

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
The
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Edition

In memory of
Rebbitzin Esther Jungreis

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בעזה"ש

פרשת נצבים

With Rav Avigdor Miller ztz"l

Recognizing The Greatness of Our People

- Part I -

Different People | 1

- Part II -

The People of Hundred Tekios | 9

- Part III -

The Honored People | 13

נא לא להרוא בעת התפלה וקריאת התורה

Part I. Different People

THE POISON TREE

We begin with a *possuk* in our *parsha*: או אשה או משפחה או שבט – Perhaps there is someone among you, a man, a woman, or a family or tribe, whose thoughts stray from Hashem our G-d (Netzavim 29:18). It's talking about someone who has an inclination to follow after his own thoughts, and he's veering away from the ideals of Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

שְׁלוֹם יְהִיָּה לִי כִּי בְּשִׁרְיוֹת לִבִּי אֵלֶךְ – “I’m going to go the way my mind sees,” he says. It means, he’s a *ma’amin* in Hakodosh Boruch Hu, he’s a *shomer torah u’mitzvos*, but his attitudes of the mind are straying. And in case you would think that it’s nothing at all, the Torah says: פֶּן יֵשׁ בָּכֶם – שֶׁרֶשׁ פְּרָה רָאשׁ וְלַעֲנָה – מִפְּרָה וּמִרְבֵּה רִשָּׁע בְּקִרְבוֹ – those wrong attitudes of the mind are a *root producing gall and bitter fruit* (ibid.) It means he’s planted bitter seeds in his mind and now there are poisonous plants growing there (Rashi, ibid.).

SOME ARE THIRSTY, SOME NOT

Now what does Hashem tell us as an example of this man who is straying away from Him and planting poisonous ideas in his head?

Maybe it's someone who's dabbling in *avodah zarah*, or someone who is *mi'vazeh talmidei chachomim*? No. It's a man who says בְּשִׂרְיוֹת לְבִי אֵלֶיךָ – *I'll follow what my mind believes*, הֲרֹוּה אֶת הַצְּמָאָה לְמַעַן סְפוֹת – *in order to join those whose thirst is quenched with those who are still thirsty*.

Now these are mysterious words, “He’s joining the thirsty with the satiated.” We’ll try to understand what they mean; but whatever they *do* mean, whatever that man is thinking, it must be terrible because the Torah says: לֹא יֵאבֶה ה' שֶׁם סִלַּח לוֹ – *Hashem will be unwilling to forgive him*, כִּי אִזּוֹ יַעֲשֶׂן אֵף ה' וְקִנְאָתוֹ בְּאִישׁ הַהוּא – *the wrath of Hashem will fume and His vengeance will inflame that man*, וְרִבְצָה בּוֹ כָּל הָאֵלֶּה הַכְּתוּבָה בִּסְפֵר הַיָּהּ וּמִחָה וְרִבְצָה בּוֹ כָּל הָאֵלֶּה הַכְּתוּבָה בִּסְפֵר הַיָּהּ וּמִחָה – *and there will come upon him all the curses written in the Torah and Hashem will wipe away his name from beneath the sky* (ibid. 19).

All the curses written in the Torah?! Wrath and vengeance?! That means we’d better get busy understanding this terrible sin of “equating the thirsty with the satiated.”

BLOWING SHOFAR AT THE FRUIT STORE

So we’ll begin it by learning the *peirush* of these words as found in *Mesichta Sanhedrin*. Everyone knows about *hashavas aveidah*, the *mitzvah* to return a lost item to a fellow Jew. The Torah says וְהֵשַׁבְתּוּ לוֹ – *you have to bring it back to him*; it’s a *mitzvah d’oraisah*. And it also says there, לֹא תוֹכֵל לְהִתְעַלֵּם – *You should not avert your eyes from the aveidah*; it’s an *aveirah* to walk by and ignore it. The Torah is very interested that you should protect your fellowman’s property.

And so, when you walk by a fruit store on the street and you see that an apple fell from the bin onto the sidewalk, so if it’s a Jewish fruit store then it’s a *mitzvah d’oraisa* to pick up the apple and put it back before it gets ruined. Now, it’s just an apple – it’s not a matter of ten dollars. It costs thirty cents, forty cents, that’s all. But it makes no difference. Even one *prutah* – a penny, you have to return.

You hear that? You never thought about that before? Now you know why you should come here more often; you’ll learn something. If you pick up an apple outside of a Jewish fruit store and you put it back in the bin, you should know that you’re doing a *mitzvah d’oraisa*, just like blowing *shofar*.

SINNING AT THE FRUIT STORE

So now we can look at the *gemara* (Sanhedrin 76b) and see how *Chazal* describe the sin of this man who is planting poison seeds in his mind; the one who is “adding the satiated onto the thirsty.” And the *gemara* says like this: What did he do? He was walking, let’s say, past a Korean fruit store and he saw a fruit lying on the sidewalk. An apple fell off the bin and in another minute someone will pass by and kick the apple into the gutter. So this man bends over, picks up the apple and puts it back on the bin. That’s all he did. He has in his mind *hashavas aveidah* – to return a lost article.

And what does the Torah say about this good fellow, this well-mannered citizen? Maybe he should get a special commendation from the mayor? Could be. But listen to what the Torah says about him: לֹא יִאֱבֹה ה' שֶׁסָּלַח לוֹ – *Hashem will not want to forgive him for what he did*. Not only that He won't forgive him; He won't *desire* to forgive him. Hashem won't even *desire* to forgive him?! What did this man do wrong already? He picked up the apple and put it back on the bin – that’s all he did.

THE THIRSTY NATION

And the answer to that puzzle is revealed to us in those words in the *posuk*: הֲרִיגָה אֶת הַצְּמֵאָה לְמַעַן סְפוֹת – *it’s because he added those who are already satiated onto those who are still thirsty*. It means like this: Jews are thirsty for *mitzvos*; they are a people whose desire for *avodas Hashem* is never quenched. It’s not the whole story of the *Am Yisroel*, but it’s one of the important differences between us and the nations of the world. *Am Yisroel* are *tzmei'im l'avodas yotzro*, they’re thirsty for *mitzvos*, while the gentiles are satiated; they’re not interested. And just because of that, just because we’re thirsty for *mitzvos*, we deserve tremendous honor.

The *Am Yisroel* is busy all day long with *mitzvos*. *Shmiras halashon* is a *mitzvah* of the Torah; all day he’s watching his mouth – at least he’s trying to keep his mouth closed. וְאַהֲבַת לְרֵעֵךְ כְּמוֹךְ, to love your fellow Jew is a *mitzvah*, and וְאַהֲבַת אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ is also not a small *mitzvah*. And when he walks in the street he’s thinking, וְלֹא תִתְרוּ אַחֲרֵי לְבַבְכֶם וְאַחֲרֵי עֵינֵיכֶם – the men don’t look at women and women don’t look at men. All day long he’s serving Hashem.

Even today, *pushute* Jews are keeping the Torah everywhere. Everyone is preparing for *Shabbos*; women and young girls are laboring in the kitchen for hours *l’kavod Shabbos* – a very great *mitzvah*! The Jewish

stores are crowded; long lines filled with people paying big sums of money – and for what? For the *mitzvah* of *Shabbos*!

All week long the *Am Yisroel* is busy with *mitzvos*. A *frum* Jew gets up early in the morning to go to *shul* and then a few hours later he's back in *shul* again. Elderly men, *bochurim* and little children are going to *shul*. Back and forth, back and forth. *Shachris*, *mincha*, *ma'ariv* – he *davens* and he learns a little bit too. He puts a nickel in the *pushka* whenever he gets a chance.

WHAT ARE THEY THIRSTY FOR?

Are *goyim* busy with *mitzvos* all day long?! *Ah nechtige tug!* He sees the Jew walking back and forth to *shul* a few times a day; he doesn't understand what's happening. He goes to church once a month and the priest says, "All your sins are forgiven," and finished.

Don't think that the Catholics or the Protestants, even the religious ones, are the same as you, only that the religion is different. Don't make any mistake about that! There is a very wide chasm between you and them. *Goyim* don't desire *mitzvos*; maybe they accept a few commandments of the Torah, maybe they follow some of the Bible, but they don't do it with any sort of *cheshek*, any desire. Even if they do some things, they're *zaht* – they're overfed; they're not thirsty for *mitzvos*.

I'll tell you what they're thirsty for. You walk in the streets early in the morning in a Catholic neighborhood, a respectable upper class Catholic neighborhood, and lying stretched out on the ground is a good Catholic. He's drunk and he's been sleeping on the street all night. I walked in the Catholic neighborhoods forty years ago and I saw that many times. Drunk all night, fast asleep in the gutter; and then he gets up in the morning, staggers home, and tells everybody, "Ooh wah! What a time I had last night!" He's proud of himself.

And did they expel him from their homes or from their churches? No! Never! It wasn't even considered a *chisaron*. Many people admired him; they were jealous of him. It was an exploit! He would tell his friends about it: "Did I ever tell you about the time that I slept drunk in the gutter the whole night?!" A *goy* is satiated with drink! He wants *mitzvos* like he wants a hole in his shoe.

THE FIGHT FOR CHEDER EDUCATION

Did you ever see a Jew lying drunk in the street at night?! Maybe today you could, but forty years ago you couldn't. Does a Jew go to the pub and drink after his day at the office?! He's busy with better things; he's learning with his children. He's wiped out from a long day but he sits down to *chazer* over the *gemara* with his boys. The mother is sitting the girls, with the *chumash*, with the *aleph beis*. All day long you hear *brachos* in that house. There's a *tehillim* on the table. The girls are davening *shemonah esrei* in the corner. It's a house of *mitzvos*!

And what's a Jew doing in the office anyhow? He's there for *mitzvos*! It cost big money to raise a Jewish family today! People are spending tremendous sums to bring up their children *b'derech haTorah*! We're trying very hard to get vouchers; at least the I.R.S. should recognize what we're paying for tuition and give us a rebate on our income tax. But the I.R.S doesn't care how much we spend - you can't deduct that. And the Reform Jews are fighting against us - they don't want us to get deductions because once we have an opportunity to get rebates on our school expenses, then maybe more and more Jews will send their children to *yeshivos*. And the Reform is afraid of that. But no matter what, rebate or no rebate, the *Am Yisroel* is paying the money anyhow; we're spending tremendous sums on *schar limud*. Only a thirsty nation would do such a thing!

HOLY PARENTS AND HOLY CHILDREN

Here's a Jew who's going around from house to house in his spare time. He works all day in a factory but he has ten children and he has to pay *s'char limud*. The *Satmar Yeshiva* tells him he must go and collect money to pay tuition. So after work he goes around asking for donations. He comes to your home and you give him something. Let's say, you offer him a glass of milk. But he won't take it; he doesn't trust your milk. He's thirsty, he's weary, he's eaten nothing all day long but he refuses to drink any milk that's not *chalav yisroel*. That's a hero! That's a martyr! You should feel honored to have him in your home for a few minutes.

And not only him. Even the little children of the *Am Yisroel* are holy of holies. Our little children are **צְמֵאִים לְמִצְוֹת**, they're thirsting for *mitzvos*. A little boy in Flatbush is more holy, *l'havdil*, than all the gentiles put together. I always tell you the same story, but it's a good story to tell.

There's a little boy who ate a *fleishigeh* meal and now he wants some ice cream. There's ice cream in the freezer. Nobody's home - he's all by himself. He looks at the clock. A little boy, he's waiting for the clock to turn the six hours and then he'll eat the ice cream. He keeps looking at the clock; he wants his ice cream already, but no matter what he'll wait the six hours.

THE LITTLE BOY BREAKS THE SCALE

If you have a big scale, and you put on one side all of the nations - all the Englishmen, all the Americans, all the French, every other people on the face of the earth, all on one side of the scale. And on the other side is one little *frum* boy, or one little girl, they are *machri'a es kulan* - they outweigh all of the nations of the world.

Go out in the streets in the morning. You see boys and girls everywhere waiting for the buses. They're going to the *Beis Yaakovs*, the *yeshivoos*. And the little boys are in the *cheder* all day long sitting and learning *Eilu Metzios*, all kinds of *dinim*; when you have to return a lost article, when you don't have to return it, how to return it. Little boys, not even *bar mitzvah* are learning the details of the *mitzvoos*. They're learning to love what it means to be part of the nation that is thirsty for *mitzvoos*.

Does the Italian send his children to places where they learn the *mitzvah* of *hashavas aveidah*? No; he's sending his children to public school or to the gentile private schools where they study *kol davar ossur*. What they study and practice in those schools, I don't want to even say the words in a *shul*. That's the thirst of a *goy*. There's no comparison between the gentile and the Jew - no comparison at all!

HONORING THE HONORABLE

And so this man, when he picks up the Korean apple from the sidewalk and puts it back into the bin, he's equating the overfed *goyim* with the *Am Yisroel*, the nation that is thirsty to serve its Creator. שְׁהִשָּׂהוּ כְבוֹדֵן שֶׁל אֲמֹת הָעוֹלָם לְכְבוֹדֵן שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל - *He equated the honor of the gentile to that of a Yisroel*. When a person does that out of the generosity of his heart; when he thinks, "Since it's a good thing to return a lost apple that belongs to a Jewish fruit man, I won't be selfish just for us alone. I'll be generous-hearted, and I'll return it to the *goy* too," so that man has to know that Hashem won't forgive him. Hashem won't even desire to

forgive him for that poisonous thought in his head of equating the honor that belongs to the Jewish nation with that of the gentiles.

Now, if you tell me that you pick it up because you want to show that Jews are good people, *darkei shalom*, all right, maybe. Everyone knows that if the cashier in the 99 cent store accidentally gives you more than you deserve to get, so sometimes it pays to say, “You made a mistake. You gave me too much money.” Could be. If you have a beard and a black hat, it could be it’s a *mitzvah* to say that.

So if there are *goyim* standing around, if a policeman is standing there, all right, pick up the apple and put it back on the bin. Be a nice fellow so that the *goyim* will say, “You see that; the Jews aren’t so bad after all.” It’s a *mitzvah* to raise the honor of the Jewish people in the eyes of the *goyim*.

But otherwise pass by. Because what we’re learning here is that it’s even a bigger *mitzvah* to raise the honor of the Jewish people *in your own eyes!* And what that means is that when you pass by the fruit on the floor you keep going – and you remind yourself why you’re doing that. You don’t want to be a man who harbors poison in his mind, someone who is *הַרְרָה אֶת הַצִּמְאָה סְפוּת*, equating the honor of the over-satiated with the honor that belongs only to the thirsty nation. For a *Yisroel*, *achicha*, yes, you bend over and pick it up. *אֲבֵרַת אֶחָיִךְ* – the lost object of your brother in *mitzvos* you’re *muchuyav* to return. A nation that does *mitzvos*, so we do *mitzvos* for them – it’s an honor they deserve! But the gentiles? They don’t want to do any *mitzvos*, so we don’t honor them with our *mitzvos*.

THE TERRIBLE CRIME OF HASHAVAS AVEIDAH

Now this I admit; let’s say you found a watch in the street and now you want to put it in your pocket. It could be you have to give it to the police. I don’t know; it could be there’s a law like that. Some places have a law that you have to bring it to the police station. So if it’s a law of the government, that’s something else. But you’re not doing it because of a *mitzvah* though; you’re only doing it because of the law.

But no government has a law that you have to bend over to pick up the apple. There’s no such thing that when you pass by a fruit stand, you must pick up the apple and put it back – no. And so if you lean over and pick up that Korean’s apple it’s a terrible sin. And you’re also doing

a tremendously dangerous thing for yourself. If you pick it up with the same emotion that you pick up an apple for the Jewish food store, so the Torah says, לֹא יִאָבֶה ה' שֶׁסָּלַח לּוֹ – Hashem will not want to forgive you. If you do it because you want to do a good deed – let's say you're not thinking and you have in mind the idea of *hashavas aveidah* – so you've committed a crime, a very great crime against the greatness of *Am Yisroel*.

A crime?! Yes, it's a crime. The crime is that you don't understand, you don't appreciate the greatness of the *Am Yisroel*. And it's a terrible corruption of character! A nation that loves *mitzvos* should be honored in such an exceptional way, that *chas v'shalom* if you do anything for a non-Jew to put him on par with a *Yisroel*, you're committing such a terrible crime that Hashem won't even have an interest in forgiving you. לֹא יִאָבֶה ה' שֶׁסָּלַח לּוֹ. "You're making a fundamental error" says Hakodosh Boruch Hu. "You think you did a good deed but it's an *aveirah*, a serious sin! Because one of the worst mistakes in life is to think that the honor and respect deserved by the most simple Jew is anywhere near what should be done for a non-Jew."

THE ROSH HASHANA MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

Now some people, when they hear this, they want to walk out. I know that for some of you it hurts to hear such things. So we say goodbye to you. You can leave if you want but I won't pull any punches. I know that many of you have American heads but I can't help that – here we talk the Torah truth, like it or not.

In this place we're not willing to yield anything to the ideals of democracy; we're not willing to distort the Torah out of fealty to the Constitution. "All men are created equal;" that's for gentiles to say. But the *emunah* that Hakodosh Boruch Hu requires of *us* is that we should know that we are the *b'ni bechori Yisrael* – "You are My firstborn son," says Hashem. "You're My only son." And that's so important that it's something we're expected to internalize every time we pass by the Korean fruit store.

I make it a point to pass by! I wouldn't pick it up. I make it a point to keep on walking and I remind myself, "Only for a *Yisroel* there's a *mitzva*." I hope you'll try that out next time. Because to do otherwise means that you're planting poisonous seeds in your mind.

We're learning now that this is one of the great functions of our lives – among our many duties to Hashem is to understand and appreciate the greatness of the people that love *mitzvos*. You're learning now how a *pashuteh* Jew should be treated. It's a matter of respect, of esteem for those who deserve to be honored. And the *mitzvah* of *hashavas aveida* is just one example of how we do that. When you see his apple on the sidewalk, that's an opportunity to demonstrate how greatly you value the importance of a Yisroel: you're *moichel* on your time, on your *kavod*, on the *tircha* for him – you bend over and pick up the apple and put it on the bin, and you think, "I'm doing a *mitzvah d'oraisah* of returning lost object to a brother – a brother *b'mitzvos*.

Part II. The People of Hundred *Tekios*

THE SECRET OF THE HUNDRED *TEKIOS*

Now, once we begin to appreciate how significant it is that the *Am Yisroel* is the nation that is "thirsty for *mitzvos*," so we'll be able to understand now a *gemara* in *Mesichta Rosh Hashana* (16a-16b) that needs explanation. You know, *tekias hashofar* is really not complicated – to fulfill the *mitzvah min hatorah* doesn't require so many *tekios*. How much do you have to blow already? Nine *tekios*, thirty *tekios* maybe, and that's it; you're finished.

But what do we do on *Rosh Hashana*? We have *tekios* before *mussaf*, *tekios* during *mussaf*, and then again another set of *tekios* after *mussaf*. We blow again and again and again. We're hungry; we want to go home and eat already, but we stand in shul listening to the *bal tokei'a* blowing the shofar much more than is required by the Torah.

THE SATAN'S CONFUSION

What's it all about? That's the *gemara's* question: לָמָּה תּוֹקְעִין לְמָּה תּוֹקְעִין וְיִשְׁבְּנוּ וְתוֹקְעִים וְיִמְרְעִין בְּשִׁבְתָּם עוֹמְדִים – Why do they make *tekios* so many times? It seems so superfluous! We're not doing a new *mitzvah*. It doesn't make sense. We already fulfilled the *mitzvah* before *mussaf* – you can't do a *mitzvah* twice! What's this thing all about?

Now listen to what the *gemara* answers: כִּדְּרֵי לְעַרְבֵב הַשָּׂטָן – *We do it in order to confuse the Satan*. He's standing ready to prosecute us and he has many claims against us. We're human beings and human beings do

very many things and we're being judged now for those things. And the prosecutor comes to the courtroom with a lot of paperwork, a lot of evidence. There's a lot he has written down about our past year. And that's not good. So what saves us? How do we come away from the *Yom Hadin* safely? So the *gemara* says that we confuse the Satan by blowing more than we have to.

ESCAPING A GUILTY VERDICT

Now, the *Satan* is not a foolish man. He's a *malach* – a very wise *malach*. And he's not easily confused; you're not going to confuse him by repeating some *tekios*. The exact number of *tekios* won't confuse him, you can be sure about that.

The answer is like this: It's not the *mitzvah* that saves us; it's the *chiba* of the *mitzvah*; it's the love of the *mitzvah* that "confuses" the *Satan*. שְׂהֵם מְחַבְּבִים אֶת הַמִּצְוֹת – Because they love *mitzvos*; they love *mitzvos* very much. That's the one thing that knocks him out entirely. When he sees that we're standing up now to blow *shofar* again – "What's going on?! They blew already!" – then all of his claims become muted; they're made quiet. When he sees that the *Am Yisroel* just can't get enough of *mitzvos* – they did the *mitzvah* already but they're thirsty for more – that knocks him over. He still has claims against us, but he does it with a different *niggun*. He says it with respect now; the Satan has a newfound respect for us.

And therefore, even though the *Satan* will not yield his duty – he has to carry out his mission to be *melamed chov* on *Am Yisroel* – but when he sees that we're חוֹזְרִין וְתוֹקְעִין, that we're blowing *shofar* again, that causes him to be quiet. לְעֵרֵבב – he gets confused. He knows exactly what he wanted to say, but all of a sudden his arguments fall apart. The foundation of his whole argument against us becomes confused.

GREATNESS IN A CAVE

There's a tale – a story in the *gemara* (Shabbos 33b) about Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. Rabbi Shimon was once sentenced to death by the Romans because he had criticized the Roman government. Now, when the Romans pronounced a death sentence on a person it wasn't like in New York; it was serious business. So when Rabbi Shimon heard about this he did the smartest thing; he ran away with his son and hid in a cave. And for twelve years they sat in the cave hiding from the Romans.

Now, you have to know that it was during those twelve years that Rabbi Shimon and his son became exceedingly great. What went on in that cave was tremendous. They didn't want to wear out their clothing, so they dug a hole in the ground and they sat in the sand up to their necks all day long and they learnt Torah. When they had to daven, so they climbed out of the hole and put on their clothing and davened. Then they took off their clothing and went back in the hole again. That's how they spent twelve years.

It wasn't an easy life – their bodies were full of sores from the sand. But they became very great! Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and his son Rabbi Elazar b'Reb Shimon became very great men as a result. These twelve years elevated them immensely.

DESTROYING THE WORLD

Finally at the end of twelve years a message was sent to them *m'shamayim*: "The danger is over; you can go out now." So they went back out to civilization and what did they see? They saw people, *poshuteh* Jews. They saw people who were farmers, people raising cattle, and they said, "What's this? Milking cows?! You're wasting your life with milking cows planting fields?!" They didn't understand! That people should give their time for anything but perfection, *shleimus* of *avodas Hashem*?! You don't share the heart with anything else except for serving Hashem – that was their idea. They had just lived it for twelve years.

So wherever they looked they were dissatisfied with what they saw. And because of their *kedusha*, wherever they looked with their holy eyes, it was destroyed. They took a look, they disapproved of what they saw and **מִיָּד נִשְׂרַף**, it was destroyed. They destroyed this field, they destroyed that field. They couldn't tolerate what they were seeing.

So Hashem said, "You think I let you come out of your cave to destroy My world?! Is that how you look at My people?! Go back to the cave again! Go back and stay there!" And so, Rabbi Shimon and his son returned to living in the cave.

MYRTLE RISING

After one more year in the cave they finally came out again. It was *erev Shabbos* and they saw an old man running. Now, old men don't run. For an old man it's hard sometimes just to tie his shoes, but here was an old man who was running. And in his hands he was carrying two

branches of *hadassim*. So they say to him, "What are you running for?" He said, "I'm going home to bring flowers for Shabbos - *l'kovod Shabbos*." So Rabbi Shimon said, "So why do you need two?" He said, **אַחַד כְּנַגְד זְכוֹר וְאַחַד כְּנַגְד שְׁמֹר**. "*L'kovod Shabbos*, one sprig for the word *zachor* and one for the word *shamor*."

When Rabbi Shimon saw that, *ehr iz arois fun di keilim*, he became so excited! "Oooh," said Rabbi Shimon. "I change my mind now about the *pashute* Jews." **הֲיֵי כְּמָה חֲבִיבִין מְצֹוֹת עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל** - "Look how cherished the *mitzvos* are to the Jewish people. The *pashute* Jews are *kodesh kadoshim*," said Rabbi Shimon. "They're thirsty for *mitzvos*. An old man running *l'kovod Shabbos*!"

And so *nisyashev da'ato*, the mind of Rabbi Shimon was appeased. Now he was satisfied with the *Am Yisroel* - not only satisfied; he appreciated them, he respected them. And now he didn't cause any more trouble where he looked; he didn't make anything *charuv* anymore. Because wherever he looked, what he saw was a nation that thirsted for *mitzvos*. They're milking cows, they're planting crops, they're in their homes; whatever they're doing, they're living lives of *mitzvos*!

THE APEX OF PERFECTION

What we see from this story is that Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, despite all of the *shleimus* that he achieved in that cave during those twelve years, nevertheless, he needed one more *madreigah* of perfection. And that was to recognize the *gadlus* of the *frum* Jew, even the *pashute frum* Jew. Rabbi Shimon was already very great from his years in the cave but it wasn't enough - he had to achieve one more thing, one more attitude of the mind. The apex, the crown of his *shleimus* - was to be impressed with the stature of the most simple Jew; to respect and admire the nation that is thirsty for *mitzvos*.

So we begin to see that even though you're a *shaleim*; even though you're *moiser nefesh* for *avodas Hashem* like Rabbi Shimon and his son; you're succeeding in learning Torah - you're even learning the deepest secrets of the Torah - nevertheless, there's one more secret that you still have to learn. You must add to the list of your achievements, the very great perfection of recognizing the *gedulas Am Yisroel* - the nation that loves *mitzvos*. No matter how great you are in *avodas Hashem*, and how great you are in Torah knowledge, you must add this attitude of mind to your store of knowledge.

Part III. The Honored People

ROSH HASHANA DAVENING

And that's why there are a few words that we repeat over and over again on the *Yomim Nora'im*. In all of the *tefillos* we say the following words: **וּבְבִגְן תֵּן כְּבוֹד הַשֵּׁם לְעַמְּךָ תְּהִלָּה לִירְאֵיךָ** – “Hashem, give honor to Your people, let there be praise for those who fear You.” It means that we're praying to *Hakodosh Boruch Hu* that the time should come when the nations of the world should honor the Jewish people. You know that right now they're busy doing the opposite. From the beginning of our history nobody is as vilified and insulted and blackened as the Jew. And therefore we ask Hashem again and again: **וּבְבִגְן תֵּן כְּבוֹד הַשֵּׁם לְעַמְּךָ**. We pray that the gentiles should give honor to Jews. **תְּהִלָּה לִירְאֵיךָ** – May the time come when they should give praise to those who fear You. That's our fervent wish

Now, the first thing *Hakodosh Boruch Hu* says when He hears that is, “What about you? You're so interested in the honor of your nation? Are *you* honoring your fellow Jews? When you see a Jew, do you feel a surge of emotion, an outpouring of admiration toward him?”

Did you ever say to yourself, when you see a stranger in the street: “That man walking towards me on the street is an aristocrat! Even if the king of England would be walking past me, that would be nothing compared to this Jew, the one who is *tzamei la'mitzvos*.”

If you're not thinking that way, then you're not thinking. And it's a requirement – otherwise you're not speaking to Hashem in truth. “Hashem should honor the *Am Yisroel*”?! You're just saying words; it's in the *machzor* so you have no choice, you can't skip it after all. But do you really care about their honor? Are you doing something about it?!

LET'S TALK L'MAISAH

I'm talking *halacha l'maisah* now – practical things, not just *d'varim b'alma*. Suppose you're sitting on a bus – it's a bus that runs through the Italian neighborhood and it's packed with anti-Semites. They don't say anything – they're not telling you what they really think about kikes, but they're anti-Semites; you can trust me about this.

And suddenly there comes up on the bus a Jew with a beard, a big conspicuous beard; it's already gray or white. And of course, nobody

gives him a seat. He's standing there, one Jew with a white beard, standing all alone on a bus full of *goyim*. Everybody has seats; he happens to be the only one without a seat. And he's swaying with every lurch of the bus and nobody even bothers to offer him their seat. What do they care for an elderly Jew – let him stand, let him collapse, they don't care.

Here's where you come in. You remember now what you said on Rosh Hashana, "Hashem, give honor to your people." And so you get up and you offer him your seat. But you don't just mumble something to him; you don't make some motion. Instead you make a big scene; a public demonstration of *תֵּן כְּבוֹד לְעַמְּךָ*. First you shake hands with him – with respect, with *kavod*. That's number one; you get up, you shake his hand and show that he's an honored man.

THE HERRING MAN DESERVES YOUR RESPECT

Now it could be he sells herring in the grocery store. He's not a great rabbi; maybe he's not even a little rabbi, but it makes no difference. He's a Jew; he's from the *יִרְאַיִךְ*, those who fear Hashem; he's from the *צְמֵאִים לְמִצְוֹת* – the nation that thirsts for *mitzvos*.

And that's why you go out of your way to honor him. That's enough of a reason. You don't care if he's a herring salesman or a *rosh yeshiva*; he's a thirsty Jew and he deserves all the honor in the world! And that's why you have to get up and make a public demonstration. He sits down in your seat and you stand over him and talk kindly and respectfully to him. It's a public demonstration; you don't care about everybody else in the car. Let them grit their teeth in anger; let them get cancer from watching that. You're just doing our job. That's our job – to demonstrate that we have the highest respect for *frum* Jews. *תְּהִלָּה לְיִרְאַיִךְ*, we have to show praise to those who fear Hashem.

RESPECT, NOT RACHMANUS

We're not talking now only about having *rachmanus* on an old man who gets on a crowded bus – it's much more than that. It means we have such a respect for the nation that is hungry for *mitzvos* that we *want* to honor them. We *want* to give him a seat because we want to honor the nation that is thirsty for *mitzvos*. We *want* to lean over into the gutter to pick up his lost apple because we want to honor the holy nation. We *want* to hold open the door for a fellow Jew because we want to honor

every member of the nation that fears Hashem; we *want* to add praise to the יִרְאֵיךָ, those who fear Him.

And therefore, it's not only a lonely Jew on the bus who you should honor; that's when it's more important of course, but we're speaking now about all the *frum* men and women, all the *frum* boys and girls. We should be giving them great honor; we have to praise them with all good words because no matter what you'll say, it won't be an exaggeration. You'll say that they're children of the *Keil Chai*, it's absolutely true. You'll say *kol Yisroel yesh lahem chelek l'olam haba*, that's also true. And so when you see a *frum* Jew on the street you're looking at someone who Hashem is thinking about; you're looking at someone who will one day be with Hakodosh Boruch Hu in the Next World.

NO EXAGGERATING

And it's not a *guzmah*; an exaggeration or a form of speech. The nation that is doing *mitzvos* – not only doing, but they're thirsty for *mitzvos* – that makes them holy. That's what we say all day long: קְרִינְךָ אֵתָהּ הַשֵּׁם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו – Thank You Hashem for making us *kadosh* by means of the *mitzvos*. A *mitzvah* changes you! We become more *holy* when we do *mitzvos*.

Every *mitzvah* will makes you more and more *kadosh*. Even if you sit all Shabbos long and do nothing, you become more of a *kadosh* at the end of Shabbos. קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתֶיךָ you say on Shabbos. Shabbos makes you *kadosh*. You're clothed in a *beged* of *kedusha*. And next Shabbos, another *beged*. The older you are, the more *kedushas* Shabbos you have.

MORE AND MORE HOLINESS

Not only a *mitzvah d'oraisa*. The *chachomim* came along and added more *mitzvos* – and that means we're busy with *kedusha* all day long. You wash your hands for bread and you make a *bracha*, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו עַל נְטִילַת יָדַיִם. What a privilege that is! “Oy! What a good fortune it is, Hashem, that You gave me another *mitzvah* that makes me more *kadosh*.”

The *Am Yisroel* is an *am kadosh*, a *holy nation* – no question about it. And therefore, it's not only the non-Jews on the buses should learn to respect us; most important is that *we* have to learn to respect *frum* Jews. We have to always understand that Hakodosh Boruch Hu says: “Don't make any comparison! לֹמַעַן סְפוֹת הַרְוֶה אֶת הַצְּמָאָה – “Don't add the

satisfied, the overfed *goy*, onto the holy Jews.” The *tzme’ah*, the nation thirsty for *mitzvos*, is an entirely different category by itself.

YERUSHALAYIM AND GOLDERS GREEN

Now, that’s something that needs a great deal of practice; to train yourself to think, “Every Jew is *kodesh*; he’s miles above anyone else in the world!” Your wife is *kodesh*, your children are *kedoshim*, your neighbor is a *kadosh*. The people in the street, your customers, your employers, everybody in the *beis haknesses* – all the *shomrei mitzvos* are *kodesh*.

And there’s such a *kedushah* that the *Shechinah* is on them. וְשִׁכְנָתִי בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל – You have to believe *b’emunah shleima* that the *Shechina* is found in no other place in the universe! It’s found in Yerushalayim. It’s found in Bnei Brak and in Flatbush and in Lakewood. It’s found in Golders Green in England. And as you walk through those streets, you walk with the greatest *derech erez* because in those places the *Shechina* resides. When you walk through these places, you should know that you’re walking in the streets of the most noble people, the aristocrats of the world.

THE HOLY AND THE MUNDANE

Not just the neighborhood – every family, every individual is worthy of the greatest honor. Let’s say you pass by a home, a Jewish home. And one house over, there’s another Jewish home. But in between there’s a gentile home with an Italian flag outside – it’s a neat home, with neat garden. Very nice, very nice. But you should understand there’s a *hefsek* in between the two Jewish homes. Here’s *kedusha*, then there’s nothing, then there’s *kedusha* again. A Jewish home is without measure superior to the non-Jewish home.

You have to have the greatest *derech erez* for a *frum* Jewish home. Because who’s living in those homes? It’s not the overfed Italians living there – it’s thirsty Jews! Jewish children! Jewish grandmothers! Jewish mothers and fathers! It’s a nation that is beloved by Hashem because they love *mitzvos*! Of course, in ancient times it was much more intense. But even today, the *frum* Jews are *kodesh kadoshim*.

THE WOMAN HIGH-PRIEST

When the lady of the house tells you, “Don’t take this, it’s *fleishig*. Take a different spoon, a *pareve* spoon,” she’s like a Kohen Gadol

in the Beis Hamikdash giving directions. She's guarding the *kedusha* of the house. It's a very important function. A Jewish mother that supervises the *kashrus* of the house is a tremendous thing! And if you don't appreciate that, then it's a danger because, לֹא יִאָבֶה ה' שֶׁמֶסְלֵחַ לוֹ, Hashem won't want to forgive you if you equate the Jewish homes with those of the gentiles.

It's something you have to practice; you won't believe it unless you think about it often. It takes training. When you see a Jew, any Jew, practice. You see a *Yisroel* coming toward you, you should think, "Here comes a *tzamei la'mitzvos*. And that means that the *Shechinah* is coming toward me." It's *mamish* the truth. It's a *yesod haTorah* to gain a feeling that when you see a Jew: "There goes the *Shechinah*; the *Shechinah* goes with him." You have to work on that until it gets into your bones! Some people live their entire lives and never gain this attitude – and it's a tremendous loss because it's one of the *yesodos* of being a Jew.

It's one of our functions in this world – it's a principle of the Torah to realize the greatness of the nation that appreciates *avodas Hashem*, absolutely. Not only on the *nation* as a whole but *b'prat* on each Jew. It makes no difference if it's an old man, or a little girl or little boy – all of them are endowed with this great blessing, that the *Shechinah* rests on them on them.

RESPECT A JEW

Here's a customer coming into your store; or let's say your wife's cousin is coming over to visit. Now, I'm not saying you have to waste time with him; sometimes you might waste time and it's *d'varim bateilim*, it's a waste of a life. But here is an opportunity for you to become great, by learning to respect the *kedushah* that hovers over his head. While he's talking, maybe he's not saying anything important, so you're nodding your head and you're thinking, "This man is so holy. I admire him and respect him. There's nothing in the world as dignified, as honorable, as my wife's cousin."

That's what you have to do. From time to time, choose one person, any person, any *shomer mitzvos* – it doesn't have to be a *gadol* or a special *chosid* – and say, "That man is *kodesh* and I respect him because he's a *frum* Jew who is thirsty for *mitzvos*. And that thirst is so immense, it's so tremendous, that no matter what I do to honor him it won't be enough."

IT'S EASIER THAN LOVE!

It's not easy to love every *Yisroel*; but to train yourself little by little to have a respect for him because he's *kadosh*, that's something you can do. He's a *tzamei la'mitzvos* and you have to deal with him like he's *kodesh kadashim*. It is completely impossible to think of being *mivazeh* him. Even though you are angry at him, you can't scorn, you can't speak impolitely to a *Yisroel*.

I know it's a very, very big demand: "How can I live that way?" you'll say. But it's a *yesod* of *emunah* to understand how valuable, how precious every single Jew is. And so be very careful not to do anything against a *frum* Jew. You shouldn't do anything against *anybody*, but *frum* Jews who are doing *mitzvos* are something different altogether, and it's something that you have to feel in your bones.

And one day you'll begin to feel it a little bit! And then you'll know that you've accomplished something by coming into this world. You accomplished something great - you're living now with one of the great truths of the Torah; you understand what it means the *kedushah* of a *Yisroel*.

COMMITMENT FOR ROSH HASHANA

And there's no better time than now, as we begin the new year, to make a commitment to yourself: "Hakodosh Boruch Hu, this year is going to be a year of raising the banner of the greatness of Your people. This year I'm going to respect and honor the *Am Yisroel* - all of them! I'm going to take the tremendous lessons of *Parshas Netzavim* and the tefillos of the *Yomim No'ra'im* and make it a principle all year round, to give honor to Your people."

And then you get busy doing it. Honor every Jew; at least in your mind you should look at a fellow Jew with great respect. It's not only picking up lost apples from the sidewalk; it's an attitude of the mind - it's a tremendous perfection of the mind to think this way. A mother of a *frum* family deserves honor; the bigger the family, the bigger the honor. How greatly you respect a mother who raises a family of little *tzaddikim*, boys and girls who will someday be big *tzaddikim*! What a tremendous achievement! We honor such a mother. We honor Jews who sit by the *gemara*. We honor the young boys and girls who give away

their days in the *yeshivos* and *Beis Yaakovs*. We honor the *pashuteh* Jew on the street – because he’s not *pashut* at all! We make sure to honor all people who are proud to show they’re *frum* Jews; they look like Jews and talk like Jews and are thirsty for *mitzvos* like Jews. We honor the thirsty nation to no end.

And by means of always honoring the *shomrei Torah u'mitzvos*, we’ll continue to fulfill our function in this world of not “joining the satiated to the thirsty,” of not equating the Jews with the nations of the world. And we’ll continue fulfilling this function of ours until the time comes when Hakodosh Boruch Hu will come and demonstrate to the whole world that we, the ones who are loyal to Him, are the ones who truly deserve the great reward of eternal honor. And then we’ll witness with our own eyes the fulfillment of וְתַן כְּבוֹד לְעַמְךָ – Hakodosh Boruch Hu, give honor to your nation; and the people that truly thirsted for Hashem and His *mitzvos* will forever bask in their well deserved glory.

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<p>Mel and Raquel Urbach</p>	<p>נעזים</p>	<p>יצחק בן חיים הירש ע"ה מרים בת לואיס ע"ה צבי הירש בן יוסף ע"ה פנינה בת לוי ע"ה</p>	<p>כי תבא</p>	<p>לעילוי נשמת פיגא רבקה בת אריה לייביש</p>	<p>כי תבא</p>
<p>Available</p>	<p>וואת תבא</p>	<p>Available</p>	<p>דאיני</p>	<p>Available</p>	<p>וילך</p>

שאל אביך ויגדך זקינך ויאמרו לך

Q&A

With
Rav Avigdor Miller Ztz"l



Q:

The Rav said tonight that we should get busy before Rosh Hashanah remembering all the good that Hashem has given us since last Rosh Hashanah. But don't we have to spend the time we have left thinking about our sins and our behavior over the past year and making resolutions for improving this coming year?

A:

You'll recall that I said the words, "as part of our work." Really, there's so much work to be done, that we don't have time in the ensuing period, until tomorrow at sunset, to do what has to be done. But remembering all the good that Hakodosh Boruch Hu gave us this past year, and thanking Him for it, is most surely a very important part of our preparation.

So instead of worrying about fitting it all in, I'll tell you what to do. You make sure to think for five minutes about the past year – about all the good that Hashem has given you since exactly one year ago. Do that and you'll be a great man. And then another five minutes about resolutions for the coming year. And then you'll be an even greater person. Those ten minutes will be a great accomplishment.

If after sitting here for an hour and a half, you'll go out and think for five minutes, you should know that you're an exception. You're a dagul mei'rivavah – you're one out of ten thousand. There's nobody like you.

Who thinks for five whole minutes about gratitude for Hashem for the past year?! And who thinks for five minutes about making resolutions for improving himself in the coming year?! People talk about it. But that's all. That's why I said in the beginning of our talk, that if you do this on a small scale, then you shoot up and your head is way above everybody else.

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