

TORAS AVIGDOR

AUTHENTIC TORAH THOUGHT FOR LIFE

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"L

PARSHAS VAYIKRA

WITH

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"L

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

COMING CLOSE TO HASHEM

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Part I. Close to Him

The Sprinkler System

We begin with a *possuk* in our *sedrah*, וְהִקְרִיבוּ בְנֵי אֹהֶרֶן הַכֹּהֲנִים אֶת הַדָּם וְזָרְקוּ אֶת הַדָּם עַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ סָבִיב – and the *kohanim* should bring the blood to the *mizbeach* and sprinkle it on its corners (Vayikra 1:5). When a *korban* was brought, the *kohen* would catch the blood in a basin and sprinkle it on the *mizbeach*. But the *possuk* is telling us that before the actual sprinkling of the blood, there was another *avodah* that had to be performed: וְהִקְרִיבוּ – The *kohanim* should bring the blood. In Gemara parlance it's called 'holacha, walking' and it means that there was a special procedure of walking towards the *mizbeach* in order to sprinkle the blood.

And it was an essential part of the *avodah*; in most cases if it wasn't done the entire *korban* would be rendered *possul* and unacceptable. Even if they would find a solution to avoid the walking – imagine they make an assembly line and a line of *kohanim* are standing from the place where the blood was caught all the way to the *mizbeach*, and they're handing it one to the other until the last *kohen*

who's standing near the *mizbeach* sprinkles the blood; it's no good. Even though the sprinkling is done it's not a kosher *korban* because it omits *holacha* – it lacks the procedure of walking towards the altar and the essential lesson that *holacha* is coming to teach us.

The Walking Program

And what is that lesson? The Torah wants to emphasize here the procedure for coming close to Hashem. Because what is a *korban* after all? It's a declaration of a person's desire *lehiskarev* – to come close to his Creator and to gain His favor. And whatever we learn therefore in the Torah regarding the procedure of bringing a *korban*, we have to know that it's also teaching us about coming close to Hashem. And so, if the Torah tells us that *holacha* is essential, it's teaching us that if you want to come close to Hashem, if you want to achieve *kirvas Elokim*, then *holacha*, physical movement, is indispensable.

Now, we understand of course that included in *kirvas Elokim* is the great career of the mind – thinking as much as possible about Hakadosh Baruch Hu. Absolutely, we're expected to be close to Hashem intellectually. If you're learning Torah,

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you're utilizing your mind to come close to Him. When you're thinking *inyanei emunah*, that's *kirvas Elokim*. All the great emotions of *yiras Hashem* and *ahavas Hashem*, *bitachon* and everything else, that's a greatness of mind! That certainly is called *kirvas Hashem*!

But Hakadosh Baruch Hu desires more than that. The *avodah* of *holacha*, of walking towards the *mizbeach*, is intended to teach us, among other things, that He wants you to come close to Him physically. The great lesson of *וְהִקְרִיבוּ* is that in order to achieve *kirvas Elokim* you have to bring your *body* close to Hashem. And it's an idea that is very frequently reiterated in the *nevi'im* and in the *dinim* of the Torah.

Pesach in Yerushalayim

That's why when there was a Beis Hamikdash it was a mitzvah to be *oleh regel* three times a year. *יְרָאָה כָּל זְבוּרָךְ, שְׁלוֹשׁ פְּעָמִים בַּשָּׁנָה* – *Three times a year, you should show yourself before Hashem your G-d* (Devarim 16:16). In ancient times nobody went to Florida for Pesach, to glatt kosher Pesach hotels. Nobody would dare cheapen Pesach with such commercialism. Where did they go? Only to Yerushalayim. And they didn't travel on airplanes either! No; they all *walked* to Yerushalayim!

Oh, you're walking up towards Hashem? You're not just sitting in your house and thinking about Hashem? You're walking to His house; you're using your feet to come close to Him. It's a tremendous thing!

That's what it says *וּבָאוּ לְפָנָיו וְשָׂאוּ מִנְחָה* – *Raise up a gift, a korban, and come before Hashem* (Divrei Hayomim I, 16:29). It means you shouldn't just send a *korban*. You know, you could do that too; you could appoint a *shaliach* to bring a *korban* for you. After all, why should you make such a long trip to bring a *korban*? You might think that there are better ways to spend your time in His service. "I have to waste all that time traveling? I'll send it

with a messenger service and I'll sit in my house all day long meditating about the *chasdei Hashem*."

So Hashem says, "No, that's not enough. *וּבָאוּ לְפָנָיו* – *Bring your bodies to Me*." It's not enough that they should make *minyanim* in their *kibbutzim* and their farms wherever they live. No. They have to forsake their homesteads and they have to travel to Yerushalayim. That's the importance of coming physically close to Hashem.

Admiring Their Feet

And so, three times a year the whole nation packed their bags, put on their walking shoes, and hit the road. And now there were great crowds of people traveling on the roads. It was an inspiring sight to see the Am Yisroel marching up to Hashem! And as they passed different villages more and more people came to join them. And they were all singing – they were walking and singing *shir hamaalos*. It was a *holacha* to the *mizbeach* of the greatest magnitude! And when they finally arrived in Yerushalayim, they all sang together: *עֲמֹדוֹת הָיוּ רַגְלֵינוּ בְּשַׁעְרֵיךָ יְרוּשָׁלַם* – "We're here! We made it! We walked miles to see You and now we're standing in Yerushalayim" (Tehillim 122:2).

Now, how does Hakadosh Baruch Hu look at that scene? So the Gemara (Chagiga 3a) tells us what He's thinking. He's speaking about the Am Yisroel and He says, *מַה יָּפוּ פְּעָמֶיךָ בְּנַעֲלִים בַּת נָרִיב* – *How beautiful are your feet adorned in shoes* (Shir Hashirim 7:2). You hear that? Of all things, Hashem is praising our feet and shoes?

You have to understand that in those days not everybody wore shoes; when you had to take a long journey, you made sure to put on shoes. And so when the Am Yisroel made their trek to the Beis Hamikdash, Hashem looked at their feet and He said, *כִּמֹּה נָאִין רַגְלֵיהֶם שָׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל* – *How beautiful are My people who put on shoes and walk towards Me*."

The Am Yisroel is walking on the roads *and Hakadosh Baruch Hu is admiring their feet*. Now, He admires their minds too. If, while you're walking

you're thinking about Him, very good. If you're thinking over the *sugyahs* of Rav Chaim Brisker, excellent! Hashem loves you for that. But even if you're not thinking at all – the mere fact that your feet are moving towards Him, that's already especially beautiful in the eyes of Hakadosh Baruch Hu. To walk to Yerushalayim, the *ir Hashem*, and to climb the mountain to the top of *Har Habayis* where the House of Hashem is, that's already a very big achievement.

Visiting the Mikdash

Now, we don't have exactly that today – we look forward to that great day when we'll be privileged once again to visit Hashem in His home in Yerushalayim but we're still waiting. But we should listen to Dovid Hamelech because he gives us an example of physically bringing ourselves close to Hashem that we try to make use of even today. אַחַת שְׁאַלְתִּי מֵאֵת הַשֵּׁם – “There's only one thing I ask from You Hashem,” said Dovid. One thing! You hear that? A man has so many things he has to ask of Hashem – so many things that you want and you need. But Dovid says, there's one thing that's most important to me and אֹתָהּ אֶבְקֶשׁ – *that what I'm busy seeking always*. And what is that? שְׁבַתִּי בְּבֵית הַשֵּׁם כָּל יְמֵי חַיִּי – *I should sit in the House of Hashem all the days of my life* (Tehillim 27:4).

So here's a man who is a busy personality. Let's say he's a famous surgeon or maybe a great industrialist. He's a successful man who spends a lot of time in his office. So now, when he comes home in the evening he deserves a good rest. He wants to sit on the couch with his legs up on a chair – why not; he had a long day. But he reminds himself of the words of Dovid Hamelech and he picks up his weary body and goes straight to the house he loves most; to the house of his Best Friend to sit there as long as he can.

The Wife's Part

And his wife understands that; she says, “When you go there, take me along with you. I can't go in

body but I'm there in spirit.” Sometimes she has to urge him too; it's more comfortable sometimes to keep his legs at rest. But she says, “Hurry up, you might miss *Maariv*.” And so he takes the hint and gains an alacrity. He walks to the synagogue! And he sits there too! That's *kirvas Elokim*! And she has a 100% share. She goes together with him even though she's busy at home.

Now, the truth is he can't do it always – he has to make a living too. And even if you don't go to work; let's say you're sitting in the shul all day long, but sometimes the *shamash* says, “Sorry, sir. We have to lock up; you have to leave.” But that has to be an ambition. “If only I could sit in the *Beis Hashem* all the days of my life.” To be close to Hashem physically, that's what Dovid desired. That's why he said, “Of all the things I desire, the one I really want is *shivti b'veis Hashem* – I wish I could sit in the House of Hashem, *kol yemei chayay* – all the days of my life.”

The Avodah of Sitting

So you might think it means to go into the shul or the *beis medrash* and to open up the Gemara or the Tehillim and to get to work. That's what the shul is for after all. No; Dovid didn't say that; He said, “The one thing I want is *shivti*! I want to sit in the House of Hashem.” Of course, once you're sitting you might as well accomplish something too; but even if you don't, just walking up the steps, bringing your body into the shul and sitting, that alone is an accomplishment.

I'll prove it to you. Let's say right after the *tefillah* you realize you forgot your coat in the shul. You're in a hurry; you have to catch the train so you want to rush back in to get your coat. Oh no! You can't do that! You'll walk into the house of Hashem just for your own purpose?! You have no business coming in here just for your coat. And so you're stuck now outside the shul.

So the Gemara gives you an *eitzah*. It tells you that when you walk into the shul, the first thing is

you have to sit down. Sit down for a minute in the *mikdash me'at*. It's a *halacha* – you have to sit down for a little bit and then you can take your coat. And the Rambam (Tefillah 11:9) explains that 'sitting down in the *beis haknesses* is a *mitzvah* on its own, as the *posuk* states *אֲשֶׁרֵי יוֹשְׁבֵי בֵיתְךָ* – How fortunate are those who sit in Your house'.

Grabbing Opportunities

Now, if we hadn't learned this *halacha*, it could be we would have thought that *ashrei yoshvei beisecha* means you're sitting and learning Torah; or maybe you're *oisek b'tefillah*. No. *Yoshvei!* Just put your body down on the chair for a moment, that's *shivti b'veis Hashem*. Imagine a man comes to the *beis haknesses* and he does nothing – he just sits down there. Not because he wants to find some refuge from the hot sun or because it's too cold outside – no, that you're forbidden to do; it's *ossur* to utilize the *beis haknesses* for a material purpose. But if you're going in to sit down, that's wonderful!

Yes; just for the *mitzvah* of sitting, it pays to come into the *beis haknesses*. Isn't that a good idea? You pass by a *beis haknesses* or a *yeshiva* and you don't need it; you weren't planning on going inside. But you walk in and sit down just for the *mitzvah* of sitting there. It's a good idea to try it some time. Let's say you're riding in the car and you're passing a *beis haknesses* or a *yeshiva*. It's an opportunity to practice up on walking closer to Hashem. Stop, walk in, sit down for a minute and think, "I'm doing this for a purpose." And what's the purpose? The purpose is to physically come close to Hashem.

Simple Solutions

Of course, you want your mind to also become close, but that's not so easy. But that your body should come close is much more simple to accomplish, so you should grab the opportunity. Sit there for a minute and think about that – "I'm sitting here now in the *beis haknesses* because I'm doing what I can to be physically close to Hashem."

If nobody's listening say "Baruch Hashem, I was *zocheh* to walk in!"

You think it's silly? It's the unsilliest thing in the world! Because we're learning now that walking into the House of Hashem and sitting there, that's already a fulfillment of the great ideal of *kirvas Elokim*. As close as you can get to the *Shechina* with your body, that's already a perfection of the *neshama*.

Part II. Close to Close Ones

Clinging to Chachomim

Now, among the many opportunities to come physically close to Hashem is the *mitzvah* to cling to *talmidei chachomim*. Because on the words *וְבו תִדְבֶק* – and to Hashem you should cling, the Gemara asks *וְכִי אֶפְשָׁר לְדַבֵּק בְּשִׁכְיָהּ* – is such a thing possible, to cling to the *Shechina*? After all, cling means to physically cling. Of course, as I said before, there's a great deal to be said on the *mitzvah* of *וְבו תִדְבֶק* in an intellectual sense but there's no question it includes also physical proximity and closeness to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. How is that possible?

So the Gemara says, *אֵלָא הֲדַבֵּק בְּחַכְמִים* – the way to achieve that is by clinging to the *chachomim*. If you go to the *chachomim* you'll find that Hashem is there, by them.

I'll explain that. You remember when Shaul Hamelech returned from his victorious battle against the Amaleki in the days of Shmuel Hanavi, so Shmuel chided him, *וּמָה קוֹל הַצֹּאן הַזֶּה בְּאָזְנִי* – "What's this sound of sheep that I hear in my ears." It means, "Instead of destroying all of Amalek's livestock like you were commanded, you brought back the sheep alive?!"

So Shaul excused himself. He said, "I did it only *כִּי לְמַעַן זְבַחַ לְהַשִּׁם אֶלְקֵיךָ* – in order to be *makriv* them as *korbanos* to Hashem, your G-d" (Shmuel I, 15:14).

So the Kuzari (4:3) asks a *kasheh*. He says, "Why does it mean your Hashem? Isn't it Shaul's Hashem

too? Shaul was a *frum* Jew! Shaul was a *ben Torah* and an *anav*; a very big *tzaddik*. I'm not just saying this on my own – Chazal say all these things about Shaul Hamelech. So what does it mean, “Hashem your G-d”? He should have said, *למען זבוח להשם אלקינו*, – “We want to bring them to Hashem *our* G-d.”

Connect to the Shechina

And so the Kuzari explains, certainly it's everybody's Hashem, but Hakadosh Baruch Hu chooses to rest His Presence on those people who are closest to Him. The *navi* is a man of greater perfection because of his achievements in *nevuah*. And so, when Shaul spoke to Shmuel Hanavi he said, “your G-d,” because he was saying, “Hashem is resting His Presence on you more than me! You have an excellence, a *shleimus* of character, and that makes the Shechina rest on you even more than upon me.”

So you'll say, “The Shechina? That's only a *mashal*. The Shechina actually rests on him?!”

And we say yes! Yes and yes! We're learning now that the Shechina *actually* rests on the *chachmei haTorah*. And that's why when you bring yourself close to *talmidei chachomim*, to those upon whom the Shechina rests most intensely, so in a sense it's considered like you're bringing yourself close to Hashem.

That's why the Rambam (Deios 6:3) says that we should all strive as much as possible to be close to the *chachomim* *בְּכָל מִינֵי חִבּוּר* – *with all forms of closeness*. To walk with them, to eat together with them, to do business with them. As much as possible, in whatever way you can imagine, to be *physically* close to them, and to thereby be close to Hashem.

Introducing the Prophet

And that's why we have a principle called *shimusha shel Torah* – to be *meshamesh*, to serve *talmidei chachomim*. That's why, when the Sefer Melachim (II 3:11) wants to introduce Elisha Hanavi

and tell us who he is, what his *yichus* is, so it says, *פֹּה אֵלִישָׁע בֶּן שָׁפָט – Here is Elisha Hanavi, אֲשֶׁר יָצַק מֵיִם עַל יְדֵי אֱלִיָּהוּ – who used to pour water on Eliyahu's hands.*

Now, some say it's only a *mashal* – they go off into fanciful explanations; they want to say that *shimush* means learning more deeply – that it means he was a *talmid* of Eliyahu and that he learnt intensely with Eliyahu, but that's not the truth. The Gemara (Berachos 7b) explains: *לְמַד לֹא נֶאֱמַר – It doesn't say he learned from him, אֲלָא יָצַק – it says only that he poured water over his hands.* It means that he was present when Eliyahu had to wash his hands, so Elisha took the can of water and poured it on his *rebbe's* hands. And that's our introduction to Elisha – he was the one who washed his *rebbe's* hands.

The Wrong Introduction

Now, that's a stunning statement – it's almost not understandable at all. Because it could have said, “Here is Elisha who learned from Eliyahu Hanavi the methods of achieving *nevuah*.” Eliyahu was the one who trained Elisha to be a *navi*. Eliyahu had a school of *bnei hanevi'im* and he brought up Elisha in the *darkei hanevuah* – he taught him everything. But no, that's not mentioned at all. All the secrets of the Torah, all the *darkei Hashem*, everything else that was taught in that great academy of *nevuah*, nothing is mentioned of that. The only thing that deserves mention is that Elisha poured water on the hands of Eliyahu Hanavi!

So the Gemara tells us that we see from here that, *גְּדוּלָה שְׂמוּשָׁה שֶׁל תּוֹרָה יוֹתֵר מִלְמוּדָה – serving the one who teaches Torah is even greater than learning Torah from him.* And why is that? Because washing hands is a physical closeness! The physical closeness to Eliyahu, to a man upon whom the Shechina rested in greatest proportion, was such a great merit that it's like being close to Hashem *even more than the closeness by learning the Torah*. In a certain sense it's even more important than

learning. Believe me coming to visit a live Chafetz Chaim is better than reading the sefer Chafetz Chaim.

Associate With the Greats

And that means we should never disdain the opportunity to be physically close to the *gedolei Yisroel* and to the *talmidei chachomim* of our generation; to associate with them as much as possible. Many benefits can be gained if a person makes it a career of his to be *meshamesh talmidei chachomim* and it should be considered a very great privilege because it's a form of achieving physical closeness to Hashem.

Of course, it could be these *talmidei chachomim* are busy; could be that when you seek their company they'll push you away. But that's your job anyhow, to do whatever you can to bring yourself close. You shouldn't worry about becoming an encumbrance. Let them tell you, "Get away from here." Meanwhile you try your best to get close to them.

Arguing With the Satmerer

Let's say the Satmarer Rav; he's a very fine man by the way. I know him personally – a very fine man. But he's a busy man; he's learning all the time, and people come to him all the time with *sheilos* too. But suppose you go to him and you say, "I heard Rabbi Miller speak so I want to get close to you."

But he says, "I don't have much time."

So you'll say, "Can I at least carry your *tallis* to your *beis hamedrash* for you?"

So the Satmarer Rav says, "I don't need it. I carry it myself."

So you beg him, "Please *rebbe*, do me a favor. Let me carry your *tallis*." He's not going to spend time arguing with you in the street, so he relents. So you're walking behind him carrying his *tallis* – you're not talking to him; you're just walking close to him. You have to know that you're accomplishing

a great achievement for yourself. I'm not a *chossid* but I'm telling you, if you'll get that privilege to carry his *tallis*, you're now becoming closer to Hakadosh Baruch Hu; no question about it.

Grab the Opportunities

Now, I picked just one person. But it applies to all of the *roshei yeshivah*; get close to them. They don't have time to talk to you, but if you become useful to them in some way, you're *meshamesh talmidei chachomim*, hang around, after a while, maybe you'll be *zocheh*. And *baruch Hashem* we have them today – not as many as we had twenty years ago, not as many as forty years ago, but still we do have them. Only that most people don't understand how important it is to get physically close to them.

Even when we had really great men, only a few people came to them. When Rav Aharon Kotler, *zichrono livracha*, was alive, how many Jews, *baalei batim* or even *bnei Torah* came to see him personally? He was a busy man, no question, but why didn't you come to see him? Just to walk to his house or to his *beis medrash*; even if you wouldn't speak to him, just the walking meant that you were walking towards the *mizbeach*.

Now, if you could find a way to speak a few words with him, even better. To ask him for advice, a *derech* in life? Absolutely! A few words from a great man would set you straight if you would be willing to listen. But even if you didn't speak to him, just to be close to him is already a perfection of the *neshama*. And when Rav Aharon passed away, the generation lost that opportunity forever.

The Basement in Monsey

When Rav Moshe Feinstein was alive, it was a pleasure to talk to him. When Rav Yankev Kaminetzky was still alive, he was a *baal yoeitz*. You could talk to him. He would give advice. But even if you didn't speak to him, just to be there. And still, how many people bothered to come? Rav Yankev Kaminetzky used to say a *shiur* on Chumash in

Monsey. He had a little basement where he said his Chumash *shiur*. Rav Yankev Kaminetzky talking on Chumash! Who shouldn't come?! It should be packed! It wasn't packed. There was plenty of room left over.

And even in our generation if you'll find *tzaddikim* – there are plenty of *tzaddikim* in this day too – and you get close to them, you must realize that the merit of coming close to the Shechina is being achieved and it's one of the big successes in life.

That's why it says – Pesach is coming and among all of the other obligations **חַיֵּב אָדָם לְהִקְבִּיל פָּנָיו בְּרֵגְלֵי רֵבּוֹ בְּרֵגְלֵי רֵבּוֹ** – it's a *chiyuv* to visit your *rebbe* on *yom tov* (Rosh Hashanah 16b).

Now, it's true that the mitzvah of physical proximity to the Shechina requires that **לְעוֹלָם יָדוּר אָדָם בְּמִקְוָם רֵבּוֹ** – a man should always live in the same place where his *rebbe* is (Brachos 8a); but on *yom tov* you're obligated to pick up your feet and go even closer, to go and visit him. Don't come here by the way. You have to find yourself a real *rebbe* and visit him.

Substituting for Aliyas Regel

Why on *yom tov*? The answer is you should visit him all the time, but during the year you're busy working. On *yom tov*, you're off from work. So if you're not working, what should you be doing? Go to the amusement parks? Visit the zoo? You can do that too, but that's not what *yom tov* is for. Those days off are intended to be an opportunity to bring yourself close to Hashem! And if we don't have the Beis Hamikdash to go to, to be physically close to the Shechina that way, we can go to *chachomim*.

Certainly you might hear good things from him too, but even if you don't, even if you come and you fall asleep at his table, but if you went to your *rebbe* on *yom tov*, you already came close to the one who has the Shechina resting on him, to the one about whom you can say “Hashem *Elokecha* – it's your Hashem”. And so for the nation that wants *kirvas*

Elokim, physical proximity to the *chachomim* is in itself a very big achievement because it's considered getting closer to Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

Part III. Close to Jews

Favored Nation Status

Now, once we understand the importance of this principle of being physically close to Hashem, there's another part of the subject that shouldn't be overlooked. Because if to be *daveik b'Hashem* means to come close to any place that's favored by Hashem's Presence, it opens up for an entirely new panorama of perfection available to us. And it's available right here in Flatbush – especially in Flatbush.

I'll explain that. The Gemara tells us in Mesichta Brachos (7a) that among Moshe Rabbeinu's requests of Hakadosh Baruch Hu after He forgave them for the sin of the *eigel* was, **בְּקִשׁ שְׁתַּשְׂרָה שְׂכִינָה עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל** – he asked Hashem that always and forever the Shechina should reside among the Bnei Yisroel.

Now, that's not a simple matter to explain exactly what it means, but whatever it was, it means that Hakadosh Baruch Hu's Presence should be especially among us. And only us; because Moshe's second request was, **בְּקִשׁ שְׁלֹא תִשְׂרָה שְׂכִינָה עַל אֲמוֹת** – that the Shechina should not rest on any other nation. And so when Hakadosh Baruch Hu granted Moshe those requests, it meant that forever and ever, if you're going to seek out closeness to Hashem, you'll find it among the Jewish people.

Favored Places

Now, you have to know that it depends on numbers. When Hashem comes to rest on Am Yisroel a special kind of Shechina rests on big numbers. Everybody knows that when ten Jews come together, **כָּל בֵּי עֶשְׂרֵה שְׂכִינָתָא שְׂרִיא** – Hashem loves that and He comes to be present (Sanhedrin 39a). The Shechina is there and therefore, **וְנִקְרָא שְׂתִי**

בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל – you can say *kedusha* and do other certain things in honor of His Presence.

And when there are more Jews, there's more Shechina. It means He's more present. אֵין הֶשְׁכִּינָה – שׁוֹרָה עַל פְּחוֹת מְשַׁנֵּי אֲלָפִים וּשְׁנַי רִבּוּוֹת בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל – When there are twenty two thousand Jews together, it's a different kind, a more intense kind of Shechina (Yevamos 64a). And so each additional person is an especial addition of Hashem's Presence. A very important addition! We owe, by the way, a great debt of gratitude to the mothers and fathers of big families just because of that. They're bringing the Shechina down more and more.

Location, Location, Location

Now, I read in the newspapers an article that Flatbush is full of Orthodox Jews now and it's bursting at the seams. That's what the newspapers say. The Syrians brought thousands of Syrian Jews here. We're jammed with Russian Jews. A lot of Israelis too. Not only *frum* Jews, other Jews too, but let's hope they'll all become *frum*. The streets are crowded with white people, baruch Hashem. It's a pleasure. White people are a great pleasure, but white *frum* Jews are even a greater pleasure because it means that we're living close to Hashem.

And so let's say there's a man in Scarsdale who hears this tape – we have people in Scarsdale too – and he wants to come close to Hashem. Imagine such a person, he's hearing now these words that to come close to Hashem means to physically come close. So he should think, “What's the best place to cling to Hashem? Scarsdale or Flatbush?”

Of course, I personally say that the very best place – and I'm not partial – is Williamsburg. Because Williamsburg is crowded with what's closest to the European, original type of *frum* Jew. But we're not going to ask this Scarsdale man to move to Williamsburg; that's too much. And his wife surely won't agree. But at least come to the Shechina in Flatbush!

Sacrifice for Flatbush

“Oh,” he says, “but we have a *yeshiva ketana* in our town. We have a *kosher* butcher and a *shomer Shabbos* grocery. We're very happy. We're building up a Jewish community in our town.”

Maybe it's true. I'm sure some people are doing good things. But I'm also sure that you're missing out on the greatness of being physically close to the Shechina. That's *pshuto shel mikra* of the mitzvah of *dveikus*; וְבוֹ תִדְבֶּק means you should cling to Hashem physically. And to be *mekayem* that mitzvah, no question that a place crowded with Jews is a much better place. It pays even to change your livelihood, your *parnassah* if necessary. A neighborhood like that is worth any money in the world because you're close to the Shechina. Of course, not always is it feasible but if possible, everything should be done to be in a place of more Shechina.

Rav Miller's Kol Korei

If I was anyone of importance I would say that we should issue a *kol korei* from some headquarters – let's say Agudas HaRabbanim or some other rabbinical headquarters – a public proclamation for all Jews to move back to Brooklyn. “Come back to the *frum* neighborhoods of Boro Park and Flatbush.” I would say Monsey also.

In the course of time everybody will have children and children's children. They'd buy houses and all the others living here would have to move out. Because why should a gentile live in a house that cost \$400,000 dollars in Brooklyn – that's what the Jews are offering – when they could live much more cheaply in Maspeth? And so they'll move out. But the Jews? The Jews will all move back – closer to Hashem.

Now, it's not enough however just to live in a place crowded with Jews. It's very good because on all sides you see Jews who are practicing Judaism and doing it openly. People are raising families; all *frum*, all with *yarmulkes*, all with *tzitzis* hanging

out. You see women pushing baby carriages – there are two babies in the carriage and four more holding onto the sides of the carriage.

As you walk in the street, houses and houses, blocks and blocks of *shomrei Torah*. You see signs everywhere, *glatt kosher*. You see *yoshon* signs now; many stores outside, *yoshon* signs. *Shomer Shabbos* cosmetics advertised in the drugstore. Wherever you go, if you see signs that the Orthodox population, the *frum* population is increasing, *baruch Hashem*. It's a happiness for us.

Appreciate the Shechina

But it's not enough if you're not appreciating the *kirvas Elokim*. This is the place to be! That's how you think. But not because of the kosher cosmetics or the kosher pizza stores. That's good too but what we're most interested in is we want to be with Hakadosh Baruch Hu. And when you have more Jews present, Hakadosh Baruch Hu is absolutely concentrating His Shechina more and more.

And so being here is called *kirvas Elokim* – to be close to Hashem physically! Just to be there, to walk in Flatbush is a fulfillment of the *mitzvah* to come close! When you walk down the streets of Williamsburg where *frum* Jews live, streets of Boro Park where *frum* Jews live, you walk on certain blocks in Crown Heights, you should feel a great happiness of *kirvas Elokim*. Have in mind you're close to Hashem, physically. It's true either way but the more you think about it the bigger effect it has on you.

Blocks and blocks of big *mezuzas*! Big families! It's a happiness! This is the place to be! Not only because you don't have to worry about a hold up, about someone pulling a knife out of his sock to take your money. It's a happiness because here is where the Shechina is! *קִרְבַּת אֱלֹקִים לִי טוֹב* – *To be close physically to Elokim, that's the best good for me* (Tehillim 73:28).

Out of Town Shechina

Now today, *baruch Hashem*, it's not only in Flatbush. I read an article, a clipping, from a certain newspaper whose name I don't want to mention at all, and it was telling that in Miami they're noticing that young Orthodox Jews are increasing and multiplying. The reporter was describing a visit to a pizza shop, a kosher pizza shop and he ordered a piece of pizza; he wrote there that he had to wait thirty minutes before he was served because it was jammed with people.

And the rabbi told the reporter, "Once upon a time, this community was dying out, but now it's vibrant. It's growing. Young Orthodox people are filling up the place."

There are other fine places too. Baltimore, Philadelphia, even Passaic, wherever you go today, *kehillos* are growing up. Toronto is full of *frum* Jews; Orthodox Jews increasing. *Baruch Hashem*, they're spreading everywhere.

The Great Replacement Theory

Now, our enemies are unhappy about it – you have to know that. *Baruch Hashem*, they are very unhappy. But we are happy about that too. Like David Hamelech said, *לְמַעַן שׁוֹרְרִי* – *for the sake of my enemies who look at me* (Tehillim 5:9). Let my enemies look and *הִקְהָה אֶת שִׁנְיָהֶם* – let them gnash their teeth. Let their teeth fall out. The more we grow the more they'll have to gnash.

Of course, it's not enough yet. We want the whole America to be jammed with *frum* Jews because the more they increase, the more Hakadosh Baruch Hu increases His Shechina. And that means that we can live lives of greater achievement, greater perfection, by being physically close to Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

Living for Closeness

And that's what we live for, for *kirvas Elokim*. Like our teacher, the Mesillas Yesharim says in his introduction: *בְּרַבֵּךְ עוֹד בְּרַבֵּךְ* – *If you look more*



thoroughly into the purpose of life, תְּרַאֶה – you’re going to see, כִּי הַשְּׁלֵמוֹת הָאֲמִתִּי – the true perfection, the true success of a person, הוּא רַק הַדְּבָקוֹת בּוֹ יִתְבַּרֵךְ – is only to come close to Hashem. To cling to Hashem and to be near to Him, that’s the greatest success there is. And it’s considered an especial gift to the Am Yisroel, that success. עִם קְרוֹבוֹ – We are the people that can be most close to Him.

And what we’re saying here tonight is that it’s not only a question of coming close to Him in your ideas, in your *penimiyus*, inwardly in your thoughts, in your *neshama*, in your *middos*. It’s not only that we should talk about Him all the time and think about Him all day long. *It also means physically*. And the people who come close to Him in this world, אֲתֵם הַדְּבָקִים בֵּה’ אֶלְקֵיכֶם – You who cling to Hashem physically in *Olam Hazeh*, הַיָּיִם בְּלִבֵּם הַיּוֹם – you will live forever and ever with Him in the Next World (Devarim 4:4). *Kirvas Elokim*; that’s our success and our happiness forever and ever.

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

Let’s Get Practical

Coming Physically Closer

We learned about the *avodah* of *halacha*, coming physically closer to Hashem. This week instead of just “going to shul,” I will train myself to realize that I am doing the *avodah* of *holacha* now by bringing myself physically close to Hashem. Every time I walk into shul I will *bli neder* stop for 5 seconds and reflect on that. Even when I pass a shul on the street I can linger for a moment and remember that I’m close to Hashem. I will also *bli neder* take 30 seconds every day to appreciate living among *frum* Jews because it means that I am living in close physical proximity to the Shechina.

This week’s booklet is based on tapes:
596 – Coming Close to Hashem | **704** – Coming Closer
713 – Close to Hashem | **E-264** – Close to Hashem 2

QUESTION

What is something we can think about while we’re busy with the preparations for Pesach?

ANSWER

One thing you can spend time on is appreciating that the Am Yisroel are *tzmaim l’avodas yotzrom* – they’re thirsty for mitzvos. *Poshute* Jews are keeping the Torah with all their hearts. Men and women, boys and girls are getting ready for Pesach and it’s not easy work but they’re doing it anyhow.

Some people want to dodge their work for Pesach – they want to go to a hotel. But those who are thirsty for *mitzvos* don’t dodge work. They want to work because it’s a *mitzvah*. It’s *shver*, it’s not easy – *heint* it’s doubly *shver* because *erev* Pesach is Shabbos – but they’re happy to do it. They’re not going to dodge their responsibilities. Taking things in and out; bringing in the *Pesachdige keilim*, taking out the *chametz* – all kinds of preparations.

Now, I’m not interested in changing the curtains. Changing the curtains is not necessary. You want to make a spring house cleaning, you want to change the curtains, I’m *moichel* that. But to prepare for Pesach – it’s a very great *mitzvah*! And many, many, very *poshute* people are laboring to prepare for Pesach! You have to appreciate them. They’re *tzemaim*, they’re thirsty for *avodas yotzrom*. We’re accustomed to seeing it and so we don’t appreciate it but now is a good time to think about it.

We should train ourselves to see the greatness of the Am Yisroel, how much people are willing to do in order to carry out the *pratim* of the mitzvos. And it’s a very important *shleimus* to appreciate that. No matter how great you are in *avodas Hashem*, how great you are in knowledge of Torah, you must add this information, this appreciation of the Am Yisroel to your personality. (April 2001)