

# תורת אביגדור הגאון ר' אביגדור מיללער זצ"ל

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

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## Rav Avigdor Miller ztz"l on

### פרשת בהעלותך

#### WE WANT MEAT!!

In this week's Parsha we read about an occurrence that seems to be quite disgraceful for the Nation of Hashem, something that we would rather forget about. We find that a portion of the *Am Yisroel*, begin to voice dissatisfaction with their daily portions of *mann* that fell from the sky. ויהי העם כמתאוננים - "And the nation seemed to be making themselves sad" (Beha'aloscha 11:1). The word *misonein* means "to act in a sad way". And so a sad and dejected group from the *Am Yisroel* began to complain about their lot.

מי יאכלנו בשר - "What about some meat?!" they said to each other. "Don't you remember the good times we had in *Mitzrayim*?" - "We remember the fish we ate in *Mitzrayim*." And it was *chinam*, free. Anybody who wanted to, could go to the Nile, cast in a hook, and get nice, fat fish, free of charge. In *Mitzrayim* even the *avadim*, the slaves, got fish, free of charge. - "We ate cucumbers and melons, ואת הקשואים ואת האבטחים - and all kinds of spinach, and onions, and the garlic to add taste and spice to the food." But now, אין כל - "We have nothing, בלתי אל המן - עינינו - nothing but *mann*. That's all we can look forward to every day. One day after the next, nothing but *mann, mann, mann*."

## WHAT'S SO BAD ABOUT COMPLAINING?

And so ויהי העם כמתאוננים רע באזני השם. They began to express their displeasure. The people began to complain and it was רע באזני השם - it was evil in the eyes of Hashem. Now everybody who learns Chumash agrees, "How could they?! To complain to Hashem? It's a terrible thing!" But when we read the passuk carefully, we see it says it was 'רע באזני השם' - "It was evil in the ears of Hashem." Not in anybody else's ears. *Only in Hashem's ears* was it wicked. But if *we* would have been there and heard them, we would have said that they were justified

Because really, what's so evil about it? When the *Bnei Yisroel* left *Mitzrayim*, they were on top of the world. They came out *b'yad ramah*, with a strong hand, and they were loaded down with *kesev v'zahav*. And they thought that *this* was how it was going to be from now on. From here on in there would be nothing but complete happiness and luxuries. They'd be on top of the world forever and ever.

And they knew what eating well felt like. *Mitzrayim* was a lush country - all kinds of vegetables and fruits grew in *Mitzrayim*. It was *k'gan Hashem*, "like a lush garden of Hashem." And now, suddenly, they were faced with a very plain diet; a monotonous and boring food. Their food was a diet of a seed-like, colorless dish that had but two tastes; like a wafer in honey or like a pancake in oil (Shemos 11:8).

## COULD THEY REALLY TASTE PIZZA IN THE MANN?

Now, of course, we all know what the *Chazal* tell us, that they were able to feel various tastes in the *mann*. But don't be deceived by that. Those tastes were very hard to achieve. It wasn't as simple as you learned in the *cheder*. You needed a lot of *emunah*, a lot of *bitachon*. You had to sit down before the *seudah*, with a *mussar sefer* and say "הריני מוכן ומזומן" to feel a taste of meat in this *mann*." You had to work on *mussar*! And many times you can learn *mussar* and it has no effect on you. You have to learn *a lot of it*, until it seeps into your mind! And so only when they sat down to eat with *emunah* and *mussar* - after a lot of hard work, were they able to have a taste of meat in their food.

But suppose somebody was late; he came late to the *mussar seder*. And he just sat down to eat, without the preparation - "This

*mann* again!" ונפשינו קצה בלחם הקלוקל - "Our souls are loathe with this light and insubstantial food" (*Bamidbar* 21:5). Every day the same old stuff! Some people were lazy, and they didn't enjoy life at all there. And even the good ones, it's a bit tiresome to eat in that fashion. They would have liked to sit down to a real *seudah*, with real food! To a red steak, and to some wheat bread!

### REAL FOOD IS MORE FUN

They were hungry for some real food after all. Is that *such* a sin? Suppose you didn't get any meat for a year's time. Suppose you didn't get any onions for a year. How could you go without onions? You need onions, and garlic, and spices for everything. And so forty years of eating only honey wafers and pancakes, day in and day out, is not something that any of us would stand for! As delicious as it might taste; still, one week, two weeks, how long could you eat pancakes already?! You'd be protesting in the streets; there would be an insurrection.

Now let's pay close attention to the response of Moshe Rabeinu to this incident of the *misonenim*. Because here now is what is the most remarkable *parsha* in the whole Torah! You know that Moshe Rabeinu went through many things during his career as the leader of the *Am Yisroel*. Already back in *Mitzrayim* he had dealt with people who didn't appreciate his leadership. And in the *midbar* he went through the story of the *eigel*, and the story of Korach. And there were the *miraglim*, and many other things. But even with all of these events, with all of those troubles, never do we find an expression from Moshe Rabeinu like we find here in our *parsha*.

### MOSHE RABEINU WANTS TO DIE?

Moshe began a long speech, a long speech of despair. He said, "Ribono Shel Olam, what are You doing to me that You gave me this job of taking care of these people?" And he remonstrated and lamented, and finally he said a most desperate thing: הרגיני נא - "Just kill me!" Kill me?! How could he say such a thing. And he meant it! Kill me?! He spoke very bitterly, bitter words of disappointment. ואל אראה ברעתי - "I don't want to see in my misfortune" (*ibid.* 11:15) "Enough!" said Moshe Rabeinu. "I can't witness such a thing. I'm finished; I want to resign." הרגיני - "Kill

me!" he said. Through all of the other *tzaros* that Moshe faced, we never heard such a thing before! But all of a sudden, when the people are complaining, Moshe Rabeinu becomes so discouraged that he said, "I give up. הרגיני נא הרוג."

And truthfully, we're surprised at him. After all, he's the leader; a man of great *seichel*. What does he want to be killed for?! He could say maybe "Give me advice what to do." Or maybe "Send them some real food to appease their appetites." But "Kill me!" What's that for?! And it's a big *kasha*. Because nowhere else did Moshe make such a statement. It's a question that needs an answer!

So one *peirush* you can say is that Moshe had a good heart. He was an *oheiv Yisroel* par-excellence. He loved the Jewish people more than you can imagine, and when he saw that they were weeping, that they were unhappy, so he was also unhappy. Like any good leader, Moshe suffered along with his people. And the truth is that this *pshat* is not wrong. But it's not enough. It's not enough.

#### LACKING NOTHING AND HAVING NOTHING

So we'll start like this. In *Dvarim* (2:7) we are told: זֶה אַרְבַּעִים שָׁנָה הָשֵׁם אֱלֹהֶיךָ עִמָּךְ לֹא חָסְרָת דָּבָר - "These forty years in the *midbar*, Hashem, your G-d was with you; you lacked nothing." *You lacked nothing!* Now, how are we supposed to reconcile that with what we know? There were many times when we see the *Bnei Yisroel* crying out, complaining, when they lacked food to eat, and sometimes even water to drink. So how can Hashem say that they "lacked nothing"?

And it wasn't only the lack of meat and onions! It was an overriding feature of their entire lives. For forty years, they were very limited! They didn't have large homes - they didn't have any homes at all! Every day they had to be on the alert, maybe they'll hear the *chatzotzros*, the sound of the trumpets that summon them to pull out the stakes of their tents, and start moving. They never had any kind of security, any assurance, in the *midbar* that they would remain in one place for longer than a day.

It's true, in one place they remained eighteen years. But the entire eighteen years, every day, they were in trepidation. Every

minute, the trumpet might sound and say: get moving! You understand what a disturbance that is for a normal feeling of security in this world. Let's say you move into a home. But you know that at any moment you might be summoned to leave, with you and your family, and never to return. You won't do anything! You won't try to make any repairs, nothing. Any minute, you might get a notice to move out! And even if you lived there fifty years, you never had a minute of security. And so we would not be wrong if we would ask: How could Hashem, whose words are nothing but pure unadulterated truth, say that we "lacked nothing" in the *midbar*?

#### PSHAT IN "YOU LACKED NOTHING"

And the answer is this: What the words "you lacked nothing" mean is that "You lacked nothing *that the perfect mind should desire!*" In the *midbar* they didn't need any food, because the *mann* fell every day. They had everything they needed. They didn't have to go to the store to buy a new suit every year. שמלתך לא בלתה מעליך - "Their garments never wore out". And they had where to live. Nobody was being evicted from their tents in the *midbar*. Every person had a place to sleep. They had *everything!* They didn't need anything else to live happily in the *midbar*. לא חסרת דבר, Hashem said. "You were lacking *nothing!*"

Now it's true, the *Am Yisroel* might have lacked many pleasures and conveniences in the wilderness. But they still lacked *nothing*. And there was a purpose to this extreme limitation of pleasure. Forty years of eating only *mann* was intended by Hashem as a lesson - a most important lesson in training us for our purpose in life. Hakodosh Boruch Hu had special plans for His children. The *midbar* was now going to be a training ground for the future of the *Am Yisroel*. The *Am Yisroel* has to learn to be happy with all of the benefits that Hashem was showering down upon them, *without* the constant desire for more and for better things. And they were taught this intended lesson by being provided with only their minimum needs. ויענך וירעבך. Hashem "afflicted them" by allowing them "to hunger" for all of the extraneous and superficial things. And in this manner our nation became great.

## YESHIVAS HAMIDBAR

When the Am Yisroel was given only the minimum requirements of basic living, at first it was a shock. It wasn't easy. But with no choice but to accept their lot, every day became a new lesson about what happiness means. The *machaneh Yisroel* was one big Yeshiva. And the most important lesson that they were learning at all times was that not only did they not need more, but that they could find a deep wellspring of joy in all of the pleasures of their simple and mundane lives. And so, in order to teach His children the *derech Hashem*, they were given a diet that consisted of *mann* and *mann* and more *mann*. It was something, a limitation of pleasure, that they weren't accustomed to. And it was going to change them forever. For forty years they were being taught that lack of comforts is "lacking nothing"!

Now this great subject is not easy for people to understand. I'll quote a *possuk*: וזכרת את כל הדרך אשר הוליכך - "And you should remember the whole journey that Hashem led you on for forty years in the wilderness." Now pay attention to the next few words: למען ענותך - "in order to afflict you." Hashem took us into the wilderness *in order to afflict us for forty years!* Now what does "to afflict you" mean? To torture you?! To make you sad?! No! "To afflict you" means to see if you'll get along without unnecessary pleasures. Without entertainment. Without onions. Without fish. Do you hear that? Even onions and fish are unnecessary pleasures. The *Am Yisroel* in the *midbar* didn't have to worry about any deficiency in their diets. The *mann* was so planned to supply all that the people needed to remain healthy. It was not necessary to eat anything but the *mann*. It supplied all the vitamins, and just the right amount of protein, and carbohydrates, and amino acids - everything they needed was in the *mann*. Hashem was capable of doing the best job at preparing the *mann*.

### THE ELEVATION OF THE AM YISROEL

The *possuk* says: לנסותך לדעת את אשר בלבבך - "To test you, and to thereby elevate you; to know what's in your minds." Are you learning this great lesson of being satisfied *and happy* with everything that Hashem gives you to supply all your needs? That was the *affliction* in the *midbar*. The training of getting used to the

great principle of being satisfied and happy, of being *actually full of joy*, from having all of the basic needs of Mankind. And to not spend your lives in constant search for more pleasure. That lesson itself was the greatest elevation for the *Am Yisroel*. לַנְּסוֹתֶיךָ - “to elevate you forever from the endless pit of desire and unhappiness.”

#### NO ICE-SKATING IN THE MIDBAR

You know what else was lacking in the *midbar*? Entertainment was missing. Yes, entertainment was lacking. When the *Am Yisroel* were in the *midbar*, there was no entertainment. The Jewish nation *never* had any entertainment. They never had any public games, never had any races, no. Never! And that was an affliction for the weak minded fellow. What would he do on a Sunday afternoon if he couldn't go ice skating? And there was no theater or baseball either. There was none of that. In the *midbar* the *Am Yisroel* lived lives of simplicity.

But for those of lazy minds, the weak minded people, it wasn't enough. Some people felt that they need a little fun in life. “Ohhh, if we could just chew a piece of meat - even though we don't need it - but still, if we could chew a piece of meat, that's what we want. We need some fun in life!” הִתְאוּוּ תְאוּוּהּ it says. “They worked themselves up into a desire” (ibid. 11:4). That means that it wasn't any external circumstances that caused this lusting. It was simply a lack of appreciation and happiness with what they had. You know, there's nothing natural about wanting to go bowling. I'm much older than you and still I've never desired to go bowling or ice-skating. Only that when a person is too lazy to find happiness in his own life, the way that Hashem intended, so he fans the flames of lust. “Give us meat!” “Give us a bowling alley!”

#### BEWARE OF WAITERS WITH EARRINGS

Like today, you have a person who has plenty to eat. His refrigerator and pantry are full! But he wants some “special food”, maybe a restaurant. Ahh! A restaurant. Your own kitchen is a thousand times better than a restaurant! Restaurants, not only do they cost money, but the waiters touch the food with their dirty fingers. And you're eating from their dirty fingers. He wipes his

nose and then gets back to your chicken. That's the truth. Behind closed doors, that's the truth. When he brings you the food, there's all types of germs sticking to your food. And sometimes your waiter has an earring too, so you already know what type of germs you're getting from him. And you pay for that *simcha!*

But no, you have to eat out. Eating out! Why eating out? Who needs it?! You have plenty to eat in. It's just a *meshugas* of dissatisfaction. Always looking for something else. Always looking for something *more* than you need. That's the weakness of Mankind, the insanity of Mankind. הַתְּאוּוֹ תְּאוּוֹה - "To desire a desire." It's a *meshugas!*

### TRUE HAPPINESS IS FOUND IN MAINE

Here's a man who has a nice quiet home. He might even have a couch and a dining room table. But he's not satisfied with a quiet and peaceful home. He wants more. So he goes for a walk down the street; maybe outside he'll find the "good times." So he's walking down the street in the summer here in Brooklyn, and it's very hot, and maybe he's thinking, "Ah, if I had a car, and I could to Maine in the woods someplace, and have a nice cabin with an air conditioner, and let's say a hammock and a swimming pool. And other things too. "Of course, other things too. Because it never ends!

"I want some fun," he says. "So I think I should get in my car and travel someplace." So he sits in the car all day long, holding the steering wheel. He's tense, he can't rest, there's traffic, but he's traveling. And he's smelling the fumes of a thousand cars ahead of him, the gasoline fumes. Does it enter into his mind that, "Maybe I would have been better off sitting on my porch by my house. Or maybe inside my dining room." No. It doesn't enter his mind. Because there's something else. He's looking for something. And the problem is that he'll never find it.

The number one cause of our lack of gratitude to Hashem is that men spend their days, their lives, trying to obtain what they don't have and they therefore overlook all the kindness that they have received and that they continue to receive. One must make a conscious effort to limit his interests - what he wants, what he desires - in order to begin putting effort into enjoying the *present* benefits and training himself to thank Hashem continuously for

what he has. And that was the purpose of the forty year training program in the wilderness. The *Am Yisroel* was given only their basic needs, and they thereby learned to understand that receiving the basic necessities of life meant that they lacked nothing. They already have everything they need. And when a person knows that he lacks nothing, that is the catalyst for beginning to appreciate - more than appreciate - to be happy, to be filled with happiness with all of these basic benefits.

And that's what the lesson of the *mann* in the *midbar* came to teach us. To always be happy with the most simple things in your life - not to merely accept your lot begrudgingly - but to actually be bursting with joy in your *cheilek* in this world. When we say: *איזהו עשיר? השמח בחלקו*, it doesn't mean that it's a good thing. It's a *chiyuv*, an obligation on you to be happy that you're alive. You should be so happy with *חלקו*, your lot that you're alive, that you're busy singing to Hashem all day long. *Shiru lo, zamru lo!* Sing to Him, make music to Him. And that's the first step of being a *frum* Jew - appreciating everything that Hashem is giving you.

### DON'T WORRY BE HAPPY

So we'll study together a few selections from Koheles, from the wisest of all men. In *kapitel ches, possuk tes uvv* we read: *ושבחתני* - *אני את השמחה* - "And I praised joy; I praised happiness." Now, we're not talking about *drashos* here. The *gemara* has what to *darshan* on this *possuk*, but *אין מקרא יוצא מידי פשוטו*, the plain meaning is always valuable too. And Shlomo Hamelech said, "I am praising joy". Now when he said "I am praising," it doesn't mean, "I, Shlomo Hamelech, am praising." No; he's saying "I, Shlomo, am telling you the *da'as Torah*. This is what you have to accept because *this is what Hashem is saying*: 'I praise *simcha!*'" If you're talking about the good qualities in life, the good *middos* that you must strive to acquire, then you have to know that to be a *שמח וטוב לב*, a good natured and hally person and always in a good mood, that in itself is a very praiseworthy *middah*, says Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

Now pay attention to the next statement because it's a remarkable statement and it has caused a lot of people - even good people - much confusion. *כי אין טוב לאדם תחת השמש* - there is

no good under the sun, **כי אם לאכול ולשתות ולשמוח** - except to eat and to drink and to be happy! Now that's a *possuk* we like to hear! Hashem wants us to live a life of one party after another!

Now, does that mean you should sit in the cafe or the restaurant and gorge yourself? Or you should go into a bar and drink all night with the Irishman? No, it doesn't mean that. Those people who gorge are very unhappy! Those people who drink until they're inebriated and intoxicated they're not happy - they're not happy at all! They're simply trying to fill up the hollowness and emptiness of their sad lives.

And so, Koheles doesn't mention anything about a restaurant or a bar. He means you should eat a piece of bread, even without a jelly spread, *and be happy*. And you should drink a cup of water - from the sink - *and feel full of joy*.

#### THE EYE HOSPITAL

The **שער הבחינה** in his preface to his **חובות הלבבות** tells us that **טוב ה' לכל** - Hashem is good to everyone. Only that "most are like the blind, and fail to recognize His kindness." And to fix that, the Chovos Halevovos says, is the purpose of being in this world. This whole world is an eye hospital, he says, a place where you must learn to "heal your eyes". You have to make sure that your eyes are being healed in this world and that you're learning to look at everything with healthy eyes.

And what does it mean "healthy eyes?" The *yesod hayesodos* that most people aren't aware of is that we are in this world to recognize the goodness of Hashem. And that's how our eyes become cured! When you look around you and say, this is good and that's good, and this is good and that's good. But who is doing that? We are born blind, we come into the eye hospital of this world blind, and most of us remain blind all of our lives. It's a tragedy! We say *Boruch Atah* all day long - we're all saying *Boruch Atah, Boruch Atah, Boruch Atah*, but we don't know what we're saying! We don't feel indebted to Hashem, we don't feel *actual* gratitude, because we're not actually happy with what we're saying thank you for.

## A TZADDIK DOES MORE THAN JUST MITZVOS

And when a person doesn't feel indebted to Hakodosh Boruch Hu for all of the endless and valuable gifts that He's giving you, then it's *impossible* to be a servant of Hashem. It's true that you're doing *mitzvos*, you're doing everything, but your mind is lacking the thoughts that are supposed to underpin all of your *avodas Hashem*. Because it is gratitude, a real gratitude that engenders humility, that is the foundation of your service of Hashem.

When a person begins to realize what Hashem is doing for him all the time, that's the beginning of a career of being an *oved Hashem*. Because it's not the same as just doing *mitzvos*. Of course, doing *mitzvos* is very important because you can't be a Jew without *mitzvos*. But that's like saying, "You can't be a civilized man if you don't wear pants in the street." So you'll wear pants and you'll be a civilized man. But by wearing pants you're not a *tzadik* yet.

## THE FOUNDATION OF AVODAS HASHEM

Similarly, the fact that you do *mitzvos* makes you a decent person, a Jew, that's all. But to be an *oved Hashem* you need more than just pants, more than just *mitzvos*. The first thing you need is to realize what Hashem has done for you, and what He is doing for you every second. Because once you begin to understand how much He is giving you, your burden of gratitude to Him begins to weigh down on you. And that burden is the rock-solid foundation of *avodas Hashem*. In the words of Dovid Hamelech, **מה אשיב להשם** - **כל תגמולוהי עלי** - "How can I repay You Hashem for all of your kindness to me?" (Tehillim 116:12). At least *let me serve You* as an expression of my gratitude!

"I will rain down *mann* from the sky," said Hashem, "In order to test the nation, if they will walk in My *torah* or not." Now, don't make a mistake. To "walk in My *torah*" does not mean only the observance of the laws. Even more that that is the service of Hashem with gratitude instead of complaining. "In order to afflict you and to test you," means to test you regarding *your primary obligation* of thanking your Creator for life and for the essential sustenance that He provides. It is this happiness of receiving the fundamental benefits that make up life, that should cause men to

"walk in My Torah" and to "keep My commandments." And this actually means the *avodah* of thanksgiving, which is the service of Hashem that flows from a welling up of gratitude for all of the good He favors us with.

#### DOES A YESHIVA BACHUR NEED TO ENJOY LIFE?

One our greatest successes in this world is the realization that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is giving us everything we need. And actually being happy about it, and appreciative to Hakodosh Boruch Hu. The service of Hashem stands on the foundation of gratitude for his many kindnesses at all times. This emotion of thankfulness is the catalyst, the dynamo, that creates the energy for every form of service of Hashem, including the the most important service of constant praise and gratitude. But gratitude won't sprout on its own. It must be watered with constant happiness and appreciation of all the good things in life. When men are happy with the gift of life, the gift of food, the gift of peace and all the other countless benefits showered upon them, they can respond with gratitude.

A *bochur* in the yeshiva heard this once, he heard me say that the service of Hashem rests on happiness and gratitude, and he wrote me a letter. "How can you say such a thing? After all, I'm a frum Jew. I do all the mitzvos. The fact that I'm not enjoying life, does that mean I'm a failure?!" And the answer is yes. Yes, that's a failure. Because you may be doing *mitzvoos*, but you're not serving Hashem. And that's because when you do *mitzvoos* and you think that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is not nice to you, not kind to you, so what are you really thinking? "I'm not getting much from Hashem, but look what I'm doing for Him. So you think you're the Benefactor, and therefore you're turning the table upside down. You're the טוב ומטיב and Hakodosh Boruch Hu owes you! He's in debt to you.

#### I'M DOING MY JOB, BUT HASHEM...

Once, when I was in the yeshiva in Slabodka, a Yeshiva man, an old *talmid* came back to the Yeshiva to visit the *rebbeim*. And so, the *mashgiach* asked him, "*Vus hertzich?*" So the visitor said, "In *ruchniyus*, very good, very good. But *gashmiyus*, it's a *shoerer matzav*, it's very difficult."

After this *talmid* left, the *mashgiach* told us *pshat* in what he had said. The *mashgiach* teitched it *uhp* as follows: "What I'm doing for Hakodosh Boruch Hu, it's very good! I'm not pulling any punches; I'm giving Hakodosh Boruch Hu everything I can. But as far as what He's doing for me, it's *shver*, it's not so good." And that's called living in an upside down world. Because now, you're the *tov u'meitiv*, you're the Benefactor in this relationship, and Hashem is the one taking. And there's no bigger *meshugas* than that.

### A COMPLAINER IS A LOSER

And now we can understand why Moshe Rabeinu was so dejected when the *misonenim* began to complain, and he said **הרגני נא**, just kill me. *Misonenim* means to make yourself sad - when you have enough to be satisfied and happy, but you're looking elsewhere. And so, Moshe Rabeinu was afraid that this poison of dissatisfaction might spread. And that would undo his life's work. He had led them out of *Mitzrayim* for only one purpose, and that was to come to *Har Sinai* and become servants of Hashem. And he understood now that the complaining and unhappiness of the people would undermine their entire status as Hashem's servants. "And if that's the case," Moshe Rabeinu said, "Then I'm a failure. I failed as a leader. If the nation is not serving you out of gratitude, then I failed. You remember Hashem when You wanted to appoint me as a leader; You came to me and I refused. And you argued with me for a number of days, again and again, until finally I yielded. But maybe I was right after all. I'm not fit for the job. If Your people are complaining, then I've failed. Because if there's no gratitude, there's no *avodas Hashem*."

Now, I'm sure you don't understand it in the sense that I'm saying it. You think I'm just exaggerating. But at least something should sink in. It's so important understand the principle that if a man doesn't understand how fortunate he is in his world, then he has *not* fulfilled his purpose in the world. He's a failure.

### THE PURPOSE OF THE SEVENTY ELDERS

But Hashem didn't accept the resignation of Moshe Rabeinu. Instead, He offered a solution. Now pay attention to the

solution of Hashem. **אספה לי שבעים איש** - Hashem said: "Collect for Me seventy men of the elders of Yisroel." Seventy men? How would that help? What's that's got to do with the problem? If Hashem would have said "I'll bring you seventy ships loaded with vegetables and meat from other countries", alright, I would understand that. But seventy *chachomim*? What will *they* help out here?

And the answer is as follows. The problem of unhappiness is a matter that can only be solved by our own minds. It's self-created and it can be self-solved. In order to be happy, a person must study and recognize the many details of happiness that permeate his life. But this study, as valuable as it is, is not always available to the ordinary mind. The fact that we are busy and constantly involved in day to day life, as well as laziness of the mind, makes it difficult to focus on the actual happiness of life. Therefore, the multitude needs instruction by sage teachers that are willing to donate their time and experience for this purpose of opening the eyes of men to recognize the happiness of their lot.

Moshe Rabeinu, as great as he was, was unable to single-handedly undertake this task with the whole nation. And so, the seventy elders were chosen to assist him in this function. And he gave them the *koach* of *nevuah*. They all became *nevi'im*, these seventy people. The word '*navi*' comes from the word *niv*, which means speech, as in **ניב שפתים**. A *navi* is a person is a gifted speaker, someone whose fiery spirit and exalted diction would inspire his listeners. And the single most important inspiration needed is that of opening your eyes and perceiving the manifold wonders of Hashem's creations and the endless wisdom and kindness in every one of them.

#### THE ELDERS SAVE THE DAY

So these wise men that Moshe Rabeinu spread out and started giving lectures, to show the people how fortunate they really were, and to teach the people the secret of achieving true happiness in even the most simple life functions. And each one began teaching the people from now on to recognize how lucky they are, how fortunate they are. It takes time. It takes hard work to open the eyes of the complainers in this world. You have to talk with the people, and talk more with them. You have to preach to

them and you have to knock it into their heads in order that people should realize how to find the real happiness of life. And that's why Hashem said, "No, My Moisheleh, you keep on the job. You're doing alright and I'm not accepting your resignation. Instead I'll give you seventy people to help you teach the people how to be happy."

And we'll explain this as follows: Suppose you go to a wedding. In the olden days - today maybe it's different - there was a table on which they used to put the gifts. The chosson and kallah stood near the table, and as people put the gift on the table, they thanked the donors for the gifts.

Now suppose you have nothing to give. But you're standing nearby. And when someone else puts his gift on the table you stand there and explain to the *chosson* and *kallah* how good the gift is. "You see that watch? It has seventeen jewels. It's anti-magnetic. It's waterproof, it's this and that." So you're not giving anything that's tangible, but what you're giving them is *more* than the giver. You're giving them the *seichel*, the knowledge to enjoy the gifts.

#### AFTER A WHILE YOU BECOME RICH!

And so, if you're able to tell people how good this world is - you're not creating the world, Hashem did that - but you can explain to them how fortunate they are that they can breathe the air outside. How fortunate they are that they can walk! The gift of speech - you're able to talk! You can think! Not everybody can think. Oh yes, there are places, big buildings, full of people who cannot think. They're locked up there. You can hear! Most of you can hear. Most of you don't have any pacemakers inside your chest. Your heart is beating regularly. You have clothing on your back. You have two eyes; you can see.

And the *chochom* starts explaining it to you. And you spend time thinking about it. After a while you become happy; you become full of simcha. You become rich! איזהו עשיר - Who is really the rich man? השמח בחלקו - The one who is happy with his eyes, and his heart, and his legs, and his food, and his everything!

### SILLINESS FOR SILLY PEOPLE

Of course this sounds silly to silly people. But wise men who learn this are anything but silly. And so you have to go to people who can teach you this art. And in case you can't find such a wise man, then you're going to have to do the job yourself. It can't be helped. You'll have to speak to yourself like the seventy *zekeinim* spoke to the people and explained to them how fortunate they really were. And Hakodosh Boruch Hu *expects* you to do it.

The one and only way to be successful at serving Hashem is to train yourself to study the many benefits and kindness that you do have. Now, to just say thank you to Hashem for everything, means nothing. It's a blank check and it's worth nothing. You must begin an intensive study of the benefits that you have by spending time thinking about them.

But it's impossible to achieve any kind of happiness unless you have *dei'ah*. *Dei'ah* means that you understand things. Because what is happiness? Happiness is having things that cause you happiness. You need something to cause you happiness. And so if one thing causes you happiness, let's say you have grandchildren and your grandchild causes you happiness. So if you have one grandchild, you have one element that causes you happiness. Suppose you have five grandchildren, so those five grandchildren cause you five times as much happiness. It's true, you'll see later that it will turn out that way. The more you have, the more happiness you'll have.

### HAPPINESS IS EVERYWHERE

Now listen to what I'm telling you now. Suppose you get happiness not only from grandchildren, but you get happiness from the regular things in life. There are so many regular things, so if you use them correctly, you'd be overflowing with happiness.

Now these things sound silly to all the wise guys. And that's why the wise guys are missing out on all the happiness of life. Because it's always the wise guys who have no *da'as* at all. It's in here that we learn what it really means to be wise. We learn what it means to be happy.

It takes some effort but a person is capable of teaching himself to be happy with everything he has - without going anywhere. In order to be always happy a person must first choose one thing and concentrate on it until it makes him happy. You have to work on that one thing.

### ONE STEP AT A TIME

So start out as follows. Say, "I'm so happy that I have something to eat. I have what to eat and I'm not starving." Learn how to be happy that you have food. Work on that. It takes effort. It's much easier to let your thoughts wander and not concentrate on these ideas. But you can use your thoughts to become a very happy man if you want to. While you are eating, instead of thinking about every meshugas in the world, just think about the kindness of food. There is so much to enjoy. The taste, the texture. Just the act of being able to chew is a pleasure. And while you are chewing you should be thinking these thoughts. Trust me, if you do it properly, without slacking off, you will become a very happy person. So make sure to practice this *avodah* this service of Hashem, without weakening your resolve. Start, and don't stop.

And that's finding happiness the Torah way. Suppose a man learns to be happy the way the Torah says. The Torah says ואכלתם לחמכם - If you're going to keep My laws, then אם שמוע לשובע, "Then you'll eat your bread to satisfaction." You'll have enough to eat. Enough to eat?! That's called happiness?! All the people will get up in a revolution, "No! We want television sets! We want cars! We want vacations! We have to have special subsidies from the government! Just to have enough food to eat? That's how you reduce us, to the lowest level of life?!"

### HAPPINESS IS MISUNDERSTOOD

And that's because people don't understand what happiness is. You think happiness means getting this and getting that. Because the world doesn't understand. Having enough to eat! That's what the Torah is constantly promising you - that's what's going to be your reward for all your good deeds. ואכלת וישבעת - You'll have enough to eat. So we see that we're missing something here. Because we didn't know that having enough to eat is *the* very great happiness of life.

After a while, after much thought, you'll be happy with that one thing. Then add another thing. And work on that. You went to the bathroom and everything worked? Everything is working! Learn how to be happy with that. You hear that?! Learn how to be happy with a functioning body! You don't think about it?! When you'll be eighty years old you'll start thinking about it. Trust me, you'll think about it. And you'll long for those days of happiness when everything worked so well. So start thinking about it now. Work on being happy that you can go to the bathroom.

### I <3 KIDNEYS

Imagine, here is a man who had an operation and they had to take out his kidneys. And now he looks back at the good old days when life was full of happiness. What was the happiness? He had kidneys. It's too late for him now, but he learned a great lesson - he learned that happiness consists of kidneys. Now all you people who have not just one kidney - this man would be happy with one kidney! If he could get one kidney he would be intoxicated with joy. He wouldn't want anything else in this world. Just give him a kidney and he'd be walking on clouds. And you have two of them and you're not intoxicated?! Forget about being intoxicated, you don't even think about it. Only that I happened to mention it here, so you'll think about it for a few seconds.

You have to learn to enjoy your two kidneys. And you should enjoy it so much that it should make you really dizzy with happiness. Think about it! Two kidneys! Ay yah yay! Ahh, ahh, ahh! Two kidneys! It's such a happiness - you could go *meshugah* from happiness.

### THE FREE COCKTAIL

Then move onto another thing- did you ever learn to enjoy air? So you'll laugh at me. "Air?! you'll say. "What a naive fellow this fellow is, telling us to enjoy air!" No, I'm not naive at all. Air is a lot of fun. Breathe in a deep lungful of this special cocktail; oxygen, and nitrogen and a little bit of carbon dioxide and some other gases. A mixture that's perfectly suited for your lungs. You breathe in and fill your lungs with that air, and it gives you red

blood cells that will flow more rapidly through your veins, with more zest, and you'll live more vigorously because of that cocktail.

### SLEEPING IS FUN

And so life is full of happiness. When you get up in the morning, do you appreciate that you slept last night? You slept! Do you know how many people cannot sleep! Sleep is the medicine that heals the weariness and frazzled nerves of the body. When you wake up you're a new man. Do you appreciate the happiness of a good night sleep? That's another happiness of life.

And we could go on and on forever. Summer is a joy! Of course, the fools are waiting for the winter. And when winter comes they'll be waiting for the summer. That's a life?! But the wise man learns the joys of every season, and each season is one of the things that contributes to his happiness. What a pleasure summer is! What a joy it is! Learn to dive into the warmth of summer! Learn to be happy in the sunshine!

### DON'T WAIT TILL IT'S TOO LATE

There's so much to talk about. It's a tremendous subject - it's the subject of living properly. People don't appreciate that they have wives and husbands. Ohhh, until they don't have them. Finally the husband is sent to the funeral parlor, and he's put into a box and he's sent to *Eretz Yisroel*. Now the wife is all alone, and now she's thinking, "Oy, I lost my husband." Now she realizes that she had a husband once. But while she had him, she didn't enjoy him. Ay, what a foolish existence it is that we're living. A living where we're only happy in retrospect, looking back and seeing the happiness they once had.

You must learn to live in the "good times" of the present. Life is full of joy. We have thousands of elements in life, and each one is capable of making our careers here in this world an unending series of happy events and joyful experiences.

Little by little, add. It takes work. It takes time. Like I said before, it doesn't come by itself. But that's what you're in this world for. Little by little, you'll add. And after a while you'll have forty, fifty things. you'll be happy with forty things and you'll be a rich man. And that's nothing yet because there's so much more than that. And if you're a young man yet - even a young man of

sixty - you'll keep on this path, on this career, until you're in your nineties and you'll be a very wealthy person!

### **WHO NEEDS THE YANKEES?!**

The successful man sings to Hashem in this world all the time. He's not grouchy, and he's always singing to Hashem because he really enjoys what Hashem is doing for him right now. Not that he wants a better car, with more gadgets. He doesn't need the theater or the ballgames. Restaurants and entertainment mean nothing to him. Travel? Who needs travel?! It's such an insanity!

Here's that he wants to always travel and see the world. That man is a fool. עיני כסיל בקצה הארץ - "The eyes of a fool are on the ends of the earth." Over there, far away, is where he thinks he'll find happiness. He has to see Venice and Paris to be happy. No! The happy fellow doesn't go anyplace. He never goes! He hasn't been in a hotel in his lifetime. He doesn't know what the inside of a hotel looks like - and he doesn't care. He has no desire for eating out and for entertainment. And if you would give him a menu, he wouldn't know what to do with it. He was never in a restaurant; he doesn't know what a menu is. He never traveled on an airplane. Never.

### **BE A STICK IN THE MUD**

So you'll say, "That's a man?! That's no man; that's a stick in the mud! That's happiness?!" And I'll say back to you that this man is the most successful man in the world. And the happiest as well! Because this man is capable of enjoying every second of this life with such a happiness that you could never imagine in your wildest dreams.

But you have to do it, though. Just hearing me say it, is not enough. You have to make up your mind that you're going to pursue this career of happiness and that you'll always be saying, "I thank You Hashem." Always, "I thank You Hashem for giving me this breakfast. I thank you Hashem for being able to go to the bathroom." And don't rely on the brachos you make. You must say it with your mouth in your own language. Always. And,

המחשבה נמשכת אחר הדיבור - your mind will be transformed because of your speech and you will become a happy man. You will become happy with the so many wonderful things that you have always taken for granted. And you will become a servant of Hashem and a great man. Not only will you become a happy person, but you will become a person who is now prepared to begin a career of being a true *eved Hashem* - a career of serving Hakodosh Boruch Hu with an overwhelming feeling of love and gratitude.

**HAVE A WONDERFUL SHABBOS!**

# תורת אביגדור

"שאל אביד ויגדך זקניך ויאמרו לך"



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

**Q:**

**What should our attitude be toward the unorthodox?**

**A:**

And there is only one answer. Our attitude should be to do everything we can to make them Orthodox. Which means you must show them a friendly face. You must go out of your way to be kind to them and to attract them. But in your heart you must realize that those who are right now Orthodox, they are the ones who are the aristocrats. And don't make any error about it. You cannot compare those whom Hashem loves with those who He will eventually love, or you hope that He will love one day.

So it doesn't pay to be unfriendly to irreligious Jews. But that doesn't mean you have to yield to them on any front. Whether it's in the synagogue or in the community you don't yield one iota. Certainly not! You have to stand up and battle for the principles of the Torah. You have to battle against the gays. You have to battle against every form of wickedness, even though they're Jews. But whenever you have the opportunity, there's no question that you have to show a פנים מסבירות - a friendly face. And your job is to try to win them over.

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