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AUTHENTIC TORAH THOUGHT FOR LIFE

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"L

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## PARSHAS SHELACH

## LIVING FOR HIS HONOR

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# PARSHAS SHELACH

WITH

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"L

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

# LIVING FOR HIS HONOR

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## Part I. Our Existence

### Moshe's Proposal

In *Parshas Shelach*, after the sin of the *meraglim* and the people who listened to them, we read what Hakadosh Baruch Hu said to Moshe Rabbeinu: עַד אָנָה יְנַאֲצֵנִי הָעָם הַזֶּה – *How long will this people vex Me?* וְעַד אָנָה לֹא יַאֲמִינוּ בִי בְּכֹל הָאֹתוֹת אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי בְּקִרְבּוֹ – *How long will they fail to believe in Me, despite all the signs that I performed in its midst?* And therefore, אַכֶּנּוּ בַדֶּבֶר וְאוֹרִשֶׁנּוּ – *I will smite the entire nation with a plague and I'll wipe them out.* And how will I fulfill My promise to Avraham that his children will become a great nation? Through you, Moshe, וְאֶעֱשֶׂה אוֹתְךָ לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל עָצוּם מִמֶּנּוּ – *From you I will begin again and make you a great nation, even greater than they are now* (Bamidbar 14:11-12).

At that time, Moshe Rabbeinu proposed an idea which we're going to study tonight. He said to Hashem (ibid. 13-19), "When the Egyptians will hear that You took this people out from among them and You destroyed them, so they will say, 'It's because the Hashem of the Hebrews, when His nation began to approach the land of Canaan and He saw how fortified the land was, how difficult it was in undertaking to conquer all those nations, so He backed out. And therefore in order to be free from His promise, He destroyed His people.' So now Hashem, because of Your honor, You should retract Your decree and You should stand by us forever. Otherwise, it will be a blemish on Your great Name."

### Do It For Your Sake

So Moshe Rabbeinu at that time proposed a principle of *kevod Shamayim*. It's the honor of Hashem that the Am Yisroel should be allowed to persist. וְעַתָּה יִגְדַּל נָא כֹּחַ ה' – *And now*, Moshe said, *let Your power become increased when everyone will see that despite whatever we have done, still You're willing to forgive us. You'll still maintain Your love for us despite what You say that we did, then that's going to be* יִגְדַּל נָא כֹּחַ ה' – *there will be a greater honor for Hashem.*

And Hakadosh Baruch Hu listened to that. וַיֹּאמֶר ה' סָלַחְתִּי כִּדְבָרֶךָ – *I forgive as you have spoken. I will let the nation live according to your proposal* (ibid. 20).

### Moshe's Test

Now I must make a note before I go on. Hakadosh Baruch Hu never intended to destroy the Jewish people. What He did was merely a test for Moshe Rabbeinu. Moshe was offered now that the entire nation would come directly from him instead of merely from Avraham Avinu; it would be a new nation built on his descendants. A tremendous honor forever and ever! The eternal people will look back to the founder, Moshe Rabbeinu. A glory unequaled!

But Moshe Rabbeinu rose to the occasion and he refused to yield. He said, "No, I want You to maintain Your promise to protect our nation as they are today. Because that's the greatest honor for You. More than the honor You'll have from making a new people out of me, when people will see that You are loyal to Your promise — You promised to take us out of Mitzrayim and bring us to Eretz Canaan and that we should be Your nation forever — and You kept Your word, that's going to be the greatest honor for Hashem and therefore that's what I want."

Now, we have to understand what took place then. It's true that for Moshe Rabbeinu it was an opportunity for greatness of character; it was a test and he passed with flying colors. Like a navy ship returning from battle with its colors, its flag, raised high as a sign of victory, that's how Moshe Rabbeinu left this encounter with Hakadosh Baruch Hu — he was victorious in passing the test.

### The More Important Test

But there's something that resulted from this whole story that is even more important than Moshe Rabbeinu. יִגְדַּל נָא כֹּחַ ה' – If Moshe Rabbeinu's proposal to Hashem was to allow us to exist just for the sake of bringing Him more honor, and Hashem was *maskim* just because of that — "If that's the case," Hashem said, "if the existence of the nation will be an honor for Me, then I'll keep them alive" — it means that our existence in the world, in world history, is because of that episode that took place in our *parsha*. We're around today only because of this principle of *kevod Shamayim*, in order to increase the honor of Hashem.

Now, on its most basic level it means that when there's the Am Yisroel, it's a glory for Hashem. That's a very important point: The Jewish nation, just the fact that we're still around, our mere existence is a testament to Hashem because we are the ones who testify to the One true G-d.

### Existing in the Shadows

I'll explain that a little more before we go on with the subject. You know, in Europe in the Middle Ages we lived in the shadow of the cathedral. Everywhere there was a church; wherever you walked you heard church bells.

Everywhere there were idols in the streets, and also nuns and priests, and everybody who passed them crossed themselves. Someone once described to me an old Irish woman in Ireland — he took her for a ride in a taxi — and she was crossing herself a mile a minute. For every icon, every statue, every priest, every nun they passed by, she was crossing herself. He thought she would tear up her shirt by crossing herself so much.

Imagine that a thousand times more, that's how it was in the Middle Ages. The whole European world — even the Jewish world — was in the shadow of the church.

Now, what did the church mean? The whole church was based on an idea that a god was born of a woman. He was a god and there's nothing else to talk about.

### The Jew Denies

Now suddenly they see a most unwelcome figure, a form of a Jew walking through a side street. You know what that means? The existence of that Jew means that everything you say is a lie, that your god had a father.

I once saw a little tract issued by a fundamentalist Christian group and the author was fulminating against the modern Christian "imposters" who are willing to say that he wasn't born of god, that he had a human father. And it said there, "If you're going to say that he wasn't the son of god, then you're saying that he was a B" — I won't say the rest of the word.

So the fact of a Jew walking through a medieval city, it was like he was wearing a big placard, "Your god is a B." Because otherwise, why didn't the Jew hurry to accept Christianity? Such a glorious thing, a god who was born of a woman! And here's a stubborn devil, a wicked fellow who refuses to admit that.

### Jews Still Exist?

And so the mere existence of the Jew was a witness to the lies of Christianity and therefore his mere presence sent a coldness through them, a weakness. Their backbones turned into water. They felt that it's all a lie. They felt it! The Jew was supposed to have disappeared long ago because the Jewish religion was taken over by him and he gave it over to all the gentiles. "We're the real Jews now," the gentiles are thinking, "so what are you doing around here? You're a fossil! You don't belong around anymore."

But the Jews had the audacity to get together in the ghetto and build a synagogue. In the synagogue, they carried on the same old ceremonies that even the Christians' god kept. Before he became deified by being put to death, their god put on *tefillin* and said the same prayers, and here the Jew is carrying on as if nothing happened, as if the whole thing was a lie. And therefore, the presence of the Jew was most obnoxious to them.

### The Angry False Prophet

The same was on the other side of the world. Mohammed, he just couldn't stand it. He came along and offered the Jews a deal. "Jews, you're the people of the book. You're a great people. And now I come to you with a great promise. Your G-O-D came to me and I was sent to you to tell you that from now on, there is a new law. Every word in the Koran was given to me from Heaven, Divinely inspired, and this is your great chance now for fulfillment of your great mission in the world."

You know how the Jew reacted to that? He laughed. "Uh, what was happening when this took place? Were you standing at Mount Sinai? And how many millions of people were standing and watching when Allah was talking to you?"

Now Mohammed didn't have an answer. All he could say was, "You infidels. You dogs." And he waved his sword and threatened them with death. But the Jew persisted in his faith and persisted to exist.

And so the Jew in the Muslim lands, they were also placard wearers: "Your prophet is a false prophet, a fraud. We have our One Hashem and we'll never abandon Him."

### The Testifying Jew

It means that the existence of the Jews is a standing testimony to Hashem; just the fact that we walk the face of the earth as loyal Jews, we get up in the morning as loyal Jews and go to sleep at night as loyal Jews, that's the biggest *kevod Shamayim* there is. Because just by means of our existence we are testifying, "*Hashem Echad u'Shemo Echad.*"

That's what it says in the book of Yeshaya in the name of Hakadosh Baruch Hu: אַתֶּם עֵדַי נְאֻם ה' – "*You are My witnesses*," *said Hashem* (43:10). If you'll open the *siddur*, it states, שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֱלֹקֵינוּ ה' אֶחָד. The *ayin* of the *Shema* is a big *ayin* and the *daled* of the *Echad* is a big *daled. Ayin* and *daled* means *eid*, witness.

What do we testify? We testify that *Hashem Elokei Yisroel* created the world. We say it every morning and evening, but that's just to remind us that we're *eidim* all day long too. A Jew, just by existing, is announcing to the world, "*Hashem Echad*!"

They don't want to hear it! Some of them want to talk about their three-in-one concoction, others about their prophet and his puppet god. Others — the materialists — they want to live brutishly, to throw themselves into the pursuit of pleasure and power and immoralities. They try to cover their ears. But we're still going strong, announcing to the world, "*Hashem Echad*," which means everything they say is all wrong, all mixed up. And therefore, the presence of the Jew is not appreciated.

### The Witness Protection Program

You understand now why all these efforts have been made, on a grand scale, to wipe out the Jewish people. Mankind has a seething desire inside which usually is concealed, a desire to get rid of the witnesses.

Did you ever hear of that statement, "Get rid of the witnesses"? Suppose the government finally has some witnesses against big mafia bosses, so the mafia have one interest in mind — to get rid of the witnesses, to give them cement shoes. That's why people are afraid to be witnesses because the powerful criminals will not stop at anything. So if the government really means business, it puts up a very strong guard to protect the lives of the witnesses.

Which means the fact that the Am Yisroel continues to exist is an honor for Hashem. There are so many reasons why we *shouldn't* exist. The hostility of all the nations who were always against us from the earliest times. The old Greeks were very much opposed to us. Every nation tried to destroy us. And the fact that we persist to this day, that's *kevod Shamayim*, that's a glory for Hashem!

## Part II. Our Behavior

### Creating Witnesses

Now, this principle — that when there's an Am Yisroel it's a glory for Hashem — means that every woman when she marries is embarking on the career of *kevod Shamayim.* Because when you have children, Jewish *frum* children, that's a tremendous honor for Hashem. If you're raising children, you're filling the world with witnesses and you're fulfilling what we learn from this week's *sedrah*, the reason for our existence.

Here's a woman who went to the dentist. She took along eight witnesses with her — eight children. The children were romping around in the dentist's waiting room making all kinds of trouble. She has to keep this one quiet and that one quiet. While she's talking to the secretary at the window, she's holding a baby in her arms and also quieting the other seven.

It's a *kavod* for Hashem. They're not wearing placards but it's the same thing. Eight children! She has more than that. Some are home. That's what Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants, a *ribui* of the Am Yisroel. The more children you have, you should know it's a tremendous *zechus*. A Jewish mother is a tremendous instrument for the glory of Hashem.

### Multitude of Witnesses

And that's why it's so important to found yeshivas and girls' schools everywhere, and maintain them and help them with money. No question, that's a fulfillment of יִגְדַּל נָא כֹּחַ ה׳ when you go out and see in front of a *frum*

girls' school a long line of buses. A long line of buses! *Erev Shabbos* when you walk in the street and the buses are coming home early, and on all sides loads and loads of *frum* children are walking on the avenue going home for Shabbos, ooh ah! That's what Moshe Rabbeinu was proposing to Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

The truth is even one *frum* Jew all by himself walking down Ocean Parkway — a Jew who wears a black hat or puts on a beard too, whatever it is — he's honoring Hashem. Even a *bochur* in yeshiva, a little boy with a black hat riding on a bicycle speeding through the street. If Hashem's people are alive, are flourishing, keeping the Torah, that's Hashem's honor, absolutely.

I was once on a bus carrying an *esrog* in my hand and a *lulav*. A Russian man came over to me and said, "עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל חַי!" He was so proud! And therefore the more *shomrei mitzvos* there are and the more children in the street, *frum* boys with their *tzitzis* out, more *frum* girls with long dresses, more *frum* people in the world, it's an honor for Hashem. No question about it! We demonstrate how *Toras Hashem* is real! It's alive! And it's going to live forever! They see that עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל חַי, *the nation that lives to honor Hashem is alive*!

### Model Witnesses

Now, this principle of יִגְדַּל נָא כֹּחַ ה׳ doesn't mean merely that our *existence* as loyal *shomrei Torah u'mitzvos* is a *kevod Shamayim.* We'll see now that it's more than that. Because included in the principle of existing to glorify Hashem is also *how* we exist, how we conduct ourselves as the nation of Hashem.

It means that every observant Jew should feel it's his *chiyuv*, it's his duty, to maintain the name of Hakadosh Baruch Hu in honor. Because that's the very purpose of his existence. He has to make it his business to behave properly. He has to be nice to everybody. He has to be eagle-eyed in watching his ways, his speech, his behavior at all times, in order to glorify Hashem in the world.

A boy comes out of the yeshiva and looks wild. He's dressed wildly, *uhpgelozen.* "That's a yeshiva man?" People look at him. They don't say anything but they're thinking, "That's an Orthodox Jew? A *pera adam.*"

I don't say he has to be a sport but he shouldn't look like a *pera adam.* Certainly you're *mechuyav* for your appearance. Not that you have to look like a *goy.* You could be wearing nice long *peyos*, whatever it is. If you're a

*frum* Jew, look like a *frum* Jew; but look like a person who at the same time is *mechabed* Hakadosh Baruch Hu. You should look and act refined.

### The Tzaddik Who Skipped the Line

I'll tell you a little incident, a true story. There was an elderly man with a long *kapote*, a beard of course, and he carried a cane. I met him once on the street and he was telling me of his father's righteousness, what a *tzaddik* his father was. His father was such a *tzaddik* that he never walked between two women. That's what he said about the greatness of his father.

So I was thinking, "Anything else?"

I didn't want to ask him but I was thinking, "That's it?"

I saw right away that this man did not know what it means to be an *oved Hashem*. That's not *avodas Hashem* yet.

So one day I was in the post office; there was a long line. This man came in and without standing in line he walked to the head of the line. And all the Russian Jews on line are looking at him. He whispered something to the man in front of the line. The man in front didn't understand him — he's Russian — so he let him take the place. All of a sudden, he's standing at the window already. Everybody is looking at him.

Now this man was advertising himself as a Jew! He wasn't wearing a Mets cap. A long *kapote* and a beard among ignorant Jews and gentiles and he takes away their rights! He doesn't care for *yosher*! It was a *chillul Hashem* of the most open sort. A Jew in line at the post office, if you have a beard and a black hat, then you should be the most polite and decent man there.

Later I spoke to this man. I said, "That's a *chillul Hashem* what you did in the post office."

He said, "*Chas v'shalom*."

He didn't understand it. If his whole concept of being a holy Jew is not walking between two ladies so you understand why he himself practiced one of the very worst forms of *aveirah*. *Chillul Hashem berabim*, in the presence of many Jews! It's worse than *arayos*! People don't understand that.

### Glory for the King

And that's because it's a *stirah* to our existence. We exist not only for ourselves — we're around today for *kevod Shamayim*. That's what the

Rambam says, that a person should go out of his way to behave in certain ways עַד שֶׁיִּהְיֶה הַכֹּל מְקַלְּסִין אוֹתוֹ, *so that everybody should praise him* (Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah 5:11). But not because he wants praise; he's doing it for Hashem. He wants that Hashem should say about him, "עַבְדִּי אַתָּה – *You're my servant*, יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר בְּךָ אֶתְפָּאָר – *I am glorified by you.*" (Yeshaya 49:3). It means your behavior and your appearance have to be such that when people look at you and they see the way you behave, they say, "Ah, that's a nation of Hashem. It's an honor for Hashem to have such a nation."

It's a big obligation. Every man and woman, boy and girl, should make it a principle that whenever you go among people, you make up your mind beforehand, "I'm going to be polite. I'm going to say please and thank you in the stores. I'm going to be humble and honest and conscientious. I'm going to be especially careful to bring glory to Hashem today."

It's not easy. You may not want to do it. You're not in the mood. You're grouchy today. You would rather go outside and act naturally, without thinking too much. But you do it anyway because that's your job in this world. As long as you're in this world you should make it a goal that you're going to behave in such a way that Hashem says of you, "Oh! I'm happy that I kept My nation around! I am glorified by you."

### Free Fare Buses

It means you can't be careless, absent-minded, because if you're not thinking about it then things happen. Here's a man with a hat who gets onto the city bus. Everybody sees he's a Jew, an old-time Jew. He pays one fare — he doesn't pay three fares. But he sits down and he puts his shopping bag on the seat next to him and he takes his Yiddish newspaper and turns it to the side — three seats he occupies!

Meantime, the colored people are getting on the bus and the bus is crowded and they're looking at these two seats, but they're too bashful to say anything; they're keeping quiet. But in their hearts, you understand what they're thinking.

Finally a tough black man gets up, he says, "Mister, move over." He moves over.

You need a colored man to teach you *derech eretz?* Is that *kevod Shamayim* when people will say, "That's a *frum* Jew?" According to the Rambam, already when he was climbing onto the bus that should have been his first thought: "How can I fulfill יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר בְּךָ אֶתְפָּאָר?"

### Banking on Hashem

A Jew is obligated to be a model citizen. Especially today when there is so much slander against Orthodox Jews, if you get an opportunity, it's *mamesh* a *matanah* from Heaven. Let's say the bank teller gives you an extra bill by accident, tell her right away. "No, no, Mrs. You gave me too much. Here."

Especially if you look like a *frum* Jew. If you have a good Jewish name like Israelovitz or Jacobovitz or Yankelovitz, still better. Anybody named Yankelovitz should make it his business to return the money; they should see that the Yankelovitzes are honest people. A Jew must uphold and further the honor of the Jewish people — but not because of the Jewish people; it's the *kevod Shamayim* that matters.

One of the great elements of our place in the world is *kevod Shamayim*, the honor of Hashem, and that includes the obligation to maintain in the minds of all those who see us the attitude of, "Yes, Hashem's people are fine people." They may not like to admit it — I'm not saying the blacks and Italians will say it out loud — but they'll see that the Orthodox, the *shomrei mitzvos*, are fine people.

### Jewish Snow Removal

Find ways and means of public expression of kindliness and decency. You walk in the street and you see snow at the intersection so you kick a little path open for people to walk through. Do that. "Oooh," they say, "a boy with a *yarmulke* is making a path for people to walk."

Or there's a fellow eating a banana in the street, a *goy*, and he throws the peel onto the sidewalk. What does he care about the world? Let them slide to the hospital! So this *frum* Jew picks it up, or at least he shoves it into the street, into the sewer, so that nobody should get hurt. You're kicking it to the side and you're thinking, "I'm doing this because I want to bring *kavod* to Hashem."

That's a very important element of the service of Hashem. You cannot be an *oved Hashem* unless you're willing to take upon yourself this responsibility to create a good name for Hashem.

### Jewish Scowl Removal

Here's another *frum* Jew, he walks in the street with a scowling face; an angry face all the time. It's a tremendous *bizayon* for the Torah. That's a *ben Torah*? הֱוֵי מְקַבֵּל אֶת כָּל אָדָם בְּסֵבֶר פָּנִים יָפוֹת (Avos 1:15). A Jew has to keep a pleasant face.

Now, you might say, "That's already too much to expect. It's my face. What's that have to do with anything?" And that's because we ourselves are very far away from the importance of the principle of *kevod Shamayim*.

That's the function of a Jew; בְּךָ אֶתְפָּאָר – *you have to become a glory for Hashem*. When Moshe Rabbeinu gained a promise from Hashem to maintain us forever as His nation, it was only with the assumption, the condition, that it should be an honor for Hashem, that we're going to increase *kevod Hashem* forever.

That's what Moshe Rabbeinu said, יִגְדַּל נָא כֹּחַ ה' – *Hashem's koach should increase in the world.*

"Oh," Hashem says, "if that's the case, you're talking about *kevod Shamayim*, then I accept the proposition. As long as you're going to maintain that proposal, I'm going to back you. I'm with you."

## Part III. Our Thoughts

### A Step Up

Now we're going to take a few minutes to talk to *ba'alei madreigah* who want to do more. Up to now, we were talking about more "simple" things — it doesn't mean it's easy; it requires *zehirus*, awareness, but it's possible to train yourself to live successfully according to this principle of יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר בְּךָ אֶתְפָּאָר. The same way you train yourself to watch your step when you cross the street, the same way you have to be careful what you eat — you shouldn't eat things that cause you too much cholesterol, things that raise your blood pressure — so too you train yourself to live according to this program of being careful to glorify Hashem by means of how you behave.

But we're talking now together, you people who come here aren't satisfied with the minimum, and so we'll speak about a higher way of *kevod Shamayim*, a more rigorous way. It's not as easy, but the results are much greater. After all, how many times do you have an opportunity to kick a banana peel into the gutter when people are looking? It's not so often. But we're going to see something now that's always available, a way of fulfilling the principle of honoring Hashem much more frequently.

### Honoring by Thought

Now if we're talking about *kevod Hashem*, the glory of Hashem, you have to know that this term is translated by the Rambam in *Moreh Nevuchim*

(1:64) in an interesting and fundamental manner. He explains there that whenever you see in *Tanach* the words *kevod Hashem*, it means things that remind you of Hashem; that's the glory of Hashem, when you think about Him. Like when it says in the *possuk*, וַיֵּרָא כְּבוֹד ה׳ – *there appeared to them the kevod Hashem* (Bamidbar 16:19, 20:6), it means it was something that reminded of Hashem. Or the *ananei hakavod*; why are they called *kavod*? Because they cause you to think about Hashem.

It means that whatever happens in this world, whether it's the great miracles of history or the constant miracles of nature, their purpose is that people should think about Hashem. וְהָאֱלֹקִים עָשָׂה – *Why did Elokim make everything?* שֶׁיִּרְאוּ מִלְּפָנָיו – *In order that we should be aware of Him, we should think about Him* (Koheles 3:14).

**If a Tree Falls in a Forest...**

So suppose in a forest where nobody is present, there was thunder and lightning, but nobody heard or saw it. So it's not a *kevod Hashem* — because nobody heard about it; nobody is thinking about Hashem because of it.

It doesn't mean that it's not useful, that it's a waste. Thunder in the fields where there are no people is very important because the animals are frightened away by the thunder. They run for shelter because soon the lightning will come. I was once in a field and I saw that. It started thundering and all of a sudden cows began running for refuge. So the thunder is important.

And the lightning is even more important. When there's the tremendous heat of the lightning, that causes the oxygen and the nitrogen to unite and it creates nitrates; that's fertilizer. And then the rain brings down fertilizer on the ground and the grains and fruit can grow. Excellent!

So even though nobody is present to see these miracles, the *chessed Hashem* is being effected regardless. But there was no *kevod Hashem* because the cows can't learn anything. They don't think.

But suppose a *person* happens to be there and he sees this and he's capable of recognizing what's taking place. So he's thinking, "Ooh, look what Hashem is doing! Hashem is feeding the world by means of lightning." Imagine such a person; he hears thunder and he's thinking, "Hashem is now preparing food for the world." He sees lightning and he's thinking, "הַזָּן אֶת הָעוֹלָם כֻּלּוֹ – Hashem is now preparing for the world bread and other good things." That person is fulfilling *kevod Hashem* on the highest level because he's thinking about Hashem.

### Going Bananas for Kavod

Now, this idea opens a panorama of opportunities for us for *kevod Shamayim*, more than we imagined. A banana peel in the street is not only for the *kavod* you can bring to Hashem by kicking the peel into the gutter so nobody should slip. If you do such a thing, wonderful! But there's something else, something even better. The banana peel is for the *kevod Hashem* of thinking!

First you'll notice that even though the outside is attractively yellow, the underside of the skin is plain; it's colorless. Why is that? Why shouldn't the interesting color be on the underside too?

And the answer is Hakadosh Baruch Hu! He packages food in order to make it attractive to you and so what benefit would there be to put the shiny yellow on the underside? It would be a waste of color. But on the outside He makes it turn from green to yellow to let you know that it's ripe now, that He wants you to enjoy it.

So you're walking along and you see a *goy* drop the banana peel on the sidewalk; you're looking at the peel and you're thinking, "Doesn't this banana peel show there's a purpose here, an Engineer Who made this banana?"

### Eating for Kavod

Of course if you're eating a banana — let's say your wife packed up a banana for you to take to the *kollel* — that's an even better opportunity. Instead of chewing it down quickly, you'll make it a program for *kevod Shamayim*. It's a good idea to admire the peel before you put it in the trash can. Also, you see that when it's ready to eat, the peel comes off so easily. Ooh ah! That's a miracle!

And when you bite into the banana, that's the best time to give *kavod* to Hashem with your thoughts. "I don't have to cook it. It's not like a potato; it's ready-made like a roll." And it's luscious too. The Designer made a wonderful concoction; a little sugar, a little acid too; flavoring and starch. And it's nourishing. It's better than an ice cream; it won't harm you at all. After eating ice cream you have to wash your teeth; the sugar will make your teeth rot. But the banana is good for you. And so you're chewing, you're enjoying this world, and you're giving *kavod* to Hashem with your thoughts.

Now, nobody knows what's doing in your head. Your friend thinks you're only eating a banana, but actually you're fulfilling that contract that

Moshe Rabbeinu made with Hashem in this week's *sedrah*. And that's our function; it's what Hashem expects of us. Right now! עַתָּה יִגְדַּל נָא כֹּחַ ה׳, like Moshe Rabbeinu promised. You can think about Him עַתָּה, *right now*.

### Honor Him With Roses

What should you think? When people use their eyes and their good sense and they look around and see מְלֹא כָל הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ – there isn't a single object in the world that doesn't demonstrate the presence of Hashem. So you're walking by your neighbor's yard — he pays the gardener to come and make it nice, but you'll be the one to benefit most — and you're thinking, "Why is it that the rose is red? Where does redness come from? Out of the mud where it grew from? There's no redness in the mud at the bottom of the rose. Where did that beautiful red color come from? And the fragrance; where does the perfume come from?

"What about the arrangement of the petals? And in the middle there are stamens and pistils with pollen on them, an ovary. A whole factory to reproduce more roses. It's engineering of the highest sort!" And so it reminds you of the Engineer Who made that.

### Honor Him With Sunlight

And so the whole world speaks openly about a Borei. On the street, you see the sunlight, "Ooh, that's Hashem's sun. He's giving me light and it warms me up too." And it's all free energy! Con Ed won't send you a bill for the daytime light. Also vitamins; the sunlight gives you vitamins as it hits your skin. Ah, the sunlight! The biggest *kevod Shamayim*!

So a person looks at me with a blank face. "The sun is for *kevod Shamayim*?" Absolutely! You know, the longest *bracha* that we make in davening is on the sun. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה׳ יוֹצֵר אוֹר and it concludes יוֹצֵר הַמְּאוֹרוֹת. The longest *bracha*, and you never thought to think about it? Doesn't that show the hypocrisy among us?

### Wind, Food and Kavod

There's so much to think about Hashem. When the wind blows, a nice summer breeze, you're thinking, "Hashem is feeding the world." Because the wind brings carbon dioxide to the plants. The plants take the carbon dioxide and make it into starch. That's how you get wheat, barley, oats. In a minute, the plant sucks the very small percentage of carbon dioxide that's in the air. And then the plant should stop working; it should die. But no. The wind keeps the air moving. So this air is exhausted already. New air comes

in and it's an endless chain. The wind keeps on bringing more and more air constantly. And so the wind is feeding us.

But it's not the wind; Hashem is making the wind blow. It doesn't say "the wind blows" in *Shemoneh Esrei*. It says, "He makes the wind blow." He is blowing the wind! And that's the way we have to train our minds. The wind is blowing; you have to hold onto your hat so it shouldn't fall off. Why? To remind you now, "Oh, I have to utilize the wind!" A glorious opportunity! A wind blows, you think, "פּוֹתֵחַ אֶת יָדֶיךָ – *Hashem, You're opening Your Hand now*, וּמַשְׂבִּיעַ לְכָל חַי רָצוֹן – *in order to feed the world*."

### What is a Woman?

So this man knows how to live life! He's holding onto his hat, thinking about Hashem, and now a new opportunity: He passes by a Beis Yaakov school and he sees the girls coming out; not one girl has a mustache. So he's thinking, How did it happen? Not one girl has a mustache? An accident? The *yad Hashem*! Wake up! Marvel at that!

You should walk in the streets and think how such a thing happened. There is a certain encoding of messages and instructions on the original cell — a tiny, one-celled organism which will someday develop into a human being — and it has on it a DNA molecule that is encoded with hundreds of thousands of instructions. And among them is this one: No mustache on the female face.

Of course, if you didn't hear of this before you might even ridicule it. But I'm planting it in your minds now, and as the years go by you'll think more and more about it. Why not? Why shouldn't they have a mustache? Your daughters don't have mustaches. Of course, if they had them, it would be a *rachmanus* on you. It's hard enough to get rid of your daughters even without a mustache.

### The Best Career Choice

And therefore we see that somebody who is interested in *kevod Shamayim*, in fulfilling the promise Moshe Rabbeinu made that we'll live in order to honor Hashem, so it's a lifetime career. Of course, just by living as *frum* Jews, just the existence of a nation that testifies to Hashem, that's already a *kevod Shamayim*. And the more we bring honor to Him with our behavior, even better. But most of all, let us undertake a career of thinking about Hashem!

That's the best thing — to spend your days and nights and years seeing how the world testifies to its Creator and thinking about Him always. הַשָּׁמַיִם

מְסַפְּרִים כְּבוֹד קֵל – *The universe is speaking about the honor of Hashem*, but אֵין אוֹמֵר וְאֵין דְּבָרִים בְּלִי נִשְׁמָע קוֹלָם – *people don't listen.* They don't want to put in the mental effort of bringing forth that honor by means of thinking. But for people who are *ba'alei madreigah*, of more intelligence, that's one of the great goals of life — recognizing His deeds in the world. Because that's the highest *kevod Shamayim.* Hashem says, "This man, more than anyone else, is honoring Me."

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This week, *bli neder*, when reciting Shema Yisroel each morning, I will remember that I am an "עֵד" who testifies to the truth of Hashem and His Torah. Therefore, when I interact with people, I am going to sanctify Hashem's name by being especially polite and pleasant. And as I experience nature, I will think of the One Who is behind its incredible wonders.

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I encourage parents and mechanchim to call **347-966-1130** and listen to a sample shiur to appreciate the chashivus of this resource. Torah Umesorah endorses the Chazarah Hotline and encourages its use.

Sincerely,

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# Be My Guest

Hashem commands each Jew, "You shall call Shabbos a delight." (*Shabbos 118b*) On Shabbos we are told to enjoy food, and, *baruch Hashem*, the women constantly work on making it as tasty as possible. Why do we have such a mitzvah? What do we gain spiritually by sitting down to enjoy a tasty meal? Let us push the question a little further. Yom Kippur is also Shabbos. It's called *Shabbos shabbason*. But on this day we eat nothing at all; we fast. It's a day that's completely spiritual. If so, why indulge in delicacies on Shabbos?

Let us explain the difference between Shabbos and Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur is a day for *us*. It's the day we can achieve the highest level of *kedushah*. And when we generate *kedushah* we give up everything for Hashem, out of love for Him. That's why Yom Kippur is called *Shabbos shabbason*:

Not only do we refrain from working, we even abstain from eating, drinking, etc. It is a day of pure *ruchniyus*.

If Shabbos were a day for *us* as Yom Kippur is, we would fast and forgo physical pleasures. And we would surely gain more by doing so. But in truth, Shabbos is something else altogether. Imagine a Jew receives the honor and privilege of being hosted by the Chasam Sofer, a monumental Torah figure. The Chasam Sofer is very fond of this Jew and happy to see him. "*Shalom aleichem*, Reb Yaakov!" he says with a beaming smile. "Welcome! I'm so happy you came. I want you to eat supper with me." The Chasam Sofer himself goes into the kitchen and says to his Rebbetzin, "Did you hear? Reb Yankel from Boro Park is here. Please prepare a special meal for him." The Chasam Sofer emphasizes that a really nice meal should be served for his beloved guest. Soon the Chasam Sofer emerges from the kitchen with a plate of chicken and side dishes. He places it before the astonished guest and urges him to eat.

"I'm sorry, Rabbi," the guest says, "but I'm really trying to cut down on my intake of tasty food. You know, I'm working on the *middah* of *perishus*. Maybe you have a dry piece of bread and a cup of plain water? That's fine for me." This surely is not the way to behave. When a person is in his own home and wants to work on being more spiritual, indulging himself in rich food is not the way to do it. The less he eats, the better off he is. But when in the Chasam Sofer's home, he should put his personal preferences aside. A great tzaddik has invited him to dine with him, and his own desires pale in comparison to the tzaddik's. The guest should stop thinking about what he wants and focus on what the tzaddik wants. That is the proper reaction.

When the Chasam Sofer asks you to enjoy a meal he has prepared for you, the relevant halachah is: "One should not refuse a great person." (*Bava Metzia 87a*) Your *avodah* at that moment is to put aside what you want and do what he wants. I (Rav Pincus) travel a lot, and the state of *kashrus* varies from place to place. So I made an ironclad rule not to eat meat outside my own home. I simply don't touch anything *fleishig*. But once I broke my rule. I was in the home of a great Rosh Yeshivah at suppertime, and he insisted that I join him for the meal. We were served chicken, and I ate out of respect for this great man.

When Yom Kippur comes, we focus on our own *avodas Hashem*. That calls for fasting. But when Shabbos comes, we're not in the center of the picture, because we're in Hashem's house. We are guests at His table, and He says to us, "I want you to enjoy My delicious food!" And the halachah is, "One should not refuse a great person." We put aside what we want and do what Hashem wants. This explains the mitzvah of *oneg Shabbos*!

לעילוי נשמת שפיקא בת לטיפה ע"ה

Adapted by R' Y. Levy from Nefesh Shimshon, Shabbos Kodesh, Rav Shimshon Pincus, Feldheim

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QUESTION

**If a Jew is verbally abused by a non-Jew, what's the best thing to do?**

ANSWER

If a gentile insults a Jew, so the best thing to do is to thank Hakadosh Baruch Hu for the great *kavod*. It's a reminder, that's all. You're being reminded that you're the best, you're the aristocrat of humanity.

And so if the *goy* on the street calls you a name — "Dirty Jew," he says — you should feel very happy. Very happy! It's a good sign! Hakadosh Baruch Hu is saying, "I've chosen you."

And therefore, אַל יִפֹּל לֵב אָדָם בְּקִרְבּוֹ. Never feel sad if you're being insulted. On the contrary, you should say, "בָּרוּךְ אֱלֹקֵינוּ שֶׁבְּרָאָנוּ לִכְבוֹדוֹ וְהִבְדִּילָנוּ מִן הַתּוֹעִים — *I'm so grateful that He separated us from all those who are wandering after falsehood.*"

Now, you're not *mechuyav* to bless him in your heart — as far as you're concerned, let him drop dead. But that's not the big achievement. The achievement is to ignore the insult and be reminded who you are and to thank Hakadosh Baruch Hu that He chose you: אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בָּנוּ מִכָּל עַם וְרוֹמְמָנוּ – *He elevated us,* מִכָּל לָשׁוֹן – *from all the other nations.* And the more they insult you, the more it's a sign of the greatness of the Am Yisroel.

December 1986

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