Widen your Tent

Thoughts on Life, Integrity & Joy

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BASED ON RAV SHIMON SHKOP’S INTRODUCTION TO SHAAREI YOSHER
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Introduction to Shaarei Yosher

This is Rav Shimon Shkop’s introduction to his magnum opus. In it, he discusses the essentials of how the Torah teaches us to live. After we let Rav Shimon speak for himself, we can explore possible ways to understand his words and to further derive from his thoughts ways of applying them to our own lives.
Blessed shall be the Creator, and exalted shall be the Maker, Who created us in His “Image” and in the likeness of His “Structure,” and planted eternal life within us, so that our greatest desire should be to benefit others, to individuals and to the masses, now and in the future in imitation of the Creator (so to speak).

For everything He created and formed was according to His Will (may it be blessed) only to be good to the creations. So too His Will is that we walk in His Ways. As it says, “and you shall walk in His Ways.”

1 All honorifics, such as “may it be blessed” and “may His memory be a blessing” appear in the original as acronyms of common idioms that the reader could read without losing their train of thought. Since this is impossible in translation, I chose to hereafter omit them. For similar reasons, “Moshe our teacher” or “Moshe our teacher, peace be upon him,” I usually rendered simply “Moshe” for readability.

2 Devarim 28:9.
That is, that we, the select of what He made—should constantly hold as our purpose to sanctify our physical and spiritual abilities, for the good of the many, according to our abilities. In my opinion, this whole concept is included in Hashem’s mitzvah [of] “Be holy, [for I am Holy].”

The Midrash says about this verse: “Can it [truly] be ‘like Me’? This is why it continues, ‘For I am Holy,’ to teach that My Sanctity is above yours.”

And about the foundation of this mitzvah of sanctity, the Toras Kohanim states, “‘Be holy’—be separate.”

Nachmanides, in his commentary on the Torah, explains at length this principle of “avoidance” as it is stated in this mitzvah, that it is an avoidance of excessive comfort and pleasure—even if they are actions that are not prohibited to us.

3 Vayikra 19:2.
5 Ibid.
In an illustrative statement, he writes that it is possible for a person to be disgusting within the technical framework of Torah law; see his holy words there.

According to this, it would seem the Midrash is incomprehensible.

What relevance does the concept of “avoidance” have to being similar to the Holy One? The verse tells us with regard to this that His Will is not like this, as it says, “Can it [truly] be ‘like Me?’ This is why it continues, ‘For I am holy,’ to teach that My sanctity is higher than yours.”

It is exceedingly difficult to understand “My sanctity is higher than yours.” This explanation is incumbent upon us to understand—in truth there is some similarity in the holiness He expects of us to His [Holiness], except that His Holiness is more general and inclusive.

If we say that the essential idea of the holiness He demands of us (in this mitzvah of “be holy”) is distance from the permissible, that kind of holiness has nothing to do with Hashem.

ובッツיר מבילט אומר שאמפר לארס להוית נבל ברשא המח<dim>彧 תויי שס בברל הקדושיש עא פו ווה אוארה ברם המדורש אטס מובינמ.

איך שרי בעמ פירשות מחדרהמח˂יב דעלו הז השפעון הבוב שלא נ רצונ יברך שחר אומר י scm הממות תלאמר יפי קדוש און קדושית למעלת מקדושתכם.

וביותר קשה לחברל מ השמסיק קדושית למעלת מקדושתכם דבמן מז ביא י הר עליפי לוחין דבמח משל יש זים מחברשה השה דורש מחמאנ קדושית יברך אלא קדושית יחר צללת ומקפה.

ואס נאמר עדיק מובן מקדושה שיא דורש מחמאנjumbotron קלחרק קדיש יתייה לחהירק רון הממחו יזכרז יאני מחמאנ לכל הפרך.
And so, it appears to my limited understanding that this mitzvah includes the entire foundation and root of the purpose of our lives. All of our work and effort should constantly be sanctified to benefiting the community. We should not use any act, movement, or get benefit or enjoyment that doesn’t have in it some element of helping another. And as understood, all holiness is being set apart for an honorable purpose.

Behold, when a person straightens his path and strives constantly to make his lifestyle dedicated to the community, then anything he does even for himself, for the health of his body and soul, he also associates to the mitzvah of being holy. For through this he can also benefit the masses. Through the good he does for himself he can benefit the many who rely on him. But if he derives benefit from some kind of permissible thing that isn’t needed for the health of his body and soul, that benefit is in opposition to holiness. For with this he benefits himself, as he imagines at that moment, but to no one else does it have any value.
And based on what we have explained, the thesis of the mitzvah of avoidance is essentially the same as the underlying basis of the mitzvah of holiness, which is practically recognizable in the ways a person acts. But with insight and the calling of spirituality, this mitzvah broadens to include everything a person causes or does even between him and the Omnipresent.

In relation to this, this holiness is comparable to the Holiness of the Creator in whatever small resemblance. Just as the Act of the Holy One in all of Creation, and in each and every moment that He continues to cause the universe to exist; all His actions are sanctified to the good of others, so too it is His Will that our actions be constantly sanctified to the good of the community, and not personal benefit.
However, what of a person who decides
to subject his nature, in order to reach a
high level so that he has no thought or
inclination in his soul for his own good,
only a desire for the good of others? In
this way he would have his desire reach
the sanctity of the Creator, as His Desire
in all of the creation and management
of the world is only for the good of the
created, and not for Himself at all.

At first glance, one might say that if a
person reached this level, he would reach
the epitome of being whole. But this is
why our Sages of blessed memory teach
us in this Midrash that it is not so. We
cannot try to be similar to His Holiness
in this respect.
The Creator’s Holiness is greater than ours. His Holiness is only for the created and not for Himself because nothing was ever added to or could ever be added to the Creator through His Actions, anything He did or does. Therefore, all His Desire could only be to be good to the created.

But what He wants from us is not like this. As Rabbi Akiva taught us, “your life comes first.” [Our Sages] left us a hint of it when they explain the Scripture [of] “Love your neighbor as yourself” in a negative sense, “That which is hateful to you, do not do to someone else.” In terms of obligation, it is appropriate for a person to place his own good first.

There are also grounds for asserting that in the very foundation of the creation of Adam, the Creator planted in him a very great measure of propensity to love himself. The Sages of Truth [i.e., Kabbalists] describe the purpose of all the work in this language, “The Infinite wanted to bestow complete good that wouldn’t even include the embarrassment of receiving” ([Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato] KeLa”Ch Pischei Chochmah, ch. 4).
This notion reveals how far the power of loving oneself goes, that “a person would rather have one kav [a unit of measure] of his own making than many kavin that are given to him”—even if from the Hand of the Holy One!—if it is an unearned present. From here it should be self-evident that love of oneself is desired by the Holy One, even though “the wise shall walk because of it and the foolish will stumble over it.”

In my opinion, this is true despite all the evil and sin that the world is full of because of this middah of self-love. Added to the challenge of wealth, this middah will cause him to stumble until the depths, as it is written, “Lest I grow full and deny [and say, ’Who is Hashem?’].” Because of the greatness of a person’s attachment to his own kav, if Hashem graced him with wealth, and he believes with complete true faith that everything is the Holy One’s, he is in truth poor. What he has isn’t his. However, if he denies Hashem, then it is all his and he is in his own mind truly wealthy. Therefore, to satisfy his desire to enjoy his wealth, he will habituate himself to deny Hashem, and then [free of feelings of guilt], he will be able to fully satisfy his desires.

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6 A Rabbinic aphorism that paraphrases Hoshea 14:10, “וְצַדִּיקִים יֵלְכוּ בָם וּפֹשְעִים יִכָּשְלוּ בָם” by turning it into the singular (from “because of them” and “over them” to “it”).

7 Mishlei 30:8.
One can also feel this way with respect to acquiring a greater thing [than a *kav* of merchandise], which is wisdom.

To stress this point: If a person does not try, according to his abilities in Torah study, to grasp the wisdom of *yir’ah* and the pure faith, then there is a possibility to stumble through the strength of the *middah* of self-love.

Just as this *middah* [of self-interest] harms anyone who studies external wisdom—and to the contrary, [learning these subjects] should really add to the breadth of their appreciation of Hashem’s deeds, as it says, “the Heavens tell of the glory of G-d [, and His handiwork is described by the sky],”8 they [who don’t add this perspective] fall and descend downward.

For if they were to believe that all their wisdom and all they acquired were not theirs, they would lose all their wealth. Only through heretical denial could they make themselves rich. Then, all that makes them great is theirs, and can make them haughty of what they accomplished.

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8 *Tehillim* 19:2.
In this way one may explain that which is said, "Moshe will be joyous with the giving of his portion, because You called him a reliable servant" [Shabbos Morning Amidah], that there is no joy in receiving the aspect of wisdom unless he is a reliable servant who possesses nothing, that it is all his master’s and lord’s. Only then there is complete joy in acquiring wisdom. Without this [attitude] it is possible that there is no happiness in acquiring wisdom, for through it he is capable of reaching heresy.

Although it at first glance seems that feelings of love for oneself and feelings of love for another are like competing co-wives one to each other, we have the duty to try to delve into it, to find the means to unite them, since Hashem expects both from us.

This means [a person must] have clear for himself and accept the truth of the essence of his “I,” for with it the statures of [different] people are differentiated, each according to their level.

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9 Rav Shimon here is utilizing an idiom we find in the berachah made when seeing a Torah sage, "שחלק מחכמתו ליראויו—Who apportioned from His Wisdom to those who revere him.”
The entire “I” of a coarse and lowly person is restricted only to his substance and body. Above him is someone who feels that his “I” is a synthesis of body and soul.

And above him is someone who can include in his “I” all of his household and family. Someone who walks according to the way of the Torah, his “I” includes the whole Jewish People, since in truth every Jewish person is only like a limb of the body of the nation of Israel.

In this [progression] there are more levels for a fully developed person, who can ingrain in his soul the feeling that the entire world is his “I,” and he himself is only one small limb of all of Creation. Then, his self-love helps him love the entire Jewish People and [even] all of Creation.

In my opinion, this idea is hinted at in Hillel’s words, as he used to say, “If I am [not] for me, who will be for me? And when I am for myself, what am I?” It is fitting for each person to strive to be concerned for himself.
But with this, he must also strive to understand that “if I am for myself, what am I?”—that if he constricts his “I” to a narrow domain, limited to what the eye can see [is him], then his “I”—what is it? Vanity and ignorable.

If his feelings are broader and include [all of] Creation, that he is a great person and also like a small limb in this great body, then he is lofty and of great worth. In a great machine, even the smallest screw is important if it even serves the smallest role in the machine. For the whole is made of parts, and no more than the sum of its parts.

Similarly, it is appropriate to think about all the gifts of Heaven “from the dew of the Heavens and the fat of the land” (Bereishis 27:38), that they are given to the Jewish People as a whole. Their allotment to individuals is only in their role as caretakers until they divide it to those who need it, to each according to what is worthy for him, and to take for himself what is appropriate for him.
With this idea one can understand how charity has the effect of enriching the one who performs it, as the Sages say on the verse “aseir ta’aseir—you shall surely tithe”—tithe, so that you shall become rich—shetis’asheir.”

Someone who is appointed over a small part of the national treasury who does a good job guarding at his appointment as appropriate will be next appointed to oversee a sum greater than that, if he is not particularly good in other areas. If they find a flaw in his guard duty, no fine qualities to be found in him will help, and they will demote him to a smaller task.

The same is true of the treasuries of Heaven which are given to man. If he tithes appropriately, he satisfies his job of disbursement as he is supposed to conduct himself according to the Torah, giving to each as is appropriate according to the Torah’s direction, then he will become wealthy and be appointed to disburse a greater treasure. And so on, upward and upward, so that he can fulfill his lofty desire to benefit the masses through his stewardship of the treasury. In this way a man of reliable spirit does the Will of his Maker.
And it is similarly possible to get a feeling for the idea that is told in the Talmud in the powerful story about the holy man Nachum ish Gam Zu. One time he did not fulfill the mitzvah of charity as he felt he should. He decreed upon himself that his eyes go blind, his hands whither, and his feet be amputated. His decree was fulfilled. This is the way of great leaders, who, if they feel about themselves that they failed in the requirements of their duty, make a request to be relieved of those duties. So too this holy man conducted himself. Since he knew about himself that all his abilities aren’t his own and he is just appointed to utilize them, when he saw a flaw in fulfilling his duties he decreed that all his limbs be dismissed from their jobs.
The same is the case in regard to the Heavenly dew—Hashem’s assistance—in acquiring wisdom. It is proper for every person who is graced from the One above with some increase in wisdom to ingrain a deep foundation within his soul that this gift of wisdom was not given only to the person himself, rather that he is the one placed in charge of teaching it to every person for whom it is appropriate. If he guards this duty to teach whomever it is appropriate to teach, then he will be further enriched and made like a disburser over a greater treasure than this. Perhaps one can use this idea to explain “and I learned, more than anyone” (Ta’anis 7a).

Aside from the natural aspect of it, there is also the spiritual potential of charity and tithing to help it ascend and grow, like the spiritual effect with regard to tithing money. So it seems to me.
Paragraph 4

As a beginning of this preparation, so that one is ready to acquire Torah, the Torah requires specific conditions.

The first condition is toil and effort, as our Sages explain, “If in My statues you go’ (Vayikra 26:3)—that you should be toiling in the Torah.” (Rashi ad loc., quoting Sifra 26:2), as well as in the other things required for acquiring Torah.

One can use this approach to explain the whole subject of breaking the [First] Luchos, for which I have not found an explanation, for at first glance it appears incomprehensible.
Is it possible that Moshe Rabbeinu would think that because the Jews made the [Golden] Calf they should G-d forbid be left without the Torah? He should have just waited to teach them until they corrected their ways, and not totally break them and then have to supplicate before Hashem to beg for a second set of Tablets.

Our Sages received [a tradition that] there was a unique spiritual effect inherent in the First Luchos. As it says in Eruvin (54a), “What does it mean when it is written [in the Torah], ‘engraved on the Tablets’?10 Had the First Luchos not been destroyed, the Torah would never have been forgotten from Israel.” That is, they contained the spiritual potential that if someone learned something once, it would remain in his memory forever.
This quality Moshe felt would cause a very terrible profaning of the holy to arise. Could it happen that someone corrupted and dirtied by evil deeds would be expert in every area of Torah? Moshe reasoned \textit{a fortiori} from the Passover-offering, about which the Torah says, “No outsider shall eat of it.” Therefore, Moshe found it fitting that these Tablets be shattered, and he should try to get other Tablets.

The First \textit{Luchos} were made by Hashem, like the body of writing as explained in the Torah. The latter Tablets were made by man [Moshe], as it says “Carve for yourself two stone tablets” (Shemos 34:1). Tablets are something that cause permanence, and existence, so there will not be “letters hovering in the air.” Since they were made by Hashem, they would stand eternally. But the second ones, which were man-made, only exist subject to conditions and constraints.

\footnotesize{11 \textit{Ibid.}, 12:43.}
The beginning of the Receiving of the Torah through Moshe was a symbol and sign for all of the Jewish People who receive the Torah [since], for just as Hashem told Moshe, “Carve for yourself two stone Tablets,” so too it is advice for all who receive the Torah. Each must prepare Tablets for himself, to write upon them the word of Hashem. According to his readiness in preparing the Tablets, so will be his ability to receive. If in the beginning or even any time after that his Tablets are ruined, then his Torah will not remain.

This alleviated much of Moshe’s concern, because according to the value and greatness of the person in awe/fear of Hashem and in middos, which are the Tablet of his heart, this will be the measure by which Heaven will give him acquisition of Torah. And if he falls from his level, by that amount he will forget his Torah, just as our Sages said of a number of things that cause Torah to be forgotten. Upon this great concept our Sages told us to explain the text at the conclusion of the Torah, “and all the great ‘Mighty Hand’ [and Awe-Inspiring acts] which Moshe wrought before the eyes of all of Israel.”

12 Devarim 34:12, the closing words of the Torah.
To my mind, one can use this idea to elaborate what our Sages explained in *Nedarim* (38a) [commenting] on the verse “Carve out for yourself.” Moshe only became wealthy through the extra pieces of the *Luchos*. This is an amazing idea—[is it possible that] Hashem couldn’t find any way to make Moshe wealthy except through the extras of the Tablets? But through what we said, we can explain this.

Because of this change in how the Tablets were prepared, it provided opportunity for those who receive the Torah to fear, to accept upon themselves the yoke of Torah. Through this, it becomes appropriate for anyone entering the gates of Torah to separate themselves from all the preoccupations of the world. As they interpret the verse, “It is not on the other side of the sea,” that it is not found at salesmen or importers. However, if the First *Luchos* had remained, then it would be sufficient to establish a small amount of time for Torah, and spend most of one’s time trading and buying.

13 Also in *Yerushalmi, Shekalim* 5:2, Vilna ed. 22b.
14 *Devarim* 30:13.
15 Loosely paraphrasing *Devarim Rabbah* ad loc. (*Nitzvim* 6, Leiberman ed.).
For this reason, the Holy One showed Moshe as a sign to all who accept the Torah that He would prepare their income for them through the making of the Tablets; any “extras that are carved away” will provide them with income.
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Acknowledgments

And here I, who—by Hashem’s Compassion upon me—He placed my portion among those who work for the community. For in the year 5644 [AM; 1884 CE] I was called by my great-uncle[-in-law] the Ga’on Rabbi Eliezer Gordon, z”l, to be a teacher to students in Telshe, in the yeshiva there. [I was called to the rabbinate] in 5667 [AM; 1907 CE] to the city of Meltch, and in 5780 [AM; 1920 CE] to Grodno.

I merited [the opportunity] to draw a following among those who listened to my teachings in each of the places of Torah dissemination listed above. For all this is not in accordance with my actions or with my abilities, but only as the reward of “aseir ta’aseir—you shall surely tithe” as we wrote.16 Since before I existed until now we had enriching times for myself and those who listen to my lessons.

16 See sec. 1.2, “Paragraph 2,” p. 50.
Therefore, I hope that also with the release of this book of mine to spread [these ideas] to the masses. The One Who is Good and the Benefactor will give me the grace to draw the hearts of those who toil in the depths of halachah, to contemplate it, to add lessons, and may my portion be among them.

I know that this book of mine will not be accepted by everyone, because many who study aren’t acclimated to contemplate in an in-depth manner, in a deep way that surrounds and goes through the many topics discussed in this book of mine. For there are many approaches to the Torah and each person finds meaning¹⁷ according to what he is used to. Also, most of the topics explained in [this book] are topics that demand an understanding heart (i.e., mind) will not grasp them with a mere glance. Not every person wants to face the deficiency in himself [he may find] due to the depth of the concept and the deficiency of the conceiver.

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¹⁷ An idea that one finds appealing. "A meaning," rather than "the meaning."
I heard a pleasant and compelling idea in the name of my late brother-in-law, the Rav, the Ga’on, our teacher, Rav Shlomo Zalman the son of Rav Kalman Abel of Telshe.

The Talmud (Bava Kama 20a) tells about the topic of “this one gains, and that one doesn’t lose,” about how Rav Chisda asked of Rami Bar Chama, and he responded to him, “‘Go serve me [first, then I will answer].’ He lifted his scarf and folded it.”

[This story] is perplexing, at first glance. The aforementioned rabbi [—my brother-in-law Rav Shlomo Zalman—] explained that the matter is something which requires deep thought and contemplation.

The essence of the matter hangs upon whether the one being taught believes in the greatness of his teacher. Then, if he does not understand at first, he would blame the lack on himself, and will add more effort to strain himself and then finally understand. But if his teacher’s ideas are trivial in his eyes, so that it is not worth it for him to toil at [understanding] them, then if he does not comprehend the ideas at first assessment, he will put them aside or dismiss them in his heart, and that would satisfy him.
Therefore, when Rami bar Chama understood the depth of the topic that [Rav Chisda] wanted him to teach him, he didn’t wish to teach him until he was convinced that Rav Chisda yearns to learn\(^{18}\) from him like a *talmid* from a *rav*. Therefore, he did not teach him anything until he served him, as a *talmid* would a *rav*. “And there is grace in the words of the wise.” (*Koheles* 10:12)

In this way, it is possible to explain what our Sages expounded in *Yoma* 28a on the Scripture, “And Avraham was an elder, coming on in days...” (*Bereishis* 24:1),

“Rabbi Chama beRabbi Chanina said: From the days of our forefathers, their yeshiva was never interrupted. Avraham became an elder, and stayed in yeshiva.”

\(^{18}\) The conjugation here is “*hislameid*,” from the root \(לָמֵד\) — to learn, conjugated in the *hitpa‘el* form that usually denotes the reflective—something done to oneself. So perhaps Rav Shimon intends to speak of the student willing to learn about himself and take lesson from the *rebbi*, rather than including the student who is only interested in abstract ideas, on a theoretical plane.
It is not explained how they derived this concept from this verse. According to our idea, one can say: Behold, in the Gemara (Bava Metzia 87a) it says: “Until Avraham there was no such thing as aging, and someone who came to converse with Avraham would end up conversing with Yitzchak, [or] with Yitzchak—and end up talking to Avraham. Avraham came and requested aging, as it says, ‘And Avraham was old, coming on his days.’”

The concept of aging which this [quote] speaks about is the elderliness that makes itself obvious to every eye that sees. Therefore, our Sages learned from this that Avraham stayed in a yeshiva. The purpose of recognizing the value of aging is to take a lesson from it.¹⁹ For if one recognizes that he finds worthwhile to deeply study that which [his aging] teaches, then he will achieve the desired goal, as we have written.

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¹⁹ The term here is *mislamaid*, which would mean here to teach oneself, to take and internalize a lesson. (Similar to word discussed in the previous note.).
Therefore, I would think that only those who value my words before they see or hear them will find the desire to study this book of mine. In their eyes it would be worthwhile to deepen their study if they do not understand it on first attempt, and then they will accept my ideas, with Hashem’s help.

But to my mind it is worth knowing and contemplating what our Sages said on Chagigah 15b. How could Rabbi Meir receive Torah from the mouth of Acheir [the former Elisha ben Avuya, after he became a heretic]? Doesn’t Rabbah bar bar Chana quote Rabbi Yochanan [in Chagigah as saying], “What does it mean when it says, ‘For the Kohen’s lips should keep knowledge; they should see Torah from his lips, for he is the angel of Hashem, L-rd of Hosts’ (Malachi 2:7)? If the rav is similar to an angel of Hashem, L-rd of Hosts, seek Torah from his mouth. And if not, do not seek Torah from his mouth.” And the Talmud concludes, “There is no question—this [Rabbi Meir studying under Acheir] is in regard to someone great, this [the verse] is of someone of smaller stature.”
It is worth understanding according to this how Rabbi Yochanan spoke without elaboration, since he speaks only of the smaller statured, not the greats. One may say that we should be exacting in that which Rabbi Yochanan said, “Seek Torah from his mouth” and not “Learn from him.” For in truth, one who learns from his peer does not learn from the mouth of the person who is teaching him, but listens and weighs on the scales of his mind, and then he understands the concept. This is not learning “from the mouth of” his teacher, but from the mind of the teacher. “Torah from the mouth” is only considered accepting the concepts as he heard them, with no criticism. And it was by this idea that Rabbi Yochanan spoke about accepting Torah from the mouth [i.e., uncritically] only if the rabbi is similar to an angel of Hashem, L-rd of Hosts.

And according to this, hinted to in Rabbi Yochanan’s words is a distinction between one who is of smaller stature and one who is great. The person of smaller stature will learn Torah from the mouth, for he is unable to decide what to draw near and what to keep away. Whereas a person of great stature who has the ability to decide [critically] does not learn Torah “from [someone else’s] mouth.”
Similarly, it’s appropriate to alert anyone who contemplates the books of Acharonim that they should not “learn Torah from their mouths,” they shouldn’t treat everything implied by what was said as a fundamental principle before they explore well their words.

Something like a hint of this idea can be learned from what the Gemara says in *Bava Metzia*, Chapter “*HaSocheir es haPo’alim*”:20 Rabbi Chiya said, “I made it so that the Torah would not be forgotten from Israel.” It explains there that he would plant flax, spread out nets [made of that flax, thereby] hunt deer, made parchment [of their hides, and write on them] Chumash texts. This hints that whatever is in our power to prepare from the beginning of the Torah, it is incumbent on us to do ourselves, according to the ability that was inherited to us to explore and understand. And not to rely [passively] on the words of the *Gedolim* who preceded us.

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20 *Bava Metzia* 85b.
This exposition of my thought will be a deciding factor for me toward the side of merit if those who study my book find ideas that contradict the ideas of greats whose “little [finger] is thicker than my thighs,” or that I thought of the idea of one of the greats but didn’t cite their words, or that I did bring down their ideas and dismissed them. My usual frame of mind in the ways of learning is as said: I only looked a little into the books of Acharonim, for this book of mine is not a book of responsa, only an explanation of halachos that the free analysis of the mind comprehends through appropriate and effective contemplation.

After prostrating and bowing to the One Above who is Good and is a Benefactor, who gave me the merit to bring this book of mine to light, I will establish a memorial to the souls of my parents: My master, father, and teacher, the epitome of Hashem’s Torah and Yir’as Shamayim, Yitzchak Shemuel HaKohen, z"l, and my mother, my teacher, Rachel bas haRav Eliezer Shemuel Lyubanksy, z”l. They pushed themselves beyond their abilities to keep me in the “tents of Torah” all the days of my youth—the yeshivos of Mir and Volozhin. In their name and memory, I called my book by the name “Shaarei Yosher” (Gates of Honesty), for the initial letters of their names [Yitzchak Shmuel and Rachel] comes to the name “Yosher.” My name is also included in it.22

22 Perhaps Rav Shimon is referring to the fact that word “yosher — ישמר” is a reverse acronym of the initials Rav Shimon Yehudah.
Similarly, it will also be an eternal memorial to the souls of my father-in-law, the Rav and Gaon Moshe Mordechai Eidlitz, z”l, and mother-in-law Rachel the daughter of the Rav and Gaon Rav Avraham Shemuel Gordon, z”l. For all their striving was to fulfill my needs, so that Torah could be my [full-time] occupation, and their thoughts were for desiring to help me, with Hashem’s help. And (may she be distinguished for a good life) my honored spouse, the Rebbetzin Leah, who has helped me succeed in all of my soul’s journeys from then until today. May my son, my dear rabbi the Rav and Gaon—a “Sinai and uprooter of mountains”23—Moshe Mordechai, shlita, and my son-in-law the Rav and Gaon—a “Sinai and uprooter of mountains”—Shraga Feivel Hines, shlita, should be remembered for good, for they helped me in a number of topics to resolve uncertainties.

23 I.e., someone with both encyclopedic knowledge of everything given at Sinai and also the deductive skill to overturn large edifices built on flawed reasoning.
And remember for good my brother-in-law, the lofty Mr. Eliyahu Moshe Halpern, \( shlit'a \), and my honorable sister Mina Le'ah, \( tichyah \), who saw it fit to take responsibility for the publication of my book. And remember for good my honorable brother-in-law, Rav and Gaon—“a Sinai and uprooter of mountains”—Rabbi and Teacher Zvi Yehudah Allswang, \( shlit'a \), rabbi in Chicago, who gave me the initial ability to print my book.

I feel greatly indebted to\(^{24}\) the eminent young man, Master\(^{25}\) Aharon Yeshaiah, \( n'y \), who performed amazing work, preparing the manuscript in a clear handwriting, like the Hand of Hashem which has been good to him. He didn't read it like someone reading to find typos, but toiled and reviewed every topic carefully with people his age, among them also my eminent grandson Master Kalman, \( n'y \). Their names should be for a blessing and for glory.

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\(^{24}\) This is said idiomatically. The words would literally mean: “I would carry a sedan chair for...”

\(^{25}\) Literally: “Groom and young man, Mr...” meaning, a young man of marriageable age.
And my prayer\textsuperscript{26} is that the One Above similarly help me to bring to light the rest of the products of my creativity, which I have in manuscript, to be spread in Israel.

These are the words of one who awaits the redemption, the elevation of the pride of the holy Torah, and the building of Zion and Jerusalem, quickly in our days. Amen!

Shimon Yehudah HaKohen Shkop

\textsuperscript{26} Lit., “and I am prayer so that...”