



Kinder Torah. ©



Renovations

Bang! Smash! Clop! Boom!"
"Imma, Imma, what is all that loud noise?"

"It is the upstairs neighbors, Chaim. They are renovating their house."

"What are they doing? It sounds like they are tearing all of the walls down and pulling up the floors."

"They are, Chaim. They are completely re-doing the entire house from top to bottom. The contractor is tearing down the old walls and putting up new ones, extending the house and adding new rooms. He will then put down a new floor and installing a new kitchen. Everything in their house will be big, bright, new, and modern."

"It sounds impressive, Imma. Why are they doing all of this?"

"They feel that their family has outgrown their home. They need more space. Therefore, they are making their rooms bigger and adding new rooms. They also feel that the old kitchen appliances cannot cook enough food fast enough, so they are installing all new ones."

"It all sounds so exciting, Imma. Do you think we will ever do anything like that?"

"Abba and I have discussed it a few times, Chaim. He is coming home in a few minutes. Together we will tell you the changes that we decided to make."

Chaim's eyes lit up. He was bursting with excitement. A new home! More space! New closets and floors! How wonderful! How exciting! He could hardly wait for Abba to come home.

Shalom everyone! I'm home." "Shalom, Abba! It is great to see you! I hear that you have great news for us!" "You must mean the renovations." "Yes, Abba. Are we getting a new house like the neighbors?"

"Well, it won't be exactly like the neighbors, Chaim. However, we are planning to make some changes. I would like to knock down some walls to make more room. I would also like to bring some new furnishings into the home."

"Hooray! We can hardly wait! Which walls will we knock down?"

"Let me begin by telling you a little story, Chaim. I have been in many homes in the older sections of Yerushalayim, where families lived in very tight quarters. I was once *menachem ovel* (comforting mourners) in a tiny home that had only one bedroom. The mother of a family of twelve children had passed away. She raised all of her children in this little house."

"Oy, those poor children. They must have suffered so much."

"You might think so, Chaim. However, I saw quite a different picture in the house. All of the sons were *talmidei chachomim*. Some were Rabbonim, some were Roshei Yeshivas, and some were teachers. They

were all very normal, happy people. In fact, I know one of them personally, and his love for his fellow Jews knows no bounds. He is happy with everyone and everything."

"How can that be?"

Because in that family, they focused on a person's true home – his heart. The mother of that family had enough room in her heart for all of her children. The walls of her home may have been close together, but her heart was open wide to love all of her family. She built her home on a grand scale."

"I am beginning to understand, Abba."

"Rav Shlomo Volbe zt"l spoke many times about 'building the inner person.' Our job in this world is to build our neshama – our mind, our character, our middos, our love for Hashem, and His people. Therefore, we must constantly renovate. We must knock down the walls that divide us – the barriers that we put up

between



others and ourselves. Ignore our petty differences and focus on unity. Break the *klipos* (shells) around our hearts that separate us from Hashem. Widen our hearts with more and more love for our fellow Jews. We need more room in there – room for another Jew that we love, and another, and another."

"What about the new furnishings, Abba?"

"Yes, Chaim. Begin each day with a new approach, a freshness, and a vigor to do Hashem's will. Yesterday I made mistakes. Today is a new day. I begin again. This time I will succeed. I have a new plan which will work to beat the Yetzer Hora."

Abba, I love it! We can do great home renovations, without the dust, dirt, and rubble. We can build a palace, and it will not cost us a cent! We can have plenty of room for the whole family, and the food, guests, and anyone who wants to come. Our heart is open wide to all of our fellow Jews, and most importantly – to Hashem!"

"Now you've got it, Chaim. I am going to make you the main contractor in our construction project."

"Abba, I accept the job!"

Kinderlach . . .

The verse states, "Hashem, your G-d will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, to love Hashem, your G-d, with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live" (Devarim 30:6). This is speaking about the mitzvah of teshuva – returning to Hashem, with is the main focus of our efforts this month of Elul. The Baal HaTurim points out that the first letters of the Hebrew words; "your heart and the heart of" form the word "Elul". Hashem promises to remove the barriers around our heart that separate us from Him. We just need to make the first effort, just as Chaim's father proposed to do. Kinderlach, may you all be extremely successful in the renovations business this Elul.

Today

What's that up ahead?"

"It looks like a fork in the road."

"You're right. Which road do we take? Left or right?"

"I'll look at the map. Have you noticed that we have encountered many forks in the road on this trip?"

"Yes, we have a lot of choices and a lot of decisions to make."

"Behold, I have placed before you **today** life and good, death and evil." (Devarim 30:15). "Today?" Rav Moshe Feinstein asks, "Why does the Torah use the word 'today'?" The Torah does not need to give a date to this choice between good and evil. Perhaps the reason is that a person is faced with this decision every day. There are many forks in the road. Even if he chose the wrong path yesterday and the day before, he need not despair. He can choose the right path today. The opposite is also true. His correct choices until now do not guarantee that he will choose correctly in the future. Every day is a new decision.

Kinderlach . . .

Yesterday you made mistakes – you did not pray well, you got upset for no reason, or you did not learn well. Do not give up! Today is a new day! Hashem gave you a new chance to get it right. Even if everything went well yesterday, do not rest on your laurels. Keep plugging today to keep things going well. Make the right decisions . . . TODAY!

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