

# תורת אביגדור

הגאון ר' אביגדור מיללער זצ"ל

SEFER DEVARIM - THE PENSON FAMILY EDITION

IN MEMORY OF MENDEL BEN MENDEL A"H

# TORAS AVIGDOR

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"L

פרשת דברים

*Pursuit of Happiness*

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**Year 3 | Issue 40**

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# פרשת דברים

WITH

# R' AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"l

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

## Pursuit of Happiness

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## Part I. School of Happiness

### Happiest Time In History

It may be a surprise for you to hear that the happiest time in the history of our people was the forty years they spent in the Midbar Sinai. It's a true statement you're hearing now, but in order to appreciate what it means we're going to have to study a *possuk* in this week's *parsha*. In *perek beis*, *possuk zayin*, the Am Yisroel's journey in the wilderness is described by Hakodosh Boruch Hu as follows: **כִּי הַשֵּׁם אֱלֹקֶיךָ בֵּרַכְךָ בְּכֹל מַעֲשֶׂה** - *Hashem blessed you in everything that you did*, **וְיָדַע לְכַתֹּבְךָ אֶת הַמַּדְבָּר הַגָּדֹל** - *He paid attention and supervised your walking in this great wilderness*; **וְזֶה אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה** - *These forty years*, **הַשֵּׁם אֱלֹקֶיךָ עִמָּךְ** - *Hashem was with you*, **וְלֹא חָסַרְתָּ דָבָר** - *and you didn't lack a thing*.

Now that's a statement that should give one pause. We're being told, in the name of Hashem, that for forty years in the wilderness the Am Yisroel lacked nothing! *Lacked nothing?!* How are we supposed to reconcile that with what we know? Every little *beis yaakov* girl knows

what happened in the *midbar*. We see many times that the Bnei Yisroel cried out and complained. **מִי יֵאָכְלֵנוּ בָּשָׂר** - “What about some meat?!” they said to each other. “Don’t you remember the good times we had in *Mitzrayim*?” **זָכַרְנוּ אֶת הַדָּגָה אֲשֶׁר נֹאכַל בְּמִצְרַיִם הַנֵּם** - “We remember the fish we ate there - and it was *chinam*.” Even the slaves got fish free of charge. Anybody who wanted could go to the Nile, cast in a hook or a net and catch a fat fish - a Nile perch can weigh 200 pounds! That’s a lot of healthy protein for a big family.

### **Lacking Everything**

They were missing vegetables too. **אֶת הַקְּשָׂאִים וְאֶת הָאֲבִטְחוּחַיִם** - “We ate cucumbers and melons, **וְאֶת הַחֻצְרִיר וְאֶת הַבְּצָלִים וְאֶת הַשּׁוּמִים** - and all kinds of spinach, and onions, and garlic to add taste and spice to the food.” And now, **אֵין כָּל** - “We have nothing, **בְּלֹתִי אֶל הַמָּן עֵינֵינוּ** - nothing but mann. That’s all we can look forward to every day. One day after the next, nothing but mann, mann, mann.”

And it wasn't only the lack of meat and onions! *Chosarta*, lacking, was the overriding feature of their entire stay in the *midbar*. For forty years, they were very limited! They didn't have large homes - they didn't have any homes at all; they lived in tents! They had no air conditioning, no indoor plumbing, and no phones either. What *did* they have?!

And so we wouldn't be wrong if we would ask: How could Hashem say that we “lacked nothing” in the *midbar*? They lacked *everything*! Had we been there we wouldn't have been satisfied at all!

### **Affliction and Happiness**

And the truth is that Hakodosh Boruch Hu admitted as much Himself. **וְזָכַרְתָּ אֶת כָּל הַדֶּרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר הִלַּכְתָּ בְּהַרְדֹּתַי אֶלְקִיךָ זֶה אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה בְּמִדְבָּר** - You should remember the whole journey that I led you forty years in the wilderness. Now pay attention to the next words: **לְמַעַן עֲנֹתֶךָ** - Why did I lead you for forty years in the wilderness? *In order to afflict you.*

So on one hand Hashem tells us to remember the forty years when we “lacked nothing at all,” and then we hear that He kept us in the *midbar* for forty years in order to afflict us. It’s a big question.

Now, I don't claim to be able to explain everything but the truth is as follows. What does it mean “to afflict you?” Does it mean that Hashem kept us in the wilderness in order to make us sad? No, Hashem doesn't want us to be unhappy. Just the opposite - Hashem likes happy Jews. But happiness is not something you're born with - like people think that some people are naturally happy people, while the rest of us will never be that lucky. No; happiness is a science that can be studied.

And just because of that, just because Hashem wanted to teach the *Am Yisroel* how to be happy in this world, that's why we spent forty years in the *midbar* – it was a forty year stay in a university, *l'havdil*, dedicated to the study of happiness. Every day in the *midbar* was intended to be a training of the mind in understanding that *lo chosarta davar*, that we have everything.

### **Forty Years of Discomfort**

Indeed the *Am Yisroel* lacked many pleasures and conveniences. For forty years they lived in tents and ate one type of food. They didn't go shopping; they wore the same garments for forty years. There was no ice-skating or bowling; no Broadway plays to go to. Of course they lacked; but for forty years they were being taught that lack of comforts is a lack of nothing.

Now, I'm not going to tell you that it was an easy lesson to learn; certainly not. Not only children, but even many righteous people were dissatisfied in the beginning. But Hashem was insistent that the *Am Yisroel* learn this lesson and therefore for forty years the *Am Yisroel* lived lives of simplicity and they learned how to appreciate the happiness of such lives. They were being trained not to hark after extraneous things. They had no choice – that was the plan of Hashem; they were going to live for forty years with all the food they needed, a place to live, and clothing and peace *and that's all!*

### **The Best Eyeglasses You Could Buy**

That's why the most important class in that Yeshiva of Happiness was *l'maan anoscha* – you'll be afflicted by the lack of things *that you don't need*. “You lacked nothing” means that you lacked nothing *that the Torah mind should desire!* They learned to be happy in the *midbar* with all the happiness of life without needing more, without needing extras and luxuries.

Because that's really the answer to all of our problems – to learn how to be *sameiach b'chelko*. Happiness in this world depends on having a proper frame of mind. It's like putting on a pair of rosy colored glasses and everything that you see in this world becomes rosy. But if you put on smoked glasses then it's a dark gloomy world. So you have a world that is according to the color of the glasses with which you look.

If you learn to look at the world the way Hashem looks at the world (Bereishis 1:31): **וַיִּרְא אֱלֹקִים אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וְהִנֵּה טוֹב מְאֹד** – *And Hashem looked at everything He made and He said, “It's tov me'od; it's a very good world”* – then you're going to be happy in *Olam Hazeh*. There's no question that

this world is going to be transformed into a place of happiness for you. You could be walking in the street without a penny in your pocket, and you have nothing to boast of – you're not a famous man, you're not rich, but you'll rejoice in your wealth anyhow.

### **Bread and Suicide Stats**

"How lucky I am that Hashem is giving me my daily bread!" That's actually how we're supposed to think. You could be full of joy because you have what to eat – it's nourishing and tasty and it's keeping you healthy – you don't need anything more than that. There was a time when Mankind was grateful for his daily bread. Not long ago they didn't have too much of it and whenever there was food available, that was happiness.

I spoke to old time Jews when I was in Europe many years ago and they related to me stories of their youth. Your great grandparents, when they were still in Europe, learned to be happy with the morsel of bread that was given to them by their mother; sometimes when they asked for another piece of bread, the mother said she couldn't give it and they learned to savor every bite – bread made them happy.

You know that more suicides take place in the homes of rich people than poor people. The rich people jump off the roofs, not poor people. The poor people have been trained to be satisfied when they get something; they're very happy with a piece of bread.

### **Kaluga Is Not Happiness**

The truth is that's what the Torah is constantly promising you – that's what's going to be your reward for all your good deeds. The Torah says *וְאַכְלֶתֶם לֶחְמֵכֶם לְשֹׂבַע*, *את מצותי תשמרו* – If you're going to keep My laws, Then you'll eat your bread to satisfaction. You'll have enough to eat. Enough to eat?! That's called happiness?! All the Americans will get up in a revolution: "No! We want television sets! We want cars! We want vacations! We have to have special subsidies from the government! Just to have enough to eat?! That's how you reduce us? To the lowest level of life?!"

And that's because people never learned what happiness is. Open the New York Times and you'll see there long articles about wines. Long pieces about expensive wines to drink and restaurants you can go to. Kaluga caviar and imported cigars – the New York Times will say *that's* life. But these are the *meshugaim* – they're not happy; they're not getting anything out of life. The people who write those things are not happy people. If they were happy they wouldn't be thinking about such things.

They're looking for good times because they never learned how to be happy with what they have.

### **Studying Science**

That was the great lesson of *lo chosarta davar* that the Am Yisroel learned in the *midbar*. That's what Hakodosh Boruch Hu wanted to teach us when He "afflicted" us with lives of happy simplicity – that we're not lacking anything at all!

Of course, to acquire an attitude like that takes time. But anyone who wants can utilize this great lesson and learn the great science of becoming a happy person by means of appreciating what he possesses right now. I say science, because it needs to be studied – it's the science of understanding how fortunate we really are. And that was one of the most important purposes of our stay in the *midbar* – to appreciate the happiness of life without all of the superfluities.

## *Part II. Lessons In Happiness*

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### **Blessing of a Home**

We have to know that never in history did the people have all their needs supplied like they had in that camp. Nobody was being evicted from their tents in the *midbar*. Every person had a place to sleep. And because there were no suburbs and bigger houses to hark after – this was it, and therefore they learned to enjoy the happiness of their tents. It's a big happiness! "How lucky we are to have a home, a place to sleep!" Ahh! What a *bracha* a home is!

Now, I know that people outside will say that all this is silly talk. That's always how it is – for *meshugaim*, everything is silly. So let *them* be *meshugeh* and *we'll* be happy! We'll live happy lives just because we have homes.

### **You Live In Paradise**

Don't you see sometimes those homeless women on the street pushing a shopping cart? You see that and your heart breaks for her. All her possessions are in that little shopping cart – she has nothing else. She has no bathroom, no kitchen, no place to go even at night. She sits down in one of the little parks in the winter time and tries to catch a nap. She's freezing but she's trying to sleep.

If somebody would let her rest in the vestibule of their home, it would be the greatest happiness for her. She'd be *meshugeh* with joy. And

if in addition to that she could have a piece of soap and a faucet to wash her face and hands, ooh wah, that would already be *Gan Eden* for her.

That's what we learned in the *midbar* for forty years; that we have *Gan Eden* in our lives – we're not lacking anything. We have a thousand and one things that should make us happier than that poor woman sleeping on the bench on Ocean Parkway. And we don't even have to be satisfied with tents. We live in mansions compared to what the *Am Yisroel* had in the *midbar* – we're living in the lap of luxury – and we're expected to study that.

### **Remembering the Happiness**

Now, you can't just say, "Tomorrow morning I'll put on rosy colored glasses and I'll be happy." That's like saying nothing at all. Like any important subject, it takes effort on your part. You have to constantly remind yourself about what you have.

Like Dovid says in his Tehillim (103:2): בְּרַכֵּי נַפְשִׁי אֶת הַשֵּׁם – My soul, bless Hashem, וְאַל תִּשְׁכַּחֵי כֹל גְּמוּלוֹי, – and don't forget all that He bestowed upon you. Dovid was constantly reminding himself about what Hashem had provided to him. For us, that's hard to understand because what was he thanking for already? He didn't have a new automobile or a home that was air conditioned. Dovid didn't even have a telephone or a refrigerator in his house.

So what was Dovid so happy about? He was grateful that over his head there was a roof! He was so grateful that he had a place to lie down at night and sleep! And when he woke up in the morning and got dressed, he became an even happier person because he was thinking now about his clothing and he was grateful for that too.

### **Simcha in the Laundromat**

Dovid learned all of this because he studied the forty years in the *midbar*. In the *midbar*, everybody was happy with the clothing they had. שְׂמֹרְתָם לֹא בִלְתָהּ מִקְעָרָה – Their garments never wore out. They didn't have to go to the store to buy a new suit every year. It was the same suit for forty years. The fun of going shopping they didn't have, so they learned to appreciate the clothing they had. When people are interested in clothing only because of changing, always buying new things, always the styles, so they won't find happiness in the clothing they already have. In the *midbar* they learned the happiness of wearing the same garment all forty years. "I have a clean shirt and pants, clean underwear. What a *simcha* it is to have clean clothing!"

Did you ever walk in the Bowery? You see a fellow – you can't even walk near him because his clothes are loaded with the fragrance of his feces and his urine. He hasn't washed his clothes for months; they are ridden with lice. I saw it at the Bowery; not only I saw it – I smelled it. Trust me, if you have clean clothing you have very much to be happy about. Who cares about styles? You're not lacking a thing. Even if you have an old suit. Maybe you have holes in your sleeves. It doesn't make any difference – you're clothed and therefore you should learn to enjoy even your poor suit.

### **Joy Is In the Details**

And it's not just one thing. Just to mumble something in the morning about *malbish arumim*, “He clothes the naked,” and that's it? I'm sorry to say, many people say *malbish arumim* – and don't even stop to think for one second. And even if you thought about what you were saying, you're going to *patur* yourself with a wholesale *bracha* that includes many things? Each *begeid* is a blessing in itself. You have to study the fact that you wear different items of clothing. Every item is important and must be studied! Otherwise you cannot feel the proper gratitude. Your shirt is one happiness, your pants are another happiness and your socks are a different happiness altogether.

Not only each article of clothing – every detail is a blessing. You have to enjoy every detail of what you're wearing. How good buttons are! *Boruch Hashem*, I have buttons! Buttons are a luxury! It's a luxury they didn't have in the time of the *midbar*. They had little stones – you scrunched up a stone on this side in the cloth over here and you pushed it through a hole over here. It was difficult. And when you went to sleep you had to put the stone down on the side; sometimes it fell on the floor and you had to crawl on the floor to look for the stone. But now you have buttons sewn onto the suit – you never have to look for them!

### **Secrets My Rebbe Told Me**

*Boruch Hashem*, I have buttonholes! Look at the buttonhole – you see there's a rim sewed around the buttonhole. It's real stitching. You couldn't do that yourself; it's a professional job. If you didn't have that stitching around the buttonhole – every day the hole would get bigger and bigger. You never stopped to think about buttonholes?! Yes, why not?! My rebbe told me that. He said you have to thank Hashem for buttonholes. *Boruch Hashem* I heard that from him. About seventy years ago I heard that and I didn't forget.

How good pockets are! I have the luxury of having pockets! You know, ladies don't have pockets. That's why I always say that you make the *bracha shelo asani isha* in the morning – because women don't have pockets. Men have pockets. Aren't pockets a big convenience? Don't think it's a joke. Suppose they made pants without pockets – there's no place to put anything; everything you'd have to carry in your hands. You never stopped for a half minute to be happy with pockets?! Of course people will say it's ridiculous; people will laugh at that. But that's because they're blind; that's why they're not happy in this world.

You'll have to spend time studying your belt too. Enjoy your belt; enjoy the fact that you have holes in your belt – one hole for before supper, one for after. That's a luxury! Imagine that your belt didn't have any holes. You have to think about all these things. There are hundreds of such details!

### **Gratitude For Your Body**

That's what Dovid did all the days of his life – he was happy with what he had. He was happy because he had two kidneys and because he had two eyes! **כָּל עֲצָמוֹתַי תִּאֲמַרְנָה הַשֵּׁם מִי כְמוֹךָ**. He didn't lump it all together. He sang to Hashem for all of his limbs. He was amazed by the creation of a heart; such a pump that day and night it pumps without stop for so many tens of years. Every detail made him a happier person. His lungs! His nerves! The antibodies that travel through the body and destroy germs! When Dovid studied the story of the *Am Yisroel* in the *midbar* he understood the lesson that Hakodosh Boruch Hu was teaching – even for his feet he learned to be grateful.

They did a lot of walking in the wilderness and **וְרַגְלֶיךָ לֹא בָצְקָה** – *And your feet did not swell for forty years*. Ahh! What a *simcha*! Feet that don't hurt; feet that don't creak. It's a good idea sometimes just to look at your feet as you're walking as if you never saw them before; study them as they twist and turn and bend. It's a pleasure to see how well they function.

### **Gratitude For Your Joints**

And all the joints are lubricated. The knees are bending effortlessly. It's lubricated by the ankles too and by the toes. You can make an experiment and see if it's lubricated. Make motions with your knees, with your thighs, with your ankles. Everybody here, just for practice, let's do that now. Bend your knees everyone – I won't look at you to see if you're doing it or not but do it anyhow. Do you hear any creaking? Any sounds of bone rubbing against bone? It's perfectly lubricated.

Imagine a man who is full of joy that he has joints. Especially if it doesn't hurt; you have no arthritis. Suppose you're young enough and you can move your joints without any sensation of pain. You know what a luxury that is?! People who live with this fundamental approach that happiness is in the things they already have, those are the happy people.

### **Europe In Turmoil**

I'll tell you something else they learned to appreciate in the *midbar*. **יָדַע לְכַתֵּךְ אֶת הַמִּדְבָּר הַגָּדֹל הַזֶּה** – *Hashem paid attention and supervised your walking in this great wilderness*. They didn't only walk without pain in the *midbar* – they walked in security. The *ananei kavod* were overhead and never in history were they as safe as they were in that camp. And they were expected to find happiness in that security, happiness in *shalom*. Just the fact that nothing has happened is in itself a very great blessing.

You people don't know what a pleasure it is to not have to worry about an invading army coming through your city. In Russia and Poland, for many years, armies flowed back and forth; one day this army occupied the city, the next day the other army occupied the city. People were being strung up, being hung up as a punishment every single day in the city. Executions every day in the city! Life was hanging by a thread. I'm not talking about the Nazis – when the Nazis came it was the real *malach hamaves*. But even before the Nazis, when World War One waged for years, the landscape was flooded with dangers and there was no such thing as security. People yearned just for peace!

Learn to enjoy the absence of war, the absence of insurrection, of rioting; that's the way a wise person studies the world and lives with true happiness. So when you're walking in the street in the summertime and you're perspiring and you're thinking maybe of some cool place; you'd like to be in Maine or some other place, remember these words. **לֹא חִסְרָתְךָ דָּבָר**. You're not lacking anything! Think of the peace you're enjoying now! Savor it! You're not famished by hunger? You're not bothered with war? You have it nice and quiet? The regular routine of life is a very great happiness and the Am Yisroel learned to be happy with that.

### **Search Warrants Are A Happiness**

You slept last night? You can lie down in your bed at night and nobody is disturbing you? That's the happiness that Hashem wants you to enjoy! **וַיִּשְׁכַּבְתֶּם וְאִין מַחְרִיד** – “*And you will lie down and nobody will disturb your sleep*” (Vayikra 26:6). At night the secret police won't come banging on your door. I was in Lithuania and once, in the middle of the night, the police came banging at the door. Somebody was staying with us in our

apartment — he was a foreigner and he was staying overnight. At half past twelve there was a pounding at the door. The police were banging on the door looking for him. “Open the door immediately!” They don’t need a warrant in Lithuania. They bang down the door and pull you out of bed.

But here in America you can sleep in bed and nobody bothers you. That’s a happiness! You can sleep in peace; bands of soldiers are not roaming the streets. Drunken bums are not banging on your door. Of course, today you must secure your windows at night because the liberals have wreaked havoc upon us. But let’s say you have enough bars on your windows, then **וּשְׁכַבְתֶּם וְאִין מְחַרְרִיר**, you can fall asleep without being terror-stricken.

### **Boredom Is Fun**

In the *midbar* the Am Yisroel learned the happiness of *shalom*, the happiness of daily routine. It was forty years! That’s a long time. Forty years of routine. They woke up, they did what had to be done and they went to sleep. No trouble! No excitement! *Boruch Hashem* everything is normal!

Now, try to go outside today and convince somebody that he should be happy with the regular routine of life – that’s what *shalom* is after all – and he’ll look at you like you fell off the moon.

“No,” he says. “I want some fun! I think I should get in my car and travel someplace.” So he sits in the car all day long, holding the steering wheel. He’s tense. He can’t rest and he’s smelling the gasoline fumes of a thousand cars ahead of him. Does it enter his mind that maybe he would have been better off sitting on the porch in front of his house? Or inside his dining room? No; the happiness of *shalom* is not good enough for him. He has to go to the bowling alley. You know, there’s nothing natural about wanting to go bowling. I’m much older than you and still I’ve never desired to go bowling. Only that when a person is too lazy to find happiness in his own life, the way that Hashem intended, so he fans the flames of lust. “Give us meat!” “Give us a bowling alley!”

### **Hashem’s Big Promise**

But all these things are meaningless compared to the happiness of **וְנָתַתִּי שְׁלוֹם בְּאָרֶץ**. Hakodosh Boruch Hu says, “I’m going to give you peace in the land.” You hear that? Hakodosh Boruch Hu doesn’t promise you good times. He doesn’t promise you restaurants and basketball games. He should have promised us good times! It should have said “I will give you money so you can travel, and eat out. And I’ll give you all types of

luxuries.” No, it doesn't say that. All that Hashem promises is that He'll give you enough to eat and that He'll give peace in the land.

Many people get nervous when they hear that. That's all?! That's happiness?! That's boring! It's monotonous! That's called life?!

Yes indeed! *Shalom* means that life is monotonous; nothing exciting. You're going to live all your life without excitement. No ambulances will come to your house. No fire engines will come to your house. Your daughter is not calling you in the middle of the night to tell you she's having trouble with her husband. That's a *simcha*! It will be nice and quiet all your life. That's a happiness! If you can live quietly that's the greatest happiness in life. You can go to sleep tonight and appreciate the gift of peace that Hashem is giving you and you'll fall asleep a joyous man, with feelings of happy gratitude to Hashem.

## Part III. Utilizing Happiness

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### **A Limited Menu**

Now, once we realize that our entire journey in the *midbar* was for the purpose of learning how to be happy with what we have, we can better understand the purpose of the *mann*. It says (Bamidbar 8:3), *Va'yiancha* – He afflicted you, *va'yarivecha*, and He made you hungry. It was a simple diet in the *midbar*; a very limited menu. For breakfast and supper, it was *mann*, always *mann*!

Now, we understand that they weren't hungry – in the *midbar* they never went hungry. The *mann* supplied all their needs; all vitamins and nutrients they needed were in the *mann*. And it was filling too. Only that *Vayachilcha es hamann*, Hashem gave them the *mann* to eat, *asher lo yadata*, that they never knew before. It was an unusual form of food. They got everything they needed from the *mann* but they didn't feel like they were eating; it wasn't the eating they were used to - there was no variety of textures and tastes and flavors.

So if you had a good imagination and you were able to be *mechadesh* in your thoughts that you're eating cherries and you're eating fried mutton, so you think of all kinds of good tastes and Hakodosh Boruch Hu sees you're working hard, so He rewards your imagination and you feel something like those tastes.

### **Forty Years of Chanuka**

But suppose it's too hard to think about such things. Let's say you're not interested in thinking so much in order to have a tasty meal. So you're

faced by *l'shad hashemen* and *tzapichis b'dvash*. Every day the same thing; *tzapichis b'dvash* and *l'shad hashemen*. Two different tastes; one was *tzapichis b'dvash*, if you like something sweet. The second taste was something that felt more substantial. You fried it and it became *ta'amo k'lshad hashemen*, like fat latkes. That's alright, but not every day! Latkes every day?! *Ah gantz yur Chanuka?!* They would like to sit down to some real meat; a red steak, some wheat bread! But day after day, to eat something that just your mind is telling you tastes good? That's very difficult!

So what happened? Some people became bored with the *mann* and they imagined they were hungry – they became hungry *hungry for extra things*. *Lo chasarta davar* – they lacked nothing but they felt they needed more. It's like today, you have a person who has plenty to eat. His refrigerator and pantry are full! But he wants something special; he wants to take-out or a restaurant maybe.

### **The Restaurant Critic**

Now the truth is that your own kitchen is a thousand times better than a restaurant! Restaurants, not only do they cost money, but the waiters touch the food with their hands and you're eating from their dirty fingers. He wipes his nose and then touches it. That's the truth – behind closed doors, that's the truth. When he brings you the food, there are all types of germs sticking to your food.

But still, the imagination runs wild and you think you're hungry for a restaurant. Why eating out?! Who needs it?! You have plenty to eat in. It's just a *meshugas* of dissatisfaction, of always looking for something else, for something *more* than you need. That's the weakness of Mankind; the insanity of unhappiness.

Now, in the *midbar* they weren't that foolish. Nobody would think of such a thing – to pay good money to eat in a restaurant. But they wanted some cake maybe, some halava. The truth is they didn't even want that; that much they weren't looking for. All they wanted is *knubble*; they wanted some garlic, some onions too. That's a very poor and modest demand; it doesn't seem so terrible to us. If a *tzadik* would want a piece of garlic or some onions in his soup, what of it?

The truth is there's nothing wrong – only that we're expected to learn that it's not a necessity. “To afflict you” means to teach you how to get along without unnecessary pleasures. We were trained in the *midbar* to be happy with what we have – to be full of joy with the simple pleasures of life.

## The Secret Of Breakfast

And that's why Shlomo Hamelech said the following. Pay attention because you have to hear this very well. אֵין טוֹב לְאָדָם תַּחַת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ - *There is nothing good for a man under the sun*; that means in this world, כִּי אִם לֶאֱכֹל וְלִשְׁתּוֹת וְלִשְׂמֹחַ - *except to eat and drink and be merry!* (Koheles 8:15).

Isn't that a pity that people read these *pesukim* and all they see are the *drashos*? *Drashos* are very good but *ein mikra yotzei miyedei peshuto*. The greatest secrets of the Torah are on the surface! And here we have such an important secret and yet it's so frequently ignored.

The secret is that Hashem wants you to enjoy what you eat! It doesn't mean that you should go out and look for more eating. That's not going to make you enjoy it. The secret of happiness is right there in your own home; in your own refrigerator and food pantry. That's what the *mann* is telling us. When you eat a little breakfast, *be happy with it!*

## Happiness Of Breakfast

You had an egg? Oooh, an egg! Isn't that a great happiness! An egg is a wonderful item of food, a wonderful contrivance of Hashem. It's nourishing and it has a flavor too – the yolk flavors it. And you can eat it quickly; it doesn't take much time to eat and it digests quickly in your stomach. And it's not too expensive either. And so if you're willing to לֶאֱכֹל וְלִשְׁתּוֹת וְלִשְׂמֹחַ, you'll really enjoy that little breakfast of yours.

Did you ever try to enjoy a piece of bread? Take a piece of bread without anything else on it and start chewing it and learn how to enjoy it. “Aaahh, is this good! I'm sinking my teeth into a piece of bread and I'm chewing with a gusto. It's *mamesh* fun!”

Now, you *tzadikim* who are thinking only about *Olam Haboh*, so you're going to poo-poo this talk. You'll say, “We didn't come here to hear such *gashmiyus*! We want to hear about others things, spiritual things.” It's the Torah however; I have to tell you what the Torah says, what else can I do?

## Learn From An Ox

What can I do if you're sitting there at the breakfast table like an ox – I don't want to say like an ox because an ox *does* enjoy his hay. An ox has enough sense at least to be happy with his hay. You see that while he's eating his hay, his saliva is drooling. Did you ever stop on the side of a road and watch a cow eating hay? The saliva is pouring out of it's mouth – he's enjoying his luscious food. He really enjoys it. But you're worse than a *beheima* – you're sitting and eating a good piece of bread and you're not appreciating it.

So you have to learn now how to enjoy the fact that you ate a meal. You walk away from the meal and you're full, so you should say, "Ahh! I'm happy! I'm a happy man!" Isn't that a remarkable thing?! And people will say you're a lunatic. But the truth is that they are crazy! And you're the only sane man.

### **A Bachelor's Feast**

And let's say even if you're a lonely bachelor; so you go home and your refrigerator is almost empty. But you have a couple of boxes of matzos, no? You have a little salt. And you have plenty of water from the sink!

It says in the Mishna: *Kach hi darkah shel Torah* - This is the way of the Torah, *pas b'melach tochal* - you eat a piece of bread dipped into some salt, *umayim bimsurah tishteh* - and you drink water with only a little measure, not much water, *v'al ha'aretz tishan* - and you sleep on the ground."

Now, the truth is you don't sleep on the ground. You sleep on a bed. And you probably even have a mattress and a pillow as well. And you have plenty to eat. All the bread that you want and all the water you want.

You have to eat breakfast, and you have to eat supper, and maybe lunch too; why not? You should eat lunch and you should enjoy it. If you'll eat that simple meal from your pantry, and you drink those simple drinks that you have in your fridge, and you'll enjoy it, then you're a servant of Hashem. **לֶאֱכֹל וְלִשְׁתּוֹת וְלִשְׂמֹחַ**, to eat and drink happy with it! *Pas b'melach tochal*, you'll be able to eat bread with salt, *umayim bimsurah tishteh*, and you'll drink a little cup of water, and you'll be so happy that you'll be *ashrecha b'olam hazeh*, you'll be happy in this world.

### **Ready To Face The World**

And not only will you be fulfilling your function in life of being happy with all of the things that Hashem is giving you *all the time*, but Shlomo Hamelech says even more than that: **וְהוּא יִלְוֶנּוּ בְעֵמְלֹי יְמֵי חַיָּיו** - *And that happiness will accompany you in your toil all the days of your life (ibid.)*. What does that mean, "it will accompany you in your toil"? It means you need that happiness.

You must learn how to be happy with the simple things because there is going to be a lot of *amal*, a lot of trouble in life. There's hard work, there are ups and downs; sometimes there's even a tragedy in a family, *chalilah*. All kinds of things happen in the world. But when your mind is fortified with the vitamins of happiness - happiness with your water and your bread and the roof over your head; happiness with your joints and

*shalom ba'aretz*; happiness with the fact your heart was pumping in your chest the whole night while you slept and you didn't have to call an ambulance – that's when you're ready to face the world.

When a man is fortified with all of these forms of happiness, and all the other thousands of happinesses in his simple and mundane life, then he is able to ride out all the storms of life. Otherwise many people are knocked off kilter. They're knocked over, and when you get knocked over emotionally, often it affects your physical health as well.

People develop tumors on the brain, they develop tumors on the intestines, they develop - I don't want to say that bad word that happens to people. A certain cell starts becoming wild and over acting, and it starts spreading through the body. Sometimes bad things happen as a result of not being prepared for the eventualities of life. Life is full of things that require the vaccine of happiness.

### **Please Don't Ignore Me**

Now, isn't a pity if you'll listen to these words and the effect will be there for an hour or two hours and then you'll go back to the old habit of ignoring the wealth that you have. Life passes by and you don't enjoy what Hakodosh Boruch Hu wanted you to enjoy. It's a shame that people hear words and they have the opportunity to open up the gates of a lifetime of happiness and they move on in life ignoring the great opportunity.

If people would know how to live properly – and by properly I mean happily – they would live with moderation. They would eat what they have to eat, and they would drink what they have to drink, and they would enjoy it so much that their lives would be overflowing with happiness and satisfaction. It would be a life of *lo chosarta davar!*

And once you're prepared, once you're fortified and armed with *simcha*, you're able to face life. וְהוּא יְלוּנוּ בְעֵמְלוֹ - *It will accompany you in your toil*, יְמֵי חַיֵּיךָ אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לְךָ הָאֱלֹהִים תַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם, *all the days of your life that Hashem will give you in this world*. Because you'll be filled with a genuine happiness all day long. *Real simcha!* When a man learns the lesson of *lo chosarta davar*, that's how he finds the greatest happiness. He finds the true happiness in what he already has.

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# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

שאל אביך ויגדך ויקניך ויאמרו לך

Q:

**The gemara tells us that Rabbi Tzaddok fasted forty years before the Churban Beis Hamikdash in order to try and help avert the coming catastrophe. But doesn't that mean that he was probably a depressed and gloomy tzaddik?**

A:

I wasn't there, but I guarantee he wasn't. I guarantee he was more happy than we are with all of our breakfasts and lunches and suppers. Because it's not breakfast and lunch and supper that makes you happy. Because it's not breakfast and lunch and supper that makes you happy. *איזהו עשיר השמחה בחלקו* – it's the mind that makes you happy. And this tzaddik, he had to eat of course; every night he ate. And when he sat down at night, he enjoyed his little piece of bread to no end. A piece of bread and a cup of water, it tasted good! He never tasted anything as good as it tasted to him that night. Every night he enjoyed his supper. Don't think Rebbi Tzodok sat down and said, "Feh!" No! He was looking forward to that piece of bread and he enjoyed it. He wasn't gloomy at all!

That's why I say, *Motzai Tisha B'Av*, don't lose the opportunity. It's a lesson you're getting, to once more appreciate food. *Tisha B'Av* night we should utilize that. *Motzai Tisha B'Av*, as you sit down to your bread and your water, you should enjoy it no end, because the purpose of fasting is not merely to fast. It's to let us know that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is the One who is *gomer chassodim tovim*, He is bestowing kindness. And therefore fasting in order to enjoy the food is not a wasted effort. You never heard that before, did you? Fasting in order to enjoy the food on *Motzai Tisha B'Av*! It's a very important lesson. That's one of the byproducts of a *taanis tzibur*.

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