



פרשת שמעני

WITH

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BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

The Real World

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Part I. Purpose of Sorrow

The Day of Ten Crowns

“וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי” – It was on the eighth day” (Vayikra 9:1). In the beginning of *parshas Shemini*, we arrive at that glorious day of *hakamas haMishkan*, when the Sanctuary, the home of Hashem, was finally erected in this world. The Am Yisrael was about to claim the exclusive glory of having Hashem reside among them. The *Yom Hashemini* was a most majestic and joyful day for the Am Yisrael.

There were very few days – actually, no other day – in the history of the world when there was so much rejoicing. And the Gemara (*Shabbos 87b*) tells us that *נָטַל עֶשֶׂר עֲטֻרוֹת*, this day was crowned with ten crowns of glory – an exalted day like no other in our history. The *Shechinah*, the Presence of Hashem, was now coming down to rest among them – and they went *wild* with happiness. “וַיֵּרָא כְבוֹד ה' אֶל כָּל הָעָם וַתֵּצֵא אֵשׁ מִלְּפָנֵי ה' ... וַיֵּרָא כָּל הָעָם וַיִּרְנוּ

וַיִּפְּלוּ עַל פְּנֵיהֶם – And the Glory of Hashem appeared to all the people, and a fire came forth from before Hashem ... and all the people saw, and they shouted in joy, and they fell down on their faces” (*Vayikra 9:23-24*).

Imagine that! A whole nation – millions of men, women, and children – shouting in great ecstasy at the sight of the *Shechinah*. All together they stood and witnessed this momentous event, and they were electrified by what they saw! It was what they desired more than anything else – to see with their own eyes that Hashem had chosen to reside among them forever. And they were thrilled down to their marrow. It was a remarkable experience – a happiness and a thrill that would never be repeated. That was the great day of *וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי*, one of the most joyous days in the history of our people.

The Happiest Woman Ever

Now, the *Medrash (Tanchuma, Shemini 2)* points out that one person there was reveling in

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happiness more than anyone else. And that lucky person was Elisheva bas Aminadav, the wife of Aharon Hakohen. For her it was the most special of all days, *mamash me'ein Olam Haba*. She was privileged to be the wife of the Kohen Gadol, and she saw success that no other woman ever saw, before or after. Her husband was the High Priest who put on the glorious gold vestments, garments studded with gems and jewels to serve Hashem *lifnei ulifnim*. And not only that, but he was a *navi* as well, a prophet of Hashem.

And her sons? Ah, what *nachas*! She had four sons, Nadav, Avihu, Elazar, and Isamar, and all of them were chosen to work in the Mishkan, assisting their father. A mother's dream! And not only was she glorying in the greatness of her husband and her sons but she knew it was only the beginning, because *her* descendants forever would enjoy this privilege. The family of *kohanim* would descend from her for eternity. And that was a success that no other woman was ever given the privilege to enjoy.

Happiness on All Sides

The truth is that Elisheva bas Aminadav had even more than that. In addition to the greatness of her husband, her brother-in-law was the king of the Jewish nation. That itself is an honor and a greatness. "My husband's brother is Moshe Rabbeinu, the leader of our nation. And he speaks to Hashem face to face." Her brother-in-law was the greatest prophet who ever lived. And in addition to that, her illustrious brother, Nachshon ben Aminadav, was the leader of the twelve princes of the Am Yisrael.

And on this *Yom Hashemini*, all of this pride and joy came together before her eyes. It was all encapsulated on this day of the *hashra'as haShechinah*, when the Presence of Hashem entered into the Mishkan. Her husband and sons would be the ones officiating in the place that Hashem had designated as His home. And it was

all taking place under the direction of her brother-in-law, the King, as well as her brother Nachshon, the leader of the *nesi'im*. And so while the *Yom Hashemini* was a day of great happiness for everyone, this most fortunate woman was reveling in joy more than all others.

Tragedy Strikes

And yet, it was not to last. Her joy – and not only her joy, but the joy of the whole nation – was about to be marred by the worst of misfortunes a mother could ever suffer through. Because on that day, *וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי*, when two of her sons went in to officiate in the Mishkan, they were struck dead by a fire that came forth from Hashem and consumed them. "וַתֵּצֵא אֵשׁ מִלִּפְנֵי ה' וַתֹּאכַל אוֹתָם וַיָּמָתוּ" – *A fire went forth from Hashem and devoured them and they perished there before Hashem*" (*Vayikra* 10:2). *Ay yah yay!* What a terrible sadness! A most tragic event that will forever spoil the memory of this great day.

Now, most of us, when we study this terrible event, regard it as an unfortunate mishap that came at a most inopportune moment. We shrug our shoulders and commiserate. "It's hard for us to understand the *darchei Hashem* – that such a beautiful day, a most glorious day, should be ruined by a tragedy like that." That's how we think. But we're going to learn now that it wasn't a chance mishap, that it wasn't an accident at all.

To this tragic day of *Yom Hashemini*, the *Midrash Tanchuma* (*Vayikra* 9:2) applies the following *passuk*, and we should pay close attention now because it's Hashem talking to us, and He's revealing to us one of the fundamental ways He deals with us in this world: "אָמַרְתִּי לַהוֹלְלִים אַל תְּהַלְלוּ" – "I said to those who are reveling, 'Do not be too merry'" (*Tehillim* 75:5). Hakadosh Baruch Hu gives an order here, an order for how this world should run – He says, "I don't want people to be too happy."

And that means that for anybody, even the most virtuous man or woman – Elisheva and Aharon were virtuous, after all – Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants to make sure that a certain element enters their life, an element that is essential to the success of their career. And that ingredient is sadness. Yes, sadness! Sadness is essential in life. And therefore: “I say to the merry, ‘Don’t be too merry.’”

A World of Kindliness

Now, for us that’s a big question, a very big question. Because you know, especially if you come here, that in this place we try to live according to the true principle that עולם חסד יבנה (Tehillim 89:3), that Hashem made a world of kindliness. We know that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is the *Tov Umeitiv*, the One Who is good and does good. That’s number one! It’s fundamental, and we are required to assimilate that idea into our bones – that Hashem created everything for the purpose of kindliness.

I say “number one” because it’s something we learned way back in Bereishis: “וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹקִים אֶת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וְהִנֵּה טוֹב מְאֹד – And Hashem saw everything that He made, and behold it was very good” (1:31). Not only *tov*. *Tov me’od*! And when Hashem says *me’od*, it means *me’oooooooood*! It means an endless good! It’s extremely, extremely, extremely good. We know it’s a very good world because Hakadosh Baruch Hu doesn’t give His seal of approval, “very good,” unless it is very, very, very – and we won’t ever stop saying very – good. That’s how good it must be if Hashem says it’s “*tov me’od*.”

So on the one hand we’re saying that Hashem is all kindliness, that He’s good, that He’s very good, and very, very good. And yet, this goodness is not always readily apparent to us. Because Elisheva, the wife of Aharon, did not see the *tov me’od* she expected. And most of us don’t see it either, because Hashem is always tempering our happiness with some sadness.

Our successes in life are almost always sobered by the hand of Hashem one way or another. We don’t have all the wealth we’d like to have. We’re not having the fun in life we’d like to have. Most of us feel that we’re being deprived. There’s always some unhappiness that creeps into our lives. We have grudges against people; we feel we’ve been wronged. People don’t appreciate us; we’re rejected and so on and so forth – all the things that make a person unhappy. And don’t think it’s only you, or only certain people. No, everybody has some unhappiness like that. And so, it’s a good question: What happened to Hashem’s *tov me’od*?

Olam Hazei Is Not the Goal

In order to understand this subject, we’ll read a selection from our *rebbe*, the *Mesillas Yesharim*. The *Mesillas Yesharim*, in the first chapter, wishes to impress upon us the importance of directing our thoughts toward the World to Come. And he begins as follows: “וְתִרְאֶה בְּאֵמֶת שֶׁכִּבֵּר לֹא יוּכַל שׁוֹם בְּעַל־שֶׁכַל לְהֶאֱמִין שֶׁתְּכַלִּית בְּרִיאַת הָאָדָם הוּא לְמַצְבוֹ בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה – Nobody who has any *seichel* at all could believe that the creation of man was for his situation in this world.” The *Mesillas Yesharim* is warning us here: Take note – this world is not your purpose. You hear that? This world is so good that the *Mesillas Yesharim* has to warn you not to get too caught up in it! There is so much happiness in life, so much joy in life, so much zest and fun in life, that it’s enough to deceive anybody into thinking that this world is it! And so the *Mesillas Yesharim* makes sure to inform us that it’s not real, that it’s illusory and fleeting.

And he explains it like this: “כִּי מָה הֵם חַיֵּי הָאָדָם, אוֹ מִי הוּא שֶׁשָׂמַח וְשָׁלוֹ מִמֶּשׁ בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה – Because what is the life of a man in this world? And who is there who is actually completely happy, and who really has tranquility and peace in this world? יָמֵי שְׁנוֹתֵינוּ בָּהֶם שִׁבְעִים שָׁנָה וְאֵם בְּגִבּוֹרֹת שְׁמוֹנִים שָׁנָה וְרַבָּם עֵמָל וְאֹן – Our days are only seventy years, and *bigvuros*, if a man has strength and a healthy

constitution, then he can live maybe eighty years. But a great part of these years is filled with difficulties and toil. בְּכֶמֶה מִיְּנֵי צַעַר וְחִלָּאִים וּמְכַאוֹבִים – A great part is sadness – various kinds of vicissitudes, pain, illness, troubles and worries. And after everything comes death.”

Troubles and Disappointments

Find me someone whose life is not visited with disturbances! There is no such thing! The disappointments, the troubles, and the turbulence are constant. Every family, every individual, suffers in various ways in this world – I know all about it. I get the phone calls all the time. People are ringing my bell constantly. I know much more than you do. Troubles with *parnassah*, *shalom bayis*, *shidduchim*, sickness, fighting with neighbors and mothers-in-law, debts, and everything you could imagine – and more. Life is full of difficulties for everyone – even the “fortunate” ones suffer in this world.

And even if one would live a long life, peacefully, without any disturbances, the end of life is almost always filled with *tzaros*. Before death, there is infirmity and sickness. It’s no longer fun, I imagine, when he gets to that point. Could that be the *tov me’od* that he pursued all the days of his life?

The Dying Club

And after all of those “pleasures,” what is waiting for him? The cold clammy clay of the grave. *Ay yah yay*, the grave – the thought that we push away and hope to ignore forever! Because, of course, only *other* people die. There’s a “*chevrah shtarbers*,” a club for people who die, and people imagine they’ll be able to say, “I never signed up for that club!” That’s how we think.

And so the *Mesillas Yesharim* tells us that this proves that Hakadosh Baruch Hu must have intended for us a different existence, where that promise of *tov me’od* will be fully fulfilled. Because this world may be *tov*, and it may be *tov me’od*, and it may be *tov me’od me’od*, and another thousand

me’ods – but it’s still finite. It will always come to an end. The ultimate promise of *tov me’od* will only be fulfilled in the Next World. It’s only the happiness of *Olam Haba* that will never end, and that’s where your *neshamah* will finally be satisfied.

Now, we must know that the *Mesillas Yesharim* is not talking to people who have to be convinced about *Olam Haba*. His words are directed to *b’nei Torah*, to *ma’aminim* who already believe in the Next World. He’s talking to people who are born into an environment – this was two hundred years ago or more – an environment where the entire world, even gentiles, all subscribed to the principle of the Afterlife, the Hereafter.

But belief is not enough! You don’t just sign on the dotted line: “הֲרַנִּי מֵאֲמִין בְּאַמוּנָה שְׁלֵמָה בְּעוֹלָם הַבָּא” – I hereby believe with complete faith in the World to Come,” and finished. No! That’s only the first step. And so the *Mesillas Yesharim* wasn’t writing this to convince us about the *existence* of *Olam Haba* per se, but rather to emphasize *that Olam Haba is the sole purpose of our stay in this world*. Because even a *ma’amin* who believes implicitly in *Olam Haba* could think that maybe this world is also an end in itself.

The Secret to All Dissatisfaction

And that’s one of the most important explanations for all the disappointment and unhappiness that we see in this world – this world is not the final goal, and we have to be reminded of that. We need to be reminded that there’s another place, where the enjoyment will continue forever. And there, the enjoyment will be in such a form that we will never tire from it; we’ll always be happy with that pleasure, and it will continue forever.

And so, what happened on that *Yom Hashemini* was no mishap – it was part of the eternal plan of Hashem in this world, to interject sadness in the midst of great joy. And the purpose was to teach them, during their great joy, that you must always

remain focused on the principle that true unadulterated joy is reserved for the Afterlife. Whatever sin the two sons of Aharon may have committed, the severity of their fate and the sadness it brought upon the people was decreed beforehand, to teach the Am Yisrael forever and ever this lesson of supreme importance – the great fundamental lesson of Olam Haba.

It was the plan of Hashem that especially on this great day of joy, the Am Yisrael should be reminded of the true joy that they live for, of their true purpose in life. And it is *davka* sadness that comes about during moments of great joy that accentuates most effectively this great teaching of Olam Haba. Hakadosh Baruch Hu is talking to the *holelim* – that’s us – He’s talking to us all the time, and He’s saying, אֵל תְּהִלּוֹ, don’t lose yourself in the addictive happiness of this world. Remember that you are here only to prepare for the World to Come.

Too Much Good Is No Good

And that’s what the *Medrash Tanchuma* means when it describes the happy day that turned tragic with these four important words: “שְׂאִין שְׂמֵחָה – מְמַתְּנֵת לְאָדָם – Happiness does not last permanently for anybody.” Joy in this world will not continue forever, and the one who rejoices today will not necessarily rejoice tomorrow. Like the *passuk* in *Koheles* (2:2) says: “לְשׂוֹק אֶמְרָתִי מְהִלָּ – About laughter I said, ‘It is wild; it is too much.’” מְהִלָּ means gaiety, happiness. And Hashem says, “If someone is reveling in this world, if he’s making his way merrily through Olam Hazeh, getting entangled and absorbed in the success of this world, then I say to him: ‘That’s too much; it’s not good for you.’ I can’t let a person get lost in his happiness, in his desire to achieve satisfaction in this world, because that’s how a person squanders his life away.”

You’re only here for seventy, eighty years, after all; but it seems so permanent, and you begin

to feel that it’s an end in itself – and that’s how a person misses out on the opportunity of life. So Hakadosh Baruch Hu sends reminders. He gives His order of אֵל תְּהִלּוֹ, and He introduces into your life an element of sadness.

And so, when we study our *parshah* and read about the great tragedy that took place on this happy day, we understand that it was Hashem’s plan to inject sadness into the happiest day in the history of the world. Hakadosh Baruch Hu *always* brings into people’s lives experiences that are meant to sober them. And He has in mind this general principle of tempering the happiness and success of life so that a person will be encouraged to keep his focus on the Next World.

Part II. The Great Consolation

Keeping Us Focused

You know, one of the surprises that little children get is when they discover how “mean” their mothers are. Here’s a little boy who was given, let’s say, a quarter. A whole quarter! He’s on top of the world now! So he goes to the store and buys two lollipops. He comes home so happy, but as soon as he gets home, his mother snatches them out of his hand. And he can’t understand why his mother who is always so considerate and kind is now being so mean to him. But it’s just before mealtime and she doesn’t want him to spoil his appetite for nourishing food, and therefore she deprives him of his *nosherei*.

And so, too, Hakadosh Baruch Hu sometimes takes away happiness from people so that they won’t lose their appetite for what’s coming later, to keep them focused on the great happiness they should always be anticipating, and that’s the World to Come.

The Book about Happiness

Too much success is unhealthy. It’s like too many sweets in your diet. You can’t live on sugar;

you need proteins and other nutrients and vitamins, too. And you need a little bit of bitterness in life, too. And that's what the *Medrash* is teaching us – it's an illustration of the lesson that nobody should expect that this life will be nothing but pleasure and good times.

You know, many times I thought about writing a book called *The Pursuit of Happiness*. I have a lot of material on the subject, and I knew that it would be a good book because this world is a very happy place. But I didn't write it, because I didn't want to mislead people. Because this world is *not* for the pursuit of happiness.

Although this world is full of happiness, people would read that title and think that happiness is a purpose in itself. No, it's the pursuit of achievement, the pursuit of perfection – that's what we're here for in this world.

Fun with Limitations

And therefore, Hashem has in store a lot of these treatments for everybody; it can't be helped. Because when it causes a person to think of *Olam Haba*, the *tzaros* treatment is actually the biggest *tovah* possible. When people see that there is no complete happiness in this world, and they understand why that is so, that's already a perfection of character.

And therefore, it's important that Hashem remind people that this world is not for enjoyment and pleasure. Although there is a lot of fun in this world, there's a special world that was made for enjoyment. The Next World is especially set up for pleasure – it's a world of absolute happiness. But this world is not the place for that; this world is set up especially for achievement. And that's the great consolation of life in this world – *that this world is not what it's all about!*

Like Dovid Hamelech said when he saw that difficulties were coming upon him: “אָם אָמַרְתִּי מָטָה – רַגְלִי – *When I thought that my foot was slipping,* חַסְדְּךָ ה' יִסְעָדָנִי – *Hashem, it was Your kindness that*

supported me” (*Tehillim* 94:18-19). Dovid says: I cried out to You that Your kindness should help me. And many times it did. And then Dovid continues: “בְּרֹב שְׂרָעָפַי בְּקִרְבִּי – *In the multitude of my thoughts in my midst.*” Dovid had thoughts, worries of what was going to happen. He was confronted with peril at every footstep. Shaul was seeking Dovid with armed men; he was trying to ambush him and Dovid was hiding like an animal in caves and thickets. He was constantly beset with worries. And what did he say? “בְּרֹב שְׂרָעָפַי בְּקִרְבִּי – *Because of the many worries within me,* תְּנַחֲמוּנֵיךָ יְשַׁעְשְׁעוּ נַפְשִׁי – *Your consolations were the delight of my soul.*” Which consolations? What consolations?

The Only True Nechamah

Dovid was thinking about *Olam Haba*! He knew how to utilize his troubles in this world. He knew that one of the most important functions of sadness is to loosen your grasp on this world a little bit. So he made use of his troubles to create for himself a mind that was an *Olam Haba'dikeh* mind. And it's only the man with an *Olam Haba'dikeh* mind who can weather the storms of this world.

Somebody called me up now; he lost his son. A couple lost a son and they wanted to talk to me. Now, I could certainly share with them various words of consolation. But the only true consolation is the words that we're speaking here tonight. This world is a place where everybody loses something. But your world shouldn't collapse because of what happened. When you focus your life on *this* world, even if you believe superficially in *Olam Haba* but you live here with a feeling of permanence, that's when the world turns out to be a disappointment. Everything turns dark and it all collapses into nothing.

Weathering the Storms of Life

But Aharon Hakohen and Elisheva, when their two beloved sons perished on the *Yom Hashemini*, they didn't collapse. And that's because they

understood the nature of this world; they understood that it's a world of disappointments. And they concentrated on the thought that they would see their sons again. They would continue making their way successfully through the hallway of this world – what is it, after all, except a hallway that's seventy or eighty years long – and then they would meet their sons again in the world of eternity.

And that's what everyone has to know. You can't expect to be able to weather the difficulties of life, the small disappointments or the great tragedies, *chas v'shalom*, if you're not prepared beforehand with the proper Torah attitudes. It's the person who lives with Olam Haba on his mind who is able to make his way successfully through everything that life brings his way. Because he knows that he will rejoice in the Next World. He knows that he will receive his just and everlasting reward there, no matter what type of *tzaros* – big or small – he undergoes here.

The Sneak Attack

And that's why the *Chovos Halevavos* tells us that of all the principles the *yetzer hara* tries to weaken in a man, it is this one – the belief in the Next World – that he attacks first and foremost. Because he knows that Olam Haba is the *yesod* of our lives. It's our purpose here.

So all the other things the *yetzer hara* can ignore – believe in Hashem, good; believe in *Matan Torah*, good; believe in *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, good; believe in *Torah sheb'al peh*, good; believe in the whole Gemara; believe in everything! You can even believe in a *rebbe*, a *tzaddik*! But just be weak in one thing – be weak when it comes to Olam Haba.

“Be weak in that,” says the *yetzer hara*. “Don't talk about it. Be embarrassed to mention it.” Because Olam Haba is everything! If the *yetzer hara* can weaken your awareness of Olam Haba, then everything else falls away. If your belief in

Olam Haba is weak, then your Torah is weak, and your mitzvos are weak. Everything else is weakened if Olam Haba is not constantly at the forefront of your thoughts.

What the Children Hear

And let me tell you something – the *yetzer hara* is doing a good job on us. There are plenty of *frum* people who are very weak in this principle. Now, you may argue with me, but I'm telling you that very many of us have succumbed almost entirely to the *yetzer hara*. And I can prove it to you immediately by a simple experiment. Let's listen in to the conversations in an Orthodox home.

All they talk about is this world. And they talk about it a lot! With details – all the *Olam Haze'h'dikeh* details. The little girl listens to her mother on the telephone. What does she hear, already? Sheitels! This kind of *sheitel*, that kind of *sheitel*. And dresses! The mother is complaining about how hard it was to buy a dress. “I couldn't get a dress anywhere. I went all over town to find a dress.” Finally she found it in a “special” place – around the corner. This is an Orthodox mother? And that could be all the child hears. Sometimes recipes, maybe makeup. All things of *this* world. She can sit next to her mother for *a thousand years* while her mother talks on the telephone, and she probably won't hear Olam Haba mentioned even once.

Where Is Zeidy?

I'm afraid the fathers are no better. And I'm not talking now about the father who is a connoisseur of wines, of bourbons, who has a cabinet filled with all different types of wine, *and he knows their names!* That man I'm not speaking about now. He's already sold out to Olam Haze'h completely.

I'm talking now to the *frummeh*, the best. Here's a father and his children, all with black hats, sitting around the table talking *divrei Torah*. Maybe

the father will say over *pilpulim* if he's a *talmid chacham*; if not, he'll say over some *gutta verter*, some comments on the *sedrah*. But *Olam Haba*? It's a rare bird. You can sit sometimes for twenty years at a table and not hear *Olam Haba* mentioned even once! Little children growing up don't even know there is such a thing. Unless someone dies and so they tell the child that "Zeidy is in *Olam Haba* now." But even then, the child is thinking, "What? Where?" Because nobody is talking about it. And there's a good reason for that. Because the *yetzer hara* is most interested that it shouldn't be mentioned.

And so, we have to do whatever we can that we shouldn't fall into the trap of the *yetzer hara*! We must make it a point to speak about *Olam Haba* at the table. You have to plan ahead, with wisdom, with cunning. "How am I going to sneak in the subject of *Olam Haba* today?" And when you succeed, so you start making plans for the next meal.

And even more than that – how long will we have to wait to hear people talk about Gehinnom at the Jewish table? Now, that's a Jewish table, where a father and his family discuss Gan Eden and Gehinnom! And the father is always pointing out that *לְמַחֵר לְקַבֵּל שְׂכָרָם*, in the Next World, that's where we'll be rewarded for our life's work. "Chaim'l, in the Next World Hashem is going to give you everything! Only Hashem can make you truly happy. And you should know, Chaim'l, it's not *stam* a reward. A person won't be able to handle the *simchah*! Hashem is going to have to revive you again and again in order to continue bestowing His goodness upon you." That's table-talk fit for a Jewish home!

It's Not Just Old People

Now, I know that many people don't like to hear about this subject, and I don't blame them. You might think, "That's all Rabbi Miller is going to tell me?! That there's another world?" I know some

people don't want to hear about the Next World; it makes them sad when I talk about it. They want to imagine that they'll live forever and ever.

But what can I do, my friends? It's so important to internalize that this world is not forever, that everybody will die sooner or later. So a man comes back to the house after his mother's *levayah*; she is gone now, and he's going to her home to sit *shivah*. He sees a nice quiet home; it's very neat because last week she was still cleaning up. And now she's gone. What a pity! What a pity! The *alter* mother or the *alter* father is gone. They always said such kind words to us; it's such a pity they're gone now. But he has to know that someday he'll be gone, too. Everyone must know that he won't live forever. And we're in this world only for the purpose of preparing.

The truth is that it shouldn't make you sad, because when you know you're living for a purpose, every moment in this world becomes more precious to you. You enjoy this world even more because of the opportunities it provides for achieving the eternal *tov me'od*. And so a wise man, a *chacham* who is *ro'eh es hanolad*, doesn't invest his hopes in this world. Because he knows that if he puts his hopes into *Olam Haze*, he's going to be terribly disappointed. But that's why you find a lot of old people who are very soured on *Olam Haze*, because that's all they were concerned about, and now they see that it turned into nothing.

The Happy Old Man

I once visited a home for the aged, and I was looking around at the old people. It was filled with American-style old Jews – *burim*, *amei ha'aretz* – and it was a pity to see them. They were sitting around, staring. Life had turned out to be a big disappointment. "This hurts me." "I have none of my own teeth left." "I can't go here; I can't do this or that." It was nothing but disappointment. Only complaints, that's all you could hear.

But in the corner, I saw an old man with a white beard, sitting at a table with a *gemara* open. And he was busy! Busy getting ready for the Next World. He was reviewing everything he had learned in his lifetime. And he was the happiest man in the place! He was busy, and he was accomplishing, because he knew he had a purpose. He was happy because none of the disappointments in life had disappointed him! Everything was turning out exactly as expected, and now he was getting ready to cash in. He was busy counting all of his “bonds” before going to the bank, making sure he wouldn’t leave anything over. He was a happy man!

We Don’t Like Tragedies

And it wasn’t because he searched for happiness his whole life — it was because he recognized all the bumps of life for what Hashem intended, as reminders from Hashem to remain focused on the true goal. Because he understood the important lesson *al taholu*; he knew not to get lost in the happiness of this world, *and that’s why he was so happy*.

So instead of just talking about becoming great, we can actually do something about it. Some people just talk about doing things, but we’re going to get busy immediately thinking about the World to Come. Together we’ll start an Olam Haba program. We’re going to spend at least thirty seconds every day thinking about Olam Haba, reminding ourselves that we’re in this world only as a preparation for the World to Come. For half a minute, remind yourself that this world is just a vestibule, a place to put your things in order, before the World to Come.

Every day, for at least thirty seconds on the clock, think about Olam Haba. Whether you’re hanging on a strap on the subway, or driving to work, or waiting to see the doctor, or even just standing on the corner waiting for the light to change — look at your watch and let it tick off

thirty seconds while your mind focuses on the World to Come and you think about the purpose of life.

The Sweetest Greeting

Then, when you come to the Next World, they’ll ask you, “What do you want here?” And you’ll say, “I prepared — I thought about Olam Haba in the world where I’m coming from. I worked on it!” “Oh!” they’ll say. “*Shalom Aleichem!* Welcome!” Because you’re superior to everybody else. You’re a *dagul meirevavah*, you’re one in ten thousand. You’re a head taller than everybody else because you understood the lessons of what happened on *Yom Hashemini* and you thought every day about the World to Come. Now, whether they’ll give you a front seat, a middle seat, or a back seat will depend on how much effort you put into the things we speak about here. But they are going to welcome you — that’s guaranteed.

And so, if anyone asks you what you are doing in this world — whether you can tell him or not — at least you have to know for yourself that we’re here to prepare for the great career of everlasting happiness in the Next World. That is the foundation upon which we build everything in this world. It’s the *yesod hachassidus v’shoresh ha’avodah*, and if you have this before your eyes then you can build. But if not, or even if you do but it’s weak, then you’re building without a solid foundation. The whole foundation of being a Jew is the clear conviction that our purpose is Olam Haba. Not that the Afterlife is an annex, something that is *also* going to be given to us. No, *the Afterlife is it!*

It’s only Olam Haba that counts! That’s where you’ll find your great joy! And do you know what’s going to happen when you train yourself to think this way? It’s going to illuminate your life. It will inject a *simchah*, a deep and profound happiness, into your life. Because no matter what happens, from the smallest bumps of daily life, to *chas v’shalom* the most terrible of tragedies, you know

that you are being reminded by Hashem of your purpose in this world, and you know that you're headed for success. And once you absorb this idea of Olam Haba into your bones, you'll be able to weather all of the turbulence that life brings. And you'll grow even greater from the lessons of אל תהלוך that Hashem sends you as He prepares you for the great day when you will finally leave this *prozdor*, the hallway of this world, and you'll enter into the *traklin*, the great palace of the World to Come.

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

Preparing for Olam Haba

Some people just talk about doing things, but I'm going to get busy immediately thinking about the World to Come. This week, I will *bli neder* spend at least thirty seconds every day thinking about Olam Haba, reminding myself that I'm in this world only as a preparation for the World to Come. Throughout the day, whenever I encounter a bump - a hitch in my plans - I will recall that this was sent upon me to remind me that this world isn't the be-all end-all of my existence. Only the Next World is the *olam shekulo tov*, the world that is all good.



If it's ossur to think *divrei Torah* in the bathroom, then what should one think about?



What should we think about in the bathroom? You should think about what a *chesed* it is that you're able to go to the bathroom normally. You should think about it. Chasdei Hashem! Yes, you should spend time thinking about that. It's a tremendous *chesed*.

Rofei Chol Basar U'maflee La'asos. Maflee la'asos means that it's a miracle. It's miracles upon miracles. Now, some of the *kadmonim* didn't always understand this, so there are all kinds of *peirushim* on those words. But today we know that it's simply miracles and miracles. I'd like to explain a little more about how miraculous it really is but it would take too much time. But it's a miracle. You're able to expell the waste; and you should be filled with happiness that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is doing this miracle for you. Put thought into that.

And then, when you get out of the bathroom and make the *bracha* of *Asher Yatzar* make sure to put all those thoughts that you had in the bathroom into the *brachah*.

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