

TORAS AVIGDOR

AUTHENTIC TORAH THOUGHT FOR LIFE

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"L

PARSHAS NASO

WITH

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"L

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

THE DEDICATED NAZIR

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Part I. The Ancient Nazir

The Kohen's Principle

In our *parshah* this week (6:12) we read about the Nazir who became impure – he accidentally walked into a room where there was a dead body, or maybe he touched a *meis* – and he must now begin his term of *nezirus* all over again. But before he could restart his *nezirus*, he first had to bring a *korban asham* to the Beis Hamikdash.

Regarding this *korban*, the Gemara (Nazir 4b) relates a statement that Shimon Hatzaddik, a *Kohen Gadol* who served during the early years of the *Bayis Sheini* period, made to his *talmidim*. He said as follows: “In all my days I never ate from the *asham* offering of a Nazir who had become *tamei*.” He had a principle never to eat from that *korban*. He had a certain reason (see Nedarim 9b) which we won't speak about now; what matters for us is the story related there.

The One Exception

The Gemara there says that there was one time when Shimon Hatzaddik made an exception. One

day a handsome young man, a Nazir with beautiful long hair, came to the Beis Hamikdash to bring his *korban*, and Shimon Hatzaddik saw him and took note of the beautiful locks that were hanging over his shoulders.

You know today, if you see a man wearing long hair, what it means is that he wants to show the world that he's a rebel; a tramp. But it was different in those days; in those days they wore long hair not because they imitated the gentiles – it was the way that people went. And so, Shimon Hatzaddik said to him, “*Bni*, my son; *mah ra'isa l'shacheis sei'ar na'eh zeh*; what reason did you have to shear off such beautiful hair? Why make a vow to become a Nazir when you knew that you would have to cut off such beautiful hair at the end of your *nezirus*?”

The Yetzer in the Mirror

And so this young man told Shimon Hatzaddik the following story: “I am a shepherd for my father's sheep. One day as the sheep were drinking from a spring in the meadow, I too was thirsty so I bent over to take some water for myself. As I leaned close to the spring I noticed my reflection in the clear water; I saw my image and I noticed that I was

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good-looking.” This shepherd wouldn’t have known otherwise because in those days men never looked at mirrors; but it happened this one time by accident.

Now, when this shepherd saw his reflection, he felt a stirring within him: *Pachaz alai yitzri* – “My *yetzer hara* leaped upon me,” the shepherd said. It doesn’t state what the *yetzer* urged him to do, so we take it in its most simple explanation that it was the evil inclination of vanity. He saw that he was a handsome young man and he felt a surge of pride; and right away he understood that he was becoming conceited.

This young man understood the danger that was brewing in his heart and he said to himself, “Young man, you need a talking to”. Ordinarily, when you hear such words, somebody else is saying it to you, but in this case when there’s nobody else around to criticize you, so you have to say it to yourself.

Early Detection

And listen to his words. “*Rasha! You evil person!*” he said to himself, “*Mipnei mah atah misga’eh b’olam she’eino shelcha? Why are you proud, so conceited with a world that does not belong to you?!*” Now, to hear such words being spoken by this young man is a remarkable thing. Because the fact that he was virtuous enough to recognize in his incipient conceit that it was the work of the *yetzer hara* is already a *madreigah*.

Imagine someone tells you that you are handsome or maybe that you are wise or whatever it is and you feel a stirring of pride within you; would you think to say such a thing: “Wooah! Hold on a minute here! That’s the *yetzer hara* that just leaped upon me.” If you do that then you’re something special; you’re an exceptional person if you recognize that.

And not only did this young shepherd understand that this was the work of the *yetzer hara*, but he went a step further and he said, “*Ubikesh l’tardeini min haolam – This evil inclination was attempting to drive me out of the world.*” He was wise enough to realize that ‘*Ga’avah rosh kol chatas,*’ that arrogance is the beginning of all sins and that the *yetzer* was using a stratagem to lead him astray. That’s a *chochom!* To recognize the danger not after it had already progressed and led him astray, but at the very first stirring of conceit! The mere awareness of beautiful hair or a beautiful nose or a beautiful complexion or beautiful eyes, he recognized it as the beginning of a campaign to drive him out of this world.

The Ancient Shepherd

Now, this young man wasn’t anybody we would consider exceptional; he was nothing but an ordinary shepherd boy pasturing his father’s sheep. He wasn’t in the *beis hamedrash*; he was alone somewhere in the fields. But as we listen in on the words of this shepherd boy, we get a little taste of what the Jewish nation was in the early days of the *Bayis Sheini*; we begin to understand the greatness of our nation. It was a people that were trained in piety and *yiras Shomayim*; and the *emunah* had so saturated the nation that the teachings had permeated down even to the lower levels of the people, down to the working boy.

That’s what he was – a working boy. But we see from this young man’s words that he was very aware of the great issues of life. The truth is that if we’re going to be honest with ourselves we’d have to say that the old time working boy of the *Bayis Sheini* was far superior to some of our very good people today.

The Truth About the World

And so we’re going to sit now at the feet of this shepherd boy as if he were one of the Sages of the

Am Yisroel and listen to his words as he teaches us one of the *yesodei ha'emunah*; one of the Torah foundations of understanding life and all the phenomena of this world. That's a very big order, but we're going to hear about it now from this shepherd boy. "As I was looking at my image in the water and felt the stirrings of vanity, I thought to myself, 'What's going on here? *Rasha! You evil person! Why are you proud, so conceited with a world that does not belong to you?!'*"

Now, in those words we hear a very great message. It's the message we're going to listen to tonight. He recognized that this world is not his; that it has an Owner, a Landlord. That's what we hear from the words of this boy. "I'm living in a world that belongs to Someone Else! And everything in the world belongs to Him including my handsome face and my beautiful hair. It's loaned to me for a short time. It's not your hair," he was telling himself, "What's there to be proud about?"

The Tuxedo Gmach

Imagine someone borrows a tuxedo or an expensive *chassidische* suit from a friend. And so he's strutting down Thirteenth Avenue wearing his friend's outfit, fancying himself a wealthy man now because he's wearing his tuxedo. He's so proud of himself. "Ahh, my beautiful tux! I'm a wealthy man!" What would we say about such a fellow? "A *meshugeneh*," we'd say. It's all a *dimyon*; it's your imagination. You're being *misga'eh b'olam she'eino shelcha* – you're proud about owning a tuxedo that's not yours. If you're an honest man, as you walk down the avenue and people are admiring you, so you say to yourself, "Don't live in a world of fantasy! You're parading around in borrowed finery."

And if we would study well the words of our teacher, this shepherd, we would understand immediately that even the rich man, the "owner" of the tuxedo, if he's walking down Thirteenth Avenue thinking that he's proud of his tuxedo, so he's

exactly like that poor fellow parading around in borrowed clothing. Nothing is his! Of course, it's his; but he understands that it really belongs to Hashem! The rich man is only temporarily in charge of the property. And if he's arrogant, he's being *misga'eh b'olam she'eino shelo* – he's being arrogant with a world that doesn't belong to him.

Giving Back

So this Nazir said to himself. "How could I be arrogant with hair that is not mine? It's not my hair anyhow!" And so, what did he do? "*Ha'avodah she'agalchacha la'Shomayim*," he said. "I take an oath by the temple service to be a Nazir; I'll let this hair of mine grow and then at the end of the period of *nezirus*, I'll shave off all of this beautiful hair and give it back to its true Owner."

"I'm living in a world that is not mine, wearing hair that's not mine, and that's easy to forget in Olam Hazei. I need some time to think; time to reflect about the One Who owns this world and remove the conceit from my mind. And so I'll become a Nazir and after a period of time thinking about that, of drilling that truth into my head, I'll take *Your* hair and give it back to *You*."

The Ancient Orthodox

You know, in the olden days people were loyal to Hashem. You have no idea how much people were devoted to Hakadosh Baruch Hu in the early days. The common people thought about Hashem always and the awareness that He was the *Adon*, the Master, was paramount to them in their hearts.

We are very far away from that today. If a person is *frum* today we don't examine him too much; we're not interested in how much he's thinking about Hashem in his heart. *Halevai* he should be *mikayeim kol haTorah kulah* in all its technicalities and we'll consider him a *tzaddik gomur*. But in the olden days it was the Awareness of Hashem that was the criterion. Everyone lived with the

declaration of Hashem that **כִּי לִי הָאָרֶץ** – “I am the One Who owns the land” (Vayikra 25:23). And what mattered most in those days was how dedicated you were to Hashem in your heart, how much you recognized Him as your Master.

And therefore, if someone felt that he was lacking in this awareness of Hashem, if he felt there was some shortcoming in his dedication to this principle, so to remedy that, sometimes he or she – it was available to men and women – would accept upon themselves a term of *nezirus*. It means you make a decision to set aside a certain period of time – thirty days or longer – to recognize that you belong to Hashem and you express that dedication by becoming a Nazir.

The Hairy Crown

Now, the laws of *nezirus* are made up of many details; in many ways the Nazir was imitating the laws of a *kohen* who was the prototype, the *eved Hashem* par excellence. But one of the most prominent aspects of a Nazir was the hair on his head. When you study the laws of a Nazir in our *parshah*, you'll see that it states as follows: **כִּי נִזָּר אֶלְקִינוּ עַל רֹאשׁוֹ** – *The crown of Hashem is on his head* (Naso 6:7). Now a *possuk* like that is something that's almost unequaled! His hair is a crown of Hashem resting on his head! That's something! We have to study that; it's not for nothing that it's in the Torah.

It's a remarkable thing – for thirty days he was chosen by Hashem to wear a crown on his head – that's his long hair. And the crown was considered so sacred that when the *nezirus* ended he had to cut off his hair; it was burnt in the fire upon which they were cooking the *korban shelamim* that he had brought. The *hair* of the Nazir was burnt as an offering to Hashem!

An offering of hair!? Yes, his hair was *kadosh* now because this man had recognized that even *his* hair, growing from *his* hair follicles, on *his* head, it

all belongs to Hashem. A Nazir became a new person. Not only that he looked different; it could be that externally the only change you would see would be his hair growing. But more important was that his *mind* was growing. For one month – sometimes more than that – this person had devoted his or her mind to Awareness of Hashem!

The Thirty Day Campaign

Now, it doesn't mean he didn't do anything during that time. I'm sure that the *Nezirim* learned and they *davened* too. Some of them even worked – there were *Nezirim* who were farmers and blacksmiths. The shepherd in our story didn't stop herding his father's sheep. But whatever it was that they did, their minds were devoted entirely to thoughts of Hakadosh Baruch Hu, to recognizing that we are guests in His world.

That was the crown of a Nazir, the long hair on his head was a crown of dedication to Hashem, a sign of what was doing *in* his head. He was learning that he's living in an *olam she'eino shelo* – in a world that's not yours. And once a person underwent such an experience, once you went through that, then all of your life the impression of that period remained on your mind.

Part II. The Modern-Day Nazir

Don't Try This at Home

Now, we can't do that today; nobody should try it nowadays because once you say you're Nazir, you're out of luck. You can't bring any *korbanos* and that means you'll be stuck forever. But at least we should realize what we're missing out on. It's a tremendous loss for us that we don't have the opportunity to accept upon ourselves *nezirus* and have a certain period of time dedicated to thinking about what it means to be living in an *olam she'eino shelanu*, a world that doesn't belong to us.

And yet, the message of *nezirus*, the results that follow from this important principle that this shepherd boy is teaching us is just as available – and just as important – as it was then.

Thirty Seconds of Nezirus

The Nazir tells us that anyone who wants can choose to be dedicated to Him. You're not a *Kohen*? So what? You're not a *Levi*? So what? You didn't merit to be a *talmid chochom* yet? No matter. Hakadosh Baruch Hu says to every man, woman and child: "You want to become great? You want to wear a crown of dedication to Me on your head? So you have to volunteer your thoughts to Me."

It's a glorious opportunity! Devote yourself to Hakadosh Baruch Hu for a while. Maybe you can't do it for thirty days; so much we won't ask of you. But for a little bit, why not? While you're waiting for the red light you can wear the crown of Awareness of Hashem. When you're walking down the street, you can make a donation to Hakadosh Baruch Hu. For one half a minute put in some thought to this *yesod* that this world is not ours; that there's an Owner and that whatever you take from this world has to be with His permission. And then try it tomorrow again. And then the following day again. You can even do it for thirty days if you want to be great. Do it for a month and you're on your way to understanding your place in this world!

Begin From The Beginning

Now, this is such a fundamental Torah teaching that it's found at the beginning of the Torah: **בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים** – *At the beginning, Elokim created.* This statement teaches us many things; but one of the teachings is that nothing in this world is *hefker*. There is nothing in this world that is not owned by Hashem because *bara Elokim, Elokim* created it all.

Not only that He created it; He owns it! It's His. That's the first teaching. **בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים** means that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is the *Owner* of

everything. We should study that idea. You know that there are various methods of *kinyanim*; various ways by which you acquire ownership of something. A movable thing, you pick it up and it becomes yours. If it's a heavy object, you can drag it – that's *meshichah*; or you can put it into your house and be *koneh* with a *kinyan chatzer*. If it's real estate, you have *kesef, shtar v'chazaka* and *chalipin*. There are all kinds of ways of acquiring ownership.

But the very best form of *kinyan* is when you create something. Let's say you take a few blocks of lumber and you saw them down; and then you sand the pieces and nail them and glue them and finally you build a bookshelf. You created it! It's yours! That's the best ownership of all.

You Make It, You Own It

But there's one way that's even superior to that. The very best *kinyan* is when you create the thing out of nothing. It's impossible; you can't do it. *Yesh mei'ayin*, to bring something into existence from nothing at all, that's the most outstanding *kinyan* there could be. It only happened once!

That's why we say that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is the *Konei Hakol*, the One Who acquired everything. Hashem is a *koneh*? A *kinyan*? He acquired it?! He purchased the universe and everything in it? The answer is that by means of Creation, He became the Owner. There was nothing at all and He created everything *yesh mei'ayin* – and continues to create it every second – so He's the true Owner of the world. When Hashem made everything, He acquired it with the best possible *kinyan*. That's the first and most fundamental principle of the Torah – Hakadosh Baruch Hu created it all and He owns it all!

That's step number one – recognizing that you're walking in a world that's not yours. And if that thought doesn't enter your mind so you have no place in this world; you have no right to walk the earth. You're prancing around in a world that

doesn't belong to you and it doesn't even enter your mind. An Owner?! Who ever thought about that?!

Shopping With Children

We are the same as a little child who hasn't learned yet. Did you ever experience taking a little child into a Five and Ten. I'm talking about the good old days when they didn't keep the merchandise behind glass. Maybe there are still some neighborhoods like that. So you're walking in the aisle with your child and he begins reaching for everything. "I want this." "I want that." He's pulling it off the shelf. So the father has to tell him, "You can't take it!" He doesn't understand. "Why can't I take it?" And you have to teach him, "It's not ours; it belongs to the storekeeper!"

That's a tremendous lesson for a little boy to learn. It's a new concept for him. "An owner? Someone owns all of this; not me?!" A little boy doesn't understand that! As you walk through the store with him, you have to drill into his mind that what he sees on the shelves doesn't belong to him. It takes some time for him to understand that *chiddush*.

Adult Education Classes

The truth is that most adults haven't yet learned that piece of Torah either. Of course, the Orthodox will say, "Certainly; *mai komashma lun*." They know all about it! But the truth is that we are very far away from realizing what that means.

When you see people coming out of the stores with shopping carts jammed with all good things, it's the same as if they broke the windows and looted the stores. You see that happens sometimes in certain neighborhoods; if they get enough looters to break into the store together, so the police stand by and watch. They don't do anything while the bums are running in and out of the store with big boxes of merchandise. Sometimes these looters even bring their automobiles to fill them up.

And when we hear about it, we are upset about that. We want to protest only we can't do anything about it because the mayor is on their side! But we think it's terrible; it's an *avlah*, a terrible sin!

But you have to know that these "underprivileged youth" who loot the store are not worse than the person who stands on line and pays good money. He says, "I paid for it," but what did he pay?! He gave the man in the store a few bits of green paper that are worthless! The shopkeeper agreed to take money for what you have in your cart but is he the true owner?

You're a Looter Too

Everything that they're taking out of the store comes only from Hakadosh Baruch Hu; and even if you pay good money, but if you don't recognize the true Owner, you're the worst type of *ganav*. According to the principles that we're learning now you're also a looter because no one in this world has a right to take anything unless the owner yields! If the conditions are not fulfilled, then it's considered as if this man is a looter, he's a pilferer!

So you'll tell me, "Hashem is the Owner, but if you make a *brachah*, then He lets you partake of His world" (Brachos 35a). That's the price, the Gemara says. The Owner yields to you if you'll pay Him the price of saying **בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם**.

The Frum Shoplifter

But a *bracha* is the smallest possible payment. It's the minimum, just to get by so that you won't be called a *ganav*. So you're not a holdup man; is that something to be proud of? And what about everything else on the shelves of this world besides for food? Hashem is the *Koneh Hakol*; He's the Owner of *everything* in this world and our first function is to recognize that! It means an awareness that nothing is really yours; that you're taking everything from the shelves in Hakadosh Baruch Hu's store.

That's our function; that's the reason for our existence. And even if you make a *bracha*, a perfunctory movement of your lips, but if your mind is not there, if you don't sense that you're taking from a world that doesn't belong to you, so you're considered a criminal. Hakodosh Boruch Hu blames you as if you're an unsavory character, taking what doesn't belong to you. If you don't understand that you're walking through an *olam she'eino shelcha*, then you're just as corrupt as the looters in the slums.

Try It at Home

When you turn on the faucet, you're taking from the Creator! He's the Landlord! When you pick up a piece of bread, it's His! Now we have to drill ourselves with this. You think it's just a technicality: say a few words, now I can eat. No; practice it up tonight. When you come home, you want to take a drink of water. As you fill the glass, you think, "It's not mine." Practice that. As you're holding the glass of water in your hand, as you're drinking, you're thinking, "It's not mine." Try that once.

As you're eating supper, practice. You're eating a piece of chicken? Try it, one bite at a time. As you put the food into your mouth, think, "I'm eating Hashem's food right now. It's His world and He let's me take it off the shelf." If you do it for one bite you're already great. The next day, try two bites. You're on your way now.

The Well-Stocked Store

Not only when you open your faucet and when you eat chicken. As soon as you walk out of here – when you leave here tonight and you take a peek out into this world – imagine you're a little child walking into the world for the first time. You're peeking for the first time at all the good things with which this world is stocked. Like the little boy who needs to be reminded, you're no different. You have to remind yourself, "It's not yours! You think you

can just take things from this world without permission?" When we look into this world, it's important for us to learn that first lesson.

The sunlight has an Owner. The clouds have an Owner. And the trees and the sidewalk and the air and the grass have an Owner too. We have to realize that even to walk on the face of the earth, we need permission. *V'haaretz nasan l'vnei adam* – He gives us this earth to walk on. Earth to walk on?! You have to be grateful to be able to walk on the earth?! Absolutely! Hakadosh Baruch Hu is supplying us with a place to live. The truth is every block should have a turnstile which requires us to drop in a nickel or a dime. A long block, you should drop in a quarter! And yet, it doesn't even enter our minds that *la'Hashem ha'aretz*, that to Hashem belongs the sidewalk!

No EZ-Pass On This Highway

Sometimes there's a highway that's been used for many years and suddenly the government decides that it needs extra income. So it sets up at the beginning of the highway toll booths; toll collectors to take your money. There's an outcry! "We always used this highway for free and now we have to pay?!" But the government says, "It costs us money to make that highway; it costs big money to maintain and repair it."

Hakadosh Baruch Hu doesn't want your money. He doesn't need it and it's His anyhow. He doesn't need your long hair either. That's His too. What does Hakadosh Baruch Hu want? He wants your mind! When we walk in this world, when we make use of His world and His conveniences, we are expected to pay a certain toll. What toll? Recognizing as much as possible what the shepherd boy realized; that it's an *olam she'eino shelcha* – there's a very big Landlord in this world.

Part III. The Grateful Nazir

Animal Torah

In *Mesichta Pesachim* (49b) the Gemara states, *זאת תורת הבהמה* – *This is the torah of a beheima* (Vayikra 11:46). So the Sages ask, what kind of Torah does a *beheima* have? For us there's a Torah, but what's this *toras ha'beheima* all about? It may not sound like a very big *kasheh* to you, but you'll see from the answer that it's an important thing.

The Gemara says like this: There is a *toras ha'beheima*, rules for eating a *beheima*. It means that in order to have a right to eat the meat of living things so you must qualify. *Am ha'aretz assur le'echol basar* – An ignoramus cannot eat meat. Which means when your wife sends you to the butcher shop to buy some meat, so the butcher should say, “Say over something; let's hear something. I can't give you meat unless you have some Torah with you. Say over a piece of *Ketzos Hachoshen* or a piece of *Nesivos* or at least some *ha'arah* in the *Biur Halacha*. At least quote something from the Gemara.”

Get Used to Spinach

So you tell him, “What do you mean? I'm giving you money!”

“Money?” he says. “Money can't buy everything. That's the teaching of the Gemara – there's a *toras habeheima*, a Torah connected with a *beheima*. This steak has an Owner and He says it's not for everybody. It's only eligible for those people who study Torah. I'm sorry, but there's a vegetable man across the street. Go across the street and buy some spinach. For meat you have to be a Torah learner; you have to have a head filled with Torah attitudes.”

So next time you sit down and eat a piece of chicken – it doesn't say chicken there but probably it means chicken too – if your wife puts some

chicken on your plate you have to first consider if you're eligible. Maybe you should leave it over and suffice with the potatoes.

There's a great lesson here. The world belongs to Somebody! There's an Owner. You can't stretch out your hand and take at will! Forget about the butcher! There's a bigger Owner and He yields His rights only to someone who learns Torah. *Kol haoseik baTorah muttar le'echol basar* – *Anybody who engages in Torah, he – it means he and his wife – is permitted to eat meat!* If the husband does not study Torah, he and his wife have to live on spinach!

The Learning Boy's Shidduch

Another example. In *Mesichta Shabbos* (25b) it says like this: *Isha mekushetes l'talmid chacham* – A woman that's all dolled up—she's wearing makeup and jewelry—she's for a *talmid chacham*. It's a remarkable statement; maybe you don't want to hear it, but it's the Gemara speaking. It means you're listening to the words of Hashem now: the *isha mekushetes* is for the learning boy.

You know, to us it seems that for a *talmid chacham*, you should bring him a wife that's as plain as could be. It's the *grubbe yungen*, the ignorami, they're the ones who should have women who come out of the beauty shops and wear the most expensive things.

No; it's just the opposite. For them, their wives have no right to put on any cosmetics. An *am haaretz* should be happy that he gets any wife at all – it's more than he deserves. A plain ragdoll with frazzled hair is good for him. She doesn't have to wear high heels; no fancy wigs either. A girl as plain as could be, that's all. And he has to be happy that he has even that. If you see that the *resho'im* or *amei ha'aretz* also have dolled up wives, then you have to know that it's robbery. It's the same as if he had kidnapped the woman! They have no right! Only the man who devotes his days or part of his days in the pursuits of *Toras Hashem* – he sacrifices

himself, he gives away his leisure to master the wisdom of Hakodosh Baruch Hu – this man is given the luxury of *isha mekushetes*.

So if you have a good looking wife and you're not a *talmid chacham*; if you have a beautiful home and you're not a *talmid chacham* – could be you have beautiful furniture too. All these things, the Gemara says are appropriate for a *talmid chacham* because it encourages his mind, it stimulates his mind. But some people, their minds don't have to be stimulated because what are they using their minds for anyways? And so, as you walk into your beautiful home and sit down on a beautiful chair and you see your beautiful wife walking through the room, make sure you remember the Owner. And then, when you smell the meat cooking from the kitchen – that's something too – you have to remember Him again.

Using It Right

A *talmid chacham* who is busy with the Torah, he's busy filling his mind with knowledge of the Owner of this world, so he's not going to be spoiled by the fact that he's eating tasty meat. He won't allow himself to be spoiled because he married a beautiful *kallah*. On the contrary, when he sits down to supper and his wife, an *isha mekushetes*, brings him a plate of food and he sees that it's not only broccoli and spinach – there's some meat in there too – so he reminds himself about what the Owner of this world is giving him.

“Look what Hakodosh Baruch Hu is giving me! A *bracha* is not enough!” And although he is weary from his efforts in learning, he encourages himself to learn another couple of hours before going to sleep, to make up for it. “I don't deserve it otherwise – I'll be a *ganav!*”

The Fear of Tzaddikim

And that's why Yaakov Avinu said, **קטנתי מכל** **החסדים ומכל האמת אשר עשית את עבדיך** – “I am too little

for all the kindness and all the faithfulness to your promises that you did for me.” Yaakov was really worried about that. It wasn't a form of speech the way we say it – “I don't deserve it” – just to show off. *Katonti* – that's the fear of *tzaddikim*.

Now, when a person is not well founded in the fundamental principle we're speaking about now – when he doesn't sense clearly that the world has an Owner and that his taking from the world therefore requires justification – so that person will never say *katonti*. The truth is, he's always thinking the opposite: “It's too small what I'm getting.” He won't say it out loud because he's embarrassed to admit what he's thinking – *boruch Hashem*; at least that. But Yaakov Avinu was well founded in this principle and when anything came his way he was so overwhelmed with awareness of Who was giving it to him that he said, “*Katonti* – I don't deserve it.” Because he understood the world has an Owner and that you cannot take unless the Owner is satisfied to yield it to you. And he was afraid that he had not fulfilled the conditions.

The Deficit is Rising

Now, all of this is based on the great principle that we learned from the shepherd boy: It's an *olam she'eino shel'cha* – “The world does not belong to you.” And therefore those people who take from this world without thinking about that must know that they are ignoring a fundamental Torah principle.

We must know that the true *tzaddikim* are constantly worried about that subject. They're concerned lest they don't deserve what they're getting – and that's only because they're always thinking about the Owner they're taking from.

Now, the *tzaddikim*, because they always recognize what they're getting from the Owner, so they're always trying to pay up a little bit. They know they can never fully pay, but they're always

trying to increase their *avodas Hashem* – what more could they do already?!

But the rest of us are in the red and we're not doing too much about it. Now, what can we do about it? Of course I can tell you "You can become a *tzaddik*," but that's a little too difficult. You can't make yourself a Nazir; that you can't do. What do we do?

Act Guilty

So, I'll tell you an easy way out. One thing we can do right away. And so we say to Hakadosh Baruch Hu – of course if you can do better than that, you should. Don't be satisfied with saying the words; get busy and do something. But at least we should keep in our minds always this thought, a fundamental teaching that the world has an Owner and that whatever we take, even if we're not justified – after all you're going to eat meat anyhow even if you won't learn Torah – but at least have a sense of guilt about it. "I'm taking from Hakadosh Baruch Hu."

You're like a man who walks into the butcher shop; he knows he owes the butcher five hundred dollars and so he walks in *b'boishes panim*, with his head hanging. And he says, "Please extend a little more credit to me." The butcher is a kindhearted man so he does it and now this man can eat but at least he does it with an awareness of the largesse of the owner. He's eating the *chulent* meat, but he knows who is really the owner of the meat. But at least it's better than the holdup man who walks in with a knife or a gun and forces the butcher to give him meat.

Unemployed Butchers

By keeping in mind this principle that the shepherd boy enunciated, that it's an *olam she'eino shel'cha*, that's already a big *hatzlacha*! We'll continue taking what we're not justified in taking – how can everybody abide by that Gemara, not to

eat meat unless he's *osek* by Torah?! All the kosher butchers would go out of business. And if you made a wedding, you'd have to have special seating charts for the guests – most guests would sit at the *milchige* table; only one or two could sit at the *fleishige* table. So what could we do? So we take anyhow; we're taking from the Owner all day long – we're not *lamdanim*, we're not *oisek baTorah* sufficiently and yet we have meat every day on our tables. But not just meat – expensive meat. *Amei ha'aretz* are sitting and splurging every day on expensive cuts!

But it's not only meat; *basar* is something special but *everything* belongs to the Owner. We're taking from this world from the minute we open our eyes in the morning until we go to sleep – and all night too. The air we breathe, the sunlight that warms us and the cooling breeze, it's all His. Even our bodies – our hair, our teeth, our fingers – belong to Him. And so we're taking and taking and taking without end.

The Achievement of Decency

And therefore, the least we can do is take with the knowledge that we're taking what belongs to Hashem. We should cry out to Him and say, "It's all Yours, Hashem! You're the *Koneh Hakol*, the Owner of everything." If we're taking, at least we know from Whom we're taking it. If we're stealing it, at least we know from Whom we're stealing. Before we take, at least we should bow our heads in embarrassment and say, "*Ribono Shel Olam*, I know I don't deserve it. *Katonti*, I'm too small for this but at least I recognize that it's Yours."

Recognize that it's His. You can't help yourself; you must take, so at least you should say, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu, *katonti*. I don't deserve it. It's all Yours. It's an *olam she'eino sheli*, a world that doesn't belong to me." And Hakadosh Baruch Hu will say, "This man is at least a decent fellow." And that's a very big achievement! If Hakadosh Baruch Hu

thinks you're a decent fellow it means that you're on the right path.

And so, if we came here tonight merely to realize *katonti*; just to understand we're taking from Someone all the time and that we don't even deserve it, that's already a tremendous achievement! We should walk out tonight happy that we understand that! We should really walk out singing "katonti" because that's the beginning of the Torah; it's the foundation of everything! It's בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים and that's the bedrock on which all the other teachings and doctrines of the Torah are founded. All kinds of accomplishments and achievements of *shleimus* stand on this *yesod*, this foundation that the world has an Owner!

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

Let's Get Practical

Remembering the Owner

One of the important lessons of *nezirus* is that we live in a world that is not ours. Hashem is the owner and our recognition of this Truth makes us great. At least once every day this week I will *bli neder* stop for a moment before I eat or drink something and reflect on the lessons learned and consider whether I am truly deserving of all the benefits I am receiving. I will try to express my gratitude to Hashem for all the good He gives me.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

58 - Borrowing and Not Repaying | **84** - The World Has an Owner
271 - Tenants In This World | **703** - Repaying the Benefactor
890 - Battle Against Materialism | **E-33** - Cohanim, Nezirim,
Secret Tzadikim

Q&A
WITH
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QUESTION

Today when we hear about intermarriage they say that's the worst thing that could happen to the Jewish people. Yet we could infer from the story of Rus that we could get a great prize by having the *malchus Beis Dovid*?

ANSWER

If a person will dive off a boat in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean during a hurricane, let's say, and he'd be submerged for a minute or two and he'd come up holding a casket of jewels, so therefore would you say that there's any virtue of diving off a boat in the middle of a hurricane in the Atlantic Ocean? No. It's just his dumb luck. That's all. You don't dive off to look for jewels in the middle of a raging ocean and anybody who would be happy with an intermarriage because of the hope that it will bring back a jewel, probably will bring up an oyster.

And so in this case it was *min haShomayim*. It was rigged up. It was one of the mysteries of history that Hakadosh Baruch Hu had planned and that's why it's written in *Megillas Rus*. But nobody else should attempt to emulate Machlon and Chilyon because what happened to them will happen to him. And if he won't be destroyed in this world, he'll be destroyed in the World to Come. He's much better off if he's destroyed in this world - at least he'll have the Next World.

And anybody who even countenances such a thing - it means if he's even friendly to relative who has an intermarriage among his children *chalilah* - then that person who is friendly towards them is also an accomplice and is going to lose out. The only way to deal with such a situation is the way Naomi dealt with it while her sons were still alive. That's hostility and opposition.

TAPE # 264 (May 1979)