

Mishlei: The Right Path in Life Part III

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller-Gottlieb

Bereishit begins with the story of creation. Rashi asks why, didn't the Torah start with the first *mitzva* of kiddush hachodesh? Rashi answers that it begins this way so that people will know that Hashem created the world and ultimately everything belongs to Him. *Klei Yakar* points out that it's meant to teach us that the world was built on the principle that it's Hashem's providence that determines who gets what. The relationship of a thief to others is -I have the right to swallow you alive. There are people who will do whatever they need to do to protect themselves, not letting themselves think about their victim. Suppose you have an apartment to rent out. You set a price and someone comes and tells you he'll take it. You agree, although no contract was signed yet. Fifteen minutes later someone offers you a higher price and you give him the apartment. The first person still thinks he's

moving in. You didn't take a cent from him, but you've swallowed him alive along with his plans and hopes that became irrelevant to you when you accepted the higher offer. Any form of going beyond the hashgachic limitations that Hashem set is a denial of His providence.

"My son, don't go on the way with them, hold back your foot from their path." There are two similar words used here, *derech* and *netiv*. *Derech* connotes a well-trodden road which one might think is safe. We justify things by saying, everyone does it, but it doesn't mean it's necessarily right. The child in you might say- I can get away with it, just like everyone else. A *netiv* is a small distinct path. When the Bais Yaakov movement started it was revolutionary. Girls didn't go to Jewish schools. One of the signs that a fish is alive is that it can swim upstream. Sometimes the test is to rise

above what everyone is doing and choose the truth.

"Their feet move towards evil and they are quick to shed blood." Most murderers didn't plan to become murders, but on some level, they never questioned what a human has a right to do. Theft takes the life of the thief. On a human level, he is destroyed. We have to teach our children to see the consequences of their choices. When you take what's not yours, it's a denial of Hashem's providence. It's as if you're saying- Hashem had no right to give this to this person. In the end, you'll stop noticing all the good Hashem gives you. This is something we have to teach our children before they steal, not after. We must teach them who created the world, for what purpose, and our responsibility to keep the *mitzvot* that guide us how to live life.

Categories of Muktzta Part IV

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Shimon Isaacson

A *keli shemelachto l'heter* is a vessel whose primary use is for a permitted use. The Shulchan Aruch tells us that even these items contain a sliver of *muktza*. Although one may move it, to protect it from the elements (*m'chamo l'tzel*), one may not move it for no reason at all. If you're handling it because you're fidgeting, you could attribute that to a psychological need. Moving it for no reason at all would be a very narrow case, but the *issur* would still apply.

Tosfot notes that there are certain objects that have no *muktza* status at all. These include basic household items such as cutlery, cups, and plates. Other examples that would fall in this category would be *Torah* texts and food items. These may be moved for no reason at all. The Shaarei Zion based on Rashi explains that they are so commonly used that Chazal never prohibited moving them in any fashion on *Shabbat*.

Let's look at some basic household items. Is a Scrabble game *muktza*? Rav Bodner asked Rav Moshe Feinstein about this and he differentiated between the deluxe and

standard edition. The deluxe edition comes with a stand where the tiles are stuck in a groove preventing them from shifting. Rav Moshe felt that this would fall under the prohibition of *kosev* (writing) which would make the game a *keli shemelachto l'issur*. The standard edition comes without the stands. The tiles are not supported or attached to each other which in general doesn't constitute a prohibition of *kosev*. However, the Chayei Adam rules that a game that involves writing and keeping score would be prohibited. Therefore, it would still be a *keli shemelachto l'issur*. There is a view that if one doesn't keep a score one could possibly argue that it would be a *keli shemelachto l'heter*.

Children's toys such as blocks and lego do not generally fall under the *issur* of *boneh* (building) and are not *muktza*. There are *poskim* who are of the opinion that jigsaw puzzles that are affixed to each other and stay in place are prohibited due to *kosev* and would be a *keli shemelachto l'issur*. Children's puzzles that don't involve interlocking pieces would not be a problem. The Shulchan Aruch rules that a ball has the status of *muktza* and one may not play with it on *Shabbat* and *Yom*

Tov. The Mishna Berura explains that this refers to balls made out of paper or wood which have the status of a stone. In the times of the Shulchan Aruch there were no special balls constructed for playing. Therefore, since it wasn't set aside as a toy to be played with on *Shabbat*, it had the status of *muktza machmat gufo*. Balls today which are constructed for playing are a *keli shemelachto l'heter* and are not *muktza*. A baby rattle is a *keli shemelachto l'issur* and is *muktza* due to the prohibition of making noise. This applies to musical instruments, graggers, and any kind of toy whose function is making noise.

The Shulchan Aruch cites the opinion of the Rashba who permitted moving a telescope and books of wisdom such as math and science texts on *Shabbat*. He also quotes the Rambam's dissenting view. There is a prohibition to read *shtorei hedyotot* (business documents) on *Shabbat*. This is based on the verse in Yeshaya, "*Mimtzvo cheftzecha...*," our manner of conduct on *Shabbat* should be different, reflecting the holiness of the day. The Shulchan Aruch goes so far as to say that even reading letters of friendship on *Shabbat*

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(with one's eyes, not even pronouncing the words) would be prohibited so that one should not come to read business documents as well.

The Shulchan Aruch further writes that one

should not read stories of *sichat chullin*- novels, lustful books, or war stories on Shabbat. He further states that reading *sifrei leitza'not* is prohibited even during the week. Reading improper lustful material that incites the yetzer hara and leads one to sin is like

turning to foreign idols. One who authors or publishes such works is causing many to sin. We must be very aware and wary of what we are feeding our minds as it leaves a lasting impact.

Traveling through Life Accompanied by Tehillim Part IV #2

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

David Hamelech refers to those who give in the best way possible as *ashrei* and we need to understand why. They didn't receive anything. They invested time, effort, and money to give to others, why are they called happy? This chapter in *Tehillim* tells us that if a person is *maskil el dal*- gives with thought, Hashem will save him in a time of difficulty. The commentators explain that this also refers to the World to Come. If the person deserves punishment Hashem will save him from all or part of the punishment he deserves.

The Midrash points out- Rabbi Levi says in the name of Rav Chama bar Chanina that the term *ashrei* is mentioned 22 times and nowhere is the reward delineated except in this instance. Why in this particular case is an incentive mentioned? David Hamelech wanted to teach us a fundamental principle- giving is a critical key to happiness. The common attitude is that having brings joy. But in reality, it's not having, but giving to others that creates feelings of joy, fulfillment, and meaning.

Yale University conducted a study on people who lived in third-world countries. They found that although the standard of living had risen in the last few decades, people didn't feel happier. They wanted to understand why. So, they set up a study consisting of two groups. They gave each of the members of the group money to spend. The first group was told to spend the money on themselves while the

second group was told to use it to help someone else. The results of the study showed that the level of happiness of those who gave to others rose while the level of happiness of the first group was not impacted. The question then arose, if the key to happiness is giving, why don't more people give? The answer they found was that most people didn't know this secret. There's room to think- if I give to others something is taken away from me. Why should it make me happy? Let's explore this question.

Our most precious possessions are those that are sentimental and are an expression of deep feeling towards us. Hashem gives each and every one of us endless gifts. There's nobody who isn't a recipient of Hashem's kindness. Every breath of life is an opportunity. A person can approach Hashem's gifts with the attitude of - I'm entitled, I deserve it because I worked for it. By attributing it all to himself, he loses the most precious aspect of receiving a gift and that is the relationship it expresses. In contrast, a person can take the right approach which is recognizing the source of his gifts and feeling joy and pleasure in the relationship it expresses. I can buy myself a necklace or get it from my mother. The necklace from my mother will hold far greater value because it expresses something deeper than the item itself. A person who feels entitled will not feel gratitude. A person who recognizes that it's all coming from the Creator who loves and cares for him, will feel gratitude and will want to do whatever it takes to make the Giver happy.

When a person attributes the gifts to himself, he distances himself from Hashem. He has what he has and it can give him a certain level of pleasure. But he'll never reach the ultimate level of joy that comes from recognizing it's all from Hashem. When a person discerns the Giver and feels gratitude, every gift creates a deeper relationship and that is more valuable than the gift itself. When we have everything we could want except good relationships, life is miserable. If we have deep and close relationships, even if we only have the bare minimum, we can be happy. There's no greater or more valuable relationship than a connection with Hashem.

Why is it that Hashem gives some the ability to give and some the need to receive? These are secrets of creation. However, we must understand that no matter where Hashem puts us, we have equal opportunity to create a relationship with Him. The Malbim says that the test of the wealthy is to know that what they have is not related to their efforts. It's all coming from Hashem. A needy person does not have this challenge. However, the Malbim points out that he sees much more *hashgacha pratit* in his life. Hashem continually sends him opportunities for receiving in unnatural ways. His mission is to recognize that Hashem loves him although his reality might be challenging. Every person is given the opportunity and free choice to take what Hashem gave or didn't give him and see His presence there.