

תורת אביגדור
הגאון ר' אביגדור מיללער זצ"ל

Rav Avigdor Miller on the Parsha

Adapted from his Tapes, Sforim and Writings of Talmidim

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info@TorasAvigdor.org

732.844.3670

5014 16th Avenue Suite 488

Brooklyn NY 11204

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Rav Avigdor Miller ztz"l on

פרשת תולדות

THE GREAT BLESSINGS

In Parshas Toldos, Yitzchok Avinu summons his son Eisav to stand before him to receive the great blessings of ויתן לך האלוקים מטל השמים ומשמני הארץ. And it was much more than a brachah of a father to a son; it was a prophecy for all generations to come, important words that would guide the future of all world events, and manipulate the history of nations.

And therefore, we should listen closely to what Yitzchok chose as the most important preparation for this great event. Because if it was up to us we know what we would have chosen as the best sort of *hachana* for such a great event. Maybe we would have told Eisav to fast and spend the day in *tefillah* and *teshuva*. Maybe Yitzchok should have gone to the mikveh and fasted as well. He could have said *tehillim* all day long! Now that would be a *hachanah* if there ever was one! That would be *brachos* given בקדושה ובטהרה!

FOOD AS A PREPARATION?!

But what do we find instead? צא השדה וצודה לי ציד - "Go out to the field, my son, and hunt some game for me, בעבור תברכך

נפשי - in order that I should bless you" (Toldos 27:3-4). Now that's a very queer *passuk*. Yitzchak told Eisav to make him a meal! "If you bring me supper, then I'll be ready to bless you."

Let's say, imagine your son comes to you, and he wants a blessing. He's getting married, or he's going to a new yeshiva or opening a business. Would you say, "The first thing is, I want you to make a meal for me in order that I should bless you"? What kind of nonsense is that?! You can't give him a brachah unless he makes you a meal?! So what was Yitzchok doing here? It's a remarkable thing and we have to make note of that point; it's something that must be explained.

YITZCHOK ORDERS VENISON

And not only did Yitzchok ask Eisav to hunt some game for him and prepare for him a meal, but he added, *ועשה לי מטעמים* - "And make for me some tasty food, *כאשר אהבתי*, like I love." You hear such words?! Yitzchok didn't ask for just any old meal; no, that wouldn't satisfy him. He wanted it to be prepared "the way that I love." He wants a good piece of roasted venison. Venison tastes good you know. Maybe you never tasted it because it's very expensive - but well roasted venison is a delicacy.

So what are we learning here? That Yitzchok loves food! You hear that?! We ourselves would be loathe to admit such a thing. It's a very strong expression. *כאשר אהבתי* - "Like I love." Imagine if somebody would say he loves food in the company of *tzaddikim*. You couldn't get away with such a thing today!

WE HAVE TWO WITNESSES

And in case you might have thought that this was some sort of aberration, something that was not typical of Yitzchok Avinu, so the Torah lets us listen in on another conversation in this holy house. And we hear Rivka telling Yaakov "If you want to be the one to get the *brachos* from your father, we're going to have to prepare for him a delicious meal *כאשר אהב*, like he loves." So על

פי שנים עדים יקום דבר, we're told this idea twice already. Once Yitzchok Avinu himself tells us that he loves good food. And then Rivka tells us the same: באשר אהב, "Like he loves." Now we know that Yitzchok Avinu was no glutton - *chas v'shalom*. So we have to understand what's doing here.

So we'll explain as follows: It's clear that Yitzchok loved his son enough even before he would partake of the venison that Eisav placed before him. No question about that. And there's no question that Yitzchok was capable of bestowing a beautiful *brachah* on his son without the incentive, without the *gashmiyusdigeh* motivation of good food. And nonetheless, we see that Yitzchok wanted that he should first partake of a meal that Eisav would make for him - "tasty foods like I love" - and only then would he be ready to give the *brachos*.

GOOD FOOD INTENSIFIES THE LOVE

And the reason for this is because Yitzchok knew that this would *intensify even more* his love for his son. "The time has come to give Eisav the *brachos* and I want it to be the best *brachos* possible. Of course I could give Eisav a good *brachah* - I could put my hands on his head and cry copious tears - but a good *bracha* is not good enough for me. I want it to be the best, the most heartfelt *brachah* possible."

And so when Eisav went out to the field to go hunting for him, to catch a deer, so Yitzchok was thinking, "My son will bring me some deer meat and he'll broil it for me and make it taste good. And I'm going to love him even more for that. My love for him will well up in my heart not only as a result of thinking that he's my son, that he's my future; not only that, but look what he did for me - he went and made me something tasty to eat. And as I'm eating the food he prepares for me, my love for him will become even greater than it is now, and my *brachah* to him will be greater as well."

And therefore, he said to Eisav, “Make me a tasty dish, *make it very tasty the way I love it*, בעבור תברכך נפשי, so that my *nefesh*, my soul should bless you.” Because after eating a good meal that Eisav prepares for me, now it's a *different kind of brachah entirely*. Not merely that my tongue and my lips should bless him. And not even so that my mind should bless him; “*but בעבור תברכך נפשי*, so that my whole being should bless you.” It will come from deeper in my soul, with even more love than was possible beforehand.

YITZCHOK WAS HUMAN

Now we might say, for Yitzchak Avinu isn't that an insult to him? That by eating of Eisav's food, Yitzchak would be more enthusiastic, more sincere, in bestowing a blessing on him?! And the answer is *yes! Because that is human nature*. And Yitzchok wasn't a *malach*; he *was* a *tzadik* but even a righteous man is a *human being*. And that's how Hashem made human nature. And so Yitzchok understood that in order that the blessing should be *more perfect in enthusiasm*, it was necessary to eat of Eisav's cooking beforehand.

Now once we understand this story, about how Yitzchok used food for a much more sublime purpose than just filling his stomach, we can better understand a gemara that has puzzled us. In Mesichta Pesachim (118a) the gemara speaks about *Hallel Hagadol*, the Great Hallel (Tehillim 136). Now, we know that *everything* in Tehillim is *gadol*. *Ashrei, Tehilla l'David* is very great. If you say it every day three times you're a *ben olam haba*. That's how important it is. So why then is this *kepitel* singled out to be called *Hallel Hagadol*? That's the *gemara's* question.

THE GRAND FINALE: GIVING OUT FOOD

Now, in that *kepitel* you have twenty six times the phrase כִּי לעולם חסדו, enumerating the *chasdei Hashem*. He took us out of Mitzrayim, He brought us through the Yam Suf, He destroyed our

enemies. A whole long list of *chasdei Hashem*. And what's the pinnacle, the final thing on the list, It says there: **נותן לחם לכל בשר** - "Hakodosh Boruch Hu gives food to all flesh."

And so the *gemara* explains: **שהקדוש ברוך הוא יושב ברומו של עולם ומחלק מזונות לכל בריה** - Hakodosh Boruch Hu sits in the heavens and distributes food for every living creature. And the Rashbam (ibid.) says: that's the *davar gadol*. The Rashbam is telling us that this phenomenon that the *Borei Yisborach* is providing food for all the living creatures is such an important thing, not that it's a *davar gadol*, it's *the* *davar gadol*. That's the *pshat* in the Rashbam. And that's why it's called *Hallel Hagadol*, because the *davar gadol* that we see most prevalent in this world is food, that Hashem is feeding everybody. And that's why after a long list of *chasdei Hashem*, the last one, the grand finale, the pinnacle of all of the *chasdei Hashem* is that Hashem is feeding the world!

THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE IS MAKING FOOD

Look out the window, the whole world is eating! People are walking in the street, that's a proof that they're eating. Otherwise they wouldn't be able to walk. Everybody is eating! And the entire universe is working to get you a piece of bread, a tomato, a piece of chicken and a potato.

In *sefer Emunas V'deios*, Rabbeinu Saadia Gaon makes a remark that enlightens us about the nature of *Olam Hazeh*. He says that this world is a world that's made for the production of food. The machinery of how the world works revolves *entirely* around the purpose of supplying food. It's a very important observation that nobody pays attention to. But Rav Saadia Gaon made note of this phenomenon. The entire *Olam Hazeh* is geared for the function of **מכלכל חיים בחסד**.

The first thing that we take note of is that the entire earth, with all its phenomena, is devoted to the purpose of creating and supporting life, through a wonderful system that supplies the

food needs of all the living. The entire soil that blankets this earth is only for the purpose of supplying food. The winds, the sun, the rain, the atmosphere, many factors have the sole function of cooperating in supplying food for the living. The vast phenomena of the sun, the force of gravity, the winds, the rains, the snow and the atmospheric gases all cooperate in the mighty function of supplying you with your breakfast, lunch and supper – as well as all that snacking in between. And of course these systems are all cooperating with each other to feed the world. And if you open your eyes, if you open your mind, you see it all day long.

The marvel of the food supply system is absolutely incomparable to anything else. It's majestic; a remarkable demonstration of the *yad Hashem*. And it's being done for the sole purpose of bringing that slice of bread and that piece of chicken to your plate.

WHY IS FOOD THE "DAVAR GADOL"?

And that leaves us with the glaring question that we should be asking ourselves: What is the purpose of all this? Why is so much going on in this world all for the purpose of food? Such a wondrous and remarkable proliferation and for what?! For what purpose did Hashem do this? And why is it called the *davar gadol*, the most important of all the *chasdei Hashem*?

And so we'll study a gemara in *Mesichta Chullin* (4b), and there, we will find an answer to this question - why is food such a *davar gadol*? What makes it such an important phenomenon, that it should be the greatest of all the *chasdei Hashem*?

THE WAY TO A MAN'S HEART IS THROUGH HIS STOMACH

We find there a very interesting observation that Chazal make. They tell us that the most effective way to persuade a person, to entice a person, is not with words. **אין הסתה בדברים** - "You can't really entice somebody with words," they say. The real way to persuade somebody is with **אכילה ושתיה**, with food and

drink. And Rashi explains there that אדם שצריך לאכילה עיקר הסתה - באכילה ושתיה - for a person living in this world of *gashmiyus*, the way to his heart, the way to buy his love, is with good food. When you want to make that big sale to an important customer, you make sure to take him out to a good restaurant. Of course, you'll be talking about how your prices can't be matched, and about the quality of your goods, you'll show him that the deal is a no-brainer - but still you need to put that good steak in front of him so that he should like you, and to induce him into closing that deal.

And now we can understand why Hashem gives us food. We thought that there's food in the world merely because we have to live - we need the nourishment, the vitamins, in order to survive. We need energy to do mitzvos, to learn Torah. And we thought that food is the *heicheh timtzei* to be able to live. But no, that's not the real purpose. Because our nourishment could have been tasteless and colorless, and without aroma. *Hakodosh Boruch Hu could have given us the fuel we need without all the fun of eating!*

ONE WHITE PILL THREE TIMES A DAY FOR 120 YEARS

Hashem could have made apples that have all the materials you need to regenerate your worn out tissues, to give you the energy you need. And the apples could be without taste and without color. You wouldn't enjoy it. As much as you enjoy the gasoline you put into your car, that's how much you'd enjoy the apples. You'd chew them anyhow; what could you do? You have to refuel. But instead Hakodosh Boruch Hu gave you apples that are red, or golden delicious, and they taste good, all different types of flavors, and sweet aromas too.

And who needs apples at all? Hashem could have given us white pills without any taste. And בלית ברירה, with no other option, we would eat the white pills. And we would have been happy to ingest the life-giving materials which would supply us with energy. It would keep us going like vitamins. They don't

have any taste. Sometimes they're bitter. But we'd eat them because we have to.

HASHEM IS PERSUADING US!

But instead He gives us "pills" that taste good. He feeds us *בטובו בחן בחסד וברחמים*, in His goodness, kindness, grace and mercy. Hashem made the eating function into a considerable pleasure by bestowing on our food a wide variety of tastes, colors and aromas. The large amount of fruits, with each fruit itself coming in various flavors and shades of color. A variety of poultry and fish and meat. Varieties of grains and vegetables and fruit. And various spices and condiments.

And that's what the gemara in Chulin is teaching us: What's it all for? Why is there an endless variety of foods and tastes? The wide variety of foods and drinks in this world is *Hashem trying to persuade us*. He is doing His best to persuade us to perfect ourselves in Awareness of His kindness, of the *chesed* He's doing for us, so that we should be tangibly feeling His *chesed* all day long, and falling in love with Him. All day long Hashem is trying to seduce you with the endless variety of good foods, tasty foods, *מטעמים כאשר אהבתי*. And after every meal, you should be a different person, you should feel an even greater love and appreciation of Hakodosh Boruch Hu who just took you out for supper!

FEEL THE TANGIBLE LOVE

And that is the real reason why this world is a food making machine. So that we should rejoice in this endless variety and appreciate the infinite kindness of Hashem. And it's all for the purpose of inducing us to love Him. That's the reason we're eating and enjoying these things!

And that's what we say in birchas hamazon every day: You're feeding us Hashem; and You do it *בחנו בחסד וברחמים*. And what's it all for? It's for one purpose, *בעבור שמו הגדול*, for the sake

of His great name, so that we should appreciate what You're giving to us and feel an actual love, a tangible love for You.

WE'VE BEEN TRAINED THE WRONG WAY

Now here comes the rub, here's the difficulty. Because you people are all *tzadikim* and you've been trained to know that you're not supposed to enjoy anything in this world. You shouldn't enjoy! "תאוות האכילה," you'll say, "that's a terrible thing." You don't want to become subject to the desire to eat!

But that's because up till now all of us *tzadikim* "knew" that eating is an evil - a necessary evil, but an evil nonetheless. And we would have loved to be exempted from it. It takes up a big part of our lives! If we could take the time we spend on our meals and use it to learn, let's say, *Ktzos Hachoshen*, or *Mishna Berurah*. Maybe some *Chovos Halevavos*, a little *mesichta* on the side - think of all the accomplishments we would achieve in our lives. We spend a great deal of time - too much time it seems - on this pursuit of eating food.

TAA'VAS ACHILAH IS LECHATCHILAH!

But now we're learning that it's not an accident, it's not a *b'dieved*. It's the plan of Hashem. We see now how important the function of eating is in this world - because it's the eating of food that is the occasion for the great service of Hashem, the service of actually *believing* that He is a *Chofetz Chesed*.

He's trying His hardest to get our attention. But we're sleeping. Even when we're eating our minds are fast asleep. We're not thinking about it at all. But when a person is wise enough to think when he eats, he's allowing himself to be persuaded by Hashem to fall in love with Him. And that's *why* Hakodosh Boruch Hu gives us good things to eat, so we should fall in love with Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

FALLING IN LOVE WITH HASHEM

Many people will laugh at that. "In love with Hakodosh Boruch Hu?!" they'll say. Yes! Absolutely in love. You say it every day, **ואהבת את השם אלוקיך**, But nobody is doing it. And so you're learning now one of the most available ways to actually fulfill this mitzvah of loving Hashem. And that's the great tragedy of Mankind - they don't utilize the great opportunity offered by eating.

Now, one of the greatest men in our history should be our model for how to be successful in this "food-world." So let's listen to what Dovid said about this subject: **אני אמרתי** - "I am the one who said, **עולם חסד יבנה** - that this world is built for kindness" Now what are those extra words, *Ani amarti*, "I said"? What's the introduction for? Just tell us, "*Olam chesed yi'baneh.*"

EATING LIKE A "SLAVE"

And the answer is this. Yes, of course, everyone could say "This world is a world of *chesed*." Why not? It's easy to say; it doesn't cost you any money. But to actually *understand* that it is so, to *feel* that this world is a world of *chesed*, and more *chesed* and more *chesed*, that's a big accomplishment that only a few people achieve.

When Dovid sat down to eat, he didn't waste any time. He ate supper like an *eved Hashem* is supposed to eat supper. He was *Dovid avdi* because he knew how to eat; he ate with thought. Dovid was sitting and eating and thinking. As he ate, he saw the *chesed Hashem*; better yet, he *tasted* the *chesed Hashem*. He felt it on his taste buds, he felt it in his stomach, **עולם חסד יבנה** - "It really *is* a world of kindness!" And because he made a program out of it, because he did it day after day, he actually began to *feel the chesed Hashem in his bones*. When Dovid Hamelech ate, he was taking the superficial wisdom that everyone knows, and he became saturated with it. He became identified with that wisdom. It became part of him. He actually *felt* it so.

YOU SAY IT, BUT I MEAN IT

Ani amarti, said Dovid, after his breakfast, after his lunch and supper. "I'm the one who can really say it, because I actually make it my business to experience, to appreciate, Hashem's kindness." *Ani amarti* - "Listen to me because I know what I'm talking about. I've come to the conclusion that *olam chesed yi'baneh*, that Hashem truly made this world for kindness.

So now we're learning the paramount duty of appreciating food. Eating is a very important part of our progress that we make in this world. And it's the great tragedy - I would say for Mankind but I would prefer to say for the Jewish people - it's a great tragedy that this fundamental principle is overlooked. We serve Hashem most greatly by being grateful for our sustenance. It's food, the eating of food, that is the occasion for the greatest service of Hashem.

It's your great opportunity to appreciate the great *chesed* of *ani amarti*, the understanding of what *bri'as haolam*, the creation of the world, really means. When you sit down to the table and you eat food, you're taking the *yedias hasechel*, the superficial knowledge of the mind, and you're transforming it into *yedias hachush*. And the more you enjoy the eating, the more you're going to be grateful to Hashem and understand His kindness.

WHO REALLY MADE THE CHICKEN?

And therefore when you eat, it's a glorious opportunity. Every time you sit down at the table, you sit down with the intention "הנני מוכן ומזומין" to gain more love of Hashem." So you're sitting down to a meal. First thing is you should tell your wife how good the food is. You give her a compliment. "Chanaleh, this chicken is excellent. It couldn't have been any better." You should say that! But when she walks out to the other room and she doesn't hear, you should say, "This food tastes so good, Hashem. Thank you, You did a remarkable job on this chicken. I love You, Hashem." That's how to love Hashem through eating. And

although there are many ways of loving Hashem, eating is one of the most fundamental means because it hits the spot. It's *yedias hachush*, it's sensory knowledge. The whole body is employed in the function of eating, and your whole being therefore becomes employed in the function of loving Hashem.

But you won't be able to employ your body in this great function unless you use your mind as well. If you're eating your food the same way a donkey or horse eats, or even the same way your Italian neighbor eats, you'll never achieve anything in this world. You won't be better than Mr. Ferraro. So as you sit down to your meal you're thinking, "You know, this food doesn't taste like turpentine. It doesn't taste like dirt or like paper. This bread tastes good! And Hashem created for me all types of flavors and tastes. Onions! What would the world be without onions?! And salt! And sometimes pepper! It's so much fun to be eating. It's delicious and filling. And, not only is it fun, but it's refreshing and invigorating for my body and soul. I'm a new man after a good meal." These are important thoughts. Think about them while you're eating and when you finish the meal you'll see that you're a different person. By eating properly, you become a different person!

And just like Yitzchok's eating from Eisav was the catalyst for an entirely different *brachah*, that is the goal of all of our eating. If we eat this way, with the thoughts of what Hashem is giving to us, then our gratitude and love, and our *brachos* to Him become entirely different than they were before the meal.

WHO IS DOING THE FAVOR FOR WHOM?

So you thought that when you make a *brachah* you're doing a favor to Hakodosh Boruch Hu. "I make a *bracha* to Hashem and He'll reward me for my *bracha*. He owes me for my *bracha*." So Hashem says, "Oh, I owe you?! What about what you owe Me for all the sweetness I'm giving you?" All that appreciation, all that gratitude and love of Hakodosh Boruch Hu

has to go into that *brachah*! The *brachah* is your opportunity to grow even greater.

And so when it comes to *birchas hamazon* or any *brachah achronah*, you have to realize that it's your opportunity to sum up all your achievements that you made during the meal. *Birchas Hamazon* is just a review, a *chazara* of what you "learned" while you were actually chewing and enjoying and swallowing. You're taking all those great ideals, all of the love and gratitude that you were thinking as you chewed the tasty food, and you're telescoping those feelings into the words of the *brachah* so that those ideas shouldn't go lost. And that way, the *brachah* itself helps you gain more of that appreciation, more of that *yedias hachush*, the sensory perception of Hashem's *chesed*, and the encouragement to love Him.

WHAT ARE YOU EMBARRASSED ABOUT?

And that's why every time that you partake of food, it's not enough to just make a *brachah* and be *yotzei*. Your *bracha* should be a loud and enthusiastic proclamation of the great principle of the kindness of Hashem. And when you make that *brachah* you can't be ashamed to say it out loud! Don't be embarrassed! Absolutely, you should say it aloud. How else are you going to make the *brachah*?! The Navi says, והבושת אכלה את יגיע אבותינו (Yirmiyahu 3:24). "The embarrassment, the bashfulness ate up the labor of our fathers." To be embarrassed with *yiddishkeit*?! והבושת אכלה את יגיע אבותינו. Being bashful can sometimes eat away at all of your *avodas Hashem*. It impedes the greatness that you can achieve. To be embarrassed when you thank Hashem?! Don't be embarrassed! Certainly, make a *brachah* out loud. הודו לה קראו בשמו. Thank Hashem and make His name great by proclaiming His name. What else?! Are you going to proclaim His name by whispering, by mumbling?!

That's why the only *brachah* that's *min hatorah* is the *brachah on food*, after eating bread. Because even the *birchas hatorah*, some

say it's only *dirabanan*. But *bentching*, everybody agrees that it's *min hatorah*. And for *birchas hatorah*, you say a *brachah* and finished. But for *birchas hamazon* you have to sit down, you put on a hat and jacket, and it takes some time before you get through. Even if you try to rush through it, it's still so many words, so much thanking and thanking. So you see that for *birchas hamazon* we make a very big fuss.

Now what is this that for *gashmiyus* you make such a big fuss? Isn't Torah so much more important? Now we begin to see a big *chiddush* here, that *gashmiyus* in a certain sense is more important than Torah!

PREFACE: BELIEVE IN HASHEM

Now while I'm talking to you it enters my mind that this lecture should have a very big preface, it needs a very big *hakdama*. I see that my words are not registering enough. And you know why it doesn't register? Because something is missing. The preface to all these things is *to believe in Hakodosh Boruch Hu* - and that's missing.

Tzadikim, the *frummeh* Jews - that's what we all are - take everything for granted and we never even feel the presence of Hashem. We just say the words. קרוב אתה בפיהם ורחוק מכליותיהם - You Hashem are close to their mouths, but You're far away from their insides.

SIGNING THE PAPERS ISN'T ENOUGH

And therefore we have to learn not only to say "*Ani ma'amin*, I sign on the dotted line, 'Yes, I'm a *maamin*. I'll give my life for Hashem.'" No, that's not enough. You have to learn how to *feel* that Hashem is actually there. From *emunah sichlis*, intellectual *emunah*, you have to change it into physical *emunah*, *emunah chushis*.

But that first preface has to be established. It's so important to work on the *mamashus* of *emunah*, the actuality of feeling דע לפני

מי אתה עומד. And *then* you can start listening to this lecture. Because once you come there, once you start feeling that Hashem is there, *then* You can begin to use eating for loving Him.

HASHEM IS THERE NO LESS THAN YOUR MOTHER

Let me explain that. What happens when you eat something that's good? You're grateful to the one who gave it to you. Unless you're a completely ungrateful fellow, a wicked person, so you'll be grateful. A loyal husband, when he sits and eats a good meal, he thinks of his wife, and he loves his wife more and more. The more you enjoy your meal the more you love your wife. Let's say a boy comes home from the yeshiva and there's a good supper waiting. So he's very much grateful to his mother. He should be anyhow. And the truth is that your wife and your mother do much more for you than just cooking some hot soup for you. But it's the delicious bowl of soup that wakes you up. Because now it's not just knowledge, it's not just that you *know* how good your mother is, but you *taste* how good she is. And for that you can learn to love her more and more.

And when it comes to loving Hashem it's no different. Hashem is right here giving you food. But you have to create that Awareness of His presence in your mind as the first step to actually loving Him. Because once you do that, then all of your eating takes place *לפני השם אלוהיכם*, and your enjoyment, gratitude and love is directed towards Him alone.

ONEG SHABBOS ISN'T ONLY FOR KIDS

And now we understand why Shabbos is so important; not only Shabbos, but why *oneg Shabbos* is so important. It's not only that we're honoring the day of Shabbos. Honor is something too, but that's not enough. Let's examine some words that we say every Shabbos: *ישמחו במלכותך שומרי שבת וקוראי עונג* - "Let them rejoice in Your kingdom." Who should rejoice? "Those who keep Shabbos and proclaim it a day of pleasure."

We're celebrating the *malchus* of Hashem; it's His world and He made everything in it. Shabbos is the celebration of the *briyas ha'olam*. But what is "the creation of the world"? What does it mean? It's much more than just *briyas ha'olam yeish m'ayin*. The creation of the world was based on the principle of *olam chesed yibaneh*. The world was made for kindness! And everything in the world is a demonstration of His kindness.

THE THEME OF SHABBOS

And so when when we say that we're celebrating the creation of the world, that means *we're celebrating all of the chesed that Hashem gave to us*. He gave us a world. Ever think about that?! You're thanking Him for that great gift of this world. And you have to study that gift, and appreciate that gift.

Like Dovid Hamelech said: מזמור שיר ליום השבת - What's the song of Shabbos? That means, what's the *theme* of Shabbos? And the answer given is: טוב להודות להשם - "It's good to give thanks to Hashem," כי שמחתני השם בפעליך - "You caused me joy Hashem with Your work," במעשי ידיך ארנן - "I sing at the deeds of Your hands."

SAMPLING THE CHESED HASHEM

So on Shabbos we sit down and we say, "Yes, Hashem I *know* that You made a great world, but now I'm going to sample from it." And the most significant, the most prevalent and tangible manifestations of His *chesed* is food.

So now we're beginning to understand what it means when we eat the three *seudos* on Shabbos. The Shabbos meal is the time when the principle of the creation of the world is "brought home" to us. When we sit down on Shabbos to partake of creation, it's a demonstration that enters into our bodies and our minds. Now our bodies fully agree that Hashem is a *tov u'meitiv*.

IT'S NOT JUST A CEREMONY

The problem is most people are just going through the ceremonies superficially; it's just a day of rest. But that's a fatal error; it's a tragedy to misunderstand the function of eating on Shabbos. The right way is to *enjoy one's Shabbos*. And while you're enjoying it, you're thinking, "Not only did Hashem make the world out of nothing, but He made the world for *chesed*. *Viharay'ah*, I'm enjoying it right now!"

And so when Shabbos comes you starve yourself a little bit on Friday afternoon and that way, Friday night the *challah* will taste much better. So you sit down and taste the *challah*, "Oh yes, Hashem it really is a good world that You gave to me." And then you sample the fish, the soup, and the chicken. "Yes, it's a really good world," you say.

THE CHULENT MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE!

And now it's a very great difference from what we said before the meal. "It's a good world," after the *chulent*, is very different from "It's a good world," beforehand. So Shabbos is an opportunity to understand the great *chesed* of **אני אמרתי עולם חסד יבנה**, because the best way to learn *pshat* in that *possuk* is with your taste buds and your stomach.

And as you sit Shabbos at the *seudah*, and you're pounding away, you're actually pounding away in your mind with these thoughts. You take the fish on your fork and you say, "Thank you Hashem, I relish the fish. I love You for giving me *gefilte* fish to eat." And the wonderful vegetables on the fish, the onions. What would the world be without onions? Onions are the happiness of Mankind! Ah, the *tzimmes*, and the *knobluch*, and the salt! And then comes the soup, with the gravy and the vegetables. I would like to spend even more time describing the chicken, and then the *compote* too, but it's getting late!

And as you sit and enjoy Hashem's food to no end, you have to know that this is your chance for perfection. You should

be thinking about the *pnimiyus* of the food, of why Hashem made food altogether. It's all to open up your mind, so that you'll begin to actually feel grateful to Hashem and love Him for what He's giving you.

EATING IS GREATER THAN FASTING!

That's why Rabbi Yehuda Halevi says that eating on Shabbos is a bigger achievement in holiness than fasting a number of fast days. That's how great of an opportunity it is to eat on Shabbos.

And if people would learn to utilize even to a small extent the Shabbos *seudah* for this purpose, they would be living for a great and important achievement in life. Isn't it a pity that people let these opportunities go by?! And the truth is that even the weekdays shouldn't be wasted. Shabbos is *set aside* for this, but why should you waste even a Sunday and a Monday and Tuesday. You eat during the week, don't you?

And that's the primary function of food. That's why we say *גדולה לגימה שמקרבת את הרחוקים*, how great is the business of eating, it brings back people who were far away. Because by eating with these thoughts in mind, we come closer to Hashem and we begin to love Him more and more. And as the days and the weeks and the years go by, if people would apply themselves they would grow great.

EATING LIKE A DOG

Of course, if people are not interested their lives will go by and they'll eat like the cat under the table is eating, or like the dog in the yard. Like the Rambam says, some people eat *ככלב וכחמור*, with no thought at all. But if you'll utilize your lives properly then you'll continue to grow mentally, and your bodies will be in full agreement with all these great ideals. And the ideals will permeate your personality and you can come more readily come to love of Hashem.

And here's a good thing to practice. Tomorrow morning you should try it. As you're eating the egg or downing the oatmeal, think about what you heard here tonight. As you're enjoying the food, think that Hashem is giving me this good tasting food. And if nobody is around say aloud, "I'm eating because I want to love Hashem even more." Your wife, your mother, shouldn't hear you though. They'll think the worst. She'll call you a faker, a hypocrite. Of course you're a hypocrite when you do it, you don't really feel it yet, but that's the best type of hypocrite there is. It's a good hypocrisy. But that's how it has to be - you always have to be one step ahead of yourself. But no matter what, that's what you should be thinking.

So this man eats and he enjoys the food; yes, he enjoys it *lisheim shamayim*. Because the more he enjoys it the more he loves Hashem. **מכלכל חיים בחסד**, He makes us happy, He gives us good things to eat. And why does He do it? **שמו הגדול**, **בעבור שמו הגדול**, for the sake of His great name.

PUTTING KNEIDEL INTO YOUR HEAD

And so when you eat for the purpose of His great name, even though you're eating it with joy - you know it's fun eating the *kneidelech* - but you're becoming a new person while you eat the *kneidelech*. Because besides for the extra weight you put on, you're also putting something into your mind.

It's not difficult. It's the same eating; you don't have to forgo any of the pleasures of the breakfast table. But what you *do* have to do is reconsider the entire subject of eating. Because if you're sitting here, if you come to this place, you already know all about how good Hakodosh Boruch Hu is to you. He is giving you a heart that's beating, a kidney that's functioning, lungs, a spleen, and eyes; it's endless! You can walk and talk and breathe - it's all *chasdei Hashem!* But it's *the food, the drink*, that touches the spot and is the best catalyst to actually loving Him and fulfilling the mitzvah of **ואהבת את השם אלוך**. And that's what Yitzchok

labored in all the days of his life. He knew that the function of eating is the very important function in gaining a knowledge and love of Hashem. And the person who eats like an *eved Hashem* is supposed to eat, and makes *brachos* like an *eved Hashem*, that's the person who comes closer and closer to Hashem all the days of his life and achieves the perfection that he came to this world for.

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