

ArtScroll® Series



SHALOM  
FOR  
CHARLOTTE  
צע"נ שינדל בת חיים יהודה לוב

THE HERTZ FAMILY EDITION

SEEK PEACE  
בקש שלום

# Live

# the Blessing

Daily wisdom on how to live in peace  
with family, friends, and yourself

CHOFETZ CHAIM  HERITAGE FOUNDATION

By now you've likely heard about the passing  
of our daughter

*Charlotte,*

and how we chose to turn what could have become a source of  
conflict into a vehicle to spread shalom throughout Klal Yisroel.

As a zechus for Charlotte's neshama, we've created a 9 days initiative  
that we hope you'll share with your campers.

Together with ArtScroll, we've assembled a pamphlet  
containing 9 lessons from the Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation's  
*Live the Blessing*, demonstrating valuable and practical ways  
to spread shalom.

I hope that you'll share these lessons with your campers  
during the 9 days – perhaps at mealtime, during learning groups  
or shiur, or at any other convenient time.

Together we can inculcate shalom into our lives and transform  
the coming of Moshiach from a dream into reality.

Thanks in advance,  
*Yudi and Chumi Herzberg*

**ShalomForCharlotte.com**  
**לע"נ שיינדל בת חיים יהודה ליב**

# DAY 1

## The Wisdom

*Peace with  
others is peace  
with Hashem.*

## *When the Children Get Along*

If you knew your accountant never made a mistake, you wouldn't waste your time rechecking his work. If your taxes seemed a little higher than they should be, you'd say, "Oh, well, I guess my estimate was off." With 100 percent trust in the person in charge, we accept the outcome as correct and necessary. With 99.9 percent trust, we already have grounds for resentment.

That's why the **level of shalom in our life is a mirror image of our trust in Hashem**. Our tolerant acceptance of others' sometimes selfish actions demonstrates our faith in Him. It proves that we believe that **nothing Hashem wants us to have can be denied to us**, and that He can and will help us acquire whatever we should have. Instead of feuding, we can keep the peace with our brothers and sisters in Klal Yisrael and turn to our Father with our grievance. Then He rewards our trust, not just in equal measure to what we've lost, but in abundance.

The Chofetz Chaim tells us that when we avoid *machlokes* with our brothers and sisters, our Father overflows with *nachas*. Any parent can understand the joy of seeing children treating each other with compassion and empathy. What can be more endearing than watching a 3-year-old tenderly place the pacifier back in his crying baby brother's mouth? "He already loves him!" the parents exult. Then, as children grow into adulthood, parents fill with *nachas* when the siblings spend time together and the cousins are close. The **siblings' loyalty to one another bespeaks their joint loyalty to the parents who raised them**.

Likewise, **living a life of shalom with our fellow Jews is our most eloquent statement of loyalty to Hashem**.

# Wisdom in Action

*A family sits at the Shabbos table as dessert is served. Eight-year-old Yaakov accepts his piece of chocolate cake happily, but before his fork reaches the delectable frosting, his 6-year-old brother David swipes the plate away and takes a big bite out of the cake.*

*Yaakov swipes it back and screams, "You're a robber!" at David. David hits Yaakov on the arm with his bony little fist and Yaakov strikes back. Their father, watching in dismay as his Shabbos table turns into a wrestling match, exiles them both to their rooms.*

But what if Yaakov, angry as he felt in the moment, knew that such a response would only make matters worse?

*Yaakov is ready to swipe it back, but he knows that would start a fight, and the fight will upset his father. Instead, he walks to the head of the table and whispers in his father's ear: "Tatty, I know you saw David take my cake. But I'm not going to start a fight. I know that you bought us a whole big cake and there's plenty more for me, so could you please let me have another piece?"*

*The father smiles in delight, kisses his son, and personally cuts him a piece of cake that is twice the size of the first.*

**Our Father has plenty of everything.** When we turn to Him instead of grappling with our brothers, He answers our trust with His abundance.

## Practicing Peace

*When you feel that someone is depriving you of what is rightfully yours, remind yourself that your Father has many ways to ensure that you get what you deserve.*



*Hashem is called "Peace."  
He is Peace, His Name is Peace,  
and everything in the world is  
bound together by peace.*

Zohar, Vayikra 1467a

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# DAY 2

## The Wisdom

*Conflicts are part of the plan, designed for our self-perfection.*

## **Intro:** *Between You and Peace*

Our dream of life as it should be is one in which everyone is smiling, everyone is happy, and everyone loves and cares for each other. This is how a young married couple envisions their future family. This is the kind of home every child wants to grow up in, the kind of community in which we all want to live, and the kind of workplace in which we all want to spend our days.

Seemingly, this is the life the Torah wants for us as well. **Shalom is our highest level of existence. It's *shleimus* – perfection.** It's one of Hashem's names. Despite all of that, however, ***machlokes* is the natural state of the world.** It is a feature of Creation itself, as the upper waters conflict with the lower waters, the sun conflicts with nighttime luminaries, and Kayin conflicts with Hevel. Then Klal Yisrael is swept into the fight, with Yishmael taunting Yitzchak, Esav swearing enmity against Yaakov, and the righteous Yosef being betrayed by his righteous brothers. We can't deny that G-d made the world with *machlokes*.

Why? The answer is that ***machlokes* is the essential instrument by which we, as individual Jews and as a nation, can fulfill our purpose in life: to refine our character and become G-dly.**

*Middos* are the product of how we handle *machlokes* in our lives. Our conflicts shape us, and in turn the *middos* we thereby develop enable us to handle the next *machlokes* better. This process is not the antithesis of shalom, but rather the route to shalom. If we use each irritation, aggravation, injustice, and disappointment as a means to build our internal well of positive *middos*, we find as years go by that we have become better people and better Jews. We have become more like Hashem.

The Vilna Gaon in his commentary on *Mishlei* explains, **“At the moment you're working on a *middah*, that's your challenge, that is your *tafkid* in life.”**

Knowing this is the key to meeting the challenge productively. When we expect life to be a utopian vision in which everyone is pleasant and reasonable, their departures from that vision confuse, shock, and upset us. When

we realize that these challenges are not a departure from the script but rather the actual plot of our life's story, we have the knowledge we need to wisely choose the role we want to play.

## **Practicing Peace**

*Think of one recurring source of conflict in your life and form a strategy to use that situation to build the specific middah that this situation challenges.*

## **Wisdom in Action**

*A man runs into his office building just five minutes before 9. Already tense from a morning of fighting traffic, he crams himself into a packed elevator. The high-speed elevator launches and the man finally exhales. Unless some other crazy thing happens between now and the 60 seconds it takes to reach the 53rd floor, he'll be on time.*

*Suddenly he feels someone jostling him. "Why doesn't he watch what he's doing?" the man thinks. "We're here in a crowd without an inch between us. At least he could stand still!"*

*But the jostling continues and then something that feels like the tip of an umbrella pokes the man. He would turn around and glare at the guy behind him but there isn't even room to maneuver. "Never mind. When he gets out, he's going to know what I think of him," the man thinks.*

*The elevator stops at the 43rd floor and the man feels the person behind him squeezing through the crowd toward the door. The man gets his best death-glare ready, but as he catches a glimpse of the miscreant going past him, he sees a shocking sight. The man is wearing dark glasses and holding a long white stick. He's blind.*

*Immediately the death-glare turns into a look of remorse, and then one of admiration. What would it be like to work in a Manhattan office building, maneuvering the streets, the traffic – the elevators! – without the benefit of sight? The man steps aside to give the blind man a wider berth. In seconds, the elevator door closes and the scene is over. However, when the man emerges moments later on the 53rd floor, he's not the same person as he was when he boarded.*

# DAY 3

## The Wisdom

*Envy gets us nothing and costs us everything.*

## *Envy: What's Yours Is Yours*

In our prosperous times, people's idea of what they ought to own has expanded to encompass items, appliances, devices, clothing, vacations, homes, and furnishings that once would have been the dream of kings. With the internet and colorful magazines, we are exposed to thousands upon thousands of buying opportunities; and with credit cards, we can fulfill desires faster than we earn the money to pay the price. Whetting our appetite further, social media supply people with an endless flow of images depicting other people's shining moments – their smiling faces, well-dressed children, exotic vacations, and gourmet meals. Standards constantly creep upward toward bigger and better as our consumer culture fans the flames of desire. **We see it, we want it, and without a second thought, we begin to envy those who have it** – especially if they seem less deserving than we are.

For many people, awareness doesn't progress past the level of a preschooler who wants the toy the other kid has. He never wanted it before, and once he has it he quickly loses interest, but as long as someone else seems to be enjoying it, that toy is all he wants. **His focus is on what he doesn't have, and that is the fuel of jealousy—the peace-destroying monster that eats away at shalom.**

The antidote to this mindset comes to us from Yaakov Avinu. After his long sojourn with Lavan, he sets out to establish a household of his own and on the way encounters his estranged brother, Esav. At this point both brothers are wealthy men with large families and an abundance of possessions. Esav tells his brother, "I have a lot." Yaakov, however, describes his wealth differently, declaring, **"I have everything."**

Esav's words, says the Chofetz Chaim, indicate that there's still more he wants to acquire. Yaakov's words, however, indicate complete satisfaction. **"I have whatever Hashem has decreed for me, according to my needs. There's nothing else that is relevant to my life right now."**

# Wisdom in Action

*Whenever Shlomo came home from yeshivah for Shabbos, his younger brother Eli stared morosely at the gold watch on his brother's wrist. It had been their grandfather's; he had left it to Shlomo, his eldest grandson. "But I was so much closer to Zeidy," Eli mused. "And I visited him all the time when he was sick. That watch should be mine, and Shlomo knows it. He's self-centered, and this is just proof of it."*

*No one would be surprised to learn that under these circumstances, the conversations between Shlomo and Eli were filled with sarcasm where there used to be good-natured teasing, and their Shabbos afternoon learning partnership evaporated. **Jealousy "rots the bones,"** says Mishlei (14:30). **It rots relationships as well.***

Setting goals for financial growth, for a necessary purchase such as a car and house, new clothes for the new season, occasional vacations, and so on, is a normal, healthy part of life. However, the moment we set our eyes upon what someone else has and begin to see it as our due, we shatter our most valuable, irreplaceable possession – our shalom.

## Practicing Peace

*Take a quick inventory of all your important possessions and at least once a day say the words, "I have everything."*



*True peace is when people feel love for one another and are happy for one another's good fortune.*

K'sav Sofer, Esther 10:3

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# DAY 4

## The Wisdom

*Siblings are the training program for learning forgiveness.*

## *Good Practice*

The battles that break out among siblings have at least one useful purpose. They create the perfect setting for learning how to forgive. With their parents' help, children can discover how much more they gain by letting go of their gripes than they can ever gain by holding on to them.

Families can foster a forgiving attitude among the children in many ways. One is for the parents to practice it themselves, with each other and with their children. Another is to refrain from always looking for the culprit when there's a squabble.

In a more direct way, parents can point out to their children the lose-lose proposition that holding a grudge represents. Nobody is happy when angry. The real victory is not in getting the other person to admit he was wrong or suffer our wrath, but in clearing the air between ourselves and those we love. Children see their siblings every day; they eat at the same table, play with the same toys, and sometimes even share the same room. If bitterness flows through all these settings, their entire home life is bitter.

Besides the wonderful benefits a forgiving attitude brings to a family and a home, it changes a person's entire spiritual destiny. Hashem, in His "measure for measure" judgment, rewards our forgiveness of others' mistakes with His own forgiveness of our mistakes. Therefore, if we can't be perfect, the next best thing we can be is forgiving.



*[Peace] for man is a silver or a gold strand upon which many precious gemstones are strung.*

Akeidah, Bamidbar 6:24, Shaar 74

# Wisdom in Action

*Shlomo said he would take his younger brother to an amusement park one day of Chol Hamoed. Then Shlomo got an invitation to visit a friend in a luxurious resort hotel with an indoor swimming pool. “Sorry, Betzalel, I know I said we could go to Dizzy Daze Park, but how can I resist this offer?”*

*Betzalel, who idolized his older brother, was deeply disappointed. He barely spoke to Shlomo in the ensuing days. Shlomo felt bad, but in his 19-year-old mind there was no question as to what he should do.*

*“You know, Betzalel, you don’t have to be angry at Shlomo,” the boys’ father quietly commented. “I know you’re disappointed, and it’s true that a person should keep his word, but what are you gaining by being angry?”*

*“I’m right!” Betzalel said. “And he’s wrong! Why should I forgive him?”*

*The father agreed that Shlomo had made the wrong move, and he would certainly discuss it with him later. But at that moment, there was a more immediate lesson to impart.*

*“Betzalel, **forgiving someone doesn’t mean you’re wrong. It means you’d rather have shalom than keep up the fight,**” his father explained. “It means you can joke around with Shlomo again instead of grumping around the house.”*

If this father manages to impart to his son one lesson – that a person is better off forgiving a wrong than holding onto his righteous grievance – he will have given his child one of the most important skills he can take with him into life.

## Practicing Peace

*In disputes between your children or your own siblings, focus on the benefits of peace rather than the satisfaction of being right.*

# DAY 5

## The Wisdom

*The cost of  
envy is far too  
high.*

## *How Far Do You Want to Go?*

A small-business owner might notice a brand-new delivery truck riding down the road, emblazoned with his competitor's logo, and think, "That should be my truck with my name on it. I've been in this business since he was in high school!" A manager might spy his recently promoted colleague turning the corner into his new, private office and think, "That should be me! He just knows how to sell himself to the bosses." In our minds, there are many perks we "should" be getting and much recognition that "should" be coming our way, but instead go to someone else.

The result is envy, and since envy is among the negative *middos* that drive a great swath of terrible *middos*, the ultimate result is spiritual disaster. No one proved this more thoroughly and finally than Korach, the notorious status-seeker who took his family and followers down into the abyss for the sake of his futile quest for power.

How could Korach not have realized that if Hashem had chosen Moshe and Aharon for leadership, the choice was therefore beyond challenge? The answer to this question explains how we, too, fall into the trap of Korach-like thinking. That answer is self-justification. Korach talked himself and thousands of others into believing in the righteousness of his cause.

Again and again, we learn that **the *yetzer hara's* most powerful strategy is to disguise itself as the *yetzer hatov***. Therefore, we don't tell ourselves, "I'm jealous that he got promoted over me." Instead we say, "I'm far more qualified and more deserving. If I got that raise, I would put the money to better use." In our view, Hashem didn't give him his position— he stole it from under us.

This is Korach-like thinking. Even if a competitor did somehow cheat us out of our due, there are proper channels—*rabbanim* or *beis din*—through which to air our grievance. If we still come up short, then we have no choice but to accept the situation and move on. No one knows what the next chapter of the story will reveal; perhaps Hashem has something better in store for us. Perhaps the position we envy today will be "downsized" out of existence tomorrow. We just don't know. But Hashem does.

Korach teaches us that when a person fights for

something Hashem has chosen to withhold from him, there is only one possible ending: to go down fighting into the abyss, dragging our families and friends along with us. Clearly, this is not a wise or sane choice.

## Wisdom in Action

*After years of learning together in yeshivah, Avigdor and Danny became accountants. Soon afterward, each of them got married. Avigdor got a job, but Danny remained unemployed for quite some time. Eventually Avigdor's firm had an opening, and Avigdor persuaded his boss to give his friend a chance.*

*A few years later, the boss announced that he was relocating and would be hiring a manager to run the local office. Despite Avigdor's seniority, Danny got the promotion. To Avigdor, it seemed unfair. After all, Danny was there only because of Avigdor's concern for him.*

*Avigdor tried to make peace with the situation but ten years later, with the two men still at the same firm, Avigdor had not fully rid himself of jealousy. By this time, both of them had children entering shidduchim. A shadchan contacted Avigdor and told him, "Your son is a Torah scholar and has a sterling character. I know someone who so much wants him for his daughter that he's willing to buy a four-room apartment in Bnei Brak for the couple."*

*Avigdor was shocked. Who was willing to expend so much money to marry off his daughter to Avigdor's son? "It's your manager, Danny," the shadchan disclosed.*

*"For ten years I was jealous of Danny," Avigdor later said. "And all that time, he was working for me! He was working for my son's sake. My jealousy was all a mistake."*

## Practicing Peace

*Think of times when you "lost out" but ended up benefiting in some way from the situation. Bring those occasions to mind the next time you find yourself in a potential "Korach" situation.*

# DAY 6

## Competing Without Conflicting

### The Wisdom

*You can afford to be kind to your competitor.*

Business competitors sometimes see each other as personal adversaries. Even when they believe “it’s nothing personal,” their behavior toward each other is colored by suspicion. They begrudge each other’s successes and conjure up schemes that will put the competitor at a disadvantage. People who have this approach might believe that it is the ticket to success, but really it’s a mark of failure. Successful people network with their competitors. They share ideas, refer customers, form partnerships, and help new members of the industry establish themselves.

This is true in the secular world. How much more, then, should it be true in the Jewish world, where we understand that Hashem will always apportion to us the livelihood we are supposed to have? How much more should we be helpful to each other when we know that Hashem rewards our kindness, compassion, and honesty? The very traits people fear to express in the marketplace are the ones that earn them the *zechus* for an ample livelihood.

Not only can a person afford to be kind to a competitor; he can’t afford to be selfish, dishonest, and cruel. Behaving with these traits brings retribution. The “dog-eat-dog” approach to competition soon consumes both parties. Such a life is filled with crises and enemies. Work becomes nothing but a steaming geyser of stress and anger that overflows onto everything else.

On the other hand, those whose attitude is “There’s room for everyone” do not lose one dollar for their openheartedness. Instead, they gain everything they want most in life, for all of it comes wrapped in the *kli* of shalom.

*\*When this month has only 29 days, the lesson for 30 Kislev should be learned together with 29 Kislev.*



*A greedy person stirs up strife,  
but one who trusts Hashem  
will have abundance.*

Mishlei 28:25

# Wisdom in Action

*One Shabbos, a raging fire spread through a block of stores and apartments on Boro Park's busy 13th Avenue shopping district. Yossi Heiman, owner of Yossi's Fish Market, lost his store. As soon as Shabbos was over, Shea Langsam, owner of a competing store called Fish to Dish, gave Yossi a call.*

*"What can I do to help you?" Shea asked Yossi.*

*"I just need a place where I can process my orders for delivery," Yossi said.*

*"Why not join me in my store?" Shea offered.*

*Amazingly, two competitors whose stores were a mere nine blocks from each other were soon working under the same roof. Yossi took care of his customers and Shea took care of his, and neither worried for a moment that they would lose by the arrangement.*

*"We're a close community, and we all try to help each other out as much as we can," Shea explained.*

*Weeks later at an award ceremony honoring Shea for his kind deed, a State Assemblyman elaborated on this. "We are a community known for chesed," he said. "But offering a direct competitor the use of your own storefront definitely goes above and beyond."*

People like Shea Langsam seem to be stepping out on a tightrope, taking a big chance that his act won't end in a fall. Everyone else watches in wonder, thinking, "Who would do such a thing?" Yet those who take this approach to their business, trade, or profession see something other people don't; there's a strong, dependable net under the tightrope. They know that Hashem will never let them fall.

## Practicing Peace

***Do you resent your competition, whether at your workplace or in a competing business? Try reaching out in some small way to collaborate on something that benefits both of you.***

# DAY 7

## The Wisdom

*When  
"someone's  
got to  
pay," that  
"someone"  
may be you.*

## *The Fight That Wasn't*

Things go wrong. The architect makes a 12-inch mistake that throws the entire kitchen out of whack; the salesman charges someone a discounted price on a brand-new, exclusive item; the secretary loses important contact information; there's a blackout in the building and a whole day's business is lost. A person could write an encyclopedia filled with nothing but things that have gone wrong.

When we're in charge of a situation, our reaction to these mistakes and mishaps, whether they're caused by people's carelessness or by forces beyond human control, is often some version of kicking and screaming. When someone is at fault for the problem, we have a target for that kicking and screaming.

The result of this type of reaction is two-fold: It creates inner turmoil for the angry boss or customer, and it creates anger, fear, and tension for the person on the receiving end.

We can sow happiness or misery with our reaction to mistakes. If we sow misery, we are forced to live in the atmosphere we've created, surrounded by sullen, fearful people who wish they could be anywhere else. That is why when we believe "someone has to pay," we become the victim of our own retribution. But there is no rule that says a person must exact retribution when something goes wrong. Sometimes there is no one to blame, and even when there is, the only fruitful response is to help that person learn from the mistake so that it won't recur. There doesn't have to be a fight.

# Wisdom in Action

*As a caterer, I've dealt with my fair share of difficult clients. For the most part, I just try my best to satisfy my customers without getting too involved emotionally.*

*When Mr. Weingarten\* hired me to cater his baby's bris, I understood that only the best would do. I worked hard to please him. On the morning of the bris, some of the food was sent directly from the suppliers to the hall, but most of it I carefully packed into my van to bring myself.*

*I left home that morning with time to spare. I was cruising along the highway when traffic came to a standstill. Instinctively I pushed the knob of my radio to listen to the traffic report.*

*"Accident involving a tractor trailer... expect significant delays...."*

*For the next two hours, I inched forward. The bris was called for 8 a.m.; it was already past eight and I still had a way to go. I was hyperventilating. An incident like this could tarnish my reputation and cost me a fortune.*

*With a feeling of dread, I took out my cellphone and dialed Mr. Weingarten's number. No answer. I tried again. Still no answer.*

*At long last, the traffic cleared up. I pressed on the gas and zipped along as fast as I could. When I reached the hall I hastily parked my van and jumped out. To my chagrin, I saw people leaving the hall; I had arrived at the end of the simchah.*

*As my helper began unloading the van, I ran ahead to apologize. I was hardly able to look the baal simchah in the eye.*

*"This never happened to me before, I gibbered. "There was simply awful traffic on the way. I feel terrible. I'm so sorry. I can't believe--"*

*"We're only human," he said, cutting me off. "These things happen. It's no one's fault."*

*Mr. Weingarten instructed me to set up for the few remaining guests. He made no recriminations. On the contrary, he insisted on paying me in full because, he said, what happened "could have happened to anyone."*

*As told to Sarah Massry  
\*Name has been changed.*

## Practicing Peace

*The next time something happens that prompts you to "make someone pay," ask yourself if your anger will do long-term good or harm.*

# DAY 8

## The Wisdom

*“Do not  
answer a fool  
according to  
his folly.”  
— Mishlei 26:4*

## *Who’s the Fool?*

Most people don’t stir up animosity on purpose, but are pulled into the whirlpool that someone else has stirred up. However, **when we let ourselves be pulled in, we are the ones who suffer.** It’s our heart that starts beating furiously and our mind that suddenly forgets everything we’ve ever known about civility.

As a result, we turn ourselves into someone who is equally as loud and aggressive or cold and spiteful as the person who started the conflict. He’s yelling and we’re yelling. She’s never speaking to us again and we’re never speaking to her again. He’s telling everyone how horrible we are and we’re telling everyone how horrible he is. Who, then, is the real fool? Who is the one who lacks self-control and emotional maturity? The answer becomes impossible to determine.

Shlomo HaMelech warns us that when we go down to the level of the fool, we too become foolish. Furthermore, there’s nothing to gain. A fool will not hear our arguments, nor will he feel remorse over the hurt he’s inflicted. Instead, he will justify himself and rationalize his further aggressions as a fair response to our angry words and deeds. When someone tries to pull us down into the mud, wisdom dictates that we make every effort to remain standing.



*Avoiding quarrels is a man’s  
honor, but every fool reveals  
himself [in it].*

Mishlei 20:3

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# Wisdom in Action

*Gershon was about to pull into a parking space when a little Toyota nimbly zipped in right in front of him. Gershon rolled down his window and honked his horn to get the usurper's attention.*

*"What's your problem?" demanded the other driver.*

*"You took my space. I was already in position to park,"*

*Gershon answered in as mild a tone as he could muster.*

*The lid popped off the Toyota driver's self-control. He began shouting, insisting that he was there first and that Gershon had almost damaged his car. "If you don't get out of my face right this minute, I'm calling the police," he added for good measure.*

*Gershon's temper began to surge. What was this other man ranting and raving about? How about just saying, "I'm sorry. I didn't notice you there. I'll move my car." That would be the normal response, but no, this person had to shout and curse and create a scene. Gershon noticed that the other shoppers who were heading to and from their cars in the parking lot were all staring in his direction.*

*At that moment, he realized that this fight could only become more and more of a spectator sport if he let it go even one more round. Not only that, but no one who was watching and listening would know which of the two men had stolen the space and which of them had started the fight. Gershon rolled his window back up and drove away. He would do his errand later rather than risk a rematch inside the store.*

*Later, when he told the story to his wife, his 10-year-old son couldn't hide his disappointment. "Why did you let him win, Daddy? He was wrong and you were right!"*

*"No," Gershon replied. "Fighting with him was wrong and leaving was right."*

*Adapted from Vitamins for the Soul, by Avi Shulman*

## Practicing Peace

***If someone lashes out at you, before deciding how to respond ask yourself, "Do I want to sound and act like that?"***

# DAY 9

## The Wisdom

*Putting  
out your  
neighbor's fire  
saves your  
house.*

## *It's Not My Fight*

When we're living in peace and harmony with the people in our lives, does it matter to us whether they are also living in peace in harmony with each other? If they want to fight and feud, why would we even want to get near the situation? The best advice would seem to be "Stay far, far away."

That is perfect advice if we have nothing to offer but another voice in the *machlokes*. Indeed, **we are wise to avoid taking sides**. However, many times we do have something to offer: **Perhaps we can be the one to bring the *machlokes* to an end**. In that case, we are doing a tremendous service not only for the disputing parties but for ourselves, because **when there's *machlokes* in our immediate world, it will inevitably pollute the atmosphere around us**. Like fire, *machlokes* spreads. People hear about it, talk about, take sides, and sometimes become active participants in an issue that has no personal bearing on them.

Dovid HaMelech tells us that if we want "long life and days of seeing good," one of the ways to capture this coveted reward is to **"Seek peace and pursue it"** (*Tehillim* 34:15). First, we have to care about the fate of those who are locked in *machlokes*. We have to envision them as people who are burning down their own houses; then we'll feel the urgency and motivation to think about what we have on hand, or what we could procure, to put out the fire. In the end, we not only save their houses, but also prevent the fire from spreading everywhere and consuming our own home in the process. It's their fight, but it's our emergency.

# Wisdom in Action

*The Lipsky family lived on the first floor of a quiet apartment building in Jerusalem. Because their balcony was easily accessible from the street, they kept having break-ins. They decided to build a fence around their balcony.*

*The Frieger family, who lived right above them, objected. The fence would give would-be burglars a foothold to climb up to their balcony on the second floor. Why should the Friegers' safety be sacrificed for the sake of the Lipskys' safety? Despite the objections, the Lipskys persisted. Why should they be sitting ducks for every thief in town? The Lipskys and the Friegers held their ground, each feeling that the other was heedless of their neighbor's well-being. It became personal.*

*At that point the third-floor neighbor, Michael Bookstein, heard about the heated dispute. He invited the two parties to his home to discuss the situation, and after hearing both sides, he made an offer: Let the Lipskys build their fence and he would pay for a fence for the Friegers. Both families would be protected.*

*Amazed by Michael's generosity and commitment to shalom, both families accepted the proposal and made peace. Anger had been dispelled and the building was once again a friendly place to live in.*

*One evening a few weeks after the fences went up, Michael and his wife went to visit some friends. They left their 14-year-old daughter babysitting for the younger children. While they were away, a fire broke out in the living room, trapping the sleeping children inside. Neighbors saw flames pouring out of the window and ran up the stairs to rescue the children, but the door was locked. Then some young men spotted the fences. They were able to climb from the Lipskys' fence to Friegers', and then to the third-floor balcony. Entering the apartment, they rushed the children out to the balcony and waited in safety until the fire department was able to break through the front door and douse the fire. Once again, the building was saved.*

## Practicing Peace

***Is there an ongoing feud among people who are part of your life? Try to find out what would be needed to settle it, and if it's something you can do, do it.***



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# Dear Klal Yisrael,

*Our lives are filled with challenges, some of which are so hard that they don't seem to make any sense. And then there are challenges that are so great, you have no choice but to find a way to make sense of them.*

June 2, 2026, started out as the most regular day of recent memory. That afternoon, I picked my son up from school, and was nearly home when I got a frantic phone call from my wife. She was hysterical, screaming that our eight year old daughter Charlotte had been hit by a car. The panic in her voice was terrifying.

Pulling up to the house two minutes later, I was relieved to see my dear friend, my chavrusa, on scene. He's a Hatzolah guy, the person I rely on whenever we have a medical situation, with another close friend and Hatzolah volunteer there as well. Seeing the two people who are always there for me on scene made me feel like everything was going to be okay.

But then I saw my chavrusa look away from me. He was looking at his car. And suddenly everything clicked.

He was the driver.

My beautiful daughter, who never stopped moving, was laying motionless in the street.

And standing there filled with fear and heartache, I kept asking myself how could this be possible?

How could it be that my chavrusa, the person I loved like a brother, the husband of my wife's dear friend, someone who stands for chesed in our community... How could he have been the driver of the car that hit Charlotte?

At first, it didn't make any sense. But then slowly, even at that moment, things started coming together. I knew that people would talk, that fingers would be pointed, and that all too soon our community would be torn apart.

And I couldn't let that happen.

My friend, my brother, couldn't be the reason for our community to become divided. Not him, someone who stands for shalom. Someone who is the polar opposite of a reckless driver. Someone who is always the first person to speak to others about driving carefully. At that moment, I knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that this accident was *Yad Hashem*, and that something greater was happening here.

Before leaving to the hospital with my wife, I hugged my friend, to let him know that this wasn't going to destroy the close bond we had built over the years. He was so torn up over the accident he couldn't even look at me.

The whirlwind that is every parent's worst nightmare continued. My wife and I rushed to the hospital and saw with our own eyes how Hatzolah and the hospital staff did everything they could. They worked for 40 minutes trying to revive Charlotte. But it was clear that she wasn't meant to come back to us.

The next day, at the levaya, I spoke about how the Satan was testing us. How he wanted to show Hashem that our beautiful neighborhood, a neighborhood which is the epitome of *achdus*, couldn't handle a *machlokes*. But the Satan underestimated us, I told everyone, and we were going to prove him wrong.

The responses we received from the levaya and the hesped were beyond anything we could have ever imagined.

People started asking themselves: If Charlotte's parents could be *moichel* the driver, how could they allow grudges and *machlokes* to fester in their own lives? People began forgiving as a *zechus* for Charlotte's *neshama*, with stories pouring in by the dozens.

So now, in Charlotte's memory, we created *Shalom for Charlotte*, an initiative encouraging every member of Klal Yisrael to forgive, to forget, and to move on.

Do it for Charlotte.  
Do it for yourself.  
Do it for Klal Yisrael.

The *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed because of *sinas chinam*. Right now, we have the opportunity to rebuild it with *ahavas chinam*.

**We ask all of you: Go to our website. Take the pledge.**

Resolve to end *machlokes*, to drop a grudge, or not speak negatively about people. Because together, in Charlotte's memory, we can bring *Moshiach*.

*Yudi and Chumi Herzberg*

Under the Rabbinical Guidance of  
Rav Yosef Elefant  
Rav Binyamin Eisenberger  
Rav Heshy Kahan

*ShalomForCharlotte.com*

