

Sefer Devarim

THE CHOPP HOLDINGS EDITION

IN MEMORY OF THE VICTIMS OF THE MERON AND SURFSIDE TRAGEDIES,
AND AS A ZECHUS FOR THE YESHUA OF KLAL YISROEL

פרשת דברים

WITH

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BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

Exiled Among Neighbors

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Part I. Evil Neighbors

Divine Geography

We're going to begin by studying some geography together. Now, I understand that you didn't come here tonight for a school lesson but I'm talking now about something bigger than that; we're going to study some divine geography together. Hakodosh Boruch Hu has His own geography lessons and it's a pity that it's not studied in the schools this way.

And so we'll look at this week's *sedrah*, about the nations that Hashem settled around Eretz Canaan, and we'll make a small attempt to study His geography, not only where He settles nations but

for what purpose. And you can be sure it will open up our eyes – instead of a geography lesson where a teacher with a wooden head is making students with wooden heads, we'll study some geography *al pi Torah* and we'll gain Torah heads.

The Surrounding Nations

“And now, turn yourselves around and make your journey,” said Hakodosh Boruch Hu to the Am Yisroel, “I have given the land to you; come and take possession of the land” (Devarim 1:7-8). That was the command of Hashem to His people as they began to make their way to Eretz Yisroel.

And yet, there would be no straight path into the land. As they began to make their way towards Eretz Canaan, Hakodosh Boruch Hu did not give them a free reign to take any path they wished; they weren't permitted to make war against the surrounding nations at will. Every step would have to follow the divine plan – some nations would be removed from Hashem's map forever and some would remain to be the neighbors of the Am Yisroel.

Sichon the Emori and his kingdom were destroyed by the Am Yisroel. Og Melech Habashan also went lost forever. The land of Canaan was dissolved, never to be heard of again. But Hashem allowed Edom, Amon and Moav to remain there as our neighbors, right on our border, for many years.

The Geographical Plan

As they approached the land of Edom, Hakodosh Boruch Hu warned the Am Yisroel to stay clear, “for as an inheritance to the children of Eisav have I given Mount Seir” (Devarim 2:5). And so “they turned away from Eisav and began to travel on the road to Moav” (ibid. 8); but there, at the border of Moav, they were stymied once again by the *devar Hashem*: “I shall not give you an

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inheritance from their land, for to the children of Lot I have given it as an inheritance” (ibid. 9). And the same happened when they passed the land of Amon (ibid. 18-19).

Now, we are accustomed to reading the *pesukim* of our *parsha* and we accept it as a given that all these relatives of ours were settled around us. But we see now that there was a plan here – they didn’t settle, they were *settled*. It was a plan of Hakodosh Boruch Hu that these nations should be left alone by the armies of the Am Yisroel, and remain our neighbors. Don’t think it just happened that way. This was Hashem’s geography. They were placed there.

Evil Neighbors

And they let us know they were there! Everyone who learned even a little bit of Nach knows that these nations weren’t the best of neighbors; they were a permanent thorn in our side for years and years. **עַל כָּל שְׂכְנֵי הָרָעִים, כֹּה אָמַר ה' –** So said Hashem, **אֲשֶׁר הִנְחֵלְתִי אֶת עַמִּי אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל, –** about all of the evil neighbors, **הַנִּגְעִים בְּנַחְלָה, –** who touch the estate, **אֲשֶׁר הִנְחֵלְתִי אֶת עַמִּי אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל, –** that I gave to My people Yisroel as their inheritance (Yirmiyah 12:14). It’s talking there about these inveterate enemies who were always molesting and oppressing the Bnei Yisroel. They are forever called the *shecheinei hora'im*, the bad neighbors of the Am Yisroel.

But we’re going to see tonight that these neighbors of ours that Hakodosh Boruch Hu settled on our borders were called evil neighbors for an entirely different reason than the years of harassment that they made the Am Yisroel suffer through. We’ll learn now what it *really* means to be a bad neighbor. But this will require an introduction, so pay attention well now.

Another Evil Neighbor

In Mesichta Brachos (8a) Reish Lakish is discussing someone who lives in a neighborhood where there’s a shul to daven in, but he doesn’t make use of it. **כָּל מִי שֵׁישׁ לוֹ בֵּית הַפְּנִסָּת בְּעִירוֹ וְאִינוּ נִבְנָס. שָׁם לְהַתְּפַלֵּל –** Anyone who has a synagogue in his

town but he doesn’t go there to daven, **נִקְרָא שְׂכֵן רָע, –** he is called an evil neighbor. Chazal bestow on him a special title of shame, a badge of dishonor: he’s an “evil neighbor.”

Now, let’s understand who we are talking about here. It doesn’t say he doesn’t *daven* – he *davens*, only he does it at home. Don’t we know that Friday night some people permit themselves the liberty of *davening* at home; some even do it on Shabbos afternoon. Friday night and *Shabbos* afternoon you don’t see them in the shul. Of course, we give them the benefit of the doubt; there are a lot of other synagogues. But you know what the world says, “When there are two synagogues you don’t go to either one!”

And they think nothing of it. Some of them even fancy themselves rabbis – that’s how they submit their names to the telephone company and that’s how they appear in the telephone book – and *Shabbos* morning when they get an *aliyah*, they want that the *shammas* should call them up, “*Yaamod ha’Rav Ploni ben Ploni*.” They want to be called rabbis but they don’t defend their title!

The Edomite Rabbi

So along comes Reish Lakish and he has a different title altogether for this fellow who sees his neighbors walking to the synagogue on *Shabbos* afternoon but he closes his blinds so nobody should see him praying at home. Reish Lakish tells us that he’s not a rabbi! He’s a *shachein ra*, an evil neighbor; the same title given to the wicked nations who molested us for centuries.

And Reish Lakish quotes the *possuk* about our bad neighbors of Amon, Moav and Edom in order to prove his point. How do I know that this neighbor of ours is deserving of the title “evil”? **כֹּה אָמַר ה' –** So said Hashem, **עַל כָּל שְׂכְנֵי הָרָעִים, –** about all of the evil neighbors who touch the estate that I gave to My people Yisroel as their inheritance. And the *navi* describes there the punishment that will be meted out to these nations because they were such evil neighbors.

Feuding Neighbors

Now the question is, when our sages quote a *possuk* to back up one of their statements so we understand that usually it's not the plain meaning; we call it a *drasha* – it's something more than a plain meaning. However, it has to have some connection with the *possuk*; it shouldn't be entirely alien from the spirit of the *possuk*. And so, we're puzzled because this *possuk* is not talking about neighbors who don't come to *daven*; it's talking about neighbors who shoot arrows at us!

So let's say this rabbi – he's a rabbi in the telephone book at least – is passing by the synagogue and he picks up a stone and throws it at the shul and breaks a window pane. I don't know why he would do it but imagine such a thing. Every day as he passes by the synagogue, let's say in the morning on the way to work, he picks up a stone and breaks a window. So it makes sense that we'd call him a bad neighbor. You could say there's a proof from this *possuk* that he is included in **טָרְבַּנֵי הָרְעִים**, absolutely. But if he passes by and just doesn't come in, so what is the proof from this *possuk* that he is called a bad neighbor?

I hope the question registered. *Amon* and *Moav* and *Edom*, they molested us, they harassed us; they made inroads and tried to conquer the land. Again and again we had battles with them. And sometimes they oppressed us greatly. So Hakodosh Boruch Hu is saying, "These bad neighbors I am going to punish." But how can we apply this *possuk* to someone who respects the shul, he never harms the property of the synagogue, only he doesn't go in all the time when others go in. How does that make him the bad neighbor of this *possuk*?!

Purpose of Neighbors

So we're going to have to say that these nations were called bad neighbors for an entirely different reason than we imagined. Of course, they were our enemies who molested us for many years, absolutely. But an evil neighbor is more than that. An evil neighbor means someone who lives nearby, he lives in proximity to someone good whom he

can learn from, and he doesn't change for the better! It's a *neighbor who doesn't take advantage of being a neighbor!*

When Hakodosh Boruch Hu puts enemies around His people, it's for the purpose that the enemy should learn from us and become good. You hear that? It's a big *chiddush* the *gemara* is teaching us: *Amon* and *Moav* and *Edom* were placed near *Eretz Yisroel* in the hope that they would choose to be good neighbors, that something would come of them.

Three Success Stories

And to a certain extent it worked. We know that *Rus* came from *Moav*. How did it happen? Only because *Moav* was next door. So now you know why Hakodosh Boruch Hu settled *Moav* near our boundaries – so that there should be a *Rus*. *Rus* is a result of a divine plan, a plan of divine geography. And *Rus* means *Dovid Hamelech* (*Brachos 7b*). We forget about it now in retrospect; we forget that *Dovid* is *Rus*. That's some accomplishment. That's a big achievement.

The truth is from *Amon* there also came a precious soul, *Naamah Ho'amonis*. She is an ancestress of the family of the kings of the *Bais Dovid*, and she came from *Amon*. So *Rus* came from *Moav*, and *Na'amah* from *Amon* – it means the *melech hamoshiach* comes from these two women, from these two nations (*Bava Kamma 38b*). That's no small matter! It means that *moshiach* will come because of good neighbors. And the plan was to bring back many *Ruses*, many *Na'amahs*, not just one.

And there's no question that there were many more. From *Edom* there came a very great soul, *Agrippa the first*. He was brought up among *goyim*; he lived like a *goy* in *Rome*. But when the emperor appointed him king of *Judea*, he made up his mind to become a *talmid* of the sages. He was so *frum*, he was so pious and so humble that he became beloved by the entire nation (*Mishna Sotah 7:8*). So *Edom* accomplished at least one *tzaddik*.

A Great Responsibility

But Hakodosh Boruch Hu was not satisfied with that because a good neighbor is someone who goes all out! And so Hashem gave His eternal *psak*, “These nations are evil neighbors, *shecheinai hora'im!*” And now we are learning why. They are called bad neighbors because they didn't look across the boundaries at their neighbors. The Am Yisroel were an exceptional people and there was a lot to learn. But these evil neighbors kept their eyes closed, their minds were closed. That's a bad neighbor of the worst kind!

And therefore the *gemara* learns from this about a man who has a good *shul* in his neighborhood – others are going there to *daven*, to go to *shiurim*, to learn *mussar* – and he doesn't come in; he doesn't look at his neighbors and seek to emulate them. That's a bad neighbor; worse than if he broke the *shul* window!

The *psak* of the Torah is that if you're not utilizing the opportunities that Hakodosh Boruch Hu gives you, then you're an evil neighbor just like Amon and Moav, and all of those punishments in that *possuk* are *chalilah* for you as well. That's a very big responsibility you're hearing about now and you shouldn't let it be like water off a duck's back.

When a person doesn't utilize the opportunity of emulating and imitating the good deeds of his neighbors, he has to know that he's a sore thumb in the neighborhood! A good neighbor is always looking out for the righteous ways of his neighbors and trying to acquire them for himself.

Part II. Jealous Neighbors

Gwendolyn and Jeffrey

Now, in order to understand this a little more, we are going to study a subject that deserves our attention. You remember when our first mother, Chava, gave birth for the first time in history, she had to choose a name for her son.

Now, today when a mother gives a name it's not such an earth shaking event. She passes by a movie theatre on Kings Highway and she sees a name in lights and that's it – that's going to be the name of the child she's carrying. If it's Grace or Gwendolyn, or whatever is the name of that “virtuous” woman, that's going to be the name of her child.

If it's a boy, the same thing. That's where you get the name Jeffrey. You know, a few years back I would be sitting by my window or walking on the street and all day long I would hear, “Jeffrey,” “Jeffrey,” “Jeffrey,” Jeffrey this, Jeffrey that. All day! It looks like everybody was named Jeffrey! What was it? There was once upon a time a movie star named Jeffrey so now you had a whole generation of mothers who named their boys Jeffrey.

Yenta and Yonason

Or, if they are better people, she calls up their rabbi and asks him, “What kind of a name can I give that resembles this and this name of my *bubbeh*?” Her *bubbeh* was named, let's say, Yenta, and it's a boy, so she doesn't know what to do. Well, what else is her rabbi good for so she calls him up on the telephone to ask him this pressing question.

And so the loyal rabbi pulls down from the shelf his *Even Ha'ezer*, *Hilchos Gittin* – that's the only way he uses it anyhow – and he opens it up to a certain part, *sheimos anoshim*. There's a whole list over there of names in *aleph beis* order – it's used to clarify the proper spellings of names for when they're written in a *gett* – and he looks under the *yud* and he finds something: Yonason. So he calls her back and tells her, “Yonason!” and that's how the little boy gets his name. So it's one of the two ways – either the movie star or *l'havdil* the rabbi.

A New Acquisition

But originally when a name was given, it meant much more than that – the name meant something; it was a teaching. Especially when our first mother

gave a name, you can be sure it was of the utmost significance.

Now, when Chava gave birth for the first time in history she was understandably immensely excited. Up until then only Hakodosh Borch Hu created humans. And here she had just witnessed a miracle that from her came forth a human being, complete in every detail. And therefore she exclaimed, **קָנִיתִי אִישׁ אֶת הַשֵּׁם** – *I have acquired a man for Hashem*. Up to now there were two servants of Hashem, Adam and Chava, and now reinforcements are coming up. That is how the first mother regarded her child, as an acquisition for Hashem, and that's why she called his name Kayin.

Variant Meanings

However, you are going to hear something tonight, a little insight into this name. But first you must know the following principle: when we learn *chumash* and we find the *possuk* gives a reason why such a name is given, even though an explanation is given, it doesn't exhaust the explanation of the name. You hear that? Even when a reason is given in the Torah, don't think it's the end of the story.

For instance, when Leah gave birth to Yehuda, she called him that name because she said, "*Hapa'am odeh es Hashem – this time I shall praise Hashem.*" She was so happy that she had another son and she said, "I will praise Hashem even more than before." And she called his name Yehuda – *he shall praise.*"

But we see that when Yaakov Avinu was blessing this sons, he said, **יְהוּדָה אֶתְּהָ יִרְוּךָ אֶחָיִךְ** – *Yehuda, your brothers will elevate you* (Bereishis 49:8) from the word *hod*, which means to elevate. So we see that Yaakov Avinu put an entirely different meaning into it; she was talking about elevating and praising Hashem and her husband understood it in the sense that Yehuda himself will be elevated; a different meaning.

And along come our sages in *Medrash Shmuel* and they put another meaning into the word, a very good meaning. Yehuda means, "He's going to praise Hashem," because from him will come forth Dovid

Hamelech who will say praises to Hashem. And that's exactly what happened – the whole world to this day resounds with *shirei Dovid avdecho* – that's our whole *tefillah*; and even *l'havdil* the gentiles say the psalms of Dovid.

Meanings of Kayin

And so the principle we have to follow is that the names that were given in the Torah with explanations, that's not the sole explanation. And therefore we understand that there is another layer of understanding why Chava gave her son the name Kayin: **וַתֵּלֶד אֶת קַיִן** – *And she gave birth to Kayin*, **וַתֹּאמֶר קָנִיתִי אִישׁ אֶת הַשֵּׁם** – *and she said, 'I acquired a man for Hashem.'* Chava said, "Hashem I am grateful to You because You have given me a purpose in life – I was able to acquire a man for You, to bring a human being into this world to serve You."

Chava was saying, "*Kanisi! I acquired something for myself; I got something out of life.*" A woman who has more children is getting the most out of life because what's as big as accomplishing offspring, sons and daughters? It's a tremendous acquisition.

So **קָנִיתִי** really means, "I got something out of life," and when she called her son Kayin, she wanted him to follow suit. That's included in the name Kayin – she intended it as a *tefillah* that he should be a man who is a *koneh*, someone who acquires things; he should get busy acquiring for himself all the things that will make him successful in the Next World.

Utilizing Your Name

And you can be sure that when Kayin's mother gave him that name she wasn't *yotze* with just the naming ceremony alone. She expected Kayin to make use of his noble name and imbue himself with the spirit that he has to get out of life all that he can. And she spoke to him all the time about that. "Kayin, my son; you know when you were born I gave you this name because I don't want you to ever forget that your name is from the word **קָנִיתִי**, to acquire. I want you to be an acquirer, a go-getter."

And she expected him to think about that every time he heard his name being called. Every time she called him, “Kayin, come here and take out the garbage please,” or “Kayin, please go outside to the field and help your father with the plow,” she was instructing him, “My son, you’re not here just to exist, Kayin – you’re here to be a *koneh*, to get things out of life!

What To Acquire

What things? That’s an entire subject – many many lectures it would require. But she had in mind certain great things that man is expected to acquire in this world. *Kenei chochmoh*, *kenei binah* – acquire wisdom and understanding of Hakodosh Boruch Hu (Mishlei 4:7). To acquire good character traits and good habits and good deeds, that’s what the first mother wanted from the first child.

And that’s *our* function in life. The first person ever to be born in this world was given this most noble name to teach us the noble lesson that every person born into this world after him is born for acquiring! To get things out of life, to get *mitzvos*, to get Torah, to get good character, to get *da’as*, to get *emunah*. That’s what life is for, for acquiring all the greatness that is possible to achieve in this world.

We didn’t come into this world just to live out our lives and have a nice quiet existence with a little bit of kosher fun and entertainment once in a while. No, that is not the purpose. This world is only a preparation for the world to come and we are here to be Kayins, to be *koneh*, to acquire merchandise – there are certain things we have to accomplish while we’re here, a great many things.

Acquisition and Envy

But that’s not the end of the story because now we are going to hear that *kenei*, *kuf nun hei*, to acquire, is related to *kanei*, *kuf nun alef*, to be envious. If you studied a little *dikduk*, so you know that the *hay* and *alef* are interchangeable – קנא and קנה are the same word. So *kenei*, to acquire from your neighbor, and *kanei*, to be envious of what

your neighbor has, are related – and it’s because a person only becomes an acquirer if he’s a jealous fellow.

And when Chava gave her son the name *Kayin*, an acquirer, she knew about that. Whatever *dikduk* we know, she knew a thousand times better. She prayed that her son should be a jealous fellow, that he should never be satisfied with his accomplishments; instead he should see what others are accomplishing in their lives and be jealous of that. She wanted that he should try to outdo even his father!

And that’s what he tried. You know the first *korbon*, the first sacrifice in history was brought by Adam *harishon*; Chazal (Avodah Zarah 8a) say he sacrificed an ox, a one-horned ox. And that’s why Kayin went ahead and brought offerings; because he had learnt from his mother that he has to be jealous. And so he was jealous of his great father; any good thing his father did, he also wanted to do.

Beautiful Emotion of Jealousy

That’s the good jealousy that every person is born with. There’s not a human being in the world that doesn’t have *kinah* in him – every normal person can feel the stirring of jealousy in his heart and there’s no question that’s what Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants. In order that we should acquire things, Hakadosh Boruch Hu put into a man’s mind the quality of envy; that is why there is such a thing as jealousy.

Of course, people who never studied the subject, they don’t know what it’s for and so they misdirect it. It’s stirring, it’s busy, very busy but it’s busy with something else. Somebody has a better car than you have, a more expensive home, other things that aren’t important and you’re jealous. It’s a waste of good energy – it’s not for that purpose. You’re taking a beautiful emotion and you’re wasting it on nothing.

Dangerous Emotion of Jealousy

Not only wasting; it’s dangerous. Like it says in Iyov (5:2); וּפְתָהּ תִּמְיֵת קִנְאָה – a fool will be put to death

by his envy. You know that people have died because of envy? A man goes to the hospital and he has annoying pain and *nit eingedacht* the diagnosis is that dreaded sickness.

How did it start? He ate himself up with envy about things that don't matter, things that are beyond his control, and he caused the cancer in himself. Many people contract illness because of envy. וְרָקֵב עֲצָמוֹת קִנְיָהּ – *envy is a rot in the bones* (Mishlei 14:30). Not only do you lose weight – you lose your fat because of envy – but it even causes your bones to rot away.

Essential Emotion of Jealousy

Now why is it that Hashem would invent such a powerful torment that can so easily ruin men's lives? The answer is that it is most essential! In order that mankind should not be complacent; they shouldn't be satisfied with what they have. Man must have a certain drive, a desire to acquire all of the good ideals and good attitudes and good deeds of his neighbors.

Jealousy means if you see someone who stands a good *shmonah esrei*, so you say "That's something I wish to acquire! I am going to do the same." If you see someone accomplishing in Torah or in acquiring good middos or in creating a peaceful and happy marriage, and you are jealous, you're using the function of jealousy the way Hashem intended it. קִנְיַת סוֹפְרִים תִּרְבֶּה הַחֵמָה – *The envy of bookmen causes wisdom to increase* (Bava Basra 21a).

Now you know what envy is for. It's for the purpose of life! That is why Hakodosh Boruch Hu gave us this powerful motivation and the wise man is constantly revitalized by his righteous envy to become more and more of a *tzadik*, more and more righteous. And that is the purpose of life, to gain all the good qualities and improve constantly.

Evil and Good

And so we come back now to the beginning of tonight's talk. Amon and Moav were called *shecheinai hora'im*, our evil neighbors, not only because they molested us throughout history but because they were neighbors of good people – the best people, the Am Yisroel – and they didn't use that opportunity to envy their ways and to seek to emulate them.

And we're learning now that *all of us* are good neighbors or *chalilah* the opposite. You know, we have next to us an apartment house; they are nice people next door, Jews. They walk by, some even compliment us on how handsome our building looks. But that's not called good neighbors. They don't come in here to join us in our *shiurim*; they're not jealous of the progress we're making!

People in their blindness typically ignore everybody else; they think that nobody has anything that's worth emulating and therefore each person continues on his beaten path.

But we're learning now that one of the reasons we're in the world with other people is because they have something to teach us. That's the way to utilize your neighbors and your acquaintances; to have before your eyes all the models of good qualities. Whatever you see that somebody has, any good quality, you should be envious and try to acquire it as well. Don't worry – they won't lose them.

Everyone Has Virtues

Now some people are good at emulating, only that it's all the bad things they see around them that catches their eye. Here's a fellow who says, "In this and this *shtiebel* – I don't want to say the name – they *daven* fast." Or they *daven* late, after *zman kriyas shema*. That *shtiebel* is known for that and so he also adopts that principle. Some principle! So he goes around adopting "good" principles from everybody and he ends up being a man of principles!

Little by little he collects all the bad things until he becomes a museum of all undesirable qualities.

Oh no, that's the opposite of a good neighbor. A good neighbor chooses carefully what to emulate. And the models are endless because everybody has different virtues. If you look at every person you'll find at least one thing that you should try to kidnap for yourself. How could it be that people can complacently walk into a synagogue and see someone who has achieved learning and they don't feel the slightest urge to emulate or to outdo him? Don't they have that natural instinct of jealousy towards their fellow man?

This man gets up early and he comes to the shul before davening for a *shiur*. Another man remains later in the shul after *maariv* when everyone else goes home. The one who gets up early may leave early and the one who comes later, he remains later. So if you know what jealousy is for, you try to acquire the qualities of both!

You can't do both? Ok, but at least *one* of them you have to acquire. And so everyone has to get busy being jealous and acquiring things from others. When you're in the synagogue and you see a person standing a long *shmoneh esreh* – even a little *bochur*'l – you say, "I want that too!" A neighbor, a few blocks down *davens* up a storm; he enjoys *davening*; so you decide you're going to acquire that. You're jealous of him! Very good! Go ahead and try to emulate him. Learn to put your heart into *tefillah*.

You see people knowing *gemara*? Don't be complacent about that: "I have to know *gemara* too! Why shouldn't I be finishing *mesichtos* and making *siyumim* just like him?"

Moving the Yeshiva

You know what it means to have the Mirrer Yeshiva as our neighbor?! It's a blessing! We can't thank Hashem enough that we have the Mirrer as our neighbors. But for many people in Flatbush it's a serious problem. You think it's a favor to everyone? Oh no, for bad neighbors it's not a favor at all. Up until the time that the yeshiva settled here, Flatbush

was exonerated; it was one big bush! It was nothing; it was a wilderness, a spiritual wilderness, where people wandered around like wild beasts. And you couldn't blame them too much. What could you expect of them?

But now they have a fortress of *Torah* in their midst, and now things are not so good for them anymore. Because now you're expected to be a good neighbor! By the way, now you know why the Mirrer Yeshiva was exiled to Flatbush.

The Mirrer Yeshiva was in Mir, a tiny town in Poland, and it had very many neighbors. So as long as Hakodosh Boruch Hu saw that the Jews living in the towns in Poland were good neighbors and they were utilizing the Mirrer Yeshiva by sending *talmidim* to learn there and bring the Torah spirit back to their hometowns, so they deserved the Mirrer Yeshiva. But when He saw that the towns in Poland and Lithuania were now sending less and less boys to the yeshiva, so Hakodosh Boruch Hu said, "You're becoming bad neighbors now and so I have a better place for the yeshiva. Flatbush needs the Mirrer Yeshiva!"

And now it's a big responsibility on *our* shoulders. Why aren't we becoming better as a result? It means that each one of us must get busy becoming jealous of Mirrer Yeshiva. "Only the young men there should learn *b'hasmadah*?! Why shouldn't we also?!"

Building Yeshivos

A good neighbor says to himself, "If they are sitting and learning, so will I. I can't come everyday, I can't do it in the same measure, but at least I'll come on the long Friday nights and Shabbos mornings and Shabbos afternoons."

You can't go to the yeshiva? So get together a few *chaveirim* and make your own Mirrer Yeshiva in your synagogue. If you can't get the people in your shul to do it, then sit at home and make a Mirrer Yeshiva in your own home.

If you want to be a good neighbor in the eyes of Hashem you'll emulate that as much as possible. "On *motzei shabbos*, instead of wasting my life going

to visit Uncle Jake in Crown Heights I'll be like the yeshiva boy who spends his Saturday nights in the *beis medrash*. I want to become a *gadol ba'Torah* too." You'd be surprised – even if you start late in life you can become a very big *talmid chochom* in your spare time.

Chassidim and Chassidos

And the neighbors we can use as models for ourselves are endless if we would only open our eyes. Some people can find a neighbor, a *chossid*. I don't mean *chossid* in the sense of opposed to a *misnaged*; *chossid* means a servant of Hashem. Maybe he's succeeding in understanding *emunah*, in becoming a *ba'al da'as*; you see that he's putting his heart into thinking about Hakodosh Boruch Hu in the style of the Chovos Halevavos. Another neighbor has good character and *derech erez*. Somebody else guards his tongue; he doesn't talk much and even when he does open his mouth he counts his words and he's careful not to speak about people. Ooh, that's what I'd like to be! Try to acquire that from him.

Or here is a housewife who stands on her feet all day long and loyally prepares food and cares for everybody in the house. So it's a lesson for others to emulate, how to be loyal to your family, to think of others all day long. These housewives deserve to be riding on a marble horse, there should be statues built in their honor for their lifetime of self-sacrifice. Some women are thinking about the Shabbos lessons we discuss here while they're cooking. She's standing at the stove like the *kohen gadol* in the *kodesh kodoshim*. Why can't every woman emulate that?! Of course you can.

Here is a man who is a *ba'al tzedakah*. When you see that, you shouldn't look at it stolidly, phlegmatically. "I want to acquire that too!" There's a woman over here, not too far from here, who is busy helping the poor. I know her, and she's always sending parcels to the needy. She's gathering clothing and helping families. She's helping poor girls get married. A lot of good things that she is doing. How can we live right here, only a short distance away, and not make use of that model?

The Kollel Neighbors

Sometimes you see a *kollel* couple staying for years in the *kollel* denying themselves everything, living in a tiny flat in one of the worst tenements. And she is working every day in addition to the fact that every once in a while there's additions to the family too. These idealists are living a life of Torah! Now how is it that people don't envy them? Instead of looking down on them, start looking up; you have to look up very high!

You should envy the amount of children they have. That's a great thing to emulate. Children! A family with a lot of children! Everybody should feel, "I wish I could do that!" You remember, וְתִקְנֶה רַחֵל בְּאֲחֵיהָ – Rochel was jealous of her sister (Bereishis 30:1). We have no idea how profound her jealousy was when she saw her sister acquiring such a tremendous achievement and she was lagging behind.

Rochel understood what it meant to have a child. She had the tradition handed down from the beginning, קָנִיתִי אִישׁ אֶת הַשָּׁם, and she wanted to acquire things in this world too. And she *davened* harder because of that – she *davened* her heart out and finally, just because of her deep desire to acquire what her neighbor had, Hakadosh Baruch Hu allowed her to participate.

A Test For Us

And that's the great lesson that we're learning now. Every one of us has to get busy envying and acquiring good things all the days of our lives. And that's the lesson of divine geography we spoke about in the beginning of our talk – one of the reasons why Hakadosh Boruch Hu settles us wherever we are, with the neighbors and acquaintances we have, is so that we should be good neighbors by means of taking lessons from their good qualities. All of the qualities that people possess are models for us to imitate – and we were put into the world with them in order to learn from each one whatever we can.

That's one of the great lessons that our sages learned from this week's *parsha*; how Hakadosh

Boruch Hu settled the nations on the borders of Eretz Canaan in order to test them – will they be good neighbors or not? And the most important lesson is for us – are we going to be the best neighbors possible by means of envying and emulating all the good things around us?

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

Neighbors Of The Beis Hamikdash

The best opportunity for learning from good neighbors was in the days of the Beis Hamikdash when the *Shechina* was among us and *tzadikim* surrounded us on all sides. We were able to walk in the streets of Yerushalayim and see *nevi'im*, *nezirim*, *kohanim* and *chachomim*. And one of the reasons for the *churban* and the *golus* was because we were evil neighbors and failed to learn from them.

Bli neder, this week I will make an effort to learn from the good neighbors who surround me. Every day I will choose one person whom I come in contact with often and study one good aspect of his/her personality which I will then attempt to acquire.

By being good neighbors we will merit the fulfilment of the verses in Yirmiyah: Thus said Hashem: As for My evil neighbors ... I am going to uproot them from their soil... **וְהָיָה אֲחֵרֵי נְתָשִׁי אוֹתָם** Then, after I have uprooted them, **אָשׁוּב וְרַחֲמֵתִים** I will take them back into favor, **וְהִשְׁבַּתִּים אִישׁ לְנַחֲלָתוֹ וְאִישׁ לְאֶרְצוֹ** and restore them each to his own inheritance and his own land *bimheira biyameinu*, Amen.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

שאל אביך ויגידך זקניך ויאמרו לך

Q:

The gemara tells us that Rabbi Tzaddok fasted forty years before the Churban Beis Hamikdash in order to try and help avert the coming catastrophe. But doesn't that mean that he was probably a depressed and gloomy tzaddik?

A:

I wasn't there, but I guarantee he wasn't. I guarantee he was more happy than we are with all of our breakfasts and lunches and suppers. Because it's not breakfast and lunch and supper that makes you happy. **איזהו עשיר השמחה בחלקו** – it's the mind that makes you happy. And this tzaddik, he had to eat of course; every night he ate. And when he sat down at night, he enjoyed his little piece of bread to no end. A piece of bread and a cup of water, it tasted good! He never tasted anything as good as it tasted to him that night. Every night he enjoyed his supper. Don't think Rabbi Tzodok sat down and said, "Feh!" No! He was looking forward to that piece of bread and he enjoyed it. He wasn't gloomy at all!

That's why I say, *Motzai Tisha B'Av*, don't lose the opportunity. It's a lesson you're getting, to once more appreciate food. *Tisha B'Av* night we should utilize that. *Motzai Tisha B'Av*, as you sit down to your bread and your water, you should enjoy it no end, because the purpose of fasting is not merely to fast. It's to let us know that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is the One who is *gomel chassodim tovim*, He is bestowing kindness. And therefore fasting in order to enjoy the food is not a wasted effort. You never heard that before, did you? Fasting in order to enjoy the food on *Motzai Tisha B'Av*! It's a very important lesson. That's one of the byproducts of a *taanis tzibur*.

TAPE # 796

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