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פרשת שופטים

WITH

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BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

Joining In

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Part I. Joining The Sinners

Two Or Three?

In Parshas Shoftim we learn one of the cardinal principles of procedure in a Jewish courtroom; that if you want to accuse someone of a crime you need two witnesses.

לא יקום עד אחר באיש לכל עון ולכל חטאת ... על פי שני עדים ... יקום דבר – A single witness shall not stand up to testify against a man for any iniquity or for any error ... by the testimony of two witnesses the matter should be confirmed (Shoftim 19:15).

Now the *mishnah* (Makkos 5b) asks a *kasha* on this *possuk*. Because I left out some words when I quoted it to you; what the *possuk* actually says is, על פי שני עדים או על פי שלשה עדים יקום דבר – “by the testimony of two witnesses or by the testimony of three witnesses the matter should be confirmed”. And those extra words sound superfluous to our ears – not only superfluous, but they seem to be misleading.

If you learned even a little bit of Gemara so you know that תרי כמאה – two is like a hundred. If two witnesses testify to something, then that something has been established. There’s no need for a third – even if another ninety eight would have testified, it would make no difference. It’s two that seals the deal.

And so the *mishnah* asks: What’s the purpose of these extra words “or by the testimony of three witnesses”? Space in the Torah is precious real estate – there must be something important there.

A Serious Decision

And so Chazal tell us that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is teaching us a valuable lesson here – that the third witness is actually just as important as the first two witnesses. It’s true, you didn’t need him to “establish the matter”; the first two were already on the way to the *beis din*, and they were just fine without him. But he tagged along anyhow; he joined them at the last second, and once you join in with the first two fellows, you’re already one of them.

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And it's no monkey business, that decision to join in. Because suppose all three witnesses were found to be *zomemim*. *Zomemim* means that two other witnesses came and said, "How can you say you saw this crime being done? You three witnesses were with us in a different place at that time! You're testifying that you saw Reuven commit murder in Brooklyn on Tuesday, but at that same time you were with us in Eretz Yisroel!"

So the Torah says, וְעִשְׂתֶּם לוֹ כְּאִשֶּׁר זָמַם – you have to do to the three witnesses what they wanted to do to the person they falsely accused. They were trying to kill Reuven, who is an innocent man, so the *beis din* puts them to death in retribution.

Now the third man could speak up, he could say, "What are you punishing me for? The testimony of the first two would have put Reuven to death. I'm going to be put to death just for tagging along?!"

So the *mishnah* says, yes, it's true he didn't do much; he was superfluous. But the Torah wants us to know that in the Eyes of Hakodosh Boruch Hu he did it all. That's why the Torah says "by the word of two witnesses or by the word of three"; because the third one is blamed also.

Joining the Yankees

It's a lesson of tremendous proportions! הַנְּטָפֵל הַלְעוֹבְרֵי עִבְרָה – if somebody chimes in for something wrong – even though the wrong thing would have been done without him – just for the chiming in, for identifying with those who are doing an *aveirah*, he is held guilty.

Let's take one example, something a little closer to home than the *beis din*. Here's a *yeshivah bochur* – not only a *yeshivah bochur*; any *frum* Jew – and he goes out to the baseball stadium, to Yankee Stadium. Now, it's certainly wrong to go there. For many reasons; first of all it's plain stupid. Even if there's nothing wrong in a game, but it's stupid, it's meaningless. Who cares who wins?

Isn't it foolish to be enthusiastic as people are playing baseball or basketball or soccer, whatever it

is? If you could get on the field yourself and kick the ball around, at least you get exercise. But all you're doing is sitting on a hard chair and getting hemorrhoids – if not hemorrhoids you're getting fat. And they're getting money from you too! You're paying good money for that! It means you've been victimized; a hold-up.

The Wicked Sports Fans

But I'm not even talking about that now. Because some people will make excuses. They'll say they enjoy it; what's so bad? So let's leave the foolishness on the side for now and talk about *nitpal l'ovrei aveirah*. Who's going to the game after all? Are the *roshei yeshivah* there? Is Rav Ahron Kotler there? Does the Rav of your shul go there? If he does, it's time for a new Rav.

Who's there? You have a lot of Italians there. Irish too. Other nationalities. Tens of thousands of gentiles! And what are they doing there? They're going *meshugeh* about someone hitting a ball with a wooden stick. They're drinking beer. They're using foul language. They're fighting. There are always fistfights in the stadium. Sometimes they pull knives too. And here is Chaim, a good *frum* boy, and he's joining along with them!

Now, I wouldn't suspect Chaim of doing anything like the gentiles are doing there; *chas v'shalom*. But he joined them! He was *nitpal l'ovrei aveirah*. He's joining the herd that's being led to the slaughter.

Joining For Reward

Now, I bring that only as a *mashal* for our subject. There are many other examples I'm thinking about, but tonight we won't speak about *aveiros*. I don't want to make any enemies with Rosh Hashanah right around the corner. So we'll talk about a happier topic, the subject of doing *mitzvos*.

Because along comes Rabbi Akiva in that *mishnah* and he says like this: אִם כִּן עָנַשׁ הַתּוֹב לְנִטְפָּל – If this is how the Torah punishes someone who is merely an accomplice; all he did was join the sinners and now he is subject to

the full penalty imposed on the first two witnesses, **עַל אֶחָת כַּמָּה וְכַמָּה יְשָׁלֵם שׂוֹכֵר לְנִטְפָּל לְעוֹשֵׂי מִצְוָה בְּעוֹשֵׂי מִצְוָה** – so all the more so if you join people doing a *mitzvah*. Even though they don't need you, even though you're not important, you'll be rewarded just like the ones who initiated the *mitzvah*, the ones actually carrying it out. "If you join in," says Rabbi Akiva, "how great will be your reward."

Shlep That Couch!

Let's say, you're walking down the street and you see a few Jews doing a *mitzvah* – they're carrying a couch, let's say, to an *almanah* with a house full of little children. Somebody donated a couch for this poor woman and they're bringing it up to her apartment.

Now, it could be that they don't need your help at all – they're not struggling; they're not sweating. But you see an empty corner and so you join in, you put your shoulder underneath the couch. It's not necessary; they're carrying it anyhow. But you show that you want to join them, that you sympathize with them.

Just that – your wanting to help out and going out of your way to assist them – that's called **נִטְפָּל לְעוֹשֵׂי מִצְוָה**; you're joining them *and you get reward together with them*. Not just together with them, you're rewarded as if you did the whole thing! It's considered as if you went to the store to pay for the couch and carried it up to this *almanah's* living room.

You ARE Interested

It's remarkable! It's a tremendous idea you're hearing now – merely joining in makes you a full partner! If you'll join in, if you'll just take hold of the end and participate in order to demonstrate that you're with these good people, that's already a very great achievement for you.

So let's say the Ponovezher *yeshivah* is making a banquet to raise money. They need money to support all those boys learning there. Now, it could be that you're not able to support a big *yeshivah*. It costs a tremendous amount and money doesn't

grow on trees. And besides, you're raising your own *yeshivah* and *beis yaakov* in your own house.

But imagine that they're coming to you now – "Mister so and so, maybe you'll buy the Beis Hamedrash in your name or your father's name. It only costs 100,000 dollars. If that's too much maybe you'll buy a room in the *yeshivah* for 70,000 dollars."

So you look at them like they're nuts. "Me?! I'm not so rich! I'm not even interested to think about the whole thing!"

Ooooooh! Not interested?! That's a tragedy! Of course you're interested! Now, it could be you're not interested in the way the Ponovhezer *yeshivah* wants but you're interested anyhow because there will be tremendous reward for the one who joins in; *k'osei mitzvah* – like the one who did the *mitzvah*. The one who gives five dollars to the *yeshivah* has joined in with the one who gave the hundred thousand dollars!

The Tzadik's Loan

By wanting to join in, and by acting on your intentions, even if it's only a tiny fraction of the *mitzvah*, you demonstrate where your heart is. That's one of our most important functions in this world: to develop an appreciation – I say 'appreciation', I should say 'desire' – for the important things of this world. It's not only what you did; it's your wanting to join.

I always tell the same story. Reb Simcha Zissel, the Alter of Kelm, was a man with very little money. But he had a brother, Reb Leib, who was a businessman. So he once wrote a letter to Reb Leib and asked him to lend him some money. That was a *chiddush* – Reb Simcha Zissel should borrow money?! What for?

So he said, "I want to give *tzedakah* but I don't have any money; and I'm getting accustomed to the idea that I don't have to take part in this great *avodas Hashem* of the Am Yisroel." And so he borrowed a little bit of money so that he could be **נִטְפָּל לְעוֹשֵׂי מִצְוָה**.

Join the Great Endeavors

And that's why when you get letters in the mail; all types of *tzedakah* requests – *yeshivos*, *kollelim*, *cholim* – so many organizations – so you shouldn't just throw them into the trash. You should want to join in! Now, will your dollar, your five dollars, make a difference? Maybe yes, maybe no, but that's not what we're talking about now. Whether they need your five dollars is not the question – even if they don't need you, you need them.

When you send in five dollars to *Ponovezh yeshivah* so you're already *nitpal* to Rav Shach. You're a part of the *Ponovezh yeshivah* in Eretz Yisroel. You send money to Lakewood and you're joining in with Rav Ahron Kotler *zichrono l'vracha*. Now, Rav Ahron Kotler lived very poorly. I once walked into the house of Rav Ahron and I saw it was a poor house, a very poor house. And because of that Rav Ahron rose up in my eyes very much – I saw that he didn't take money from the *yeshivah* and spend it on expensive things. The money was all for feeding the Torah learners and for building a Torah community. And your few dollars means that you're building the same *yeshivah* that Rav Ahron built – you're *nitpal* to that great *tzadik*.

That's the great principle of *על אחת כמה וכמה*. *ישלם שכר לנטפל לעושי מצוה בעושי מצוה*. If you join people doing a *mitzvah* – even though they don't need you, even though you're not important – you'll be rewarded just like the ones actually carrying it out.

Part II. Joining In Forever

Fueled by Alcohol

Now this is such an important principle, such a valuable lesson, that Hakodosh Boruch Hu didn't wait until *Parshas Shoftim* to teach it to us; it was taught to us way back in the beginning of the history of the world. An episode took place in the span of only a minute or two and yet it caused a tremendous change in the course of the history of nations. So

let's study that story for a few minutes in order to make this idea more convincing.

Everyone remembers what happened with Noach and his children when they finally exited the *teivah*. After being saved from the *mabul*, Noach understood that it was appropriate to give thanksgiving to Hakodosh Boruch Hu. And so he did it over a little *mashkeh*. That's the way to do it. *אין היין אלא על היין* – *אומרים שירה אלא על היין* – When you say praise to Hakodosh Boruch Hu, you do it by means of drinking wine (Brachos 35a). We drink a little bit to give some fuel to the gratitude, so that you'll open your heart and open your mouth a little wider and sing to Hashem.

That's why we make *kiddush* over a cup of wine. At a wedding, under the *chuppah*, we drink wine. At all important occasions, at a *bris* too, you make a *borei pri hagofen*; in order to thank Hakodosh Boruch Hu, we utilize wine. And so Noach drank wine as a means of igniting his gratitude to Hashem.

A Family Gathering

Now it could very well be that he didn't sit down by himself; maybe he had his family with him. But there's no question that Noach was the most enthusiastic of all and therefore he imbibed a bigger measure; more than was necessary to be *yotzei* the *mitzvah*. And so, because of his wine he fell asleep.

Now, the exact circumstances of what happened next are not told to us, but here's what's related. Noach lied down under his blanket to sleep but because he had been inebriated, so maybe he thrashed around a little bit and he became uncovered. Whatever happened exactly it was all orchestrated by Hashem to test the future of mankind – to guide the course of the world that was being created again after the *mabul*.

Cham's Impulse

Now, Noach had three sons, Sheim, Cham and Yefes. Cham was the kind of man who was curious to see things. He was always looking where he wasn't supposed to look. And so he opened up the bedroom

door and saw his father uncovered. Now that was a big mistake. He shouldn't have done it; it was none of his business.

But then Cham made his second mistake. He acted on impulse. The name Cham means a man of a fiery disposition, a man of passions, of impulses. And the first impulse he had was to tell his brothers what he saw. Why tell them? You're spreading news of your father's embarrassment. But that was Cham, and what he did changed the course of his descendants forever.

There are a lot of lessons to be learned from Cham but we'll leave Cham on the side for now and we'll study his two brothers.

Sheim's Initiative

What does the Torah tell us about what Sheim and Yefes did when Cham came to them and opened his big mouth? וַיִּקַּח שֵׁם וַיִּפֹּת אֶת הַשֹּׁמְלָה – *Sheim and Yefes took hold of a blanket and they went in to cover up their father* (Bereishis 9:23). But we have to pay close attention to the first word in that *possuk*: וַיִּקַּח is written in the singular and that's the wrong word – it should say וַיִּקְחוּ, plural, they took. וַיִּקַּח means *he* took it.

And the answer is וַיִּקַּח שֵׁם, *Sheim picked up the blanket* – that's the way to read the *possuk*. Who took it? *Sheim*. That's it. Sheim picked it up by himself and was walking with a blanket to cover up his father. And he didn't need his brother. How much does a blanket weigh already? It's not a couch after all!

What happened next? וַיִּפֹּת – *and Yefes!* Yefes saw Sheim doing the *mitzvah* and he said, "Me too!" And he grabbed on to the end of the blanket. That's why it says וַיִּקַּח, singular; because Sheim is the one who took it. Only that Yefes saw what was going on and he grabbed the corner – he joined in to do a good thing.

Sheim's Reward

Now, what happened at that moment was an earth-shattering event; at that moment Sheim and Yefes changed the fate of their descendants forever. Because later when Noach discovered what had happened, he said the following prophecy. וַיִּשְׁכֵּן – *Where will Hashem dwell?* בְּאֹהֲלֵי שֵׁם – *only in the tents of Sheim*. The generosity of the soul of Sheim came forth at that moment and that's why he was *zocheh* forever and ever.

The Am Yisroel would come forth from Sheim and when they made the *Mishkan*, וַשְׁכַּנְתִּי בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. *Hashem put His residence only in Sheim* – nowhere else. The die was cast; nothing will help. וַיִּשְׁכֵּן בְּאֹהֲלֵי שֵׁם – *Forever and ever Hashem dwells among the seed of Sheim, on the Am Yisroel*.

A Reward for the Tag-along

And what about Yefes? What did he get for tagging along? About Yefes, Noach foretold the following: יַפֵּת אֲלֵקִים לַיִּפֹּת – "Hashem will give wide dominion to Yefes." *Yaft* is from the word *paso*, פָּתַח, which means to open up wide, like a *pesach*, a doorway.

Because Yefes joined in to take part in a good thing, Noach said, "You'll be blessed with great power that will spread to the ends of the earth." From Yefes came Persia who ruled the whole world at one time; Greece too ruled the world at one time. Yefes was Rome and all the nations of Europe that conquered all the continents. If you want to know why the white race has covered the face of the earth; if you want to know why civilization – literature, culture, dominion – has been only in the hands of the Caucasian races, then you don't have to look any further than this word, *Va'Yefes* – And Yefes also grabbed onto the blanket.

Now he didn't do anything; Sheim didn't need him. But that didn't matter to Yefes; when he saw something worthwhile being done, he said, "Me too." And because of that, history was changed. Because of that little bit – at least that's what it seems like to

us – Yefes blessed himself and his children for many generations.

Make America Small Again

You know, we are accustomed to measure everything by weight and by size. That's why in America there are the three sizes that anything comes in – colossal, jumbo or giant; they don't make anything else. When you actually buy it, it fits on a thimble, but that's a different story. The most important thing is that it's the bigness that is advertised. That's what matters. And so, unfortunately most people think that good deeds have to come in big sizes; and therefore when we hear about small opportunities for greatness, we tend to disregard them. Tagging along? That's nothing, we think. Actually it's everything.

Now, I understand that people think this is exaggerated talk but I have to tell you that such an attitude is just *leitzanus*. That's what a *leitz* is – somebody who doesn't appreciate the importance, the value, of a good thing. A *leitz*, as soon as he hears these things, he hears the idealism of *hanitpal l'osei mitzvah k'osei mitzvah*, he laughs at it. Ha ha! And that kills it – it's gone; the opportunity is lost forever.

Your Ticket to Olam Haba

Here's a *frum* Jew, he comes into shul and he passes by people who come before *davening* to learn for a few minutes; but he always comes *after* the learning. Or maybe after *davening* people sit and learn, but he goes out right away. It's not his style, he thinks. He never went to *yeshivah* and he won't understand too much anyhow. What should he do? Just tag along?

Absolutely! That's the best thing you can do for yourself! The man who is not a *leitz* wants to participate – even if it's only a bit. At least you should *show* that you're interested and sit down with them. You can't learn so well? You come in anyhow and sit alongside them as they learn.

Oh! That's a greatness of character! You know, a person is not able to learn but he comes and sits down with those who are learning, even if he doesn't understand anything, the Gemara says that such a person is *זוֹכֶה וְיוֹשֵׁב בְּיִשְׁבֵּה שָׁל מַעְלָה* – He'll be admitted to the *yeshivah shel ma'alah* eventually.

Why is that? He didn't do anything! And the answer is that he did everything! Because he demonstrated, "Me too! I also want to sit and learn." It's an important lesson – merely by coming in and sitting down alongside them, you already are a partner in their idealism and you already have a right to be admitted to the *yeshivah shel ma'alah* when the time comes.

Be A Sefashkenazi

We have to remember at all times the statement in Pirkei Avos, *אַל תְּהִי מַפְלִיג לְכָל דָּבָר* – *don't push away anything*. Don't underestimate even the little things because they're much more important than people think. Join in with the *osei mitzvah* as much as possible!

So let's say you see a group of *Sephardic* Jews bringing a *sefer Torah* into their synagogue. They're making a *hachnasas sefer Torah* and they're dancing on the street and singing their *Sephardic* songs. Now, you're an *Ashkenazi* so you're thinking, "It's not my *sefer Torah*, it's none of my business."

But then you remember that one time you were sitting by a lecture from Rabbi Miller and he said that joining in is something too. So you say, "Me too! I want to honor the *sefer Torah*. I also want to bring a new *sefer Torah* into this shul. And I'm going to join in – at least a little bit – in their happiness!"

You didn't give any money; you didn't even know there was such a shul around the corner. But it's not only the money, it's the desire to join in that matters. So you follow in with them. You clap a little also with your hands just like they're clapping their hands. You try to sing along with their *niggunim*. Whatever little bit you can do, you show

that you are identifying with them and the *mitzvah* they're doing.

Join In The Demonstration

Here's a *shul* or *yeshivah* that is making a dinner. You don't have much money to give right now. But you come anyhow and you stand there; you make the crowd bigger. Your presence will be a very big *mitzvah*. Any place that you go to encourage them even though you're not doing anything concrete, you are *nitpal l'osei mitzvah*, you join people to do a *mitzvah*.

There are people who write letters of encouragement to *rabbonim*. That's how they're *nitpal l'osei mitzvah*. People send me letters of encouragement! It's remarkable! I'm receiving letters from all over the world! Here's a letter – he thanks me for writing this-and-this book. He said he grew up with that book. His name is not signed; He doesn't want to write his name. It must be an important personality, maybe a *rosh yeshivah* someplace and he doesn't want to admit he grew up with this book in English. Whatever it is, a little letter of encouragement sent to the *osei mitzvah* is not little at all – that's the principle we're studying tonight, that joining in with the good ones, even in the smallest way, that's a greatness.

When you take hold of the corner of the blanket and say, "Me too!" it's a demonstration of *where you want to be; where your heart is*. And because of that demonstration the Torah teaches us that *יְשָׁלֵם שׂוֹכֵר לְנִטְפָּל לְעוֹשֵׂי מִצְוָה בְּעוֹשֵׂי מִצְוָה* – that as far as Hashem is concerned you've done everything! And that's why we should always be looking to say, "Me too!"

In as many ways as possible, in all the good things that the Am Yisroel is doing we try to join in, to tag along. And even though it could be that you're not going to change the world by your little act, but you're going to change *your* world!

Part III. Joining The Good Ones

Identify as a Frum Jew

Now, when we talk about joining in with the *osei mitzvah*, even though it takes some work to develop the proper attitude of the mind that appreciates how great a small act might be, it's still something tangible that you can grab on to.

But there's one part of this *avodah* of *nitpal l'osei mitzvah* that is less tangible and therefore, as great as it is, it is too often neglected. And that is the *avodah* of identifying with the Am Yisroel. After all, what is the Am Yisroel if not a nation of *osei mitzvah*?! The Torah calls us that – the nation that is thirsty for *mitzvos* (Sanhedrin 76b, Rashi).

A Remarkable People

We're so accustomed to it that we don't realize how extraordinary it is; the *frum* Jew is always busy with *mitzvos* *asei* and keeping away from *mitzvos lo sa'asei*, all day long. *Davening* and *brachos* and *tznius* and *tzitzis* and Torah. *Shmiras haloshon* is a *mitzvah* of the Torah; a Jew keeps his mouth closed. *וְאָהֲבָהּ* *לְרֵעֵךְ* – to love your fellow Jew is a *mitzvah*. *וְלֹא תִתְרוּ וְאָהֲבָהּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ* is also not a small *mitzvah*. *וְלֹא תִתְרוּ* *אֶחָדֵיכֶם לְבִבְכֶם וְאֶחָדֵי עֵינֵיכֶם* – he walks in the street, he doesn't look at women and women don't look at men. *Mitzvos* all day long; all kinds of *mitzvos*.

A Jew sends his children to a *yeshivah ketanah* and all day long they sit and learn *Eilu Metzios* – when you have to return a lost article, when you don't have to return it, all kinds of *dinim*. Little boys, not even bar *mitzvah* yet, they're teaching them to love *mitzvos*. It's a nation that loves *mitzvos*. And so we want to join with them; we want to be *nitpal* to the *osei mitzvah*.

Now I say this is a separate part of the subject because we're not talking now about joining in by means of doing, by means of sending five dollars to the Lakewood *yeshivah* or donating your shoulder to bring the couch up to the *almanah's* apartment –

I'm talking about an *avodah* of the mind; about being *nitpal l'osei mitzvah* with your thoughts.

A Panorama of Greatness

So when you hear about good things being done – let's say you hear the Bobover are making a big *yeshivah* in Eretz Yisroel, or that the Satmarer are building a big *beis hamedrash* someplace – even though you have no connection with them; you're not a Bobover or Satmarer, and besides you live far away; you'll never see the *beis hamedrash* – no matter! You want to be a part of that *mitzvah*.

So you're thinking, "Ah! It's a very good thing." You have to express happiness about it; "Me too! The Bobovers in Eretz Yisroel are happy? I'm happy too! Yes, I'm full of *simcha* that they did it." Of course, if you can send five dollars, a contribution, even better. Join in whichever way you can; but at least think in your heart, "I am part of it." And Hakodosh Boruch Hu gives you credit for taking hold of the blanket, for joining in with them.

Now that's a very important lesson that opens for us a panorama of greatness. As much as possible identify with all the good Jews everywhere they are. You see people with black hats – now, it could be you don't wear a black hat, you wear a *yamulkah*, let's say. Don't say, "Those black hats." That means you're somebody else; you're not from them. "No! I'm a black hat man, even though I don't wear one. I myself don't do it but I admire them. I belong to them. They're my people!"

The Hat and The Tefillin

Now, of course if you can do something and you don't, then identifying with the good ones might be worth something, but it's not much. So if you can buy a black hat that's even better; it means you grabbed onto the blanket a little bit more. But even if you can't – for whatever reason you can't – you still can join the good ones by identifying with them. And the more you join them and identify with them, the more reward you get together with them.

Now, I'm not saying right now that there's something special about a black hat. Color is not important. If all the *bnei Torah* would wear yellow hats, then we should all wear yellow hats. The main thing is to identify with the *bnei Torah*, with the *frummeh*.

You know that a boy approaching *bar mitzvah* gets a pair of *tefillin* that costs five, six, seven hundred dollars – even more than that – and he also gets a black hat. To me, the black hat is no less than the *tefillin*. No less! When a boy in our shul puts on a black hat, I give him a *mazel tov* as if he's putting on *tefillin*. Because the hat shows that, "וְשִׂים חֶלְקִנוּ עִמָּהֶם" – "I want my lot in life to be together with the *frummeh*."

Join Your Generation

Don't disdain that attitude of the mind, of "Me too!" It's so important to always be thinking, "I want to be together with them!" And therefore, you shouldn't waste that opportunity. Every time you put something on your head – it's not important what material it is; a *sheitel* too – you should say those words, "וְשִׂים חֶלְקִנוּ עִמָּהֶם! Thank you Hashem for placing my lot with the *frummeh*. Boruch Hashem, my lot is with the *frummeh*, the *tzadikim* of Klal Yisroel!"

You're joining in with *frum* Jews, with all people who learn in *yeshivos*, all the *kollel* people, all the *baalei batim* who learn Torah in their free time and you're identifying with the whole nation of *ovdei Hashem*. Who is the *frum* community? All the *shomrei mitzvos*. There are all kinds of *shomrei mitzvos*. There are *Sefardim*; and *Sefardim* include the Lebanese and the Syrian and the Egyptians – others too. And there are *Ashkenazim*; *chassidim* and *misnagdim* and German Jews and others.

As much as possible we try to be **נִטְפָּל לְעוֹשֵׂי מִצְוָה**, to those who are doing good things; we seek to sympathize with their ideals and their attitudes. And even though we perhaps may not be so busy with *mitzvos*, we ourselves sometimes might be far away from their perfection, nevertheless, we approve of

them, our heart is with them and by means of our minds we become one with the *ovdei Hashem* in our generation.

Join the Past Generations

But it's not only my generation; if I'm joining the *klal Yisroel* I'm identifying with all the *tzadikim* that ever lived before. By identifying with the Am Yisroel, you become a member of the historic Am Yisroel from the beginning.

If you are part of the *osei mitzvos* you're thinking of Avraham Avinu. You have to think of Avraham Avinu. זֹכֵר הַסְּדֵי אֲבוֹת – Hashem remembers the greatness of our forefathers. The question is do you remember? You're asking Him to remember? How about you remembering it? And so we admire our forefathers. You read about Avraham Avinu in the Chumash? Start admiring him. Identify with him. He's my grandfather! I'm so proud of him! Hashem is proud of him – we surely should be proud.

You're identifying with Moshe Rabeinu and all the *nevi'im*. Later generations too, and so the Chofetz Chaim's *zechus* is on my side now – because he is the Am Yisroel. The Chofetz Chaim is Am Yisroel, absolutely. Whatever he put into our nation became Am Yisroel. And what Rav Akiva Eiger put in and what all the great *tzadikim* put in, the Vilna Gaon, the Ba'al Shem Tov. All the *gedolei Yisroel* of all the generations back till Avraham Avinu, they're all part of the Am Yisroel.

You have to remember all the generations, all of our generations. We're so proud of our fathers. Those who were in Europe a hundred years ago, two hundred years ago, three hundred years – better and better. We have to be proud of our great grandmothers who had more *da'as*, more *emunah*, than many *gedolim* of today. Who said that? Rabbi Yeruchum Levovitz, the Mirrer *mashgiach*. He said, “We don't understand our great grandmothers” – that's how great they were. And the further back, greater and greater.

Amazing the Nations

I want to tell you a little scene from our history. Josephus describes at the *churban Beis Hamikdash* when the masses of Jews, plain Jews were captured by the Romans and were taken for torture in public hippodromes. And Titus HaRasha was traveling home, he took along tens of thousands of captives. And he marched from town to town. Now in each town, he made a demonstration in hippodromes, big theaters, stadiums where people came and watched and the Jews were put there to torture and they were supposed to say, “We don't believe in our Torah anymore.” Otherwise, they would be tortured. And the Jews refused to say that, plain Jews. They refused to say, “We don't believe in our Torah.” And they were tortured to death with every kind of cruel death and they all refused!

Josephus writes that. He said, “The nations were amazed at what they saw.” That's how great the *hamon* was, ordinary people. Not to become *apikorsim* and bow down to idols. No! Just to say something against the Torah. Even one word against their Torah they wouldn't say. And for that they were willing to suffer terrible tortures. That's how great our nation was in the days of old.

Now, we *boruch Hashem* didn't have that test – *boruch Hashem* we didn't have the opportunity to fulfill that *mitzvah*. But we're part of them! We think about them! We identify with them! We're *nitpal* to them and that's a greatness, a perfection of character.

The Beis Yisroel Anthem

And so if we had to sum up our lecture in one sentence we'd say that *we must begin to join in with good people*. As much as possible we try to be נְטוּפָל לְעוֹשֵׂי הַטּוֹב, to those who are doing good things.

And so we all say together: אֲנִי עַבְדָּא דְקוּדְשָׁא בְרִיךְ הוּא – “I am also a servant of Hakodosh Boruch Hu!” Did you ever sing that song? You say אֲנִי, אֲנִי, אֲנִי – “I too! Ana, me too, ana, me too! Let's say it together right now. Right now, all of us together. Ana ana ana *avidah di'Kudisha brich hu!*”

Now, it doesn't mean that we're already *ovdei Hashem*. But we're saying, "Me too." It's small but it's something. And if you say that, if you *want* to be an *eved Hashem* and join in with all of the great things the Am Yisroel does, so you'll be *zocheh* to be part of the Am Yisroel. And once you're *nitpal* to the Am Yisroel, that membership entitles you to the most eternal of all rewards. בְּלִישְׂרָאֵל יֵשׁ לָהֶם חֵלֶק לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא. It doesn't say there *kol hatzadikim*; it says *kol Yisroel!* If you're part of us, then you're forever.

And so we should always keep in mind that whenever possible we join in with all the good deeds of our nation; we do whatever we can to take hold of the garment and say, "Me too!" And even when we can't do, merely by thinking and saying, "I belong!" we are *nitpal* to that great nation. We join in the *avodas Hashem* of *kol Yisroel* and are thereby *zoicheh* to בְּלִישְׂרָאֵל יֵשׁ לָהֶם חֵלֶק לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא – we're gaining a ticket to *Olam Haba*.

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

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This week I will *bli neder* spend two minutes a day joining in with the *osei mitzvah* and thereby gain immeasurable reward. When I *daven Shemoneh Esrei* I will stop for one minute as I say "*v'zocher chasdei avos*" and remember my pride in our great forefathers. I will also stop for a minute during the day to express my connection to the great endeavors of the *frum* world.

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

שאל אביך ויגדך זקניך ויאמרו לך



When children fight, should parents mix in?



Absolutely! Children should be taught never to fight. I understand that children always are fighting and still you should always mix in, constantly and constantly and constantly. *Hinei mah tov umah naim sheves achim gam yachad*; children have to learn to get along. Your house is the home where you train them for life. If you train them to get along in the house, they'll be able to get along later with their wives and with their *mechutanim* and with their business partners and with their employers and with everybody else. You have to train them in the house; you have to talk about *shalom* all the time.

Now, it's not necessary always to hit them but you must talk and talk and talk because a child is a human being and *sof kol sof* something goes into his little head. So talk to children always about *shalom* and *achdus* with their brothers. Say, "Love your brother." To him it's a joke – love your brother? He loves his brother – smack! He smacks his little brother. No; teach him to love his brothers. After a while he'll begin to listen; it will penetrate. It goes in. Now, there's a lot more to talk about on this subject but I'm sorry that our time is up for now and I have to stop.

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