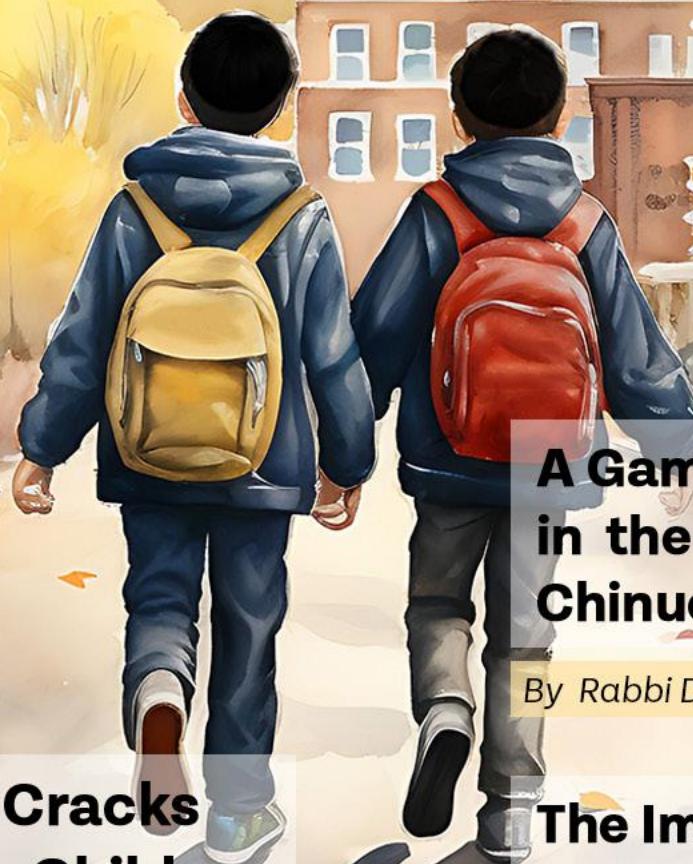


See Ads Supplement on page 40



# HAMECHANECH

המחנך חשון תשפ"ד VOL 15 ISSUE 1



**A Game Changer  
in the World of  
Chinuch - Page 17**

By Rabbi Dovid Goldstein

**Closing the Cracks  
Before More Children  
Fall Through - Page 13**

By Rabbi Yaakov Mintz

**The Importance  
of Being Part of  
the Group - Page 6**

By Rabbi Shmuel Yaakov Klein

# HAMECHANECH

## MAGAZINE

### VOLUME 15 ISSUE 1

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Torah Umesorah is committed to promoting Jewish continuity by fostering Torah, Jewish values and Jewish tradition. In particular its goals are: to establish Torah schools in Jewish communities across North America; to enhance the religious infrastructure of these communities; to offer training, placement and mentoring of principals and teachers to staff these schools; and to provide them with teaching materials and resources.

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## MESSAGE FROM THE MENAHEL

I write these words just a few days before the yamim noraim – well in advance of our upcoming National Convention. It's a good time to reflect on the chassadim that Hashem bestows upon us. All too often we get caught up with the frustrations of daily life and overlook that at that very same moment we are being showered with kindness from Above.

So, as you read this message, take a deep breath – and breathe out! Yes, the days of Tishrei will soon be behind us, but it is early enough in our school year to plan ahead with hope and confidence. Certainly, none of our concerns should ever overshadow the delight in the knowledge of our relationship with Hakodosh Boruch Hu. He truly loves us. We really are “Bonim la’Hashem,” and as such how fortunate we are and indeed how special we are!

Let us move from the Yamim Noraim to Shmini Atzeres. The Gemara at the end of Masechta Sukkah conveys in the name of Rabbi Elozer of the Ribbono Shel Olam’s relationship with Klal Yisrael on Shemini Atzeres. As a parable, Rabbi Elozer, speaks of a king who held a feast for all his ministers for seven days. On the eighth day he told his closest minister, let the two of us have a private dinner, nothing elaborate, just a simple meal that will express my closeness with you. Or as the medrash in Shir HaShirim explains: בא שלמה ופירש נגילה ושמחה בך, בך בתורתך, בך בישועתך. Hashem shows us how he wishes that we rejoice with Him in His Torah and in his salvation.

And how relevant is that thought to Mechanchim! What greater connection can we have with Hashem than that which emerges from our looking after His children, the tinnokos shel beis rabban?

This being our Convention Issue, many of us will be experiencing the warmth and wholesomeness of these four days, when

we will delight in the presence of our Roshei Yeshiva, savoring their words of chizuk. We should not take their words as hyperbole. We should appreciate that as Rebbeim and Moros we are ensuring the future of Klal Yisroel. Is it any wonder that the Roshei Yeshiva hold all of you in such great esteem?

We say every day in our davening the words in Tehillim, “Harchev picha v’Amal’eihu,” in a sense: dream big and Hashem will help us realize those dreams.

In fact, mechanchim have always dreamt big. They have dreamt of lighting the fire of Torah and fanning those flames to engulf their talmidim and beyond. Today we witness how those dreams continue to be fulfilled, with over 800 Yeshivos and Bais Yaakov schools across North America and beyond that have formed a tie with Torah Umesorah. More than 800,000 children and 20,000 teachers, kein yirbu. Where would we be as Klal Yisroel without these figures? What kind of Yiddishkeit would we be experiencing, absent of these numbers. Considering that every child and every teacher has their own dreams to fulfill. I believe that on the basis of those dreams alone we can expect b’ezeras Hashem to see great Hatzlocho in the coming years.

May the Ribbono Shel Olam continue to shower you in ways that will raise the banner of Torah and Yahadus around the World.

And may we be zocheh to greet Moshiach together.

*As we go to press, the devastating and heartbreaking news concerning Eretz Yisroel is still fresh in our minds. May the Shomer Yisroel be merachem on Klal Yisroel so that we should see the Geulah Sheleima Bimheirah.*

*Rabbi David Nojowitz*

# CONTENT

- 3 MESSAGE FROM THE MENAHEL**  
*Rabbi Dovid Nojowitz*
- 5 LETTER FROM THE EDITOR**  
*Rabbi Shmuel Yaakov Klein*
- 6 THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING PART OF THE GROUP**  
*Rabbi Shmuel Yaakov Klein*
- 8 YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED**  
*Rabbi Moshe Mordechai Lowy*
- 11 MEET THE DIRECTORS**  
*Rabbi Yehoshua Levy*
- 13 CLOSING THE CRACKS BEFORE MORE CHILDREN FALL THROUGH**  
*Rabbi Yaakov Mintz*
- 17 A GAME CHANGER IN THE WORLD OF CHINUCH**  
*Rabbi Dovid Goldstein*
- 21 NISHMASI**  
*A Nishmasi Staff Writer*
- 24 NOW HIRING TALENT FOR THE GREATEST JOB IN THE WORLD**  
*Rabbi Moshe Dov Heber*
- 28 ALIYA BETEFILLAH KEEPING IT UP-PART 2**  
*Rabbi Yechezkel Leiman*
- 30 INSTITUTING SHNAYIM MIKRA IN OUR SCHOOLS**  
*Rabbi Yoel Yormark, Rabbi Yaakov Dovid Kibel*
- 34 OLOMEINU/OURWORLD AND CHAYEI OLAM**  
*Rabbi Daniel Feldman*
- 38 BEHIND THE SOUND**  
*Yudel Shick*

21





## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

This issue of Hamechanech Magazine is what we refer to as our “Convention Issue,” as it coincides with the National Convention, which this year will take place over the Shabbos of Parshas Vayeira. This parshah contains what is certainly one of the most dramatic narratives of the Torah – the Akeidas Yitzchak.

According to most Rishonim, this is the final and most challenging of the ten nisyonos with which Hashem tested the stamina and the devotion of Avraham Avinu. As the Mishnah tells us in the fifth perek of Avos, “V’amad b’chulan,” Avraham indeed passed that and all of the nisyonos.

The question that might be asked is why we need to know this bit of information. Chazal do not share with us biographical information that bears no implication for our lives. So, how can we gain from knowing that Avraham Avinu successfully withstood his extreme tests?

The Maharal, in Derech Hachaim, offers a crucial interpretation. Bearing in mind that we are descended from Avraham Avinu, and bearing in mind that we are his heirs, not only to his precious legacy, but also to his genetic constitution, the Mishnah seeks to impart an essential lesson that is meant to guide us. The lesson is that we all have it within us to be omeid b’nisayon, just like our Zaydeh, Avraham Avinu. We are a people that has been well trained in the matter of valiantly standing up to challenges of various sorts. We are a people that has been granted a heaping helping of Siyata Di’Shmaya with which we overcome

hurdles and continue relentlessly on our march to nitzchius. We merit the grace of Hashem because we have always shown that we deserve it on the basis of our mesirus nefesh for the cause of Torah u’Mitzvos.

It would be my contention that the highest pinnacle of that sense of mesirus nefesh is found among the stalwarts of chinuch, who do much more than simply teach. Our mechanchim plant the seeds for a Jewish continuity that is founded upon integrity and complete devotion to the sacred task. It is the cadre of mechanchim and mechanchos who perhaps lay the greatest claim to a share of the legacy of Avraham Avinu and his ability to be omeid b’nisayon.

The pleasures and the emotional rewards of being in chinuch, notwithstanding, we ought to realize that the highest level of devotion to the Ribbono Shel Olam is demonstrated among those who illuminate the lives of Jewish children and who pave the way for the bright future of Klal Yisrael.

Ashreichem, v’tov lachem. **H**

*Rabbi Shmuel Yaakov Klein*



# The Importance of Being Part of the Group

*Rabbi Shmuel Yaakov Klein*

**Q** How important are friendship and social interaction in the maturation of young people? Do they contribute to academic development?

As the Ramchal suggests in the hakdamah to Mesilas Yesharim, even that which is known requires periodic reiteration. Such is this issue.

Every so often one encounters an individual who not only survived his youth without the benefit of friends but even outshone his or her peers. That may have been either despite having no or few friends or actually because of that. I have one friend who for much of his yeshiva years chose to sit by himself in his dormitory room learning with remarkable hasmadah, rather than sitting in the bais medrash with a chavrusa. He grew into an exemplary Torah scholar and posek. Unquestionably, though, such people are the rare exceptions rather than the rule.

The rule is that as we grow we need peers from whom to nurture.

As a principal, over the years, I was requited to deal with numerous cases of children or adolescents who were not savvy in the area of social interaction. Baruch Hashem, in most cases, with concerted effort and the passage of time, the obstacles were overcome. But not always!

One young man, whose difficulties stemmed partly from his lack of personal maintenance skills, ended up remaining friendless and ultimately slipped to the periphery of Torah adherence. When the boy was eleven years old, I took upon myself the unpleasant task of discussing the issue with his parents – including its cause. I was seeking intervention at home, for this alone would result in change. The response I got, however, much to my chagrin, was that Yanky (not his

real name) “is old enough to look after his personal needs.” Apart from feeling almost helpless and very sad for Yanky, I felt that the problem would only get worse. Unfortunately I was not wrong.

Yanky’s classmates shunned him, and despite my efforts both at encouraging their tolerance and at attempting to coach him toward change, the problem only got worse. Yanky ended up retreating more and more into his secluded world.

Instinctively, human beings crave camaraderie. The Rambam writes in Moreh Nevuchim (Chelek 2, Perek 40) that essentially man is a social being. It would therefore follow that when this aspect of the natural human condition is suffering, some other part of the individual’s development might be stunted as a result.

One example follows. Elsewhere the Rambam writes (Hilchos Talmud Torah, ch. 4, hal.5), “The student shall not be ashamed before his companions when they have grasped the learning after one or two times while he has not learned it until after several times, for if he will be embarrassed over that, the result will be that he will enter and leave the bais medrash without having learned anything.” Negative social interaction hinders progress.

This statement of the Rambam takes to a new level our reading of the mishnah in Avos (2:6) that proclaims, “Lo habayshan lamed, the bashful cannot learn.” The conventional meaning is that if one tends to be embarrassed, he will desist from asking questions and will consequently fail to learn properly. In the view of the Rambam, however, the bashfulness may have nothing to do with a reluctance to ask: it is not bashfulness before the teacher. It may be entirely connected to extraneous



issues. The individual student might be futilely struggling to secure a place within his social group. His bashfulness is thus tied to his self-consciousness and it exists vis a vis his classmates.

A social gap can thus become extended into a learning deficit as well.

Consider the various causes for an individual being “alone,” so to speak, within his peer group. Sometimes he might be self-conscious over physical situations – height, weight or a variety of possible irregularities. This often becomes intensified when youthfully insensitive classmates might point out the irregularity or poke fun at it. Children are apt to be cruel that way.

Some individuals see themselves as being academically inept, as in the situation about which the Rambam speaks... and in fact might be intellectually less endowed than others in his group. A possibly real ineptitude thus deepens because of the self-concept that goes with it, such that the young boy or girl becomes increasingly regarded by himself and others as “different.”

There are cases of newcomers – from another school or another town – who have not been welcomed into the group in their new setting. And there are cases of individuals who for one reason or another respond to situations differently from the ways that others do – for better or for worse. Perhaps they have been inadequately trained in social skills, and perhaps their mind just prompts a different set of reactions.

Whatever the cause, though, and whatever form the youth’s responses might take, it is incumbent upon the adults in that child’s life to help in this extremely crucial aspect of life.

Remember that the Mishnah places greater emphasis on one’s having a close companion than on his having a teacher. Whereas one must “make” for himself a rav (aseh lecha rav) one must even purchase a friend (kneh lecha chaver). While I do not think that purchasing friends with tangible things is what the mishnah intended, I do believe that it was stating clearly what one’s priorities must be. Good friends are more important than mentors, even as tremendously important as the latter surely are.

We might recall the words of Rebbi Yehudah Hanasi (Makos, 10a) wherein he professed that as much as he may have learned from his rebbeim, he learned more from his friends. One must have friends in order to learn from them.

The advice that I would give to parents and/or teachers is that rather than attempting to orchestrate friendships, a move that would probably end up creating relationships that are synthetic or contrived, they should teach the young person the dynamics of good social interaction. Analytically try to unearth the identity of those behaviors that are distancing him or her from their potential friends. Coaching social interaction is pivotal to improvement.

There needs also to be a simultaneous attempt to build up a healthy self-concept on the part of the youth. Confidence, combined obviously with a strong dose of humility, is a non-dispensable ingredient in the recipe of healthy interaction.

In yet another Mishnah in Avos we find Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai asking the advice of his five most esteemed

disciples concerning what is an ideal quality to which man shall cling. R’ Yehoshua ben Chananiah averred that this is “chaver tov, a good friend.”

The primary interpretation of these words, as found in the commentary of Bartenura, is that one shall have a good friend who will guide him and rebuke him when necessary. In other words, the idea is to HAVE a good friend. The Sfas Emes, though, interprets differently. He says that the statement of R’ Yehoshua is that one must BE a good friend: exercise good social skill towards others. Ultimately, however, there is no dispute between the two concepts, for in order to have a good friend one needs to be a

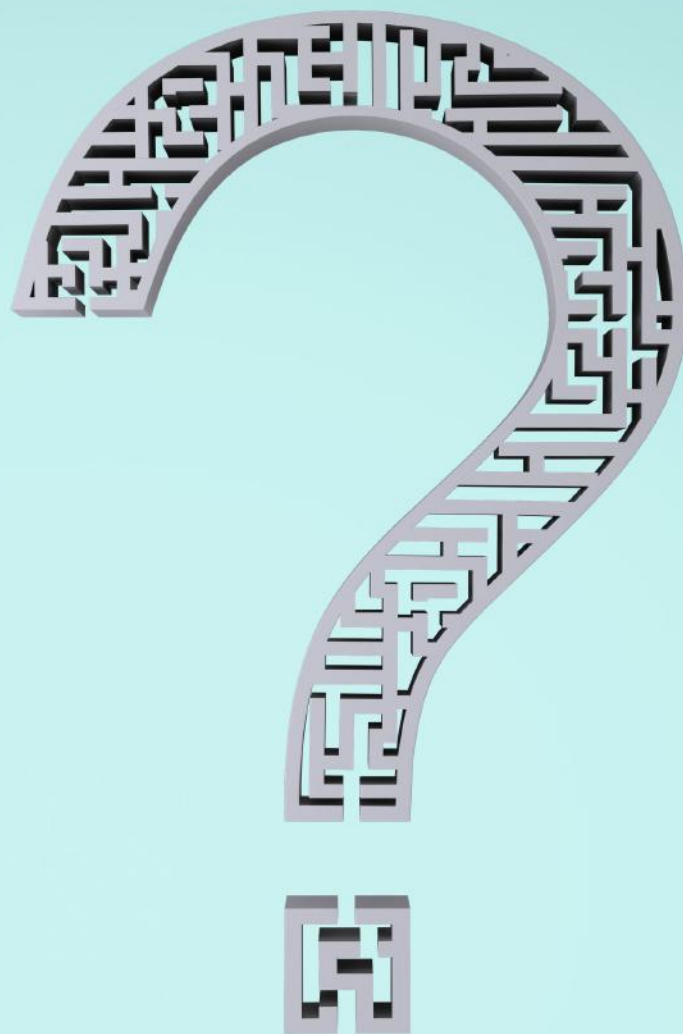
good friend. Stated in other terms, in order for one to have healthy social interaction with others, he or she needs to be guided and trained in basics social skills.

Where these are lacking and an individual finds himself in solitude, a variety of unhealthy mindsets will develop. These include depression, self-hatred and dark, deep loneliness. Such preoccupations will almost certainly impede proper learning and development.

The Gemara teaches (Bava Basra 22a) that when a talmid experiences learning difficulty, rather than for him to be secluded, “lehevei tzavsa lechavrei”, he should be maintained as part of the social fabric that binds all talmidim. While on one level the Gemara is teaching us that the child should at least be “one of the group,” on another level the Gemara may be informing us about what will help. By his enjoying a secure place within the mini-society of his peer group, the talmid could be helped and could even overcome the initial challenges. **H**

“  
**One must BE a good friend: exercise good social skill towards others.**  
”





**YOUR  
QUESTIONS  
ANSWERED**



**Q I find note-passing extremely disruptive during class time. If I confiscate a note, am I permitted to read it? Does the halachah change if I clearly warn my students at the beginning of the year that they will forfeit their right to privacy if I catch them with a note?**



Rabbi Moshe Mordechai Lowy, shlita

A teacher has a responsibility to ensure that his/her classroom is a place where the maximum amount of learning will occur. Thus, activities such as note-writing and passing are discouraged. However, another important reason why note-passing must be eschewed is to teach children the importance of not sharing private information improperly. Most often, notes passed during class contain either inappropriate comments that should never have been written, or private information that should not be circulated. Students must be taught about the value of confidentiality and privacy.

Teachers, too, must abide by the halachos of privacy and confidentiality. A teacher has no right to see private information, even if that information was passed around during class. A teacher does not have the power to forfeit students' privacy unnecessarily, even if his/her rule has been broken.

When a teacher sees a student involved with what appears to be a note, the teacher can quietly confiscate it. The teacher must take care not to shame the student unnecessarily until the

matter is clarified, but he/she should ask to meet with the student after class. The procedure described would pertain whether or not the teacher made a rule banning note passing.

In private, the teacher should emphasize that his/her sole objective is to prevent the student from disturbing class—not to be nosy or interfere in the student's private matters. The teacher should then ask the student whether the confiscated note contains relevant information to the class lesson. If the student responds that the note did, in fact, pertain to class material, then the teacher can ask to read it. If the student responds that the note is not, in fact, private, but that he/she would prefer that the teacher not read it, the teacher can remind the student that it is a teacher's right to read a note that is not confidential. Once the student has specified that the note is not private, the teacher may peruse the note.

It is important to remember that the purpose of a teacher in questioning a student about the content of the note is not to "catch" the student in a lie, or to force them into an uncomfortable position. Rather, the purpose is to educate the student in three areas—on the importance of preserving privacy, on the importance of telling the truth, and to clarify whether the student has or has not broken a class rule. **H**

If a student replies that the note did not pertain to the lesson, and says that it is confidential, then the teacher should not look at the note, but should admonish the student for passing a note during class.

However, if based on prior evidence, the teacher suspects that the note may contain material of an inappropriate nature—such as chutzpah—then he/she is permitted to scan the note l'toeles. If, while scanning, the teacher finds that the note contains confidential information—and not chutzpah—the teacher should stop reading immediately.

Above all else, teachers must bear in mind that the benefit of the doubt applies in every situation, and even a simple matter such as note-passing demands proper clarification.

The rebbi had reached his wits' end with the note-writing epidemic that was disrupting his class daily. Finally, he threatened that the next student to write a note would be suspended from school for a week. Shortly after the warning, he spotted Moshe writing a note at his desk! Incensed, the rebbi seized the note, threw it in the garbage, and

announced that Moshe was suspended for a full week. Moshe protested and insisted that he was innocent, but the rebbi refused to listen. Moshe begged his parents to listen to his story until finally they consented.

"The note I wrote said these words: 'V'ahavta es Hashem'—'es le'rabos talmidei chachamim', (And you should love Hashem—the word "es" comes to include Torah scholars) because I wanted to reinforce Rabbi's message."

Moshe was determined to find the note in the garbage can. Unfortunately the garbage had already been taken out to the dumpster, but Moshe resolutely sorted through the garbage dumpster, until he actually found the note and brought it to his rebbi—with the exact words that Moshe had quoted!

The rebbi asked mechilah from Moshe—the incident made a powerful impression on both of them, as well as on the entire class. H

The purpose of a teacher in questioning a student about the content of the note is not to "catch" the student in a lie

*Reprinted with permission from "Impressions," a biweekly newsletter for educators published by the Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation.*

# MEET THE DIRECTORS!



*Hamechanech Magazine's new feature—*

*"Meet the Directors," is a series of interviews conducted by Hamechanech Magazine with the members of Torah Umesorah's Executive Staff. Get to know us a bit better!*

***In this issue, we introduce you to Rabbi Yehoshua Levy, a TU Executive Consultant.***

## Can you tell us a bit about your background?

Raised in Monsey, NY. Attended Chofetz Chaim HS. Seven years Bais Medrash. Serving as a Rebbe, Assistant Principal for 9 years. 25 years as a principal. The principalships were Savannah, GA, Wilkes-Barre, PA and Philadelphia, PA.

## You have been a mechanech for many years. Can you share some of the details of your chinuch career.

Savannah was the merger of a community day school and a Torah Umesorah school. The Chashuve Rav, Avigdor Slatius served as the Daas Torah for the merger and guided the mosad.

In Wilkes-Barre, PA- United Hebrew Institute was founded in 1950 by a Posek and Rav in the area, named Rabbi Yisroel Benzion Davidson. By 1994, the enrollment had dropped to under 100 students. Through a collection of efforts, enrollment rose to 120 and the school remained an Orthodox outreach institution with community members from all religious affiliations. Rabbi Fein from Scranton and Rabbi Moshe Yeres, Rav of the Wilkes-Barre community served as the Daas Torah for the school.

**You have been a mechanech for many years. Can you share some of the details of your chinuch career.**

Without question, the Chofetz Chaim Rosh Yeshiva- "Reb Henoch" Zt"l guided every one of my positions. Day-to-day matters were very much influenced by Rabbi Chaim Feuerman Z"L and the network of TU principals from Conventions.

**When did you first get involved with Torah Umesorah?**

I am fortunate to have attended every midwinter and major convention since 1982 when the convention was at the Tamement Hotel in the Poconos. (My son's bar mitzvah was the same Shabbos as midwinter in 1988- you can guess which one I attended). At the very first mid-winter in 1981, Rav Gifter zt"l attended that event in Miami.

**Torah Umesorah has an official mission statement; however, what would you love to see Torah Umesorah focus on more, if indeed that is different from its current focus?**

Finding ways to include our schools that are not located in major Torah centers

**What is your personal vision for vocational self-fulfillment, both within TU and beyond?**

Technology is a necessary evil and personally I would turn the clock back 30 years. I would like to see parents in the Orthodox world realize the poisonous danger of technology access. That said, I would like our staff to be aware so that we can make use of the technology in a way that advances the mission of Torah Chinuch. H

# CLOSING THE CRACKS BEFORE MORE CHILDREN FALL THROUGH

*What principals can do to replace rejection with embrace for children who cannot remain in their yeshivos*



**BY RABBI YAAKOV MINTZ**

Every year, the same story repeats itself hundreds of times, as it has thousands of times over the years. A young person in a Torah day school exhibits behaviors that make school administrators feel that the individual simply cannot remain part of their student community.

Perhaps it is substance abuse, dangerous behaviors, academic failure, non-compliance with rules, religious shortcomings, or some other factor that leads to this agonizing decision. Being responsible for the safety and growth of all their students and the overall well-being of their institution, it is clear that this child simply cannot remain in the school. At the same time, the notion of mandating a child to leave the yeshiva flies in the face of our essence as mechanchim dedicated to raising bnei Torah.

The quandary in which yeshivos find themselves is very real. On the one hand, we are determined to build educational mosdos filled with the values of talmud Torah and Yiras Shamayim that we hold so

dear. We want to give our kids the opportunity to truly “shteig” in every way, raising the quality and quantity of learning, and keeping a high level of shmiras hamitzvos and dikduk bahalachah. We know that at least as impactful as what children learn from their rebbeim and moros is what they learn from one another. The social setting of a yeshiva allows children to form lifelong bonds with others who share our values and commitment, and who will go on to build the communities of the future. Children are constantly learning from one another, and the words, behaviors, and actions of one child can have a real impact on peers and on the institution as a whole.

This leaves us with a significant challenge when we encounter children who cannot live up to the lofty chinuch standards that we hold so dear. Are we to sacrifice the level of talmud Torah of the yeshiva for those who cannot keep up? Can we allow students who are not makpid on tefilla and



other areas of halacha to be part of our yeshiva and thereby lower the overall level in these areas? What about students who are failing in the areas of kedushah and shmiras einayim? How do we handle a situation in which these shortcomings become public knowledge, and the reputation of the institution is at stake?

We also know the detrimental effect of expelling these children from our yeshivos.

Telling a child whose family members all attend “yeshiva x” that he is not welcome to stay – no matter how justified the reason – is a clear message of rejection and alienation. How can we expect that child to grow up and form a commitment to Torah and mitzvos when, in his mind, he was rejected from that world at a young age? When a fourteen-year-old young woman is expelled from Beis Yaakov for not adhering to the expected standards of tznius, can we blame her for becoming resentful toward the Bais Yaakov community?

Experience teaches us that, by their very nature, a segment of the population of our children simply do not fit into our school system. In our community, as in every community, our young people have a wide range of personality types, experiences, and abilities, and we know with certainty that many of

our children simply will not fit into our conventional educational structure. These children often have personalities that are adventurous and free-spirited, characteristics that can be wonderful in life but that often do not translate well into a classroom setting. Many of them are deeply interested in very specific areas of study and are not able to deal with the wide variety of subjects learned in a typical yeshiva curriculum. Some have experienced some sort of trauma and need time and space to heal outside of a rigorous academic setting. Substance use is common among teens, and when schools do not have an embracing way of dealing with these children, we know that we are bound to be pushing children away from the Jewish community.

That being the case, we need to carefully consider how we treat this segment of our population, as our response to them can drastically change the trajectory of their lives. These children can either be made to feel rejected and expelled from the Jewish community or find a way to grow into welcome, proud members of the community despite not being successful in a formal educational setting. Two examples\* of cases that occurred just this past year illustrate how the intervention of school administrators can make a drastic difference in the lives of these young people.





In the first case, the school was faced with a situation in which a few students reported that a young man, new to the yeshiva community and coming from a complicated family background, was engaged in disturbing behaviors that made them understandably uncomfortable to be around him. Determined to protect the safety of their students, administrators told the young man not to come back to school the following week while the school deliberated how to best handle the situation. The young man was out of school indefinitely. He spent months at home in isolation, not knowing what to do next. The school knew that they could not have him in the building but did not give him any guidance or direction as to what to do next, nor did they make a “clean break,” which would have given him clarity as to his situation. While they put in real effort to try to help this child to the best of their abilities, they simply did not have the tools to give him what he needed. The tragic results were that this child felt abandoned, rejected, and isolated from the Jewish community, and his next few months were lonely and unproductive. This experience caused a major blow to this child’s personal and religious growth. Convincing a child in such a situation that he is in fact cared for and beloved by Hashem and the Jewish community is a big challenge, as their experience in such a vulnerable, formative time in their lives screams the opposite.

In the second case, the yeshiva also concluded that the child could not remain in their school. The young man’s lack of compliance with the yeshiva’s basic standards of behavior was having a significantly detrimental effect on the entire school community. Every talmid is affected significantly by the behaviors of his peers, and the situation simply could not be allowed to continue. In this case, however, the Rosh Yeshiva did more than just put time and effort into considering how to best meet

**We must  
recognize and  
embrace the  
diversity of  
personalities  
Hashem has  
given us**

the needs of the young man. Unequipped to help this young man on his own, the Rosh Yeshiva contacted people with specific expertise in helping kids in these types of situations. Using self-discovery and alternative educational approaches, they were able to coordinate and join forces with various community resources to significantly help this young man. With a coordinated effort, specialized professionals were identified to help him in areas where he was lacking, and alternative educational options were used to find him a setup in which he could feel welcome and valued. While it was not an easy process and he

was upset that he could not go back to his friends in his old school, it was also clear to him that the adults in his life and the general community were truly caring for him. Even in this most difficult situation, he understood that the community truly had his best interests in mind.

To better understand these situations, we must consider the fact that yeshiva administrators are generally tasked with building institutions with high standards of Torah, Tefilla, and middos tovos. Enforcing these standards upon all children inadvertently excludes

those children who are not in a position to meet these expectations. This leaves a large crack in the social fabric in which we raise our children. Children who cannot live up to the expectations that have been set find themselves isolated from the community. While most responsible mechanchim will go out of their way to support young people in their growth, there are children who simply are not currently able to succeed at meeting those standards. Praising and recognizing those who thrive at textual learning and compliance with rules leaves children whose natural abilities and personalities do not lend themselves to such success feeling isolated and unappreciated by the community. Even while in school, these children often feel suffocated by the long, intense school day. They begin to see talmud Torah as a detriment in their lives, and they develop strong negative associations with learning. In extreme cases, when they are



expelled from school altogether and further isolated from their friends and familiar environment, their disillusion grows even further.

Unfortunately, throughout our yeshivos, there are youth who have already fallen deep into this crack in our educational system. They generally either drop out of or get kicked out of school, hold strong resentments toward educators, and feel very distanced from the community. Yeshivos often tell the family that they are simply “not equipped” to handle this child and the family is left to pick up the pieces. When this happens, it becomes the work of organizations, therapists, drop-in centers, and alternative yeshivos to pick up the pieces from this terrible experience. Children can spend years feeling helpless and isolated, sometimes wondering what is wrong with themselves, and at other times trying to figure out what is wrong with those who rejected them for being themselves.

While it often takes time and creative thinking, it is incumbent upon all educators to pay attention and catch these children before they fall through the cracks. We need to turn this process of rejection and alienation into one of seamless community cooperation and support.

When a situation arises in which a child cannot remain in a particular yeshiva, a community-wide collaboration of school leadership, rabbanim, community leaders, and employers can help find an appropriate place in the community for each child. This includes accessing the various alternative education options available, considering meaningful employment options, internships, job training, etc., all with the goal of finding a setting that will work for this individual child. With community collaboration in place, schools can support children whose performance, ability, or behavioral history have made it unfeasible for them to continue in their school.

Chazal (Berachos, 10b) teach us based on the pasuk of “ein tzur k'Eilokeinu,” the idea that “ein tzayar k'Eilokeinu,” there is no artist like Hashem. They explain that the uniqueness of Hashem’s creativity is that He has fashioned all mankind to not only look differently from one another but to think and act differently as well. We must recognize and embrace the diversity of personalities Hashem has given us, including those who do not do well in conventional school settings. To make sure that these children have an excellent chance to succeed in our community, we must be open to accessing resources outside of educational settings for children who need them so that we can truly know that there is a welcome place for every child in the Torah community.

*\*For the sake of privacy, details of these stories have been significantly altered.* **H**

*Rabbi Yaakov Mintz serves as an educational consultant for Work At It, an organization that helps young people in the Jewish community find their best path forward. By utilizing strength discovery, alternative education, career coaching, and other opportunities, Work At It plays a vital role in helping young people who have not succeeded in other settings. Rabbi Mintz can be reached at [yaakov@workatit.org](mailto:yaakov@workatit.org).*



# A Game Changer in the World of Chinuch



BY RABBI DOVID GOLDSTEIN

It is a known fact in the world of chinuch that one of the great challenges facing today's youth is the concept of respect for others. This should not come as a surprise to anyone. Chazal (Sotah 49b) foresaw this, as they state, "B'ikvos Meshicha Chutzpah Yisgei" – in the time period of "Ikvisa Di'Meshicha," there will be an increase of chutzpah in the world. This is the phenomenon to which we bear witness today. Did Chazal reveal this to us merely as a sign of the coming of Moshiach? Certainly not. Chazal were imparting to us a very timely message: The avodah of Ikvisa Di'Meshicha is to strengthen the area of "ne'arim p'nei z'keinim yalbinu" to the best of our ability, in order to be zocheh to the Geulah.

I believe that the shoresh for tikkun to today's generation having such an insensitivity towards the concept of respecting one another is rooted in strengthening our adherence to the mitzvah of Kibbud Av Va'eim. If a child is raised lacking the basic fundamental that he must respect his/her parents and honor their will, can he be expected to conform as he grows up to have the appropriate respect towards a Rebbe/Morah and to obey authority? Surely he will not have the proper sensitivity. (The passuk in Michah [7:6] also clearly highlights the lack of kibbud av va'eim that will exist in these times, which implies that this is the root cause for what the Gemara [ibid] mentions: "ne'arim p'nei z'keinim yalbinu" – youths will disgrace the faces of elders.)

Aside from the fact that kibbud av instills in a child an appreciation for authority and consideration toward others, the mitzvah of kibbud av plays another pivotal role in the life of a fledgling ben/bas Yisrael. Rav Meir Simcha (Meshech Chochmah, Parashas Va'eschanan 5:16) explains that the mitzva of kibbud av is vital for the mesoras ha'Torah. For if we indeed don't have the proper chashivus for our parents and appreciate them, how can we properly impart chinuch and the mesoras ha'Torah to our children?

Children will reject what their parents have to offer. They will not feel a need to please their parents and follow in their ways. Unfortunately, this is something that we witness in our times. Perhaps, it is for this very reason that Hashem gave the Yidden the mitzvah of kibbud av in Marah prior to Mattan Torah (see Sanhedrin 56b), because this mitzvah is a prerequisite to Kabbolas Ha'Torah, in order for parents to pass down the Shalshelos Ha'Torah to their children.

Hence, by telling us that in Ikvisa di'meshicha, "chutzpa yisgei" Chazal were teaching us that the avodah of Ikvisa di'meshicha is to strengthen the mitzva of kibbud av. Apparently, there is a direct connection between the mitzvah of Kibbud Av and Bi'as Hamoshiach.

Rav Yonason Eibeshitz, zt"l, (Yaaros Devash vol. 2 derush 2) explains that Bnei Yisrael need the merit of Kibbud Av in order to be redeemed from Galus Edom. This is because the power of Edom is due to the zechus of Eisav for his dedication to the mitzvah of kibbud av, and in order to overcome Malchus Edom, we need to overpower his merit in this mitzvah. It is thus that the nisayon in this area is so great, so that our dedication to this mitzvah, despite its hardships, will garnish the zechusim needed to merit the Geulah.

Rav Aaron Leib Shteinman, zt"l, made the following observation: The average life span of today's generation is much longer than that of previous generations. Nowadays, it's quite common to have elderly parents well into their nineties. Why was our generation blessed with arichas yamim? Is it because of the advancement of medicine and technology? Rav Aaron Leib explained that while it's true that there has been tremendous advancement, Hashem chose to allow these developments to occur during our time; and He did this so that our generation would have more opportunities to fulfill the mitzvah of kibbud av.

Now, I raise the following question: what can we mechanchim do to assist our talmidim in strengthening the mitzvah and overcoming the challenges? While it is relatively easy to define the issues of our times, finding solutions

## The mitzvah of kibbud av plays another pivotal role in the life of a fledging Ben/Bas Yisrael

is not always easy. I've heard many remarks such as, "It's a big problem, but there's nothing to do about it." Or, "This is our generation, it is what it is" etc. Other mechanchim try tackling the issue by speaking about the importance of the mitzvah and sharing stories about people who were very careful in their observance of it. While this is definitely a start, in order to make real change, it's not enough. Even teaching the basic halachos of kibbud av wouldn't break the trend and help to instill real change of today's prevalent mindset and behavior.

Putting the onus on parents to demand that their children respect them will not only fail to repair the issue; it will have the reverse effect, giving an impressionable young child the idea that his parents care primarily about their own honor and state of authority.

I would like to suggest what, in my humble opinion, is the only eitzah to create real change: To make a real limud with the talmidim/talmidos in hilchos kibbud av; to study the halachos in depth by learning the Shulchan Aruch inside

with the practical application of each halachah. As Rav Yisroel Salanter, zt”l (Igeres Hamusar) explains, the most effective way to eradicate a bad middah or to acquire a good middah is by learning that subject thoroughly.

While most yeshivos have a seder designated for learning halacha, most often the focus of the halachos learned are in Orach Chaim, such as hilchos tefillah, berachos, Shabbos, etc. Obviously, all of these halachos are very important in the everyday life of a Yid. But is kibbud av not also an integral part of a Yid’s life? To the contrary, kibbud av is the groundwork of raising a Yid b’derech haTorah, as previously explained.

Perhaps we should implement hilchos kibbud av as part of the curriculum for halachah seder. Can we expect our children to adhere to the laws of this great mitzvah if they are unaware of its many halachos? I would not be surprised if many of our children are not even aware that there is a Shulchan Aruch on hilchos kibbud av. But the tachlis of learning the halachos is not merely to gain clarity in how to perform the mitzvah. More importantly, focusing on the halachos for a period of time will most certainly bring awareness to the mitzvah.

Most often, when a child is lax in his

kibbud av, if he were to properly think about his behavior and whether it is appropriate or not, he would probably understand what is right. Unfortunately, most children don’t think along these lines. The thought that what one is doing is improper never crosses his mind – “K’omer mutar dami.” If one invests time into learning hilchos kibbud av, it will then be on his mind, and when

a situation arises that is connected to his personal kibbud av, he will be more conscious of the mitzvah, which will help him navigate his situation in a more positive way.

If only we would strengthen the area of kibbud av, all the pitfalls that spiral from it will also fall to the wayside. Classroom behavior and the Rebbi/Morah relationship will dramatically improve. The acceptance of authority will return to our people and a sense of respect for one another will be reignited. The pnimius of our nation shall shine through the darkness of the world surrounding us. As

the Torah states (Shmuel 2 7:23) “Umi k’amcha Yisrael, goy echad ba’aretz.” “Who is like your people, Yisrael, a unique nation in the world.”

The Hanalah of the Yeshivos and Bais Yaakovs (high schools/seminaries) should be encouraged to take on the task of imparting this message

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and infusing our children with the hashkafos ha'Torah. There is a two-fold challenge: firstly, inspiring them to want to improve their kibbud av. Secondly, once a child is motivated to make real change, his knowledge of how to perform this mitzvah is very limited. There are many halachos pertaining to the proper hanhagah that a child needs to have for a parent, b'machshavah, b'dibbur, and b'maaseh. Talking about the mitzvah is not enough. We need to implement a real limud of the hashkafah and halachos of kibbud av to make solid, long-lasting change.

(A personal note: The aforementioned inspired me to author a Mishnah Berurah-style sefer on the Shulchan Aruch, hilchos Kibbud Av with a clear and thorough analysis and compilation of the relevant halachos. In addition, it features a lengthy hakdamah with a collection from Chazal and the Gedolei Hadoros full of inspiration and appreciation for this important mitzvah. This is an ideal sefer to be studied in yeshivos/ Bais Yaakovs, with the relevant halachos at one's fingertips. Rav Elya Ber Wachtfogel shlit"a personally called up a Rosh Yeshiva of a large Mosad to encourage him to have the sefer studied at his yeshiva.)

It is my fervent Tefilla to the Ribbono shel Olam that the Yeshivos and Bais Yaakovs seize the opportunity to devote a seder/ period for several weeks to the learning of hilchos kibbud av, and in the zechus of our increased zehirus in this noble mitzvah, we will see tremendous nachas from our children and merit the coming of Moshiach speedily in our days.

*Rabbi Dovid Goldstein, a son in law of Rav Yisroel Belsky zt"l is an alumnus of Telz Cleveland, and is a long-time R"m in Mesivta Torah Vodaas, and has authored several seforim titled Du'daei Reuven. H*

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# Nishmasi

**A foundational approach that teaches children emotional awareness and regulation in a Torah-true, exciting and interactive manner.**

*(Geared toward children in Kindergarten through Second Grade)*

## By a Nishmasi staff writer

Mrs. Klar, the Pre 1A teacher at a local girls' school, was greeting all the children with a warm, and loving "good morning" as they were getting off the bus. Her eyes focused on Chavy, as she passed Devoiry and yelled out, "You're such a baby." Devoiry didn't respond. She sadly put her index finger into her mouth and quietly lowered her head.

Mrs. Klar has been putting in her whole heart and soul into building her student's Achdus and has been addressing the bullying situation all year. She kept telling the girls that they have to be nice to one another. That they can't hurt other children's feelings. V'ahavta L'reiacha Komocha. But somehow, they were not quite getting it.

Children, especially young children, have a hard time grasping the concept of emotions as well as identifying emotions in themselves and in others. They might not correlate facial expressions with the correct emotion and don't know how to respond appropriately to emotions in other people.

This is why foundational education in the matter is so crucial. Especially when they're young, it's important for them to get the proper SEL (Social Emotional Learning) foundation to help them develop into healthier adolescents and adults.

That's where Nishmasi steps in. Nishmasi created a full curriculum integrating SEL competencies, CBT, and DBT modalities designed with frum children in mind. The books contain stories and scenarios revolving around a Jewish lifestyle and are illustrated with characters that look like their friends, family members, and classmates. Nishmasi teaches children social skills, emotional awareness and regulation in a Torah-true, exciting and interactive manner.

Mrs. Klar's school signed up for the Nishmasi curriculum and ordered the classroom posters. She started teaching her students Nishmasi's "The Feelings Class Books" during circle time. The books cover one emotion at a time, with real-life scenarios and age-appropriate activities. The books sparked great discussions and prompted students to identify facial expressions, validate themselves and others. The worksheets had practical scenarios and encouraged them to come up with their own ideas of how to self-soothe. She finally felt like her students were grasping it!

One day, Chavy was picking on Devoiry again. Of their own accord, two students walked over to the Nishmasi poster on the wall. The posters feature named, illustrated characters for each emotion. The students pointed to Huvi Hurt and said, "Look! Devoiry looks like her. We shouldn't hurt her feelings."

With the help of Nishmasi, Mrs. Klar had achieved a powerful and empowering breakthrough.



Mrs. Brody, a kindergarten teacher, has found the program transformational for her students. She expressed herself about the program “What a superb visual aid. I was able to point to the illustrations and say, ‘This is how I feel,’ or ‘Show me how you feel.’ Learning to name and accept their emotions teaches students a new and effective way to deal with their experiences.

As a side benefit, I started using these techniques with my own children. The program is very systematic, and it has become part of me.”

This program is brought to you by Zipora Gordon, the founder and director of Nishmasi. Mrs. Gordon has worked as a pre-school curriculum director and saw the need for a program to incorporate Social Emotional Learning into the curriculum of young students. After scouring the market, she realized that the options for this age group were using scenarios and illustrations that were inappropriate for children growing up with frum values. The other options were using emojis or very basic illustrations which weren’t utilizing the facial expressions of each emotion.

And so, she set out on her life’s mission and her calling, to create Nishmasi. Teaching children to reflect upon, connect to, and express their emotions, incorporating torah-true values and middos tovos – always coming back to the neshama and how we can serve Hashem with simcha and love.

Zipora developed a one-of-kind curriculum, banking on over 10 years of research and a lifetime of experience. The books use a systematic approach to help students grasp and apply regulation to their daily lives, one emotion at a time.

‘The Feeling Class’ set of books cover 18 emotions and have Yiddish and English versions, as well as girls’ and boys’ versions. Each book includes worksheets and activities for the teacher to implement. The book includes a recorded training to learn about the books and the Building LIVES model. Through storytelling, worksheets and interactive activities children learn to Listen, Identify,

Validate, Empathize, and Self-soothe (acronym for LIVES). Take a glimpse into how children would learn the ‘hurt’ emotion.

The lesson starts by introducing the emotion with an illustrated story where a child is hurt. On the next page they have an activity to place a sticker next to the hurt children. By analyzing the posture and facial expression they ‘Listen’ and ‘Identify’ the emotion. This activity broadens their understanding with varied scenarios – nits in a child’s hair, a bleeding hand, a cast etc.

The next page teaches when a heart can be hurt. They need to cut and paste examples of when a heart hurts. On the next page children ‘Validate’ their own emotions by drawing scenarios of when they’ve been hurt. The next page features a scene with a lot of children where they used their acquired skills to place a sticker on the hurt children. Learning to identify emotions enhances their social skills and builds ‘Empathy’.

The worksheets delineate all kinds of bullying from sharing secrets (exclusion), to making fun of children, to physical bullying. The next three pages differentiate between different responses to bullying – passive, assertive, or aggressive. Children are encouraged to react assertively by pasting assertive solutions to the situations on

their worksheets.

Most emotions end with a ‘Self-Soothing’ page where children learn about the gifts they have and how they can use it to make themselves feel better. The concept of utilizing multisensory techniques is clearly described as using the “gifts” from Hashem such as hands, ears, mouth, etc.

Rabbi Shmuel Yaakov Klein of Torah Umesorah Publications warmly recommends Nishami programs to schools worldwide, “Educating today’s children to deal properly with the social and emotional aspects of their lives is an endeavor of tremendous merit. This is especially true in our contemporary world when traditional values are threatened by societal decay. Mrs. Zipora Gordon has

**Children  
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been hurt.**

had years of experience in these very areas. I have a deep appreciation of the work, the time and the effort that were invested in this effective resource. These booklets will bring a tremendous benefit to schools (and/or families) that will make regular use of them.”

Over 30,000 books have been sold to schools across the globe and have become a favorite among teachers who refer to them as a ‘set table’ – a platform fully prepared and set up for them to teach Social Skills, emotional awareness and regulation and of course middos tovos to their students.

Other resources include posters for each student and a large poster for the classroom wall.

Each poster has 18 children corresponding to the 18 emotions that students learn. This helps students retain and internalize what they’ve learnt, as well as serving as a visual reference for teachers.

Schools can also purchase the ‘Finger Puppet Set’ which engages children with storytelling and imagination. Another great Nishmasi product is ‘The Music and Movement CD’ that features a collection of songs to help children learn about emotions in a fun and interactive manner.

In the words of Mrs. Gina Levenberg at Torah Umesorah from the UK, “Zipora Gordon has produced a program of exceptionally high caliber that has been adapted to raise the level of emotional awareness in today’s youth. This has the potential to achieve tremendous impact by enhancing social interactions and communication with parents, teachers, peers and relationships in their future lives! Those who utilize this program will find that enabling children to identify and understand why they feel/ behave in certain ways, could prevent many issues that are prevalent in schools. This program will b’e”H equip students with skills and coping mechanisms that will greatly benefit them in their years of schooling and beyond!”

The program is endorsed and enjoyed by principals, therapists, and teachers worldwide. **H**

*To request a free sample: Call us at: 845-579-0015 ex.1 Or visit: [www.nishmasi.com](http://www.nishmasi.com). Zipora Gordon, CIPS has over a decade of experience working directly with children in schools and has helped over 11,000 children become more emotionally expressive through her books, groups, and private sessions. Nishmasi also runs over 20 SEL groups weekly in collaboration with schools, parents, and mental health agencies.*

## DO YOU HAVE QUESTIONS?

Yesterday

Teacher

How do I know which filter to get?



MESSAGES

30 min ago

**A confused parent**

Hey Yossie, are the new WhatsApp Channels ok?



MESSAGES

1 min ago

**A worried mother**

Help! I just caught my child with a phone. What do I do now?



MESSA

**A troubled**

Hi, I want a parent's car

MESSAGES

3 hours ago

**A frustrated father**

Hey, I need internet at home for work, any ideas?



MESSAGES

just now

**A revered Rebbi**

What's the deal with AI? Can I use it or not?!?!?!?



MESSAGES

1 min ago

**A big businessman**

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# NOW HIRING TALENT FOR THE GREATEST JOB IN THE WORLD



*Rabbi Moshe Dov Heber*

Imagine a life that each day is exciting, there is a vibrancy. Imagine a life where each day is spent on a higher calling. Imagine a life where you are consistently inspiring the youth of Klal Yisroel. Imagine a life coming into each Yom Tov, having learned and taught about it. This and so much more could be yours by choosing a future in chinuch.

The more time I spend in chinuch, the more I realize that many in chinuch would never trade this opportunity for anything else in the world. The talent in chinuch is beyond words. Rebbeim and moros constantly come up with innovative ways to keep our children excited about Torah and mitzvos. They then share their hard work with others so that everyone can gain from their talent. It's a humbling experience to serve as a messenger from Hashem to teach Torah to His nation.

Talk to those in chinuch and hear their dedication to their mission. It can sometimes mean early mornings or late nights but the classes have to be prepared and the calls to parents have to be made. It could be a sleepless night debating the best way to deal with a struggling child that needs to be reached. It could be the child from a super successful family and from those that aren't. Those in chinuch care because they are taking care of Hashem's children.

If those in chinuch know that this is the greatest opportunity, why is it that we are struggling to fill our classrooms with the most talented staff to teach and reach the next generation of Klal Yisroel? Why is it that even those who have the passion for chinuch are often convinced otherwise or they themselves



lose that desire even before they enter this great field?

The easy answer to this question is that we don't pay our rebbeim and teachers enough and therefore it's not feasible to teach anymore. While there may be truth to that, and those whose mission it is to raise these salaries should continue doing so, I believe there is more to the story. In discussion with talmidim and others over the years I have heard a constant impression of the image that they have on those in chinuch, "They work so hard, have so many challenges from hard students, etc. and don't really get paid much".

In terms of the finances of a rebbi or morah, it is simply not true to say every rebbi and Morah is struggling financially. There are many who have the talent and are able to use a rebbi or Morah job as an anchor for a parnassa in klei kodesh. There are tremendous opportunities for those who are talented in this field to make a tremendous difference to so many, find fulfillment for a lifetime, spend their life for a higher calling, all while earning a livable parnassa. There are opportunities in and out of school. Some examples would be learning with children outside of school, running extra programs, working in camps in the summers, developing curriculum and so much more. There are some, as guided by their rebbeim, who are anchored in chinuch but find means outside of chinuch to supplement their income.

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Hashem. We do  
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Many super organizations have worked tirelessly to raise salaries, benefits, and so much more for those in chinuch. They have directly affected thousands in chinuch and in turn tens of thousands of those who will be the future of Klal Yisroel. While this has helped the bottom line of rebbeim and moros, the image that many in the next generation have of what the life of a Morah is, seems to still

be lacking. What is still left to do is tell the world that those in chinuch love being in chinuch. They are proud of it and would not trade it for anything.

I would like to suggest that part of the issue is a perception of what rebbeim and moros are. In the mind of a child growing up, they consistently hear about how little rebbeim and moros make. It's a standard conversation. In their minds, they think, "why would I even go there? They work so hard..." What they aren't told is that in every career they will venture into, there will be challenges. Nothing is a given in this world. With passion and siyata d'Smaya, they can succeed in any field they choose.

Your children need to understand that we do work hard, very hard, however our hard work is a direct shlichus from Hashem. We do this because we want to. We try to help our students succeed because this is our calling and we are proud and happy to put in this "extra work".

The great organization, Chasdei Lev, for example has boosted this image in a tremendous way by not only supplying many in chinuch with Yom Tov necessities, also promoting rabbeim and

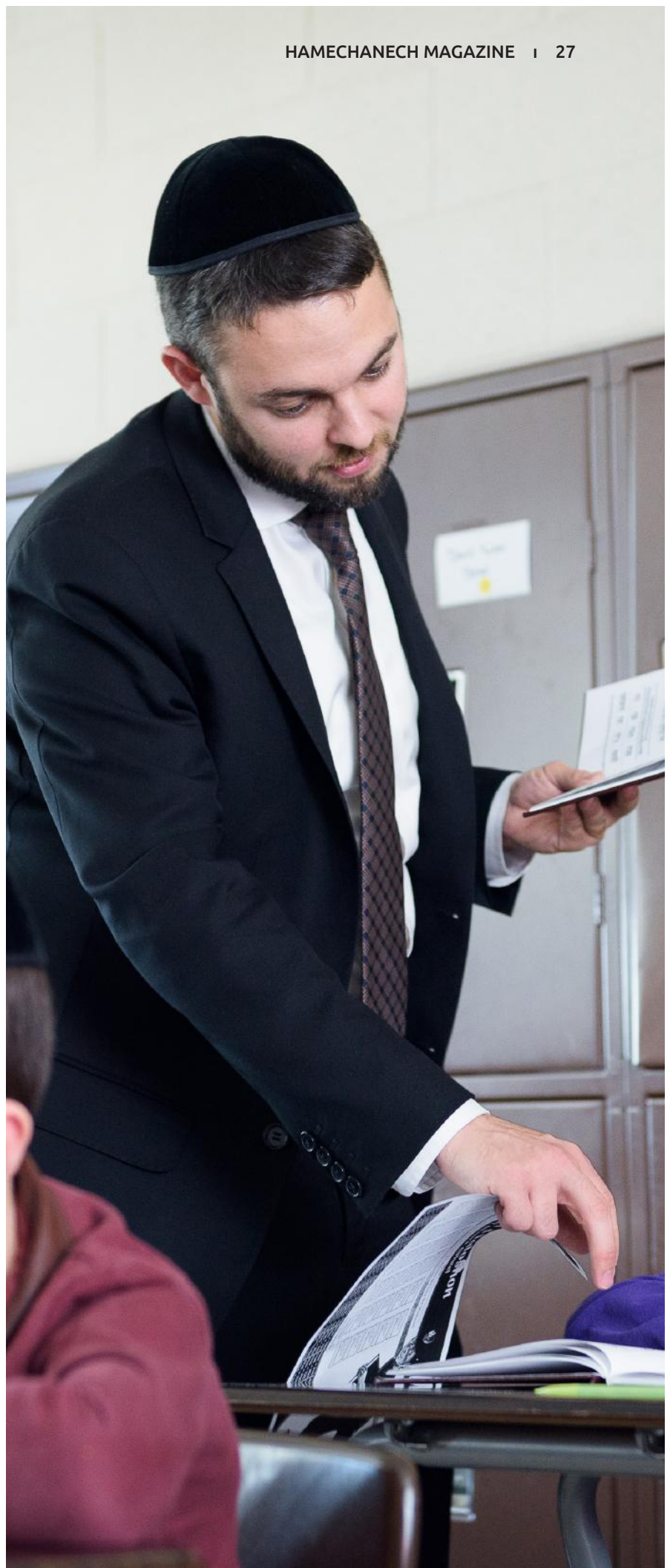


moros through song. What is left for us to do is have a conversation with our children about considering this as their future and telling them with pride that we would be proud if our children would take a path in chinuch. Have them speak to someone who “made it” in chinuch and let them hear about the greatest job in the world!

A colleague of mine wanted to suggest, in addition, that there is a misconception that to be in chinuch, you need to have “off the charts talent”. There are many skills that can be learned and many styles to give over the Torah. If you are willing to learn and it fits your shoresh haneshama you can be very successful and fulfilled even if you are not the next “superstar”.

As we approach the Yom Tov of Chanukah, where we light the neiros, let us spark that flame in our children; to have appreciation for those who dedicate their lives to the future of Klal Yisroel. As you give gifts to your children’s rebbeim and moros, explain to your children how sacred their task is, and the appreciation you have as a parent is endless. Explain how those who dedicate their life to chinuch, regardless of their financial status, are our heroes. In addition, maybe— just maybe— that child of yours who you see has the passion for Klal Yisroel and chinuch, may understand that they have the future of Klal Yisroel in their hands. **H**

*Rabbi Moshe Dov Heber, an alumnus of Yeshivas Ner Yisroel of Baltimore and Bais Medrash Govoha, is a graduate of the TU/Aish Dos Program for Melamdim. He is presently a Middle School Rabbi in Yeshiva K’tana of Waterbury, the Director of the Mishmar Evening Program in Waterbury and Division Head in Camp Romimu. He is a frequent contributor to Hamechanech Magazine and Chinuch.org. Rabbi Heber could be reached via email [mdheber@ykwaterbury.org](mailto:mdheber@ykwaterbury.org)*





# Aliya Betfillah Keeping it UP!

– Part 2

**Rabbi Yechezkel Leiman**

In the previous issue of Hamechanech, we introduced the newly revised Aliya Betfillah curriculum. Read on for more exciting information, as well as for a beautiful explanation of what Tefillah in general is all about.

To review, Aliya Betfillah is a beautifully printed 9-volume Tefilah curriculum, produced by TU. Its goal is to connect each child to their siddur, and ultimately to Hashem.

Each of the nine volumes consists of approximately 20 lessons and focuses on a specific part of davening. Each volume is independent of the others, so the program is great for an entire school... and great for the individual rebbi or morah seeking to teach a certain part of davening.

Aliya Betfillah is about tefillah itself. There's an essence, a depth, an understanding, a beauty. Every lesson consists of several components, blending to create a masterful message. The lesson begins with a short introduction, the teitch of



the words under study, several insights, a story, an interesting tidbit, a halachah, and something practical for the student to do, related to the lesson. The students are intrigued and engaged. They look forward to the lessons, and eventually to their davening.

What exactly is Tefillah? Twice daily, we say in Shema, “Ul’ovdo b’chol levavchem– and to serve Hashem with your entire heart.” Rashi explains this refers to Tefillah, and quotes a passuk in Tehilim – “Tikon tefillasi ketores lefonecho – You should establish my prayer as Ketores before You.

Chazal often compare tefilah to avodah in the Beis Hamikdash. But why does Dovid Hamelech specifically compare it to the Ketores? Some Seforim explain that Ketores is the highest form of Avodah. For example, a korban is brought on the Mizbaech Hachitzon. The Ketores is brought on the Mizbaech Hapnimi. On Yom Kippur, the Kohen Gadol entered the Kodosh Kodoshim with the Ketores. The holiest person on the holiest day, in the holiest place – with the Ketores.

What fueled the smoke of the Ketores? The most burnt coals of the Mizbaeach Hachitzon. In other words, the innermost coals of that Mizbaech serviced the Ketores. Furthermore, korban means closeness. Ketores is Aramaic for keshet, meaning a bond, an even more intimate attachment to Hashem.

When Hashem is upset, so to speak, the Ketores abates His anger, as the pasuk in V’zos Habrochoh says, “Yasimu ketores be’apecta– They place Ketores to abate Your wrath.” When a plague struck the Jewish nation, Aharon ran into their midst with a tray of Ketores.

The reason Ketores is greater than a korban is similar to the reason Torah is greater than

mitzvos. Mitzvos involve a physical element such as a limb, while Torah is solely mind and speech (air) - purely spiritual. Likewise, a korban involves an animal, while Ketores is purely spiritual – a fragrance.

Dovid Hamelech is revealing to us the enormity of Tefilah. It is like the Ketores. It is so powerful! Just like the Ketores, and just like Torah, it is purely thought and speech. It is avodah she’b’lev. It is intangible. We cannot see or touch a tefillah. And it is exceptionally cherished by Hashem. It has the ability to abate Hashem’s anger. It has the ability to bind us with Hashem. It has the ability to help us in so many ways.

Let’s give our talmidim and talmidos the tools to tap into Tefilah! Join the many schools already benefiting from Aliya Betfillah! H

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**Rabbi Yechezkel Leiman is  
Editor of Aliya Betfillah.**



# INSTITUTING SHNAYIM MIKRA IN OUR SCHOOLS



**By Rabbi Yoel Yormark,  
with Rabbi Yaakov Dovid Kibel**

Hillel was approached by a non-Jew with an outrageous request: “Teach me the entire Torah while I am standing on one foot.” Hillel answered in five words.

Imagine being faced with a similarly daunting question: What can we do to alleviate the following current problems facing the Jewish world today?

- Kriah difficulties.
- Learning disabilities.
- Lack of proficiency in Chumash.
- The need to be mekarev our non-religious brethren.
- Unmotivated students.
- Children (and adults) going off the derech.

Incredibly, a solution to these problems can be offered in just four words: shnayim mikra v’echad Targum.

As we know, Chazal stated that there is an obligation to read the weekly parshah twice, and once with Targum. Every Friday, I have my class read the first aliyah of that week’s parshah twice, without Targum. Parents must sign that their child performed this assignment over the weekend. I even sweeten the deal with Pringles as a reward. I have seen many positive results, including improvement in kriah skills. When second and third graders heard about this, they happily joined in. The students are excited and love doing this, and the parents applaud the idea as well. In fact, some second through fourth grade students are even reading the whole parshah twice. The enthusiasm has grown so great that even



some parents of first graders told me that their children actually beg them to listen to them read shnayim mikra.

Can you imagine your children begging to learn with you, with shnayim mikra as part of their regular vocabulary? This is what has happened in our school. Parents have actually thanked me for this homework. How often does a teacher get a “thank you” for homework?

Another outstanding result is that parents tell me that their children now stay in shul for laining. They read along with the baal kria, so that they can fulfill mikra one time. Is there any other assignment that can produce such results?

Shnayim mikra is a tremendous aid in improving kria skills. However, even for those children who have excellent kria skills, encouraging the practice of shnayim mikra will establish a deeper connection to Torah and mitzvos, helping everyone stay on the derech, because if shnayim mikra is done week after week, year after year, it will leave a massive impact on all who do it.

### ***As a General Aid to Limud HaTorah***

The advantages to doing shnayim mikra are numerous. One of the primary benefits, as recorded by the Levush, is that it gives one tremendous fluency in Chumash, which subconsciously provides one with a deeper connection to Torah

and mitzvos. If this is done every week, year after year, can you imagine how much more limud haTorah and fluency in Chumash result from shnayim mikra alone? It leaves an enormous imprint.

Every parshah contains some or all of the following: mitzvos, halachos, mussar lessons, hashkafah, and fundamental yesodos. It follows that anyone who does shnayim mikra will be left with the long-lasting benefits that such learning provides. All of this is from simply reading Chumash, even without translating.

The Chofetz Chaim and the Shulchan Aruch Harav state that every word of Chumash read out loud is a separate mitzvah of limud haTorah, even if it is not understood. This is as opposed to Torah Shebaal Peh, which must be understood in order to fulfill the mitzvah of limud haTorah.

The Vilna Gaon says that when Chazal state, “Talmud Torah Keneged Kulam,” it refers to even one word of Torah that is learned. In a similar vein, the Ramchal says that just reading Chumash out loud, even if it is not understood, has a very powerful hashpa’ah. The Tana Devei Eliyahu



masechtos, such as Negaim and Ohalos. This shows us the tremendous power of just reading Chumash.

[Another plus of this assignment is that it forces the student to actually have eye contact with a Chumash for an extended period of time. Teachers are well aware that eye contact with sefarim is sorely lacking these days. The shnayim mikra program helps correct this deficiency.]

During these troubled times, with technology and all the other issues and problems our schools are facing, a shnayim mikra program in every school is crucial. We should never underestimate the importance and power of this crucial mitzvah.

Dovid Hamelech says in Tehillim, "Toras Hashem temimah machkimas pesi - learning Torah makes the fool wise." When one reads the words of the Torah, even without translating, one becomes smarter. Is there a better way to get one back into learning than through the words of the Chumash themselves, which are "machkimas pesi"?

There is another advantage for older students. Rav Aharon Feldman, Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva Ner Yisroel, told me that learning Targum is especially helpful, as it aids talmidim in their Gemara learning.

Rav Aharon Hersh Fried, author of the Torah Umesorah Kriah Scan, related the following insight of Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky zt"l. He explained that when Chazal said, "Ben chameish lemikra," they meant that children should be taught and should practice kriah with a Chumash, not with a siddur or Tehillim. Indeed, the Shevet Halevi states that when children

reach the age of chinuch, they must be taught to do shnayim mikra v'echad Targum.

The Aruch Hashulchan states that Moshe Rabbeinu himself instituted this halachah. [See the Baal Haturim at the beginning of Sefer Shemos, who finds a remez for the chiyuv of shnayim mikra there, as the word "shemos" is the roshei teivos of shnayim mikra v'echud Targum, hinting to this powerful mitzvah.]

This halachah has, unfortunately, become weak and neglected. In fact, the siman in Shulchan Aruch that discusses this chiyuv of shnayim mikra is siman 285, or reish pey hey, spelling the word rafah, weak.

Shnayim mikra is the only halachah in all of Shulchan Aruch that requires a set quota of learning per week: the parshas hashavua twice, with Targum once. There is no halachah that you must learn one to two Mishnayos per day, or a daf a day, or a halachah a day. It is true that the Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 246:4) mandates that one devote a significant portion of one's day to learning Gemara. However, no quota is given, and, seemingly, one is free to choose his own pace. Of course, Daf Yomi and other programs like it are all fantastic, but the pace of shnayim mikra is a halachah, while other learning quotas are not.

Furthermore, considering the weak adherence to this halachah, as mentioned above, is it not prudent to initiate an official shnayim mikra program? Why is this program, which has its source clearly stated in Shulchan Aruch, Chazal and Gemara, being ignored? This is the missing link in all of the "yomi" plans. Why are students learning Mishnah at

very young ages, without being trained to also do shnayim mikra?

”  
**Torah  
makes  
the fool  
wise.**



## Here is a shnayim mikra homework sheet:

Name	_____
Grade and amount	Parent's signature
1st grade, until sheini - 1x	_____
2nd grade, until sheini - 2x	_____
3rd grade, until shlishi - 2x	_____
4th grade, until rev'i - 2x	_____
5th grade, until chamishi - 2x	_____
6th grade, until shishi - 2x, with Targum	_____
7th grade, until shevi'i - 2x, with Targum	_____
8th grade, entire parshah - 2x, with Targum	_____

This sheet can be downloaded from: [http://www.chinuch.org/item\\_detail/Shnayim-Mikra-Initiativewg](http://www.chinuch.org/item_detail/Shnayim-Mikra-Initiativewg)

If this plan and sample verification sheet would be a mandatory part of every day school's curriculum, we would reap so many benefits.

To recap, some of the numerous benefits of this shnayim mikra program are that it:

- Engenders fluency in Chumash.
- Improves kria skills.
- Brings improvement to learning disabled students.
- Helps prevent children from going off the derech.
- Motivates learning for the unmotivated.
- Increases limud haTorah.
- Encourages a chiyuv that is neglected.
- Is a consistent weekly goal.
- Does not interfere with the regular curriculum.
- Grants one a long life.



This program should run year-round throughout the school year.

I have obtained written haskamos from both Rav Aharon Feldman and Rav Zev Leff for this shnayim mikra plan as a mandatory program in every school, in conjunction with the homework sheet above. Can this shnayim mikra plan really do all of this? Yes, it can. It will be a game-changer in the chinuch world.

Try it now. You will see amazing results.

"One who finishes the parshah with the community will be given extended days and years" - Brachos 8b **H**

*The author, Rabbi Yoel Yormark, former resource room director at South Bend Hebrew Day School, can be reached at [jyormark1@gmail.com](mailto:jyormark1@gmail.com) or 574.383.0723.*

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# Olomeinu / Our World and Chayei Olam:

On the Founding of the  
Beloved Torah Umesorah

*An Appreciation*



By Daniel Feldman

A famous machlokes in Gemara Shabbos 10a quotes Rava criticizing Rav Hamnuna for extending his davening at length at the expense of resuming Torah learning. Rava chides his esteemed colleague: “Manichin chayei olam v’oskim b’chayei sho’oh, setting aside eternal life and engaging in temporal life” through protracted prayer that delays talmud Torah.

Rashi comments that chayei olam, the enduring realm, is Torah, whereas chayei sho’oh is a transient realm exemplified by prayer for pressing needs of the immediate moment, such as health, peace, and sustenance. While chayei olam is what finally endures, our world presents us with both ultimate and urgent needs, and, consequently, our task in preparing talmidim for the complexities of existence in this world requires that we attend to both chayei olam and chayei sho’oh.

This double perspective is the legacy of Olomeinu / Our World, the classic children’s magazine published by Torah Umesorah for nearly seven decades from from 1945 through 2011. A historical review of this important publication for young talmidim from its inception to discontinuation reflects how a series of Olomeinu editors balanced the pressing needs of the moment with an enduring message of Torah education.



## Founding in Crisis

Olomeinu was born in a moment of unprecedented tragedy. News of the Churban that would eventually be called the Holocaust had reached American shores by the mid-1940s, even if the extent of the devastation was not yet known. In America, a different though tangentially related crisis challenged the orthodox rabbinic leadership, many of whom were among the few European Jews spared the conflagration of the war. A nearly total ban on immigration to America in the 1920's and 1930's brought an end to an earlier federal policy of open immigration that had once given orthodox leaders confidence that the numbers of frum American Jews would inevitably swell and make them the dominant branch of American Yidden by mid-century. The demographic situation that emerged in the 1930s and early 1940's was quite the opposite. Frum communities could be found only in small isolated "pockets" that were becoming ever more precarious. The restrictive Immigration Act of 1924, Great Depression, and the onset of World War II coincided with a period of widespread acculturation among erstwhile observant Jews and a wave of intense antisemitism among many gentile Americans. The result was cessation of Jewish immigration to the United States and massive attrition among the ranks of American orthodox Jewry. The demographic and educational situation for Torah yidden in America was dire, if of a wholly different order than the deadly threat faced by their brethren in Europe. In New York, a group of prescient rabbinic leaders stepped into the breach to face the needs of the moment by founding Torah Umesorah in 1944. The original goal of the organization was to establish a network of private Jewish day schools — independent elementary and secondary schools offering intensive Jewish studies alongside general education in English — in cities across the United States. In other words, the objective was to content with the urgent needs of the hour by focusing on Chayei Olam.

## Reb Shraga Feivel's Idea

Among the leaders of this effort was Rabbi Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz, zt"l (1886-1948), an immigrant gaon from Hungary, who, in 1921, at age thirty-four, was appointed principal of Yeshiva Torah Vodaas in Brooklyn. At the time, Torah Vodaas was only the fifth Jewish day school in America. A staunch advocate of Torah scholarship coupled with general studies, Reb Shraga Feivel diagnosed the formidable challenges facing Orthodoxy in America and prescribed education as the remedy. First, however, he needed to convince American children (and their parents) that Torah education could co-exist with American values and pedagogical requirements. For this he needed a way of speaking directly to potential talmidim. With that idea, Olomeinu / Our World was born only one year after Torah Umesorah was founded. The initial editors and staff of Olomeinu — founding editor Rabbi Bernard (Binyomin) Goldberg and his successor Rabbi Berel (Dov) Merling — were handpicked students of Reb Shraga Feivel. The demographic and educational situation for Torah yidden in America was dire, if of a wholly different order than the deadly threat faced by their brethren in Europe. In New York, a group of prescient rabbinic leaders stepped into the breach to face the needs of the moment by founding Torah Umesorah in 1944. The original goal of the organization was to establish a network of private Jewish day schools — independent elementary and secondary schools offering intensive Jewish studies alongside general education in English — in cities across the United States. In other words, the objective was to content with the urgent needs of the hour by focusing on Chayei Olam.



## The Original Mission

Their task was not to appeal to an existent frum youth readership but to create one. They went about their task with a keen instinct for how to present Torah Judaism as compatible with mid-century American childhood. Early editions of Olomeinu were characterized as much by tales of the middos of European gedolim as by lessons in American Jewish history. President George Washington's 1790 letter to the Hebrew Congregation in Newport, Rhode Island known as the Touro Synagogue was featured on the cover of an early issue. Two decades before Ruth Finkelstein's beloved "Mendel the Mouse" cartoon premiered in 1966 under the editorial eye of Rabbi Yaakov Fruchter, the original Olomeinu back-page comic series was devoted to "Dave and His Mighty Staff" depicting a wholesome yeshiva boy from New York who functions as a Jewish superhero with yarmulke and tefillin instead of mask and cape.

Over time, the back page comic would develop into a cherished Olomeinu tradition for a talented array of artists to portray the bravery of Soviet Refuseniks, Holocaust survivors, and the refugees of Yeshivos Mir. But the protagonist of the original back-cover comic indicates how different the hora'as hash'a, the needs of the day were in the immediate postwar period. The eponymous hero of "Dave and His Mighty Staff" is a valiant guardian of vulnerable Jews who is similar to the superheroes proliferating in other American postwar comics. He defends Jewish children at a frum summer camp under attack from a local anti-Semite; he defeats a street gang stealing from a kosher food drive; and he ascends the world stage by moving to the Eretz Yisroel and taking up arms in the Israeli fight first against the British and then Arab enemies, burnishing the Zionist bonafides of the early Olomeinu. All the while, Dave retains his chiseled American appearance, prep-school dress, and casual 1940s and 1950s American diction. The comic was a signal to the Olomeinu child readership that they could attend yeshiva and still be completely, even heroically American. His magical staff resembles a baseball bat more than the matteh of Moshe Rabbeinu.

## Jewish News to Jewish Renewal

Early volumes of Olomeinu dutifully covered the frenetic pace of world change that accompanied the magazine's early history. A recurring item titled "News and Views" informed the magazine's readers about astonishing historical developments including efforts to rescue lost Jewish orphans of the Holocaust, salvage precious seforim, and re-establish yeshivos that had been uprooted from Europe. The heady events in Eretz Yisroel culminating with the founding of the State of Israel also preoccupied editors, staff, and readers. The Israeli War of Independence, the waves of immigrants to Israel from Arab countries, and the precarious security situation of the new Jewish state received rapt attention in the magazine's pages. The obligation to daven and provide for these urgent needs, especially the sustenance and safety of Jews around the world, was a central message conveyed to readers in these early years.

Over time, chasdei Hashem, the situation stabilized and Olomeinu shifted focus to Chayei Olam through its founding purpose of shoring up a population of talmidim at yeshivos and day schools across America. Following the devoted service of its early editors, Olomeinu became far more ambitious under the aegis of two luminaries in English-language Torah publishing.

From 1965-1975 the editors of Olomeinu were Rabbi Nisson Wolpin and Rabbi Nosson Scherman, each of whom would leave the magazine to assume a key post in publishing and media addressed to the American Torah community. Rabbi Wolpin served as the long-time editor of the Jewish Observer, the primary late twentieth-century periodical of Agudas Yisrael of America, and Rabbi Scherman became the general editor and literary force behind ArtScroll. Friends and pen pals since their adolescence, Rabbis Scherman and Wolpin professionalized Olomeinu during their consecutive tenures as editors, and the magazine developed more sophisticated artwork, closely researched historical reportage, extensive rabbinical biographies, and detailed discussion of religious practice. The antics of "Mendel the Mouse" and the back-page comics continued and evolved, as well.



## Fulfilling the Mission

By the 1970s, the tide had turned in the magazine's original mission of convincing American Jewish parents and students of the necessity of intensive Torah education. The number of Jewish day schools multiplied tenfold in the first two decades after World War II, and the growth continued to accelerate after that. "By 1975, every city in the United States with a Jewish population of 7,500 had at least one day school," writes Chaim Waxman in a 2003 history of yeshiva education. The magazine had justified itself. By the twenty-first century, the success of Torah Umesorah and American Orthodoxy rendered Olomeinu obsolete. The cover of its final issue declared, "Mission Accomplished." In a sense, it certainly was. The tremendous efforts of editors Rabbi Yaakov Fruchter and Mrs. Gittel Wilner saw the publications through to its culmination by ensuring the highest caliber of content and the highest of standards. Still, with the mission achieved, the time came for others with business interests – and not the elevation of the klal – to enter the field. And as they say, the greatest tribute comes in the form of emulation! Still, the pages of the early Olomeinu demonstrate how difficult the situation was when Torah Umesorah launched the magazine — and how much has been accomplished, baruch Hashem. Although no longer in production, Olomeinu and its archival history remind us that in order to embrace Chayei Olam through Torah we meet the challenges of Chayei Sho'oh. This is the pedagogical legacy of Olomeinu, one that remains as relevant today as when the magazine was founded. H

**Daniel Feldman is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of English Literature and Linguistics at Bar-Ilan University in Israel.**



# BEHIND THE SOUND

*YUDEL SHICK*



With the first glowing ray of dawn,  
Over the Judean plateau,  
Rises a father from a listless sleep,  
In a rush to buy his eternity.  
With son and servant in tow,  
He heads up to Moriah...  
To offer up the unspeakable  
Upon an altar of divine devotion.  
“And where, pray tell, shall we find,”  
The unknowing son does query,  
“The stuff of which your offering  
Shall be made, dear Father?”  
“He Who has bade me do His will,”  
The all too knowing father replies,  
“Shall present unto us the kid  
Of which my offering shall be made.”  
With not so much as a sentimental  
tear

In the merciful eye of the elder –  
Only an arduous drive to do the will –  
Does he proceed to a paternal abyss.  
And with nary a twitch of fear,  
Does the edified youth now move on  
Wholly apace with the holy father  
On their way to his trial of selflessness.  
With the dagger raised,  
Over a truly unintended one,  
A voice culls out its command to halt –  
And a second time indeed.  
But lo, in the thicket awaits a beast.  
Patiently pinioned since long ago,  
Waiting to ascend through its heavenly task  
And to raise all our progeny high.  
From it ascends even now  
A shrill sound of jubilee.  
And jubilant though the sound is not,  
A father and son are proudly heard.

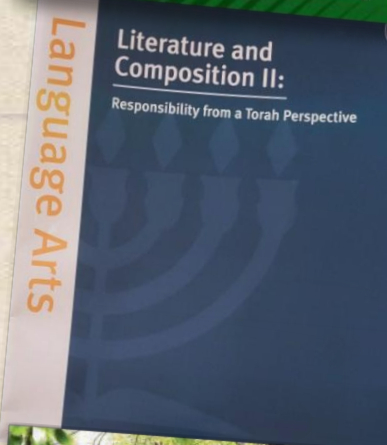
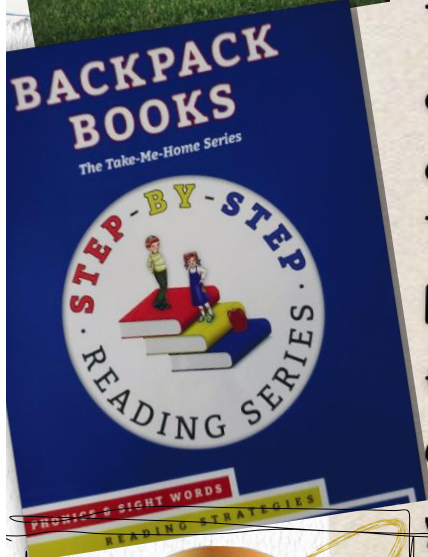
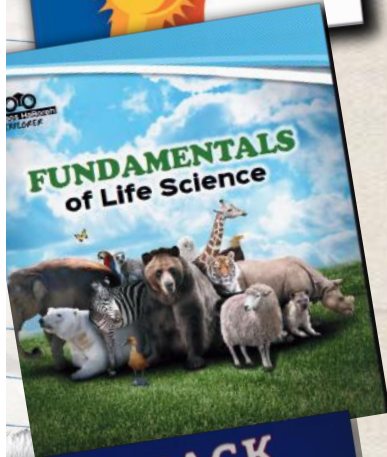
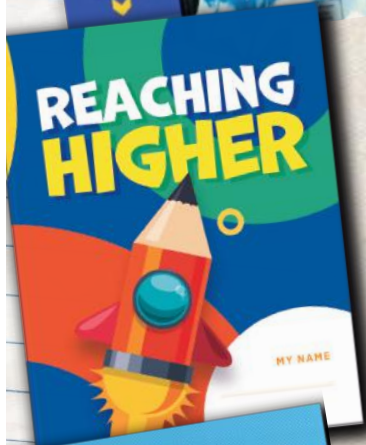
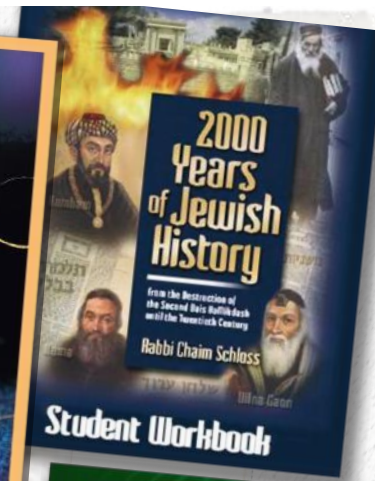
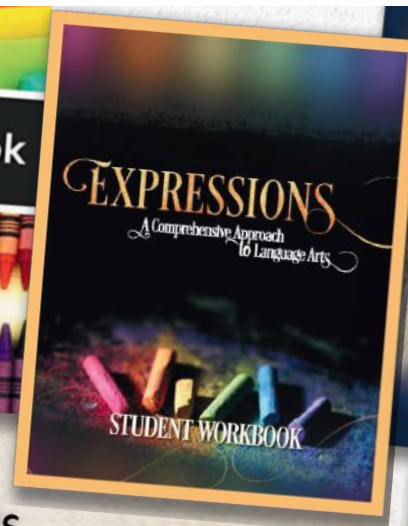
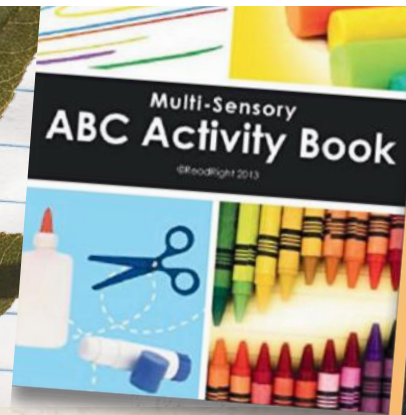


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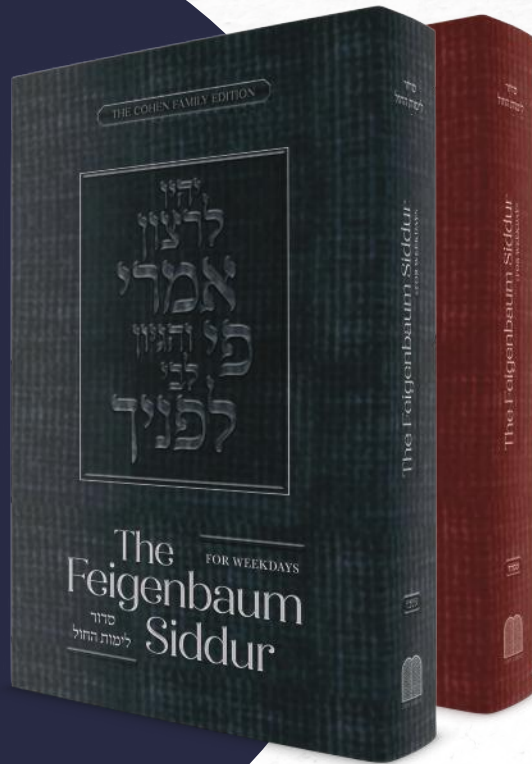
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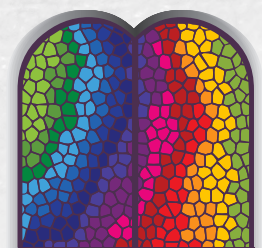
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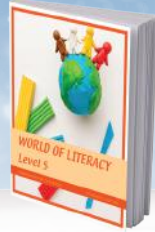
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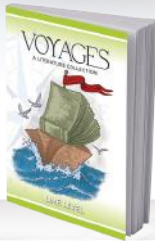
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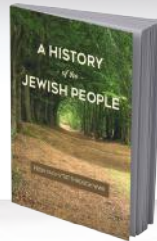
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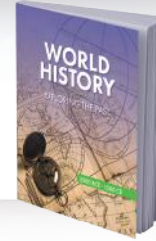
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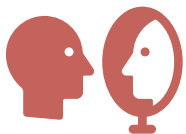
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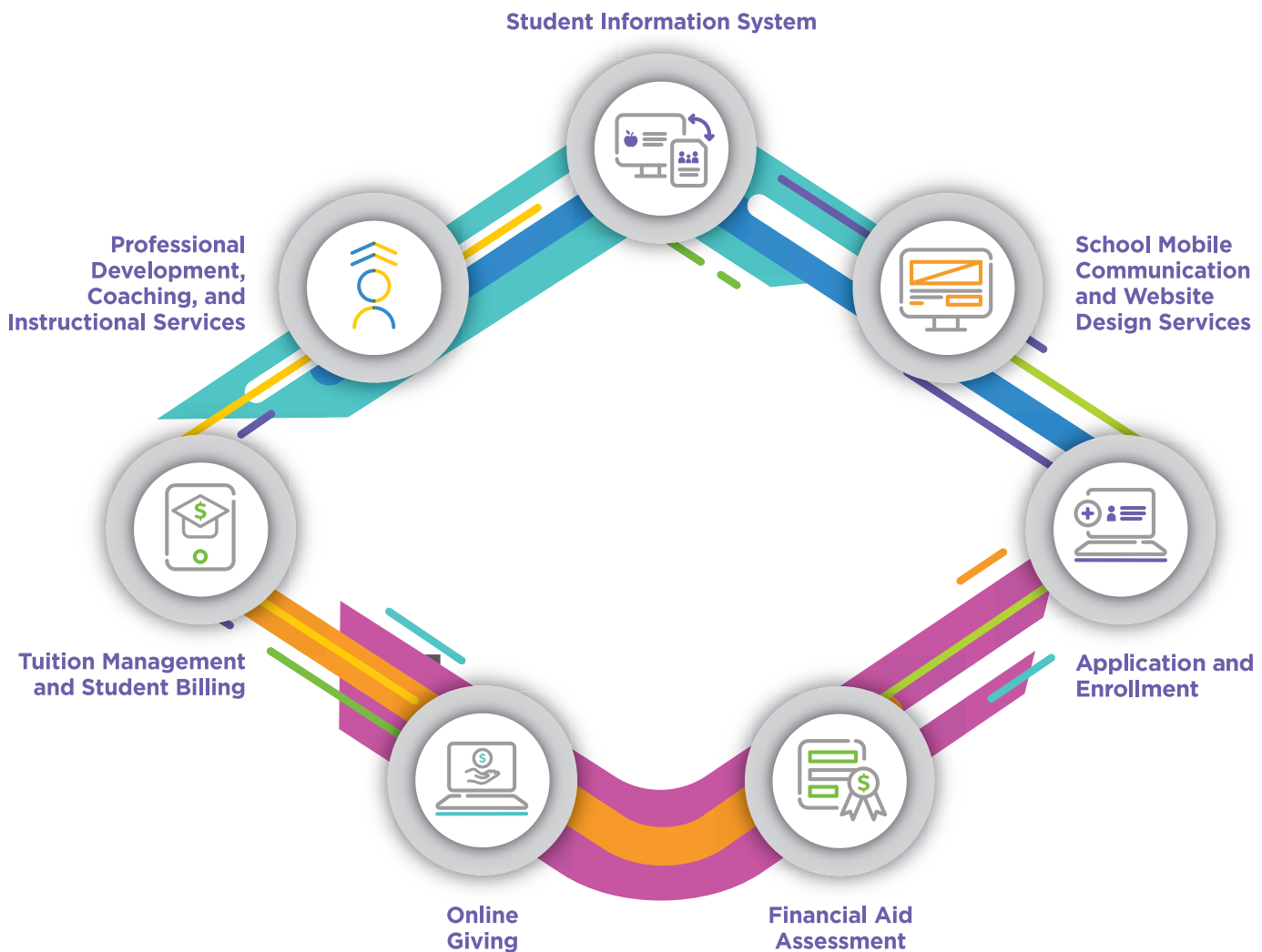
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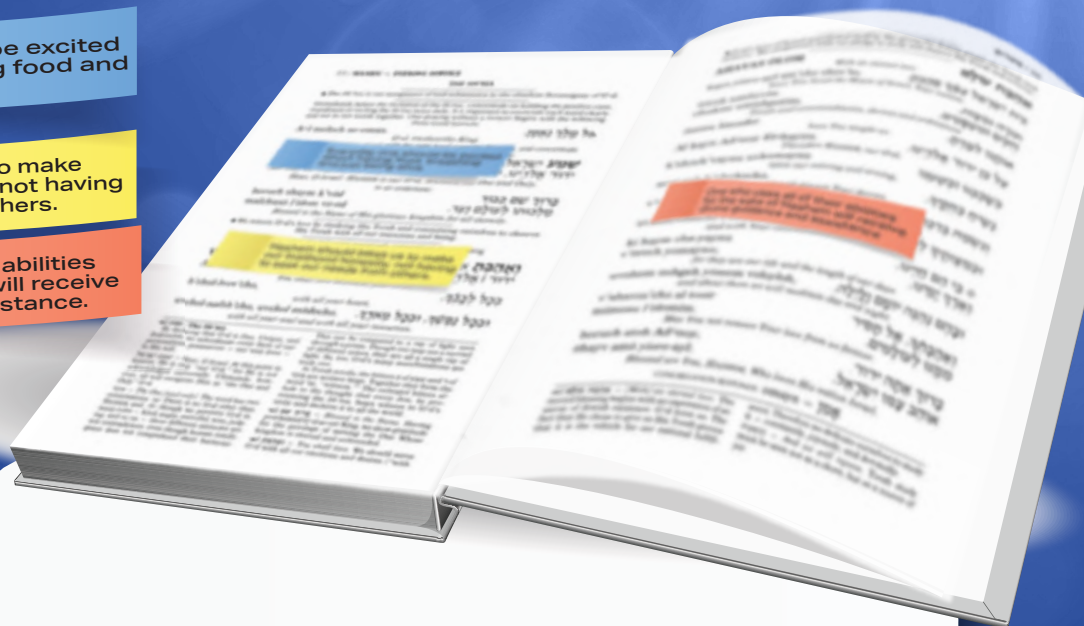
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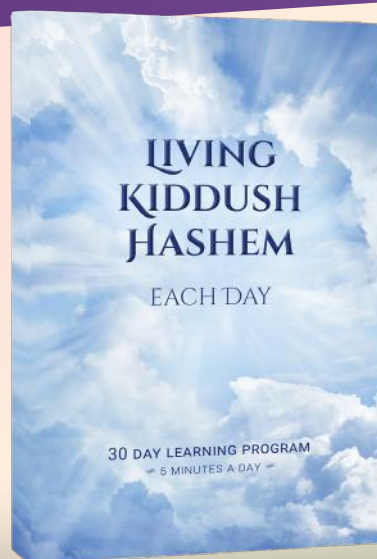
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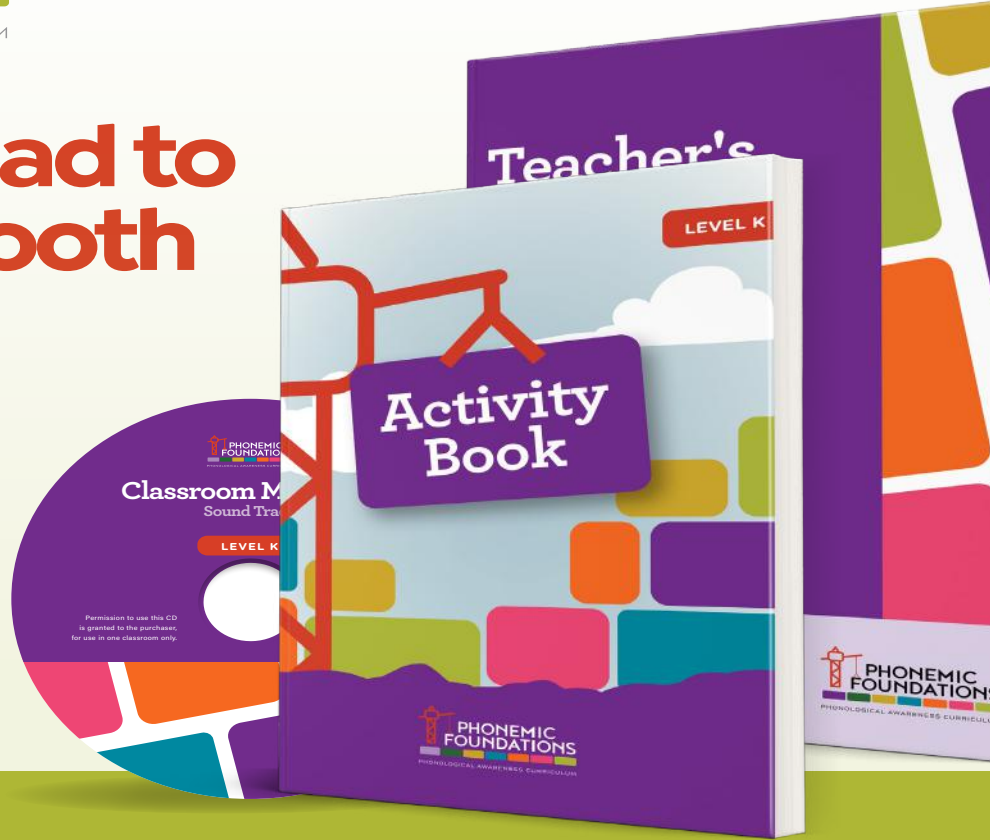


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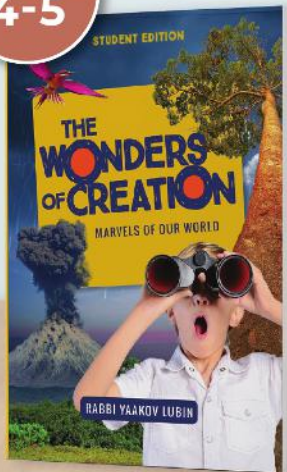
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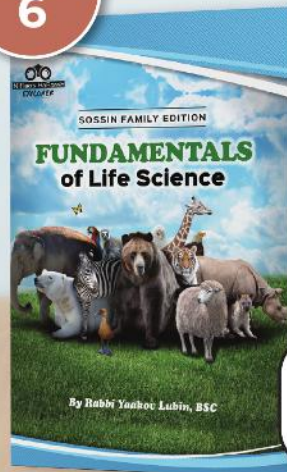
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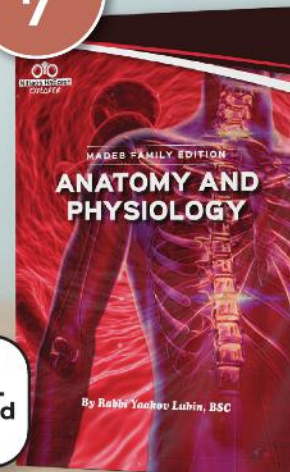
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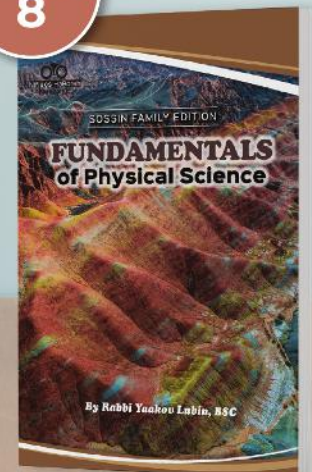
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GRADE  
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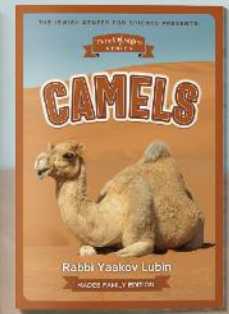
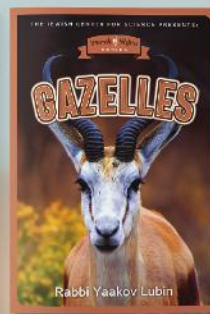
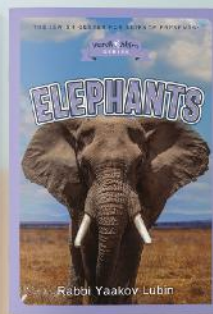
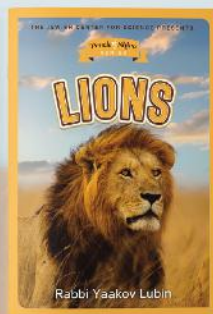
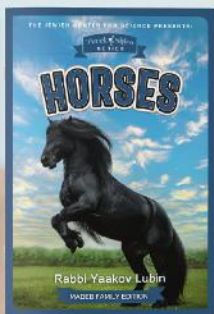
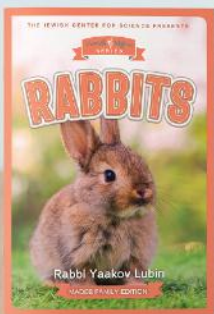


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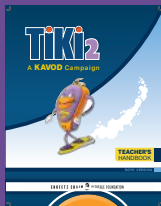
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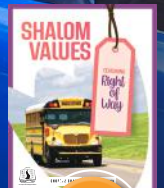
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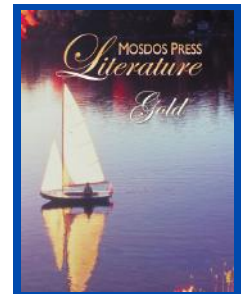
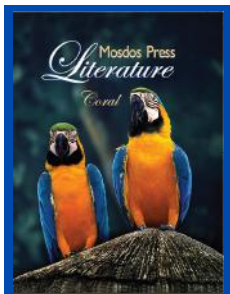
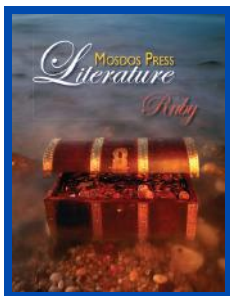
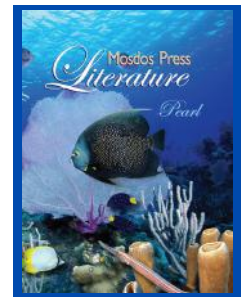
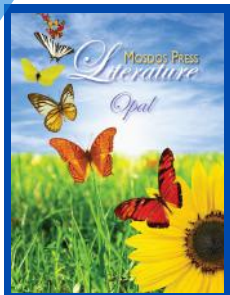
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