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## SUPPORT GROUP

I LEAD A SUPPORT GROUP FOR FAMILIES DEALING WITH CELIAC AND I WANT TO KNOW IF PUBLICIZING RELEVANT INFORMATION ON THE PHONE LINE IS LIABLE TO BE LASHON HARA.

03

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## OPEN (HEARTED) CHECK

IS YOUR WALLET SO FULL OF CREDIT CARDS AND GREEN DOLLARS THAT THERE'S NO PLACE IN IT FOR A FEW MEASLY SHEKELS FOR A BUS RIDE?"

04

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## FIRST PLACE

WHAT IS THE CONNECTION BETWEEN A LITTLE GIRL IN FIRST GRADE WHOSE PENCIL POINT BROKE, AND HILLEL HAZAKEN?

06



# FROM THE REBBETZIN'S DESK



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PUBLISHED BY MISHMERES HASHOLOM -  
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What does a person do if he needs a job?

First of all, he prepares an impressive and persuasive resumé. An acquaintance of mine went to a professional to help her prepare her CV and she came out dizzy. "I felt uncomfortable with all the fancy and extreme words she wrote about me, with her attempt to inflate my abilities. But she explained that that's how it is today. If you don't know how to market yourself – you get left behind..."

Maybe, precisely because we are living in a generation of "public relations" and "self-marketing," it is especially important to inculcate the important *middah* of *anavah*, humility.

On one of the Chofetz Chaim's journeys, he stayed overnight in a room adjacent to that of one of the great Roshei Yeshiva. A thin wall separated the two rooms. The Rosh Yeshiva attested that, at night, he heard the Chofetz Chaim say: "Ribono shel Olam, how can I thank you for all you've done for me?" Here, he began to enumerate all of Hashem's kindnesses for him since his childhood, when, as a young orphan, he was almost lured away by Maskilim, and Hashem sent a water-carrier who advised him to flee, and so he was saved. The Chofetz Chaim then went on and said: "Ribono shel Olam, you were *mezakeh* me to write the *Mishnah Berurah* and *sefer Chofetz Chaim*, and to establish a yeshiva in Radin..."

When the Rosh Yeshiva returned home, he shared his amazement with his *talmidim*: "The Chofetz Chaim didn't say, 'Ribono shel Olam, remember everything I accomplished, all my *mesirus nefesh* for Klal Yisrael.' In his great humility, he felt that everything he'd done was only thanks to Hashem's help... Nothing was from himself."

This is true *anavah*. We have talents. We know and do and succeed. But nothing is in our own merit. Everything is a gift from Hashem!

We, too, at Mishmeres HaSholom, want to thank Hakadosh Baruch Hu. Only thanks to Him have we been *zocheh* for more than twenty years to spread *shemiras halashon* throughout the world!

Now it's your turn to take part in this *zechus*, to join us in this great enterprise and also to have a chance to send names for the *tefillah* at the Chofetz Chaim's *kever* in Radin. *Shemiras halashon* is the most proven *segulah* for *yeshuos* (*Chofetz Chaim*), and we at Mishmeres HaSholom get to see this fount of *yeshuos* with our own eyes!

There is no question that it is a great *zechus* for Yom Hadin for the Chofetz Chaim to be a *meilitz yosher* for us.

Wishing all of you a *shanah tovah, kesivah v'chasimah tovah.*

*Sari Wertzberger*

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# ASK THE RAV



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HARAV HAGAON R' MENACHEM MENDEL FUCHS SHLITA

## GIVING INFORMATION ABOUT A DIFFICULT TENANT

**Question:** Someone came to me to ask about Ploni, who'd rented an apartment from me in the past. Ploni had inquired about an apartment that this person had for rent, so he wanted to ask: Does Ploni pay on time? Take good care of the apartment? In general, how is the interaction with him – pleasant or problematic? Since I understood that the matter was still theoretical, I put off answering and told the inquirer to come back to me if it becomes more serious. My real intention was to buy time, since I wanted to first ask a Rav what I am permitted to say about this tenant, whom I really found hard to deal with and who complained about every little thing.

**Answer:** From the questioner's words, it appears that his difficulty with this tenant lies only in his interaction with him, mainly that "he complains about every little thing." Apparently, he does pay his rent on time and also takes decent care of the apartment. Therefore, the questioner should not give a negative response. On the contrary, he should first praise Ploni's good sides, as mentioned, and afterwards add that since he is very precise in doing what is demanded of him as a tenant, he also expects to get precisely what is coming to him from the renter. It is permissible to add that this at times demands patience, and not everybody can tolerate it, but, all in all, it pays.

## SHARING INFORMATION IN A SUPPORT GROUP FOR PEOPLE COPING WITH CELIAC DISEASE

**Question:** I lead a support group for families dealing with celiac. Recently, we had a question in *shemiras halashon*. The group members leave messages on the joint phone line, such as problems with various products – "Attention everyone! I found a piece of wheat cereal inside a package of product X" – a report that is *lashon hara*, but for real *to'eles*. People also share positive information, such as: "We stayed at Hotel X and received excellent consideration for our gluten sensitivity." But there is liable to be a follow-up message from a different member, saying, for example, that she, too, was in that hotel and was very disappointed by their service in the area of gluten...

I'd appreciate getting clear rules about what is permissible and prohibited on such a phone line.

**Answer:** The questioner is discussing the phone line she operates, in which every message automatically reaches all the members. It is important to preface: On this kind of line, there are generally two options: A. Whoever wants to can

enter a message, and it will reach all the members. B. Nobody is able to enter a message on the line; rather, she needs to call the organizer or leave her a message on a certain extension, and the organizer deals with the message as she sees fit. In practice, the first option should not be used by any means. With this option, one will almost definitely slip into *lashon hara* and *rechilus*.

As to the question itself: The purpose of this line is to give general information about how to avoid exposure to gluten, which, for members of the group, is like poison. On this line, apparently, they can hear which foods are suspect of containing gluten and which are safe; tips on how to satiate the body without using products containing gluten; recommended recipes for cooked dishes and cake; words of *chizuk* that give people the strength to abstain, day after day, from such a range of foods, especially at *simchas*. All of the above – it is permissible to report and to put on the line, without concern for *lashon hara*. One can also advertise on the line excellent no-gluten products from specific companies and denote each one's *hechsher*.

Conversely, one should avoid praising a particular hotel or restaurant for giving excellent service to people avoiding gluten, because this commonly evokes an opposite reaction about the same place; as long as there is no meticulous oversight regarding the area of gluten by an authoritative entity, mistakes and problems are unavoidable. In the event that such a response is received by one of the participants in the line, there will be great doubt whether and how to inform others about it, so "*Sheiv v'al taaseh adif*" – better not to do anything.

Regarding the example that was mentioned about the piece of wheat cereal found in a product that was supposed to be gluten-free, it is permissible to publicize that such a thing happened, but without specifying the company. Nobody's perfect, and mistakes like this are liable to happen on rare occasions in any company.

## RECOMMENDING A SHOP WHERE PRICES ARE LOWER

**Question:** My good friend has been shopping for years in a certain shop – a good, reliable place that carries quality merchandise. She is very satisfied with the stock, service, and prices in this shop and doesn't bother checking elsewhere.

Still, every time she shows me the clothes she bought there, I wonder to myself: Maybe, as her good friend, I should recommend to her (even though she didn't ask!) a different shop, which I know is also good and reliable, but with lower prices.

**Answer:** First of all, the questioner should praise the merchandise that her friend bought, both its quality and the shop's prices and service. Afterwards, she is permitted to tell her friend that she is familiar with a different store that is also good and reliable, but has lower prices.

לע"נ הרה"ח ר' שבתי זאב בן הרה"ח ר' מנחם מנדל ז"ל חוג' מרת חיה דבורה בת הרה"צ ר' משולם זושא ע"ה



# דבר גדולים

## MARAN HAGA'ABAD YERUSHALAYIM ZT"L

IF YOU LEARN HILCHOS SHEMIRAS HALASHON, YOU ARE CAREFUL NOT TO SPEAK. IF YOU ARE MECHANECH CHILDREN IN SHEMIRAS HALASHON FROM A YOUNG AGE, IT WILL BECOME A HABIT FOR THEM, LIKE AVOIDING MUKTZEH ON SHABBOS. BERACHAH V'HATZLACHAH AND A LONG LIFE TO ALL THE REPRESENTATIVES.

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## STORY

RACHEL T.

# A "HOLE" PUNCHED IN THE HEART



The woman on the other end of the line sounded confused and helpless. She briefly explained about the declining medical condition of her husband, a man in the prime of life, who had been stricken with a degenerative disease. "One of the nurses on the ward in Shaare Tzedek gave me this number. She said you might be able to help us---"

Mrs. Judy Klein's voice was warm and caring, as she clarified details of the family's plan to bring the patient home. "So, first of all, you'll need a hydraulic hospital bed. That is the basis. And you need to check if you are eligible for coverage by---"

The two went on to discuss motorized orthopedic chairs and a variety of other vital accessories for patients in this condition. Mrs. Klein displayed knowledge and familiarity, ably guiding her conversation partner through the options. Then she took down the woman's contact information and promised to see what they could do to help. "Just one request," added Judy, in conclusion. "Our donors request total secrecy. They want to remain far from the spotlight. If you receive a grant from us, *b'ezras Hashem* – simply do not talk about it," she said, with a smile.

"Yes, of course. If that is your donors' demand, we won't say a word," the woman confirmed, never guessing the identity of those "esteemed donors" who wish to remain anonymous---

In Shaare Tzedek, everyone on the staff knew the friendly American volunteer. She had a flowing heart and easy personality, as well as extensive medical knowledge, and her regular volunteer shifts had become an inseparable part of the hospital scene. "It keeps me busy. Better than sitting at home and staring at the four walls," she would say with a pleasant smile and a heavy accent, whenever they tried to compliment her on her dedication and caring.

Nothing in her outer appearance disclosed the fact that she was wealthy, but word spread that her family, who had arrived just a few years earlier from America, owned a successful business with several branches. Gradually, requests for aid started streaming to her door...

At first it was a little girl who had been in a complex accident. Judy would sit at her bedside

and occupy her, take her for walks and buy her little prizes. When she heard that the doctors had recommended a costly device that could help with rehab, but the parents had trouble buying it, she simply put the purchase on her account---

Judy had just one request of the head nurse – to present the device to the parents in her stead, without revealing her identity. "It's very important to me," she emphasized. The nurse couldn't exactly understand why Judy was so averse to getting some compliments and words of thanks, but she respected her request.

The next time it was a sick boy who needed a machine for respiratory rehab. His low-income family began the slow procedure of verifying eligibility for getting the device via the Kupat Cholim, which caused a substantial delay in the treatment...

Again, Judy Klein entered the picture, providing the necessary financial aid and asking to remain anonymous...

"You can refer patients who need help buying medical equipment to me," she said to the nurses on the ward. "But, please, just give them our unlisted number. It's very important to us that people shouldn't know who is behind this."

And people called, and asked. And she answered, and listened, and advised, and also wrote down their information and promised to help. And she carried out her promises...

Because if Hakadosh Baruch Hu kindly gives them success in business, and the dollars keep rolling in, *baruch Hashem*, they need to show their appreciation by using some of that money to help His children, and to do it quietly, without publicity or drumrolls.

And then, one not so fine day, the wheel of fortune turned against them.

Someone on the other side of the ocean – apparently an embittered ex-employee – decided to implicate them in a legal case. The pebble that he tossed gathered speed as it catapulted downward, carrying them along to the edge of the abyss.

Huge deals were stopped in their tracks. Assets and bank accounts were frozen. Major lawsuits kept their top lawyers occupied. And here, in Eretz Yisrael, they tottered at the threshold of a situation that could compel them to sell their home to cover the running expenses of the family.

All that time, Judy continued her regular visits to Shaare Zedek. She took the bus, like plain folks, instead of the usual taxi, but she wouldn't give up the privilege. Giving to others bolstered her.

In the end, they somehow managed to lift themselves up a bit from the swamp they'd been sinking into, and so, at the last minute, they didn't have to sell their apartment. But as to continuing to finance medical equipment for patients – that was something they could only dream about...

It was a hot Yerushalayim afternoon. Judy stood at the bus stop on Herzl Street, waiting for bus 39 to take her home. The bus stop was full and the wait was long. Amid the crowd, she recognized a familiar face from her street.

This was before the time of computerized screens at every bus stop; there was no way of knowing when the bus would come. Meanwhile, she pulled out her bus card (yes, it was before Rav-Kavs) and suddenly grasped – her card was all used up! There wasn't a single spot left for the driver to punch a hole! And her purse was empty, too – that she knew without even checking.

One moment of helplessness, and then she decided to turn to the woman from her block – we'll call her Sara, but the name is fictitious, for obvious reasons, "I see that I'm left without rides in my card. Could you lend me a few shekels or do a punch for me?" She swallowed the terrible shame she felt, as the "retired millionaire," thrust into the position of beggar, and she made her request with a sincere smile.

In her wildest imagination, she couldn't have expected the response.

"Is your wallet so full of credit cards and green dollars that there's no place in it for a few measly shekels for a bus ride?" Sara snorted loudly. All too loudly. A few pairs of eyes looked in Judy's direction and she lowered her gaze, incapable of bearing the embarrassment.

But Sara wasn't finished. "I'm not worried about you, Judy. You won't remain stuck at the bus stop. If you can't take the bus, a private helicopter will rescue you and take you home," she said sarcastically, enjoying her cleverness.

Only the bus, which just then approached the



curb, could redeem Judy from her mortification. Sara flashed Judy a triumphant smile, and then stepped into the bus, leaving her at the stop, with her heart in shreds.

*How could she torment me so?? What did I ever do to her to cause her to publicly debase me like that?*

She shook herself from her reverie, crumpled the finished card in her hand, and began plodding back to the hospital. She had no choice. She needed to get home and she would have to try and get hold of a few shekels from one of the nurses.

*As she walked down the street, the thoughts kept galloping. So what if she's sure that I'm still at the top of the world and our wealth irks her and makes her jealous. That still doesn't justify such an attack...*

Judy was approaching the hospital entrance when suddenly, a new thought popped into her mind: Sara had been standing at the Shaare Zedek bus stop. Who knows? Maybe someone in her family was sick. Maybe she's going through a terrible time. Maybe the difficulty and the anguish are what drove her to such deplorable behavior.

*And maybe... maybe this is my chance to rise above the pain and humiliation, to overcome the anger and resentment, to banish the accusations from my heart, and to simply - well, not so simply - forgive her??? To act lifnim mishuras hadin here in Olam Hazeh, and to hope and daven that, middah k'neged middah, Hashem in Shamayim will act with chessed v'rachamim, save us from this legal mess we've fallen into, and extricate our business from this dead end?*

She did it. And the *zechuyos* soared up to the Kisei Hakavod. And within a short time, the wheel

of fortune turned back in their favor---

A red-eyed mother sits across from the doctor in Pediatric Oncology, glancing nervously at the documents full of frightening English words on his desk. Her pale young daughter has been sent to play in the game room, so she shouldn't hear...

"There is costly equipment that can help her---" The doctor's voice tries to be gentle, considerate. "We have connections with an organization that can help in such things. I hope that this week already, we'll get their approval for this purchase."

Organization? Purchase? Approval? Everything spins around in Sara's ears. She just nods in thanks, silently blesses the people behind this marvelous organization, who, the doctor says, insist on maintaining anonymity---

The equipment is purchased and arrives at the ward. The relief it brings with it is amazing, and the improvement that comes in its wake to the ten-year-old patient's condition is even more amazing---

Only after the girl has completely recovered, and they are in the staff lounge, bestowing gifts and thanks and emotional goodbyes, she suddenly overhears one nurse whispering the name of the donor...

The donor who insisted on keeping her name confidential. But that donor herself knew precisely to which family she was proffering help, and yet, she signed the check with a steady hand and sent it off---

קדושה

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חסידות

טהרה

פרישות

נקיזות

זריזות

זהירות



# מסילות ישרים:

## ענוה – Humility

It is not easy to acquire the quality of humility – so writes the author of *Mesilas Yesharim*. Because of this difficulty, the characteristic of *anavah* was positioned as one of the final rungs of the ladder of *middos*, reached after we've already invested efforts and progressed in many other traits.

## Humility in Matters Related to Shemiras Halashon

When a person's starting point is humility, it is easier for him to tolerate insults and bow his head when offended.

Therefore, *anavah* is the foundation that enables us to reach the longed-for level of "Those who are hurt and do not hurt back; who hear their humiliation and do not respond," of whom the *pasuk* says: "And those who love Him shall be like the rising sun in all its power."



# STOP AND THINK

B. HARAMATI

## HUMILITY OPENS GATES



A school principal sits in her room, busy with important matters – perhaps a call to the national supervisory office, or placement of teachers for the next school year, or maybe eighth-grade registration for high school. Suddenly, there is a soft, shy knock at the door. It is a little first grader. What could she want from the principal? Did her ponytail holder tear or her pencil point break? Maybe she lost the “smiley sticker” she got that day from the teacher?

Nu, what do you think? Is it appropriate to come to the busy, distinguished principal with such issues?

And what did Hillel Hazaken think when a “nudnik” came to him on Erev Shabbos with questions about the behavior of native Africans and the eyes of desert nomads??

How did he restrain himself from humiliating the fellow and throwing him out? How did he manage to remain unruffled and answer him patiently?

The answer is one word: *Anavah*.

Hillel Hazaken was an incomparably humble person. He did not perceive the bothersome behavior of this individual as an insult to his honor as the *nasi*; therefore, he saw no reason to be angry. In his profound humility, he simply answered the nudnik’s questions. Patiently. Calmly. Without a trace of irritation.

The Gemara says that Beis Hillel’s extreme *anavah* was the reason why most of the halachic disagreements between them and Beis Shamai were resolved in favor of Beis Hillel. “Humility wins...”

### IN THE FACE OF CAPABILITIES AND SUCCESSES

What, actually, is the quality of *anavah*?

Does it demand of us to disregard our talents and successes?

The *Mesilas Yesharim* (ch. 22) explains that even if a person is smart and knows more than others – he has nothing to boast about, because he is simply acting in accordance with his nature and with the talents he was given from Above, just as a bird cannot take pride in its flying ability and the ox cannot brag about its physical strength. Rabi Yochanan Ben Zakai said in this regard (*Avos* 2:8): “If you studied much Torah, do not take credit for yourself, because that is what you were created for.”

If so, humility is the understanding that all of our

abilities and successes, our intelligence and talents – are gifts from Hashem; hence, there is no point in feeling pride in them. On the contrary, if a person was gifted from Shamayim with a sharp mind and other makings of success – the expectations and demands of him are correspondingly higher. If so – what cause does he have to boast about his success?

The *Mesilas Yesharim* adds that all this is so when speaking of *gedolim*, *kedoshei elyon*. But as for us?? We are so riddled with flaws that we don’t have to work hard to see the lowliness of our souls and the weakness of our minds. We *certainly* have nothing to boast about...

And what, indeed of the *gedolei ha’umah*?

Who is greater than Dovid Hamelech, who reached such a high stature as King of Yisrael. Yet he said of himself in *Tehillim* (22:7): “But I am a worm, and not a man, scorn of humanity and despised of people.” Dovid Hamelech! The Sweet Singer of Yisrael!! The one whom Hashem chose as King over Klal Yisrael!! And yet, he likened himself to a worm...

Dovid proved this humility when he heard Shimi Ben Gera “curse him with a powerful curse.” Even though he could have killed Shimi for the crime of rebelling against his monarchy, Dovid told Yoav Ben Tzeruyah, “Let him be... for Hashem has told him to curse.” He let the insult to his honor pass, out of a humility of spirit that it is hard for us to comprehend.

### FLEEING FROM HONOR

Someone once came to the home of Rav Moshe Feinstein and asked: “Could the Rosh Yeshiva write me a certificate confirming that I am a certified *shochet*?”

Rav Moshe asked the man to wait in the hallway. As he prepared to write the requested document, the other people in the room asked in wonderment: “Doesn’t the Rosh Yeshiva remember this man and how he behaved a few months ago in this very room, after the Rav ruled against him in a *din Torah*?”

Rav Moshe nodded. Yes, of course, he remembered.

Nevertheless, he took a pen and began to write...

“But he behaved then with great contempt, with incomparable *chutzpah*...” The Rav’s disciples couldn’t understand how, in spite of everything, Rav Moshe was willing to help him out and write a letter of approbation.

“I don’t understand what the connection is.” Rav Moshe’s voice was totally calm. “Yom Kippur has

passed in the interim. I said *‘Tefillah Zakah*” and declared that I forgive anyone who wronged me. Rabbosai, it’s not a game. I said that I forgive and I meant it. In any case, that man has surely already repented for his deeds...”

He then finished writing the certificate and handed it to the man waiting outside the door.

Greatness that reflects tremendous *anavah*. *Anavah* that demonstrates tremendous greatness!!

The *pasuk* (*Bamidbar* 12:3) says of Moshe Rabbeinu that he was “exceedingly humble, more than any man on the face of the earth.” Moshe Rabbeinu – Klal Yisrael’s first leader – had a humility that it is difficult to fathom!

That humility continues to characterize the leaders of all generations, as seen in countless stories from their lives. One small example is the story about Rav Akiva Eiger and the Nesivos Hamishpat, who were riding in a carriage together. When they approached the city, they saw crowds waiting to greet them. Rav Akiva Eiger quickly got down from the carriage, because he was certain that the honorable reception was for the Nesivos Hamishpat, sitting at his side and he, too, wanted to join in honoring him. In deference to Rav Akiva Eiger, the Nesivos Hamishpat got out of the carriage for the same reason. When the carriage entered the city, the people were surprised to see that it was empty...

Of this, it says, “He who flees from honor, honor pursues him.”

### PRECEDENCE BY HAKADOSH BARUCH HU

In the *tefillos* of the Yamim Nora’im, we mention again and again that Hashem loves the despondent and the broken-hearted. It’s a fact – people who are lowly of spirit and embrace the *middah* of *anavah* have “*protektzia*” in Shamayim. They are given precedence by Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

Conversely, the Gemara (*Sotah* 5a) tells us: “(Regarding) anyone who is haughty, Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, ‘He and I cannot live together in the world.’”

Isn’t it worthwhile to hold on to the precious *middah* of *anavah*? Would anyone pass up the special relationship that Hashem confers on those who possess the quality of *anavah* – from His good and loving hand??

# THE STAGE IS YOURS



DID YOU SEE A YESHUAH? CALL AND BE MEZAKEH HARABIM. TO HEAR AND RECORD YESHUAH STORIES FOR WOMEN, CALL 072-337-2212

## ENTRANCE TICKET TO HIGH SCHOOL

My daughter was finishing eighth grade and ready to continue to high school, and we got a message that in order to finalize her acceptance, I'd need to meet with the high school principal. I got very nervous. I knew the principal; she was a very forceful woman. Who knows what I was in for... In order to calm myself, I decided that before leaving the house, I'd call the Shalom Hotline and hear some *chizuk* stories in *shemiras halashon*.

As I was listening, someone knocked at the door. It was my neighbor, who wanted to get a difficult experience off her chest. She talked and talked. A few members of the family overheard a word here and there

and their curiosity was piqued. After the neighbor left, they tried to pressure me to tell everything I'd heard, but I refused, because it was clear to me that doing so would be a violation of prohibited speech.

I set off to the high school, and, *baruch Hashem*, the meeting was as smooth and positive as could be. I felt that it was all in the *zechus* of my restraint.

## A NOT EXTRANEIOUS BATCH

I am a Mishmeres HaSholom rep in Beitar.

Last month, there was a technical error in sending the



## DOUBLE WIN

This time, instead of presenting a story that came to the editor's desk, we decided to write up something that happened here, at the Mishmeres HaSholom office.

Every month, there is a raffle drawn from among those learning *hilchos shemiras halashon* every day. One of the secretaries' most pleasant jobs is to inform the lucky winner that her name was drawn and that a gift is on the way.

In the raffle drawn in Tamuz among those who'd learned in Sivan, there were a few winners. When we called one of them, we heard the amazing story that lay behind the win...

"A half year ago, my father, a perfectly healthy person, suddenly started feeling very strong intestinal pains," said the woman on the line. "The doctor rushed him to a series of tests, which revealed a cancerous growth in his intestines!"

The patient underwent a first series of chemotherapy treatments so as to shrink the tumor as much as possible. Next was an operation. The surgeons tried to clean out the growth as much as they could, but they admitted that in such a situation, it is almost impossible to clear everything out, a hundred percent. The plan was to do another series of chemotherapy a few months later, to deal with the inevitable remains of the tumor.

A short period passed, and the pains reappeared. The family went into a panic. "It was clear to us that the tumor was continuing to spread. We assembled and decided to increase *zechuyos* for Abba's recovery. I participate in Mishmeres HaSholom's programs and I asked all members of the family to take upon themselves to learn *hilchos shemiras halashon* daily from the Hotline. For a full month, we tried not to miss a single day!"

Here, the voice on the end of the line became choked up with emotion: "Yesterday, the answer came from Abba's biopsy. Everything is fine! There is no sign of the tumor!! Our father is perfectly healthy!!"

She had won a healthy Abba, and now had also won the raffle...

magazines and I received twice as many as I needed. I decided to give the extra batch to my married daughter, who lived in Bat Ayin. My daughter jumped at the opportunity. She immediately thought of her sister-in-law, a young woman who was hospitalized already for several weeks. The doctors couldn't figure out what her problem was and they suspected that it was the *machalah*... Needless to say, the entire family was very stressed. My daughter decided that this was precisely what she needed to amass *zechuyos* for her sister-in-law's *refuah* – to distribute the Mishmeres HaSholom magazines in her town.

It wasn't easy. She invested time and effort into this distribution. But already the next day, the good news arrived: The doctors had succeeded in pinpointing the problem. It was just a virus, and within a few days, *baruch Hashem*, there was a rapid recovery!

## BETTER THAN ALL THE OINTMENTS

I am a teacher in Netanya.

Recently, I started having sores on my face. They were unpleasant, annoying, itchy, and, of course, also unsightly.

I went to a few different doctors and smeared on various ointments, but there was no improvement. On the contrary, the situation seemed to worsen.

My husband consulted with our Rav and we decided to work on *shemiras halashon*. After all, the sores were similar to the affliction of *tzaraas* that comes because of *lashon hara*... I called Mishmeres HaSholom to donate a sum equal to the numerical equivalent of *petza* – 240 shekels a month – and I also took upon myself to learn two halachos from *Chofetz Chaim* daily.

Miraculously, at the end of two weeks, my face began to improve, and within a few days, all the sores had disappeared the same way they'd come.



# VOICES FROM THE FIELD

SHARING STORIES AND EXPERIENCES FROM MISHMERES HASHOLOM ACTIVITIES

# ברכנו אבינו כולנו 'נאחד'

K'ECHAD MEETINGS - INTERESTING AND INSPIRING MONTHLY GET-TOGETHERS FOR WOMEN LIVING IN THE SAME BUILDING - HAVE LONG AGO BECOME ONE OF OUR MOST EXCITING PROGRAMS. THESE MEETINGS DID NOT ORIGINATE HERE, AT MISHMERES HASHOLOM. IT IS MOVING TO SEE THAT THE CHOFETZ CHAIM HIMSELF FOUNDED SUCH GROUPS, AS HE WRITES:

*"...To strengthen this holy matter, we assembled a group of yerei Hashem, called "Agudas Hashomrim," from the pasuk, "Shomer piv uleshono... one who guards his mouth and tongue guards his soul from troubles."*

*"We made another takanah - that once every thirty days, on Erev Rosh Chodesh, the entire group, or at least its leaders, should meet... to discuss how to strengthen this holy topic that Hakadosh Baruch Hu was so exacting about."*

*"And whoever guards himself as required will merit the berachah that was given at Har Gerizim by all of the Levi'im, with the Aron Habris, and to which the entire nation said, 'Amen!'"*

\*\*\*

THE ENTHUSIASTIC RESPONSES AND EXCITING STORIES STREAM IN WITHOUT A STOP. WE'VE ASSEMBLED JUST A SMALL SAMPLING FOR YOU:



**B. K. FROM BEIT SHEMESH - FROM THE FIRST BUILDING TO WIN A BUILDING UPGRADE IN THE SPECIAL RAFFLE AMONG PARTICIPANTS**

**IN K'ECHAD MEETINGS - SHARES:**

As soon as I got married, I wanted to be a rep, but the building where we were renting already had a rep. I hoped that when we'd move to our own apartment in Beit Shemesh, I would realize my dream. I got to the building and - again, they already had a rep... What a disappointment! Then, our street rep suggested that I become a rep for the building next door. I was thrilled! I started holding K'echad meetings for both relatively small buildings. For years, we held these monthly meetings, with the neighbors "fighting" over the *zechus* to host them in their home. Women came to the meetings at any price...

I would prepare the programs myself every month. I accumulated a whole folder of programs, and other buildings made use of them. Here and there, we bought creative programs from a woman in Tzefat.

Suddenly, Corona invaded, and everything ground to a halt. When it became possible to resume the meetings, they didn't really pick up...

Then was the major event for reps in Beit Shemesh. They introduced the new, upgraded

programs and special kits for K'echad meetings. I decided: We're getting back into action! That same week, I took the special invitation from the kit and made a separate copy for each neighbor, not just one to hang up in the lobby. I felt the need to do something big, that would really take off, but I was afraid that just a few neighbors would show up.

*Baruch Hashem*, the first meeting succeeded beyond all expectations. We kept adding more chairs. Sixteen neighbors came and there was an unusual feeling of *achdus*.

Since then, there's been a new atmosphere in the building. You feel it as soon as you walk in. Here, too, things happen, as in every building; people build out and so on, and you would expect that there would be uncomfortable situations and even *machlokes*. But, thanks to the meetings, the dialogue is entirely different. The language among the neighbors is the language of peace.

And then came the win!!

It was an added injection of *chizuk*, like a message from Above that we were doing the right thing and Hashem was happy with us!

The front doors in both buildings had glass squares that had been broken for a long time. Suddenly, we were able to replace them. Now the buildings were whole and perfect in all respects. There is no excuse

THE WINNING BUILDINGS IN THE RAFFLE FOR UPGRADING THE FACE OF THE BUILDING, DRAWN FROM AMONG BUILDINGS THAT HELD K'ECHAD MEETINGS



**KISLEV**  
12 AND 14 MINCHAT YITZCHAK, BEIT SHEMESH  
₪ 3,200



**TEVES**  
67 BEN ISH CHAI, BEIT SHEMESH  
₪ 2,800



**SHEVAT**  
41 YEHUDA HANASI, BRACHFELD, MODI'IN ILIT  
₪ 4,000



You can hear these stories and more directly from the people involved, on the reps' line: 072-337-2100, ext. 4 and 5.

not to have meetings; we set a day and a place, and that's it!! Thanks to the beautiful kits, everything is ready. Many times, I photocopy the story for everyone, because they want to take it home to read to their families.

I must add that the magazines recently are full of content. No one passes it up. It is so well done, suiting all tastes and shades, for young and old. Even the story on the back page has been specially upgraded.



### E. P. FROM KIRYAT GAT IS EXCITED:

I moved into a huge, new building, with twenty-four families. I didn't know anyone. It was a new city, everything

strange and unfamiliar. I experienced adjustment pains from all directions.

Then – one of the women invited the neighbors to a K'echad meeting. We didn't know what it was all about, but we came. What can I say...? This get-together transformed the entire building. Suddenly, I had neighbors...no, not neighbors, but friends, almost sisters. We learned the halachos together, then listened to an interesting lecture on the Mishmeres HaSholom hotline, and, above all – got acquainted with all the neighbors. We emerged with a sense of *achdus* and *chizuk*. It wasn't just a coffee klatch to pass the time; it was a spiritual encounter. I cannot fully describe the experience and the unity it engendered. Suddenly we showed interest in one another. We felt a caring bond.

Several years have passed since then, but we don't let it go. Every month, we get together at the home of a different family, and nobody passes up participating. Recently, thanks to the beautiful kits, the meetings have been much upgraded. What amazing programs! What meaningful messages! My whole fridge is plastered with the inspiring sayings. The K'echad meeting has become a "treat" that we wait for all month. Believe me – even if it falls out on a day when I have a wedding or other event to attend, I won't miss it. This is what gives me strength, gives me the feeling that I have family, I belong. I feel that this spiritual bond is what is *mechazek* us so much – a genuine bond, without *lashon hara* and *rechilus*, just peace and brotherhood.



### R.W. FROM Y-M IS ALL WORKED UP:

I must tell you a fresh story that happened this month. I wanted to invite a very special speaker to our upcoming K'echad meeting.

I knew she was very busy, but, if she would come, it would add a lot to the event. When I called, she admitted that she was very overloaded and didn't have time, but since she had a son who wasn't finding his *shidduch*, she'd make an extra effort to come, as a *zechus* for him. We set the meeting for Sunday night. On Sunday evening, she called and said, uncomfortably, that in the end, she can't come. But she didn't want to pass up the opportunity, so she asked us to put off the meeting to Tuesday.

On Monday, she called, all excited. The night before, her son had gotten engaged! The *erusin* would take place on Tuesday, so, of course she couldn't come to our K'echad, but she felt tangibly that the *yeshuah* had come because of her desire to speak at the meeting...

I had no choice but to find a different speaker. I'd already informed the neighbors about Sunday, then put off to Tuesday. I couldn't cancel again... I called someone else, a *chassidish* woman I highly respect and told her the whole story. She said, "If so, I want to do it for my daughter's *zechus*. She's also been in *shidduchim* a long time. Nothing serious is cooking now, but still..."

She came and seemed distracted, but still delivered a powerful *shiur*. The next day (!) she called and said: "You won't believe it! My daughter got engaged last night!"

What had happened? For some time, they'd been involved with a serious *shidduch* suggestion. They were very interested, but the matter wasn't progressing... On Tuesday, before leaving to our K'echad meeting, she got a call from the *shadchan* that the other side wanted to move ahead and that the *bachur*, who lived out-of-town, would be coming in for a wedding, so they could take a look at him. "When I got to the meeting, my head was already spinning, but I didn't want to give up the *zechus*," she said. "After the meeting, I went to have a glimpse, and

after that, matters progressed out of control. By the middle of that night, they were engaged!"



### AND IN RAMOT, THEY FIGHT OVER THE PRIVILEGE:

Here in the building, everyone knows that whoever hosts a K'echad meeting – has a *yeshuah*. One month, two neighbors badly wanted the meeting to take place in their homes. One had a boy in *shidduchim*, and the other, a daughter. It was hard for them to be *mevater*. In the end, one gave in, and what's interesting is – *her* daughter is the one who got engaged!!



Activity: "K'ECHAD MEETINGS

Target population: WOMEN, GIRLS, AND BOYS

Number of participants: TENS OF THOUSANDS OF PARTICIPANTS EVERY MONTH, AT ABOUT A THOUSAND MEETINGS.

"K'ECHAD" MEETINGS ARE MONTHLY GET-TOGETHERS THAT TAKE PLACE IN A BUILDING, IN THE GOAL OF TOGETHER STRENGTHENING THEMSELVES IN MATTERS OF SHEMIRAS HALASHON AND BEIN ADAM L'CHAVEIRO, AND ABOVE ALL, TO UNITE AND LIVE TOGETHER IN LOVE AND HARMONY.

A MONTHLY ACTIVITY KIT FOR "K'ECHAD" MEETINGS IS DISTRIBUTED FREE OF CHARGE TO INTERESTED BUILDING REPS, ALONG WITH THE MISHMERES MAGAZINES.

AT THE "K'ECHAD" MEETINGS FOR KIDS EACH MONTH, THE PARTICIPANTS ENJOY FASCINATING STORIES, SKITS, ACTIVITIES, GAMES, AND CRAFT PROJECTS.

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BY HARAV HAGAON R' MENACHEM MENDEL FUCHS SHLITA,  
RAV OF MISHMERES HASHOLOM

## ASK THE RAV

### HOW TO PERSUADE A FRIEND

**Question:** I'm in third grade and I go to a weekly *shemiras halashon* group. I learned that if someone *chalilah* spoke *lashon hara*, he needs to do *teshuvah* by feeling regret, admitting his sin, deciding not to do it again, and persuading the listeners that what he said wasn't true.

**My question is:** How can I convince the friend who heard *lashon hara* from me that it isn't true, when I myself know that it's true?

**Answer:** If the *lashon hara* is likely to cause damage or pain, the Chofetz Chaim says (*Hilchos LHR 4, BMC 48*) that the speaker needs to convince the listeners that the information he told them is not true. That will prevent the damage and also save him the need to conciliate the one he spoke about, leaving him with the obligation only to do *teshuvah* to Hashem. If the *lashon hara* is not liable to cause the person damage or pain, the Chofetz Chaim does not write that one should do this, but, certainly, when possible – it is best to do so.

The questioner wonders, "How can I convince the listener that the story isn't true, when I myself know it's true?" Keep in mind that in order to avoid *lashon hara* or *rechilus*, the Chofetz Chaim writes (*Hilchos Rechilus 1:8*) that you're allowed to lie outright. If so, she can veer from the truth to convince people that the facts she reported were inaccurate. In practice, there's no need to actually lie. She can simply say, "Apparently I was mistaken in some of the details." Here are some examples:

If she'd said that Ploni turned on the light on Shabbos, she can explain that it turned out he'd forgotten that today was Shabbos. If she'd said that Plonis scribbled in her classmate's notebook, she can explain that she later found out that the girls had hurt Plonis's feelings and she'd restrained herself from responding, but, in the end, lost control.

With these explanations, the speaker can also convince herself that it indeed is not clear that there was something negative here.

## OUR WORD

"Saba, you were really in Radin, at the *kever* of the Chofetz Chaim?" Nine-year-old Yossie can hardly believe it.

"Yes, Yossie. A few years ago, when you were very small, I flew by plane to a faraway country called Belarus and went to the little village of Radin. I visited the building of the Chofetz Chaim's yeshiva, I saw the place where he lived, and, of course, I davened at his *kever*."

Yossie is excited to hear about it. Saba told him more about Radin – a remote town, with old wooden homes, chickens in the yards, no shops, nothing...

Yossie is bewildered. How could it be that the Chofetz Chaim, the tzaddik every boy has heard of, lived in such a simple, far-flung place...? And how did he manage – from such a distant town, reached only with by horse-drawn carriage – to spread the *sefarim* that he wrote throughout the Jewish world?

But Saba was there and saw it with his own eyes. He explains to Yossie that the Chofetz Chaim was a humble person, who wasn't interested in honor or money. He wanted only to encourage more and more Jews to guard their tongues, through the *sefarim* he wrote. And he was *zocheh* that his *sefer Chofetz Chaim-Shemiras Halashon* can now be found in every Jewish home. It is the basis of all the many *sefarim* written in our time on *hilchos shemiras halashon*, including illustrated books for kids.

This month, on 24 Elul, will be the *yahrtzeit* of the Chofetz Chaim. He will surely be a *meilitz yosher* for all the precious children who work on their speech and take upon themselves to learn *hilchos shemiras halashon*.

Yossie has a beautiful *sefer* at home, with colorful pictures. He's decided to start learning one halachah of *shemiras halashon* from the *sefer* every day. And how about you?





# THE VICE-PRINCIPAL'S NEIGHBOR

In the middle of the lesson, there was a knock at the door of the sixth-grade classroom. The secretary, R' Shmuelov, was there, a large envelope in his hand.

"Avrumi Levin," he scanned the rows of children. "You're a neighbor of the vice-principal, right? He doesn't feel well and he didn't come in today. These are important documents that must get to him urgently." He walked over to the third desk in the middle row and put the envelope on Avrumi's desk.

Avrumi nodded, and Rebbe Lerner, who was in the middle of writing words and their explanations on the board, said: "Avrumi is very responsible. You can rely on him."

Again Avrumi. Chaim's hand, which had been rapidly copying down the words from the board, stopped.

Last week, Avrumi had come to *cheder* with a huge loudspeaker for the Rosh Chodesh program. The vice-principal had left his house early and forgotten to take it with him, so he called Avrumi's house and asked him to bring it on the school bus. All the way to *cheder*, Avrumi held the loudspeaker on his knees and wouldn't let anyone touch it. That Avrumi...

And then there was the time that the vice-principal himself came to their class and called on--- Avrumi, of course, and asked him to---

Oof. It gets Chaim angry. Really angry. So, true, Avrumi is the vice-principal's neighbor across the hall, and if the vice-principal wants to send something with him, all he needs to do is knock on his door. But still.... Why always Avrumi?!

They sat together on the big porch and learned. No one from Avrumi's family was home, and he'd invited a few friends to study with him for the test in Mishnah. Chaim was there, too, even though he was still a little angry at Avrumi for seeming like a privileged character...

Suddenly there was a frightened banging at the door. Avrumi ran to open and found a little boy standing there, crying hard.

It was six-year-old Nachumi, the vice-

principal's son. In between his spurts of sobbing, they managed to understand that no one was home... that he was supposed to have gone to his cousins' house, but since he had a key, he'd decided to come home and wait for Ima... that meanwhile, he'd felt thirsty and decided to make himself a cup of hot cocoa... and---

"Help! What do we do???" Ariel started getting hysterical.

Chaim and Elchanan stood there, scared, looking with horror at Nachumi's little hand, which was bright red.

"It's just a little burn," Avrumi said in a calm voice, like that of an adult. He turned on the faucet and washed the hand with a lot of water. "Soon I'll bring Burnshield (a special bandage for treating burns) from our medicine Gamach closet, and everything will be fine, Nachumi."

Gradually, the boy's crying subsided. Apparently the pain had receded somewhat, along with his panic at what had happened. Avrumi brought the bandage from the Gamach closet and tended Nachumi's burn like an experienced EMT.

After the hand was well-bandaged, he went to the kitchen and came back with a big, red lollipop. "This is also good for burns..." he said, with a smile, and handed it to Nachumi, whose cheeks were still wet from tears.

Then he tried calling the vice-principal's cell phone, but the number was not available. Maybe he didn't have reception.

Meanwhile, Nachumi sat with them on the porch, completely calm, thanks to the red lollipop, until he saw his father approaching the building.

"What a story that was," Ariel sighed, after Nachumi ran home and after they stood at the door and heard how Avrumi reported to the vice-principal everything that had happened, and how the

vice-principal himself pinched Avrumi on the cheek and thanked him profusely...

"Tomorrow it's going to be the attraction of the whole *cheder*," Chaim announced. "How Avrumi saved the son of---"

But Avrumi thought otherwise. He asked them not to say anything about what had happened.

No, it wasn't a secret, but he didn't like to brag and didn't feel comfortable when everyone looked at him and talked about him.

If, until then, Chaim had been jealous of Avrumi for living so close to the vice-principal, and had thought, "Why always him?" - now, he suddenly understood that he had another reason to envy him...



Whoever answers correctly enters a raffle for prizes  
Last month's winner: Yaakov Ben Chaim, Yerushalayim



## PREPARING THE QUIZ

It's the beginning of the school year – books in shiny covers, clean, empty notebooks. The sixth grade rebbi has given the boys a challenging assignment: to prepare a brief quiz on the subject of Elul with a partner. Every day, a few minutes will be devoted to the quiz questions the boys come up with.

Yitzchak and Ephraim make up to prepare the quiz together. They already have a great idea. But where will they meet to write it?

Yitzchak says: "Better not to do it in my house. My fifth-grade brother Menachem is so annoying. He'll try to bother us non-stop."

Look up *sefer Chofetz Chaim, Hilchos Lashon Hara, Klal Ches, Se'if Aleph (and Beer Mayim Chayim ibid, se'if katan aleph)*, call 072-337-2212 Ext. 33, listen to a question based on the story, and choose an answer. Those who answer correctly will automatically enter a raffle.



The idea that won the prize was from Yosef W., Yerushalayim



THERE'S ALWAYS ANOTHER SIDE

### Chani's story:

The beginning of the school year. My briefcase is neat, my pencil case is fully-equipped, my notebooks are unwrinkled. It's wonderful to be in fourth grade, the grade for big girls!

Today we had art class for the first time. The teacher explained to us her special teaching method. She also wrote on the board what supplies we need to buy for art class. I love drawing and this teacher looks so special. I came home and told Ima excitedly all about my experiences, and especially about art class. In the afternoon, I went to the shopping center with the list the teacher had given us. As I was walking down the street, I saw Shiffy coming towards me, walking with her mother. Until a year ago, Shiffy was my best friend, but in the beginning of last year, they mixed up the classes. Now Shiffy isn't in my class anymore and we don't see each other every day, but we are still friends. So why is Shiffy making that strange face at me?? Why is she trying to avoid me?? What did I do to her???

### Shiffy's story:

Yesterday afternoon, Ima let us open the kiddie pool on the porch. It was so hot. Ima said that Elul is the very end of the summer and it often has some very hot days. We all jumped for joy when we heard the word "pool." "This is the last time, before I pack it up and put it in the attic, until next year," Ima said. After having a great time in the water, we ate supper and got ready for bed. I felt very hot, so I set up the fan to blow right on my face, turned it to the highest number, and went to sleep.

When I woke up in the morning, I didn't recognize myself in the mirror. My mouth was all lopsided. Ima was frightened and immediately called our doctor. "It could be connected to the strong fan that blew on her face at night," the doctor explained. She told us to come to her office that afternoon.

I couldn't bring myself to go to school like that. I really looked strange! I barely agreed to go to the doctor's office with Ima, and all the way there, I davened that I shouldn't meet anyone I knew...

The doctor examined me and said that, *baruch Hashem*, it's nothing serious. The chill from the fan had affected my mouth muscle and it would get back to itself in a few days.

*Baruch Hashem*, I didn't meet anyone at the doctor's office or on the way home. I just saw my friend Chanie from quite a distance. I hope she didn't notice me...

## A LOPSIDED SMILE



Summary: Last time, the boys called the number written in the *sefer*. Dov, the Ukrainian refugee, was shaken by the words in Russian, which called for battle. Only after they exchanged one digit did the boys get to the right number, where they were able to order free *sefarim* for groups.



## ON THE WINGS OF A STORY

# FINAL CHAPTER: LAST STOP

### Eli's *sefer's* story:

The little locker was dark and I lay there, pensive and confused. A few days had passed already. Doors above and below me had creaked; only my door hadn't budged. I'd almost given up hope. Eli had put me in his father's locker so I wouldn't disappear again, but would I lie here in the dark forever? Never see the light of day? That's why I was so happy on Thursday when I heard a muffled voice outside. I felt the door jiggling and heard something metallic being stuck inside it.

"Does it work?" someone – maybe Yudi or Shapiro – asked Eli.

"Mmm... not exactly," answered Eli.

"Try again. Left, more gently."

More voices were heard. First it was just Eli and his friend. Gradually, more boys joined. They each tried to turn the key. They talked about how the lockers had been installed just the previous week, and maybe it wasn't the right key.

"We have to call the *gabbai*!" said Hillel.

"Yes, but not now!" insisted Dovid. "In another fourteen minutes, the Daf Yomi *shiur* will start. It's a shame to waste time now getting out Eli's *sefer* when we have enough new *sefarim*."

New *sefarim*! I felt a pinch in my heart... While I was lying in the locker, bored and forgotten, new *sefarim* had arrived at the shul. Who... ach... who needs me?

"You're coming, Eli?" I heard a muffled

voice. "We're starting, okay? Time is running away and we have no choice."

"I..." Eli hesitated. "I, eh..." he panted. Warm air blew on me through the crack.

I wanted to tell him to hurry up and not miss the learning. But I also wanted to beg him to remain with me, not to abandon me in favor of a new *sefer*. Maybe it was for the best that I couldn't make a real sound – I'm just a *sefer* – because every second I wanted something different and I couldn't make up my mind.

"There! There!!!" All at once, light burst into my locker. Eli's hands embraced me, and then his lips touched my binding and he kissed me fervently.

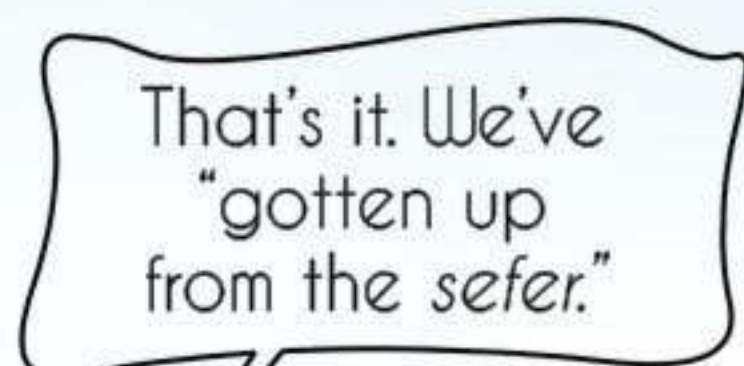
"*Baruch Hashem!*" Eli shouted, taking me and running. "I managed to get into the locker. Wait for me!" He sat down next to Dov and quickly opened me up. "I couldn't think of learning from a different *sefer*," he

muttered to himself, and

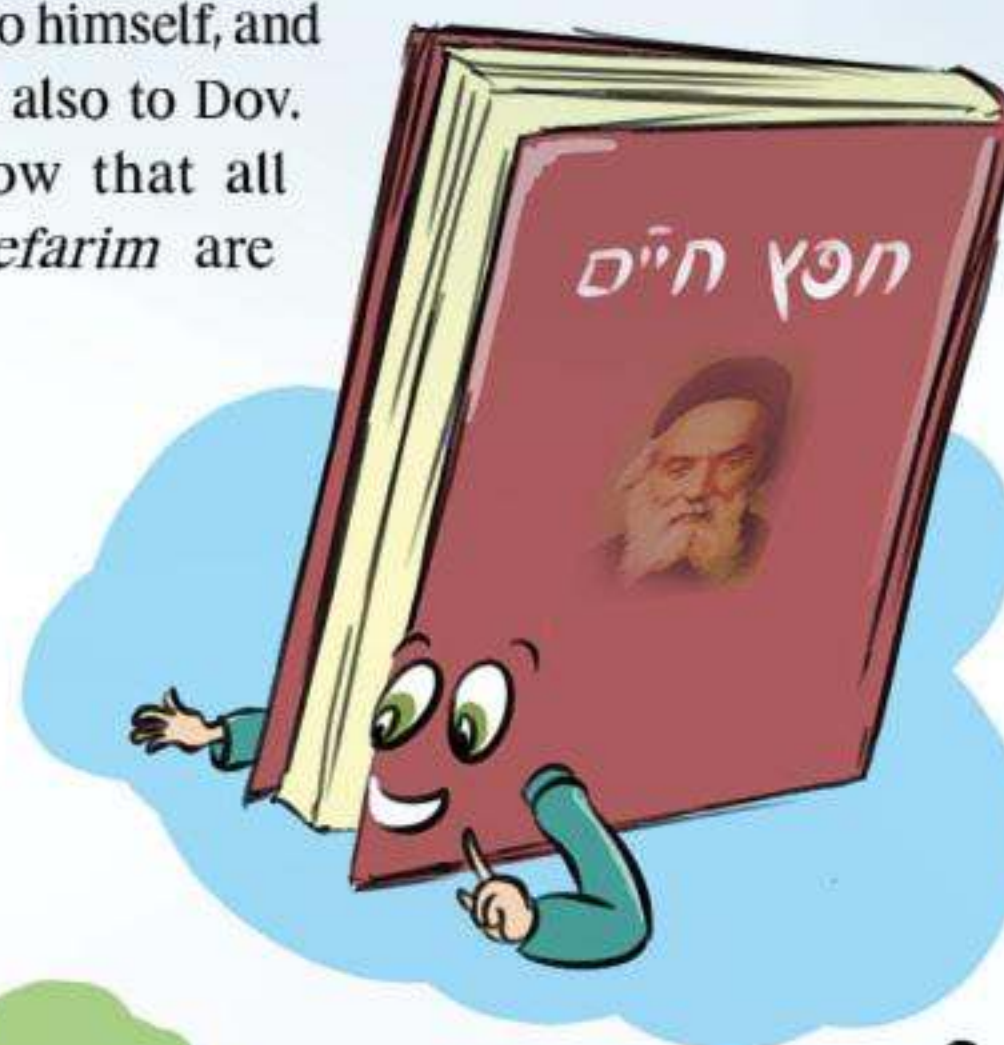
maybe also to Dov.

"I know that all the *sefarim* are

That's it. We've "gotten up from the *sefer*."



"I know that all the *sefarim* are



Let's hope we'll find things that we can carry out!

hands, and from now on, I would be his alone. Maybe it was a tear of emotion. Or a drop of juice from the first plum of the season. Words were heard around me, and without speaking aloud, I, too, joined in: "*Shehecheyanu... v'kiyemanu... v'higiyanu... lazeman hazeh.*"

identical to this one, but my *sefer* and I went on a real journey together."

Real...journey... The boys read something and discussed it and maybe took on a *kabbalah*. But I? I was all worked up. Even when Eli put his finger inside me, reading fluently and even when Shapiro suggested getting hold of a new fruit – "Because there's a special feeling of newness with these *sefarim*, and we ought to say '*Shehecheyanu*' – I floated a bit above the sound waves.

Suddenly, safe in the hands of Eli and belonging only to him, I thought about everything I'd been through until this point. None of the new *sefarim* – of that I was certain – had gone through as many adventures as I had. I remembered the days when I lay forgotten in the fire truck; the long time I spent in the forest. I'd gone through a harrowing odyssey, that's for sure. Until they emptied out the little office

where I sat, and until... I returned to Eli's secure hands. Then a calmer stage followed: Once a week, I was at the center, the children around me, trying to read and understand and apply. And I... I, myself also learned, both what was written inside me and what was outside of me. All the---

Something damp dripped on me. Is Eli, too, crying, like me? Why? The gift that Savta had given him (me!) was back in his



# THE CODE

It was rather late when I finally prepared for sleep. As I was pulling out the bottom bed – I noticed the note I attached for you here. It was lying on the floor.

At first, I wanted to toss the scribbled note into the trash bin. But a quick peek at the contents shook me up.

W-what? Huh?

Who wrote this clumsy sentence about me?

Who thinks that my sleeping habits are his business?

And who is aware that I've been trying very hard to change this particular habit, without success?

For two weeks now, I've been working on trying to get to bed earlier, but I've primarily met up with failures. Once, it was an adventure book that I couldn't put down; another time, it was an uncontrollable urge to straighten out my drawer. Most nights, it was just a general dawdling ...

"Do it gradually," Ima advised me. "Every week, try to move up your bedtime by a few minutes, until you arrive at the perfect time!" It was a good idea, but even those few minutes were hard for me.

And suddenly, such a "vote of confidence"!

Wait a second. This tall "t" – isn't it Mendy's?

More and more letters joined the puzzle and confirmed that Mendy – my younger brother – was the mysterious writer. Who does he think he is? My Rebbi...?

Mendy was lucky that he was already fast asleep. If not, he would have gotten a few nasty comments from me.

The next day, my anger had cooled off a little, but it wasn't gone.

At supper, Shalom showed us his test, with a "100%" on top. We all applauded him – all except for

Mendy, who ignored all the festivities. I understood that it was because of the test he'd gotten back last week. He didn't know that I'd seen the low grade written in red ink on his test paper. You could understand that it was hard for him to be happy for Shalom... And...

Would you be able to understand me, too, if I'd make a snide remark to him? All in all, it would be pretty similar to what he'd done to me. He'd given me an indirect reproach about my unsuccessful early bedtime campaign, and I'd remind him, in everyone's presence, about his "not-so-impressive" test grade.

Hmmm?

"Nu, Mendy" – the words started rolling from my mouth. Suddenly I started coughing terribly. That's what happens when you talk while in the middle of chewing a strip of pepper. Sruly banged on my back; Shalom suggested that I raise both hands; and Mendy... Mendy looked at me curiously, waiting to hear why I'd called out his name.

That short break saved me. I was about to hurt my brother, who, in spite of everything, I love and care about. So what if he wrote me an uncomplimentary note? Hurtful words that are said cannot be retrieved and they can cause all kinds of unpleasant things.

I breathed deeply and remained silent.

"What did you want?" Mendy asked.

"Uh... I don't remember," I evaded the question.

For a few minutes,

we continued eating quietly. Suddenly Mendy interrupted the silence: "You want to see something interesting we did yesterday?" He put a note on the table. A familiar and not so endearing note...

"Yankie taught me a few coding techniques" – he said, not noticing that something was bubbling up inside me. "If you want to send a message to a friend that nobody else will understand, you can use initials, as I did here!"

Everyone huddled around the note, full of curiosity.

"MUST EVERY EVENING TZVI MISS EXPECTED ASLEEP TIME? FORGOT INTENDED VERY EARLY!"

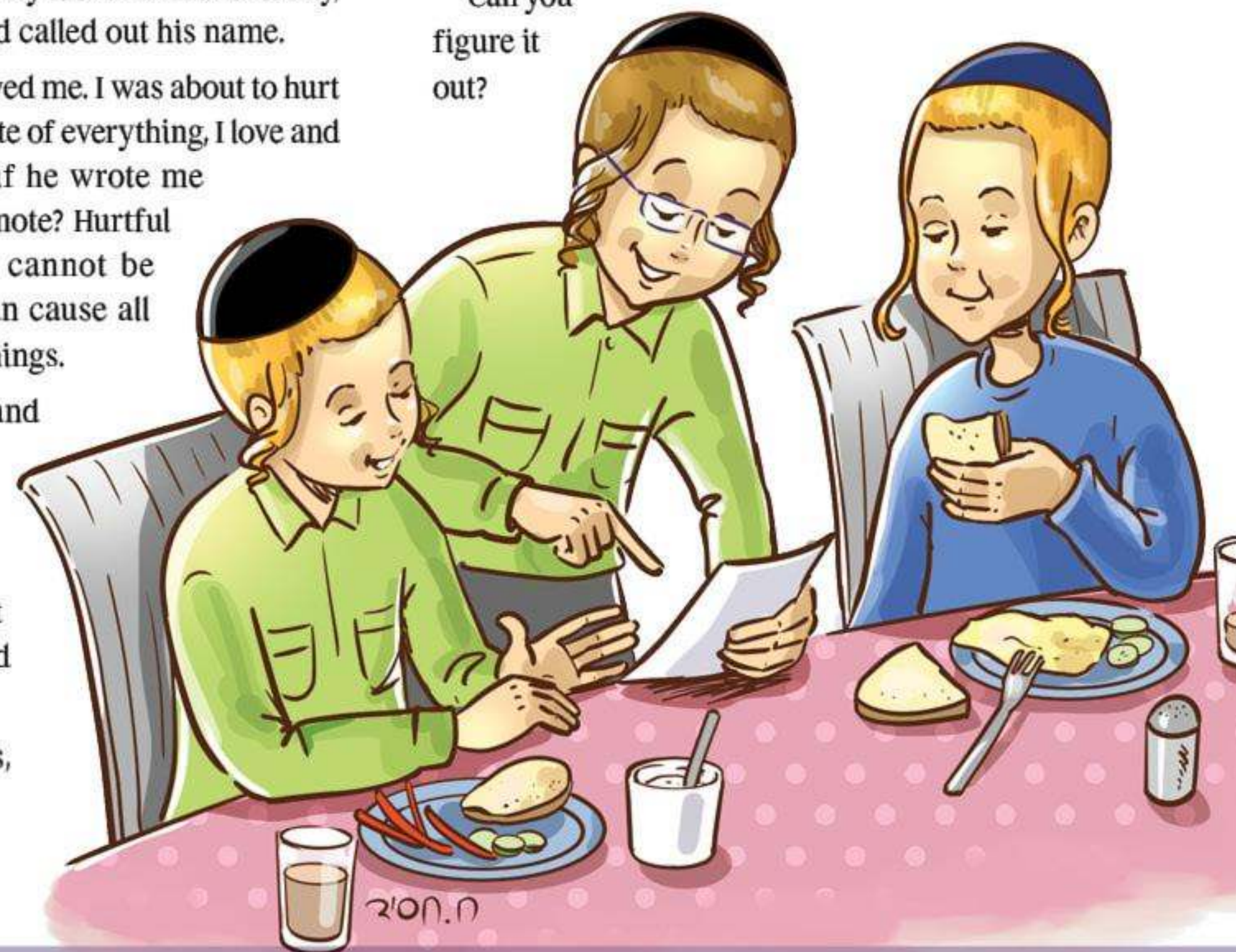
Sruly figured it out first: Meet me at five! That's clever!"

"Wow," Shalom enjoyed the idea. "Let's try to write one ourselves!"

I pulled out a pen from my pocket and wrote the following, right below my brother's words:

Good Useful Advice: Remember Delay Your Opinion Until Really Think Over. Never Go Utter Evil.

Can you figure it out?





RAFFLE WINNERS FOR THE PUZZLE SECTION:  
**YEHONASAN COHEN, BNEI BRAK**

Best wishes to the thousands of children who participated steadily in the **Sefiras Ha'omer project** and received special, exclusive gifts

# ELUL WORD SHAPE PUZZLE

Solve the Elul-related clues below and fit the answer into the correct word shape. (The arrows tell you where the word starts.) How do you know which word fits where? Each word shape is designed to match the shape of the letters in the answer. So, for example, if the answer to a clue is "elul," the word shape will look like this:

A small square box in the word shape will contain a small letter; a tall box reaching up will contain one of the tall letters in the alphabet, such as "l" or "h"; and a long box reaching down will contain letters like p. Note: We did not capitalize any words! Once you have solved the clues and inserted your answers into the matching word shapes, unscramble the letters in the yellow boxes to read our special Elul message!

Clues:

1. Elul is the \_\_\_\_\_ (number) month
2. Give lots of this in Elul
3. Say this to people you have wronged
4. Do this to people who have wronged you
5. Sound the \_\_\_\_\_ every Elul morning
6. He's in the field in Elul
7. Early morning tefillah in Elul
8. The returning we do in Elul
9. Regretting the past and changing our ways
10. Even if you sinned once, make sure not to \_\_\_\_\_ the sin.

Name:

Address:

Phone:  City:

Send solutions to Mishmeres HaSholom  
 11 Sdei Chemed St. Jerusalem or fax: 02-650-6107  
 Raffles follow the protocol at Mishmeres  
 HaSholom offices. Winners will be informed

**Summary:**  
Alexander, a boy from the area of the Chernobyl explosion, comes to Eretz Yisrael, to the home of Meir, an only child. His father Igor remains in Russia and researches the consequences of the explosion in the nuclear reactor. Asher is annoyed by all the attention his classmate Meir is getting due to his Russian guest, Alexander.

# Controlled EXPLOSION

Written by B. Halevi  
Illustrated by C. Chusid

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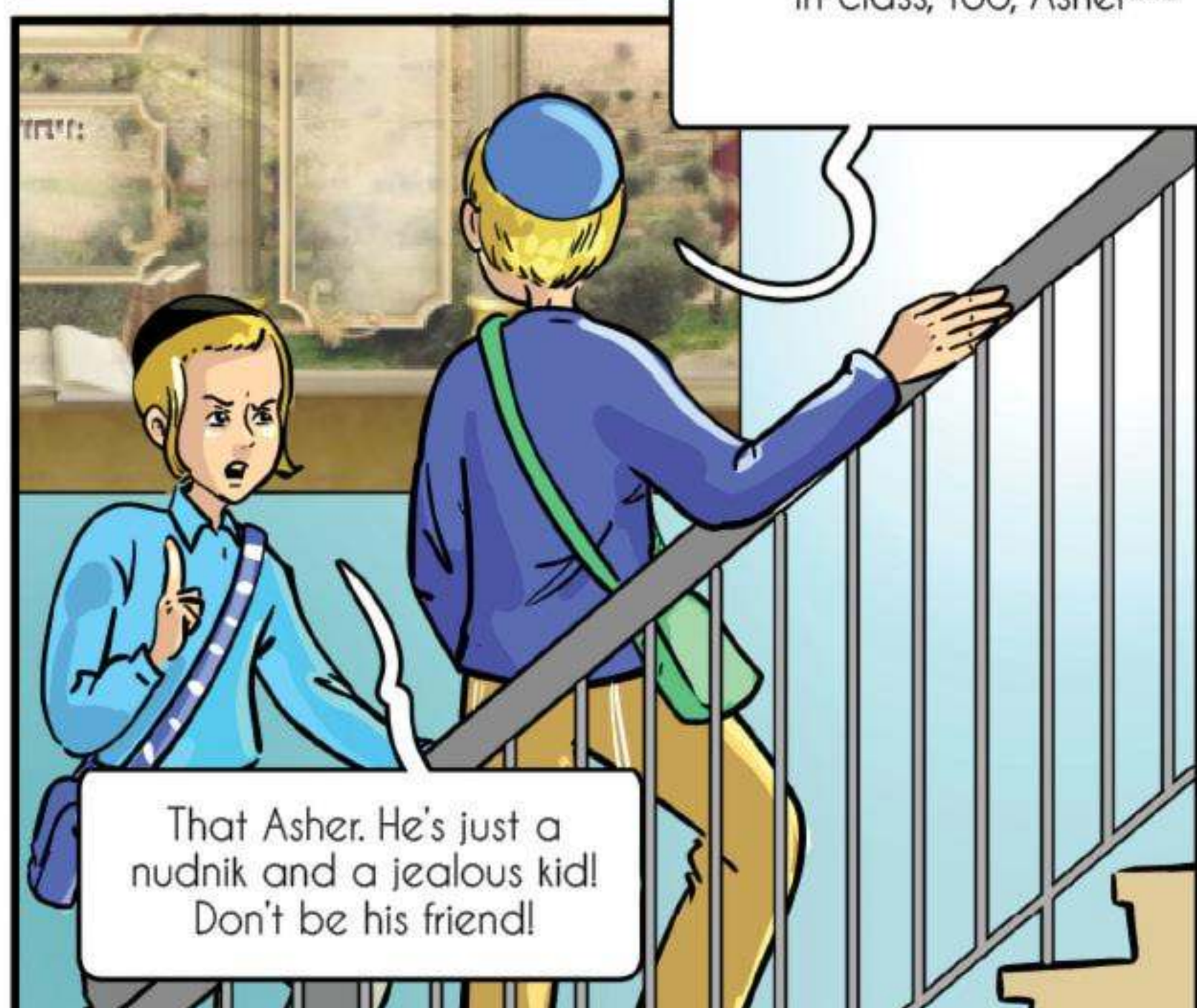
I already almost know the way from your house to the cheder!

Don't say "your house." Say "our house."

You're right. I already feel like part of your family. And in class, too, Asher---



That's him!

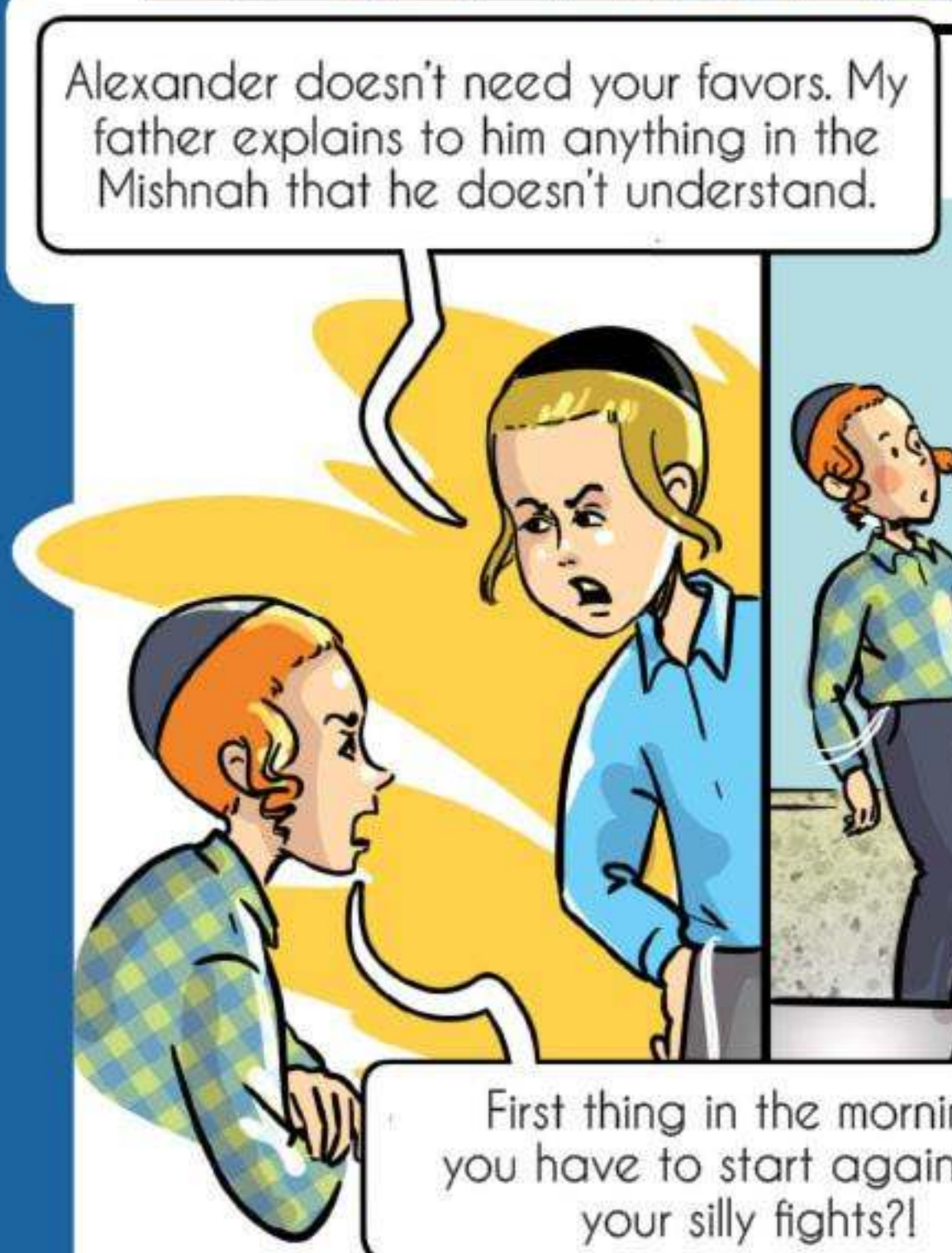


That Asher. He's just a nudnik and a jealous kid! Don't be his friend!



Hey, Alexander! *Dobroe utrol!*\* My father has this Russian booklet on the Mishnah we're learning, so I brought it here for you.

So what if his father knows Russian. Because of that, he needs to "steal" him from me?



Alexander doesn't need your favors. My father explains to him anything in the Mishnah that he doesn't understand.

First thing in the morning, you have to start again with your silly fights?!



We know exactly what you did yesterday!

Yes, Asher. You and your whole gang! Don't play innocent!



Hashem, I like Meir and also Asher. Please help me manage in this fight between them.

\* Good morning, in Russian.

To be continued, be"H