

Good Habits

"Avi, it's time to get up. You don't want to be late for *shacharis* (morning prayers).

"Okay, Imma. But *shacharis* begins in half an hour."

"Avi, It's always good to be early."

Later that day. . .

"Avi, begin preparing to leave. We must catch the bus."

"Yes, Imma. But the bus leaves in twenty minutes."

"Avi, It's always good to be early."

That evening . . .

"Avi, it's time to begin getting ready for bed."

"Imma, bedtime is not for another fifteen minutes. You are always telling me to be early. Why?"

"Avi dear, being early has many advantages. A person who is early is relaxed, because he is not rushing to make his appointments. He does not forget things in the last-minute rush. He has time to collect his thoughts when he arrives. One who is early for prayers, prays better because his mind is settled. An early-bird can be more patient when things go wrong, because they will not make him miss his appointment. He improves the quality of whatever he does because he is more relaxed."

"I never realized that, Imma."

"I'm trying to help you develop a good habit, Avi. It will help you the rest of your life."

"Thank you, Imma. You always help me. We learned about developing good habits yesterday in out parashas ha-shavuah class."

"That is so interesting, Avi."

"Where does the parasha mention good habits?"

"The very first mitzvah, Imma. 'Judges and officers make for yourselves in all of your gates' (Devarim 16:18). The Sefer HaChinuch explains that the judges and officers enforced the Torah laws, making sure the people always did the right thing. They developed good habits. Habit becomes a person's 'second nature'. He learns to naturally do only good. This leads to following Torah laws out of love of Hashem, and not fear of

officers."

"Fascinating, Avi. Abba once told me that an *Odom Godol* (Torah Giant) once said that things that his parents were strict about in his childhood were now easy for him. On the other hand, things that they did not stress were still a struggle for him to this very day."

"Wow."

"That is the power of habit."

Kinderlach . . .

Now is the time to develop good habits. Punctuality, patience, happiness, good learning habits, politeness, good eating habits, and respect are all a matter of habit. Second nature comes easier when you are young. Work on these things now. Also, thank Abba and Imma when they help you shape your habits. They are giving you a gift for life.

Receipt for Donation
Amount: \$1.00
Thank you very much.

The First

"Yes, young man. May I help you?"

"Yes sir. I'd like to pay for these items."

"With pleasure, young man."

The store owner began ringing up the items on his cash register. The young man noticed something unusual on the wall behind the register. He looked closer. It was a framed receipt for a tzedaka donation.

"Excuse me sir, may I ask you something?"

"Go ahead young man."

"Why did you frame that *tzedaka* receipt and hang it on the wall?"

"That donation, young man, was from the first dollar that I ever made. I dreamed for years about opening this store. I scrimped and saved and borrowed until I could finally go into

business. I bought this store building, but it was a mess. I renovated, painted the walls and set up the shelves with my own two hands. Finally it was finished. I ordered the merchandise and stocked the shelves. I opened the doors and the first customer walked in. He bought a pair of socks for a dollar and paid for them. After all of my hard work, that first dollar meant so much to me. Hashem had blessed me with my own store. I returned that dollar to Him by giving it to charity."

"The first of your grain, wine, and oil and the first of the shearing of your flock you shall give to Him (Devarim 18:4)". The Sefer HaChinuch explains that it is fitting to remember the One Who blessed us with prosperity. A person works hard sowing and reaping his crops. When he sees the fruits of his labor, he wants to enjoy them. Remember Hashem first, before you take for yourself.

Kinderlach . . .

We all work hard. If we are zoche (meritorious), Hashem blesses us with success. That is the time to remember Him. Did you get a gift for your birthday? Before you spend anything, take some and give it to tzedaka. Did you earn some money babysitting? Don't forget about the poor people. Did you win a prize? Give something to those who learn Torah. They are supporting you. You can support them. At all times of blessing and success, remember that Hashem blessed you with this prosperity. Return some of it to Him.

Parasha Questions

- What does a bribe do? (16:19)
- What three things must a King of Israel limit? (17:16,17)
- What must the King do with his Sefer Torah? (17:19,20)
- What gifts do the Kohanim receive? (18:3,4)
- Do "*eidim zommimim*" (plotting witnesses) who succeed in carrying out their plot get punished? (Rashi 19:19)