

Sefer Shemos

IN MEMORY OF R' SRULY MILLER A"H

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DEDICATED BY HIS CHILDREN

פרשת משפטים

WITH

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BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

Badges of Honor

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Part I. One Badge

The Hebrew Israelite

Our *sedrah* opens with the laws of the *eved ivri*, the Hebrew slave: כִּי תִקְנֶה עֶבֶד עִבְרִי – When you shall buy a Hebrew servant, וְשֵׁשׁ שָׁנִים יַעֲבֹד וּבְשִׁבְעַת, יֵצֵא לְחֵפְשֵׁי הַנֶּחָם – he shall work for six years and in the seventh he shall go free (Mishpatim 21:2). That was the arrangement in ancient times; it happened sometimes that for certain reasons a man would give up his freedom and become an *eved ivri* – it means that this Yisroel becomes now a “Hebrew slave” and he must labor for six years in the service of a fellow Jew.

Now, although this *eved ivri* is in temporary servitude he's a regular Yisroel like each one of us. He's kosher to be a witness and can be the tenth man in a *minyan* like any other Jew. It's true, he's an indentured servant but he's *chayav* in all the *mitzvos* like any other male Jew. He has to go *daven* three times a day and he puts on *tzitzis* and *tefillin* too. Everything he has to do!

And so the question arises, if he's a regular Yisroel why doesn't the Torah call him that? I want to make sure you understand this question because it's the starting off point in tonight's subject: Why does the Torah go out of its way to call him by the name of *eved Ivri* instead of *eved Yisroeli*? After all, it seems to us that he's a Yisroel in all respects! Why don't we call him by his proper title?

An Honorary Name

Now, if you don't understand this question, if you don't think there's anything puzzling here, that's because you're not familiar with the *Tanach*. Because to find such an appellation attached to Jew is quite out of the ordinary. In the Torah literature the appellation *Ivri*, “a Hebrew”, is not used to describe the Jewish people. And that's because Hakodosh Boruch Hu bestowed upon us a special title of glory that we are loath to part with; we have been given the honorary name, Yisroel.

“Yisroel” is much more than just a name – there's a prophecy that Hashem put into that word; it means, “You will conquer all the forces that oppose you.” That's why that name is our pride, our glory: Yisroel – “We are the eternal nation that will overcome all others.”

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A Cover-up Name

And that's why the gentiles prefer to know us as the "Ivrim." The *umos ha'olam* always used the name *Ivrim* when they spoke about us because they wanted to paint a different picture than what the name *Yisroel* represents. "Oh; those people, the Jews?! They're only *Ivrim!*" *Ivrim* means that we come from *ever hanahar*, from the other side of the Euphrates. "Their forefathers migrated across the Euphrates to settle in *Eretz Canaan* but they can't fool us; they're just part of the *Ivrim*, those people who live on the other side of the river."

Instead of recognizing us as a separate entity, the gentiles always preferred to see us as just another branch from Semitic stock. It was a way of trying to cover up the truth of the one nation, a nation separate from all others, that was chosen by Hashem to be the eternal people.

They abhorred the idea of a nation called *Yisroel* because it meant something; it was a title of national glory that meant there's an *am l'vadad yishkon* that is going to win out in the end. *Yisroel* is a chauvinistic name, a badge of honor that we wear with pride, and therefore it's understandable that the nations of the world are not interested in hearing such things.

Speaking With Them

That's why when we speak to the gentiles we call ourselves "*Ivrim*." You remember when Moshe Rabbeinu was in the palace and Pharaoh said, "What are you telling me to release your people and send them out? Who sent you to me with such an errand?" So Moshe Rabbeinu said (Shemos 7:16), אֱלֹהֵי הָעִבְרִים שְׁלַחְנִי אֵלֶיךָ – "The G-d of the *Ivrim* sent me." He was talking to Pharaoh after all and when you talk to the gentiles you talk in a language that they understand. But Moshe would never speak to his own people and say that *Elokei HaIvrim* sent

me to tell you. Never! Because Jews didn't use that word.

If you remember in the book of *Yonah*, when *Yonah* was on board that ship trying to escape the mission that Hashem sent him on and suddenly a storm arose that was threatening to sink the ship. Now, the gentile sailors in those days were more *frum* than some of the Orthodox today and they understood that storms don't just happen – somebody's god was angry – and so they cast lots to discover the guilty party. And when the lot fell upon the *navi Yonah* they said to him, "Tell us who are you?", and he said (1:9), "עִבְרִי אֲנִי – I am a Hebrew." It's because he was speaking to gentiles so he had to speak gentile words. But among Jews nobody would speak *goyish*. It would be a *bizayon* to call a Jew an *ivri*.

The Stolen Name

Later on in history when the gentiles saw that the name *Yisroel*, *Israel*, stuck, so they came up with a new way of dealing with that prophetic name – they tried to steal it from us! They proclaimed that *they're* the 'new' *Israel*. That's why the Pope will tell you – if you ever get an opportunity to talk to him – he'll tell you that *he* represents the true *Israel* and you, the Jew, are no longer called *Israel*.

That was the plan of the early Christians from the beginning. That's why the narrators who invented the stories of the New Testament invented a tale of twelve apostles. Everything there is artificially made in order it should appear like a fulfillment of some prophecy, of some sign. And so, the New Testament narrators made it seem that *Yoshka Pondra* had twelve disciples. Why twelve? Because his imaginary twelve disciples were supposed to take the place of the twelve tribes from now on.

Thieves and Impostors

And so the name *Yisroel*, the glory of our people, is now snatched away from us and it's put upon their heads. Of course, they're not using it; they're not really interested in it. No Pope was ever called Israel. Search through the lists of their saints; you won't find any Saint Israel. They took it from us not because they wanted it, only that we shouldn't have it, so that we shouldn't be glorified with the name *Yisroel*.

The same is with our scriptures; they want the world to think that Hashem changed His mind and rejected us so they took the Tanach away from us and now they call it the Christian Bible. The plain truth is they don't use the Bible anyhow. The Pope himself eats pork and wears *shatnez*, although it's openly forbidden. No matter – “It's not yours,” they claim.

Oh, but the whole Torah is about us! We're the ones who experienced it all! “No, no,” they say. “It was all an error!” A big error! We experienced it all but it was just a joke – actually it was meant for the ones who eat pork and keep Shabbos on Sunday.

Hebrew is Not Torah

And even after the destruction of the first Beis Hamikdosh when we lost the ten tribes of *Yisroel* and only *Yehuda* remained, so we took the name *Yehudim* – that's also a name of glory because *Yehuda* means, “the one who praises Hashem.” That's the most important function of a Jew, a *Judah*, in the world; to speak about *Hakodosh Boruch Hu*. We are the nation that speaks always about *Hakodosh Boruch Hu*.

And therefore, when we look through the Torah and the *nevi'im*, we're going to find everywhere the name *Yisroel* – and after the *churban* we are called *Yehudim*. These are our names, *Yisroel* and *Yehuda*. But *ivrim*? Never! We're not Hebrews. Our language too – it's *loshon*

hakodesh, the holy tongue. To say that our language is *Ivris*, Hebrew, is also a non-Torah expression.

So you know now that the Union of American Hebrew Congregations is not a Torah organization. And if you read in the *New York Times* – you shouldn't, but if you did – that a group of reptiles, of loathsome animals who marry a certain way, organized a congregation, a synagogue, and they received recognition from the Union of Hebrew Congregations, so we say, “Of course Hebrews would do such a thing; but *Yisroelim* or *Yehudim* could not.”

The Slave is Deprived

And now we come back to the puzzle that we mentioned in the beginning of our talk. Because although we don't use the title “*Ivri*” among ourselves – and certainly we wouldn't expect *Hakodosh Boruch Hu* to use it – suddenly we find the Torah describing a *Yisroel* as an *ivri*. And it's not when Jews are talking to gentiles. *L'havdil elef havdalos*, *Hakodosh Boruch Hu* Himself is speaking and He's speaking about a *Yisroel*: “When you shall buy an *eved ivri*, a Hebrew servant.” That's how this *mitzvah* is worded in the Torah!

And the reason is as follows. Although we surely know that an *eved ivri* is still a *Yisroel*, there is one obligation which this Jew loses when he becomes an *eved* – he loses the prohibition against marrying a *shifcha* (ibid. 21:4). During those six years his master can marry him off to a slave woman so that they should have children together who will continue to be *avadim Canaanim* even after this Jew goes free.

Now, as soon as the six years are up, this Jew is restored to his previous status and he's forbidden to be married to her anymore; but during those few years, although in all other respects he is a full Jew, the Torah deprives him of the name of *Yisroel*. Someone who can mix with the gentile women, is

no longer an aristocrat, he cannot be called a Yisroel.

Badges of Aristocracy

Now we learn from here a very important principle! The greatness of being a Yisroel is the fact that we have 613 *mitzvos*. You might think if you have six hundred and twelve it's good enough – and it's certainly a great thing.

Imagine you're invited to a royal banquet and you've been honored with various medals of honor; you have this sash and this ribbon and this medallion – all the signs of aristocracy. You have a big nicely starched shirt and you're coming into the ball with all of your badges on that shirt – six hundred and twelve badges! Six hundred and twelve medals! How can they even fit on you? You have to pin some to your pants and your hatband because there are so many.

And so you walk in and all the guests are looking at you as you stride past them decked out in your full regalia of royal honors and your heart swells within as you strut through the hall displaying all of your decorations. You're walking with a chest sparkling with jewels; you're announcing, "I am a Yisroel."

"Oh no!" Hashem says, "You're not! Because one decoration is missing. You're demoted – you're an *eved ivri* now." If someone is willing to sell himself or engage in behavior that forces the *beis din* to sell him to be an *eved* and forsake even one of these badges of glory it means he has fallen beneath the level of the Am Yisroel; a Yisroel recognize the greatness of our badges of honor – he would never remove even one of the badges from his chest.

Our greatest pride is the fact that Hashem chose to command us in the *mitzvos aseï* and *lo saaseï* and although there are many of them, each one is a separate and distinct honor; every single one is a separate badge of honor pinned on us by

the Creator of the world. That's what being a Yisroel means and if you don't understand that then you're demoted – you're an *Ivri* now.

Part II. Value of The Badge

We Are Commanded

So what do we learn from this lesson? That when you walk down the street and you're hungry and you cannot find a kosher restaurant – so as you walk past them you should raise your head proudly because that's your badge of honor. When you go into the five and dime and you see an entire section of various razors for a smooth face, your heart swells with pride: "I'm a Yisroel! I can't use those – that's another badge on my chest."

When you want to buy a jacket, you can't just buy anything – you'll have to check it first; there can't be wool and linen in the same garment. Even if it's just for a minute. Suppose you're working in an office and you have to run out to buy something but you left your coat in the other room. Sometimes there's a goy who works there in the office with you so he tells you, "Here, take my coat. Use my coat for two minutes just to run out into the street to get what you need." No, you can't take it. You can't take his coat. It might be *shatnez!*

So many prohibitions! So many things to know and be careful with! And every one of them is a glory – every one of them is essential to give us the name of Yisroel.

Now, whatever the reason is for each specific commandment, it's not important now. Of course it's good for people to investigate the whys and wherefores of Torah but the most paramount greatness of the commandments is simply that we are commanded. I'll repeat that because it's so important: The most important greatness of all the *aseis* and *lo saaseis* is that honor that they were imposed on us by Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

The Great Banquet

Now, to understand that we need to study a *gemara*. The *gemara* (Kiddushin 31a) tells about the famous *amora* Rav Yosef. He was a blind man and he was studying the opinion of the Tanna Rabbi Yehuda. Rabbi Yehuda had said that “*Suma patur mikol hamitzvos – a blind man is free from all the commandments of the Torah*. That’s what Rabbi Yehuda holds. A blind man is free of the *mitzvah* of *tefillin* and he is free of the *mitzvah* of *sukkah* and so on – all the positive commands a blind man is *patur*.

Now, when Rav Yosef heard this he said that he would like to hear that the final *halacha* is like Rabbi Yehuda. He said, “If somebody could tell me that he has a tradition that what Rabbi Yehuda says is authoritative, then “*avidna yoma tava l’Rabbanan – I would make a big banquet for all the talmidim in the Yeshiva to celebrate, d’ha lo mifkidna – that I’m not commanded in mitzvos*”.

Rav Yosef said, “If the *halacha* is like Rabbi Yehuda that I’m not commanded to do *mitzvos* and still I’m doing them anyhow—I do wear *tefillin* and *tzitzis* and I do go into the *sukkah*; I do everything anyhow—it means that I’m doing it voluntarily. That’s a greatness! Out of the goodness of my own mind, I’m volunteering to go beyond the call of duty for You Hashem!” And therefore, to celebrate that especial level of *avodas Hashem* he wanted to make a banquet.

Cancelling the Banquet

But then, one day he heard a certain statement of Rabbi Chanina. Rabbi Chanina said as follows: *גְּדוֹל הַמְצִוּוֹה וְעוֹשֶׂה – Greater is the one who’s commanded to do something, יוֹתֵר מִמִּי שְׁאַיְנֵוּ מְצִוּוֹה, וְעוֹשֶׂה – more than if somebody does it voluntarily*. If you do *mitzvos* as a volunteer, not because you were commanded, that’s less than the one who does it because he has to. The one who is

commanded and does it, is considered more important than the one who volunteers to do it.

Now, to us that doesn’t seem to be logical; because if someone is *misnadiv* from the generosity of his heart without being told, it seems that he should be considered a more important personality. Why is it that the one who does it because he *has* to, because it is imposed on him, is considered greater?

The answer is that we look at the One who imposed it upon us. The One with a capital O! Who commanded it? The Creator! Every *mitzvah* is a medal that is pinned on you by the *Melech Malchei Hamlachim*: “You, the Yisroel, have hereby been chosen from all the billions of the people in the world to be the one who wears the honorable badge of a *metzuveh v’oseh*.”

The Privileged Society

And it’s a medal that should be envied by all the peoples of the earth who are not privileged members of this exclusive society. Suppose a colored man or a Japanese or an Italian decide from now on they’ll eat kosher. It’s not a badge; it’s an imitation. If you look closely, you’ll see it’s not the genuine one that the king bestows. People can make things that look like the royal insignia, but they have no right to wear them.

A Japanese can’t wear it – unless he converts. Some things he can do voluntarily; a little Japanese boy might honor his parents, why not? Could be he’ll even get reward for it too, but no matter what it’s not a badge of glory. It’s the command, the One who commanded, that makes the Yisroel great.

Those who are not commanded, do not get that benefit. It may be virtuous. They deserve perhaps credit for volunteering, but the privilege, the gift of a *mitzvah* is only for certain personalities that Hashem chose. Only chosen individuals are given the privilege of being commanded.

Bar Mitzvah Banquets

So now when Rabbi Yosef heard this *maamar* of “greater is the one who is honored with commandments”, he changed his mind altogether. He said, *Maan d’omar li ein halacha k’Rabbi Yehuda* – if somebody will tell me the *halacha* is not like Rabi Yehuda that a blind man is *patur* from *mitzvos*, then I will make a *yoma tava l’Rabbanan*. If I’ll hear that a blind man is obligated, then I will celebrate and I’ll make a big banquet.

And that’s what they say is the source of making a bar mitzvah banquet. A bar mitzvah boy, an Orthodox little boy, he was keeping all the *mitzvos* before anyhow, but before he was not *metzuveh v’oish*; he was doing it voluntarily. And now when he’s thirteen he becomes *metzuveh*. Ooh! He’s commanded now! Now he gets all his badges and he’s honored. We make a banquet to celebrate that! Because that’s the glory of a man; he’s able to come out and demonstrate that he’s wearing all the medals that the king pinned upon him.

Celebrating Bas Mitzvahs

A bas-mitzvah, a girl who turns twelve, it’s no less of a celebration. Only that the *derech hatorah* is to keep women undercover. The idea that women should come out in public more than required and be on display – even a young girl – is not the *derech hatorah*.

At a boy’s bar-mitzvah, he comes to shul, everybody’s listening to him, looking at him. He’s on display. It’s not good for a girl to be looked at too much, to be on display. It can’t be helped – we will not be foolish and ignore human nature. But that doesn’t in any way, *chas v’shalom*, reflect anything about the Jewish women. The Jewish woman, the Jewish girl, is a holy aristocrat, a *metzuveh v’oish*. She’s wearing badges, only she wears them inside! No matter whether you wear it

inside or out, the *mitzvos* are a sign of honor, of love, from the King.

Wonderful Gifts

You know, we say in *ma’ariv*, “*Ahavas olam beis Yisrael amcha ahavta* – Hashem, You loved Your people with an everlasting love,” and right away it explains what this love is: *Torah umitzvos chukim umishpatim osanu lemadeta* – You taught us the Torah and the commandments, the laws and the statutes. We’ll explain this as follows.

Everybody knows that when a *chosson* loves a *kallah*, he gives her *sivlonos*, gifts. He’ll buy for his intended a diamond, a bracelet. Now, he’s not doing it merely to show off – he gives her gifts to show that he loves her: “You’re a diamond to me,” he’s telling her – that’s why she runs right away to the jeweler to ask how much is this diamond worth. She wants to know just how much he loves her! In any case, a *chosson* gives valuable gifts to his *kallah*.

And so, when Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim and brought us to Har Sinai, He said to us, “I’m going to be your *chosson*; I’ll take you to be My *kallah*. And because I love you with an *ahavas olam*, that’s why I’m going to give you the very, very great gift of the Torah. The *torah umitzvos chukim umishpatim*, that was the wedding gift, the *sivlonos*, to the Am Yisroel.

The *mitzvos*, all the *aseis* and all the *lavin*, are expressions of great love that Hashem shows us. Not like people think, it’s obligations and rules and prohibitions. Oh no – it’s jewelry; every single one is a badge of honor, the medals of a *metzuveh v’oish*.

Appreciating the Gifts

You should think about that sometimes when you *daven maariv*: “You loved us with an everlasting love ... and you gave us all these badges to wear ... and we’ll be happy with them forever and ever.”

Every single *mitzvah* is an ornament for us and we thank Hashem for each additional one because each one expresses His love for us. *Torah umitzvos chukim umishpatim* – so many badges, so much honor, so much love.

That's why every Jewish house should have shelves of *seforim*; shelves and shelves of *seforim*. It's a way of showing your appreciation for that great gift that Hashem gave us. Whether you have time to learn them all or not it's still a good thing to display those *seforim* in your home because that's the pride of our people – it's a demonstration that we are proud of being *metzuveh v'oseh*.

And therefore when you pass by the *seforim* shelf, even if you're too busy now to open a *sefer*, but your heart swells with pride; *ah yah yay* precious *seforim*. Man, woman, boy or girl should say that! All the details of our badges of honor are written down there – a *shas* on the shelf is a symbol of Hakodosh Boruch Hu's greatest love for us.

Not only *shas*; the *seforim* of the *rishonim* are all ornaments for us; the *gedolei achronim* too. Here you have the *Shach*, you have the *Taz*, you have the *Magen Avraham*. It's precious jewelry from the *Chosson*. Hanging over our necks is *Chovos Halevavos*, the *Rambam*, the *Rif*, *Emunos Vedeos*; all the great *chiburim*. Hanging from this ear you have the *Ketzos Hachoshen*, the other ear, the *Nesivos*. All kinds of beautiful jewelry, they're all badges of honor that make us the chosen nation who are commanded.

Part III. Earning The Badge

Enjoying the Glory

Now, once we understand this subject of the pride of being a *Yisroel*, of being privileged to have been commanded by Hakodosh Boruch Hu, it opens for us an entirely new vista of appreciating our function in this world. For the thinking person

Olam Hazeh becomes one big banquet hall of glory. What a happiness it is to walk down the street in *Olam Hazeh* thinking such thoughts: "I'm clothed with Your decorations, Hashem; six hundred and thirteen medals and then hundreds more *d'rabanans*! Ah! What a glory!" So what if the Irishman with the red nose passing by doesn't know! You know and therefore every minute is precious to you. You're sucking the honey out of every second, enjoying the glory of being a *metzuveh*, one of the precious few who were commanded by the Creator of the Universe!

Now, of course, if the day of the banquet comes and you've imbibed generously beforehand and now when you walk into the hall you can barely stand – you're so groggy with liquor that you don't know what's doing – then you lose out on the glory. What a pity! And that pity is us! We're drunk with making a *parnasah* and other worries; we're drunk with running after *olam hazehdikeh* pleasures and so we miss out on all the glory. A tragedy! We go through our entire lives in this world like drunken sailors, not realizing what an honor it is to be a *metzuveh*.

A World of Doing

Now, we'd be remiss if we stopped our talk now because actually this badge that we wear in *Olam Hazeh*, the badge of being a *metzuveh*, is only the beginning of the story. Of course, it's a very good beginning! It's a very happy beginning! But there's an important word in Rabbi Chanina's statement that cannot be ignored: גדול המצווה ועושה – "Great is the one who's commanded to do something," he said, "and he does something about it."

V'oseh! To do! That's the true glory of living in this world; *laasos*, to do, to accomplish. That's what Hakodosh Boruch Hu says in the Torah (*Devarim* 11:13): "You should do all these commandments *asher anochi mitzvavcha ha'yom*, that I am commanding you today to do them." So

the question is why do we need the word *ha'yom*, today? And tomorrow He's not commanding us?

So the *gemara* says, *hayom laasosom v'lo machar laasosom* – “Today” to do them and not tomorrow. Today is the time for doing because today you're still here and tomorrow you don't know where you'll be; and in the next world you won't be able to do even the smallest *mitzvah*. This world is the *olam ha'asayah*, the place for doing. אֵץ לֹא עָבְשׁוּ אִמְתִּי – *The glorious opportunity of being a metzuveh v'oseh is only now!*

The Rabbit Race

And therefore included in *hayom laasosom*, today is for accomplishing, is that in this world we should not be too busy with other things. *Hayom* you can't be running after pleasure because *Olam Hazev* pleasure is the kind of animal that when you chase it you'll never catch it.

It's like the dog races they have in Massachusetts. I told you once that in Revere, Massachusetts they race dogs for money. What do they do? The greyhounds are released into chutes and they run down the ramps chasing after rabbits. Of course, they'll never get there because there's an arrangement – it's a metal rabbit running on an electric track and the faster the dog runs the faster the rabbit goes. And even though the poor dog is chasing the rabbit – the rabbit is covered with pasted on fur – and he's dreaming, “Ah, I'll sink my teeth into that delicious warm meat, and the fresh blood will squirt into my mouth,” he'll never catch it. And the truth is it's lucky for him that he doesn't – if he would catch the rabbit and sink his teeth into the metal he would have to go to the dentist.

And that's what's happening to us too in this world; we're running after elusive pleasures that won't make us happy anyhow—you'll never get there. And so, included in those words *hayom laasosom*, the Torah is teaching us that we have more important things to do in the world than

break our teeth on tin rabbits. We have real happiness waiting for us! And therefore we must get busy doing as many *mitzvos* as we can! The opportunity to live most happily and successfully is included in these words, *hayom laasosom*.

Enjoying the Mitzvos

True happiness in this world is only when you get busy running after real rabbits – after real achievements, after *mitzvos*, after Torah. That's where you'll find happiness.

There's no question that the person who keeps Shabbos is immediately being rewarded with happiness. It's fun to keep Shabbos. It's fun to bathe yourself *erev Shabbos* and to put on *bigdei Shabbos*. It's fun to be together with your family and to eat the special meals. It's fun to come together with your congregation, your community, in your synagogues. It certainly is fun to climb into bed on Shabbos and to rest your body. There's no question that Shabbos is a happiness for us.

And that's only a model for everything else. *Kashrus* in general means healthful food. In general, it means things that are safer to eat. Everybody knows that seafood in many instances is a carrier of certain parasites. When the American soldiers were in Egypt in the last war, many of them contracted snail disease because they were eating snails – it was considered a delicacy. In America too, untold numbers of people contracted trichinosis from eating pork products that were smoked. Even today, trichinosis is widespread – there's a worm that remains in the tissue of the pork and it enters the intestine walls and it bores in and lays very many eggs and after a while a person becomes loaded with trichinosis worms. It's well known. There's no question that kosher food is certified for happiness too.

A System of Happiness

Children who honor their parents, they're going to first of all make their parents happier and secondly they're going to obey the admonitions of their parents, which is extremely important for a child. Youth must have some check; children can't do whatever they wish. They'll get into all kinds of trouble without proper instruction. And therefore when a child has learned to honor his father and mother and obey them, there's no question that there's a great deal more of good health and happiness and success in life.

And so, it's certainly true that when people live by the Torah and fulfill its precepts they benefit thereby; the general system of the laws of the Torah is constructed for the purpose of reinforcing a man's life, of reinforcing society, of giving him a wholesome and healthy lifestyle and making society capable of coexistence, *shalom* and also good health and *parnassah*. There's no question that fulfilling the Torah is the best plan for a man's wellbeing in this world.

The Sweetness of Achievement

But I'm not talking only about that happiness – that goes without saying. We're talking now about a more sublime *simcha* – the genuine joy that comes with knowing that your days are being spent with purpose, with the purpose you came here for. That's what makes life worth living!

The happiness of life is to put on *tefillin*. If you can put on *tefillin* in the morning, it paid to wake up in the morning. If you say *brachos* in the morning, life is worth living. It's sweet to be a Jew; it's delightful to do *mitzvos* because the sweetness of life is the sweetness of achieving.

Now, I understand this falls on a stuffed ears and people don't become excited over this, but that's the plain truth and so why should we overlook it? Why should we be like sleepwalkers all the days of our lives? Why should we neglect

the opportunity? Because a time will come when we're going to look back and we'll regret that we didn't enjoy achieving in life. As long as a man is alive, he should glory in that opportunity! *Hayom laasosam*, now is the time we can achieve!

Let Me Live!

And that's why Dovid said, (Tehillim 118:17), לֹא אָמוּת – “I don't want to die! בִּי אֶחְיֶה – I wish to live.” Dovid didn't say those words on his deathbed; he didn't say it on his last day – that's what he said *always* because he recognized how precious life is.

Every pious Jew should have an ideal to try to exist on this earth as long as possible; he should do everything necessary to live long because life is of the utmost importance. It's our greatest physical property; it's our happiness and our glory because we are living the lives of a Yisroel! It means that no matter what, our lives are purposeful – being a *metzuveh v'oseh* makes life worth living.

Preserving the Precious Life

Nobody who understands this is going to be careless with his life. A Yisroel will always be most careful with his safety and the safety of his family. He's not reckless; he won't speed on the highway, he won't smoke cigarettes, he won't be careless because there's too much involved in being safe and well. If life is of paramount importance, if life means not only happiness but achievement and glory, then we must do everything possible to preserve our lives.

A man who runs across the street recklessly is not risking merely the hours that he could have lived on. He's risking all the *kriyas shemas* that he could have said. He's risking all the *tefillin* he could have put on. He's risking all the Torah, all the *brachos*, all the *shabboses*. He's risking all the *zechiras yetzias Mitzrayim* – twice a day it's a *mitzvas aseï*, in the morning and in the evening. People don't think about that. *Yetzias Mitzrayim* in

the evening and in the morning, each time it's a separate *mitzvah*. There are many *mitzvos* without end. And a man who is reckless with his life, he is reckless with these opportunities.

And therefore, the person who lives with the happiness of *hayom laasosom*, he's the one who lives most happily – and he'll live with that happiness forever because this world is the place of doing and *u'machar l'kabeil secharam* – tomorrow, the next world, is the day for reward. When he comes to the World to Come, he'll appreciate the eternal happiness, the real happiness of which there is no greater that he achieved by means of living the successful life of a *metzuveh v'oseh* in this world.

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

The *eved ivri* lost his status as a Yisroel when he forgot what a privilege it is to be commanded in so many *mitzvos*. Every morning this week, before I say I say *birchas hatorah* I will take ten seconds to appreciate the fact that I am a *metzuveh v'oseh*. *V'chayei olam nata b'socheinu* – there's no better gift than the Torah and its *mitzvos*!

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

שאל אביך ויגידך זקניך ויאמרו לך

Q:

Everybody says that משנכנס אדר מרבים בשמחה, that when Adar comes in we try to make more simcha. How do we do that?

A:

I want you to understand that it's not difficult at all. We have within us a fountain of simcha because when Hashem blew into a man the *neshama*, He also blew in an endless fountain of happiness. And all you need is to turn on the faucet and it starts pouring out. It's remarkable how much joy there is in a human heart.

Of course, you have to be a good plumber because sometimes it's plugged up. But if you know how to unplug it, you'll understand to look at the sunlight and say, "How sweet is the sunlight," and you'll enjoy it; you'll become happy with the sunlight. Imagine that! Happy with sunlight! It says that: ומתוק האור – *How sweet is the light*, וטוב לעינים לראות את השמש – *How good it is to see the sunlight* (Koheles 11:7). So all year round you're busy with all kinds of things, but in Adar, you take a little extra time to look at the sun and you become full of happiness.

Now, once you start practicing you'll be amazed how much happiness you have in your heart. When you walk outside and breathe the air, even cold air, it's a happiness. It's good, clean air, and the cold helps clean the air; it makes it free of germs. When you breathe it in, you're so happy. It comes into your lungs and it invigorates you; it makes your blood become more red and you're so happy. And so, משנכנס אדר מרבים בשמחה: "I'm so happy to see the sunlight! I'm so happy to be breathing!"

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