

The *Mesilas Yescharim* taught us that *zehirus*, watchfulness is the first step in the ladder of spiritual perfection. Watchfulness means to be alert, to be aware, to ask myself will I be happy with the consequences of my actions, with my ways, what will my take on this be, two years from now, five years from now, am I headed in the right way. But to be ever alert.

This *perek* deals with the motivation. Okay I get it, I have to be watchful, I have to be on guard, I have to grow, I have to accomplish. But what's going to inspire me? what's going to motivate me? what's going to get me moving?

So the *Mesilas Yescharim* explained to us that the very first step is *limud hatorah*. *Torah* is the spiritual energy, it's the force, it's that galvanizing strengthening, energizing entity that allows us to be pushed and propelled forward.

But in addition to that we need specific work, we need specific motivation and the *Mesilas Yescharim* explained to us that there are three groups of people. And each group of people will have a different motivational system. Meaning everyone needs *Torah* but for each group of individuals there'll be a separate distinct motivational system.

We had the *shleimei hadas*, the *shleimei hadas* are those who really get it. They see the world to come, they recognize the consequences and for them there is no greater motivational than the single reality that I will be exactly what I shape myself into.

If I make myself into a stellar individual, that's who I am, if I don't work on myself, then I'm diminutive. But exactly as the consequences, exactly the results of my actions, my ways, will be a part of me. And explains the *Mesilas Yescharim*, for them the *shleimei hadas*, there is nothing more potent.

You see they understand that number one it's really going to happen. I'm really going to leave this earth. My body will be put in the ground and I will be there. And number two, they fully get it that it's me. It's not my distant cousin, it's not my later ego, meaning not only will it happen, but it will be me. Exactly the one who tells my arms and legs to move, I will be there.

And the one other concept that the *shleimei hadas* get is the great delicateness of each action. Meaning to say it's not just how I do the act, but it's the *menusheh*, it's the details and everything that I do, everything that I engage in, has a dramatic impact but it's the nuances, and the finest of my intentions, of my actions, that will greatly impact me.

And because they see it as a part of them and they recognize the value of it, there is nothing that's more motivating to the *shleimei hadas*.

Now as I mentioned last time, I think that for most of us this is really above our pay scale. Meaning we could utilize it, we could focus on it, we could somehow touch it but it's not something that actively, really describes us, nevertheless it's important to know that there are a such groups of people, b it's important for us to be able to touch it, to use it as a somewhat of a motivating system.

But now we're going to deal with the second group of people, what he calls the people below this first group. And he says for these people he says it's *pashut*, it is obvious "*etzel kol bal das*" it's obvious to any thinking person, "*she'en hamedregos muchalkel bu'olam amiti shel olam haba*" that the *madregos* in the world to come, the levels in the world to come are given out "*lefi hamassim*" in accordance to the actions.

Meaning there'll be great, great differences in the world to come. It's not just that we're all angels in white, we'll all be there singing gleefully in our white angelic wings flying, it's true *im*

*yirtzeh* Hashem we'll all be there, but there'll be vast differences. There'll be people who'll be towering above and people well, well below and there'll be many, many *madregos*, many, many levels in between.

Meaning to say it's not one size fits all. Exactly what I shape myself into is what I'll be, and there are going to be vastly different levels.

*"bishlo yisrolem sham elo mishragil masav meichavero"* and the only ones who'll be lofty there are those who actually work on themselves, those who lift themselves above, those who actually become what they're supposed to be, *"va'asher mu'at hamasim"* and those people who do very little will be *"shafal"* will be low.

And then the *Mesilas Yesharim* makes a very important observation he says *"yesh mehapesaim"* there are these fools *"hamuvakshim rak luhakel me'alehem"* they make them, they say to themselves, I want to take it easy *"lama niga atzmeinu bukol kach chassidus uprishus"* why should I work so hard with all of this piety, all of this religious observation, why should I really strain myself *"vulo dy lanu"* it's sufficient *"shelo merushaim handanim ligehinom"* it's sufficient if I'm not amongst the wicked who are judged in *gehinnom*, I'm not going to push myself, I don't have to push myself *"lifni ulifnim"* inside if I don't have a great portion in the world to come, I'll have a smaller portion what do I have to work so hard for?

And if these words sound strange, I think they're really very, very accurate and I think if we're honest with ourselves, we might really feel ourselves saying something similar. Meaning do I have to have the front row in *Gan Eden*, I have to push myself? I'll be okay as long as I make it into the world to come, I'm good. I don't have to have the front row seat, I don't have to have big titles and honors, it's okay, as long as I'm there it's good.

And that claim, the *Mesilas Yescharim* says is based on one simple mistake. That mistake is assuming that I will feel then as I feel now. You see now it's true, it doesn't concern me much, I'll be in *Gan Eden*, that's fine, I don't have to have the front row, it's true, but that's based on a fallacy and the *Mesilas Yescharim* says I'll prove it to you.

He says what happens in this world? What happens in this world when someone who's below you suddenly gets that corner office, when someone who you look down, you're very nice to but suddenly they rise above you, they become your boss. What happens when someone says to you, please go do this for me when you used to be leagues and leagues above them?

And explains the *Mesilas Yescharim* what happens to us average people is it burns us inside, it bothers us and explains the *Mesilas Yescharim* that this is motivational system for grouping number two. Something called *kavod*, something called honor and I'd like to share you while honor doesn't sound very pious, it doesn't sound very religious or holy, it's something that I believe operates in our world and greatly impacts us.

Let me explain to you what I mean: I spent *Shabbos* not long ago in an out of town community there was a small *Shabbaton* and the fellow whose house I was staying in welcomed me into his home. His home was a four million dollar custom built home and it was exquisite, right out of a magazine. I mean everything was absolutely pristine, as a matter of fact they only moved in a few weeks ago.

Now you have to appreciate, twelve foot ceilings, eight thousand square feet, everything was custom built, custom designed, he had a playroom that looked like a small gym. In any case *davening* was supposed to be in that playroom. I was escorted to my room that's where I was and

then as it got closer to *Shabbos* I went downstairs and the brother in law of the fellow came in and I asked him if he could show me where the playroom is, where the *davening*'s going to be.

And the brother in law says well to tell you the truth I don't really know the house that well and he couldn't really find it. I got lost going upstairs four or five times. There were two stairways, each one leading differently and I'm telling you I got lost in the house.

I'd also like to share with you that for me when I *daven kabalas Shabbos* it was a powerful moving experience. You see I used this as an illustration, I saw this fellow's gorgeous home and I thought of my own home. *Baruch Hashem* I live in a nice home but compared to his it's a shack. And I said imagine what it's going to be like in the world to come, imagine if this fellow's world to come is this gorgeous mansion and I have this little shack and I *davened* the *davening* that was very, very powerful.

What the *Mesilas Yesharim* is sharing with us is that *kavod*, honor is a powerful tool if you know how to use it. Meaning to say we are all very sensitive to *kavod*. We don't like to think of it that way, we don't focus on it, but our social position matters to us greatly.

And once you recognize that and you recognize that who I am in the world to come is directly based on what I accomplish. To the *sholem*, that's a person of great spiritual growth, it's just internally I greatly aspire to be close to Hashem, I greatly aspire perfection because I recognize it's going to be me, I recognize the impact of my actions.

But if we're not quite on that level, the next motivating system is the realization of what it's going to be like in the world to come. You see in the world to come I'm not alone, it's not like I have my own little area and no one else talks to me, no one else around, it's social, we're much aware of others there and who I am is directly related to what I made myself into.

Great or whatever, fantastically pristine or just sullied. But exactly how I use my time, exactly what I focus on, becomes me. And that can be a very powerful motivating force if we understand how *kavod*, how honor works.

And let me share with you some interesting observations:

Bonard Napoleon was a fantastic general but he was also a very powerful motivator of men. He wasn't just a wise person in strategy, he knew how to get the troops to really do what he wanted them to do. And at a certain point he created what he called the legion of honor. He distributed fifteen thousand medals to his soldiers, he made eighteen of his generals marshals of France and he called his troops The Grand Army. At a certain point he was being criticized for giving toys to war hardened veterans, why are you treating them like they're children? Why are you giving them toys?

And he said these words, he said men are ruled by toys. And you will find something very, very interesting about the male of the human species. If you watch little boys you'll see that they're very, very competitive and they're often in situations where one tries to dominate, one tries to be in charge, one tries to be the one on top and you'll typically find that little boys play games where there's a winner and a loser and heaven forbid if I lose there's going to be *kol ra'ash gadol* because it doesn't matter as long as I'm the winner, and you could typically see boys getting very competitive over games.

But it's not just games. Little boys like to play particular roles, it'll be firemen, policemen, soldier, and you'll probably note that almost every one of those roles have a rank. There's a ranking system. You see it's not just about macho, it's about social hierarchy and the simple

reality is that armies have ranks, teams have captains, games have winners and losers and to a little boy, their social standing is very important.

And that social standing, is something that they'll fight for. You may think that it's boys and not girls, and it is true that typically girls are not that competitive in terms of winner or the loser of the game, but I'd like to share with you that social rank matters to a girl very much. As a simple observation:

The *Beis Yakov*'s today stress tremendously *tznius*. How long the sleeves, how long the skirt, necklines, it's very very focused on and it sure does seem that we're losing the war. I have four daughters, they went through the typical *Beis Yakov* system and I'd like to share with you that it's my personal sense that many of the girls today dress in an abhorrent fashion. Tighter than tight, so inappropriate, not the way a *bas yisrael* should dress. And here's the question:

Their *Morahs* don't dress that way, their mothers don't dress that way and there's such an emphasis on *tznius*, why is it that the girls dress in a manner that's excuse my vernacular, promiscuous? It's simply not the way a fine, delicate *Beis Yakov* girls should dress. Why do they do it? Are they thinking that they want to be provocative to men? Are they thinking they want to be sexually attractive?

I don't think so at all. Most of these girls are way, way too innocent, they don't even have a clue to the implication of the way they dress. So why do they do it?

And the answer really has nothing to do with promiscuity. It has to do with the fact that all the girls dress that way. You want me to look like a nerd, you want me to be the outsider? I mean people are going to think I don't know how to dress.

I had a woman once who I was speaking to, she was going out with someone and it was a question of yes getting engaged or not getting engaged. They were both *balei tshuvah* and the issue revolved around one simple point, she wore low cut dresses. But when I say low cut dresses, I mean the back was cut all the way down and he didn't want that in his marriage, he didn't want his wife dressing that way and after a while we were speaking back and forth, I spoke to both of them and I asked her a simple question, I understand that this is important to you but you feel that this might be the right one and you seem to get along very well and it seems like it might be the, your potential marriage mate.

How important is this dressing thing, I mean let me ask you a question, how often do you actually wear these dresses? So she says well I wear them whenever I got to a wedding or a *bar mitzvah*. I said how many times a year? She said well four, maybe five times a year. I said so let me ask you a question, is it worth giving up your husband for the four or five times a year?

And she said to me, don't you understand I'm going to go there, my cousins, my friends, they're going to think I don't know how to dress. How could I live with that?

And I'd like to share with you that that is very, very telling because there are two rules about *kavod*, the first rule about *kavod* is that it's always within class. You see there's a peer group, there's a societal group and it's always within that group that I base my decisions. You see my social rank is based on my group. Wherever my group is is hugely important to me.

If you've ever seen a teenage girl who says I'm not going to school. Why not? I have a pimple. She's in an all-girls school, what does it matter? The answer is the girls are going to think I don't look attractive and heaven forbid if she doesn't have the right knapsack or the right boots, or the

right in whatever, she's hugely embarrassed and she feels she just doesn't have a place. Now why is that?

The why is it is because to girls their social rank is also very, very important but they typically measure it differently than do boys. Boys typically measure their social rank by their position. In sports by how dominant they are, and that's why they play those types of games that they play. Girls typically judge their social rank differently, how popular I am, how well I dress, maybe how pretty I am. But boys and girls both are very, very attuned to their social rank.

But the first rule of social rank is that it's within class, within my peer group, within whatever my grouping is. It's always my equals, my peers that determines what my social rank is and it's against them that I measure.

But there's a second rule about *kavod* that I think is equally important. Here's an interesting question, how do you get an eighteen year old boy to clean his room? Very, very difficult. How do you get an eighteen year old boy to be willing to give up his life? The answer is very, very simple. In a civil war, people boys, men enlisted and if you read some of the depictions, if you read some of the descriptions of the times, you'll see that it was the oddest things that made them willingly, voluntarily, enlist into the army.

Now the civil war you have to appreciate is a highly foolish war. War in general is very debatable, the intelligence of it. But a civil war is an internal war, state against state, often with family members on opposite side of the war, how do you get an eighteen year old to sign up?

One such description, the fellow explained I was in my home town and I saw the look in people's eyes, like what was I doing here and I realize if I don't sign up I'd be a coward for the rest of my life I'd have to live with that, I enlisted.

The Red Badge of Courage is a book, it's albeit fictional, but it's an apt description of what it was like to be a soldier. And the Red Badge of Courage describes the driving force of I can't be called a coward. As a matter of fact this fellow was so fearful that time after time he ran from the line. But finally, finally he got wounded, hence he had the red badge of courage, he could go home with honor.

But the simple reality is that my social rank is very, very important to me and the first rule of *kavod*, the first rule of social rank is, it's within my peer group and the second rule is it may be true that I don't have to be on top, but I sure can't be below.

You see for most of us we're not pursuing honor, we're not looking to be the world famous, the one whose name is in the papers, the rich super famous guy, most of us aren't driven that way. But I think almost all of us are acutely aware if we are below our peer group. If everyone else moves from apartments to a house, it's a huge pressure.

If everyone advances *shiur* and you are left behind, it's a huge pressure because the first rule of *kavod* is it's based on my peer group, it's within class. The second rule of *kavod* is I may not have to be on top but I sure cannot stand being below.

You see my social identity is very, very important to me whether I'm aware of it or not it's hugely, hugely important. And if you'd like to understand yourself better, all you have to do is find what I call your currency. You see there are different social markers, one person may be very, very into money and another person may not be at all into money. But I guarantee that everyone has certain social markers that they value their currency and once you find it, you'll understand yourself a lot better.

For one person it may be learning, how well I learn or how much I know. Another person it may be expertise. Men are very, very proud of their expertise. Another person it may be their position, whether it be in business or it be in the community, I'm an upstanding member. But all you have to do is find your social marker and what you'll find is that that is very important to you, but you have to remember the two rules of *kavod*.

Number one it's within my group and number two it's true I don't have to have the front row, I don't have to be on top but I sure can't be below. Men have their social markers and women have a different set of social markers. For many women it's how many children they have, how well they keep their home. For some women it's how nice their home is, for how women it's how pretty they are or how well they dress. For many women it's how young or old, but I guarantee that if you find a woman, you'll find a social marker. Something that they're hugely, hugely invested in, something that's very important to them.

And I have one more observation that I'd like to share with you. We all like to think that we're not judgmental. I don't judge, I don't judge. I'd like to share with you it's not true at all, we all judge and we do it all the time. Whether I judge myself above you or below you, better than you or worse than you, it's almost an instinct, we're constantly pegging people and all you have to do is find your social currency, find what really, really matters to you and I guarantee you'll be able to tell me exactly where everyone fits in, in that social order.

If it's money, I got money he don't. He has more than me, he has less than me. If it's learning, I'm the best guy in the *beis medrash*, I'm the second best, I'm the third best. This guy is better than me, he's not better than me. If it's *frumkeit*, how religious I am, my *shmoneh esrei* is longer than his. I have better *middos*. Maybe it's your kids. I have the best kids, I got the best *shidduch*,

I guarantee all you have to do is find your social marker, find your currency and you'll find that you're very, very acutely aware of rank.

Rank means how do I fit into my group. Are those people below me, are they above me and all you have to do is find someone who you knew a couple of years ago and suddenly is towering over you and suddenly you become acutely aware of how important social rank is to you.

A very simple example by the way for women as you know women dress for different motivations than do men. Most women dress because they feel it's an expression of them, it's how I express myself and it's a, it's my identity. Some women dress very casually, some very sporty, some dress very elegantly, it's an expression of self.

Here's an interesting observation. Imagine you're a woman and you had a dress that you loved, it was great, it just, it was so flattering and it was so, it was just perfect and you wore it and you wore it. And you put it in your closet and now you have a wedding and you pull out that dress but the only problem is it's five years out of style. Why don't you wear the dress, why don't you put it on? It's a great dress and it's flattering and you love it and you wore it so many times, and it's perfect.

Why won't you wear the dress? And any good woman would do anything rather than wear that dress. But why? It's a beautiful dress, you loved it. What happened? The answer is it's out of style. I'm going to walk into a wedding with something that's five years out of fashion?

And again, if fashion isn't your currency I guarantee you have a currency and the easiest way to see currency is to look at the teenage years, boys, girls, those are the most turbulent times that's when a peer group is so critical and that's when you get to see what the boy or the girl's currency is and if you're passed that stage yourself, think back over your time as a teenager or watch your

children in that stage and you'll see tremendous turbulence but their social rank is such a driving force.

Now we think that we become very different people once we're adults but it's true we mature a little bit, but I'd like to share with you that our social rank remains acutely important to us. And it's not something that is new to us. Throughout history, there have been markers that have shown a person's social rank and they've had huge importance.

A thousand years ago a collection of books, that's what made you a real *chashuvah* person, you had a collection of books. Later on in different societies it was special colors. In China you could only wear yellow. In Rome it was purple. In the medieval times, in the fifteenth century, if you see pictures you'll understand how powerful social markers are because you'll see that men and women both were wearing these ridiculously long pointed shoes. When I say long shoes, I mean they had a toe that went out as much as twenty four inches and it was so long in front of them, so pointy that they used to have to wear something strapped to the front of it to tie it to their shins, to their knees to support the toe so it didn't flop.

And you could see these people with these long pointed toes and you have to say to yourself what were they doing? And the answer is it was very fashionable, very in.

Edward the Third of England, restricted shoe length, six inches of tip for a commoner, fifteen inches for a gentleman and only nobility could wear the truly long tips. And if you'd like to see something that's very foolish, you could look at pictures of those times but you'll see the importance of being socially in, and certainly not being below.

I'll share with you a much more relevant example. For one thousand years in China, women bound their feet very, very tightly. If you wanted your daughter to marry into aristocracy, or even

just a noble family or even just well, you would bind her feet. It was called lotus feet. But I don't just mean bind the feet, they'd bend the toes under the sole and break the foot. When a girl was six years old they would begin the process and they would continue the process for a few years, constantly breaking the toes and the foot until the foot formed properly, the ideal was to have a foot that was no longer than four inches long, that was considered dainty, it was considered elegant.

The primary thought behind it was that workers need to walk on their feet. If you're a lady of aristocracy, nobility, you don't work and they bound these poor girl's feet and they broke their feet until they became deformed and it was so common in China for one thousand years it lasted and it wasn't until 1912 that they had to pass a law to stop people from doing it.

Now, if you think that that's strange, I'll share with you something that's equal to it and also very compelling. For almost four hundred years in Europe, women wore corsets. A corset is a type or girdle that brings in the waist so tight that you'll see an abnormally small waist.

But the way they would do it is it had eyelets and laces and they pulled tight. Someone had to dress them. As a matter of fact they really went out of fashion during the first world war because ladies no longer had people to dress them, everyone had to work or go to war, you couldn't pull it yourself, you had to have someone or sometimes two people pulling on either sides, as they suck, pull it in and you would suck in the air and if you'd like to understand the consequences, you ever hear of fine young ladies fainting?

They say that often time the fainting was because they could barely breathe and you could see these women bound up and reports after reports from doctors at the time lamented how dangerous it is, how bad it is for one's health etc. but it didn't help.

Why? Because when you showed up in public, you had to have that waist.

Now an anthropologist studied, a woman called Gibson studied the remains of women from those times and she estimated that the average waist of these ladies was ten inches less than current times. Not because the women were much smaller, but they had basically deformed their rib cage, deformed part of the body and it got the point that the average waist then of a fashionable woman, was ten inches less than a person now and again, not that the women were so much thinner, but quite simply because they were walking around with these corsets and forcing themselves to do something very, very uncomfortable for days, weeks, months, their life.

But here's the point. Social markings are very, very important. They were important back then, they're important in our world as well. And if you're not attuned to it, all you have to do is find your currency, find what really matters to you. The point the *Mesilas Yesharim* is making to us is that my currency will change dramatically. Whatever I consider important here, if it's money, if it's honor, if it's fashion, if it's being popular, if it's being handsome or beautiful, whatever my currency is here, will change instantly when my body's put in the ground I separate and in a heartbeat my entire vantage point changes and I greatly, greatly value the accomplishment of one *mitzvah*, I recognize the tremendous damage of one sin and my vantage point changes, my currency now becomes so much different than what it is now and I'm not alone.

And the driving force for us can be if we could learn to use motivation we could learn to use social status. It matters to me now, it'll matter to me then but I have to put myself forward and see what it's going to be like and that will drive me, that will push me.

And I'll share with you just one social marker that is very common, whether it applies to you or not, but in our world today, money is a very, very significant social marker. Money is important

for what it buys, but it's much more important because he has money, she comes from money, it's a sign of social prestige, it's a currency of a social marker.

But here's the problem that we all face. You see two, three hundred years ago those who had money and those who didn't have money were in vastly different places. As an example, a *bal bassar*, a corpulent person was respected in days of yore. When a *bal bassar*, when a very heavy guy walked into the *shteibel*, people were like wooh, a *bal bassar*. Why was a heavysset guy respected? Because no one had food to eat. Everyone was rail thin but not because they were dieting, because the average person didn't have enough money to actually feed himself.

To have somebody who has so much food that he could actually put on weight, that should be, corpulent, really heavy, oh my goodness, he has to be an *ashir*, a wealthy, wealthy guy.

Well, here's the problem in the world that we live in, we're all *baruch* Hashem wealthy. We all have enough to eat, we all have places to live, we all have cars. How do you show the difference between I got money, how do you show social markers?

So I'll share with you how you show social markings. It's with trinkets, it's with toys, that really have no value. I'll give you an example:

In LA recently, a high fashion shoe store opened up, it was called Paleci, and they invented many of the fashionitas and the various people who were in to the exclusive opening and they videotaped a lot of the interchanges. And you saw one woman looks at a pair of shoes that were marked six hundred and forty dollars, and she said oh they're elegant, sophisticated, and she bought a pair.

Another man picks up a pair, ooh, high quality and he paid three hundred and fifty dollars. Each person after they went to the register, after they bought their shoes, were invited behind and there they were explained that Paleci was actually not a real name. It was Payless. Payless Shoestore which typically sells shoes at nineteen ninety nine or thirty nine ninety nine. Put out the sign Paleci, they pretended to be high end and now when these people were confronted with the six hundred and forty dollar pair of shoes that they bought that really cost nineteen ninety nine they were oh my, hahah.

Now payless was generously gave them free shoes and they. You could see the videos and you could see the astonishment.

So here's the point, your Prada shoes, how much better are they? Well it says Prada on it, I got it. Well I have a little observation to share with you, I have been stuck on the westside highway many a time, when a Bentley, or a Rolls Royce pulls up next to me. A Bentley, a Rolls Royce, cost depending which model, two hundred and fifty thousand, three hundred and fifty thousand dollars. It gets stuck in traffic the same way that I do. It has basically the same functionality and if you tell me your Lambigiti can do zero to sixty in three point two seconds, I got news for you, you're not driving a hundred and twenty miles an hour, you're not going to be going from zero to sixty anywhere because they're going to arrest you so why do you pay all that money?

And the answer is really very simple, I drive a Bentley. Now if you have some drive you, I get it. But you drive a Bentley the same way I drive a Toyoto Camry. Well, Toyoto Camry it's \_\_\_\_\_ (36:15) not for a person like me, I get it. I get it. There's one distinction, not how fast it goes, not even the comfort because I really would be hard-pressed to believe that you don't get the same

leg cramps driving five hours in your Bentley as I get in my Toyoto Camry, but let's make it more obvious.

Let's talk about watches. I only wear Rolex, Oyster, I only wear that particular model because eighteen thousand dollars on my wrist, you know, time is very important to me. I'd like to share with you if you're actually concerned with time, you buy yourself an atoma clock, by radio frequency it talks to the satellite, talks Greenwich time, Greenwich Med time and it will tell you to a tenth of a second, accurately what the time is.

Your Rolex does not tell time as well as my Timex does.

But if you're really, really concerned for time, you pull out your phone and you find it's accurate to the split second because it's always beaming up to the satellite. So don't tell me that your watch is more accurate, your watch says one thing, I have social ranking, money and showing off that I could spend money is how I rate myself and what you're looking at is, in my opinion, very humble opinion, foolish, but to some people an important social marker.

I was at a guy's house for *Shabbos*, I was speaking and on the table, were a few bottles of *shnaps*, there was a *kiddush* made, it was *Shabbos* morning and after I was speaking they invited me to, to have something and I like, I like to drink on *Shabbos* and there was a bottle of Blue Label. I never had Blue Label and I tried it and I'd like to share with you I like whiskey, and it was alright, nothing, nothing spectacular.

A bottle of Blue Label costs two hundred and fifteen dollars, thirty two, whatever the liter or thirty two ounces, two hundred and fifteen dollars and I'd like to share with you it really doesn't taste that good. And again, I appreciate whiskey, I prefer rum but I happen to appreciate whiskey and don't tell me that's it's the taste because just watch when the guys down a shot, hum hum,

smooth, very smooth. You don't even know what the stuff tastes like, you can't stand the stuff, but I only drink the best stuff, I am a sophisticated.

Okay, it's a very simple issue. That's how you define your position in society, that's how you define your currency, that's your social marker. I knew a woman, a young woman who spent fifteen hundred dollars on a pocketbook. She was married to a regular working guy, not a millionaire and it was aghast by the price tag, fifteen hundred dollars. But you better believe it was very important to her and when she wore her pocketbook, it spoke about who she was.

And my point is not the significance or insignificance of social markers, the point is that social markers are very important to us and if you're not sure I'm right I'll share with you one more. Most married women, if not all, have a diamond ring.

Now diamonds as you know are rare, precious, very valuable and very expensive. And as I'm sure you know as well, diamonds can now be basically synthesized in a laboratory. They're not real diamonds but certainly CZs, cubic zirconia, um and etc. they can be synthesized and it's very, very difficult to tell them apart.

Now if you know gems, and you have a loupe, you certainly can tell a CZ from a diamond and there are distinctions, and it's really not that hard to tell them apart. But, in 1998 moissanite was introduced to the jewellery market. Now moissanite is a, it's actually synthesized, it's actually a mineral that's created in the lab, but here's the problem, the problem is it's identical to a diamond, in terms of durability on a hardness scale, a diamond is a ten, this is a nine point five. It's one of the hardest substances known to man.

Sparkle and fire is the diamond's famous spire, moistenite has a greater sparkle and a greater fire. In terms of clarity, moistenite has greater clarity than diamond. Color, equal or better than a diamond. And the great problem is how do you tell them apart?

Now naturally you and I who are consumers, who go to a gem enologist, who go to an expert, the expert will tell us whether it's moistenite or real diamond. But how does the expert tell them apart?

And here's the great and interesting observation, it's nearly impossible for a trained expert to tell the difference between a diamond and a moistenite by looking at them. They look to the naked eye almost identical, under a loupe, it's often very, very difficult so how do you tell them apart?

The answer is really quite simple, there's a moistenite tester, you apply a very small degree of electricity and the conductivity of the moistenite is different than the diamond so when you put this probe with a very low voltage of electricity on the mositenite the reaction there is different than a diamond and hence you can tell.

Okay, but here's the punch line. A one karat moistenite costs six hundred and fifty dollars. Of equal quality diamond, a one karat would be about five thousand dollars. A three thousand over moistenite is about fifteen hundred dollars, same quality diamond at three karats is at least thirty thousand dollars.

So what in the world are you spending the tens of thousands of dollars on? And my point here is not to go invest in moistenite, go hock your diamond, my point really here is that social status really is very important to us. Our social position is very important to us. And all you have to do is find your social currency, find what you value, find what's important and then you have to understand that in the world to come that won't be important to me but it sure will matter to me

how much I worked on my *middos*, how much I worked on learning, how much I *davened* because it becomes the part of me and who I am, I am for eternity.

But I'm not alone, I'm with a whole group of people and it may be way above, I may be way below, and one thing for sure within my peer group, I may not have to be the top, but for me to be way, way below, is a very painful thing and it doesn't change when we leave this earth it remains.

And that understanding I believe is what the *Mesilas Yesharim* is sharing with us. A motivation is the fact that my position in the world to come is directly dependent on what I do here. When I recognize that social position is important to all of us, it's always within class and it may not be that I have to be at the top but it certainly can't be below and all you have to do is find the social markers of people throughout the ages and you'll see they invest tremendous energy and tremendous importance in it.

And if you're not into one social maker, don't worry about it, you're into another and you'll know very well where you stand in accordance to your friends, depending on what you value. And once you understand that, your values will change, you'll get it.

I want to share with you a story, the Chafetz Chaim certainly towards the end of his life, was treated with tremendous honor. He would show up to a town and from the train they carried him, in one such situation he got off the train and they began carrying him on the shoulders of people and a huge throng of people accompanied him to the *shul* and he was overheard talking to himself from up there. "Oh Yisrael Meir, Yisrael Meir you see you really do like *kavod*, you see, you really do like *kavod*". Meaning he caught himself. He had reached a level where honor and

dishonor weren't really significant to him and now he caught up, oh, he caught himself you see honor really does matter.

We all like to think we're like the Chafetz Chaim, *kavod*, I'm not into *kavod*, I'm not. I wish it were true, it may be if you're a *tzaddik*, it is true. But if your name is not the Chafetz Chaim, then the odds are very, very good that honor is hugely important to you.

Now that may not mean my currency and it may not be the person next door's currency, but I guarantee you have a currency and I guarantee once you have your well-defined peer group and you find yourself well below them in a certain area, that will bother you, it will hugely impact you.

What the *Mesilas Yesharim* is sharing with us is that this is a huge motivating force. *Halevi* we get to the *shleimei hadas*, where it's my own perfection, my own greatness or lack thereof that motivates me, but if we're not there yet, social ranking is very important.

Again, I may not have to be the top guy, I may not have to be the best, or the richest or the most famous but to be well below deeply bothers me, when I understand that I can use that to drive myself forward, and to propel myself to serve Hashem better, why because what I'm doing is I'm using that force.

I want to close with a story that I think well defines this. When I was a young man I was learning with the *Rosh Yeshivah zatzal's blatt shiur* and I one time had one of these fits of piety and I came to the *Rosh Yeshivah* and I said, *Rebbi* I'm troubled by something here. I'm not learning *lishma*, I'm driven to be the best guy in the *shiur* and I'm much aware of it, of my position and I feel like that's driving me in learning and I'm not learning *lishma*.

And the *Rosh Yeshivah zatzal* said to me, good. Now it was obvious that the *Rosh Yeshivah* didn't hear what I was saying. I mean, *Rebbi*, I mean I'm not like learning *lishma*, I'm not learning to serve Hashem so much, I'm learning, I'm driven to be the best guy in *shiur*, I want to be on top, I don't you know, I'm not learning *lishma*.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* said good. And again it was obvious he didn't hear what I said so I said it a third time and again the *Rosh Yeshivah* said good.

And then the *Rosh Yeshivah* explained to me, he said the only one who wants you to learn *lishma* is the *satan*. Why? Because if you learn *lishma*, if you learn for the *mitzvah*, you learn to serve Hashem, you'll sleep till twelve o' clock. *Halevi* that you learn to be the best guy in *blatt shiur*, why because you're using that as a gallivanting force to propel yourself.

You're not in *yeshivah* for the honor, you'd be out there making money or getting an education, whatever you'd be doing. You're obviously in *yeshivah* because you want to grow, you want to learn. But you're using *kavod*, you're using honor as a driving force.

We have to recognize that honor is important to us. Maybe not honor that I have to have the big honor, but certainly social rank, certainly my position, certainly within my peer group, not being below. Once I understand that I could use that as a driving force, why am I using it, I'm using it because I want to better serve Hashem. I'm using it because I want to learn, I want to *daven*, I want to grow, I want to work on my *middos* but I need motivation.

What the *Mesilas Yesharim* is sharing with us is that this is the motivation, this is the powerful force. If we learn how to use it, we learn how to harness it, it could drive us to greatness, to reach our potential.

