

The fourth *perek* in the *Mesilas Yesharim* which we're dealing with is what I would call the systems of motivation.

The first *perek* in the *Mesilas Yesharim* explained to us that we're here for one reason, to grow and to accomplish. This is the gym and the world to come is the spa and the *Mesilas Yesharim* really lays out a system of self-perfection, the ladder of spiritual growth and it's based on the *bryshah* of Rabbi Pinchas *ben* Yair. It starts with *Torah* as the beginning, as the spiritual nourishment, the first in the actual growth steps is *zehirus* and *zehirus* as the *Mesilas Yesharim* described to us means watchfulness, being alert, being aware, asking myself are these actions for my betterment, for my detriment, will I be happy with the results of these two years from now, five years from now, ten years from now.

*Zehirus* is an awareness, being alert of the results of my actions and my ways. But the problem is that this type of activity, of being *zahir*, and really it means transforming myself requires a tremendous amount of drive, energy and motivation.

And the question is how does one get motivated and again this *perek* really focuses on the motivational systems as we mentioned last time, learning *Torah* is the spiritual nourishment, it's rocket fuel for my soul, it gives me the energy, it gives me the strength.

Nevertheless there is direct work that must happen. And the *Mesilas Yesharim* explained to us that the first part of the direct work is understanding the "*chomer ho'avodah*", the gravity of the *avodas* Hashem and the "*omek hadin aleha*" and the depth of judgment on it. Just recognizing how serious the *mitzvahs* are, seeing how the *Torah* views the extraordinary value and impact of my actions, that alone is the greatest motivator, that alone is the thing that will drive me to growth.

But explains the *Mesilas Yesharim*, here in our session, we begin with these words “*yesh buhisbonenus hazeh he’arus he’arus buhadragah*” there are many levels in recognizing this, many levels in understanding this “*lishleimei hadas*” to those who have complete, perfect understanding “*upachus mehem*” those people under them, “*ulechol hahamon*” and for the majority, for the bulk of the Jewish nation.

Three separate groups and each of them have a different system that will motivate them.

Meaning to say all within the context of understanding the gravity of the *avodah*, understanding the depth of the judgment, but that recognition will work in three different ways for three different groups of people.

The *shleimei hadas*, what we would call *tzaddikim*, people of tremendous, tremendous caliber, the *gedolim*, the *avos*, those underneath them, a second category, “*ulechol hamon*” and to the average person. The *Mesilas Yesharim* explains “*lishlomei hadas*” what will be the motivator, how will the understanding impact these people of complete understanding, the *shleimei hadas*, “*ki misborer mah sheyisbarer lohem*” they’ll be motivated when it becomes clear to them “*ki rak hashleimus hadavar harai sheyichamei mehem*” because they understand that only *shleimus*, only perfection is worthy of desire, “*vushe’ein rach gadal micheshbon hashleimus*” and there’s nothing worse than a lack in perfection “*vuarchaka mimenu*” and being distanced from that.

The *shleimei hadas* have one single focal point, one thing that they value, that’s perfection and in their mindset there’s nothing worse than a lack of perfection and for them this is the motivating force and this is the system that will allow them to grow.

Now let's begin by trying to understand what the *Mesilas Yescharim* is sharing with us and to do that let me share with you an observation. Any discipline system as well as any motivational system, will hinge on one single point, and that is the currency of the individual.

If you want to motivate a child, or you want to discipline a child, you have to know their currency, you have to know what they value, what they consider important and before you motivate them with some prize or in fact the opposite, limit their behavior with certain consequences, you have to know what they value, what they consider important and the best discipline system in the world or the best motivational system in the world if it doesn't speak to the currency, to that which the child values, forget it, it's useless, it's not going to do a thing.

And the first observation I'd like to share with you is that this group of people that we're discussing over there, the *shleimei hadas*, probably is above our pay scale. You see this *perek*, the fourth *perek* is the motivational system for three different groupings of people:

The *shleimei hadas*, those people with perfect understanding, those under them and then the *hamon am*, the regular folk.

The first grouping, the *shleimei hadas* are what we would call, *tzaddikim*, we would call *gedolim* certainly when you read about the *avos*, when you read about Avraham, Yitzchak, Yakov, they're in the category of the *shleimei hadas*.

And if you'd like to understand exactly what that means, the *Mesilas Yescharim* says there's one thing that motivates them, *shleimus*, perfection and more than that, they understand that anything that I do either allows me to become more perfect, or damages me. And because of that understanding there's nothing more that motivates them, why, because all they covet, all they

value, all they really deem worthy of striving after is perfection and there's nothing worse to them than a lack of perfection.

Now this is again a category that I'm sorry to say probably doesn't apply to us, *halevi* it did but I'm sorry to say it probably doesn't. To give you a *mashal* of what it's like, later on the *Mesilas Yesharim* gives us a *mashal* to eating *treif* food. He says imagine the following:

Imagine you're thirsty and there's a cup of cool aid right there and you know that there's only a one in a hundred chance that there's cyanide in the cool aid, only one in a hundred, would you drink the cool aid? I hope the answer is no, no matter how thirsty you were, I hope you wouldn't drink it because poison, as in cyanide is lethal and you're not going to take a chance, not one in a hundred, not one in a thousand because it's absurd. It's just foolish and I wouldn't do it.

Explains the *Mesilas Yesharim*, if we got it, if we really understood the consequences of our actions I would deal with *treif* food as if it was poison. What do you mean, there's even a question on a *hechsher*, sort of slightest sort of question, how would I take a chance, it's foolish.

Now for you and I it could be we don't quite get it that way, we work on it, we try, the *sholeim* fully totally gets it, with absolute clarity of thought they recognize that every action that they're engaged in, molds them, shapes them for eternity. But more than that, their currency is one thing, what they value, what they strive for is *shleimus*, perfection and there's nothing worse to them than a lack of perfection.

If you tell them, this action, these thoughts, this behavior will lead you to a lack of perfection, they run from it like running from a fire why? Because oh my goodness, there's nothing worse than a lack of my *shleimus*, a lack of my perfection.

And therefore explains the *Mesilas Yesharim*, to the *shleimei hadas*, to this group of people, the greatest motivator is when they read in the *Torah* and they see the punishment for sins, they see the tremendous reward, it gives them an insight in terms of the extraordinary value, in terms of the accomplishments, the gravity of *mitzvahs* and because that's all they covet, all the desire is *shleimus*, perfection, therefore this motivates them to be much more *zahir* and much more careful, much like cyanide in the cool aid, if I really understood it I would run from it, the *sholeim* fully, fully gets it, they understand perfection is what we're here for, that's why Hashem put me on the planet, to grow, to accomplish, to change the essence of me.

There's nothing more that they desire and nothing more that they fear than a lack of perfection.

However, here's the question, what exactly does this have to do with us? Again, *halevi* it were true, but I can't say that everything that I value, everything that I strive after is *shleimus* and it's the worse, a lack of *shleimus*, any small little lack of *shleimus* is the worst thing in the world to me. It's really not me, and probably not you either. So the question is what relevance does this have to us?

And to understand the relevance to us, let's focus on a more basic question: How is it that the *sholeim* gets it, these *shleimei hadas*, why is it that their entire currency, their entire value system is *shleimus*, how is it that they get it so clearly?

And I believe that there are a few concepts that they get, that we don't. Number one, that it's really going to happen. You see all of us have been to funerals, most of have been probably even to friends' or relatives' funerals but no matter how many times I'll be at a funeral, no matter how many times I'll speak at a *hesped*, it's not real. It's true he died, *nebbach*, she's no longer with us. But as we discussed in an earlier session, when Hashem created us, Hashem put within us

blindness, we're not able to see that last moment of our lives, we're not able to see ourselves leaving this existence because if I ever really got it with absolute clarity of thought it would scoo??? (10:48) freewill in such a way, effectively I would lose *bechirah*, I would lose freewill.

Why? Because if I realize that this life has a *ketz*, has an end, automatically I would start dealing with who I am, what I am, automatically I would deal with the fact that what I shape myself into is who I am for eternity and while that would be wonderful if it came to me naturally, it's not something I acquired, it's not something I work on, effectively given to me but not something that I made myself into. There would be no freewill as we know it and the growth that we engage in wouldn't be possible.

To allow the human being to actually struggle, one of the blinders that Hashem puts in our mind's eye is I cannot see my death. I can't, I could theoretically, statistically I know the odds, I know that listen, no one I know shook hands with the *Gra*, no one I know shook hands with Abraham Lincoln, but that's in theory. To actually see myself in that box, to actually see myself there, mmmmm in theory, but not practically again, because it would take away my freewill.

But the *sholeim* gets it. After years and years of working, after really perfecting themselves, they cut through the haze, cut through the physicality and they recognize a reality that I will be there in the box. And because they realize it, obviously their value system changes. But there's another recognition that they understand that we don't quite get:

And the second recognition is that it's me. You see, my body is put in the ground, but I separate. But I'm the one inside, I'm the one the who thinks, I'm the one who tells my arms and legs to move, I'm the guy inside, who occupies my body. When my job is done, the body's put in the ground and I leave. But you see it's me, not my distant cousin, not my alter ego, not my

*neshamah*, my *neshamah* is going to go to *Gan Eden*, it's not my *neshamah*, it's me, my conscious, thinking, alert, I who am speaking to you.

And as Reb Yisrael Salanter explains to us, it's like taking off a coat, I separate and I am what I shaped myself into. And there's a certain reality that eludes us. Not only does it become very difficult for us to see it actually happening, but to actually concretely be aware of the fact that I will be there and it will be me as I am now, is very, very elusive and very difficult to really feel and I have a *mashal* that I'd like to share with you.

Back in the early eighties when word processors first became popular, they were these big clunky things, you would type on it and on the screen in front of you, you would see the words you would type. But to actually underline a phrase, you would have to hit an open bracket, a u and a closed bracket, that's what you would see on your screen and that would signal the printer to underline that phrase. If you wanted to bold a word, you'd put an open bracket, a b and a closed bracket. Again, on your screen that's what you would see and that would be a signal to your printer to bold that word.

In the late eighties technology evolved and something came out called WYSIWYG, what you see is what you get. What you see is what you get, that acronym refers to the fact that now when you open a Microsoft Word, you click b and on the screen that word is bolded. When you click the u, on the screen that word is underlined. What you see on the screen is what you get in the printer, WYSIWYG is something we're all familiar with.

And I believe that's an apt parable to what it's like when I leave this earth. My body's put in the ground and I separate. But what you see is what you get, you see now you can't see me, you see my body, maybe you see my motions, you could hear my words but you cannot tell what I'm

thinking, you can't peer into the essence of me and know what I'm feeling, know my thoughts because I'm cloaked in this heavy coat of physicality.

Once I'm done my job, the body's put in the ground and I separate but you see me for exactly what I am. With all of the areas that I worked on and grew in, and all the areas that well, maybe I didn't. and WYSIWYG, what you see is what you get, I believe is an apt parable for what it's like when we leave this earth, my body's put in the ground and I separate and I am exactly what I shaped myself into, all of my thoughts, all of my actions, everything that I hid from everyone, during this existence we call life, is right there out in the open.

Now as an observation, we human beings are very, very careful not to do or say dumb things. If I have a stain on my tie, I'm embarrassed because you know I'm seen in public. But even worse, if I'm not dressed appropriately, a number of years ago I was supposed to speak that evening in Queens and it was getting a little bit towards the late afternoon, my kids came home from school and I was in the house actually before them and I was wearing my shirt and tie etc. the kids were outside in the snow playing so I put on a winter coat and I went out to play with them for a little while.

Anyway it got late, so I went in to say goodbye to my wife, got in the car, drove to Queens and then when I got there, took off my coat only then realizing, oh my goodness, I'm not wearing a jacket. You see I'd left the house to play with the kids, I just put a coat on and then because I got involved with playing with them, I came back in just to say goodbye to my wife, I forgot that I wasn't wearing a jacket and I showed up to speak in public without a jacket.

I cannot describe the *bushah*, I cannot describe how uncomfortable, how just just embarrassed to the core.

Now isn't that a foolish, alright you explained to people what happened. People understand what are you embarrassed about, what are you getting all carried away?

The answer is it's embarrassing, if I say the wrong line in the wrong time, I'm hugely embarrassed. The stain on my face, the sense of I can't believe I said that, is powerful. You see we human beings are very, very sensitive, at not saying or doing dumb things because it reflects on me and I'm hugely embarrassed.

Now the *sholeim* gets it. What they understand is that who I am for eternity is directly molded and shaped by what I do. But they're not concerned that you're going to look at me and see me with a stain on my tie and I'm going to be embarrassed, it cuts much deeper. They so value perfection and so recognize that their actions impact them, that they say oh my goodness, how could I do that it's gonna damage me for eternity.

That stain is going to be there forever. I will be hugely embarrassed. And if you'd like an illustration of this, I want you to imagine the following:

*Im yirtzeh* Hashem many years from now, and I sincerely hope it's many, many years from now, after a long, productive life, we'll all meet again and imagine that we're all there and you get to see me, I get to see you but I'm no longer wearing this cloak, I'm no longer masked, I'm no longer hidden and you get to see me for exactly who I am. I hope that there'll be some areas that I worked on and you may even say ooh Rabbi Shafer, I see you worked on this area, very impressive. You grew in that area, very nice, very nice but Rabbi oh, who, Rabbi I didn't know.

You see each of us has areas that we'd be aghast if others were privy to. There are things that I have done, things that I have thought, things that I have said that I don't want anyone to know.

And that's okay here, I can mask those thoughts, but when my body's peeled away and I

separate, I'm there exactly as I shaped myself, WYSIWYG, when that curtain comes down I separate and exactly as I am, exactly what I shaped myself into, is what I am for eternity.

But you see I am a composite of many, many actions. If you've gone to the Holocaust museum, when you walk into the body you see what looks like thousands of pictures. They took thousands of pictures of individuals and put them on all the way up, you could see this person and that person and that person and this person and that person and that person, if you would like to have an illustration of what it's like, every event in my life, every conversation with another, every interaction with another human being creates a photograph, creates an imprint in me.

When my body's put in the ground and I separate, my entire life, pshoo pshoo pshoo pshoo pshoo, every action, every interaction, every thought, it's all there, permanently there, right there, because it comprises me. And exactly what I made myself into, with every single interaction, is a part of me.

*Baruch Hashem* there's a concept called *tshuvah*, you can wipe out hours, days, weeks, maybe a month, maybe, maybe a year or two, but the point is that unless I do that, and unless I actually change myself, I am for eternity what I made myself into.

And this recognition is something that the *sholeim* gets. The *shleimei hadas* fully recognize number one it's gonna happen, it's not a joke. It really will happen. And number two it's me. But when I say it's me, it's the same feelings, the same things, I will separate and I will be there and you'll see me for exactly what I made myself into.

But you see, there is one mistake that we make when we try to project forward. Whenever we think about *olam haba*, I think we think in terms of now and that's false. You see if you would ask a five year old what do you want to be when you grow up? Typical boy he'll say something

like well a fireman, a policeman, Spiderman. He is not telling you what he wants to be when he grows up, he's telling you through a five year old's eyes what he thinks he's going to want to be when he's an adult. But he can only view himself only project himself, with the emotionality, with the value system, with the currency that he now has.

To him Spiderman is about as cool as it gets. A fireman rides on that big truck and wooh wooh wooh. But that's because his perception, his currency is that of a five year old. You see when I leave this body it's I but instantly my currency changes. Everything that I consider so important now, everything that's so valuable becomes frivolous. Money, ooh he's got money. Pst hey, I don't want to be heard, he's worth a hundred million dollars. And I don't care how spiritual you are, there is a simple reality that we value money, *ashirus* and maybe even appropriately but I guarantee, when I leave this earth it's not going to matter.

What I did with it, will matter. But not money, not honor, not prestige, not all of the things that we so valued here. My entire currency instantly changes. But you see the *sholem* gets it. The *sholem* is able to view this world through the world to come's eyes. He's able to tap into that world, he's able to see the currency of then, he thinks in that currency because he's not the immature five year old projecting forward, he/she has worked on themselves, their currency changed and the one thing that they value is perfection because that's what Hashem put us here for and ultimately that's the only thing that really counts and while I don't recognize it now, when my body is put in the ground, instantly my value system, my currency changes, and what the *sholem* gets is that is reality.

And what they're able to tap into is that powerful sense of accomplishment. When I leave this earth, every *mitzvah* that I engage in is wow. Every aspect of it is tremendous. And the flipside,

any thing that I did I hurt another human being, I embarrassed a person, I spoke *lashon hara*, so what I spoke *lashon hara*, does it matter? Oh it sure does, I don't recognize it now, I don't see the imprint that it does to me, I don't even recognize the damage it does to someone else. The *sholem* fully gets it and is able to view this world through the eyes of the world to come, their currency is one thing and one thing only, perfection, because ultimately that is the only thing that matters.

But you see there's another concept that the *sholem* gets that's even more difficult for us to understand. To share with you that concept, let me share with you an idea. In the year 2000, the Debear Group, presented to the world the Millennium star diamond. This was the ultimate diamond, two hundred and three carat, a near perfect diamond. Internally flawless, externally flawless. If you know diamonds it takes your breath away, it is magnificent. It's a deep, blue, gorgeous near perfect diamond and it's absolutely stunning.

Now this diamond is actually, it really is priceless because it's so valuable, a one carat diamond in that caliber can sell for five hundred thousand dollars or so but once you get to ten carats, twenty carats, certainly at two hundred carats it is literally priceless and it really doesn't have a price, it's not for sale but it is a magnificent diamond.

Now when it came out of the ground, it was not two hundred and three carats, actually it was discovered in Zaire, what's known as the Congo, when it came out of the ground it was seven hundred and seventy carats in the rough and then it was given to the Steinmetz group to cut.

The head cutter was Neil Luviant who was an Israeli fellow, and it took the Steinmetz group three years, they studied the diamond, made models of it, did everything they could and in the end after three years there was a sterile laboratory condition, with lasers carefully pointed they

began the process according to the story that when Neil Luviant hit the button and the lasers actually cut the rough away, emerged this near perfect diamond supposedly according to the story, he fainted.

But here's the point. A magnificent gorgeous diamond. Now imagine that you and I were there at the diamond mine when this rough was brought out of the ground and there was an African tribesman there, primitive African tribesman, who had a friend who worked in the mine. And imagine that we got to hear the conversation with this African tribesman says to his friend, hey what's the tumult, what's everybody getting all excited about, what's happening?

So this friend who works in the mine says oh I don't know if you heard, but they found a seven hundred and seventy seven rough diamond, it came from a certain vein, they think it might actually become the finest diamond imaginable, we're not sure but that's what we think.

Says the African tribesman, what's a diamond? The fellow says, a diamond, you know a, it's a diamond, it's a rock, a precious stone. A stone is precious?

The fellow says to this tribesman, yes *epes*, listen, before a man gets married, he typically as a pledge of his devotion, of his loyalty to his wife he'll give a diamond. It's a stone, it's precious and he gives it as a stone. This one is so heavy it weighs two hundred times the average stone. A person normally gives one carat, this might well be two hundred carats when it's fully cut.

The African tribesman says I get it, I get, wow.

But tell me something if it's so heavy, how do you carry it? If it weighs two hundred times, how would you carry it?

Explains the fellow to the African tribesman, I'm sorry to tell you this but you see two hundred carats weighs an ounce and a half because that's all it is.

At which point the African tribesman says you fools, an ounce and a half that's it, that's what's so valuable? When I married my wife, I gave her fifty kilos of yams, each yam is far more heavier than your little rock. You guys are so foolish.

Now it's true that in the African tribesman's mind rocks are rocks. Whether they're shiny, they refract light or they don't, they're just rocks. But if you understand diamonds, you understand that currency, when you cut away the rough it's a near perfect diamond that is literally priceless but you have to be in that currency.

And I believe that's exactly what the *shleimei hadas* get that we don't. In a very real sense, we're like that primitive tribesman, we look at actions whether they be *mitzvahs*, whether they be *averos*, big deal, c'mon I did *daven*, I didn't *daven*, with *kavanah*, without, it doesn't really matter. And that's because we live in a very physical world, I'm blocked by this heavy cloak of physicality and I don't recognize the value, the impact of my actions.

What the *sholem* gets is the incredible accomplishment of one act. But not just one act, the nuances and the details and how every little extra part of it is another part of the diamond, is either perfect or flawed. We look at it as rocks, we look at it as potatoes. What we don't understand is the extraordinary value.

Because the *sholem* really gets it because they've cut through the haze, because they see beyond this heavy veil of physicality, they're able to perceive number one it's really going to happen.

Number two it's me, not my distant cousin, not my alter ego, it's me and it's WYSIWYG, what you see is what you get, I will be exactly there what I shape myself into.

Here I can hide, there I can't. And they understand that there's only one currency in the world to come, there's only one thing that I'll value there and that is how much I grew, how much I was *kovesh* my *yetzer*, how much I learnt to control myself, how much I accomplished.

But it's not just that I'll value that, it's not just that instantly my entire currency switches to that, but the extraordinary accomplishment of one *mitzvah* and the incredible damage of one *averah* is something that we don't get because we're viewing it from the five year old, from the immature standpoint.

And it's true in this world okay I said words I did this, I didn't do this, what's the big deal? What the *sholem* gets is the extraordinary impact of a single action. The incredible nuances and every detail and how much greater or the opposite it is based on the intentions, situation, the circumstances. And because of that there's only one thing that motivates the *sholem*.

They understand that how much I become is completely in my hands. Whether I become phenomenally great or just whatever, it's absolutely up to me.

And the final point that the *sholem* gets that we don't really get is that I'm always changing. Every thought, every word, every interaction shapes me. Much like those pictures on the wall, the thousands of pictures in the Holocaust museum where you see this image and that image, that image, it's all a part of me. Every action, every thought is a part of me forever.

And every one of them is so finitely controlled in the sense that every single picture has not just details but extraordinary details and every single event has nuances to it and ultimately the value and the impact of one action is beyond our understanding.

And that's something that the *sholem* gets and therefore they're hugely motivated when they read the *Torah* and they see the incredible gravity that the *Torah* puts on actions, and the flipside, the punishments. They get it to a greater extent and that's the single greatest motivator.

And again, even though we're not there, I believe it does have great relevance to us. Because even though I may not be able to feel it completely, I can tap into it. I can understand it a little bit, I can understand it to a certain extent and more than anything I can recognize that my actions impact me.

When you read the biography of *gedolim* and you see an extraordinary human being, what you're looking at is a person who really got it and even though I may not be there, I could recognize and understand that their vantage point is the right one and I can train myself to be alert, to be aware, to focus on it and to use it as a motivating system.

So even though it's true that we're not really in the category of *shleimei hadas*, it is relevant to us when we recognize those simple realities. And the more I could tap into it, the more I could study people who are on that level now, or were on that level in previous generations, the more I can see a human being flourishing to an extent that's beyond extraordinary.

My daughters play piano. When one of my daughters was advancing, I took her to a college of music because she really was at a point where she needed advanced lessons and she studied under Doctor Lum. I didn't know much about Doctor Lum but I had, she had been recommended to me and my daughter studied under her.

And my daughter invited me when Doctor Lum was giving a concert. I'm not a big fan of classical music, I really don't recognize it but I sat at this concert and I was mesmerized. You see I've watched my daughters play and I'm amazed when their fingers can just schhhzz and ten

notes, twenty notes just come out, they don't even think about, just the fingers just know how to find twenty, twenty five notes just drrrrdrr.

When I watched Doctor Lum it wasn't twenty five notes, her fingers just flew and hundreds and hundreds just the dexterity, the coordination, the incredible control, I've never seen that level of perfection in a physical act of that type.

And it was awe inspiring to me. Not because I want to be a pianist, but that level of perfection is eye-opening.

When you read about *gedolim* when you read their biographies or you hear stories, it's true it's not me and I don't share their currency and I don't share their value system, but I see perfection, and it can inspire me and more than anything I can hope to see the world a little bit through their eyes.

They recognize the impact of their actions, they reached utter perfection because they had a currency based on the world to come. Even though I don't have it now, I work on it, I try to understand it, I try to view the world through their eyes as much as I can, more than anything the *sholem* applies to me in the sense that number one it's really going to happen. Number two, it's going to be me, it's WYSIWYG, I will be what I shape myself into. My currency instantly will change to that incredible value system and I begin to understand the incredible impact of my actions.

While the *sholem* may not be where we're at, it's a valuable system and in fact as the *Mesilas Yesharim* explains to us, it's something that we can use as a part motivator for us and it'll be part of our entire inspiration and motivation to becoming that great person.