



## LOOKS CAN BE DECEIVING

Judaism teaches us not to accept matters at face value, but to delve into their true meaning. What seems positive isn't always good for us.

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TEACHER'S MANUAL



# JEWISH INSIGHTS

A TASTE OF THE REBBE'S TEACHINGS



PARSHAT VAYECHI

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Shluchim of the Rebbe to Mumbai India

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In this week's Torah reading, we read about the passing of Jacob (Source 1) and Jacob's gratitude to G-d for the fact that all of his offspring followed in his ways (Source 2). When they left Egypt, G-d referred to the tribes as "grapes in the desert" (Source 3), and the Midrash explains that this is because they all followed in their father's ways. (Source 4)

## B. The Torah's Exegetical Principles.....3

Moses gave the written Torah to the Jewish people, and alongside that, he taught them the oral tradition of its interpretation (Source 5). Everything is alluded to between the lines of the written Torah, and the oral tradition deciphers it.

In this class, we'll examine one of the tools the sages use to interpret the text, called "don't read it ... " For example, "don't read it 'Vayikra' but 'Vayakrie'" (don't read it "he called," but rather as "he caused others to call [G-d]") (Source 6); "don't read it 'guard the matzot' but rather as 'guard the mitzvot' " (Source 7); "don't read it 'from those who disgrace it' but rather as 'who are forgiven.'" (Source 8)

## C. The Heart of the Jewish People.....8

The "don't read it" rule is used in both the very beginning and the end of the Torah. Beginning: "Don't read it Bereshit, but read it Bara-shit," meaning that G-d created the space under the Altar during the Six Days of Creation (Source 9). In the end: "Don't read it Yisrael but "Ra'ah E-l," meaning that the deeds of the tribes are pleasing to G-d. (Source 10)

The Rebbe applies a lesson from here to our spiritual service: The space under the Altar is the foundation of the world, like the Foundation Stone (Source 11). At the beginning of our spiritual journey, we are told: "Do not be distracted by the physicality of the world, because G-d created the world upon the space under the Altar - the spiritual." Eventually, one is told they must reach a level of "seeing" G-dliness.

## D. Don't Rush to Judge.....15

The rule of "don't read it" also applies to childhood education.

This rule essentially says the following: When you see something that may be positive, do not accept it at face value. Look deeper, perhaps within it there's something that may be bad for you. As King Solomon said in Proverbs: "For the lips of a strange woman drip honey," but "her end is as bitter as wormwood." (Source 12)

Story.

# Introduction

The Torah is cryptic and full of allusions, and its verses don't always tell us exactly what to do and how to do it. There are exegetical principles which help interpret these verses.

In our class, we'll focus on one of these rules, called "don't read it" and learn a life lesson from it.

## השיעור לפרשת ויחי

משיחת כ"ף מנחם אב, ה'תשמ"א.  
הנחה בלתי מוגה.  
שיחות קודש ה'תשמ"א, התוועדות כ"ף אב, ע' י"ז.

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# A. The Tribes Follow in Jacob's Ways

This week we finish reading the book of Genesis and the stories of the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This week we read about Jacob - also known by his alternate name, Israel - who passed away in Egypt, surrounded by his large and loving family.

Before his passing, he calls for all of his children and begins an interesting discussion:

## Source 1 Genesis 49:1-2

Student's  
pg. 1

Jacob called for his sons and said, "Gather and I will tell you what will happen to you at the end of days. Gather and listen, sons of Jacob, and listen to Israel, your father."

וַיִּקְרָא יַעֲקֹב אֶל־בָּנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר הֲאִסְפוּ  
וְאֶגִּידָה לָּכֶם אֶת אֲשֶׁר־יִקְרָא אֶתְכֶם  
בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים: הֲקִבְצוּ וְשִׁמְעוּ בְנֵי  
יַעֲקֹב וְשִׁמְעוּ אֶל־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲבִיכֶם:

## Source 2 Agadat Bereshit

Student's  
pg. 1

**Gather and listen:** Why did he gather them? He said to himself: my grandfather, Abraham, had two sons, Isaac and Ishmael. Ishmael was wicked, and Isaac was righteous. Isaac also had two sons, Esau and myself. Esau hated the ways of G-d and I loved G-d's ways. As for myself, I've been given twelve sons - are half wicked and half righteous? His sons replied: "We know what is in your heart. 'Hear O Israel, the L-rd is our G-d, the L-rd is One.'" When Jacob heard that, he prostrated himself and began to recite "Blessed be the name of the glory of His kingdom forever and ever."

הֲקִבְצוּ וְשִׁמְעוּ: וְלָמָּה קָרָא אוֹתָן? אֵלֶּיךָ  
אָמַר: אֲבִרְהֵם זָקְנֵי שְׁנֵי בָנִים הָיוּ לוֹ  
- יִצְחָק וְיִשְׁמָעֵאל, יִשְׁמָעֵאל רָשָׁע,  
יִצְחָק צַדִּיק. וְכֵן יִצְחָק שְׁנֵי בָנִים הָיוּ  
לוֹ - יַעֲשָׂו וְאֲנִי, יַעֲשָׂו שִׂנְאָ דְרַכִּי  
הַמְּקוֹם, וְאֲנִי אֶהְבֵּתִי דְרַכִּי. וְאֲנִי נָתַן  
לִי י"ב בָּנִים, תֹּאמַר הֲצִנְן צַדִּיקִים  
וְהַצִּנְן רָשָׁעִים? אָמְרוּ לוֹ: יוֹדְעִין אָנוּ  
מָה בְּלִבְךָ, שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֶל־לִהְיֵנוּ  
ה' אֶחָד, פִּינּוֹן שְׁשִׁמְעַע יַעֲקֹב, מִיַּד  
הַשְּׁתַחֲוֹה, שְׁנֹאמַר וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה יִשְׂרָאֵל,  
הַתַּחֲוִיל אוֹמֵר בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד  
מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

Jacob thanks G-d for his good fortune, that all his sons follow in G-d's ways and will establish the Jewish people.

Decades later, during the exodus from Egypt, G-d Himself praised the tribes for following in Jacob's ways.

**Student's** **Source 3** Hosea 9:10  
pg. 1

Like grapes in the desert I found Israel ...

כַּעֲנַבִּים בַּמִּדְבָּר מָצְאתִי יִשְׂרָאֵל.

G-d compares the period in which he “found” Israel to a person who finds grapes in the desert. Like grapes in a desert are very precious, because they were found in a barren place, so too when G-d “found” Israel and took them as a nation, they were very precious to Him.

The Midrash says that G-d praised the tribes because they all carried out the will of their father, Jacob:

**Student's** **Source 4** Tana Devei Eliyahu 27:2  
pg. 1

When G-d saw that all twelve tribes fulfilled Jacob's will, they were like “grapes found in the desert.” Don't read it 'Israel' but read it “ra'ah-El” (G-d saw) meaning that G-d saw that all their deeds were perfect.

בְּשַׁעָה שֶׁהִקְב"ה מָצָא אֶת כָּל שְׁנַיִם  
עֶשְׂרֵי שְׁבָטִים שֶׁעָשׂוּ כְּלֵם אֶת רְצוֹן  
יַעֲקֹב אֲבִיהֶם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר "כַּעֲנַבִּים  
בַּמִּדְבָּר מָצְאתִי יִשְׂרָאֵל", אֵל תִּקְרֵי  
יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶלָּא שְׂרָאָה-אֵל, שֶׁכָּל  
מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם מְכוֹנִים לְפָנָיו.

What is this “don't read it”? Is this a mere word game?

This brings us to a debate over the exegetical principles of Torah interpretation. Often, we learn these interpretations and wonder, what does this mean?

Is there a rhyme or rhythm to it? Can anyone make up their own interpretation?

In this class, we'll focus on this method of interpretation, known as “don't read it.”

# B. The Torah's Exegetical Principles

## The Written Torah and the Oral Torah

### Source 5 Maimonides' Introduction to Mishneh Torah

Student's  
pg. 2

The mitzvot given to Moses at Mount Sinai were all given together with their explanations, as implied by the verse: "And I will give you the tablets of stone, the Torah, and the mitzvah." "The Torah" refers to the Written Law; "the mitzvah," to its explanation. G-d commanded us to fulfill "the Torah" according to the instructions of "the mitzvah." "The mitzvah" is called the Oral Law.

Moses personally transcribed the entire Torah before he died. He gave a Torah scroll to each tribe and placed another scroll in the ark as a testimonial, as the verse states: "Take this Torah scroll and place it beside the ark and it will be there as a testimonial."

"The mitzvah" - i.e., the explanation of the Torah - he did not transcribe. Instead, he commanded it verbally to the elders, to Joshua, and to the totality of Israel, as the verse states: "Be careful to observe everything that I prescribe to you." For this reason, it is called the Oral Law.

כָּל הַמִּצְוֹת שֶׁנִּתְּנוּ לוֹ לְמֹשֶׁה בְּסִינַי  
בְּפָרוּשׁוֹן נִתְּנוּ. שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר וְאֶתְּנָה לְךָ  
אֶת לַחַת הָאֶבֶן וְהַתּוֹרָה וְהַמִּצְוָה.  
תּוֹרָה – זֶה תּוֹרָה שֶׁבְּכָתָב. וְהַמִּצְוָה –  
זֶה פְּרוּשָׁהּ. וְצִוּנוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת הַתּוֹרָה עַל פִּי  
הַמִּצְוָה. וּמִצְוָה זֶה הִיא הַנִּקְרָאת תּוֹרָה  
שֶׁבְּעַל פֶּה.

כָּל הַתּוֹרָה כְּתוּבָה מִשֶּׁה רַבְּנוּ קָדָם  
שֶׁיְמוּת בְּכָתָב יָדוֹ. וְנִתְּן סֵפֶר לְכָל שִׁבְט  
וְשִׁבְט וְסֵפֶר אֶחָד נִתְּנָהוּ בְּאָרוֹן לְעֵד.  
שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר לָקַח אֶת סֵפֶר הַתּוֹרָה הַזֶּה  
וּשְׂמַתֶּם אוֹתוֹ וְגו'.

וְהַמִּצְוָה שֶׁהִיא פְּרוּשׁ הַתּוֹרָה לֹא  
כְּתוּבָה אֶלֶּא צִוָּה בִּיה לְזִמְנִים וְלִיהוֹשֵׁעַ  
וְלִשְׂאֵר כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל. שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר אֶת כָּל  
הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי מְצַוֶּה אֶתְכֶם אֹתוֹ  
תִּשְׁמְרוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת וְגו'. וּמִפְּנֵי זֶה נִקְרָאת  
תּוֹרָה שֶׁבְּעַל פֶּה.

*Moses received the Torah at Sinai in order to give it to the Jewish people. The process began at Sinai, and lasted for the forty years the Jews spent in the desert. Moses would ascend Mount Sinai (or in later years, would enter the Tent of Meeting) and G-d would dictate the Torah and then explain it.*

*For example, G-d dictated the verse "And you shall inscribe on the posts of your house and upon your gates," and explained that this was a commandment to write the Shema passages on parchment and affix it to the doorposts.*

*Another example: G-d dictated the verse "And you shall bind them as a sign on your arms and a Totafot between your eyes." G-d then explained the details of the mitzvah of Tefillin: which verses to write on parchment, how to place the scrolls in the boxes of leather and how to wrap them on the arm*

and head. He dictated the Written Torah, and at the same time explained the meaning of the verses.

Moses descended from Sinai and taught the Jews the Torah the same way. He read the verses of the Written Torah and then transmitted the explanation that G-d gave alongside it. This is how the Written Torah and Oral Torah were delivered. Whatever G-d dictated to Moses, Moses in turn dictated to the Jewish people, and what G-d told Moses verbally, Moses taught the Jews.

It was forbidden to transcribe the Oral Torah, as it was delivered orally by G-d, lending it the name "Oral Torah." Throughout the generations, it was passed on from teacher to student in the same manner, for 1000 years, until Rabbi Yehuda undid the ban on writing it and wrote the Mishnah, which is a summary of the explanations of the Torah and the laws derived from it.

To make the memorization process easier, the sages devised a system of allusions within the text itself. That doesn't mean that anyone can interpret the verses as they wish and invent new allusions. Moses created rules according to which the Torah is interpreted and allusions are found in the text, in support of the oral explanations. In Talmudic language, these rules are known as the "principles of Torah exegesis."

(The first step is to find allusions in the text in support of the oral explanations. The second step is more difficult: when a case or situation arose that didn't exist in Moses' time, the sages had to decide what the Torah would rule. They used this system to interpret the text to adjudicate the situation.)

In this class, we'll focus on one of the exegetical methods, "don't read it."

## >> The Rebbe

### "Don't read it"

**Student's**  
pg. 2 The exegetical principle of "don't read it" is one of the derivation rules of the Torah. Through the application of this principle a number of matters are derived in the Oral Torah.

**Student's**  
pg. 3 This underlines the necessity of the Oral Torah, as it is only through studying the Oral Torah that we are able to fully and properly understand the Written Torah. In the words of Maimonides, "the Torah was given together with its interpretation" - referring to the Oral Torah as the interpretation of the Written Torah.

כללות הלימוד "אל תיקרי" הוא אחד מאופני הלימוד בתורה, ומזה למדים כמה וכמה ענינים בתורה שבעל-פה.

וזהו החידוש של תורה שבעל-פה לגבי תורה שבכתב - שהרי דוקא על ידי לימוד תורה שבעל-פה אפשר להבין את הענינים של התורה שבכתב לאשורם ולבוריים. ובלשון הרמב"ם - "התורה בפירושה ניתנה". היינו, שהתורה שבעל-פה היא הפירוש של התורה שבכתב.



Student's  
pg. 3

To elaborate: Everything is included within the Written Torah. As the sages teach, "there is nothing that isn't alluded to in the Torah." But this is often included in the form of an "allusion," and the function of the Oral Torah is to reveal and explain the matters contained within the Written Torah. This includes derivations through the principle of "don't read it".

זאת אומרת: בתורה שבכתב כלולים אמנם כל הענינים. כמאמר "אין דבר שלא רמוז בתורה". אבל לאידך - הרי זה רק באופן של רמז; והחידוש של התורה שבעל-פה הוא - שהיא מגלה ומפרשת את הענינים של התורה שבכתב, כולל על ידי אופן הלימוד "אל תיקרי".

*The Oral Torah explains the Written Torah in various ways, with many different rules of interpretation. One is "don't read it," which means, don't read the word with the regular pronunciation, read it slightly differently to lend it a different meaning.*

Following are three examples:

## Calling G-d's Name in the World

### Source 6 Genesis 21:33

Student's  
pg. 3

Abraham called there in the name of the L-rd, the G-d of the world.

"ויקרא שם בשם ה' א-ל עולם".

Talmud, Sotah 10a

Student's  
pg. 3

Reish Lakish said: "Don't read it "called (vayikra)," but rather as "he caused them to call (vayakrie)." Meaning, Abraham caused G-d's name to be on the lips of all passersby. How did he accomplish this? After he wined and dined them, they rose to bless him. He asked them: "Did you eat my food? You ate the food of the G-d of the universe! Praise Him and bless Him, He Who uttered and the world came into being.

אמר ריש לקיש: אל תיקרי "ויקרא" אלא "ויקריא". מלמד שהקריא אברהם אבינו לשמו של הקדוש ברוך הוא כפה כל עובר ושב. כיצד? לאחר שאכלו ושתו, עמדו לקרנו. אמר להם: וכי משלי אכלתם? משל אלקי עולם אכלתם! הודו ושבחו וברכו למי שאמר והיה העולם.

*"Vayikra" shouldn't be pronounced conventionally, with the meaning that Abraham alone called or prayed to G-d, but the pronunciation should be altered to make it say "Vayakrie" - meaning that Abraham taught others to follow G-d and taught the world monotheism.*

A second example:

## Don't Pass Over a Mitzvah

### Source 7 Exodus 12:17

**Student's** Guard the matzot.  
pg. 4

"ושמרתם את המצות".

Yalkut Shimoni 201:6

**Student's** Rabbi Yoshiah said: Don't read it "guard the  
pg. 4 matzot," but rather as "guard the mitzvot." Just as we don't allow the matzah to sit long enough to begin to rise, so too we must seize every mitzvah opportunity immediately.

ר' יאשיה אומר אל תקרי בן  
אלא ושמרתם את המצוות.  
בדרך שאין מחמיצין את  
המצה כך לא יחמיצו את  
המצוות אלא אם באה מצוה  
לידך עשה אותה מיד.

The literal meaning of this verse is to be vigilant in not allowing the matzah to rise. Rabbi Yoshiah interprets it to say "mitzvot" rather than "matzot." The lesson is: Do not squander the opportunity to do a mitzvah.

A third example:

## The Importance of Observing Shabbat

### Source 8 Isaiah 56:2

**Student's** Fortunate is the man who will do this and the  
pg. 4 person who will hold fast to it, he who keeps the Shabbat from profaning it and guards his hand from doing any evil.

אשרי אנוש יעשה זאת וכן אדם יחזיק  
בה שימר שבת מחללו ושמר ידו מעשות  
כל רע.

Talmud, Shabbat 117b

**Student's** Rabbi Chiya bar Abba said in the name of Rabbi  
pg. 4 Yochanan: One who observes the Shabbat properly - even if they worship idols - is forgiven of their sins, as the verse says "Fortunate is the man who will do this... from profaning it." Don't read it "profaning it (mechalelo) but read it "he is forgiven" (machul lo).

אמר רבי חייא בר אבא אמר  
רבי יוחנן: כל המשמר שבת  
בהלכותו, אפילו עובד עבודה  
זרה [כדור] אנוש – מוחלין לו,  
שנאמר: "אשרי אנוש יעשה  
זאת וגו' מחללו". אל תקרי  
"מחללו" אלא: "מחול לו".

The verse praises those that observe Shabbat instead of profaning it. The Talmud interprets this to mean that they are forgiven of their sins; one who observes the Shabbat is forgiven of all sins.

The common understanding is that these interpretations of “don’t read it” act in support of the oral tradition received from Moses.

This method of interpretation is applied in the following ways:

- A) Adding or subtracting a letter (matzot - mitzvot)
- B) Reordering the letters (mechalelo - machul-lo)
- C) Changing pronunciation (Vayikra - Vayakrie)

## >> The Rebbe

### “Don’t read it”

Student's  
pg. 5

The application of the “don’t read it” principle doesn’t negate the simple meaning of the words. It only adds an additional meaning. The simple meaning of the Written Torah and the “don’t read it” reading of the Oral Torah constitute one whole, one Torah.

וכמדובר לעיל<sup>1</sup> שהלימוד “אל תיקרי” אינו שולל את הפירוש הפשוט, אלא רק מוסיף פירוש נוסף, זאת אומרת, שהפירוש הפשוט של התורה שבכתב, והפירוש “אל תיקרי” של התורה שבעל-פה, נעשים ענין אחד, “תורה אחת”.

*It is clear that the exegetical derivation doesn’t negate the simple meaning. For example, while we indeed derive from the verse about matzot the idea of not squandering a mitzvah opportunity, the simple meaning - preventing the matzah from rising - remains in place.*

# C. The Heart of the Jewish People

## >> The Rebbe

### Beginning and End

Student's  
pg. 6

We find the principle of “don’t read it” employed immediately at the beginning of the Torah, and also right at the end of the Torah, “the beginning is wedged into the end and the end is wedged into the beginning.”

We have discussed a number of times that the beginning and end of the Torah encapsulate the entire Torah. This is alluded to by the first letter of the Torah being a beit (bereshit) and the final letter a lamed (Yisrael), which together form the word lev, “heart.” This alludes to the heart of the Jewish people, which is awake for G-d even when we are slumbering in exile, because the Jewish people, Torah, and G-d are all one unit.

*The Written Torah begins with the letter beit of bereshit, and ends with the letter lamed of Yisrael. Together, these letters form the word lev, “heart.” This alludes to the fact the Torah is constantly present in the heart of every Jew, and even Jews that don’t observe the Torah externally still retain a deep belief in Torah in their hearts, because the Torah and the Jewish people are an inseparable unit.*

Student's  
pg. 6

Since the principle of “don’t read it” is a basic tool of Torah exegesis, we find it employed both at the beginning of the Torah as well as at its conclusion.

והנה את הלימוד של “אל תיקרי” מצינו תיכף ומיד בהתחלת התורה, ועל דרך זה בסיום התורה - “נעוץ תחילתן בסופן וסופן בתחילתן”.

וכמדובר כמה פעמים שהתחלת וסיום התורה הרי זה כולל את כל התורה כולה - כמרוז בזה שהתחלת התורה היא באות ב' (“בראשית”) וסיומה באות ל' (“ישראל”), שזהו תיבת “לב”. שמתייחס ללבן של ישראל, שגם כאשר “אני ישנה בגלותא”, הנה “לבי ער”, משום שישראל אורייתא וקודשא בריך הוא כולא חד.

ומאחר שהלימוד “אל תיקרי” הוא אופן לימוד כללי בתורה - לכן מצינו לימוד זה בהתחלת התורה ובסיומה:

## Bereshit

**Student's** pg. 6 On the very first word of the Torah, Bereshit - "In the beginning" - the Sages expound: "don't read it *bereshit*, but as *bara shitt*, 'created the cavity.' "

אודות התיבה הראשונה בהתחלת התורה - "בראשית". דרשו חכמינו ז"ל<sup>2</sup> "אל תיקרי בראשית אלא ברא שית".

## Source 9 Talmud, Sukkah 49a

**Student's** pg. 7 Rabbah bar bar Chanah said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: The shittin were created during the Six Days of Creation ... The school of Rabbi Yishmael taught: Don't read it "bereshit" but read it "bara shitt" (G-d created the cavity).

אמר רבה בר בר חנה אמר רבי יוחנן: שיתין, מששת ימי בראשית נבראו... תנא דבי רבי ישמעאל: "בראשית", אל תיקרי "בראשית", אלא "ברא שית".

*The Talmud discusses the water and wine libations (pouring) in the Holy Temple. The priests would pour the wine on the edge of the Altar and it would go down to the shittin, cavities under the ground of the Altar. The Talmud says that this space was carved out during the creation of the world, and that is alluded to in the text using this method of interpretation.*

## Yisrael

### >> The Rebbe

**Student's** pg. 7 On the final word of the Torah, Yisrael, the Midrash teaches "don't read it Yisrael, but rather as ra'ah E-l, G-d saw."

ואודות התיבה האחרונה בסיום התורה - "ישראל", נכתב באליהו רבה "אל תיקרי ישראל אלא ראה א-ל".

## Source 10 Tana Devei Eliyahu 27:2

**Student's** pg. 7 When G-d found that all 12 tribes fulfilled Jacob's will, they were like "grapes found in the desert." Don't read it 'Yisrael' but read it "ra'ah-El" (G-d saw) meaning that all their deeds were perfect.

בשעה שהקב"ה מצא את כל שנים עשר שבטים שעשו פלם את רצון יעקב אביהם שנאמר "כענבים במדבר מצאתי ישראל", אל תיקרי ישראל אלא שראה א-ל, שכל מעשיהם מכונים לפניו.

## >> The Rebbe

**Student's** We can derive practical lessons for our lives  
pg. 7 from these “don’t read it...” teachings. The “don’t read it...” teaching at the beginning of the Torah teaches us a lesson about the start of our Divine service, and the “don’t read it...” teaching at the end of the Torah teaches us a lesson about the conclusion of our Divine service.

*The exegetical derivations at the beginning and end of the Torah aren't just localized derivations that teach us about the Temple design and the spiritual status of the tribes before Jacob's death. These are general principles for the Divine service of every one of us.*

### The Foundation of the World

**Student's** The literal meaning of Shitt is “foundation.”  
pg. 8 The sages teach that the *even hashtiyah*, the foundational rock, is the foundation of the entire world.

This means that the *shittin*, the cavities under the Altar in the Temple are the foundation of the entire world, like the Foundation Stone (*even hashtiyah*) which was located in the Holy of Holies in the Temple.

והביאור בזה בעבודת האדם:  
הלימוד “אל תיקרי” שבהתחלת התורה,  
קשור עם התחלת עבודת האדם; והלימוד  
“אל תיקרי” שבסיום התורה, קשור עם  
תכלית השלימות בעבודת האדם:

“שית” פירושו - יסוד. ובלשון חכמינו  
ז”ל אודות “אבן שתיה”, “שממנה  
הושתת כל העולם” - יסוד כל העולם.  
זאת אומרת: ה”שיתין” שתחת המזבח  
בבית המקדש, הם היסוד של כל  
העולם כולו - בדוגמת הענין של “אבן  
שתיה”, ובבית המקדש גופא הרי  
זה קשור עם קדש הקדשים, כמובא  
בהלכות בית הבחירה להרמב”ם<sup>3</sup> “אבן  
היתה בקדש הקדשים במערבו כו”<sup>4</sup>.

### Source 11 Talmud, Yoma 53b; 54b

**Student's** A stone was there from the days of the  
pg. 8 early prophets, and it was called shetiya,  
it was three fingerbreadths higher than  
the ground.

This teaching is congruent with the teaching that the world was created from Jerusalem, as Rabbi Eliezer taught: the

אָבֵן הַיְתָה שֶׁם בְּקֶדֶשׁ הַקְּדוֹשִׁים מִיָּמֹת  
נְבִיאִים הָרִאשׁוֹנִים – דָּוִד וְשְׁמוּאֵל שִׁיְסְדוּ  
אֶת הַמִּקְדָּשׁ – וְאָבֵן זֶה “שְׁתִּיָּה” הַיְתָה  
נִקְרָאת, וְהַיְתָה גְבוּהָהּ מִן הָאָרֶץ שְׁלֹשׁ  
אַצְבָּעוֹת.

שְׁנֵינֵנוּ בְּמִשְׁנֵה כְּשִׁיטַת מִי שְׁאָמַר: מִצִּיּוֹן  
נִבְרָא הָעוֹלָם. שְׁהָרִי שְׁנֵינֵנוּ בְּבִרְיָתָא: רַבִּי  
אֱלִיעֶזֶר אָמַר: עוֹלָם מֵאֲמָצְעֵיתוֹ נִבְרָא,

3. רפ”ד.

4. ואין זה סתירה להמבואר בגמרא (סוכה שם) שה”שיתין” היו תחת המזבח - כי החלל שתחת המזבח היה הולך ונמשך עד מקום קדש הקדשים כו’.

**Student's** world was built from the center, as  
pg. 8 the verse states: "When the dust runs  
into a mass, and the clods cleave fast  
together."

שָׁנְאָמַר: "בְּצִקָּת עֹפָר לְמוֹצָק וְרִגְבִים יִדְבְּקוּ",  
וּכְשֵׁם שְׁעוֹשִׂים בְּרִגְבֵי עֹפָר, שְׂמַתְחִילִים מִן  
הָאֲמֻצָּע תִּחְלָה, וּמוֹסִיפִים רִגְבִים מִסָּבִיב, כִּךְ  
הִיָּתָה גַם בְּרִיאַת הָעוֹלָם.

### Rashi

**Student's** From Jerusalem: Jerusalem was built  
pg. 8 first, and clods of earth massed  
together around it, creating the  
world.

מִצִּיּוֹן נִבְרָא – צִיּוֹן נִבְרָאת תִּחְלָה  
וּסְבִיבֶיהָ נִדְבְּקוּ רִגְבִים עַד סוּף  
הָעוֹלָם מִכָּל צֶדֶד.

The Talmud says that in the Holy of Holies there was a special stone known as the Foundation Stone. The Talmud explains that this stone was the foundation of the entire world, and Rabbi Eliezer even describes how that worked - creation began from Jerusalem and spread outward.

The Rebbe extends this interpretation to the cavities, *shittin*, under the Altar. *Shitt* and *Shetiya* are made up of the same letters, both meaning foundation. The *shittin* too, the Rebbe says, were a foundation for the world.

## >> The Rebbe

**Student's** The meaning of *bara shitt* in our personal  
pg. 9 Divine service is that when we are at the  
beginning of our life's work and we look  
at the external appearance of the world  
- the heavens, the earth, and all that they  
contain - we are told "don't read it *bereshit*  
- "creation" - but *bara shitt* - "created  
the foundation." We shouldn't make the  
mistake of thinking that the world was  
created on its own, because nothing can  
create itself. We need to understand that  
*bara shitt* - G-d created the entire world,  
from its foundation up.

וענינו בעבודת האדם: כאשר יהודי  
נמצא בהתחלת העבודה, והוא מביט  
על כללות מציאות העולם בעיניו בשר,  
שמים וארץ וכל צבאם - אומרים לו  
"אל תיקרי בראשית אלא ברא שית",  
היינו, שמציאות העולם אינה התחלת  
הענין ("בראשית"), מציאותו מעצמותו  
חס ושלום, כי אין דבר עושה את עצמו,  
אלא "ברא שית": ישנו בורא העולם  
שהוא ברא את כל מציאות העולם, החל  
מהיסוד ("שית") של העולם.

When we get into the details, we learn that the foundations of the world are located under the altar and under the Holy of Holies.

וכאשר מתעניין אודות פרטי הענין -  
מסבירים לו שה"שיתין" (יסוד העולם)  
הם תחת המזבח, ויתירה מזו: תחת קודש  
הקדשים במערבו.

The Rebbe interprets the foundation of the world in a deeper sense. A person standing at the outset of their Divine service and studying the first verse of the Torah, "in the beginning G-d created" should not be overwhelmed by the materialism of the world. We must recognize that G-d based the world on the foundations of holiness and spirituality, "under the altar and the Holy of Holies." This gives us a radically different perspective on the world.

\*

Sometimes, we can look at the world around us and see a jungle where man eats man, the fittest survive and there's no judge and no jury. This can make us despondent. How do we rise above it all and live upstanding, good lives? The Torah comes along and tells us that the big wide world before us is made of holiness. The world is created from the cavities under the Altar; meaning, the world's destiny - including the negativity - is holiness. We are to transcend the challenges and bring goodness and holiness into the world.

When we understand that the world is built on holiness and for holiness, that makes the struggle easier and gives us hope.

This is what "don't read it" teaches us about the Torah's first word. Don't think that in the beginning a huge, scary world was created, and that's all there is. The real meaning of the word "bereshit" is that the world is founded upon the Altar, holiness.

## Seeing G-dliness

Student's  
pg. 9

After beginning, we continue learning until we reach the ultimate state of perfection in Torah study, "a wonderful, unparalleled union" with the Giver of the Torah. The ultimate form of union is when the union is tangibly visible, not just something known from hearing about it.

This is what the "don't read it" at the end of the Torah, "don't read it Yisrael, but as ra'ah e-l, G-d saw."

Student's  
pg. 10

When we reach the ultimate perfection in our Divine service we aren't just on the level of "Yisrael," which is a composite of the words "sarita e-l," successfully grappling with G-d. We go further and reach "G-d saw," which can also be understood as "saw G-d," a tangible vision of G-dliness.

ולאחרי התחלת העבודה הרי הוא לומד תורה, עד שמגיע לתכלית השלימות של לימוד התורה - "יחוד נפלא שאין יחוד כמוהו"<sup>5</sup> עם "נותן התורה", והרי תכלית השלימות בענין היחוד הוא - כאשר היחוד הוא באופן של ראייה מוחשית (ולא בבחינת שמיעה בלבד).

ואופן עבודה זו מודגש בלימוד "אל תיקרי" שבסיום התורה - "אל תיקרי ישראל אלא ראה א-ל-ל":

כאשר הוא מגיע לתכלית השלימות בעבודתו (סיום התורה), הנה מעמדו ומצבו אינו רק באופן של "ישראל" כפשטות הכתוב "כי שרית עם אלקים ואנשים ותוכל", אלא עבודתו היא באופן של "ראה א-ל-ל", ראייה מוחשית.



The ultimate state of perfection is when we "see G-d" in the physical world itself. Not only do we perceive the spiritual foundation of the world, but we see the Divinity within it.

זאת אומרת: תכלית שלימות העבודה היא באופן של "ראה א-ל" בעולם גופא, היינו, לא זו בלבד שכאשר מסתכל על העולם הרי הוא רואה את הענין של "ברא שית", היסוד של בריאת העולם, כפי שהוא בסדר ההשתלשלות, אלא באופן של "ראה א-ל" - ספירת החסד ("עולם חסד יבנה"), ובשמות הקדושים - "א-ל".

*When a person studies Torah for many years, and reaches a complete understanding in Torah, they feel and experience spirituality in a tangible sense.*

*We see the physical world day in and day out before our eyes. We live our lives based on it. Spirituality is something we hear about but cannot touch and feel, but we know it is there. There is a purpose and meaning in life, but we cannot see it.*

*After a person refines themselves and becomes more attuned to the spiritual, the tables turn. Spirituality is taken for granted, while the physical is more elusive. Wherever they look, they see G-dliness.*

*The end of the Torah, Yisrael, alludes to the complete process a Jew goes through until they finally see G-dliness.*

\*

*Seeing G-dliness is really something relevant to us all; it means living life cognizant of G-d's guiding Hand in every step. For example: you find yourself stuck in traffic, get angry, and then take it out on your wife who caused you to leave the house late. You're scared of your boss who'll be mad at you for arriving late at work, etc. But one who believes in G-d's hand guiding everything feels G-d is sending them a message. They only need to understand what the message is.*

*By way of analogy: a group of people are eating together in a lunchroom. Suddenly, a young child begins to cry and scream, disturbing everyone. A regular bystander may say "What an undisciplined child." But the child's mother knows this means he is exhausted and hasn't eaten anything since breakfast...*

*In other words, a regular person sees the reality before them and is enraged. The mother, who is deeply connected with the child, immediately tries to understand what's going on and how to resolve it.*

*One who lives with the knowledge that G-d is guiding everything tries to find that understanding within everything that happens to them, to hear what message G-d is sending him, and to act accordingly.*

## D. Don't Rush to Judge

After explaining "don't read it" as it applies to the beginning and end of our spiritual service, the Rebbe gives it a very relevant and practical application for childhood education:

### >> The Rebbe

#### Education

Student's  
pg. 11

The concept of "don't read it..." has a special lesson to teach us regarding education:

True guidance and education requires explaining to children that even though they want a particular item because it is shiny and attractive, or they want to play because they think this will bring them true pleasure - "don't read it..." Don't be fooled by appearances. It may appear beautiful and sweet externally, but in reality it leads to the very opposite.

When we show children something in the world, we need to explain to them that even if it appears to us externally to be good or bad, "don't read it..." it's possible that the appearance is deceptive and it is really the opposite. The attitude towards it, embracing it or rejecting it, needs to be dictated by its true essence.

כללות העניין של "אל תיקרי" קשור במיוחד עם ענין החינוך:

חינוך והדרכה אמיתיים מתבטאים בזה שמסבירים לילד, שעל אף שהוא רוצה וחפץ בדבר מסוים כי הוא "נחמד למראה", הוא רוצה לשחק כי הוא חושב שזו ההנאה האמיתית, ונדמה לו שעל ידי זה יהיה לו תענוג אמיתי - אומרים לו "אל תיקרי": "אל תבט אל מראהו" שהוא "נחמד למראה", זה אמנם נראה יפה ומתוק מבחוץ, אך למרות ש"נופת תטופנה שפתי זרה", הנה "אחריתה מרה כלענה".

זאת אומרת, אף על פי שכלפי חוץ זה נראה כמו דבר מתוק, לפועל זה מביא להיפך מהמתיקות, עד לתכלית הירידה, היפך העניין של "נופת".

ועל דרך זה, כשמראים לילד משהו בענייני העולם, מסבירים לו שעליו לדעת, שאפילו שדבר מסוים נראה בצורה מסוימת (טוב או רע), אז "אל תיקרי" - יכול להיות שבאמת זה באופן אחר לגמרי ממה שזה נראה. ולכן הוא צריך לנהוג בו, או בימין מקרבת או בשמאל דוחה, לפי עניינו האמיתי.

## Source 12 Proverbs 8:3-4

Student's  
pg. 12

For the lips of a strange woman drip honey and her palette is smoother than oil, but her end is as bitter as wormwood."

כִּי נִפְתַּת תִּטְּפֶנָּה שְׁפָתַי זָרָה וְחֶלֶק מִשְׁמָן  
חֶפְזָה. וְאַחֲרֵיתָהּ מָרָה כְּלַעֲנָה חֲדָה כְּתֹרֵב  
פִּיזוֹת.

Metzudat David

Student's  
pg. 12

One must be very vigilant in resisting temptation, for the harlot's words are sweet as honey and smoother than oil.

"כִּי נִפְתַּת" – ר"ל: מְאוּד צָרִיךְ לְהִיזָת  
נְזָהָר לְכָל יַפְתָּה, כִּי אִמְרֵי הַזּוֹנָה  
הֵמָּה עֲרֻבִים וּמְתוּקִים כְּנִפְתַּת צוּפִים,  
וְהֵמָּה חֶלְקִים יוֹתֵר מִשְׁמָן.

**Her end:** The result of falling for temptation is as bitter as wormwood.

"וְאַחֲרֵיתָהּ" – אֲכָל אַחֲרֵית הַפְתּוּי  
מָרָה כְּלַעֲנָה.

"Don't read it" is telling us: Do not accept matters at face value. Probe deeper and see if there's something beneath the surface. The Rebbe applies this to life: When we see something that appears sweet and good, we cannot accept it as is - "don't read it." We need to look beneath the surface and examine whether it is truly beneficial or not.

When a child wants more and more candy, or an iPhone, we should explain to them that not everything that looks sweet is good for them.

## >> The Rebbe

### "Don't read it" in Worldly Affairs

Student's  
pg. 12

When we begin to educate Jewish children, we explain to them that G-d chose us from among all the nations to be his special people, and that G-d calls us a "wise and understanding people." As a result, we are supposed to conduct ourselves differently than everyone else, "Your people will be distinguished from every other nation on the face of the earth." This doesn't only apply to our study of Torah, prayer, and other religious affairs - that goes without saying. Rather, even when we are engaging in worldly matters - eating, sleeping, and the like - our conduct needs to be distinct

זאת אומרת: כאשר מתחילים לחנך את ילדי ישראל, ומסבירים להם ש"אתה בחרתנו מכל העמים", "עם חכם ונבון", ולכן צריכה להיות הנהגתם באופן של "ונפלינו אני ועמך מכל העם אשר על פני האדמה" - אין זה רק כאשר מדובר אודות לימוד התורה ועבודת התפלה וכיוצא בזה (כי זהו דבר המובן מעצמו), אלא גם כאשר מדובר אודות עניני העולם, אכילה ושתייה וכו', צריך להיות ניכר בהנהגתם שהם שייכים ל"עם חכם ונבון", וכמו

**Student's** and we need to be recognizable as belonging  
pg. 12 to the "wise and understanding people."  
As Maimonides writes, "a wise person is  
recognizable from how they eat and drink."

*A Jew must act justly and morally, not only during prayer or Torah learning, but even when eating or drinking or engaging in business, he must act in a distinct way.*

**Student's** This is the lesson of "don't read it" When  
pg. 13 it comes to worldly affairs, our approach  
as Jews can't be the same as the way non-  
Jews typically approach them - "don't read  
it." Our conduct in worldly affairs must  
express "Your people will be distinguished  
from every other nation on the face of the  
earth."

For example: when a Jewish child walks  
down the street and sees a snack or drink,  
they can't just eat it immediately. They must  
first check whether this food is kosher and  
permitted for consumption for a Jew. "Don't  
read it" the way things appear externally,  
but rather as they are defined in the Code  
of Jewish Law.

This is the foundational principle of  
education for Jewish boys and girls. When  
children are educated in this path the  
entire home acts accordingly, and all of  
the conduct in the home reflects "G-d will  
bless you in all that you do."

שכתב הרמב"ם 'שהחכם ניכר במאכלו  
ובמשקהו וכו'.

וזהו כללות הענין "אל תיקרי": כאשר  
מדובר אודות עניני העולם, הנה אצל  
יהודי אין יכולים להיות עניני העולם  
כפי שהם בפשטות אצל אומות העולם,  
אלא הנהגתו בעניני העולם היא באופן  
של "ונפלינו אני ועמך מכל העם אשר  
על פני האדמה".

ולדוגמא: כאשר ילד יהודי יוצא לרחוב  
ורואה דבר מאכל ומשקה, אינו יכול  
לאכול ולשתות תיכף ומיד, אלא לכל  
לראש צריך הוא לברר אם מאכל ומשקה  
זה מותר ליהודי; "אל תיקרי" כפי  
שהדבר נראה בגלוי, אלא כפי שהדבר  
הוא בשולחן ערוך!

וזהו יסוד החינוך של בני ובנות ישראל,  
וכאשר החינוך הוא באופן כזה, הרי ברוח  
זו מתנהג כל הבית כולו - היינו, שניכר  
בהנהגת כל הבית כולו כללות הענין של  
"וברכך ה' אלקיך בכל אשר תעשה".

משיחת כ"ף מנחם אב, ה'תשמ"א  
הנחה בלתי מוגה.  
התוועדות כ"ף אב ה'תשמ"א,  
שיחות קודש כרך ד, ע' י"ז (442)

## Story Four cups of milk for the Seder night

*One Erev Pesach in the afternoon, a man asked Rabbi Yosef Ber Soloveitchik of Brisk, Poland whether it is permissible to use four cups of milk instead of wine at the Seder. The rabbi told him that he had asked a difficult question and that time did not permit him to look into it immediately. He then gave him 100 rubles and wished him a happy Yom Tov. The rabbi's wife, who observed this, asked, "Why did you give him so much money? Couldn't he buy wine for much less than that?" The Rabbi explained, "If he considered using milk, obviously he also does not have meat for the festive meal, and perhaps he is missing many other things also. Therefore, I gave him enough money to ensure that he and his family will have all their needs."*

\*

*This rabbi heeded the lesson of "don't read it." He could have simply answered the question: one cannot drink milk for the four cups. But he probed deeper and realized what was behind the strange question. He didn't look at the superficial question, but understood where it was coming from, and helped a family celebrate the holiday with dignity.*

*This is a lesson for us all. Always search for the deeper meaning of everything you encounter. Don't suffice with a superficial understanding, but read between the lines and act accordingly.*