

# תורת אביגדור הגאון ר' אביגדור מיללער זצ"ל

Rav Avigdor Miller on the Parsha  
Adapted from his Tapes, Sforim and Writings of Talmidim

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## Rav Avigdor Miller ztz"l on

### פרשת נח

#### GLOBAL DESTRUCTION

In *Parshas Noach* we read about the *Mabul*, the great flood, that Hakodosh Boruch Hu brought upon the earth. Everyone knows, every little child knows, that wickedness and immorality were running rampant in the world. כי השחית כל בשר את דרכו על הארץ - "All flesh had perverted its way on the earth" (Bereishis 6:12). And therefore Hakodosh Boruch Hu was "grieved at His heart" and "He reconsidered having made man on earth" (ibid. 6:6) and He decided: ומחיתי את כל היקום - "I will blot out all of existence." And so, by means of a great flood Hashem erased all of life from the earth. וימח את כל היקום. All of Mankind, except for the family of Noach, was destroyed. And now there would be a new start for Mankind.

And therefore, if need be, if Mankind's behavior would warrant it, there would be no reason for Hashem not to bring the same destruction to the world again. We see that if Mankind is perverting its way on this earth, so Hashem says, "I don't need you here. I can always start again." And the truth is that such wickedness is being done today that was never done before in the history of the world. Once upon a time, when I was a young boy, the streets in America were kosher streets. The gentile streets; yes! They weren't holy, but they were kosher. You could walk in the streets. Once upon a time a *mishkav zochornik* was put into jail. I

remember! *Ba'alei to'eivah* were put in prison. And a vagabond, someone who didn't work and just wandered the streets, was arrested. If someone was just hanging around on the streets, the policeman would yell at him, "What are you doing?!" And if he was just loafing, he would be arrested. Nowadays, they would arrest the policeman for yelling at him.

### WEARING A GAS MASK TO COLLEGE

The world is crazy today. The literature is filthy. Filthy, disgusting ideas. The libraries, the high schools are dirty places. And the colleges? The colleges are worse than dens of the underworld. University dorms are worse than houses of ill-repute. I had to go to Brooklyn College recently. I went there to help protest against making this homeless shelter in our neighborhood. It was a community protest meeting and it was held at Brooklyn College. And as I walked in, I smelled a terrible odor. The place *poshut* had a *rei'ach ra'ah*. It stank! You really need a gas mask when you go into college in America. If you go pay a visit to the place of the mafia, a mafia den, it's perfume compared to a college. I mean it. It's not an exaggeration.

The world today is filled with terrible attitudes and ideas. The streets are filled with filth. You see wicked people, you see women undressed in the street. On Kings Highway there are women who walk outside dressed up - in just a pocketbook. And I don't mean only in America - Eretz Yisroel is no better. Everything good is being broken down. The Knesses, that holy group of *tzadikim*, passed a law that promotes this type of activity, this behavior that Hashem says is a *to'eivah*, an abomination. They said that they're proud that in Israel, what they call "the Jewish State," there's nothing wrong at all with being a proud *mishkav zochornik*.

### IS A TSUNAMI HEADED OUR WAY?!

And I want to tell you that I'm very much worried. Will Hashem continue to keep quiet about America? Will He keep quiet about Medinas Yisroel? The whole world is becoming so wicked today, I don't know what to expect. I don't know what's going to happen in the future. Hashem will not continue to keep quiet. How can He?!

Because when you look around and you see the great *yeridah* in society today, the increase in *pritzus* and immorality -

things that are much worse than in the days of the *Mabul* - you have to know that there's no question that Hakodosh Boruch Hu could bring the same *Mabul* upon us today. *Chas v'shalom, chas v'shalom!* We should be sitting today in fear of the next *Mabul*; and all we would be able to say is **אולי ירחם, אולי ירחם**, maybe He'll have *rachmanus* and hold back the *Mabul* that's supposed to come on the world.

### SAVED BY THE SHEVUAH

And yet, we know that it *won't* come. Hakodosh Boruch Hu will never bring another *Mabul*! Because when the *Mabul* finally came to an end, Hashem swore that it would never happen again. **ואני הנני מקים את בריתי...ולא יהיה עוד מבול לשחת הארץ** - "And behold, I establish My covenant with you...never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth" (ibid. 9-11).

Now when we look to see why Hashem swore such a thing, why He swore that He would never bring a flood even if deserved, we find something very queer. Because when the great flood was finally all over, and Noach came out of the *teivah*, he took some animals and he offered them as *korbanos* to Hashem. **ויעל עולות במזבח**. He built a *mizbayach*, slaughtered animals and he burned them as *olos*.

### THE GOOD SMELLING ROAST

Now pay attention to what happened then. You know that a good piece of meat, as it's roasting on the fire, smells delicious. And so when Noach offered up these *korbanos* and the smoke went up, the pleasant aroma of the roasting meat wafted up into the sky. A very sweet smell. Ahh, was it delicious!

And there's an interesting statement in the Torah about that aroma: **וירח השם את ריח הניחוח** - "Hashem smelled the pleasant savor" (ibid. 8:21). Hakodosh Boruch Hu smelled the sweet fragrance of Noach's offerings! Isn't that a queer thing to say? Hashem smelled the wafting fragrance from the burning meat! And as soon as Hashem smelled this pleasing aroma, He said: **ולא אוסף לקלל עוד את האדמה בעבור האדם** - "No longer will I curse the earth because of man" (Bereishis 8:21). I will never repeat a catastrophe like the *Mabul*.

Now this we all know - Hashem promised to never again bring such a *Mabul*. But when we read the *pesukim* carefully we

see the reason for this; we see exactly *why* He made this promise. Hashem smelled the sweet savor of Noach's offerings, and immediately, on the heels of that, Hashem said "No more *Mabuls*. I'm no longer going to curse Mankind in such a way." So we see openly why He's not going to bring the *Mabul* anymore. Even if it might be deserved, like today, why won't He destroy the world and make a fresh start with the righteous? It's because He smelled the enticing smell of Noach's offerings; He smelled the delicious fragrance of meat roasting on the fire and said "OK, no more floods."

### IS HASHEM SO FICKLE?

Now does that make any sense at all?! If Hashem was justified in His decision to bring the *Mabul*, and He surely was, why would it be that when He smelled the savor of Noach's offering that He changed His mind? Is Hashem such a fickle G-d that some sweet smelling steak, could affect a change in His attitude? Could it be that merely because Noach brought up an offering, and "Hashem smelled the sweet savor," so He said, "Never again will I bring such a catastrophe on mankind"? This needs an explanation; a good explanation.

But before we can do that we have to first understand why Hakodosh Boruch Hu tells us *anything* about Himself *at all*. After all, **כי גבהו שמים מארץ כן גבהו מחשבותי ממחשבותיכם**. Hashem's thoughts are too sublime for us to understand. And when He tells us certain things about Himself, things that He is thinking, it's not really in the sense that we think, because He is sublime, He is above all human concepts. Hashem doesn't smell. And He doesn't have any physical sensations, or emotions.

So why does He tell us anything? After all, it's not true. He doesn't have any *middos*. Hakodosh Boruch Hu loves?! He is kindly?! He regrets?! He gets angry?! Impossible! He doesn't have any *ka'as*. He's *kulo chochma!* Whatever is said about Hashem in the Torah, Nevi'im and Kesuvim *is not actually so*, because we could never describe what Hashem does.

### HASHEM IS OUR MODEL

And therefore we have to follow the great teaching of the Rambam (Hilchos Dei'os 1:6). And the *klal gadol batorah* is that whatever we are told about Hashem, *it's for the purpose that we should begin practicing that behavior*. That's why He tells us His

thoughts. Anything that He reveals about Himself is for us to know that's what *we* should do, as a model for us to follow. Hashem is שׂוֹנֵא גֵזֶל, He hates thievery, so that's what He expects from us. He hates *zimah*, immorality, so we have to hate immorality. Like Him, that's what we try to do, and that's how we have to train ourselves to think. Hashem tells us things about Himself in the Torah *only in order to teach us how to act*. And that's why understanding the Torah is so important. It is full of advice for how to lead a truly successful life and for developing attitudes that Hashem wants you to have.

And so, this *possuk*, וַיִּרַח הַשֵּׁם אֶת רִיחַ הַנִּיחָח, is supplying a most important lesson for us to follow. We sitting here are expected to study these *pesukim* describing how Hashem smelled the pleasant odor of the *korban*, so that we can learn to live according to the will of Hashem, and live successful lives. Here was Noach trying to persuade Hashem. A great catastrophe had just struck all of Mankind and now he was full of fear, hoping it would never occur again. After everything Noach had just gone through, everything he had seen, he wished for a guarantee that Hashem would never repeat this spectacle again. He didn't want to see his own grandchildren, his own descendants destroyed. So he brings *korbanos* and he's thinking, "Please Hashem, don't put the world through such a disaster again." Now that's a very poor way of talking to Hashem, of trying to persuade Hashem. You bring Him some sheep - they're *His* sheep by the way - and you offer them to Him. You burn it up for Him so that He should change His mind, to convince Him to acquiesce to your wishes?! What's a roasted sheep to Hashem anyhow? It's a pitiful little gesture of Mankind to propitiate Hashem, a gesture that means *nothing at all* to Him.

#### HASHEM IS NOT THAT HAUGHTY

But Hakodosh Boruch Hu is not that haughty, He's not that arrogant. He saw a poor, little human being down below who was trying, making an attempt to show his allegiance, his loyalty, his subservience to Him. So Hashem said "I smell the pleasant savor of your *korban* and I am persuaded by that." Hakodosh Boruch Hu says, "That's good enough for Me! I want to be a model for Mankind to follow; and so I'm going to say, because you, Noach, offered to Me a propitiatory offering; you wanted to win My favor, so I'm going to say, 'Yes, My dear Noach. From

now on, just for that, I'm giving you My commitment, I'm giving you My word, that never again will the world be entirely destroyed."

That's what the Torah is teaching us here - that even an emotion that comes from the smallest thing, the most insignificant stimulus, should be used by us to become appeased. An emotion that comes from the smell of a good steak certainly should have no value as a stimulus. A good aroma is no rationale, it's no justification! But if you make use of that stimulus, no matter how negligible it might be, if you use it *to become appeased*, so you're considered as walking in the footsteps of your Creator.

### HAKODOSH BORUCH HU THE ALCOHOLIC?!

And this is what the *gemara* in *Eiruvin* (65a) teaches us. כל - המתפתה ביינו - "If you allow yourself to be persuaded by means of wine - that means that you allow yourself to get a little tipsy when drinking wine, and you allow the wine to influence your opinions and your attitudes, then יש בו מדעת קונו - so you're walking in the ways of Hashem. And the *gemara* continues: From where do we learn this? From where do we learn that to be so silly, so fickle, to be so easily assuaged and appeased, is a character trait worthy of praise? And the *gemara* says we learn it from Hashem Himself! *Chazal* point to our *possuk*: וירח השם את ריח הניחוח - "And Hashem smelled the sweet savor of the offering of Noah and became appeased"

So it's a good thing you came here tonight. Because it turns out that what you thought was silly and foolish, is really how Hashem wants us to act. And that will be our topic for tonight: how to follow the lead of Hashem, and learn how to smell the ריח הניחוח, how to become appeased from even the most minor and insignificant of things.

### DRIVING THROUGH LIFE UNDER THE INFLUENCE

Now you people who come here have heard this many times already. If you come, let's say to a *kiddush*, and you come in a little late and there's only one empty seat in the whole room; there is no other place, so you sit down there. After you sit down you look, and you see that seated next to you is your neighbor whom you don't like - you definitely don't like him. You had trouble with the driveway with him, and other problems. But what could you do? You're stuck; there are no other open seats.

Now, once you sit next to him, he sees that you have no wine - you have to make *kiddush*; you can't eat before *kiddush*. And your neighbor is sitting closer to the bottle, so he reaches out and pours some wine into your cup. You make *kiddush* and you drink the wine, and you take another cup as well - and there's some alcohol in the wine. And so you become a little bit confused. Now you start forgetting about the driveway. All you're thinking about is the wine that he poured for you. And so you find yourself becoming persuaded to become friendly with him. So you raise up what's left in your cup and you say "*L'chaim. L'chaim!*" It's the first time - forty years you've lived next to him and it's the first time you've said a friendly word to him. "*L'chaim!*" And he answers you back "*L'chaim,*" of course.

So the wine is getting to your head, and you're thinking, "What am I so upset about already?! What's the big deal? So he blocked my driveway. What's a driveway anyway? I'm not going to be able to take it with me to the Next World anyhow." You know that by the way don't you? They don't let you take your driveway with you. It doesn't fit into the *aron*, so you'll have to leave it behind. So you drink a little more and become a little more confused. Maybe when they start dancing a little bit later you'll take his hand too.

#### RAV MILLER PLIES THE OILAM WITH MASHKEH

I saw it happen here in my shul, at our Purim *mesibah*. Two *mispallelim* who didn't see eye to eye, they didn't get along, accidentally sat down next to each other at the table downstairs. Here we drink a little on Purim; so now it's time to drink and they both are sitting at the *mesibah*, and they're sitting near each other, and drinking. I don't think they wanted to be near each other, but that's what happened. Now, I remembered this *gemara* so I told the man, "Here, have another cup of *mashkeh*. One more cup of *mashkeh*." And then, when it finally got to his head, I told him to give his neighbor a big hug and to say, "I love you." And he did; it was two grown men who hadn't said a nice word to each other in years, and now they were hugging.

It's a silly thing, you'll say. Here, all year round you're sober, and your mind is working, and you decided not to like him. And now comes along Purim, or some wine at a *kiddush*, and because you're thinking under the influence of alcohol, you decided to like him, you want to be friendly? It's so silly! You'll

change your mind because of alcohol?! Now that the wine has confused your mind, you want to forgive him? Does that make sense? Is that really the measure of a smart person; a person who can so easily yield the attitudes that he formed when he was sober, when he was still able to reason rationally?!

### GETTING TIPSY AND ACTING LIKE HASHEM

So we say, Yes! It makes the most sense in the world. That's the best possible reaction a man can have to wine. Not only is it not silly, but it's thinking along with Hashem. "Oh," Hakodosh Boruch Hu says, "That's what I like! כל המתפתה ביינו, if you allow yourself to be persuaded by such a silly thing like alcohol, then *יש בו מדעת קונו*, then you're like I am. I did that too," says Hakodosh Boruch Hu. "I allowed Myself to be persuaded by Noach's wine. You think that the tantalizing smell of roasted lamb means a thing to Me?! Of course not. But I allowed Myself to be *nispateh*, to be persuaded for the purpose of teaching you that you should do the same thing."

Hashem allowed the sweet savor of Noach's *korban* to persuade Him, *solely* so that you should learn to not be such a stickler, such a rough and tough arrogant fellow, and instead allow yourself to be persuaded, just like He did. If you can find anything, even the smallest thing, the silliest thing - after all alcohol is very silly, the sweet savor of roasted meat is very silly - but if you can take that silly thing and use it to persuade yourself into forgiving your fellow Jew, and now you're becoming friendly with that neighbor who you didn't even want to look at; that is the *middah* of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. That's learning from the ways of Hashem! And you're a great success!

And if right now you're cordial to him and you allow yourself to be persuaded by your wine, look at that - you can like him after all! You liked him on Purim, didn't you? So, maybe you can like him all year round too! And if you have sense enough to do that, then you're *really* acting like Hakodosh Boruch Hu acts, you're *really* thinking like Hakodosh Boruch Hu thinks. כל המתפתה ביינו, if you let yourself become persuaded by wine, *יש בו מדעת קונו*, so you have the mind of your Creator.

### GETTING TIPSY WITHOUT ALCOHOL!

And it's not only wine; you don't have to wait for wine, for alcohol. Wine is only a *marshal*. It's only one example of the

thousands of ways of being persuaded to love your fellow Jew. Even that man at the kiddush didn't have to wait for the effect of the *alcohol* to be *nispateh*. As soon as his neighbor pours something into his cup - even if it was just orange juice - "Oh," you think, "That's a good neighbor. He's a nice man after all." The wise man will use *anything*, he'll use *everything possible*, to learn to love his fellow Jew. He'll use *any opportunity he can find* to persuade himself to let go of negative attitudes, and become a lover of the *Am Yisroel*.

Here's a man who was belittled by his wife in public. It happened to a *misparallel* in our shul. They were sitting together with other families at a *simcha* and she said something. A stupid thing she said; and to say it in public?! A terrible *cheit*. But I told this man, I said to him that he should learn from the ways of Hashem. "When she serves you supper," I said, "Use that supper to forgive her. Say to yourself, 'Since she is serving me dinner I will forgive her. She cooked for me and I'm *nispateh* from that.'" So when this man comes into the door of his home the next night and he smells the *ריח נִיחוּחַ* coming from the kitchen, he should remember that lesson of Hashem.

#### RAV MILLER REMINISCES ABOUT THE LITVAKS

A woman called me up on the telephone this week. She's been married for thirty years and she says "For thirty years I've suffered from him." And it's true that she's suffered. I know him very well; I've suffered from him in the shul as well. He can be very difficult sometimes. But he's working; he works hard and he brings home the paycheck every week to his family. He doesn't go out to the pubs with his paycheck and waste half of it there.

You know, when I was in Lithuania, I watched how the *goyim* would take their weekly pay and drink it all up instead of bringing the money home. Every Wednesday was a spectacle in itself. Wednesday was the fair day, the market day, in the small town where I lived. So on Wednesday the peasants would come, the poor peasants; they were as poor as anything. They came and they sold their produce. They sold their chickens, they sold their sheep, they sold their wood, their lumber, they sold their linens. And they took their money and they went straight to the saloon and they got drunk. I can't say it was every single one of them, but I'll tell you what I saw. I saw a shocking sight. A heap of men and women, lying dead drunk, all on top of each other, like a pile

of old clothing. And with vomit all over them. I was shocked, but people told me that this is the regular procedure every week.

So when I was speaking to this woman, I was thinking, "Was that the regular procedure by your husband? Did he drink away his paycheck and collapse on the sidewalk outside of a bar and spend the night wallowing in his own vomit? He didn't do that, did he? How about for thirty years he paid the rent; for thirty years he gave you his paycheck. He worked hard to support the family." So when he brings home his paycheck and gives it to her she should think, "I'm going to be like Hashem. With this paycheck I'm going to forgive everything." That's a wise woman who is walking in the ways of Hashem. That's **חכמת נשים בנתה**, **ביתה**, a wise woman who knows how to build her home.

#### A BOX OF CHOCOLATE FOR A SLAP?!

Here's a man who got angry, he lost his temper and he slapped his wife. It shouldn't happen! A wicked thing; a terrible *cheit*. He was shouting at her, and he got excited and he gave her a slap. He realized that he had made a terrible mistake and that he had to make *shalom*. And in order to apologize, he bought her a gift box, a box of candy or chocolate, whatever it was. And she accepted it. She accepted it! Now actually, he should have gone over to New York, to Manhattan, and bought her a diamond. It will cost him, maybe \$1,500, \$2,000, and he'll have to pay in installments for five years. No matter, it pays. He should bring the diamond home without saying anything - just give it to her. Hopefully she'll take it.

But this man didn't do that. He went out and bought a box of chocolates instead of a diamond ring. Now, is a box of chocolate enough to appease a wife for a wicked thing like a slap?! It's *meshugah!* But she was a smart woman and she accepted it. She let herself become appeased with a little nothing. She is wiser than all the fools who call me on the phone and tell me about how they're going to go to court and break up their marriage because of this or that. They're setting themselves up for a life of unhappiness, while this wise woman is still happily married and dancing at her grandchildren's *chasunas*.

A woman who allows herself to become appeased over a box of chocolate, and to use it as an excuse to forgive her husband is emulating the example of her Creator. It's a terrible *cheit* that he

did, but she was smart enough to learn from the attitude of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. כל המתפתה ביינו יש לו מדעת קונו - If you allow yourself to become appeased by something as superficial as wine, as superficial as alcohol that muddles your mind, or by a box of candy that tickles the nerves, then already you're walking in the footsteps of Hakodosh Boruch Hu!

### SMOOTHING OUT THE ROUGH EDGES

Shlomo Hamelech said: כי מי אשר יחובר אל כל החיים יש בטחון - "For one who is attached to *all the living*, for him there's still hope (Koheles 9:4). Being alive is not enough - cats are alive too, birds are also alive. It's being attached to all the living, learning how to deal with all the various types, that is your hope for success in life. And it says *kol hachaim*, *all the living*! Not just those who rub you the right way. You thought it's good enough to get along with your "type", with people you like. No; your hope for success in this world is to get along with *everybody* - even the person who annoys you!

It's not an accident that people are different from one another. כשם שאין פרצופיהן שווין זה לזה כך אין דעותיהן שוות. Hashem made every single human being different than the next one. Why? Wouldn't it have been easier if Hashem had made us all alike? And He could have done it. He could have! But that's not why Hashem brought you into this world. No; He wants you to make something out of yourself. What, are you going to remain the same bumpy clump of clay that you were born as?! Hashem wants you to smooth out your rough edges. *Your* rough edges, not your friend's rough edges! Not your wife's rough edges or your husband's rough edges! It's *you* that has to change.

### GUARANTEE: PEOPLE WILL IRK YOU

You're going to come in contact with many people in your life. And none of them are going to be perfect. Everyone has that little something, or that big something, that is going to bother you. People are going to irk you one way or another, I guarantee you that right now. Because that's how Hashem made this world. בהכמה יסד ארץ. And Hashem wants you to be able to overlook all the idiosyncrasies of your fellow Jew, to take in stride all those things that make him a little - or even a lot - different than you. That's the greatness of a person. To be pleased with everyone, and

to get along with everybody, even those who rub you the wrong way.

And it's not enough to just tolerate, or even get along with your fellow Jew. It says **וְאַהֲבַת לִרְעֵךְ כְּמוֹךְ**, that you have to *love* your fellow Jew. And that means that you should have an *ahavah*, a love, a real affection for him. Now we see how far away we are from even beginning to achieve that. Of course we're willing to say that we agree with the idea. Maybe someday we'll even come around to it, we think. But you won't! You won't, unless you start doing something about it.

### LOOK AND YOU'LL FIND

But how can we accomplish this? How does one actually take steps to succeed at being *nispateh*, and becoming happy with everyone? The first step on the ladder is to make yourself aware of when others do favors for you, when somebody is nice to you; he helps you, or even if he just smiles at you, *and use that as stimulus to love him*. Even if it's the smallest thing, you have to be on the lookout for the good things that your fellow Jew is doing for you. You have to keep your eyes wide open! Because whatever it is, there is always something you can find.

Only that most people overlook everything. Now if your neighbor would give you a million dollars, or even if he would buy you a new car, then you'd have reason to love him. At least for a few days you would love him. But if he smiled at you and said "Good morning," if he did you a small favor, is that enough of a reason to love him?

### KNOW WHAT TO FOCUS ON

And the answer is absolutely! But you have to keep your eyes open; have to keep your mind attuned to what's going on around you. If you live your life, thinking only about yourself, **אֲנִי וְאַפְסֵי עוֹד**, then you'll always be a failure. Your wife is doing things for you all the time. Your children. Your neighbors. Your coworker. The *gabbai* in shul and the grocer on the corner. You have to spend some time thinking about it, because it's happening all the time. People are nice; they're helpful and kindly. Only that you're not paying attention. Or you're paying attention to the wrong thing.

Of course, there will always be people who you think have wronged you. And maybe they have. They might have done something to upset you, but you should still focus on the good they do for you and be *nispateh* from these favors. The fact that he once helped you with your package, or lent you his tools. He's polite to you; he's a nice quiet neighbor! You can love him just for that!

You have to train yourself to accept even the small things that others do, and look at them with a loving eye. Let yourself be נתפייס and become appeased by the silliest things. And the more you pay attention to the benefits that you are gaining from others, the more you will be appeased and the more you will be seduced to love them.

### EVERYONE HAS GOOD QUALITIES

I'll tell you even more than that. Even if he didn't smile *at you*. So what if he didn't pour you wine? And what if he never roasted a sweet smelling steak for you? He never did any favor for you! Even so, you can still love him. He smiled *at someone else*; you can utilize that too! That's more difficult; but it could still be used. He smiles at people. He's a good man if he smiles at people. So take that as an opportunity to like him. You have to be wise enough to find some good in your fellow, and to use that good *middah* that he possesses, or that הנהגה טובה that he's committed to, and allow yourself to be נתפתה to get along with him.

Everyone has something good about them that can be appreciated, and used as a *pituy* to fall in love with. And it doesn't have to be something big, something exceptional. But you have to be willing to look and to think. And the truth is that if you'll try to think about a person's *middos tovos*, you'll be surprised that there isn't a person who doesn't have some good in him, some exceptional good in him. Among the *shomrei Torah* everyone has some good qualities.

One of my *rebbehs* once spoke *b'rabim* and he said that a person is not one *middah* - a person is a bundle of *middos*. And you cannot form an opinion in general about a person, because in this *middah* he can be excellent, while somebody else might be excellent in a different *middah*. A person is a big bundle of character traits; he's not just one thing. So in case you can't love the person entirely, you can learn to love at least one aspect of his

personality. Let's say he davens well. So love him for that. Love that man because he davens well. There's a man who davens in our shul and I can tell you that I love that man for twenty years already. Just because of the way he stands *shemonah esrei!* Just because of that, I fell in love with him. Another person learns well. He comes to the shul to learn and he doesn't waste any time talking. He opens his *seforim* and gets to work on the *sugya*. He doesn't know, but I'm watching him every day, and I love him. Another person gives *tzedaka*. And another one is quiet and polite. Find what you can in each person. There's a man I know who smiles at people! He smiles at everybody! A beautiful smile! I love him for that! You'll be surprised, you'll be very surprised! People are full of good things. And the wise man concentrates on a person's beautiful character traits and ignores the *middos* that are less appealing.

#### THE SMILING TISSUE MAN

I'll give you an example. Here's a man in shul who leaves his dirty tissues on the table. So you're thinking that he's not so thoughtful. And it's not conducive to healthy living either. There's no *mitzvah* to share your germs with your fellow *mispalilim*. But why do you have to harp on that? So he puts his tissues on the table, alright. But he smiles at you all the time. A smile is a valuable gift. And he gives a quarter to every *meshulach* every collector, who comes into shul. **אל ישוב דך נכלם**. It's a beautiful thing.

And you must use those good things that you see, as a *pituy*. Use them as opportunities to cover up his misdeeds, and *still* love him, notwithstanding what he's done. You're obligated to love your fellow Jew even if he leaves his dirty tissues on the table. You know that, don't you?!

#### DON'T LET HIS GOOD BE COVERED UP

Here's a man at work. He's always taking the credit for everything. And it grates on your nerves. He's too arrogant for your liking. But you can focus on his good points, and thereby smooth out your rough edges. He takes charge. He fills up the urn every morning. Or he sets up the coffee and the cups. When the water runs out, he refills the water cooler. So next time you see somebody that you envy, somebody that you have a grudge against, somebody you're upset at, so find something positive

about him, and say, "He's a nice fellow after all." Look for an excuse to love him - even the most insignificant thing. That's called walking in the footsteps of Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

And the neighbor who blocks your driveway or the one who steps on your lawn. So what if he never lent you his hammer? And even if he saw you struggling with a package and was too busy to help. So what?! But he sets up for *shalosh seudos* in shul. Or maybe his children are gems; each one of them! He's doing a good job with his children. Or he puts his *gemara* back where he took it from. You see that he takes a *sefer* off the shelf and when he's finished he puts it back in the right place. You know, some people don't do that. And *he* does! Look for an opportunity to love him, any opportunity. Just for that, *just for that*, you can love him. Only, that in your mind, it's all covered up by that time he parked in your spot. And therefore, you must use all these good things to fall in love with him. You can't walk around harboring negative feelings about those around you forever. It's not a difficult *avodah*; it just takes some time and a little bit of persistence.

#### CHANGE YOUR PERCEPTION OF HIM

Now all this is easier said than done, no question about it. But if you're willing to work, if you want to make something out of yourself, then listen to me now. You're going to have to get busy changing your perception of people. You've been looking at your neighbor for years. Or this "tissue man." And every time you see him, *that's* who you see. The neighbor *who is a pain*. The man *who leaves tissues around*. The coworker *who is arrogant* and leaves the extra work to you. That's how you see them.

And what about your neighbor whom you have nothing against? But is that enough? Just to have nothing against him, is that what Hashem wants from you?! Here you have a neighbor, a quiet fellow. He doesn't bother you, he doesn't call the Buildings Department on you, so you don't even think about him. That's the way to look at a neighbor? That's called *ahavas Yisroel*?! Just because you don't hate him; that's called *ahavas Yisroel*?! How could you live next door to a man for years - for years! - and not work on loving him?!

#### STUDY THE LAMDAN

And so, you're going to have to do something about this. You have to spend some time thinking about the good that this

person does. He smiles all the time. He sets up for the *kiddush* in Shul. He loves lending his tools or his *seforim*. He's learning in shul, a real *lamdan*. Whatever, it is, you *study him*, and find the good. And then you practice the following. Every time you see him, you think about that good. Every time you pass him, you think, "This is the man who fills up the urn every day." Or, "This is the man who gives a coin to every *meshulach* who comes by." "He's a *midakedeik b'mitzvos*." Or "he davens well." "He has a nice smile. That's who he is!"

And continue doing this without fail. And slowly but surely, it will sink into your mind, and your perception of this person will change. You've attached positive traits to him instead of the negative ones. He's not *the tough neighbor* anymore; he's *the man who lends you whatever you need*. He's not *the dirty tissue man* anymore; he's *the one who gives tzedaka without fail*. Or the one who helps out in shul. Or the one who always smiles at people. You're allowing yourself to be *nispateh* by a little something - exactly like Hakodosh Boruch Hu did. And now when you pass him by the next time, you're already seeing a different person.

#### LEARNING TO LOVE A LAMPOST

Every time you pass a fellow Jew, you can easily find something to love about him. I'm talking about that fellow in shul who you never even think about, that person on the block whom you never even paid much attention to. There are so many people whom you come in contact with all the time, but you never even think about them at all. You pass him on the street, a frum Jew, and as far as you're concerned he's a lamppost. You never even had a thought about loving him! And that's a tragedy because every Jew you pass by is an opportunity for greatness. And with a little bit of paying attention and thinking, you can fall in love with him as well.

Here's a little boy walking past you on the street. And he has beautiful *payos* hanging over his ears. Such a sweet little boy. *You* don't have such long *payos* but this boy is wearing them proud. It's so beautiful and that itself is a good enough reason to fall in love with him. Even something as small as a *yarmulkah*. He's wearing his Jewish pride on his head. I love him just for that. A beard? Tzitzis out? That's already a *tzadik*! And if Hashem is אלהים, then I love him too.

Here you have a man who walks out in the street with a shtreimel. In Flatbush! It's not Williamsburg, it's not even Boro Park; it's Flatbush! And it's the summer, it's hot. And he's wearing a long coat as well. That's a man dedicated to Hakodosh Boruch Hu, a man fighting against the outside environment. How can you not love a man like that?

#### LOVING THE NEAT FELLOW

And the more you're willing to look at the good of a person, the more you're willing to think out of your own *daled amos*, you'll find things to love about people. As much as you can, you should be using whatever possible to generate respect, affection and even *love* for a fellow Jew. Here's a man who's always dressed well. He wears pressed pants and a jacket. And a nice pressed shirt too. He's a neat fellow. Try to love him because of that. Even a person's eyeglasses - you can use them to fall in love with him.

It's not silly what I'm telling you now; you can even like a man because of the way he looks. Let's say you look at a man and you like his necktie - he has a nice necktie. Now, a necktie is nothing. You can change neckties, you can buy a new necktie - it's nothing. But you look at him and yes, you like him because of his necktie! Don't tell that to somebody outside; they'll think you banged your head. Who knows what they'll think! But here we're willing to say the things that others think is silly, as long as it brings us closer to Hakodosh Boruch

#### From the Biography

To Rabbi Miller this wasn't just lip service. He worked on himself and created exercises to reinforce seeing the good in everyone. One method he used was to consciously attribute some special quality or commendable trait to others. He even prepared lists of commendable traits and sought out people to apply them to. Some descriptions that Rabbi Miller often used include: "a rare *baal middos*," "a *tzadik*," "a true *mensch*," "a *baal derech eretz*," "a *mashpia*," "a *kodosh*," "a *ben Yisroel*," "a *ben Torah*," "a *lamdan*," "a *baal ruach*." The most prestigious description he could bestow on someone was "an idealist." Even an external factor is sufficient to train oneself to think positively about others. Rabbi Miller cited examples such as *yichus*, good looks, and even dressing well. If a person had nothing more than a nice tie or a nice-sounding name it was enough to use as a launching point to train oneself to think positive thoughts about him.

**Rav Avigdor Miller:**  
**His Life and His Revolution p. 292**

Hu. His necktie looks good on him? Maybe you like the color of his hair? Maybe his eyes are nice, beautiful nice orbs. It doesn't matter what it is - anything that will stimulate your feelings of affection toward him, grab it and use it to love him more. It should cause you, it should stimulate you, to be more friendly to him. And little by little it'll enter into your heart and you'll gain a certain warmth for that person. And that warmth, as little as it is, is a tremendous achievement. That's why we came into this world.

Once you realize that it's not enough to just feel neutral about a person, it's not enough to even "get along", you'll see that you have your work cut out for you. When are you going to finally fulfill the *mitzvah* of loving your fellow Jew? It's always tomorrow or the next day. Maybe you'll wait till next *Rosh Hashana*? Maybe *erev Yom Kippur*, or even better, *Hoshana Rabah*? Or until you retire and finally have some time to serve Hashem? Loving the Am Yisroel, *the individuals of the Am Yisroel*, is one of the most important achievements you can make in this world. It's the *klal gadol batorah* because it's the foundation of *kol hatorah kulah*.

#### THE MESILLAS YESHARIM'S SEGULAH

And it's so important that the Mesillas Yesharim tells us that **אין הקדוש ברוך הוא אוהב אלא מי שאוהב את ישראל** - Hashem *only* loves the one who loves the *Am Yisroel* (Mesillas Yesharim Perek 19). You hear that? Loving your fellow Jews - feeling a genuine affection for them - is a criteria for acquiring Hashem's love! And Hashem's love means all good things, in this world and the next. Therefore in the *possuk*, **וירח את ריח הניחוח**, Hashem offers us the secret to a program for how to climb this ladder of *ahavas Yisroel* and achieve the perfection that we're in this world for.

If you would only be willing to pay attention and look for the good things, you can find the *ma'alos* of all of the people you come in contact with during your life, and begin seeing the good in everyone around you. And you'll be able to appreciate your fellow man like never before. But it will never happen unless you get working on it. If you're lazy and you're not willing to activate your mind, then you'll never get anywhere in this world. And the ideas we learned tonight will just be another *ma'amar chazal* that is almost worthless to you. Will you ever be **נתפתה בינו** like Hakodosh Boruch Hu did? *You're* the reason why Hashem did it! You never even tried it?

And when people look for opportunities, for excuses, and then they use the opportunities to change the way they think, so they are walking in the ways of Hakodosh Boruch Hu and that's why this *possuk* was written in the Torah. And by doing so, you will have succeeded in that great achievement of acquiring the *רעת קונו*, the same attitude that your Creator has. That's why Hashem smelled the sweet fragrance of Noach's *korban*. Not because He liked the smell. And not because He appreciates being served by a human being. *וירח השם את ריח הניחח* because He wanted to teach you this most important lesson, in how to deal with all the people around you. Hakodosh Boruch wants you to follow in His ways, and gain that attitude of always being willing to yield your attitudes already formed, and to accept even the most superficial actions, even the most superficial behavior, of your fellow Jew. And the more you do that the more you have acquired the attitude of Hakodosh Boruch Hu, and the more you have achieved the perfection of being as similar as humanly possible to Hashem.

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תורת אביגדור  
"שאל אביך ויגדך זקניך ויאמרו לך"



## Q&A With Rav Avigdor Miller Ttz"l

**Q:**

**Does the Rav think we could be doing more to bring our fellow Jews back to Judaism? How responsible are we for this?**

**A:**

And the answer is that this is the biggest worry we have today. Our biggest worry is what are we going to answer to הקדוש ברוך הוא when he asks us, "What did you do for others?" It's a very big worry of mine.

Now, if you support the Yeshivas, you should know that you are doing something. That's already a good answer. The Yeshivas are doing the job for you. And not just your children. The Yeshivas are raising the children of ישראל. So let's say they come to you and they ask you to support the Yeshivas, you should know that with that, you have a chance to be able to answer the מלאך at the entrance to עדין. You will say, "I supported those who were spreading Torah among the Jewish nation." If it wasn't for the Yeshivas, do you know what would be?!

Therefore, helping all the מוסדות התורה is so important. Girls' schools, the Bais Yaakovs. It's very important to help the girls' schools. All the institutions where our children are growing up בתורה, that's our answer. That's our answer. Mothers and fathers are putting in tremendous effort into raising their children התורה. It's not easy. And it costs – it costs a lot of money. So that's our answer.

Of course, it's not the only answer. But it is a very big answer. So support the מוסדות התורה as much as you're able to because they are doing the job that we're supposed to be doing. You can go out on the street and hand out fliers to people. Fliers about Hashem and doing תשובה. But you're embarrassed to do it. You're ashamed to do it. There are many good thing that you can do. But you're not doing it. But the Yeshivas are doing it. And therefore, make sure to support them in their very great endeavor.

TAPE # 613

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