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פרשת וישב

WITH

R' AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"l

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

Writing the Eternal Story

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Part I. In Tanach

Stopping the Ambition

Everybody remembers the story of Yosef HaTzaddik, the little brother who appointed himself *mashgiach* over his older brothers, reporting back to their father whatever he saw as wrong in them. And if that wasn't enough, he was beginning to dream about achieving power over his family. And he didn't keep his dreams to himself – he made sure to tell his brothers all about them.

Now, a man who is thirsty for *kavod*, for glory, the Jewish people never liked such people. And therefore when the brothers saw a young man, especially a younger brother, who was so ambitious – “He’s already dreaming about us bowing down to him” – they understood that he had to be stopped. Such a power hungry person was too perilous for the future of the *Am Hashem* and they had no alternative but to do away with him. What else could they do? They couldn’t just allow this

dangerous upstart to willy-nilly assume the role of leadership in the holy family.

The Rescuer

At that time, it was Reuven, Yosef's oldest brother, who intervened to save his life: "Let's not shed his blood," said Reuven, "We can throw him into a pit instead." לְמַעַן הַצִּיל אֹתוֹ מִדָּם לְהַשִּׁיבוֹ אֶל אָבִיו – Reuven's plan was to return later and rescue Yosef in order to bring him back to his father (Vayeishev 37:22).

About Reuven it says, *Hu pasach b'hatzalah techila – he was the one who had the courage to speak up first*. It was such a great deed that many years later when the Am Yisroel set up the *arei miklat*, the cities of refuge; the first ones were established in Reuven's *shevet*. That was a reward, a recognition of that great deed. We're proud of him when we read those words in our *parsha*: "And Reuven said, 'We should not kill him!'" (37:21).

However, the eye of Chazal saw something else here that surprises us when we hear it. The *Medrash* (Yalkut Shimoni, Neviim: 604) makes the following comment about this incident: "Had Reuven known that Hakodosh Boruch Hu was going to inscribe this incident in the *chumash*, he would have taken Yosef on his shoulders and carried him back to Yaakov Avinu!"

The Unwritten Possuk

It means that Reuven wouldn't have been satisfied merely by interceding. Had he known that this story would be inscribed in the *Tanach* forever it would have looked entirely different – on *Shabbos Parshas Vayeishev* the *baal korei* would have read the following words in the presence of all the people: וַיִּקַּח רְאוּבֵן אֶת יוֹסֵף שָׁם עַל שִׁכְמוֹ וַיֵּרֶץ וַיִּבְאֶהוּ אֶל אָבִיו – Reuven took Yosef and placed him on his back and he made haste and he brought to his father. It would have been a different story altogether!

Imagine how exciting that would have been! Reuven is running with Yosef on his back and the brothers are in hot pursuit; when they get close Reuven fights them off in order to defend his little brother. Reuven is running and hiding, making his way back to their father Yaakov. And we are kept in suspense until finally Reuven arrives home and he deposits Yosef at the feet of the father. "My father! Your son is

safe!” And Yaakov would have poured blessing on the head of Reuven and he would have been inscribed in the Torah as a hero forever.

Oh, how we would applaud when the *baal korei* reads those words, “And Reuven returned Yosef to his father.” We’d stamp with our feet! We’d be wild with happiness! Had this verse been inscribed as I invented it – and I’m sure Hakodosh Boruch Hu could dictate a better one than mine – every year the whole world would recount that story in all the *batei knessios*. How glorious and exciting it would be!

The Ignored Album

And Chazal tell us that it could have been so. “If only Reuven had known,” they say, “that this story would be recorded forever, that’s what would have happened.” It’s like when the photographer comes to the wedding hall to take pictures, so everyone who is in the scene realizes that these pictures are going to be preserved forever. The bridal album is a heirloom – it’s handed down for generations to look at – and therefore people usually try to live up to the moment. Somebody will perhaps look at his picture, maybe, someday, and so he straightens his necktie; he wipes the crumbs from his lips. The ladies say, “Wait!” and they straighten up their hair.

Now, the bride’s wedding album is actually not forever – sooner or later it wears out. Even the *kallah* herself loses interest in it to a great extent and it finally ends up in a wastebasket of some great-grandchild. At best it’s put up in the attic somewhere for the next homeowner to find and discard. Like all the memories of our lives, the photographs and the mementos that were precious to us end up losing their importance; they wear out and are discarded.

The Scrutinized Album

But in the case of Reuven, it wasn’t so; he was posing for a picture that would continue to be viewed forever. Forever! And not only would the picture be looked at, it would be analyzed! It would be studied by hundreds of thousands of sages and Torah students! By millions of schoolchildren! By millions of men and women who read that story over and over since the Torah was first given to us! Reuven’s deed of carrying his little brother on his back to safety would have been recounted millions of times and preserved forever because the Torah is forever!

But there’s no such story in the *chumash*; such a *possuk* does not exist. And Chazal are telling us that it’s not there because Reuven didn’t

know that he would be in the Torah. He may have known that there would be a Torah, but that *he* would be in the Torah, that he didn't know. And therefore, he failed to be as great as he could have been.

Pasach b'hatzalah techila! He did something marvelous; he saved Yosef's life! But the sages are telling us that had he known that the photographer was taking pictures, that he was posing for eternity, an entirely different degree of greatness would have awakened within him. Had Reuven understood that his deed was being written down for the eyes of all the generations to read, forever and ever, that would have awakened in him a grandeur of responsibility. He would have lived up to that momentous occasion.

Tanach Unsealed

We're hearing now a very important statement that's going to affect our lives if we understand it properly. Because the *chachomim* tell us that in this instance Reuven is serving as a model for us. It's not only that we can point at Reuven and repeat the words of our sages about how he failed to realize he was acting for eternity; they're pointing their fingers at us too – what's said about Reuven applies to every one of us.

That's what Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said when he studied this incident: "In the past, when a person did a *mitzvah* the Torah would preserve it forever; the *navi* would inscribe it in the *Tanach* as an eternal remembrance. But what about today? When a person today does a good deed, or the opposite, who writes it down? How is it preserved?"

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi answers as follows: "It's recorded just the same! *Eliyahu Hanavi* and *Melech Hamoshiach* write out the details and *Hakodosh Boruch Hu* signs it" (*Yalkut Shimoni ibid.*). It means that the *Tanach* we have in the shuls, in our *yeshivos*, is not the end of the story. A great *Tanach* is being written right now!

Now, we all know that the *Tanach* has been sealed already. There's no such thing as adding to the sacred scriptures. There's no adding anymore even to the Mishna – the holy Mishna is sealed forever. And finally even the Talmud was sealed; you cannot add anything to the *gemara*. If you wish, you can write in the margin, but in the text it's forbidden to make any changes.

The New Bestseller

And yet, the *medrash* tells us that the deeds of men are being inscribed even today; they are being written in a great scriptures that

are going to be read forever! Not like *seforim* that people write today. Today many people publish *seforim* that are never read a second time; some of them are never read even a first time. A printer once told me, a *frum* printer, that he makes a living from *redifas hakavod*. That's his life. He makes his *parnasah* because people want their names to be famous for the time being. People want *kavod*, so they come to him to print their *torahs*. It's printed once; the uncles and cousins of the *mechaber* have to buy it but nobody reads it. It's forgotten about after a little while.

But Hashem's *sefer* is very different! We're talking now about a *sefer* that will be forever – it'll be read forever and ever in *Olam Habo*. Everything is being recorded and the names are there! Our names are there! It's a *sefer*! Everything we are doing now will exist in that great *Tanach* that Eliyahu Hanavi is writing and Hakodosh Boruch Hu is affirming. It's true, it won't be in the *chumash*, it won't be in the *kisvei hakodesh* – we're too late for that. But there's a *sefer* that Hashem is keeping: יְכַתְּבוּ לָּךְ וְעַל סֵפֶרְךָ בְּלֹא יִכָּחֶבּוּ – You, Hashem, have a *sefer* in which everybody will be inscribed (Tehillim 139:16).

There exists a great book in which He's recording all the things that happened since after *matan Torah* until the end of the world. And all the generations that go into Gan Eden will read it over and over again. The life of every single person will be a *sefer* to study. But not only “the life” in general – every single act is inscribed in a great book that is being read at this moment by the biggest audience that the world ever saw.

Literal Literature

Now, we are accustomed to making everything into a *mashal*. Does Hakodosh Boruch Hu really bother Himself to write? Does he need to put things down in writing? “It's a form of speech; it's poetry,” people say. But actually it's repeated so many times in the *Tanach* and elsewhere that we must understand there's an actual record. And it's a record that's in the form of writing. It'll be written with the style of *tanach*, not in modern Hebrew. Modern Hebrew is an abomination, it's a caricature. This will be written in *loshon kodesh*, not in *ivrit*, and it will be a real *sefer*.

Now it seems to us a surprising idea – that our acts now are going to be entered into a new *Tanach*. But let's put ourselves in the place of Reuven. Reuven also didn't suspect that his deeds would be written in

the *chumash*. Had someone told Reuven, “You’re going to be inscribed in the Torah,” it would have seemed ridiculous to him.

“Who am I and what deeds am I doing? My father – perhaps, yes. Some great decision, yes. But this is a thing of momentary importance, how exactly to save Yosef from the brothers.” That it would be written down?! It didn’t enter his mind! Like it doesn’t enter our minds! And that’s why the sages go out of their way to teach us that exactly the same thing is transpiring with us as of this moment – “Don’t fool yourselves,” they warn us, “Whatever we do or say or think in this world is going to continue to exist forever and ever.”

Part II. Unchangeable Tanach

The Lost Reels

Now, today this is easier to understand than ever. Not so long ago if they would have told you that you could record somebody’s words on a machine and then play it back, you would think that they’re pulling your leg. Once upon a time nobody even dreamed that what I’m saying now could someday be replayed.

When I was in *yeshiva* we didn’t have that. In Slabodka we heard beautiful lectures, *mussar* talks, an hour-and-a-half each. They were so perfect, so carefully worded and so full of *machshava*. But they’re gone now. Some of them were written down partly, but most of it went lost. Had they had tape recorders then, the world would have been wealthy with a great amount of *chochma* today.

The Futuristic Machine

But the truth is that nothing went lost; it still exists. I want to explain this in a way that you’ll understand it, even scientifically. You know, we have the impression that when sound waves arrive and they deliver the message, so it’s all finished, the sound waves are destroyed. But that’s not true. There’s a law of science that teaches us that energy can never be destroyed – the indestructibility of energy. If I give a bang on the table here, that bang goes through the earth all the way to China on the other side; and although in China they won’t be frightened – there won’t be an earthquake or even a tremor – it’s not because it goes lost. It’s not lost; it’s just dispersed. The energy becomes so dispersed,

so spread out, that when it arrives it's not strong enough to make any effect. But that energy is there forever.

Now, sound is an energy. Just like when you bang on the table it doesn't go lost, sound also never goes lost. What happens? It dissipates; it diffuses and it gets lost in the atmosphere. But it's there and the truth is if we had the capabilities to gather together that energy and bring it back to its original place, we would be able to hear today what was said thousands of years ago.

Now, I'm not such a big *chacham* but we know that there is a *shitah* among scientists that anything said in the world may someday be recaptured. It could be that one day they will invent certain machines that can assemble together all the sounds that are dispersed in the universe. We might be able to press a button that will cause all the dissipated sound waves to reassemble and they would come forth today with the original voice of the speaker. We don't yet have such excellent machinery that's capable of doing such a thing but it's not too farfetched to imagine such a device.

Now, whether or not we'll ever have the ability to create such a machine, Hakodosh Boruch Hu is surely capable of such a thing. And He's doing it – He's collecting all the energy in the form of speech that was once upon a time distributed and scattered throughout the atmosphere; it's all being reassembled to be played back.

A Real Movie

And who's going to hear these sounds when Hashem plays them back? All those who are worthy to be in the Afterlife will be sitting and listening to everything that was ever said! Everything will be repeated for everyone to hear – all the words of the *tzaddikim*, the righteous, and all the words of the *kesilim*, the fools; nothing goes lost!

Not only the sounds – all the scenes are being replayed on a tremendous screen. Right now in *Olam Habo*, the *tzaddikim* are sitting and looking at the most entrancing movie. *Lehavdil*, when people go to a movie, what do they see? They see false things. The actress is wearing teeth that are not hers; they put over her teeth a close fitting replica that look like perfect teeth. She wears wigs chosen for the occasion and her face is colored to suit the scene. She speaks words which in themselves are meaningless; it's all *sheker* – she's making believe! But that's what people are paying good money for – the public doesn't come

with the purpose of truth. On the contrary, they go in order to be deceived by this display.

But that's not what's doing in *Olam Habo*. In the next world we're talking about a movie produced by Hakodosh Boruch Hu Himself. It's a real movie – the most real movie possible. In *Olam Habo* all the *tzaddikim* and all the *malachim*, with Hakodosh Boruch Hu at the head, are seated, *lehavdil*, in a great theater and on the stage there is being enacted a story of the events of mankind's history! Hakodosh Boruch Hu is displaying it before all the people worthy to sit in *Gan Eden* – they're viewing the deeds of every person!

The Great Study Session

They're not only studying what's written in the *chumash*; all the acts that took place after the *Tanach* was closed are being studied there too. Right now, this minute, every deed of every individual is portrayed on that stage and is being studied by all the ones worthy of coming to the Next World.

And it doesn't get boring. It's not like when we go to some *mitzvah* play, let's say, like when they put on a "Yosef and His Brothers" play for charity purposes, so we may enjoy the proceedings, but finally it's over and we have to leave. And in a sense we are grateful when it ends because how much can we take already. Even the most interesting portrayal, after a while we can't tolerate it any longer.

But in *Olam Habo* it's very different. In *Olam Habo* the movie never becomes intolerable. The audience sits there enchanted at this spectacle. And the longer it continues, the more enthralling it becomes because every detail is examined even more than is ever possible in this world. In *Olam Habo* every detail is studied with such sharp acumen and masterful logic that would confound the sharpest minds of the living. Dizzying discussions with tremendous *pilpulim* are taking place; even subconscious motives are ferreted out and discussed. It's an intense atmosphere of analysis – every story in all its details is being studied so thoroughly that never can anything be done more thoroughly.

Sad Actors

And I must tell you that all this is very big fun! That's part of the great *simcha* of *Olam Habo*. It's a remarkable happiness to study and analyze the events of human history with all the secrets revealed and thoroughly understood.

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But it's only a happiness for the spectators – it's not always a time of joy for those who were the actors. Because when Reuven – Reuven is there, he's among the audience – when finally the picture of Reuven is flashed on the screen he's not so happy with himself. Everybody, all the *tzaddikim*, *nevi'im*, *Tana'im*, *Amora'im*, the *Rishonim* and *Achronim*, and everyone who came after them, are sitting and studying the story of Yosef being saved: *And Reuven said to them, "Don't shed his blood. Let's throw him into a pit instead,"* and when Reuven hears those words he puts his head into his hands and he thinks to himself: "Ach! What poor words these are! Couldn't I have written into the scenario something more noble than that? Why didn't I realize when I had the opportunity what was really taking place? I wish I could have another chance!" But there are no take-twos in the next world. What's written down has been recorded forever and it's going to play in *Olam Habo* forever.

The Sin That Wasn't

Almost everyone who learned the story of Dovid and Bas-Sheva is familiar with what Chazal say: *Kol ha'omer Dovid chatah eino ella to'eh* – Anyone who says that Dovid committed a sin – it means the way we perceive the sin – is making a mistake (Shabbos 56a). That's a subject to be discussed elsewhere; it's explained a little bit in my book, *Behold A People*. But whatever it was or wasn't, for Dovid Hamelech it was something; he gave a handle, an excuse, for the enemies to criticize. There's one black mark on Dovid's record: *רק בְּדִבֵּר אִוְרְיָה הַחִתִּי* – Only in the matter of Uriyah HaChiti, that's the story with Bas-Sheva, did Dovid make a misstep (Melachim I, 15:5).

That's why he was bitterly castigated by the *navi* who spoke in the name of Hashem. Nosson *Hanavi* blasted Dovid with the worst words until he broke down and said *viduy*; he prayed to Hakodosh Boruch Hu for forgiveness. And his repentance was so monumental that Dovid became very great as a result of his *teshuva*. Instead of being one of the dark episodes of his life, this actually was one of the most heroic instances in history.

The Unwashable Stain

Now, when Dovid did a perfect *teshuva*, it seems to us that the whole account should have been settled. But Dovid understood that it wasn't settled. After it was all over, Dovid began to think about the consequences. *Teshuva heint*, *teshuva morgen*, Dovid understood that

what he did would be recorded forever and that rankled him terribly. And therefore he made an especial petition to Hakodosh Boruch Hu as follows: *Al yikaseiv surchoni* – My misdeed should not be inscribed in Tanach (Yuma 86b). He prayed, “Leave it all out! Including my *teshuva*, including all the perfection that I achieved as a result of his repentance, including the great *mizmorim* which I inscribed in *Tehillim* as a result of that mistake. Everything should be wiped out!”

Now, we don’t know how many tears Dovid shed in his petitions to Hakodosh Boruch Hu to erase that from history, but however much it was, it was too late. The deed had been done and Hakodosh Boruch Hu therefore refused his request.

Do you know what a sadness it is for his posterity when they read the story of Dovid and Bas-Sheva? Not to mention the ridicule of the gentiles and the *amei ha’arets* who follow only the plain wording of Tanach and are therefore misled to despise Dovid in their hearts. Not to mention the many *reshaim* who have utilized that story as an excuse – “If Dovid could have done this-and-this, so why should we strive to be different?”

A Lesson for Posterity

And what about the discouragement that this causes to *ma’aminim*? This deed has been a thorn in the side of the Jewish people. It wasn’t only Dovid who regretted what he did; every Jew since the Tanach was written regretted that such an episode ever took place. “Dovid! That’s our hero! That’s our ideal! *Ne’im zemiros Yisroel* – That sweet singer, the composer of songs. The great hero, the fighter for Torah, the friend of Hakodosh Boruch Hu! We don’t want to read that story!”

But no! That deed is inscribed and it rankles forever and ever. That thorn continues to burn in the side of the Jewish nation.

Now, had Dovid known beforehand that it would have been inscribed, then things would have been different. There’s no question that the perfect awareness that every action, even every thought, was being recorded forever would have been enough to elicit from him a different kind of behavior – he wouldn’t have wanted such words to be read by the generations to follow. And that’s intended as a great lesson for us – there are no do-overs, no take-twos.

Part III. The New Tanach

Let's Talk About You

Now, in order to give this idea a little more substance we're going to talk now about ourselves. It's not only Reuven and Dovid; it's not only the *tzadikim* of all generations whose lives will be on display. We have to realize that the time will come when we too shall be seated in the audience and then up on that tremendous screen in *Olam Habo* will flash episodes from our own lives – in front of everyone, all the incidents of your life, the small and the big, will be displayed for all to see. And the question is, what will our reaction be?

Now, such an idea is very far away from the way we think; that the details of our lives should be so important, so prominent?! Reuven, we understand. Dovid, yes. But us? It's hard for our minds to accept that the details of our lives matter so much; it's remote from our minds.

You're Immensely Important

The truth is that to accept such an idea requires a very big change in our attitude toward mankind. If we wish to appreciate this lesson of Torah we must understand a fundamental principle that requires a great amount of explaining; it can't be done quickly and it certainly cannot be accomplished tonight. The truth is, it's so wide of a subject that it takes a lifetime of work to appreciate it. And yet, *something* we have to say because without it we are incapable of appreciating how this subject of "Ilu yoda Reuven – If only Reuven who have known what would be written," relates to our own lives.

And what is this principle? It's the principle of the importance of man! Not of Mankind in general! Of every man! Any human is immensely important! The deeds of one person are more important than the entire history of an empire! And not only all the acts of his life, but the greatness of a single act of a human being is more important to Hakodosh Boruch Hu than all the other events of history.

Let that sink in! It's an explosive teaching, it's stunning! In the eyes of Hakodosh Boruch Hu, a man is the most important of all objects in the universe and the slightest deed that any of us does outweighs the greatest event in the history of the heavens! If stars would explode and disintegrate, if billions of tons of matter would fall apart in the distant heavens, if many worlds would collide and be smashed into bits and

disappear, all this would mean nothing compared to the single act of a human being!

This is one of the fundamental principles of Torah – the greatness of man! No matter how long we shall discuss this and how much we shall explain it, we shall fail to grasp the immensity of the subject of the greatness of humankind. *Gadlus ha'adam!* It was for this purpose that Hakodosh Boruch Hu created man – so that he should perform deeds that would be studied forever and ever.

Start Posing

Now, with this in mind we can begin to understand why every deed is photographed forever. Whatever you do is going to be inscribed forever and ever because there's nothing more important!

It's not merely imagination. It's not merely something we say. It's a fact of our lives – actually it's *the* fact of our lives. We are being photographed forever and it's going to be played out in the next world for the righteous forever and ever and ever. And the ones who could have produced better results are going to regret forever and ever what they could have done but didn't. It will be an embarrassment that is there forever. It's like sometimes when you turn the pages of a wedding album you find someone in a ridiculous pose. Isn't it a pity? That silly smirk on that man's face is forever ensconced in that album and there's nothing he can do about it.

But once a man knows that the camera is focused on him, it's a different story. When we know that everything we do is forever; that when we are sitting in our homes or walking on the street, whatever we do, we are being photographed forever, then it's going to be a tremendous incentive to do some posing.

You Have An Audience

I once told you, I was sitting in the subway. So who looks at me? Nobody. Who cares about an old Jew sitting on a subway? But I suddenly discovered I had an audience. A little colored girl was looking at me. It wasn't much of an audience, but I straightened out my slump. And I was thinking, "For whom are you doing this? For such an audience?!"

The answer is, yes. For any kind of an audience, we like to pose. And when we know that the camera of eternity is directed at us and that no act is unimportant, then we'll act differently. And that means that all of our deeds should be done as if we were actors posing and trying to

make the most favorable impression that we could create for all time to come.

We should always think about that as often as we can. *Da mah limaalah mimcha!* Know what's above you, *Ayin ro'eh v'ozen shoma'as* – An eye that sees and an ear that hears (Avos 2:1). *Ayin ro'eh* means not only it looks at you, but it photographs! His Eye is photographing you! *Ozen shoma'as* – His Ear is not only listening, it's recording your words!

Now, these words that are said by the *chachomim* of the *mishna*, they didn't merely put them there because it looks good. It says we should *think* about these things! So we should always keep in mind the great lesson that *kol ma'asecha b'sefer nichtavin*, that all of your deeds are being recorded in a *sefer*. There's a *sefer* and we're being recorded in that *sefer*.

A New Page

The truth is that *we* are the ones who are writing our own history today. That's what the *Chovos Halevavos* says: *Hayomim megilos* – The days of your life are pages; every day is like a new page, *kisvu bahem*, write in these pages, *mah shetachpetzu sheyizacher lachem*, what you wish should be remembered about you.

Now that's not a *mashal*; it's not a form of speech. You're actually writing! You are writing your own biography! You're taking your own picture! Of course Hakodosh Boruch Hu is doing it, but you're the one who's causing it!

It means that tomorrow morning when you wake up, it's a new page in your life. It's a clean page and therefore try to write the best you can by keeping in mind that this page is forever and ever. When you open your eyes and you say *modeh ani* – “Thank You Hashem that You restored my life,” and you say it with *kavanah*, that's a way to begin writing on the new page properly.

Starting Your Day

Let's say you're going to *daven* now – *davening* is an opportunity to write a beautiful chapter. Don't be in a hurry. *Tov me'at b'kavanah meiharbeh shelo bekavanah* – A little bit with *kavanah* is preferable to a great deal without *kavanah*. When you say something with understanding in your *davening*, it's a pearl, it's a diamond. It's for your credit forever and ever. One line of the *siddur* if you say it with deep *kavanah* is an

eternal achievement. That's how important it is, one line of *siddur*, if you think what you say.

And if before you go to work you sit down to eat breakfast, it's another glorious opportunity. Food is a miracle. What does bread come from? Where does milk come from? From nowhere. It comes from air. It's a miracle. Did you ever think about that while you're eating? That's a way to write your history. While you're eating, you're recognizing the wonders of Hashem. You're thinking about how you're putting bread into your mouth and it becomes part of your body. It becomes part of your hair, your beard. Yes, your beard is from bread. Your skin, your muscles, your bones. "The bread I'm chewing on now turns into muscles and bones!" That's how to eat, thinking that wonderful thought. As you're eating and thinking you're writing a history.

And then when you're finished, *baruch atah Hashem*, I bend my knees to You, Hashem, *Elokeinu melech haolam hazan es haolam kulo*, and you're thinking about the miracle of Hashem providing food for the whole world.

What Will be Remembered?

At the end of the day too, the camera is still taking pictures. When you get home and your wife gives you a supper, remember to say it's a good supper. You want that to be remembered of you. It'll be written down, "He said, 'Thank you Sarah; it was a good supper.'" If you say, "It was a very good supper," so that extra word will be written down too. Make sure you do that so it should be written down.

If somebody said something that was mean about you, don't answer back. Don't say a word because that word that you'll say will be written. You don't want that written in your record. *Kisvu bahem*, – *write in your record*, *mah shetachpetzu sheyizacher lachem*, – *only what you desire that should be remembered about you*.

The way you talk to your wife or to your husband. The way you talk to your neighbors. How you talk in the *beis haknesses* or in the *yeshiva*; whatever you say is of the utmost importance. *Nothing* you do is unimportant because you are too important.

Keep Working!

The more you create that attitude in your mind, the more successfully you live. If Reuven had known he was being photographed forever and ever, he would have done something else. Had he

remembered that, he would have done so much more in order to be depicted in the Torah as a *tzaddik* and a hero! And we're told that story so that we should learn the lesson that we're here in this world to write our own biographies. Right now, we're being portrayed. A camcorder is directed at us and it's photographing our emotions, the expressions on our faces, the sound of our voices; and it's being recorded forever and ever. And the time will come when it'll be played back. Whatever act you do, you should know it's forever and ever.

And therefore, as much as possible, we have to keep on cleansing our minds, and working to gain that purity of attitude that whatever we do in this world is being photographed. And the more you gain that attitude the happier you become because you know that you're always achieving. Nothing is ever unimportant in your life because wherever you are, whatever you're doing, you're writing what you want to be remembered.

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

"If Only I Knew..."

If we don't wish to regret our actions in the next world, we must train ourselves to recognize the truth that our actions are always "on the record".

This week, once a day I will spend 30 seconds continuing to do whatever I am in the middle of doing, with the added thought that "Right now, Hakodosh Boruch Hu is making a video of me that will one day be played on a big screen in Olam Habo." And for those 30 seconds each day I will try to make the best eternal impression that I can.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

R-12 - It Is Forever | **54** - Posing For Eternity | **435** - Your Deeds Are Forever
858 - I Am Important | **E-35** - The Book of Remembrance
E-260 - You Act Forever

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

שאל אביך ויגדך זקניך ויאמרו לך

Q:

Should someone buy gifts for his children on Chanukah?

A:

There's no harm, but you have to be careful that it shouldn't enter into the realm of the season's holidays spirit. It shouldn't be done because of the general atmosphere of the street, because they're doing something like that. You have to beware of that attitude.

So, to give cash is a much better idea. Chanukah gelt is a well-known *minhag*, so give cash if you can. I don't say it's wrong to give gifts; nothing wrong with giving gifts. But make sure, in your own mind at least, that you're divorced from any thoughts of the season.

Chanukah is not the season to give gifts, no, no. It's not the gift season. You can give gifts anytime. You can give gifts on Shavuot too, and Purim and Pesach. And if you want to give gifts on Chanukah as well, I'm not going to tell you no. But if you're going to make a big fuss about it, and make it into an ideal, that Chanukah is the *time* to give gifts, then you might as well sing carols and put up a Chanukah tree, because that's what it really is.

TAPE # E-170 (December 1998)

— This week's Q&A sponsored by: —

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