

**תורת אביגדור**  
**הגאון ר' אביגדור מיללער זצ"ל**

**Rav Avigdor Miller on the Parsha**  
Adapted from his Tapes, Sforim and Writings of Talmidim

**פרשת נשא**

*Mishpachat Levy*  
*Edition* 

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## Rav Avigdor Miller ztz"l on

### פרשת נשא

#### THE POWER OF A TZADDIK'S BRACHOS

In this week's *parsha*, Hashem commands the *kohanim* to bless the Am Yisroel with an especial blessing. And so, even to this day, the *kohanim* stand facing the Am Yisroel, acting as the messengers of Hashem, to bestow blessings upon the people. This was an extraordinary prerogative, an especial privilege, which Hashem conferred upon the *kohanim*. It would be through *their* pronouncement of the blessings, that Hashem would confer *His* blessings upon the nation.

Now, you have to know that even when you get a *bracha* from a *tzadik*, the *bracha* is really coming only from Hashem. We must note that in the three verses of the *birchas kohanim*, the *kohanim* utter Hashem's name in each blessing. And it seems redundant. But this procedure is intended in order to emphasize the awareness that it is solely Hashem who confers the blessings and not the *kohanim* or any other cause. The listeners are expected to hearken to this repetition of Hashem's name and learn therefore that all blessings are from Him and from Him alone. So we see that it is not the words of the *kohanim* that is bestowing the blessings, but the *brachos* are a prayer to Hashem, that He should bless the Jewish People.

Now, you have to know that this is how all *brachos* work. Even when you get a *bracha* from a *tzadik*, the *bracha* is really coming only from Hashem. And we see this from the words of the *birchas kohanim* itself. יברכך השם... יאר השם... ישא השם. The *kohanim* utter Hashem's name in each blessing. And it seems redundant. But this procedure is intended in order to emphasize the awareness that it is solely Hashem who confers the blessings. It's not not the *kohanim*, it's not the *tzadik*, or any other cause. The listeners are expected to hearken to this repetition of Hashem's name and learn therefore that all blessings are from Him and from Him alone. So we see that it is not the words of the *kohanim* that is bestowing the blessings, but the *brachos* are a prayer to Hashem, that He should bless the Jewish People.

#### NICE GUYS FINISH LAST?!

However, the discerning one will ask: The whole nation stands before the *kohanim* and receive the blessings of Hashem; but what about the *kohanim* themselves? After all, a *kohen* also wants to be blessed with the words יברכך השם וישמרך. Does a *kohen* not also deserve to be blessed and guarded by Hakodosh Boruch Hu? The *kohen* also desires that Hashem's face should shine upon him, יאר השם פניו אליך, and he too wants to receive the *bracha* of *shalom*, וישם לך שלום. Does the fact that he is privileged to be the conduit through which the *brachos* flow to the Am Yisroel mean that he is to lose out on receiving the *brachos* himself? Where is the *yashrus* in that? Is it fair?

Now, you should know that this is not *my* question. Do you know who asks it? It's the *gemara's* question! If you're interested in knowing, it's *Mesichta Chulin* on *daf mem tes amud alef*. The *gemara* begins by quoting the *possuk* in our parsha: כה תברכו את בני ישראל - "So should you bless the Bnei Yisroel" (Nasso 6:23). And the *baraisa* tells us the following: למדנו ברכה לישראל מפי כהנים - On the basis of these words we learn that a blessing is given to the Bnei Yisroel from the mouths of the *kohanim*.

## HASHEM MAKES A DEAL

But לכהנים מנא ליה - From where do we see a *bracha* for the *kohanim*? And the answer to this question is our subject for tonight. אמר רב נחמן בר יצחק - Rav Nachman bar Yitzchok says, it's from the words ואברכה מברכיך (Bereishis 12:3). We learn the blessings for the *kohanim* from somewhere else altogether. Way back, in the beginning of *Parshas Lech L'cha* Hakodosh Boruch Hu declared to our father Avraham, ואברכה מברכיך - "I will bless those who bless you." Anybody who blesses you, I'm going to bless him. And therefore, the blessings upon the *kohanim* comes from that promise made to Avraham. "If you, the *kohanim*, are blessing the Am Yisroel, then I'm going to bless you" says Hashem.

Now, we are learning something new from this gemara: When Hashem said to our father Avraham "I will bless those who bless you", it was a covenant that He made with our nation *forever*. It was a contract that He made *not only* with Avraham personally, but with *all* the seed of Avraham, all of his descendants. If it was a promise that was made to Avraham alone, we wouldn't be able to say that it continues to apply to the *kohanim* forever and ever. What we are learning here is that Hashem has made a promise forever: ואברכה מברכיך - "Anybody who blesses the Am Yisroel is going to be blessed by Me."

## DAVENING FOR A CAR CRASH

And by the way, it's written there as well, ומקללך אאור - "Those who curse you, I shall curse" (ibid.). That means that anyone who curses a Jew can expect to feel the wrath of Hashem one way or another. And I have to tell you that it's not just if he curses you. The word מקללך comes from the word קל, to make light of. Even to make light of another Jew is already very dangerous.

So if a gentile curses a Jew, or degrades him, he's out of luck. If his car won't smash up on the next block, then it'll smash

up eventually. Or something else will happen to him; you don't have to worry. Not always will you have the pleasure of witnessing it, but it'll happen sooner or later, no question about it.

And you can ask Hashem for it as well. I was once walking across the street and an Italian bum was sitting in his car waiting for the red light to change. So in order to frighten me he pressed on the gas so that his car would quickly jerk forward toward me. To frighten me! This happened to me recently. I looked at him and he was acting as if he didn't see me - making believe. And his wife is sitting next to him and she is laughing. They're both laughing because they scared an old Jew. So I said quietly to myself, "*Ribono Shel Olam*. I don't want You to do *too* much harm to him. Just that his leg should come off right above the knee - that's all. More than that I don't want. He has a *goyishe* head; scaring Jews is his fun in life. So just above the knee it should come off. That's enough." And I want to tell you something: He'd be lucky if that happens, because if he waits for Gehenim it will be a pity on him. It would be a very big *chesed* for him if he loses his leg right now.

And sometimes you will even *see* the **אָאָר**, the "I will curse him," of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. He's so busy mocking you and threatening your life that he loses control of his car. And he smashes into a telegraph pole right next to you! It's a pleasure to see Hakodosh Boruch Hu taking revenge on our behalf. It's a *ta'anug!* But the truth is that you don't need that pleasure of *seeing* it. Because you can rely on Hashem's promise - He's on the job. And He'll take care of it.

#### RABBI YISHMAEL GETS A BLESSING FROM A YISHMAELI

*Tosfos* on that *gemara* in *Chulin* brings a story from the *Yerushalmi Brachos*. There was a certain gentile who was walking on the road and he encountered Rabbi Yishmael. So this gentile said to Rabbi Yishmael, "*Al-salam Aleikum*." "Peace upon you, Rabbi." So Rabbi Yishmael answered him back: **מִלַּתְךָ כִּבְרַ אִמּוּרָה** - "My word to you, my blessing to you, is already said." In other

words, "It's not necessary for me to respond to your blessing with a blessing of my own because it's automatic. It's done already." And it's explained there like this: Hakodosh Boruch Hu had already told Avraham our father **ואברכה מברכך** - "I will bless those who bless you." So Rabbi Yishmael was saying, "As soon as you blessed me, you were already blessed by Hakodosh Boruch Hu."

And *Tosfos* makes a point of telling us that this rule of **ואברכה מברכך** - "I will bless those who bless you," applies even to a *gentile* who blesses a Jew. After all, it was an Arab traveler who was blessing Rabbi Yishmael, it wasn't a *kohen*; it wasn't even a Jew. **ואפילו עובדי כוכבים המברכים את ישראל מתברכין** - "Even a gentile who blesses a Yisroel is going to be blessed." And if even a *goy* is rewarded by Hashem for blessing a Jew, you can only begin to imagine what blessings Hashem showers upon His own children when they bless each other.

Another lesson that we glean from this story is that "I will bless those who bless you" is not only applicable if one blesses the whole nation, or intones the special blessings of *birchas kohanim*. No! Even someone who blesses *one individual Jew*, like the *goy* in our story did, has already secured himself a *bracha* that comes directly from Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

#### THE GOY IS JUST BEING POLITE

And the truth is that this blessing that the *goy* gave to Rabbi Yishmael probably wasn't such a heartfelt one. He didn't put his hands on Rabbi Yishmael's head, and shed copious tears praying to Hashem that Rabbi Yishmael should be blessed. No; it was more or less a formality. The gentile merely said *Shalom* to him. A formality, that's all. That's what the gentile says to everyone on the road. He's being polite and wishing him well. It could very well be that Rabbi Yishmael had a company of *talmidim* with him, and this gentile was traveling alone on the road, so he thought it would be more diplomatic to bless Rabbi Yishmael. But

even so, we are being taught here that those simple and probably even superficial words of blessing that he said to a Jew, will be requited, will be paid back. And it's all because of the promise that Hakodosh Boruch Hu made to Avraham so many years ago, **ואברכה מברכיך** - I will bless all those who bless you, no matter what.

Now we're learning here a subject of very great benefit. Because we're seeing that by blessing a fellow Jew you are invoking upon yourself a special covenant that Hakodosh Boruch Hu made with our forefathers and with all of the future generations of the Am Yisroel. And that covenant means that by merely wishing a fellow Jew a *Shalom Aleichem*, a "Good Morning," a "Good Night," a "Good Shabbos" or anything similar, will cause you to be blessed. And that is even if you said it without too much thought. How much more so will be the blessing of Hashem on the one who blesses his fellow Jew wholeheartedly!

#### WHAT DOES HELLO MEAN?

So if you meet somebody in the street, instead of saying meaningless words like "Hi" or "Hello", you say *Shalom Aleichem*, the traditional Jewish greeting. There was a Rosh Yeshiva in America, HaRav Gustman, he should be well [*zatzal*]. He once heard somebody say "Hello." So he said, "*Vus epess 'hello'?! 'Hello' doesn't mean anything,*" he said. "*Say shalom aleichem, a real greeting.*"

And even if you say it superficially, you have already done a wise thing; you have made a very good investment. Because the plan of Hakodosh Boruch Hu is that it's going to come back to you. It'll come back surely in the smallest manner - you're going to be greeted by others! Didn't it ever happen to you that you pass people on the street and you are offended because they don't seem particularly interested in looking at you, even though you are acquaintances? And you're thinking, What's wrong with this grouchy fellow? Maybe it's because you didn't greet them. That

could be! Because that's the very lowest level of compensation - if you bless others, then others will bless you. And even that is valuable for a person. To be always greeted happily by others is a boon for living happily and healthfully.

And so the *kohanim* get up - yes, it's true, in some ways it's a formality. People say to the *kohanim*, "*Birkas kohanim!* Come, come on, wash your hands." And the *kohanim* come to the front and they give us brachos. And Hashem says to the *kohanim* who are blessing us, *ואברכה מברכיך* - "I will bless you because you have blessed My children." If you bless a Yisroel - *even as a mere formality* - there's no question that it's a very wise investment for you. Because Hakodosh Boruch Hu is on the job. And it'll rebound back to your benefit.

#### A PEACE TREATY OVER THE DRIVEWAY!

However, really it is much more than that. When you say *Shalom* to a person, and instead of just saying it like you say Hello or Hi, you should have in mind that "Hakodosh Boruch Hu should bless you with only peaceful things." That he shouldn't fight with his landlord. That he shouldn't argue with his wife. You're adding some meaning to the word now! That he shouldn't have a conflict with his boss or with his partner. That he should get along with his neighbors and not fight about the driveway. So you're giving him a blessing that has meaning to it. You're putting something into that word *Shalom*.

In Slobodka they used to say that when you get an *aliyah*, and afterwards you say to the *gabbai* - "*Yasherkei'ach*", it shouldn't be a formality. You should say it with *peirush hamilos*, with the meaning of the words. "*Yasherkei'ach*" means "May your strength increase." *ישר כוחך* is what you're davening for him. Oh, that's a big difference now. You're getting an *aliyah* and you're saying to the *gabbai* - you're saying it in *lashon kodesh*, but you're saying, "May your strength increase." You should have bigger muscles! You should have enough calcium in your bones! Your eyesight

should be sharper! Everything about you should become more powerful! That's what you're saying when you say *yi'yasheir ko'chachah*. And if you're thinking it, then those words now have an entirely different power. And what we're learning now as well is that it's not going to remain unanswered - *in your own life!* You're going to get a blessing for that too.

#### A GOOD MORNING WITH PEIRUSH HAMILOS

And therefore, according to what we were taught in Slabodka, when you say "Good morning", you are expected to think what "Good morning" means. Don't just wish him a hollow "Good morning" without any thought. Wish him a good morning with *peirush hamilos* - a good morning with some thought behind the words, a good morning that means something.

Now he doesn't know what you're thinking. But that's not important right now. Because there is Somebody who *does* know. "Your breakfast should be digested well," you're thinking. "Your wife shouldn't anger you. You shouldn't miss the train. You should find a lot of orders waiting for you on your desk when you come to your office. You should have a smooth and happy day." Now *that's* a good morning greeting!

#### WAKING UP ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE BED

You know, good mornings are very important. We want to have a lot of very good mornings in our lives. And we want our mornings to be *really* good mornings, not just empty and hollow good mornings. And therefore it should be a principle of ours to think about the meaning of the words that we say. We'll begin to train ourselves in forgoing all of the meaningless good morning greetings that fill our lives, and begin to actually bless our fellow Jews.

When you say "Good night" - Oh, it's a glorious opportunity! How many good things, how many good wishes and blessings are included in those two simple words! "You should

sleep well, without having to get up in the middle of the night. You should have a peaceful night and your whole family should sleep well.”

#### A BRACHA FOR A YUMMY CHULENT

And “Good Shabbos!” How much thought, how many blessings are included in a good Shabbos! “Your wife’s challah and kugel should taste exceptional. And the chulent should be perfect. You should have a relaxing nap and be *matzliach* in your learning over Shabbos. You should get *shlishi* and it shouldn't cost you too much money!” There's so much to think about when you wish somebody a good Shabbos.

In the measure by which you bless others, that's how much you will be blessed. It depends how much you put into your blessing. Now, even if you didn't put anything into your blessing, it's still a blessing. Like this gentile who passed Rabbi Yishmael on the road. He didn't stop and contemplate what the meaning of *Shalom* is. He just said it. It was a formality.

#### THE GENTILE WHO ALMOST KNEW SHAS

And nevertheless, that caused the contract that Hashem made with Avraham Avinu to go into effect. There's no question about that. It doesn't mean that the gentile in that story will be a *ben Olam Habah*, or that he'll know Shas. It doesn't mean that he'll become a millionaire. But there are a lot of blessings underneath that we'd like to get as well. And that gentile is promised *min hashamayim*, from the outset of the career of our nation, when Avraham set out from *Charan* to begin building the Am Yisroel, he set out with this contract in his hand. וְאֶבְרַכְהָ מְבָרְכֶיךָ - I will bless those who bless you.

And so anybody, a Jew or a gentile, who will takes the trouble to say words of blessing to a Jew must know that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is now mortgaged to them and He's going to deliver. The man who makes the effort to bless the Am Yisroel

should know that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is under contract to deliver.

### LO YAGATA , UMATZASA TAAMIN!!

Now, if what we're saying here is true, then we know now that this is an easy way for a person to accomplish in this world. Some things require a great deal of effort. If you want to be a Torah scholar, *יגעת מצאת* - you're going to have to labor in order to attain your objective. If you want to become a big *ba'al dei'ah*, a *ba'al machshava*, a *ba'al emunah*, then there's a lot of work to be done. In order to achieve *middos tovos*, to acquire good character, there's training you must follow, a lot of important things. And they're worth the effort - they're very big achievements! But they're not easy.

However, here we're learning about an achievement that is immensely easy. And the profit is *immensely* great. And that is the career of blessing fellow Jews. Now, when I say career, I mean that you must take the ideas that you're studying here tonight, impress them upon your minds, and consider how to incorporate them into your regular practice, your regular routine of life. Because with a little bit of thought and some planning, you can live a life of *ואברכה מברכך*. Because, tell me, what difficulty lies in this exercise of good character? Nothing really! It's one of the easiest things in the world to do - to bless your fellow Jew.

### FOOLING EVERYONE

Now, in order to take these ideas we're learning here tonight and make them part of our lives, we will discuss together a few ways to transform our habit of speaking hollow words of greetings and good wishes, into what Hakodosh Boruch Hu actually wants from us - to live a life with this principle of *ואברכה מברכך* on our minds.

Suppose you meet somebody on the street, like this gentile met Rabbi Yishmael. So he said "*Shalom*" to him. It was a

formality, that's all. Maybe there was some sincerity there, I cannot tell you - I wasn't there. And in general, that's what our greetings are - just formalities, niceties. So when you meet someone, and you want to wish him "Mazel Tov," usually it's just a formality. You may even be enthusiastic about it; at least you *act* enthusiastic, because you want to make a good impression. And there's nothing wrong with that. We should all want to make good impressions on everyone we meet. By the way, that should be one of your goals whenever you meet someone - you should act in a way that will make him think well of you. That's what we should all want. I want people to say, "Hey, you know Miller? He's a good fellow, a nice person!" So be enthusiastic with your greetings, add a warm smile to them - try to score some points.

And so suppose that after you greeted him: "Oh, I heard your daughter got married! Mazel tov! You should have a lot of *nachas*." And you shake his hand warmly. Wonderful! That's wonderful! But even so, even with all of your enthusiasm, and even with your big smile and warm handshake, it's still a formality after all. You're so busy trying to be excited, trying to make your good impression, that you're not thinking about what you're saying.

#### **CHAZER'ING THE BRACHA TO YOURSELF**

And so suppose you do this. After you greet him, after you wish him Mazel Tov, so you take leave of him. And after you walk ten steps; now he doesn't see you anymore, he can't hear you. And now you repeat those same words again, when he's not listening. "Mazel Tov! You should have a lot of *nachas*!" Now, nobody should hear you talking to yourself! Be careful about that because most people don't understand greatness - they scorn greatness. But don't let that stop you from doing it.

And you should even add something. The more the better. "Hashem should help you find all the money you need to pay the *chasuna* bills. And your daughter and her new husband should get

along with each other *b'shalom*. And you should find good *shidduchim* for your other children too." And what these added few seconds of *avodas Hashem* proves, is that you're not saying it just to flatter him or as empty word of formality. You're saying it because you actually want Hashem to bless him. And you're practicing the great principle of how Hashem directs this world: **וְאֵבְרַכְהָם מִבְּרַכְיָךְ** - "I will bless those who bless you."

### GETTING SEMICHA IN HILCHOS BRACHOS

This is a practice that true *ovdei Hashem* can do without any effort. And it's a practice that's available to you all the time. You say "Good Shabbos, good Shabbos." And then you pass by him and forget all about him. Don't waste the opportunity! Five paces later say again "Good Shabbos" to him. This time he doesn't hear it. But *this time* you mean it more. And under your breath you should add the *peirush hamilos* - with a few *peirushim*! "Your meals should be *geshmak*; you should enjoy the *chulent* and the *kugel*. Hashem should help you enjoy your children and your wife and you should have a good Shabbos nap."

You hear that *chiddush*?! You hear the greatness that's available to all of you?! You'd have to go very far to hear this *chiddush*. It's a *chiddush* all the way from Slabodka! And now it's in Flatbush! This is one of the *yesodos* of "*Hilchos Brachos*" that we learned in Slabodka!

### THE ALTER OF SLABODKA TALKING TO A HOUSE?!

The Alter of Slabodka was once walking in the morning with a disciple of his. And they passed by a house where one of the Kollel men lived. So the Alter stopped, and faced the house, and said to the house, "*Gut morgen* - Good morning. You should have a wonderful day." So this *talmid* was thinking who knows what and he said, "Nobody's listening!?" So the Alter replied, *Tzu darf ehr heren?* - "Does he *have* to be listening?" You hear that? You hear what the Alter said?! That's from a great man! "*Tzu darf ehr heren* - Does he have to hear?!" The point of the bracha is not that

he should hear you; what you want is that *Hakodosh Boruch Hu* should hear you and see that you love His children and that you want only good things for them.

And so, when you walk down the street, keep your eyes peeled for the big *mezuzos*. And when you see one, "Ah, a bracha on that house. *"Yivoreich es beis Yisroel!"* The next house, another big *mezuzah*. "Everyone in that home should be well for many happy years. They should all have a comfortable livelihood and pleasure and satisfaction from their children. All the children in that home should all find the best *shidduchim*. In that home there should be only *simchos* and happy occasions."

#### OCEAN PARKWAY IN SLABODKA

They're not just homes. They're *holy* homes. Beautiful kosher homes. So make sure to stop for a moment and bless those inside. And be specific. Say the words. "Ribono Shel Olam, please keep everyone in this home healthy. Let them all get along with each other and live happy and safe lives. Please Hashem, let there be no mishaps in the home. Let the children all be *matzliach* in Yeshiva and they should all find good *shidduchim*. And the parents should see *nachas* from their children." Now, the more detail, the more Hashem will bless you. Every added *bracha*, every added detail, adds to the *ואברכה מברכיך*, and Hashem will bless you more and more. Because Hashem loves the Am Yisroel. And He therefore loves all those who wish well upon the Am Yisroel. So not only are you following in the ways of Hashem, but you are bringing *brachos* upon your own self. Now that's a whole different way of walking down the street. You're walking down Ocean Parkway like a Slabodka *talmid* walks down the street!

#### BLESSING YOURSELF

You're taking a walk. But you know what you're doing? Besides for loving the Am Yisroel - and that's a perfection in itself - and the more you practice loving the Am Yisroel the more perfect you become. Hashem loves the Am Yisroel. He loves us

with a love that we can't even begin to fathom. And He says, "I love my people so much, that whoever wishes them well, I love them for that, and I will bestow blessings upon them just because of that." The Mesillas Yesharim (Chapter 19) tells us that "Hashem loves *only* those that love the Am Yisroel." And therefore Hashem says, "Whoever blesses My people, I will bless that person Myself." And so besides for walking in the ways of Hashem, and loving the people that Hashem loves, you are also gaining wealth from Him. To bless a fellow Jew is a seemingly simple deed, but it is richly rewarded by Hashem. You're blessing your fellow Jew, but you're also *blessing yourself!* You're doing a very big favor for yourself. That's what the Gemara says. It's plain common sense. If you get into this habit that we're speaking about here tonight, you'll be getting for yourself *brachos* and good blessings all the time!

And one of the best opportunities, one of the most authentic and real opportunities, is when the one you're heaping *brachos* upon doesn't hear, and doesn't know. So you pass by a school where there are little girls playing in the yard. You see little Jewish girls, and they're wearing stockings, and sleeves. It's beautiful to see! Don't just pass them by! They're *tzon kodoshim*, it's a holy nation. These are going to be the mothers of our people, mothers of frum families. How could you pass them by without a big hearty blessing from the bottom of your heart?! Does it cost you any money? Why are you being so stingy with your *brachos*? It's the easiest and cheapest investment for you. Bless them that they should all be well and have lives full of *hatzlacha*. Each one of them should be healthy and they should live to get very good *shidduchim* - each one of them. And they should all be wealthy and all have a lot of healthy normal children. They should live long! And their husbands should be big *talmidei chachomim*. Bless them! Whatever else you could think of, give them as many *brachos* as you can!

And so when you pass by a Yeshiva and you see the Yeshiva men going in and going out - don't neglect the opportunity. Do you realize what an opportunity it is when you walk by a Yeshiva?! You should stop and pour out blessings on the *talmidim*. "They should all have a good day in Yeshiva. They should do well on their tests." Say it. Don't just think it - say it. And bless the Kollel men who are sitting and learning. "They should get their kollel checks on time." They need *tefillah* for that! And bless the Roshei Yeshiva as well. Wish them long lives and good health. Wish all of the Yeshiva people success in their studies and in supporting their families.

When you are in the *beis knesses*, in the shul, and you look around and see that you're surrounded with good, frum Jews. You should quietly wish them all *bracha v'hatzlacha*. And even better, you should mention their names individually. This might sound like a *chiddush* to you - because it is! But this is the way to loving your fellow man and giving Hashem *nachas*. And you should speak with details. Ask Hashem, "Please Ribono Shel Olam, send *parnasa b'revach* to this man who is having a hard time. Please have pity on him and his family." And you can give a *bracha* to the rav of the shul as well. He could use it! "Please help Rabbi so and so get along with his *mispallelim*. And make the board give him the raise that he needs."

And the truth is that you don't have to go anywhere to succeed at these accomplishments. You know, it's a remarkable thing that all of our prayers are so arranged that we are blessing our fellow Jews constantly. חנינו מאתך דעה בינה והשכל - Favor us with *dei'ah binah v'haskeil*. It's a request for understanding and wisdom. But it's in plural. We say *chaneinu*, not *chaneinee*! Now some people pray and they think it's the royal "We". They say רפאינו, heal *us*, and חנינו, grant *us* wisdom, and they're thinking "Me and me and me." They're saying נו and נו and נו but they're thinking ני and ני and ני - "Me and me and me." They know it's plural, but it's just a form of speech, they think.

## WE HAVE LOTS OF RABBI AKIVA EIGERS NOWADAYS

But that's not correct. You're not asking only for yourself. You're asking for all the boys in the *yeshivos*. Pray to Hakodosh Boruch Hu that they should have good heads. You know how important a good head is in the *yeshivos* today? A boy with a little bit of a weaker head gets so discouraged. Especially with the rebbeim who are saying big *pilpulim*. Even in the lower shiurim the rebbeim are not saying plain *pshat* and the boys get discouraged. Each rebbe wants to show he's "Rabbi Akiva Eiger" so he's saying deep *pilpulim* - I don't know how good they are but he's trying his best anyhow. And that's instead of saying plain *pshat*. And meanwhile the poor, bewildered *talmidim* understand nothing. So a few very good boys succeed. Just a few of the *ba'alei kishronos*, those with the good heads.

So what do people do? They complain about it. They blame this one and the other one. But why don't *you* do something about it? You're standing in *shmonah esrei* anyhow? So you have to pray for all those boys that are being frustrated and being disappointed by these difficulties. And very many of them are being turned off - of course they are, because they don't understand what is going on. And so we turn to Hashem every day and we pray, אתה חונן לאדם דעת...חנינו מאתך. We pray, "Hakodosh Boruch Hu, please give *da'as* to all the boys in the *yeshivos*. Help them understand the *shiur*. Help them understand the *gemara*."

## HOMESCHOOLING

And to the girls as well. Here's a girl - I knew the family - and she couldn't keep up with her studies in the Beis Yaakov and they wanted to send her out. They wanted to expel her finally from the Beis Yaakov. So her father came running. "What should I do?!" he said. "I can't take her to public school. *Gevalt*, what am I going to do? What are you doing to my child?!" They told him, "What could we do already? We can't keep her." So they made a deal finally, they let her go just to English alone. But it was

a terrible thing, a calamity - it wasn't her fault, it was a girl who just couldn't keep up. So why aren't you praying for these girls?

And so when we stand in *Shemonah Esrei*, and we're saying our *tefillos* in plural, it's not a bad idea to think about your fellow Jews who are right around you. Maybe it's too big, too vague, to think about all of the *Am Yisroel*, but at least in this minyan where you are, these neighbors who are standing next to you, can't you at least have them in mind?

#### MAKE SURE TO LOOK AROUND DURING DAVENING

Did you ever think about that? While you're *davening*, you're thinking about the man next to you. רפאינו השם ונרפא - "Please Hashem, keep this man healthy and well. And if he has any ailments, please heal them." You're asking for this man next to you, or the man behind you, that he should be well. Try it. Between *brachos*, take a peek, a quick glance, at the people around you. And when you say the words of the *bracha* have them in mind. Have their families in mind. And a woman, a girl, who is davening at home - think about your husband, your children, your brothers and your sisters. And your neighbors as well. No harm thinking about your neighbor. Even the one who steps on your lawn or blocks your driveway. No harm at all!

On day you'll do it by one *bracha*. The next day by a different *bracha*. השיבנו - "*Ribono Shel Olam*, bring us back to you. Me, him, him and him." וגאלנו גאולה שלימה - "Hashem, help me, help my neighbor pay his bills, help my chavrusa find a *shidduch* for his daughter." את השנה הזאת ברך עלינו - Hashem, I'm begging you - please, my coworker at the office needs a raise. Please help him find favor in the eyes of the boss. "And if you keep this up, I guarantee you that in no time at all you'll be a different person.

And so we have to learn to pray for all of our fellow Jews who need help. What difficulty is involved already? Are you too busy to pray for your fellow Jews who need it? Are you too lazy to daven for the children struggling in school? When you're saying

the bracha of *Refaeinu*, you can't spare some thought for the *cholim* and bless them?

### YOU'LL BE ANSWERED FIRST

And this *yesod*, this principle of *ואברכה מברכך*, is really the secret behind the well-known *Chazal* (Bava Kama 92b) that כל והוא צריך - המתפלל בעד חברו - If a man prays for his fellow man, - הוא נענה תחילה - and he needs the same thing, - והוא צריך לאותו דבר - he will be answered by Hakodosh Boruch Hu first. Of course, if you're praying for a bachelor to get married, but you're already married, then Hakodosh Boruch Hu won't do anything for you now; it says והוא צריך לאותו דבר, and he needs that thing. But good health everybody needs! So if you pray for your fellow man's good health, הוא נענה תחילה, you're going to be answered first, the *gemara* says.

But most people learn this *ma'amar Chazal* wrong. They think it's some sort of reward, an incentive, to pray for your fellow man. But no, it's really much more than that. It's a direct result of your *tefillah*, because of the great principle of the Torah, *ואברכה מברכך* - "I will bless those who bless you!" And that's why the *Anshei Knesses Hagedolah* established all of our *tefillos* in *lashon rabim*, in plural form. Because every *tefillah* for your fellow Jew ends up being a *tefillah* for yourself as well.

### WHAT COULD BE BETTER THAN SEEING A DRESSED UP DONKEY?

So here we have a system for life. It's not a one time thing. It's not a once in a lifetime event, like let's say *pidyon peter chamor*, where you do it once and now you can feel accomplished; now you can tell your *chaveirim* that you once witnessed a *pidyon peter chamor*. But this is much more than that. It's a program for life.

Now, many times, people ask - they ask me - "What can I do to make progress in life that is not going to require too much time? I'm a busy man, trying to make a living, and besides that my spare time is occupied by learning." Or, "I'm a busy wife and

mother, trying to raise a family.” So they ask me, what can I do that will take only a minute or so, something that will allow me to make headway all my life?

### THE CADILLAC THAT SELLS FOR NICKELS

Now that's a big order to ask. What can you get already for a minute?! It's like you're going shopping for a Cadillac and all you have is some nickels in your pocketbook! But what I'm telling you now is a Cadillac that you can buy for nickels - even less than nickels!

So get into the habit of giving blessings to Hashem's children. When you see a pious Jew, don't be lazy - give him a hearty and warm blessing. He doesn't have to hear you. He's just passing by, and you ask Hakodosh Boruch Hu to make everything work out for him בתיקונו, to perfection, today. And if you do that, then you have to know that *you* are the one who is achieving perfection today. You have done something that is a *shleimus*, a perfection, and you are on the road to greatness.

A man can make progress all the days of his life without any effort at all, if he will keep his mind fastened constantly on this principle of לברך את ישראל. And so whether it's in the *Beis Haknesess* or in the street, or even standing by your window looking out at your neighbors, they're all wonderful opportunities for לברך את ישראל. And when you pass a hospital you pray for any Yisroel who is sick in that building. And you must know that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is going to listen to that and He inscribes it in His ledger, that He owes you something for that.

### THE MEANING OF A SIREN

You hear an ambulance speeding down the street, with its siren wailing. Don't just take it as one of the background sounds, one of the phenomena, of daily life in the city. “Oy vey Hashem, if it's a Jew send him a *refuah sh'laimah*.” Sometimes it might even be an important personality. I once heard an ambulance racing down

the street and I later discovered that it was a big Rosh Yeshiva. And he passed away a few minutes later. How could a person let that opportunity go lost?!

So when you hear that outcry, the wail of the siren, it's as if the sick man himself is crying out "Please help me!" That's how you should consider the siren. Of course, the man who's driving the ambulance, he's making a loud ruckus because he wants to advertise his company! He wants you to see what a good company it is. That's why he's making all the different sounds and wails. He doesn't need all that noise. But he's doing it anyhow.

But you don't have to worry about what the driver is thinking. Hashem cares about what *you're* thinking. So you should listen to that wail, that "outcry" of the afflicted person who is battling for his life as the oxygen is being administered to him. His heart is barely beating. And you are standing by on the street, or in your home. Don't be phlegmatic and ignore it. Say a *tefillah* for him - it doesn't cost you anything at all. You bless him and Hashem will inscribing it in His book. וישמע השם - And Hashem hears, ויכתב בספר זכרון לפניו - And it is written in the Book of Remembrance before Him. He owes you something and He's going to repay you.

#### THE EASY PATH TO FINDING YOUR TRUE LOVE

If we'll be able to acquire this mode of living in a permanent fashion, then it will transform our lives. Because we learned tonight about many different ways of being *m'vareich* the Am Yisroel. And they're all good, they're all capable of changing our lives. A simple greeting like "Good morning" can be transformed into a real *bracha* with the mere addition of some thought. And better yet, you can add your own *peirushim* to these words and add details to the *bracha*. And then we also spoke about repeating the *brachos* over to yourself when you walk away. That's an authentic *bracha*! And you don't even have to be around others to become great in this career. You can bless houses that you pass

in the street, neighbors who live down the block, and all the *mispallelim* in the shul. The opportunities are endless.

And by following these *eitzos*, you will transform your lives, as well as the lives of those around you. It's a good thing to teach to your children! Everyone in the family should learn this lesson of always saying blessings on people, in their presence, yes, as well as when they're not around.

And so, when people learn this important attitude of spending their lives even in small deeds, never neglecting the little opportunities, that's how they can become successful in this world. And don't think that just because there's no effort involved that it's worthless.

Even saying a blessing on someone who doesn't hear you, saying a prayer for a neighbor or a stranger, is a great accomplishment. Don't think that these small things are really small. Because a man who doesn't neglect these smallest of opportunities is setting in motion a great career for himself that will make him stand out in our history and in the eyes of Hashem.

Don't waste a minute of your life. There are so many opportunities for serving Hashem in this way. And once you begin, you'll see how easy it is to live a life of giving blessing. And as a result there will be constant *brachos* that are being showered upon you as well. And that's because every *bracha* you give awakens within you a love for Hashem's children. The more you live a life of blessing others, the more you learn to love them. And *just* for that, Hashem loves you more than you could ever imagine and bestows *brachos* upon you. "Hashem loves only those who love His children" (Mesillas Yesharim). So always remember to bless the Am Yisroel. And don't ever stop.

**HAVE A WONDERFUL SHABBOS**

# תורת אביגדור

"שאל אביגדור ויגדך זקניך ויאמרו לך"



## Q&A With Rav Avigdor Miller Ztz"l

**Q:**

**What does the Rav think about a person having a hobby?**

**A:**

Now we have come to a subject that many people are *nichshal* in. And you must realize that. Here, you have a woman who has a special room that is dedicated for her hobby. Let's say, for example, she has a Turkish Room. She has all types of Turkish things in that room. And it's her pride and joy. She takes her guests into that room to show them the Turkish tablecloth, the Turkish cups and the Turkish pictures.

Now, that is a waste of a life. You are wasting your life on zero. One hundred percent zero! The money was thrown out, the time was thrown out and, most importantly the thoughts were thrown out. You're wasting your thoughts and you're ruining your mind.

Hobbies are nothing. We have so much to do in life and there's no room for hobbies. Yes, you can have a hobby. Your hobby can be raising your children *bi'derech ha'Torah*. Your hobby can be Bava Kama. Bava Kama! Now, that's a good hobby. Bava Kama is a good hobby to choose. You can take a Mesechta and make it your project. Some people love Mesillas Yesharim. Mesillas Yesharim is also a good hobby. There are so many good things to do. And so many interesting things to do. And valuable things. So how can a person decide to waste his life on hobbies?! Who has time for collecting stamps?! Fishing?! You will spend your Sundays fishing?!

How can you throw away your life like that?! "Hobbies" is a gentile word that has no place in the Jewish dictionary.

TAPE #E-218

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