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Peace Of Mind

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continue to bless, uplift, and inspire
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פרשת ויחי

WITH

R' AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"l

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

Peace Of Mind

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Part I. Losing Menucha

A Father's Death

When our father Yaakov was about to pass away he called his sons together for the last time and sitting on his deathbed he began to speak to them: הַקְבִּצוּ וּשְׁמְעוּ בְּנֵי יַעֲקֹב – “Gather together and listen, you children of Yaakov, וּשְׁמְעוּ אֶל יִשְׂרָאֵל אָבִיכֶם – listen to Yisroel your father. I’m going to be leaving the world now and this is our last chance to be together in this world” (Vayechi 49:2).

The end of life, that’s the grand finale. Those last moments are a very important opportunity to make a lasting impression on your children because at that moment the heart of a child is open to anything the parent will say. You know – you shouldn’t know, but some do – the sadness of watching a parent leave this world is almost impossible to imagine for one who hasn’t experienced it. And at that moment, all of your regrets for not treating your parents the way they deserved stand before your eyes, and

so, you're willing to listen and to commit to anything in order to please them. Your emotions open up your mind to hear anything.

And therefore the admonition of a father or a mother on the deathbed has a lasting effect. When a parent who is dying exhorts his children to keep the way of the Torah – not to pursue luxuries and wealth but to live with temperance and be modest in the way that they dress; to always study Torah, to always honor the Shabbos to the extent of their ability, to see that their children are trained in Yeshivos and Bais Yaakovs – whatever it is that the parents will speak to their children on their deathbed, it is going to have a lasting impression.

The Dying Wish

I told you once about a family in Baltimore; they weren't *frum* people but their father on his deathbed extracted a promise from them that they should keep Shabbos. And they kept Shabbos forever. Otherwise they wouldn't have anything. They didn't know anything and all the rest of their peers didn't even know about Shabbos. But this family, even to this day – they are old men and women now – they still keep Shabbos because they promised it to their father on his deathbed.

But it's not only a time for giving general testaments, for telling them the way they should go in life. Sometimes you have to talk tough; sometimes grown children have to be criticized too. You know, when the sons or daughters are big and they did something wrong, a one-time act and it's over already, so you might feel that it's not diplomatic to tell them on the spot because they might be offended. They're big children now and they're walking *b'derech hayashar* so you want to be careful about stepping on their toes.

But sooner or later they must know what they did wrong. They must know, because if a man never knows his misdeeds, he'll never repent and he'll never change his ways. And sometimes the last moment is the best.

That's what Yaakov did. He waited until the day of his death and then, when his children were standing around his bed and they knew that these were their father's last moments in this world – every minute counted now and every word was measured – that's when Yaakov made use of the great opportunity.

Prophecy, Praise and Pillory

Now, every word of Yaakov deserves to be studied and restudied. He prophesied and he praised and he pilloried – there's no end to the pearls

of wisdom you'll find there. But tonight we'll spend a little time on what he said first, the first son he spoke to.

Yaakov turned to Reuven, his firstborn, and he said like this: רְאוּבֵן – “Reuven, you are my firstborn and you could have had all the dignity of the family. בְּכֹרִי אַתָּה – You were the first one, וְיָתֵר עָז, וְיָתֵר שְׂאֵת וְיָתֵר עָז – and you had everything. I expected you to come out on top. Everything was yours for the taking!”

But what happened? A tragedy. פָּחַז בְּמַיִם – You were hasty like water. פָּחַז means hasty and unstable; like water which is easily directed in any direction. “You did something in haste,” Yaakov said, “without thinking it through. And therefore אֶל תּוֹתֵר, because of that you will not be raised up above the others. You could have excelled as the bechor, but this quality of becoming overly excited and doing something in haste deprived you of your greatness.”

Now, to act with alacrity, with zerizus, that's a praiseworthy middah. כָּל מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם שָׁל צְרִיקִים בְּזִרְזוּת (Mesillas Yesharim 7). Tzaddikim do everything with alacrity, certainly. But haste and alacrity are two different things. Zerizus means that you're moving quickly, you're not delaying; but your mind is unhurried.

Holy Impulses

A person can even sometimes make a spur-of-the-moment decision and yet we'll praise him for it because it's not based on a spur-of-the-moment emotion – it's the result of a lifetime of preparing for that moment.

You remember when Pinchos seized the spear and killed? He acted in haste, but not because his mind was in haste. His mind was working. He knew the issue that was involved; all his life the honor of Hashem was foremost in his mind. And when he saw it being trampled upon, he took action immediately. It was an act that was the result of a lifetime attitude. A quick decision that's a result of a lifetime of thinking and idealism, there's no question it's good.

Let's say, somebody is *chalilah* drowning, and you're able to throw a life preserver to him, or jump in and save him so what do you do? You'll stand and say, “I'll be deliberate, I'll take my time?” No; you move as fast as you can. That's alacrity because it's something based, not on the decision of the moment. You learned how important it is to save a life. You learned how to swim, how to pull a drowning person out from the water. All the techniques and various problems that might come up, you're prepared for them. So your mind is prepared and working.

Haste, *pachaz*, is when the mind of a man comes to a decision quickly, a decision based on a momentary impulse. *Pachaz*, in the sense it's used here, means to become confused in a time of excitement and to be hasty and do something without thought. And that's the quality that Yaakov was criticizing in Reuven, and he said, "Therefore, because of what you did, אַל תִּהְיֶה לְרֹאשׁ, *you cannot be the leader.*"

Rochel's Ambition

So what was the story? What did Reuven do with *pachaz* for which he was castigated so severely by his father? What was the excitement that caused Reuven to do things in a wrong manner?

The story is like this. When Rochel passed away on the way to Beis Lechem, everybody had commiseration with her; everybody sympathized with her *tzaar*. Not only because of the fact that she was dying young but more importantly, it was the fact that she was leaving this world and she hadn't had all the children that she wanted.

That was her greatest ambition – to have a full share in the future of the Am Yisroel. You remember when she gave birth to her first son, the name she gave him was a prayer to Hashem: "יִסְדֵּי הַשֵּׁם לִי בְּנֵי אִהָרָה – *Hashem should add even more sons to me.*" That was her most fervent wish, to have a big share in the future Am Hashem, the holy nation. What's greater than bearing children to the Klal Yisroel, especially in the original stages of our history when each child meant a whole tribe?

And now as her second son was being born and she was dying in childbirth she realized now that her dream was being extinguished. And so she called him Ben Oni – the son of my affliction, my sorrow. What was her sorrow? Not that she wouldn't be present to play with him and to see him grow up and to go to his wedding. Of course, that's a *tzaar*. It's a terrible sadness when a young mother passes away and she won't be present at all the developments in her child's life; it's very sad. But Rochel was sorrowing for something more. "This is the last son I'm going to have. I'm dying now in childbirth and my dreams of a large family are dying too." That's why she called him "The son of my sorrow."

Rochel's Future

And so at that time everybody was commiserating with Rochel. And it was certain in everybody's mind that Yaakov would beget more sons from Bilhah, Rochel's handmaid, as was the practice in those days. That was the ancient custom. When they were slow in having children, they gave their maidservants to their husband and he had children from the

maidservants, and they were considered as children of the mistresses, of the wives of the husband.

Now, because this is what everyone expected, it caused Reuven to become agitated. He began to panic. He was a loyal son of his mother, Leah, and he knew how much she suffered from the fact that she was the less favored wife and he was afraid that now Rochel's maidservant would be favored, and it would be another blow to his mother's honor. And so Reuven felt he couldn't stand by. "Rochel had her chance and she didn't have children, and that's all. Her chance is gone and now my mother should remain in ascendancy."

And that agitation caused him to become *pachaz*. He became unsettled, unnerved, and that's when he did something that caused him a great loss. He did something that prevented Yaakov from taking Bilhah.

Haste and Insolence

Now, whatever happened there, it was considered a great insolence of a son. It was a lack of respect for his father to intervene in his father's marital affairs, to try and prevent Yaakov from taking Bilhah. And he did it because he was *pachaz kamayim*. He acted in a panic, in a hurry.

Now, there's no question that had he taken more time to think things over, had he been less hasty to act, he would have refrained from that act and he would not have lost his superiority as the *bechor*, the first born of the Am Yisrael. But because he imagined that there was no time to think – so he acted swiftly without enough opportunity for circumspection. He hurried up and he did something to prevent Bilhah from being taken.

And that's why Yaakov castigated him. The last thing his father told him was, "Don't do things in haste! You should have done nothing! And because you were **פָּרוּזוּ כְּמַיִם**, you did something in haste like water, **אֵל תּוֹתֵר**, you won't excel, you won't become great." And then Yaakov passed away.

The Path To Success

That was the last thing that Yaakov spoke to his son Reuven; the last words that went into his heart. And it's in the Torah because it's talking to us too: "You want to become somebody? You want to be **תּוֹתֵר**, to be lifted up and to live successfully? You have to have a calm personality. That's the path to success." What the Torah is teaching us here is actually the subject entitled *menuchas hanefesh*, to have calmness of mind as much as possible. That's the path to success.

And it's very important because everyone to a certain extent is a **פָּרוּזוּ כְּמַיִם**. I say "everyone" because it's not an accident – it's one of the

stratagems of the *yetzer hora*, to make you nervous and confused. People don't know about this. It's important to understand that one of the tricks of the evil inclination is to make you frightened, mixed up. It's one of the objectives of the *yetzer hora* against you, to upset your *menuchas hanefesh* and to cause you to act in haste.

It's true that not everyone has the opportunity to make the error that Reuven made – everyone is tested in their own way, with their particular circumstances – but everyone, one way or another, will suffer from this bad *middah*, the sin of hastiness, unless they make it a goal to acquire *menuchas hanefesh*.

Part II. Seeking Menucha

A Sly Snake

There's a wonderful little *sefer* called Cheshbon Hanefesh, and in this *sefer*, among other important subjects, he speaks about this quality of *menuchas hanefesh*, peace of mind. And to help us understand the subject he tells us about a certain snake in South America that lives on birds; that's its food. But the snake can't fly and he can't climb trees either. What does he do? He waits until the bird decides to take a rest and it perches on a bough, on the branch of a tree, and the snake slithers over underneath the branch and opens up a big fierce mouth underneath the bird.

Now, actually nothing would happen. The bird is as safe as can be. But it looks down and it sees that terrible mouth directly underneath waiting to devour it. And it begins to panic. *Ay yah yay!* Such a big mouth! Such trouble! Something he has to do! And quick!

Now if the bird was present here tonight and he heard tonight's lecture, he would remain calm. He would be relaxed. If anything, if he was a wise little bird he would simply turn around and deliver a little bit of bird feces straight into the snake's mouth. Finished, snake!

Finished, Bird!

But like others who don't listen to advice – this is the trouble with many people; they never listen to any advice – he looks down and becomes hypnotized with fear: “Danger. Quickly, something has to be done.” He loses *menuchas hanefesh* and he begins to thrash; his wings are flapping and his claws are scratching on the branch. What happens? His hold on the branch becomes weakened and he falls down into that fierce mouth that is waiting for him. Finished, bird!

That's all of us, says the Cheshbon Hanefesh. We're nervous birds. We're agitated and hasty and we're always falling into the mouth of the snake; that's the *yetzer hora*.

And so what should be done? What's the first thing we have to learn so that we shouldn't make a mistake? Now, I want to tell you the advice of Shlomo Hamelech in Koheles but there's something that comes before that. Because Shlomo Hamelech is going to tell us what to do when you're already in a tizzy, when you're already upset and nervous. But there was someone who once said that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Benjamin Franklin said that. He was a wise *goy* – that's why they put his face on a hundred dollar bill. He wasn't a *tzaddik* by the way; he was very far from being a *tzaddik*. I know his biography. But he made some good statements and that's one of them.

An Ounce of Prevention

Often the best advice is prevention, and for our subject there's no question that sleeping well at night is worth pounds and pounds of cure that you're going to need later *chas v'shalom*. Most people, you'll discover, are subject to stress and other nervous disorders because of lack of sleep. This I know from experience.

Many times boys in the *yeshivah* cause an upset in their nervous system because of a lack of sleep. I myself know two cases of boys who didn't go to sleep on time and they went insane, *nit eingedacht*. Yes, it happened. They ruined their lives. But even if you don't have a breakdown, if you don't get enough sleep, your nervous system is upset and you're guaranteed to be a *pachaz*.

And therefore every individual is responsible for his or her own health and everyone must make it their business to get enough sleep. It's more important than food. It's more important than vitamins. It's the best ounce of prevention you'll find.

Shlomo's Wisdom

But no matter what you do, no matter how well you sleep, you'll run into obstacles. The *yetzer hora* is on the job and he's experienced. So there'll always be obstacles; there'll always be situations of agitation, of nervousness and excitement. So the best thing is to listen to the words of the *chacham mikol adam*, to this voice of experience. Shlomo Hamelech is advising us: **אם רוח המושל תעלה עליך** – *When it happens that the spirit of that powerful one, the yetzer hora, rises up against you,* **מקומך אל תבא** – *don't do anything* (Koheles 10:4).

Now we have to listen prayerfully to these words because although I'm sure everybody here lives a normal well-ordered life, sometimes in everybody's lives a crisis arises and if you'll remember these words at that time, it can be of inestimable benefit to you. Many people listening here will be able to use this advice someday – and very often too.

The *yetzer hora* can sometimes come in such a guise and do such things that will knock you entirely off balance and cause you to do the most irresponsible thing. He attacks you suddenly with some temptation or some unexpected situation, a problem, and he throws you into confusion. And so, the first thing to know, Shlomo Hamelech says, is what you should do. Don't do anything! That's number one. **מְקוֹמְךָ אַל תִּנָּח** – *don't leave your place*. Stay where you are. Don't do anything in confusion because it is probable that you'll do the wrong thing.

Don't Be Rash

Like that young *yeshivah* man when he was confronted with two big bums, *goyim*, who were calling him names. He lost his head and he started acting like a hero. He picked up his fist. The biggest mistake! Ay! A tragedy. One of the *goyim* took a hammer and broke his skull on the spot. *Nebach, nebach*. But had he learned, he would have known that the best thing to do is do nothing. Just keep on walking. They'll call you names and in five minutes from now you'll forget all about it. You can go to lunch and enjoy life. But he wasn't prepared, and in the excitement, the confusion of his nerves, he did what was wrong.

And therefore, how grateful we have to be to our great teacher, Shlomo Hamelech. **תּוֹרַת הַחֵכֶם מְקוֹר חַיִּים** – *the teaching of the wise man is a fountain of life* (Mishlei 13:14), and he tells us that when the spirit of that powerful force of the *yetzer hora* rises up against you – and it happens all the time, in little ways and big ways – **מְקוֹמְךָ אַל תִּנָּח**, *don't leave your place*. Remain where you are. No matter what happens, stay where you are.

You're in a fight with your boss? Don't make any rash decisions. *Shalom bayis*? No matter what, you continue living at home. Some trouble with your neighbor, with the driveway or his children trampling on your lawn? Don't do anything. Whatever it is, keep on going to your *beis haknesses*, continue in your *yeshivah*, remain in your family. Be as you were before, a loyal observant Torah Jew, and the end will be, you'll see, that all the things that got you excited at that moment passed away, *gam zeh ya'avov*. By being a *pachaz kamayim* you only lose out. You're overcome by the *ruach hamoshel*, by confusion, and do things in haste and then you regret it forever and ever.

Homeless!

Here's a man; something happened in the house and his wife became very insolent to him. And one day she told him to leave. A big tough wife, she threw him out of the house. A true story. And he was flustered so he left. A few weeks later he came here and he told me his plight. He tells me he's out of the house.

I said, "Why did you leave?"

"She yelled at me. She threatened me. I didn't know what to do."

"What do you mean? You shouldn't have done anything. *Al tanach!* Stay inside. Fall into the bed. Why should you go out?!"

The police couldn't force him to leave the house. It's his house. But he lost his head, and she was making him *meshugeh* so he went out. She's driving him out? He should have held onto the bed post. "Nothing doing! I'm not leaving!" She would hit him with her pocketbook. She would kick him. *Gam zeh ya'avov*, it will pass by. She won't murder him.

Ay yah yay! If only he would have come to this lecture. But he lost his head, he acted with *pachaz*, and he went out. Now, he wants to come back but the police won't let him, it's too late now. Now it's established, a *chazakah*, that it's her place. He's on the outside now, an outcast. That's an error that he made, an irretrievable error in a moment of panic, because in his confusion he wasn't seeing straight.

Anxious Vision

Today such things are happening all the time. From all corners I get phone calls; I hear stories of people who acted in *behalah*. Everybody's in confusion, in haste, and because of that they're not seeing clearly, and they make big errors. It's a Gemara in Mesichta Brachos (43b): פְּסִיעַה גָּסָה: אָרְבַּע מֵאוֹת וְעֶשְׂרִים חֲמֵשׁ – *A hasty footstep, when you walk fast, it takes away one five hundredth of your eyesight.*

Now, that's a *maamar chazal* that has to be explained properly to be appreciated. It depends why you walk fast. If you walk fast because you love exercise, you get fun from walking fast, it won't harm you at all. It'll put a sparkle into your eyes. It'll cause your blood to run faster through your veins. Your circulation, your respiration, everything will perk up. It's a tonic for your body. It's a good habit to get into; exercise by walking fast. But suppose you walk fast out of anxiety, that's something else. When people run because of anxiety, פְּסִיעַה גָּסָה – *a hasty footstep is unhealthy.*

Now he doesn't have to run; sometimes he can be sitting at home, but he's running in his mind. He's tumultuous with thoughts. And that

פְּסִיעָה גְּסָה, *that big hasty footstep*, נוֹטְלֵת אַחַד מֵת"ק, *it takes one five hundredth away*, מִמְּאֹר עֵינָיו שֶׁל אָדָם – *from a man's eyesight*. He can't see right and wrong anymore.

Now that's a figure of speech but actually it's true also because it's well known that anxiety, excitement harms the eyes. It's well known. You say it every day; maybe you didn't notice the *possuk*. עֵשְׂשָׁה מִכַּעַס עֵינֵי – *My eye wore out from ka'as*, עָתִיקָה – *it grew old*, בְּכָל צוּרְרֵי – *because of all my enemies*.

Literally and Metaphorically

So if you want to find the best eye advice, it's right there in *tachnun*. People don't realize what a precious gem of healthy living it is. You want to preserve your eyesight, don't you? Seeing is lots of fun after all. So don't get frustrated and nervous and agitated! Sometimes excitement brings on diabetes, which causes eventual blindness in many people. It's a fact!

Now that's true literally, but it's true metaphorically also. A hasty footstep, anxiety, takes away more than the physical eyesight. It also takes away your intellectual eyesight. The lack of a calm solid attitude towards life takes away your intellectual eyesight because anxiety makes a man incapable of reasoning properly.

That's why most of the populace of the world is going blind and crazy today. Most of the populace are crazy. Look, aren't they crazy if one-fourth end up in divorce court? Isn't divorce crazy? Here they're switching partners and looking for somebody else. What will they get someplace else? Somebody better? Sure they're crazy! They're all blind! There's no question that they're blind.

Certainly! Mankind today is blind and crazy! And a very great part of it is because there's no *menuchas hanefesh* and everyone is thinking and doing in haste. And therefore it pays to listen well to the advice of the wise king, Shlomo Hamelech, and remember, "אַל תִּנְחַח. Don't do anything rash when you're excited."

Part III. Discovering Menucha

Your Dual Personality

Of course, this is all easier said than done. You can't just wake up one day and say "From now on I'm going to have *menuchas hanefesh*." No, it

doesn't work that way. And that's why we'll spend a little time studying a few words from Tehillim together.

In this *possuk* (116:7) Dovid Hamelech is talking to himself and he says like this: שׁוּבֵי נַפְשִׁי לְמִנוּחַיִכִּי – “Turn back, my soul, to your repose, כִּי הָשֵׁם גָּמַל עָלַיִכִּי – because Hashem has bestowed upon you.” It means that Dovid's mind was speaking to his *nefesh*, his personality, and he was encouraging himself to acquire the perfection of *menuchas hanefesh*.

There are two parts to every person. One part is your mind, your intellect. But there's another part to you and that's what we call the *nefesh*, your personality. Your feeling personality, that's who you really are and that's what you're trying to shape all your life. It's the duty of the mind to constantly work upon and shape the *nefesh*, to educate and train and encourage the emotions of your personality.

That's what it means that Dovid was speaking to himself; the calm, rational side of his character was urging the emotional and feeling side of his character to adjust to the events of the world, to the problems of the world. And he said, שׁוּבֵי נַפְשִׁי לְמִנוּחַיִכִּי – “Turn back, my *nefesh*, to your original repose.”

All Is Taken Care Of

Originally, the soul had perfect repose, perfect tranquility. At the beginning, there were no problems. But as soon as it comes into this world, it is confronted by the winds that are blowing from all sides and therefore the original tranquility of the *nefesh* has to be regained.

And this tranquility *must* be regained because that's where our success lies. The most important ingredient in the service of Hashem and the preface to any kind of accomplishment is peace of mind. And so Dovid was always encouraging himself: “My *nefesh*, you can return to your composure.”

The question is, how? With what idea was Dovid encouraging himself? כִּי הָשֵׁם גָּמַל עָלַיִכִּי – Because Hashem has already bestowed upon you. *Gamal* not *yigmol*. It's in the past tense. Not that it's *going* to be taken care of; it's *already* taken care of! Oh, that's already something else! There's nothing to worry about because it's all arranged already.

“It's true,” Dovid was thinking, “I have no awareness of how the problem will be solved. I don't see the solution. But that doesn't matter because I can have full confidence in the ways of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. He loves me and He's thinking about me and He's all powerful so I have

nothing to worry about.” And so he counseled his *nefesh*, “It’s already taken care of. Hashem is on the job and the solution is on the way.”

Dovid Hamelech is teaching us here the high road to *menuchas hanefesh*, the ideal way to make your way through the storms of life; and that is to talk to yourself always, to remind yourself that Hashem Melech and that everything is under control, and therefore **כִּי הָיָה גָמַל עִלְיָי** – He already has made arrangements for you.

The Lower Road

But there’s another road that we could take, the not so high road. And we have to be willing to make use of it because we can’t afford to wait until a person arrives at that *madreigah*, until he becomes a deep thinker and appreciates that truth, that it’s already taken care of. Life is too important, there’s too much to accomplish and therefore we can’t wait to reach that level. And so we want to utilize any method possible to arrive at *menuchas hanefesh*.

That’s why there’s a second *pshat* in those words of Dovid Hamelech – it’s the lower road to repose of mind. **שׁוּבִי נַפְשִׁי לְמַנוּחָיִי כִּי הָיָה גָמַל** – Turn back from your worries, my *nefesh*, and relax because in the past, didn’t He help you? *Gamal* means He helped you already in the past.

And so we’ll use common sense arguments in order to gain this gem of tranquility. Look back on your own little experiences. How many times were you frantic with apprehension and it turned out to be nothing? You know how many times you worried about this or that? You thought it would be an insurmountable problem and it turned out to be nothing. It’s because **כִּי הָיָה גָמַל** – He helped you in the past. So take that as a model; He’ll help you here too.

Isn’t that a sensible way of doing it? Look back at your own life, the life of your friends and acquaintances, and you’ll see that He’s helped in the past. This one finally bought a house and the other one married off his daughters. *Ki gamal* – He helped. That one is making a *parnasah* and this one got a good *shidduch* finally. So what are you worried about? Don’t you know in most cases your worries turn out to be nothing?

All Roads Are Good

Don’t disdain that road. Don’t scorn that method. If we are not able to attain *menuchas hanefesh* right away by means of the high road, so let’s use the low road. Any road is good if it takes us to our destination. It’s good for the eyes and it’s good for everything else inside of us and of

course it's good for the *neshamah* because it's a *mitzvah* to have *menuchas hanefesh*.

And that's why I recommend, one of the easiest ways to mold your *nefesh* is to do what Dovid Hamelech did. Sit down by yourself and sing *שׁוּבִי נַפְשִׁי לְמִנוּחַיִךְ*. Sing that over and over again. You're walking on the street by yourself? Repeat the words of that great man again and again. "Return my soul to Your tranquility because Hashem is on the job. He's *gamal* – He's already arranged everything ahead of time, before you even started worrying. And He's done it in the past too." That's the lower road of *נִמְלַח עֲלֶיךָ* – He's already helped you and others so many times. Say it over and over again and after a while some of it will sink into your *neshamah*. It'll be like a balsam on your soul. It's not a *segulah*. It's common sense.

Now, I know that most of you won't do it – you're not going to bother practicing. You're too lazy maybe, and you hope that you'll acquire this perfection of *menuchas hanefesh* by itself, without any effort. And therefore I want to leave you with a little secret, an *eitzah tovah* for acquiring this *middah* that we're talking about tonight. Because there's a certain day especially set aside by Hashem for *menuchas hanefesh* and that is Shabbos. Shabbos is the *Yom Menuchah* and it's the best day to practice up this attitude of the mind.

Someone Is In Charge

It's Friday night. You're seated around the Shabbos table and you or the master of the house picks up a goblet of wine and he makes a declaration: *וַיְבָרֵךְ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ ... אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים לְעֵשׂוֹת*. You're announcing now, you're declaring that Hakodosh Boruch Hu created the entire universe out of nothing. Everything is nothing but His will. Not only all materials all the world, but all phenomena in the world – it means whatever happens in the world – is His will. That's the meaning of *briyas haolam yeish me'ayin*.

So let's sit down now on Friday night and contemplate that. That's the purpose of Shabbos! We declare that Hashem created the world out of nothing. It means nothing is done unless Hakodosh Boruch Hu wants it. So what are we worried about? You mean to say it's not under control, that He's not going to handle it properly? The *Chafetz Chesed*, the One Who desires kindness and the One Who has full power to carry it out, do you mean to say He's going to allow it to turn out other than good? Of course, it's going to turn out good. Absolutely!

Now, it doesn't mean what we think is good. Many times if we were asked to write a prescription for ourselves, if the pharmacist would say, "Come in and take whatever you want" you wouldn't walk out alive. But our Creator, the *borei yeish me'ayin*, knows exactly what to give us; so how can a man have any anxieties?

Invigorated By Alcohol

Now this great teaching, we don't merely listen to intellectually, but we down it with a drink of wine; some alcohol is in the wine too, usually. It helps as the wine goes into your intestines, it exhilarates you, so you feel more keenly the great lesson that you just heard or said with your mouth. And then you have the *seudah* too. The Shabbos *seudah* takes time. The *challah* and the fish and the chicken and the potatoes; there's a lot of time to practice up these thoughts.

And little by little as the weeks pass by, you're going to discover that Shabbos is a tranquilizer without any side effects except the beneficial ones. Because when you realize that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is the Master of the universe and in full control, then everything begins to settle into place. Because the foundation of all understanding, is this principle that Hakodosh Boruch Hu created the world and He's in charge of the world and His intentions are all kindly.

Now I don't want to make any error here with you people. Don't think that I'm telling you that you shouldn't try to improve your lot. I don't say you shouldn't try. If a person has some kind of anxiety about his health, certainly he should take steps. About business, certainly you should do certain things. Whatever the problem is, a man should do what his *seichel*, what his reason advises him. But underneath everything, there has to be a substratum, and that is the foundation of *emunah* that everything is going according to plan. Everything is under control. And even what you think is a sorrow for you is in reality some great benefit.

Nothing To Do But Relax

Now of course as I said before, there's another pathway, a very *pashuteh* simple way. Even on Shabbos there's the lower road. Because even if you're not going to think too much, but on Shabbos you can't do anything anyhow. You're stuck. You can't do any business. You can't make any telephone calls. Whatever it is, you'll *have* to let things slide for a while.

Let's say that on *erev Shabbos* you were frantic. What should I do? Maybe I should run to City Hall? I should call a politician? I should call

long distance to Cleveland? I'll call a *tzaddik* in Eretz Yisroel and he'll pray for me. All kinds of things I can do maybe in the last minute to save myself. But then Shabbos comes; בָּא שַׁבָּת בָּא מְנוּחָה. You're stranded. You can't do anything.

Wonderful! You have to relax! So in a simple way, Shabbos is a *refuah*. You have to give up. What can you do? What else can you do? You're a *frum* Jew. You have to keep all the *d'oraysas* and all the *d'rabbans*. You can't do anything. You can't even touch a pencil. You can't even touch a coin. So naturally you relax. You have to rely on Shabbos. כּוֹלָהּ הִיא לְהַצִּיל – Shabbos can help. That's in a simple way. It certainly heals.

And so once a week you're being reminded by your Creator – “This is the mind that I want you to bring with you into the weekdays as well. Remember, I'm in control and I'll take care of everything. Just leave the driving to Me and that way you'll live a life of *menuchas hanefesh*; that way you'll avoid all the troubles that hastiness brings upon a person and that's how you'll live successfully.”

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

Attaining Menuchas Hanefesh

Although Reuven should have been the *bechor* and enjoyed all the privileges of the eldest, he lost out because he acted in haste. We must work to attain *menuchas hanefesh*; whether by the high road of understanding that Hashem is in control and is ultimately doing everything for our benefit, or by means of the easy path; reviewing our own life story and recognizing that things usually turn out okay in the end. This week I will *bli neder* spend one minute each day reviewing the *possuk* “שׁוּבֵי נַפְשֵׁי לְמְנוּחָיְכִי בֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם” and remembering its lessons.

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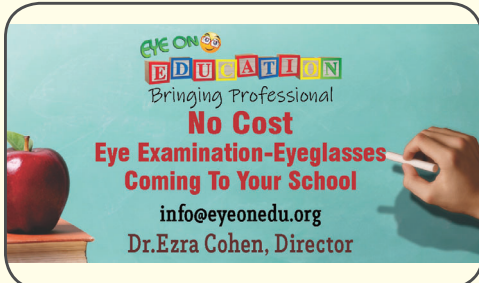
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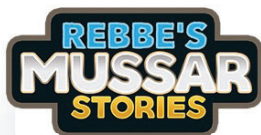
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Q:

How does one gain self-esteem?

A:

Oy! Who said you have to gain self-esteem? It's a foolishness. The psychologists and the therapists are *dreyng ah kop*. How do you gain self-esteem? Who needs self-esteem?! On the contrary, get rid of self-esteem. Say, "I'm nothing, I'm a nobody. I have to work hard to become a somebody!" Let's say you learned half of *shas* already; say, "I'm a nobody. I don't want any self-esteem, I have to know the whole *shas*; half a *shas* is nothing yet." Give up your self-esteem.

All these things you have to know are phrases which come from the outside world and we are slaves to our environment. We listen to the talk of the world and we believe that psychologists have a Torah that we didn't know before. The Torah of the character is found in the *seforim*, in our *mussar seforim* and the Gemara. If you look carefully you'll find all the psychology that's true, it's there already. What's not there, you know is not true. It's the imagination of two *apikorsim*; one of them was named Freud; Sigmund Freud was an *oisvurf*. The other was Carl Jung. Two people. And what they said is worthless.

You might say how do I know it? I know all about it. What I tell you, I know what I'm talking about.

All true psychology is found in our *seforim*. The *gedolei Yisroel* have practiced it in all generations. My rebbes in Slabodka were tremendous *chachmei hanefesh*. Tremendous *chachmei hanefesh*! They studied character; they knew people from the way they smiled, the way they talked. They were experienced; they dealt with hundreds and hundreds of *bochurim* for many years, and they learned all the *seforim* and thought into the things. They had the true *chochmas hanefesh*. And therefore, if you want to know about the truth of the knowledge of character, don't go to the *umos ha'olam*. It's found in our own Torah more than any place else.

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