

# תורת אביגדור

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SEFER SHEMOS - THE PENSON FAMILY EDITION

IN HONOR OF YEHOASHUA MORDECHAI'S UPCOMING BAR MITZVAH

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# פרשת תרומה

WITH

# R' AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"l

## House of Thanksgiving

### Contents:

Part I. The House - 3

Part II. The Table - 5

Part III. The Chandelier - 9

Part IV. The Soul - 13

## Part I. The House

### Drill Past the Chitzoniyus

When we read the remarkable words that Hashem spoke to Moshe Rabeinu, וְעָשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ – *They should make for Me an especial place, וְשִׁכְנָתִי יִשְׁכְּבָתִי* – *and I shall dwell in their midst* (Terumah 25:8), right away we understand that such an astonishing concept – a house dedicated to Hashem! – requires great study. And therefore, we should try to understand, at least a little bit, what it is that the Beis Hamikdash and its vessels achieved for the Am Yisroel.

Now, before we start, I must give credit to one of the *chachamim* of two generations back, who made a statement that serves as an introduction to our subject. The Alter of Kelm, Rav Simcha Zissel, *zichrono livracha*, said that when studying the Torah, it's necessary *l'hafshit es hatzurah* – *to remove the outward guise of what we see*. It means that we are expected to remove the *chitzoniyus* of the *mitzvos* and study their *pnimiyus*, the core of what Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants from us. And so, when it comes to a subject as important as the Beis

Hamikdash, it pays to drill down to the heart of what it all means – to remove the shell and try to discover its *pnimiyus*.

### Music Appreciation

Now, Dovid Hamelech wrote a song that he intended to be sung at the occasion of the inauguration of the Beis Hamikdash. We're all familiar with it – if you come on time, you say it every day in *shul*: מְזִמּוֹר שִׁיר הַנֶּחֱבֵת הַבַּיִת לַדָּוָד – A song for the inauguration of the House of Hashem, composed by Dovid (Tehillim 30:1). And we understand that if Dovid composed a song especially in honor of that important occasion, then if we want to glean something about the significance of the Beis Hamikdash, we should study his words.

Whether it's going to be a song in which Dovid expresses his gratitude to Hashem for resting His Presence among us, or maybe it contains in it a promise to Hashem that we'll serve Him faithfully in the Beis Hamikdash by fulfilling all the details of the *avodah* – whatever it may be, this *shir* is expected to be an illumination on the subject of the Beis Hamikdash.

However, when we examine this *mizmor* it seems like there's a mistake here, because except for the title not even one word is mentioned about the Beis Hamikdash. מְזִמּוֹר שִׁיר הַנֶּחֱבֵת הַבַּיִת לַדָּוָד – A song for the inauguration of the House of Hashem, composed by Dovid – and that's it; nothing else is mentioned. It's a remarkable thing that when you look at this song that was composed for the inauguration of the Beis Hamikdash, when you study it line by line and seek some reference to the Beis Hamikdash, there's not one word – not even a hint of anything.

Isn't that strange? There's so much to say about the Beis Hamikdash! The *kedushah*, the *Shechinah*, the *kohanim*, the opportunity for *mitzvos* and *avodas Hashem*. So much of our history and so much of our Torah ideology is connected to the Beis Hamikdash, and yet there's not a word in the entire song about all of that. The *avodas hakorbanos* was the heart of the Jewish nation for so many years, and we have *mesichtas* and *mesichtas* filled with its details – *Zevachim* and *Menachos* and *Bechoros*; other *mesichtas*, too – and yet in this *mizmor* nothing is mentioned at all! Even one *possuk* Dovid couldn't say?! Certainly, we wouldn't have made a *shir* for the Beis Hamikdash in that manner.

### Raise Him Up

And so, in order to answer this question, we must go back to the principle that Rav Simcha Zissel taught us, and we understand that Dovid Hamelech is being *mafshit* the *tzurah* of the Mikdash – he's peeling away the outer layer to teach us what the Beis Hamikdash is all about.

אָרוֹמְמֶךָ הַשֵּׁם – “I will exalt You, Hashem,” begins Dovid. With these first words Dovid is teaching us a very big *chiddush*; right away he’s stripping away the outer shell and telling us something that we probably wouldn’t have understood on our own – that the *Beis Hamikdash* was dedicated to the function of giving gratitude to Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

“I will exalt You, Hashem.” The purpose of the *Beis Hamikdash* was to be a place to raise up Hashem. Exalt means to raise up high, from the root “alt,” like in altitude. And as you read the whole *shir*, you see it’s one long narration of gratitude, of *hakaros hatov*. “You want to know why I’m doing all of this?” sings Dovid. “You want to know why I applied myself to gathering together all the materials for the building of the *Beis Hamikdash*? I did it for one purpose! To thank Hashem!” That’s what the *Beis Hamikdash* is for. בָּאוּ שְׁעָרָיו בְּתוֹדָה הַצִּירְתָּו בְּתֵהֵלָה – “Come into His gates with praise,” said Dovid Hamelech. “That’s the purpose of the *Mikdash* – it’s a place of raising You up high by means of gratitude.”

### **The House of Thanksgiving**

Whatever the *Am Yisroel* will do there, it’s all an expression of gratitude to Hashem. We’ll bring *korbanos* and light the *Menorah* and put the *lechem hapanim* on the *Shulchan* – everything we’ll do – and by means of that, אָרוֹמְמֶךָ הַשֵּׁם, “I will exalt You Hashem,” said Dovid. And there’s so much to thank for that we’ll never stop – Dovid is pouring out his heart in thanks to Hashem all the way till the last words: הַשֵּׁם אֱלֹקֵי לְעוֹלָם אוֹדָךְ. You know, when you write a *shtar*, so you have to be *chozer beshitah achronah*, to sum up the contents of the document on the last line. Like they say in America: “What’s the bottom line?” And what’s the bottom line, the grand finale of this *mizmor*? הַשֵּׁם אֱלֹקֵי לְעוֹלָם אוֹדָךְ – Hashem, I’m going to thank You forever.

Now, to us that’s a very surprising statement because we had other ideas in mind about the *Beis Hamikdash*. We never imagined that the House of Hashem is actually the House of Thanksgiving! We’re being taught now an entirely new attitude toward the *Beis Hamikdash*, a new explanation that most of us never even dreamed of. And we will begin to understand now that not only the general idea of the *Beis Hamikdash*, but also all of its details, are an expression of thanksgiving.

## *Part II. The Table*

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### **There’s Always Bread on the Table**

Everyone knows that in the *Mishkan*, and later in the *Beis Hamikdash*, we had the *Shulchan*, the Golden Table. וְעִשִׂיתָ שֻׁלְחָן עֲצֵי שֵׁטִים

— You should make a table from atzei shittim — it's a certain type of wood — וְצִפִּיתָ אֹתוֹ זָהָב טָהוֹר, and you should overlay it with gold (25:24). On that golden table were placed the *lechem hapanim*, twelve loaves of bread that remained there all week long.

It says לָחֶם פָּנִים לְפָנַי תָּמִיד — And you should put upon this table 'bread of the presence' before Me always (25:30). And so, when the Kohanim came on Shabbos to remove the bread, they had to be careful to be *mekayem* the command of that word *tamid* — it was forbidden to leave the *Shulchan* empty for even a moment! That's why, as some Kohanim were taking off the old bread, other Kohanim were already pushing the new bread onto the table.

What's this all about? It's not a bakery; it's a *Beis Hamikdash*! Now, I must tell you beforehand that the Rambam says that he doesn't understand the idea of the *Shulchan* and the *lechem hapanim*. He says that he has no explanation for it, and therefore I must apologize because along comes a nobody now who will give an explanation. But what can I do? What can I do — I can't help myself.

### **It's a Food World**

In his *sefer Emunos V'deios* (9:6), Rabbeinu Saadia Gaon makes a remark that enlightens us about the nature of *Olam Hazeih*. He says there that this world is a world that's made for food — not a world made for *Olam Habo* or for the *Am Yisroel* — he says that this world is created entirely for the purpose of supplying food. It's an observation that we don't usually pay attention to, but Rav Saadiah wants to make sure we don't miss it — to note this phenomenon that the entire *Olam Hazeih* is geared up for the function of מְכַלְכֵּל חַיִּים בְּרוּסָר. The world is working *tamid*, all day and all night, for the purpose of producing food.

The entire earth, with all its phenomena, is devoted to the purpose of creating and supporting life by means of a wonderful system that supplies the food needs of all the living. The soil that blankets this earth is only for the purpose of supplying food. The vast phenomena of the winds, the sun, the rain, the atmosphere, and thousands of other factors are all cooperating with each other in the mighty function of disbursing food to all the living — the world is working *tamid* to supply you with your breakfast, lunch and supper — and all the snacking in between.

### **Wheat Fields and Delivery Trucks**

If you open your eyes, if you open your mind, you'll see it all day long. Even a man in the city who never saw a cow or a wheat field in his life — he can see what Rav Saadiah is speaking about all around him. All day long trucks are driving back and forth on the streets, bringing all

types of food to the stores. Some are loaded with fruits and vegetables. Others with milk, and cheese, and poultry, and meats, and loaves of every type of bread. And it's *tamid* – from early in the morning, before you're even thinking about getting up, these trucks are on the road loading and unloading cases of food. There's something here! The whole *briyah*, the whole *maaseh bereishis* is working *tamid* – and for what? To bring you food! And we're all making use of it – the whole world is eating! You walk in the street and see hundreds of people there – that's a proof, a 100% incontrovertible proof, that everybody is eating.

And all of it is *nissei nissim*. Everyone knows what the *gemara* says: קָשִׁין מְזוּנוֹתָיו שֶׁל אָדָם בְּקָרִיעַת יָם סוּף – *A person's food is as difficult as the splitting of the Yam Suf* (Pesachim 118a). Now, what does that mean? Making a living can be difficult, but almost everybody is doing it. You're making a living, aren't you? But you still can't split the *Yam Suf*. What the *Gemara* is telling us is that the subject of food in this world is one of the greatest demonstrations of the greatness of *Hakodosh Baruch Hu* that we'll ever witness – and every piece of bread is as miraculous as *Kriyas Yam Suf*.

### **Kriyas Yam Suf In The Dining Room**

*Chazal* tell us that at the *Yam Suf* there were 250 *makkos*; it means there were at least 250 open miracles when Hashem split the *Yam Suf*. And when you're eating food, you're expected to realize that every bite is at least 250 miracles. The truth is that it's much more than *chamishim umasayim nissim*; it's *elef alfei nissim*! It's *amok amok*, it's miracles deep beyond comprehension. You need millions of details to cooperate to make bread; millions of details waiting, each one in its turn, to help make bread.

Can you even imagine such a thing, that inorganic material – air and water and some chemicals from the soil – should mix with a little sunshine and be transformed into organic substances capable of sustaining life?! But who needs to imagine? You can see that Hashem is doing it – *tamid*!

פּוֹתַח אֶת יָדְךָ וּמְשִׁבֵּיעַ לְכָל חַי רִצּוֹן – *You open up Your hand Hashem and feed the whole world*. How does He accomplish that? By harnessing the the sun to evaporate the water from the seas to create clouds, and then by moving these water-filled clouds inland by means of the wind. It's like a big conveyor belt moving water from the sea to the farmers. And then He opens up the clouds and causes the rain to fall upon the fields. *Hakodosh Baruch Hu* is feeding us *tamid* by keeping the air in constant motion bringing a never-ending supply of carbon-dioxide to the plants, and by the miracles of photosynthesis and the carbon cycle. The

stupendous phenomenon of supplying countless kinds of foods to countless kinds of diverse creatures, the never-ending process of recycling the waste and the dead plants and animals to replenish the constant supply of food, demands of us the very greatest expression of admiration and gratitude!

### **The Table Sings “Thank You”**

Now, when we want to express our gratitude to Hashem for this world that is working all the time to provide us with food, so we put on the *Shulchan* לֶחֶם פָּנִים לְפָנֵי תְּמִיד – loaves of bread to remain there all week (Shmos 25:30). Hashem is giving us bread and all of our food, every day, *tamid*, without the slightest interruption, and so we express our gratitude to Him by means of these twelve loaves that we keep on the table *tamid*.

That’s what the *Shulchan* was! In the building that was the home of Hashem, in the holiest place in the world, we set up a table with bread on it as a *מִזְמוֹר לְתוֹרָה* for the great *nes* of *lechem*. We say to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, “אֲרוֹמְמְךָ הָשֵׁם – We’re thanking You, Hashem! We exalt You because You give us our daily bread.”

Now, what was in the *Beis Hamikdash* was only a *remez* and a *mashal* for what you should do, for how you should think. And therefore, when we talk about the *Shulchan*, we have to remember that the *lechem hapanim* is an expression of the feelings that we’re *mechuyav* to express every day, *tamid*. When we remember the *lechem hapanim* that were arranged on the *Shulchan*, we must know that it obligates us to always keep in mind the *lechem* on our table – which means that we should never forget how great our gratitude should be for our daily bread.

### **Don’t Throw Miracles Around**

And that’s why when you’re sitting at the table and somebody says, “Can you give me that piece of bread?,” you can’t throw it to him. *Ein zorkin es hapas* – You can’t throw bread (Brachos 50b). *Derech erez!* You hand it to him with the *gresteh kavod*. Be polite with the bread! “I’m passing to you now Hakadosh Baruch Hu’s miracle.” Would you throw the *lechem hapanim*?! Would you throw, let’s say, the *urim v’tumim*?! If the Kohen Gadol said, “Hand me the *urim v’turim*,” would you throw it? You would lift it up with the biggest *derech erez*, with the greatest *hachna’ah* and *yiras Shamayim* and hand it to him.

But the piece of bread is more *nissim* than the *urim v’tumim* – much more! The *urim v’tumim* was a rare miracle, but bread is no less remarkable. It’s bigger – much bigger, only that we’re accustomed to it. So Hashem says, “Is that My fault? I’m giving you bread every day, so

therefore you shouldn't be excited?! Would it be better if I gave it to you once in ten years?"

When you see a piece of bread on your table, you have to train yourself to be excited about it – no less excited than if you found the *urim v'tumim* on your table. Say with your mouth, "You, Hashem, are אַתָּה הָעוֹלָם בְּלֹא – You are feeding the whole world. And right now You're feeding me בְּחֶן וּבְחֶסֶד וּבְרַחֲמִים – with favor and with kindness and with mercy." Don't rely on the *brachah*; don't wait for *bentching* – say it now! Because what's the purpose of all those miracles, after all? What's the purpose of that bread on your table? It's for the same purpose as the bread that sat on the *Shulchan* in the *Beis Hamikdash* – it's all בְּעִבּוֹר שְׁמוֹ – for the sake of His great name! How are we supposed to react from eating a piece of bread? We have to talk about His great name! That was the purpose of the *lechem* on the *Shulchan* – and that's the purpose of the *lechem* on your *shulchan*, too!

## Part III. The Chandelier

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### Uncovering The Light

Now, once we begin training ourselves in making use of this principle of *l'hafshit es hatzurah*, of drilling past the *chitzoniyus* in order to understand the *pnimiyus* of the *Beis Hamikdash*, so we shouldn't stop yet. וַעֲשִׂיתָ מְנֹרֶת זָהָב טָהוֹר – "Make a Menorah of pure gold" (Shmos 25:30). Now, I'm not capable of explaining the *pnimiyus* of the *Menorah* – this light that burned *tamid* is a very big subject. But if we attempt to talk about it, we'll have to offer more than one explanation because it's a splendid subject that lends itself to many important lessons – and all of them are true!

The first thing we think about is the great blessing of light. Now, it's a problem because when you talk to people about such a subject it's difficult for them to feel what you have in your heart. But what can I do? It's an obligation that the *Anshei Knesses HaGedolah* imposed upon us every day – it's in the *siddur*!

Every morning we say a *brachah* of *Yotzer Ohr* – the longest *brachah* in the *siddur* – so how can you ignore that subject? And don't be fooled by anyone who tells you it's talking about the *ohr haganuz*, about a secret light that's hidden away, or maybe the light of *Mashiach*. No, it's talking about *our light*, the light we see everyday, which obligates us in gratitude to Hashem.

Unfortunately we're not present while we're saying these words. We're traveling through Africa on a safari or maybe in *Eretz Yisroel*, and then we come back from our daydreams just in time for *kriyas shema*. Good, very good — *kriyas shema* is very important — but it means that we're missing out on thanking Hashem for the gift of light.

### **Inclusive Benefits**

Now, I know that most people will not be influenced by this kind of talk. If I would tell them something that's personal, something just for them, then yes, they might be happy. But to be happy about something that everybody else has, too?

Let's say Hashem would give you a million dollars — but then He would give another million to him and to him and to him, so you wouldn't be grateful at all. The fact that everybody else has light robs people of all their interest in it. If you could make the whole world dark for everybody else and he alone should have the sun — oh, yes, that would be something special. But that everybody should have the light, too? That robs you of the enjoyment. And therefore, says the *Chovos Halvovos*, you have to learn to thank Hashem for *tovos hakolalos*, for the all-inclusive benefits that He's giving to *everybody*. Certainly you must thank Him! Just because everybody else gets it, it doesn't make it any less important or valuable to you.

### **The Wise Malachim Are Excited**

And not only is it a *chiyuv* that the *Anshei Knesses HaGedolah* require of us, but they brought the *malachim* into the *brachah*, too. Why did they bring the *malachim* into the *siddur*? What do we need them for? And the answer is: to be an example for us. *Malachim* are very wise creatures — they have very good heads. בְּלֵם בְּרוּרִים בְּלֵם גְּבוּרִים — the whole *aleph beis* they are — every letter in the *aleph beis* is used there to describe the greatness of the *malachim*. And still, these *malachei elyon* become excited when they see the light! Light! That's what excites them! They call out *b'raash gadol*! Not like we say it, mumbling the words quietly; no, they're so excited that they go into ecstasy — they go wild with *simchah* and *hakoras hatov* when they see the light! מְבָרְכִים וּמְשַׁבְּחִים — We'll bless You, Hashem, and praise You and glorify You. And for what? עַל מְאוֹרֵי אֹר שְׁעֵשִׂית יִפְאָרוּךְ סְלָה — For the light! That's why the angels praise You forever — they're going *meshugeh* from happiness because of sunlight!

Of course they're going *meshugeh*! A glowing ball of thermonuclear energy sending forth its rays with tremendous power — billions of tons of horsepower flowing down to the earth. Light is a wonder — it's a miracle, a magical substance. To this day nobody knows exactly what

light is. Is it a substance or a force? It's a big *machlokes* in the science books — what is light? It's still a mystery. It's a form of energy, but how does that energy travel? And it's not just traveling — it's moving at tremendous speeds. The light shoots forward at 186,000 miles a second — not an hour; a second! — as it travels from the sun to here. We're standing here and the sun is shining over there, and the sunlight that's here now was eight minutes ago on the sun — 93 million miles away!

### **The Great Menorah in the Sky**

Without the sun this earth would be an ice cube. Nothing would move on the earth — there wouldn't be any life at all, because the energy comes from the sun. And this great light bulb has been shining for a long time, over 5,000 years already, and giving out energy at a tremendous rate, without letting up in the least. They have been measuring energy from the sun and it hasn't changed in the least. And as long as Hashem wants it to, it'll continue pouring out endless stores of energy.

Someday there won't be Arabian oil and they're going to put satellites in space to capture the sunlight and make energy out of it. Because only a tiny fraction of the sun's energy is used by the earth — all the rest goes off into space and is lost. But someday more of it will be channeled to this earth and all of Mankind will continue to live on the sun's energy.

And therefore, our function is to pay attention to this *menorah* that's always burning. *Ohr!* A light is burning! The *Menorah* in the *Beis Hamikdash* was an expression of gratitude, reminding us to thank Hashem for the sunlight that burns *tamid* — even at night, it's doing its work somewhere else — and the fact that we are dulled to it and we don't respond enthusiastically is nobody's fault except our own. The light is the great testimony to its Creator and our function in this world is to be excited about the light. *מְתוֹק הָאוֹר* — How sweet the light is, *טוֹב*; *לְעֵינַיִם לְרֵאוֹת אֶת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ* — it's a pleasure to see the sunlight (Koheles 11:7). But if you never think about it, you're missing one of the big happinesses of life — to be happy with sunlight, with daylight. And therefore we should take the *Menorah* as our model and say, “Ahh! *אֲתָה הַשֶּׁם יוֹצֵר*, *הַמְאֹרוֹת*.”

### **Thinking Along With Hashem**

Now, there's a lot more to say about the light — just like the *malachim* are *תְּמִיד מְסַפְּרִים כְּבוֹד קַל-ל*, we could do that, too. But we'll move onto something else that the *Menorah* wants to remind us: *כִּי נֵר מְצוּהָ* *וְתוֹרָה אוֹר*. Everybody knows that *possuk* — What is the true light of the world, the lamp that lights our way in this world? The *Toras Hashem*. *אוֹר* *לְתַיְבְּתֵי* — *וְהָאֵר עֵינֵינוּ בְּתוֹרָתְךָ*. — “Give

light to our eyes,” that’s what we ask Hashem for, because without the thoughts of the Torah, we walk in darkness.

Now, I must explain something to you. It’s not only that the Torah gives us *mitzvos* to do and that we earn merit and get *Olam Habah* because of the Torah. It’s much more than that. The Torah is *kulo svava*, it’s entirely the thoughts of Hakadosh Baruch Hu. And that means that there’s an eternal light burning in this world, a *ner tamid* that is teaching us how to think – a *light that is elevating our minds to think together with Hashem!*

To think along with Hashem! It’s one of the most important achievement in life because when Hakadosh Baruch Hu said on Har Sinai, אֲנִי הָשֵׁם אֱלֹהֶיךָ – *I am Hashem your G-d*, He meant – among other things – the *mitzvah* of *hevei domeh lo* – “Be like Me!”

Now, a command like that, to be like Hashem, seems at first to be very difficult to understand. Because we can’t make our faces or our bodies like Hashem. And so, in what way should we be like Hashem? And the answer is: *in our minds!* In our thoughts it’s possible, at least a little bit, to be *domeh lo*, to be similar to Him.

### **Learning How To Think**

“What should my opinion be about this or that?” “What should I be thinking about?” Those are questions everyone should be asking himself because our minds are what we really are – your future in the next world depends on the mind you create in this world. And the answer is: *Anochi Hashem Elokecha* – “Take Me as your model,” says Hakadosh Baruch Hu, “and learn to think the way I think.” Look in the Torah, in the Gemara, in the *seforim*, and you’ll see the *machshavos* of Hakadosh Baruch Hu. Even the details about a *bor b’rshus harabim* or *rov v’karov*, it’s all the thoughts of Hashem. By learning Torah, we are thinking along *k’vayachol* with Hakadosh Baruch Hu. Of course, כִּי גָבוּהוּ שְׁמַיִם מֵאָרֶץ בֶּן (Yeshaya 55:9) – the way Hashem thinks is infinitely higher than the way we think; He’s thinking *bishmei marom*, and we’re thinking way down below. But as long as we develop Torah attitudes and Torah ideals, our thoughts can at least go in the same direction as His.

And the lamp of the *Menorah* was our expression of gratitude to Hakadosh Baruch Hu for giving us this light of the world – for the opportunity to light up our minds with the thoughts of Hashem. And that’s why the light of the *Menorah* was also לְהַעֲלֵת נֵר תָּמִיד – it had to remain lit always (*Vayikra* 24:2); because we must be reminded that for such a gift like the opportunity to think along with Hashem, we should *forever* be expressing our gratitude to Hashem.

And so, when we read about the *Menorah* in the *Beis Hamikdash*, we should understand it as an expression of *hakoras hatov*, of gratitude to Hashem. And the best way for us to express the appreciation for this gift of the Torah is to forever spend time thinking the thoughts of Hashem — as much as you can, think His thoughts. Not only in the *beis medrash* — on the street, too! Because we never want to stop. וְהִגִּיתָ בוּ יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה — Whenever you have some spare time, learn Torah — because that's the illumination of the mind, and we do everything possible that this lamp of Torah should burn brightly for us day and night, forever, in every generation.

## Part IV. The Soul

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### The Gift of Life

Now, I couldn't part from you tonight without sharing one more lesson of thanksgiving that we learn from the *Menorah* that was burning always in the *Mikdash*. נֵר הַיָּשׁוּם נִשְׁמַת אָרָם — *The life of a person in this world is the lamp of Hashem* (Mishlei 20:27). It's telling us here that the life of a Jew is called the lamp of Hakadosh Baruch Hu and the *ner tamid*, the burning lamp on the *Menorah*, is a symbol of life reminding us to be grateful for every second of life.

I'll tell you a story. I told it many times already. In Lomza, the *mashgiach* once saw a sad-faced *yeshiva bochur*. So he went over to him and took him by both lapels and he said, "Mazel Tov! Mazel Tov! You're a lucky fellow!" he said to him. "Everybody should envy you!" And he went on and on — "Mazel tov! You're a lucky fellow!" And the boy was waiting already to hear what the good news is — the *bochur* was looking at him — "What's the *mazel tov*?" Finally after many *mazel tovs*, the *mashgiach* said, "Mazel tov — you're alive!" That's the *mazel tov*. "Oh! That's all?!" That's what the *bochur* was thinking.

### Try This At Home

Try that the next time you meet somebody who is downcast, somebody who is discouraged — do what the *mashgiach* in Lomza did. Give him the good news! It's too bad that people don't appreciate such news. And more importantly, it's too bad that *we* don't appreciate it. We should say "mazel tov" to ourselves. When nobody's looking, say it: "Mazel tov, Miller! You're so lucky to be alive."

You know there will come a time when you won't be alive. Of course you plan on being here for the next ten thousand years, but sooner or later it will all come to an end — and so you might as well enjoy every

second of it now. A time will come when we're going to look back and regret that we didn't enjoy life. You know when a person realizes it — when he's approaching his last moments, he looks back and thinks, "Why was I so stupid? My mind was obsessed with so many superficialities — so many different worries and silly ideas. The mere fact that I could walk down the avenue and see the light of day — cloudy, windy, sunny, any kind of a day, it was so much fun ..."

There's no such thing as an unpleasant day. Every day you should be grateful to Hashem. All the *meisim*, if they could come back for five minutes to this world — even two minutes, one minute — they'd sacrifice a great deal of their happiness. **יְפֵה שְׂעָה אֶחָד שָׁל תְּשׁוּבָה וּמַעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים בְּעוֹלָם יְפֵה שְׂעָה אֶחָד חַיֵּי עוֹלָם הִבָּא הָיָה מְכֹל חַיֵּי עוֹלָם הִבָּא**. How precious life is! At the end, when it's too late, that's when everybody knows it!

### **Life Is Sweet**

Enjoy it! — Be happy with it right now. Don't let a minute go by! Every moment that you're breathing and your heart is beating, your brain is functioning, enjoy the sweetness of life. It's so much fun to be alive! There's no fun on earth to compare to it! The greatest fun you could find in this world is the fun of being alive! There's nothing like it. Because when a man is given the opportunity to choose great pleasures, intense pleasures, but at the cost of his life soon thereafter, nobody would be so silly as to sacrifice his life. Because in the final analysis, everybody understands that true happiness is being alive. There's no fun like being alive! Isn't that a pity that people spend their days in ignorance in this? Think of all the good times you can have free of charge. The fact that you exist is the greatest of all kinds of enjoyment. It's a pity that people don't spend enough time thinking about it and the opportunity is lost. It's the most intense pleasure of all.

Isn't it a pity to appreciate that just when you're about to lose it? But that's the foolishness, the recklessness of mankind. Unless you're willing to invest a little effort and time, you'll never enjoy life. But once you start thinking these thoughts, it will repay you richly. If you learn how to enjoy life — enjoying life doesn't mean running around on Caribbean cruises, no! Enjoying life means, "Ahh! *Baruch Hashem*, I'm alive!" — and then you'll be a happy man always.

Practice up! When you open your eyes in the morning, the first thing you should feel is an outpouring of gratitude. "I'm alive!" You know, not everyone wakes up in the morning, and therefore it's important for a person to learn to be grateful that he's from the lucky ones! **בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' הַשֵּׁם הַמְחַיֵּי נְשָׁמוֹת לַפְּגָרִים מֵתִים** — *He gives back life to the dead bodies in the morning. Modeh ani l'fanecha* — the first thing in the morning!

## Rav Miller's Secrets

What I'm telling you now are all secrets; you shouldn't say these things when you go back to the *yeshiva* – because they'll laugh at you. You have to be careful when you repeat these things to other people. Shlomo Hamelech said **בְּאָזְנֵי כְּסִיל אֶל תִּדְבֵּר** – *Don't talk in the ears of a fool.* The whole world is foolish when it comes to these things because they only know the *chitzoniyus*. They didn't learn the lesson that Rav Simcha Zissel taught us, that we have to remove the outer covering of the *mitzvos* to understand the *pnimiyus* that Hashem wants from us.

**בְּאָזְנֵי כְּסִיל אֶל תִּדְבֵּר** – *Don't talk to other people about these things, כִּי יִבְזוּ לְשִׁכָּל מְלִיךָ* – *lest they make your words into nothing.* It means you'll tell somebody, “Be happy that you're alive,” and he'll look at you with his deadpan face and right away you'll get cooled off. He doesn't even have to say anything – his face alone cools you off. But in this place I'm talking to an intelligent audience – you people are all intellectuals so you won't cool me off. But in general you have to be careful lest people make your words into nothing! It could be he's polite and he won't say anything, but his face may show such a lack of interest that you yourself lose your enthusiasm. And therefore, **יִהְיוּ לָךְ לְבַדָּךְ וְאִין לְזָרִים אֲתָךְ** – *they should be for you alone, and strangers cannot share it with you (Mishlei 5:17).*

### Talking To Yourself

So when you go home and nobody's listening, talk to yourself about the happiness of life. All that fun that we get as we walk through the streets in the morning, coming to the *beis haknesses*, and breathing deeply as we look at the blue sky and think, “How good it is to be alive.” When you're in the street, when you're shopping – wherever you are, you can stop for a moment and think that the *menorah* of life is burning, the *ner Hashem nishmas adam* is burning within you – you're still alive! Ah, *chasdei Hashem!* Every minute is so precious, more than *kol chaye Olam Habo!*

And that's one of the reasons we light the *Menorah* in the *Beis Hamikdash* every day – to teach us the great lesson that we should feel gratitude *always* for the gift of life, for the *neshamah* that burns within us. And therefore, when we think of the *Menorah*, let's always be grateful for that gift of life that Hakadosh Baruch Hu bestows upon us every day – just like it stands there *tamid* with the lights burning, we should have in our hearts, too, there should always burn a fiery *hakaros hatov* to Hashem that we're alive.

And so we come back again to the heart of the *Beis Hamikdash*: “Come into His gates with thanksgiving and into his courts with praise; give thanks to Him and bless His name; Hashem is good and His kindness

is everlasting” (Tehillim 100:4-5). The astonishing concept that the Creator of the Universe, Whose glory fills the endless remoteness of space, should choose to dwell in a home among us was fundamentally an opportunity to express gratitude to Hashem. That’s the prime purpose of the *Beis Hamikdash* – to be an eternal expression of the overwhelming importance of gratitude in this world. And that means we have to apply ourselves to the great career of לְעוֹלָם אוֹרֵךְ, of singing Hashem’s praises.

### Lives of Happiness

Now, *rabbosai*, don’t imagine that I’m tying you down to a life of obligations – I’m tying you to a life of happiness! Because as a result of these lessons of gratitude you’re going to live lives of *simchah* – you can’t help it! You’re going to rejoice in every function of your body and every function of your mind. You’ll rejoice in your food, whatever it is. You’ll rejoice in the sunlight. You’ll rejoice in life itself – being alive is fun! As a result of this, you’re going to live lives of endless *simchah*.

That’s why Dovid Hamelech made *davka* this song as the dedication song for the *Beis Hamikdash*. וַתֵּאֱרָנִי שְׂמֵחָה – Hashem, You girded me with joy by giving me everything. And if that’s the case, Hashem, then I’m going to dedicate everything I have for one purpose – years and years of collecting materials and building the *Mikdash*; it’s all לְמַעַן יִזְמְרֶךָ כְּבוֹד – so that we should sing to You in glory. And not only here in the *Mikdash*: וְלֹא יָרִים – We’ll never stop singing to You in gratitude. הַשֵּׁם אֱלֹהֵי אֲנִי לְעוֹלָם אוֹרֵךְ – Hashem, my G-d, forever and ever we are going to thank You. That’s our big job in this world – that’s why we were born. We are here to talk about Hakadosh Baruch Hu! And that was the vow that Dovid made on behalf of the *Am Yisroel*, and it’s why Jews all over the world spend their lives fulfilling Dovid’s vow by living the lessons of the *Beis Hamikdash* and thanking Hashem forever and ever.

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# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

שאל אביך ויגדך ויקניך ויאמרו לך

Q:

**What should we be thinking about when we hear that the stock market has reached an all time high?**

A:

Well, you should be thinking that the market prices are very high right now but it's very possible for them to fall and become very low again. And therefore, it's nothing new. Many people have been ruined by the stock market. And therefore, I would say to put your money in the bank, in a savings account. And daven. Always be mispallel.

And I want to tell you something. One of the most important reasons why the stock market fluctuates is just for that – so that you should call out to Hakodosh Boruch Hu. When it's high, you should be calling out to Him in gratitude. And when it's low you should be calling out to Him that it should go up. And if you don't do that, the whole experience was a waste. Even if you made a lot of money, you wasted a valuable opportunity. And if you lost money, chasv'shalom, but you were forced to daven, then you gained. You gained da'as Hashem, Awareness of Hashem, which is more important than all the money in the world.

Who knows what can happen?! I know a man who has been losing tremendous sums in the stock market. He told me that he lost over three hundred thousand dollars so far in the stock market. So I said to him, "What about stopping maybe?" He said, "No, I'll get it back. I'll get it back," he says. The poor man is still hoping.

TAPE # E-133

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