



EQUANIMITY AND YOUR MIND

Erev Shabbos Parashas Vayechi 5781

Dear Parents,

This past week, many thousands of *talmidim* around the globe endured the sad news of the passing of a great man, *Moreinu HaRav Avraham Kanarek, zt'l*. Not well known beyond the circle of three generations of students in *Yeshiva Chofetz Chaim in Yerusholayim (CCJ)*, *Rav Kanarek* embodied the rich Torah legacy of pre-war Europe and the burning devotion to pass on the great *Mesorah of Torah and Mussar* to succeeding generations of American *Yeshiva Bochorim*. His incredible humility and simplicity could not mask his greatness.

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I will attempt to share an insight of *Rabbi Kanarek's* that I was privileged to hear from him, nearly 50 years ago. He was discussing *Seichel*, which is usually translated as wisdom, understanding and insight. It is that quality that every person strives for. Everyone wants to be "smart" – from the youngest to the oldest. It is why parents invest so much into providing the best education possible for their children. It is why teachers work so diligently to instruct their students.

Although innate intelligence is a gift from Hashem, it is up to each person to make his mind work. *Rav Kanarek* cited two examples from this week's and recent *Parshiyos* to illustrate how a person can sabotage his own natural intellectual gifts. The first example is *Reuven. Yaakov Avinu*, in his blessings to his sons as he lay on his deathbed, delivered rebuke along with blessings. *Reuven* was destined for greatness, but he lost it because on some infinitesimal level he was lacking in the *Middah* of patience. He became angry because of that small amount of impatience and that caused an error in judgment, when he rearranged his father's bed. Because of a lack in *Middos*, he couldn't think properly and his *Seichel* was affected. He could therefore no longer be counted upon for the leadership role that had been waiting for him as the first born.

In another example, the Torah describes *Yosef* as a *Na'ar*. The *Seforno* explains (*Bereishis 37:2*), that *Yosef* had exceptional intellectual prowess, understanding and wisdom. And yet, there was foolish youthfulness that co-existed. He didn't think deeply enough as to the ultimate consequences of his words and actions, as young people frequently fail to do, and therefore he brought back incriminating reports about his brothers. As *Rav Kanarek* explained, *Yosef's* barely perceptible shortcoming in the area of maturity caused a confusion in his mind, and thereby a mistake in his actions, with devastating consequences.

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We all have deficiencies in our *Middos*, we all struggle with controlling our emotional reactions to upsetting scenarios. What advice is there for us to maintain and strengthen our *Seichel* under such circumstances? *Rav Kanarek* addressed that question and offered the following approach: Think over what you are about to do. Develop *Yishuv HaDaas* – equanimity. However, he quoted *Rabbeinu Yonah* as saying that even if you do think things over, it is only effective if you are not agitated. An angry

person can think over & over & over again, but his mind is not working properly because of the anger, so it won't help. One needs to get into a settled frame of mind, let things go, don't be so bothered by the current circumstance and then your *Seichel* can function at maximum capacity.

How does one work on this and hope to achieve this equanimity when faced with frustrating and anger provoking circumstances? *Rav Kanarek* explained that if one's entire frame of reference is *Olam Hazei*, this world, he will be agitated because he'll take things very hard when they go wrong. However, if one's focus can shift to *Olam HaBa'ah*, the next world, the ultimate goal of Hashem's master plan, then he won't be as perturbed by things not going as planned. What goes on day to day in this world is not that critically important, not that worth getting upset about. This is a key to achieving *Menuchas HaNefesh* – a deep sense of peacefulness.

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Rav Kanarek was addressing himself to young men, on the threshold of adulthood. The truisms he shared reverberate for old and young alike. We need to inculcate within ourselves, and thereby in our children, that we can best use the great gift of our intellect if we can control our *Middos*, by developing the proper attitude toward the value of this world and the one to come. May *Rav Kanarek's* teachings, example and inspiration help us all to enable our Heavenly gifts to be used to their maximum capacity.

Yehi Zichro Boruch.

Best wishes for a calm, peaceful Shabbos,



Rabbi Kalman Baumann