

Camp Middos: Building Character Play-By-Play

By Rabbi David Sykes

Grade Level: Elementary, Middle School, High School

Description:

These dramatic and humorous plays provide models for the process of Middos transformation. Each play involves a different Middah which is ameliorated as a result of dialogue with a Rabbi and events which occur. Although the plays take place in a camp setting, they can be easily changed to match that of a school environment.

How to download:

- Download the print-ready PDF file (includes lesson plan/instructions).
- OPTIONAL: Download the editable Word file. (Does not include lesson plan.)

Goals/Objectives:

Students will focus on their own behaviors through the lens of proper Middos and will improve areas which they find wanting through the information and inspiration they have received from these plays.

Materials Needed:

Read each play thoroughly to determine which props are needed.

Instructions:

1. Read through the plays. Decide if you would like to stage all of the plays or just some of them. Make the changes necessary to meet the needs of your audience.
2. Decide where you would like to stage the plays. Will they be performed in front of the entire school monthly? For the parent body? For just the students?
3. Decide how you will choose the actors for each play.
4. Decide if you will be giving class time to prepare for the plays.

Closure Assessment:

- You can follow-up each play with a discussion, or story, about the featured Middah.
- You can ask students to write how a child their age may struggle with the featured Middah and concrete ways in which he or she can work on it.

Variations:

- Change the camp setting to a school setting.
- Change characters to girls.
- Make more plays featuring different Middos.

CAMP MIDOS

BUILDING CHARACTER

PLAY BY PLAY

BY RABBI DAVID SYKES

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BS"D

WELCOME TO CAMP MIDOS!

Midos are learned here in many ways

Through song, signs, speech, and plays

There is the singing of the Midos song

You can hear it all summer long

"Midos are the way we act and how we think and feel.

The Torah shows us just what we should do.

So if you want to be a Mensch and really do what's right,

You have to have good Midos through and through."

At this camp, Midos are in the air

There are signs about Midos just about everywhere

Each day, our commitment to love our neighbor we declare

Then, we ask for help in speaking appropriately in a prayer

There are two "Midos of the week", each a gem
Friday mornings, campers produce Midos skits about them
At Camp Midos, there are also Midos plays
Performed by campers in extraordinary ways
A camper with a Midos problem talks to a Rabbi
And his Midos are greatly improved thereby
These Midos plays are dramatic and fun
After each play, a discussion is run
In this book, these Midos plays we now share
With people seeking good Midos everywhere

Camp Midos very strongly resembles - and is modeled upon - Camp Monroe, also known as Happyland, a sleep-away camp for Jewish children between the ages of 9 and 15, located about 50 miles northwest of New York City. Rabbi David Sykes has been running the Foundations program at Camp Monroe for the past 14 summers. He wrote these Midos plays to illustrate the process of Midos improvement. They are designed to help people learn more about their Midos and how to go about changing them for the better.

Camp Monroe is headed by Stanley Felsinger and Lenny Amdurer. Rabbi Sykes is very grateful to both of them for giving him the opportunity to run the Foundations program and for all of the guidance and support they have given him over the years.

The Foundations program is housed in the *Goder Center*, named for Rabbi Shlomo Goder, of blessed memory, who inspired many at Camp Monroe and elsewhere.

ONE MIDAHA AT A TIME

1 - I've really been enjoying my first couple of days at Camp Midos. The people are great, and the country air is so refreshing. Also, the signs on the trees make me feel so good and give me a real lift.

2 - I'm so glad to hear that you are having a wonderful time here and I'm especially glad that you are enjoying the signs.

1 - Thanks, Rabbi, but there's one sign that I can't seem to figure out no matter how hard I try; it's the sign that says "MIDOS." I'm embarrassed to admit this, since "MIDOS" is the name of this camp. I tried looking it up in the dictionary, but it wasn't there. Is it someone's name?

2 - No, it's not someone's name; I guess you haven't yet heard the Midos song. Let me sing it for you: "Midos are the way we act and how we think and feel. The Torah tells us just what we

should do. So if you want to be a Mensch and really do what's right, you have to have good Midos through and through."

1 - That's a great song! Now I understand why there is a Midos sign! I see that good Midos are very important.

2 - Good Midos are very, very important. Our Midos define who we are and they are the roots of all that we do. In addition, good Midos help us tremendously in our lives. A person who has bad Midos isn't happy with himself and doesn't have good relationships with other people or with God.

1 - I see your point, Rabbi. People with bad Midos are not able to be good friends, because their bad Midos get in the way. How is it possible to have a true friendship with someone who is, for example, arrogant, angry, or jealous? People with bad Midos are too focused on themselves to be able to really be there for others.

2 - Not only that, but bad Midos are unhealthy for the body and the mind as well. A person who has bad Midos is frustrated and

unhappy inside and we know that emotional stress can make a person sick, God forbid. In addition, bad Midos make a person unable to see things clearly, and he may make up or accept false facts and ideas in order to justify his bad Midos. Many times, the person himself does not even realize that he's doing this.

That's also why, even if such a person is presented with facts and logical proofs indicating he is wrong, he will not be convinced.

1 - Wow! I am starting to understand just how important Midos are.

2 - This is why it is so important to work on and improve our Midos; by doing this, we change ourselves, our lives, and the lives of those around us. In fact, Rabbi Elijah of Vilna, the Vilna Gaon, said that people were created to improve their Midos. The Vilna Gaon goes on to ask: If we fail to do this, what is the point of our lives?

1 - Wait a minute, Rabbi. I have a problem with what you're saying. I already have good Midos. Does that mean that my life has no point?

2 - Have you ever really taken a good look at your Midos?

1 - I don't have to! I have better Midos than you or anyone else. In fact, I am the nicest person in the world. How dare anyone question my Midos! Who do you think you are?

2 - Most people are nice as long as they get what they want; they then have no reason not to be. The real test of Midos is when a person does not get what he wants. It is especially at those times that he may display the arrogance and anger that have been hidden inside all along.

1 - Wow, I didn't even realize what I was saying and how I was saying it! I am so ashamed!

2 - Don't feel bad. As you have seen, unless a person really looks at his Midos, he is generally not very aware of what they really are. You have to make what is known as a Cheshbon HaNefesh, an

Accounting of the Soul. To do this, you have to first know what proper Midos are, and then look at yourself and see whether your Midos are what they should be. Maimonides says that our Midos come from three sources. Some come from our individual inborn natures. Others we learn from those around us. The third source of our Midos is our own hard work to change the bad Midos we already have.

1 - I have to tell you that while I truly do want to have good Midos, the more I think about it, the idea of making a Cheshbon HaNefesh to get there is very scary to me. You have already made me realize that I have some big problems with my Midos. Now, I am scared that I will find out more bad things about myself, and that I will then fall apart completely. The letters of the MIDOS sign have been whirling around in my mind. When I read them backwards, they spell "SO DIM." That is how I see my prospects of making a Cheshbon HaNefesh and changing my Midos at this time.

2 - If you choose not to make a Cheshbon HaNefesh because of what you may find, you'll succeed only in hiding your bad Midos from yourself. Those Midos are still present anyway, however. God certainly knows about them, and they come through to other people as well. Why should you be the last person to know about your bad Midos? Moreover, the goal of a Cheshbon Hanefesh is not to find bad Midos in order to feel bad about them. Rather, it is to find bad Midos in order to change them to good ones. As a result, you will in fact become a much better person, and you will therefore eventually feel much better about yourself!

1 - But is it really possible for me to change my bad Midos?

They are very much a part of who I am.

2 - Perhaps you have heard the saying that people do not change. I must tell you that this is not a Jewish saying. It is a basic teaching in Judaism that Man has free will and can change the bad parts of himself to good ones. In fact, the Mitzvah of Teshuvah, repentance, requires that we do this. You can see that

you can change by looking at your own life and seeing how much you've already changed. The desires and values you had at the age of two were different from those you had at the age of seven, and the desires and values you had at the age of seven were different from those you have today. People can and should continue to grow throughout their lives.

1 - OK. I am not afraid to make a Cheshbon HaNefesh anymore; I am ready to work towards becoming a better person. However, I am now facing a different problem. You yourself have taught me that the Rabbis said that a person cannot see his own faults; a person is not able to be objective about himself. How, then, can I hope to know which Midos I need to improve?

2 - You are asking a very good question. We should certainly try to look at ourselves objectively. If problems keep coming up in the same kinds of situations, recognizing this may help us to identify a particular Midah that needs to be worked on. However, we still need input from other people, who are often more

objective. We should note and take seriously the comments and criticisms we hear from others. It is true that parents, other family members, and friends may not always be objective either. Nonetheless, if they do point out issues, it is worthwhile to look into them and talk about them. Especially if a lot of people point to the same issue, they may very well be right. One can also seek and learn from the advice of a Rabbi, teacher, or counselor who would tend to be more completely objective.

1 - And once I do find out what my bad Midos are, how can I change them?

2 - There are many different approaches that you can take. Different ways work for different kinds of people. A person with strong self-control can simply resolve to change them and do so. Even if a person can't simply change the underlying Midah, he can at least try to change actions that result from it; it is a basic Torah teaching that our hearts are influenced by our actions.

One who tends to analyze things can make a cost-benefit analysis,

which will show how great the loss caused by the bad Midah is, and that it really leads to no gain at all. A person who feels that he has it in him to become much greater than he is can take the approach that it is beneath him to have such bad Midos. Today, there are many Torah-based books written in English that can help a person work on his Midos.

1 - If I have to work on all of my bad Midos, I am going to be completely overwhelmed!

2 - The best thing to do is to focus on one Midah at a time.

1 - But how will I know what to start with?

2 - I would suggest that you begin by working on your worst Midah. We are in this world to make a Tikkun, to fix something in ourselves. Rabbi Elijah of Vilna, the Vilna Gaon, as well as many Chassidic teachers, said that one's particular Tikkun is always in the area that presents the greatest challenge for him. I would therefore suggest that you work on your worst Midah and achieve

your purpose in this world by fixing it. Once you do that, you will know how to then work successfully on your other Midos.

1 - Thank you very much for all of your help. I'm ready to begin, but I'm still feeling a little scattered. I have so much going on in my life. Can you suggest anything that could help me focus properly on improving myself?

2 - Yes, I have an idea. Why don't you keep a Midos diary? You can begin by describing and discussing the Midah that you want to change. Then, each day, you can note anything you did to work on changing it, as well as anything that happened that challenged you regarding that particular Midah, and how you dealt with it.

Hopefully, your diary will end with an event showing that you were successful in truly changing the Midah, even when something came up that would have brought out the worst in you in the past. If you really put your mind to this, there is no reason that you shouldn't be successful. I would be very happy to look at your diary at any point and to give you my comments and suggestions.

1 - Thank you so much. I am really looking forward to doing this work. Before, my prospects of improving myself had seemed "SO DIM." Now, I see that it's the other way around; working on my MIDOS is the key to bringing great light into my life. Isn't it amazing how much one can grow from looking at the signs in Camp Midos?

THE END

THE BULLY MEETS THE RABBI

1 - Hello, Rabbi! Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Grrrr. I am president of the Proud-to-Be-a-Bully Society. I am very strong and powerful. Even other bullies are afraid of me. Let me tell you about one of my favorite victims - a boy named David. I make fun of his nose, I make fun of his clothes, I make fun of his glasses, and I make fun of the way he speaks. Basically, I make his life miserable. Oh - and get this! He has a silly rock collection, and I make fun of that, too.

2 - It's nice to meet you, Grrr, but let me ask you a question - Why are you telling all of this to me, a Rabbi? How could you possibly think that I would be supportive of what you're doing?

1 - Rabbi, I am here today to prove to you that bullying is a Mitzvah in the Torah.

2 - Wow, Grrrr, I didn't know that you're a Torah scholar. Please, let me hear your proofs that bullying is a Mitzvah.

1 - Okay. First, I learned in Hebrew school that it says in the Torah that the Egyptian King Pharaoh tortured the Jews and made their lives miserable. With my bullying, I'm following the ancient tradition of Pharaoh!

2 - Don't you know what happened to Pharaoh in the end?

1 - Actually, now that you mention it, I don't know. I think I stopped paying attention at that point in the lesson because I was too busy making faces at David, who was sitting next to me in class.

2 - But don't you know what happened from reading the Haggadah at the Passover Seder?

1 - I pay attention only at the beginning of the Seder, until the Afikomen is set aside. Once that happens, I'm completely focused on hiding it, and on the prize I'll get for returning it. And if any of my competitors gets in my way - whack! I hit him over the head with my matzah.

2 - Well, let me tell you what happened. God punished the Egyptians with ten plagues, and Pharaoh's army was destroyed in the Red Sea. Pharaoh was humiliated, and Moses led the Jews out of Egypt as free people!

1 - But, wait, Rabbi, I also learned about another bully - Haman. He got King Achashverosh to agree to let him get rid of all of the Jews in the Persian Empire. What about him?

2 - Don't you know what happened to Haman and his plans?

1 - Actually, I don't, because when I hear the Megillah on Purim, and it gets to the part where Haman describes his plot to bully the Jews, I get so excited that I start hitting David with my grogger (noise-maker).

2 - Well, Grrr, let me tell you, Haman and his sons didn't fare too well, either. They were all killed.

1 - Wow, I didn't know all of this. I'm beginning to see your point. Maybe bullying is not one of the 613 Mitzvos after all.

2 - Let me tell you another story that is written in the Bible. I happen to be teaching it to my class today. It's in the Book of Samuel, the prophet. The Jews and the Philistines were enemies, and the Philistines proposed that, rather than going to war, each side pick one person as a representative to fight in a one-on-one battle. The Philistines had among them a powerful giant named "Goliath." For forty days, Goliath cursed God and the Jews, and there was no one who was brave enough to challenge him.

1 - Wow, Goliath must have been president of his local Proud-to-Be-a-Bully Society, like me. Was anyone able to stop him?

2 - Yes, a young boy named David came on the scene. He was deeply disturbed by Goliath's behavior, and he asked to be chosen to be the one to fight to defend the Honor of God. His brothers and others tried to persuade him not to take up a battle against this experienced man of war.

1 - Why didn't David listen to them?

2 - David was confident that God would help him defeat Goliath. He said that, when he was a shepherd, God had helped him to overpower a lion and a bear who tried to attack his flock of sheep. He therefore had faith that God would help him now, and He did.

1 - How did David do it?

2 - David defeated Goliath with his sling shot, using a single rock. David really taught bullies a lesson, didn't he? In fact, I actually have a sling shot with me today, to demonstrate to my class how it works.

1 - Now that I think of it, maybe that's where my victim David got his idea about having a rock collection. I'm starting to get a little nervous. Rabbi, do you have any rocks with you today?

2 - Sure I do. Let me show you how it works.

1 - No, please, please, have mercy on me. I promise that I won't bully David - or anyone else - anymore. Please, please, have a heart.

2 - And what was your response when David cried for mercy?

Did you stop bullying him, or did you laugh at him and torture him even more?

1 - Please, please, I promise I'll be better.

2 - You don't have to worry, Grrr, I'm not a bully. I won't hurt you. The Torah commands us not to say or do hurtful things to others. Anyway, I think you're beginning to learn your lesson.

1 - Yes. Actually, the stories you told me are all very scary to me. I see that, every time, even though the bully rides high for a time, he eventually has a tremendous downfall. I'm really scared about what could happen to me because of all the bad things I've done.

Three days later ...

2 - Hi Grrrr, what's going on?

1 - Rabbi, I've decided to change my ways. I now know that bullying is a terrible thing, and I am ashamed. I realize that my behavior was coming from low self-esteem. I was trying to feel

good about myself at the expense of others. I want to have real power. I have decided that I now want to become president of the Proud-to-Be-a-Rescuer Society. Rabbi, can you teach me what it takes to be rescuer?

2 - Sure. Let's take a look at the rescuers in two of the stories we've already talked about. Moses, who led the Jews out of Egypt, was a great rescuer. In Egypt, he once saw an Egyptian taskmaster about to kill a Jewish slave. Moses intervened and saved the Jew. He also once saw two Jews fighting, with one raising his hand to hit the other. Moses intervened then as well, and broke up the quarrel. Even when he came to Midian, a foreign land, and the local shepherds chased away the girls who had come to draw water from the well for their sheep, Moses saved the girls by chasing away the shepherds and drawing the water for them.

1 - And who was the rescuer of the Jews in Haman's time?

2 - That was Queen Esther. She was a different kind of rescuer. She used her special womanly wisdom to foil Haman's plot and she used her political connections by speaking to King Achasverosh, who had the power to stop Haman permanently.

1 - Thank you, Rabbi. I have come to realize that the people who need to be rescued the most are the bullies themselves, who are destroying themselves and hurting others with their behavior. In honor of this, and in gratitude for your help, I am changing my name from "Grrrr" to "Grateful", and I am also volunteering at my local chapter of "Bullies Anonymous", to help those who are less fortunate. I hope that through my new approach, I will be able to make up for all the pain I've caused. I have also decided to write an article for the school paper about David's rock collection. Now that I've stopped making fun of it, I realize that it really is quite impressive.

2 - Mazel Tov, Grateful! Is there anything else you would like to say?

1 - Yes Rabbi. Rescue rocks!

THE END

A PASSION FOR POPCORN

1 - I love popcorn. I have loved popcorn for as long as I can remember. I love the crunch, I love the taste, I love the oil. I could eat popcorn all day long. In fact, I have a craving and desire for popcorn all the time. It may sound corny to say this, but I could never scorn popcorn. My friends know about my love for popcorn. To them, I seem a little extreme. But there is nothing wrong with loving those precious popped kernels God has created.

2 - How do you get your popcorn?

1 - There are different ways. Sometimes, I buy ready-made popcorn in a store, but my favorite kind is home-made. My mother bought me an old-fashioned popcorn popper. You put in the kernels and the oil, and out comes the delicious popcorn.

2 - Do you ever run out of popcorn?

1 - No. I keep an enormous supply of kernels in the cabinet,

and I pop away all the time.

2 - I just heard there is a world-wide shortage of popcorn kernels. What are you going to do?

1 - I'm not worried, I have my supply.

Three months later....

2 - It's three months since we last met, how is your popcorn supply doing?

1 - My supply is running out. I have to get some more. If I don't, I'll be in big trouble!

2 - Are you addicted?

1 - Well, I'm not exactly addicted, but I feel like I just can't live without my popcorn!

2 - So what are you going to do?

1 - I know, I'll ask my friends if they have any popcorn kernels to spare.

2 - What did they say?

1 - Two of them had some kernels, but they wouldn't share

them with me. One said that he wanted them for himself, and the other said that he didn't want to support my addiction.

2 - So now what are you going to do?

1 - Well, I think, at this point, it would not be a sin for me to just steal the kernels from them. I'll even put the money secretly in their pockets.

2 - What? You're actually going to steal from someone else?

1 - Yes, I have every right! After all, my friend who says I'm a popcorn addict is actually stealing my good name with his slander, so I'll just collect damages from him by taking his popcorn kernels. And about stealing from my other friend, it's not so bad. I'm even paying him for it.

2 - There is a big problem with what you're about to do! If you think someone has caused you damage, you can't just settle the score on your own. You need to consult with a Rabbi who is very knowledgeable in matters of Jewish Law who can guide you as to what is the right thing to do. Also, The Torah says: "Thou Shall

Not Covet." The Talmud teaches that this means you should not desire what someone else has and take action to try to obtain it, even if you pay for it. It's one of the Ten Commandments!

1 - It's not such a big sin.

2 - That's not for you to decide. I see that you are really addicted. Your desire for popcorn is so strong that you just can't think clearly. Also, are you really ready to hurt your friends and to get into trouble with the law for these popcorn kernels?

1 - Okay, I see that you may have a point. But what should I do? I need my popcorn!

2 - Why don't you try to expand your search? Maybe you could put out an ad in the local newspaper, or do a search on the internet. Then you could achieve your goal without doing anything wrong.

1 - I hadn't thought of that, I guess I wasn't thinking so clearly.

2 - Addicts don't think well, their addiction clouds their minds.

Why don't you take my advice, and give it a try?

1 - Okay.

Later...

1 - Well, I put out an ad, and I did an internet search, but I got no results. There really does seem to be a world-wide shortage of popcorn. What do I do now? It looks like I'm going to have to go back to my plan of stealing popcorn. You can't stop me, and you can't even warn my friends because you don't know who they are!

2 - You're right, there's not much I can do, but I hope and pray that you have a change of heart, and that you do the right thing. You just have to give up your addiction! Look at how low you're willing to go to support it!

The Next Day...

2 - So, did you take my advice?

1 - Of course not! Last night, I sneaked into my friend's house while everyone was sleeping, and I took the kernels. No one saw me! Now, I have a ten-day supply. What a relief! He called me

an addict. Now I have taken my revenge!

2 - Now you're also taking revenge? That is forbidden by the Torah as well. You really need help.

Two weeks later...

2 - It's been two weeks, have you regretted your actions yet?

1 - Well, I have to say that you were right. After my ten-day supply ran out, I decided to steal from my other friend. I went to his house and the car was gone. I went in and found the kernels and quickly put them into my pockets. As I was about to leave, to my surprise, my friend's mother walked in! She asked what I was doing there, and I lied - I said that I had forgotten something there when we last played. She didn't believe me. She knows about my need for popcorn. She had also heard that my other friend's popcorn had mysteriously disappeared. She ordered me to empty my pockets, and out came the kernels. She called me an addict and a thief, and threatened to call my mother and the police.

2 - Oh my, you even went so far as to lie as well? What did you do next?

1 - I said she could call the police if she wanted to, but she should please not call my mother! That would be the end. She just wouldn't understand. My friend's mother said she would call both anyway.

2 - What happened next?

1 - I got very scared. I begged her to forget about it, but she refused. She said that my addiction must not be enabled; it must be brought to an end! She picked up the phone, and I panicked. I took one of the kernels, and I threw it in the air to intimidate her with "popcorn power." I intended to catch the kernel with my hand, but, unfortunately, it got out of hand, and it bounced up back at my friend's mother and hit her in the face. I ran out of the house. I was later arrested for attempted assault with a popcorn kernel. Despite my protests that I didn't mean to hurt her, and that I would never intentionally waste a popcorn kernel,

I was convicted by the court and sent to a juvenile correctional center. I'm very worried now about my future. How will this affect my ability to get a job and to get married? What I did wasn't so bad. I didn't mean to hurt anybody. I guess I just over-reacted and got nervous and out of control. And there's no way to get popcorn here!

2 - I do feel sorry for you. The nature of addiction is that the addict will do just about anything to support his habit, even lying, stealing, and hurting others. The addict is also ready to give up the good that he does have in his life, including his relationships with family and friends. Do you now admit that you have an addiction?

1 - I guess I have to admit that I went too far. What can I do? I still have my popcorn cravings, but I also crave a better life, a new start.

2 - You need to join Popcornaholics Anonymous. You have now admitted that you have a problem, and that is the first step. If

you are addicted to popcorn, there must be reason.

1 - What do you think it is? Why do people get addicted to things?

2 - Many times, the reason is that they feel emptiness in their lives. They look for something to give them pleasure and meaning, and then they feel like they can't live without that thing. In truth, they are only making their problems worse, since they don't find real, lasting pleasure and meaning from their addiction, and they feel even emptier.

1 - How did you know? I love popcorn so much because I have so little else in my life. I don't really feel like I'm doing anything meaningful. Popcorn makes me feel good and important.

2 - Maybe you could find another way to have enjoyment and meaning in your life. If you start to study the Torah, you would really find fulfillment and you would learn how to live a better life. You would also use your mind and develop your intellect, which will give you a higher kind of pleasure.

1 - There could be a kernel of truth in what you're saying. I now see that my way doesn't work. Also, I said when I broke into my friend's house the first time that no one saw me. I know that God sees everything, and that He certainly saw what I did. I feel very bad about what I did. What can I do to make amends?

2 - In Judaism, we have the concept of Teshuvah - Repentance. If we admit the wrongs we have done, sincerely regret them, ask for forgiveness from the one we hurt and from God, and try our best never to repeat the wrongs, then we will be forgiven. If something is stolen, you also must consult a Rabbi to see how you can pay back what you have taken. I can help you with all of this. There is, within you, a precious kernel, your soul. If you can pop it open and let it explode out, you will find true meaning and fulfillment, and others will appreciate you as well. Let's try that, and then you won't need popcorn anymore.

1 - Thank you! I feel lighter and fluffier already!

THE END

TRUE LOVE

1 - "I accept upon myself the positive commandment to love and respect my neighbor and friend just as I would like to be loved and respected."

2 - Wow, it's so wonderful to hear that you have accepted this Torah Commandment upon yourself. Do you know how important this commandment is? It actually includes many other Mitzvos as well, like doing all sorts of kindnesses for others, such as providing hospitality and visiting the sick.

1 - Of course I know how important this commandment is! The Talmud says that the first Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed because of some terrible sins, but the second Temple was destroyed, even though the people did not commit these sins, because people hated each other for no reason. We must love one another. We must only want the best for others!

2 - You're right! With your loving approach, the Temple would

not have been destroyed, and it will be speedily rebuilt!

1 - Of course, hatred is wrong only if it is for no reason. If I hate someone else for a reason, that's OK.

2 - Wait a minute, what do you mean?

1 - Well, for example, I hate many people because I'm jealous of them. My hatred has a basis; they have things that I don't have.

2 - You're making a big mistake here. Hating a person for no reason, or baseless hatred, means that there is no legitimate reason to hate the person according to the Torah. The Torah outlaws jealousy. This prohibition is found in the Ten Commandments! Rabbi Yisrael Meir HaKohen, the author of Sefer Chofetz Chaim, wrote an essay about love and hate. He singled out jealousy as the main cause of baseless hatred. He lists various reasons for jealousy:

A person is sometimes jealous of others because of the material things they have, be it a job, a house, or anything else

that they themselves want. The Talmud says: "Every tradesman hates his fellow tradesmen." When two people are in the same business, and especially when one is more successful than the other and takes business away from him, hatred is the result. One must be very careful about this. If people give honor and praise to a certain person, this may cause another to be jealous and hate him. This is so even if the other person is praised for qualities or abilities the jealous person knows he himself does not possess.

1 - All right, I realize that jealousy is outlawed by the Torah; it can't be a legitimate basis for hatred. However, there are other perfectly acceptable reasons for hating people. For example, I don't like the color green. It really annoys me. It reminds me of the vegetables my mother tries to force me to eat at home. So, if a person wears something green, I hate him. It's for a good reason!

2 - Just because someone wears something you don't like, you

don't have a right to hate them. You may dislike them, or dislike what they do, but that does not mean that you can hate them.

There is a difference between "like" and "love." You can dislike someone else but still love them as their fellow man/woman.

Your dislike of the color green does not count as a legitimate reason to hate.

1 - All right, I see your point. Maybe green isn't so bad, and I shouldn't hate others for wearing it. However, there is another exception, and this one I'm sure you'll agree with. This would be hating a person who engages in annoying behavior.

2 - Like what?

1 - Like if someone chews his food really loudly, like my little sister does at home, I really hate her. It's soooooo annoying!

2 - I'm sorry, but the Torah would not say that this is a legitimate reason to hate someone. Just because someone does something that annoys you does not mean that you may hate them.

1 - Oh, I have another example, and this time you must agree!

I am a very quiet-loving person, and one of my bunkmates talks a mile a minute. He just yaps all day long. How can I stand it? I can't help but hate him!

2 - This is also not a reason to hate someone. We need to recognize that people have different habits and personalities; these are God-given. The world needs all of them. These people are not doing these things to annoy you; it's just who they are. They are just being themselves. We need to appreciate people for who they are. Maybe your friend is very wise, and you should stop and listen to what he has to say.

1 - All right, I guess I see your point. My little sister isn't chewing so loudly on purpose; she just can't help herself. And my friend who talks a lot does sometimes have something worthwhile to say. I am ready to love people who annoy me! But what about someone who refuses to do a favor for me? Can't I hate them for those reasons?

2 - The Torah says: "Do not take revenge and do not bear a grudge towards the people of your nation, and love your neighbor as yourself." According to the Rabbis, the Torah is referring to a case in which person 'A' asks his friend, person 'B' to do a favor for him, and he refuses. The next day, person 'B' asks for a favor from person 'A'. Person 'A' cannot refuse to do the favor just because the day before his friend refused to help him out. If he does that, then that is called "taking revenge." Also, he may not say: "I won't be like you! I will lend you what you're asking for, even though you didn't do the same for me." That is called "bearing a grudge." You certainly may not hate the other person for refusing to help you out.

1 - The Torah is really asking a lot of me. Here, there really does seem to be a basis for hating the other person, yet, the Torah doesn't allow it.

2 - The love that we have for each other must be very deep. Little issues cannot and should not change it. We should

remember all that we have in common and not focus on our differences. Just like parents and children generally love each other no matter what, so, too, should be our love for every person.

1 - Refusing to do a favor for someone is one thing, but what if someone does something that really hurts my feelings? Do I still have to love him?

2 - The Torah tells us: "You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your friend, and not bear a sin because of him." If someone did something hurtful to you, you should not hate him in your heart, but rather, you should tell the other person what is bothering you. Of course, this should be done in a soft voice and with the intention of "clearing the air" and helping the other person to improve. Many times, it will turn out that the person had a completely different intention from what you thought. It is very important to judge others favorably.

1 - I thought true love meant loving another person if they are

nice to me, share my likes and dislikes, and treat me with respect.

This sounds more like unconditional love, and that makes loving others much more difficult than I thought!

2 - It is definitely more difficult, but it is also so much more meaningful. We have to see ourselves as part of a bigger picture.

We are all brothers and sisters! We are all connected!

1 - I said before that the second Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed because people hated each other for no good reason.

Could you please tell me more about that?

2 - Well, you know the story of Kamtza and Bar Kamtza. This hatred actually led to the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem. However, there was another aspect to the hatred and disunity that was found among the people. There were three groups in Jerusalem before it was destroyed. The first group was called "The Friends of Rome." They wanted to be like the Romans, and didn't mind being under their rule. The second group was called "The Zealots." They wanted to wage war against Rome,

and become independent of them. The third group, which included the Rabbis, was the moderate group. They encouraged the people to live peacefully under Roman rule, while still living as Jews in every way. These groups did not get along with each other and they fought against each other. Each group controlled a different part of Jerusalem and they did not work together against the common enemy. In fact, three very rich men in Jerusalem stockpiled enough oil, wood and grain to last throughout the siege that the Romans placed around Jerusalem. The Zealots, in an attempt to get the other groups to fight against Rome, burned down these stockpiles, and many people died of hunger as a result.

1 - That's terrible!

2 - The point is that we need to be united, despite our differences. Then, we can be strong against the real enemies of the Jewish People. Just like a string may not be so strong on its own, but when it is intertwined with other strings it creates a

rope which is much stronger, so too, we are stronger when we are all united.

1 - I am beginning to really see your point. We need to be united, despite all of our differences. I heard that God loves it when people get along and are united in peace and love. Why does God care so much about us getting along?

2 - We are all God's children. If we really love God, we will also love His other children. Just like a parent has great joy when all of his children get along with each other, so, too, does God have joy, so to speak, when we all get along. Then, His Presence will surely dwell among us.

1 - Thank you for teaching me about true love!

THE END

THE COMPLAINER

1 - It's my first week at Camp Midos, and I'm having big problems here!

2 - Really? What's wrong?

1 - The food!

2 - The food seems good to me. What's the problem?

1 - I don't like the way they make the string beans here.

They're too thick. I like them cut into very thin slices, French style. This situation is very challenging for me.

2 - I'm so sorry for what you're going through.

1 - And not only that, but I was horrified when they served the chicken soup Friday night. I like my chicken soup clear, but there were noodles in my soup! As a result, my beautiful clear chicken soup was made very cloudy. I feel so bad about this. The sunshine is gone from my life!

2 - Well, at least we have great desserts.

1 - I'm in pain about this also. Sometimes the cake is vanilla, and sometimes it's chocolate. I would like the cake to be a perfect blend of half vanilla and half chocolate. Otherwise, I feel completely out of balance.

2 - Have you spoken to anyone in the dining room about your problems?

1 - Yes. They said that I could cut the string beans myself, remove the noodles from my soup with some soup, and combine halves of different cakes.

2 - These seem to be very good solutions. What did you say?

1 - I said that it's too much work. I'm entitled to be given everything exactly as I want it. If I don't get what I want, then everyone else is to blame. When I complain, I'm putting the blame where it belongs.

2 - What makes you think that you're entitled to everything that you want, exactly as you want it?

1 - I don't know; it's just a feeling that I have.

2 - I understand that you feel this way, but you're living in a fantasy world. There is no basis, in this world, for you to expect that everything will be handed to you exactly the way you want it. This is just not the way the world works. We have to ready and willing to put in the effort to get what we want.

1 - Maybe you have a point. The thing is, I love to complain! I'm not really interested in solutions. If the problems would be solved, then I wouldn't be able to complain about them anymore.

2 - I don't understand! Why do you love to complain? It doesn't seem to be getting you what you want in life.

1 - I love the attention I get when I complain. In fact, I've come to realize that, unless I complain, no one pays any attention to me at all.

2 - I feel very bad for you, but is the attention you're getting positive attention?

1 - Well, actually, everyone says that I'm very annoying.

2 - So why don't you try to do something that will get you positive attention?

1 - That's an interesting idea, but I don't think that I can give up complaining. There are so many advantages to complaining. It feels so good to complain and get all my feelings out. In fact, I have a plan for a major public anti-noodle demonstration, so that everyone can hear my complaints. I even had some t-shirts and buttons made, saying, "Noodles are For Poodles." The rally is planned for this Friday afternoon in front of the dining room.

A few days later...

2 - So, how did your anti-noodle demonstration go?

1 - Not so well. I was the only one who showed up. I guess I'll have to donate the extra t-shirts and buttons to the dog-lovers society. Why do you think that no one joined my demonstration?

2 - People who complain all the time don't tend to have a lot of friends. No one likes to be around a negative person.

1 - Maybe you're right; I don't have many friends. But what am I supposed to do? Bottle up my emotions? Is that healthy?

2 - In the short term, complaining feels good. However, we must also look at the consequences in the long term. Complaining about problems while doing nothing about them only leads to focusing more on the negative in your life. This leads to more unhappiness and even more complaints.

1 - I had no idea that complaining could be so harmful.

2 - Yes, it is. You have to also realize that complaining when things don't go your way is usually an expression of anger.

1 - It's true. I guess that's why I enjoy releasing my emotions by complaining. It's like the pleasure I get when I release my anger at people in other ways.

2 - We all know that expressing anger may feel good in the short term, but it is also very damaging in the long term. An angry person loses dignity and also loses friends.

1 - But what am I supposed to do with my emotions?

2 - You need to look at the positive things in your life and be grateful for them. Your positive emotions deserve as much, if not more, of your attention. By focusing on the positive aspects of your life, you can rise above your negative emotions and actually accomplish something. Be grateful that the camp provides string beans, chicken soup and cake!

1 - Wow, I never thought of that! How do you know so much about this?

2 - You're not the first person in history to complain about food. The Jewish People traveled in the desert for 40 years, from the time they left Egypt until they came to the Land of Israel. There is, of course, not enough food found in the desert to feed millions of people. God provided food for the Jews in a miraculous fashion. Each day, a special food called "Manna" fell from heaven. On Friday, a double portion would fall, so that everyone would have food for Shabbos as well, since on Shabbos,

our day of rest, no Manna would fall. All of this is described in the Torah.

1 - What a miracle! The people must have been so grateful!

2 - Actually, some people complained that they missed the foods they used to eat as slaves in Egypt. This did not find favor in God's eyes, and it did not lead to good things.

1 - So, you're saying that complaining is also spiritually wrong?

2 - Yes, complaining is like telling God that you're not happy with what He has given you. We are not supposed to complain about the ways of God. If something does not go our way, we are supposed to say, "Gam Zu L'Tova", "This is also for the good."

Actually, Tisha B'Av became the saddest day on the Jewish calendar because it was on that day that the Jews in the desert complained and cried for no good reason.

1 - What happened?

2 - Twelve men were sent to spy out the Land of Israel. Ten of them came back with a false report about the land. They said

that it was not a good land, and that the people there were so big and strong that it would not be possible for the Jewish people to conquer it. Despite the fact that God had already promised them that the Land of Israel was a good land, and that they would conquer it, the people cried that night and complained that God hated them and took them out into the desert just to kill them. From that time on, Tisha B'Av was set aside as a very sad day for the Jewish people.

1 - You've helped me very much, but I'm so used to focusing on the negative. Can I really change?

2 - Of course! In fact, I have an idea for you. The Rabbis of the Talmud instituted blessings to be said over all foods and drinks. In this way, we recognize that the food is God's gift to us, and we show our appreciation for what God gave us.

1 - I would like to learn and recite these blessings; I think I'll become a more positive person through them. I just have one

more question. Is complaining always wrong? Are there situations in which a person should complain?

2 - That's a very good question. Complaints that are purely negative and unproductive are wrong. On the other hand, the Torah encourages constructive communication to draw attention to real problems, so that they can be solved. For example, the Torah says that if someone offends you, you should not hate the person in your heart. Instead, if possible, you should try to speak to the person and make peace. It is included in the Mitzvah of "loving your neighbor as yourself." It must be done privately, in a gentle tone, without hatred or anger, and without embarrassing the other person. Of course, if someone is threatening or hurting you or someone else, you must report this to an adult who can help.

1 - Wow, thank you for helping me to become a more positive person.

2 - We should really have a celebration in honor of the new you!

1 - What should we do?

2 - I think we should have a party and serve all of your favorite foods: French-cut string beans, clear chicken soup, and vanilla-chocolate cake.

1 - The truth is, now that I'm a more positive person, I don't really want those things anymore. I was just unhappy and looking for things to complain about. I actually love the food at Camp Midos! In fact, I'm planning a rally in honor of the chef in front of the dining room this Friday. I'm also having t-shirts and buttons made saying, "Noodles Aren't Just for Poodles."

2 - I think it's wonderful that you have become so outspoken in a positive way. The truth is, I think that even though you were just looking for things to complain about, the particular things you chose to complain about symbolized the changes you wanted to make, deep down. You complained about the string beans because you realized, deep down, that your ego was inflated, and needed to be cut down. You complained about the noodles in your

soup because you realized, deep down, that your vision was clouded over, and you could not see the sunshine in your life. You complained about the cake because you realized, deep down, that you did not know how to properly view the light and dark in your life. Now, all of these problems are solved, and so, you don't desire these foods anymore. By being a positive person, your deepest wishes for yourself have been fulfilled. Mazel Tov!

THE END

THE FAME GAME

1 - Fame is my aim; it's the name of the game. I want to see my name in lights, and to be praised by all, days and nights. I seek universal acclaim, and I want everyone to wear t-shirts bearing my name. When my name is mentioned anywhere, I want cheerleaders to wave pom-poms in the air. One thing, however, is a big shame: I can't come up with a claim to fame.

2 - Do you always speak in rhyme?

1 - I do it all the time. I can make up a rhyme on a dime.

2 - Why do you want to be famous?

1 - I want to feel more important than all the rest; I want everyone to exclaim: "He's the best!"

2 - What do you want to be famous for?

1 - That's not important; it doesn't matter what it's for.

I just want to be famous; that's for sure.

2 - Are you sure it doesn't matter what you're famous for? I think you need to think about this. It's easy to become famous for bad things. Many people who have fame are famous because they are criminals. Do you mean to say that you would do anything to be famous?

1 - I agree; that kind of thing is just not for me. That's not fame, but infamy!

2 - So what are you going to do? What is going to be your claim to fame?

1 - I have really been racking my brain to come up with a claim to fame. I would like to be the greatest actor of all time, but I can't act worth a dime. I would like to be the greatest baseball player of all time, but I just strike out all the time. I was thinking of trying to build the world's largest house made entirely not of bricks, but of popsicle sticks. I have this as a dream, but my allowance isn't enough to buy all that ice cream.

2 - I have an idea. You could be a great poet!

1 - Don't you think I already know it? But, can you name one person today who is famous for the poetry he/she writes? Today we live in a world of sound bytes. Besides, my English teacher tells me that my poetry needs a lot of work, and, when I recite my poems, people always smirk. I'm giving up on being a poet. There is no fame in it; I just know it.

2 - Are you really sure that you still want to be famous?

1 - Of course I am. Fame is immortality; it means you live forever.

2 - That's not true. Even a person who is very famous tends to be famous in his own place or time, but not beyond that. Let's take, for example, athletes and actors. Can you name an athlete and an actor from before modern times? Fame is fleeting.

1 - Even if fame is fleeting, it is wonderful to have it even for a short time. I want to be a celebrity. That means everyone celebrates how great I am.

2 - Do you think that celebrities are really happy people?

1 - Why wouldn't they be?

2 - The Talmud says that the desire for honor is never satisfied; it "takes a person out of this world." With all of the honor a celebrity has, he is never satisfied, but always looking for more.

1 - At least they have a lot of admirers. I don't have any.

2 - So many famous people have very sad lives. They may have many admirers, but they never know who their real friends are and who is just acting like their friend in order to just be connected to someone famous. Also, they have absolutely no privacy; their admirers and the media constantly follow them around and take over their lives. They even try to uncover - or invent - scandals about them. A lot of jealous people derive great pleasure in discovering flaws in famous people; it makes them feel better about themselves.

1 - I hear what you're saying, but I just thought of a way to begin my path to fame. I have a plan of how to become famous and keep my privacy as well.

2 - Really, what is it?

1 - I'll run for class president, and I'll have a whole team of assistants and public relations people who will be on the job 24/6 to protect my privacy.

2 - Good luck!

Three weeks later...

1 - Hi.

2 - Hi, how are you? Are you famous yet?

1 - You won't believe what happened! My opponent in the race for class president uncovered some very embarrassing facts about me, like when my previous school's softball team lost the final game because I let the ball roll between my legs. My opponent also publicized the fact that my mother makes me eat

Brussels sprouts every night for dinner. I am so ashamed. I lost the race for class president, too.

2 - I'm so sorry.

1 - I'm not interested in being a celebrity anymore. I have been trying - and failing - all this time to be famous. Now, I'm totally lost. I don't have any goals for myself! Help!

2 - The desire for fame can actually divert a person from his true purpose in life. I have never wanted to be famous; there are things that are more important to me than public acclaim. It is most important to me to do the right things in life, whether or not they make me famous, or even popular.

1 - Do you mean to say that what other people think of you is not the most important thing? Whose opinion counts, then?

2 - God is greater than all people. What's important to me is to do what's right in the eyes of God, for God to celebrate my actions. I don't need fame in the eyes of other people to give me the sense that I'm worthwhile and valuable.

1 - You don't? How is that possible?

2 - I know that I'm very important and very valuable because I am here in this world, and that means that God wants me to be here. So I know that God values me. I know that I have within me what it takes to do something meaningful in the world.

1 - I didn't realize how great and important I already am. I now realize that, in seeking to be famous, I was actually getting farther removed from who I really am and lowering my self-esteem even more. Now, I'm eager to get on with my life and to do something meaningful with it.

2 - Earlier, you said that, through fame, a person becomes immortal. Judaism teaches, however, that it is by doing good deeds that one achieves immortality. In the afterlife, we enjoy the rewards of the Mitzvos we do in this world. And the afterlife is forever.

1 - I have very great regret that I gave up my dream of being a poet. I have been given a special gift; I can and should use it to

give people a lift. I now realize it's such a shame that I focused so much on the game of fame. What really matters is to do what's right and to live forever after in God's Light.

THE END

THE JAIL OF JEALOUSY

1 - I am very happy with what I have. We live in a small house. It fits our needs perfectly, since we are a small family. We have a small yard, with just enough room for my trampoline.

2 - That's wonderful. You are truly a rich person. As the Talmud says, "Who is rich? One who is happy with his portion."

Eight Months Later...

1 - You won't believe this! There were always small houses on our block. Someone bought a bunch of them, tore them down, and built a huge mansion. I look at it everyday when I jump on my trampoline. From what I hear, there are twenty bedrooms and fifteen bathrooms. The thought of having that house is so sweet to me. I know I am being jealous, but the thought of having the house is as sweet as jello, and there's always room for jello!

2 - The thought may seem sweet to you, but why? You don't need twenty bedrooms and fifteen bathrooms!

1 - But I want them. You have to understand that this is part of human nature. When a person sees an image, it creates a desire for the object in the heart. That's why advertising agencies use so many pictures. Jealousy is a desire like other desires. Why shouldn't I enjoy the thought of the fulfillment of my jealous desires?

2 - The Talmud says that jealousy takes a person out of this world. You are living in a fantasy world! Your desire gains you nothing in reality. There's no way for you to fulfill this desire. Even if it were for sale, you don't have enough money to buy it. Wanting an unattainable object in no way brings it closer. Jealousy doesn't jell into anything useful to us.

1 - I know, but I enjoy being jealous. What harm does it do, anyway?

2 - Jealousy is definitely not harmless. First of all, the energy that goes into being jealous could be used for something productive. Also, jealousy, because it is the expression of

unrealistic wishes, leads to frustration and misery. Instead of being sweet, life becomes very bitter. Jealousy causes you to be so focused on what you don't have, that you can no longer appreciate what you do have. Sometimes, the gap between the wish and the reality can be so painful that jealousy causes a person to take drastic measures to obtain the object of his desire. Jealousy may, at first, feel as sweet as jello, but, its end is lousy.

1 - I agree with you. Actually, lately, these negative feelings have been surfacing within me more and more. Even so, I crave the sweetness of my jealous thoughts very powerfully, and I just can't think straight. If these feelings are so strong, how can I ignore them?

2 - Your feelings of jealousy may seem to be strong and powerful, but, in reality, they are as firm as jello. The power of a desire does not necessarily indicate how much attention a person should give to it. A small child may want something very badly, to

the point that the child throws a tantrum, even though the object of his desire is not good for him. Some of our desires are similarly powerful and primitive, and they need to be controlled. Each of us has this "little child" within us. In Judaism, this is called the "Yetzer Hara", the drive to do bad things.

1 - Until now, you have spoken of jealousy as being foolish and destructive. Now, you're saying that it is actually bad. Do you mean that jealousy is actually a sin?

2 - The Torah teaches us that a person is not allowed to be jealous. In fact, it is the last of the Ten Commandments.

1 - But why?

2 - There are two reasons. First, to be jealous is a sin against one's fellow man. It is a sin to desire something that belongs to someone else. A jealous person is actually stealing in his heart. Moreover, jealousy is a sin that can easily lead to other sins. It can lead to stealing the desired object, or worse. The Torah also forbids pressuring the owner of the object to give away the

object or even to sell it. Even if the owner eventually agrees, a sin has still been committed.

1 - And what is the second reason?

2 - To be jealous is also a sin against God. Judaism teaches that God gives each person exactly what he is supposed to have. Someone who desires what God gave to another, and is not happy with his own portion, is going against God's plan.

1 - Are you saying that we are not allowed to try to improve our situation in life?

2 - No. We should seek to better our situation; God wants us to do that. However, what we do should be based on our own needs and our own growth and goals, not on what another person has.

1 - I want to do what you say, but I feel that I have no choice. The power of my jealous impulses seems irresistible to me.

2 - The Torah teaches that a person has free will; a person can control his actions. God commanded us not to be jealous; He

expects us to control our emotions, our Yetzer Hara. In fact, Judaism teaches that people were given a Yetzer Hara in order to overcome it and to choose what is good and right. That way, they can earn eternal happiness in the next world.

1 - What can I say? I feel that it is simply impossible for me to not be jealous.

2 - I see that you're really stuck. Sometimes, we see that when God wants us to learn a lesson, and we are not learning it, He may bring about events in our lives so that the lesson will be learned. Let's see what happens next.

The Next Day...

1 - I have some very exciting news! My new neighbor told me that he is going away for a couple of nights, and he has asked me to house-sit! Now, I'll be able to live in the house of my dreams! Ok, it's only for a couple of nights, but I am so excited. I'll finally have a taste of true happiness.

2 - I'm very happy for you, but I also want to mention something. How many times have your eyes seen - and your heart desired - a product that was advertised, but when you got it, it wasn't at all what you wanted? How disappointed were you? I wish you well, but you never know...

Two Days Later...

1 - I'm back.

2 - Well, how was it?

1 - Sniff, sniff.

2 - Why are you crying?

1 - First of all, I couldn't sleep at all. The house is very poorly constructed. When the wind blows, the window rattle. Also, whenever I took a step, the whole house creaked. I thought living in this house would make me happy. I am so disappointed. I'm crying for another reason. As you know, the house is a very big house. It also has a fenced-in roof-top tennis court. While I was up there, I saw, through the fence, in the distance, an even

bigger mansion. This one looks like it has over 100 bedrooms, and over 80 bathrooms. Now, I will have no happiness until I have that house.

2 - I was so happy to hear that you lost interest in the first house. Now I see that you still have the trait of jealousy within you. You only lost interest in the first house because you saw the flaws in it. If you continue down this path, to always desire what you see, you will never be happy.

1 - We'll see about that. I have an idea. I went to the house and I saw that there is room, at the very end, that has a window that is left open. I'll get into the house through that window, and I'll spend the night there.

2 - Don't do it! Not only is it wrong, but you could really get into big trouble with the law!

The Next Day...

1 - Can we just talk on the phone today, instead of meeting in person?

2 - Sure, but why can't we meet in person?

1 - I'll explain everything. Last night, I went to the house, and there were no cars in the thirteen-car garage. As I expected, the window was open, and I climbed in. There was a beautiful four-post canopy bed in the room, with fluffy down pillows. I climbed in, and settled in for a cozy night's sleep. All of a sudden, I heard something in the room. I looked around, and I saw a mouse scurrying across the room. I screamed, and then I closed up the curtains of the bed so that the mouse wouldn't be able to get in. All of a sudden, I heard footsteps. I wanted to run away, but I was afraid of the mouse. Then, one of the maids came into the room, opened the curtains of the bed, and asked me what I was doing there. I started to try to explain myself, but she called the police. The reason I can't speak to you in person today is that I have been arrested, and I'm now confined to a prison cell in the police station.

2 - This is terrible! I'm coming to visit you!

1 - Thank you so much for coming. I'm so miserable here. Instead of my old house, or a mansion with a 100 bedrooms, or even a mansion with 20 bedrooms, I'm now in a tiny prison cell. The sound of the clanking of the metal doors here is much worse than the sounds of the windows and floors in the mansion. Moreover, here, there aren't only mice, but rats as well. My jealousy has brought me to exactly the opposite of what I wished for. I wish I could be back in my old house. Now I really appreciate what I had and lost. I see that I was truly in the jail of jealousy.

2 - You have really learned your lesson. Now, it seems that you are ready to go back to who you were before you were sidetracked by your jealous desires.

1 - I would like that very much, but I'm stuck in this jail cell, waiting to see what my fate will be. In fact, I see the police chief coming now. I am so scared!

2 - It looks like he wants to talk to you privately. I'll be back.

A Few Minutes Later...

1 - You'll never believe it! The police chief told me that there are secret listening devices in the jail cells. He heard our entire conversation. He said that he was very impressed by my sincere words of regret and remorse. Therefore, since I am a not an adult, he decided to give me another chance and release me. The owner of the second mansion has been informed as well, and he and his wife were so impressed with my turnaround that they have invited me to come and be their guest.

2 - Are you going?

1 - While I do appreciate their generous offer, I am not going. I'm not interested in being in the mansion anymore. I am very happy with what I have. We live in a small house. It fits our needs perfectly, since we are a small family. We have a small yard with just enough room for my trampoline.

THE END

A DOLLAR AND A DREAM

1 - Hello, allow me to introduce myself. My name is George Reedy, G. Reedy for short. I am so proud to be named George because George Washington is on the face of every dollar bill. I love money; it is sweeter to me than honey. And I'm not just saying that to be funny. Money is my joy and my delight; I dream about money all day and all night! In fact, I dream in the color green!

2 - It's nice to meet you, Greedy - I mean George. It seems that you are very wealthy in your dreams, but, in reality, do you actually have any money?

1 - Yes, I do. My very rich uncle gave me a million dollars in cold, hard cash for my Bar Mitzvah.

2 - Mazel Tov on your Bar Mitzvah!

1 - Thanks, but how can I think about my Bar Mitzvah when I have a million smackerroos!

- 2 - What are you planning to do with all that money?
- 1 - What do you mean? I'm keeping it all for myself, of course.
- 2 - Did you put it in the bank?
- 1 - No, if I put it in the bank, I won't be able to look at it and admire it all the time. Besides, if I do put it in the bank, how can I be sure that the bank will return it to me?
- 2 - Oh, so you must have given it to your parents to watch.
- 1 - No, they're very busy with a lot of things, and I don't think that they would be able to guard it every second.
- 2 - So what did you do with the money?
- 1 - Shhhhh - don't tell anyone, but I brought it to camp.
- 2 - You brought a million dollars to camp? Did you put in your account in the main office? Can they handle such a large sum of money?
- 1 - Not to worry - I have come up with the safest place in camp to store my cash. What place could be safer than Foundations?

After all, the sign on the Godes Center says "We Have a Treasure." Now I have given that sign a new level of meaning.

2 - Aren't you worried that someone might find the money and take it?

1 - No, I put it where no one will look - under the cushions of the couch! You're there during the day, and you lock the place up every night. So, although I won't be able to admire my money day and night, I can go and visit it during the day at lunchtime, when no one else is around.

2 - Well, thanks for having such confidence in me, and thanks for letting me know about the money. I'll make sure to keep it a secret.

Three days later ...

1 - Hi Rabbi, I have a problem, and I think that you're the only one who can help me with it.

2 - Sure, I'd be happy to help. What's the problem?

1 - Well, I came by during lunch today to say "hello" to my million smackeroos, and they were gone - all of them!

2 - Oh, George, that's terrible. What could have happened to your money?

1 - Well, Rabbi, since you are the only other person who knew about my money, I have come to the conclusion that you must have taken it!

2 - George, why would I do that? It's against the Torah to steal!

1 - You have a point, Rabbi. I admit that, knowing you as I do, the idea that you took the money seems far-fetched, but, on the other hand, all evidence points to you.

2 - George, let me let you in on a little secret. There are secret cameras here in camp. Why don't I go to the security office and ask them what the camera footage shows?

1 - Great idea!

The next day ...

1 - Well, Rabbi, what did the camera footage show?

2 - The cameras show that no one took your money. At one point, a family of chipmunks invaded Foundations, but we examined the video very carefully, and they didn't run off with your money either.

1 - This is unbelievable! Then what really happened to my million-dollar treasure? (Starts to cry.)

2 - I have to tell you that there was something else the secret cameras revealed: you never hid your money here in the first place!

1 - What? The cameras must be broken!

2 - No, the cameras have been working fine all summer. George, I'm going to have to have a talk with your parents!

1 - No, no, please! Don't tell my parents! They told me to put the money in the bank and not to bring it to camp, but I didn't listen. Now I'm really paying the price!

2 - We all make mistakes in life. I'm sorry, but I must straighten this out with your parents.

The Next Day ...

1 - So, how upset were they?

2 - Not at all, George. Your parents explained to me that you never got a million dollars as a Bar Mitzvah gift. They said that you are a very vivid dreamer, and that you often confuse your dreams with reality. They also said that you mostly dream about money; I guess when you said that you dream about money day and night, you weren't kidding.

1 - It's all coming back to me now. Actually, I did receive a few hundred dollars in gifts, and I put all the bills into a photo album so that I can admire them. Rabbi, I'm so sorry for accusing you. Please forgive me. Maybe you can help me overcome my obsession with money. I need help!

2 - I forgive you, George. Let's try to move on from here.

You're probably a very unhappy person, and you dream about money all the time because you think that it will bring you happiness.

1 - I do have low self-esteem. I don't do well in school. I'm not popular. I'm not good in sports. If only I had lots of money, I would have happiness. People would honor me and respect me, and I could buy whatever my heart desires!

2 - I'm afraid that you're dreaming again, George. Money can't buy happiness. Money can buy things, but it cannot buy success or love. In fact, people who are very rich can never be sure who their real friends are. In the Bible, in the Song of Songs, it says that if a person gives away all of his money to secure love, people will only look down on him in disgrace.

1 - So maybe I shouldn't be so money-hungry and greedy.

Maybe I should just hold on to what I have.

2 - I have a better idea, George. I think that if God has blessed you with money or talents, you should share those blessings with others in need. Tzedakah, giving to the needy, is a big Mitzvah. What could be more appropriate?

1 - Rabbi, now you're going too far. I agree that I shouldn't run after money all the time, but why should I give away what I have to someone who hasn't earned it, and doesn't deserve it? Poor people deserve to be poor! Let them work for their money!

2 - It's not a person's fault if he's poor. Many people work very hard, but they still cannot make ends meet. A person has to put in whatever efforts he can, but, after that, he must simply trust that God will provide for him. Right on the back of George Washington's picture on the dollar bill it is written not "In Money We Trust", but "In God We Trust."

1 - I'm sorry, but I was never good at sharing - even in kindergarten. "What's mine is mine, and what's yours is mine" - that's my motto!

2 - Now you are starting to sound like the people of Sodom.

Sodom was located in an area near the Jordan River, which had a lot of water for crops. The soil there also contained a lot of gold, silver, and precious stones. Sodom was therefore the richest city in the world at that time, but the people who lived there kept all of their money for themselves. Instead of being grateful to God for all the blessings they had, they turned away from God and put all of their faith into their wealth.

1 - What kind of rules did they have in Sodom?

2 - The constitution of Sodom stated that any stranger found in Sodom must be robbed of all of his money and mistreated, and that anyone found giving food to a poor person must be put to death. The people of Sodom even went so far as to prune all of the fruit trees so that not even the birds could benefit from them! The Torah tells us that what used to be Sodom was destroyed by God and became the area of the Dead Sea, where

nothing grows. On the other hand, the Bible says that giving Tzedakah saves a person from death!

1 - Well, maybe I'll give a little bit of Tzedakah; I don't want to end up like Sodom.

2 - If you can, you should really consider giving more than just a little. Think about it. Money comes from God. God gives us the money to use to fulfill His wishes and to do Mitzvos. If we do so, then that gives God a good reason to give us more. The Rabbis of the Talmud tell us that giving Tzedakah actually leads to becoming rich. A person who gives Tzedakah is truly respected, and whatever he gives away is never lost. The good deed is his forever!

1 - Rabbi, you've convinced me to be a more giving and selfless person. Instead of being called G.Reedy, I would like to be called G.Enerous! I no longer want to be a man of greed, but one who helps his brothers and sisters in their time of need.

2 - That's wonderful, George, I'm so proud of you!

Three Days Later ...

2 - So, George, now that you're giving Tzedakah, how is it going?

1 - Great, Rabbi! You know how the lottery advertisements say "All it takes is a dollar and a dream"? Well, I'm happy to inform you that I have won the Mega Millions jackpot, and I'm not dreaming! Here's the ticket.

2 - That's amazing! What will you do with the money?

1 - Well, I've decided to set up programs for those less fortunate, and, to make up for having falsely accused you, I've decided to fund the creation of **Foundations** programs in camps all around the country, so everyone can learn such important lessons about life.

2 - George, I really do see that through giving to others, our dreams really can come true! Mazel Tov!

THE END

FROM MESS TO SUCCESS

1 - Hi Rabbi, thanks for coming to visit my room!

2 - Where are you? I hear your voice, but I can't see you!

1 - I'm here - behind all of these high piles of my most prized personal possessions.

2 - Wow, what is all of this doing in your room?

1 - Well, I have saved and saved, and I have every piece of clothing I have ever worn, every toy and game I have ever owned, all of my notebooks and textbooks since preschool, and I also have all of my electronics, past and present - computers, game-boys, i - pods, MP-3's, and so on. Oh - and I also have the wrappers from every laffy-taffy I have ever eaten.

2 - Wow, you sure have a lot of stuff! Why have you gone to the trouble of keeping it all?

1 - Well, you know, it's not right to waste anything, and I'm into saving the environment. The landfills have enough garbage in

them already. Plus, how could I bear to part with any of my precious belongings?

2 - It's very impressive that you care so much about the environment, but what about the environment you're living in?

1 - Well, now that you mention it, it is a little cramped in here.

2 - Not only is it cramped, it looks like it could use a little more organization.

1 - That may be so, but it takes a lot of time and energy to organize things. I'm a big believer in "Mess for Success", because that way, I can be completely devoted to accomplishing my goals in life. Besides, what's so bad about having a messy room? I like the "lived in" look.

2 - But how do you find any of your possessions with all of this clutter?

1 - I have a brilliant system that's sort of like the game "Battleship." I have used magic markers to make ruler marks on the walls of my room, and I have made alphabetized index cards

with the coordinates that tell me the exact location of each object I own. That way, when I want something, I just look at my index cards, and I immediately find whatever I need.

2 - Wow, can you demonstrate how it works?

1 - Sure. Let's say I want to find my tennis racket. I just look at my index cards, and ... wait a minute, where are my index cards? I can't seem to find them. Oh no, now I'm sunk!

2 - I'd like to try to help you find them, but I still can't see you, because of all of the clutter. Let me listen to the sound of your voice, and I'll climb over the piles to find you.

1 - No, no! Don't do that! You'll cause my tunnels to collapse!

2 - Tunnels, what tunnels?

1 - I have a network of tunnels under the piles of stuff. I crawl through these tunnels to get where I have to go.

2 - Well, since I don't think that I'm up to crawling through tunnels, why don't you come out of your room, and we'll go to the store to replace your index cards.

1 - That's very kind of you, and I would love to go, but I have another problem - I can't find my shoes.

2 - What do your parents have to say about all of this? Where are they?

1 - I don't know. I can never find them.

2 - I feel so bad for you. You have so much stuff that you don't even need anymore, and it's preventing you from finding the things you really need in order to live your life to the fullest!

1 - I hear what you're saying, Rabbi, but I'm so attached to all of my possessions. Each item has a precious memory attached to it. How can I bear to part with any of them?

2 - I understand your feelings, but what's more precious than your own self? I don't think you can live this way much longer.

Three days later ...

2 - Hi, I'm glad to see that you made it out of your room! But, wait a minute, why do you look so unhappy?

1 - You'll never believe what happened! I invited some of my friends over to visit the other day, and one of them sat down on one of my piles of stuff. The next thing I knew - Smash! Bam! Boom! My entire system of tunnels came crashing down, along with all of my prized possessions! Now I'm completely lost in my room. I did find my index cards and my shoes, though.

2 - I'm really sorry to hear about what happened, but maybe its time to part with some of your possessions.

1 - Rabbi, I'm afraid that you may be right, but I'm terrified! Will I have to watch my beloved things go into the garbage to be destroyed forever?

2 - No, I have a different idea. There are children who have no clothes to wear and no toys or games to play with. Why don't you donate the items you've outgrown to them?

1 - That sounds like a really exciting idea! I'm not really using these things, and they could really help other people.

2 - Great, let's get some large bags and begin to remove the clutter. That way, there will be room for you, room for me, and, at the same time, you'll be caring for the needs of others as well.

1 - I like your approach. It really puts people's needs first.

The Next Day ...

2 - Well, how do you feel now that the clutter is gone?

1 - I feel like a new person! I feel like I can breathe! I feel like I now have room for myself!

2 - That's great, but I have to tell you that we're not finished yet. The clutter may be gone, but everything that's left is all over the place. Now we need to organize everything so that you won't need to turn your walls into rulers and to spend your life looking at index cards. It takes a little work to get organized, but, in the end, it will be much better for you.

1 - But I don't know how to organize anything! Help!

2 - Don't worry, I'm here to help. I think I see some furniture sticking out from the piles of stuff is still in your room. I see a

dresser! I see bookshelves! I see a computer desk! Why don't you use them?

1 - That's not a bad idea. Actually, these things have been cluttering my room. Now, I can use them to get organized. I wonder what's in these drawers. Let me see ... Hey, here's the autographed baseball I've been looking for for the past five years. And look - here's the gift certificate my parents gave me for my birthday eight years ago!

2 - What's that glittering thing in that drawer? It looks like something precious.

1 - Wow! It's the golden heart pendant that my grandmother gave me when I was little. She died a few years ago, and I miss her so much. I'm so happy that I found it - I thought that it was lost forever!

2 - I'm so happy for you. I think that there is a special message in the fact that you found a heart of gold that had been lost. The truth is, when people have a lot of clutter on the

outside, it usually means that they also have a lot of clutter on the inside - in their minds and hearts. Sorting out your surroundings can lead to big changes in your life. When we clean out and organize our physical surroundings, we make room for the things that really matter in life: our connection to God and to other people.

1 - Thank you, Rabbi. I see that there can be a lot of benefits to organizing one's life. We may find treasures we had given up on finding, or never even knew about. I don't believe in "Mess for Success" anymore. Now I believe in "Arrange for Change." I finally feel like I'm in control of my surroundings, instead of my surroundings controlling me. I really love the power of discipline! I'm finally seeing the light at the end of my tunnels!

2 - If so, then I have something else to tell you - We Have a Treasure! The Torah, through its commandments, disciplines us and empowers us to reach our potential as human beings. If you connect to the Torah, you will connect to the greatest gift from

God. And who knows? You may even find the biggest treasure of all - yourself!

THE END

WORTHLESS

1 - I am worthless. I am poor. I live in a small room with ten other people. I am ugly. I have no proper clothes. I don't have even one thing that has a label on it. I am the least popular person in my class. I have no friends. People cross the street to the other side when they see me coming. I am picked last for every team. I am the weakest student in my class. I can't do anything right. They call me "the class klutz."

2 - The Torah teaches that every person is unique and has something special to offer. Surely you have some special strength or talent.

1 - Well, I am very good at collecting lightning bugs. I keep them in jars near my bed. I have 51 jars. Each one has a number. I am providing a source of light for the people around me. However, they say it disturbs them when they try to sleep.

2 - That is a most unusual contribution to the world.

1 - The problem is that I don't feel important. I don't see what I am supposed to or able to do in the world. Even if I do have a purpose, others can do the same things better than I can.

2 - You are measuring yourself by your own standards and by those of others. What does the Torah say about man? The Torah says that God created man; God wanted man to exist. Man is important to God. If God thinks man is important, then man is important. In fact, the Torah teaches that every person is given a soul, a spark of God.

1 - But I still don't understand why God would consider me important and not give me the talents to do anything important or unique.

2 - I think we need to shift the focus of our discussion. We have been talking about physical things. We need to talk about spiritual things. The Talmud says that the soul, before it comes into the body, is made to swear that it will be good in the body, and not bad. Some people have greater material gifts than

others, but everyone has the potential to be a good person.

1 - This is very spiritual talk. Aren't the physical, external things what are important?

2 - Man has body and soul. The soul is the essence of the person.

1 - How do I even know I have a soul?

2 - Do you have a conscience? Where does that voice come from? You have tremendous spiritual potential that is hidden. It would be a shame not to actualize it. It would be a shame not to be who you really can be. God had promised the Jews the Land of Israel when they came out of Egypt. The Jews had spies who checked out the land. They did not have confidence in their ability to do this, despite God's promise. They looked at what they saw and imagined in their own minds; they did not look at what God said. They said they could not conquer the land. In the end, this became a self-fulfilling prophecy. God punished the people and declared they would wander in the desert and die

there, and never reach their potential. Two spies disagreed with the others, Joshua and Caleb. They said God would help. In the end, they did come to the Land of Israel.

1 - I don't know what my spiritual potential is.

2 - You just have to tap into it and access it. When you come from your soul, you have a completely different way of looking at yourself, at the world, and at what is important. Many people are not aware of their soul potential, and, as a result, do not actualize it. However, if we want to, God helps us.

1 - I am getting concerned. I recently heard that a person should avoid pride and prejudice. Is it not arrogant to look for what one is good at doing?

2 - It is not arrogance to look at one's abilities. Rather, it is a matter of self-esteem. The difference between arrogance and self-esteem is this: An arrogant person takes credit for his abilities and puts down others because of them. A humble person with healthy self-esteem sees his abilities as gifts he has been

given by God in order to use to the best of his ability.

1 - Well, let me take a look, then, at my soul potential. You know, I never really thought about it, but, to me, I guess Shabbos is very special. I love the Mitzvah of Shabbos. I guess I am actualizing my soul potential in this area. I love the singing of the zemiros in the dining room. I love Shabbos Menucha. I even love the cholent. I think I have a special connection to Shabbos. If God loves Shabbos - and He does - then God loves my connection to Shabbos; it is worth a lot to Him.

2 - I am very glad that you are beginning to think in a different direction. This is a positive development.

1 - You know, I think I would like to do something more for my beloved Shabbos. What else can I do? Let me think about this and pray to God for help about what I can do to further express my love for Shabbos. A word had now entered my mind ...

SHABBATOGRAMS! If I send people Shabbatograms, in which I wish them Shabbos greetings, that will give me a way to share my

love of Shabbos with other people. It will make them love Shabbos more and give them a good feeling before Shabbos.

2 - You have been so self-absorbed this whole time. When a person is self-absorbed, he tends to have low self-esteem and he has a hard time feeling happy. Now, you are thinking about what you can do for God, for Shabbos, and for other people. This leads to spiritual fulfillment and to real happiness.

1 - As I mentioned earlier, people avoid me and run to the other side of the street when they see me. How, then, can I deliver the Shabbatograms?

2 - Actually, the written medium of the Shabbatogram is perfect for this; you received true inspiration here. You will just have to deliver them when the people are not around and leave them for them.

A Few Days Later ...

1 - Hi Rabbi! I did my first batch of Shabbatograms. People were very amazed by them. I made special artistic designs on

them, and I wrote heartfelt messages on them about Shabbos and about the recipients. People are starting to appreciate who I am.

2 - When you start to appreciate who you are and what you have, other people do, too.

A Few Weeks Later ...

1 - Now that I have been sending these Shabbatograms for a few weeks, my whole life is changing. I feel much more self-confident. People have gotten to know the real me. They no longer cross the street when they see me. They have become truly friendly with me.

2 - You have done something worthwhile for others, and they have appreciated it. Moreover, you didn't do it to win their friendship; it was not an attempt at bribery. You did it for pure reasons, to share your love of Shabbos with them, and they saw this as well.

1 - You know, since I have become more self-confident, my

whole life has turned around. I look much better now. I have an inner glow; people are drawn to me. I am much stronger, and I am less clumsy. I am not "the class klutz" anymore. I am also doing much better in school. You know what I think? I think I had the talents all along, but my lack of self-confidence was blocking them from emerging.

2 - If a person doesn't believe something is possible for him to accomplish, this itself will block it from happening. We must not doubt our true potential.

1 - One of my new friends even connected me to an alternative energy company that has given me a contract for my lightning bugs! I am getting money as well.

2 - I wish you success with your lightning bugs, but one thing is for sure. You have discovered the light in your own life.

THE END

TIME FOR A CHANGE

1 - Aargh... Grrrr... Grrowl... morning, Rabbi.

2 - Good Morning! You don't sound like a happy camper today.

1 - I'm not! I need a ladder. Do you have a ladder I could borrow?

2 - Why do you need a ladder?

1 - I feel that I am being made fun of constantly!

2 - I'm sorry to hear that, but how will a ladder help?

1 - All day and all night I am being made fun of by the signs in camp. "Midos", the sign screams. I don't have good Midos! "Self-Control Builds Strength." I have no self-control! The sign is saying that I'm a weakling! I am so angry! I want a ladder so that I can climb up to where the signs are and take my revenge!

2 - What, exactly, do you want to do to the signs?

1 - I want to add the word "Bad" before "Midos", and I want to replace the self-control sign with "Self-Control is for Weaklings."

I want to change "Smile" to "Frown", and I want to change "See the Good" to "See the Bad"! They don't call me "Nomidos" for nothing!

2 - Do you really think that lashing out at the signs will make you feel better?

1 - Yes, definitely. I want to yell and scream. I want to be recognized for who I am! Wait - now I hear them singing a song! "Midos are the way we act" It's the Midos song! I'm about to explode!

2 - Wow! You seem to have a lot of anger bottled up inside of you. Why are you so angry?

1 - I have every reason to be angry. I have gone through so much in my young life. My parents constantly criticize me and tell me that I'm out of control. I have been begging them for a pet poodle for years, but they refuse to get me one.

2 - Have your parents explained to you why they won't buy you a pet?

1 - They say that I can't even control myself, so how could I possibly control a pet and take proper care of it?

2 - And what do you say?

1 - My parents don't understand my anger. When I'm angry, I'm not out of control, but in control. I feel very powerful. My anger is my best friend. In fact, I want to name my poodle "Anger."

Anger makes me feel good, and I love it, feed it, and nurture it. I think that I am more than ready to be responsible and take care of a poodle named "Anger."

2 - All of this sounds very strange to me. The people I know who have anger wish that they could control it and lock it up in a cage far away. They know that anger and a lack of Midos do not make for a happy or fulfilling life.

1 - They must be from a different planet. My motto is "Just say no to Midos." I love not having Midos.

2 - Well, Nomidos, I'll let you in on a secret. Not many people know this, but the **Goder Center** is actually a time-travel machine

in disguise. With just the press of a button, we can travel forward or backward in time! How would you like to travel with me to your future?

1 - Wow! That sounds amazing. I would love to! Where's the magic button?

2 - It's right here on the air conditioner. Here we go, ten, nine, eight Blast off!

1 - Help! I feel a bit woozy and dizzy. Where are we?

2 - Welcome to your future, Nomidos! We are now in the year 2020, and you are in college. Let's take a look.

1 - Oh wow! I see myself as a freshman in the college of my dreams! Things must be going really well for me.

2 - Why don't you take a closer look? It seems that you and your roommate are not getting along very well, and constantly disagree. Look at this scene: You are saying that you love noodles, and your roommate is responding "Noodles are for Poodles." You are outraged; he has insulted not only noodles, but

also poodles! Now, see how you hit him and knock him down. Now, see that the police come and you are arrested for assault and battery and sentenced to a year in jail for injuring your roommate.

1 - Well, I guess I'll get out of jail, and then I can finish my education and go on to have a good life.

2 - Let's go forward another five years. Do you see that you are working in a beautiful office?

1 - It really looks great. I am so happy!

2 - Now, let's see how your job is working out. Your boss is telling you that she needs certain work done by tomorrow, and you're saying that you can't do the work tonight because you bought tickets to a poodle show. Now, your boss is insisting, and you become very angry. The next thing you see is that you are fired on the spot.

1 - I don't like any of this. Maybe I'll at least have some success in my family life.

2 - Okay, let's move forward another five years. Do you see those children?

1 - Yes, they look familiar. They look just like me!

2 - Take a closer look and you'll see that your children also act just like you. In fact, they're angry at you all the time and don't treat you with any respect.

1 - I have no idea what it's like to be on the receiving end of all of this anger, especially as a parent. I don't like any of this. Maybe, after my children are grown, I'll at least have a nice old age.

2 - Let us move forty years ahead. You see yourself all alone, with no friends or family coming to visit you. Your friends have had enough of your anger and have abandoned you. Your wife and children want nothing to do with you, and even your pet poodle has run away and found a new owner.

1 - This is a terrible future. Please take me back to the present, Rabbi. If what you've shown me is my real future, I don't see how I can go on.

2 - But this does not have to be your future. If you choose to change the way you act, you can change your future.

1 - But how?

2 - If you try to have good Midos and get rid of your anger, you could really have a bright future!

1 - Really? Then what would my future be like?

2 - Let's take a look. Five years from now, you are successful in college. Ten years from now, you are keeping a great job.

Fifteen years from now, you have a wonderful and loving family.

Fifty-five years from now, you have reached old age, surrounded by family, friends, and poodles.

1 - What a relief! I thought I was doomed!

2 - Nomidos, now that we're back in the present, remember that you still have to change your Midos in order to have the bright future you want.

1 - But Rabbi, can I really change my Midos? I've been this way for so long - my entire life! Can I really get rid of my anger at this point in my life?

2 - Judaism teaches us that you have the power to change at any time. We are all products of our inborn natures and our surroundings, but we all have free will and we can always choose to be better people and rise above that.

1 - Okay, Rabbi, I'll give it a try.

A Week Later ...

2 - So, Nomidos, how are things going?

1 - Well, it has been very interesting. I still feel anger sometimes, but, every time I do, the scenes from your time-travel machine flash before my eyes, and I'm not able to stay angry. I find that I'm a much happier person now.

2 - That's great! There's nothing like living your life with an eye to the future. Has anyone in your life noticed a change?

1 - Yes, my parents came up for visiting day, and they could not believe how much calmer and in control I seemed. It made them very happy to see me this way. They even said that if I continue to act this way, they will be happy to get me a poodle.

2 - You see that since you have started to change your Midos, your future has already become brighter!

1 - I'm very happy about that, but, I have to tell you, Rabbi, I feel very bad about all the years that I had bad Midos. I wish that I could go back to the past and change my actions.

2 - You can! The Torah teaches that God gave us the gift of Teshuva, Repentance, through which we can actually change the past! There are three elements that the Torah requires for true Teshuva. First, a person must admit to God that what he did was wrong. Second, a person must express regret about what he did.

Third, a person must declare that he will try his best never to repeat the wrong he has done.

1 - But what if someone hurt another person, or caused him to lose money or property?

2 - In that case, one must first repay the person for anything stolen or damaged, and then ask the person for forgiveness.

Then, and only then, can he can ask God for forgiveness.

1 - Teshuva seems like an incredible gift from God! It seems almost unbelievable that you can change the past!

2 - I have an idea! Why don't you do Teshuva, and then, using the time-travel machine, we'll go back to your past and see what it looks like.

Two Weeks Later ...

1 - I'm back! I'm ready to travel back to my past!

2 - Okay, let me press the button. Here we go! What do you see?

1 - I see that I'm very cheerfully wishing you "Good Morning", but wait, I still see myself asking you for a ladder!

2 - Yes, but let me turn up the volume and let's listen more carefully to what you're saying.

1 - Oh, I'm saying that I want the ladder so that I can climb up and nail in the signs more securely. I'm saying that I love good Midos! Self-control does build strength! It's good to smile and to always see the good!

2 - And what about the Midos song?

1 - [Sing the Midos song with enthusiasm. Midos are the way we act ...]

2 - Do you still want to be known as "Nomidos"?

1 - Of course not! Please call me "Gomidos"!

2 - And what about your poodle?

1 - Thanks so much for asking about the poodle. My parents told me that they now feel that I'm ready to get one. As for the poodle's name, I think I'll just change the last letter. Instead of

"Anger", I'll call it "Angel." Instead of r, which stood for rage, I'll replace it with l, which stands for love!

2 - I'm so glad that you have used your "noodle", and Mazel Tov on your new poodle!

THE END

THE TOP DOG

1 - Let me introduce myself. I am the big enchilada. I am the big cheese. I am numero uno. I am the top dog. And I'm not talking about dogs like pets. I'm talking about mean dogs. Woof, woof!

2 - You look like a person to me! What do you mean that you're a dog?

1 - I learned in science class that, in nature, only the strongest survive. This is a law of nature, and I follow the law. Humans, too, live in a "dog-eat-dog" world.

2 - What makes you the top dog?

1 - I have the highest grades in my school, I am the captain of the hockey team, and I play five musical instruments, including the trombone. Everyone admires me.

2 - I'm sorry, but I don't agree with your comparison of people to dogs. I believe people have a higher nature, and while some

people may act like mean dogs, others do not. People have hearts and souls and, if they choose to follow them, they will act in a selfless way and will really try to give of themselves to others.

1 - That may be true, but I can't afford to feel sorry for other people. If I help others, I am taking attention away from myself and my own needs. This means that I would be in danger of being eaten by the rest of the dogs out there!

2 - Do you have any friends?

1 - In a dog-eat-dog world, there are admirers, but no friends. Everyone is in it for himself/herself.

2 - Well, I know people who give of themselves all the time, and they don't feel that they lose out by it at all. Rather, they feel that doing acts of kindness for others is the very best thing they could be doing.

1 - Really? Who are these people? What planet are they from?

2 - They are from planet Earth, just like you and me!

1 - How do you know them, and how do you know that they're really so selfless?

2 - Last year, I had a medical emergency, and I had to go to the hospital for a number of days. Thankfully, I am better now.

During that time, I experienced tremendous acts of kindness from many people. It began when I was taken to the hospital by a Jewish volunteer ambulance service called "Hatzalah", which is the Hebrew word for rescue. They took me all the way to New York City, where I received the care that I so desperately needed.

1 - What about Shabbos? Does Hatzalah rescue people on Shabbos too?

2 - Yes, they do. It's a Mitzvah to violate the laws of Shabbos in a situation of possible danger to human life. I needed to go to the hospital on a Friday night. This is, for many Jewish families, the most special time of the week, when they sit down with their families for Kiddush, challah, and chicken soup. I told the

Hatzalah volunteers that I felt bad that I was taking them away from all of this.

1 - What did they say?

2 - "You must understand that we are volunteers. We and our families choose to do this special Mitzvah. We feel that helping others, even people we don't know, is more precious than eating Shabbos dinner with our loved ones on Friday night!"

1 - Amazing! I see that there are people who really do put the real needs of others ahead of their own.

2 - Let me tell you more. I was in the hospital on Shabbos, feeling sick and lonely. Then, a man appeared. He brought me grape juice for Kiddush, and challah for my Shabbos meal. He sang zemiros, told me words of Torah, and gave me encouragement.

1 - Who was this man? What is his story?

2 - I found out that this man and his wife live in Queens during the week, but they rent an apartment near the hospital and come

there every Shabbos, so that they can be there to help the patients.

1 - Really? That's what they do every single Shabbos? They give up Shabbos in their own home, community, and synagogue in order to help people who are stuck in the hospital? It must be so difficult for them!

2 - That's not how they feel at all. They said that the opportunity to be able to do this special Mitzvah is the most wonderful thing that ever came their way.

1 - Were you in the hospital for any holidays?

2 - Yes, I was there for Purim. Can you imagine being in the hospital for the festive day of Purim, while most others are out celebrating? Yet, there were other very special people who came and made my Purim in the hospital one that I shall never forget.

1 - What did they do?

2 - Well, first, there were boys who came to the hospital to read the Megillah for me and other patients. I asked them what

prompted them to do this Mitzvah. Both of them answered that their fathers had just given them beautiful Megillah scrolls as a gift, and the first thing they wanted to do with them was this Mitzvah of reading it for patients in the hospital. Not only that, but there were people who came around in costumes in order to sing, dance and cheer up the patients. A group of them came to my room, and one of the people was dressed up as a bottle of ketchup, while the other was dressed up as a bottle of mustard. They asked me which I prefer, ketchup or mustard.

1 - What was your answer?

2 - I said that I prefer mustard because it is mentioned in the Talmud, while ketchup is not. The mustard man was practically crying tears of joy because everyone else had voted for ketchup!

1 - I see that you did encounter some truly kind people. I can't deny it. How did you get home from the hospital?

2 - Where I live, there is a volunteer transportation service for patients and their families that takes them to and from hospitals

or doctors' offices, day or night. I met one particular driver who loves to give these rides at the most inconvenient times, like Friday afternoons and right before Shabbos. He especially loves to do the one right after Yom Kippur, when most everyone else is sitting down to a meal to break their fast.

1 - After hearing all of this, I see that I was wrong. There are people out there who are truly selfless human beings.

2 - So, are you ready to change from a dog to a human being?

1 - I don't know, the system is working for me. I need to look out for number one.

2 - Well, I see that I haven't yet convinced you. Let's give it some time. Sometimes, when God wants us to learn a lesson, He makes things happen in such a way that, eventually, the lesson He wants us to learn will be learned.

Two weeks later....

1 - Hi.

2 - Hi, how's it going?

1 - I can't believe it! My father's company has just required him to relocate to Midos, New York! Now, I'm going to have to go to a new school. I was the top dog in my old "puppy-dog" school. Now I'll be in the top academic school district in New York State, with champion sports teams! What will happen to me now? Also, although I play five musical instruments, I don't play them very well, especially the trombone. I only want to be a dog and live in a dog-eat-dog world if I am the top dog!

2 - In competition, no one wins all the time in all areas. Even a powerful dog becomes weak when he gets older.

1 - Speaking of dogs, do you see, across the street, that man walking his dog? That dog looks awfully mean. Oh no! The dog has broken loose and is heading straight towards me! He wants to eat me for dinner!

2 - Quick! Jump on top of my car and the dog won't be able to reach you!

1 - Thank you so much! You saved my life! I don't want to live in a dog-eat-dog world anymore. I don't want to be a dog anymore.

2 - The Torah teaches us that the world is built through kindness. We all need other people from the time we are infants. When people help other people, they are not making themselves less. Rather, all involved are making themselves more than they could possibly ever be if they only focused on themselves. Not only that, when people give of themselves to others, they are helping themselves as well. Performing acts of kindness makes us develop into better human beings. In the very act of giving, we receive. That's why the Hebrew word for "gave", "natan", reads the same backward and forward. Also, the more kindness there is the world, the more love there is, and we don't feel alone.

1 - I have to say that the people you described sounded happier and more fulfilled than anyone I have ever met.

2 - Yes. When happiness depends on life events, happiness is very fragile. When happiness comes from the choices we make in life, it is true and lasting. How we treat others is something we can control. You can be that way too!

1 - Wow! That makes me feel so much more hopeful about my future. Maybe there will be some nice people at my new school. Maybe I'll even make some friends. Maybe I could even offer to give free trombone lessons. Thank you, you have given me a new understanding of my purpose in life. I don't need to be the top dog anymore. The "woof-woof" has gone "poof-poof"! Now I want to be the top "do-gooder"!

THE END

FROM LAZY TO HAPPY

1 - I'm lazy. I admit it. I like to just lie around all day and do nothing. I wish I could sleep late every day. I wish I didn't have to go to school or do homework. I wish I didn't have to go to activities. I wish every day could be "lazy day"!

2 - Aren't you lonely and bored living this way? Don't you feel like you're missing out on life?

1 - No, I'm very happy with my own company, thank you. I find myself very interesting. I love myself, and I enjoy being alone. Besides, it's too much work to have to talk to other people. Why work hard? Let everything be easy!

2 - Actually, the Bible talks about a lazy person. There is a book called Mishlay, or Proverbs, which contains sayings of King Solomon. King Solomon was the son of King David. He is described in the Torah as having been the wisest of all men. Here are some of his descriptions of a lazy person: "A little more

sleep, a little more napping." "As a door turns on its hinge, so a lazy person turns in bed." King Solomon describes the lazy person as being "very wise in his own eyes" in making up excuses not to work. For example, he says that he can't go outside because "there is a lion in the streets."

1 - King Solomon was indeed very wise. He described me perfectly!

2 - King Solomon not only described you; he also criticized you: "Lazy person, how long will you sleep? Lazy person, go to the ant. Learn from his ways. He has no boss, yet he works hard." King Solomon, the wisest of all men, writes that it's not wise to be lazy, and it doesn't lead to pleasure, but rather to pain. The lazy person has goals, but he can't realize them. The lazy person has nothing to eat because he doesn't work. "The lazy person puts his head in his plate, but has no food to put into his mouth." You're not working and you have food from your parents. However, the point King Solomon is making applies to you, too. Laziness has a

price. Is it worth the price? Does the pleasure of laziness now outweigh the pain laziness causes later on?

1 - Well, that's the question. For example, when I sleep late in the morning and miss the bus, my parents have to drive me to school. They're not very happy about that. When I don't do my homework, I get in trouble at school. When I don't study for tests, I don't do well in school. Actually, I'm in a lot of trouble right now both at home and at school. But what can I do? I'm lazy!

2 - There are other prices, too.

1 - Yes, in fact, I had a dog, but I didn't take care of it properly, and my parents gave it away. I was also supposed to go on a big trip with my class, but I ran late and missed the bus. I was also supposed to have a birthday party at a restaurant, but I showed up two hours after everybody left.

2 - You're saying that you enjoy being lazy, but you're also saying that it costs you dearly in many areas of your life. Is it

worth the price?

1 - I don't know. I just like being lazy.

2 - Do you know why some people are lazy? Basically, people are lazy because they're not happy with their lives. They would rather do nothing than live the lives they're living.

1 - This is very upsetting to hear. Are you saying that I'm an unhappy person?

2 - I am saying that you do not find fulfillment in your life.

This is a sad situation.

1 - Well, it's basically true. It's not that I love doing nothing so much; it's that there's really nothing else I enjoy more. I really don't like school. Not everyone likes studying and working all the time. Why do we have to work at all? Let's just play all day.

2 - It's true that some people love school, and some people don't. Some people love to work, and others don't. However, we need to look at this from a different perspective. Sometimes, something is a means to an end. Even if we don't enjoy the means,

there should always be focus on the end goal. Not everything we do in this world is purely pleasurable. However, the realization of our goals will give us pleasure, and we must not lose sight of that. You may not enjoy the school work, but it does lead to a lot of good things. Therefore, it's worth pursuing. A lazy person is a short-sighted person. We need to work for things in this world.

1 - But why can't I just enjoy myself and relax?

2 - As infants, we're centered on our own immediate needs and fulfillment of those needs. However, as we grow up, we realize that things are more complicated. There are times we have to sacrifice pleasure in the short-term in order to get pleasure in the long-term. This requires perspective and vision of the future, which an infant does not have. There are trade-offs in life. We must be ready to make sacrifices for the higher good.

1 - Are you are saying that I have no vision of a future for myself?

2 - That's right. What do you want to accomplish in your life?

Just to lie around? Do you aspire to nothing greater than that?

Do you aspire to have a job and support a family? Do you aspire to improve the world?

1 - I do.

2 - In that case, you have to get to work and find your happiness.

1 - But how can I be happy when I don't enjoy school, or spending time with my family and friends?

2 - Until now, you've found them to be an obstacle to your being lazy. Look at them in a new way. When you look at them in a new, more positive way, they will look at you in a new, more positive way as well, and it will all work out.

Two Weeks Later...

1 - I've been working now for a couple of weeks, but I haven't yet seen all of the rewards. School is hard work.

2 - The very fact that you're off the couch and heading in a positive direction is positive in itself, and will lead to positive

feelings. You'll feel even better as the rewards roll in. Moreover, once you really get into the work, you may discover that you really enjoy it. Even though you start with the goal of delayed gratification, you may well end up with pleasure in the present as well.

Later...

1 - I've continued on the path, and everything you've said has come true. Thank you!

2 - What changes have you seen in your life?

1 - I love school now. I love doing my work. I love the learning, and I love the feeling of success. I was on time for the big class trip, and we all had a great time. My parents even got my dog back and made another birthday party for me in a restaurant. I was able to be there on time and celebrate my life.

2 - I am very, very happy for you.

1 - I should be very happy, too, but for some reason, I still don't feel completely happy. I'm happier with what I'm doing, but

I still have a certain feeling of sadness inside. This slows me down in what I'm trying to accomplish. Sadness and laziness seem to be connected. When I'm happy, I feel energized. When I'm sad, I feel depleted and lazy. Help!

2 - In Judaism, simcha, happiness, is considered to be of critical importance for precisely this reason. Simcha is like an engine that energizes our lives. It's also a great Mitzvah to make other people happy. The Talmud says that two people out of a whole group were identified as being destined for a special portion in the World to Come. Why? The Talmud explains that they were comedians; they brought laughter and joy to other people. I would love to do the great Mitzvah of helping you to become even happier. How would you like to come to Camp Midos, also known as "Happyland", for the summer?

1 - Wow, that sounds amazing, but I don't think that I am happy enough to fit in there. Maybe I don't feel happy because I feel that certain things are missing in my life. Other people seem

happy. Why are they happy, and I'm not?

2 - Maybe something sad happened in your life, and that's why you feel sad. We're supposed to be sad about sad things.

However, we're also supposed to be happy about happy things.

Sometimes, people only focus on the sad things, and not on the happy things. Actually, this is a choice people make. Some people choose to focus on sad things. Some people choose to focus on happy things. All kinds of thoughts come to our minds. It's our choice which we choose to focus on.

1 - But why don't I focus more on the happy things? Who wants to focus on the sad things?

2 - Sometimes, a person takes the happy things for granted, and focuses only on the sad things and on what he doesn't have. He expects the happy things to be that way, so he doesn't appreciate them. On the other hand, he isn't expecting the sad things, and he's sad because of them and dwells on them.

1 - I see your point, Rabbi. There is, in truth, a lot of good in

our lives, and there's no reason not to focus on that as well.

2 - The very fact that we're alive and well is a tremendous thing. We have our material needs, and we have family and friends. These are external things, but they are happy things, and they can, if we allow them in, impact on our inner feelings as well. Above all, when we focus on doing what is right, we are happy.

1 - I choose to be happy. I am very happy that I am happy.

Thank you, Rabbi. Now I feel ready to go to Camp Midos!

Happyland, here I come!

THE END

THE LOSHON HARA HOTLINE

1 - I'm very excited to tell you about my new idea for a business venture! I've decided to establish GOSSIP CENTRAL USA and the LOSHON HARA HOTLINE! It will be the largest resource for gossip in the country. I'm going to sell loshon hara to anyone who needs it. This will be a most useful service. If people want to put anyone down, all they have to do is call me, pay me, and the information is theirs.

2 - Don't you know that the Torah forbids speaking loshon hara? The Torah also forbids listening to loshon hara. Even if one does hear it, he is not allowed to believe it. One must run away from loshon hara just as he would run away from a fire!

1 - Maybe I have heard something about "no gossip", but that's just for goody-goodys. I already have a toll-free number, a website, www.gossipcentralusa.com, and a jingle. Do you want to hear the jingle?

2 - No, not really.

1 - OK, here it goes:

"Let me give you a wonderful tip.

Call 1 -800-2 -GOSSIP.

For all of your loshon hara needs,

Call the hotline for all the best leads!"

Also, I am really going to be doing a Mitzvah by helping my customers feel better about themselves. We all know that people who like to speak and hear loshon hara have low self-esteem.

Putting other people down helps them to feel better about themselves. This is an important contribution to society!

Anyway, it doesn't really hurt anybody; haven't you heard the saying: "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names can never hurt me!"?

2 - According to the Torah, people can feel better about themselves by building themselves up and doing Mitzvos, like being a Mensch, not by putting other people down. Also, the

saying you mentioned is simply not true, words do hurt.

1 - I'm sorry, but I can't accept your words. The potential for riches is just too great!

2 - What makes you think that you'll be so rich? How much do you charge for your gossip?

1 - Well, prices vary according the person and the information. For information on someone in the same bunk or class, the price is higher. For information about criminal activity, the price is even higher. For \$50, I'll give you information on just about anyone or anything. I'll be so rich!

2 - How do you get your information? Don't you have to pay people to get your information? Doesn't that reduce your profits?

1 - I have spies who work for free! Do you know why they work for free? It's because I threaten to spread loshon hara about them. They're so scared, that they provide all the gossip I need for nothing! If I need more gossip, I'll just make it up! People

will believe anything, just to make themselves feel superior. Isn't this a great business? All gain, at no cost!

2 - Actually, you're wrong. Loshon hara costs people dearly.

The Torah teaches that when someone says something negative about another person, they lose the merit of the Mitzvos they've done in the past. And who do you think gets them? The person they spoke about! The gossiper also "wins" all of the other person's sins. It's definitely not a win-win proposition!

1 - Well, when I'm rich, we'll see who wins!

Two weeks later....

2 - So, how's business?

1 - I'm shocked! Not one person has bought any of my gossip! I was even offering some really juicy rumors, like gossip about someone who wore a shirt that was in style, like ten years ago. I also had gossip about a person who was seen talking to the least popular person in the class, someone who collects lightning bugs, of all things. I even had gossip about criminal activity - about a

person who was so addicted to popcorn that he wound up in a juvenile correctional facility for attempted assault with a popcorn kernel!

2 - Do you know why no one is buying your gossip?

1 - Actually, I heard that someone spoke loshon hara about me and said that I poison people through the phone and the computer when I give them the information! Can you believe that someone would spread a rumor like that? Now people are afraid to call me! It's terrible, people will believe anything!

2 - In my opinion, what was said is true. Loshon hara is poisonous. Aren't you ashamed of yourself? Don't you know how bad it is to spread gossip? It ruins relationships, and causes so much damage in the world! The Talmud says that loshon hara kills three people: the speaker, the listener, and the victim. On the other hand, it says in the Book of Psalms: "Who is the man who desires life, loves days to see good? Guard your tongue from evil..." Loshon hara causes spiritual sickness and can also cause

physical sickness. Gossip is all negative and leads to stress and conflict, which can cause illness. It's much healthier to be positive and to help others, not hurt them, through our speech.

There was a very great Rabbi in the last century who wrote about the laws of loshon hara. He called his book "Chofetz Chaim", which means "He who desires life." He lived close to 100 years!

1 - Wow, I had no idea that loshon hara was so bad. I want to make money, but it doesn't sound like my business idea is worth the price I'll have to pay. I would like to change my ways, and be more positive, but it seems impossible. I've been speaking loshon hara for so long, how can I possibly change? Also, I'm afraid that no one will find me interesting. I won't have anything to talk about, and I won't have any friends!

2 - Who wants to be popular with people who speak and listen to loshon hara? Do you think that they are really your friends?

Today, they're talking about someone else, but tomorrow, they'll be talking about you! I'm sure you have a lot of good things to

say. The best things to talk about are ideas, not people. The Talmud says that it's not a good idea even to praise a person too much to another person, because it may cause the other person to actually put down the person who is being praised. Why don't you talk about ideas instead of talking about other people?

1 - I don't know anything about ideas. Also, how can I make amends for all the damage I've caused with my gossip?

2 - I have an idea! Why don't you talk about the laws of proper speech? If you do that, you'll find true friends, and you'll repair a lot of the damage you've caused. The Talmud says that the second Temple was destroyed because of baseless hatred. The number one cause of baseless hatred is *loshon hara*. Every time we don't speak *loshon hara*, and we teach about the laws of proper speech, we are helping our nation end its exile and return to its former glory.

1 - Sounds good, but I don't know anything about the laws of proper speech.

2 - Sure you do, you heard about proper speech just this morning.

1 - I did? What are you talking about?

2 - You heard the prayer that is recited every morning at the flagpole. That prayer was actually written by the Chofetz Chaim, the great Rabbi I mentioned earlier.

1 - Could you please summarize the laws of proper speech for me? Then, I'll be able to spread the word about it.

2 - Sure, here are the Ten Commandments of proper speech:

1. It is forbidden to say anything negative about anyone to another person, even if the information is true. It is also forbidden to listen to such information.

2. It is forbidden to spread false rumors. That is called slander/motzi shem ra.

3. It is forbidden to tell someone that another person said something negative about them/rechilus.

4. It is forbidden to say hurtful words to anyone. This

includes saying something that would cause emotional pain, like bringing up something from the past that the person has pain about, or is ashamed of. (ona'as devarim)

5. It is forbidden to repeat something that was told to you in confidence. Unless the person specifically tells you that you may repeat the personal information he has told you, don't repeat it.

6. It is forbidden to lie.

7. It is forbidden to say words of flattery. Flattery is saying things that another person wants to hear, just to get on his good side.

8. It is forbidden to engage in mockery, making fun of other people or things. Remember, "Mockery Makes a Mess!"

9. It is forbidden to use disgusting words.

10. It is forbidden to complain about the ways of God. If something doesn't go your way, you must not complain.

1 - Wow, thanks. But I have a question. What if you know that

someone is doing something bad, or is planning to harm another person? Isn't it necessary to sometimes tell information about what someone is doing?

2 - Yes, you're right. Loshon Hara refers to destructive speech, but sometimes one must say something bad about another person for a constructive purpose. The Torah says: "You shall not peddle information among your people, and you shall not stand idly by while your fellow's life is in danger." This is understood to mean that, while it is not allowed to say negative things about others in general, one must do if someone is in danger. A child must tell an adult if anyone tries to harm him. If a person knows that someone is engaging in harmful behavior, or says that he's going to harm him or someone else, it is Mitzvah to tell someone who can help. One can also talk to a therapist, counselor or teacher, in order to get help with a problem, even if it involves speaking negatively about other people. Just make sure to tell the other person that you're saying the negative information for

a constructive purpose.

1 - Is the other person allowed to believe the information?

2 - They shouldn't accept it as an absolute fact, until it is proven, but they can take precautions as if it were true.

1 - I would love to go around speaking about the laws of proper speech, and.... But, wait a minute, I know that I'll get a lot of spiritual rewards, but how will I make any money?

2 - I have another idea for you. There is an organization called "The Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation", which is dedicated to preserving and promoting the teachings of the Chofetz Chaim about proper speech. They even have a "Loshon Hara Hotline" - only this one is for people with questions about the laws of proper speech. The hotline is open from 9pm to 10:30pm, Monday through Thursday, and when Shabbos ends early, on Saturday nights, too. They have wonderful Rabbis who answer the questions about loshon hara, as well as any questions about relationships between people. Why don't you apply for a job

there? They could probably use someone with your enthusiasm!

1 - OK, I'll try.

Three weeks later....

2 - Hi, how are you?

1 - Great! I'm so excited about my new job! I work for the real Loshon Hara Hotline now. I even have a new jingle:

"Let me give you a really good tip

Always remember, "Shhh... NO GOSSIP!"

For difficult situations to fix

Call 1 -718-951 -3696!"

2 - Wow, that's great, I'm so happy for you!

1 - Thanks! At GOSSIP CENTRAL USA I had no friends and no income. Now, I have both. It's wonderful to be with people who believe in building people up, rather than tearing them down!

2 - I wish you continued success and lots of wealth.

May you live to a ripe old age, in good health!

THE END

THE WORRIER

1 - Hi, welcome to Bunk W!

2 - Bunk W? I didn't know that there was a Bunk W here. Are you sure we're in Camp Midos?

1 - I renamed my bunk "Bunk W" because I'm a worrier.

2 - What do you worry about?

1 - All kinds of things. You know, there's no limit to the things that can go wrong. Name a subject, and I'll tell you what there is to worry about.

2 - Okay, how about the signs on the trees in camp.

1 - Are you kidding? There's a ton to worry about. First of all, they could fall off the trees at any moment. Not only that, but we should really install a security system so that no one with bad Midos will come into camp and steal them. And who knows, the squirrels might decide to pack them away for the winter!

2 - Wow, I see that you really are a worrier. By the way, do you carry that umbrella around with you all day, even in your bunk?

1 - Yes, I carry it to every activity, even swimming. You just never know when a storm could pop up. The sky could fall at any time.

2 - And those rocks all over your bed, why are they there?

1 - I'm worried that my bed will tip over in the middle of the night. With the rocks weighing it down, it won't tip over.

2 - And why are all of your clothes on your bed?

1 - I worry that someone might steal all of my clothes during the night. So I wear all of my clothes to sleep every night.

2 - And what is that container of wild berries doing on your bed?

1 - I worry that the camp kitchen will run out of food, so I collected these berries from the forest. I keep them under my pillow so that they'll be safe during the night.

2 - It seems to me that you're paying a very high price your constant worrying. It must be very hard to sleep on a bed of rocks. You must get very hot in all of those clothes. And it's dangerous to eat wild berries; many people who eat them get a stomachache.

1 - You're right. It is pretty hard on me to do all of these things. On the other hand, I have to protect myself.

2 - Do you really think that your worries are realistic? Did any of these things actually ever happen to you or to anyone else in any other bunk at camp?

1 - Now that you mention it, no. Maybe these worries of mine are irrational and a waste of time. On the other hand, anything is possible. I'm ready for anything...

That night...

BAM!...SMASH!... SQUISH!

The Next Morning...

2 - Good morning! What is your bed doing on the floor?

1 - Unfortunately, my bed collapsed under the weight of all those rocks.

2 - Did you get hurt? Your clothing is all red!

1 - Well, what happened is that, when the bed collapsed, the berries were crushed and dyed all of my clothes! Now, I don't have a bed, I don't have clothes to wear, and I don't have my extra food supply. My worst fears and worries have been realized! I now see that it doesn't make sense to worry about these things. It only leads to real problems.

2 - So, are you ready to give up your worrying?

1 - I still have plenty of more realistic things to worry about; things that could really happen. For example, I might not be picked for the team, and even if I am picked, I may strike out. I will, however, in the future, try to make sure my worries are realistic. If they're not, then I won't worry about them.

2 - Maybe you shouldn't worry about those things either. What are you getting out of worrying?

1 - I love to worry. I need to worry. I have worried for as long as I can remember. I think I learned it from my family, they are all worriers. Actually, my biggest worry is that I won't have anything to worry about! Now that I think about it, worrying makes me feel like I'm in control.

2 - You've just discovered the number one reason that people worry. In their imaginations, they think that by worrying they will be in control of their lives. This is not real, it is illusionary thinking.

1 - But what about taking precautions when they are necessary? How will I do that if I don't worry?

2 - It's important to be aware of possible problems, and to take precautions to try to prevent them. I do check to see whether there are any real concerns to be addressed. Then, I try to take care of them to the best of my ability, and then I put them out of my mind. Worrying is something else altogether. When one

worries, one thinks about his worries all the time, even after there is no longer any benefit in doing so.

1 - I hear what you're saying, but sometimes a worry comes into my mind, and I just can't get rid of it, no matter how hard I try.

It gets stronger and stronger until it takes me over. What can I do?

2 - One good idea is to imagine what it would be like if your worry actually came true. Many times, our imaginations take over, and we lose track of reality. For example, if you don't make the team, or you strike out, what would really happen? Would it really be the end of the world?

1 - I guess it wouldn't be the worst thing that could ever happen. Thank you, Rabbi; you've really helped me with my worrying. It still is challenge, though, because I know that things in life don't always work out in a positive way. That's the way life is. Don't you ever worry that things may not turn out the way you want them to?

2 - Worrying and dwelling on possible negative outcomes does nothing to help the situation. On the other hand, when a person has a positive outlook, the outcome tends to be more positive.

There is a saying in Yiddish which means, "Think good, and it will be good." There is a real basis for this idea. For example, when a person is so focused on the worry that he will strike out at the plate, that negative thought tends to take the person over. They are then much more likely to follow through on that thought and actually strike out. Also, worrying is not good for one's health. A person will tend to be much happier and healthier if he doesn't worry.

1 - And what about when something you don't want to happen really happens?

2 - Just look around at the signs on the trees. I believe that "THE BOSS IS IN CHARGE." I believe that "SOMEONE IS WATCHING." Therefore, I believe that if something doesn't go the way I want it to go, it is still for the good somehow. This is

the meaning of "GAM ZU L'TOVA," "This, too, is for the good."

Everything that happens is for the best.

1 - But there are things that happen that seem very difficult to see as being for the good in any way.

2 - You're right. Moses asked God about this, as did the prophet Jeremiah. In fact, the entire Book of Job is devoted to this question. Job was a very righteous man who endured tremendous pain and anguish, and he asked God why he deserved to suffer so much.

1 - And what did God answer?

2 - God did not give an answer in any of these cases. He indicated, rather, that there are things that are beyond human understanding. He stressed to Job that we don't understand the wonders of the amazing world that God created, so how can we expect to understand why He runs it the way He runs it? Even though we cannot always understand why, we still believe that God is good, and He only has our best interests in mind. Many

times, if we look hard enough, we can "SEE THE GOOD."

Therefore, there is never a reason to worry.

1 - You must be a really happy person. I would like to be like you. I'm going to try to think positively, and try not to worry. I am confident that I'll succeed; I'm not worried at all.

2 - Good luck!

Two Days Later...

1 - I can't believe it! I was walking back to my bunk, and I tripped and sprained my ankle. Color War is coming soon and I won't be able to be in any of the sports competitions! I don't know what I'm going to do - this is Color War we're talking about!

2 - Are you worried?

1 - I want to worry, but I can't; I said that I would try not to worry anymore. This is a real test for me, but I'm confident that I can pass the test. Everything will work out for the best.

A Week Later...

2 - So, how did Color War go?

1 - It was amazing! Because I sprained my ankle and couldn't participate in the sports competitions, I was put in charge of making up the song for my team. I had never made up a song before, but I had a positive attitude, because, as the sign says, "ATTITUDE MAKES THE DIFFERENCE." Not only did my song score the winning points for my team, but I have discovered a talent that I didn't know I had. My injury actually led to my team winning Color War.

2 - What was the song about?

1 - The two Color War teams were the "Blue Worriers" and the "White Warriors Against Worrying." I wrote my song to the tune of "Friends, friends, friends."

2 - I'd love to hear it.

1 - Okay, here it is:

Worriers, worriers, worriers

Worriers we never should be

Whether in fair or in dark stormy weather

Gam Zu L'Tova is better

It's tried and true

It's the way of a Jew

To the end of my days I'll remember always

Not to worry, worry, worry!

2 - Now I understand the real reason your bunk is called "Bunk

W." W is for warrior! I see from your song that you have

changed from a powerless worrier to a powerful warrior. Mazel

Tov!

THE END

CAN'T WAIT FOR COLOR WAR

1 - Goo Mo Rabbi!

2 - Goo Mo?

1 - I say Goo Mo because it takes too long to say "Good Morning." In fact, that's why people call me "Goo Mo."

2 - Good Morning, Goo Mo. Welcome to your first full day at Camp Midos! Please let me know if I can help you in any way. By the way, Goo Mo, why are you in such a big rush?

1 - I'm against wasting time. Everything must be done the instant I want it done.

2 - Like what?

1 - Well, I demand instant cocoa, instant oatmeal, instant friends, and instant good grades.

2 - And what happens when you don't get what you want right away?

1 - When my wishes and my time are not properly respected, I get very upset and angry. For example, the person who was supposed to drive me to camp showed up thirty seconds late, and I flew into a rage. Also, I couldn't wait to get to Camp Midos, so the whole way I kept asking, every thirty seconds, "Are we there yet?" I was getting really upset, and so was the driver. Don't you agree that I had every right to be upset?

2 - Actually, I don't agree.

1 - Rabbi, are you saying that I have bad Midos? How is that possible? I'm the one who's always on time. I'm the one who is respectful and considerate of other people's time and needs.

2 - It seems to me that you are not patient enough with people who are not like you. But don't worry; you've come to Camp Midos, which is the perfect place to work on your Midos. I would be more than happy to help you uproot the bad Midah of impatience.

1 - I appreciate your offer, Rabbi, but I don't think I'm going to be needing it anymore. Now that I finally made it to Camp Midos,

I could not be happier; I already have everything I could desire. Before I leave you, though, I was wondering whether you could answer a question for me about the camp calendar. It says something about "Color War." What does that mean? Do we write out the word "war" in big letters and color them in?

2 - No, Color War is a war between colors.

1 - I've never heard of colors fighting before. And anyway, what does that have to do with camp?

2 - No, you don't understand. There are two teams, the blue team and the white team, and they go to war.

1 - War? Rabbi, you are really scaring me! I was assured that Camp Midos was a nice, safe place with great security. Now you're telling me that I'm in a war zone! I'm heading right back to my bunk to pack my bags. I'm outta here!

2 - Wait, wait - I didn't mean an actual war. Color War is a competition between two teams. It's the most exciting and

intense event in camp, and the competition and fun last for four or five days. You certainly wouldn't want to miss it!

1 - Color War sounds very exciting, but I have another question. On the calendar, why does it say "Color War" with a question mark after it? Does that mean that there may or may not be Color War?

2 - There is no question about it; there will definitely be Color War. The question only is when it will be.

1 - Why don't they just write it down on the calendar then?

2 - The exact day and time when "Color War" will start is top secret. That makes it even more exciting.

1 - How will I know when Color War starts?

2 - There will be a special surprise way in which Color War breaks out. When the break occurs, papers are distributed with the names of the teams and their members.

1 - I'm really getting excited! I want Color War to start now. I can't wait another minute:

Ain't gonna wait for Color War

Ain't gonna wait for Color War

Competition, games, and fun galore

Ain't gonna wait for Color War!

2 - Well, the exact moment that Color War breaks is not really up to you. It is a decision made at the highest levels of the camp administration.

1 - But Rabbi, I cannot wait!

2 - There are many situations in life that require us to wait. We have a choice: we can have patience or not have patience.

1 - I don't feel like I have a choice in this matter. My impatient reactions in life seem to be automatic.

2 - You're right. Your reaction is automatic. It is the automatic reaction of the Yetzer Hara, the inclination to do bad things that is in all of us.

1 - So what can I do so that the Yetzer Hara will not take me over?

2 - You have to do a "cost-benefit analysis": What does impatience cost you, and what do you gain, if anything, by it?

1 - I don't gain anything by it. My impatience doesn't get me anywhere. The thing I desire does not come to me any more quickly as a result of my impatience.

2 - Why don't you ask yourself, also, "What's the rush?" If you have what you want now, it will be over with before you know it. On the other hand, if you wait, you'll be able to enjoy what you want later. What difference does it really make? And what is the cost of your impatience?

1 - Well, first of all, now that you mention it, people do get very annoyed with me when I am impatient. My impatience upsets everyone - including myself. Second of all, my impatience has led me to do things that have made me lose the very thing I wanted.

2 - Like what?

1 - Well, I was once waiting on line for eight hours to buy

tickets to a World Series game. I was almost at the front of the line, but I became so upset and out of control that the security guards had to remove me from the line and call my parents to pick me up. I never got the tickets, and boy, did I get into trouble!

2 - I feel so bad for you! There's another, more hidden cost of impatience that you didn't mention. Impatience is, in itself, a complete waste of precious time! An impatient person becomes so focused on the future that he loses the gift of the present. As Eleanor Roosevelt said, "Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, and today is a gift - that's why it's called 'the present'."

1 - A waste of precious time? I never thought of it that way! You are showing me that my impatience is actually leading me to the very opposite of my goal. My whole aim is not to waste time, and, yet, by being impatient, I am actually wasting time.

Impatience is terrible!

Two Days Later ...

2 - Hi, how are you?

1 - You're not going to believe what happened! I was in the dining room, and they served blue and white eggs for breakfast! There were even papers with the eggs! I got so excited, but Color War didn't break! What's going on?

2 - That was a "fake break."

1 - A "fake break"? What's a "fake break"?

2 - To add to the excitement of Color War, there are events that seem to be the actual break, but are not. This adds to the drama and suspense! The real break will be much more dramatic than blue and white eggs.

1 - Now I've really lost it! I was being so patient, but now I can't be patient anymore. Through the fake break, my excitement was really built up, and, now, I am so disappointed. I'm going to the camp director right now to tell him that I can't be tortured like this any longer. Color War must begin right away!

2 - I am so sorry for your disappointment, Goo Mo, but, even so, you should remain patient. One good way to fight the bad Midah of impatience is to prepare something else to do while you have to wait for what you want. Then your time is not wasted, but is used in a worthwhile way. When I know that I may have to wait somewhere for something, I bring a Torah book with me, so that I can use the time to study. In fact, there was a Rabbi who finished the entire Talmud while waiting for different things over the years!

1 - That's a good idea, Rabbi, but I don't think that will help me with waiting for Color War. I simply cannot focus on anything else! I'm sorry Rabbi, but nothing you say cure my Color War addiction! I'm going to the camp director now and demanding that he break Color War immediately, and you won't stop me. And I'm not going to do this just by myself; I have been enlisting supporters in a "Color War Now" movement. And I already have a theme song to sing at our rally at the entrance to the camp

director's house: "1,2,3,4, we won't wait for Color War! 5,6,7,8,
another minute we won't wait!

The Next Day ...

2 - So, what did the camp director say?

1 - He said, "2, 4, 6, 8, your excitement I appreciate. 8, 6, 4, 2,
you'll just have to wait for the white and blue!"

2 - Well, I guess you'll just have to be patient then, and wait it
out.

1 - I'm not giving up! I simply cannot wait for the bliss of Color
War for one more minute! I'm going to go to the camp director
twelve times a day to tell him that he must break Color War
without delay!

2 - Good luck!

Three Days Later ...

1 - Rabbi, I hear a siren! Now I see a fire engine racing up
toward the bunks! This is very strange! There was no fire alarm,

and I don't see a fire or smell smoke. Look - there are papers being shot out of the fire hose! Could this be it?

2 - Why don't you take a look at the papers and see what they say.

1 - I caught one! Let me see ... It says that the teams are the "Blue Soccer Field" and the "White Basketball Court." Oh no! Another fake break! My hopes have been built up and smashed once again! I can't take it anymore! I would rather leave camp and miss Color War than be disappointed again!

2 - Do you really want to leave Camp Midos? You'll be missing out on the most exciting part of the summer! You already admitted to me that in the past your impatience has ended up causing you to lose the very thing you were waiting for.

1 - I don't care! I'm going to the camp office right now and I'm demanding that my parents be called to come and take me home immediately!

2 - I am warning you: Impatience can be very destructive. We can learn from Jewish history just how serious the cost of impatience can be. The Jews in the desert were impatient when Moses seemed to be taking a long time to come down from Mount Sinai with the Ten Commandments. Some people gave up on his return and made an idol, a golden calf, which led to many bad consequences. Moses came down from the mountain the very next day. If they had waited just one more day, they would not have committed this terrible sin.

1 - Are there any other examples of the negative consequences of impatience from our history?

2 - Yes. In later times, the prophet Samuel told King Saul to wait for him for seven days, at which time Samuel would arrive and offer a sacrifice to God. Saul waited for Samuel, but, on the seventh day, it was getting late, and Samuel still had not yet appeared. The Israelites' enemies, the Philistines, were gathering for battle, and the people began to scatter. King Saul gave up on

waiting for Samuel, and he offered a sacrifice himself. Just when he finished doing so, Samuel arrived and told Saul that, because he had not followed God's command, his kingship would not last. Had Saul waited another minute, his kingship could have endured.

1 - I'm sorry, but nothing you say will heal my bitter disappointment. I am going to demand that my parents be called to come and take me home!

Ten Minutes Later ...

2 - So what did the camp director say?

1 - He quoted to me the words of a poem:

You can never tell how close you are

It may be near when it seems afar

So stick to the fight when you're hardest hit

It's when things seem worst that you mustn't quit!

2 - The words and thoughts expressed in this poem are truly beautiful. So what did you say in response?

1 - I asked him, once again, to please call my parents.

2 - And what did your parents say?

1 - They said that they were planning to leave in two days to go on a cruise to Alaska to celebrate their anniversary. They said, however, that if I really feel that I need to come home, they would cancel their plans and stay home with me. The camp director asked me whether I really felt comfortable doing that to my parents, and I said that I did. They'll just have to be patient and go on their cruise another time.

2 - I am shocked by your attitude. Your parents have been so patient with you your entire life! They stayed up nights with you, changed your diapers, dealt with your tantrums, and patiently taught you so many things you needed to know. And you're not willing to be a little patient so that they can go on their cruise?

1 - What you're saying is true, but they offered, and I'm taking them up on their kind offer!

2 - I have a feeling that you're going to regret this!

The Next Morning ...

1 - My parents are here to take me home. I'm going to miss our conversations, but I have to go. Thanks for all of your advice that I didn't take.

2 - Goodbye and good luck.

A Few Minutes Later ...

1 - Rabbi, I called camp from my mother's cell phone and I had you paged because we passed the firehouse just a little up the road, and I saw, parked there, an unbelievable sight - a car painted half blue and half white!

2 - Why don't you go ask your mother to go back there, and then take a look and see who's in the car?

1 - Okay, wait a minute ... I don't believe it! I see the camp director dressed up in blue and white. I also see a blue and white helicopter heading toward camp. Oh no! What have I done?!

2 - I have an idea! Catch the camp director and ask him to please let you come back to Camp Midos.

1 - How can I? I'm ashamed and afraid that he may have run out of patience with me! I bothered him twelve times a day, and then I even left camp.

2 - Don't worry! He, like your parents, is very patient. I'm sure that he will let you come back.

A Minute Later ...

1 - I asked him, and he said that he would be very happy to have me back at Camp Midos! I thanked him for being so patient with me, and I apologized to my parents for having been so selfish. They forgave me. Now they can go on their anniversary cruise.

2 - That's wonderful!

Five Days Later ...

1 - Good Morning, Rabbi. I wanted to let you know that now I have really learned my lesson about patience. Impatience creates problems with other people, and one can lose out on many good

things. Color War was everything I had hoped it would be. It was well worth waiting for!

2 - Yes, to quote from the poem once again,

Often the struggler has given up

When he might have captured the victor's cup

And he learned too late when the night came down

How close he was to the golden crown!

1 - 1,2,3,4, I really enjoyed Color War! 2, 4, 6, 8, being patient is really great! Thanks so much for all of your good advice, and, especially, for your patience.

2 - In Color War at Camp Midos, everyone is a winner. But you are a double-winner because you have won your war against the Yetzer Hara of impatience as well. Mazel Tov!

THE END