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WITH

R' AVIGDOR MILLER זי"ל

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

### The Precious Mind

#### Contents:

- Part I. On Your Mind - 1
- Part II. Using the Mind - 4
- Part III. Guard the Mind - 7

### Part I. On Your Mind

#### Learning From the Insane

I'll begin tonight's subject with a short introduction. It's just an anecdote but I think it's an important preface to the subject.

I was once in my home late at night - I was in my pajamas already - and the phone rang. It was somebody important and he asked me to go visit somebody, a *talmid* of the yeshiva who unfortunately had lost his mind and was in an insane asylum. I had never been to an insane asylum before - today you can walk the streets in

New York and it's almost the same as if you visited Bellevue. But this important person said it was an emergency and that I should go right away.

And so I went. It was after visiting hours, and they gave me a big strong guard as high as the ceiling to go with me, to protect me. I came into the room and three hundred *meshugaim* are sitting and looking at me; they were laughing at me. I had a beard. In those days nobody had beards. Today, *meshugaim* also wear beards but in those days it was a rarity. Anyhow, I met with this *bochur* and we spoke. After a short while I had to leave. Now, I can't say that I recommend it to everyone - but it most definitely pays to make a visit to an insane asylum. It was an enlightening experience for myself. When I walked out, I realized that I possessed something. I possess a mind!

That's the introduction. You possess a mind!

#### The Parade of Body Parts

In this week's *sedrah* we read about the *korban olah*. Now we spoke here once about the mitzvah of *nituach*; וַנִּתַּח אֹתָהּ לְנִתְחָיָהּ - And cut it into its pieces (Vayikra 1:6). After the animal was slaughtered, the *kohanim* dismembered it into separate limbs. And the Mishna (Tamid 4:3) describes how the *kohanim* lined up in a procession, like in a parade, to bring up to the *mizbeach* the various parts of the *korban olah*: בְּלֶךְ

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עומדין בשורה והאברים בקדם – All of the kohanim were standing in a row with the limbs in their hands.

And we explained that one of the purposes of the *korban olah* was to express our gratitude to Hashem for the parts of the body that He gave us. “I’m so grateful that You gave me an arm that actually I should be offering up one of my arms on the *mizbeach* to You.”

After all that would be the most sensible thing. You gave me two arms for forty years already. I used them happily every day so now I’ll express my gratitude to You by returning one of them. Let’s say I lend you my car, and you’re riding around in my car, enjoying yourself for a couple of days, and then I say, “My friend, can you please give me back my car tomorrow?” So are you going to say, “What do you mean, ‘Give back the car?! I don’t want to give it back.” Of course you give it back. And you say “thank you” too.

So we should return our arms, why not? Only that Hashem is kind to us and He says, “Don’t do anything to yourself. Don’t cut yourself. Live happily. Keep all of your limbs till you’re 120.”

But something we have to do! Something we have to do to remind ourselves! And that was the *korban olah*.

### Leading the Parade

Now, the first part of the body in that parade of limbs was the head. The *posuk* says וְעִרְכוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַכֹּהֲנִים אֶת־הַנֶּתֹּחִים אֶת־הָרֹאשׁ – And the kohanim placed the head ... onto the fire of the altar (ibid. 1:8) and the Mishna (ibid.) learns from there that הָרֹאשׁוֹן בְּרֹאשׁ – the first *kohen* in line carried the head. And that was a great lesson for the Am Yisroel; your head, your mind, that’s number one. What’s the first thing you have to be grateful for? Your sanity, your intelligence, your ability to think.

Now, that’s a big *chiddush* to us. There’s a weakness in mankind; we are under the assumption that our ability to think is inherent in ourselves. My mind, that’s my identity! It doesn’t even occur

to us that our intelligence is something outside of us; a gift that’s being bestowed on us that requires our gratitude.

### The Unique Introduction

Now, if you come here probably you’ve heard this before but I’ll repeat it again for our new customers. If you look at the weekdays *brachos* in the *shemone esrei*, the middle *brachos* of gratitude and supplication, you’ll see that they don’t begin with declarations. They are all supplications and right away we get down to the business of asking. For instance, הֲשִׁיבֵנו אֲבֵינוּ לְתוֹרָתְךָ – Turn us back to Your Torah. סַלַּח לָנוּ – Forgive us. רְאֵה בְּעֵינֵינוּ – Pay attention to our troubles. And so on, רְפָאֵנוּ, Heal us, בְּרַךְ עָלֵינוּ, Bless us. They all begin with entreaty.

There’s one exception however. When we come to the first *bracha* in the parade of *brachos*; the supplication for wisdom and knowledge, we see that it begins in an unusual way; it begins with a statement, a declaration: אַתָּה חוֹנֵן לְאָדָם דַּעַת – You bestow upon a man intelligence. Later, right afterwards, we move onto making an entreaty like all the other *brachos*: הַנְּנוּ מֵאֲתֶיךָ – favor us דַּעַת בִּינָה וְהִשְׁפִּיל – with different forms of knowledge and wisdom. But unlike the other *brachos* it starts off with a statement of fact: “You give us our *daas*.”

Now, we have to first get clear in our heads that there’s nothing haphazard in these *brachos*. The Anshei Knesses Hagedolah who arranged the *tefillos* were men of the greatest perspicacity and every word was weighed and discussed before it was passed by a great assemblage of sages. And therefore it’s not just by accident that one *bracha* has a certain expression and another one doesn’t. It’s certainly conveying to us an important idea.

And so we have a right – actually an obligation – to ask such a question: Why does this *bracha*, the *bracha* when we request *daas*, begin with a declaration, אַתָּה חוֹנֵן לְאָדָם דַּעַת – “You are the One that favors man with knowledge”.

## He Gives Us That Too?!

And the answer is that all the other things we need from Hakodosh Boruch Hu can more easily be recognized. For instance, everybody knows that mankind is weak and that we have to be brought back to the Torah. So we get down to business right away and say *Hashiveinu*, bring us back. We don't need any declaration.

*S'lach lanu* – Forgive us. There's no preface needed for that. We know that we are sinners. אֵין יְחַטָּא צְדִיק בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה טוֹב וְלֹא יִחַטָּא (Koheles 7:20). And so we can jump right into it and ask His forgiveness without any declarations of fact. רְאֵה בְּעֵינֵינוּ – Look in our affliction. This we know that we are afflicted; we know very well that we need His help. We don't need any declaration. And so on, all the *brachos*.

## Declaration of Daas

But when it comes to *daas* people are generally unaware that it's a commodity that's constantly being supplied to them. Men consider their intellect, their intelligence as inalienable, an inseparable part of their personality. As a matter of course I have a mind. "I am my intelligence."

And therefore when it comes to this subject it requires first a clarification. It's necessary to declare beforehand to ourselves that all consciousness is a gift. And so we say, אַתָּה חוֹנֵן – It's You Who gives us our minds! We're not going to be fooled like the unthinking masses. We're going to practice up three times a day, realizing that something has been given to us. And who is the Giver? *Atah! Atah!* You are the One who bestowed upon us. Any function of the mind comes directly only from You!

## The Ten Percenters

And that brings us now to the great necessity of thanking Hashem that we're not in the insane asylum. Don't underestimate that. You know, 10% of the world's population is insane. I'm not talking about people who have idiosyncrasies,

eccentricities; no. I'm talking about plain insanity. Don't we see people *lo aleinu v'lo aleichem*, who are born without *daas*? And we see people who do have *daas*, but in certain areas their minds don't function. And if you're not one of them, then you have a very great debt of gratitude. The fact that 90% of the world is able to function, that doesn't absolve you from your obligation.

It's important to always remind ourselves of that. "Ribono Shel Olam, we admit that if it were not for You, then we would be – we wouldn't even be gibbering idiots, people who have to be confined in a padded cell. If not for You we would be lying flat on the ground like a stone. We wouldn't even know how to raise a finger. We thank You that we are not idiots. We thank You that we are not in a straitjacket.

"We thank You that we're able to walk in the streets without suspecting that every person is attempting our life. We thank You that we are able to live without imagining that we have every disease."

## The Misery of Illness

I once met a man, a hypochondriac; a man who was otherwise successful, but he was so unfortunate because he thought he was suffering from a serious disease. So I called up his physician and he told me, "There's nothing wrong with him; he's a hypochondriac."

But he made his life so miserable because of his imaginary disease that his wife left him and she finally divorced him. His children moved away from him. I don't know what happened to him; he couldn't have lived long because he was suffering terribly. "Rabbi Miller," he said, "I'm suffering acutely. Whether it's true or not, but I'm suffering."

And so when we have normal *daas* – pretty normal at least – we have to appreciate this as one of the very greatest gifts that Hakodosh Boruch Hu gives. The ability of the mind to function is one

of the greatest of gifts and it obligates us – we're up to our ears in debt just because of our brains.

### **Rav Miller's Style**

Now, if you tell people outside what you heard now, it will mean nothing to them. "It's just Rabbi Miller's style" they say. And so before we proceed, we'll listen to the words of the Chovos Halevovos – you have to learn that this is Chovos Halevovos style, it's Torah style. And I don't care who tells you no and no and no, the Torah tells you yes and yes and yes.

In Shaar Cheshbon Hanefesh the Chovos Halevovos gives us thirty subjects for homework; thirty things that we have to think about if we want to fulfill our obligations as servants of Hashem. He calls it thirty *cheshbonos*. And the third *cheshbon* on the list is – I'll just say it in translation – "The third *cheshbon* is how a person must make a consideration with himself, how great is the benefit of Hashem that He bestowed upon him intelligence."

### **Change Your Tefillah**

Now, if this great author chose just thirty subjects and number three is this one – it's not talking about anything else, just sanity – then we begin to understand how big of an obligation it is. The Chovos Halevavos is telling you that if you want to serve Hashem at a minimum level, you must spend some time thinking about the gift of a mind.

"Let a man think," the Chovos Halevavos continues, "suppose he was bereft of his intelligence. Suppose he was walking around in a blank; he couldn't function at all. And somebody came along, a specialist who was able to open up his skull and to insert a functioning brain. How much would he owe this man?! How great would be his gratitude towards his benefactor?! Would even all the days of his life be sufficient to spend in the thanks to this benefactor?"

I'm not talking about a genius, something brilliant; he's talking about the gift of minimum intelligence. And three times a day you are expected to have that in mind. So that's going to change our *shemone esrei* from now on. Now we will have something to think about when we say these words.

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## *Part II. Using the Mind*

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### **The Billion Dollar Gift**

However, if we are going to remain just on the level of appreciating that we're not lunatics, that Hashem gave us ordinary intelligence, we are not fulfilling the purpose. Recognizing that great gift of sanity is very big – it's so important that's why I recommended going to visit an insane asylum – but it's only the beginning. I'll explain this to you.

Suppose you have a rich uncle and this uncle wants to give you a gift. And so he goes out shopping and he wants to spend a few billion dollars on you. So he goes let's say to Harvard and he sees they have a mechanical brain there. It's a very big object; it's beeping and it has wires running in all different directions and it can do all types of calculations.

And he speaks to the president there, "Would you like to sell this thing here?"

He says, "Our mechanical brain? What do you need it for?"

"I have a nephew. I want to give him a present."

So the president thinks it over and he says, "Well, to tell you the truth, we already used it a good deal; it's not new anymore and we're thinking of getting a new one anyhow so we'll give you a big reduction and we'll sell it to you for four billion dollars."

And so your uncle parts with the money. What wouldn't he do for his nephew?



### **Free Delivery**

And so he rents a special truck and he gets an exclusive license from the highways department because you can't drive such a truck on the highway. It's a truck that has tires as huge as let's say a tank and it's pulling this big contraption. They have to take down bridges and telegraph poles in order that it should be able to pass through.

And finally the day comes when you see in front of your house the sidewalk is being broken by a huge contraption. The street is broken down from the weight of this tremendous machine. And now it's yours.

Now, imagine you're a man who once in a while, when you have to calculate, if the thing has more than three digits, you give up. You were never good at mathematics in school and you have a lazy head too. So you never bothered with making simple calculations in the house. But now this big thing is outside. Now's your chance to impress your wife.

### **Government Inflation**

So let's say your wife comes back from shopping and she spent let's say – on an ordinary shopping trip today you can spend let's say 100 dollars. That's not much today. Today the prices are going up because the government is wasting billions of dollars. Don't deceive yourself. Our politicians are to blame. And even though they'll come to us and say, "Look, we are getting certain grants from the government and the *yeshivos* can use the grants," don't be fooled. Don't think the grants are going to give you something for nothing. You are getting something right now, but you are paying out much more in other ways.

Eventually it comes out of the *yeshiva* man's pocket. When he goes to the store he pays much more. He has to spend much more for the produce that he could have gotten for much less had the government not wasted billions. You're going to

pay through the nose for everything! Gasoline and cars cost more when taxes are raised and therefore transportation costs more. So there's no such thing as saving money by getting handouts from the governments. You're going to pay more for a pound of potatoes.

So now your wife came back from the grocery store and you're trying to calculate if you have enough money in the bank to cover the check. But it's more than a hundred dollars; that's three digits already. "I'm too lazy," you think. "I'll use my Harvard mechanical brain."

### **Using the Gift**

And it works! You're so happy with it. It makes grocery shopping so easy now.

Now, let's say a month later your uncle comes around and wants to have *nachas* from you. "How are you doing my boy? How are you making out with the gift I gave you?" he asks.

"Well," you say, "I use it."

"That's great! What for?"

"I use it to calculate how much my wife shopped in the local grocery. And sometimes I use it to help my little one with his math homework."

"What are you, crazy?!" he says. "That's what I gave you this mechanical brain for?! You don't even need a pocket calculator for that!" He's angry. Such a gift he gives you and you're wasting the opportunity to use it.

"Give me back my mechanical brain and here's a nice lead pencil. That's all you need."

And so Hakodosh Boruch Hu says "I gave you such a prized gift, the human brain that's unequaled in the universe and you're using it merely to function like somebody who has achieved the great perfection of not being insane?! That's what the brain is for?!"

## **Don't Believe in AI**

Now, the truth is that the Harvard mechanical brain doesn't come near the greatness of our brains. Don't be deceived by the computers! Don't be fooled by the enthusiastic inscriptions in the periodicals that make people think that the computers are almost able to think; they can't think at all. It's *sheker ve'kozov!* It can't do a thing other than what they are programmed to do. It will never do anything near what a mind can do.

The calculating abilities of the brain are far beyond whatever will be manufactured by the human hand. Even the biggest computer machine – even if it was bigger than this room; even if it was as big as from here until London – it would be a pocket calculator compared to the poorest human brain.

## **The Evolving Brain**

One savant ventured a guess that the human brain can store 15 trillion different bits of information. Not billion; trillion! I really don't believe it; I think it's an understatement. I believe that the brain learns to store more and more because the endless number of electric circuits in the brain are developed so that each circuit learns to take over a lot of the functions. That's why people who learn more, are accustomed to memorizing more.

The more you practice and use your mind, the more agility your mind acquires and the more facts are able to be registered. A man's mind is unfettered; without any incentive, without any initial input, a man's mind is able to develop the greatest theses, the greatest thoughts, the greatest arguments, the greatest results from logic. There's nothing like the mind.

## **Greater Than Cats**

And that's one of the reasons we repeat to ourselves over and over again all of our lives, "*Atah Chonein!*" You are providing me with such a great gift, such a tremendous machine that is almost

unlimited in its potential. And like the uncle in our story, Hakodosh Boruch Hu is asking us, "What are you doing with my present? How are you using it?"

Because for what you're accomplishing, the brain of a cat would be good enough. A cat's brain is perfect for our needs; even more than we need because the cat has some gifts, talents that we don't have. A cat has the ability to figure out things by instinct; we don't have that.

Even less than a cat's brain would be good for us. We could function, we could eat properly, we could take care of our bodies. We could get along with our wives. Why not? Cats get along; cats don't have any divorces. Why should they divorce? A cat wants a mate. They don't divorce; it's an insanity to divorce.

And so we could function perfectly with a smaller brain. Why did Hakodosh Boruch Hu give us this great brain? And immediately we understand that Hakodosh Boruch Hu wants us to know that we're expected to make use of it; He expects great things from us. He says, "I gave you a brain for big things – it's more than just sanity. It's intended for bigger things than just living like a cat."

## **Ten Thousand Years of Toras Avigdor**

And now we come to the very great subject which Hakodosh Boruch Hu really intended with the brain. What's it to be used for? What did He expect of us with this brain?

Now, it wouldn't be right for me to imagine we can answer that question tonight. And so I invite you to come and listen to these lectures for the next 10,000 years. That would be a good beginning on the subject of *daas* and I'm not exaggerating. If you'll find better lectures, then certainly go there. But you must go somewhere and learn the subject of creating a Torah mind. You'll never get enough of it; it's the greatest thing of life.

Now, most people think they have a good mind – it's a tragedy that most people suffer – and that's the best proof that their mind is entirely vacant. You don't really have a mind unless you labored on it. And you have to labor years because included in a Torah mind are all the perfections of mankind. All the *shleimus* of Torah, all the great qualities that Hakodosh Boruch Hu implanted in us and that we are capable of achieving.

### **You Can Know Shas!**

Hakodosh Boruch Hu says, "I gave you a brain for big things. If you're a man, so inscribe a *mesichta* on that brain. Maybe you can inscribe Shas on that brain. Why can't you do it? You think you can't learn Shas? Everybody can learn Shas. If you're not lazy it's possible. Get busy now. Learn without Tosfos; learn Shas!

Why should you waste Motzei Shabbos sitting home and talking to the folks? Why should you waste Sunday night visiting your relatives? Why should you waste your evenings? Take a tape recorder and play yourself tapes of Gemara. Go over it again and again. Listen and repeat and listen and repeat, and over the course of time you can take on this mechanical brain of yours, you can inscribe Shas on it. It's possible. At least inscribe a *mesichta*; at least a *perek*.

And if you're a woman, you can inscribe the great lessons of all the *seforim* on your mind. There's no end of wisdom that people can inscribe on the tape recorder of their minds.

And therefore if we get busy on this job of producing in ourselves a new mind, a Torah mind, we will change. By thinking Torah you gain a *Torah'dige sevara*. It's not just that you think *halachos* and you think *dinim*. Over the course of time you begin to think according to the style of the Torah. You begin to think according to the direction of the Torah. You learn how to think in an entirely new way. That's how you take the most valuable gift you've received from Hakodosh Boruch Hu and use it for its intended purpose.

### **The Insured Thesis**

I recall once there was a dean of a college who had a big surprise. He was sitting in his office and he saw two armed guards coming into his office carrying a package. "What's this?" he said. So they told him that it's postal regulations. "Anything that's insured for \$1000 must be delivered with armed guards." That's how it used to be in the regulations.

One of the students had written a thesis for his doctorate. He put a lot of work into it so he had it insured for \$1000 and mailed it to the professors for review. And that's how it was delivered – with two armed guards. Well, the professor, later when he read it through, he didn't think it deserved any armed guards but we see that things that are valuable have to be guarded.

And that brings us to the next part of our subject. Let's say you heard tonight's lesson and you took it to heart. Not only are you constantly filled with gratitude to Hakodosh Boruch Hu for giving you a mind, for giving you sanity, but you also got busy making use of that gift and creating for yourself a Torah mind. And now you're full of Torah up to your nose. You know everything. You can answer every *apikores*. You know what to say because you're loaded with Torah and *yiras shomayim* up to the gunwales.

### **The Security Industry**

Don't think that's it! That's only half the story because a mind has to be guarded too. Such a valuable gift – it's your ticket to the Next World after all – has to be guarded like nobody's business.

Shlomo Hamelech said that. He says (Mishlei 4:23) מְבַל מִשְׁמֶר נֹצֵר לִבָּךְ – *More than anything you guard, you must guard your mind*, כִּי מִמֶּנּוּ תוֹצְאוֹת הַיָּיִם – *because from your mind come forth all the results of life*. It means anything that you achieve in life is from the mind. The kind of mind you have,

that's the kind of life you're going to have in this world and in the Next World. All your eternal happiness forever and ever in the World-to-Come all depends on the kind of mind you get. And therefore there's nothing more precious than guarding your mind.

Now, you see today that one of the biggest industries is security. Remember years ago, when did you see a store that had iron bars? It was a rarity. Today because of the liberal politicians, iron bars are everywhere. And alarms and also uniformed security men; it's a very big part of the world's commerce today. It's a big business, guarding property.

But the truth is that property you can guard with a certain amount of carefreeness because the only way it could be ruined, let's say, is if a vandal passes by and throws a torch inside the window. So if the windows are locked or if you have the windows covered with metal sheets, you're pretty safe. You don't have to worry too much.

### **Many Security Threats**

But your mind, you can never stop worrying because there's nothing as sensitive and delicate as your thoughts and from all sides there are going to enter influences that are going to change and influence your thoughts. The influences are pouring in without stop! And therefore **מְכַל מְשֻׁמֵר נִצָּר לְבָד**, guard it more than anything else.

But what do you see? Just the opposite happens. It's one thing that they don't guard. The most precious thing that they have, their minds, is wide open. Imagine a bank at night; the bank doors are wide open, even the walls inside are wide open. The president of the bank goes home to sleep; everybody's asleep, there are no guards, everything is open. What would you say to such a bank?

Well, we are worse than that because our bank is wide open; our ears are open all the time

and the eyes are wide open all the time, and anything that wants, can come in. When he walks in the streets, this *shoiteh*, he looks everywhere. You're not watching your eyes? No *kedushas einayim*? There's nothing to look out for?!

Do you know what danger that is? There's nothing as precious as your mind; but nobody's on guard! It's a fact!

### **Inviting The Criminals**

People sit and listen to a radio; some listen to other things. They listen to fools who are sitting with them together. Let's say Cousin Jack comes with his family and you sit for two hours and listen as he fills your ears with *naarishkeit*. Where are the bars?! Where are the walls? Where are the fences? Where are the security guards? All these things that are coming in are taking away your mind, your *seichel*.

Even if you gained a Torah mind, you're ruining it. Let's say you're pouring into yourself *Mesillas Yesharim* day and night, you never let go of the *Mesillas Yesharim*. All day long you're pouring *Chovos Halevavos* into your heart. It's a good thing by the way. Even one drop is a good medicine and if you would pour it day and night, ahh is that something! But if at the same time the sewage is pouring in too, then what good is it? You have the best wine, the most expensive wine, and you pour it in a cup that's filthy with mud, that's crawling with bacteria, with worms and you pour in the wine so what kind of appeal will it have?

And some people invite criminals into their home. They have a special window, you turn a little knob and criminals climb in through the window and there's a big light. And sometimes for two hours the criminals are there and they're stealing your mind; they're stealing your mind through that little window, they're taking everything you have. And this is as true as anything could be. If you would let them climb into that



window and take all your jewelry, it's a much smaller misfortune.

Suppose they climbed in and took away, let's say, your wife's diamond ring and your golden watch and maybe \$100 cash you keep hidden away somewhere, it would be a terrible thing for you. You'd call the police. Oy oy oy! And here you've lost your entire mind; you've been robbed, you're impoverished, you're a pauper, and you don't even think about it for a minute.

### **Keeping Your Mind**

Even if you'll listen to a conservative gentile on his talk radio show you're losing your mind. Of course it's much less harm than if you listen to the liberals. However, you should know that the best goy is a *leitz* – even if he's the best of them you're losing your mind to a *leitz*.

So he says, “Oh no, they didn't take away my mind, no. No one can take my mind. My mind you can't take away. I'm not such a fool. I can see all these things and my mind remains the same.” It's the biggest deception, it's the biggest *sheker*. Your mind is gone already.

Now, if when your wife is away shopping you can tiptoe into the dining room with a hammer and demolish the television set, you don't know what a big accomplishment you're doing for your family. And you young fellows who are not married yet have to know you should make up with the girl that you're going to meet, make up “in our home: no television”. There shouldn't be any question in your mind and if she is hemming and hawing and hesitating then you look elsewhere.

### **A Diamond For a TV**

Now you old fellows who already have your girls, so buy her a diamond ring. Tell them, “A diamond ring instead of the television.” Buy them anything! There's no price too big to pay for that television set because you don't know what a mistake you made when you let it come into your house.

Suppose a man built a beautiful home and then into his dining room he opened the sewer main, and anytime the people in the block defecate or urinate it goes right into his dining room on his expensive rug. That's preferable. That's much better than having a sewer main direct to channel this and channel that. Because these low characters are spewing out day and night the worst kind of filth and it's coming into your home and your poor little children, innocent little children are growing up in the midst of a sewer.

Now you don't need me to tell you this. Today even the gentile authorities are saying this openly everywhere. So *al achas kamah vekamah*, how much more so do we have to beware, more than the decent gentiles who are worried about the problem.

Now they're not worried about minds. They're worried about crime. And they say it demoralizes the youth and causes crime. But preventing crime is not enough for us. If we prevent crime, if our children don't mug and don't hold up people in the streets are we happy? There's a whole world, a whole outside world, that's pouring into us every second all of the sewage, all of the garbage, all of the wickedness and foolishness of the gentile world. And therefore we have to stand guard day and night over our minds.

### **The Unfair Contest**

Now remember, remember how unequal a contest this is. Because how much *yiras shomayim* are we actually pouring into our minds day and night? How many programs of *yiras shomayim* is your wife seeing on the television? How many exhortations to *tznius* and to *avodah* and to *tefillah* and *mitzvos* come in on the radio every day? How much do you hear on the radio about being pious? How much are the magazines urging our children to become great *talmidei chachomim* and to spend their time studying Torah? All this you don't hear from the street. All you hear is the opposite; so what kind of a contest is this? From the outside

world is pouring in all kinds of filth and we are pouring in to ourselves nothing else. It's a very unfair contest and so we have to get busy – it's the only way we'll win out. And the first step is to realize the great gift of the brain, the immense potential we have.

And that's the great lesson of הָרֵאשׁוֹן בְּרֵאשׁ – the head was carried up to the *mizbeach* before all the other parts of the *korban olah*. It was brought up on the *mizbeach* first because that's the most important thing in our lives, our minds. And that's why the first of all the weekday *brachos* is *Atah Chonein*, because that's number one! To thank Hakodosh Boruch Hu for the great gift of sanity. And to remember always that it's this gift that is our most precious possession in this world – and that's why we'll develop it and guard it more than anything else.

### Have A Wonderful Shabbos

#### LET'S GET PRACTICAL

##### The Gift of A Mind

In the times of the Beis Hamikdash we had a constant reminder of the great gift of having a functional mind. Whenever a *korban olah* was brought, the people would witness the procession of limbs which was headed by the head, and feel gratitude for their heads and for each of their limbs. This week when I stand *shemone esrei* I will *bli neder* take the time to appreciate that proclamation in the first weekday *bracha*: “You are the One Who gives me sanity! You give me a mind! I must guard it and utilize it in Your service!”

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

13 - Most Precious Possession | 457 - Shmone Esreh IX  
470 - Shmone Esreh X | 493 - Shmone Esreh XI

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## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### שאל אביך ויגדך זקניך ויאמרו לך

Q:

**What should be our reaction when we hear about wars and other upheavals that are happening in other parts of the world?**

A:

When you see trouble among, let's say, in Africa, in the Congo, and they are massacring entire tribes or massacring each other, or if you hear that the brown peoples in Vietnam are trying to destroy each other, or in Korea, North Korea and South Korea they're warring with each other, or in China, the nationalists and the communists are fighting against each other, all these phenomena shouldn't be lost upon us.

And one of the purposes is to make us think, “Suppose we lived there; can you imagine what suffering we would undergo.” It's a very great suffering to live in Vietnam. People are constantly in terror, in commotion. Their lives are ruined. And how many of them have been destroyed? How many have been maimed, orphaned, widowed? How many are refugees? They're afraid to sleep at night.

If we can live in peace, if we can get up in the morning after a good night's sleep – you know what it means to sleep in peace? We don't even think twice about it. Do you know what a luxury it is to go to sleep in peace? To be able to put your head on your pillow without any fear and to fall asleep peacefully is a very great *bracha*.

We're not afraid that somebody will shoot machine guns through our window or burn down the house. We're not afraid that all of a sudden at night, there'll be an invasion. When you go to sleep in America, you know that nobody is going to wake you up. Nobody will bother you. You're sleeping in peace.

Sleeping peacefully is a precious commodity. So tonight when you say *השכיבנו ה, אלקינו לשלום* – let us lie down in peace. Appreciate that! If you just came here to learn that, it's worthwhile. *השכיבנו ה, אלקינו לשלום* – we should be able to sleep in peace. It's a big *bracha*!

Now this is such a precious commodity that we have to pay for it. And the minimum payment is gratitude to Hakodosh Boruch Hu. That should be our minimum reaction to the news of upheavals in the world.

TAPE # 2 (October 1973)