand.

"Tastes," however, cannot be confused with reasons. Never can we imagine that we fully understand a reason for a mitzvah, and conclude that

Effective Prayer

Squandered Opportunities

Mazel tov! You've bought a house! Now it's time to get your

mortgage.

You carefully gather the relevant documents, make sure your suit is clean and shoes are shined, and you're off. As you sit with the bank officer, your attention is riveted to her every word. After all, she has your future in her hands.

Torah Tools for Personal Growth

Inspiration

Ideas

Excellence

Success

the mitzvah doesn't apply to us, or our community, or our time in history. In essence, every mitzvah, even those with a discernible "ta'am," is really a chok. We do it, not because we like the taste or understand the reason, but because it's Hashem's will. Only when that motivation underlies the mitzvah can it be performed to perfection.

Adapted from "Outlooks and Insights," by Rabbi Zev Leff, with permission from Mesorah Publications

Better Relationships

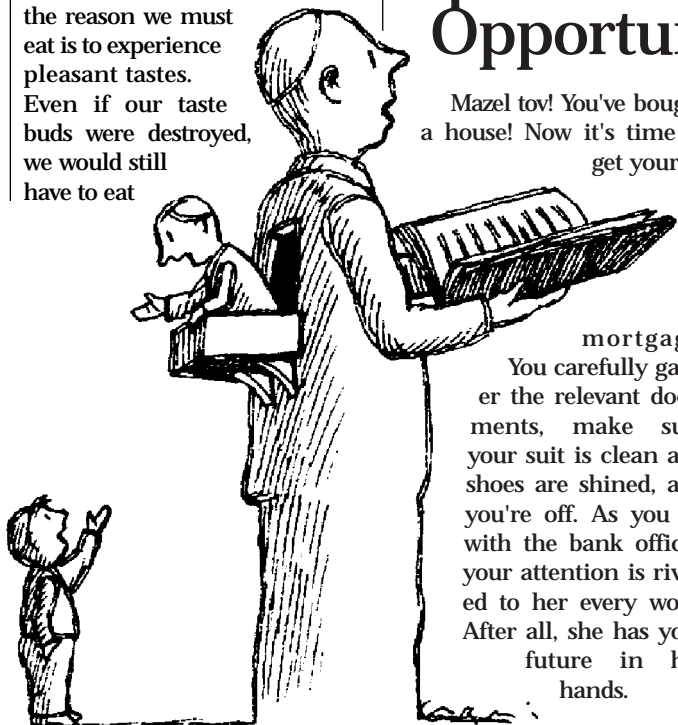
Getting What's Due

When we examine the idea of being hurt—having our honor or our financial status diminished—we see that it is based upon a false assumption. We're assuming that this honor or money would have been ours, had this wrongdoer not done his damage. But the Gemara teaches that no one has the power to alter the amount of money or honor Hashem has designated for us, not even by a hairsbreadth (Yoma 38a).

King David epitomized this belief when he was cursed by Shimei, a member of Saul's household. King David's general proposed revenge, but the King would not allow it: "So let him curse, because the Lord has said to him, 'Curse David.' Who then shall say, 'Why have you done so?'"

Bitachon, trust in the ultimate good of everything Hashem does, is a vital component of Shmiras Haloshon. The desire for revenge, which often leads to loshon hora, becomes an irrelevance once we understand that nothing was lost through the acts of the wrongdoer. Although he still bears the guilt for his wrongdoing, and we still need to take appropriate

Continued on back



"No time for a chat."

Then, in walks a neighbor. You jump up out of your seat and greet him, spend five or ten minutes chatting, and then stroll back to your seat. The incredulous loan officer immediately hands back your papers and suggests you look elsewhere for your mortgage.

A ridiculous scenario. People do not squander their future for a chat with a friend.

Every day, three times a day, our personal futures and Klal Yisrael's future are on the agenda of a far more important meeting. These meetings are precious opportunities to reach out to Hashem, Who determines

Continued on back



Published by
**The Chofetz Chaim
Heritage Foundation**

Deflating an Insult

An essential part of most people's self-image is the way in which other people treat them. If people like you, you're likeable. If they look up to you, you're respectable. If they ask your advice, you're smart.

That is why hostility or rejection from others is so painful. Not only do we suffer from the unpleasantness of the encounter. We also suffer, usually much more deeply, from the sense that maybe they are right to some degree. Our sense of competence and worthiness suffers when someone else's anger—even unjustified anger—is aroused against us.

But hostility need not make a person feel unworthy. When someone else speaks to

us with anger and disrespect, we feel diminished. But behind nearly every hostile, angry attack is someone who is suffering himself with feelings of depression, unworthiness, or insecurity. When you realize the problem is with the attacker, and not with you, the hostility loses its ability to deflate you. In reality, it's not even about you.

A put-down need not be accepted. It need not become a chink in the mirror we use to view ourselves. It can, and often should, just pass into history.

Shabbos Table Discussion:
What are the strongest, most reliable foundations for a person's self-esteem?

“Behind nearly every hostile, angry attack is someone who is suffering himself.”

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 Shailah 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.**



[Note: At times another person's hostility can be excessive or destructive. If this seems to be the case, it is worthwhile to seek a knowledgeable, objective opinion.]
Adapted from "Success," by Rabbi Moshe Gans, with permission from Mesorah Publications

Squandred Opportunities

continued from front

every breath we take, every cent we earn, every morsel we eat; Who determines whether we live in peace or war, poverty or plenty, freedom or oppression. Who can afford to walk away, even for just five minutes?

Shabbos Table Discussion:

Look at the blessings of Shemoneh Esrei. How do the things we pray for make a difference in your life?

—CCHF

Getting What's Due

continued from front

steps to improve the situation, the results he brought about were Hashem's desire. When we see a setback as a way to learn what Hashem wants from us in this world, we will not see it as the fuel for loshon hora.

Shabbos Table Discussion:

What is the difference between having bitachon, and passivity or inaction in the face of a problem?

Adapted from "Chofetz Chaim: A Lesson a Day," by Rabbi Shimon Finkelman and Rabbi Yitzchak Berkowitz, with permission from Mesorah Publications

Our Sponsors

לע"נ
שרה בת ר' מנחם מענדל ע"ה
Mrs. Sara Fogel a"h
נבל"ע כט' שבט תשנ"ט

We gratefully acknowledge our generous sponsors for making this publication possible.

In Perspective

Count Pototsky, the "Ger Tzedek" of Vilna, was considered a traitor by the Church. Tracked down to his hiding place in a Lithuanian village where he had devoted himself to learning, he was sentenced to burn at the stake. Before he died, he put his executioner's act in perspective.

"As a child, I carefully built some clay soldiers, which another child destroyed. I thought that when I got older, I would take revenge. But once I had grown, the incident seemed trivial." That, he explained, was how his earthly torment would appear in the light of his Heavenly reward—a mere triviality.

And though most of life's situations are far less dramatic than this, the truth remains that, in perspective, many of our seeming "torments" fade into triviality when given a little perspective.

Shabbos Table Discussion:

Why does the passage of time—even just an hour—sometimes take the urgency out of an upsetting situation?

Adapted from "Dearer Than Life," by Rabbi Abraham Twerski, M.D., with permission from Shaar Press

Index Reference 127



Chosen Words is a biweekly publication of the Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation

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