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WITH

R' AVIGDOR MILLER זי"ל

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

Always Enthusiastic

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Part I. Lighting The Fire

The Peeping Radiner

There was once somebody in Radin who peeked through the keyhole into the room of the Chofetz Chaim. I don't know if it was right to do but that's the story - he wanted to see what an *ish kadosh* was doing in private and so he looked through the keyhole into the garret, into the attic room where the Chofetz Chaim was.

What did he see? The Chofetz Chaim *zichrono livrocho* was sitting on the edge of a bed and he was studying the *makkos* that Hashem brought on

Mitzrayim. Now, the report we have from this yeshiva man in Radin is that the Chofetz Chaim wasn't studying the *makkos* with the *peirush* of the Zohar Hakadosh. And neither was he learning the *Sifra Ditzniusa* in that locked room. No; he was holding a simple Chumash, reading the *pesukim* from this week's *sedra*. He was saying plain Chumash - *and he was sitting and laughing!*

“וְהָרְגָה אֲשֶׁר בַּיָּאֵר מֵתָהּ וַיִּבְאֵשׁ הַיָּאֵר” - *The fish-life that was in the River died and the River stank because of all the rotting things* (Va'eira 7:21). The Chofetz Chaim was reading those words like a little boy in *cheder* learning Chumash for the first time. He was learning the Chumash *mamesh* like a pre-kindergarten child, the first time he's hearing about the *makkos*. He's thrilled. He's imagining how the Egyptians are leaning over their wells trying to quaff a mouthful of fresh water. And they're spitting it out and retching. “Fech! Uch! This is disgusting, this stuff.” And the Bnei Yisroel are watching their tormentors and laughing; they're busting their sides with laughter.

A Tzadik's Fun

And the one who was looking through the keyhole tells us that the Chofetz Chaim was enjoying it too; he was sitting on his bed and saying: “Ah! *Gut oif zei!* - Good for them! They're getting exactly what they deserve!” He was banging with his foot on the floor like a boy, like a little boy in Mitzrayim watching the Mitzri'im get it in the neck.

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As a Zechut for a Zivug Hagun for
Rachel Simcha bat Chana Leah

Now, that's the briefest kind of report, because that boy didn't have the nerve to look for too long. He felt he was eavesdropping on the Shechina when he looked at the Chofetz Chaim through the peephole and so he turned away; he slinked away down the steps.

Now we have to understand that the Chofetz Chaim was already an old man. He was in his eighties, close to ninety. So we think: alright, he'll learn the Chumash *shnayim mikra v'echad targum*; but such a *zakein*, such a *chochom*, wouldn't bother to learn *pshuto shel mikra*.

Oh no! He bothered with it! Certainly! And he did it all the time! Because the Chofetz Chaim understood the purpose of the *makkos*; he understood that Hashem brought the *makkos* for *him*. I'll explain that.

Plagues of Knowledge

We might have said that the reason Hakodosh Boruch Hu brought *makkos* was because the Am Yisroel had to be saved, but the truth is that the *makkos* weren't needed for that. They could have been saved from slavery in ways that weren't spectacular at all. It wasn't necessary to make plagues on Mitzrayim. It wasn't necessary to split the Yam Suf so that Mitzrayim should drown. They could have gone out; Pharaoh could have got his people together and said, "Look these people were once friends of ours, they asked for asylum years ago and Yosef was a benefactor of Egypt. Let's let them out."

Although Pharaoh himself wouldn't do it, but Hakodosh Boruch Hu could have moved his heart. **לֵב מְלָכִים בְּיַד הַשֵּׁם**. He could have caused Pharaoh to change his mind and he would have sent them out.

So why did Hakodosh Boruch Hu make such a display of His power? Ten *makkos*, drawn out over an entire year. What was it for?

So let's listen to what Hakodosh Boruch Hu says. After all, He knows best why He did what He did. "Why am I bringing *makkos* on Pharaoh? Not

only to save My people. And not only because Pharaoh deserves to be punished. There's a much more important reason. The reason is **לְמַעַן יִדְרַע בִּי אֲנִי הַשֵּׁם בְּקֶרֶב הָאָרֶץ** – so that you should know that I am Hashem in the midst of the land (Vaeira 8:18). **יִדְרַע בִּי אֵין כְּמִנִּי בְּכָל הָאָרֶץ** – in order you should know there is none like Me in the whole universe (*ibid.* 9:14). So that you should know; in order that you should know.

Again and again we're told that this is the motivation of the *makkos* – so that they will know. Not only the Egyptians should be educated; Hakodosh Boruch Hu is not going to do that only for the Mitzri'im. We are the ones still reading the Torah today – it's for us. And the keyword is **יִדְרַע**; you should acquire *deiah*, knowledge.

Between Two Great Ones

Now in Mesichta Brachos (33a), the Gemara makes an important statement that serves as an introduction to this subject of acquiring *daas*: **גְּדוֹלָה דְרַעָה** – How great is knowledge! And the Gemara brings an illustration of how valuable it is. **גְּדוֹלָה דְרַעָה – שְׁנֵתַנְהָ בֵּין שְׁתֵּי אוֹתִיּוֹת** – So great that it's placed between two names of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. Because it says, **בֵּי ק־ל דְרַעוֹת הַשֵּׁם**. So one side you have the word **ק־ל**, *Aleph Lamed*, and on the other side you have the word Hashem, *yud kei uvv kei*. And in the middle, you have the word *dei'os*.

As was explained once, if you see three people walking down Ocean Parkway; on one side is the Satmerer Rav and on the other side is, let's say, the Lubavitcher Rebbe; and in the middle, walking between those two great men, there's an unknown person. So you understand right away that if he's in the middle of these two, he's somebody important. And if you see a word positioned between *Keil* and Hashem, so that word signifies something very important! So if it says **ק־ל דְרַעוֹת הַשֵּׁם**, therefore it proves, the Gemara says, that *dei'ah* is very important.

All of the great Torah ideals, all of the attitudes and lessons and stories, they're in the Chumash but not in our heads. And *daas* means that we have to transfer them from the Chumash to our brain. We have to take the ideas in our *chumashim* and *siddurim* and other *seforim* – Shaarei Teshuva and Chovos Halevavos and Mesillas Yesharim – and put them into our heads.

Don't Be Lazy

When we say *daas*, it means not merely something that you can repeat quickly; “Oh, I know all about it already”. “*Kulanu chachomim*,” the *yeshiva bochur* says. He's bored by it. “*Kulanu nevonim*” – He knows! He learned Chumash already; maybe he learned the Rashi too. All the ideas he knows already.

And so the lazy fellow says, “I know Hashem is great; don't bother me anymore. I told you He's great and that's all there is to it.” It's like a man who is willing to give you a check for whatever you want – “How much do you want? A million dollars? Here! Here's a check for a million dollars!” But he has no money in the bank and so it's worthless. When people say “Yes, Hashem is great! There's nothing like Him *ba'aretz*; I know all about it,” but there's nothing up here; if this bank up here is empty, if his head is empty then it means very little.

I'm not saying we don't appreciate the statement; at least you're willing to say it – it's a good beginning, but it's not *daas*. It's not enough to know with a cold, intellectual, knowledge. *Daas* means that you know with a sensory knowledge; your nerves feel it – it goes into the marrow of your bones. You're thinking constantly, lighting that fire of enthusiasm all the time.

Resting Place for Wisdom

And so we come back to the Chofetz Chaim and we understand that he lived for acquiring *daas* – he wanted all of the great Torah ideals to become part of him, to go into his bones. And because he worked on it, because he made effort to acquire

wisdom, that's what happened. He became an embodiment of the *possuk* in Mishlei (14:33), **בְּלֵב נְבוֹן תְּנוּחַ הַחִכָּמָה** – *In the heart of the understanding one, wisdom rests.*

The plain meaning is that when a person is a *navon* – it means that he looks into things; he wants to understand, he seeks to know – so **בְּלֵב נְבוֹן**, *in the heart of such a person*, **תְּנוּחַ הַחִכָּמָה**, *the wisdom comes to rest.* It finds a resting place; it remains there.

Wisdom becomes *kavua* in his mind because he wants it. That's what he lives for. He is seeking *chochma* because that's the *shleimus* that Hakodosh Boruch Hu created him for. And that becomes the purpose of the *navon* – he seeks to become a *shalem*; he wants to become the best he can.

Now, it doesn't mean it bursts forth. He doesn't seek to publicize what he acquired. He's not interested in making a manifesto of his wisdom. He's hiding in his attic working on himself, putting the great Torah ideals into his head.

Watermark of A Fool

That's why the end of the *possuk* says, **וּבְקֶרֶב כְּסִילִים תִּדְרַע** – that when this *chochma* comes in the midst of fools, **תִּדְרַע**, it becomes known. The *kesil* doesn't keep it a secret because his purpose is not *daas*. He just wants to let others know, that's all. **תִּדְרַע** – whatever he knows he tries to tell other people. In fact, he tells them more than he knows.

That's the watermark of a fool; the identification mark of the *kesil* is that he's always telling others what he knows. After all, that's his purpose in learning. He wants to show people what he has gained. And that's why by him it *won't* rest. Unlike by the *chochom*, *daas* won't have any *menucha* by the fool; it'll evaporate.

Communist Food Lines

In Russia, you know, they're busy exporting – so there's nothing left for the people over there. People have nothing in Russia. They stand in line

for food because Russia is busy sending everything out of the country.

Same thing, when a man is busy exporting *ruchniyus* all the time, always telling others what he knows, always exporting to other people – like I do – so he's in a big *sakanah*. He has to be concerned that maybe things aren't going to remain with him. He has to worry all the time. If you're busy in the export business, it could be that nothing is left at home. So because the *kesil* is always busy telling others, so the *chochma* doesn't have *menucha* in him. It doesn't rest in him.

The *navon* on the other hand is interested in *having* the wisdom, in *keeping* it. Of course, if necessary, if you have the opportunity you'll be *lilmod u'lilameid*, you'll learn and you'll teach too. But otherwise that's not his purpose. His purpose is to acquire perfection in the Eyes of Hashem. And that's why *tanuach chochma* – it rests there; it's quiet and people would never know.

And as this *chochom* goes through the street, as he goes to the *beis haknessess*, or even in the *yeshiva*, people won't understand who he is. Nobody knows that his mind is working, that he's thinking about *Makkas Dam* or *Briyas Ha'olam* *Yeish Mei'ayin* or *Maamad Har Sinai* right now. But he is quite satisfied. What does he care?! He's not looking for the vain glory of *Olam Hazeh*. He wants achievement; and he knows he's got it. His purpose is transforming his mind into a Torah mind. And that's why he's busy in his attic studying the Chumash, putting all of the great ideals into his head where they belong.

Part II. The Fire Dims

The Humble Commentators

Now, along come our sages (Bava Metzia 85b) with their sharp eyes and they see another meaning in this *possuk* – pay attention and you'll soon see it's an entirely different idea. “מאי דכתיב בלב נבון תנוח”

הַכָּמָה – What does it mean that ‘in the mind of a *navon*, wisdom comes to rest’? זֶה תַלְמִיד חֹכֵם בֵּן – That's a *talmid chochom* who comes from a family of *talmidei chachomim*; by him wisdom is resting for generations already; it's settled by him already.”

“וּבְקֶרֶב כְּסִילִים תִּדְרֹעַ – And in the midst of fools it becomes known. From a fool it comes bursting forth.” But our sages tell us that it's not *stam* a fool: “זֶה תַלְמִיד חֹכֵם – He's a *talmid chochom* too! But he's a תַלְמִיד חֹכֵם מִמְּשֻׁפָּהוּת עִם הָאָרֶץ – he comes from a family of *amei ha'aretz*. And so תִּדְרֹעַ, he makes it known.” It's something new, a novelty in this family, and so he publicizes his knowledge.

Now, Rashi says a *nifla'dige* thing on this *maamar*. Rashi you have to know is the *amkan*, the deep commentator. Peirush Rashi is in itself a *sefer*. It's a pity that Rashi is just pasted alongside the Gemara, so you think he's just a commentator – oh no, Rashi is a *chibur nora* by itself. That's the trouble with these *anavim* who make a *peirush*. Rashi could have made *Emunos V'Deios*; he could have been from the biggest *seforim* if he made a *sefer* of his own. But he made it a *peirush* and so people forget that Rashi is a very great man in his own right and that his explanation of *maamarei chazal* are all gems.

Rambam For Breakfast

Now we would think, if we just learned the Gemara on our own, that this *ma'amar* is *l'gnai*, that it's deprecating this fool. That a *talmid chochom* who comes from a family of *amei ha'aretz*, so he wants to show off. But Rashi doesn't say that. Rashi says “he makes it known” because מְתַפְאֵר בָּהּ – he glorifies himself with it. The *talmid chochom* who comes from a family of *amei ha'aretz* is so happy about his newfound knowledge, his newfound achievements, that he can't keep it to himself – תִּדְרֹעַ, he makes it known. Not because he's showing off; he's just burning with enthusiasm; he's excited about it!

But a *talmid chochom* from a family of *roshei yeshiva*, on the other hand, when he hears something, could be he's not so excited. His family has been saying things all the time. When he was a little boy he went to his *zeide*. His *zeide* was a *gadol*, and his father was a *gadol*, and his uncles are all *gedolim*. At the breakfast table they spoke about a *shverer* Rambam. And so when he hears something, he's not so excited. He appreciates it but he's not excited. And so *בְּלֵב נְבוֹן הַנְּנוּחַ הַחֲכָמָה*, in his heart all the great ideals begin to rest ... and fall asleep!

The BT Attitude

Now we have to take Rashi's *pshat* and utilize that as a basis for understanding ourselves. Because according to this it's just the opposite of what we thought. It's not enough to be a *chochom*; to hear things and become familiar with them. *Sometimes that itself is the problem*; you think you know all about it and so it goes to sleep. All the great ideals and attitudes that you're supposed to be living with are in a deep sleep; they're snoring away.

But when a person is a *talmid chochom* who comes from an adverse environment, from a family that didn't learn; let's say a *baal teshuva* – when the *baal teshuva* comes into *yiddishkeit*, he glories with *yiddishkeit*. He *really* has the zest in what he learns. He has a gusto, an appetite, for all the great ideals that make up a Jewish mind.

He glories with *tefillin*! Ho! *Tefillin*! He's so happy he's wearing *tefillin*! He's enthusiastic about them. The *baal teshuva*, when he puts on his *tefillin* – at least the first year or two – he puts it on with a dedication because he's thinking about what they mean. It's a sign of glory! They told him that. Let's say he went someplace where *baalei teshuva* got together and somebody was talking to them and he told them *tefillin* is a *pe'er*. *וְקִשְׁרָתָם לְאוֹת* – it's a sign that you are one of the king's palace, *bnei paltin*. When he put on the *tefillin* the first time, he felt so elevated; he felt that the warmth came over him and his whole character changed – and for a long time he continues to feel that way.

The Pious Stereotype

The trouble is, after a while, he's no longer a *baal teshuva*. He becomes a 'real Orthodox Jew' and he falls into the rut of all the other Orthodox Jews who put on *tefillin* without any thought at all. He becomes an old settled *frum* Jew, and he forgets that *tefillin* is a sign, that it's telling him something, teaching him ideals and attitudes.

The idealism begins to go to sleep because after all, he's not from a family of *amei ha'arets* anymore. He broke away from that; he has his own family already, a good kosher family. And he begins to go to sleep. Sure he's still *midakdeik* in the *mitzvah* of *tefillin* – could be he's even more *midakdeik* now. Maybe he even spends more money on *mitzvos* as time goes on. But the enthusiasm has died out.

And that's how it is with all the Torah ideals and attitudes that create the Torah mind – they're *farshluffen*, they're going to sleep. You can see this every day. It becomes so customary, so habitual, so superficial and drab. Are the great ideals present in the Jewish home? Sometimes it's only by stereotyping; they sound very pious, "Im yirtzeh Hashem", "Boruch Hashem, boruch Hashem" and so on. But actually Hakodosh Boruch Hu is not a real entity in their lives.

Duly Davening

Even in the *shul*. You can find sometimes a *beis haknesses* where everybody was *frum* for the last hundred generations. Their *grandmothers* already had beards and long *peyos*. All the way back! And you walk in and you see no enthusiasm. They make motions as if they're enthusiastic but you can see that their hearts are not in the *davening*.

Sometimes a *baal teshuva* comes into a *shul*, he can't keep up with the old time Jews. And he thinks it's because he's not an expert in *davening*. He doesn't understand the secret. The secret is they're skipping. That's the secret. They say half words and many times don't say any words. It's a

fact. It's a tragedy. You walk into such a place to *daven*; three *minyanim daven* while you're *davening* once.

So fast?! You know, that alone is something. If you're in a hurry to get out, it's a *siman* that you're not enjoying it. Of course you have to be *melamed zechus*; people have to go to work. But suppose it's not a work day; it's Shabbos, Yom Tov. Same story. Galloping, galloping. That's a *siman* that the heart is no longer in it.

If you come close to them, even if you put your ear against their lips you won't hear anything. You'll be surprised how many people *daven* that way. They're just *davening* inside of themselves. Their lips are barely moving. It's a tragedy.

Extinguished Glory

And if you put them at the *amud* you'll be surprised, they're butchering the whole thing. I once heard a Jew at the *amud* say, *וְכָל עַמּוּד מְהֵרָה יִכָּרְתוּ* – *And Your entire nation should be cut off quickly*. An old Jew who *davened* every day of his life, at least fifty years, three times a day. *שְׁבָחְךָ מִפִּינוּ יִמּוּשׁ* – *Our praises of You will cease from our mouths forever and ever*. It's remarkable, the errors you hear in a shul. *וּמִלְפָּנֶיךָ רִיקָם תִּשְׁיָבֵנוּ* – *Please Hashem, turn us away from You empty-handed*. It's *chiruf v'giduf*. And they do it every day. They're not listening to what they're saying.

That's why you can catch them saying the most noble words, words that should set their hearts on fire, but they're saying the words and *b'shaas maaseh* they're signaling to each other. He's saying the noble words *הַרְר כְּבוֹד הוֹרֶךְ* – *The splendor of Your glorious honor*.

But no, he's not saying anything important. He's just saying words; and so at the same time he's signaling to his neighbor. Or his neighbor is talking to him. "Did you see, was Shmerel here today?" his neighbor asks him. And he's mumbling, "*mehmehmehneh*, *hadarkevodhodecha*,

mehmehmehmeh." He's pointing somewhere while he's talking.

Tatte in himmel, what happened to this idealist?! He's still an *ish kadosh* in all his practices, but it has died out within him! *בְּלֵב נְבוֹן תְּנוּחַ חֻקָּמָה* – *the wisdom of all the great ideals are still there but tanuach, they have fallen asleep*. The idealism has been extinguished.

Europe Cools Down

Of course, if you'd put him to the test and say, "People are going to kill you if you won't worship *avodah zarah*", it could be, most likely, that he'll give his life. But up to that time he's asleep. He's not enjoying his *yiddishkeit*. "Oh sure", he'll tell you, "*עֲבְרוּ אֶת הַשֵּׁם בְּשִׁמְחָה*". But he's not *besimcha*. You can see it on his face. You can see it in his *davening*.

And you should know, that's the answer to what we saw in Europe. In Europe, seventy years ago, almost everybody kept everything. But already the enthusiasm was dying out. Now, that doesn't mean there weren't places that didn't have tremendous enthusiasm. Certainly, there were. Europe was still Europe in many places. But in general, the enthusiasm was cooling off, no question about it.

I was in Europe in 1932 – that's forty-eight years ago – and I saw how it had cooled off tremendously; even in places where they still kept, but it was cooled off.

But not only the cooling had taken place, by that time it had come to other things. Because cooling off is the beginning of everything else. When the *yiras shomayim*, the *hislahavus*, the fire, cools off, that's *chas veshalom* the *hakdamah* to a roller coaster that's running downhill.

Budapest and Germany

And that's why we had at that time already in Europe a lot of atheists. At the Tarbus schools, in Budapest, there were a lot of atheists. There were a lot of assimilationist circles. I'm not talking about

Germany; there, no question, but all over Europe times were changing.

In Russia, before World War I there were hotbeds of wickedness; in Odessa and other places. Now, once upon a time it was unthinkable among Jews. But now you had entire cities that were famous for wickedness. A lot of *kofrim*!

Now how did it happen? It didn't happen all at once. It happened because it started cooling off. Because that's the process. It's not insignificant when you begin doing *mitzvos anashim melumadah*. To do things just out of habit without enthusiasm is a symptom that inside the fire has gone out. And when the fire goes out it means everything is out.

Part III. Rekindling The Fire

A Boring, Effective Solution

So we're facing a problem. It's a big problem because we can't be new *baalei teshuva* all our lives. And especially, who wants to be born into a family of *amei ha'aretz*? It's an ideal that we should be *talmidei chachomim*. And we want that our progeny forever should be *talmidei chachomim* and *lo yamush mipinu*, the Torah should remain in our mouths forever. It's a big problem that affects all of us and we're going to see what we have to do about that. It's a problem that requires a solution.

And the solution is that we have to use our thoughts to reignite that fire in our minds.

Now, it could be you wanted to hear something more exciting but that's the plain truth – thinking is the fuel that keeps the fire burning. And the more thought you put into the furnace up here, the more you feed the fire, the brighter the fire burns. But you have to be constantly adding new fuel; otherwise it dims and goes to sleep.

The Greatest Secret, Revealed

Now, how many old *talmidei chachomim* take a Chumash in their hands? All right, maybe they're learning the *parsha* but they wouldn't bother to learn *pshuto shel mikra*. Even the *meforshim* they know already so they're looking now for *sisrei Torah*. You know, *sisrei Torah* are wonderful; no question, it's great. But the biggest *sisrei Torah* are on the surface. Never forget that secret. It's a *sod* that I'm telling you now. The biggest *sisrei Torah* is *pshuto shel mikra*. And many times people lose sight of these *sisrei Torah* – they look for others.

The truth is that looking in the Chumash alone, without *midroshim*, you'll be amazed how much there is to talk about. You never studied it properly but if you put your head into the Chumash you'll start discovering gem after gem, diamond after diamond.

Poor Fred's Chumash

Let me tell you a little story. I have a little Chumash. I found it in East Flatbush, in a garbage can. It was put out for the garbage people to take away – I saw it on top of the pile in the can so I took it.

Inside is the name Fred. And I think all the time, "Fred, poor Fred. Why didn't you utilize your Chumash? I got so much benefit out of your Chumash." There are no *meforshim* in the Chumash, no *meforshim* at all. I use it; I walk in the street with that Chumash and I think into it. I'm *maamik* in the the *pesukim*. I just use the *peirush* of the Rosh. This, *my rosh* (the Rav pointed to his head). It's a gold mine for me, the Chumash! I wrote a *peirush* on Bereishis from that Chumash. I'm writing a *peirush* on Shemos from that Chumash. And Fred put it in the garbage can. Poor Fred.

Now nobody here is throwing a Chumash into the garbage can *chas v'shalom*; none of you *tzadikim* would even consider such a thing but still we're throwing away the opportunities, opportunities to put the Chumash into our heads.

A New Way

To put the stories, the ideals, the attitudes of the Chumash into our heads! *That's already an entirely new way of learning Chumash.* That's how the Chofetz Chaim did it. Because he knew that the more you study the *makkos*; the more you think about it, the more you light that fire in your mind, the more you know, you feel, that “there is no one like Hashem...”

Not only the *makkos* – everything. There are so many things to think about. Let's say, **בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרָא אֱלֹקִים** – the first fact in the Torah. “*In the beginning Hashem created everything.*” Which of us does not subscribe to that? We are talking about *ma'aminim*. But do you know how remote it is from us in reality? Do you know what the consequences of that statement are? It makes a fundamental difference in everything that you see in the world.

You Don't Exist

Imagine, if you stop for a second to think, that **בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרָא אֱלֹקִים** – *in the beginning Hashem created*, that means that whatever you see in this world is the Will of Hashem and nothing else. You don't see matter. You don't see flesh. You don't see people. You see something that is merely a form, a form of the Words of Hashem when He said, **יְהִי** – *let there be!*

So there's no matter – everything is spirit. Mr. Shamoula, and Mr. Shelby and Dr. Weiss and you and I, all of us that now are facing each other, what do we see? We don't see people. We see only the *dvar Hashem*.

And if we were to apply ourselves to the ideas of the Torah in this manner, we would find startling results and our heads would become full with remarkable ideas. Every time you read the words, they're like new ideas, adding more layers of Torah attitudes onto your mind.

New Old Songs

That's the very important principle that Dovid Hamelech frequently reiterated. And we say it many times without even stopping to think what it means. **שִׁירוּ לוֹ שִׁיר הַדָּשׁ** – *Sing to Him a new song.* New songs? New attitudes? What's wrong with the old songs? The old songs were pretty good – they won't make any better ones than the old ones – Dovid himself sang plenty of old songs.

But we see that Dovid said, “Sing new songs.” What is that? It means that the old Torah ideals are very important but you have to always refresh those ideals with new thoughts; **בְּכֹל יוֹם יִהְיֶה בְּעֵינֶיךָ בְּחַדָּשִׁים** – they have to appear new to you by means of your enthusiastic thinking. And so, **שִׁירוּ לוֹ שִׁיר הַדָּשׁ** – always review the old ideas and make them new again. Generate your own enthusiasm every day.

Of course, you'll look in the *shirei Dovid avdecha* and repeat his old words – *but you'll think about them!* And if we'll follow in his footsteps, if we'll make good use of the *Tehillim*, we're going to experience some of his emotions. Not all of them. This, I am sorry – I can't promise you, but you'll achieve a small percentage of what Dovid Hamelech was able to achieve. Try to follow in his footsteps and recapture some of his feelings.

Our Great Failing

Now I understand people who do lip service are satisfied to fulfill their obligation and say the words. But that's not a *shir chadash*; it's only by means of thinking into the words of Dovid that's how you begin to relive a little bit of the great emotions that he felt. That's why *pesukei d'zimra* is so important.

The people who finish in a big hurry, they're busy trying to just get through the *davening*, they're missing out on one of the greatest accomplishments of life. I won't tell you my own opinion; I'll just say what the Tur says: **טוֹב מְעַט בְּכּוֹנֵה שְׁלֵא בְּכּוֹנֵה** – To say a little bit and to think

about what you're saying is much more valuable than to just speed through the whole *davening*.

The *siddur* is a very profound book. There are deep things there and they deserve to be studied. Every line is another gem, another important thought that we must live with. Take your time. The *siddur* is a career that is available for every Jew and it's a tragedy that lives are being wasted. I've said it before, that it's a cancer, this sickness of what we are doing with our *davening* today. The truth is that it's one of the greatest failings in Jewish life today. And therefore, to restore *tefillah* to its proper place should be one of our highest aspirations.

Guarantee of Greatness

By the way, I would like to talk about the *siddur* all the time, but I know it would be boring for you. On *tefillah*, I would like to talk for a whole year. An entire year only on the subject of prayer! We could take every word and analyze it; we could study it deeply and it would be worth every minute.

You want a program for greatness for yourself? I can guarantee; any person who's listening, I can guarantee you greatness if you'll undertake a program of spending five minutes a day thinking. If you want a path to greatness, that's it. Try learning with the *peirush harosh*, that means using your *rosh*, your head. Use your *rosh* and think into any *possuk* in the the *siddur* for five minutes straight. I'll give you a *shtar kasuv v'chasum*; you're guaranteed to become great.

After some weeks pass, and you continue that way, you'll discover things not only you didn't dream they're in the *possuk*, you didn't dream they're inside your heart. Something is going to develop in your mind; an entire new understanding of the subject will flourish. You'll be amazed at the results you'll produce. An enthusiasm, a fire. It can change a person's character.

The Way to Pray

Try it once just for practice and see what it is. Of course it's a very hard job to think five minutes a day on one *possuk*. Try it – you'll discover it's not easy. We once had a group for young men who undertook to do this – to choose any *possuk* in the *siddur* and to spend five minutes thinking about that *possuk*. Now, when they heard that the first time, one of them said, "Well, I think two hours every day on certain things". So I said "Try it anyhow". He came back three weeks later – we used to meet as a group once every three weeks – and he said "It's very difficult; it's not as easy as I imagined".

But if you do it, and then you take those ideas you gained and you put it into the *davening*, you've accomplished something remarkable. That's what *tefillah* is called: *avodah sh'bileiv*, service of the mind. Your mind has to be working hard during *davening*.

You know, sometimes there were people who came to watch Rav Yisroel Salanter *daven* and they were terribly disappointed. Because he wasn't shaking; he stood still and didn't move as he *davened*. And they were so terribly disappointed. Terribly disappointed! But there was one person who was standing near him, watching him, and he was watching his forehead. And the veins on his head were swollen, they were pulsating. His mind was working very hard. That's how to *daven*, with your mind.

Living Successfully

The greatness of a person is not only that he walks in the beaten path – just because he did it yesterday or somebody did it generations ago – but he walks that beaten path with a new fire! Every day he's singing a *shir chodosh*, a new song. And that's when all of the great Torah ideals will find a *menucha*; they'll find a place of rest in your heart and it will stay with you.

Everyone can be like the Chofetz Chaim; everyone can study the Chumash like he was doing in his room. That's how we have to do – even into our old age. Keep on reviewing all the great ideas every day a little bit to refresh in your mind the great impression that you once had. Go over it again. Practice what it means. Think of Yetzias Mitzrayim like the Chofetz Chaim thought about it. Each *makkah*, think about it. Think. When? Don't wait till Pesach night at the seder. All year long you should be thinking about what's in the Chumash.

Think about what's in the *davening*! Take time out to think about the *pesukim* that you're saying every day and gradually that fire of enthusiasm will grow brighter and brighter. And the more you think, the more real it becomes – and the more enthusiastic you become.

Gedolah deiah! How great is true knowledge. When a person becomes clear in all these things because he's thinking constantly in them, that's the man who has lived successfully.

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

Living With Idealism

The *makkos* were sent upon Egypt to sear the lessons of Daas Hashem into our minds. The great men of the past utilized these lessons by spending time just reading the Chumash as if for the first time.

This week I will *bli neder* spend five minutes each day in thought. Concentrating either on one of the plagues in Egypt or on one *possuk* of the *siddur*. As Rabbi Miller asserts:
This is a guarantee for greatness!

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

שאל אביך ויגדך זקניך ויאמרו לך

Q:

Should a person eat meat every day?

A:

Now, that's not my line – I'm not in the nutrition business. But I'll merely say this: In addition to having a varied diet of all kinds of food, not only one kind, in addition to that, everyone should learn not to be a slave to the dinner table. We eat for the purpose of being healthy. The Rambam says that you should eat what's good for your health. He says, *lo k'kelev u'kechamor*, not like the dog or the donkey who eat only what's sweet for them. Animals eat what's sweet to them but we have to eat what's good for us.

And therefore that's the only recommendation I'm able to give: Eat what's healthful for you and it will be included in your service of Hashem if you'll add the thought of why you're doing it. Like it says in the Shulchan Aruch. The Shulchan Aruch says you should eat with the intention, *kedai she'uchal la'avod es Hashem*, so that I should have the strength, the energy, to be able to serve Hashem. Always think that. I would recommend that you should say it too when you start eating. It's not a bad idea, only that your wife shouldn't hear it – she'll laugh at you. Or your husband will laugh at you. But you should say it anyhow, even if they'll laugh: "I'm going to eat now *kedai she'uchal la'avod es Hashem*." That's what the Shulchan Aruch says. You're eating in order to serve Hashem.

TAPE # 751

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