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פרשת ויקהל-שקלים

WITH

R' AVIGDOR MILLER זי"ל

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

Three Roads to Greatness

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Part I. Ordinary Service

**The Half-Shekel**

In the ancient days of our nation a very big event took place every year which attracted a great deal of attention, and that was the collection of the *machatzis hashekel*. Today we still have a small *zecher* of those bygone days – we remember what used to be by reading a special *sedrah* on Shabbos Shekalim; we give a half dollar to a *tzedakah* fund before Purim; we do different things – but in our early days the gathering of the

*machatzis hashekel* and bringing it to Yerushalayim was much bigger than that.

Our *chachomim* tell us that בְּאָדָר בְּאָדָר מְשַׁמְעִין עַל הַשְּׁקָלִים – On Rosh Chodesh Adar they begin to make announcements reminding everyone that it is the time to bring in the *machatzis hashekel*. Everywhere, in all of the places where the Am Yisroel dwelt, there were commissions set up, officials and *gabboim* for the purpose of collecting the half-shekel from every Jew.

And although it was only a half-shekel, but because it was an obligation on every Jew, very large sums of money were collected. All over Eretz Yisroel and Bavel and wherever Jews lived, bucketfuls and trunkfuls of half-shekels were collected. And finally the money was gathered together and sent to Yerushalayim, to the Beis Hamikdosh.

**The Convoy**

It was a very big affair every year, a tremendous scene to behold. There was a large convoy of about ten thousand people who came from Bavel, besides others who joined as the convoy passed their locales. All those who wanted to come to Eretz Yisroel to study Torah utilized the opportunity and came along. Also all the *meisim* that died in Bavel and wanted to be buried in Eretz Yisroel were now exhumed and the bodies were carried with this convoy.

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They had with them groups of armed soldiers who made treaties with the kings and governors whose lands they passed through. This was so that they should have the privilege to pass through unhindered and have the right to collect *machatzis hashekel* from the local Jews without having to pay taxes. And as they converged upon Yerushalayim from all sides of the *galus*, it had a very big effect on all the Jewish communities they passed. Everybody, wherever he was, knew that it was his duty to contribute.

### **Membership Money**

The entire nation participated in the *avodah* of the Beis Hamikdosh with this money. It was with the half-shekels of Abba in Pumbedisa and Chanina in Bnei Brak and Chisda in Neharda'ah, with the half-shekels of all the Jews everywhere, that the *korbanos tzibbur*, the community sacrifices, were purchased.

And that's how the entire nation participated in the *avodas Beis Hamikdosh*. Just like when the Mishkon was erected in the Wilderness, everybody took part by means of an obligatory contribution of a *machatzis hashekel*, that's how it remained always.

That's what the *machatzis hashekel* means – it represents the obligations of a Jew by means of which we become Hashem's people. All of the people participated, and that's how they were counted as Bnei Yisroel. Of course, it represents all of our obligations; everything, not only the half-shekel. It means *tefillin* and Shabbos and *tznius*. It means *limud Torah* and eating *matzah*. It means *shaatnez* and *birkas hamazon*. It's the whole Shulchan Aruch. Fulfilling all of those minimum obligations, that's what makes you part of the Am Yisroel.

### **Membership Perks**

Now, what does it mean to be part of the Klal Yisroel? It means everything! It's not like the Pole says, he's so happy to be a Pole. Or the black man

says “We are so proud that we are black.” Now, I have nothing against them for being proud; I think it's good to be loyal to your people – let the Blacks be proud, let the Poles be proud; *gezunterheit*. But what is it really after all? Not much. It means they're proud to be a member of one of the *mishpechos ha'adama*, the nations who live for this world. Because the nations of the earth live only for now and then they go down in the soil and are forgotten forever.

But when we say “we are proud to be part of the Jewish people”, we mean much more than that because Hakodosh Boruch Hu said to us that we are living for a different place. When the Bnei Yisroel accepted the Torah, from now on, they are not of this world; they are forever.

When you do a mitzvah you are investing in eternity. You are a person that is forever! You are part of the Am Olam – not only you live forever in this world, you're a nation that will forever exist, a nation that will live forever in the World to Come. Membership in the Klal Yisroel entitles you to the most important thing you could imagine: כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשׁ לָהֶם חֵלֶק לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא – Every Yisroel has a portion in the World to Come.

Now, we note that it doesn't say, כָּל הַצְדִּיקִים. Maybe only *tzaddikim* should get Olam Habo? No, it says כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל. It means that the World to Come is the very great reward given to every Jew who keeps the Torah. That's what it means כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל – every Jew who fulfills the basic Torah obligations is guaranteed a ticket to Olam Habo.

### **Earning Your Ticket**

And just like a person who fulfilled the minimum obligation of giving a half-shekel was guaranteed a share in the Mishkon. So too, by means of the obligatory performance of all the *mitzvos*, a person acquires a share in the Eternal Mishkon of the Afterlife. If you want a portion of whatever our nation is promised, that's the minimum you have to do.

We should keep that in mind always, that by participating, by fulfilling our basic obligations we're not merely "doing *mitzvos*." We're not merely "Orthodox Jews." What it means, *k'pshuto*, is that we're gaining a ticket to Olam Habo. That's our *zechus*! Because we belong to that great nation of those who follow the *dvar Hashem* – the Shas, the Rishonim, the Shulchan Aruch – because we have a Torah and we have to fulfill it, that's the way we merit eternal life.

### **Catching Fagin**

And so, *kol Yisroel*, everyone, is promised a *cheilek* in Olam Habo. Because everyone participates in everything. In ancient times everybody kept the letter of the Torah. Up until recently even in our memory – that is the memory of our grandparents – in European communities up until the 1870s, everybody kept everything; except in Germany, certain parts of Austria, Italy. Otherwise in Poland and in Russia where the masses of the Jews lived they kept the entire Torah. Everybody put on *tefillin*. Everybody fasted on Shiva Asar BeTammuz.

Everybody washed *negel vasser* when they got up in the morning. Everybody had a basin with a pitcher of water near his bed. Everybody! It was remarkable. That's how it used to be. No Jew would leave his bed if something happened to the *negel vasser* in the morning. He would ask, "Where's the water?" They had to bring the water before he could get off the bed.

They used to say that if you want to catch a Jewish thief so when he's asleep take away his *negel vasser*. When he gets up in the morning he can't leave his bed because a Jew without *negel vasser* doesn't leave his bed.

I told you once about Warsaw. In Warsaw the pickpockets had long beards and *kapotes*. The crooks were *frum* Jews. There was nothing else you could be in those days. There was no possibility of not being an Orthodox Jew. A Jew wouldn't walk *daled amos* with his head uncovered once upon a

time. You couldn't find it. Every detail of Jewish life once upon a time was fulfilled.

### **A Golden Woman**

Of course there were many who went beyond the line of duty too. Everybody knows the famous story of the *Goldene Roize* who was once sentenced for some reason in the Middle Ages. In the late Middle Ages she was sentenced by the gentiles to be put to death, a woman, and she was tied to the tail of a wild horse who was supposed to be driven into a fast run dragging her onto death.

So before they did that she asked for one favor. She asked for a pin. A well-known story, a true story. They gave her a pin, the last request, and she pinned her skirt to her feet, to her skin. She pinned her dress to her skin so the dress should be kept down as she would be dragged. It's a famous story, the *Goldene Roize* they called her, the golden rose.

### **Getting Into the Straightjacket**

And there are a thousand more stories like that. But that wasn't the minimum *machatzis hashekel* – it was above and beyond; it was glorious – but even the most simple Jew, the simple tailor and shoemaker, the mother raising her children, the masses of Am Yisroel lived gloriously and acquired a share in Olam Habo because they lived by habit, by the good habits of Torah and *mitzvos*. That's how we lived in all the generations and that's how we continue to live today. We follow the beaten path of fulfilling everything.

You know, somebody once wrote a history and he said when Rav Yosef Karo came along and made a Shulchan Aruch, he put the Jewish nation into a straightjacket from now on. Up until Rav Yosef Karo there was not one *sefer* that told you everything you have to do. But today you open up a *sefer*, look in the table of contents, this *siman*, that *sif*, and you know what to do in this and this case. You can look it up.

To a very great extent our course in life is delineated and so this writer – he wasn't a big *tzaddik* by the way – he was complaining that the Shulchan Aruch put us into a straightjacket. But we say *baruch Hashem!* We need a straightjacket! Otherwise, we would be crooked. Better a straight jacket than a crooked jacket. That's our ticket to the Next World.

### **Convoy to Destiny**

And because we follow the Shulchan Aruch, we all earned our ticket. If a Jew is a *shomer mitzvos*, if he tries to keep the *mitzvos*, then he is ours, *yeish lo cheilek l'Olam Habo*. I don't care what kind of *yarmulke* he wears; if he wears a knitted *yarmulke* or if he wears something else, he's traveling along with us. A person who keeps *taharas hamishpacha*, family purity, he eats kosher, he sends his children to yeshiva and not public school, he's a *shomer Shabbos*, he has *mezuzos* on his doors – a person like that is walking with us to *Olam Habo*.

That's how the masses of our people traverse the same path together towards *Olam Habo*. Just like the march of the *machatzis hashekel* to Yerushalayim meant they were marching together with the whole nation; in every generation, by following that pattern of fulfilling the basic obligations of the Torah, that's how the throngs of our people are marching towards their destiny in *Olam Habo*.

## *Part II. Extraordinary Service*

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### **The Surprising Question**

Now, as simple as all this sounds, it's interesting to note that among our sages of old it was not considered a simple matter at all. Because we find in the Talmud a question repeated again and again, *אִי־הוּ בֶן עוֹלָם הַבָּא* – *Who is worthy of the World to Come?* Once and again this question is posed; and our sages give various answers, examples of those

who undertook a special behavior that merited for them a place in *Olam Habo*.

Now, that's surprising to us because we wouldn't even ask such a question. To us it seems so simple. *Kol Yisroel!* Every *frum* Jew has a share in the World to Come. What's the question already? And yet, if the sages are asking, "*Who is worthy of the World to Come?*" we already have reason to suspect that the matter is not as simple as we imagined.

The Gemara (Taanis 22a) tells us a story about a certain Rav Beroka who was standing in a marketplace and he encountered Eliyahu Hanavi. It means he had a vision – *giluy Eliyahu* is a vision that some of our great men merited. Now, it's a special privilege to be able to encounter Eliyahu Hanavi and so Rav Beroka utilized the opportunity to ask him this question. "Is there anybody in this marketplace who's a *ben Olam Habo?*"

### **Clowning Around**

Now, you understand already that in a marketplace there must have been many Jews, many people who merit *Olam Habo*, and yet that's the question Rav Beroka chose to ask of Eliyahu: "Is there someone here who is going to be a resident in the Next World?"

"Yes," Eliyahu said to him, "I'll show you." And he pointed out a clown who was dancing in the corner of the marketplace; a poor Jew whose business it was to make people laugh – he was dancing up and down for some pennies. "That's a *ben Olam Habo*," Eliyahu said.

Rav Beroka was quite surprised. "A clown? That's the *ben Olam Habo* of the marketplace?!" And so after Eliyahu departed Rav Beroka went to investigate. He approached this clown and he asked him for details of his behavior. "Tell me something about yourself." He wanted to discover what is there about him that merits *Olam Habo*.

## Clandestine Clowning

“My line of work is to be a comedian,” the man said. “I dance and sing and make jokes. And I try especially to cheer up those who look sad.”

Now that's not a simple statement. What Rav Beroka discovered was that this clown used to clown in his off-hours also. When he was finished clowning for *parnassah*, he went clowning for a mitzvah. The clown told him, “When I am off from my work and I have spare time, I go around to people who are sad and I jump up and down and make them laugh.

Now, I'm not able to tell you exactly what this clown did but it's certain that it was a program that this man followed not once or twice. It was a system of his that he kept his eyes open as he was performing; and if he saw among the crowd someone who seemed to be not enthusiastic or didn't respond so he singled him out to give him a special private treatment later.

And even though he was tired from dancing and juggling all day, after hours he made it his business to visit that person and to perform for him especially, to cheer him up. That was his *shittah*; if someone was sad or depressed, he donated his services for nothing; he would visit sick and lonesome people and entertain them. He racked his brain thinking of ways and means to amuse them and make them happy. And that's how he became a *ben Olam Habo*; he received not just a *cheilek*, a portion along with everyone else, but a much higher station in the world that's forever.

## No Simple Thruway

Another story from the Gemara. It's about a *chacham* who left this world for a short time and then came back to give us a report about what he saw there in *Olam Habo*. Now exactly what happened I cannot tell you. Whether he died and came back to life again or he was close to death and while he was close to death he had a vision of *Olam Habo*, I can't tell you – the details are not supplied. I suspect that most people who die tend

to stay dead and so I venture to say that it was a vision. But whatever it was, when he returned to the life of this world, when he regained consciousness, they asked him “What did you see? What did you see in the other world?”

And this sage told them that he was amazed at what he saw there, at the information that was revealed to him. “עוֹלָם הַפּוֹךְ רָאִיתִי – I saw an upside-down world. עֲלִיּוֹנִים לְמַטָּה וְתַחְתּוֹנִים לְמַעְלָה – The upper ones here, the ones who are most important in this world, are at the bottom there, and those who are at the bottom here are on the top in that world.”

Now don't get your hopes up now just because you feel you're not much in this world. It doesn't mean that *everything* is upside down. But it means that we'll be in for some surprises because there are some of the *elyonim* in this world who are *lematah* there and there are some *tachtonim* in this world who are *lema'alah* there.

And so we begin to see from these stories an important principle that the way to *Olam Habo* is not the simple thruway we imagined. It's not just a straightforward matter how *Olam Habo* is conferred on people. Because if it's possible that such big surprises should take place – clowns who are first in line and *elyonim* who are at the bottom – you must say that something is being done by people even today that we don't recognize so easily but when they come to the World to Come they are going to be given great distinction. In that world they will be greatly honored for things that they're not honored for now. And therefore when we talk about the question who is a *ben Olam Habo* we're not speaking about fulfilling that which everybody else does. We're talking about being original, doing something unusual.

## A Greater Share

And that's why in our parsha we find that Hashem spoke to Moshe Rabeinu and said קָחוּ מֵאִתְּכֶם תְּרוּמָה לַיהוָה כֹּל נָדִיב לְבוֹ יְבִיאוּהָ “Take from among you a *terumah* to Hashem, whoever is of willing heart should bring it” (Vayakhel 35:5). It

means that after the *machatzis hashekel* was given by everyone, ensuring for everyone a nominal share in the Mishkon; an additional chance was given to afford everyone a very much greater opportunity. Now you could volunteer with your free will and acquire a larger share in this eternal achievement.

“Whoever is of willing heart” should step forward with whatever they’re capable of. And many did! Women brought their copper mirrors – it’s not easy for a woman to give away her mirror – and donated them to the Mishkon. Others came with valuable metals, gold and silver. Those who had been forced to learn metallurgy in Mitzrayim as slaves stepped forward and willingly offered their expertise and time. Those who had become expert weavers came to use their talents for Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

It could be some stayed in their tents, I can’t tell you – could be some were satisfied with the minimum half-shekel – but everyone had the opportunity to be a נָדִיב לָב and gain a greater share in the Mishkon.

### Two Levels

And these two opportunities to donate to the Mishkon; the half-shekel and the appeal to step forward with more, are parallels of all the achievements that a Jew can make in his lifetime.

One level, the minimum, is the obligatory performance of all the *mitzvos*; when a Jew performs all of them he has acquired a share in the eternal Mishkon of the Afterlife. But those that choose to go beyond the line of duty – these people acquire a greater share in the eternal Mishkon of Olam Habo.

And that’s what matters most when we talk about Olam Habo; we’re not interested in the minimum that gives us an ordinary portion in the World to Come. That *cheilek* is not enough for us. When we’re talking about the eternal Mishkon, we’re talking about something that’s forever, and

so we’re interested in achieving much more than the minimum.

### Level of Love

And that brings us to the important question of what’s called *chassidus*. Now when you hear this word, *chassidus*, don’t lose interest because that’s the crux of the whole matter. We’re not talking about *chassidus* the way it’s spoken about today, certain groups that teach certain kinds of ideologies. Right now we’re talking about *chassidus* in the original sense, the way it’s used in the Gemara.

The sages ask, אִיזְהוּ הַסִּיד – *Who can be truly called a chossid?* הַמְתַּחֲסֵד עִם קוֹנוֹ – *the one who does some kindness to his Creator.* Now, at first glance that doesn’t appear to be much of an answer. Because how can you do kindness to your Creator? You can’t do a thing for Him. What does הַמְתַּחֲסֵד עִם קוֹנוֹ mean?

What it means is that you show a special devotion to Him, an exceptional loyalty and love, by doing more than is required of you. That’s what kindness means – you do more than you have to because you love that person. And that’s what *chassidus* means – if you do beyond the line of duty because you love Hakodosh Boruch Hu, you’re a *chossid*.

### The Real Candidate

The Mesillas Yesharim gives an example. Suppose a father and his son are walking down the street, and the father stops for a moment and he admires a certain fruit on the fruit stand. He doesn’t say anything. He just looks at it, and then he passes on. Now, this son is the kind of son who wants to please his father and so he doesn’t wait for his father to say, “Son, buy me this” or “I want this.” No. He sees that his father’s interested in it so he comes back later and he buys that for his father. That’s a truly devoted son. He doesn’t wait to be told, but he seeks opportunities to fulfill the desires of his beloved father.

And so the Mesillas Yesharim says, a *chossid* is somebody who, if there's an indication in the Torah that Hashem approves of a certain practice, then he's not satisfied by doing the minimum; instead he goes all out and adds to it. "Oh Hakodosh Boruch Hu, is that what You want? You want me to participate with a *machatzis hashekel* in building the Mishkon? So I'm going to go out of my way to do even more." That's *chassidus* and that's the heart of the subject that we're talking about – the person who is willing to step over the border line and do more than he's required, that's the one who is the real candidate for Olam Habo.

### A Different Mind

And so we're learning now that our station in the Next World depends on our "willingness of heart" to do more. It's not only the "more" – it's the "willingness of heart." It's not merely a quantitative difference; it's a difference in *quality* because it demonstrates that you love Hashem. When you add to what is required of you, when you're looking for ways to express your devotion to Hashem, it demonstrates that your entire attitude is different. You're demonstrating what's in your mind – an especial loyalty and an affection for his Creator.

That's the great *maalah* in being a *chossid* – the mind of a *chossid* is an entirely different mind because he loves Hashem and therefore he utilizes whatever abilities he has to serve Hashem and to bring Him pleasure. There are a lot of things in life – whether you're a clown or a goldsmith or a weaver or even a quiet woman who is willing to collect copper mirrors for the Mishkon – you'd be surprised how much *chassidus* there is in life.

All our lives we have to be on guard to add and add and add. That's the best way to serve Hashem. And Hakodosh Boruch Hu is able to recognize what's in a man's mind. Hakodosh Baruch Hu has His eye open for these people and that's why they are the true *bnei Olam Habo*.

### The First Two Ways

Our *chachomim* tell us (Makos 24a) that בָּא מִיָּכָה וְהִעֲמִידֵן עַל שְׁלֹשׁ – *Micha the Navi came and he established the Torah on three principles*; it means he pointed out for us three foundations on which a person's *avodas Hashem* rests. It's related to our subject so let's listen to what he says: הֲגִיד לָךְ אָרָם – *He tells you, O man, what is good*, וְמָה הַשֵּׁם דּוֹרֵשׁ מִמּוֹדָה – *and what does Hashem require of you*, בִּי אֵם עֲשׂוֹת מִשְׁפָּט וְאַהֲבַת חֶסֶד וְהִצַּנֵּעַ לְכַת עִם אֱלֹקֵיךָ – *but to do mishpat and to love kindness and to walk secretly with Hashem* (Micha 6:8).

What are these three things? Number one, *asos mishpat*, is what we spoke about in the beginning of tonight's talk. If you're interested in knowing what Hashem wants of you, the first thing is *asos mishpat*, to fulfill the Torah; it includes all of the *dinim*; all the laws between man and man and the laws between man and Hakodosh Boruch Hu. That's *mishpat* – all the minimum obligations that we must fulfill. It's the first step of being a Jew and it's our ticket to Olam Habo.

But that's not enough. A good Jew, if he loves Hashem, he wants to do more. And so the second thing that Hakodosh Boruch Hu requires is *ahavas chessed*, to love the practice of *chassidus*, of going beyond the line of duty. Of course it means kindness too but in general it means to not be satisfied with the minimum; instead you go beyond what the *mishpat* requires. That's what kindness is, after all. It's *nedivus haleiv*, what a man's heart volunteers to do; it means making use of your free will to add even more and to acquire a greater and more special share of Olam Habo.

### Clandestine Activities

And now, the third principle of Micha; if you fell asleep pay attention now because this is something new: After *asos mishpat* and *ahavas chesed* comes עִם אֱלֹקֵיךָ – *To walk with Hashem in secret*. Now what does it mean to "walk

in secret”? It’s an added dimension; it means to do everything without displaying it. הַצִּנֵּעַ לְכַת – to conceal your good deeds; to do these things privately without ostentation.

Let’s say if a man wants to give charity; so instead of doing with display, he gives it secretly. Nobody knows about it. Our sages did that. Everybody knows about the story of Mar Ukva (Kesubos 67b), how he gave *tzedakah* secretly. He used to come and deposit money behind the door so that the poor could take it without knowing who the giver was. That was the policy of Mar Ukva. And once a poor man wanted to discover who it was that was giving him the money so Mar Ukva fled; he made a quick getaway and in order to conceal his identity he entered a furnace, a burning furnace. That’s how important it is to conceal your good deeds. As much as possible all good deeds should be done without display.

It’s like a certain precious stone that has a brilliance only when it’s in the dark. When you display it in a cave or in a cellar where the windows are draped over then this precious stone gives forth a bright light. But when you take it into the street in the sunshine, it loses its brilliance.

Now, why can’t a mitzvah shine in the daylight too? What is it that makes a mitzvah shine when it’s done in secrecy? The answer is that you’re thinking about Hashem. The great advantages of הַצִּנֵּעַ לְכַת is that you do it עִם אֱלֹהֵיךָ; you’re doing it only for Hashem Elokecha and for no ulterior motive. Otherwise it could very well be that you’re doing it for the acclaim of others.

### **Impress the Guests**

Let’s say you’re in the *shul*. You’re a *yeshiva* man or you’re a *ba’al habayis* in the *shul*, and you’re praying now. It’s hard to deny that we are encouraged by the fact that people are looking. Of course we don’t do it *because* of that but every additional shake gets a little bit of a push from the fact that we have an audience. And I can prove it. Because when you’re home, let’s say you’re saying

*birkas hamazon* after the meal, you can catch yourself sometimes saying it without so much shaking – and it could be a pretty cold *bentching* too – because there’s no audience. Nothing but your poor wife and you don’t feel like showing off so much in her presence.

But suppose a stranger happened to be present at your table. Oh, that’s a different story. Now, because I’m an old hand already, I utilize it. When I have guests at the table I tell them, “I’m glad you’re here because you give me an incentive to *bentch* with more *kavanah*. I let them know. “I’m glad to have you here because now I’m saying it better than usual.” I make use of the audience. But first thing I give a *mesiras modaah*, “Don’t think that’s the way I always *bentch*. Only because you’re around, I want to make use of the opportunity and I’m doing it better.”

That’s human nature – you want to impress. Are you thinking about Hakodosh Boruch Hu? Could be you’re thinking about Him too. More or less; usually less. But the people, that’s who you’re actually performing for.

### **Clandestine Cleaning**

And that’s why הַצִּנֵּעַ לְכַת is so valuable. When you serve Hashem in secret it’s especially prized because it’s not merely an improvement on the *mitzvah*; it’s a brand-new career of *im Elokecha*, of training yourself to be aware of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. A career of awareness of Hakodosh Baruch Hu! That’s called living!

And it’s a career that’s open to everyone. To walk secretly with Hashem is open to everyone; you don’t have to be a *talmid chochom*; you don’t have to be wealthy or wise – all you need is a desire to become great.

And that’s why every man and woman, every boy and girl, should take up a program of הַצִּנֵּעַ לְכַת; everyone should make up his mind that once a day he’s going to do an act of *chesed* secretly. Nobody should know about it. “I’m not doing it for people

to like me; only because I want Hashem to see that I'm serving Him."

Did you ever try that? Do it tonight when you get home. When your mother's not looking, wash a dish for her. Wash out a dish, yes. Or when nobody's looking, wash your wife's dish. Do that once in a while when nobody's looking. And don't ever tell anyone.

### **Secret Service**

If you think about it you'll find many ways of helping people secretly, of doing things that they don't know about. Let's say you go to the yeshiva and nobody's around; put the *seforim* back on the shelf before anybody comes in. Or you'll buy, let's say, fragrant soap and bring it into the lavatory of the *beis haknesses* or the yeshiva – put a piece of fragrant soap in a urinal, yes. It's a big *chesed*!

I know a man who goes into the bathrooms of the synagogues and puts bars of soap there. And he goes out and nobody knows who did it. Sometimes he goes into the yeshivas and leaves tissues there, on the tables, when nobody is looking. Other people go buy *seforim* and they deposit them in the *azat* of the yeshivas. There are people like that; nobody knows about them. Secretly they are doing *mitzvos*. Only Hashem knows.

If you think you have nothing to do, so write a nice letter to some person and encourage him without signing your name. An anonymous letter. I do that many times; I write letters to encourage people. I don't sign my name so they'll think it's somebody important writing to them. They love it! If you want you can sign your name too, but if you do it secretly, it's a tremendous thing!

### **Clandestine Calling**

People can pray for others in secret. No effort is involved and everybody needs prayers. Some need it desperately. So many people – people who can't get married, people who have trouble with

*parnassah*, people who don't have *shalom bayis*, people who are ill.

When you hear that a friend's child is very sick, or that a neighbor or cousin had some mishap, don't just say "Tsk, tsk" and move on. Take the name down and pray for that person. Nobody has to know. Stand in a corner somewhere and speak to Hashem. Or find a telephone booth – you can even take the receiver in your hand if you want and pray to Hashem: Make a long distance call to Hashem: "Please *Ribono Shel Olam*, send a *refuah sheleima* to so and so, *bi'soch sha'ar cholei Yisroel*."

I know a man who carries papers with him that have the names of *cholim*. Do that. Carry these papers and from time to time look into the papers and be *mispallel*. It's a very important opportunity. It's *gemillas chassodim*, a *chassidus*, to be *mispallel* for someone who is sick. And the more you're *minadeiv leiv* to do it, the greater you become. And when it's done *b'hatzneia*, in secret, that's the pinnacle! Everything is made especially great when it's done in secret.

### **The Ladder**

And so we learn now that there's a ladder to climb to Hakodosh Boruch Hu. Of course, a ladder to Hakodosh Boruch Hu goes up very high, but we see now that there are three principles upon which the ladder stands. Number one is the half-shekel that everyone participates in – it means all of the obligations that make us into the Am Yisroel, the Yisroel that's included in *kol Yisroel yeish lahem cheilek l'olam habo*.

But we're not satisfied with that. After all, this world is merely transitory; it's not permanent – whatever Olam Hazeih success you achieve is not forever. But whatever you achieve for the Next World, that's what counts.

And that's why we all want to be *chassidim*. That's the second principle. As much as possible we look for ways and means of going beyond the line of duty – we're not satisfied with just the minimum *cheilek* in the Next World.

And on top of all that, the pinnacle of our service of Hashem, is to do it solely for Hashem. הַצָּנֵעַ לְכַת עִם אֱלֹהֵיךָ. Look for opportunities – not look; *make* opportunities to serve Hashem in secret. Your wife and your children should not know. Your husband and parents shouldn't know. That's the especial greatness of an *oved Hashem*; to train oneself to become aware of Hakodosh Boruch Hu by doing things in His service that nobody knows about.

And if you begin this program and persist – don't become tired and don't scorn the opportunities – then you're going to be surprised at the harvest of *shleimus* which will be yours in the years to come. Little by little you are climbing the ladder of perfection and becoming a *ben Olam Habo*.

### Have A Wonderful Shabbos

#### LET'S GET PRACTICAL

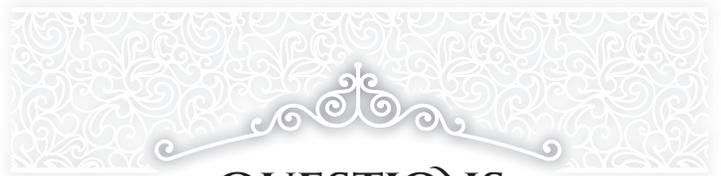
##### *Traveling All Three Roads*

Micha teaches three ways of serving Hashem: (1) Keeping all the requirements of the Torah, (2) Doing extra, and (3) Doing things secretly. This week I will *bli neder* set aside time to work on all these areas. I will spend five minutes each day studying the basic laws of the Torah in *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* or a similar *sefer*. Additionally, I will go beyond the call of duty by praying to Hashem for someone else each day. I will do this secretly so that no one but Hashem knows of my devotion to Him.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

465 - Who Merits Olam Habo | 905 - One Nation in the World  
974 - Beyond the Line of Duty | E-6 - A Youth's Ladder to Greatness

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## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

שאל אביך ויגדך זקניך ויאמרו לך

Q:

**How does one teach oneself  
to think before he speaks?**

A:

I told you this already more than once. Make up your mind that for the next two hours when somebody speaks to you you're not going to answer until you count to five. Do that for two hours today. No matter what, you'll count to five before you respond.

Now, once you accomplish that do it again tomorrow for two hours. And the day after. And after a while you'll get into the habit of thinking before you talk.

By the way, when you talk to important people you'll notice that even gentiles *l'havdil* have learnt not to shoot their mouths off.

Of course, the best thing is you if don't answer at all. A lot times, small things, you don't have to answer at all. You listen but you don't have to answer all the time. But if you must, take your time before you answer. Count: one, two, three, four, five, and then you can open your mouth. That itself makes you considered a wise man to other people.

TAPE # 493 (January 1984)

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