

TORAH WEEKLY



CELEBRATING
25
years
OF TORAH GROWTH
TOGETHER

Parshas Acharei Mos | May 4, 2024 | Volume 25 | Issue 28

From the Outside In

By: Rabbi Shmuel Halpern (Originally Published 2016)

Impressed by a prominent, successful world leader? Read his biography. The fact is that the people who seem to have all the wisdom to actually live moral lives often fail miserably. What is it that prevents us humans from translating our knowledge into action?

While this question touches on a wide range of issues, I'd like to focus on one specific aspect. Rabbi Yerucham Levovitz (1873-1936) explains that while we may believe in an ideal, that doesn't necessarily mean that ideal has become a part of our very essence. There is, in fact, a great gap between our minds and our hearts, between our intellect and our emotions. The great secret to bridging this gap is action. When we act according to a moral truth that we've come to understand, we bring that knowledge from the realm of the abstract to the realm of the physical. When we do that repeatedly, that ideal becomes embedded within us - a very part of our essence. In the words of the Sefer Hachinuch, "Man is mostly influenced by his own actions."

The Rambam (1135/1138-1204), in his commentary on the Mishna, rules that it's better to give one dollar to one hundred people as charity than to give one hundred dollars one time. This is because each and every time we give charity, the ideal of loving-kindness becomes a deeper part of our essence. One might ask, "If we are acting out of habit, isn't there an inherent lack of meaning to our actions?" Rabbi Levovitz explains that when we accustom ourselves to doing things correctly, with passion and energy, we make those correct actions a part of who we are. We can now focus on growing from this point onward.

Rabbi Avigdor Miller (1908-2001) further states that when one gets used to doing good deeds with ease, he is rewarded every time as if he had to struggle to perform that good deed. This is because it was one's own hard work that ingrained the good habit into the personality. As one educator noted, "I'd rather my kids get used to brushing their teeth when they're young, so that as they grow older they can focus on more important accomplishments." We tend to think this idea applies only to children, but, in fact, it applies to adults, too. The path to continued personal growth is to keep building a framework of good habits, which then gives us the freedom to focus on our next goal, confident that our earlier accomplishments are secure.

This idea is expressed in this week's Torah portion, when G-d tells the Jewish people, "Carry out My laws and safeguard My decrees, to walk in them." (Acharei Mos 18:4) Rabbi Levovitz explains that G-d is urging us to make His laws part-and-parcel of our personalities, using the very powerful tool of habit. May we all merit to inculcate within ourselves and our children the ideals that G-d set down for us in His Torah.

Alumni Focus

Rabbi Shmuel Halpern

PAST



Rabbi Halpern, teaching, 2015

2014-2021

Years as a Denver
Kollel Scholar

PRESENT



Rabbi Halpern, teaching, 2023

RABBI

Young Israel of Denver

Kollel Happenings



On Rosh Chodesh Nissan, the Kollel scholars elected to be tested by Rabbi Yosef Fund, Bochen BMG on hilchos muktza. Rabbi Fund giving a shiur on the sugya of lishma.