

# chosen words

## Personal Growth

# The Basic Element

*Why nothing but the truth will do*

Imagine you're lost in the forest on a bitter cold winter night. Miraculously, a blazing campfire appears to provide you with warmth and light. Surely, you wouldn't pour water on it.

The neshamah that gives us the warmth and light to find our way in this world is a miraculous gift, taken by Hashem from beneath his Divine throne and invested in each of us. But it's not made of fire; Rabbeinu Yonah teaches that it is made of truth, since Hashem's seal is truth. Because truth is the basic element of the neshamah, speaking falsehood—truth's antithesis—diminishes the neshamah as surely as dousing the flames diminishes the campfire.

In business, community affairs, family relations and friendships, truth is the essential element, and any profit that appears to come of falsehood is simply an illusion. The Midrash relates that Falsehood came to Noach and asked for a place on the ark. Noach replied that only pairs were allowed on board. So, Falsehood searched until he found the one willing partner—Destruction. After thousands of years of working as Destruction's partner, Falsehood sug-

gested that they make an accounting of their profits. "Profit?" asked Destruction. "I'm Destruction. Everything I touch is destroyed. There is no profit."

We are required to teach our children everything they need to survive, from swimming to earning a living. Teaching them to be truthful—through our words and our example—is the most

## Better Relationships

# Letting It Go

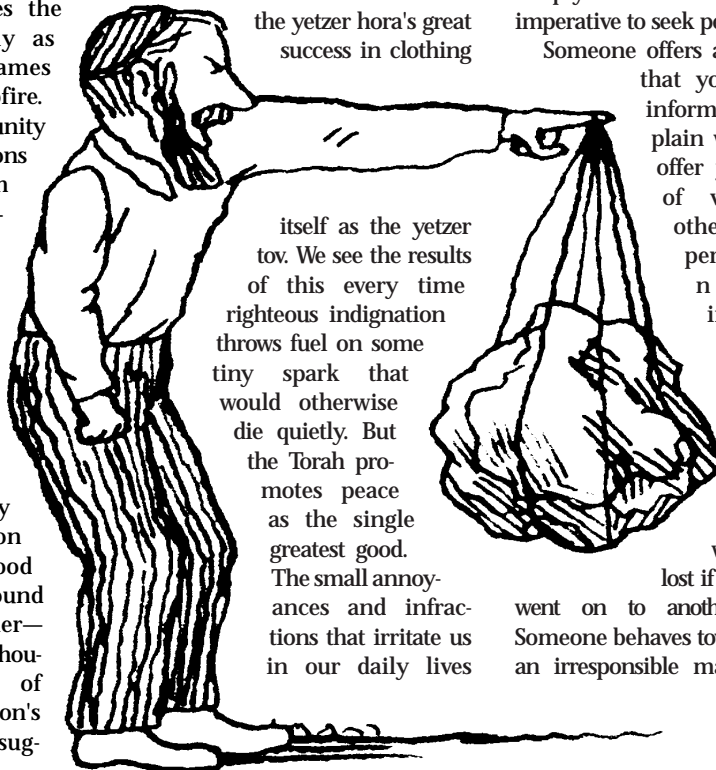
The Torah warns of the yetzer hora's great success in clothing

itself as the yetzer tov. We see the results of this every time righteous indignation throws fuel on some tiny spark that would otherwise die quietly. But the Torah promotes peace as the single greatest good. The small annoyances and infractions that irritate us in our daily lives

simply don't outweigh the imperative to seek peace.

Someone offers an opinion that you find ill informed or just plain wrong. You offer your point of view. The other person persists. The normal impulse is to argue your point. But to what end? What would be lost if you simply went on to another subject? Someone behaves toward you in an irresponsible manner. You

*Continued on back*



*"Sometimes all it takes to keep the peace is the willingness to 'drop' it".*

## Torah Tools for Personal Growth

Inspiration

▼  
Ideas

▼  
Excellence

▼  
Success

## Effective Prayer

# Checking In

The alarm clock rings. In most homes, that begins the rush to get dressed and off to work or school. But where others can't find a spare second, a Jew finds time—about an hour of it—to pray. Our day can't start without acknowledging the One who made it.

The hectic day speeds along. Who would stop everything to seek a spiritual experience? But for a Jew, there is time for Minchah—time to acknowledge that all we've accomplished comes from G-d.

Finally, the day ends. Most people have no energy left for anything but dinner and some relaxation. But for a Jew, there's energy for Maariv—energy to affirm our faith before we put ourselves in Hashem's hands for the night.

The Sages ordained three periods of prayer each day, so that throughout the day, a Jew is "checking in" with his Creator. Not only are those the times of day when we most need to turn our minds to Hashem. They are also the times when Hashem, our Father, waits to hear from His children.

Shabbos Table Discussion: Why not pray only when you feel inspired to do so?

*Adapted from "The Art of Jewish Prayer," by Rabbi Yizchok Kirzner, with Lisa Aiken, Aronson Publications*



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# The Best Day Ever

You learn something new every day. That cliché is actually the key to an attitude that can make every day a great day. Because each day we are a little more experienced, a little wiser than we were the day before, we have the potential to reach higher goals. A person does not need to wait for the big raise, the fabulous present, the exciting journey to turn today into something special.

The Rambam told the story of a distinguished person who was asked, "What has been the most joyous day of your life?"

"It was a day that I was on a ship," he replied. "There were people on the ship who mocked

me, and even threw garbage on me. But I was able to transcend this and create my own inner joy."

This person experienced a distressing situation as his own private liberation day. He proved to himself that his inner landscape was under his own control, and couldn't be invaded by even the most unpleasant occurrences. That made the day a great one.

If you want to lend today the distinction of being the greatest day in your life, focus on what you are better able to do today. Maybe your learning comes a little easier; maybe you handle a difficult situation with more maturity;

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If you want to lend today the distinction of being the greatest day in your life, focus on what you are better able to do today. Maybe your learning comes a little easier; maybe you handle a difficult situation with more maturity;

maybe you find that you've gotten into some positive new habit that was a struggle for you before. When you build today upon everything you've learned and done before, each day stands above the ones that preceded it. Each day can be the greatest day. So far.

To do:

Start today on something—a new attitude or action—that will boost you to a new level of growth.

*Adapted from "Happiness," by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin, with permission from Shaar Press*

## Letting It Go

*continued from front*

reprimand him. He doesn't seem particularly repentant. Now it seems necessary to uphold your principle and force the issue. But what would be lost if you let it slide? If it's important, you could wait for a time when the person is more receptive.

The need to have the last word, to have one's rightness confirmed in every situation, can make life a discordant misery. When we let go of the issue, we often find that, within minutes or hours, it simply doesn't matter any more.

—CCHF

**"A soft reply turns away anger."**

—Mishlei

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May the learning and personal growth engendered by this issue of Chosen Words be a **ככלל ישראל** for all of **כלל ישראל**.

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

# The False Tree

Rav Aharon Kotler founded the yeshivah in Lakewood in a small house that he had acquired for that purpose. Along one side of the walkway leading up to the house were three trees, and along the other side were two.

One day, receipt books which had been ordered for the yeshivah were delivered to Rav Aharon. To give the receipts a little more graphic appeal, it was decided to print a picture of the yeshivah building across the top. The artist who rendered the building drew it, complete with trees, but for the sake of aesthetics, he had drawn three trees on each side of the walk.

When Rav Aharon saw the receipts, he rejected them because of the false picture they depicted. "I am building a yeshivah based upon the foundation of truth," he explained. "I do not want even a small trace of misrepresentation or dishonesty to be involved in the foundation of this yeshivah!"

Shabbos Table Discussion:

Why is truthfulness integral to success?

*Adapted from "The Rosh Yeshivah Remembers," retold by Rabbi Elazer Menachem Man Schach, Shlita, compiled by Rabbi Asher Bergman, with permission from Mesorah Publications*

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**✉ We welcome your comments!**

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# Do you have a Great? Shabbos Table

**Share Your Success with Klal Yisrael!**

Because the Shabbos table is such an integral part of family life and chinuch, the Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation's topic for this year's nationwide Winter Forum is **Mining the Treasures of the Shabbos meal**.

The program will feature practical advice and clarify hashkofah issues that relate to the Shabbos table.

**We'd like your input:**

**A:** If your family has a unique way for making the Shabbos table a place for learning, inspiration and growth please share your ideas with us.

**B:** If you have a question you would like addressed we will submit it to our distinguished panel.

**Please Fax, E-mail or Send Your Ideas or Questions To:**

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