

תורת אביגדור הגאון ר' אביגדור מיללער זצ"ל

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

Sefer Devarim
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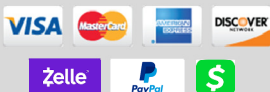
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בעזוהשי"ת

פרשת כי תצא

With Rav Avigdor Miller ztz"l

Justifying the Just

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נא לא להרוא בעת התפלה וקריאת התורה

Part I. Praise the Righteous

THE GENERAL FUNCTION OF A COURT

In the Torah we read about the many functions of a *beis din* of the *Am Yisroel*, but of all the functions, the most fundamental one is taught to us in *Parshas Ki Seitzei*: וְהַצְדִּיקוּ אֶת הַצִּדִּיק וְהִרְשִׁיעוּ אֶת הָרָשָׁע – *And they should justify the just and condemn the wicked.*

That's the general function of the place of judgment, where the Torah *dayanim* are sitting to consider the deeds of men. They are obligated to declare the righteousness of the *tzadik*, the one who is in the right according to the Torah, and to condemn the *rasha*, the one who is in the wrong.

Of course, by condemning the *rasha*, you are already justifying the *tzaddik*, but according to the *seder* of the words of this *possuk*, number one on the agenda is, וְהַצְדִּיקוּ אֶת הַצִּדִּיק, they must make the *tzadik* righteous. They have to encourage him and say to him, "You're in the right, and we're happy to see you win. Keep it up – you should succeed in your ways." And they should speak good about him.

GENERALIZING THE GENERAL FUNCTION

But וְהַצְדִּיקוּ אֶת הַצִּדִּיק means much more than merely protecting the *tzadik* from his accusers in *beis din*. Because

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included in these words is a general intention, for all of us. If somebody is a *tzadik*, it's important to let the world know about it. It's necessary to praise him and to cause him to find favor in the eyes of people.

One of our functions in this world is *to declare the righteousness of the tzadik*; to praise the *tzadik* whenever you can. And that means that these words in our *parsha*, “*And they should justify the just and condemn the wicked*”, are a model for everyone to follow; it's a way of life. It's the function of the *Am Yisroel* to elevate the righteous man in the eyes of the world. And not only is it your obligation, but it's your perfection.

RAISE HIM UP, HIGH!

That's what it says, **אָמְרוּ צַדִּיק כִּי טוֹב** (Yeshaya 3:10). Now you might think that the *navi* here is telling you to *imru*, to say about the righteous person, *ki tov*, that he is good. And while that's true, you should speak well about the *tzadik*, but the *possuk* is saying much more than that.

Because *imru* doesn't mean to **say** that a *tzadik* is good. It means to raise up on high and to elevate the *tzadik*. Like in the words **בְּרֹאשׁ אֲמִיר** (ibid. 17:6) – *omir* means the top of the tree. So **אָמְרוּ צַדִּיק** means *raise up on high the tzadik* – praise him up to the sky. And why do we do that? **כִּי טוֹב** – *because that's what is good*. It's a very good thing to do. Not only is the *tzadik* good, but *you* are doing good; *you* become better by speaking his praises.

It's one of our important functions in the world: **וְהִצַּדִּיקוּ אֶת הַצַּדִּיק**. Our job in life is to uphold, to raise up, the good. Not just to say the *tzadik* is not a *rasha*. That's nothing yet! We have to talk about how great the *tzadik* is! If somebody is a *tzadik* it's important to let the world know about it. It's necessary to praise him and cause him to find favor in the eyes of people.

HILLEL AND SHMUEL THE LITTLE

You know that in the days of the *bayis sheini* they didn't have any *ruach nevuah* anymore – the gift of prophecy was taken away from us at that time. **וְעַדֵּן הָיָה מְשַׁתְּמָשִׁים בְּבֵת קוֹל** – but our nation still had the privilege of a *bas kol*, a Voice from heaven. There were times when a prophetic Voice came forth; it wasn't a

prophecy, but it wasn't just *ruach hakodesh* either — it was a minor form of *nevuah*. And from time to time, at very rare intervals, a *bas kol* would come forth from the heavens.

The *gemara* in *Sanhedrin* (11a) tells us two instances of such an event. One was when the *chachomim* were seated together when suddenly they heard a Voice speaking: "Sitting among you there is one who is fit to receive the spirit of *nevu'ah*. There's an individual here that is worthy of Me speaking through his mouth." So they looked around at each other — they understood that it was a hint *min hashamayim* that they look; that's why Hakodosh Boruch Hu made that *bas kol*. So they looked around and they decided that it was Hillel — he was the one.

Another story, very similar. The *gemara* tells that a different time years later when they were sitting together a Voice came from heaven and it again pointed out that there was someone among them who had achieved a very high level of perfection in *avodas Hashem* — a man of such *tzidkus* that he was fit to be a *navi*. Who was it? It was Shmuel Hakatan. A humble *talmid chochom*, one of the great men of the *yeshiva* in *Eretz Yisroel*; they knew about Shmuel Hakatan, but Hakodosh Boruch Hu wanted them to know more and so He sent a *bas kol*.

A WASTE OF A BAS KOL?

Now these are remarkable statements! For *that* it was necessary for a *bas kol* to be heard?! After all a *bas kol* didn't happen every day — not even every year. It was a rare event in our history. So why did *this* occasion merit that Hakodosh Boruch Hu should let such a voice be heard?

When the *Sanhedrin*, the chief dignitaries of the nation, are visited by a *bas kol*, it should be about something of the utmost importance. If it had come to tell them to beware of war that is coming or that the nation must better their ways and do *teshuva* before catastrophe strikes, *those* things, such important national events would have justified a *bas kol* speaking to the people. But what was the great necessity, the urgency for the *bas kol* to come and merely say "Among you there are men who deserved to be *nevi'im* had they lived during the era of the *nevi'im*"?! It seems like it's the wrong use for a *bas kol*!

And not only that, it was superfluous. They knew that Hillel was a great man; they had already appointed him as the *Nasi*. They recognized his excellence. They knew about the greatness of Shmuel Hakatan; he was one of them!

THE WEALTH OF OUR NATION

But Hakodosh Boruch Hu said it's not enough! It's not enough to just know — like you know that President Bush is the President, you also know that Hillel is a *tzadik*? No, that's not knowing!

So Hashem sent a message *min hashamayim*; a great demonstration was made to let the nation know that they *don't* recognize him *enough*. "You don't *really* know who he is. This Hillel whom you honor, whom you made your leader, is much more important, much greater than you ever imagined." "Shmuel Hakatan, the humble *talmid chochom* who sits in the back — he's the best; a *tzadik*, a *chossid*." The *bas kol* was an impressive demonstration of Hakodosh Boruch Hu being *matzduk* the *tzadik*.

We learn from this story how essential it is to raise the stature of *tzadikim* among the *Am Yisroel*. Aggrandizing the *tzadik* is important enough that it's worthy of a *bas kol* just to make us aware of the exceptional greatness of *tzidkus* in this world.

THE TZADIK NISTAR

Now, you have to know that just like it wasn't easy for the generation to recognize the elevated status of Hillel and Shmuel, it's also not always easy to recognize a *tzadik* altogether. Many times there are great *tzadikim* who are unknown.

The Mesillas Yesharim says in his preface a remarkable statement: הַחֲסִידוֹת הָאֲמֵתִי הַנִּרְצָה וְהַנִּחְמָד רַחוּק הוּא מִצִּיּוֹר שְׂכָלֵינוּ — "The true *chassidus* that is desired by Hakodosh Boruch Hu is far from any picture we have in our mind." You hear that? A real *chossid*, a man whose piety and devotion is desired by Hashem, is something that is far from what we imagine. It might be somebody that it'll give us a big surprise to discover that he is the one.

Like this, you might have said that a *tzadik* is someone who shakes during *shemoneh esrei*. Maybe a *tzadik* is someone who has a

big bushy beard, and big bushy *peyos*. There's nothing wrong with these things, it's beautiful, but people will think that *this is it* — it's *this* that makes a *tzadik*!

But suppose you'll find however that a *bas kol* will appear and announce that a *tzadik* is someone who walks in the street and kicks banana peels off the sidewalk into the gutter — that's a *tzadik*. That's something new; that's also a *tzidkus* that has to be acclaimed and glorified. The *gemara* says a story about a *chossid* — what did he do? It says he was removing stones from the street. That's how the *gemara* praises him! So we see that's what a *chossid* does. Now it doesn't mean that he shouldn't sit and learn all the time — certainly, someone who learns all the time is a *chossid*, but we have to be *matzdik* all the *tzadikim* of the *Am Yisroel*.

THE TZADIK MELTS THE ICE

Here's a man — I know him well — when it's slippery outside, so he has a little bag in his pocket; he walks down the block and puts his hand in the bag and he scatters ashes or sawdust so that people shouldn't slip. That's a *tzadik*. Not only on his own sidewalk — on slippery sidewalks, on the public sidewalks.

If the *bas kol* would come tell you that this man is a *chossid*, it would open up your eyes. We would learn now the definition of a *chossid* — it's someone who is concerned about the welfare of the *Am Yisroel*. It's a *frum* Jewish neighborhood and someone might go to the hospital as a result of a slippery sidewalk. And this person is concerned about that.

ALL TYPES OF CHASSIDIM

There was a Reb Shlomo Feldman, a man who used to come here. He was a *moicher seforim*; you would have imagined he was a regular fellow. But he was no ordinary person. Every *chol hamoed* when the *chadorim* were closed he brought together hundreds of boys and he taught them. He gave them prizes and they learned with him. And he did things like that constantly. He was a *tzadik*! But I'm sure that people didn't appreciate how great was his *tzidkus*.

Not long ago there was a *tzadik*, Rav Asher Zimmerman, *zeicher tzadik l'oracha*. He didn't look like a *tzadik*; he looked like a plain man. But I knew him personally — I knew him for at least fifty years. This man never spoke *lashon hara*, not even the smallest *rei'ach* of *lashon hara*. He was a man who could answer any question in *halacha l'maisah*. And people called him up all the time and he was always willing to answer everyone. There's no question that he wasn't appreciated enough because when we know of a *tzadik* we should prize him more than we prize our own property. And we should make known to each other what we have.

TZADIKIM AND TZIDKONIYOS

Now, while we're on the subject of *tzadikim* you must know that it's not only men — it may be a *chiddush* to you but there are many women *tzadikim* too. I can point out one or two without hesitation. Rebbetzin Kaplan who founded the first girls' seminary. No question she was a *tzadeikis*. She taught thousands of girls to build idealistic Torah homes and to have big families. She raised up *doros* not only of teachers but of *balabustehs* who brought up frum families of *bnei Torah*. No question that she's among the *tzadikim*; Rav Aaron Kotler said that without her the *kollelim* couldn't exist in America. She prepared girls who wanted to marry *kollel* boys.

But not only that — as a private woman, in her own humble home, she was a *tzadeikis*. She had fourteen children of her own. And we should point that out — we should talk about it as much as possible. There are thousands of frum mothers and fathers who are sacrificing to raise large families — and they're not raising Italian families or Irish families. They're being *moser nefesh* to build *Torah* families, they're raising *tzadikim* and *tzidkoniys* in their homes. And our very important function is to always be singing their praises; it's the principle in our *parsha* of וְהִצַּדִּיקוּ אֶת הָעָם (We have to raise up the banner of the *tzadikim* as much as we can.

RUSSIA'S PROPAGANDISTS

You know that up until recently, when the Communists were still in charge in Russia, so the Russians worked very hard to

influence American public opinion. They had thousands of agents in the United States, people all over the country, who had only one job: They wandered around, they made their way into newspaper offices, into the offices of politicians – they put themselves everywhere – and whenever they had a chance they said something positive about Communism or the Soviet Union. Or something bad about America, something bad about standing strong against Communism.

Now, you wouldn't know they were agents. You didn't know they were propagandists. But at every opportunity they got in a few words to praise communism, to speak against President Reagan, to knock the American government, to talk against nuclear arms. They were infiltrating society everywhere; private life, public life, the newspapers, businesses. Thousands and thousands of agents. And they had one purpose – to praise what the Kremlin wanted them praise; to work on behalf of the Communist government and justify everything that they did.

HASHEM'S PROPAGANDISTS

Now, what we have to realize is that this is a *mashal* for our function in this world. But *l'havdil*, instead of being agents of disinformation, we are the *sh'luchim* of Hakodosh Boruch Hu, the agents of the truth. Rabeinu Yonah tells us this in his *Sha'arei Teshuva*. If you look there (2:21 and 3:148) you'll see that he says every person has to be a *sh'liach ne'eman* for his Creator. We are Hashem's agents and our job therefore is to spend our lives talking in *shevach* of *avodas Hashem* and in *shevach* of the *ovdei Hashem*. That's our job to speak up, to be propagandists for all the Torah people and all the Torah ideals.

You have to speak up in praise of the places of *avodas Hashem*, of the *yeshivos*, and the *kollelim*. Say good things about the *Beis Yaakov* and the *batei kneisiyos*. Let's say you go to a certain frum *shtiebel*, and you see many frum Jews, *kein yirbu*, so when you come back home, make sure to speak in praise of what you saw to your family, to your friends. "I'm *nispa'el*," you'll say. "It's so wonderful there. "Their behavior, their *avodas Hashem*, the *hispa'alus* in the davening. And they're so friendly." Speak to the sky about all the good things in the *Am Yisroel*.

And when you visit another shul, make sure to come home and aggrandize that shul as well. You can find things to say. “You can’t imagine how much *tzedaka* they give away in that shul. They give charity like nobody’s business!” Whatever it is, make sure to be *matzduk* the *tzedek*. Think beforehand. Every time you sit down for a meal with your family is a remarkable opportunity. You can speak about the greatness of the *Am Yisroel* in so many different ways.

HOW TO MAKE A GOOD SALE

You have to be a salesman to sell the Torah ideals to the world. Always say a good word about the Torah, about *tzadikim*, about the *frum* families. I’m not talking now about speaking to irreligious Jews — the *frum* Jews have to hear it; they’re the ones who have to hear these words. And what about yourself? You have to hear it too! After all, it’s yourself who’s most important. And when you speak up, you’re talking to yourself.

You’re hearing this, but I know you won’t do it so I’ll repeat it. *וְהִצַּדִּיקוּ אֶת הָעָדִידִיק* means that you have to open your mouth and speak highly of all the good things in this world. That’s what the *Sha’arei Teshuva* says: *פֶּאֶשֶׁר יִתְיַצֵּב בְּתוֹךְ הָעָם וְיִדְבֵּר עִם חֲבֵרָיו* – “When you’re standing among the people, מוֹצֵא שְׂפָתַי בְּכָל מוֹצֵא שִׁגְיָהּ בְּכָל מוֹצֵא שִׁגְיָהּ – you should plan your words with wisdom, and carefully prepare what will come out of your mouth, לְשֹׁבַח עוֹבְדָיו וְיִרְאָיו – to speak words of praise about His servants and those who fear Him.” You can’t just show up at the Shabbos table and hope that the right things come to your mouth. You have to prepare beforehand.

THINK BEFORE YOU SPEAK

Now, when we talk about the *tzaddik* or when we talk about *tzedek*, it’s not sufficient to say “This man is a *tzaddik*”. It’s not enough to say that this-and-this practice or this *derech* in life is *tzedek*. Your words have to be planned out, thought out with wisdom.

When somebody went, let’s say, to *Eretz Yisroel* to some famous *tzaddik* and he comes back, so there’s no harm if he tells how righteous he is, how he’s *medakdek k’chut hasa’arah* in every *halacha* and even in every *minhag*, no harm. But if you want to be a good propagandist you’ll also speak how pleasant the *tzaddik* was,

how handsome his face was when he was talking; what beautiful eyes the *tzaddik* has, what a beautiful white beard flowed down over his garments. You can even say that he was wearing beautiful silken garments, a beautiful *bekitché*. “Oh, it’s a beauty to look at him,” you say. “It’s like seeing the *Kohen Gadol*.” By speaking the right words you’re being *matzdik* the *tzadik*, you’re creating a good impression of the good people and the good things in this world.

You know who taught us that? Dovid Hamelech. When the *meshoreir* wanted to sing the praises of Yerushalayim (Tehillim 48:3) so he said, יְפֵה נֹר, what a beautiful neighborhood it is. He praised the trees around Yerushalayim, the fields. How fragrant it was, the *reiach* of the fields around Yerushalayim! מְשֻׁשׁ כָּל הָאָרֶץ – it’s a joy to go there.

BE SUPERFICIAL

Now, who cares about that? Let’s say *Yerushalayim* was in the slums; it was surrounded by desolation, a wilderness. Who cares?! *Yerushalayim* is such an important center of *kedusha* – should we pay attention to such superficial things like appearances? And the answer is absolutely! It’s our job to elevate the righteous people, the righteous ideals and even the righteous places as much as we can; that’s how we propagandize for Hashem.

So when you come home from the *yeshiva* and you have to describe it to your parents, don’t merely say that the *rosh yeshiva* says a good *shiur* with a lot of *lomdus*. Don’t only say that *bnei yeshiva* are all *shakdanim* who study Torah diligently. You can say that too, but there’s no harm if you propagandize a bit as well. Come back and say, “The yeshiva is so clean and all the *seforim* are in the right place. It’s a beautiful *beis medrash*; it’s so nice and clean and everything is in order.” The more good things you can say about the *rebbeim*, about the *roshei yeshiva*, about the *kollel*, the more *mitzvah* you’re getting.

Aren’t the wicked doing just the opposite? The wicked are giving every desirable adjective to every wicked thing and making it beloved by the multitude – and the whole world is being misled. The most ugly things are described today in

the most glowing terms. So why don't we fight back and describe the beautiful things, the holy things, in most glowing terms. We have to be propagandists for everything good in this world. That's the function of *וְהִצְדִּיקוּ אֶת הַצְדִּיק*, of justifying the good things in this world. *אָמְרוּ צְדִיק. – Do whatever you can to elevate the tzaddik. כִּי טוֹב – because that is a good thing for you to do in your lifetime –* to raise the prestige of the good things, the things that Hashem considers good.

Part II. Condemn the Wicked

WE DON'T YIELD

Now, this brings us to another side of this big subject; because the second half of that *possuk* is also very important: *וְהִרְשִׁיעוּ אֶת הָרָשָׁע – and they should condemn the rasha*. At the same time that we live our lives fulfilling the function of “justifying the just,” we must remember that part of that *avodas Hashem* is also *וְהִרְשִׁיעוּ אֶת הָרָשָׁע – the Am Yisroel must condemn the wicked*. (Sha'arei Teshuva 3:148).

And that means we can't yield; when it comes to declaring who is the wrong man, and what are the wrong ideals, the *Am Yisroel* must speak up clearly and point to the wrong and say, “That is wickedness!”

Now, before we continue, I need to stress something so that we shouldn't make any error. It's of the utmost importance to understand that when we speak now about making judgments and condemning the wicked, it means those who have forsaken the *derech haTorah*. A *frum Jew* is not a *rasha*! And even though he happens to be your competitor in business or he follows another rebbe who may be in competition with yours, or maybe he even wronged you in some way, that means nothing. If there's a dispute between you and him, that's for *beis din* to decide; but he's not a *rasha*.

WE CAN BE COMPASSIONATE!

Now, let's first clear the decks for action. First of all we understand that compassion is one thing and *וְהִרְשִׁיעוּ אֶת הָרָשָׁע* is another thing. Certainly we have compassion on a *rasha*. If he had a better upbringing, if he had been born in a better family or in a

better neighborhood, it could be he would have been good, maybe even better than us.

We're not saying that he never would have been good, but we have to condemn him as he is because any weakness in our attitude towards wickedness, is a weakness in our attitude towards Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

We must understand that in the Torah, there is a white district and a black district. It's not grey. There's a line between *tzedek* and *resha*. And when someone forsakes the *derech haTorah*, the Torah truth, so he's already on the wrong side. It could be in other things he's good; but wickedness must be condemned.

POLITICAL CORRECTNESS IS A SIN

Now, in this age of liberalism it's something that people are afraid to say. It's not stylish today to condemn anybody, to speak up for the Torah truth. Everybody is impressed by the idea of saying nice words about people. It's become the style to be a liberal to the criminals, to be a liberal to all the wrongdoers and to not speak up against them.

That's why capital punishment is considered a wicked thing today – it's not liberal enough. We have to be easy on the criminals. And so, whenever they're putting to death a murderer in Florida or in Louisiana, so from all over the world come telegrams from the liberals, protesting and asking in the name of compassion to have pity on the murderer.

But we have no pity for a murderer! His victim should lie in the ground while he can still bum around in jail; he should eat and drink and breathe?! The electric chairs should be working day and night; there are so many customers that deserve it. No question about it! And instead he's watching television in the prison too. The liberals are using your hard earned money to buy color televisions for murderers.

REVENGE IN THE COURTROOM

And sometimes he doesn't go to jail either. Like what happened when a twenty-two year old *sheigetz* took a hammer and smashed the head of a seventeen year old Jewish boy. So the wicked gentile judge said, "The courtroom is no place for

revenge!" They wouldn't consider it murder; they called it "criminal negligence." Negligence! He was just *careless*. He just wanted to give him a bang on the head with the metal hammer, but it so happened that he murdered him.

So the judge gave him five years probation. That means for five years he comes once a month to the police station and shows his face to the officer: "Hi Jerry, I'm here." And the officer writes him down, "He checked in." And if once in a while he doesn't show up, that's also OK. That's called condemning the wicked?!

The courtroom **should** be a place for revenge. Forget about the evil attitude of coddling the wrong doers. The judge has to represent the conscience of the people; he should be boiling up with indignation. And if he isn't, then we should be so incensed, so taken up with the injustice, that we should feel indignation against the judge! That's how we should be.

THE LIBERAL HYPOCRITES

Of course, we know that liberalism is all a fake — it's hypocrisy. Because the liberals are not always speaking kind words. The liberals condemn with venom and hatred anyone who opposes them. And what that means is that they function in direct contradistinction to our *possuk* — they spend their lives condemning the good ones and justifying the wicked. But we are not liberal! We speak up and condemn whatever is wicked.

And the same thing is we should be angry against atheists, the materialists. Don't think that we're a compassionate people, broad-minded and ecumenical; that we can understand everybody's viewpoint. We don't understand *any* viewpoint that stands in contradiction to the Torah. We know it's false and we condemn it.

WE DON'T GIVE THEM CREDIT

And therefore we have a right and a duty to expose them for what they are. We must speak up against all the evil ones of the world. Now, we can't go out in the street and protest. And even if we would write letters to the New York Times, they won't print them — this I know from experience — but at least among ourselves we shouldn't give any credit to the evolutionists or the

liberals for having good intentions. They are *resha'im gemurim* and open liars — they are enemies of the truth. And we have to realize this ourselves first, and then we teach it to our children and our people.

Now, this subject however is not limited to individuals because *וְהִרְשִׁיעוּ אֶת הָרָשָׁע* means that we condemn not only the *rasha*, the wicked person, but the *resha*, the wicked ideals. It means that there's a certain obligation to condemn the way of life that is wicked.

PERMITTED LEITZANUS

Now the *nevi'im*, you have to know, all spoke *loshon nekiyah*; they were very delicate in their language. Never do you find a description in the whole Torah of a man doing his needs in the bathroom; it's not described.

But then we find a surprise. Yeshaya Hanavi (46:2) says, *כָּרַע בַּל* – *The Ba'al is kneeling*. That's their *avodah zarah* — it means he's crouching to perform his needs. Yeshaya is making a joke of the idols; he's saying that the idol is struggling to move his bowels. *קָרַס נְבוֹ* – *Nevo is down on his knees* and, *לֹא יָכְלוּ מִלֵּט מִשָּׂא* – he cannot get rid of the load.

Yeshaya Hanavi is telling us that the idol cannot get rid of the load — he's very constipated. The poor *avodah zarah* with the big belly is constipated — he can't get rid of that load that he has.

Now that's a queer thing for a *navi* to say. It's *leitzanus*! He shouldn't talk that way; after all, a *navi* is *kodesh kedoshim*! His mouth is holy!

HOLY LEITZANUS

And the answer is that when it comes to degrade the wicked, it's considered *kedusha*; that's what a mouth is for. It's considered a virtuous thing to disparage the wicked ideals. That's what the *gemara* says on that *possuk*: It says there that *כָּל לִיצְנוּתָא אִסְרָא* – You shouldn't disparage things; it's wrong to be a *leitz*. However, the *gemara* says, we see from Yeshaya Hanavi that when it comes to *leitzanus* of *avodah zarah*, it's a *mitzvah*. *כָּל לִיצְנוּתָא אִסְרָא* – *לְבַר מְלִיצְנוּתָא דְעֵבוּרָה זָרָה* – all *leitzanus* is *assur* except *leitzanus* of

avodah zarah. And not only is it permitted, says the *gemara*; it's a *mitzvah*.

A *mitzvah*! And that means that we shouldn't pull any punches. It means that we don't have any respect for the religions of the world. Of course, you have to be careful not to hurt the feelings of *goyim* because of *darkei shalom*, but among ourselves we should know it's *hevel v'rik*; it's all *sheker v'kazav* and we should say it. All the religions of the world are nothing but lies and you should never lose sight of that. There's not even an iota of *emes* there. Whatever *emes* they use is only in order to give some credence to their *sheker*, but it's altogether *kulo sheker* from beginning to end. At least among ourselves we have to speak up and proclaim the *sheker v'kazav*.

SNAKES ARE HATED HERE

Not only *avoda zara*; not just the false religions. All of their false ideals, all of their ideals are worthy of *leitzanus* and degradation. If they are *to'eivah* people we must speak against them with the worst possible words. You know even those who oppose *to'eivah*, so first they give a little preface: "I have nothing against them personally but — ." No! No buts. You hate them! You abominate them! You're going to love a *to'eivah* person? Do you love a dangerous snake? "I have nothing against you Mr. snake but — "

No! We hate dangerous snakes. Especially if the snake is headed for your child, you hate him 100 times over. And that's they're doing today — don't think otherwise — they're headed for your children. And you want to love them?! You want to love a snake? I don't understand that; you despise them!

AN OPEN MIND

And don't think that we're being selfish or we're being limited in our outlook. We have to know *we* are the ones who are broadminded. We are broadminded enough not to be influenced by the fads of the day. We're proud to be close-minded! You know, if your mind is closed, and it's open only to the subject of Hashem, that's the most open mind you could have. But if your mind is open to anything at all, if it lets everything in, then it's the most closed mind there is because *everything* settles in your

thoughts. And what is the result? All kinds of sewage collect in your head, and your mind becomes just a garbage disposal, that's all. An open mind is a mind of sewage.

And even among ourselves, among the good ones, we have to say it like it is. Foolishness has to be called foolishness – we won't kowtow to those who want us to keep quiet. We tell the world how silly it is to go bowling! What do you need bowling for? Chol Hamoed, he goes bowling. What is he doing it for? What does he get out of it? He goes and he bowls and he calls it *simchas yom tov*. Of course, people will criticize you for saying such things – they'll call you close-minded; they always do – you have to expect that when you speak up for the truth.

REPETITION IN KOHELES

And that's why *Koheles* repeated himself over and over again: הָבֵל הַבָּלִים אָמַר קֶהֱלֵת, הָבֵל הַבָּלִים הַפֶּל הָבֵל – it's *hevel*, it's all emptiness and more emptiness. The question arises, how many times should it say the same thing? And he repeats it constantly in that *sefer*. And the answer is, that it's a very important function and there's never enough. You must constantly warn yourself and your children against all the foolishness of *Olam Haze'h*.

What is sports? It's so silly! The Yanks and the Mets hitting the baseball. It's so *meshuga*. It's an American *goyishe meshugena velt*. It's headlines – Yanks, Mets. It's so silly. Here's a boy, strutting down the street, in a lacrosse uniform. Did you ever see a lacrosse uniform? You don't know what it is? It's a game that high schools and colleges play. So he's strutting down the street in his uniform, all covered with helmets and padded things all over him, and he walks down the street like a hero. He has a halo of sanctity around him. That's what they think. They think that sports is something noble. So this garbage we have to get out of our heads. There is nothing noble about holding a stick and smacking a baseball. There's nothing noble about it at all – and הִרְשִׁיעוּ אֶת הִרְשָׁע means that we have to speak up about all the *hevel* in this world.

THE ART APIKORIS

When the *goyim* talk about art, you have to downplay it – art is nothing but foolishness. Now some people will feel that it's

wrong to say such a thing. Art is nothing?! They bridle when they hear such *apikorsis*. But I'm an *apikoris* when it comes to art! There's nothing to painting at all. A good photograph is better than any painting.

Of course, I know it's not easy to say these things, because all around you, even the frum world has already been flavored by the *umos ha'olam* — and when people become accustomed to bad smells, they begin to think it's normal. And so that's our job. If you're going to say that art is an ideal then we'll laugh at that. We'll condemn such foolishness. *Art shmart*, it means nothing to us. Here's a fellow who goes to Paris to study art and he settles on the left bank, whatever they call it there. He lives in a cockroach infested apartment — a 'studio' he calls it in order to sound impressive — and he lives for art. He lives for his painting.

SCRIBBLING CAN'T COMPETE

The truth is any good photographer can produce a better painting than the best artist today. Let's be practical about it and stop bluffing ourselves. The whole business of painting should be dead — for a thinking person it's already out of style. Painting was valuable before you had cameras but today, with color photography, painting is as dead as a doornail. It's only the affectation, the showing off, the bluff of art, that still maintains the existence of this corpse but it can't be deader than it is. And people sooner or later will discover it.

What's the point of his scribbling? If he's trying to compete with a good camera, he'll never succeed. So instead he tries something else; he goes off and makes crazy dots and dashes and he smears a brush over the canvas and he sells it for \$10,000 to some foolish nouveau riche who wants to adorn his house with something he doesn't understand.

If you ask him what it is, what's it a picture of, so he'll tell you that it's "Springtime in Afghanistan." He says it with a straight face and his befuddled guests are standing in front of the thing saying ooh and ah. "Do you see over there?" he says. "You see that line sticking out? That's the tail of the tiger hiding in the brush." It's no tail! The painter by accident rubbed his finger on the canvas so they imagine it's a tiger tail.

HEAVENLY MUSIC

The same is with everything else. Here's a man who tells me that he's studying music — music appreciation. What do you have to learn to appreciate music for? "Oh," you say, "Music is from the seven *heichalos*, music is one of the heavens."

Look; I'll tell you the way it is — if it's used for *avodas Hashem*, certainly it's good. The *Levi'im* after all used music in the *Beis Hamikdash*. The *Kuzari* says that the *mikdash* is where music had its place but today music has been degraded and it's primarily utilized for romance and licentiousness, for *rish'us*. And so when you pass a music store and you hear the sounds inside, you should think it's a crazy house. And the people that patronize it are lunatics. To make an ideal from music? It's a *meshugas*!

THE ENLIGHTENED PEOPLE

The *mitzvah* of **וְהִרְשִׁיעוּ אֶת הָרָשָׁע** means that we must enlighten our families and our neighbors — and most important to enlighten ourselves about the foolishness and the evil in the outside world. And we, the handful who have been privileged to walk *b'ohr Hashem*, we're the lucky ones! **כִּי הִנֵּה הַחֹשֶׁךְ יָכֹסֶה אֶרֶץ וְעֶרְפֹּל בִּי הִנֵּה הַחֹשֶׁךְ יָכֹסֶה אֶרֶץ וְעֶרְפֹּל** — *Behold a darkness covers the world, and a thick cloud covers the nations*, **וְעַלֶיךָ יִזְרַח הַשֵּׁם** — *but on you, Hashem has given His brilliance*, **וּכְבוֹדוֹ עָלֶיךָ יֵרָאֶה** — *and His glory is visible upon you*.

There's no such thing as people outside of the *Am Hashem* that walk in the light of the truth. Now, I don't care what you people will think. If you don't understand this, if you want to quibble about it, so you should know that you're lacking in one of the most fundamental truths of the Torah — that the world was made for one righteous nation and that's us. Hakodosh Boruch Hu waited until one nation came forward and claimed that role — anybody could have done it but our forefathers chose it — and now we are the righteous nation until the end of time.

We are the center of the stage and everything else in the world is just scenery for the *Am Yisroel*. The world stands on the righteousness of the Jewish people; that's a fundamental truth that is constantly reiterated in the *Tanach*.

GET OUT THERE AND SPREAD THE TRUTH

And **וְהַצַּדִּיקִים יִצְדִּיקוּ אֶת הַצַּדִּיק וְהַרְשִׁיעוּ אֶת הָרָשָׁע** means that at least among ourselves we have to advertise this truth. Spread the word! Talk about *tzadikim* – all of them – in your home. Praise *tzadikim*. Praise *frum* Jews. There's so much to be said for them – all the *frum* Jews! And of course, we have to downplay the outside world and talk about how ridiculous they are and how wicked the world is. Everybody outside of the *olam hatorah* is depraved; they've fallen into ways of wickedness – some more, some less – but without Torah ideals there can't be true good.

And therefore if we want to fulfill our function in the world, one of our main purposes is **וְהַצַּדִּיקִים יִצְדִּיקוּ אֶת הַצַּדִּיק** – *justify what really is just*, and **וְהַרְשִׁיעוּ אֶת הָרָשָׁע** *condemn the wickedness*. And by spending our days fulfilling the ideal of this *possuk*, we bring the light of the Torah into our own minds and the minds of those around us.

And Rabeinu Yonah says that if you do this then, **יִזְכֶּה בָּזֶה, בְּהִגְיוֹן לִבּוֹ וּמִבְטָא שְׁפָתָיו, בְּלֹא יְגִיעָה וּפְעַל כַּפַּיִם, זְכוּת גְּדוּלָּה עַד לְשָׁמַיִם, כִּי זֶה מַעֲקָרִי יִצִּירַת הָאָדָם** – *by doing this, by merely preparing your thoughts and using your words for the cause of praising the true good in this word, then without any effort and work of your hand, you will acquire merits without end, because this is one of the most important purposes of the creation of man.*"

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With
Rav Avigdor Miller Ztz"l



Q:

Are emotional problems considered *yissurim*?

A:

Certainly. But it depends how those emotional problems originated. Most emotional problems are the result of wrong *middos*. When people are *nokeim v'noter*, they can't forget what somebody once said to them, it boils in them and makes them sick. It's only people who can forget, they can overlook what has been done to them, who can remain healthy. Just ignore it.

Like the *gemara* (Sanhedrin 7a) says: טוביה דשמע ואדיש – *How happy is the man who hears people saying things and he pays no attention, חלפיה בישתיה מאה – a hundred evils will pass him by.* You get excited that your mother-in-law said this or that?! You're a fool; just forget about it! She didn't know what she was talking about. Your wife said something to you? Forget about it – your wife doesn't know what she's talking about. Your husband said something – ignore it; he doesn't know what he's talking about. Pay no attention.

So, "How happy is the man who hears and ignores." Just ignore it. Because when a person doesn't ignore it, it eats him up. And he gets emotional problems. So therefore a person has to think sensibly – think about Hakodosh Boruch Hu, how many good things He does for you in this world. Think about how lucky you are to have two good eyes – most of you have two good eyes. You have something to eat, you have a bed to sleep in at night. You have so many good things in this life, so try to enjoy them. ראה בטוב השם – *Look at the goodness of Hashem*, and then your character will often straighten out and most of your emotional problems will become nothing.

TAPE # E-12

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