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SEFER BAMIDBAR - THE RAHMANI FAMILY EDITION

FOR THE HATZLACHA, HEALTH, AND HAPPINESS OF OUR FAMILY AND ALL KLAL YISROEL

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Parables of Cheshbon

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פרשת חקת

WITH

R' AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"L

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

Parables of Cheshbon

Contents:

Part I. City of Cheshbon - 3

Part II. Life of Cheshbon - 7

Part III. Eternal Cheshbon - 12

Part I. City of Cheshbon

No Trespassing

When the Bnei Yisroel received the command from Hakodosh Boruch Hu to finally leave the wilderness and cross over the Jordan River into Eretz Cana'an, they still had to pass through various kingdoms that were situated on the *Ever Hayarden*. And there, among the other empires was a territory that belonged to Moav.

Now, Moav was one of the lands that Hakodosh Boruch Hu exempted from the invasion of the Bnei Yisroel. Like Edom and Amon, they were descendants of our ancestor Avraham's family, and therefore Hakodosh Boruch Hu had stipulated that the Am Yisroel should never encroach on their territory. The land of Moav was off limits to the Am Yisroel.

Now, there happened to be an ambitious monarch in Transjordan, his name was Sichon Melech HaEmori, and this Sichon embarked on a war with his ancient enemy-neighbor Moav. It wasn't our business – it

was a personal fight between gentiles that took place long before the Bnei Yisrael came there – but the Torah tells us that Sichon became embroiled in a war with Moav and after many battles Sichon was victorious.

Triumphant Conqueror

It was a big triumph for him – the Moavim were no weaklings after all – and as a way of celebrating this great victory, Sichon took Cheshbon, one of the big cities of his newly acquired territory, and he began to build it up as his new capital. Cheshbon would be a showplace for his kingdom; a way of glorifying his conquest.

It was a glorious time in the history of Sichon and his kingdom and there were even poets who composed songs of celebration. They would stand by the city gates and on the street corners and they would chant songs of victory in honor of their king: **בָּאוּ חֶשְׁבוֹן** – *Let people come to Cheshbon from all over and see the great victory of our king. תִּבְנֶה וְתִכְוֶן* – *Let the city of Sichon be built up and be established!* (Chukas 21:27). Everyone should see how this important city that had once belonged to Moav has become built up and established as the capital city of our great monarch, Sichon.

Ridiculing the Losers

And they encouraged their king to press on further to more victories over Moav: **כִּי אֵשׁ יֵצֵאָה מִחֶשְׁבוֹן לִהְבֶּה מִקְרִית סִיחֹן אֶכְלָה עַר מוֹאָב בְּעֵלֵי בְּמוֹת אַרְנוֹן** – *A flame should come forth from Cheshbon, a flame from the city of Sichon, and consume Ar of Moav and the lords of the Heights of Arnon.* Our great monarch Sichon will go forth now like a fire and consume the rest of the kingdom of Moav.

And they ridiculed the trust that their fallen enemy had put in their god Kmosh who failed them in their time of need: **אֹי לְךָ מוֹאָב אֲבֵרְתָּ עִם כְּמוֹשׁ יִתֵּן בְּנָיו פְּלִיטִים וּבָנָיו בְּשֹׁבִית לְמַלְךְ אֱמֹרֵי סִיחֹן** – *Woe to you Moav, you are lost O' people of Kmosh. They have given away your sons as refugees and your daughters into captivity to Sichon King of the Emori.* They sang this proverb about how the Moabite god Kmosh had allowed his worshippers to be defeated; how the soldiers had to flee from the battlefield and the women had become captives.

It was by all accounts a glorious time in the history of Sichon's rule. **וַיִּגְרַם אֲבֵר חֶשְׁבוֹן עַד דִּיבּוֹן וַיַּשְׁמֵם עַד נֶפֶחַ אֲשֶׁר עַד מִידְבָּא** – *The sovereignty of Moav over Cheshbon was lost, all the way to Divon; we laid waste to Nophach*

which reaches up to Meidva. Sichon was making progress! He was a conqueror! He was drunk with success!

Sichon Gives a Hechsher

Now, when the Bnei Yisroel were approaching Eretz Canaan, they had no intention of becoming involved with Sichon – they just wanted to pass through into Eretz Canaan, that's all – but Sichon Melech HaEmori came out and initiated battle with them. *“Sichon assembled his entire people and went out to wage war against the Am Yisroel”* (ibid. 21:22) And what happened? *The Am Yisroel smote them with the edge of the sword and took possession of their land* (ibid. 21:24). Sichon was killed and the Bnei Yisroel overran his domain and conquered his kingdom.

But now, when they took over the property that belonged to the dead king Sichon, they also took over that portion of the kingdom of Moav that Sichon had conquered. It's true that they would never have been able to enter the land of Moav – Hashem had forbade them from doing so – but once Sichon annexed it to his kingdom, by right of conquest it was no longer Moav's. Among the nations the Right of Conquest is recognized as a right of ownership, and so it was Sichon's land that they had conquered now, and it was therefore permitted to the Bnei Yisroel.

The Bnei Yisrael were grateful now for what Sichon did for them – he had unintentionally performed a service for them by going into battle and making Moav kosher. *“Amon u'Moav tiharu b'Sichon – By means of Sichon's conquest the land of Moav had become incorporated into the territory of the Emori and it became permissible now to the Am Yisroel”* (Gittin 38a). And not only had Sichon made Moav permissible but he had built up for the Bnei Yisroel a beautiful city.

Ridiculing the Winners

Now, this story, this episode of Sichon's conquest of the city of Cheshbon and his unwitting preparation of the city for the Am Yisroel later became an object lesson for those who liked to study history. You know, in the olden days there was a profession of *moshlim*, individuals who used to entertain the people by teaching certain virtuous lessons that you could learn from history. They didn't just say it with boring words like I'm doing now – they made proverbs and they used to sing it with a tune. That's the point of a *mashal* – it's a certain style of using words, phrases, that teach lessons; sometimes even more than one lesson – there was a surface lesson and then another lesson beneath the surface.

And it was used as a form of entertainment – the *moshlim* would gather on the street corners and put on a performance, chanting their proverbs and teaching people lessons. And this story of Sichon taking Cheshbon and its ultimate conquest by the Am Yisroel was obviously fit for an example and so it became a proverb.

Everyone remembered the songs of Sichon after he conquered Moav – “Come to Cheshbon and see how it was built up for us” – *and now they used his own words to ridicule him*. They said, “Look what Sichon said. ‘I’m building up a great city!’ But for whom did he muster all of his efforts to build a beautiful capital? Who gained the benefit of Sichon’s planning; his architects and also the money he had put into building this capital city? Sichon had done it all for the benefit of the Bnei Yisrael.

The *moshlim* said that it with mockery and derision: “Here’s a man who thought he was building up for himself and he would sing, ‘Bo’u Cheshbon – Come and take a look at what happened with Cheshbon, *ki Cheshbon ir Sichon* – I made it into the main city of Sichon, *tibaneh vesikonen* – and we are singing about how we were building up and establishing the city with the great pomp of victory.’

The Real Mashal

“And now look what happened! It’s now in the possession of Sichon’s enemy!” That’s what it means when it says **עַל בֵּן יִאֲמְרוּ הַמִּשְׁלִים** – “Therefore the *moshlim* said...” *Al kein* in Torah language means “not like what you thought, but instead it was for *this* purpose.” It comes to preempt the original meaning of the Emori’im in favor of the meaning that the *moshlim* now gave it.

“*Al kein*, therefore *this* is the true intention of the parable” said the *moshlim*: Come to Cheshbon, to thinking – besides for being the name of that city, in *lashon kodesh* the word *cheshbon* means reckoning, thinking, and so the *moshlim* made a play on words in order to ridicule Sichon: “Come to *cheshbon*, to thinking, and take account of what really happened in that city.” Think, consider, what happened there; how Sichon’s success in this world, what he intended to be his success, ended up being empty dreams. All of that glory and happiness, all of his labor in making war, was for naught.

It’s a great object lesson that the *moshlim* took from the story of the town of Cheshbon; about how men attempt to make themselves great, to aggrandize themselves in this world. But because they didn’t look ahead, they didn’t contemplate what might be, it was all for naught, all a waste.

Burning Money

The story of Sichon Melech HaEmori was utilized to make note of that quirk of life; about the people who labor all their days, in order to give away their labor to others. And for whom? “I want my child to have the best,” he says. Who says it's good for them to have all of that money? The best means the worst because you're giving him every opportunity to ruin his life.

Here's a man who sneaks into the bank when his neighbors aren't looking and he goes into the vaults department and unlocks his deposit box and takes out his packages of hundred dollar bills. Fat packages! And he counts them and admires them then he sticks it back in, locks it up and goes home again. What's he saving his money for? He's saving it up for somebody else.

For whom? It could be for some rotten son who is now in Greenwich Village smoking dope. You know it costs a lot of money to take dope and all that money that his father was saving will be burned up in dope to help his son get to an early grave — at the ripe old age of 27 his son will kick the bucket because of his father's savings. A true story! So the purpose of that money was to help let his son die early. If he knew that — he doesn't want his son to die — he'd burn up the dollars. The hundred dollar bills he'd burn up! But he doesn't know because he's not thinking. He never came to *cheshbon*. That's what the *moshlim* saw beneath the surface of the story of Sichon and Moav and it's an excellent lesson that the proverb-makers taught us.

Part II. Life of Cheshbon

A Deeper Meaning

Now that's what the ancient proverb-makers who lived in the days of Sichon sang to their customers. But *our* Proverb Maker, that's Hakodosh Boruch Hu, spoke those words to Moshe Rabeinu in the Torah and it's interpreted by the sages of the Talmud who saw something much deeper than that. They dug beneath the surface and provided us an even more profound lesson from these words in the Torah.

They explained (Bava Basra 78b) the meaning Hakadosh Boruch Hu intended when he wrote these words in the Torah: *Al kein yomru hamoshlim* — and therefore the parable-makers said. But *moshlim* has two meanings; number one, “those who make parables” — that's the way

we understood it up till now. But in *lashon kodesh* the word *moshlim*, from the word *moshel*, also means “those who rule over themselves.” A *moshel* is one who has learned to be in control – he doesn’t do anything unless he consults his wisdom, his reason.

Al kein yomru hamoshlim – And so the ones who are rulers over themselves are trying to tell us something here. What is it? The *moshlim* are telling us the way to achieve the eternal accomplishments that we’ll be able to take with us into the afterlife.

Bo’u Cheshbon – “Come to Cheshbon,” they say. If you want to be a real success and see things clearly, then come to *cheshbon* – it means come to that place situated between your shoulders; come to an accounting, a calculation of what you’re actually accomplishing here.

You want to be a success in *Olam Habo*? You want to make something from yourself in this world? So the *moshlim bi’yitzram*, those who are in control of their thoughts and their emotions, say, “There’s only one way – come to reckoning.” That’s the most effective way – actually it’s the only way. *Bo’u cheshbon* – you have to make time for thinking.

Entering The Labryinth

Now if the *moshlim* say that, you can absolutely rely on them. Not only you *can* but you’d be a fool not to. If you want to find your path to success in this world, who better to listen to than the *moshlim bi’yitzram*, those who have already learned to control their thoughts and their emotions; those who have already succeeded in taking control of their lives.

The *Mesillas Yescharim* (ch. 3) explains it with a *marshal*. “To what can it be compared?” he says. “To a garden maze that wealthy aristocrats used to have on their property.” He calls it a *gan hamevucha*, a garden of confusion.

What was this garden maze? As a form of amusement, they used to have their gardens landscaped with an especial kind of design. There were terraces, trees and shrubs that were planted in the form of a labyrinth with twisting paths. The high bushes were arranged in the form of walls and between the walls there were various paths that would twist and wind – to the one walking the paths they all had the same appearance and visitors would attempt to make their way through the maze.

Navigating the Maze

Now, in the center of this garden was an elevated place with seats and the lords and ladies were invited to sit and view the people who were

traveling in the labyrinth. And those who volunteered to attempt to go through this labyrinth, they would try to arrive at the elevated pavilion that was situated in the middle; if they could find their way to the center they would climb up and sit together with those who had already made their way through and were sitting on top.

Now, you have to imagine how it was to walk this maze; some of the paths lead directly to the pavilion in the middle and some of them however were so planned that if you traverse them, you'll go farther and farther away from your destination. You might even end up outside of the city limits. Unless you're an experienced visitor here, someone who'd been through it many times; otherwise you wouldn't know how to find your way. All the paths are the same to you; it was almost impossible to make your way to the end.

But the people who are sitting on the elevated pavilion, from their vantage point they could look down and they can see if you're taking the right path or not. So imagine now that these people are beckoning to you; when you take a turn, they shout, "No, go the other direction," would you be so foolish as to disregard them and investigate on your own? You might continue all day long and never arrive!

And so the Mesillas Yescharim compares those who are sitting on the pavilion to the *moshlim*, those who have been successful against their *yetzer hora*. They've already made it through the maze and therefore they are the ones who can succeed in guiding others – they're the best ones to listen to.

Accounting 101

And what do they say? *Al ken yomru hamoshlim* – therefore those who already succeeded say, *bo'u Cheshbon* – come to this career of *cheshbon*, of thinking, of reflection. In order to arrive at your successful destination you have to live with thought about yourself. That's what those who already made it to the end of the maze and climbed the pavilion, that's what they're calling out to us: "Come to Cheshbon; come to an accounting! If you don't want to become a Sichon, someone who works in this world for nothing, then come to a career where you're going to consider what you're doing all the days of your life. Wake up and live a life of thinking!

Now, what is included in making a *cheshbon*? Everything! What kind of business you should do, where you should live, what you should eat, how you should dress, with whom you should associate. That's what

you're supposed to think about. Where's the best place for me to live? If it's next door to the yeshiva that's where I'm going to be – I don't care where the boss says we're supposed to move.

Whom should I marry? Don't wait until somebody ropes you in – a *shadchan* who tells you this or that, or a whiff of perfume that ropes you in. No. Make a *cheshbon*. What do you want? What are you looking for? You must know what you want first. If you don't, it will be a pity on you.

The Tzadik and The Ogre

If you're married already, take five minutes to think about your married life. You think you're a *tzadik* but maybe you're really an ogre. Every criminal thinks he's a nice fellow – a man could be trampling on his wife all of his days and he thinks he's a perfect example of a frum Jew. After all, who doesn't think they're a *tzadik*? Maybe you're not brash enough to say it out loud but in your heart you're patting yourself on the shoulder.

Live with thought! That's what Hakodosh Boruch Hu wants from us. Don't live aimlessly. Don't get up in the morning and just repeat your routine without any thought. Instead you're going to plan your life. Look back and measure your days, did your life live up to your aspirations? Why not? And what can you do with the remainder of these days, these precious days that Hakodosh Boruch Hu gives you in this world, to achieve something? How can you get the most out of your life?

A Few Minutes

We have to spend part of our days in calculating, in reckoning, in considering, making inventory of ourselves, working on our past and planning our future. Even a few minutes during the week, once a week, is a tremendous accomplishment – it's a good beginning.

There are plenty of things to think about. You have to think about how you behave at home to your father and mother, how you behave to your landlord. Are you fulfilling your duty to your employer? To your employees? Do you guard your tongue? Do you pay your debts? Do you shave with a razor? Do you carry on Shabbos? If you're a yeshiva man, so you don't shave with a razor or carry on Shabbos of course but do you learn on Shabbos? What are you doing on those long afternoons?

The Morning Blessings

You want to be great in the next world? Take an inventory every night before you go to sleep. Spend five minutes thinking: What did I do

when I got up in the morning? Did I say *modeh ani* with *kavanah*? When I washed my hands in the morning did I wash them with *kavanah* like the *kohen* did before he began his *avodah*? When I made the *bracha* of *malbish arumim*, was I happy with my garments? When I said *שָׁעֵשֶׂה לִּי כָּל צָרָתִי* did I look at my shoes? Not only shoes – you have to be grateful for the laces too. Imagine you're running across Ocean Parkway and you don't have laces – you're running but your shoes are falling off your feet.

When I said *אֲזִיז יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּגָבוֹתָהּ* did I think of my belt which is holding up my pants? You know how difficult it would be to walk around all day long holding up your pants in the street? A belt is a big *simcha*, a big *yeshua*. And it's not only a belt but a belt with holes! One for before supper and one for after supper. That's something to think about before you close your eyes! That's *cheshbon*! Make it part of your routine every night or at least as much as you can.

Now, five minutes is not enough time to really think, but at least the man might begin to suspect the truth during that time. It's a rare exercise for most people. Did you ever think five minutes straight about your path in life? Come on; tell the truth, you never did. It's a good program; try it out yourself.

And it's of the utmost importance to gain this knack, because once a man learns the art of thinking, he becomes a different man. If you make the time to think about what you're doing, where you're heading, you'll have insights into living successfully that others don't have – you become a different personality altogether.

Wise Gentiles

You should know that there were wise men even among the gentiles who gave this *avodah* much more than five minutes. There was one wise *goy*, a true story, who every Saturday night he told his family that he was going into a room by himself; "Please don't disturb me" he said. Every Saturday night he spent time reflecting on his life. A true story – in recent history.

I'll tell you something else. A different *goy* that you know by name, Benjamin Franklin, spent a great deal of time thinking about himself; he made a calendar and on the calendar he put certain attitudes that he wanted to work on. Patience, humility, guarding his speech. He identified thirteen virtues and he worked on one per week. And he had a calendar worked out according to the year and four times a year he repeated it. By the end of the year he repeated all thirteen qualities of character four

times. It was the thirteen virtues; thirteen weeks, and he repeated it four times each year, thinking and trying to train himself in these virtues. So you see there were sensible *goyim* who worked on themselves and they gained prudence; they came to *cheshbon* and gained insight into themselves.

But a Torah Jew stands to gain much more than Benjamin Franklin if he thinks; a frum Jew by means of a career of Torah thought has much more to gain. The Torah attitudes that can be planted in the mind of a thinking Jew can grow infinitely greater than those of the best gentile because he's not just preparing for living righteously in this world, for getting along with others; he's preparing for an entirely different existence, an existence that's forever and ever.

Part III. *Eternal Cheshbon*

One Great Cheshbon

Now, when the sages wanted to teach us this great principle of “Bo’u Cheshbon” – coming to a life of calculating, so of all the many *cheshbonos* that a person must think about, you’ll see that they chose to mention only one.

The Gemara there puts the following words into the mouth of the Moshlim: “Bo’u u’nechashev *cheshbono shel olam*”, they say. “How should you calculate the calculations of the world?” What should you spend time thinking about? *Havei michasheiv hefseid mitzvah keneged secharah*. It means you have to consider always, “What am I losing by doing this *mitzvah* versus how much am I gaining?” U’sedar *aveirah k’neged hefseidah*. “What do I gain by a sin? What do I lose by doing a sin?”

“If I go to shul a little earlier every day and have time to say *pesukei dezimra* with *kavanah* what will I gain? If I come late, just before *borchu*, how much will I lose? That’s the way the *moshlim* want us to think all the time: “What do I lose by a *mitzvah*? What do I gain by a *mitzvah*?”

Profit and Loss

Now the truth is you won’t lose too much by doing a *mitzvah*, but your imagination will make it seem like a lot. You lose some time, perhaps some convenience and ease. You might have to get up early in the morning. You might have to yield your temper and refrain from saying mean words. Sometimes it costs money too – it’s not always easy to part

with your money. A good pair of kosher tefillin costs money. Cheap tefillin might not be kosher. Who knows what's inside? Instead of *parshiyos*, there may be little pieces of the Algemeiner Journal. It happens sometimes! And so, kosher tefillin cost a lot of money!

But you must weigh it *keneged secharah*, opposite your gain. Consider what you gain by it – that's not imagination already. You gain a greatness that has no end, the eternal happiness of Olam Habo for which we were created. That's the *cheshbon* of *hefsed mitzvah keneged secharah*.

Think Into the Calculation

And so it seems to be a simple and straightforward calculation; “think about how your actions reward or punish you in *Olam Habo*”. It's not complicated at all – even a gentile could make such a *cheshbon*. Maybe you don't remember but only a few years ago speakers – I'm talking about gentile speakers, politicians – mentioned the World to Come in their lectures. I remember as a boy even the president of the United States used to speak openly about the hereafter. It was considered part of America ideology that this world is but a preface to another existence.

But that's not what we're talking about now. Because talk about *olam Habo* can be *misafah u'lachutz*, it can be very superficial. But that's not what is expected of us. *Bo'u v'nichashev cheshbono shel olam* means that you evaporate all excess ideas and bring everything down to its barest essentials; and when you do that you see that actually this is the only *cheshbon* that matters, to view whatever you intend to do in this world in terms of its eternal value, in terms of *nitzchiyus*.

It means you're living your days with an awareness of Olam Habo that is so pervasive, so all encompassing, that whatever you do, you're making a *cheshbon*: What's going to be the impact of my actions in *Olam Habo*? What I'm doing right now, where I'll be going tonight, the words I'll be saying now, I'll gain in this world but will I be gaining in the Next World? What will I lose in this world if I do this *mitzvah*? What will I lose by pursuing virtuous accomplishments? What will I gain by serving Hashem; by learning Torah and good character, by studying *emunah*, by becoming closer to Hashem? And what will I lose by procrastinating until I'm already an old man ready to leave this world?” Whatever you do, you're making a *cheshbon*: What's going to be the impact of my actions in Olam Habo?

Build Yourself Up

Only that to keep such attitudes in your mind always you must spend time thinking about *schar mitzvah*. I'll repeat these words again: You must spend time thinking about *schar mitzvah*! Not that you'll say the words and forget all about it. *Bo'u cheshbon* means you must spend time thinking, "What will I gain by my effort to learn Torah at night after a hard day's work? What will I gain by sacrificing a little ease in order to come earlier to the beis medrash to serve Hakodosh Boruch Hu? What will I gain by keeping my mouth shut and smothering the vicious words that I might have wanted to say? Is what I'm doing right now going to build me up in the next world?"

Spend time thinking about that. *Tibaneh vesikonen*, if you want to be built up, if you want to be established, you have to make sure you're building up in the right world. Don't build up and establish yourself in this world. Of course you should build up a good business; you could build up a very big business. You could build up an empire, nothing wrong. Nothing wrong in making kosher money. But all the while your head is in the next world and you're living with a purpose. *Tibaneh v'sikonen* – You're building up an empire in the world to come that will last forever; it's the only edifice that will be forever.

Bulldozer in Boston

In this world everything that we build; sooner or later turns into ruins. Even the most beautiful home in which you invest all of your effort and your money and it's in a new neighborhood, a flourishing neighborhood, but someday, years will pass by, and a bulldozer will come to pull down the walls of your house.

Forty five years ago, when I was still in Massachusetts I was walking by a home and I saw a bulldozer razing it to the ground. And I was thinking that this was once a beautiful home – eighty years ago or a hundred years ago when it was first built it was probably one of the most expensive homes. But years passed by and the inhabitants grew old and decrepit; they went to the old age home and from there to the hospital, and then they died. And others took over their home. The house deteriorated and soon poorer people moved in. The neighborhood deteriorated too and after years the home became a wreck and was condemned by the city. And now the bulldozer came and there was nothing left.

I saw on all sides nothing but broken pieces of wood, broken pieces of plaster, and I was reflecting there that's the end of all the ambitions of

this world. I reminded myself of the bigger empire, the permanent capital city, that must be built. *Tibaneh*, it should be built up, *v'sikonen*, and established in the world to come. No bulldozer will ever raze the palace that you built for yourself in the next world. And so, it's the eternal palace that you're building in *Olam Habo*, that's the edifice that should be most important to you.

A Fire From Cheshbon

Now, it's important that we make one thing very clear to ourselves before we conclude. Nobody should be fooled by that well-known *maamar chazal* (Sanhedrin 90a) that promises *kol Yisroel yesh lahem chelek l'olam habo*, that every Jew has a portion in the World to Come - and therefore he doesn't have to exert himself for *Olam Habo* he thinks.

Certainly it's true that every *shomer torah u'mitzvos*, every Jew who hasn't forfeited his portion, will have his or her eternal palace in the next world, but that's only part of the story. Because for those who weren't *michasheiv cheshbono shel olam*, even their *Gan Eden* will be a place of everlasting regret. I'll explain that.

You remember what the parable-makers said **כִּי אֵשׁ יֵצְאָה מִחֶשְׁבֹן**, that from Cheshbon a fire will come forth and consume other cities of Moav. But we shouldn't forget that underneath that song is a deeper *mashal*, an idea that is infinitely more important than what the ancient parable-makers intended.

כִּי אֵשׁ יֵצְאָה מִחֶשְׁבֹן, a fire will come forth from Cheshbon. Our sages explain it like this (Bava Basra *ibid.*): *Teitzei eish min hamechashvin* - In the World to Come, a fire will come forth from those who live with reflection, *vesochal es she'einam mechashvim* - and it will consume those who live without reflection. There will be a tremendous difference. Because even in *Gan Eden*, *teitzei eish min hamechashvin* - a fire will come forth from those who were thinking and it will consume those who didn't think.

Burning Diamonds

Like the Gemara (Bava Basra 75a) explains, **מִלְמַד שְׂכָל אָחָד נִכְוָה מִחֻפָּתוֹ**, **שֶׁל חֵבְרוֹ** - in *Gan Eden* each frum Jew has a *chuppah* of his own, a canopy made of diamonds and all kinds of precious stones. Of course the diamonds of *Olam Habo* are much more valuable than ours and every loyal Jew has a *chuppah l'fi kevodo*, a canopy according to his just desserts. And so the *simcha* of the *tzadikim* as they're sitting and counting the

diamonds in their *chuppah* and admiring all they accomplished in this world is beyond our wildest dreams.

But it's a queer thing because the Gemara tells us something interesting. It says there that as this Jew is sitting in Gan Eden and enjoying the happiness of his reward to no end, at the same time he's admiring his own canopy, his eyes also wander over to his neighbor's *chuppah* and he begins counting his neighbor's diamonds too!

And there's a tremendous regret! תִּצַּא אֵשׁ מִמְּחֻשְׁבִּין וְתֹאכַל אֶת שְׂאֵימָם – A fire goes forth from those who lived with *cheshbon*, those lived with a purpose more than the other ones and it consumes, it means it scorches a little bit, those who weren't *muchashvin* as much. It's Gan Eden but there will be regret – eternal regret.

Eternal Jealousy

Now it seems a contradiction but that's how it is. They'll be in *Gan Eden* and they'll be burned up by jealousy. Forever and ever they'll think, "Why didn't I spend my life as a *mechashev*, as a thinker?" The regret will consume them forever and ever: "If only I would have taken myself by the reins and thought more about the *schar mitzvah k'neged hefseidah* look at what I could have had now! Why didn't I come and listen to these things? Why didn't I look at the right *seforim* and become a *mechashev cheshbono shel olam* and think about all the things necessary to think about? I was a *frum* Jew, fine. I kept *mitzvos*, fine. But I could have transformed my life entirely had I utilized that great means of *machshava*."

So the *Mesillas Yescharim* (ch. 4) says, "Maybe you'll say, 'What do I care? As long as I'll get a place in *Olam Habo*, even if it's just a back seat I'll be so happy! Who says I have to exert myself so much in this world? I'll be happy with just being there.'"

"Oh no," says the *Mesillas Yescharim*. "You must know beforehand that the human nature that you have now is a parallel to what's going to be in the world to come. Human feelings are not superficial. They're eternal – they go with us in the afterlife and that means that the desire for glory doesn't end at the grave. And so those who sit in the backseat, although they're enjoying the happiness of the world to come, are going to be gnawed and consumed by the emotion of envy. Why didn't we achieve what this other did? I could have done the same thing!"

Rags to Riches

Suppose someone once worked for you as an errand boy; a klutz, a *shlemazel*, but you did him a favor and hired him to stock the shelves, And

then later in life you discover that he's ten times as wealthy and successful and famous as you are. He worked hard building up an empire while you were being lazy. How do you feel about that? Doesn't a fire burn in you, a fire of jealousy? That's what it means: fire will come out from those who live with *cheshbon* and it will consume those who live without *cheshbon*.

And so, you're going to find that many from Jews will one day discover that this little *yiddeleh*, a quiet neighbor, the one who sits in the back of the shul, or a simple woman down the block, is way on top and they're way at the bottom. Because who knows how much *cheshbon* a person is making?! It could very well be that very many ordinary people who understand what it means *bo'u cheshbon* have found great favor in the eyes of Hashem.

And therefore, how great is the necessity for people to realize the function of thought in their lives. *Bo'u cheshbon* – come to thinking! Constant awareness of the World To Come must be the chief ingredient in our lives. All our thoughts and efforts must be directed toward the achievement of success in the World To Come. We cannot live a successful life if all our lives are empty of thoughts about the World To Come. We have to keep in mind, always, the necessity of being reminded about Olam Habo, at all times. At all times! That's our function. That's our future.

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

Building the Everlasting City

This week I will dedicate my thoughts to training myself in this great function of *bo'u cheshbon*. Twice a day I will make a thirty second *cheshbon* of *schar mitzvah k'neged hefseidah*.

First I will dedicate thirty seconds to the next five minutes of the day: "What can I do now that will best build me up for the next world? How can I live the next five minutes of my life for Olam Habo?"

Later in the day I will dedicate thirty seconds to the hour that just passed and see what I did to build myself up in Olam Hazeh and what I did that will bring me closer to Olam Habo.

— This week's booklet is based on tapes: —

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

שאל אביך ויגדך זקניך ויאמרו לך

Q:

When I take my child fishing, is it better to emphasize the idea of *tza'ar ba'alei chayim* or to emphasize the concept that it is a *zechus* for the fish to be eaten by an *oived Hashem* who will use the energy obtained, to serve Hashem?

A:

First of all, who takes children fishing?! I never did! It doesn't say that Yankev Avinu took his children fishing. Recreational fishing is only an imitation of the gentiles. Gentiles go fishing so you're also a Gentile who goes fishing too. No, it's not right. There are better things than going fishing.

You can take a walk with your child and look at the grass. And say to him, "This is your wool winter coat." "My coat?" he'll say, "What do you mean?" Yes, the sheep eats grass and turns it into wool. Can you imagine such a machine? You put in grass and it produces wool for you. Actually, you are grass. Your mother ate meat which came from animals that grew from eating grass. Yes, a cow is a miracle. You put in grass and it produces meat and milk. All that grass becomes meat on your plate and the milk in your refrigerator. So your mother drank milk and ate meat. And your mother made you. So if you explain it to your child and explain it again to your child slowly, he begins to hear the *nifla'os ha'Boirei*.

But to go fishing? The whole concept is an imitation of the gentiles. So you'll have to think of a better idea than going fishing.

TAPE #E-255

— This week's Q&A sponsored: —

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