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**הגאון ר' אביגדור מיללער זצ"ל**

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

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observe My commandments.” Those words are talking about doing the *mitzvoos*; so what do the words אַם בְּהַקְתִּי תֵלְכוּ - “You should walk in My statutes” mean? And so Rashi tells us: It means שְׂתַהַי עִמְלִים בְּתוֹרָה - “That you should be *laboring* in the Torah.” *Teileichu* - “You should walk; that means you should be moving forward, making progress. You can't just be ‘keeping’ the Torah - you have to be *ameil* in it. And that means we have our work cut out for us.

### EVEN AMERICANS MUST LABOR

If you want to serve Hashem it takes *ameilus*, labor. Now, I know that for our American ears, it's something difficult to accept. We don't want to *labor* - maybe to work a little bit, OK, we'll consider it; but to labor, to be *ameil*, that we'll leave for others. So the first thing we have to get into our heads is that we came to this world to labor.

In Iyov (5:7) it states: *Adam l'amal yulad* - “Man was born into this world for *amal*, for toil.” Now, the truth is that all of creation must work in this world - birds, plants, reptiles, mammals; they also have to make a certain effort. But that's not their *purpose*. They're not *born* for toil - they're born for utility. The world needs them; there's an ecosystem where they fit in and therefore even an ant must toil to maintain himself, to preserve his existence. Animals must labor to find food, to find shelter, to survive; nevertheless that's not their purpose. But Mankind is different: *adam l'amal yulad*, his purpose is to *toil*. It's a very important principle you're hearing now. In fact it's the principle of principles.

### AMEILUS BATORAH!

Now, to labor in Torah includes many subdivisions, but the first thing that comes to mind when we read the words of Rashi: שְׂתַהַי עִמְלִים בְּתוֹרָה is *ameilus* in *limud hatorah*.

Learning Torah is very important! If you have any chance to learn - not just to learn, but to be *ameil* in Torah - there's nothing better than that. Because even when learning Torah, a person can choose the path of avoiding *ameilus*; he could study easier things.

He could be *ma'aver sedrah*, and then he could learn *Mishlei*. And after *Mishlei*, he sits and says *Tehillim*. And it's all important, but if you were born to be *ameil*, then you have to labor in learning *gemara* too.

*Gemara* is never easy, you know; it's never easy. לֹא כָּרַת - Hashem made a covenant with our nation only because of the *Torah sh'bal peh* (Gittin 60b). And the *gemara* says מִשּׁוּם דִּתְקִיפוֹ לְמִיגְמְרִינְהוּ - because it's hard to learn the *Torah sh'bal peh*. Especially before they had printed *gemaras*, everything was done by heart; it's very difficult to learn *b'al peh*.

### CHAZARA IS AMEILUS

Of course, to labor means that you have to sit by the *gemara* and learn for many hours, no question about that. And it's not only what you learn but how you learn. To review what you're learning, that's *ameilus ba'Torah*. You should say the words of the *gemara* over and over again. If you learn a *perek*, and you review it again and again until you know the *perek*, that's *ameilus*. And if you labor in *Tosfos*, surely good. But even if you just labor in a plain piece of *gemara*, and you can say it like *ashrei*, you're a success. And actually there's nothing sweeter than knowing a whole *perek* inside - even the *gemara* alone. If you can run through the *perek* like you say *ashrei*, it's a *simcha*, a real happiness.

We say it every morning: וְהֵעֲרַב נָא הַשֵּׁם אֱלֹהֵינוּ, "Make the words of Your Torah sweet in my mouth." How does it become sweet? You know when you keep a piece of bread in your mouth longer it becomes sweeter; every time you chomp down, it becomes sweeter and sweeter. Because the bread is starch and the starch turns into sugar through the action of the saliva on the starch. The enzymes mix with the starch and it turns to sugar. The longer the bread is in your mouth the more sweet it becomes. And the Torah is no different - the longer the Torah is in your mouth, the sweeter it becomes. So review and review and review; the *ameilus* of *chazara* is wonderful.

## THE MORE DIFFICULT THE BETTER

There's a world of achievement for you. Every male should have a goal of learning *kol hatorah kula*. All of it! *Talmud Bavli*, *Talmud Yerushalmi*; there's no end to what you have to accomplish. And you'll only achieve it by means of hard work; it's not easy street in this world and therefore you won't succeed unless you *labor* in Torah.

And it's the labor, it's the hard work, that Hashem wants. That's the great principle of *l'fum tzara agra*, according to the difficulty is the reward. The more difficult it is, the more is the reward. Let's say it's a hard *sugya*; you don't understand it and you're discouraged - so you get more reward than when you do understand it. The more *kashas* you have and the less you know about the *gemara*, so you're struggling more and you're working on it, so you get more reward.

You know, *Tosfos* had more *kashas* than we have because he was *ameil* when he learned a *sugya*. *Tosfos* when he finished the *sugya*, he would say, "I don't understand the *gemara* at all!" But we learn for a few minutes and "I got it; I understand everything!" - because we're not working. *Tosfos* has questions on the *gemara* because his mind was laboring, he was always thinking. So *Tosfos* gets more reward because he suffered more in his learning. Whatever it is, difficulty in doing good things certainly gives you a greater reward.

## WHAT'S "TO DO" ALREADY

In the beginning of the creation of the world, it says that Hakodosh Boruch Hu blessed the seventh day, **כִּי בּו שָׁבַת מְקַל** - **מְלֵאכֶתוֹ אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹת** - because on that day, He stopped all His work *that He created to do* (Bereishis 2:3). Now, if you pay attention to that *possuk* it seems like *la'asos* is a superfluous word; He created *la'asos*, "to do". That word "to do" is hanging on like a tail at the end of the *possuk*. He created; that's all! What is "to do"?

Now, in *pashtus* it means that He created the world to function continuously; that means that after Hakodosh Boruch Hu established the entire *briyah*, it continues to function. All living things work in tandem and this very complicated world runs on

its own, *k'viyachol*, living, producing, functioning. A cow, for example. Cows are giving us milk and meat and leather, and other good things. There are baby cows, and they eat grass and become big cows and the process starts again. And Hashem made it *la'asos*, that it should continue to function this way on its own.

### WE DO MORE THAN COWS

Now this explanation is a true explanation, no question about it. However, our *chachomim* tell us that there's something more important than that. Because man after all is the most important creation in the world and his *la'asos* is a different kind of *la'asos* than that of the cow - he's created not just to function; to eat and reproduce. Man is created to do something more than just live.

On this word, *la'asos*, there's a *Medrash* that states as follows. "It's a *mashal* to a craftsman who is working in his shop and his little son is looking on. After the boy becomes older, so the father says, 'Now you take over.'" That's the *mashal* in the *Medrash*. Now, what's the *nimshal*? As follows.

Before the creation of the world, man did not exist yet and therefore Hakadosh Baruch Hu was the sole doer; Hashem was the Creator, the only doer. But when He finished and He created man, so He said, "Now *you* take over; now it's you turn *la'asos*; I want *you* to get busy doing. And therefore the words אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹת - "He created - *to do*," means that from now on, man must do.

### WELCOME TO THE WORKSHOP

And so when you enter this world, you're coming into a workshop. You're not coming into a vacation place. It's not a place where you'll lull on the beach or sit in an easy chair. This is a place for work. That's the lesson that is being emphasized here, that you were born into a world *la'asos*, to do. אָמַר רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר כָּל אָדָם לְעֵמֶל נִבְרָא - Every person was created in order to labor (Sanhedrin 98b), and there's no way to skirt your obligation if you want to fulfill your purpose here.

Hakadosh Boruch Hu created the system whereby men must labor. בְּזֶעַת אַפְּיךָ תֹאכַל לֶחֶם - "With the sweat of your brow, you're going to eat bread" (Bereishis 3:19); which means the Creator laid down a law that you must *work* for your living. There's no such thing as loafing through life because the loafers are the ones who leave the world quickly. And even if they hang around, it's usually trouble - for everyone.

Work is a fundamental part of our nature. When people don't work, then something happens to them. First of all, their minds begin to falter. Without being busy, it's almost impossible to maintain sanity. It's an interesting aspect of human nature that man cannot tolerate idleness. Even the wealthy who don't have to work, so they look for something to do as a substitute for work. They travel; some do more mischievous things. Whatever it is, they try to keep themselves busy in one way or the other.

#### THE REAL WORK

But all this, you have to know, is really only a symbol of something that's much more profound. Because man was not made merely to stand behind a counter or to drive a truck or to be a dentist. All these things are only a *mashal*. They're only a symbol of our true function. This instinct of the workdrive in human beings was given to men in order to let them know, in order to stimulate them, to labor for *shleimus*, perfection.

*Ha'kol tzrichin asiyah*; man was not created as a finished product, is what the Medrash says. The word *la'asos* tells us that the work is not yet done; we're not perfected yet. *Bara Elokim*, Hashem created you, *la'asos*, so that you should do something; you were created to make something out of yourself. That's your job in life and there's so much *la'asos*, so much to do, that it means we have a big job ahead of us.

#### THE TRUCKER WHO MISSED THE BOAT

It's not enough to refrain from *aveiros*; it's a very good thing to refrain from doing sins, but it's not enough. You didn't come into this world to not do sins. You're here to do something positive, to labor in *la'asos*.

I always tell you this story: You sent your trucker with a truck full of goods to deliver in Los Angeles. So he made the trip and came back and he tells you, "Boss, it was a successful trip. I didn't get a single traffic ticket, no accidents. It went very well." "That's great," you say. "And how did the drop off go? Did all the goods fit into the warehouse?" "Oh," he tells you. "I forgot to deliver the goods!" So you'll come back to Hashem and you'll say, "Hakodosh Boruch Hu, I did no sins." "Fine, very good," says Hashem, "What about *la'asos*? What did you make out of yourself?" "Oh, that I forgot."

Now, I'm going to emphasize this a little more because when people hear they have to do, immediately they think they understand what to do. You have to do *mitzvos*. And *mitzvos*, that's already a stereotype - nothing to talk about. Why waste any more time talking about it? Who doesn't know you have to do *mitzvos*?

And the answer is, *mitzvos* is not what you think it is. Because whatever *mitzvos* are, they're only the beginning, the bare bones of your *shleimus*, of making yourself. They are only means that are given to help out. לֹא נִתְּנוּ הַמִּצְוֹת אֶלָּא לְצַרֵּף בָּהֶן הַבְּרִיּוֹת, the purpose of *mitzvos* is to refine the person doing the *mitzvos* (Bereishis Rabbah 44:1). Which means that people can do *mitzvos*, but many times they lose sight of the purpose; and it's a pity, it's a frustration of the plan of Hashem.

#### CHICKEN SOUP FOR THE SOUL

For instance, the *mitzvah* of Shabbos. If it's done properly, Shabbos can change a man. Week after week, the Shabbos comes and goes and it changes people. Only that you have to know how to utilize Shabbos. That's why there's no other work allowed on Shabbos, because you're expected to get your *mind* working, thinking. You can't just eat the chicken soup like a *golem*. Now, you can't expect to work the whole bowl of soup, but at least the first spoonful, you can be *ameil* in! You think, "This spoonful is to celebrate *briyas ha'olam yeish mei'ayin*, the creation of the world from nothing." Ah! Now you accomplished! You changed yourself!

*Tefillin* should change you. If you put the *tefillin* on your head with the proper understanding, you become a different person. Of course, it takes effort. You'd rather not have to think - on, off, on, off, every day, that's it. But if you'll be *ameil*, if every morning you put some thought into what *tefillin* mean, so every day becomes a new *la'asos*. Not only are you putting *tefillin* on your head, but you're changing what's *in* your head; and that's the real *la'asos*, to transform your mind into a Torah mind.

When you wear *tzitzis* and you utilize them, that's *la'asos*. Not to just let them hang there and never consider them. It's better than nothing but that's not it. *Adam l'amal yulad*, you have to be *ameil* in the *mitzvos*! We have to utilize the *mitzvos* for *shleimus*. You can't do it all at once, but little by little, you begin to be *ameil* in the *mitzvos*, and that's your success. You're moving, you're progressing every day.

#### WALKING AMONG THE ANGELS

There was a certain Kohen Gadol, who had a vision once, a prophetic vision, and Hakadosh Baruch Hu showed him that there were *malachim* who were standing around. Angels were standing around. So Hashem said to the Kohen Gadol, "If you will go in My ways, then וְנָתַתִּי לְךָ מֵהַלְכִים בֵּין הָעֲמֻדִים הָאֵלֶּה, I'm going to give you the opportunity to walk among those who are standing here" (Zecharia 3:7). It's a remarkable *possuk*. Hashem is describing the angels as *standing*, and He says, "You are going to *walk* among these standing angels." Not, "You'll stand among the angels" or "You'll walk together with the angels." No, the angels are standing and you'll be walking among them.

So the commentaries explain as follows. Angels are called *omdim* because they can only stand, they don't move. Now, we know that they move from one place to another, whatever it is; they carry out whatever Hashem sends them to do. But still they're *omdim* because they cannot change. An angel cannot become better; there's no *la'asos* for an angel. An angel will never improve himself. He's a robot. Whatever he is, that's what he's going to be forever. You, however, are a *mehalech*. You are walking. You're not supposed to stand still! You're not supposed

to be an *oimed*. You cannot stand still. That's the contrast, *mihalchim bein ha'omdim*. A human being is not an *oimed*; he's a *mehalech*. **אִם בְּהִלְכְּתִי תֵלְכוּ** - He has to be walking; he has to be toiling.

#### STEP BY STEP

Now, walking means he has to journey. And journey means step by step. You don't make a journey by one great leap. Even if you're taking a plane, you'll have to step up the stairs to the plane. You have to make steps and therefore, gradually a man is expected to change himself.

And so we must understand that the system that is required of us is a system of gradual progress, gradual achievement. That's what *bichukosai teilechu* is saying. It's a process, it's step by step; nobody accomplishes things immediately. But it means that you have to be moving, always laboring and walking forward. There are no two ways about it - *adam l'amal yulad*, that's why you were born.

## Part II. A Program for Life

#### DON'T YES ME!

I'm not going to leave you with just this thought alone because it will have no effect. Because people say "Yes, yes," and then they go home and forget about it. It's easy to say, but it's difficult to do the work. Now, work means you have to have a program. And you have to look for advice on how to work on it. Did you ever ask anybody? *Ah nechtige tug*. He never even thought of getting busy on it! Why should he? He's sure he has it already.

And that brings us now to a great *eitzah*, the great recommendation for how a person can change himself. So we'll talk for a few minutes about a system, a system we can follow for *la'asos*. This system is exemplified by a certain *sefer* called Cheshbon Hanefesh. Now, it's not the only system there is, but it's a system that works if you take it seriously. And people *should* take it seriously because this is the most serious business of life -

not to be an *oimed*, not to stand still. There's a man in this synagogue who's been here for forty years, almost fifty years already, and he is the same as he was when he walked in. Of course, that's also an achievement; he could have become much worse - there are people like that too. But not spoiling is not enough. Hakadosh Baruch Hu didn't create us to remain the same. The *gemara* tells a case of tzaddikim who were taken out of this world, not because of anything wrong, but because they stopped improving. Life is only for improving, for changing.

### THE REMARKABLE SYSTEM

So let's study this system, and we'll take it seriously because that's our business here; we were born to be *ameil*. The author of Cheshbon Hanefesh was Rav Mendel Satanover. He lived in the time of the Gra and he was a man who exercised quality of thought. It's remarkable what else he says in his *sefer* besides what we're going to say now. You'll find there remarkable ideas about how to recognize the *kochos hanefesh*, the psychology of human nature, and how to harness a person's qualities to do good things.

When I was in Slabodka, there was a *histadrus hamussar*. It was a gathering of Slabodka talmidim - Roshei yeshiva, *kollel* people and *talmidim* who came together from time to time to work on *mussar*. And one of the projects they undertook was to reprint some old *sefer*. And they were considering - I was present at the meeting - they were considering reprinting Rabbeinu Yonah on Mishlei. And yet, even though Rabeinu Yonah is a *Rishon*, finally they decided in favor of the Cheshbon Hanefesh.

Do you know what that means? These people were experts in the subject, old Roshei Yeshiva, *talmidei chachomim*, and of all the *mussar seforim* to reprint they chose the Cheshbon Hanefesh. You know, that Rav Yisrael Salanter in the *sefer* Ohr Yisrael, he says, עין בְּחֶשְׁבוֹן הַנֶּפֶשׁ "See Cheshbon Hanefesh." It's a remarkable thing. R' Yisrael didn't recommend any *sefer* and here you have a remark, *agav orcha*, he says, עין בְּחֶשְׁבוֹן הַנֶּפֶשׁ. That's a tremendous recommendation.

## SLOWLY BUT SURELY

So here is the system that this *sefer* recommends. There are easy stages; it's a week by week program, so pay attention to what we say here now. Let's say this week you decide you want to work on the quality of loving your fellow Jew. Now you can't suddenly say *הִנְנִי מוֹכֵן וּמְזֻמָּן* and I'll do it. No, you can't do it; it won't work. To succeed, you'll do it by gradual stages. You commit yourself to *ameilus*, to labor in loving your fellow Jew and you get going. You'll pick just one Jew and you'll concentrate on him this week. This one Jew, for this week, you'll try to think as much as you can of his good qualities. Latch onto something! Even if it's just his appearance, how he dresses. *Something* you can find! Try to love him. Think of him as if he were your brother, or your son. Better yet think of him as if he were yourself.

Now how much time are you going to spend? Naturally, you're not going to spend much time. Spend two minutes a day thinking about that while you're walking. For two minutes think about that person. And be *mekayeim* on him *לְרַעַךְ כְּמוֹךְ* at least two minutes. Of course, you won't love him. At first it's just externalities. But by the end of the week - seven times two, that's fourteen minutes - it's a lot of time fourteen minutes. I know that the decent people here, they say, "Fourteen minutes a week? That's all?!" They do more than that. *A nechtige tahg!* Did they ever spend even one second on the subject?! Now, let's say by the end of the week you did fourteen minutes on one person. You're going to get *schar*, you'll get a big reward for trying; just for the effort alone - besides for the perfection you achieved.

## NEW WEEK, NEW PROGRAM

Now the next week. Next week, try something else. This week you'll try the *middah* of keeping your mouth closed. Work on that quality for a whole week; it doesn't mean you'll do it *all* week, but at least during that week you'll choose one hour a day. "This one hour, I'm going to shut my mouth and only open it for the necessity of saying a kind and helpful word to somebody, like good morning or thank you. Otherwise, I put a padlock on my lips for one hour a day." That's this week. Little by little, a person

learns to control his tongue, to squelch the wisecrack, to repress some stupid remark. And when this week passes away, he's finished. He can't keep it up too long because the energy and ambition peter out. The Cheshbon Hanefesh says that; he says that the *gevuras hanefesh* peters out and that's why you go on to a new *middah* the following week.

But the effect stays with you even after the week ends. With a little bit of work this beautiful quality of keeping your mouth closed will make you a new man. You get home and your wife says something silly to you, you get excited and open your big mouth and it blows up. Learn to practice keeping the *middah* of staying quiet. So when you're taking hold of the doorknob, make up your mind, "No matter what she says I won't answer back." Make up your mind - the effect will last for the next five minutes at least. All right, five minutes is also a big achievement. And if you're *ameil* in it, then after a while it will last for five hours. Or the wife; she knows her husband is coming home from work soon, so she makes up her mind that she's going to keep quiet today. So he's quiet and she's quiet, and it's a beautiful evening. And not only a beautiful evening but they're both transforming themselves into beautiful people.

### THE MEZUZAH PROJECT

The third week, another project. Project number three - as you pass a house where you see a *mezuzah*, especially a big *mezuzah*, bless those people. Now, they don't know that you're blessing them; even better. Bless the Jewish families who have big *mezuzos* on their doors. The truth is you can bless any size *mezuzah*. Isn't that a beautiful thing to be *ameil* in? For one week, as you pass by *mezuzos* you pour out the *brachos*. That's living! That's making progress! You're traveling, not standing still. A man who does that for one week is fulfilling בְּחֻקְתֵי תִלְכוּ He's actually walking through his neighborhood in the *mitzvos* of Hashem.

Now if you live in the frum neighborhood, there are so many *mezuzos* you can't do it. So choose one block of *mezuzos*; one full block. As I pass by, I look at the house and I say, "A blessing

on them." And if you want to be better, be explicit. "They should live long." "They should be rich." "They should be healthy." "They should have happiness from their children." Don't be lazy; keep on alternating the *brachos*. Get accustomed to blessing people who have *mezuzos* on their doorposts and do it all week. That's this week; the third week.

#### CHAZERING FOUR TIMES A YEAR

Now, you'll chose thirteen different programs for thirteen weeks because the year has about fifty two weeks. So four times thirteen weeks is fifty-two, so that means four times a year you'll review these projects. Now, not everybody should work on the same thing. It depends on what you need, more or less. Some people have to refrain from spending too much time at the supper table or too much time on the couch. Here's a man who sits down with a newspaper and a half hour goes by. Thirty minutes you need?! You have to read everything?! So for this week work on shaving off fifteen minutes. Shave fifteen minutes off that half hour every day - that's already progress. And those fifteen minutes you can pick up a *gemara* and learn three lines every day. Three lines a day! You can go and make something out of yourself during those fifteen minutes. That's already *ameilus ba'torah*. Don't disdain fifteen minutes of *ameilus*; three lines every day and you're already a *mehalech*.

This system that was outlined just now is a precious counsel that this *sefer* has bequeathed to us; to work gradually on ourselves step-by-step and to be a *mehalech*, to move all our lives, steadily ahead, even though it's only one step at a time. However, despite everything I'm saying, most people will never do it. Most people will just ignore what we're saying here. It's a tragedy, but that's how people are; they won't do it. They *won't* go home tonight and take a notebook and divide it into thirteen pages and write a heading on each page - "This week I'm working on this, next week on that." That's what they ought to do, by the way. If that's what you'll do, so tonight was a very valuable night for you. And you keep that notebook with you. Even if you try it for one

year or a half a year or a quarter of a year, it's gold and diamonds. It's already a life of accomplishment.

And when people make a program in life, a program of making progress, of not standing still, that's the greatness of succeeding in this world. That's what you came here for! That's your life! And therefore, do anything to start moving in the right direction! And even though you're moving slowly, as long as you continue to move, to grow, that's the fulfillment of the purpose of life and that's the purpose of the world. The world was created *la'asos*— for a man to make something out of himself.

#### RABBI MILLER DISLIKES THE STYLE

Now, if you'll put your mind to it, you'll see that the opportunities for *la'asos*, for *ameilus* in growth, are available all the time. Nothing is easy, and that's the joy of life, that's the success of this world. Let's say, for example, the *ameilus* of fighting against the modes of the day, the styles of the day. Now, I don't want to go into details; I don't want to make some people here feel slighted, but there are certain things that people do today that are a result of styles, of being in style. And I don't approve of it. There are certain things that are only the product of the *yetzer harah* and for women especially - men too, but women especially, even from women - indulge in them to make themselves look prettier. I don't approve of that *at all*.

"It's not easy," you say. So what?! That's what you're here for; to be *ameil*, to labor in the service of Hashem. You must fight back against the fashions of the day. It doesn't mean you have to be old-fashioned, but the things that are done today in order to attract the eyes of other people, that I don't like. A woman should never make herself too attractive in public. It's very important, and that means that every woman, every girl, has to be *ameil* because it's not easy to fight the environment. It's a *tza'ar*, it's an *amal*, but that's what you came to this world for.

#### THE EREV SHABBOS AMEILUS PROGRAM

And the truth is that you don't have to search for *ameilus* - it's always there. Here's a woman in her house and Shabbos is

coming. Shabbos is coming and she's going crazy; she has a house full of children and she has to cook and bake and clean. But once she understands what we're saying here tonight, so she's not going crazy; it's hard work, it's *ameilus* in Torah, absolutely, but she's not going crazy. She's full of joy because she knows that she's accomplishing her purpose in this world.

So she's busy mixing the ingredients and the children are pulling at her dress. Some of them are fighting, and she's telling them, "Don't fight; keep quiet. Shabbos is coming," as she puts the food in the oven. She's building the Shabbos; it's not easy to build but she's doing it! That's the meaning of *laasos*, to accomplish, to live in this world for a purpose.

Now here's a *yeshiva bochur*; he's not baking and cooking for Shabbos. His mother lets him stay in the *beis medrash* on erev Shabbos to learn. But no matter, he can't excuse himself from the function of *la'asos*, of *amal*. So he's learning a piece of *gemara*, and he labors to remember it. He goes over it again and again and again; that's *laasos*, that's *ameil*, he's accomplishing something. Maybe he's tired; he'd rather lay on the couch with a magazine or a newspaper, a kosher newspaper. But he says, "No, that's not *ameilus*; I'm here in this world to labor in accomplishment."

### Part III. Laboring in Happiness

#### IS IT SO HARD TO BE HAPPY?

And now we come to the one subject with which I want to conclude. I have so much to say to you about *ameilus* still, but I must conclude with this one subject. Because there's another very important form of labor that is included in *שְׁתַּהֲיוּ עַמְלִים בְּתוֹרָה* that many people don't know about - and actually they're surprised to hear that it requires any work at all. And that is the labor of learning how to enjoy this world.

There's no question about it that this world is full of happiness. But it's not just something that happens; to some people more, and some less. No, it's a part of the Torah; the Torah

of happiness is a very big *cheilek* of the Torah, and like all the subdivisions of Torah it requires *ameilus* to achieve. Like *Rashi* explained, Hashem tells us that we have to be *ameil* in Torah to acquire it. And what that means is that you have to study happiness; you have to labor in the *sugya* of happiness if you want to appreciate this world. You hear that *chiddush*? You can not become a *samei'ach b'chelko*, you can not enjoy this world, unless you put in work.

### LAZY PEOPLE GO TO AMUSEMENT PARKS

Now, the lazy people who never studied how to enjoy this world, they never labored in it, so they keep *trying* to enjoy this world, but they find that this world is a place of disappointments. Even when they set out to go someplace for a good time, when they come back home they see it was a disappointment. You go to the movies, and the lights come back on again and you see it's nothing but a fake; the story never happened. It's only a film; there's nothing to it. Others think that maybe that they'll find happiness on roller coasters. And if you're a high roller, you'll have bigger *hasagos*, bigger dreams, so you'll fly to the Bahamas to search for happiness. And trust me, you won't find it; you won't find happiness in the Bahamas. Bigger mosquitoes than here in Brooklyn, that you'll definitely find. Maybe some new disease from the islands you'll bring back; but happiness, no. Because for happiness you have to labor. And when you try to find happiness the easy way, by going to ball games and amusement parks, so it may be that you can find a thrill, some fun, yes. But happiness, no. Life becomes one big disappointment.

Hashem says, "I gave you this world to enjoy it *but like all good things you have to labor for it.*" *הָעוֹלָם לֹא נִבְרָא אֶלָּא לְהִתְעַנֵּג* - the world was only made for happiness (Mesillas Yesharim, *Hakdamah*). Of course the last word there is important - it says there *לְהִתְעַנֵּג עַל הַשָּׁם* - to be grateful to Him, to think about Him, to appreciate what He's giving you. We're here to understand the gifts of Hashem and to enjoy them. And when you enjoy life by means of labor, by means of studying the gifts of Hashem, thinking about them, then Hakodosh Boruch Hu says, "You're

fulfilling your purpose.” And therefore you have no option; you have to put in effort. It’s only when people toil, when they labor to see the happiness of life, that’s how they become happy people. By means of *ameilus* you can become a person who is actually overflowing with *simcha*, with real joy.

#### ENJOYING THIS WORLD WITHOUT A WRISTWATCH

Once a man ran over to me and he said, “Why are you always talking about *Olam Hazeh*?!” It was a kollel man - “You’re talking to them about *ta’anugei Olam Hazeh*,” he said. I looked at him. He’s wearing a wristwatch - I don’t wear a wristwatch. He smokes - I don’t smoke. He drives a car - I don’t have a car. But I’m the guilty one who’s enjoying *Olam Hazeh*! He doesn’t care for *Olam Hazeh*! The answer is that *בְּסִיל בְּחֹשֶׁךְ הוֹלֵךְ*, the fools walk in darkness (Koheles 2:14). He doesn’t know what happiness is. You don’t need wristwatches and cars to be happy; you don’t need anything to be happy except *seichel* and *ameilus*.

You must learn to appreciate the fact that you are able to breathe. Did you ever toil in *learning* how to enjoy how to breathe fresh air? Walk out of here tonight on the street and fill your lungs, those two balloons, with air. Breathe deeply; it’s a delight. The air oxygenates your blood and makes it red. The iron in the blood unites with the oxygen; the hemoglobin takes the oxygen in and it begins flowing in a form that’s easily assimilated by the body. Your whole body is delighting in that oxygen. There’s a happiness in breathing! You never thought about that? Practice it! Here’s a person who learned how to breathe deeply, and he enjoys life because of it. But it didn’t just happen that way; he labored in it. You’ll never be happy with breathing unless you work on it.

#### SEEING HAPPINESS

Learn how to enjoy the happiness of being able to see. You have two good cameras, camcorders, and as you turn your neck you can see everything around you. Isn’t that a pleasure? Isn’t it beautiful? You see everything; colors and movement and faces. Isn’t that a happiness? Of course it’s not, because you never labored in it. There’s nothing in the world as beautiful as seeing. If you think about that person you saw tapping his way in the street

with a stick; he was robbed of this great happiness, and you have it! *Boruch Atah Hashem, po'keiach ivrim*; Ah! The happiness of seeing. If you labor in the Torah of how to be happy with your eyes so you'll never be able to be unhappy all your life. *Eizehu ashir*, who is rich in this world? *Hasameiach b'chelko*, the one who learns to enjoy his eyes, and his lungs.

Learn to enjoy the fact that you could walk. *Boruch atah Hashem ha'meichin mitzadei gaver* - He establishes my footsteps. What a pleasure it is to get around on my feet. Look at the man sitting in the wheelchair; he can't walk *nebach*. It's a pity on him. He lost that great fun of locomotion; walking back and forth using those two Rolls Royces underneath your body! Ah, ah, ah, what a happiness! The simcha of walking, it's a joy! The person who learns how to enjoy walking will always be full of happiness.

#### THE HAPPINESS OF BREAD AND WATER

Learn how good it is to eat a piece of bread. Eating a slice of bread is a very big *simcha*, it's very great fun. And don't think that it's not a mitzvah. *Boruch Atah Hashem, hamotzee lechem min ha'aretz*. It's a great fun to eat a piece of bread and to thank Hashem from the bottom of your heart. And you say that the purpose of the bread is *בְּעִבּוֹר שְׁמוֹ הַגָּדוֹל*, for the sake of His great name. "I'll enjoy the bread and think of His great name." *כִּי הוּא קָל* *וְזוֹ וּמִפְּרִיָּם לְכָל*, You give food to the world. What a pleasure it is to chew on the bread. The pleasure of eating a piece of bread! How great is the daily experiences of a man who understands what it means to be able to chew a piece of bread and swallow it. What a benefit it is for the body to eat a piece of bread. It's a blessing.

Now, when you learn to enjoy the piece of bread and with it, a glass of water, that's the *ameilus* of a happy man. Water is a miracle; water is a combination of two gases. Can you imagine that? it's two gases. It's oxygen and hydrogen and neither of them on its own could quench his thirst. And then it comes together by an electric spark and it becomes water. That's a miracle! A *neis*! And that *neis* goes into your body and it lubricates all your joints; it makes your eyes sparkle; it causes your blood to flow so that it shouldn't congeal. Water is life! *Boruch Atah Hashem sh'hakol*

*n'ihiyeh b'dvaro*. Practice that; practice enjoying a glass of water. When the children are sitting at the table on Shabbos the first thing they stretch out their hands for is for the soda, for the juice, the colored water, the dirty water they want to drink. Teach them that the plain water is happiness.

#### EVEN TZADIKIM DRINK WATER AND SLEEP

Even *tzadikim* eat bread and drink water; and Hakodosh Boruch Hu says, "I'm not going to reward you for not being happy. I don't like grumpy *tzadikim*. If you're not happy, it's your own fault." Hashem doesn't want him to be unhappy with the bread or unhappy with the water. They're supposed to say *Boruch Atah Hashem*. I could go on all night - if you don't work on appreciating sleeping well so you'll never know what happiness is. You young fellows, you put your head on the pillow and right away you waft off into slumberland. *Ah geshmakeh* sweet sleep. But you'll never appreciate it if you don't labor in it. Ah, the pleasure of sleeping well; you wake up and you're a refreshed, you're a new person.

And so little by little, when a man works to gain the insights that cause happiness, so the world becomes a happy place. So not only can a person succeed by being *ameil* in the words of the Torah itself, but he can succeed by being *ameil* in living a Torah life. And don't think it'll be deducted from your reward in *Olam Haba* because you enjoyed Hashem in this world. The *schar* of happiness in Hashem's gifts cause you to sing to Hashem in this world and you'll continue singing in happiness to Him in the world to come.

#### THE END OF AMEILUS ROAD

So if we learned anything tonight, it's how important this element of *ameilus* is for succeeding in our function of *la'asos*. We're here in this world "to do," and doing is not meant to be easy. But once you begin to understand this vital Torah attitude, life becomes the place of the greatest pleasure because it becomes the place of achievement and accomplishments through small but steady steps.

And that's why the Torah says that *im bechukosai teileichu*, if you labor in My *mitzvos*, you will be rewarded with all good things: rains and produce and peace and long life. What does that mean that Hashem will give us plenty to eat? Does it mean that you'll have the opportunity to eat more breakfasts and more suppers? Is that what it's all about? No, it doesn't mean that. The Rambam explains that all these rewards mean that you'll have more opportunities to achieve something more while you're in this world. Because the longer you live, the more produce and peace that you have, the more you can accomplish. Your station in *Olam Habah* depends on what you do in *Olam Haze*. And therefore the greatest reward is *וַיְנַתֵּי שְׁלוֹם בְּאֶרֶץ*, peace in the land, because you'll have more years to be *ameil* in *la'asos*, and to make yourself into a new person.

And once you begin walking down this path of *im bechukosai teileichu*, of laboring in this world and achieving, so *בְּדַרְךְּ* *אוֹתוֹ מוֹלִיכִין אֹתוֹ שְׂאֵדָם רוֹצֵה לְלַכֵּת מוֹלִיכִין אֹתוֹ* - Hakodosh Boruch Hu will help you succeed at walking even more. And not only will you be fulfilling what Hakodosh Boruch Hu wants you to do - but you're transforming yourself into something much more noble than when you were born - you're remaking yourself! And so, on that final day, when you have to return your *neshama* to Hakodosh Boruch You, you'll be able to say, "Hashem, I spent my days being *ameil* in *bechukosai teileichu* - I fulfilled *la'asos*, and now I come back to You prepared to receive my eternal reward."

### HAVE A WONDERFUL SHABBOS

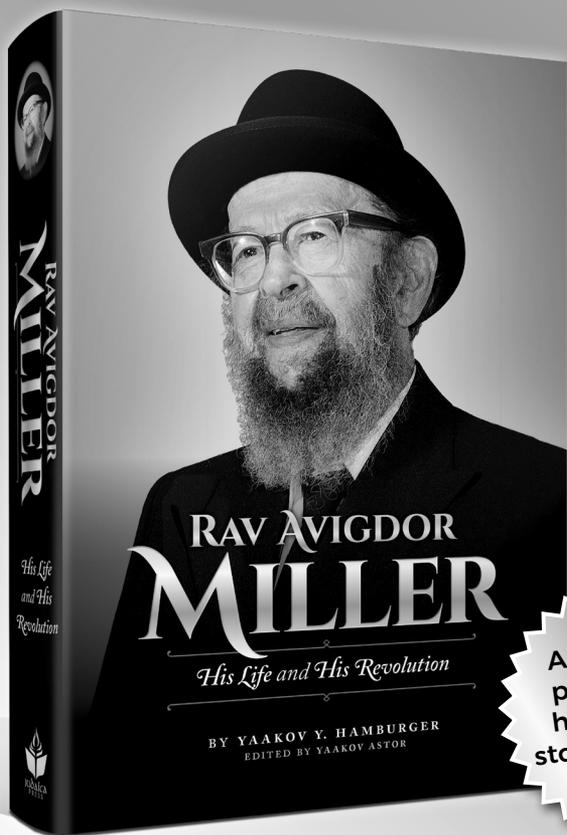
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Q&A

With  
Rav Avigdor Miller Ztz"l



Q:

**How can one truly believe that everything is *gam zu l'tova*, that it's all for the good?**

A:

We have a Torah and Moshe Rabbeinu is emes, v'soraso emes, and the Torah he gave us is true. And it states there that Hakodosh Boruch Hu does things l'tovah. He made the world for *chesed*. *Oiseh shomayim b'sevunah, ki l'olam chasdo*—everything He made, and everything He made is for *chesed*. *Ki l'olam chasdo*, it's a world of *chesed*. And if at some times it seems to be non-chesed, like a toothache; it's still a *chesed*. If not for the toothache, you wouldn't go to the dentist, and your tooth would rot away. Now you run to the dentist, he puts in a filling and you have a tooth. Pain is a *chesed*. Without pain people would be sick, and they would never know what's wrong with them.

I once heard this story. In Canada, there was a young woman who didn't have any nerves of feeling in her hands. She was putting her hand over the gas range and she smelled flesh burning. She didn't know it was her own flesh; her hand was burning from the gas range! She didn't have any sensation of pain; she lacked the sensation of pain and therefore didn't know her flesh was burning till she smelled it. If you have the sensation of pain, you pull back and you save yourself. Pain is a lifesaver. Pain is a *chesed gadol*. So don't think pain is a harm.

Poverty; for many people poverty is a *yeshua*, a salvation. Wealth? There was a wealthy man, I remember, he moved way out on Long Island. Then he lost all his money. So he moved back to Brownsville; this was in the good old days when Brownsville was a Jewish neighborhood. And he sent his boys to Mesivta Chaim Berlin. I was surprised to see him. "Oh, I said, "What are you doing here?" So he told me that he lost all his money, so now he's back in Brownsville, and he's sending his boys to yeshiva. Out there his boys wouldn't go to a frum place like Chaim Berlin. Only because he lost his money his family was saved – a true story. Many people should lose their money and move back to a frum neighborhood. It was a *yeshua*, no question about it! Wealth is a terrible injury, if it is misused. Tape # E-238

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