

GREAT FOR SHARING  
AT THE SHABBOS TABLE!

# בשבת



אור ישראל

Living Life Deeper

PARSHAS  
YISRO

BY RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT  
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## SWEAT THE SMALL STUFF

**P**arshas Yisro features Moshe Rabbeinu's father-in-law visit to Moshe and the Jewish nation. Once he arrived, he saw the system Moshe had in place for teaching the populace the proper *halacha*, and judging cases brought by litigants. Yisro saw the system as inefficient — people would stand all day to hear their case. The people and Moshe would be worn out by the end of the day.

Yisro proposed that Moshe should appoint lesser judges. In Yisro's words, "And the great matter will be brought to you, but the small matter will be judged by them." Moshe indeed executed Yisro's plan, but in describing the implementation, the *passuk* says, "And the complicated matter was brought to Moshe, and the small matter they [the judges] decided."<sup>1</sup>

The Yalkut Yehuda<sup>2</sup> points out the change of language, where Yisro spoke about the 'great' matter, the *passuk* refers to the 'complicated' matter. He explains that in Yisro's worldview, if a large amount of money was at stake, the trial should be headed by the greatest judge, Moshe. But if it was simply small claims, a lower tier judge can hear the case.

However, Moshe's perspective was very different. It did not matter how much money was in dispute. The concern was doing the right thing, and with that perspective, the more complicated questions needed to be brought to a greater judge.

This may sound obvious to all of us — but is it really? It is so easy to fall into the trap of thinking that the more valuable something is, the more importance it has. Yet, that is not the case. A person concerned with coming closer to Hashem doesn't let their guard down when dealing with 'less important' things. This is true in the monetary sense (returning a valuable object vs. a cheap one), and in any other aspect as well (a 'small' lie vs. a 'big' one).

By strengthening our mindset towards the 'small' items, we will transform our entire attitude towards *avodas Hashem*. It's not about the price, it's about the perspective.

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### Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

It is normal and natural to concern oneself with the 'big' things in life, and to let one's guard down when dealing with lesser areas.

What mental tricks can we use to be on top of our game when it comes to all areas of *avodas Hashem*?

One idea is to comprehend that if we don't act in the proper manner when it comes to 'smaller' areas, it will be very difficult for us to do so when we feel it is indeed important.

For example, one who has little or no concentration during *tefillah* will have a much harder time when they feel that they truly need to *daven*; whether it's Yom Kippur, or suffering some misfortune.

Similarly, if one were to train oneself in the 'smaller' areas, there will be a spillover effect to elsewhere. If one is careful with how truthful they are, even when they think a bit of deceit might not be so harmful, they are more likely to be truthful even when it is difficult.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rambam on Avos 3:15

<sup>1</sup> Shemos 18:17-26

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

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**Recognizing the great power that lies within Mussar study, the Yetzer Hara seeks to discourage us from it, by disparaging the stature and efficacy of Mussar altogether.**

**Let's see past these obstructions and remain energized about Torah and Mussar.**

- Chacham B.Z. Abba Shaul zt"l, Ohr L'Tzion  
Zichron Hadassah, pg. 132

## DON'T SPARE A DIME

Tzvi\* and Chaim were good friends since high school, and their relationship had only grown since. At one point they made the decision to meet once a week to discuss their *avodas Hashem*, and the plan had worked out beautifully.

“Chaim,” said Tzvi one week, “I want to start working on my miserliness.”

Chaim arched his eyebrow and looked at Tzvi. “I didn’t know you were so wealthy that you could be a miser,” Chaim said with a smirk.

“True, my miserliness doesn’t affect many people one way of the other,” Tzvi smiled back. “But all the same, I notice the feelings are there. I’ll give you an example — there are times when people come around during *davening*, asking for *tzedakah*. After thinking about it, I realized that my feelings, at best, are neutral. Sometimes they are negative, like I don’t want to give them my hard-earned money. And that’s what I’m talking about; I want to work on my miserliness.”

Chaim smiled again. This was indeed very much like Tzvi — Tzvi was thoughtful and introspective, and it was important to Tzvi to work on his *middos*. On the other hand, Tzvi could be a bit zealous in that regard, and sometimes bite off more than he could chew.

“Sounds fair,” said Chaim. “So, why not get a roll of dimes, and hand them out when people come by?”

“Dimes? Ten pennies? Why not dollars?”

Chaim again fixed Tzvi with a stare. “Really?”

Tzvi smiled sheepishly. “You’re right. Dimes. Not a bad idea.”

Several weeks passed when Tzvi brought up the subject again. “I want to thank you, Chaim. What you suggested was an excellent idea. Before, when people were asking for *tzedakah*, I found myself mired in negative thoughts. Now I am training myself to give; I’m actually excited when people come by, I like to see how fast I can go through a roll of dimes.”

Chaim nodded. “It’s obvious, but only when you think about it. If you start caring about the small stuff, you’d be surprised how much that’ll affect you.”

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*\*Based on a true story, names have been changed.*

### DID YOU KNOW?

- Besides judging the difficult matters, Moshe would also judge the difficult and powerful litigants.<sup>1</sup>
- Many small actions are often better than one ‘great’ action.<sup>2</sup>

1 *Ba'al Haturim* on *Shemos* 18:26 s.v. הקשה

2 *Rambam* on *Avos* 3:15