

The *Mesilas Yesharim* taught us that we're here for a few short years, put into this raging battle, called life, temptations all around us, various *nisyonos* and we're here for one reason, "*lukayem mitzvahs*" to fulfill *mitzvahs*, "*vulavod*" to serve Hashem, "*vulamod bunisayon*" to withstand trials. To become the great human being I can become, that's the function of life, that's the reason why Hashem created us.

This world is the gym, the world to come is the spa. And in addition the *Mesilas Yesharim* explained to us that there's a system of spiritual perfection, rungs in a ladder of spiritual progress.

The first rung is *zehirus*, watchfulness. Watchfulness means asking myself are these actions for my betterment, for my detriment? Will I be happy with the results two years from now, five years from now, ten years from now? Being on, paying attention to the results, to the ramifications, and not just being robotic, not just going through the motions.

In this *perek* that we're going to start today, we're going to begin the actual motivation system. Okay, I get it, I'm here for a few short years, I understand there's a spiritual ladder and I understand there are rungs on the ladder, but how do I stay motivated, how do I stay focused, what's the manner that a person remains inspired?

And the *Mesilas Yesharim* begins, "*hinei asher meivi es ha'adam buderech klal el hazehirus*" that which in a general sense will bring a person to *zehirus*, to watchfulness, to being alive, alert, to being focused on growth, "*hu limed hatorah*" is learning *Torah*, "*hu asher amar rebbi pinchas bitchilas habryzah*" and that's what *Rebbi* Pinchas said in the *bryzah* "*Torah meviah lidei zehirus*" *Torah* brings one to watchfulness.

And with these words, the *Mesilas Yescharim* introduces us to the motivational system. The first thing a person must do is be actively involved in *limud hatorah*, in learning *Torah* because *Torah* is the very first ingredient.

Now I believe that one might ask a very important question over here. And that is if in fact *Torah* learning is so central and so pivotal to our growth, why is the *Mesilas Yescharim* first mentioning it now? As a matter of fact the very *bryshah* that he quotes which is the basis for his entire book which really is that ladder of spiritual self-perfection, the first rung on the ladder is not *zehirus*, it's not watchfulness. The first rung on the ladder is *Torah*.

As *Rebbi Pinchas ben Yair* says, *Torah* brings one to *zehirus*, *zehirus*, watchfulness brings one to *zerizus*, onwards and upwards. But the first rung is *Torah* and that one the *Mesilas Yescharim* has forgotten. We're now in the fourth *perek*, he went through an introduction, first *perek*, second *perek*, third *perek* and he forgot the basics, he forgot the most background part, *limud hatorah*. And the question is why?

And I believe the answer to this really requires understanding, in fact why it is that learning *Torah* is so pivotal, and so vital to everything that we do as Jews. And to focus on the question, let's begin with a *mishnah*. The *Mishnah* lists many, many things that a person can do to gain reward in this world, in the world to come, and the *mishnah* in *Peah* finishes off with the words "*vutalmud torah kneged kulam*" learning of *Torah* outweighs all of them and the *Bartenura* says that means literally, if you put all of the *mitzvahs* on this side of the scale, learning *Torah* on this side, it equals out.

Take all the *mitzvahs* together, put them in one huge basket, put them on one side of the scale, learning *Torah* balances out against them. It is equivalent, it is equal as significant and as

important as all of the *mitzvahs* put together and that does beg the question, why? Why is learning *Torah* so central, why is it so pivotal? Why is it so vital to everything that we do?

And even more than that, if you focus on the curriculum in *Yeshivah* and what we spend so much time learning, you might have an additional question: The average curriculum in any *Yeshivah* in this country, in the world, has almost nothing to do with our day to day activities. Oh yes we learn *halachah* and we learn *mussar* but the bulk of the time is spent learning *Gemara* and here's the question, when was the last time you were confronted with the question of well my ox gored your ox, did it do it before, didn't it do it before, who owns it, what's property, whose area?

I doubt you're going to deal with that question. What about one *sukkah* on top of another *sukkah*. You build one *sukkah* on top of another *sukkah*, is it kosher or not kosher? I again, doubt you're going to have to grapple with that question.

How about *ben soreh umoreh*? *Ben soreh umoreh*, the *Gemara* tells us never happened and never will happen, it's a young man who's just a particular age, and he drinks an exact amount of wine and a specific amount of meat. But only after his parents warned him and only with *eidim*, explains the *Gemara*, a *ben soreh umoreh*, that wayward son who's killed, never happened, never will happen.

*Ir hanidachas*, an entire city that serves idols. There are many, many issues brought up in *shas*, much time spent learning it, says the *Gemara*, *lo haya vulo nivra*, it never happened, never will happen. So gee golly, why do we spend so much time learning it? It will never apply, it never will affect me, why's it such a basis of what we spend so much time on?

And to understand that we need to focus on one key fact and that is I. You see I, who's sync, I who am inside, really am made up of two parts. We discussed in previous sessions there's a *nefesh habahami* and *nefesh hasichli*.

*Nefesh habahami* has all of the instincts, drives and desires that you'll find in the animal kingdom. There's another half of the I, the *sechel*, the *neshamah* that comes from under the throne of glory, from Hashem's *kisei hakavod*.

I am both. I am a combination of pure *neshamah* with drives, instincts, desires to only do what's right, what's noble, what's proper. And I also have a whole other half of me. That *nefesh habahami*, that animal soul that also has instincts, also has drives but base drives just to keep itself alive, just to engage in whatever is necessary to keep the animal alive and the I who think, the I who occupy this body, am constantly in this back and forth because both parts, the *neshamah* as well as the *nefesh habahami*, the animal soul have their sway.

But here's the interesting part. Both parts are competing for primacy. Both parts are competing for control and one or the other wins out. Much like a muscle that with use it becomes stronger, with disuse it atrophies, if one gives in to the *behemah*, if one gives in to his animal instincts, to his drives, to his desires, that part becomes stronger and stronger, more dominant, more primary and it begins taking over.

If you imagine two overlapping circles, one is blue, one is red and they meet in the middle. Imagine for a minute that the red is the *nefesh habahami*, the more you allow it to grow, the more you allow it to become stronger and stronger, that circle becomes bigger and bigger until it takes over, until the blue becomes consumed by the red and all you see the world through are eyes of desire and appetite, you become an animal in the form of a human being walking around.

On the flip side, the more you control the animal instincts, the more you have your *neshamah* focal point of your decision making process, the more you exercise your *neshamah*, the stronger it becomes, the more powerful it becomes, that blue circle starts growing and growing and the red becomes subsumed within it and before you know it, you are a *malach elokim*, an angel from heaven within the guise of human form.

But the human being is ever in change, ever in flux. The I who am speaking to you, I'm not just within this battle, this competition of these two voices, I'm always changing because the balance is always changing. One or the other comes to the fore, one or the other comes to become primary.

And the *Chovos Halevavos* explains to us that there's very little that feeds the *neshamah*. You see the body has many needs and all day long I cater to its needs. I have to eat, I have to sleep, I have to do all the things I need to keep myself alive, if I don't, I'm not going to exist.

So the *nefesh habahami*, the animal soul, has a natural head start. It has a natural leg up because number one it starts much earlier, as an infant it's functioning and throughout your childhood that part has been functioning fully well. Number one it has a head start and number two the animal soul is something we have to constantly cater to, constantly meet its needs because again, if not we'll perish.

So here's the problem, if I'm constantly giving in to it, I'm constantly meeting its needs, it by nature will become stronger, more dominant and more primary. And explains the *Chovos Halevavos* if left in that stead, if left in that balance, naturally the *nefesh habahami* will vanquish, the animal soul will become more potent and more powerful and the human being will head in that direction.

And explains the *Chovos Halevavos*, there's very little that strengthens the *neshamah*. The one thing more than anything that does feed it, are *mitzvahs* that Hashem gives us, *tzedaka*, *chessed*, and you have to understand it's very logically demarked. You see there's a half of me that only knows my appetites, my drives, my desires. When you come to me with a difficult situation, you're in dire straits.

There's a full half of me that says I don't care, I can't care because all I know are my appetites, my needs, my desires. When I listen to your tale of sorrow and I feel for your pain and I go out of my way to help you, I'm exercising my *neshamah* against my bodily needs, against the *nefesh habahami*.

*Chessed* builds the *neshamah*, *tzedaka* builds the *neshamah*, *davening* builds the *neshamah*.

You're reaching out for Hashem in a spiritual manner. My entire *nefesh habahami* denies Hashem's presence. My entire animal soul says if I can feel it, if I can touch it it's real, if not it doesn't exist.

When I close my eyes and speak to my Creator, my *neshamah* is coming to the fore, I'm vanquishing my *nefesh habahami* and I'm winning the battle.

However, explains the *Chovos Halevavos*, the greatest nutrient for the soul is *limud hatorah* and there's only one pure nutrient for the *neshamah* and that is *Torah* and the reason why because *Torah* are if it could be, the upper world thoughts of Hashem, written with such brilliance that it's architecture of the world, it's Hashem's thoughts and it's the most pure nourishment for the *neshamah* in existence.

And the reason why it's so pivotal and the reason why it's so vital is because it's rocket fuel for the soul, without it you'll never succeed. It's the energy, it's the source, it gives you everything

you need to then grow, to accomplish, to then become the great human being that you can become.

However, here's the problem, *Torah* is the nourishment, the nutrient for my *neshamah*. But what happens if my goal is to become big and muscular? Imagine that I'm a young fellow and I want to put on fifty pounds of muscle. So what do I do? I start eating steaks and I start eating protein powders and I start really, really increasing my colerk??? (13:00) intake, that's very good, I eat a very nutritious diet but if I don't work out, if I don't exercise, I'm going to change my form but it's going to be round not muscular.

You see there are two things you need to grow physically, you need the nourishment and you've got to go to the gym. You gotta work out, you have to pump iron because it's only the nourishment that when then focused properly when demands are put on the body, then the body responds and that is really the way *limud hatorah* works. *Torah* is the greatest nourishment for the soul, the greatest rocket fuel for my *neshamah* but here's the problem, you also got to go the gym.

But the gym in the *nimshal* means you have to do all the exercises of an *eved Hashem* and the *Mesilas Yesharim* explains to us what that means:

I have to work on *ahavas Hashem*, loving Hashem, I have to work on *yiras Hashem*, the awe of Hashem. I have to work on my *middos*, I have to work on all of the *mitzvahs* because everything together is the, are the exercises are what I need to actually develop.

If you eat all of the nourishing food in the world but don't do the exercises needed, you're not going to be what you could be and I believe that's exactly the answer to the *Mesilas Yesharim*.

You see if you read *Mesilas Yesharim beis*, you find out that the book that we have is the second

version. Before he wrote this book, he wrote it in a dialogue form and you'll see it in that, and you could even see it in our introduction to this book, who the *Mesilas Yesharim* was addressing this book to.

He was speaking to his generation, to an extremely learned audience. The people he was speaking to, were steeped in learning, they were spending hours and hours a day learning and that wasn't the problem, but there was a different problem. The problem is they weren't working on *yiras Hashem*, they weren't working on their *middos*, they weren't working on loving Hashem, they weren't working on *shemiras hamitzvahs*.

Yes, they were very steeped in learning, but there was an element of what they were doing that was robotic, and I believe the reason why the *Mesilas Yesharim* doesn't mention *Torah* till now is because he didn't have to preach to these people to learn *Torah*, they were doing it already with tremendous zeal. That wasn't the problem, they had plenty of nourishment, the problem is they weren't exercising, they weren't working on *davening* properly, they weren't working on *emunah* and *bitachon*, they weren't working on their character traits, learning humility, learning to control their temper, they were going through the motions and as a result all of the *Torah* wasn't doing its job.

And the reason why the *Mesilas Yesharim* didn't have to mention *Torah* in the beginning is because that people were doing anyway. Had he written three or four *perakim* about *Torah*, believe me there would have been much we could learn from it but the generation, the people he was speaking to, were steeped in *Torah* learning already, they didn't need any *chizzuk* in it, now when we're beginning to discuss the actual motivation, it's imperative to realize that ultimately that is the beginning of everything.

And I believe that that is exactly why *Torah* is so pivotal and so vital to everything we do. You see at the end of the day, it's the nourishment for my *neshamah*, and if I try to work on my character traits, I try to work on *davening*, I try to work on *emunah*, but I don't have the nourishment I need, then also I'm going to fail.

There are two ingredients you need;

You need the nourishment, you need the exercise, but you need both. And all of the exercise is the world is not going to put on muscle, is not going to get you in shape, as a matter of fact quite the opposite.

If you don't have protein, if you're not eating the nourishment that you need, you're going to start becoming thinner and thinner and thinner until you're no longer here. And if a person sets his goal as growing, as accomplishing, if I get it, I'm here for a few short years, I'm who I am for eternity, it's based on what I shape myself into, and I really focus on growing and changing myself, if I'm not giving myself the nutrients that I need, I'm not going to succeed.

The reason why *Talmud Torah* is *shokul kneged kulam* is because it is the nourishment for the soul, it is the rocket fuel. That's what we need and without it we'll never succeed.

However, it's only half of the equation, it's the nourishment, it's the nutrients, but you gotta then do the work and the work is all the rest of what *avodas Hashem* includes and again, as the *Mesilas Yesharim* explains to us, that includes *yiras Hashem*, the awe of Hashem, the love of Hashem, it includes working on one *middos*, it includes *shleimus hamaseh*, doing the action with real, real purity and there are five parts to that and the fifth part is *shleimus halev*, a complete heart.

But all of these things, the love of Hashem, fear of Hashem, going in Hashem's ways which means working on one's character traits, guarding all the *mitzvahs* and doing them completely and ultimately *shleimus halev*, completion of the heart, all of those are the exercises but again you need the nourishment.

The *Mesilas Yesharim* didn't have to mention it to his generation, but I believe in our day it is very, very vital, but in either case, both are central, both are required, both the *Torah* as well as the exercises.

And now I'd like to ask a very interesting question:

If *Torah* is the nourishment of the soul and if without it we're not going to succeed, why in the world don't women have a *mitzvah* to learn *Torah*? Men have a *mitzvah* to learn *Torah*, women do not. Why not? I thought it was the nourishment, I thought without it we're going to, I'll never get what we need. How is a woman supposed to grow? Why is it that women don't have a *mitzvah* of learning *Torah*?

And even stranger, there's a *Gemara* in *Brachos* that says something so odd. The *Gemara* says "*amar lei rav nashim bumi zachim*" how do women merit, how do women merit, that's the question, what are they going to do so that they merit?

Explains *Rav*, the answer is they send their children to learn *Torah*, they send their husbands to learn *Torah*. Through their children's learning *Torah*, through their husband's learning *Torah*, that's how they merit.

Now if you read that *Gemara* you may say, wait a minute that doesn't make any sense. Do you mean to tell me a woman spends her entire life serving Hashem, *davening*, learning, working on

her *bitachon*, her *emunah*, working on *chessed*, dedicating herself truly and purely to other people and then we ask what does she do to merit the world to come?

Explains Reb Yonasan Eibeshitz in *Yaros Dvash*, that's not the *Gemara's* question. A woman has the same *Mesilas Yesharim* as a man does, a woman has all of the *lo saseis* in the *Torah*, all the *aseis* that are not *zman grama*, that are not dependent on time, and all of *avodas Hashem* is incumbent upon her as is a man. But there's one difference and that is *limud hatorah* is not part and parcel of her *avodas Hashem*.

And the *Gemara's* question was great, how is she now going to vanquish the *yetzer hara*?

Explains Reb Yonasan Eibeshitz, the *Gemara's* question wasn't what is she involved in, the question is how is she going to succeed if she doesn't have the spiritual nourishment, very nice she's spending her day exercising, working, working on her *chessed*, working on her *middos*, I get it, but she lacks the spiritual nourishment, that the *Gemara* answers that there's a supernatural system that by transference, through her son learning, through her husband learning, she's transferred that energy, that spiritual nourishment and that is what provides for her, but of course it's the rest of everything that she does that earns her her world to come.

And further explains Reb Yonasan Eibeshitz, what happens if a woman isn't married or a man who doesn't learn?

He explains that that person must be actively involved in supporting *Torah*. If you support *Torah* learning, *Torah* institutions with a full heart, he explains, with a real dedication and a real love, it works similarly, you're given by transference the same spiritual nourishment.

But here's the rule:

If you're not feeding your soul, it will wither, it will dry up and all of the *mussar* in the world, and all of the thinking in the world, and all of the attempting to change yourself in the world will never succeed because you need the spiritual nourishment, you need those nutrients.

A man gets it directly through learning *Torah*, a woman gets it through transference and again if a man can't learn maybe as much or if he can't learn, he can get it through an auxiliary system, by supporting *Torah*, by putting others on his payroll so to speak, and the system works. But it has to be both.

And I'd like to share with you an aside, I haven't seen in any *sefarim* but I believe there's another part to understanding this unusual situation that women don't have a *mitzvah* of learning *Torah* and that is that there's a starked difference between the *nefesh habahami* of a man and a woman.

Did you ever notice that generally speaking young girls are obedient. Generally speaking they follow the rules. I've taught boys high school for fifteen years, as a *Rebbi*, controlling the class was always a big issue. *Baruch Hashem* I had a good relationship with the guys but believe me it was always an issue.

I one time, for a short while, taught girls high school and I just wasn't prepared, you see I knew what was needed to teach high school, I had to be on my game, I had to be energized, I had to be focused, I had to be getting these guys really into it because if not, they were toast.

And I walked in to teach *chumash* to a girls high school and I wasn't prepared for the result. You see I spoke and they took notes, I spoke and they wrote. I spoke and they wrote, I spoke and they wrote and I said ladies stop, put the pens down, I had never experienced this before. You don't speak and expect boys, high school guys to just sit back and enjoy.

If you don't have them engaged, if you don't have them involved, if you're not really on top of them, they're gone.

And I'd like to share with you that there is a very real difference between the *nefesh habahami*, the animal soul of a man and the animal soul of a woman. One example of it is that it seems to be a lot easier for women to *daven*, it seems it's a lot easier for women to connect and I believe the reason is the *nefesh habahami*, the animal soul of a man is far more aggressive, far more dominating, far more demanding in that balance.

A woman by nature is more spiritual. It's easier for her to work on her *emunah*, her *bitachon*, easier for her to *daven*, easier for her to follow the rules, why because her *nefesh habahami* doesn't have that aggressive nature, doesn't have that dominating force and the bottom line is if you have a man who learnt a tremendous amount in *Yeshivah*, he was really deeply, deeply involved in *limud hatorah*, but then he goes to work and he stops learning, and he doesn't open a *sefer*, you have a man who's in dire, dire trouble. You have a man who will start down that slippery slope and it won't be long until he's a vastly different person than he was in his *Yeshivah* days.

Yet if you have a woman who doesn't learn, she's okay. And by the way I believe even if she doesn't have the merit of *Torah*, she'll remain pretty stable. Granted she may not be able to grow as well, to grow as much but women are far more stable in that balance, *nefesh habahami*, animal soul versus *neshamah*, men are far more at flux and I believe that's a big part of why it is that women don't need the direct *mitzvah* of *limud hatorah*.

If a man doesn't have that constant infusion of spiritual energy, it's going to change, he's going to be off the deep end in a short time. A woman is far more balanced, she's far less needy of that.

Again as Reb Yonasan Eibeshitz explains, even she still needs it and to really grow she still needs it, but I don't believe it's to the same extent and again while I haven't seen this in a *sefer* inside, I believe it's also part of the equation.

One thing is clear, what the *Mesilas Yesharim* is explaining to us is that if you don't have *Torah* in your diet, you're not going to succeed. Man or woman it doesn't matter. Men you could get it directly, women you have to at least get it by transference.

But it's the energy source and even if you'll tell me a woman is not as instable, unstable and she doesn't need it as much to grow, she still certainly needs it, still very important. And what the *Mesilas Yesharim* is explaining to us the very first part of being a growing Jew is to have the nourishment that I need. But even after I have that nourishment, I have to do the very difficult work, I have to do the exercise, I have to learn to control my desires, control my appetites. I have to work on relating to my Creator, seeing my Creator here, I have to learn to appreciate what my Creator has given to me. I have to learn to love *Hashem*, and that is the process of growing.

The nourishment comes from *limud hatorah* but I have to have the other part. I certainly have to have the exercise of both parts together, work, the reason why the *Mesilas Yesharim* didn't address in the first *perakim* the requirement for learning was because he was speaking to a very learned audience, to an audience who was steeped in *Torah*, he didn't have to be *muchazek*, he didn't have to give them strengthening in that area.

We certainly need strengthening in both areas, in learning of *Torah* and its application, without *Torah* there is no hope because again to grow in physical senses, you need both the nourishment as well as the exercises, so too the *neshamah* requires that rocket fuel and it requires the exercise.

And I want to close with one *mashal* that I think is a very defining *mashal* to me. Imagine we have Barbar who was a middle line Becker. Barbar weighs three hundred and twenty five pounds, he is the height of muscularity, professional football player and he is all muscle. Okay.

Anyway, one day during training, Barbar just doesn't feel so well, he doesn't feel right and this continues and it's a couple of weeks and he starts not just not gaining muscle, but he starts gaining fat and he's in fact losing weight and things aren't right.

So he goes to the coach and the coach says you gotta go to the doctor. Barbar whose IQ wasn't that high to begin with shows up to the doctor and says "Doc, I'm not feeling well, help me out doc".

The doctor looks at him and says well we're going to have to run some blood tests, we're going to have to do some lab work. Barbar never really trusted doctors, those were the geeks who in school never could make it in football and they had to actually pay attention in class, but listen the doctor says it, fine, Barbar gives blood, they go through the whole routine.

A few weeks later Barbar comes back to the doctor and the doctor says, "Barbar, I'm sorry to tell you, you're problem you have protein mal-absorption." What does that mean? Protein mal-absorption means there are enzymes in your body that break down the protein. Your body is not able to absorb the protein. You need protein but your body is not able to absorb it.

What do I do? Says Barbar, well you need this medicine, that will help out.

Okay, anyway Barbar leaves the doctor's office, heads right back to his home and now instead of just eating fifty ounces of meat for dinner, he now adds protein shakes, protein powders and he

says the doc says I ain't get enough protein, I got more than enough protein, he don't know what he's talking about.

Now Barbar is getting enough protein, but the protein isn't enough and if you're not absorbing that protein properly, it'll never work. One of the great secrets to growth in life is something called humility, something called recognizing my Creator.

And if a person is totally involved in learning *Torah* but doesn't actually do the other parts, obviously they'll never succeed because they're not doing the exercises. But there are certain exercises that are more critical, more important than any others, and that's humility, not taking credit for what Hashem has done.

But at the end of the day both parts have to be there. I have to feed my *neshamah*, I have to exercise, but I have to understand that there are systems involved here and even if I'm learning, I have to do the rest of the *avodas* Hashem but I have to do it a way that Hashem wants me to do because only then can a person succeed.

Both are needed, *limud hatorah* as well as the application, both allow a person to grow and to become what they were destined to be.