

# תורת אביגדור

הגאון ר' אביגדור מיללער זצ"ל

Rav Avigdor Miller on Parshas Emor

Adapted from his Tapes, Seferim and Writings of Talmidim

נתנדב לזכות

אהובה

בת מרים

---

**Toras Avigdor Al Haparsha**  
is compiled and adapted  
from the many works of  
Rav Avigdor Miller zatzal,  
including his many seforim  
and thousands of recorded  
lectures.

Rav Miller's Seforim are the  
property of the Estate of Rav  
Avigdor Miller zatzal. His  
recorded lectures are the  
property of Yeshiva Gedola  
Beis Yisroel and the Simchas  
Hachaim Foundation.

We appreciate the  
encouragement and warmth  
Rav Miller's family has  
shown towards this project,  
and their graciousness in  
letting us use this material.

Copyright 2018

**TorasAvigdor.org**

info@TorasAvigdor.org

347.556.7302

---

Dedicated by the  
**Waidenbaum Family**

לזכר נשמת אבינו הרב  
ר' נטע געציל בן ר' מיכאל ז"ל  
ממוקירי ומפיצי  
תורת הרב אביגדור ז"ל  
יאהרצייט כ"ג אייר

Dedicated by  
**Yaakov Radin  
& The Radin Family**

In Honor of  
**"Lag Ba'Omer!"**

Please be MISPALLEL for a  
REFUAH SHELEIMAH for:

יעקב צבי בן נחמה רחל  
ישראל חי בן נחמה רחל  
בתוך שאר חולי ישראל

לזכות רפואה שלימה  
מנוחה חיה בת דליה טובה

לזכות רפואה שלימה  
חיה מלכה בת בת שבט



**Take part in this immense** **זיכוי הרבים!** Sponsor the **Toras Avigdor Al Haparsha**.  
Get 500 copies distributed, in your zechus for only \$180.

## Rav Avigdor Miller ztz"l on

### פרשת אמור

#### THE KOHANIM SERVE HASHEM SHAWARMA

In this week's *parsha*, we find what appears to be a strange phrase, one that is repeated again and again: We are told that the Kohen brings to the *mizbei'ach* the לחם אלוקיו "the bread of His G-d" (Emor 21:17) לחם אלוקיהם הם מקריבים - "They are the ones who bring to Hashem His food, His meals" (ibid. 21:6). Morning and evening, breakfast and supper. Every day the Kohanim would "feed" Hashem His roasted lamb. את קרבני לחמי... את הכבש אחד - "My offering, My food... one lamb you should prepare for Me in the morning, and the second lamb you should prepare for Me in the afternoon" (Bamidbar 28:2-4).

The truth is that the entire edifice of the *Beis Hamikdash*, with its *korbanos*, the offerings of wine, and the flour of the *Mincha* offering, all of the work that the *Kohanim* were busy with all day long - and the nights as well - were seemingly dedicated to one thing. It was a building that seemed to be dedicated primarily to *the feeding of Hashem!* And there were people at that time who actually believed that Hashem was in one of the inner rooms of the *Mikdash*, where He was eating from the *korbanos*. And who could blame them for thinking so? That's what the Kohanim were

busy with - being *makriv* the food of Hashem. *Lechem Elokaav!* Hashem's food! An entire system of *avodas Hashem* based primarily on *feeding Him!*

#### DON'T BOTHER ME ABOUT HASHEM - I'M TOO BUSY LEARNING

Now, we are so busy making sure not to miss a word by *kriyas hatorah* or we're speeding through *sh'nayim mikrah v'echad targum*, that we don't stop to think about these phrases and what they are telling us. And even if we do, we know we think, or better yet we think we know, that we are too sophisticated to really believe these simplistic terms. We bring to Hashem His meals?! "No," we say. "Of course not. Hashem is too sublime for such things. These *pesukim* are maybe to help the children understand. They are *pesukim* for the ignorant and uneducated." Well, I must tell you - you are right. They *are* for the children. These words *are* written for the uneducated. But you have to know that *you* are that child! *You* are that uneducated fellow that Hashem is trying to make wise.

Now, if you're a Yeshiva man, you'll say, "Don't bother me with such questions. I'm busy with deep and intricate Torah concepts. I'm busy with *Ktzos Hachoshen* and the *sugya* of **אש** **משום הצני**." You're too sophisticated for such an idea, you think. You know that Hashem is not a *basar v'dam*. The food of Hashem?! You know that it must mean something much deeper than that. It must be a *sod*, a secret of the Torah.

#### THE SISREI HATORAH ARE RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOUR EYES

Well, let me tell you something very important. Some people search for *sisrei Torah*. You know, *sisrei Torah* are wonderful, no question - it's great. But you have to know that the biggest *sisrei Torah* are on the surface. Never forget that. It's a *sod*, a secret, that I'm telling you now. The biggest *sisrei Torah* are in the *pshuto shel mikrah*. And many people lose sight of the *sisrei Torah* in the simple *pshat* because they are looking for deeper things.

Let me explain. This problem that I mention now is extensive; it's widespread. Throughout the entire Tanach, and in all the words of *Chazal* we find such ideas - such phrases. "The eyes of Hashem". Hashem has eyes?! "hand of Hashem". Hashem has hands?! Hashem's feet! The face of Hashem! "And Hashem regretted." And when they were making the Tower of Bavel it says that **וירד השם לראות** - "And Hashem came down to see" (Bereishis 11, 5). Hashem comes down?! He sees?! And the examples of the anthropomorphisms, the personification of Hashem are almost endless. **וחרה אף השם בכם** - "And the *nose* of Hashem will be inflamed in anger!" (Devarim 11:17). You hear that?! His *nose* flares with indignation!

**ישימו קטורה באפך** - "They shall put incense to *Your nose*" (Devarim 33:10). That is the literal translation of the *possuk*. but no translator today would say such a thing. "They put incense before You," is how it is usually translated. But the word *af* literally means "nose". Hashem's nose! And the *korbanos* are brought forth to Him as an **אשה ריח ניחוח להשם** - "A fire-offering to be a sweet savor to Hashem" (Vayikra 1:9). His nose again! Hashem is inhaling the fragrance of the meat roasting on the *mizbei'ach*. That's what it says.

#### ONKELOS AND THE RAMBAM VERSUS THE TORAH

Now, anybody who looks into the *Targum Onkelos* will see that he dodges every single one of them. He takes the trouble to explain them away. Every time he explains it in an abstract way. He never translates them literally, because that's against the *emunah*. Hakodosh Boruch Hu is far above all physical attributes.

And actually, when you begin learning the Rambam's *sefer, Moreh Nevuchim*, you right away notice that he spends a lot of time on this subject, the subject that he calls *hagshama*. *Hagshama* is the personification of Hakodosh Boruch Hu as it appears throughout Tanach. It appears almost as though that's why the Rambam wrote the *sefer*. And he's hammering in one point - and

that's what we call *harchakas ha'hagshama*. Page after page he's tediously working through these many examples in *Tanach* that imply that Hashem has body parts, emotions and feelings; and he's pressing his point that actually Hashem is far removed from such things. And he goes through the entire *Tanach* interpreting these expressions out of their simple meaning.

He explains that they are only allegories; they are similes. Every statement is something else. A figure of speech, an analogy, or a parable. Whatever the Rambam says it means, one thing for sure, they are *not* meant literally. Hashem has no body, no emotion, no feelings, no nothing. Just pure *seichel*. Hashem is pure unadulterated *seichel*!

But the fact is that in the Torah it is not so! In the Torah *everything* about Hashem is portrayed in a most physical way, a most bodily way. He sorrows and He angers. He eats and He drinks. He watches and He speaks. Almost every section of the Torah is *full* of expressions which impart a physical impression of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. They give a corporeal impression, one of Hashem possessing a body as well as human characteristics, something which is false. And herein lies the great conundrum, the great paradox of *hagshama*.

#### WHICH HASHEM ARE YOU DAVENING TO?

Because not only is it false, it is much worse. It is anathema to the foundation of our beliefs as Torah Jews. Because the Rambam tells us (Peirush Hamishnayos Sanhedrin Perek 10, *Hayesod hashlishi*) that anyone who thinks that these expressions are literal, not only is that person misinterpreting the Tanach, but **הרי זה מין**. He's a heretic! If a man believes these things literally, then he's a *min*, an *apikoris*, and that means he has no *cheilek li'olam habah*, no portion in the World to Come.

He's believing in the wrong kind of a *Borei*. If he prays to such a Creator, then he's praying to the wrong address. Instead of praying in this direction, he's praying to the other direction. And

the truth is that *this is* a great danger to our *emunah*. So many things can trip up a man as he makes his way through the *Torah*. And *chalilah* he is liable to lose his portion in Olam Habah because of the *hagshama* he encounters everywhere.

After all, there *were* many people who read the Torah and took these words literally. And they fell into a great error. There were people who believed that Hakodosh Boruch Hu had a very big body, a holy body; it was noble, and it was illuminated with a great illumination. But it was a body! And He had a great arm, and He had eyes, piercing eyes, that were always open to see everything.

#### WHERE'S THE EMES IN THE TORAS EMES?

And so we see that these descriptions of Hashem are all pitfalls, they're perilous. And the Torah, the Nevi'im, the Kesuvim, are *full* of such things. Wherever you turn, you'll find these anthropomorphisms, the *hagshama*, the humanized description of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. And what that means is that the entire Torah is filled with *michsholim*, pitfalls. And any one of them is capable of misleading a man, and making a *min* out of him.

So now the question arises - and it's a very big question: Why did Hashem choose to fill the entire Torah with such booby-traps? Why take such a risk? The Torah is a *Toras Emes*, after all. It's a Torah of truth. So why didn't Hashem use more proper - truer - terms in the Torah, and in that way avoid all chance of error? Our Torah is a *Toras Chaim*; it's there to teach us how to live our lives. So what are all these *l'shonos* supposed to teach us? How could Hakodosh Boruch Hu fill the Torah, the *Toras Emes*, the *Toras Chaim*, with *apikorsis*?

#### HASHEM WANTS YOU TO BE AN APIKORIS!

And the answer to this question is our subject for tonight. There is a big lesson that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is teaching us

here. Because as big as the question is, the answer is much, much bigger, much more shocking. Because after all is said and done, what Hashem really wants from you is that you should be a *shtik apikoris*! You didn't think you'd hear that in this place. After all we advertise our lectures for the Orthodox. And so, before you run out into the streets saying that Rabbi Miller said we should be *apikorsim*, pay attention. You'd better stay here till the end.

You have to know that you're here in this world for one purpose only. One purpose! And that's to become more aware of Hashem. To become more and more aware of the *reality* of Hashem. We're expected to gain *da'as Hashem* while we're here in this world. And *dei'ah* means a real sensory perception of Hashem. דע לפני מי אתה עומד - "Know before Whom you are standing" (see Brachos 28b). "Know" means to know with all of your emotions, with everything you have.

And tragically, most people aren't even aware of this function. They know that they have to learn Torah and do *mitzvos*, raise their children *b'derech ha'yoshor* and marry them off *b'shalom*. But to *know* Hashem?! Is that also important? And the answer is "Yes, that's why you're here! That's why you're breathing right now."

#### YOU'RE NOT HERE TO KNOW SHAS

And even those who are aware of this function, it's stored somewhere in the back of the mind, with all the other clutter, and it comes to the forefront only occasionally. But I'm going to tell you the truth; no matter how much you try to ignore your function in this world, it will remain your function. You're not here to be an accountant. Now, the *Am Yisroel* needs good accountants. Most definitely. And good lawyers. And doctors and plumbers, too. Yes, we need them. But that's not your purpose in this world. And you're not even here to know *Shas*. Yes, *Shas* is part of it, but it's not your *function* in this world. Whatever you're doing in this world, it is only a tool to be used for your true

function – to become more and more perfect in the Awareness of Hashem.

And the problem is, that a very frum Jew, a really observant Jew, who would never even *think* of picturing Hakodosh Boruch Hu as a physical being, will have only a very faint impression of Him. To have no picture at all about Hakodosh Boruch Hu, but to merely perceive Him as an intellectual concept that is expressed only by the vague and foggy word, “Hashem,” is a failure - a tragedy. It's a frustration of your purpose in this world. Yes, it is true, it is a very big peril to portray Hakodosh Boruch Hu with *gashmiyus*. But there is an even bigger peril - and that is to portray Him *without gashmiyus*! Because to have weak pictures of Hakodosh Boruch Hu is worse than to have wrong pictures of Him.

#### RATTLING OFF THE EIN ANI MA'AMINS

When you think of Hakodosh Boruch Hu in no terms at all, then even though you daven and you say His name, and you might even say *אני מאמין באמונה שלימה* - you know that some people say the *Ani ma'amins* after their prayers every day. Every day! They wouldn't miss it for anything! They rattle it off, quickly, making sure they say every one. *Ani ma'amin* this, *ani ma'amin* that. And it has the exact same effect on him as if he said *אני אין מאמין*, I *don't* believe b'emunah sh'laimah. He doesn't know what he's saying. It's just words, empty words. And that's why most people end up with an empty head. Is that called living?! It's worthless! Because saying words that have absolutely no connection with your mind is the same as not saying anything at all.

Listen to this very carefully: To believe in Hakodosh Boruch Hu, and even when a man is actually willing to give up his life for the emunah, *but if he does not have actual pictures of Hashem in his mind*, that means that this man has failed in his function of *yiras Hashem*, Awareness of Hashem.

And because failing in your function of Awareness of Hashem means that you've failed in your function in life, therefore we are expected to make use of *hagshama* in order to succeed. That's what Hakodosh Boruch Hu wants from us, and that's why we come face to face with *hagshama* wherever we turn in the Torah and Chazal. You have to think of Hashem as an active personal being! In order to feel the great truth that Hashem is **ה' וקיים**, you have to think of Him as a living being. And it's not *apikorsis*, because you don't *really* believe it. But still, you *must* imagine Him that way.

#### **EVEN THE BIGGEST TZADIK IS NOT A MALACH**

That's why Hakodosh Boruch Hu allows us, He cajoles us, into seeing Him in a most physical, a most corporeal, way. Because at the end of the day, no matter how big of a *tzadik* you are, no matter how much of a man of *ruchniyus* you may be, you're not a *malach* - you're a *gashmiyusdikeh* person living in this world, with eyes, and feet, and emotions - the whole gamut of physical existence.

And because we live in the physical world, we can best become aware of Hashem when we perceive Him as something real, with all of the anthropomorphic characteristics, the characteristics that if *truly* believed would make you an *apikoris*.

#### **THE PROPHET'S SIDE JOB: PHOTOGRAPHY**

And that's why when Hakodosh Boruch Hu spoke to the *Nevi'im*, when he spoke to our prophets, He showed them *pictures*. The prophets saw *visions*; they didn't see *ideas* or *words*! It's a queer thing about the *Nevi'im*: they all saw Hakodosh Boruch Hu in physical forms. Take *Yeshaya Hanavi* for example. He describes: **מי זה בא מאדום חמוץ בגדים מבצרה** - "Who is this One coming from *Edom* with bloody garments, [from His slaughter performed] in *Batzrah*" (*Yeshaya* 63:1).

Now, *Yeshaya Hanavi* is describing a hero; Hashem is like a mighty war hero, **הַדּוֹר בְּלִבוֹשׁ** - clothed in raiment of glory (ibid.), coming from *Edom*. His garments are dripping with blood, the blood of the nation from whom He is taking the final revenge. The day will come when all the blood of the *Am Yisroel* that was shed by the nations of the world will be avenged. And Hakodosh Boruch Hu will trample on the *umos ha'olam* like one who treads on a wine press and tramples the grapes. And He will come forth towards us with His garments red with the wine of the enemy's blood. That's how the *Navi* describes Hakodosh Boruch Hu. And all the *Nevi'im* describe Hashem in similar, physical ways.

Now, the *Navi* didn't compose poetry. He wasn't trying to be a writer of novels, someone who finds ways of portraying something boring as if it were an exciting adventure. The *Navi* was simply saying what he saw in his vision. That's how he saw Hakodosh Boruch Hu! The *Navi* saw Hakodosh Boruch Hu as a person!

#### THE NEVI'IM VERSUS THE PHILOSOPHERS

And do you know what the *Navi* achieved when he saw that? Rav Yehuda Halevi in his *Kuzari* (*Ma'amar Harevi'i* 5:2-3) explains what a *Navi* accomplished; the success of the *Nevi'im*. No humans ever came as close to Hashem as did the *Nevi'im*. Some *Nevi'im* were closer than others, but a *Navi* was the most successful of all people.

The *Kuzari* states that the Greek philosophers spent their lives in attempting to come close to the divinity; meditating on the concepts that describe the attributes of the divinity. And he says as follows: although the philosophers labored all their lives to attain some knowledge of the divinity, yet, try as they did, they could not in a whole lifetime obtain what the prophet obtained in one moment. The *Navi*, in one second, attained a realization of Hashem which the old philosophers of Greece couldn't achieve in

a lifetime of thinking. That's a very important statement for us to internalize for our own lives.

In one flash of a *tziyur*, a picture, the Navi gained such *dei'ah* that these thinkers of Greece couldn't achieve in a whole lifetime of intense speculation. Because there is nothing like seeing. *אינו דומה שמיעה לראייה*. There is nothing like seeing Hashem. And so, when Hakodosh Boruch Hu showed a Navi a vision of Himself, he became a changed person forever. His mind was altered forever.

And by the *Nevi'im* there was no *harchakas ha'hagshama!* There was no way to dodge the words, like *Onkelos* does, because the *Navi* actually saw the picture with his own eyes. And if the *Nevi'im* saw Hashem with *tziyurim*, with pictures, and that's how these men became great, then we of course must use these ideas as a ladder towards the perfection of Awareness of Hashem.

#### HASHEM'S LONG AND BLOODY WHITE BEARD

And therefore, that's how we imagine Hashem as well. If you ever say *Anim Zemiros*, if you pay the slightest attention to what you're saying, you'll be describing Hakodosh Boruch Hu in the most mortal, almost vulgar, manner that could be. He appears like *זקנה ביום דין ושער ראשך בשיבה*, like an old sage with white hair who is sitting in judgement. *ובחרות ביום קרב*: And at other times He appears like a black-haired young man in the time of battle. Like our forefathers saw him, an *Ish Milchama*, a man of battle. Hashem was a warrior, a great warrior in brilliant armor, going forth in shining garb, and holding a sword dripping with the blood of His enemies. That's what the prophets saw. That's how they saw Hashem.

Now, these visions were only a *mashal* of course. They were absolutely unreal! But they brought as much *yiras Hashem*, as much Awareness of Hashem, as possible for a human being in this world. They brought so much conviction into the mind of the Navi that it brought him as close to Hakodosh Boruch Hu as

could be. Hashem allows Himself to be lowered and “insulted” by being described as a king on a throne, an old Rosh Yeshiva with a long flowing beard, or as a warrior on a chariot. These are some of the physical descriptions that we are taught. And we have to use these descriptions and any other ones that we can think of, in order to picture Hashem as something real and as a spur to increase our awareness of Him. And only then, will our *emunah* in Him become clearer and stronger. And only then, will we be fulfilling our function in this world.

#### DR. RAMBAM WILL HELP YOU WITH THE SIDE EFFECTS

And therefore, to learn Chumash without *tziyurim*, without pictures of Hakodosh Boruch Hu is really more perilous than to learn Chumash with pictures. Because we need the pictures. Because that's *da'as Hashem*, that's Awareness of Hashem. That's what brings the ideas of the Torah home to us. Only that, like with all good medicines, sometimes you must take something else while you're taking the medicine to protect you from side effects. The medicine is excellent; it saves your life. But at the same time, you need something else to avoid the undesirable side effects. But you need the medicine, because without it, you would be lost. And without *tziyurim*, without pictures of Hakodosh Boruch Hu, we would be in a very bad position indeed.

And therefore we need the *tziryurim*; we need that medicine of pictures of Hashem. *Yad Hashem, Einei Hashem, V'chara af Hashem, Va'yeired Hashem, Va'yar Hashem*. All valuable medicines! But with all of these vital *tziyurim*, we also need the *Targum Onkelos* who reminds us always of *harchakas hagashmius*, and explains all these phrases in a spiritual sense. And we need the Rambam in the Moreh to warn us at every step that this is not meant literally. And intellectually we know that it's not, but we squeeze out as much Awareness of Hashem as we can out of these words.

And therefore, for the sake of this most important of all achievements, it was necessary to undertake this great risk, the great peril of *hagshama*. The Torah takes that risk, because without *hagshama*, without the ability to perceive Hashem in a most real way, a man is one small step way from an even bigger peril - the peril of never really believing in Hashem.

#### CHOOSING THE LESSER OF TWO EVILS

And I'll bring a parallel to this that should help us better understand this. The Rambam states in a number of places, one of them is in his *Ma'amar Kiddush Hashem*, that an atheist is worse than an idolater. זרה ומינות גדולה מעבודה זרה - atheism is more terrible of an attitude than is idolatry. Now that is an important statement. It is important for us Jews to listen worshipfully to that statement. It is better to have Jews who worship idols - who use conduits to more easily perceive Hashem - than to have Jews who don't believe in a *Borei* at all. Of course, *uch in vey* to have that advantage, that superiority. But it is better! A man who is an *oived avodah zarah* is superior to an atheist.

So let us say that at the next UJA dinner if the speaker would be a Buddhist or even someone who worships a carved stick, that would be much better than the Jew who will be speaking there, the Jew who is an atheist. It would be much better!

And what does that mean for us? It's a parallel to the choice we face in our lives all the time. Because we are *always* choosing between atheism and *avodah zarah*! Now, I'm not accusing anyone here of being an atheist, but many of us are not so far from it. Of, of course you're an Orthodox Jew, the best of the best, but in many ways you're just an atheist covered with a thin layer of Orthodox paint. A little scratch on the surface and underneath we barely have any *emunah* at all.

#### THE MAN IN THE BACK ROOM WITH HIS FORK AND KNIFE

And now we can better understand the words in our parsha that we began the lecture with: לחם אלהיך - "The Food of

Hashem.” In order to assist His loyal servants in gaining more actual awareness of Him, Hashem voluntarily minimized Himself and surrendered His dignity by telling us that we are to bring forth to Him “His Food.”

Now all men, even the least intellectual, are able to feel the emotion of a servant who brings tribute to his king. And even the greatest of men achieve even more Awareness, more perfection, by utilizing the somatic descriptions of Hashem.

So when the Kohen brought the *korban*, he felt as if he were actually bringing food for Hashem to eat. He was bringing the לחם אלוֹקֵי - the food, the meal, of his G-d. And the kohanim prepared for Hashem His breakfast and dinner, just like they prepared their own two meals at home. את קרבני לחמי... את הכבש - “My offering, My food...one lamb you should prepare for Me in the morning, and the second lamb you should prepare for Me in the afternoon” (Bamidbar 28:2-4).

And it was as if Hashem was sitting in a back room of the Beis Mikdash somewhere, waiting, with His fork and knife. And it wasn't wrong for the Kohanim to think so. Not at all. That is the purpose of these words. The Kohen awakened his imagination and his emotions to believe that he was bringing food to Hashem and he thereby grew in his emunah - his *da'as Hashem*.

#### THE POWER OF IMAGINATION

Everyone knows that Hashem is *not* eating the *lechem* that you bring to Him. It's not true at all. He has no need for your *korban*. But by imagining it as if it were real, a person develops a personal closeness to Hashem. Of course, our intellect knows just well that Hashem has no *guf* - Hashem is pure *seichel*. And yet, all day long, the Kohanim were running back and forth, preparing food and feeding the King. And Hashem thereby became tangibly real to the Kohen and he begins to lead a life where the Awareness

of Hashem permeates everything that he does. And living with this awareness of Hashem is living with perfection.

And that's why we yearn for the Beis Hamikdash so deeply. Having a house in our midst where Hashem lives is a tremendous help, a spur, towards gaining awareness of Hashem. To live your life knowing that Hashem is residing in Yerushalayim, and that you will be *oleh regel* three times a year to visit Him, was the way a Jew lived in ancient times. We must not overlook the tremendous effect of having the *Mikdash*, the house where Hashem resided, in our midst. Hashem was actually residing among them. A Jew could stand in Yerushalayim and point with his finger: "Hashem lives there, down the block." And that's we cry for on *Tisha B'av* - for the loss of that great opportunity of living with a real Hashem, א-ל חי וקיים.

But even though we don't have the Beis Hamikdash today, a place where we spend the day feeding Hashem His food, there is still much we can gain from the House of Hashem. Three times a day, when you stand up to pray the *shemonah esrei* the *halachah* demands of you that you face the *kodesh hakodoshim* in *Yerushalayim*. Wherever you are in the world, you turn towards His place of residence to speak to Him. And don't waste that opportunity. When you stand up to pray, be sure to think these thoughts - the same thoughts that the *Am Yisroel* were thinking in Eretz Yisroel of ancient times - that exhilarating thought of "There dwells Hashem!" You're actually turning in *tefillah* to Hashem's house, and you're speaking to *Him!* "There dwells Hashem!"

#### THE BERDITCHEVER'S MUSSAR SHMOOZE

You have to become aware of Hashem on a tangible and personal level. He has to be more than just a word in the siddur. You're supposed to love Hakodosh Boruch Hu! Now, go love a siddur! Maybe a siddur you could love, but a word in the siddur?! That's impossible! So when will you ever come to that feeling of

*ahavas Hashem?* How many people ever felt a real love for Hakodosh Boruch Hu?

I told you this story once, but I'll say it again. One morning, in the *shtiebel* of Rav Levi Yitzchok M'Berditchev, the *Berditchiver* sent his gabbai up to the *bimah* during davening to make an important announcement. In the middle of davening, all the מתפללים were davening, and the gabbai interrupts to make an announcement on behalf of the Rebbe. "The Rebbe wants everyone to know, that there is a *Ribono Shel Olam!*" In the middle of *p'sukei d'zimrah!* A special announcement: "Remember Hashem!" Because even when you're looking in the siddur, and you're shaking back and forth, you need to be reminded that Hashem is not just a word in your siddur; He's *really there* with you!

Achievement number one of all the achievements of *tefillah* is to gain Awareness of Hashem, to gain a feeling that Hashem is right in front of you. Many people have the mistaken notion that *דע לפני מי אתה עומד* - to know before Whom you are standing during *tefillah*, is simply a prerequisite for proper davening. But that's a mistake. Because to know before Whom you are standing is actually the primary *achievement* of prayer. To feel like you're actually talking to somebody. The Somebody with a capital S.

#### UNCLE MORRIS'S BAR MITZVAH GIFT

You have to believe in the reality of Hashem at least as much as you believe in your Uncle Morris in the Bronx. Ah, good old Uncle Morris in the Bronx! Even though you never saw him - maybe he sent you a Bar-Mitzvah gift forty years ago but that's all - and yet you believe in him implicitly. You're a *ma'amin* in Uncle Morris. And if you could believe in Hashem as much as in your Uncle Morris, then you've made it. You're a success!

And the most fundamental way to get there is through pictures in the mind. You have to *imagine* Hakodosh Boruch Hu as physical being. And in order to gain that big achievement, the

awareness of the truth that Hashem is actually here; Hakodosh Boruch Hu permitted us to imagine pictures in our minds. And our business is to utilize this *heter* as an opportunity for achieving Awareness of Hashem and to become greater and greater.

### DOES ANYONE HAVE A MOTRIN?

Listen to these words of Chazal: The Gemara says (Sanhedrin 46a) that when a Jew is in pain, Hashem says, קלני מראשי - "My head hurts." Hashem doesn't say it hurts me when a Yid is in pain. He says "My *head* hurts." You hear that? Hashem's *head* hurts Him! That's how we are supposed to picture it. When you have some trouble in your life, it's not enough to know that Hashem cares for you and feels your pain. The Gemara is giving us a good piece of advice. It's a good *eitzah* to help you become more aware of Hashem. Of course, Hashem doesn't have a head and it doesn't hurt, but Chazal are telling us that we have to visualize that Hashem has a terrible headache when His children are in pain. Yes, a headache. A headache just like you and I get a headache. What you're hearing here is that you shouldn't leave your thoughts of Hashem as weak and vague thoughts. Make them real by creating *pictures in your mind*. And as you take advantage of this *eitzah*, of visualizing what the Gemara is telling you here, you will surely become more and more Aware of Hashem.

Now the opportunities for growing in Awareness of Hashem, tangible awareness, during *tefillah*, are endless. Let me give you an example. You say the *beracha* of *Refa'einu* every day, day after day, but it means almost nothing to you. It's just words. Oh yes, you'll say, "He's the רופא נאמן, He's the רופא חולי עמו "ישראל," but they are empty words in your mind. The real doctor is in that office in Manhattan; that's what you're thinking. Of course, you're not brazen enough to say it, but that's what you're thinking.

So you have to create a *tziyur* in your mind. Imagine the world's greatest doctor standing before you, ready to heal you. That's who you are talking to. That's Hashem.

You know that sometimes when a person is sick, he needs to wait weeks to see a specialist. It's not always easy to get an appointment. Maybe you have to call another doctor to see if he can make a phone call for you to get you in. Whatever it is, it's not always easy to get into the best doctors. And then, when the day of the appointment arrives, you're sitting in the waiting room, and you see the many plaques on the wall. He graduated from this university and that program. Summa cume' laude, it says on the wall. Graduated with the highest honors. Everything! All good things! He probably knows a little bit about medicine. And you feel calm, relaxed, you're in good hands. Finally somebody who will take care of you.

#### NO WAITING LIST TO GET INTO THIS DOCTOR

And so, when you stand in front of Hakodosh Boruch Hu, and you say *רפאינו השם ונרפא... כי א-ל מלך רופא נאמן ורחמן אתה*, you should feel at least as comforted as when you're sitting in that doctor's office. And you didn't have to wait weeks for the appointment. You should be filled with happiness. He's the real Doctor, the only One who can keep you healthy and heal you when you're sick. He knows exactly what's ailing you and how to heal you. He doesn't have to send you to labs, and for an MRI and to specialists. Because He is *the* Specialist!

And unlike many of the specialists you'll meet, He's not arrogant. And He's merciful and He cares about you; He loves you and wants to keep you healthy when you're well, and heal you when you're sick. He truly is the greatest Doctor and the true Healer, and you have to get to work on recognizing that. And the only way you can begin to progress from *saying so*, to actually *feeling so*, is by working on gaining this tangible Awareness of Hashem.

Now, of course, it sounds strange the first time you hear this, to imagine Hashem as a great, big, doctor, an expert above all experts. But that's how the true Awareness will hit home. When you say **כי א-ל מלך רופא נאמן ורחמן אתה**, you are talking to that Great Doctor, the One who knows all illnesses and all the best medicines. And when you work on creating this picture in your mind, the picture of Hakodosh Boruch Hu the Doctor, you will start to feel as calm and secure as when you come into the doctor's office in Manhattan.

Now, when you walk away, when you take three steps back, you know that it's not true. You know that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is not wearing a doctor's scrubs. But you're still left with an Awareness of the truth, that He is the **רופא חולי עמו ישראל**, an Awareness that up until that moment had been only a superficial belief.

#### THE MOST IMPORTANT WORDS IN AVINU MALKEINU

And when you say *Avinu*, don't lose that opportunity and just say it as if you're in a dream. He's our father; He's our father. My Rosh Yeshiva in Europe told me that old-time Jews said *Avinu Malkeinu* the way it's supposed to be said. You know that when we say *Avinu Malkeinu*, we want the second half second half of it. We're thinking about what we want from Him,, **שלח רפואה שלימה**, **לחולי עמך** or **כתבנו בספר פרנסה וכלכלה**. It's the words at the end that matter to us. We look at it as if the first two words are just an introduction, to help us warm up for the ending, the *tefillah*. But the old-time Jews spent time on the first two words: *Aaaaveeeeeenuuuuuuu!* *Maaaaalkeieieieienuuuuu!* They knew that *those words were* the important point!

And that is the true achievement! The achievement of feeling that He is *Avinu!* *Aaaaaaveeeeeenuuuuuuu!* And then they would finish up quickly **קרע רוע גזר דיננו**. And then again, they repeated *Avinu*, slowly. *Aaaaaaveeeeeenuuuuuuu!* *Aaaaaaveeeeeenuuuuuuu!* And then again and again. And it started

penetrating them that Hashem is our real loving Father and King. He's a merciful, loving father, looking down at me. Oh, now you're talking! A father!

Now a father is already a different story. It's more than a word on the page. So you start thinking: *mein tatteh*, my *Abba*, and it begins to settle into your mind. A kindly father, a father who has love and pity. You know, a father often brings home little toys for his children. Do you remember when you were were a little child, and your father used to bring something home for you when he came home from work. He brought you a little toy, and he put you on his knee. Those were precious moments. You were secure and happy in your father's loving embrace. You are able to look back on those fond moments because there was a father whom you could see, a father you could touch. And therefore, if we want to climb the ladder to love of Hashem, then we must think of Hakodosh Boruch Hu in those terms. So you'll ask me: Is that a way to speak of Hashem? Like a flesh and blood father who can hold you in His lap? And the answer is absolutely. No question about it. Because that's the way you'll come to a little bit of love, a real feeling of *Avicha Sh'bashamayim*.

#### TRY TO COUNT ALL THE MELECH'S IN DAVENING

Then you say *Maaaaalkeieieieienuuuu!* And you're imagining a great imposing king sitting on His throne, fully in charge of *everything!* You have to create that picture in your mind. The King of all kings, with a long flowing white beard, sitting on His throne, Who knows everything and Who is in control of everything. We have to think about what a king means. In the old days, when they said "King" they felt something. They understood what it means to have a King. Everything is in His hands. He decides exactly what happens in His kingdom. He could give you what you need and want, or take away what you don't want to lose, in the blink of an eye.

Do you even realize how many times you say the word *Melech* in one day? Count them; you'll be surprised. And what does it do for you? Do you think about it all? Is it changing you? *Ahh nechtigeh tug!* Because you're not creating *tziyurim* in your mind. You have some vague belief in Hashem as a king, and that's all; you're satisfied with that. But what is it worth? what is it worth?

And we're using real physical terms for Hakodosh Boruch Hu throughout our davening - only that we ignore them. For example, on Mondays and Thursdays, we say a long tachanun. And in there you say *הטה אלקי אונך ושמע* - "Hashem, lean Your ear over towards me, and listen to my words." Lean over to me?! Open Your *ears* to hear my words?! *פקח עיניך וראה* - "Open Your eyes and see what's doing." Open Your eyes?! You're telling Hashem to open His *ears* and *eyes*?! When you're davening, you're not supposed to be contemplating the *pshat* of the Rambam in these words, the *pshat* of the *Targum Onkelos*, that these are all allegories and similes for deeper concepts. No; you should be thinking about real eyes, and real ears.

Yes, that's exactly what you're supposed to be thinking. And picturing! You're asking a loving father to lean over, and to open His ears and listen to your entreaties. These words were chosen for our *tefillah* - and in abundance - for that purpose. We want to talk as graphically as possible, with words that we can understand, so that we achieve the goal of our lives, Awareness of Hashem.

#### DON'T FOOL YOURSELF

And don't think it's foolish. Don't think it's false and immature. No! You're the fool if you ignore all of these *tziyurim*. Because you're fooling yourself! Your mouth is saying all these physical expressions for Hashem but you're ignoring them completely! You're frustrating the plan of Hakodosh Boruch Hu in this world, the plan of the *pshuto shel mikrah*.

And that's we say every day in *shema*: וַהֲרַה אֵף, the wrath of Hashem is kindled against those who do idolatry. Now, Hashem doesn't lose his temper. Hashem doesn't have any fury. Hakodosh Boruch Hu is always calm and always happy and the wisdom of Hakodosh Boruch Hu always burns like an eternal light. It doesn't flicker. Now, I can't tell you much about Him. We'll have to wait till we get there. But there's no question that to say that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is furious, that He's burning with anger, is applying a physical expression, to a Being that has no relation to physicality at all. But it's useful. It's needed and it's important.

### YOUR BOSS'S ANGER PROBLEM

I'll give you a *mashal*. Here's a person at work. And sometimes he might be a bit lazy, not working up to par. So this man must know that the boss will be angry with him. . So what do you do? You don't tell him "It's against the rules if you come late or if you do this and this." You don't say, "If so and so happens I will have to put in a report." No; you tell him, "The boss will get angry at you. He'll be furious if he finds out." Even better, you say, "He'll be so angry there'll be fire pouring out of his nose." וַהֲרַה אֵף. Oh, now you're talking! Now you mean business!

And if we're going to fear Hashem at least as much as we fear our boss, if we're going to love Hashem as much as we love our children, then we have to be at least as aware of Him as we are of our boss and our children. And so for the sake of becoming aware of Hakodosh Boruch Hu, it was worth taking the risk of falling into the error of anthropomorphism.

### RAV MILLER SNEAKS IN TO THE ABANDONED HOUSE IN KOVNO

And when a person will make use of this program, the program that we find in *Tanach* of making Hashem real, he'll succeed at actually living with Hashem in his life. When I was in Slabodka I heard from the older Yeshiva men that there was a *mussar shtiebel* in Kovno. In Kovno there was a special mussar house. So I went there. I left the seder once. I left the Yeshiva and

walked across the river and went to the mussar house. Now they told me it was always locked, but that there is loose brick where they keep the key hidden. They described to me where the loose brick is, and they said that I should pull out the loose brick and that there is a key behind that loose brick. So sure enough, I saw the loose brick, pulled it out and I found the key and let myself in.

I walked in and I was all by myself in the old mussar house. And I was sitting there. "What should I do?" I was thinking. "It's an opportunity," I thought. So I was thinking I should work on this: "Hashem is looking at me." So I sat there for an hour. For a full hour I sat there by myself, thinking that Hashem is looking at me. It was in the old mussar *shtiebel* in Kovno. And I don't regret that experience. Not at all.

It's so important and you must find time for it. The great tzadikim of ancient times spent weeks and months on that. Of course, they did other things too. But they constantly worked on this attitude, this awareness that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is looking. All the time, His eyes are looking at you.

#### CAUGHT BY THE INVISIBLE MAN

Like the *Gra* once was riding on a wagon. There was a Jewish בעל עגלה, a wagon driver, and he was driving his wagon down the road with the *Gra*, and so the driver stopped for a moment to let his horse eat from the things that were growing by the roadside. Of course, it wasn't right because the grain belonged to the owner of the field. So the *Gra* is sitting in the wagon and he yells out to the driver: "*Er kukt!* He's looking!" So the driver got frightened. And he whipped his horse and he quickly road the wagon away.

And when he went down the road some distance, the driver turned to the *Gra* and said: "I didn't notice him. Where'd you see him? Who was looking?" And the *Gra* said, "Hakodosh Boruch Hu was looking!" "Ohhh!" said the driver. "I got scared; I thought it was a goy who was looking at me." He thought it was a

goy! But it was *only* Hakodosh Boruch Hu! That's because you know that the goy has eyes, and he has hands and feet. But Hashem, He's somewhere far, far away. And so we have to learn to be afraid of Hakodosh Boruch Hu too. Not only of the goy. And that's an important lesson. You can never overdo it - gaining the great attitude that what you do is being seen every moment.

#### MEETING UP WITH HASHEM ON OCEAN PARKWAY

Every little boy and girl knows that Hashem sees everything. Certainly, every four year old knows that. But the problem is when you're seventy-four, and eighty-four, and ninety-four, and you still know it the same way you knew it when you were four. Certainly, Hashem sees everything. Certainly! But is Hashem looking at you as you walk down the sidewalk? Is He looking at you when you're sitting at the table eating your breakfast? Oh; that you forgot about! To forget that Hashem is constantly looking at you?! That's a tragedy.

So you should always be reminding yourself, "Hashem is looking at me right now." When you're walking down the street, that's a good time to practice developing your Awareness of Hashem. Most of the world walk the street wasting precious time. At best, they're thinking about nothing at all. And when your mind is empty, it quickly fills up with everything that surrounds you. And that's how you acquire a gentile mind.

So let me tell you what you should do. When you walk in the street say to yourself, "Hashem is looking!" But where's He looking from? And therefore it's not enough to merely say, "He's looking," because you don't really believe it. Hakodosh Boruch Hu is *kulo seichel, kulo ruchni*; He doesn't have eyes to see. And therefore if you want to be a success, you will make sure you avail yourself of the *heter* that Hashem allows, to actually imagine Hashem with piercing eyes looking down at you. If you leave here tonight and try this for one minute on your way home, then

you're on the way. And if you do it for even one minute a day, you're already a great man!

#### SOMEONE'S SPYING ON YOU FROM THE WINDOW

Like the *mishna* in Pirkei Avos (2:1) tells us דע מה למעלה - "An eye that sees." - "You must know what's above you, עין רואה, ממשך - "He's looking down from the heavens." (Tehillim 14:2) Now, forget about the sky, forget the heavens; they're too far away. The way to accomplish this is by imagining that He's looking at you from the window of this house that you're passing by. Imagine that He's peeking at you from behind the window shade. Oh, now we're talking! Now you're beginning to feel it! "He is watching me."

And you can work on this in your place of business, in the subway, and also at home. Because there is always room in your mind for the thought that Hashem is looking at you. A successful person is always thinking: "Hakodosh Boruch Hu's eyes are gazing at me, staring at me right now."

And don't tell your wife - and wives also shouldn't let their husbands know - about what you're thinking. Because they'll think you've lost it, you're nuts. And you don't want anybody to cool you off! Now, of course, if you have a wife who is willing to listen to you, then you should talk to her! Certainly! And your children as well. Tell your children - even the little ones. Say it to them again and again, at every opportunity, and trust me, it'll have an effect on them. When you're sitting with them at the meal, don't be bashful - say to them: "You should know kinderlach, Hashem is looking at us right now. He sees everything we are doing!" Now that is real chinuch!

#### HASHEM'S NIGHT VISION GOGGLES

And every morning is another opportunity to get busy on this most important of all projects. Everybody knows the *Tur*

(Orach Chaim 2) that says that when you're dressing and undressing you shouldn't expose your body because Hashem is looking at you. And the Tur says, "You shouldn't say: *מי רואיני* - it's in a dark room; who sees me anyway? No, Hashem can see in a dark room too. The truth is that He can see under the blanket as well, but it's all a charade for your mind, so that you should become aware that He actually is looking at you. And so you try as much as possible when you're dressing and undressing not to expose your body. And by doing that, *with the thought that Hashem is looking at you*, you're training yourself to become more aware of this great truth of an Hakodosh Boruch Hu who is watching you.

And by fulfilling all these *eitzos* that I am telling you, and many others of your own, you will start becoming aware of the Presence of Hashem. You will start out on the path that will lead you to true *da'as Hashem* - true awareness of Hashem. And just like the Kohen who brought the *lechem* to the *mizbei'ach* to Hashem; just like he became great by doing so, so too, will you become more and more perfect in your Awareness of Hashem. All of our lives we are working on gaining this Awareness - He is looking at us, He is guiding us, and He is in charge of all our affairs. And we visualize Him before us all the time! And in doing so, we will be fulfilling the true function of our lives in this world.

**HAVE A WONDERFUL SHABBOS**

# תורת אביגדור

"שאל אביך ויגדך זקניך ויאמרו לך"



## Q&A With Rav Avigdor Miller Ztz"l

**Q:**

**Do I have to say that תפילה before קריאת שמע על המטה of הרניני מוחל, in which I forgive anyone who wronged me?**

**A:**

You're not מחויב, but if you want to do it, it's good business. It's a good business opportunity. Like the Gemara says, נושא עון ועובר על פשע. To whom will Hashem be נושא עון? To whom will Hashem forgive his sins? To the one who is עובר על פשע. To the one who is willing to forgive others (Rosh Hashanah 17a). If you forgive those who sinned against you, then Hashem will forgive your sins.

So it pays. If you don't want to, you don't have to say it. But it's good business. If you forgive others, Hashem will forgive you. So it pays. It pays to say it. But you have to mean it. You have to put thought into it. Just to mumble the words because it's in the siddur, won't do you any good. You have to think about what you're saying. Think about the neighbor or the co-worker who wronged you and forgive him. But do you have to say it? No. You don't have to say it.

TAPE # E-221

This and hundreds of other Q & A articles are available online at  
[TorasAvigdor.org](http://TorasAvigdor.org)

To receive a Daily Email with a Q&A from Rav Avigdor Miller z"l  
please visit our website, or email [info@TorasAvigdor.org](mailto:info@TorasAvigdor.org)