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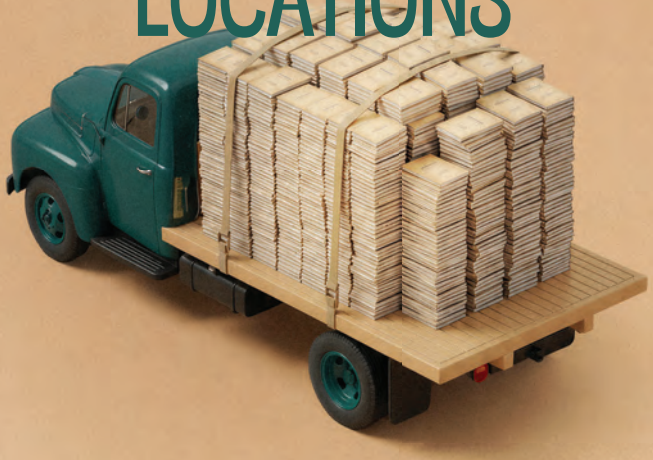

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Part I. Discovering Gan Eden

The First Commandment

When we look into the words of the *Chachomim*, we see what the first *tzivuy* that Hashem commanded Adam was. It's actually written in Koheles (7:13), where it says: רְאֵה אֶת מַעֲשֵׂה הָאֱלֹקִים – *look at what Elokim made*. It means, "Open your eyes and look at the world." And the Medrash (Koheles Rabbah) on that *possuk* says as follows: בְּשָׁעָה שֶׁבָּרָא הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא אֶת אָדָם הָרִאשׁוֹן – *When Adam was created*, נְטָלוֹ – *Hakadosh Baruch Hu took him*, וְהֶחֱזִירוֹ עַל כָּל אִילָנֵי גַּן עֵדֶן – *and He went around showing him all the trees of Gan Eden*. וְאָמַר לוֹ – *And Hashem said to Adam at that time*, רְאֵה מַעֲשַׂי – "*See My works. Look at this one and that one*, כַּמָּה נָאִים וּמְשֻׁבָּחִים הֵם – *how beautiful each one is*."

So when we learn that Medrash, we think maybe that Hashem was introducing Adam to Gan Eden, and so He was doing what any good host would do — He was showing him around. But that's not it; it's much bigger than that. It's the first mitzvah that Adam was told: "Look at My works, how handsome and how praiseworthy they are." It means the more you study them, the more you'll appreciate them. "וְכָל מַה שֶּׁבָּרָאתִי בִּשְׁבִילְךָ בָּרָאתִי – *And all that I made, I made only because of you.*"

And so here you have it, the first *mitzvas asei*: "Look and see what I did for you." It means, "Adam! You should know that you have a job ahead of you: to appreciate the great happiness of Gan Eden."

But that's not all. The Medrash puts a few more words in the mouth of Hashem: "תֵּן דַּעְתְּךָ – *Put your mind on this*," Hashem says, "שֶׁלֹּא תְקַלְקֵל – *that you shouldn't misbehave*, וְתַחֲרִיב אֶת עוֹלָמִי – *and ruin My world*." And so, right away we come also to the first *lo sa'aseh* in the Torah, the first "you shall not": "Don't misutilize what I'm giving you and spoil your Gan Eden."

Pulling Back the Curtain

Now this *maamar* is teaching us one of the fundamental purposes for which Hakadosh Baruch Hu created man on this earth. In the language of the Chovos Halevavos (Cheshbon Hanefesh 3:7), it's לְהָסִיר מָסַךְ הַסִּכְלוּת – *to remove the curtain of ignorance from man's eyes*. Every person's eyes are covered by a curtain of ignorance, of *hergel*, of habit. And in almost all cases it remains covered all his life because he never heard of this mitzvah of the Torah: רְאֵה – *you have to see*.

That's what Dovid Hamelech warns us in Tehillim (32:9): אַל תִּהְיוּ כְּסוּס – *don't be like a horse*, כְּפֶרֶד – *like a mule*, אֵין הָבִין – *who doesn't understand*. It means a person came into this world for that purpose of looking, of seeing what he has in his Garden of Delights, and if he fails, he's exactly like an animal plodding through the field. He stops and eats grass and drinks water by the roadside. He's enjoying himself. But does he think that he's happy? He's not thinking at all! A *beheimah* doesn't think.

And so people go through life tasting all the pleasures that Hakadosh Baruch Hu has prepared for them, but they are *mamesh* like a *sus v'pered*. אַל תִּהְיוּ – *Don't be that way!* You have to open your eyes and your mind and then you're going to succeed in looking through this curtain and seeing the tremendous truth of this world — what a Gan Eden it is.

Living the High Life

When you go to sleep at night, it's a pleasure. Sleep is *mamesh* a *taanug*! And you wake up a new man. All night, Hakadosh Baruch Hu was busy with you. He brought a whole staff of doctors who are working on you all night; they're ironing out your wrinkled nose and straightening out your muscles. They did a good job. The team of physicians that worked on you all night have made a new man out of you. You have a new body. חֲדָשִׁים לַבְּקָרִים – *We are new creations in the morning.* רַבָּה אֱמוּנָתֶךָ – *How great is Your steadfastness.*

When you eat, it's a pleasure to have a piece of bread on your table. And so bread is a *simcha*. You have to learn to enjoy the bread. And water? H^2O is a *simcha*. *Ah!* A *taanug* to drink that pure elixir of life! It goes into you, into your blood, into your eyes. It becomes part of you. You're mostly water.

Now, where does water come from? It comes from the sky. Where does the sky get it from? From the oceans. From the oceans it's pumped up through evaporation by the sun. The sun is ninety-three million miles away and it's pumping up water from the ocean for you. And then He blows the winds for you, to bring the clouds in over the continent.

And so, it's a Gan Eden — a Gan Eden of tremendous machinery all for your benefit! You have to see this, a purposeful plan of *chessed*. How many times did you take a peek at the sun and think about this? How many times did you look at the clouds and fulfill this mitzvah of רְאֵה מַעֲשַׂי? It's a good idea. Tomorrow morning, practice this for one minute. Even if you don't mean it yet; you're faking it. Do it *l'sheim* this program, to fulfill the first mitzvah.

The Willing Blind

Now, I know that outside of this place, people will laugh at this. It's because the world is full of stubborn mules. אַל תִּהְיוּ כְּסוּס כְּפֶרֶד – *Don't be like them.* רְאֵה אֶת מַעֲשֵׂה הָאֱלֹקִים – *You have to look at these things.*

That's the first *chiyuv* of an *adam* in this world, לְהָסִיר מָסַךְ הַסִּכְלוּת – *to remove the veil of ignorance*. And how do you do that? By looking. You look at the world. You look at what you have. You look at yourself. *Baruch Hashem!* You look at your feet! *Baruch Hashem!* You look at your ears. *Baruch Hashem!* Earphones hanging on you. You don't have to buy them.

You have various types of teeth. Just look into your neighbor's mouth, if he'll let you; you'll see a wonderful thing. The teeth up front are all cutters. And the teeth in the back are all grinders. Why aren't the grinders up front? I once asked a dentist, how many mouths did you look into? He said thousands. I said, did you ever see this order reversed? He said never. Being an unthinking man, it didn't occur to him. Why are the cutters up front? Because you have to cut off a bite to size. You can't cut off more than you can chew. That's why the cutters are up front.

Isn't that a wonderful thing? And then the tongue gets busy and it starts shoving the bite back to the back of the mouth where the grinders are waiting for it. *Baruch Hashem*!

You have a tongue. You have a speaker in your mouth, vocal cords. *Baruch Hashem*! You have eyes, cameras in your head. *Baruch Hashem*! You can walk – הַמֵּכִין מִצְעֲדֵי גָּבֶר. That's some trick, to balance yourself while you walk. And that's only the beginning. You have to start looking and seeing what is in this world.

Look Who's Living

Now, I know the stubborn mules will say, "Aren't there people who are suffering in this world? Aren't there people who are sick and in pain?" Look, if some people are in the cemetery, does it mean you're not alive? You can't enjoy life because some people are in the cemetery? If you're able to go around, if you can live and partake of this world, then that's your function in this world. רְאֵה – *see*, אֶת כָּל מַעֲשֵׂה הָאֱלֹקִים.

And not just one. כָּל מַעֲשֵׂה הָאֱלֹקִים – *You have to see everything*. נְטָלוֹ וְהֶחֱזִירוֹ עַל כָּל אִילָנֵי גַּן עֵדֶן – *Hakadosh Baruch Hu took Adam to inspect every single tree*. Every one you should appreciate. That's our lifetime job.

The Gan Eden Grind

And it's a job; no question about it. Even though Gan Eden was a place of very intense delight and happiness, it was a place of work. Adam Harishon had to work hard in Gan Eden.

I'll explain that to you. The first day they were excited over it. The second day, less excited. Every day, the *hergel*, the force of habit takes control of you. And therefore, it's hard work to continue appreciating what you have. Adam was expected to fight back every day against these shackles of habit and appreciate all the delights of life as much as possible, as he did on the first day. That was his work.

That's what it says that וַיַּנִּחֵהוּ בְּגַן עֵדֶן – *Hashem put Adam into Gan Eden*, לְעָבְדָהּ וּלְשָׁמְרָהּ – *to work it and watch it* (Bereishis 2:15). Now what does it mean "to work it"? He didn't have to take a plow. Everything was growing by itself there. לְעָבְדָהּ means he had to do *avodas Hashem*. He had to look around and appreciate Hashem's creations; to learn to love Hakadosh Baruch Hu by recognizing His *maasim*. Like the Rambam said, אֵין אָדָם אוֹהֵב הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא אֶלָּא כְּפִי יְדִיעָתוֹ – *according to how much you know Hashem, that's how you'll love Him* (see Hilchos Teshuvah 10:6).

It's All For Me

Adam was supposed to spend his time looking at this beautiful tree and saying, "It's made by Hashem for me." When he saw this kind of fruit, "*Ay, ya, ya!* בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הָעֵץ! *Ay, ya, ya!* Another fruit! *Ooh, whah!* What a beautiful color!" That was the *avodah* — to thank Hashem for every one.

"How wonderful it is! It has seeds inside. Every seed has in it millions of blueprints, plans to make another tree. If the seed is dropped into the ground, it's able to produce a tree with a trunk, with leaves and blossoms and fruits and it needs millions of instructions to do that, and it's all in one little seed!" And he was standing there and dancing in *simcha*. "*Ayayay!* מָה גָּדְלוּ מַעֲשֶׂיךָ ה' מְאֹד עָמְקוּ מַחְשְׁבֹתֶיךָ," he was saying (Tehillim 92:6). "Trees! Fruit! My teeth! My ears!"

Now, let's not kid ourselves. It was hard work. He did it one day. He did it the next day. The next day, he had to continue even more, add to it. That's what he was supposed to do. And nobody said that living successfully is easy — it's happy, but it's לְעָבְדָהּ; it takes work.

Guard the Garden

And וּלְשָׁמְרָהּ? To guard the garden? Adam didn't have to make a fence. He didn't have to hire a black security man to stand guard. There were no criminals yet, no bums on welfare who have time to make trouble, and no wicked judges yet to let criminals out on the street to break into people's gardens. לְשָׁמְרָהּ means to be careful not to ruin the Gan Eden. By neglecting to thank, he might make a *churban* of it.

So you have two things to do in Gan Eden, לְעָבְדָהּ וּלְשָׁמְרָהּ. In our Gan Edens we have to work. And it's a very big subject we're talking about now because that's the purpose of life. All of the happiness that Hashem gives us is for the purpose of working. It's the first mitzvah! We're commanded

to dedicate our lives to this function of *maaseh Elokim*. רְאֵה אֶת מַעֲשֵׂה הָאֱלֹקִים – *Look. Study it*. And the second is אַל תְּקַלְקֵל – *don't spoil it*.

Nobody Has to Tell You

Now, if you're a *lamdan*, you'll ask me: Why isn't this in the seven *mitzvos bnei Noach*? When you look at the list, it doesn't include these two.

The answer is there are more than seven *mitzvos*. Rabbeinu Nissim Gaon explains that (Hakdamah to Shas). He said there are many *mitzvos*, but the *mitzvos* that your own mind is *mechayev* you, *that* Hakadosh Baruch Hu doesn't have to tell you. Don't we find in the Chumash that many of the *kadmonim* were punished for doing wrong things they were never warned not to do? How could you punish a man without a warning? אֵין עוֹנְשִׁים אֶלָּא אִם כֵּן מַזְהִירִין – *You can't punish unless you warn him* (see Sanhedrin 56b).

So Rabbeinu Nissim says, כָּל הַמִּצְוֹות שֶׁהֵן תְּלוּיין בְּאַבְנָתָא דִּלְבָּא – *whatever depends on havonas halev is a chiyuv to do*. Hakadosh Baruch Hu demands you should do them and there is a responsibility for not listening to your *seichel*.

People don't know that. Many *mitzvos* we're *mechuyav* in that are not written in the Chumash. We'll speak about that one day. Very many things! And these two are the first on that long list of *mitzvos* of the *seichel*. Hakadosh Baruch Hu is talking to each one of us: רְאֵה מַעֲשַׂי and תֵּן דַּעְתְּךָ שֶׁלֹּא תְקַלְקֵל. See all the details that Hashem is giving you in Gan Eden.

Part II. Living in Gan Eden

The Other First Commandment

Now, what we said until now is not the whole story. It's a very big part, but it's not the whole thing because actually these two *mitzvos* apply not only to the details of our lives but also to the *experiences* of our lives. When the Torah says וַיִּקַּח ה' אֱלֹקִים אֶת הָאָדָם וַיַּנִּחֵהוּ בְּגַן עֵדֶן, that Hakadosh Baruch Hu took man and put him in Gan Eden (Bereishis 2:15), it's speaking also about *us*, too, and it means that wherever Hakadosh Baruch Hu puts you, from the beginning of your life until the last day, that's *your* Gan Eden.

Let's say, for instance, a man is getting married. So he walks into the wedding hall, כַּצֹּאן לַטֶּבַח יוּבָל, like a sheep going to the *shechitah*. He doesn't think at all. Does he know what's happening here?

That's why it pays to listen to the *brachos* under the *chuppah*. כְּשַׂמֵּחֲךָ יְצִירְךָ בְּגַן עֵדֶן – *Just like the joy that Hashem caused to His first couple in Gan Eden of old*. You hear such a thing? What kind of comparison is that? Gan Eden? Yes! You're going now into the same Gan Eden. That's why everyone raises their voices and starts singing. The musicians play on their instruments and make a whole *raash* to wake him up. You're going to a Gan Eden now!

You know what it means to get married? To have a home, a wife? And you'll have children, too. Of course you don't know what it means. Because you don't think too much and you'll just plod on. That's why we make such a big fuss! We're encouraging him in the first mitzvah: רְאֵה, *see*. Hashem says, "See what I'm giving you."

Now, I understand that everybody is a חָכָם בְּעֵינָיו and they'll say it's exaggerated. Everybody gets married, he says; what's so great about it? So עָלֶיךָ אָמַר קְרָא, about you the *possuk* is speaking: אַל תִּהְיוּ כְּסוּס – *Don't be like a horse*. Horses also get married. Horses mate and they have offspring but they don't see anything. Oh no! Don't be like a *sus*! And that's why we shout, "Wake up!" רְאֵה מַעֲשֵׂי - *See what Hashem is doing for you!*

The Lonely Man of Faith

Look how many people don't get married. They grow old and they're all alone. He goes *erev Shabbos* to the store that has readymade food and he buys knishes, a piece of meat, a bagel, and he goes home and sits by himself. It's also something — I'm not saying that the poor bachelor doesn't also have to enjoy his knish and his little studio apartment with a leaking sink — but how can you compare it to the man who has a wife?

He's very jealous of you; you should know that. He doesn't understand how a man like you is not full of joy all the time. You're finally settled. You have all the benefits and blessings of a home. Especially if you have children. Ah! Children are a happiness. And grandchildren will come, too.

That old bachelor is looking at you from his basement window and he says, "What a foolish man. He's living in Gan Eden every day. Just to look at the face of his children is Gan Eden. If he's not full of happiness, then that man doesn't understand what life is."

A House Full of Blessings

And Hakadosh Baruch Hu is even more critical! Because He says, "Why didn't you listen to what I told you on that first day of man's creation? רְאֵה מַעֲשַׂי – See My creations! See what I gave you! Did you look at your child today and think about that? Did you look around in your home and see?"

A wife is very many blessings. "How many good meals did I eat because of my wife! How many nights did I sleep in a clean bed because of my wife! How many days did I put on clean underwear! All the days she worked to see that I'm comfortable and happy!" You have to thank Hakadosh Baruch Hu for that Gan Eden!

And she has to see, too. She should think, "Chaim, all his life he went to work. Money doesn't grow on trees. He was laboring with customers and competitors and still every day he went loyally. He's paying the rent. He bought us garments. He pays the grocery bills. He pays the butcher. How grateful I am to Chaim for making our home a Gan Eden."

Don't Destroy the Garden

Now, you can't forget the first *lo sa'aseh* either. You're married now. You're in Gan Eden. תֵּן דַּעְתְּךָ שֶׁלֹּא תְקַלְקֵל – *Be careful you shouldn't spoil it.* Don't start any fights in your Gan Eden. Oh no, don't start any trouble in Gan Eden. Making *parnassah* is not enough; you have to be a *mentch*, too. *Ohohoho!* There's no *shalom bayis* in your home? You're making *charev* the Gan Eden *chalilah!*

וְאִוֶּלֶת – *And a silly woman,* בְּיָדֶיהָ תֶּהֱרָסֶנּוּ - *she tears down her home with her own hands* (Mishlei 14:1). She fights with her husband and then she goes to a judge to get a court order of protection. She calls in police and drives him out of the house. It's the silliest thing that can be done.

People are always fighting. They shouldn't, but they keep on fighting until they get accustomed to each other and they'll take their children and their grandchildren to the *chuppah* together. But if you break up the house and call in police it's *mamesh* calling in the Romans to burn the Beis Hamikdash. What a great crime! תֵּן דַּעְתְּךָ שֶׁלֹּא תְקַלְקֵל וְתַחֲרִיב אֶת עוֹלָמִי – *Don't ruin the world that I made for you.*

Children, too! A boy and a girl have to "look," too. How lucky you are to have a home! How fortunate you are to have a mother and father who support you. Every boy, every girl should say, "My parents love me and they worry about me. I have a roof over my head. I have a bed at night. I

have clean sheets between which to sleep. They give me meals. It's a Gan Eden."

Looking for Greener Pastures

Now some children are wild, they're rebellious. Here's a boy — a *frum* boy, by the way, from a nice family — but he never thought about such things. So he fought with his parents and he decided he's going to choose to be a homeless boy. He ran away from home. A *glik-yeger*.

So he's sleeping now in the subways. He tries to sneak into *batei knessios* in the toilets at night. Before the *shamash* locks up, he's standing on the toilet so the *shamash* shouldn't see his legs. That's what they do. And now he has ruined his life. He has ruined his health. His teeth are rotting away. He doesn't eat the right foods.

So this boy, not only has he ruined himself, he has ruined his Gan Eden. Of course, if I would tell him that, he'd think I'm nuts. Because he has no *seichel* to think that way. The truth is even his father doesn't think that way. I'm afraid his *rebbe* in yeshiva doesn't think that way yet. Everyone still has to learn this. רְאֵה אֶת מַעֲשֵׂה הָאֱלֹקִים – *See what I'm giving you!* Appreciate it and don't be *mekalkel* it.

Paradise at School

So this boy says, "Well, it's not my fault. I had trouble in the yeshiva, this trouble, that thing." It's because he went to the *cheder* with the wrong attitude. You go to *cheder*, it's a Gan Eden! The *rebbe* is teaching you the *darchei hachaim*, how to behave, how to sit still, not to kick under the benches to the next fellow, not to make trouble, not to talk while you're learning. Your *rebbe* is teaching you how to learn Chumash. בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹקִים – He's teaching you *yesodei ha'emes*. A *cheder* is a Gan Eden!

That's why once upon a time before a child went to *cheder*, they had a ceremony. They brought him into *cheder* and they put him on a bench and they put a *tallis* over his head and they gave him cake, sweetmeats, candy and they told him that the Torah is *masok m'dvash*. "Now you're beginning your career in *cheder*," we say to him, "and it's better than candy and better than cake." We inaugurate his *cheder* career, his Torah career, by letting him know that the *cheder* is a happiness.

Which it is. Not only you're learning *halachos* — you're learning to be a *mentch*. You become a *mentch* in the *cheder* and Beis Yaakov when you learn Torah, when you listen to the teachers. And therefore, it's a Gan

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Eden! But if a boy spoils it, misbehaves, it's his fault. He spoils the *cheder* and the *rebbe* throws him out, they can't keep him anymore. It's his fault.

Paradise at Shul

And when you get older, when you leave the yeshiva, same thing. If you belong to a *beis hamedrash*, you have a *rav* there or you have a *rebbe*, you should realize that's a Gan Eden. אַשְׁרֵי יוֹשְׁבֵי בֵיתֶךָ – *How fortunate are those who come in that house* (Tehillim 84:5). You come in your *beis hamedrash*, into your little *shtiebel* somewhere, whatever it is, or the yeshiva where you *daven* — it's a Gan Eden.

What's better than coming to the *beis Hashem*? How happy we are to come! בֹּאוּ לְפָנָיו בִּרְנָנָה – *Come before Hashem with song* (Tehillim 100:2). You should sing in happiness when you come into the *beis haknesses*. וַאֲנִי בְּרֹב חַסְדְּךָ אָבוֹא בֵיתֶךָ – *It's Your great kindliness that we can come into Your house* (Tehillim 5:8). When you come every day in the *beis haknesses* to *daven* or you come in the evenings to learn there, it's a Gan Eden for you!

But what do some people do? They sit in the back and talk *devarim beteilim* and *lashon hara*. They're not happy with this and with that. They're not happy with the *rav*. He says things they don't like, things that don't fit in to what they learned on the street, and so they make trouble, *machlokes*. Oh! He's making a Gehinnom out of the Gan Eden — politics, *narishkeitin*, foolishness. And now he's an old man, an old lump of meat sitting in the synagogue. That's his accomplishment.

Paradise in the Goldene Medinah

Now you have to study all these things. I'll add one more. America! America is a Gan Eden. You have plenty to eat, plenty opportunities to make a living. You have free rights in America like anyone else. Are you appreciating that enough?

So instead of appreciating that, people find what to complain about. You know, America is like a big ice cream cake. Let's say Hashem gave you a very big cake with lots of ice cream and a lot of toppings. And now you're putting your face into the cake and eating and you're getting smeared with ice cream. "Uch," you say, "what a mess!" He's complaining! So Hakadosh Baruch Hu says to him, "What more could I do for you, My friend? I tried."

And so, besides for all the details, don't forget about the Gan Eden right here in America. No wars! You're not living under Communism! Not

yet, at least. So you should appreciate what Hakadosh Baruch Hu is giving you.

And don't think from your experience that you understand it all already. You don't even *begin* to understand it. רְאֵה means spend time on it. That's the number-one mitzvah, the *asei* of seeing how good life is. And the *lo sa'aseh*, be careful. Be careful! אַל תְּקַלְקֵל – Don't spoil it! How many people have ruined their lives by spoiling their Gan Edens, spoiling their homes, spoiling their *cheder*, spoiling their yeshiva?

And so, all through life this principle holds good. The *asei* of רְאֵה, of seeing the details of your Gan Eden and תֵּן דַּעְתְּךָ שֶׁלֹּא תְּקַלְקֵל – *you shouldn't spoil it*. And therefore, there's work to be done. That's לְעָבְדָהּ וּלְשָׁמְרָהּ, all the days of our lives.

Part III. Earning Gan Eden

The Chofetz Chaim

Now, today, how many days is it already? It's *yud-gimmel* tonight. It's thirteen days since Rosh Hashanah. We have already, *baruch Hashem*, thirteen days in the new year. We asked for life and He gave us so much already. But we're not satisfied; we want it to continue and continue. And so listen now to to what Shlomo Hamelech said on this subject.

It says in Mishlei (17:16) as follows: לָמָּה זֶּה מְחִיר בְּיַד כְּסִיל לִקְנוֹת חָכְמָה וְלֵב אָיִן – *Why does the fool have money in his hand with which to buy chochmah, but he doesn't have any seichel to buy it?*

Imagine a boy is walking in the street and somebody gives him money to buy what he needs. But he's a fool; he doesn't know how to spend the money. He's going to lose the money or waste it. Everyone knows the old aphorism: "A fool and his money are soon parted." It's מְחִיר בְּיַד כְּסִיל, so what's the point? לָמָּה זֶּה – *Why should he have money?*

Money is Life

Now, what money is he talking about? It's the money of life. Hashem says, "Why should the fool have life? The purpose of the currency of life is לִקְנוֹת חָכְמָה, to acquire *chochmah*, but he's going to waste the money."

Which *chochmah*? So you'll say Torah. And it's true. Certainly you have to learn *chochmas haTorah*. Certainly you have to learn Gemara. Certainly!

You have to learn everything! But that's only a detail. Fundamentally, it's רֵאשִׁית חָכְמָה יִרְאַת ה' – *the most important wisdom is to be aware of Hashem, what He is giving you* (Tehillim 111:10). That's the purpose of the money of life.

Gifts Aren't Free

And so Hashem says, "Why did I give this fool good health? The purpose was so he should buy *chochmah* and say, 'I thank You, Hashem, for the good health.' Oh, that's a *chacham* if he says that! But לֵב אַיִן – *he doesn't appreciate it*. So why should I bother giving him good health?"

"I gave you the ability to breathe," Hashem says. Breathing is a big *simcha*.

The doctor asks you, "Do you have difficulty breathing?"

You say, "*Baruch Hashem*, no."

You know some people have difficulty breathing. *Ah!* I can breathe! It's Gan Eden! A pleasure to fill your lungs. Every few seconds, another breath. *Ohohoh*, a happiness!

So here's a man who laughs at breathing. *Heh heh*. That's what they're teaching you there? That breathing is a happiness?

So Hashem says, "What a fool, a *kesil*! You think breathing is a laughing matter? That's why I'm giving him breaths, so he should appreciate that detail of his Gan Eden. You're not interested? So why should you breathe if you don't appreciate it, if you're not acquiring more *chochmah* every day?" Certainly you have to be *medakdek b'mitzvos*, too, but to live successfully means to think about Hashem, to be aware what Hashem is doing for you and to fulfill the very first obligation: רְאֵה אֶת מַעֲשֵׂה הָאֱלֹקִים – *See what Hashem is doing for you.*

The Happiness of Natural Dialysis

He gives you so many things in life. When you go to the bathroom, your kidneys are working perfectly. Your blood is working perfectly. Did you thank Hashem? Here's a man; he makes *asher yatzar*. But while he's saying *asher yatzar*, he's making motions to somebody in the house, "Wait a second, wait, wait."

That's how you make *asher yatzar*? *Asher yatzar* needs to be a happiness. Kidneys! *Woo, hoo!* Here's a man without kidneys. His kidneys

don't function! If he could make *asher yatzar — ah, ah ah!* What a happiness it would be!

The Warmth of Gan Eden

And therefore, there are a lot of Gan Edens, not only health. Appreciate the roof over your head. Did you ever stop to appreciate a warm house? Once upon a time, when a Jew came into his house, "Ah! A *varme shtub*," he said, "A *varme shtub*."

I sat in Slabodka. We were freezing in the yeshiva. It was hard to heat the yeshiva. The stove was over there at the end and you put in some wood but it burned out. It was barely enough. If you stood near the stove, you felt some heat. Otherwise, it was cold. But you come home, "A *varme shtub*." It's warm.

The Proletarian Paradise

Even your job, it's a mitzvah to see that it's a Gan Eden. "Oh, that's already going too far," you say. "If you knew about my boss." No. If you have a job, it's a Gan Eden. Whether it's much or not much, you come home with a pay. How many people are *shleppers* and *shlemazels* and they suffer poverty. Some even go around begging for money. It's not a life at all. A person who has to beg is not a person, not a human being. It's a Gan Eden if you have a job!

I know the unions have taught you not so. These Marxists teach that it's not a Gan Eden, that the boss is a tyrant and that the proletarians have to fight back against the bosses. It's all *sheker v'kazav*. The boss is a *meitiv*. Of course he needs you, but you need him, too. He pays you your salary every week. רְאֵה - *You have to look at that!*

It's also good for your health to work! A person who works has a healthy mind. People don't realize how much your health is supported by the fact you have a regular job. And people who don't work become ill earlier in life and they don't live that long. And therefore, there are a lot of Gan Edens.

Gaining Olam Hazeh

And don't say it's impossible to live that way. It's possible. We have to try it because that's our function. רְאֵה אֶת מַעֲשֵׂה הָאֱלֹקִים – *See how lucky you are!* It's a pity when people don't appreciate the great opportunities. And therefore, the *kesil* who has the power in his hand to acquire happiness and greatness and achievement but he doesn't think, so Hashem says,

"Why did I give him a home? The purpose is to appreciate Gan Eden! Why did I give him a wife and children and a *beis medrash* and a job and shoes and rain and a million and one other things?"

And therefore, in order for us to remain long in this world, we'll have to fulfill what Hakadosh Baruch Hu commanded Adam Harishon: "Look and see what I'm giving you and make sure you don't spoil it." It means that every form of happiness is an obligation to get busy and start serving Hashem and doing work. It's not easy, but it's the kind of work that absolutely repays you.

Because what will you gain from your work? Well, you will certainly gain happiness in Olam Hazeh, no question about it. But in the Next World, too. You'll be so happy, so satisfied, so delirious with *simcha* when you see that you fulfilled your purpose of לְהָסִיר מָסַךְ הַסִּכְלוּת.

The Sun of Olam Haba

That's what Reish Lakish tells us about the Next World. He comes along with a *chiddush* that אֵין גֵּיהִנֹּם לָעָתִיד לָבֹא – *in the Afterlife, there is no especial thing called Gehinnom* (Avodah Zarah 3b). Now, nobody should be relieved when they hear that, because Reish Lakish is going to tell us of a big fiery Gehinnom, only it's not what we think.

What's going to be? אֶלָּא הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא מוֹצִיא חַמָּה מִנַּרְתִּיקָהּ - *Hakadosh Baruch Hu will take the sun out of its sheath*, וּמַזְקִיר – *and it will shine very powerfully*. The sun, you have to know, is encased in a big sheath. You never see the sun. Take a look tomorrow through smoky glasses. You think you see the sun? What you see is a very thick envelope of gases — melted, vaporized metals — around the sun. But the sun itself you cannot see. And you're lucky, because if the sun would be revealed, the heat would come through overpoweringly. We are protected against the direct rays of the sun by this sheath. That's what the Gemara says.

But in the Afterlife, Hakadosh Baruch Hu takes the sun out of its sheath and He lets it shine. And, רְשָׁעִים נִדּוֹנִין בָּהּ – *the reshaim will suffer from it*, וְצַדִּיקִים מִתְרַפְּאִין בָּהּ – *while the tzaddikim are going to be cured*; they're going to feel beneficial effects from that heat.

The Light of Knowledge

And we'll understand this as follows. In the Afterlife, it's not temperature that counts, it's knowledge that counts. In the World to Come, the light of the truth will be taken out of its sheath of falsehood

that conceals the truth in this world, and then everybody will see what's what. And that knowledge can be the most delectable ecstasy — and it also can be the greatest, the most excruciating pain.

Now, when people hear that's all there is in the Next World — that they'll show us the facts, how wrong we were — so it's a big relief to a lot of people. They feel like this is something they're willing to accept, they're willing to endure. But you have to know that that's going to be more than any fire. The effects of the truth in themselves are going to be worse than any kind of roasting in a real fire.

When Hakadosh Baruch Hu shows the light of the truth to us when we leave this world, so the *reshaim* will see how they have ruined their opportunity. They'll see how wonderful this world was, how good it was to be born. "How happy I could have been with my two good eyes and two good kidneys. I had a normal mind! How lucky I was I could walk and I could talk and listen! How fortunate I was I had parents and a home. How lucky I was when I went to *cheder*! How lucky I was when I had brothers and sisters! How lucky I was when I was married; I had my own home with my own wife and children. How lucky I was when I was in the yeshiva. How lucky I was when I was working and I had an employer who gave me every week *parnassah*."

Final Regrets

And the *reshaim* forever and ever will be sorry. רְשָׁעִים מְלֵאִים חֲרָטוֹת – *They'll be full of regret*. Oh! In that place where they spoke about these things, they were right?! Those ideas that I smirked at, that I thought weren't important? *Oy vey*!

"Oh! Why didn't I realize I was in a Gan Eden? All my life I was walking blindly." Now he sees that he walked through life like a horse, like a mule, that he was *oiver* on אַל תִּהְיוּ כְּסוּס כְּפֶרֶד.

But now it's too late. "Ach! I ruined my one chance. I didn't look. I wasn't happy at all! I ruined my world! My life was wasted." And even though he was a *frum* Jew, he missed the point. The רְאֵה אֶת מַעֲשֵׂה הָאֱלֹקִים he missed.

A Sunny Day in Heaven

But the *tzaddikim*, the ones who fulfilled this first mitzvah, when they'll see the true light that Hashem will show them, they'll be happy. Ah! They'll see the truth, how they were correct in utilizing their lives,

how they were correct in making their home a Gan Eden, how they were correct in making their place of work a Gan Eden. They were polite to their employer, they were loyal to him, to other workers they were polite.

In the *beis haknesses*, he didn't talk any *devarim beteilim*. He didn't talk *lashon hara*. He appreciated the *sefarim* and the *rav* and he was so happy when he came there. Wherever he went, he utilized it. Now he looks back and sees that life was so successful. And that great happiness will accompany him forever and ever and ever!

That's actually a *sechar* of Olam Haba, that a person will realize then how important life was and how successful he was. He'll be happy forever that he understood that וַיִּקַּח ה' אֱלֹקִים אֶת הָאָדָם וַיַּנִּחֵהוּ בְּגַן עֵדֶן – *Hashem took man and He put him into Gan Eden*, was referring to himself, too. And because he was happy in the Gan Eden of Olam Hazeh, that's why he'll be happy forever in the Gan Eden of the Next World!

Have a Wonderful Shabbos

Let's Get Practical

Appreciate the Gan Before It's Gone

In this week's *parsha*, Hakadosh Baruch Hu places Adam in Gan Eden "to work it and to guard it." In truth, each one of us has been placed by Hashem in our own Gan Eden and tasked to maintain it properly.

This week, *bli neder*, I will recite the *Birchos Hashachar* more deliberately, concentrating on the endless happiness of being able to see (*Pokeiach ivrim*), having clothes (*Malbish arumim*), and so on. And before I let any complaint out of my mouth about my lot in life and potentially ruin my garden, I will take a moment to reconsider and see how that very issue may actually be a great blessing.

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July 31, 2025

I am pleased to recommend the **Chazarah Hotline**, an independently developed and privately funded initiative that has proven to be a valuable tool for talmidim and Rebbeim alike.

The Chazarah Hotline was designed to help every talmid review his learning– regardless of whether his father is available to chazzer with him or if private tutoring is beyond reach. The concept is simple yet powerful: boys call a dedicated number and hear clear, engaging reviews of shiurim from experienced Rebbeim, reinforcing what they learned in class.

The hotline currently focuses on the main Mesechtos studied in **grades 5-8** and is used widely by Rebbeim as a classroom support tool. It has also been helpful for boys who miss school, allowing them to catch up with minimal disruption.

To date, the hotline has recorded **over 6,400** calls, and it remains a **completely free resource**. Its growing usage is a testament to its effectiveness, and we believe that with broader awareness, it can benefit talmidim in communities across the globe.

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,

Rabbi Chaim S. Neuberger
National Director

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Bereishis Bara is Just the Beginning....

Every year on Simchas Torah we start reading again from the beginning of the Torah, from the very beginning of *Bereishis*. It's so exhilarating and exciting to start anew! When we read "*Bereishis bara Elokim*," it feels as if the heavens and earth were just created. It's like the wonderful feeling of going out at sunrise: Everything is glowing and fresh, a delightful breeze is blowing, the birds are singing in full chorus, and your soul is singing along with them. It is surely an experience to begin the Torah anew from "*Bereishis bara*."

However, as we know, nothing of lasting value comes from momentary excitement alone. The key is: A person should always complete his *parashah* with the community, [reading] *mikra* twice and *targum* once.... Anyone who completes his parashah with the community will have his days and years lengthened. (*Berachos 8a*) There is no better time than now to strengthen ourselves in reading *shnayim mikra v'echad targum* each week. The Ari *z"l* would finish the *parashah* on *erev Shabbos* and afterward immerse in a *mikveh*, because the combination of the two enables a person to fully receive *kedushas Shabbos*. At least one should try to finish before the Shabbos day meal.

And when you go through the *parashah*, it shouldn't be a mere recital. You should take a moment to understand the words. Imagine you've never seen these words before. You're now reading "*Bereishis bara Elokim*" for the very first time. It's awesome: The great heavens, with millions and billions of stars, each many times bigger than the whole world —Hashem created all of this! The same applies to the stories of Adam HaRishon, Noach, and Avraham Avinu. When we relate to them as if the Torah were given just today, as the Shema tells us to do—"And these words which I command you *today* shall be upon your heart"—we find them sweet and inspiring.

The intense celebration that surrounds the starting of the Torah anew is akin to a wedding. Just as by a wedding, on Simchas Torah we sing and dance for hours. And just as a wedding celebration is the culmination of all the preparations, the Simchas Torah celebration is the culmination of all the preceding Yomim Nora'im. But let us take the comparison a step further: The real purpose of a wedding celebration is that the bride and groom should live their lives together from now on. Similarly, the real purpose of the Simchas Torah celebration is that we should live our lives together with the Torah throughout the coming year. *Bereishis bara* is just the beginning...

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QUESTION

If one has the opportunity to choose two careers, one of making money and being a *baal tzedakah*, or remaining in the Torah world and acquiring *shleimus* in Torah, which should he choose?

ANSWER

There's no question; תַּלְמוּד תּוֹרָה כְּנֶגֶד כֻּלָּם (Pe'ah 1:1). You choose Torah because the person who has *shleimus* in *tzedakah*, if he lacks the *shleimus* of Torah, he's lacking a bigger *shleimus*. There's no question that the *shleimus* of Torah is much greater.

I'll give one little example. This doesn't even begin to treat the subject, but there are people who give *tzedakah* and don't even have the *shleimus* of *tzedakah*, because they didn't study what the Torah says about *tzedakah*. So sometimes they give *tzedakah* just like a rich gentile gives; whereas a *ben Torah* knows what it means to give to Torah and to *tzedakah*. And even though he doesn't have, still he has the opportunity to get at least the *desire* to do it; whereas there are some rich people who don't even have any interest in the subject. To them, it's just an opportunity to get rid of people who bother them. It's only when a man has both Torah and he gives *tzedakah* — then he can do it in a perfect way.

But there are many other reasons. תַּלְמוּד תּוֹרָה כְּנֶגֶד כֻּלָּם! There's no question! Nowhere do we find it recommended that people should go into business in order to give *tzedakah*. If you're in business, then see to it that you're a *baal tzedakah*. But the best business of life is the business of becoming great in knowing Torah.

December 1973

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