

Sefer Bamidbar

THE RAHMANI FAMILY EDITION

FOR THE HATZLACHA, HEALTH, AND HAPPINESS
OF OUR FAMILY AND ALL KLAL YISROEL

פרשת בהעלותך

WITH

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BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

The Happy Nation

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Part I. Unhappiness

A Difficult Career

When we study the career of that greatest of all men, Moshe Rabbeinu, we find more than one time of extreme crisis. To lead a nation is never easy and Moshe's career was no different; he was put to the test on one occasion after another. Everyone remembers the sin of the *eigel* – it was one of the most terrible events in Moshe's career. That the nation, *his* nation, should be dancing around a golden calf?! What could be worse?

And then there was the *machlokes* of Korach. You have to know that Korach and his *eidah* were important people and so when Moshe Rabbeinu was

confronted by them, when they had the boldness to stand before him and to accuse him of partiality to his brother, it was a big tragedy for Moshe. It says (Bamidbar 16:15), וַיַּחַר לְמֹשֶׁה מְאֹד – *Moshe was distressed, – very much.*

There was, however, a worse occasion, a bigger trial in Moshe's life – the *meraglim*. When the spies returned and persuaded the people that there's no hope to conquer Eretz Canaan, something very fearsome took place. A number of the people said (*ibid.* 14:4), נִתְּנָה רֹאשׁ, וְנָשׁוּבָה, מִצְרַיִם – “Let's choose a new leader, וְנָשׁוּבָה, מִצְרַיִם – let's go back to Mitzrayim.” It was a terrible thing to say. A new leader instead of Moshe Rabbeinu?! To go back to Mitzrayim?! Everything would be undone. *Kriyas Yam Suf, Matan Torah*; all the great experiences would be wiped out! And so Moshe and Aharon fell on their faces when they heard that. It was a big blow for Moshe Rabeinu.

The Worst Experience

However, there was one experience that Moshe had in his life that was much worse than all others; it was without any comparison to the previous challenges. It's in our *sedrah*, Parshas Behaaloscha, in *shishi*: וְהָאִסְפָּדִי אֲשֶׁר בְּקִרְבּוֹ הִתְאַוּוּ תְּאֵוָה – The *eirev rav*, these converts “desired”; they felt deprived now in the Wilderness and they began to desire. They didn't have what they once enjoyed in Egypt and they began to talk amongst themselves and their neighbors: “Look what's doing here in this wilderness! There's no water.”

There *was* water but it wasn't as available as it was in Egypt. In Egypt there was water all you wanted – plenty to drink, plenty to bathe in and wash your laundry in. The Nile River was a big majestic river and there were irrigation ditches running from the river everywhere.

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And in the fertile valley of the Nile, they grew everything. All kinds of vegetables flourished in that lush valley. And now in the *midbar*, they didn't have that. בְּלִתֵּי אֵל הַמָּן עֵינֵינוּ – “Only to the *mann* are our eyes turned!” they cried. It means the most dull kind of menu. One item is served every day.

Dissatisfaction Spreads

Now, when they voiced their complaints, that triggered the emotions even of the Bnei Yisroel. You know, even if you are a satisfied man, if your wife is always complaining, so finally you break down too. She dins it into your ears so much that you also begin feeling dissatisfied. It could be the opposite too, by the way. It could be the husband is complaining and therefore the wife becomes dissatisfied. Or anybody who complains – once a person weeps, he begins to spoil the pleasure of everybody else around him.

And therefore, when the *asafsuf* began to complain, וַיִּשְׁבוּ, now they turned the Bnei Yisroel who had kept quiet until now; it means they changed now and וַיִּבְכוּ גַם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל – *the Bnei Yisroel also wept*. The good people were spoiled by the complainers, וַיֹּאמְרוּ – *and they began to say*, מִי יֵאָכְלֵנוּ בָּעֶשֶׂר – “Who will feed us a little bit of meat?” “Ah! If only we could have a little piece of salami. Why are we so deprived? Why can't we have a little piece of roast meat out here in the wilderness?”

Egyptian Delicacies

They said, “We remembered the fish that we ate in Egypt for nothing.” In Egypt, the Nile was stocked with all kinds of big fat fish and you didn't need a license to go fishing – all you needed was a hook. You took a pin, twisted it into a hook and you were ready to go. Worms were plentiful, so you impaled a worm on the hook, and threw it with a string into the Nile. And within a minute or two you felt a tug and pulled with both arms and out came a very big fat fish. And it was *chinom* – free.

And then they enumerated all the other things that they ate with the fish. They didn't eat just *stam* fish. They ate fish and on the side they had dressings,

trimmings: שׁוּמִים and הַקְּשָׂאִים, אֲבֹתָחִים, חֲצִיר, בְּצָלִים. A whole grocery list they were dreaming about; cucumber and melons and spinach and onions and garlic. “But now we are dried up. Our eyes are only directed to the *mann*.”

The Terrible Epidemic

Now, once the dissatisfaction surfaced it began to spread like an epidemic. וַיִּבְכוּ גַם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל – *And the people were weeping*, לְמִשְׁפַּחָתָיו – *there were families sitting here and weeping; it spread from one tent to another*.

“What are you crying about?”

“What do you mean?! Because of the *mann*! It's the same thing every day!”

“Ooh! That's right! Ohohohoho! The *mann*!” And they broke down and they started weeping too. The next family heard what it's all about and then the next one. It spread from family to family and it became an epidemic.

Worse Than Anything Else

Now we're going to see that this was considered the worst situation in Moshe Rabeinu's career. וַבְּעֵינֵי רַע מִשָּׂה רָע – *In the eyes of Moshe, it was considered evil; a very bad situation*. But pay attention to *how* bad it was. Moshe Rabbeinu now made a speech to Hakodosh Boruch Hu that expressed bitterness and discouragement in a way that was never heard from him in his whole lifetime. He was so distressed that he wanted to throw in the towel altogether.

Listen to what Moshe said: לָמָּה הִרְעַתָּ לְעַבְדְּךָ – *Why have you done evil to me?* לָמָּה לֹא מָצַתִּי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ? – “Why haven't I found favor in Your eyes, הֲשִׂים אֶת מִשְׂאֵל כָּל הָעָם, הַזֶּה עָלַי – *that You put the burden of this people upon me?* It means, “I cannot bear this anymore; it's too heavy for me.”

Words of Despair

And then Moshe said something that we never before heard from his holy mouth: הֲרַגְנִי נָא הָרֹג – *Just kill me*, וְאֵל אֶרְאֶה בְּרַעְתִּי – *and I shouldn't see my evil*

that is taking place. If You're going to do that to me then I prefer You should kill me.

Now that's something new. It's a remarkable thing that Moshe Rabbeinu should talk that way. "Kill me!"?! None of the crises in the *midbar* ever occasioned such words of despair.

If he would pray for the people like he prayed at the time of the *eigel* that Hashem should have mercy on them, we would understand that. He could even become distressed maybe and fall on his face, like he did at other times. But Moshe was a confident leader – he never failed in his peace of mind and his assuredness that by following the command of Hashem he would succeed eventually. But here, Moshe gave up altogether. All of a sudden he became so weak that he felt it didn't pay for him to continue; he became so discouraged that he asked Hashem, "Please kill me." And he wasn't just being theatrical. When Moshe Rabbeinu said it, it actually was a request, "Finish me off."

So the question is what's this all about? It looks like this was the most discouraging of all the things that happened in the wilderness. That's hard to understand. The fact people are complaining? So what about it? What's so terrible in this beyond any other thing?

Unhappiness is The End

The answer is, the very worst of all the things is the feeling that you're living in unhappiness; to be **בְּמִתְאֲנָנִים** – to pity yourselves; that's the worst. When they sinned with the *eigel*, when Korach *v'adoso* rebelled, it's a bump in the road but there's still a future for the people. It's not the end.

It's when the people – not making any revolt against Moshe Rabbeinu, not planning to go back to Mitzrayim, not showing any boldness, effrontery against him – when they're *unhappy*, that's the end.

Unhappiness is the worst thing that can happen to the Jewish people because when a man becomes unhappy with his lot in life, he is a failure in *avodas Hashem*! If you feel that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is

giving you a raw deal, that you are the giver here; you're giving Hakodosh Boruch Hu services – you're *davening* and you're keeping the Torah but what are you getting from Him? – if that's what you think, then you're a failure. Once you come to that attitude, you cannot be an *oived Hashem*.

True Service of Hashem

Avodas Hashem means you're looking for ways and means to express your gratefulness to Him: **מָה כֵּל תִּגְמְלוּלוֹהִי, אֲשִׁיב לְהֵשֵׁם עָלַי** – How can I pay back to Hashem, for all that He bestowed on me? But if you think He bestowed nothing on you; you think He still owes you many things, that you're doing so many things for Him but He's not doing it for you, then you're not serving Hashem – you're a frum Jew and you'll get reward for keeping the mitzvos but compared to what you should have accomplished, you're a failure.

Now, I understand that you people here are not so willing to admit this; you're hearing it but I don't think you're ready. You don't want to make any disturbance here – you're a guest here after all – but outside you'll say it's ridiculous, it's extreme. And so, I'll repeat it again and again so that the truth should sink in: *You cannot be a really frum Jew unless you are happy with what Hashem is doing for you!*

And don't let anybody tell you differently! The whole *avodas Hashem* is built on this element – gratitude to Hashem for giving you things.

First Step of Torah

And therefore number one is that a person should be happy. Not only because Hashem wants you to be happy. Not only because it's healthier to be happy. Not because you'll live longer if you're happy. All those are true but there's something much more important than that. When you're happy and you realize that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is the author of your happiness, that's when it starts – now you can get busy succeeding in this world.

And so, when Moshe Rabbeinu saw that an epidemic of unhappiness was spreading, he fell into a consternation. "If people are unhappy, then it's a

ruination of all that I planned for them.” He saw the whole work was a failure! It’s collapsing! The *kabolas haTorah* is meaningless now because what kind of Torah is it if you learn with a grudge in your heart against Hashem?! If you feel in this world you’re not getting it, then your Torah can not be Torah and your *avodah* can not be *avodah*!

And therefore, Moshe, when he saw that, he resigned. “Kill me. I’m a failure! I helped take them out of Mitzrayim, I brought down the Torah for them. We did everything but now I see it’s a failure. If they’re going to be unhappy because of *gashmiyus*, then the bottom has dropped out because *kabolas Hatorah* starts with happiness in this world.

Part II. Teachers of Happiness

The Septuagint

Now, it’s important to listen to what happened then. What did Hashem do when Moshe Rabbeinu requested to be relieved of the responsibility? He could have done something right away to solve the problem – later He did; later Hakodosh Boruch Hu gave them extra food, additional things to eat. But what happened here, right away?

The very first reply that Hakodosh Boruch Hu gave to Moshe Rabbeinu was this: אִסְפּוּ לִי שִׁבְעִים אִישׁ מִזִּקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל – *Gather together seventy men of the elders of Yisroel, אֲשֶׁר יִדְעוּתָ בִּי הֵם זִקְנֵי הָעָם וְשֹׁטְרָיו* – *that you know are the elders of the people and their magistrates.*

“Take them to the Ohel Moed,” said Hakodosh Boruch Hu, “and they should stand with you. And then I’m going to come down and speak with you and from the spirit that I have put upon you, that spirit I’m going to put upon them also to a certain extent. And they’re going to carry the burden of the people together with you and you won’t have to carry it yourself (11:16-17).

Look inside – it’s a whole *parsha* about the seventy *zekeinim* how they became inspired with the spirit of *nevu’ah*.

What Did They Do?

But we’re at a loss. Because if you read the *parsha*, you won’t see one word how they helped at all. What did the seventy elders accomplish? You know, if Moshe Rabbeinu was going to be a hustler now; if he was going to go out, let’s say, and try to buy up meat from the surrounding nations of the gentiles, so we understand it’s too much work for him to be in a wholesale butcher business by himself; so he’ll need seventy people to help him supply meat to the Bnei Yisroel.

But that wasn’t the case. The seventy elders didn’t do anything to give the Am Yisroel meat. And so what kind of answer was it when Hakodosh Boruch Hu heard Moshe’s request, “It’s too difficult for me,” that He said, “I’m giving you seventy people”?

The answer is that Hakodosh Boruch Hu was going to teach the Am Yisroel a very great lesson now – a most fundamental lesson for life. And so He said, “You know what, Moshe? I’m going to give you seventy helpers now, but their big job is not to give people more food. That’s not a way to solve the problem. We don’t need more suppliers of meat for the people. We need suppliers of *seichel*, suppliers of happiness to the people.”

Colorless Monotony

Because the truth is that the *mann* would never be a happiness for those without *seichel*. That’s why as soon as the Torah tells us about those who complained, immediately the *possuk* adds a few words in order to reinforce the complaint: וְהָמָן כְּזֵרַע גֵּר – *The mann was like coriander seed, וְעֵינָיו כְּעֵין הַבְּדֹלָח* – *it looked like crystal.* It means it had no color; it was practically colorless, like crystal.

There wasn’t too much a variety of taste either. It tasted כְּצַפִּיקוֹת בְּרִבָּשׁ, like a wafer dipped in honey; and it was the same thing every day. Day in day out, *mann* for breakfast, lunch and supper. Maybe they didn’t even eat lunch. But if they had lunch, it was *mann*. Every day, Shabbos and Yom Tov too; every day for forty years!

Only the Torah adds that if you wanted another taste, you could chop it up and make out of it pancakes. If your wife wanted to relieve the monotony a little bit, she could *רָכַו בְּמִדְבָּרָה* – she could grind it up and fry it and now it tastes like a *latkeh*, like a pancake.

The Pancake Honeymoon

Now suppose your bride after the wedding starts making pancakes. That's what she learned and so she makes pancakes for breakfast, lunch and supper. And the next day the same thing. And the next day the same thing again. You'll start reconsidering the whole business. Even if you're going to get the most delectable pancake, but if you'll get it for breakfast and for lunch and then you'll get it for supper too, so after a while it will start coming out through your ears – it will become downright nauseating.

That's the big variety they had in the wilderness. Either they ate it straight and it tasted like a sweet wafer or they ate it processed and it tasted like a pancake. That's the change of diet that they could look forward to in the *midbar* for forty years. Not four days or four weeks or four months. Forty years!

Many Tastes

Now, we know, all the children know that if somebody had enough willpower to believe that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is giving him whatever he wants, if he had trust and confidence in Hashem so something happened. That pancake or that wafer began tasting like the thing you liked to eat.

Now, that's something that can be accomplished by hypnotism. But how long could a man hypnotize himself? Let's say your bride learned one recipe; she learned how to make pancakes. And so the first day she'll try to persuade you that it tastes like potatoes. The second day she'll persuade you it tastes like steaks and the third day like broiled fish. So if you're under the spell of her beauty so it could be the first few days you might down it, but after a while no hypnotism is going to help. You'll start regurgitating it despite her personal charm.

Limited Life

And it wasn't only variety in food that they were lacking. The *mann* was an example of a special treatment they were getting from Hashem – a life program of limited pleasure, of lack of conveniences. In the *Midbar*, Hakodosh Boruch Hu didn't give our people any entertainment. There was no fun in the *midbar* in the sense that we would expect. There was no place to go. Even a kosher place that people go to, you take your children to the zoo on *chol hamoed*; here, no zoos. No Coney Island. No amusement park – no amusement at all! Of course, no movies. No theaters. No races. There was no television. There was nothing! Nothing at all!

And don't think that in those days people were so backward that they didn't know of better things. Among the nations, there was a lot of fun. *וַיִּקְמוּ לְצַחֵק* – the Egyptian *geirim* wanted to have a good time. *לְצַחֵק* means to make games. Whatever the games were, they wanted to play. They had all kinds of amusements in the days of old. Don't think that in the ancient times they didn't have fun. They had music and games. They had everything.

And now an entire nation, a nation that was being established now forever, was brought into the *midbar* to a life of colorless food; it was a bland diet and what others would consider a bland life. So of course, there was a murmuring. We're surprised it didn't happen sooner. You can be sure that if we were there we wouldn't have been too happy. No bowling? No strawberry ice cream? We would have been complaining from the get-go.

The Secret of Happiness

And so the nation had to be disabused of what they thought happiness is – they had to learn what happiness means, that the secret of happiness is not having a lot of things to eat, special foods. Happiness doesn't mean entertainment and going places. It's not having many things. The secret of happiness is understanding how lucky you are to have what you have.

Now Moshe Rabbeinu can't sit down with everyone, with every family that comes with complaints and explain to them, "Look how good the *mann* is. It's healthy; it has the vitamins you need. It won't make you overweight and it won't make your teeth rot. You don't have to eat a lot of things – the *mann* gives you everything you need; it supplies all your requirements." We'll see soon that there's much more to explain than the weak words I'm saying – I'm talking now in general terms – but Moshe would explain it to them and after a few hours they'd learn how to be happy.

Real Motivational Speakers

But he didn't have enough time. A nation of millions – he couldn't go and explain to each couple separately. So Hakodosh Boruch Hu said to Moshe, "Maybe you yourself are not able to inspire everybody but I'm going to give you help. I'm going to give you seventy men." אֲשֶׁר יִדְעוּתָ כִּי הֵם זִקְנֵי הָעָם וְשֹׁטְרֵיוּ – Good, wise men whom you know are capable of influencing people. And I'll put my spirit into them and they'll become *nevi'im*". You know what a *navi* is? From the word *niv*. *Niv* means speaker, a speaker who speaks with a fire, with *hisragshus*.

"I'm going to put my spirit on them and I'll inspire them and they're going to spread out and each one will take a part of the people and they'll teach them little by little how to come back to happiness. They'll show them how lucky they are in *Olam Hazeh*; that the happiness of the simple things in life should cause them to be ecstatically happy *always*, without any superfluous things; without meat, without zoos and bowling alleys."

Moshe Rabbeinu now had an army of capable helpers who fanned out and spoke to the people; they taught them how to enjoy the *mann*, how to enjoy life. They were *misnabim*, speaking with enthusiasm, with a fire. I'm sure they spoke to individuals, to families – they gave lectures too and they showed the public how lucky they were. Every day they had *parnassah*. Nobody remained hungry

and it was the most beneficial diet the world ever saw.

Learning the Lesson

Now, it's true that the *mann* didn't satisfy their imaginations. They'd have liked to have something exciting, something painted red like ice cream or soda water. But now they learned the truth, that a plain clean glass of clear water is better than anything else. What is soda water after all? It's just water with some red dirt added to it.

And so now they were learning how to be happy without all of the superficial things of life, without constantly hankering for more. These seventy *chachomim* were the ones who restored the optimism and the happiness of the Jewish people and for the rest of their career in the *midbar*, they learned to be happy with their lot. It took work – nothing good comes easy – but even the *asafsuf* learned what happiness really is.

The Am Yisroel in the *midbar* learned how to be happy and the entire nation settled down to enjoying life. That an entire people should learn to be idealists and be able to live in such a manner, was a tremendous event, but that's what happened in the *midbar*. The people were trained into a new mode of life; a life of genuine satisfaction and true happiness with all of the simple things in life and Hashem's nation became the happy nation.

Part III. Learning Happiness

Writing Our Own History

Now I know that at first these words will fall flat on people's ears. It doesn't make any kind of reaction in people, this idea of being happy with what we have, with the minimum things in life. Anyway, what does this mean for us, this story that happened in the Wilderness – of course there'll be privation in the desert – but what does it have to do with us who live in Brooklyn, in America?

And so first let's understand a principle, a general principle about our history. All of Jewish history is like a book, like a *sefer* that is being written by the Am Yisroel. It's being written right now and we're the ones who are the authors of that book – whatever is inscribed in that book is due to the behavior of our nation. When we are virtuous, when we increase in Torah, when we build more *yeshivos*, when more people establish *frum* families, we are writing the sentences and chapters in that book which will someday be a great history.

Before the Book

But pay attention to something important now – what I'm going to tell you now is a fundamental understanding of the entire plan of the Torah. And that is that before we were permitted to set out to write our history book, we were given a preface.

I don't know if you ever saw books that used to be in the schools that teach children how to write. I remember how in the beginning of the book, all the letters and some words and paragraphs were written, in a nice handwriting. And we were expected to write in the blank pages by copying that beautiful writing. The beginning of the book was there as a model for us to imitate – you turned to the beginning, and then in the blank pages you wrote in, copying that model writing. And after a while you learned how to write in beautiful handwriting.

Now, Hakodosh Boruch Hu gave us a model that we're expected to utilize in writing our book of history – and the model is the existence of our people in the wilderness. The *midbar* was the most remarkable period in our history and Hakodosh Boruch Hu made it that way purposefully so that it should be a beautiful handwriting that the Am Yisroel could look back at and emulate.

What We Must Study

Now in the *midbar* there were many models, many lessons to learn from. We'll talk about them some day but we're focusing now on one of the more outstanding features of life in the wilderness – it was

a life that was lacking almost all extraneous pleasures and conveniences! Not only they didn't have meat and onions. For forty years they were very limited in everything. They didn't have permanent homes. They didn't have shopping centers. They didn't have bowling. There was no ice skating and no restaurants. No air conditioning, no theatre. They didn't have anything!

And that's why we're expected now to look back to that era of the *midbar*. Hakodosh Boruch Hu wants us, to a certain extent, to relive their experiences as a model of how we should regard our own lives and to understand with what emotions a Jew should view what he's getting today. By means of forty years in the *midbar* Hakodosh Boruch Hu was teaching them – he was teaching us too – the great lesson of *Eizehu ashir* – *Who is a rich man? Hasameach b'chelko* – *the man who learns to be happy with what he has.*

The Best Place is Home

That's why when the people complained, Hashem didn't send them seventy trucks, seventy ships, filled with meat and cucumbers. Because that wouldn't be a solution; it wouldn't be more than a temporary fix. The secret of happiness is not having a lot of things to eat or going places or having many things – it's understanding how lucky you are to have what you already possess.

And so, when the seventy sages came to the people and taught them how to enjoy what they had, that became the model for the future. That chapter of our history in the *midbar* was written for us to follow forever and ever – it was intended to teach us *how* to be happy.

Happiness means being happy with our lot, happy without extras and luxuries. We don't need to spend money on things that other people feel are necessary, like eat out in restaurants. No, you can eat home. It's even cleaner than in the restaurants and it costs much less.

You don't have to go to hotels. Home is better than hotels. You have more comfort, more conveniences at home. Everything at home is better.

The Jew learns that travel is only for people who are unhappy; they're looking to go someplace else where they think they'll find happiness.

Where Is Fun?

Saturday night, take a look out of your window and you'll see automobiles speeding. They're going someplace. Everybody is going someplace on Saturday night. Now you might think they're going to a certain good place. If they were all traveling to the same place, maybe. But they're traveling in every direction — they're going both ways on Ocean Parkway. Some think fun is this way, but the others think fun is that way.

What are they looking for? They're searching for some entertainment in life because their life is empty. It's a pity on them because they never learned where to find happiness. They never learned the secret that happiness is not in places; it's in the mind.

Now, I understand that it's easy to say but the truth is anybody can succeed in following the *midbar* model if he applies himself to this goal of learning to enjoy life. It's a great subject — it's a *chochma* to learn the ability of being happy with what we possess and it won't help to just hear these words and file them away. It takes work — if it took seventy *zekeinim* who received the spirit of Hashem to do the work of teaching the people, you can imagine that it takes work.

Doing the Work

We have to work hard and concentrate on all the things we have, and we'll become rich; *someach b'chelko*. If you have good health, it's very important to think about it: If you have two normally functioning kidneys you're wealthy. If you have a heart and a liver that's another million dollars. All your internal organs are functioning? Ooh wah! That's a wealth of diamonds!

That's *chelko*! The things that you have! Only that nobody's enjoying their wealth! Why should one wait until he loses his health, to look back to the good old days which he never enjoyed?

And therefore, it's *avodas Hashem* to dwell on these things, each one separately, to think about them and be a *some'ach b'chelko*. Don't take them wholesale like I'm doing now. Enjoy your wealth one thing at a time. As you walk down the street tonight on the way home, think of the fact that you have a healthy heart. That's all. A heart is enough for one block.

Heart and Hearing

The truth is you could walk miles in the street and sing at the happiness of a healthy heart. Suppose somebody didn't have a healthy heart and now he finally gained a complete cure; and he's walking out now from the place where he was cured; he's not walking on the street — he's walking in the clouds! He's so happy and he's singing at the top of his voice and people think he's a lunatic! Or they think he won the lottery.

Try that for a full block. You'll find that you can become happy with something you already have. You got to the corner? You're going to cross the street now and so you'll choose another part of your riches to think about. You have working ears? So you're wealthy already. You're able to cross the street safely because of your ears — people are able to survive traffic because they can hear traffic coming. Toot! Toot! And you jump out of the way! It saves your life. Ears are wonderful. Besides for the fact that you can communicate with your family; your ears are very necessary for your existence. *Chirsho nosein lo dmei kulo* — “If you make a man deaf it's like you killed him because he can't function anymore” (Bava Kama 85b).

Breathing in the Spring

Learn to enjoy the ability to breathe air. Air is a gift. It's a mixture, a cocktail of different gases; oxygen in the right proportion with nitrogen and a little bit of carbon dioxide. And as you breathe it in, it stimulates you. People don't breathe deeply enough. The bottom part of your lungs in most cases never inflated. So fill your lungs with air and now you're invigorating yourself with the great gift that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is giving you in abundance. It causes your

blood to become red and it invigorates your whole body. Breathing is a great happiness for the thinking person.

Especially now in the springtime. Learn to enjoy the spring because it'll soon be over. While everything is bursting out, there's fresh green on all sides and the weather is balmy; learn to enjoy the gift that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is giving. Dive into it! Don't be afraid it's too much *Olam Haze*, that you're becoming a hedonist. This kind of *Olam Haze* is a big mitzvah to indulge in! Learn to be happy in the spring!

So here's our friend now, he's walking in the street and he doesn't have even a penny in his pocket, but he's full of happiness. His heart is pumping – that was the first block. Then he got busy being happy about his ears. And now he's breathing the spring air too! He's enjoying the good weather and he's humming a song! He's healthy! His blood is coursing through his veins! He's an American citizen! Maybe he doesn't owe any money to anybody either! Think of all the good things you have in life! Ooh wah, now his mind is overflowing with happiness.

As he's thinking about his lungs filling with the cocktail, he can't forget about his heart or his ears; that's how his cup of happiness fills up. Otherwise, it's like a cup with a hole on the bottom – whatever happiness you pour in is leaking out.

Your Happy Home

You're going home now? If you're married, think how lucky you are! You know, there are plenty of people who are looking for a *shidduch*. Plenty of people just can't find their match. Some never had and some lost it. Don't sink into the lethargy and laziness of thought and disregard what you possess. You possess a husband? You possess a wife? It's real estate! It's property! And it's very important property! Any kind of husband or a wife is important property! Think about that for a minute before you open the door to the apartment.

If you're serious about this, I'll give you some more homework. You know when you're walking up your stairs, practice enjoying the steps. In the times

of the Gemara, they had ladders – a ladder is inconvenient and it's dangerous too. So when you walk up the steps, think about the privilege you have. You're able to come from the first floor to the second floor by easy stages.

If you have a banister too, that's an extra luxury! Think how many falls you saved yourself by holding onto the banister and you pull yourself up. It helps to propel you upstairs. It's like an elevator, the banister.

Be Crazy Happy

In the olden days, they didn't have banisters. The building department requires banisters today, but in the olden days they didn't have it. Imagine you had to climb up without a banister – the entire propulsion was due to your own efforts; nothing to hold on to. And if you slipped and fell backwards, it was big trouble. And now you're enjoying the luxury, the wealth of having a banister.

Now, some people go home and tell this to their wives, so she says, "What kind of crazy things are they telling you there? Enjoying a banister?! Is that normal?!" Because the only thing that's normal is to be unhappy, to keep on wanting some more things. A banister?! At least a little elevator she wants. It's advertised in the magazines, a home elevator. Why not? It only costs five thousand dollars for a home elevator.

But we'll be crazy and be happy! We'll choose one thing and concentrate on it until it makes us happy. After a while, when you're happy with that one thing, then add another thing. After a while, work on something else. After a while, you'd have forty or fifty things – it's nothing yet because there's more than that. But if you're happy with forty things, you're a rich man already. If you'll live – you're a young man yet – and keep on the career until you get way into your nineties then you'll be a very rich man.

Happy Nation

And so there's a lot to learn in life, to learn how to be happy! There's so much to be happy with! And that's what Hashem wants us to learn from our

parsha. We learn from the model in the *midbar* that we must enjoy even the most simple pleasures of life and that's our foundation for being servants of Hashem. To be an *oived Hashem*, we learn to thank Hashem always – and we thank Him only by being happy. For forty years the nation studied the great wisdom of *eizehu ashir* – “Who is a rich man? A rich man is the one who learned to be happy with what he has.”

And the fact that an entire nation trained themselves to live that way is an inspiration to us. A happy nation is a successful nation! **אַשְׁרֵי הָעָם** – *Happy is the nation*, **לֹוּ שְׂכָרָה לוֹ** – *that so is his lot!* And therefore, **אַשְׁרֵי הָעָם שֶׁהַשֵּׁם אֱלֹקָיו** – when we realize that Hashem is the author of our overflowing happiness that's how we begin to serve Him – we serve Him in gratitude for every detail of our lives and that's how we live most successfully.

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

Studying and Discovering Inner Happiness

Happiness comes only from studying the details of what we already possess. And that requires two things: Number one, to recognize the gifts that we already have and number two, to study them.

Every day this week, I will choose three different things that I already have but that I haven't yet properly recognized as wealth and I will make them my project for the day. I will spend at least one minute thinking about each one of the three things in detail and begin recognizing how wealthy I really am.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

517 - Happy With What He Has | 991 - Happy Nation
994 - Our Benefactors

Listen: 718.289.0899 Press 1 for English and 2 for Thursday Night Lectures



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

שאל אביך ויגיד וזקניך ויאמרו לך

Q:

I would like to learn Mishlei from beginning to end for the first time in my life. Can you give me some advice about how to approach the learning of this sefer?

A:

When you learn Mishlei, the first step is to make up your mind that Mishlei knows what he's talking about. He's not just wasting his time. And even though the statements might sometimes seem *poshut*, like it's simple, make up your mind that there is nothing simple in Mishlei. That's very important to understand. A wise man is talking to you – one of the wisest the world ever saw. And therefore, try to understand the profundity of his words.

Sometimes you might need the *meforshim*, the commentaries, to help you out. Whatever it is, you should make up your mind that Mishlei is a repository of the deepest wisdom for practical living.

Although Mishlei is a sefer of *Yiras Shomayim*, like it says in the beginning of the first *perek*, you must understand that Mishlei is also a book of successful living. If you want to be happy in *olam hazeh*, in this world, then Mishlei is the guide to that. It tells you how to deal with people and how to deal with yourself in order to live successfully in this world. There are so many gems in Mishlei. Advice on how to guard your health, how to guard your property, your money, how to get along with everybody – your wife, your children, your neighbors, your enemies. And it's a shame that so many people make the time to read everything else – newspapers, magazines and so much other garbage, but for Mishlei they don't have time.

Of course, the most important advice is how to get along with Hakodosh Boruch Hu. But Mishlei is full of wise counsel that will help you live successfully in *olam hazeh*, in this world. And knowing all this, you are going to approach this sefer with a different attitude. And that should be your first step in learning the sefer of Mishlei.

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