

TORAS AVIGDOR

AUTHENTIC TORAH THOUGHT FOR LIFE

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"L

PARSHAS YISRO

WITH

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"L

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

SONG AT THE SEA

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Part I. Beyond the Line

Yisro's Torah

When Yisro came to visit his son-in-law Moshe Rabbeinu, and he was giving him suggestions about choosing judges and teaching the people, he counseled him, among other things, as follows: "וְהוֹדַעְתָּ לָהֶם אֶת הַדֶּרֶךְ יֵלְכוּ בָהּ" – You should make known to them the path in which they should go, וְאֵת הַמַּעֲשֵׂה אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשׂוּן – and the deeds they should do (Shemos 18:20).

Now before we begin, the first thing we must make clear is that when you hear these words, you should know that they're not merely the words of Yisro; Hakadosh Baruch Hu gave this man a privilege that he said Torah words. Why he merited such a thing, that's a different subject; but they are Torah words and we study them as such, exactly the same as any other possuk.

"You should make known to them the path in which they should go," means that there's a certain thing called a *derech* – a special way of living, of thinking, of attitudes, of behavior – that the Am Yisroel has to be guided to walk on; a way that is

different from the ways of all the other nations. We don't walk on the same path as the Italians or Americans. It's an entirely different way.

Volozhiner Torah

It's like what I remember sixty years ago, more than sixty years ago, a *rebbe* was learning Mesichta Nedarim with us. Now the *rebbe* was a big *talmid chacham*, a Volozhiner *talmid*, and we stopped once at a *mishnah* where the expression was ... דֶּרֶךְ תַּלְמִידֵי חֲכָמִים – it is the way of a Torah scholar ... (Nedarim 10:4). It was dealing there with a certain *halachah* – the way of *talmidei chachomim* is if they want to find out if their wives or daughters have *nedarim* on them so they have a way of investigating; they have a scheme to find out if they have *nedarim*.

But this *rebbe* of mine – may he have a blessing forever and ever in Gan Eden – he made a point of stopping and he said, "דֶּרֶךְ תַּלְמִידֵי חֲכָמִים" – We see that *talmidei chachomim* have a different way in life than other people. They have to have a *derech*; there's a certain *derech* that a *talmid chochom* must follow." And he gave a whole talk about *derech talmidei chachomim*; a way of thinking differently,

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a way of acting differently than non-*talmidei chachomim*.

A National Way

Now all the Torah that this *rebbe* said, I forgot. It's sixty years already. All the *halachos* and *pilpulim*, I forgot. But what he told us then that there is a certain way in life for a *talmid chochom*, that I still remember to this day. It made an impression on me. And it means a similar thing here; the Torah is telling us that the Am Yisroel, we have our own path different from the rest of the world – our own path in history.

Like Hakadosh Baruch Hu said about our first father Avraham; He praised him for being so loyal, so dedicated, and He said, "I'm choosing you because I'm confident you're going to teach your children, וְשָׁמְרוּ דֶרֶךְ ה' – to keep the *derech*, the way, of Hashem (Bereishis 18:19). So you see there's a special way, a Jewish way, the way of Hashem. The way we look at the world, our *weltanschauung*, and the way we live in the world, it's something unique.

A Unique Path

Now, to describe the way, that's not our subject tonight. It needs a separate lecture, a long lecture, because it encompasses many things; it doesn't mean eating gefilte fish and that's all. We have a mission in this world and to fulfill it we can't walk in the ways of the nations. We don't care what is the style of the day, the fashionable attitudes of the time, because we're traveling in one direction – we can describe it as a path to Olam Haba – and everyone else is going in the opposite direction.

And that's the first thing Yisro said: "That's your job, Moshe, to teach the people that there is a special way, a path in life, that a Jew has to walk." And not only Moshe; it means that the leaders have to teach that to everyone. Fathers have to teach that to their children. A *rebbe* has to teach his students. Even we to each other – you have to say it to me; I have to say it to you. Because that's

the first requirement, to know that we have our own way, our own peculiar mission in this world.

Beyond the Derech

But then Yisro added something else: וְאָתָּה הִמְעָשָׂה אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂוּן – "And you should teach them also the deeds that they should do," which means we're not only a nation of 'ways, of ideas'. That's the first thing but it's not enough to just spout noble platitudes. Like some groups of Jews who talk about ideals but when it comes down to practical things, they live just exactly like gentiles do; almost no difference.

No; a *derech*, a philosophy of life, is not enough. Absolutely there's a Jewish *derech* but there are Jewish acts too. And you have to live with acts of Judaism, otherwise it's nothing.

Many times you experience this; you urge somebody to do this or not to do that, but he pushes you off. "I am a Jew in my heart," he says.

So imagine that this 'heart-Jew' went swimming. And he went out a little bit beyond his depth and now he has cramps and he is shouting for help. And the lifeguard is sitting on the beach and looking on.

So you say to the lifeguard, "A man is drowning!"

He says, "Is that so?"

So you tell him, "Don't you want to help?!"

And he says, "Sure I want to help him. In my heart I want to help."

True Jews

Well with your heart you are not going to save anybody from drowning. And with your heart you're not going to be a Jew either. A Jew keeps Shabbos; otherwise he's not a Jew. If he doesn't eat kosher and have a *mezuzah* on his doorway, he can't call himself a Jew. The fact that he doesn't do those deeds itself demonstrates that he is a nothing Jew – that's the very best evidence that it's not in his heart. The heart, the *derech*, is only meaningful when it is expressed in actions.

And therefore, these are the two general admonitions that Yisro said to Moshe: the *derech* and the *ma'aseh*. First the *derech* and then number two, **וְאֵת הַמַּעֲשֵׂה אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשׂוּן** – they have to be taught the doing; the doing is what counts.

Deeds and Doing Deeds

Now, everything we said till now is an introduction to what I want to speak about tonight because in Mesichta Bava Metzia (30b), the Gemara quotes these words of Yisro, **אֵת הַמַּעֲשֵׂה אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשׂוּן** – *You should teach the deeds they should do*, and asks a question. It seems redundant: “*You should teach them the deeds*,” that’s enough. What’s “*that they should do*”? Naturally, deeds are something you do.

So the Gemara says that it’s two separate things: **אֵת הַמַּעֲשֵׂה** – *Teach them the deeds*, **זֶה הַדִּין** – *means you should teach them the basic requirements of a Torah Jew*. There are certain minimum requirements that everybody has to be taught, that every Jew must do. No matter how low you are, no matter how poor in intellect you are, how young you are, even if you’re not well, everybody has to do certain things. You can’t avoid doing it.

That’s **אֵת הַמַּעֲשֵׂה**; the minimum that everyone must do. Every Jew puts a *mezuzah* on his home. Every Jew eats kosher and keeps Shabbos. Every Jew won’t wear a garment of wool and linen or shave with a razor. And a thousand other things.

Beyond the Minimum

But then the Torah adds an entirely new obligation: **אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשׂוּן** – *that they have to do*, **זוֹ לְפָנִים מִשְׁוֹרֵת הַדִּין** – *means they have to do beyond the line of duty*. Absolutely, they have to fulfill everything but that’s only the beginning, the minimum. You have to teach them also **יַעֲשׂוּן**, to do beyond the minimum, beyond the line of duty.

And not that it’s voluntary. The second part of the *possuk*, “that they have to do beyond the line of duty” is just as obligatory as the first part. Everyone

is obligated to go beyond the minimum. Of course better people are obligated to do more but no one is permitted to shirk his duty.

Now, that’s a surprise to us. Because people might think, “We approve of going beyond the line of duty; it’s a wonderful thing if you want to be *machmir* and serve Hakadosh Baruch Hu beyond the line of duty. But to be required to do it as a *chiyuv*? To say we’re obliged to do it, that it’s a must?!”

The Wonderful Baal Teshuvah

And the answer is absolutely! That’s **הַמַּעֲשֵׂה אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשׂוּן**. You have to do **הַמַּעֲשֵׂה** – that’s the *din*, the minimum – and then you have to go further and fulfill the rest of the *possuk*: **אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשׂוּן** – you have to do beyond the minimum.

You know who can get away with the minimum? The minimum you’ll get credit for if you live in a town out west; you come from a family of ignorant people, and all around you are enemies, people who make it difficult for you, and you fulfill the minimum – you keep Shabbos, you put up a *mezuzah*, you do everything. Fine. You’ll get a big reward. After all, all of your friends are sitting somewhere in India, in a cellar smoking pot; or worse they’re going to university and becoming ruined. And you broke away from that and came back to *Torah u’mitzvos*! For you the minimum is excellent! That’s why if a man comes from the outside world and he starts keeping the *mitzvos*, we make a big deal. We praise him, “He’s a *shomer Shabbos*; he keeps the Torah. Wonderful!”

Frum is the Minimum

But if you’ll say on a *frum* Jew in a *frum* community that he’s *shomer mitzvos*, it’s a *bizayon* to say that about him because much more is expected from him.

So what if you keep a kosher home? It’s excellent but you’re satisfied with that? Up to a hundred and fifty years ago, every Jew had a strict

glatt kosher home. Not in my days – when I went to Europe, it was different already. But in the olden days, about fifty years before World War I, every Jew had a kosher home. They used to say if your name was Mendel you could eat from his *fendel*. And every Jew was a Mendel; nobody was named with a gentile name.

And so we don't congratulate ourselves for keeping the Torah. That's the minimum. They are absolute requirements but they are absolutely the minimum.

And that's why Hashem is telling us at the very beginning, even before the Torah was given, that the people must learn the necessity to do more than the law requires of them. Because it's not what we thought, that *lifnim mishuras hadin* is a voluntary thing. Oh no! **אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשׂוּן** – That you must do them, **זוֹ לְפָנִים מִשׁוּרַת הַדִּין** – is talking about beyond the line of duty.

That's the introduction to Torah living: "Whatever you'll learn in the Torah" Hashem says, "don't be satisfied with fulfilling the barest requirements. Kabolas HaTorah means that I expect of My people to do beyond the line of duty."

Part II. Beyond the Laws

Let's Get Practical

Now, that's going to be our talk for tonight – Beyond the Line of Duty – but we need to explain what it means first, how to do it, because a lot of people get snagged on that. How do you fulfill *lifnim mishuras hadin*?

Of course, there are many ways. I want to note there's somebody here tonight who recently did something beyond the line of duty. One of our people was stranded in the big snowstorm and this man went out of his way in a remarkable demonstration of concern for a fellow Jew! Absolutely, we include that in *lifnim mishuras hadin*, in going beyond the duty for the sake of a

fellow Jew. But we're going to see now that there's an entirely different area of this subject that is not discussed enough. And we'll speak about a few examples in order to better understand the subject.

The Din of the Doorpost

In the Torah there's a requirement that on the doorway, every doorway of a Jewish house there must be a *mezuzah* – a parchment with two *parshiyos* of the Shema inscribed on it – and that's why in every home where they are loyal to the Torah, it's axiomatic that they will hang *mezuzos* on all the doorways. And sometimes you might spend a good deal of money buying a very *choshuv mehudar mezuzah* and maybe even an expensive case for the *mezuzah*. It's beautiful as it stands in the doorway.

And yet when a Jew puts up a *mezuzah*, even the most beautiful and expensive one, you have to know that this man is not fulfilling all that the Torah requires of him! The *din*, the minimum requirement, he's fulfilling, but actually he is falling short of the Torah! He's being disloyal to the Torah by not fulfilling beyond the line of the minimum. And we're going to see now what that means.

Shema Ideals

In the *parsha* of Shema we are taught some of the most important principles of Torah living. It speaks there about how we have to make Hashem our One interest, about loving Him and thinking about Him, about speaking words of Torah and giving our lives to Him. Other things too.

Now, about all these ideals the Torah says, **וְשַׂמְתָּם אֶת דְּבָרֵי אֵלֶּה** – you should put these words of Mine, **עַל לִבְבְּכֶם** – upon your hearts, **וְעַל נַפְשְׁכֶם** – upon your souls (Devarim 11:18); it means you should impress them upon your mind and character. And it tells you that one of the expedients of doing that is by putting a *mezuzah* on your doorway: **וּכְתַבְתֶּם עַל מְזוּזוֹת בֵּיתְךָ**. And so immediately we see that the *mezuzah* is given – not to be a door

decoration; it's for reminding, for thinking. In order to put these principles on our hearts and on our souls, we should put *mezuzahs* on our doorways.

Satisfying Hashem

Now, we understand of course that the Sanhedrin will not force you more than just to hang it up. As long as a man is willing to keep the laws of the Torah in its most minimal way, the Sanhedrin cannot step in and chastise or even criticize. After all, the Torah is dealing with a multitude. Not everybody has the same intelligence; not everybody is capable to the same degree. And so if the *beis din* will walk into your house and see *mezuzos* they won't bother you about anything more; they're satisfied with you keeping the *din*.

But Hashem is not satisfied! "Is that what I gave you the mitzvah for?" He says. "Just to put it on the door and forget about it? I gave you this mitzvah with a purpose of reminding you of the Torah principles. And if you're going to remain a person who functions at the lowest level and is satisfied with a mechanical observance, then certainly you are transgressing the purpose of My Torah. You're not fulfilling the requirement of *lifnim mishuras hadin* that I want from you."

The Mezuzah Program

Now we know people are human. We cannot expect people to be angels. But does that mean that you can pass in and out in and out, and each time without giving any thought at all to what the *mezuzah* is saying? And it's saying many things! So you'll sit back all your life, stuff your ears and do the bare minimum? No. The Torah obligates you to do more.

So make a program – I'm giving you homework now – open the *siddur* to Shema and look at the two *parshiyos* that we put in the *mezuzah* and make a plan, a list: "Each day when I pass the *mezuzah*, at least once I'll choose something to

think about." That's called living; that's called living according to the principles of the Torah. Less than that, Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, "I'm looking for more! Not only **אֶת הַמִּצְוָה** I want. I'm looking for **אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂהוּ**, that you go beyond the line of duty."

Beyond the Strings

Now, that's only one example. *Mezuzah* is a good example because it's so available and so underutilized but there are so many other opportunities. Here's a boy wearing *tzitzis*. So the *din*, the minimum, he's fulfilling. Very good!

But sometimes he knows as much about the purpose of *tzitzis* as a cow. Isn't that a pity? **וְזָכַרְתָּם** 'את כל מצוות ה' – It's a reminder, you should think about all the *mitzvos* (Bamidbar 15:39). But he doesn't even think once. And he grows up and becomes a big old ox wearing *tzitzis*. Isn't that a pity? How hard would it be to add a little thought? Every day he can choose one mitzvah to think about when he sees his *tzitzis* and to a certain extent he's already fulfilling beyond the line of duty. He's already a head taller.

And not only your own *tzitzis*; **שִׁירְשָׁנָה בְּרֹאֵיהָ אֶצֶל** **אֲחֵרִים** – *tzitzis* is also for everyone else, for the people around you who can see them (Menachos 43a). So here's a mother with a lot of little boys in the house. The *din*, the minimum, she fulfilled; she bought *tzitzis* for all her children and she reminds them in the morning to put them on. But the Torah demands more from her. The Torah wants us to utilize the *tzitzis*, to constantly see *tzitzis* and be reminded of Hakadosh Baruch Hu. **וְרֹאִיתֶם אוֹתוֹ** – And you should see Him! (Bamidbar 15:39). You should be reminded of Hashem when you see *tzitzis*.

That's how a person can begin getting greater and greater each time; by understanding that *tzitzis* is not a mechanical thing. And how great would be the effect upon the Jewish nation if once more they awoke and they began to understand the treasures that lie in *mitzvos*.

Beyond Kosher

I can't help myself so I'll say another one or two examples. Let's say, eating kosher. Which good Jew is not careful to eat only kosher foods? He's very careful with what goes into his mouth; he's concerned about the ingredients and only the best *hechsher* he'll rely on.

But he doesn't realize that he's satisfying himself with the minimum. Because you know what kosher means? It says openly in the Torah: **וְהִבְדַּלְתֶּם בֵּין הַבְּהֵמָה הַטְּהוֹרָה לַטְּמֵאָה** – *and you should separate between kosher and non-kosher ...*, **וְהִייתֶם כִּי קְדוֹשׁ אֲנִי** – *and you should be holy to Me*, **כִּי קְדוֹשׁ אֲנִי** – *because I am holy*, **וְאֶבְדַּל אֶתְכֶם מִן הָעַמִּים** – *and I separated you from the nations*, **לִי לְהִיּוֹת** – *to be Mine* (Vayikra 20: 25-26). That's said in the *parshah* of forbidden animals.

“You cannot eat these forbidden foods because I have separated you from the nations to be holy to Me.” *Kashrus*, that's our greatness; it's our mark of distinction.

Greatness at the Dinner Table

So imagine you're sitting down to eat at your kitchen table. And of course you're eating only kosher food. Excellent! We're proud of you! But remember, Hakadosh Baruch Hu is waiting for more – He's waiting for your mind! Because according to the principle of going beyond the minimum he should think, “I thank You Hashem that You gave me a privilege of being from the aristocratic nation, a nation that has a special royal diet. My wife didn't go to the salumeria, to the Italian delicatessen, to buy meat. She went only to the kosher butcher because we're an aristocratic family.”

And even if it's a small nosh so you're thinking, “These Lieber chocolates are a mark of loyalty, a sign of distinction from the nations of the world.” That's what the little kosher symbol means; it means a badge of royalty forever. And it means that every time you check for a *hechsher* or even

every time you eat – you can't do it every time, so you do it as much as you can – if you'll add this thought that it's a demonstration of your greatness, a reminder of your elevated status, that's called fulfilling the Torah **לְפָנֶימָה מִשְׁוֵרֵת הָרִין**.

Beyond Shabbos

One more example and then we'll move on to the second part of the subject. Here's a *frum* family, a big family of *shomrei Shabbos*. They fulfill everything. They're dressed for Shabbos, they make *kiddush* and eat all the Shabbos meals. And they would never think of *chillul Shabbos*. Even if they would find a pencil on the table, nobody would think of moving it. It's a tremendous thing, the achievement of such a holy family.

But compared to what they could do, it's only the minimum. Because what is Shabbos all about? Is it only about keeping all the *dinim* of Shabbos, of not doing *melachah* on Shabbos? Of course it's that too but still it's only the minimum. Isn't that a pity, week after week you should keep Shabbos but not fulfill what Shabbos is? Isn't it a pity to be a minimum Jew, a minimum family, when you can be so much more?

Remember the Creator

So what is the purpose of Shabbos? Shabbos means **יֵשׁ מֵאֵין הָעוֹלָם בְּרִיאַת הָעוֹלָם** *the world is made out of nothing*. It means other things too but number one, Shabbos wants you to think, “Hashem made the world with His Word and His Word continues to keep everything in existence.” Shabbos means other things too; we spoke at length about it once. It means **בִּינִי וּבִין בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל** and it means **עוֹלָם חֶסֶד יְבֻנָּה** too. There's a lot of *lifnim mishuras hadin* to fulfill on Shabbos.

But how many times did you think about that this past Shabbos? When you took the first bite of *challah*, were you thinking? Nothing? Isn't it a pity? It means to a great extent you're missing out on Shabbos. Of course you're keeping Shabbos with all its details. Excellent! But *lifnim mishuras hadin*

means that the purpose of Shabbos must be fulfilled.

A Nation of Idealists

So we begin to understand now, just with these few examples, the tragedy of a Jew who remains at the level of mechanical observance, of not utilizing the *mitzvos* for what they were given. He hangs a *mezuzah* and he keeps the *dinim* of Shabbos and *kashrus* and everything else. And we love him for that; he's a *ben Olam Haba*; absolutely! But he's not yet fulfilling the will of Hashem because *lifnim mishuras hadin* is actually part of the *mitzvah*. The *mitzvah* has a purpose that can be fulfilled only if you do beyond the mere line of duty.

And therefore right away, right before the Torah was given, Hakadosh Baruch Hu taught us this function of the Am Yisroel. Because it's not a minor thing to not go beyond the line of duty. The purpose of the Jewish people is to be a nation of idealists who live with a certain awareness of the mind! It means that the purpose of the Jewish people is to be a nation of *lifnim mishuras hadin* – a nation of not only *הַמַּעֲשֶׂה* but also of *אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂהוּ*.

Part III. Beyond Nature

A New Field

And now we come to another area of *lifnim mishuras hadin*, an entirely new field of going beyond the line of duty. Because there are two Torahs in the world. One of them, what we've been discussing till now, is the Torah we got at Har Sinai. And included in that Torah are all the *dinim* and also *lifnim mishuras hadin* – the obligation to forge ahead as much as possible beyond the line of duty, beyond the minimum, and use the Torah for its real purpose, for all the ideals that it teaches.

But there's another Torah, a Torah that many are not aware of, and that's the Torah of Creation. Because this world is a great academy, or better yet a great yeshivah of *emunah* and every one of us

is obligated to study as much as possible in this yeshivah. We're obligated to acquire more and more *emunah* by means of studying the world around us.

Now, I understand that most *frum* people today have the idea that it's all superfluous. They believe as some tell them, "All you need is *emunah peshutah*," which means just say "I believe" and it's not necessary to be convinced any more than that.

More Emunah, Nor Emunah

But the truth is that even if it's so; that you believe – I'm not convinced it's so, but even if it is, that's only the bare minimum. And what we're learning now is that the Jew doesn't live with the bare minimum. To be a believer, a non-atheist, that's nothing yet. You'd have to be a lunatic to be an atheist. There's nothing special about believing.

And therefore anyone who says "I have *emunah peshutah* and that's enough," what it means is that he is dodging his responsibility. He's fulfilling the minimum – a *beis din* can't require anymore than that – but absolutely he's dodging the responsibility of *lifnim mishuras hadin*. Because *emunah*, a real sensory perception of Hashem, that's something that is a never ending achievement. There's always more and more, higher and higher.

Details of Emunah

And that's the great importance of Creation. Because why did Hakadosh Baruch Hu make such a complicated world? *כָּל מַה שִּׁבְרָא הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לֹא בְרָאוֹ אֵלָּא בְּעוֹלָמוֹ – Every detail that He made, לְכַבוֹדוֹ – He made only for His honor* (Avos 6:11). Honor means that we recognize Him; in one word '*emunah*'.

You're hearing now a fundamental statement, an all-encompassing statement that is a key to the phenomena of the universe. Every object in the universe has one purpose – of course, they have various purposes, manifold purposes, but all of

them together have one common purpose and that is to bring us to more *emunah*, more awareness of Hashem.

So when you look at your hand, the purpose of the hand is more *emunah*. When you look at a tree, the purpose is more *emunah*. When you see an apple, a blade of grass, a cloud, anything, it has one main overall purpose – to make us *ma'aminim*.

You Are What You Eat

Every person you see on the street is for that purpose. Once he was a little seven pound baby. Now he's 180 pounds. So you're thinking, "Where did he come from?" You don't gain poundage by breathing air. It's from food. You came from the food that you eat.

Where did the food come from? From the soil. You know what soil is? It's a miracle material. You know, in one tablespoon of soil you have more living organisms than you have people in greater New York. And they're all functioning together to make food. It's an especial creation just for feeding us.

So let's say you're walking in the street tomorrow morning. While you're on the street stop for a moment and look at your neighbor's garden or that little spot of soil around the tree; and you're thinking about how complicated and miraculous the soil is. Stop and give it thirty seconds on the clock. "I'll become more of a *ma'amin* because of this soil." This causes things to grow and causes things to be used over again. Things fall on the soil, they rot away and become part of the soil again. Even a person, your body is put into the soil, your body rots and becomes part of the soil again. The soil is a miracle. It creates and recreates again and again.

And the whole earth is coated with this marvelous material that no other planet has. Mars doesn't have it. No planet has this. Today with a spectroscope they can see from a distance what's

on the planets. There's no soil on the planets. It's a miraculous material created especially for us.

Using Your Head

But why go to the soil? Go to the top of your head. How is it that the soil becomes food and then the food becomes hair? What does the hair come from? Do you eat hair? How can it happen that long hairs come out of the skin of the scalp or a long beard comes out of the skin of your face? It has to come from someplace.

It's a miracle! This (*the Rav touched his beard*) is food. It's bread. It's cheese, it's chicken; whatever you ate turned into hair. It sounds like a fable, a fairytale, but it's chemistry. You can't deny it. And so as you're holding your hand on your hair, realize for a moment that you're touching a testimony of Hakadosh Baruch Hu. And you're expected to utilize that to come to awareness of the One Who created it.

Hakadosh Baruch Hu, the great Designer, was able to put food into your mouth and change it into all the necessary elements that the body requires. The chicken you ate and the bread you ate became your ears and your lungs and your eyes and your skin. It becomes hair. And therefore, when we look around at each other, we see the *yad Hashem*. We see the חֵכְמָה שֶׁאֵין לוֹ קֵץ, a Wisdom that has no end.

Fruit of Faith

And now I want to conclude with one more example that we should especially think about at this time of the year. Because *Chamisha Asar b'Shvat* just passed today and it pays to ask, how could such a thing go by without a person growing in *emunah*? Now, I understand that some people ate some fruit and they made *brachos* too. Very good but to make a *bracha*, that's the bare bones minimum.

Why don't you put on your table a red apple and sit for a few minutes, at least, and look at it.

The apple is saying, “Look at me! I’m a demonstration of Hashem’s wisdom and kindness!” Can such a thing ever be manufactured by human beings? Such a luscious package of food! It’s a drink too! And it’s cunningly put together in cells so that when you slit the apple, the juice doesn’t spill out; the juice is imprisoned in thousands of little cells.

And inside, it’s so wonderfully sugary. It’s delicious. Not too sweet and not too sour! The enjoyment in the apple is exactly suited to you, exactly suited to your taste buds. And when you finish eating the delicious content of the fruits, inside there is a coupon that entitles you to another package; the seeds. It’s like eating a box of cereal and when you get down to the bottom of the box, there’s a coupon there entitling you to another free box.

Apple Brains

So you have to ask a question: Let’s open up the tree and look for its brains. How did it create such a thing? Where is all this wisdom at? Where is it stored? Where is the wisdom that the tree possesses to create delicious fruit and seeds that are smarter than the biggest computers? In which region? Is it in the bark? Is it in the pit? Where is the wisdom of the tree?

The answer is, the tree is nothing at all. There is a Divine Wisdom that has planned everything and knows everything. That’s what an apple seed says. An apple seed says, “Look at my Creator! רֵא וְיֵצֵא אֵלַי – Look at Who created me!” That’s why I recommend studying the apple seed. I do it. I keep apple seeds in my pocket, and when I’m walking down the street I take them out sometimes to look at them. I marvel at them. People write to me that I should send them some of my seeds. I go to the post office and I mail my seeds to people. Apple seeds are *nissei nissim*!

Now, I only gave a few examples, just to understand the subject. But it’s important to listen to these examples and make up your mind that

you’re going to dedicate your career to learning to be a *ma’amin*. Because there’s no end to how much you could accomplish in your life, how great you can become in the subject of *emunah* when you act in the way of *lifnim meshuras hadin*, by using the things that Hakadosh Baruch Hu provided in nature especially for that purpose.

Energized Avodah

Now, before we conclude I want to make one more point. We have to understand that just by talking about this subject tonight, just because you came here to listen, that’s not enough. To be a *lifnim mishuras hadin* person requires a certain energy, a commitment to want to be better; a desire to be a head taller than the ones around you.

That’s why when we analyze the grammar of the verse we’re talking about you’ll note that word יַעֲשׂוּ – the word that teaches the principle of *lifnim mishuras hadin* – has a *nun* at the end that it doesn’t really need. It could have said יַעֲשׂוּ אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשׂוּ – that they will do. The *nun* at the end, *yaasun*, is for emphasis. It means ‘you have to do with a certain extra energy to go beyond the line of duty.’ That’s what Hashem asked of the Jewish nation before Matan Torah: “I want you to go all out for My Torah!”

An Energetic Acceptance

And the Am Yisroel responded in kind. You remember when the Torah was given, Hakadosh Baruch Hu sent Moshe Rabbeinu to ask them. “Are you willing? Do you want to accept the Torah?”

And we know what the response was: נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע – We will do and we will listen.” ‘Listen’ means we’re going to listen and get as much knowledge as we can. So two things: We will do and we will listen to all of the details in order to fulfill it the way You want from us.”

But did they say, “Yes, we’ll accept” as polite people do? Let’s say you’re in court and they ask

you a question, so you say, “Yes, sir. Yes, your honor.” You don’t give a thunderous yes. You don’t shout with all your energy, “Yes!” But the Bnei Yisroel, they went all out. They said such a yes that some of them fainted from expression of energy. It was a remarkable demonstration of willingness, of enthusiasm. And that was already a demonstration of going beyond the line of the *din* because the minimum didn’t require that you have to shout it with such enthusiasm.

But it happened that way because that’s the way of the Am Hashem. When the Torah was given, right away it started out with the idea of more than what was required. And that’s what we try to live up to. *Naaseh v’nishma* means that we want to succeed in this world by doing more than the minimum. We are a nation of אֶת הַמַּעֲשֶׂה – doing everything that’s required of us, and אֲשֶׁר יִעֲשֶׂה – being energized to do even more than required.

Have a Wonderful Shabbos

Let’s Get Practical

Going Above and Beyond

The Rov mentioned several practical exercises in his talk about going beyond the line of duty. Considering the ideals taught by *mezuzah*, *tzitzis*, *kashrus*, *Shabbos*. Growing in Emunah by dedicating time to meditating on the greatness of Hashem’s creations etc. As I read through this booklet, one of those resonated with me. This week, I will *bli neder* take some time each day to do that thing and thus demonstrate my desire to go above and beyond in fulfilling the *ratzon* Hashem.

This week’s booklet is based on tapes:

123 – Torah of Heart | **201** – The Battle and the Weapons
449 – Hashem’s Two Testimonials | **740** – Holiness in Marriage
997 – The Best Survive

Q&A

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QUESTION

What is your opinion about a *frum* man who takes very little part in helping his wife and his children in the kitchen and so on?

ANSWER

And the answer is, it depends on the circumstances. Sometimes a man works very hard for *parnassah* and he has to take a lot of ill treatment from his boss or from competitors or from customers. Sometimes a man comes home so broken that the house is like a hospital for him. And therefore, he deserves a lot of consideration.

However, if it's a man who has a comparatively easy life and he comes home in good condition, there's no reason why he shouldn't help out a little bit. There should certainly be some token assistance, especially if the wife wants it.

Now, some women don't want the husband to putter around in the kitchen. They tell him to keep out of it. He's a lucky man. But even then, he should make some motions as if he's trying to help out until she tells him to go out.

But there's no question at all everybody should feel it's his duty to help carry the burden of the house.

June 1983

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