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Consulting The Sages

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פרשת יתרו

WITH

R' AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"l

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

Consulting The Sages

Contents:

Part I. Consulting Moshe Rabeinu - 3

Part II. Consulting The Navi - 8

Part III. Consulting The Rabbi - 13

Part I. Consulting Moshe Rabeinu

Visiting In-Laws

When Yisro came to visit Moshe and the Bnei Yisroel in the wilderness and saw how the people were congregating about Moshe Rabbeinu, it was quite a sight to behold. It wasn't something that Yisro saw in his home country, that an entire nation should gather around one person from morning to night. And the truth is, we ourselves, if we would have witnessed what was going on, our eyes would have popped out of our heads.

And so Yisro inquired from his son-in-law an explanation of what was doing: **מָדוּעַ אַתָּה יוֹשֵׁב לְבַדְּךָ** – *Why are you sitting here alone*, **וְכָל הָעָם נֹצֵב עָרֵב** – *and the people are standing around you from morning to evening?* (Yisro 18:14). What's going on here? Why are all these people lining up to speak with you? What do they want from you already? That's what Yisro wanted to know.

כִּי יָבֵא אֵלַי – וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה לְהִתְנֶה – And so Moshe said to his father-in-law, לְהִתְנֶה – וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה לְהִתְנֶה – “They’re coming to me in order to seek Hashem.” Now, before we begin our subject it’s interesting to note what this generation was – they were a people interested in knowing what Hakodosh Boruch Hu wanted. That is the picture of this great generation, the *Dor Deiah*; they’re waiting in long lines, crowding around Moshe Rabeinu. And what is their purpose? It doesn’t say they came because they had quarrels or because they had family problems or health problems. They came to Moshe because they wanted to get close to Hashem. And that’s what Moshe told Yisro – “They’re coming אֵלַי, to me, in order לְהִתְנֶה, to seek Hashem.”

Answering The In-Laws

Now, in the Mechilta – the Mechilta is a *medrash* on Shemos – it states as follows: הָיָה רֵבֶן גַּמְלִיאֵל יְהוּדָה אִישׁ כְּפָר עָבָו אֶת רֵבֶן גַּמְלִיאֵל – *There was man named Yehuda Ish Kfar Akko who came to Rabban Gamliel and put the following question to him. He said, מָה רָאָה מֹשֶׁה לִזְכּוֹר – “What did Moshe see fit to say, כִּי יָבֵא אֵלַי הָעָם – that ‘the people come to me’?”*

Now, to us there doesn’t seem to be much of a question here. Yisro inquired and Moshe answered – he should ignore his father-in-law? That’s not a wise thing for any son-in-law to do unless he’s looking for trouble. So what is Yehuda Ish Kfar Akko’s question, “Why did Moshe say ‘the people are coming to me’?”

And so we’ll understand it as follows. Yehuda Ish Kfar Akko knew that all of our great men are noted for humility. You remember Hillel Hazakein? He’s famous for his humility. Rabbi Yochanon Ben Zakai, Rabbi Akiva, Rebbi, all of our Torah teachers were all noted for their humility.

Invisible Leaders

That’s the way to recognize a true Torah leader; he’s self-effacing, always trying as much as possible to erase his personality so that he shouldn’t be noticed at all. He wants that the people should be in contact directly with Hashem; he doesn’t want to be a partition, a *mechitza*, between the people and Hashem.

Even in our recent history, the Chofetz Chaim *zichrono livracha* was a great teacher of the Jewish people but he was almost unnoticed. If you lived in the days of the Chofetz Chaim, you wouldn’t have noticed him much. He dressed like a poor little Jew, a little old man, stooped over, walking in the street with his hands in his sleeves. He never wore

gloves; like this he walked in the streets, with his hands pulled up in his sleeves.

That's a real leader of the Klal Yisroel – someone who makes himself insignificant. And so when the Chofetz Chaim spoke or when Hillel or Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai spoke, it wasn't a man speaking to you; it wasn't a personality. You heard the pure ideology of Torah speaking to you – Hakodosh Boruch Hu was talking to you.

The Inappropriate Word

Now, Moshe Rabbeinu even more so. Of all the humble men, Moshe Rabbeinu was the most outstanding in his meekness, in his humility and his contriteness of spirit. Moshe Rabeinu is famous as the עָנִיּוּ מְאֹד מְבֹרָךְ – the most humble of all our great men. He was the prototype of the humble, self-effacing leader.

And *that's* what bothered Yehuda Ish Kfar Akko; this man, the most humble of all men, when he had to say what the people were doing, he should have just said בֵּי יָבֵא הָעָם – *the people are coming* לְדָרֵשׁ אֱלֹקִים – *to seek Hashem*. It would have been a perfect statement if he would have omitted the word 'אֵלַי, *to me*'. And that would have suited perfectly the nature of Moshe Rabbeinu. Why did he interject that superfluous word?

Now, to us it may not seem superfluous, but Yehuda Ish Kfar Akko had an ear for this and he heard a word that jarred in his ears; it didn't fit in with the personality of Moshe Rabbeinu. If it was one of us, we could excuse that slip of the tongue – after all when it comes to us 'אֵלַי' is everything; we think very highly of ourselves – but Moshe Rabeinu? Why did he have to stick in the word “me” over there? They're coming to be *doreish Elokim* and finished!

Little Word: Big Teaching

So let's see what Rabban Gamliel answered. He said like this to Yehuda Ish Kfar Akko: אִם לֹא מָה יֵאמָר – *What else should Moshe have said?* בְּשֵׁהוּא אוֹמֵר 'לְדָרֵשׁ אֱלֹקִים' יִפָּה אָמַר – *He qualified the words 'they come to me' by adding 'they come to seek Elokim,' so he is speaking properly.*

Now it seems at first sight that Rabban Gamliel is merely explaining away this contradiction between the word אֵלַי and Moshe Rabbeinu's humble character by pointing out that Moshe added the words “לְדָרֵשׁ אֱלֹקִים” – they're not actually coming to seek *me*, they come to seek Elokim. So that takes off the edge of the אֵלַי; it doesn't seem so crude anymore. After all, he clarified what he meant – it's Hashem they're seeking.

But actually that's the wrong *pshat*. Rabban Gamliel wasn't merely excusing Moshe Rabeinu; he was saying much more than that.

"Yehuda Ish Kfar Akko!" said Rabban Gamliel, אָמַרְתָּ לָאוּ מָה יֵאמָר, "You're making a big mistake because what else should Moshe Rabeinu say?! That word, אָלֵי, is of the utmost importance when it comes to seeking Hashem! It's one of the greatest lessons. If Moshe would have omitted that word we would have lost a tremendous teaching, a big principle of the Torah would have gone lost."

Not The Grand Canyon

If you want to seek Elokim there is only one way and that is אָלֵי – you have come to Moshe Rabbeinu. Moshe Rabbeinu here was not able to play the role of a humble man – he was teaching Torah; he was enunciating a great principle of what it means to be a Jew, of what it means to be a *doreish Elokim*, a searcher for Hashem.

Every human being whether he knows it or not has in his heart an instinct to seek to come close to Hashem. Of course, if he doesn't know what he is looking for, so he might go on explorations of foreign countries. If he doesn't have the money to fly on airplanes, so he'll go to places of amusement looking for fun. Maybe he'll try to become wealthy, real estate. He thinks that he's seeking apartment buildings. If he's more intellectually inclined, he'll go to the laboratories and study and do research. Whatever it is, everybody expresses this yearning in his own misguided way.

However, even when people understand that this yearning is the desire to seek Hashem and that this is the only way to be happy – like it says יִשְׁמַח לְבַב מְבַקְשֵׁי הַשֵּׁם. Even when people have enough understanding to know that it's Hashem they are seeking, they have to know where to go. Are you going to seek Him by the Grand Canyon? It's *niflaos ha'Borei* after all! Some people want to find Hashem in the forests or by the ocean, other places.

All these people are in error; they are wandering off the path because there is only one place to go and that is אָלֵי – "You have to come to me". Moshe Rabbeinu was enunciating a great principle: "If you want to find Hashem," Moshe said, "you're going to have to come through me."

A System For All Time

Oh, that seems to be over-arrogance; it's the opposite of Moshe's nature. But that is what he had to say, because there's no other way; you must come to the Torah leaders, to *talmidei chachomim*, and listen to

their words. If a Torah leader tells you to go to the Grand Canyon, fine. Maybe he'll tell you to go to the *beis medrash* instead. But whatever it is, it's by means of the *Chachomim* that you'll find what you're seeking. Otherwise you are going to wander and to continue to stray and you will never discover the truth. That is why Moshe Rabbeinu had to put in the word **וְאָמַר**; it is the most important word in that sentence!

Now we might say Moshe Rabbeinu certainly, because he was the mouthpiece, he spoke the words of Hashem. But we must understand that these words are a model for our history; forever and ever that is the system of coming close to Hashem.

Questioning the Oral Torah

And here we come to the remarkable principle of the *Torah shebaal peh*. A question is constantly being asked, why is there such a thing as an oral Torah? Why wasn't the entire Torah written down? If you look in the *chumash* you will search in vain for the details of the Torah laws that we live by. Not only *halacha*; even very important and fundamental ideals of *yahadus* are not in the Chumash.

Of course, if you have keen eyesight and you will look into it more deeply you might find certain hints but you certainly will not be able to discover it yourself. And the only way you can find out is by recourse to the sages. The entire Torah is like that, you cannot fulfill anything without the sages.

Now that is a queer thing; here we have a book of laws and they are very strict – the Torah demands strict adherence to the laws – and it doesn't tell us how to fulfill the laws; the only way is by asking the *chachmei haTorah*.

So the question is why did Hakodosh Boruch Hu make it that way? Why did He give the Torah in such a way that we can't understand it from the written Torah alone?

The Expanded Edition

Now, one answer is that *hagbah* would be very hard! To lift up a *sefer torah* that has in it the whole Shas and all the *meforshim*, that would be very heavy. You'd need a crane every time to do *hagbah*. But that's not such a good answer – so we wouldn't do *hagbah*, not so terrible.

The most important reason is that Hashem doesn't want us studying laws from a book. He doesn't want you to be a lone-ranger, sitting by yourself and learning how to practice Judaism on your own. Because Torah is not merely information – it's about seeking Hashem; it's about

learning how to live successfully in this world and the next. And the only way to do it is with a live person to guide you.

And so from the beginning that was His plan, the system of אֱלֹהִים, of coming to human beings, to the Torah sages. That is why *Torah shebaal peh* had to be learned only from living sages.

Part II. Consulting The Navi

Torah Im Derech Eretz

You know how a live *rebbe* is different than a *sefer*? I'll tell you one very important difference. Human beings have eyes and ears. Here's a man, he's studying a Tosfos. So while he's thinking, he puts his hand in his bosom, and he picks under his arm, his armpit. Tosfos doesn't tell him, "Feh!" But a *rebbe* will say it! Ah, that's a *rebbe*! When you come into the yeshiva or into the *shul* or *beis medrash* to learn from a living human being, so your *rebbe* looks at you; he studies your behavior. If you don't have good manners he corrects you. If there's something wrong with your character, he criticizes you.

When people came to Moshe and they asked him, "We want to come close to Hashem," he said, "To come close to Hashem you shouldn't wipe your nose with the back of your hand". "You shouldn't cough on somebody's face". "You shouldn't talk when somebody else is talking; don't interrupt". "You should be polite to people and say 'thank you'."

Moshe Rabbeinu said these things and thousands more. And that's how the people who came to Moshe Rabbeinu came closer to Hashem. He gave over everything together with the laws of the Torah. Along with the *halachos*, the people also swallowed a big dose of *derech eretz* and good *middos*. You heard words of *mussar* and *yirah* and *emunah* and good character; how to behave with your fellowman, how people should behave to their wives, how wives should behave to husbands, how children should behave to their parents, how you should behave to elderly people, many things you learned.

A Calamitous King

After a while of being close to Moshe, your character changed and you learned to become a perfect servant of Hashem. And that is why *Torah shebaal peh* has to be learned from the sages. You want to learn about

the real function of Torah? If you just read the Bible, you are walking in darkness. If you just learn Torah, Nevi'im and Kesuvim, as great as they are, you are living a life of error.

How big of an error? Bigger than you imagine. If you want to understand how serious of a sin it is to forget this principle of coming to a *chochom*, we should see the story of Yoshiyahu Hamelech.

One of the greatest of all the kings of Yehuda was Yoshiyahu. His was a remarkable history. His grandfather was Menashe who had corrupted the people exceedingly. Menashe reigned for fifty five years. He began at the age of twelve – at the age of twelve he began corrupting the Jewish people, and he did a very great job of it. You see today what a wicked President in America can do in just a few years! [The Rov was referring to President Carter]. Imagine fifty-five years! The people were getting ruined.

Now, it doesn't mean it was like Bronx or Bensonhurst Jewry today (1978). They were still better than the Jews of Flatbush and better than the Jews of Williamsburg. But in comparison to what Hakodosh Boruch Hu expected of our forefathers in those great days, it was considered a calamity.

A Pliable King

And so when Menashe died, he left over a bad situation. And his son Amon wasn't any better. He was a young man, young and cocky, and he followed the wicked ways of his father's regime. And it became so bad that finally the people became so disgusted with this regime, that they arose and they assassinated Amon. The people got rid of him. They couldn't do it to Menashe because he was a highhanded ruler, but Amon, he was weaker and so they had the chutzpah to rise up and assassinate him.

But when those who were still loyal to Menashe saw this, they rose up in indignation, and they took revenge on those who assassinated Amon. And then they took the son of Amon, a little eight year old boy named Yoshiyahu, and they made him king. For them this was the very best kind of king. It's like the synagogues who look for a new rabbi, and they pick the youngest one they can find; because he's pliable – you can twist him around the president's finger, that's why they want him for their rabbi. Therefore, with this young king, eight years old, Menashe's party thought that they could do what they wished.

An Enthusiastic King

And so it seemed at first. But then a queer thing happened. Instead of following the ways of his father and his grandfather, this boy began to inquire about the ways of an earlier ancestor; he was curious about the ways of Dovid, who was his great, great, great, great grandfather. And he became so interested and so inspired by the ways of Dovid, that this boy began to develop in a remarkable way. **וְקִמּוֹהוּ לֹא הָיָה לְפָנָיו מֶלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר שָׁב אֵל** **הַשֵּׁם בְּכָל לִבּוֹ** – *There wasn't a king like him who returned to Hashem with all his heart* (Melochim II 23:25). That's Yoshiyahu. He was one of the most enthusiastic of all the kings we had.

And in his time, he turned the nation upside down. He called them together, and they made a *bris*. Everybody came together and they made a covenant, and they swore they would be loyal to the Torah. They even made an expedition into the neighboring remnants of the Aseres Hashvotim where there they still had the old altars of the golden calves of Yerovom. Yoshiyahu cleared out the *avodah zarah* from all of Eretz Yisroel.

Now, there's a lot to say about the biography of Yoshiyahu but that's not our subject now. We're interested now in the way he came to his end. Yoshiyahu was still in the flower of his youth – he was only thirty-eight years old – and something terrible happened. It was terrible but it's a tremendous lesson for us.

Standing Up To Pharaoh

Pharaoh Necho, the ruler of Egypt, began a march northwards, towards Eretz Yehuda. But when Yoshiyahu Hamelech got wind of Pharaoh's plans he sent messengers to him warning him to keep out. He didn't want any foreign armies on his soil.

Pharaoh sent an answer to him and he said, "I have no business with you now, I am going to meet my adversary in the north." He was fighting against the northern kings, not against Yehuda, and he said, "Don't oppose me. I'm just marching through your territory but I have no ill intent. We're just going to pass through."

Now, Pharaoh was a powerful king with a very big army and Yoshiyahu only had a little nation in Eretz Yehuda. And so Yoshiyahu could have backed off. But still, Yoshiyahu decided that he should oppose Pharaoh. How did he decide? He said, "It's written in the Torah black on white, a promise from Hakodosh Boruch Hu: **אִם בְּחַקְתִּי תֵלְכוּ וְאֵת מִצְוֹתַי** **אִם תִּשְׁמְרוּ** – *If you will go in My ways and observe My commandments,*" **וְנִתְתִּי**

שָׁלוֹם בְּאֶרֶץ – I will put peace upon the land (Vayikra 25:3,6). “He promised us!” said Yoshiyahu. “And now we’re listening – we made such a movement for repentance in our country; we’re certainly doing the will of Hakodosh Boruch Hu!”

The Tragic End

And in that parsha, Hashem promises: וְהָרֶבֶץ לֹא יַעֲבֹר בְּאֶרְצְכֶם – “No sword will ever pass through your land.” Now Yoshiyahu reasoned like this: What does it mean “no sword will pass through the land”? It already states, וְנִתְתִּיב שָׁלוֹם בְּאֶרֶץ – that there will be peace. So why does it say “no sword will pass”? אֶלָּא אֶפְלוּ חֶרֶב שָׁלֹם – it means that even a ‘peaceful sword’ won’t be permitted to pass through. Even when a king wants to march through peaceably, when we keep the Torah, Hakodosh Boruch Hu promises that our borders will be secure even against that.

“If that’s the case,” Yoshiyahu said, “I take upon myself the right to go out and oppose Pharaoh Necho.” So he took his army and he went to meet Pharaoh Necho at Megiddo, south of Yehuda. And there a tragedy took place. וַיִּדּוּ הַיָּרִימִים לְמִלְחָה יִשְׂרָאֵל – *The archers of Egypt shot their arrows and they mortally wounded Yoshiyahu* (Melochim II, 35:23).

The Tragic Error

Now, in Mesichta Taanis (22b), the Gemara asks, מַפְנֵי מָה נִעְנַשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל – Why was Yoshiyahu punished?

Now, we have to be *medayek*, we have to be careful with the language of the Gemara. It says he was punished and the Gemara asks, why was he punished? What did he do wrong?

Now, we could say, what’s even the question why he was punished? Who said it was a punishment? He made a mistake, he made an error, that’s all. If a man is color blind and he thinks the light is green and he crosses, and a car happens to hit him, you say, “Why was he punished”? Of course not – he was color blind and he made a mistake. What’s punishment have to do with it?

The answer is, the mistake was not the reason why he was punished; a man is not punished for a mistake. He tried his best, he thought his generation was worthy. So where does punishment come in here?

The Tzaddik’s Sin

So the Gemara answers, שְׁהָיָה לוֹ לְמַלְכָּה בְּיַרְמְיָהוּ וְלֹא נִמְלָךְ – he should have taken counsel of Yirmiyahu Hanovi and he didn’t. When Yoshiyahu made the decision to confront Pharaoh Necho with the army, he did it

on his own. He didn't consult Yirmiyahu Hanovi. That was his sin for which he was punished. He was punished for the sin of failing to go to the one who was bigger than him to take counsel.

Now, Yoshiyahu was a man who was exemplary. He was as perfect as one could be. He followed with all his heart all the ways of the Torah. He strove with all his might to emulate Dovid. This man had every reason to live. Yet, he was cut down in the very best part of his life, in the flower of his youth, for only one sin, and nothing else. They could find nothing against him. He was perfect in every way, but the only fault they could find was that he had failed to consult Yirmiyahu Hanovi.

Now, he didn't disobey. It wasn't that Yirmiyah had told him one thing, and he did something else. He wasn't let's say an official of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations who had a *psak* from Rav Aharon Kotler and still they go and do what they wish. He wasn't a Po'el haMizrachi'nik or some other fellow in a very Modern Orthodox congregation who think that *gedolei Yisroel* are nothing. Yoshiyahu was a *tzaddik gamur*. And to him every word of the *gedolei haTorah* was precious. He obeyed them impeccably. They didn't say anything to him that he disobeyed.

A Startling Lesson

What he did by going out to fight Pharaoh Necho, he thought that it was certainly the Torah truth. He would have been happy to stay in his palace and not fight. But there was no question in his mind that he was fulfilling the will of Hashem.

And that in itself was the great error. Because you may be right, you may be 100 percent right, but as long as there is a *talmid chochom*, a *navi*, someone who knows more than you, someone who is closer to Hashem than you, it's your duty to consult him. And the failure to consult him means that Hashem does not need Yoshiyahu.

That's a startling lesson. No matter how great a man is, if he overlooks the necessity of being in contact with the *gedolei Yisroel*, with *talmidei chachomim*, and asking, "What do you say? What should be done?", that is such a fatal omission, that he loses thereby the right to be in this world. Not merely he got a slap on the wrist, not merely he was scratched by the arrow. He was pierced by many arrows. He lost his life. And merely for this one misstep of forgetting to consult the sages.

Part III. Consulting The Rabbi

In Every Generation

Now, I understand that right away you're thinking, "Well if I had a Yirmiyahu Hanovi or a Moshe Rabeinu so I would come to him. But I don't have that opportunity – I have a Rov, a *rebbe*, but he's not Moshe Rabeinu; he's not a *malach* like Moshe Rabeinu was."

You know, had we been in the days of Moshe Rabeinu we would have found excuses too. Chazal tell us that if you would see Moshe Rabeinu walking in the streets, you would see that he is not such a skinny fellow; he was a heavy-set man, Moshe Rabeinu. I don't want to say such words about the **אִישׁ אֱלֹקִים**, but that's how it was – he was a heavy-set man.

And our sages tell us (Tanchuma, Ki Sisa 27) that some people looked at him and they said, **בְּקֶדָה עָבִים שׁוֹקֵיו** – How thick are his paunches. "Hey, look at those thighs!" Moshe Rabeinu had a nose too. And so, people were thinking; "He's one of us." I don't know if they were actually saying those words or just thinking them but that's what our sages tell us.

It's hard to even repeat such a thing. That's what they think of Moshe Rabbeinu?! That's the way a person should have in his mind a picture of the **אִישׁ אֱלֹקִים**, the greatest man who ever lived?! But that's the nature of a person – he finds things, ways of avoiding this great principle. And we have to take time to understand this, to overcome this.

Don't Fall Asleep!

Now, to understand this a little better we will listen to what the *gemara* says elsewhere. There is a special mitzvah, a special command of the Torah, **וְבוּ תִדְבֶק** – you should cling to Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

Now, the question is, what does it mean in practice? It is a beautiful idea to cling to Hashem, certainly, but what do you do in practice?

So here is a man sitting in a room; he decides he wants to cling to Hashem so he pulls the window shades down and he closes his eyes and thinks about Hashem. It is not a bad idea, by the way; you should try that once in your life. Don't fall asleep though! And if you can do that for two minutes – two full minutes thinking about Hashem – that's most certainly a way to cling to Hashem.

But still, that's not a plan for life. We're looking for something more concrete, some method of clinging to Hashem that can guide us

throughout our lives. And we have to know that we are not left blind to wander and to experiment and waste our lives in errors. Hakodosh Boruch Hu has revealed to us exactly what this means; He gave us a precise interpretation.

Grab Whatever You Can

What is it? Along comes the Gemara (Kesubos 111a) and says, How do we cling to Hashem? **וְתִלְמִידֵיהֶם וְהַרְבֵּק בְּחַכְמֵיהֶם** – *Cling to the sages and to their disciples*. That's it! Attach yourself to the sages, that's the way of coming close to Hashem. And if you think there is another way then you are going to waste your life; some day you're going to discover your error but it will be too late.

Now we note that it says **וְתִלְמִידֵיהֶם וְהַרְבֵּק בְּחַכְמֵיהֶם** - cling to the sages *and to their disciples*. It means, not everybody can get close to the sages, to the great leaders; it's not easy to get close. Sometimes they're surrounded by thousands of disciples; sometimes there are other barriers. So **וְהַרְבֵּק בְּתִלְמִידֵיהֶם!** Get close to the disciples!

Magnetized Rabbis

It is like a magnet. Did you ever see iron pins attached to a magnet? They hang sometimes fifteen iron pins, one suspended from the other because there is a force from the first one, from the magnet, that goes through all of them. The magnet has an iron pin hanging from it, another iron pin, another one. Now these iron pins are not magnets but they are all attached to the top magnet.

So where there is a Rebbe, an *adam gadol*, he has disciples and disciples of disciples and disciples of those disciples, even if you can't get close to the top, get close to somebody who is connected to the top.

This means that the sage we're talking about is the Rabbi at that little *shul* round the corner. Which corner? All the corners. You have to come close to that one and make him your Rav. Wherever you are; you're in Canarsie, you're in Far Rockaway, you're in Manhattan; any Orthodox synagogue, make the local Rabbi your Rav, your master.

Wings and Halo

Even if it's a little rabbi, he is capable of helping you; he is capable of being the *chochom* you can come to. Of course if you can find someone better and even better and even better, certainly. If, let's say, Rav Shach will accept you as his personal friend and spend time with you, certainly. If the Slabodka Rosh Yeshiva will accept you as his *talmid*, certainly. If

the Lubavitcher Rebbe will let you in to spend time with him, certainly. But it is difficult, so take instruction from anybody.

And I can guarantee you, the little local rabbi around the corner can save your life for you. People will testify years later that he gave them one steer in the right direction and it changed their lives, again and again we hear such testimonies. How many people lost out on everything, they lost their wives, and many lost their health, and they lost their businesses because they didn't have a local Rav.

Now, I know that you have a lot of *kashes* on that because on the local Rabbi sometimes there is this *kashe*, sometimes there is that *kashe* – we are talking about a kosher Jew of course; we are talking about a person who is sincere and has a certain competence – but even though he doesn't have wings sprouting at the back under his *kapote*, even though he can't make any *mofsim*; there is no halo around him, he looks like an ordinary human being, but he is the one that Hakodosh Boruch Hu points out to you.

A Way Out?

Now you have to train yourself; you have to change your attitude; in order to cling to a *tzaddik* you have to train yourself not to see the *gashmiyus*; you have to see his spirit, his *ruach*, his *neshama yeseira*. You have to see that he's your Moshe Rabeinu; he's your conduit to be *doreish Elokim*.

That's what the Gemara (Moed Kotton 17a) says, אִם הָרַב דּוֹמֶה לְמַלְאָךְ, הַיְשִׁים – If the Rav is similar in your eyes to an angel of Hashem of Hosts, תּוֹרָה יִבְקָשׁוּ מִפִּיהוּ – then you should seek Torah from his mouth. And if not, if he appears to you to be an ordinary human beings, don't seek Torah from his mouth.

So some people – *lamdonim* – make a mistake; they take it as a *heter* to not attach themselves to any Rebbe. “Go find me a Rebbe who resembles an angel of Hashem of Hosts, they say, there is no such thing”, so they think they're free now.

Making Malachim

But they're mistaken; the word *malach* means a messenger. “If the Rav is similar in your eyes to a *malach Hashem*, that's how you'll become a Torah Jew.” If you have the attitude of loyalty to this Torah principle, that the Torah teacher represents the word of Hashem and Hashem sent him to you. If you have the ability to regard him in that light, then you'll be able to seek Torah from his mouth.

That's the way to seek success. That's the way to be *doreish Elokim*; when you get into your head that the *Roshei Yeshivah* are sent by Hashem, the *mesivta rebbeim*, the local *Rabbanim* are sent by Hashem. There are so many fine local *Rabbanim*. There are a lot of people who are capable of being regarded as *malach Hashem*, a messenger of Hashem of Hosts.

Isn't that a wonderful thing? Let's say you frequent a little *shtiebel* or a little synagogue in Canarsie and there is a Rabbi there and you walk in with the intention, "I am going to make of him the very best use I can." The first Shabbos first you go over and say "Good Shabbos" to him.

You've been there for a long time and you haven't done that yet? It's not too late. Go over to him and say "Shalom aleichem." Make yourself known to him and put into your heart a *kavanah tovah* that you want to get something out of him, that you want to get some guidance from him. You are going to see there will be results that will gratify you. Once you make him a *malach Hashem* then you are going to succeed in being a *doreish Elokim*.

The Wandering Jew

Now I know that today it is a very alien idea. People who go to *shul* every week never once came over to their local rabbi to say "*shalom aleichem*," "good Shabbos." They never came to speak to him, to confide in him, to ask him advice!

They are orphans – they are wanderers on this face of the earth; they have no father and no mother, there is nobody to guide them. They are like lost sheep. The children go lost constantly from the orthodox camp; people are going lost every day. It is remarkable how many are straying. It is because they have nobody who is in charge of them. They are *yesomim*, orphans, without parents. The majority of the observant Jews – I'm not talking about the others who are lost – the majority of the observant Jews don't understand this principle and therefore unfortunately a great part of their lives is lost too.

They keep the mitzvos, they learn Torah, they're raising nice families; very good! Excellent! But they're losing out on the real perfection in life, the real success of living life to its fullest because they're ignoring this principle of coming close to Hashem by means of subjugating ourselves to the *chachomim*.

Cause of Tragedies

Is there any wonder there are so many tragedies taking place? I hear of a couple whom I had known; they are divorced. What happened?! Why don't you come and ask beforehand?! There is no counsel, there is no guidance?

People are going crazy today, they are putting themselves in the most precarious situations, and all over it is happening. The orthodox are going lost because of lack of leadership and guidance. Lives are being ruined; people's health, trouble with children, with in-laws, with neighbors.

And even though it's very practical advice you're hearing now – you'll live more successfully in *gashmiyus* if you follow it – but we are learning here something much more important: you have to make a Rav for yourself and stick to him in order to come close to Hakodosh Boruch Hu! Because that is our function in this world and there is no other way about it. Hakodosh Boruch Hu has revealed to us that the only way that a person can ever hope to come close to Him is by means of His *chachomim*.

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

Coming Close to The Sages

Moshe explained to Yisro that the people must go through him in order to come close to Hashem. It is our duty to connect to living teachers as a means of connecting with Hashem. This week I will *bli neder* take one action each day in order to come close to my Torah teacher. I will make sure to see my Teacher each day and do something to reinforce the connection between us.

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74 - Consulting the Sages | 415 - Do Not Be An Orphan | 965 - Our Leaders of Old | E-183 - Freedom for Servitude | E-264 - Close to Hashem

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

שאל אביך ויגיד זקניך ויאמרו לך

Q:

Why are the Zionists allowing more than a half million non-Jewish Russians to enter into Israel as fake Jewish people?

A:

You'll have to write them a letter and ask them. That's what I did.

But you have to know that they don't do anything on their own. Hakodosh Boruch Hu is doing this in order to let us know – to make it absolutely clear to us – that the Zionists are trying to destroy the Jewish people.

You have to know, that when resha'im are in power, they bring ruin upon the world. And when Tzadikim are in power, then everything is in order. And therefore, it's so important for us to learn that the resha'im are ruining the world. And they're ruining the world in other ways too – many other ways. It's not just this alone that they're flooding Eretz Yisroel with goyim. They are doing terrible things in Eretz Yisroel. What the Knesses just did – I don't want to say it in public because some things are not decent enough to say in public. But the things that they gave permission to do – the terrible things that they legalized – it's a ruination. So for us, the lesson is simple. It's important for us to know – to truly recognize – that the resha'im are *mash'chisim*. They're destroying the world.

And therefore, when you say Shemonah Esrei, have *kavanah* when you say ולמלשינים אל תהי תקנה, וכל הרשעה פרגע תאבר. When you say these words you should be thinking, "Hashem, please destroy the Meretz party." Hakodosh Boruch Hu should destroy the Bagatz – the Supreme Court. Hakodosh Boruch Hu should destroy – I don't want to say the names of these resha'im but Hashem should destroy all of them.

And say it with *kavanah* – with real feeling. And that's about all you can do right now. That and supporting the Yeshivas in Eretz Yisroel.

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