



At The SHABBAT TABLE

PARSHAT TOLDOT

To receive via email, reach out
to mishael@parshagrowth.com

The Omelets of Life

Gordon Ramsay, one of the world's most celebrated chefs and restaurateurs, was once asked what he looks for when hiring a new chef. His answer was simple: "I watch them make an omelet."

There's a story about a Jew spotted by a fellow Jew in the distant city of Bangkok, Thailand. Surprised, the man asked, "What are you doing here?" The other replied sadly, "I'm running away."

"Running away? All the way to Bangkok? Why?" He sighed. "I recently got divorced. My wife hates me. My kids hate me. So I bought a ticket to Bangkok, and now I'm wandering these streets. I just don't understand it. I did so many big things for them! I took them to Disneyland, I took them to Europe, I bought them expensive gifts. I got my daughter a car, my son World Series tickets, my wife a \$20,000 necklace. How could they hate me? Okay, yes — I was often grumpy, and maybe I didn't give them the warmth or attention they needed, but look at all the big things I did for them! I just don't get it." And with that, he walked off into the Bangkok night.

What this man didn't realize is a simple truth: people don't really care about the big things. The grand gestures, the luxury trips, the expensive gifts —they're nice, but they aren't what make someone feel loved. What people truly crave are the small things: consistent care, genuine attention, being present through good and bad, celebrating even the tiniest milestones. These small, steady moments are what build connection and trust.

It's the same with our relationship with Hashem. Of course it's beautiful to learn Torah all night on Hoshana Rabba — but Hashem also treasures our learning on a random Tuesday in December when it's cold and raining. Of course He cherishes our heartfelt prayers during Ne'ilah on Yom Kippur — but He also longs to hear our prayers on an ordinary weekday. He wants to see us dance for joy when it's not Simchat Torah, to seek forgiveness even when it's not Elul, and to keep showing up in the small ways, day after day.

That is why Ramsay didn't test his chefs by how well they fillet a sea-bass or sear a ribeye. He watches them make an omelet. Because if a chef with great skill has mastered the smallest, simplest dish, they've mastered their craft. The difference between a good restaurant and a great one isn't the big things — it's the small ones, done to perfection.

And perhaps that's the secret: the people who change the world, the people who light up lives, are rarely those who do the occasional spectacular thing. They are the ones who show up again and again in the small, steady, quiet ways. If we want greatness in our homes, in our relationships, and in our service of Hashem, it begins with the spiritual "omelets" of life: the little things done with love, until they become everything.

The smallest unit in the world is the atom. The most powerful force in the world is the atom bomb. Of course it's not a coincidence; greatness is built by mastering countless small things.

(Based on a d'var Torah shared by R' Hillel Eisenman)

"A person who feels appreciated will always do more than what is expected."

The "FFB's" Struggle

The beginning of the Parsha narrates how Yitzchak and Rivka were originally childless, and after immense prayer from both of them, they were blessed with twins. Rashi (commenting on Gen. 25:21) writes that it was ultimately the prayers of Yitzchak that were answered over Rivka's, because "there is no comparison between the prayer of a righteous person who is the son of a righteous person (צדיק בן צדיק) and the prayer of a righteous person who is the child of a wicked person (צדיק בן רשע)." In other words, since Yitzchak had pure roots, he had an advantage over his wife, who came from a family of wicked people, and that gave his prayer more potency.

The *Saba of Kelm* raised a fascinating point. If anything, shouldn't it be the opposite? In Tractate Berachot, the Talmud highlights the incredible merit of someone who had been exposed to darkness yet overcame the challenges, teaching that "in a place where the *ba'al teshuva* stands, the complete *tzaddik* (since youth) cannot stand." We even find in the Prophets that Ovadiah's background, a convert dwelling among evil people, was to his credit!

His answer is astounding. He explains that although the 'righteous individual who is the child of a wicked person' indeed has enormous merit, there is a certain element in which the 'righteous individual who is the child of a righteous person' earns more credit. Yes, the *ba'al teshuva* is given enormous acknowledgment for overcoming the negativity and having chosen his own path — which is ultimately why he contains so much greatness. There is no doubt that the *ba'al teshuva* accrues immense spiritual merit for the many adversities he had to face.

Yet, from a different angle, the complete and wholesome *tzaddik* had somewhat of a different challenge that was unique for him to surmount: maintaining excitement and passion for Judaism and personal service of Hashem. Whereas the *ba'al teshuva* generally has more natural enthusiasm for mitzvot because of its newness and because he owns his Jewish identity, it may present as more of a challenge for the "frum from birth," who grew up with religious practice and perhaps is more compelled to just go through the motions... Thus, although the 'Rivka's' are spiritually soaring, a significant obstacle does exist for the 'Yitzchak's,' in which the two do not compare.

Whether you are *ba'al teshuva* or 'frum from birth,' you have a special feature and role in G-d's ultimate scheme of things. Don't disown your past; embrace your struggles and use them to spread light and hope in the world.

(Based on a d'var Torah shared by R' Avraham Mirsky)