

Sefer Vayikra

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WITH

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BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

Tenants in This World

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Part I. Nation of Tenants

The Unique Institution

The Am Yisroel in ancient Eretz Yisroel was privileged to a unique institution not found among any other nation – the Torah law of Shmittah. The truth is that nothing even remotely resembling it could be found among the gentiles – that every seventh year it should be forbidden to work the fields and orchards is a remarkable way of living in an agricultural society.

In those days when they didn't have factories, most work was agricultural work which means that every seven years the economy came to a standstill – you couldn't plow, you couldn't sow, you couldn't

reap. Your fields were off limits – they weren't yours anymore. It was a special way of living that was chosen by Hakodosh Boruch Hu for His special people.

And then, every fifty years, the shmittah cycle culminated in another unique year, the year of Yovel. When Yovel came, the nation was once again forbidden from working their lands. Coming on the heels of the Shmittah it was the second year in a row of letting the fields lay fallow.

Losing Slaves

But the truth is that it was much more than not working the fields because the Yovel was a year of tremendous upheaval from one corner of Eretz Yisroel to the other. First of all, all the avodim Ivri'im, the indentured servants who had been sold into bondage for six years, walked out on their masters. On Yom Kippur, ten days after Yovel came in, a trumpet was blown and the sound of freedom went through the land. That's why you have the inscription on the Liberty Bell: "Proclaim Liberty throughout all the land." It's our possuk, not theirs. וְקִרְאתֶם דְרוֹר וְקִרְאתֶם דְרוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ לְכָל יְשֻבֵיהָ (Behar 25:10). It's talking there about the avodim Ivri'im who went free at the beginning of the Yovel year.

Even an eved ivri who had obligated himself to work forever – he had his ear pierced, and the Torah says about him וְעִבְרוֹ לְעוֹלָם – he should serve his master forever, he also walked out to freedom.

So his master says, "But it states forever in the Torah."

"Why didn't you learn the meforshim?" the slave told him. They didn't have Rashi in those days, but you could have learned the Mechilta and the

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Sifra and Sifri – all these midrashim explain that l'olam means l'oilomo shel yovel.

Losing Land

But it wasn't only the avodim who went free – a lot of land was freed up too. וְהָאָרֶץ לֹא תִמְכַּר לְצִמְתָּת – The land shall not be sold forever (ibid. 25:23), that meant that people who had sold their ancestral lands because they needed the money – or they wanted to spend money – all those lands now reverted to their former owners.

You can imagine what a hubbub that was! People who had been on lands for decades had to surrender the lands now and throughout the land there was a turmoil of moving, of families resettling. And so, besides for this agricultural nation not being allowed to work their fields, many people lost their land altogether. It was a commotion of national proportions!

Now, such an upheaval of a nation that was settled on their own land, a whole nation stopping its normal functioning and thrown into a confusion, wasn't for nothing – there must have been something to it. What was the purpose of such a great disturbance?

The Landlord Makes His Case

Hakodosh Boruch Hu had a big intention here and so we have to listen to what the Torah tells us: בְּי לִי הָאָרֶץ – “Because the land is Mine,” says Hashem. Now listen to the next words because that's the punch line. What's the reason for all this? כִּי גֵרִים. כִּי גֵרִים אַתֶּם עִמָּדִי – because all of you are only sojourners and visitors with Me. You're only tenants in My land. That's the plain meaning of the possuk. Every seven years, when Shmittah came along, and surely when it was followed by the Yovel, Hashem was telling His people, “I want you to remember always that you are My guests in My world.”

It's an important point that most people overlook. When they think about or they study the subject of Yovel, they neglect to notice this – that

it's intended as a demonstration that we have a Landlord and we're His guests. Every fifty years, the entire nation took part in a big national exercise to remind themselves, כִּי גֵרִים וְתוֹשְׁבִים אַתֶּם עִמָּדִי – there's a Lord who owns the land and we're just passing through.

And it's necessary, this reminder, because habit makes you forget that there's a landlord. It's human nature that when a person settles in a place and he becomes a resident, he begins to forget that great principle – he thinks it's his and that it'll be his forever. After all, how long does it take for a person to become attached to the land where he lives? So after a while they forget that the land is not theirs.

Tale of Two Landlords

Let's say you move into an apartment and the landlord doesn't bother you. He doesn't come around the first of the month to collect rent. Next month he doesn't come either. And the next one too. Ah, it's a pleasure! Instead of paying rent you put more money into the bank every month. A year passes by, two years. Soon you forget all about him.

Let's say after a while, he decides to show up. And he knocks on the door. You say, “Who's there?”

He says, “I came to collect rent.”

“Rent?! What do you mean rent?! What a nerve that is!” You want to throw him down the stairs!

But suppose the landlord comes every year or so or and he shifts things around. He says, “You, Goldberg, you take apartment 1B instead of 4A. And Miller, you move into 4A.” He shifts things around so that you shouldn't get so accustomed to your apartment.

The next time he comes and asks for the rent, you won't throw him down the stairs – you're happy he's not throwing you out altogether. You realize already there's a baal habayis, a landlord.

Educational Yovel

Now, when the people kept the Shmittah and Yovel properly and they utilized the lessons, when they didn't do it mitzvos anashim melumadah, so every seven years and then even more so, every fiftieth year, they studied these lessons in emunah. They needed time to study, that's one of the reasons there was no work – the whole nation was on vacation. But it wasn't a vacation like an American vacation when people waste their lives. This was a Torah vacation.

Every few years the Am Yisroel got busy learning the sugya of **כִּי לִי כָּל הָאָרֶץ** – the earth is all Mine. Not only learning it – they were living it! Everyone is moving, the slaves are going free, and you have a full year to think about it. The whole nation watched and studied, and they realized, “Ah! There's a landlord!” It was an education in emunah on a national scale.

Forgotten Lessons

But what happened eventually? There came a time when the Am Yisroel stopped learning the lessons – I'm sure that many still did, but the nation as a whole began to weaken. Hakodosh Boruch Hu was trying to teach us that “you are visitors here with Me” but we got so settled that we stopped listening!

And so finally that sad day came when Hashem said, “I shall scatter you among the nations” (Bechukosai 26:33). It means, “Now I'm going to send you into exile to remind you – when you're in exile, then you'll remember that this world is not yours.” It's like the tenant who didn't get the hint when his landlord was sending him letters requesting rent – he was just throwing the letters into the wastebasket, and so finally the landlord says, “I'm going to evict you now and when you'll be somewhere else, you'll understand better.”

We were finally booted out and Hashem said, “You'll learn now the lessons now that you should have learned from the Shmittah and Yovel.” That's

why the Torah says about the years in exile, **אֲזַתְרָצָה** – Then the land will atone for the Shmittah years (ibid. 26:34). Chazal say that the 70 years of the Galus Bavel were for the 70 shmittahs that the Jews didn't keep in Eretz Yisroel. Of course they kept the Shmittah, of course they kept the Yovel – they kept the laws in all their details. But they stopped learning the lessons!

It was only now, wandering among the nations, living as guests in a land that didn't belong to them, that the Am Yisroel was reminded of that most important truth about Olam Hazeih – now they understood that this world is not theirs, **כי לי כל הארץ** and that we are only guests in this world, visiting for a little while until we have to leave.

Many Exiles

However, even in exile there's a danger that you might settle down and feel like you belong in this world. And so eventually they had to leave Bavel too. Hakodosh Boruch Hu sent Mohammed's armies, other armies, and the sojourning nation had to disperse again. Very many went to Spain but soon they were expelled from Spain too – again they took up the wandering stick and they traveled to Italy, to North Africa and to Germany. From Germany they moved to Poland and from Poland they moved to Russia.

Later they came to America. “Ah! America! Here's a land where we'll stay forever!” they thought. I remember when Jewish gangs used to roam the streets in America – I ran with them as a little boy. I wasn't big enough to do any harm, but I ran with them and we felt that it would be forever.

Hakodosh Boruch Hu saw that and so He started teaching us the Yovel lessons again. The Jews who clustered in thickly populated neighborhoods began to feel the pressure of alien groups – the Italians, the Irish, the Blacks started coming in. I say “come” – they didn't come; Hakodosh Boruch Hu sent them to keep us moving and to teach us that “you are visitors here on this earth.”

Guided Immigration

Don't think the Africans were brought here for the cotton plantations – the cotton planters are not important enough for Hashem to uproot the tribes from Africa. They were brought here because of the Jews! The great waves of immigration from Italy because of poverty and from Ireland because of the potato famine; the immigration from all the Latin countries, Puerto Rico and elsewhere, was all for the purpose of unseating the Jews from their feelings of permanence and teaching us Yovel lessons.

I went through all this. You see, I am old enough to look back and see all this from the first place where the immigrants settled after the big rush in 1905, 1906. When they came from Europe they settled on the East Sides of various cities and then they began to move. And they moved and they moved and they moved. From the East Side to Brownsville and from Brownsville to Crown Heights and then from Crown Heights to East Flatbush. And they're still on the move. A Jew lives on wheels; he's always ready to go someplace else.

The Wandering Jew

You'll be surprised but I'll tell you a chiddush now: The destiny of the Jews is to be in galus. Don't think that we were created to be in Eretz Yisroel. It's a big mistake to think that Hakodosh Boruch Hu's plan was frustrated. We are created for galus! Of course, we were created to be in Eretz Yisroel for a certain period of time, but for the rest of our history until the end of time, our function is galus and galus and galus.

Wherever we are, it's only a temporary place of visiting because that's the plan of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. He's giving us the Yovel treatment – it's the great privilege of being reminded that this is not the place where you're going to remain. You won't remain forever in Spain! You won't remain forever in Germany! You won't remain forever in America!

And the lesson is that you are only a visitor in this world.

Part II. Perfection of Tenants

Yissurim Atonement

Now we can understand better a Gemara that at first seems quite queer. Everyone knows the idea that yissurim, suffering, can be an atonement for a person and this Gemara (Sanhedrin 37b) is talking about different kinds of atonement that come through various yissurim.

For example, if a person has a toothache, he should realize it's a good thing for him. It could very well be that it's a kaparah to atone for talking too much. Because you opened your mouth when you didn't have to, so now you're sitting in a dentist chair and the dentist says, "Open wide, please." Middah k'neged middah – had you kept your mouth closed then, you could have kept it closed now too.

If a man loses money, it's also a good thing. It could be because he was not giving away enough. He was holding it all for himself, stashing it away in the bank. And therefore, Hakadosh Baruch Hu caused the money to go lost and he gets a kaparah now because of that trouble he had.

Any kind of yissurim, any setback, is good for you. No question, it's good for you. Of course, you don't like it; you prefer it shouldn't happen, but there's no question that it's doing a big benefit for you – every kind of mishap atones for a specific thing.

Exile Atonement

But listen to what Rebbi Yochanan says there: Galus mechaperes al hakol – "Exile atones for everything." The Gemara is telling us that if you have a toothache, yes, probably you opened your mouth too much. You lost money in the stock market? Could be you're not giving tzedakah properly and you just got a kaparah for that. But

along comes Rebbi Yochanan and he says that there's one medicine that's good for everything, for all kinds of misdeeds and errors. What is it? Galus! Exile is the very great panacea for all spiritual ailments.

Now, such a statement, such a tremendous idea, is something that we should study very carefully. Because it's a question – what's so great about going into exile that it atones for everything?

Life-Changing Exile

And the answer is what we're speaking about now – the source of all sins is forgetting that you're here as a visitor; that you're just stopping by for a hundred years and that there's a lot to accomplish in your short stay on this earth.

When people become attached to one place, after a while they start thinking that they're here for the next million years. It's not an exaggeration – that's exactly what they think! Of course, if you ask him that, he'll ridicule you. But in his heart of heart, he still hopes, maybe I'll make it. At least he lives his life that way.

Along comes golus to remind you that you're not rooted to one place. And that's why feeling like you don't belong is such a perfection that it's michaperes al hakol. Because it changes your character; your entire attitude, the way you think, is transformed. Golus makes a man feel insecure – it reminds him that there is a Landlord and he's only a tenant. And that is the yesod hayesodos, it's the foundation of all foundations. When a person begins to gain that attitude he gains the frame of mind that will make him successful in this 100 year exile.

Stuff for Contemplation

Now, included in this attitude that we're visitors in this world are very many things – we won't have time to discuss all of them tonight but some of them we'll study now with the Chovos Halevavos. Listen well because the words of this great man always deserve your attention.

In his Sha'ar Cheshbon Hanefesh the Chovos Halevavos presents the reader with thirty different ideas that every person should spend time thinking about; thirty mental exercises that are recommended for people who want to make progress. Now, you can be a good Jew even if you don't strain your mind too much, but if you want to be something better, if you want to be successful in this world, it's necessary to contemplate certain ideas.

At the end of that great list, he comes to what perhaps is the most important attitude upon which he urges us to spend time thinking. I'll quote his words: Hamashlim hashloshim hu cheshbon ha'adam im nafsho, the thirtieth thing that a man should think with himself is, b'tna'ei hageirus b'olam hazeh, about his circumstances of being a sojourner, a visitor in this world. It means that every person should set aside some time to meditate with himself about what it means that we are only temporary residents of this world.

Changing Your Attitudes

He's not telling us to merely to read these words or even to repeat them. He's urging us to spend time thinking – thinking of ourselves as being visitors who don't ever feel completely at ease and settled down. That should be the picture of a man's own existence in this world. He doesn't really belong here – he's only passing through and therefore he should never feel completely secure in life.

Now, don't think it's easy to acquire that attitude – it's not so simple to convince yourself that this world is not your place. But when a person puts time into thinking about this subject – even if it's just a few minutes a day – so little by little he becomes persuaded that he's only a visitor here. And once he's convinced that his days are numbered – whether it's numbered at 70 or 80 or 120 years it's going to come to an end – that's already an entirely new way of thinking.

Be Prepared

And included in that attitude is knowing that he won't get a notice beforehand; very many times it comes suddenly. Chalilah, people suddenly go out of the world. Some people die in their sleep without even any previous warning that the end is near. Other ways too. There was a man we know, a young man, who was driving his car under an overpass and a big block of cement that had worked its way loose suddenly fell on him just as he was passing. It extinguished his life in a second. Nobody can know. Ki lo yeida ha'adam es ito – nobody knows his time.

And therefore to be ready for the visit to be over is surely important for a visitor. He's always prepared for the journey, always thinking what he can take along with him. He can't sink all of his money in real estate because suddenly he might get an order that he must leave – he's always checking how much ready cash he has on him, making sure he has the supplies and provisions needed for his journey.

Don't Procrastinate

You know what kind of lesson that is for success in this world – it's everything! It means don't wait! Now it could be you'll live 120 years, but even that is not too long and therefore all good deeds have to be done as soon as possible. There are so many things to do in this world, so many important accomplishments and so many good thing that you'll think of doing, so do it as quickly as possible. When you understand that you're only a visitor, your attitude changes. I can't wait! Whatever you have to do, you should do.

Here's a man, he davens fast. He knows you have to daven with kavanah, but he thinks, "I'll get around to it someday." Well, you won't get around to it if you keep on waiting. When people postpone doing good things, they're taking a big risk because usually something happens suddenly and the good things don't happen. Like one young man I once knew, I asked him, "Why don't you come to our

shiurim?" This was about thirty years ago. He said, "I'll come, but not right now. First I want to make it in the stock market. By my fortieth birthday I'll be wealthy enough to stop and I'll be able to sit and learn all day long." He never hit forty. This young man never hit forty. A man in our shul.

Knowing that we're only here temporarily will make us feel the necessity to do, to stop delaying. Let's say a man is grateful to his wife for what she did but he never says thank you. He'll say it someday. One day, he thinks. And so, that one day finally comes when he's in the funeral parlor and she's on the gurney, and he's sitting and thinking, "I'll tell her thank you now? It's too late now." So thank your wife while she's still here, while you're still here. Thank your parents while you still have them. Nobody is around here forever.

A Visitor's Satisfaction

Now, another important attitude that develops in a person who realizes that he's only a temporary visitor is that he is satisfied with whatever circumstances he has. You know if you're just a stranger, if you're only in this place for a short time, you don't want a palace to live in. You're not so interested in having a big mansion house. You're satisfied to have a room. You can lock the door? Very good! You have a couch to lie down on? Excellent! You have a toilet, maybe? A pleasure! Even when it comes to eating, you're satisfied with any kind of meal, whatever comes your way. If you practice up, you become a person who is satisfied with a minimum. You behave in all of your affairs only according to what's necessary.

I'm not saying you shouldn't put away some money to last you for your old age but it doesn't mean you need millions. You need something but when you understand that it won't be forever and that there's going to be a very long old age after you leave this world so you're satisfied with a modest kind of existence.

Not only satisfied; grateful, as well. The Chovos Halevavos says that whatever benefit is bestowed on a visitor, even if it's only a little bit, he is quick to acknowledge it and give thanks. When you're a visitor, for every little thing you feel a wave of gratitude and so the guest in this world is not too particular, he's not too much of a feinsmeker. Anything he gets, he's happy with it and he thanks the Landlord for it.

And therefore, don't wait until you have a lot to thank for. Any little good you have, you should thank for it. If you're married, thank Hashem, "Ah! I'm married." Many people are not married. If you're normal – thank Hashem! Very many people are not normal. They mope in their apartments. They can't go out of the house. "Boruch Hashem, I'm normal." Many people can't walk. "Boruch Hashem, הַמְיָכִין מְצַעְרֵי גֹבֵר – I can walk."

You have to thank Hashem for that. You're just passing through anyhow, so be satisfied whatever He gives you and thank Him. You don't have headaches? You're a lucky man! You don't have heart trouble? You're a lucky man! You're able to hear? You're a lucky man! You're able to see? You're a lucky man! Every day, every morning you thank Hashem, modeh ani lifanecha that you woke me up from my sleep. Not everybody wakes up from his sleep.

That's how a visitor thinks and that's what makes the visitor in this world successful. And that's why golus is michaperes al hakol – exile is the most valuable kaparah because there's nothing like exile to make the truth hit home that you really are nothing but a stranger in this world. It's not merely a parable; it's an actual fact that you're only visiting and therefore the more a person feels like he's on the move and that he's in exile in this world, the more he'll succeed in making use of the world.

Moving Day

Now don't make any error – I'm not saying it's an obligation that you have to call the moving man. Of course, if you live in Edison, NJ and you want to move to Flatbush or to Boro Park, it certainly is a mitzvah. Even to move from East 13th to East 7th is a good idea. I'm telling you that now. From East 13th to East 7th! Move closer to us – us means our shul and the Mirrer Yeshiva. This is a good neighborhood, a Torah neighborhood. It's a good move to make.

But wherever you move, whenever you move – even if it's just one block over – you should know that it's a golus and you should utilize the opportunity; you should remind yourself of the purpose of moving; of all of the great lessons included in the Torah attitude that we're only temporary visitors in this world.

The Mini-Golus

How do I know that one block to another is also golus? It's a Gemara. Everyone knows that if a man kills somebody unintentionally, he has to go into golus. He has to flee to one of the cities of refuge and he remains in exile as a form of atonement. After all, there's an element of negligence there. Good, you didn't want to kill that person, but there's some negligence involved, so you go to galus and that's mechaper.

Now, suppose a man already lives in a city of refuge and he kills somebody by accident, so now he's in a bind – where should he go? He's already in the ir miklat.

So the Gemara (Makkos 12b) says he moves m'shchunah l'shchunah. He moves around the corner, from one block to another block. A little move like that? That's an exile? Yes, that's galus too. Because when you have to move, it's a reminder that you're not such a big macher. You're not as permanent as you imagined yourself. You're

reminded that there's a Borei who is a Landlord and that you're just a visitor who is passing through.

Pictures in Your Mind

And so, even though you're not going to exile like when we left Spain – when they had to move from Spain they felt the bitter taste of exile; they had to pay for passage on ships with wicked captains who exploited the passengers and did whatever they wanted with them. Sometimes they even threw them into the sea; all kinds of tzaros they suffered. But we're learning now that even when a man doesn't undergo any vicissitudes, merely the exile of moving from one block to another, that's also a kapparah if you'll take the opportunity to learn the lesson.

And so when moving day comes – after all, sometimes you have to move – it's a hectic day. There were many days of packing beforehand and you don't live a normal life anymore. You can't find your things – they're already packed away. And finally the big van comes outside and they come in and start carrying things out. You're neither here nor there. You're nowhere. That's a wonderful opportunity! While you're moving, think, "It's a lesson min haShomayim that this world is just moving day." Don't forget to think these thoughts. Keep in mind the following four words: Galus mechaperes al hakol – Exile atones for everything. So great is the perfection that's gained from moving that it's mechaper al hakol.

And even if you're lucky enough to live fifty years in one place – that's unusual in America but it happens sometimes – don't make any error. Don't forget that your entire life is one big moving day – you're only passing through. You're sitting in your house and you feel settled? That's already trouble brewing. So imagine for a minute that the movers are in your house already and they're lifting your furniture. Make that picture in your mind because that is actually what's taking place because this world is not yours. You're only visiting.

The Really Mini-Golus

Now, the Gemara gives us an example of how we can profit from this lesson even when we're not moving. The Gemara states that sometimes a man has a premonition that something is going to happen to him. Now it could be that there's nothing to it. It could be just a nervousness, an obsession, but it could also be a message min haShomayim, a warning to get ready for something, a catastrophe chalilah, that maybe you could ward off.

So the Gemara (Sanhedrin 94a) tells us an emergency measure of what we should do. Of course you could think, "I'm giving ten dollars tzedakah to the yeshiva." Or you could say, "From now on I'm going to tefillah b'tzibbur every morning." You could think a lot of good things. But sometimes it takes a little while before a man is able to bring himself to such a step, so the Gemara gives a capsule that you can take quickly, an emergency expedient that might save you: לְנִשּׁוּף מִדּוּכָתִיָּה ר' אַמּוּת – He should move from his place at least four cubits. It's a piece of advice that wouldn't occur to us. Let him move from his place where he's standing or sitting.

It's a remarkable statement! Jumping four cubits? What is that? Is it a superstition, chalilah? Oh no, there's no superstition in Torah and so we have to understand that – and it's understandable.

The idea is that it's a minimum golus, a minimum exile. Even to walk four cubits away from where you were standing is galus. Of course, once you move from your place it's still a good idea to add something. Add the ten dollars for the yeshiva or add the thought of coming tomorrow morning to tefillah b'tzibbur for shachris. But your moving from the place, that's the beginning. That's also a kapparah.

Torah Psychology

Here's a man standing on the corner holding his suspenders. He owns the world – not the world but he owns the place where he's standing. "This is my place!" That's how it used to be in the good old days. Nobody could push you away from your place

– you could call the policeman. Today they can push you off and knock you down and the police will be afraid to do anything. But in the good old days, if you were standing on the place, nobody would push you off your place. And you imagined it would be forever. So in order to remind yourself that you don't own this part of the globe where you're standing, walk away four amos.

Even where you're sitting now is a security that makes you forget that you don't belong to this world. It's psychology – if you sit in one place even for a short while, then the confidence that's gained by your tenure of that place, makes you forget about Hashem. I say “psychology” – it's Torah psychology. If you look deep into a man's neshama you'll see that whatever your present situation is, you think that's how it's going to remain forever.

And in order to get out of that rut and remind yourself you're only a visitor, so you get up and walk away a little bit. It's an emergency measure to remind you that you're only visiting in this world and that you have what to accomplish. That thought, that attitude – as small as it may be when you move four amos – is a perfection of character. Merely by changing your place, you have already restored some of the awareness that you're no longer such a permanent toishev.

So next time you have some worries, even in your own kitchen, and you don't know what to do, there's a strange premonition that takes hold of you, so remember this Gemara and walk four cubits away. Four cubits is about between six to eight feet from your previous place. And think, “I'm not a boss here. I'm only a stranger here and Hakodosh Boruch Hu is in charge.” And that is such a medicine that it heals everything; it's mechaperes al hakol. Even that little bit of galus is salutary, it's beneficial, because it causes you to remember the most important of all lessons – the lesson of this week's parsha that there's a Baal Habayis; you're only a tenant here. כִּי גֵרִים וְתוֹשָׁבִים אַתֶּם עַמּוּרֵי.

Good News

Now, at first, some people tend to become a little disheartened when they're told that this is not their final place. They would like to be reassured that this is the place to be for the next hundred million years. They'd like to continue the way they're doing now and it is depressing to them when you talk about Olam Habo. But listen my friends; cheer up!

If you come here then you know that in this place we're on a pleasure cruise – we're here for good times only. We never talk here about things that are depressing and so this is part of the good time cruise that we are sailing on – it'll help us enjoy our stay in this world if we'll realize that we're headed to a better place. I wish I had more time to talk about that, about how on the contrary, being aware of Olam Habo actually sweetens our stay in this world and it makes it so much more zestful, so much more delightful. We'll talk about that one day.

The true happiness of a Jew is always to be aware of Hashem and to be aware that you're going to meet Hashem someday face to face. That's the great happiness of life. If people were aware that life is short and you have to snatch whatever you can out of life, they'd be busy accomplishing, and accomplishing means that you're happy. It's only because people in their subconscious minds think that the present situation will last forever, that's why they're bored.

Preparing for the Great Career

But we are not bored by this life. We are trying to get all we can out of this life because we know there's a purpose to life and it's a preparation for a very great career that waits for us. And because we're trying to make that preparation the very best we can, just because of that we are going to get the most out of life. And not only we're going to accomplish most in life, we're going to enjoy life more than any other nation on the earth.

That's what it says in the Torah, אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אוֹתָם, הָאֲדָמָה וְחַי בְּהֶם – You'll do the mitzvos and live through them. When you know you're only a visitor you make the best use of your visit. And that person will “do these mitzvos – it means mitzvos and Torah and chesed and middos – and he'll live.” V'chai bahem! It's the person who knows that “you are visitors with Me in this world,” he's the one who lives best; he's the one who lives most. And “live” has two meanings. He'll live more happily in this world and he'll live most happily in the World To Come.

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

Internalizing the Yovel Attitudes

One of the foundations of succeeding in this world is remembering we're only visitors here. This week I will remind myself twice a day that I'm not going to be here forever and each time I will consider one of the practical applications of the Yovel attitude that we learned from the Chovos Halevavos: 1. No procrastinating when it comes to accomplishing in avodas Hashem, and 2. Training myself to be satisfied with the minimum and feeling genuinely grateful for that minimum just like a guest would.

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

שאל אביך ויגדך זקניך ויאמרו לך

Q:

Is the study of kabbalah, mysticism, an enhancement to the practical application of Torah?

A:

I want to tell you something about this subject. This is something that is an illustration of what we were talking about tonight. People are always looking for something else, something different than what they have.

What do you need mysticism for? Do you already enjoy and understand all that is nigleh, all that is revealed? Now, if you were a gadol b'Yisroel like Rabbi Akiva, and now you wanted, in addition to all of your Torah knowledge you wanted now to enter into the pardes of secret wisdom, all right. But there's so much to learn before you go to the pardes! There are so many secrets that are lying on the surface of the Torah that you don't even begin to know! So many open things that are secrets to you!

And therefore, our first job is to spend our lives gaining all of that knowledge and fulfilling all the principles that are on the surface of the Torah. Anybody who calls me up on the phone and asks me if I'm giving any lectures in kabbalah, or where can they learn kabbalah – it's mostly single girls; single girls living in Manhattan, they call me to say that they're interested in studying kabbalah – so the first thing I tell them is, “Learn how to be a Jew.” And then you'll see that there are many other things that come before kabbalah.

TAPE # 517 (August 1984)

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