

תורת אביגדור
הגאון ר' אביגדור מיללער זצ"ל

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

Sefer Devarim
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בעזה ש״ת

פרשת עקב

With Rav Avigdor Miller ztz"l

One Hundred Blessings

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נא לא לקרוא בעת התפלה וקריאת התורה

Part I. Pathway to Greatness

ALL COMPONENTS OF SERVICE

In this week's *parsha* Moshe Rabbeinu declares, וְעַתָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל, בִּי אִם – What does Hashem want from you? – לְלַבֵּת בְּכָל – only, לִירְאָה אֶת הַשֵּׁם אֱלֹהֶיךָ, – to fear Hashem your G-d, וְלִאהֲבֵהוּ אֹתוֹ – and to love Him, וְלַעֲבֹד אֶת הַשֵּׁם אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל לִבְבְּךָ וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ, – and to serve Hashem your G-d with all your heart and with all your soul, לְשָׁמֵר אֶת מִצְוֹת הַשֵּׁם – and to keep all the *mitzvos* of Hashem and to keep all of His laws (Eikev 10:12-13).

Now, the *Mesilas Yesharim (Hakdama)* explains that in this *possuk* we have all the subjects that are necessary for *shleimus amiti*, for true perfection in *avodas Hashem*. כָּאֵן כָּלֵל כָּל חֻקֵי שְׁלֵמוֹת הָעֲבוּדָה – *All of the components of the complete service that is pleasing to Hashem.*

There's *yirah*, which means being aware of Hashem – feeling His presence at all times, and *laleches b'chol d'rachav*, walking in His ways, which means that you have to study His ways in order to know them and then emulate those ways. And that's only the beginning. Hashem wants us *l'ahavah oso*, to love Him, which the *Chovos Halevovos* and the *Rambam* say is the highest of all *madreigos*. And the list goes on: וְלַעֲבֹד אֶת הַשֵּׁם אֱלֹהֶיךָ

בְּכֹל לְבַבְךָ וּבְכֹל נַפְשְׁךָ – “perfection of your heart in His service”, which means not to do it with ten percent or fifty percent, but one hundred percent of your mind! And לְשָׂמֵר אֶת מִצְוֹת הַשֵּׁם וְאֶת הַקְּהָלֵי – “to keep all the *mitzvos*”, which means you have to learn them all and keep them.

IS THAT SUCH A SMALL THING?

So now we see that all Hashem wants of you is *everything*. There’s a lot in that *possuk* – He’s asking a whole lot of things from you. It’s a load of work; a program for a lifetime. The path to perfection not easy. One way is to gird up your loins to learn *Shas*. Learning *Shas*, learning the whole Talmud, will certainly bring you close to Hakodosh Boruch Hu. Only that you have to prepare yourself for a long career of hard work. It entails many difficulties and a great deal of self denial.

And there are other ways as well, paths that require much heroism and heavy labor. You’ll have to learn *Mesillas Yescharim*, *Sha’arei Teshuva*, and the *Chovos Halevavos* cover to cover – many times! Other *seforim* as well. It’ll take some heavy lifting to achieve that.

And yet how does Hakodosh Boruch Hu introduce us to all of these great ideals? With the following words: מָה ... כִּי אָם – “What is it that He’s asking of you already? Only this...” And that’s hard to understand because we see that what Hashem wants of you is *everything*. It’s a question that anyone reading the *chumash* should ask, and in fact the *gemara* (Megillah 25a) asks it like this: אֲשֶׁר יִרְאֶה מִלְּתָא זֹוּטְרָתָא הִיא – *Is yiras Hashem* – that means the whole program enumerated in the *possuk* – *is that such a small thing?*

THERE IS AN EASY WAY!

Now, the *gemara*’s answer there is not relevant to today’s talk, it’s important and we’ll discuss it another time, but today we’ll study the *pshuto shel mikra*, which make all of these great accomplishments seem easy. Because if it was difficult, if from every angle there was no easy access to this greatness, it wouldn’t make sense for the Torah to use such words.

And it pays for us to hear what this easy path is – whether it actually is an easy way to come close to Hakodosh Boruch Hu

or it's just a *relatively* easier way, it's something we want to hear about. And so we'll study together a few lines in the *gemara* and we'll hopefully find the key that will make it somewhat more understandable.

WHAT IS A HUNDRED

In *Mesichta Menachos* (43b), the *gemara* says, הִזְהָר רַבִּי מֵאִיר, In *Mesichta Menachos* (43b), the *gemara* says, אָוֹמֵר: חַיֵּב אָדָם לְבָרֵךְ מֵאָה בְּרָכוֹת בְּכָל יוֹם – *Rabbi Meir said: Everyone is obligated to make one hundred brachos every day.* And he quotes our *possuk*: שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר וְעַתָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל מָה ה' שׁוֹאֵל מֵעַמְּךָ – What does Hashem Elokecha require of you? And Rav Meir says don't read אַל מָה תִּקְרִי מָה – Don't read the word “Mah – What does He wants of you,” but מֵאָה – “He wants *mei'ah* – one hundred blessings from you.” Instead of *mem hei*, we stick an *alef* in between and now it reads *mei'ah*, a hundred.

Now, it's important to understand that all the *drashos* of Chazal are inherent in the plain meaning. It's not merely a memory aid; it's actually included in the *pshat* of the *possuk*. So we must understand that this verse מָה ה' שׁוֹאֵל מֵעַמְּךָ, includes the duty of saying one hundred *brachos*. And so, Rabbi Meir used the sharp and witty style of the sages and he put a play on words, אַל תִּקְרִי מָה אֶלָּא מֵאָה – do you know the way, that easy way to come close to Hashem? Instead of saying מָה, which means easy, say מֵאָה – one hundred *brachos*. That's the key; that's the easy way to come to all of those great perfections enumerated in the *possuk*.

HERE LIES THE KEY

How can you come to *yiras Hashem*? How can you come to love of Hashem, and to walk in His ways, and all of those great subjects? So the *gemara* tells us, the easy way, the way of *mah*, is by saying *brachos*. חַיֵּב אָדָם לְבָרֵךְ מֵאָה בְּרָכוֹת בְּכָל יוֹם – A hundred times a day you have to thank Hashem.

Now, whether it means technical *brachos*, like בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' or saying your own words, “I thank You Hashem for this. I thank You for that,” it's all included – a hundred times a day we have to thank Hashem and that's going to bring you to all of the great qualities. The *hakdama*, the preface to *yirah* and *ahavah*

and all good things in that *possuk*, is to make a hundred *brachos* every day.

So you'll say I'm exaggerating – A hundred *brachos* a day is the key to perfection?! Making *brachos* is A,B,C – it's kindergarten talk! But that's what Rabbi Meir is telling us here; he's telling us that the way to come close to Hakodosh Boruch Hu and to acquire “all the components of service that are pleasing to Hakodosh Boruch Hu” spelled out in that *possuk*, is by means of saying an expression of thanks to Hashem one hundred times every day.

That's the way! If you're looking for the easy way path to perfection, you just heard it here – you can tell your friends about it too. *Mah Hashem Elokecha shoi'el mei'imach*, What does Hashem want from you, *ki im*, only to say a hundred *brachos* a day.

DON'T JUST MUMBLE

Now don't think you can just get up now and go home; don't think you know all about it. No, it's only the beginning of the talk and it needs an explanation. So hang around yet.

The first thing we'll say is that in order to get the benefit of this idea, you must act like you never heard of the term *brachos* before. Because if you're going to hark back to your concept of what *brachos* is, then the whole talk will be in vain. You'll have to act like you just became *geirim*, and now for the first time in your lives you're hearing there's such a thing as *brachos*. Because a *bracha* is not just *Baruch Atah Hashem*, you mumble some words and finished. And even if you're not mumbling – you're saying the words slowly with *peirush hamilos*, even that is not the *bracha* we're talking about here.

What Rabbi Meir is telling us is that one hundred times a day you have to *enjoy this world and feel gratitude to Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. Because what is a *bracha*? It's an expression of gratitude. Otherwise it's not a *bracha*, it's just words. Of course, you fulfill your obligation *al pi halacha*; you won't make a second one. But that's not what the Torah meant and it's not what Rabbi Meir is talking about.

SECRET OF BLESSINGS

Why do we say *brachos*? I'll tell you a secret now, something I heard from my rebbe in Slabodka. In the Kuzari (3:13-17) there is a remarkable statement, he says that one of the reasons for our *brachos* is *שְׂיִבְרַךְ תָּמִיד לֹא יוֹסִיף לוֹ עֲרֵבוֹת עַל עֲרֵבוֹת* - *It adds pleasure on pleasure when one says blessings*. You hear that? Eating an apple is a pleasure, but what type of pleasure is it if you don't concentrate on enjoying it? So the Kuzari says that one of the reasons for our *berachos* is to enhance our pleasure. Before you eat the apple, you stop and you feel gratitude for it. Ah, now you're enjoying it! But my *rebbe zichrono livracha* argued on the Kuzari. He said it's not "one of the reasons", it's *the* reason.

And so Rabbi Meir teaches us that the foundation of everything, of all service of Hashem, is to make *berachos*. And what is the purpose of these blessings? To enjoy the kindness of Hashem.

And now you're beginning to see, although we said that this path to excellence is *מְהֵרָה* - it's an easy way, but if you recall I was careful to say that it's *comparatively* easy. Because you can't just say a *bracha* a hundred times a day - no, that's not enough yet. It means that one hundred times a day you should stop to think about what you possess and experience a glow of satisfaction, a feeling of joy. *You must be happy and grateful to Hashem one hundred times a day!*

WHY BE HAPPY?!

Happy and grateful?! That's a secret to many people. People ask me all the time: "What is He giving me?" Last week a young man asked me; he was walking on Kings Highway with me and he asked me: "Why should I be grateful to Hashem?" I took a look at him. He wasn't wearing crutches. He didn't have braces on his feet. He didn't have a brace to hold his neck up. He seemed to have a full set of teeth - at least they didn't look like false teeth. He looked to be quite well-nourished as well and he didn't seem to have slept last night on the park bench either; probably had bathed that morning too. And he was clothed. And this yeshiva man asked me, "For what should I be grateful to Hakodosh Boruch Hu?" He was serious - he was asking with sincerity.

It's the same as a little girl of sixteen who refuses to wash the dishes. "What am I getting out of you?" she says to her parents. The nice ones don't say it, but they think it. She refuses to even pick up her own stockings in the morning when she runs off. She refuses to bring the garbage down; she doesn't do a thing in the house. She only has one complaint - "What are you doing for me?" she says to her parents.

FATHER PAYS FOR THE MITZVAH

That means, besides for giving me free lodging - no rent is charged for the bed she sleeps in - and besides giving me three meals a day and clothing, what else are you doing for me? Besides for paying her doctor bills, besides paying for dental care, besides for paying her *Beis Yaakov* tuition. When she washes her face, when she puts on the light in her room, she's using her father's hard earned money. And besides all that, later when she decides to do a very big *mitzvah* and choose a *kollel* man, so she confers upon her poor father the privilege of supporting him and her for the next five years. And she thinks she's doing a big *mitzvah* - she took a *kollel* man! On whose shoulders? On her old father's shoulders. But she's getting nothing - "What am I getting from you?" she's thinking.

So you'll shake your head, *tsk, tsk*, when you hear about this inconsiderate girl, but actually she's just a *mashal* for all of us. Most people in this world - I'm talking even about the good ones - they think Hakodosh Boruch Hu's not giving them anything. "What am I getting from You," they're thinking. Now, they won't tell you that; some self-esteem they have, but you can be sure that's exactly what they're thinking: "What is Hashem doing for me?" And I'm afraid that most of us here tonight, even though we're polite enough not to say that, but in our heart, that's what we're thinking.

THE GASHMIYUS-RUCHNIYUS SCALE

I once heard from one of my rebbes, Reb Avraham Grodzinski, *zichrono livracha*, something that I want to repeat to you. A Slabodka yeshiva man once came back to the yeshiva for a visit. So when Reb Avraham saw this old talmid, he asked him, "How are things going?" So this man said as follows, "In

ruchniyus, baruch Hashem! But in *gashmiyus*, not so good; it could be better." That's what the ex-yeshiva man told Reb Avraham.

Later on, Reb Avraham interpreted that for us – he told us it meant like this: "As far as what I'm doing for Hakodosh Boruch Hu, it's pretty good, can't complain." "In *ruchniyus, boruch Hashem,*" means that he's patting himself on the shoulder, "Good job!" *Baruch Hashem* means hypocrisy. *Baruch Hashem*, means *Baruch anochi*, blessed am I – that's what it means.

But as far as what Hashem is doing for me, He's a little bit behind. "In *gashmiyus*, could be better," means, "What Hashem is doing for me, there's still room for improvement." That's what he means. "Nu! Hashem, when will You produce already?!" Look at this *tzaddik* who's suffering in this world. I'm just eating meals every day. I'm just sleeping in a bed every night. I'm just alive. What are You giving me?

IT'S NOT JUST COUNTING

And so there's no wonder that we don't know what a hundred *brachos* are all about. Some think it's a matter of counting – they think it's all about the number. Sixteen *birchas hashachar*, five more for *birchas hatorah, asher yatzar* and *netilas yadayim*, that's twenty one. Fifty seven more for three *shemonah esreis*, that's seventy eight. I'll *bentch* once that's another four. And before you know it, you reached your quota. No, that's not what Rabbi Meir meant!

A hundred *brachos* means that one hundred times every day you have to make yourself aware of the gifts you're enjoying all the time. And if that's the case then we have a lot to talk about because our job now is to discover all of these gifts. What's Hakodosh Boruch Hu doing for us? That's the great treasure we have to uncover and we'll get started right now.

Part II. Walking the Pathway

THE WALKING CLUB

It'll be laboratory's work, seeing the kindness of Hashem in our lives, but we'll do it together we'll have a club; a walking club. Imagine we have an appointment, all of us here, to meet tomorrow morning on the corner of Ave. R and Ocean Parkway. Six o'clock in the morning - that's the best time of the day - we'll begin our walk. And we'll walk together on the Avenue and we'll study the Happiness of life.

Now, before we meet up you're going to have to wake up and get out of bed. It won't be much of a walk if you don't wake up. You know that some people didn't wake up this morning; not everybody is so lucky. As soon as you open your eyes, you should remember that and give thanks to Hakodosh Boruch Hu that He allowed you get up in the morning. *Modeh ani lifanecha*, I thank You Hashem for waking me up this morning. It's actually fun to get up in the morning - only that nobody thinks about it! It's something you should practice enjoying.

Do you ever go to a *shiva* house and you have nothing to talk about? You come in - **יְהִי חַי וְשֶׁמֶךָ** and you walk out. It's something, it's still a *mitzvah*, but there's something more you can accomplish still. What's the first thing to think when you walk out? "*Baruch Hashem, I'm alive!*" You hear the *chiddush*? When you're *menachem avel*, the first thing to think about when you walk out, on the steps, going down the steps to the street - "*Baruch Hashem I'm alive.*" Even better, say it. I'm serious. And for the thinking person, he doesn't have to wait for the *shiva* house *rachmana litzlan*. That's how he wakes up every morning! "*Boruch Hashem, I'm alive!*" He just discovered the happy news that he woke up again! It's a *simcha*, a real happiness!

A TASTE OF THE NEXT WORLD

So you're alive now and you go to the bathroom. Ah, the pleasure of urinating. Don't say "it's just nature". A lot of people don't have such natures; they have very much difficulty. For you it goes smoothly, you should enjoy the moment. Don't be afraid to

enjoy; don't be ashamed to enjoy what Hashem is giving you – that's the purpose of all of these functions.

I know a very wealthy man who cannot urinate. He has no kidneys anymore. If he could walk into a bathroom and perform like any ordinary person he'd be delirious with happiness. He told me he remembers the good old days when he could urinate normally. Oh, what a happiness it was then! If he would come up here and teach us how to say *Asher Yatzar* that would be a lesson. You come out and “*muh, muh, muh, muh*”?! That's how you say thank you?! If you're happy, you don't just say *Asher Yatzar* – you sing it.

You can take my word for it, if you put your mind to it it's a tremendous happiness. The *gemara* (Berachos 57b) says that going to the bathroom is a taste of *olam haba*; it's such a pleasure! Of course, if you didn't study it, if you don't think about it, so there's nothing to sing about. Now, mumbling a *bracha* is better than nothing. You're at least a *frum* Jew if you mumble the *bracha*, but it's a pity. You're losing the great opportunity of achieving all the perfection that *mei'ah brachos* can bring to a person.

THE PLEASURES OF WALKING

Now, I skipped a lot of steps here. Because you didn't urinate in your bed; most of you didn't wet the bed in the morning. You walked to the toilet. Now, walking to the bathroom is a *ta'anug*. If you'll think for a moment that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is giving you the blessing that you're able to move your feet; you can move your thighs – they swing effortlessly in the socket. You can move your knees. They move so perfectly in their sockets. You can move your ankles in their socket. And your toes too you can move – each one its own socket. And all these sockets are functioning at one time perfectly! Not to mention the coordination of the muscles. Every muscle that's extended has another muscle that's pulling in the opposite direction. You should know, you're a trapeze artist when you walk. You balance yourself and move with perfect ease and facility.

So as you walk, you should be enjoying those gifts. That comes before the *bracha* – first you have to enjoy the marvelous gift that Hashem is giving you. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה'שָׁם הַמְבִיֵן מִצְעָדִי גִבֹּר. Thank

You Hashem for this pleasure of being able to walk normally. There are a lot of people who can't. There are some people who cannot function in their toes. Everything else is perfect – but if their toes are fused and they won't move in the socket properly, then they have misery and very great suffering. If the ankle is fused, it won't move. Even if the knee is a tiny little bit inactivated it can be excruciating pain to move it.

ENJOYING THE SPREAD

So suppose you were able to walk out of your home and now we meet up on Ocean Parkway for our walking club. The sun is coming up now and we see a beautiful blue sky. Don't miss that opportunity! We have to say, "The sky is a beautiful blue and Hakodosh Boruch Hu made it that way because He wants me to enjoy it. That's the purpose and I'm not going to let it go to waste." Now, that's the right attitude. "Hakodosh Baruch Hu is painting a blue sky for *me* to enjoy." Once you get that attitude, then you're looking at the universe in the true perspective.

Now don't say, "Well, there are a lot of other people in this world besides me. He made the sky blue because of me?" The answer is, yes. That's what the *gemara* says (Berachos 58a): אֹרְחָה טוֹב – מה הוא אומר – what does a good guest say? A good guest, when he walks into a house and sees a table that's spread with all good things, what does a good guest say? He says like this: כָּל מֵה שְׁטָרַח – בְּעַל הַבַּיִת לֹא טָרַח אֵלָּא בְּשִׁבְלִי – Whatever the host labored to do, he did only for me. So as the good guest walks in and he sees cucumber, he sees egg salad, he sees chopped liver, he sees whiskey, he sees cake, on every item he sees, he says, "The host put it there for me."

Now, it doesn't mean he should eat it all up. That's not the intent of that *ma'amar*. What it's telling you is that as you look at it, you're expected to squeeze all of the enjoyment you can from what you see – and feel gratitude. You have to think, "The host put it there for me to enjoy."

FREE LANDSCAPING

Once you know that, you begin to enjoy everything. You open our eyes and all around you see glorious things, beautiful

things. There are beautiful gardens on Ocean Parkway. Some of our neighbors hire gardeners and it cost them a thousand dollars a year – that’s not much; some spend more than that – merely to tend their gardens. So as you pass by, you’ll think, “Well, what do I get out of it? It’s not for me.” The *gemara* says that’s what a bad guest says: אֹרַח רַע מָה הוּא אוֹמֵר – What does a bad guest say? A bad guest says, whatever he did, he did for himself. He didn’t do it for me.

No; it’s for you. For you?! Yes, for you! “It’s all done for me,” you should think. Everything is for me. That’s how you walk in this world. לְפִיכֶן נִבְרָא אָדָם יְחִידִי – *That’s why a man was created at first alone*, כָּדִי שְׂיֹאמַר כָּל אֶחָד וְאַחָד בְּשִׁבְלֵי נִבְרָא הָעוֹלָם – *everyone has to say that it’s for me* (Sanhedrin 37a). It’s for you! The gardens are for me. I enjoy the gardens more than the householder who pays a thousand dollars to the gardener. Keep your money in your pocket, but put all these things in your head and in your heart and become happy by looking at them. Look at the gardens – they didn’t cost you a penny. He’s breaking his back pulling up weeds and we pass by and we enjoy it to no end. The grass is beautiful; the colorful flowers are a pleasure to look at. Ah, ah, ah; how nice it is!

HE PAINTS THE SKY FOR ME

This is the royal road to greatness. Isn’t that a fun road to perfection? Because while you’re doing that, you’re becoming happier and happier. You’re becoming an *ashir* – a rich man without spending a penny. אֵיזֵהוּ עָשִׂיר? *Who is rich?* It’s up here (*the Rav zatzal pointed at his head*) your happiness. Your wealth is in your mind. And your money remains in your pocket.

And therefore, when we walk out into the world and we begin to see the things of the world, we must understand they are for us. They’re all for us. The fact that it’s for someone else too, that doesn’t detract. It’s for you. As you walk out and look up at the sky, you walk out in the street and enjoy the blue of the sky, as you pass by the beautiful gardens there’s no harm in thinking a noble thought.

Now all these things I’m saying from now are *l’ma’aseh*. It’s work. Practice it up and think, “Why is the sky blue?” Isn’t that a

klutz kasha? Why is the sky such a beautiful sapphire blue? And I'll tell you a secret – it's good you came here tonight. There's a reason why it's blue. It's for you to enjoy the sky. The color blue is soft and sweet on the eyes (Chovos Halevavos, Bechina 5), and you're expected to enjoy it. Isn't that a good thing to practice? See if you can do it tomorrow morning.

THE SILVER LINING

Now suppose, let's say our club walks out and this time the sky is not blue – instead it's overcast with gray clouds. Oooh! That's a glorious opportunity! **הַמְכֶסֶה שָׁמַיִם בְּעָבִים** – *He who covers the skies with clouds*. That's a different opportunity than the blue sky from yesterday. **הַמְכִּין לְאָרֶץ מָטָר** – *He's preparing rain for the earth* (Tehillim 147:8). What does that mean? Who cares what He prepares? The fact that He prepares rain is important?!

Yes! **הַמְכֶסֶה שָׁמַיִם בְּעָבִים** – When He covers the skies with clouds. **הַמְכִּין לְאָרֶץ מָטָר** – He's preparing rain for the world. Gray skies are not only gray – cloudy skies means yellow oranges, pink peaches with rosy cheeks, red apples, purple grapes – they all comes from rain. All good things come from rain. Dovid Hamelech looked up at the clouds and felt gratitude and he said, "Don't make any mistake about it. **הַמְכֶסֶה שָׁמַיִם בְּעָבִים** – He's covering the skies with clouds, and I thank Him for that!"

And therefore, whether the sky is blue or grey, it's an opportunity for happiness. We have to study the sky until it finally creates an impression that causes us joy. And if you'll work on this again and again, and finally a sapphire blue sky actually makes you happy, then you know that you're getting there. Now, there's no *bracha* that you make on the sky, but gratitude you have to feel! You say, "Thank You Hashem for making me happy by means of Your beautiful sky."

SEEING THE BLIND

How do you see the sky anyhow? You can't accomplish that feat without eyes. Ah, eyes! *Ay yah yay*, eyes! Ribono Shel Olam, what would I do without my eyes?!" And therefore, we have to practice up enjoying our eyes. You're going to have to learn to be happy you have eyes. Can we even describe the

happiness of seeing? It's impossible to describe that pleasure. You see life, you see movement, you see color, you see your family, you see the world – what a happiness it is!

So as we're walking in our walking club tomorrow morning down Ocean Parkway, we're using this camera and enjoying it. It takes a long time for these things to penetrate our thick skulls. But if you want to know that it's so, all you have to do is wait until you encounter a man with a white stick tapping his way. Tap, tap, tap, tap, tap. Take a good look at him. You think it's an accident that he came across your path? Hakodosh Boruch Hu saw that you're slow in understanding, so He sent him to teach you a lesson. You see him at the street corner and someone has to take him by his arm and bring him across. *Ay yah yay*, what a pity. What a tragedy!

So the next time you see a man tapping his way with his stick, don't let that opportunity go by. It's a gift *min haShamayim* for you. You have to thank Hashem that you can see. Utilize that. Hashem has sent that on purpose for you to see and look. "Ooh, I thank You, Hashem, I am able to see!"

THE WAY TO ENJOY A GIFT

Think – what would he say if he suddenly could get a pair of eyes like yours? How would he make a *bracha*? He'd mumble פוקח עינים?! בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה'שָׁם... פּוֹקֵחַ עֵינַיִם That's how they say it in *shul* in the morning – *yeshiva* boys also, the best. The best! They rattle it off! Oh no! Oh no! Don't tell me you made a *bracha* this morning and you counted it towards your hundred *brachos*! Did you think what you were saying? Technically, maybe it counts; maybe it's a *bracha* and you can count it, but that's not how we enjoy a gift.

A man who appreciates his eyes, he says thank you like a man drinking the most precious champagne, sipping every word. *Boruch* – ah, ah, ah! *Atah! Hashem!* Every word is a diamond! The man tapping his way on the street would shell out a hundred thousand dollars to the surgeon if he could. He'd be eternally grateful to him. He'd call him up every year on the *yartzeit* of his operation. He gave him back life. And Hakodosh Boruch Hu did it for you for nothing.

Hakodosh Boruch Hu is not sending you bills; He doesn't ask anything from you except that you should enjoy your eyes. Not to make a *bracha* – that's not what He's asking. He wants that you should enjoy them – you should be so happy with your eyes that you feel like making a *bracha*! Learn to be happy that you can see. That's a big job!

JINGLING COINS AND TEETH

Now, our walking club is still walking down the street, don't forget that. Now, if you'd have coins in your pocket, so you could cause the pocket to shake as you walk, and when you hear the change in your pocket, it's reassuring. Let's say you have a pocket full of quarters and you shake your pocket and the change is jingling in your pocket – it feels good. It sounds good. But suppose you have nothing in your pocket, but you still have everything. You have no money to jingle, so click your teeth instead. Teeth are better than money!

In the olden days, when somebody grew old and he had no teeth, so he was finished with life. If he had a nice granddaughter, she used to take an apple with a knife and scrape off some mush and give it to the old *zeidy*, on a knife. He couldn't eat, he couldn't chew. But you young fellows, you're rich! You have teeth of your own? You have a mouth full of teeth! *Ay-yay-yay*, teeth! What a happiness to have teeth! If you're eating with your own teeth then you're a lucky fellow – you already have everything. Even false teeth costs money. You have false teeth? Thank Him! So whether you have false teeth or your own teeth, you have to study your teeth. You have to be rich in the knowledge that you have teeth. A mouth full of teeth is a happiness!

THE WALKING CLUB ENDS

Now, the day is almost over and the sun is going down. All good things have to come to an end and our walking club has to break up for the night. We all have to go home; our wives and children are waiting for us and so our laboratory of enjoying the gifts of Hashem must end now. Tomorrow morning we can meet again.

Oh no! It's not over yet. When you walk into the hallway in your home and put on the switch, you're suddenly bathed in light. Do you thank Him for electric lights? Electric light is a very good thing. I remember when I was a little boy, we didn't have electric lights – only gas lights around, no electric lights! I remember that! The house didn't have electricity. And then electricity came – it's *mamish* like sunshine in the middle of the night.

ELECTRICITY AND HEATING

Do you ever thank Hashem for the electric lights? How can you live without thanking Him? The answer is, every week you thank Him. Every *Motzei Shabbos* you say, בּוֹרָא מְאוּרֵי הָאֵשׁ – you thank Hashem for artificial light. People don't know what that *bracha* is all about. They think it's just a ceremony. No, בּוֹרָא מְאוּרֵי הָאֵשׁ means you're thanking Hashem for artificial light. If you spend a little time thinking about how much you benefit from artificial light, you'll love Hashem for that. "I'm thanking you Hashem for all forms of artificial light; fire, incandescent, fluorescent, everything."

And besides for the light in the house you also have a warm home. Where does the warmth come from? Oil! Petroleum! You have oil in your home! Where does oil come from? Oil! Did you ever thank Hashem for oil? The oil man comes and delivers oil to your house. Say, "Oh! Thank you, Hashem, for oil!" What can happen if you didn't have any oil? What's going to happen? Imagine a cold house, it's wintertime and there's no oil. You call up and they tell you there's no oil on hand. There's nothing to deliver. What are you going to do? So *boruch Hashem*, there is oil. It's Hashem giving us all good things in the home.

You know how much happiness a home is. A wife, children, four walls, a roof, plumbing – the pleasures are endless! But it's getting late and now it's time to put on pajamas and climb into bed. Pajamas! We could talk about the happiness of clothing and pajamas all night. The buttons and the stitching; it's an endless happiness.

CAN YOU STILL SLEEP?

But it's too late for that now. And so the last detail of our happiness voyage for today will have to be sleep. You have to be grateful and thank Hashem for sleep. Every night you say it: **הַמַּפִּיל הַבְּלִי שָׁנָה עַל עֵינַי** - *You give me the ability to fall asleep!* Maybe you say it but do you think what you're saying?

When you fall asleep, it's a miracle. And that miracle is a gift. You know some people can't sleep anymore *chalilah*. An old man told me, "*Ich hub farloren dem schluff.*" He lost his sleep. He meant he lost his ability to sleep. It's a pity on him. To lose such a precious gift like the sweetness of falling asleep, that's a tragedy. Sleep is more important than food.

But you still have it! So you put your head down on the pillow - most of you have pillows; you're not sleeping on the ground - you have a bed, don't you? So as you fall away into dreamland you're still thanking Hashem. That's the last thought you have as you drift off into your sweet sleep. "Thank You, Hashem for giving me a pillow and a mattress and for giving me the gift of sleep. I love You Hashem." And in a few hours we'll be getting up again to say *modeh ani* again and to start loving Hashem all over again.

NOT JUST TALK

Now, I understand that what we're saying here tonight, if it was said to an ordinary congregation of *bnei Torah* - so they would think it's a waste of time. "I didn't come here to hear such things - it's too simple." To many people, they think it's just talk. Well, if that's what they want, that's what it's going to remain.

But now I'm talking to people who deserve credit because they came here for a purpose; people who are *mivakshei Hashem*; they are seeking Hashem. And to such idealists we can propose this plan that we have to use the world to enjoy the *chesed Hashem* and to be constantly thanking Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

That's the way for a Jew to live! You can't do it all the time? So at least a hundred times a day you should do that. The more you do it, the more successful you are, but a hundred times, that's the bare minimum. And that means a hundred times a day

you have to stop and enjoy the world – and you enjoy it so much that you feel a sincere gratitude to Hakodosh Boruch Hu. Of course, at first it's only artificial. You have to spend time on it – you have to take out time for this work. Plenty of time is needed for these things. Little by little, however, it grows on you.

THE GREAT SOLUTION

And not only will you be enjoying the world, but *you'll be enjoying Hashem's world*. And that's going to be the solution to the great problem of how can we gain all these things that Hashem is demanding of us: *to fear Hashem, and to walk in all of His ways, and to love Him, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul* and so on. Because it's a problem, a real problem: How do we come to all those forms of perfection? We're ordinary people living in an ordinary world. How can *we* achieve all of these great levels of *avodas Hashem*?

And that's what Rabbi Meir comes to teach us – that the key is hidden in the *possuk* itself. אֵל-תִּקְרֵי מָה אֶלָּא מֵאָה – What does Hashem want of you? A hundred *brachos*. And from those hundred *brachos*, you'll attain “*all of the components of the complete service that is pleasing to Hashem*” (Mesillas Yesharim *ibid.*). Rabbi Meir tells us that by means of this easy way, or *relatively* easier way of appreciating all of the good things that we are enjoying, that's the key to success.

YOU WILL START LOVING HASHEM

Once you get into the mode of thanking Hashem for everything, you're going to change your character. You'll become an *oveid Hashem*. You start loving Hashem! What is He doing for me? Everything! And once you love Hashem, the rest of the things will follow. You'll walk in His ways, you'll serve Him with all of your heart and soul; you're already sold out to Him.

And you're going to see that this is not only the road to come close to Hakodosh Boruch Hu, but this road will also be the royal road to fulfillment and happiness in life. After a while you become happy with so many things that you actually are a happy man. You'll actually appreciate the gifts. And the happiness will

last all your life – and not only all your life, but it will last you into *Olam Haba*.

If we'll enjoy this world one hundred times a day, and if we express our gratitude to Hashem each time, that's the royal road to happiness in this world, and to the perfection in *avodas Hashem* that brings you eternal happiness in the Next World.

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Q&A

With
Rav Avigdor Miller Ztz"l



Q:

When a person gets aggravated and upset when he sees other people doing aveiros, is that a weakness of character that a person should consider negative?

A:

When a person sees others doing wicked things, and it bothers him, it aggravates him, is his reaction justified? And the answer is yes. Yes, because the honor of Hakodosh Boruch Hu is paramount. The honor of Hakodosh Boruch Hu is always our objective.

And if you achieve that, if you acquire that attitude of having the right reaction against the wicked, you have the right to feel satisfaction that you have achieved that attitude. Because many people see wicked things being done, and it doesn't affect them at all. It's none of their business, they think.

So if you are affected by aveiros, that it's a good sign. It's an excellence, it's a perfection of character, and you can rejoice that you have achieved that attitude.

TAPE # 816

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