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SEFER VAYIKRA - THE PENSON FAMILY EDITION

FOR THE REFUAH SHLEIMA OF RIVKA BAS SHOSHANA

TORAS AVIGDOR

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תזריע - מצורע

Learning To Fear

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פרשת תזריע - מצורע

WITH

R' AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"l

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

Learning To Fear

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Part I. Invoking Fear

The Fear of Leprosy

In order to appreciate one of the most important lessons of this week's *sedrah*, we must make note of the fact that in ancient times leprosy was a dreaded malady; people trembled in fear when they heard the word *tzaraas* – and rightfully so.

Even among the gentiles, lepers were always isolated from the rest of society. Of course, it wasn't with all the provisions and details delineated in the Torah but still they were quarantined, sometimes for years on end. The truth is that even today if you visit certain places – you shouldn't, but let's say you took a trip to Africa or India, you would find there leprosariums, leper colonies, where the sickly are being treated.

But in the ancient times, before there were medical treatments for leprosy, it was even worse than today. Sometimes you would see the

victims in agony as their limbs were being consumed by leprosy – in some cases their arms and legs dropped off of them, eaten away by the disease.

And so we understand that in the olden times when the Bnei Yisroel read about tzaraas, it wasn't like today when you read the *sedrah* and finished – in the early days of our nation and even for many years thereafter whenever they read these *pesukim* it caused a certain uneasiness because everyone had before their eyes a picture of these unfortunate ones being consumed by this disease. And because it was understood that tzaraas was sent upon a person for various sins, therefore when Parshas Tazria-Metzora came around there was a palpable fear in the air – a fear of what could be when a person sins against Hashem.

The New Queen

Let's listen now to what our sages have to say on this subject. In Midrash Rabbah (15:4) it says as follows: **מָשַׁל לְמַטְרוֹנָה שֶׁנִּכְנְסָה לְתוֹךְ פְּלִטִין שָׁל מֶלֶךְ** – *It's comparable to a case of a new queen who was just married and as she enters the palace of her new husband, the king, where she is going to reside, she sees instruments of punishment hanging on the walls.* Whips and other various contrivances used to scourge people, to torture persons who deserved to be punished, were visible to all who entered.

So what happened when the queen saw that? **דָּרְחֵלָהּ** – *She trembled.* She had never seen such things before and she was very afraid. **אָמַר לָהּ הַמֶּלֶךְ** – *And so the king, seeing the apprehension on the queen's face, said to her,* **אַל תִּתַּיֵּרְאִי אֵלַי** – *“Don't be afraid, my dear wife. These are not meant for you, אֵלַי וְלַשְׁפָּחוֹת וְלַעֲבָדִים וְלַשְׁפָּחוֹת אֲכַל אֶתְּךָ* – *these are for my slaves and my maid servants who misbehave, but you, you come into my palace for a different purpose, to eat and to drink and to be merry.”*

The Intended Audience

Our sages use that *mashal* as the description of how the Am Yisroel received the details of Parshiyos Tazria and Metzora: **כִּי יָוִן שָׁשְׁמְעוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל** – *When they heard the parsha of tzaraas they were very afraid;* after all, Hashem doesn't teach such laws for nothing. And so right away *nisyaru*, they trembled in fear. “Such a terrible warning?! Such terrible afflictions for sinning against Hashem?! What's going to be with us?!”

So Moshe Rabeinu said to them, **אַל תִּתַּיֵּרְאוּ** – *“Don't be afraid, אֵלֶיךָ הַקּוֹדֵשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לֹא יִבְרָא לָנוּ עֲוֹנוֹת* – *Hakodosh Boruch Hu doesn't intend to bring negaim on you. These sicknesses are for the nations of the world, for the reshamim.”* And where do you find most evildoers? Not in Williamsburg; not in Boro Park among

those who keep the Torah, but among the nations – today irreligious Jews too. אַבְל אַתֶּם – But you? לֶאֱכַל וְלִשְׁתּוֹת וְלִשְׂמֹחַ – Hakodosh Boruch Hu wants you to live only happy lives; you'll eat and drink and be merry and you'll leave the negaim for the wicked. The whole parsha is not for you.”

Avoiding Tragedy

However, we have a question on that *medrash*, a big question that should bother us right away. Because how can you say that the laws of leprosy are written in the Torah not for the Am Yisroel? After all, we know that it's just the opposite; they're *only* for the Am Yisroel! Nothing in the Torah speaks about non Jewish lepers. Of course we can quarantine them but there are no laws in the Torah about gentile lepers – they don't become impure and there's no obligation to expel them from a walled city. All the details we read in the *parsha* about the process of quarantine and what *korbonos* lepers must bring when they become *tahor*, are only about Bnei Yisroel!

Now, listen to the answer because that's going to be our subject for tonight. Certainly the *parsha* is written in the Torah for the Bnei Yisroel – absolutely there might be times when a Yisroel will find *tzaraas* on his body or on the walls of his home and he'll have to keep the all the laws of our *parsha* in all of their *pratei pratim*. But what Moshe Rabeinu was telling the nation is that it doesn't have to be that way!

Actually the *parsha* has a double purpose; the primary objective of all of the *dinim* in our *parsha* is so that they *shouldn't* have to be fulfilled! It's so that we should study them and by means of seeing “the instruments of punishment hanging on the wall” and becoming afraid, *just because of that* we will never have occasion to practice these laws. Instead we can live happy lives; לֶאֱכַל וְלִשְׁתּוֹת וְלִשְׂמֹחַ – to eat and to drink and to be merry.

Fear Is Wonderful

We are learning a remarkable lesson now. In order to lead happy lives it's essential that as the queen enters the palace of the king – it means as the Jew enters the palace of the Torah – she should see these things hanging on the walls. That's what the king intended. Of course, he tells her, “Don't be afraid; these things are not for you,” but still he's thinking that there is no harm that she should see the instruments of torture on the walls.

Now, it may not happen in a thousand years that a queen should ever be subjected to such punishments, but the reason that the queens are so good – of course there are many reasons but this is a contributing factor – is that she remembers the whips on the wall. Because even the best

queen who comes into the palace with the best of intentions, yet it is not superfluous to give her the stimulus of fear of the eventual consequences that might befall her for disobedience.

Now, it could be you think that's a queer thing to say – you'll say, "I have to respect Hashem, yes; I have to love Him, I understand that. But to be afraid of Hashem?! – but our sages understood the depth of human nature more than anyone today. And they understood that fear is wonderful! To be afraid of being wicked is a tremendous thing. Yes! Fear! רַאשִׁית הַחִכָּה – *The first of all things you have to learn*, יְרֵאת הַשֵּׁם – *is to be afraid of Hashem!*

The Disobedient Son

You know, I always tell you about the *parsha* in the Torah of the *ben sorer u'moreh*; the disobedient son. And what does the Torah say about him? His parents are expected to bring him to the *beis din* and accuse him before the elders of the city. And the *beis din* whips him and they warn him that he'd better cut it out.

And what happens if he persists in disobeying his parents? He's brought before *beis din* a second time and this time they kill him. He's a little boy of twelve years old and they pelt him with stones! Now, he didn't commit any major crime; at most he may have stolen money from his parents to buy some food. But no matter; the Torah says that all the people of the town – his neighbors, his friends, his teachers – come to the *beis din* and they throw stones at him and kill him.

Now the truth is that this scenario has so many technicalities that must be fulfilled in order to carry out the sentence, that some say that it never happened. There's a school of thought among our sages (Sanhedrin 71a) that לֹא הָיָה וְלֹא עָתִיד לִהְיוֹת – *it never happened and never can happen* because the numerous conditions make it almost impossible to ever take place.

The Beneficial Effect

But the question is, if it could never happen why is it written in the Torah? What's the purpose of the *parsha*? So our sages say אֲלֹא דָרַשׁ וְקִבֵּל – *It's meant so that you study the laws and receive reward*. Just the study of the *parsha* is of great benefit to a person. However, it doesn't merely mean that you get the reward for studying the technicalities of these laws. Now, certainly you do; any Torah law that you study even though you never had any opportunity to practice you'll be rewarded for the mere study. But there is something in addition to that; דָּרַשׁ in this case also means that by studying it properly, וְקִבֵּל שְׂכָר, you'll be rewarded with a

better personality, with a perfection of character. And that's because the lesson of a *ben sorer u'moreh* teaches a person *yiras ha'onesh*.

You know, all the little boys in the *cheder* who learn *chumash* are frightened to death by these *pesukim*. They didn't yet learn the complexities of the Gemara and so when they learn the *chumash*, *kipshuto*, with their rebbi, they're frightened! "If I'm wicked, this could happen to me," the little boy is thinking. He doesn't know the *lomdus* in Mesichta Sanhedrin; all the conditions and *chumrahs* that make it impossible. All the little boys in the Hebrew school don't know about that and therefore they are thinking that my father and mother might some day take me to the rabbi. And you don't know how many generations of little boys became good because of that! Certainly, for thousands of years the *parsha* exerted a beneficial effect on our nation.

And that's because the effect of *yiras ha'onesh* is a great benefit for everyone. Anybody who wants to succeed in this world must understand – really understand – that there is no such thing as getting away with wickedness. You want to be good? Then you must inculcate in yourself a straight, simple fear of Hashem. And fear of what? Not only *yiras haromemus*, fear of His splendor, but fear of consequences; fear of what *chas v'sholom* will happen to you if you are negligent in fulfilling His laws.

The Path To Happiness

And don't think that for *your* sins the punishment will be minor – because no sins are small! If a man says a mean word, if he speaks *lashon hora* or any other sin, he has to be afraid for his life. Maybe he'll find on his arm a growth and he'll have to go to the *kohen*. Maybe *chas v'shalom* the doctor will see something growing on his colon and he'll have to go running to a specialist in Manhattan for an emergency appointment.

And that, the *medrash* is teaching us, is one of the great benefits of the *parsha* of *tzaraas* for those who know how to learn *chumash* properly; it makes you afraid of what could be if you make missteps. It's good to know that; it's good to know that if you are mean, that if you speak harshly to your wife, that you might get it in the *kishkes*. They might make a colostomy on you and you'll have to walk around all your life with a hole in your side, with a bag hanging on your side.

And don't think that these are depressing thoughts; the *medrash* is teaching us that this actually is the path to happiness. Because the more a man fears the consequences of sin, the more he watches his step and the more successfully he lives – and the more successfully you live the happier you'll be, absolutely.

That's what the *medrash* means: אָבֵל אֶתֶם – But you? לֶאֱכֹל וְלִשְׁתּוֹת וְלִשְׂמֹחַ – Hakodosh Boruch Hu wants you to live only happy lives; to eat, drink and live happily. You can leave the *negaim* for the wicked if you learn to be afraid of being wicked. And the way to achieve that is to by studying the Torah the way Hakodosh Boruch Hu intended.

Part II. Seeing Fear

Learning To Read

Now, that's already an entirely new way of studying Torah. The *medrash* is telling us that we should be studying the Torah not as mere words and stories; it's not only *dinim* and technicalities. Oh no! It's much more than that – it's very real; it's supposed to be for us pictures on the wall. When you read the *parsha* about leprosy you have to picture it and tremble like the queen who sees the whips. That's the type of learning that Hakodosh Boruch Hu wants because that's the type of learning that changes a person. So it means that when you come across *pesukim* like this, you should stop and spend a little time on the words and thinking about the lessons. Let other people hurry up and finish and go home – that's alright. But if you spend an extra minute it's worth the investment – it's an investment in Olam Haboh.

Our sages did that. That's why we find that the *chachomim*, when it came to certain *pesukim* that spoke of *yiras hashem*, they used to weep. It says that in the *gemara* (Chagiga 4b). Rabbi Elazar when he came to a certain *posuk* that reminded him of his responsibilities, he wept. Rav Huna too – he cried when he was read some *pesukim*. Rav Ami, Rav Assi, Rav Yosef, they were afraid when they read the Torah. And they didn't weep imitation tears, to make a show; they really wept.

So you'll say maybe they were emotional people, sensitive souls, and so they wept the first time they read the *posuk*. No; they wept each time they learned the *pesukim*. They shed tears! It means they trained themselves to weep – these great men thought about what they were reading and by weeping they gained the attitude of being afraid of Hakodosh Boruch Hu; it means they were transforming their personalities by means of an important attitude of the mind that our sages call *deiah*.

Real Knowledge

In the *gemara* (Brachos 33a) it states, גְּדוּלָהּ רַעֲיָה – How great is the quality called *deiah*. It's praising the person who acquires a certain attitude of the mind called *deiah* and we should understand what that means.

I always tell the same stories but it's important to know these stories. I remember once a *bochur* came late to yeshiva in the morning so I said to him, "Why are you late today?" He said, "On the way, I saw something; I saw a man die on the street." He was agitated; a man had just died in front of his eyes!

I said to him, "Don't you know people die? You knew that already, didn't you?" "Yes," he said, "but I never *saw it* before."

Now the question is, what knowledge had been added that he didn't possess before? He knew about death already. The answer is that beforehand it was just *chochma*, a superficial kind of knowing; but now that he saw with his own eyes that people die, he learned that it was really so – now he has *deiah*.

Converting The Knowledge

Chochma means to have information, to know things, whereas *deiah* refers to the *quality* of that knowledge. And it's *deiah* that counts! That's what every Jew is striving for.

Now, don't misunderstand me; *chochma* is important, no question about it. Certainly everyone has to work to acquire *chochma* because that's the raw material that can be transformed into *deiah*. It's like the food we eat. We can't make use of the bread that we swallow; it would be poisonous if the bread would enter our bloodstream. It's only because we have so many enzymes which are able to break up the food into its components and reassemble the materials until they are usable, that's why we are able to live.

And so too, all the facts that we learn are in themselves meaningless. What does it avail a man to *know* that he shouldn't cross against a red light if he actually does? What does it help if you know that smoking causes emphysema and lung cancer if you're still smoking?

And most importantly what does it help a man to subscribe to the principle of *din v'cheshbon*, to believe that Hakodosh Boruch Hu punishes man for sins, when actually *yiras ha'onesh* is never in his thoughts? And the truth is that even your thoughts are not enough – it has to become part of your personality! It has to get into your blood that you're here in this world for one purpose and that's to make yourself better and that any misstep you make will be punished one way or another. Unless a person makes *teshuva*, he'll pay for his sins.

Don't Take This Lightly

You know, there's a statement in the Gemara (Bava Kama 50a) as follows: כָּל הָאוֹמֵר הַקֶּב"ה וְתָרַן יִתְּרוֹ חַיִּיו – *Anybody who says that Hashem is forgiving, he's playing with his life.* It means that anybody who says that

Hakodosh Boruch Hu overlooks a man's sins and won't punish, so the man who says such a thing, he'll be punished severely just for saying that.

Hakodosh Boruch Hu is not *mivater* on anything! If a man did a wrong, if he did a sin, then even though fifty years have passed by and in between this man became a *tzadik*, he became a big Rosh Yeshiva with a long white beard, still Hakodosh Boruch Hu won't forgive him. Unless he repents, unless he does *teshuva*, there will be punishment awaiting him. That's a *yesod hayesodos*. There shouldn't be the slightest doubt that without *teshuva* Hashem won't waive a thing.

Sometimes you were a bully. Oh yes, you were a big bully when you were younger. Sometimes you were very mean to your relatives. Maybe you did things that you shouldn't have done or you looked where you shouldn't have. Maybe you weren't careful and you went where you weren't supposed to go or you said things that shouldn't have been said. You should be thinking about that! Are you so perfect that you have no worries? You're not afraid of what the Torah warns about?

Of course, you'll tell me you know all about it; and it's true, you *do* know. But it's a vague awareness that is far from his mind; it's very hazy. All these details are *chochma* that must be processed by us until they become part of our experience, part of our personality – otherwise, they are useless.

We're Like Dead Cows

That's why we have such an instance in Chazal of a *תַּלְמִיד חֹכֵם שֶׁאֵין בּוֹ דַּעַה*, a torah scholar who has no *daas*. Now, you'll ask me, how can he be a *talmid chochom* if he did not learn? But that's exactly what we're talking about here because a person can learn a great deal of information but if he doesn't internalize it, so what is he worth already? *כָּל תַּלְמִיד חֹכֵם שֶׁאֵין בּוֹ דַּעַה – נְבִלָה טוֹבָה מִמֶּנּוּ* – *A talmid chochom without de'ah, a dead carcass is better than him* (Vayikra Rabbah 1:15). That's what our sages say about him; he's worse than a dead cow.

Worse than a dead carcass?! That's already too much, you think. Couldn't we find any better comparison than a *neveilah*? The answer is, it's a very good *mashal*; the comparison is exact. Because a *neveilah* is a perfect creature; it has everything it needs. A body it has. It has a heart and lungs and teeth and a tongue. All it's missing is life; otherwise, it's all there. It is as close as possible to a living thing but it's not – it's dead.

That's a man who has acquired a lot of information, a lot of facts, but never bothered to make them part of his consciousness; he never brought the facts to life. And that's a picture of all of us.

Pictures Are Necessary

How many times will you hear that *machlokes* is terrible? *Lashon hora*? Terrible! Everyone says it, but everyone's doing it anyhow. I know because my phone is ringing off the hook. Mothers in law and daughters in law, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, neighbors, they're calling me all the time! What happened to all of the wisdom, all of those words of wisdom that you say at the Shabbos table? The answer is that it's just information to you; you never transformed that *chochma* into *daas*.

But the *pesukim* of *tzaraas* are not meant merely as information – they're implements that Hakodosh Boruch Hu hung on the wall for you to see. Next time you want to say a mean word you'll remember the picture you made in your mind of that man suffering from a sickness. Not only mean words – *tzaraas* comes for many types of sins; and if it's not *tzaraas*, so it's other things.

You have to have a picture in your head of the man in the hospital room looking down from his window at the top of the heads of all the people walking by. Oh, how he wishes he could be out on the street! Everyone is living life and he's suffering because of sins that he committed. That's a picture that every man must keep in his head.

The Earth's Mouth

That's the way to learn; with pictures in the mind. Not only the *parsha* of *tzaraas* – the whole Torah is a Torah of *daas*. When you come to the story of Korach it's not just *chochma* so that you'll have *pshetelech* to say at the table. It's written there for *yiras ha'onesh*. Why did the earth open its big mouth to swallow Korach? Because Korach opened his big mouth to speak against Moshe.

When you see that you learn not to open *your* mouth! Because even today the earth opens its mouth to bury men. Many are swallowed in an early grave because they opened their mouths. And what's even worse, many are swallowed into Gehenim too just like Korach was.

You have to think about that in a way that it becomes real. Let's say, the next time you walk in the street and you see a deep ditch – let's say, the gas workers are digging a deep hole so that they can lay a new pipe – so as you pass by you should think, "How would it feel if a man was put in that ditch and the bulldozer pushed all the dirt on top of him and covered him alive?" It's no fun! That's how to think. And the next time you want to stick your nose into a *machlokes* you'll have a picture in your mind of that ditch. That's the way to learn *chumash*.

Read and Take Heed

That's why when *Parshas Bechukosai* comes along in a few weeks – that's the *parsha* that foretells what's going to happen to the *Am Yisroel* when they fail to live up to the standards that Hakodosh Boruch Hu demands of them – when that *parsha* comes, I say that it's *kidai* to study the *pesukim* very carefully.

You know, when the *ba'al koreh* comes to the *tochacha*, what does he do? He makes sure to lower his voice so that *chas v'shalom* he shouldn't frighten you too much. That's how it was in the ancient times when people were more aware of the lessons of the *tochacha* – just reading the words created a very great anxiety, an awareness of their grave responsibility to Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

Now, I'm not going to change any customs, but the benefit of the *tochacha* is going lost today. Back then people were more aware of the lessons intended – when they read the Torah they felt it was Hakodosh Boruch Hu speaking to them – and so it was sufficient to read it quietly; everyone was impressed by the lesson anyhow. But today, when it's read merely as a formality, it wouldn't be such a bad idea if the *tochacha* was read aloud – even louder than usual. We should learn it, *b'iyun*, every detail with the *pratei pratim*.

People don't like to hear that, but you don't come to this place only to hear things that you want to hear. Of course I'd like to talk to you about pleasant things, about *yeshuos v'nechamos*, but the great lesson of our *medrash* is that studying these words are the biggest *yeshua* possible – it's the preface to a life of “eating, drinking and rejoicing” because instead of living *yissurim*, you avoid them by studying them.

Part III. Discovering Fear

Forming Pictures

Now, we're learning tonight that as vital as the *chochma* of *yiras Hashem* is, we have to make a career of transforming the ‘information’ we possess into *deiah*, into actual sensory knowledge. And the best way to acquire this *deiah* is by means of pictures in the mind. It's according to the clarity of the pictures that you have in your mind, that's how much *yiras haonesh* you'll acquire. It means that your success in this world depends on number one, the amount of pictures that you form in your mind and number two, on the sharpness of these pictures; how clear these pictures are to you.

Now, how do we make these pictures? From the story of the king who brought his queen into the palace we understand that Hakodosh Boruch Hu wants us to study the Torah with our mind's eye – a person who learns Torah the proper way, he sees the implements on the wall as he learns and he realizes that Hashem means business. *Tzaraas* is very real! And even if there's no *tzaraas* today, there are other things in Hashem's toolbox. One way or another there'll be a *din v'cheshbon* and it's not going to go well for the man who disobeys Hashem. And the more you study the Torah that way, the more successfully you'll live and the happier you'll be.

Living Pictures

However, we're going to add now another level to this career of ours and that is the *deiah* we can acquire by means of the pictures that we see with our own eyes. We can't go away from this subject without pointing out that one of the most important ways of using pictures to transform theoretical information into actual perception is by means of *living* pictures. Like that *yeshiva* man who saw a man die on the street and learned that people really *do* die, we understand that facts are best impressed upon our minds by means of the picture we see with our eyes.

And so when you walk in the street on Kings Highway and see a man with an empty sleeve, oooh, your heart should tremble. I saw that yesterday – a Russian man with an empty sleeve. I was thinking, "Hashem can take away a man's arm just like that! Oy vey! Maybe I did something with my hand that I shouldn't have done!" Take a look at your arm – *boruch Hashem* it's still there inside your sleeve. You have to be afraid; that man once had an arm inside his sleeve too but it's not there anymore.

You know what just happened? You gained a diamond just now, a diamond of *yiras ha'onesh*. And every little bit of *yiras ha'onesh* – of simple fear of what can happen if a man disobeys – is a jewel that is added to your crown of greatness; to your perfection of personality.

Seeing Is No Accident

Now, I know that right away you'll ask me a thousand *kashes* about other people to whom it happened, all the *tzadikim* who suffer. The *kashes* are only a *pituy hayetzer*, a persuasion of the *yetzer hora* that you shouldn't pay attention to this great lesson. Right now we're dealing with you – why did you see such a thing?!

Now it could be – I don't know him – it could be this man was a *tzaddik*; maybe he lost his arm fighting in the Russian army and he didn't do anything wrong; I can't tell you. Probably, since he goes without a head covering, I imagine he's not such a big *tzaddik*, but that's not our point right now.

Hashem's *cheshbonos* for him, that's not our subject right now. It's the live picture that Hashem sent you, that's what we're talking about now.

It's no accident you saw that today. Hakodosh Boruch Hu is using that person to transmit a message to you. It's like a package that you have to open up. But if you don't think about what you saw it's like when somebody sends you a package but nobody is home. The mailman leaves a slip but you never come to pick it up and the package is lost.

Learning From Them

Now certainly you should commiserate with anybody you see. Certainly whatever you can do to help, it's your obligation. Absolutely you should try to feel their plight and if you are capable you should do whatever is possible. But don't forget to pick up the package of *yiras ha'onesh*. You have to be afraid – look what Hakodosh Boruch Hu could do. So many misfortunes can happen to people, *chas v'shalom!* Just from looking around, from walking on the street we can begin enumerating a whole list of diseases, a whole list of accidents, various kinds of things that can happen, *Hashem yishmereinu*.

That's one of the lessons we have to learn from the *umlalim*, from the unfortunate people we see in the world. When you see something, it's good to be afraid. "I won't open my mouth to my wife anymore after what I saw today." It's a good thing to think about when you see a man with his jaw all bandaged up. Constantly we have to pray to Hashem: "Please Hashem! Please forgive me for the things I've done wrong. I'm afraid! I won't do it again!"

Pick Up The Packages

You saw a man with a patch on his eye? Be afraid! "From now on I won't stay in the house wasting my life looking at the television." You know what it means to have surgery on your eyes? It's no picnic! It's like finding *tzaraas* on your skin – you have to go to the doctor once and then again and again. Back and forth to the *kohen*, back and forth to the doctor. Don't forget to pick up the package of *yiras ha'onesh* when you see that. That's the way to react to such things – you should become afraid of doing *aveiros*.

When you pass by a funeral parlor, be afraid of Hashem. When you pass by a hospital, be afraid of Hashem. You stand in front of a medical building, there's a whole list of medical services. Maxillary – if your jaw is twisted out of place, they'll fix your jaw; other things too – ten different medical services are offered in that one little building and all day long people are walking in and out. You want to be *mispallel* for them? Be my guest – *daven* your heart out! But don't forget to also think, "I'm afraid of

You, Hashem!” That’s one of the purposes of the troubles that Hashem is hanging on the walls for everyone to see.

The Wicked Princess

And so when you hear that in England there was a Princess Di who was busy with an Egyptian man – not her husband – and then a car accident smashed them both and made a *kashe*, a potato *kashe*, out of them, what are we supposed to do? לְקַחְתִּי מוֹסֵר – We’re supposed to learn from that to be afraid of Hashem. Yes! Hakodosh Boruch Hu did it on purpose to show how He hates immorality! Even among *goyim*. Hashem is *soneh zimah*!

That was a lesson for the world to learn. Of course the stupid world didn’t learn anything. They never learned this *medrash* so they got it all wrong; the newspapers made a saint out of her and the *beheimos* of the world who read the papers were spoiled. Instead of becoming afraid of Hashem the world missed the whole point altogether. She wasn’t a little girl who was killed in a car crash; she’s a married woman who had big children already and she’s busy with another man. You understand they weren’t learning *Mesillas Yesharim* together! So what happened? They were caught together like mice in a trap and squashed. That’s the plain truth.

Learning The Lesson

Now, the poor queen of England who felt that a little morality would befit the royal house; she was thinking maybe it’s not proper for a royal house to give honor to such a person so she didn’t want to speak at the funeral of her daughter-in-law. But the newspapers frightened her. “What do you mean?! Are you going to snub this *kadosh*?! Certainly you have to give her an honor!”

The newspapers made such a big fuss that she was frightened and so she yielded and said a few words at the funeral. But then a proposal was made to put out a new stamp *l’kavod* this *tzadeikes*. But she said no. Oooh! The newspapers started all over again. They were howling like a band of hyenas. Howling!

Now, whatever the world did, we have to understand that as far as we’re concerned, we’re the ones for whom this drama was played out. That’s what the Gemara says, *No misfortune comes upon the world if not for the sake of Yisroel* (Yevamos 63a). Do you hear that? All misfortunes are only for the sake of our people. Even what comes upon the nations of the world. And Rashi says, *kidai leyar’om*, in order to put a fear into the Am Yisroel so that they should do *teshuva*.

On Our Level

Hashem soneh zima! Our Hashem hates immorality. Of course we're not guilty of such wicked crimes like that, but still there are plenty of sins. People look at the television, at the movies, at places where they shouldn't. Some dress on the street like gentiles or they behave like gentiles. That's also *zimah* and Hashem is not *mivateir* – He'll wait for you to learn *yiras ha'onesh* and do *teshuva* but He won't wait forever. He's *maarich apei v'govah dilei* – He waits but sooner or later He collects. Oh boy! Oooh! Think about that princess and do *teshuva*.

So you're sitting in the car and you say, "Ribono Shel Olam, never again! I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry, Ribono Shel Olam! I'm afraid!" Keep your eye on the road while you're doing that but think of *teshuva* and think what happened to these two. We ride in cars too. *Chas v'shalom*, who knows what can happen! We're constantly in danger. *Kol hadrachim bichezkas sakanah* – Today all of the streets are dangerous. No question about it. Even in the city. And so when you sit in the car, take the opportunity to be *meharher b'tshuva*. You see what happened to these two people! You see what Hashem could do!

Healthy Fear

Now, don't tell me stories about how it's not healthy to be afraid. No, it's not true – fear doesn't lead to depression; that's a very big error. Just the opposite – there's nothing better for a person.

I knew a man who was once was present at a gathering in a *chassidische rebbeh's* house and the *Rebbe* was talking about *yiras shomayim* and this man had a fit and he went into a mental trauma. So later, years later, he said that it was because he was so impressed with the fear of Hashem that the *Rebbe* was talking about, that he lost his mind. It's not true! Nobody loses his mind from fear of Hashem. He lost his mind for something else. His mind was disordered beforehand; fear of Hashem had nothing to do with it.

Nobody gets sick from *yiras shomayim*. Nobody gets ulcers from *yiras shomayim*. If a person tells you that he's nervous and distraught because he's afraid of *aveiros*, all it is is a *meshugas*; it's an obsession – it's not *yiras shomayim* at all.

People who have true fear of Hashem, even *yiras ho'onesh*, have clear heads and Hakodosh Boruch Hu makes their heads even clearer just because of that. **יְרֵאתָ ה'שָׁם תוֹסִיף יָמִים** – Fear of Hashem gives longer days of life, **וְשָׁנוֹת רְשָׁעִים תִּקְצְרֶנָּה** – while the years of the *reshoim* are cut short because they're not afraid; they're not afraid of Hashem and they transgress and die young (Mishlei 10:27).

The Guide To Successful Living

That's what Dovid Hamelech said: לְכוּ בְּנִים שִׁמְעוּ לִי יְרֵאת הַשָּׁם אֲלֶמְדָּכֶם, מִי הָאִישׁ הַחֹפֵץ חַיִּים – “Come children – it means *talmidim* – You want to live long? So listen to me when I teach you *yiras Hashem*.” That’s the secret to long life: fear of consequences has to become part of our experience, part of our personality.

That’s the great lesson of learning Parshiyos Tazria and Metzora the right way; it’s not enough to read the details of the *parsha* or even to know them. We have to give life to the details by studying the words like implements hanging on the wall; and as much as possible we add to those pictures in the mind the pictures we see with our own eyes. That’s how we gain life for ourselves!

And *habo litaher misayin lo* – Hashem will help those who help themselves, and you’ll be able to create real pictures in your mind that will guide you to successful living. Pictures of *yiras Hashem* means living successfully and happily: “But you,” says Hashem, “You will eat, drink and live happily because you’re the one who are acquiring the *deiah* you need to be a success in this world and to be happy forever in the World to Come.”

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

LET’S GET PRACTICAL

Growing in Yiras Hashem

In order to live successful and happy lives, *yiras ha'onesh* must be an essential ingredient of our daily lives; only if you really understand that there are consequences to sin, will you be capable of watching your step. And therefore we have to do whatever we can to acquire a sensory perception of fear of punishment.

This week I will make sure to find one new opportunity every day to awaken within me a tangible fear of Hashem’s punishment for sinning against Him. Whether it’s by learning a *possuk* in the *chumash* in a way that creates *daas* or by means of seeing something on the street that is a reminder of *yiras ha'onesh*, I will take the opportunity to spend one minute a day focused on the consequences of doing *aveiros*.

— This week's booklet is based on tapes: —

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

שאל אביך ויגדך זקניך ויאמרו לך

Q:

Should a yeshivah boy wear nice clothing even during the week? What about a tie?

A:

Now, this question is in order. A yeshiva man always should be presentable because he has the responsibility of the Torah on his shoulders. He represents the Torah and therefore it's a heavy responsibility.

Like the gemara (Shabbos 114a) says, כל משנאי אהבו מות (Mishlei 8:38), אל תקרי משנאי אלא משניאי, Hashem says, "All those who hate Me, love death." But our sages add another layer of meaning to this *possuk*. They say, don't read it as "those who hate Me," but "those who make others hate Me." If you're known, if you're recognized as a yeshiva man, if you wear a black hat for instance, then the hat has to be dusted, not dusty. Otherwise, wear a gray hat. Certainly people who represent the Torah, people with beards and so on must make a good impression.

What about a tie? It depends to which group you belong. Some groups don't have neckties.

TAPE # 53

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