

תורת אביגדור

הגאון ר' אביגדור מיללער זצ"ל

Rav Avigdor Miller on Parshas Vayikra

Adapted from his Tapes, Seforim and Writings of Talmidim

נתנדב לזכות

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בת מרים

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Rav Avigdor Miller ztz"l on

פרשת ויקרא

KORBANOS: FINDING FAVOR

As we read through this week's parsha as well as the rest of Sefer Vayikra, we see the theme of seeking Hashem's favor is constantly reiterated. יקריב אותו לריצונו - "He shall bring it for his favor before Hashem" (Vayikra 1:3). "For your favor you shall slaughter it" (ibid. 19:5). "For your favor" (22:19, 22:29, 23:11). To find favor in the eyes of Hashem is the highest achievement possible in this world. And if the proper attitudes and the proper procedures of bringing the offerings can gain for a man the favor of Hashem, as the pesukim repeatedly declare, then we learn how important the עבודת הקרבנות is. The emotions that are aroused in one who brings the offerings properly, and the wealth of True Knowledge of Hashem which results from such experiences, can elevate a man and bestow upon him such excellence that he actually comes to deserve the favor of Hashem. And therefore, if you have a desire that Hakodosh Boruch Hu should look down at you and say, "My beautiful child, I'm so happy with you, I love you," then don't go home yet because the subject of the night is for you.

The subject of *korbanos* is very important, but also very misunderstood. When we hear about *korbanos* today, so some people think that in the olden days it was justified, and maybe

even important. You think that in those days, maybe people had more antiquated ideas about how to serve Hashem. Everybody brought *korbanos*, so we did as well. But nowadays, who needs *korbanos*?! We have *tefillah*, the **עבודה שבלב**, the service of Hashem that emanates from the heart, so who needs animal sacrifice?

“SERVE ME WITH SACRIFICE” SAYS HASHEM

And the answer is that we all need the *korbanos*. The offering of a *korban* is of utmost importance. So pay attention because we're going to be hearing a very important principle now. When Hakodosh Boruch Hu sent Moshe Rabeinu to Pharoah to negotiate for the release of the Bnei Yisroel from Mitzrayim he said **שלה את עמי ויעבדוני** - “Send out My people and they shall serve Me” (Shemos 7:26). So people think that “Serve Me” means that they should maybe come together for a minyan, they should do mitzvos, learn Torah. No, no. That's included, yes, all that is included in **ויעבדוני**, but what it means primarily is that that they should serve Me by bringing *korbanos*. That's the *avodah* that Hashem was speaking of. “Send out My people so that they should bring offerings to Me.”

And that's what happened. We find that right after the Torah was given at Har Sinai, the very first business was to build the Mishkan where they could bring *korbanos*. And the *korbanos* and the Mishkan take up more space than any other subject. Just count the *sedrahs*. They're all talking about the building of the Mishkan and the details, all the *pratei pratim*. And that's all an introduction. Because then comes Vayikra, the *korbanos*. That's what Vayikra is - *korbanos*.

OUR PURPOSE IN LIFE: BLOOD SACRIFICE

So we're learning here what our purpose is in this world. Why are we here today? **שלה את עמי** - “Send out My people,” says Hashem. I'm taking them out of Mitzrayim. And for what? **ויעבדוני** - so that they should bring *korbanos* to Me.” We're here to sacrifice

animals to Hashem. That's why we came out of Mitzrayim. That's why we came out of Mitzrayim?! Now that needs an explanation.

WE WANT MOSHIACH NOW!

על שלשה דברים העולם עומד - "On three things the world stands" (Avos 1:2). And one of them is the עבודה. You know, some people say that *Avodah* means *korbanos* also; yes, that too. They won't deny that. But the true *avodah*, they'll tell you, is *tefillah*. But that is wrong. *Avodah* means *korbanos*. And that's why we're not satisfied today with what we have. We say ברוך אתה השם שיומע תפלה - Yes, Hashem, You listen to our *tefillos*. You're listening when we speak to You. But what's the next thing we say right away? רצה השם אלוקינו - We want the *avodah*; we're not satisfied with the *tefillah*, with the עבודה שבלב. We want the real thing. We're asking for the *avodas hakorbanos*. And when you finish *shemonah esrei*, you should feel like a person who just ate a full meal, but without any solid food, maybe just some *nosherei*. And so you say יהי רצון מלפניך השם אלוקינו שיבנה בית המקדש - Give back the *avodah* to us once more. Then we'll be serving You for real.

Now the service of sacrificing to Hashem actually began many years before the building of the *Mishkan*. And therefore, we'll turn to our first father, the great personage of Avraham Avinu, to begin this subject.

THE "OTHER" RAM

When Avraham Avinu attempted to sacrifice his son Yitzchok, and Hashem said, אל תשלח ידך אל הנער - Don't do it; don't stretch out your hand to *shecht* Yitzchok (Vayeira 22:12), so it should've been all over. Avraham should have gone home happily. He had passed the test, and he still had Yitzchok! But no, he didn't go home. He came here to bring a sacrifice, so how could he go home without bringing an offering to Hashem?!

So Avraham looked around and he saw an איל אחר נאהו בסבך - "Another ram that was caught in the bushes by his horns" - בקרניו

(ibid. 22:13). And Avraham said, "That ram, I'm going to use it as a sacrifice." But we must pay attention to the words of the Torah here. It says אֵיל אֲחֵר - "Another ram." The word אֲחֵר, another, is a queer word. That word doesn't belong here. Another ram? Where was the first ram?

And we'll explain as follows. At that moment a fire of compassion for Yitzchok raged in Avraham's heart, yet a still greater fire of love for Hashem stormed up and filled his soul with the spirit of self-sacrifice to Him, the self-sacrifice that comes from the love of Hashem that is the greatest of all emotions. Avraham said, "Yitzchok should have been sacrificed." Yes, that's what Avraham was thinking. "I wanted to show Hakodosh Boruch Hu that the thing that I love most in this world, I'm giving away for Him. But He said no. So I'm going to take this ram, *another* ram, instead of Yitzchok. And when I offer up this ram on the altar my intention will be that I am offering up my son to Hashem."

AVRAHAM AVINU DEFEATS THE CRUSADERS

The offering of an animal symbolizes the willingness of a person to offer his own child and certainly himself on the altar. "With what shall I come before Hashem to be humbled to Hashem on high? Shall I give my firstborn to You...?" (Michah 6:7). And the offering of an animal instead of one's body was not an empty lesson for Hashem's people. When the Crusaders gathered outside of the Shuls where the Jewish townspeople had taken shelter, so these "noble" Christian warriors, the ones who professed love for everyone, the great orators and professors of turning the other cheek, stood there with their hacks breaking down the doors, thirsting to slaughter men, women and children, who weren't willing to accept their nothing god.

And faced with this alternative of forced conversion to an alien religion, the Jewish mothers and fathers willingly picked up knives, and with tears pouring down they cheeks, they slaughtered their children, and then themselves. Avraham

Avinu's willingness to serve Hashem, even by slaughtering his beloved son, was emulated many times over by his descendants. The "simple" fathers and mothers of our great nation thus retraced the footsteps of our father, Avraham Avinu, who bound his son on the altar and stretched out the sharp blade in order to slit the throat of his beloved son and to sacrifice him to Hashem. Thus our nation learned to sacrifice their lives for Hashem. עליך הרגנו כל היום נחשבתנו כצאן טבחה - "For You we have been killed all the day; we are accounted as sheep to the slaughter" (Tehillim 44:23)

REENACTING THE AKEIDA IN THE BEIS HAMIKDASH

And it was that willingness, that undivided devotion to Hashem, that we kept alive when we brought sheep and cattle as *korbanos* in the Mikdash. The laws of the *korbanos* are not merely details of an archaic sacrificial rite: details of the dissecting of an animal into its parts, blood applications on the sides of an altar, and the offering onto the fire of the animal's limbs, organs and fats. No, it's much more than that. It's details of the acts of great devotion and dedication to Hashem - the willingness to vicariously give back to Hakodosh Boruch Hu everything that He has given to us. To give Him back our lives.

WHAT MAKES YOU A MAN?

The parsha of *korbanos* begin with the following words: אדם כי יקריב מכם קרבן להשם. This means: "A man of you, when he offers an offering..." (Vayikra 1:2) but the word *Adam*, a man, seems superfluous. And more than being superfluous, it is unique, for elsewhere it is never found in connection with the performance of a mitzvah. And therefore, we can sense here something more profound.

The word *Adam* signifies the source from where Mankind first came, *Adamah*, the earth. And it intimates, it hints, to the place where all of Mankind will one day return. And so the possuk is telling us that because you are an *Adam*, because you are still breathing and your heart is still beating - you have not yet

been returned to the ground from where you came - just because of that, it is befitting to express gratitude to your Creator by means of a *korban*.

THE FUN OF NOT BEING UNDERGROUND

In the context of our *possuk*, the word *Adam* teaches the necessity for one created from the earth (*Adamah*) to be grateful for life itself, for being an *Adam*. Instead of being part of the soil, from where he was formed, he is walking above the ground, and is enjoying the gift of life and the perfect and wondrous body that Hashem is giving him. And the *korban* is one of the great methods of demonstrating that appreciation. It is as if it was written: "To be a *true Adam*, deserving of that title, he should understand the necessity of bringing an offering to his Creator, to the One who continues to give him life." Gratitude for life itself is supposed to be the fundamental attitude of an *Adam*, and as he cultivates this emotion and develops it, he becomes so much more worthy of that title - *Adam*.

Now, you fellows here might not agree with that. You might say the words; you might even be able to tell others about it. But you don't even begin to recognize how indebted you are to Hashem for your being created as an *Adam*, for your body that was formed from the *Adamah*, and that continues to live.

JUST A LITTLE TOO LATE

You know when you appreciate it? You know when? When a man is lying in the hospital, and the doctors just told him that his days are numbered. He has a week or so left in this world. "Ohhh!" he says. "If I could just get out in the street again. If I could just live, and walk around again! What a happiness it would be!" He looks down from the hospital window and he sees the heads of the people scurrying about on the street, going to work, going about their daily lives, with their regular troubles. And he's jealous. He's so jealous of them. They're walking carefree, outside

of the hospital. They're living, they're alive, and for him it will soon be all over.

So don't wait till then! When you open up your eyes in the morning, and you realize that you're still here - you made it - so thank Hashem for the gift of life. Isn't it good to be alive?! There's nothing sweeter than being alive.

I always tell you this *etzah* so I'll say it once more. If you're ever feeling down, take a walk past the cemetery. And think about the people who already left this world. They're on the other side and you're still here! It's so much fun to be on this side of the cemetery fence! It's a *ta'anug* to be alive.

And that's what it says: וְכָל הַחַיִּים יִדְוֶךָ סְלָה - "And all the living will praise You forever" (Shemonah Esrei). What's the word "living" doing here? It should say "Everyone will praise you forever" and finished. What's "And all the living"? It's telling you: *Just* because you are alive - *just* because of that, that's enough of a reason to praise Hashem forever.

NO ONE'S GONNA LIVE FOREVER

But because you were alive yesterday, and you plan on being alive tomorrow - as far as you're concerned you're going to live another thousand years. Only other people die, you think. And so you don't think about it and your mind becomes stultified. You never studied this happiness and so you don't appreciate it.

"I thank You Hashem for giving me life." You have to say it! If you've never once turned to Hashem and said "Thank You Hashem for bringing me into this world and keeping me alive," then you haven't even taken the first step in serving Hashem. Don't be ashamed. You should say it. If you wish you could wait till your husband or your mother leave the room, so they won't get nervous about you, but one way or another you're going to have to say it. You're going to have to take that first step towards appreciating the gift of being alive.

But even that is only a first step. A tiny little step. Of course, when you come to the Next World, you'll see that even that tiny little step, talking to Hashem, thanking Him for life, is really a tremendous step, but it's still only the beginning. Because gratitude to Hashem for being alive is what you're alive for.

HUMAN SACRIFICE

And this gratitude is most clearly and efficiently demonstrated by offering one's own body to Hashem in the form of a sacrifice. Only that Hashem doesn't want that from us. He has big expectations from us in this world. There's a lot we have to accomplish during our stay here, and if we would offer ourselves on the fire of the *mizbayach* many of those opportunities would go lost. And therefore, Hashem tells us here, that we are to demonstrate our gratitude to Hashem with a token demonstration by offering our own bodies to Him in the form of an animal.

Now it's an important principle that you're hearing right now. The *korbanos* were a fundamental demonstration that **השם מלך**, and we are offering to Him *korbanos* that represent ourselves, because He is the One who gave us everything, our lives are completely dependent on Him. And in our gratitude we are constantly trying to show Him that we recognize that truth by offering ourselves to Him, and our children to Him. If possible we would do it - but He doesn't let us.

And so instead of taking the sharp knife to your own throat, the animal that you slaughter to Hashem is a vicarious offering of yourself to Hashem in gratitude for the gift of life. And by reliving such an uplifting experience over and over again we are reminded more and more strongly about how indebted we are to Hashem. After experiencing such an event, while thinking these thoughts, you weren't the same person anymore.

TEFILLAH VS KORBANOS

And that's why no matter how much you exert yourself in your tefillah with kavanah, it won't compare with the experience

of putting yourself on the *mizbayach* and going up in smoke to Hashem. Now, tefillah is a very great thing. It's from the דברים העומדים ברומו של עולם. But it cannot compete with the greatness achieved by korbanos. And that's why Moshe Rabeinu said to Pharaoh in the name of Hashem: - "שלח את עמי ויעבדוני" - "Send out My Nation so that they should sacrifice to Me." Because by bringing *korbanos* to Hashem, that's the most effective way to knock into that thick head of yours how much you are truly indebted to Him.

What I'm telling you now is a very important understanding of the fundamental principle, of what does it mean to bring offerings. And so we're going to take a little time to study some of the *halachos*, some of the details, and see how they can help us better internalize the service of gratitude, the עבודת הקרבנות.

SH'LUCHO SHEL ADAM K'MOSO

When a person approached the *mizbayach* to offer a *korban* it says: - "וּסְמַךְ אֶת יָדוֹ עַל רֹאשׁ הָעוֹלָה" - "And he shall lean his hand on the head of the *olah*" (ibid. 1:4). He leans his weight on it. The laying of the hands upon the head of the offering signifies the appointment of the offering as a agent, a substitute, for the owner of the offering. When Moshe Rabeinu laid his hands upon the head of Yehoshua, וַיִּסְמֹךְ אֶת יָדָיו עָלָיו (Bamidbar 27:23), he thereby made Yehoshua his agent to take over as leader and teacher of the Am Yisroel. שְׁלוּחוֹ שֶׁל אָדָם כְּמוֹתוֹ. And in the same sense, the man that lays his hands upon the head of his offering thereby makes it his agent, as if he himself is being offered to Hashem.

And that's why the halacha is that *סְמוּכָה בְּכָל כֹּחַ* - "One must lean on the animal with all of his strength" (Chagigah 16b). You can't just give a little bit of a lean and that's all. No; you had to press down with all of your strength. And that was for the purpose of waking you up to realize that this animal was representing you. And so you realized that your *olah* is not merely a lamb that is being *shechted* and brought up on the fire - it's you!

NOT FOR THOSE WITH QUEASY STOMACHS

And the halacha is that תיכף לסמיכה שחיטה - "The *shechita* must be done immediately after the leaning" (Brachos 42a). And that leaves no time for the owner of the *beheima* to walk away. Even if he's not going to do the *shechita* - often he would also do the *shechita* himself; שחיטה כשירה בור - but even if he wouldn't do it, he saw it. The owner of the offering was always present to witness how *he* is vicariously being slaughtered as an offering to Hashem. And so, he's watching as the neck is cut - the neck of his *beheima*. He can't avoid seeing the Kohen *shecht* the *olah*. He's watching as the neck is cut, and the blood is gushing forth from the gash. It's blood coming from his cut neck! And he looks at it in awe: "Yes, that's what I want! That's me! I owe my life to You and I would allow myself to be slaughtered. Only that You don't let. But that's what I want."

SO WHO'S THE DUMB OX HERE?

Now, I know that you think it's just words, that I'm exaggerating. But what do you think? That the *ba'al ha'korbon* would stand there like a dumb ox with an empty mind? No, it was a very momentous and emotional experience. He would watch as the pieces of the offering are cut apart and he would feel himself being cut up into pieces. And then how the blood and limbs - *his* blood and limbs - are put onto the altar. And then it all rises up in the smoke to Hakodosh Boruch Hu above. He's going up in the smoke. He's offering up his entire body in the smoke to Hashem. And all of these vicarious experiences set his soul on fire with unlimited devotion to Hashem. A person who went through this was never the same again. He knew that he had given himself entirely to Hakodosh Boruch Hu. And it left a tremendous impression on him.

SHEEP: MAN'S BEST FRIEND

Now, the sole beasts that are fit for *korbanos* are cattle, sheep and goats. And one of the reasons for that is in accordance

with this principle that we are speaking about, that the animal stands in your place. These beasts are not meat-eaters, and they are generally harmless and in constant contact with humans. In order to fulfill the symbolism of a man's sacrifice of his own body to Hashem, these domestic and relatively clean animals are best suited for such symbolism. Usually the owners are personally acquainted with each of their domestic beasts. Ask any farmer - I'm talking about before commercial farming - every farmer felt a connection with the animals that he raised in his backyard. They were born and bred close to their owners, and when a person would offer up his animal onto the fire, it would arouse emotions that lent a sense of reality to this symbolism of offering one's self.

Now, when they brought a *korban olah*, a burnt offering, there was a mitzvah to skin it, to take the skin off the animal - the mitzvah of *hefshet*. Now why do you need this? You're burning the whole animal on the *mizbayach*. It's an olah, it's being burned up completely, so why can't you just burn it completely, together with the skin? But no, we're told you have to skin it.

THE ANIMAL BECOMES HUMAN

And the answer is that when you are offering up a *korban*, and the skin is still on it, it looks too much like a *beheima*. The skin is a give away! But the Torah wants it to look like a human, not like a *beheima*. So the skin is taken off and it looks like parts of a human being. That's the reason for the *hefshet*; it should look like he's offering up a human being.

And there's another mitzvah as well. *Nitu'ach* - that you have to cut it up. ונתת אותה לנתחה - "And he should cut it into its pieces" (ibid. 1:6). The offering is not brought to the *mizbayach* as one whole unit, but it is divided into parts according to its limbs. You have to cut it up into its separate limbs; the feet separate, the hands separate, every part separate.

Why do we do this? They're burning the whole thing anyways - so why do you have to put each piece up on the

mizbayach individually? The first reason is because when it's skinned and cut into its limbs, it doesn't look like a sheep's thigh or leg anymore. It looks like your leg! The limbs, skinned and separated, resemble more readily the flesh and limbs of man.

But there is another, even more important reason why we cut the *korban* into its limbs. And that's going to be our subject for tonight.

EACH BODY PART SEPARATELY

The purpose of life, gratitude to Hakodosh Boruch Hu, is not sufficiently fulfilled by expressing thanks for the entire body at once; rather by considering each limb separately, and by understanding the kindness of the Creator which each part of the body demonstrates. And therefore, as the Kohen walked slowly up the ramp, the owner of the *korban* would watch as each separate limb was offered up. And he, as well as the Kohen performing the service, would be thinking thoughts of gratitude to Hashem for that specific limb. "I'm thanking you for this limb Hashem. And that limb. And that one, and this one as well." Separately, one by one.

THAT LEG LOOKS FAMILIAR

And so when the Kohen would walk up the ramp, carrying the foot of the lamb, do you know what the owner of the *korban* was thinking? "It's a leg!" The leg, stripped of its skin, and separated from the body of the animal looked eerily like his own leg. And he paid attention to that. And he knew that he was indebted to Hashem for his legs.

Do you know what a delight it is to walk? No, you don't. Because walking is only a delight for the thinking man. As he walks down the street, he doesn't waste that great opportunity. Walking is an opportunity for greatness. Only that the foolish person will waste the time thinking about a sharp word that his boss said to him, or what his wife might be preparing at home for

supper. But the wise man is thinking about his legs as he walks. As his thigh swings forward in effortless motion, he considers the miracle of the smoothly functioning joints, that are being constantly bathed in a liquid. It's an anti-friction liquid so that as his joints bend this way and that way, he feels no pain. The joints aren't grinding against each other. And he marvels as his knee bends and straightens again and again without any sensation of chafing or scraping. And the ankle joints and the complex arch bones are flexing and relaxing in easy motion.

UBER EXPRESS

Your legs are a Cadillac, providing you with 24 hour, ever-ready transportation. They are available at all times, on a second's notice, to take you wherever you want to go. And when you arrive at your destination, you don't have to look for a parking space. Your feet tuck conveniently under you if you want to sit, and will lock into place should you desire to remain standing. And it's all day, every day. A person will walk more than a hundred thousand miles in his lifetime. A hundred thousand miles!

Boruch Hashem, I can walk! There are people in the street who are sitting in wheelchairs. Rolling the wheels, trying to get in and out of buildings.

Now I could go on and speak to you for hours about the wonders of our legs. But it wouldn't help. Because *you* have to do the work. As you walk, if you pay attention to what's doing down there, you'll be surprised at how much happiness is available just from your legs.

And then he sees the Kohen carrying the kidney. Oh, the wonderful gift of the kidney. Here's a man who can't even urinate. He has a machine twice a week, for three hours at a time, to clean his body - a kidney machine. He can't urinate, he has no kidneys. Boruch Hashem you can urinate! You come out of the *beis hakissei*

and you did it! You accomplished your mission successfully. Boruch Hashem! רופא כל בשר ומפליא לעשות. It's a miracle!

BLOOD CLEANERS

You know the *kadmonim*, the earlier *mefarshim* tried to explain exactly what is this miracle. *Maflee la'asos* means that it's a miracle. But the truth is that you don't have to search for the miracle, you don't have to look for a reason. It's a miracle, as clear as day. Your kidneys are able to take a small amount of blood and continually cleanse it. That same blood courses through your body again and again. And your kidneys are constantly cleaning out your blood.

And so when the Kohen was carrying up the kidney to the fire on top of the *mizbayach*, the owner was gaining a tremendous wealth. Because he was forcing himself to become more and more aware of what it means to have a kidney. "Hashem, You gave me this great gift. And really I should offer it back to you. And I would be willing to part with it, to express my gratitude to you for its use for so many years. But no, you want me to keep it even longer. But at least this, at least accept from me this kidney, the kidney of the lamb, as a symbolic gesture of me offering up my own kidney to you in gratitude."

ASHER YATZAR - THE MINI KORBAN

Now, we don't have the chance today to offer up our kidneys, or the kidneys of a sheep. But we do have אשר יצר. At least that you can do. To say thank you with a sincere feeling of gratitude, of humility before the One who is giving you the kidney and is not asking for it back.

And so the עבודת הקרבנות is teaching us that it's not enough for us to merely say thank You to Hashem for life in general. A genuine attitude of gratitude will only develop from thanking Hashem for all the individual kindnesses on their own. You can't just say thank you and think that you have fulfilled your

responsibility. If you want to fulfill the *avodah* of the *korbanos* today, even when the Beis Hamikdash is not standing, then you must study each detail of the *chesed* Hashem, and sing a song of gratitude for that detail in particular.

It's like Dovid Hamelech said: כל עצמותי תאמרנה השם מי כמוך - "All my parts, all my limbs and all my organs, say 'Hashem who is like You'" (Tehillim 35:10). "All my parts." What does it mean that my limbs are singing to Hashem? Now some people think that it means that you have to shake your body when you daven. No, that's not the *pshat*. You can do it if you wish, but that's not the *pshat* however.

MY LIMBS ARE SINGING

What he does mean is that your body is singing! Each limb sings its own song of praise and gratitude to Hashem. Every part of your body plays its role in aggrandizing Hashem. Every part of your body, every limb, every organ, is filled with so much wisdom and so much *chesed*, that it's calling out to you, singing out to you, and asking you to join the chorus of gratitude to Hashem.

I'm looking at you right now and I see your two eyes. Even if all you had was the gift of eyes, it would be enough of a reason to thank Hashem all the days of your life. Eyes are a marvel! It's a miracle that you can see with your eyes - a miracle. What is sight? You understand sight? Does a camera see? A camera doesn't see. It just registers the light that comes into the eye of the camera, and it effects the negative. But you see! Your brain sees! And they are working so efficiently that you forget about them. They can view distant objects and then, upon your wish, they instantaneously adjust to focus on nearby objects. Seeing is one of the great delights of life. It's a pleasure to be able to open your eyes and see what's going on around you.

BE A SHOTEH!

But you have to stop and think about them. “Look how good my eyes are. Boruch Hashem I have good eyes.” Good eyes?! Everyone has eyes! They'll ridicule you outside in the street when you say that your eyes are making you happy!. But who cares what they say- מוטב לאדם שיקרא שוטה כל ימיו. Here we know that good eyes are a wealth! What a gift that is! Take a peek into the eye doctor's office and you'll see people waiting there with bandages covering their eyes. All kinds of eye ailments. This one needs this operation, and the other fellow a different operation. And you don't need any operation on your eyes! Boruch Hashem! Sing along with your eyes!

And your brain is singing too! How could it be that your brain is functioning so smoothly?! There are so many circuits, so many electric circuits that are working in your brain in one minute, and you don't get a headache. Every second there are more electrical circuits working in your brain than in the main headquarters of the telephone company of Greater New York. And you don't have any pain! It's *nissei nissim!* And therefore you're a millionaire. And you should be crying out in joy. And you would be if you studied the subject.

Do you realize how many zemiros your nose is singing?! Yes, your nose sings. Now, don't tell that to people outside because they'll laugh at you. But it's nothing to laugh at. I knew a man who had no nose. He lost his nose in a car accident and the doctors had build two holes for him on his face in place of a nose. It's a *simcha* to have a nose - to have a normal face. “The nose is a man's beauty” (Koheles Rabbasi 2:12).

THE HAIRY NOSE

You know that there are hairs inside your nose; you know that, don't you? You don't need to be a college professor to know that. Do you know why there are hairs inside your nose? In case you take a nap, and a little bug is crawling on your pillow,

exploring, and he sees a cave. So he'd like to go in and explore. But he sees hairs there, and he's afraid to go in - he might get stuck. Yes, that's one of the songs that your nose-hairs are singing. So not only is your nose singing to Hashem, but the hairs in your nose join the great philharmonic as well. Everything on the body, every limb, every organ, every hair is *nissei nissim*.

Boruch Hashem, I can walk! There are people in the street who are sitting in wheelchairs. Rolling the wheels, trying to get in and out of buildings. Boruch Hashem, I can talk! There are people who have to make motions with their hands. And I don't have to make motions with my hands; I can talk. And even those people who can't talk have to appreciate the gift of hands. Your fingers are unique machinery - versatile, sophisticated and indispensable machines that you use all day long. They are delicate tools that can be used for fine skills like writing, and yet they are packed with power for when needed. And your flexible elbows that lock into place when you need to carry heavy loads. And your skin, and your teeth, and your tongue. Where would you be without your tongue?! And what about your esophagus and your trachea? It's fun to have lungs and a stomach that function! And the list of gifts is endless.

But nobody is thinking that way. People are blind today and they don't recognize all the gifts and they do not know what there is to thank Hashem for. Even the *frummeh*, they don't feel like they struck it rich yet, in the way that they want to have it, so they're disappointed in life and they never feel that obligation of expressing a great outpouring of gratitude to Hashem.

WHY ARE YOU NOT HAPPY?

Aren't these gifts enough to make you a happy person?! Do you have to be that fool who only recognizes what he had only after they're gone? There are so many things - so many processes, so many organs, so many bones and limbs that are functioning just as they should right now in your body. You're not strewn out

on the floor waiting for an ambulance to come. You're sitting here, breathing, functioning. So many things that should cause you joy - real joy. It's *כל עצמותי תאמרנה השם מי כמוך* - "Hashem, all my parts say to You, 'Who is like You?'" All of my limbs and all of my organs are going to sing to You." You have a healthy heart? You're a lucky man! Look how many people are in great trouble. They're thinking, "Sooner or later I have to make a bypass operation, *chalilah*." They're putting it off. They're scared and they're uncomfortable. And so they're taking pills in the meantime. And they don't know what's going to be.

Did you ever stop to think about how many millions of things have to function perfectly for you to be a basically healthy person. Your chromosomes, your DNA molecules, your enzymes. You don't have cerebral palsy, right? You don't have multiple sclerosis, or muscular dystrophy. You don't need dialysis on kidney machines. You don't have a colostomy? You don't have a tumor on the brain? There are tens of thousands of disorders and you have been exonerated, you have been exempt from all of them. I didn't even begin the list. There are endless lists of ailments you have been spared. Diabetes, heart disease and liver failure.

KEEP YOUR HEART FOR YOURSELF

How many people are suffering from arthritis and other ailments? Does anything hurt you right now? Nothing hurts you right now?! You mean to say that you have no toothache? No earache? No headache? Your eyes don't hurt you? Boruch Hashem, you are loaded down with blessings. You're a lucky fellow! So everything is singing to Hashem. But you're supposed to be doing the singing too. You're not putting your heart on the *mizbayach*. You're not carrying your own leg up the ramp. Hashem says, "Keep everything. Enjoy My gifts. But remember Me. At least that. Remember Me."

How could you not be grateful for all these things? Although the list is endless, each one on its own is a happiness. Do you have any broken bones right now? Your bones are not broken?! You know some people never broke one bone in all their lives. Think about it. Are you one of these lucky people? You never broke one bone?! - שומר כל עצמותיו אחת מהנה לא נשברה - “Hashem, You watched over all my bones, even one of them was never broken” (Tehillim 34:21). Look how many people broke bones, and you didn't. You have to think about that.

KIDNEY ON THE BLACK MARKET

How much would a man pay not to break his leg? He would give a pile of money. He wouldn't give all of his thousands - it pays to break a leg for a hundred thousand dollars - but he would give some thousands of dollars. And how much would a man pay to have both of his eyes instead of one eye? For that, I'm sure he'd give hundreds of thousands of dollars. And what about to have a good kidney when his fails? Piles and piles of money! And you have two perfect ones. You don't even notice they're there because they're functioning so smoothly. So you don't take them out for the *mizbayach* - let them stay there. But in your mind, take them out and gloat over them. And one who does that is a wealthy man.

You have to count your gifts. Like a miser who hides in his home - he pulls down his window shades when his wife goes out shopping - and he pulls out his shopping bags of money that he's been saving all the years. And he takes them out and he counts them. His twenties and his hundreds. And as he counts them, his eyes glisten and his heart rejoices. That's the joy of his life. All day long he waits for that moment. He even gives his wife a few dollars to go shopping to get her out of the house so that he can have a few moments alone to enjoy his great happiness of counting his thousands.

THE CHOFETZ CHAIM: THE MISER

But that's only a mashal for the real happiness of life. There's another kind of miser, the miser who knows what it means to count the real money of life. Like the Chofetz Chaim used to do. Once somebody listened through the keyhole and he caught him doing it. He was counting his wealth. He said, "Ribono Shel Olam, I am grateful to you for keeping me alive for so many years." This year and that year. And this year and that year. "And you kept me safe from this mishap and that mishap. It could have happened to me what happened to this other fellow. And what happened to my neighbor could have happened to me. And this part of my body is functioning, and this organ." And so that Chofetz Chaim hauled out his blessings and gloated over them. And he counted his money and his eyes glistened and his heart rejoiced.

And if you want to be a success in this world, if you want your life to be *לרצון* in the eyes of Hashem, then you're going to have to practice being a Chofetz Chaim miser as well, and counting your wealth. Now, you won't be able to do it all at once - and you shouldn't. But you have to start now. Don't wait till it's too late when instead of happiness and wealth, you'll be beset with pangs of regret about missed opportunities.

You can choose even one detail for this week. And spend time thinking about it. You have time - you just have to use it. What are you doing with your time already? You're sitting on the train heading to see your customer. You're just going to sit there twiddling your thumbs? Or even worse, you'll sit there reading a newspaper, catching up on the news, and all the while poisoning your mind with *shtus*, with the poison, the putrid ideas, the wicked ideas on every page. No! Count your wealth!

I'll give you a good idea. As your saying *Hodu* or the *Hallelukahs*, you're praising Hashem anyway, so think, "This week I'm singing about my lungs." And say *הודו* and *הללויה* and all of

pesukei d'zimra just for your lungs. And all week long whenever you're walking down the street sing to Hashem, "I'm counting my breath and thanking Hashem for my lungs."

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

And next week thank Hashem for feet. It's a trick to be able to stand erect, to keep your balance. You had to learn that trick. Little children take some time before they master the art of standing erect, of **וּקָם כְּפוּפִים**. And some people can stand up, but they remain with a curved spine forever. And here you are, walking down Ocean Parkway as if it's the easiest thing in the world. You know, some people forget how to walk. And they have to be trained all over again like little children. Therapists have to teach them how to walk. And the fact that even with a therapist you can walk erect is a miracle. So spend the week thanking Hashem for the miracle of walking that you enjoy all day long.

And week after week, you'll fulfill the **עבודת הקרבנות**, right here on Ocean Parkway. You're thinking and thanking and singing all day long. And that's what Hashem took you out of Mitzrayim for. **שְׁלַח אֶת עַמִּי וְעַבְדֵי**. I'm taking you out of Mitzrayim so that you should offer *korbanos* to Me, and sing to me forever. Because although the *korbanos* have many purposes, the first of all the intentions is the expression of gratitude, for taking us out of Mitzrayim to be His people, and for all the thousands and millions of kindnesses that He bestows upon us always.

And because singing to Hashem is the purpose of life, one who joins the choir will be rewarded with even more years to sing: "The *mizbayach* was made in order to lengthen a man's life" (Middos 3:4). Because the secret of the *korbanos* is the recognition of the *chesed* Hashem that pervades one's life, Hashem bestows more life upon those that who utilize their time here to recognize Him. And they thereby achieve the chief purpose of life: **יְרֵאתָ הַשֵּׁם** - **לֵהֵיִם** - "Awareness of Hashem causes life" (Mishlei 19:23). And

therefore, even today, when we can't yet bring *korbanos*, we can still achieve the greatness of the days of the Beis Hamikdash, and find favor in the eyes of Hashem in this world and the next.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.