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הגאון ר' אביגדור מיללער זצ"ל

SEFER DEVARIM - THE CHOPP HOLDINGS EDITION

IN MEMORY OF THE VICTIMS OF THE MERON AND SURFSIDE TRAGEDIES,
AND AS A ZECHUS FOR THE YESHUA OF KLAL YISROEL

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AND AS A ZECHUS FOR THE YESHUA OF KLAL YISROEL

*In memory of my
dearest mother:*

לעילוי נשמת
האשה החשובה והצנועה
מרת ברכה סאבל ב"ר שלמה אלעזר הלוי ע"ה
ברעכער
נפטרה י"ד אלול

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פרשת כי תצא

WITH

R' AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"l

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

Honoring His Presence

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Part I. Present in The Camp

Jewish Army Gear

In this week's *sedrah* we are introduced to the Jewish soldier who is going out to battle on behalf of his people. **כִּי תֵצֵא מִחֹנֶה עַל אֹיְבֶיךָ** – *When you go out in a camp against your enemies ...* (Ki Seitzei 23:10). And we note something queer about the appurtenances that he carries with him. **וַיֵּתֵר תְּהַיָּה לְךָ עַל אַזְנֶךָ** – *In addition to his weapons of war - his sword and his bow and arrow and his lance - he also had a stick dangling at his side; a shovel of sorts.*

That's how you could recognize a Jewish soldier; he had a small shovel hanging on his belt. I'm sure there were other things too that made him different from a gentile soldier – many things – but it's this one that our *parsha* points out. He has with him a tool for digging.

A shovel? What for? And so the *possuk* explains as follows: וַיִּדְּ תַּהֲיֶה לָּךְ מַחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה – You should designate a place outside of the army camp (*ibid.*). Wherever the Jewish soldiers set up camp, a certain area was designated outside of the camp boundaries, וַהֲיֶה בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ חוּץ – It means when a soldier has to relieve himself he must walk out of the camp to take care of his needs. You can't make your functions inside the *machaneh*.

And even when you go out, that's not enough; you have to take that shovel with you, וְחָפְרְתָה בָּהּ – and you will use it to dig a hole, וְשָׁבַתְּ וּבִסִּיתָ אֶת צִאְתָּךְ – and then you will use it again to cover up the waste (*ibid.*). That's why it's a Torah law that every Jewish soldier must have with him a shovel.

Clean for the Shechina

Now, that's quite an interesting introduction to the subject of a Jewish army going out to war. We would have thought it would tell us about preparations for battle, war maneuvers or at least about certain prayers that should be said. And I'm sure that was done too. But the first thing the Torah tells us is that you have to make sure to keep the camp clean; there shouldn't be any excrement; no dirt or odor.

Now, there's no question that to keep the camp sanitary is a good thing – any army camp would do well to have such a policy – but from the *pessukim* it seems to be a very important thing, one of the *most* important!

And it is! The Torah continues: כִּי הַשֵּׁם אֵלֶיךָ מִתְהַלֵּךְ בְּקִרְבֵּי מַחֲנֶיךָ – You have to follow this procedure because Hashem your G-d is walking amidst your camp, לְהַצִּילְךָ מֵאֹיְבֶיךָ – to rescue you from your enemies. When Jews go out to battle, the Shechina comes down to help them. That's how it was. A camp of Jewish soldiers going out to war by order of the Sanhedrin was a place where the Shechina was!

Oh! That's already something different! The Shechina is here! That already requires an adjustment in our behavior. וְלֹא יֵרָאֶה בְּךָ עֲרוּת – He shouldn't see anything shameful, anything unsightly, in the

camp, וְשָׁב מֵאֲחֵרֶיךָ – and the Shechina will turn back from you and forsake you.

Exalted Behavior

That's what it means *k'pshuto*. It doesn't mean He sees any sin, but there's something that's not clean there. And if the camp is not a dignified place, if there are spots here and there where refuse is dropped and flies gather, the camp is not considered worthy of the presence of Hakodosh Boruch Hu and that's already enough to cause the Shechina to depart.

So here's a soldier. He's not doing anything wrong, he thinks. He can't deny his natural urges so he goes off someplace and he performs his needs, but he doesn't cover it up. That's all! What's the sin? Is that so wicked?

The answer is that when you know the Shechina is here, then even *that* is a wickedness. When the Shechina is present it requires an entirely different way of behaving; your demeanor changes – the way you speak, the things you say, the things you do. You don't act in front of a king the way you act in front of a nobody. And if *chas v'shalom* you do, if you're disrespectful, then וְשָׁב מֵאֲחֵרֶיךָ, the Shechina will forsake you. And that means everything! If He won't be there to aid you in battle then all the military maneuvers and all the prayers in the world won't help. All the weapons won't help unless the Jewish soldier has with him a *yased al azeinecha* – in addition to his weapons, a shovel too.

Jews or Israelis?

Before I continue, I'll say one thing that shouldn't have to be said, but because there's so much confusion today I'll take the time to say it. When we say "Jewish soldier" that has nothing at all to do with the Israeli army. בֵּי תַצֵּא מִחֻמֶּה עַל אִיבֶךָ means when you go out to fight a battle that the *chachmei HaTorah* command you to go out and fight; it's a camp where the *aron habris* goes out with you, a place of *kedusha* and *limud torah*. That's an army camp that brings down the Shechina.

The army of the *medina* is the opposite of *kedusha*. The purpose of the army is to make Jews into Israelis. They themselves say that the Israeli army is specifically set up for the purpose of breaking down the morality of the Am Yisroel. A general in the Israeli army wrote that in his book. I won't quote now his exact words because we're in a shul but anyone who knows anything knows that it's a place of *ervas davar*. Of course they fight wars too, they defend Jews, no question about it, and we pray that they should succeed in protecting the *frum yishuv* but it's not a holy camp.

In the ancient times, however, we had an army not of Israelis but of Jews, and so they fulfilled the *possuk* of וְהָיָה מַחֲנֵיךְ קָדוֹשׁ – *Your camp should be made holy*. And how do you make the camp a holy place for the Shechina to come? By behaving in a way that shows you're aware of the Shechina. Even something as natural as taking care of your needs is done with the awareness that you're in the presence of the Shechina. That's a *machaneh kadosh*!

His Glory Fills The Earth

That's the great lesson of our *possuk* – we are the ones who bring the Shechina into our lives! It's how we behave, the respect we show for the presence of the Shechina “Walking amidst our camp,” that makes it a place that's fitting for Him to come. And the more you put into it, the more you act in a way that befits the Shechina; the more the Shechina comes down. And it's a principle that applies not just to the army camp, but to anywhere the Shechina is.

Now, we know that the presence of Hakodosh Boruch Hu is everywhere; מְלֵא כָּל הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ – He's in the entire universe. The truth is that *leis asar panoi minei* – there isn't any space that's vacant of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. But we learn from the Torah and from the reiterated statements of our sages that there is such a thing as Shechina, which means the intensification of the presence of Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

Levels of Light

Our sages (Sanhedrin 39a) give a *mashal*; it's like the sun shining. It's midday and the whole world is flooded with light – not only is

there an abundance of sunshine on the street but even in the homes, even when the shutters are closed, there is still light inside. It steals through cracks in the shutters and under the door.

Now, is the light that comes through a crack in the keyhole or a shutter the same light that you'll find on the street? No. There's a big difference. On the street you're directly receiving the rays of the sun. You look up and see the sun and the rays are coming directly down upon you. But if you're inside a house and the doors and windows are closed, so the light doesn't come in directly; it comes in through some form of radiation; the light waves come in by devious ways but it's not the same.

Similarly the Shechina is everywhere; מְלֵא כָּל הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ means that wherever you turn, wherever you go, Hakodosh Boruch Hu is there. And yet there are some places where His splendor shines directly. There are some places where it's closer or more concentrated.

Now you have to put this into your minds. Forget about philosophy. What Hakodosh Boruch Hu is, that's *l'maaleh*, it's above our ability to explain, but we have to get into our heads what He has revealed to us about Himself, that He is מְלֵא כָּל הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ and in some places He makes His presence more intense than other places.

Levels of Shechina

There's a *mishna* in Mesichta Avos, in the third *perek* . רַבֵּי הַלְפָתָא בְּיָמֵי הַלְפָתָא – *When ten people gather together to learn Torah, עֲשָׂרָה שְׂוֵי שְׂבִיבִין וְעוֹסְקִין בְּתוֹרָה* – *the Shechina is there too*. You hear that? It's a *gemara* too (Sanhedrin *ibid.*): כָּל בַּיַּת עֲשָׂרָה – *Anytime ten Jews come together the Shechina is there*. When you come to a *beis haknesses* and there's a *minyan* or sometimes you make a private *minyan* , you have to know the Shechina is there. Like right here, there are more than ten of us – all kosher Jews, boruch Hashem, and you came together for the purpose not of hearing jokes, or amusement and entertainment, but to learn Torah, so the Shechina is here with us. You shouldn't slouch in your seat,

you can straighten your necktie too – you have to be aware that the Shechina is here right now.

Now he goes on and says, **וּמִנֵּינִן אֶפְלוֹ הַמָּשָׁה** – what about five Jews? And he brings a *possuk* that even if five Jews come together it's true. Of course it's a lesser Shechina, it's not the same Shechina as ten, but He's there.

וּמִנֵּינִן אֶפְלוֹ שְׁלֹשָׁה – What about when three Jews come together for *avodas Hashem*? Yes, even three. And he brings a *possuk* there to show that. **וּמִנֵּינִן אֶפְלוֹ שְׁנַיִם** – And two? Another *possuk*: **אִזְנֵי יְרָאֵי הַשָּׁם** – *Two yirei Hashem are talking, what do they talk? They're talking divrei Torah of course, וַיִּקְשֹׁב הַשָּׁם – *Hashem is right there and He's listening.**

Now, **וּמִנֵּינִן אֶפְלוֹ אֶחָד** – What about one person? Yes, even one frum Jew who's learning, who's involved in *avodas Hashem*, the Shechina is there. Like it says, **בְּכֹל הַמְּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אֶזְכִּיר אֶת שְׁמִי** – *anyplace where My name is being mentioned, אָבָא אֵלַי וּבִרְכֵתִי* – *I will come there and bless you.*

Someone Is Looking

We're learning here that if one Jew is sitting in his house and he's learning Torah, and let's say you happen to pass by and look through the window – don't look into anybody's house by the way; when you pass by don't look through the windows – but let's say by accident you saw him sitting by the window learning, you have to know the Shechina is over his head. Of course you'll never see it unless you work very hard and train yourself to understand it but the truth is that the Shechina is over the head of an *oived Hashem*.

That's why anyone who learned a little knows that among Jews the proper way when dressing or undressing is to remain covered (Shulchan Aruch OC 2). Even if you're in a private room and the door is locked and the light is out – no one could see anything – nevertheless the scrupulous Jew dresses and undresses in such a manner that his body is never revealed.

Now that's very surprising. The room is closed. The shades are down. It's dark. Nobody sees me. The answer is that somebody is

there – Somebody with a capital S, the Shechina. The Shechina is always present in the Jewish home and that's why we attempt to cover ourselves up – in deference to the presence of the Shechina.

Now the question is what does covering help? If Hakodosh Boruch Hu is looking, He can see through fabric. He can see through walls. So what will you accomplish by covering up? The answer is this is an exercise in the lesson of **וְהָיָה מִחֲנִיךְ קְרוֹשׁ וְלֹא יִרְאָה בְּךָ עֲרוֹת דְּבָר**. By covering ourselves up every morning and every night and acting in a way that shows deference to the Shechina we remind ourselves always of this great truth. Because it's not just a *mashal*, it's not poetry – *the Shechina rests on the Am Yisroel* and we have to act accordingly.

Part II. Present in The Temple

Approaching the Sanctuary

Now when we talk about the presence of the Shechina, of course, the Beis Hamikdash comes to mind. When Hakodosh Boruch Hu gave the command to erect a Mishkan, the first Beis Hamikdash, he stated **וַעֲשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ** – they shall make for me a Mikdash, which means a holy place, an especial place for me, **וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹכָם** – and I shall dwell in their midst. We learn in a nutshell what is meant by a Beis Hamikdash. It's a place of *hashra'as haShechina*, where the Shechina comes down.

So imagine now that we had a Beis Hamikdash today or that we were back in the ancient times when the Beis Hamikdash stood on the Har Habayis. And now let's say you were *zocheh* to come in to the *azarah* – you would come in with great awe as if entering the palace of a mighty king. That's how it always was. **וְשָׂם נֶעְבְּרָךְ בְּיָרְאָה בְּיַמֵּי עוֹלָם** **וּבְשָׁנִים קָדְמָנִיּוֹת** – We served You *with fear* in the days of old.

When someone approached the Beis Hamikdash, he did it with the greatest trepidation. That's why the Levi'im were stationed around its gardens – not to let the Bnei Yisroel trespass. The Levi'im stopped and interrogated him, “Are you *tamei*? Did you go to the

mikveh? Did you have *haza'ah* if you were a *tamei meis*?" They questioned him again and again. Nobody could just come in. That was the *mitzvah* of **וּמִקְדָּשֵׁי תִירָאוּ** – you should be afraid of the Beis Hamikdash!

What Are You Afraid Of?

But the *gemara* (Yevamos 6a) says something very important about this *mitzvah*. Let's say you're very much in fear – it's a feeling of awe; you're walking on your tiptoes – but our sages warn us to remember the following: **יָכוֹל יִתְיַרָא אָדָם מִן הַמִּקְדָּשׁ** – I might think a person should be afraid of the Beis Hamikdash, **לֹא תִלְמֹד לִוְמָר** – So the *posuk* says: No! **אֲנִי הַשֵּׁם** – It's Me, Hashem that you have to be thinking about.

When you go to the *mikveh* before entering the Mikdash, and when the Levi'im are interrogating you at the gates or when you walk with trepidation in the Mikdash, **לֹא מִמִּקְדָּשׁ אַתָּה מִתְיַרָא אֶלָּא מִמִּי שְׁהוֹדִיר**, **עַל הַמִּקְדָּשׁ** – We're not doing that because we're in awe of the Mikdash; it's Hashem we're thinking about. You're walking with fear and respect because of **מִי שֶׁשָּׁכַן שָׁמֹו בְּבֵית הַקֹּדֶשׁ** – Hashem is in that building there. We act differently not because of the building or the *kohanim* or the *aron bris* in the *kodesh kodoshim*. It's the Presence of the Shechina that we're thinking about.

Now, I know that today people will be quite satisfied if everybody would bow down to the Har Habayis; we wouldn't be *boidek* what the *kavanah* is but we're talking about *amito shel Torah* and the Torah truth is that we act differently because we know that Hashem is in the Mikdash.

The Holy Synagogue

Now, although we don't have anything like that today, but the *beis haknesses* is a *Mikdash Me'at*. It's a place where the Shechina is. That's why we have to behave differently in the *shul*. Not because it's a *shul* or because of the *aron*. Not because the Rav is looking. It's because *the Shechina is here!*

When you come to the *beis haknesses*, you should enter with fear. Not that you walk in, you're *heimish*, you say "*Shalom aleichem*,"

you joke around, like you're back in your club with your old cronies again. It's not a club. It's a *beis Hashem* and when you walk in, you have to be afraid – the Shechina is here. The *yeshiva* too; you have to be afraid when you come into the *beis hamedrash*, you have to act differently.

Otherwise, **וְשָׁב מֵאֲהָרָיִךְ**, the Shechina is absent. The Shechina is only in a place where people don't *kibbitz*, where they don't joke around, where they stand with *derech eretz*. In a synagogue or a *beis hamedrash* of a *yeshivah*, you must demonstrate that you want the Shechina to come, but when you stand around, even in the back, and joke around and talk in a loud voice or laugh aloud that makes the Shechina depart.

Stop The Talking

It's a great tragedy, this matter of talking in the synagogues. It's a *bizayon*, a disgrace for Hakodosh Boruch Hu. If a gentile, *lehavdil*, would come into a *shul* and see what type of place it is, he'd lose all interest, all respect. You have to realize that it's a great cancer of our nation, *chas v'shalom*. It's a terrible cancer, this lack of respect for Hakodosh Boruch Hu who wants to put His presence among us. People are shoving the Shechina away from the *machaneh*.

Here's a man who goes into a *shul* where the Shechina is present; people are learning or *davening*, and this nincompoop, this empty head, turns to his neighbor to exchange idle conversation. It means that he is negating everything that the presence of the Shechina represents. The Shechina is not worth anything in comparison to his little unimportant desires, *chas v'shalom*. And so it's *chillul Hashem*; he's profaning the glory of Hashem.

You don't want the Shechina to depart from your *shul*? You have to read to them what is written in the Tur and the Shulchan Aruch (OC 124). It says **כָּל הַשּׁוֹחַ שִׁיחָה בְּטֵלָה בְּתוֹךְ הַחֹזְרֵת הַש"ץ הָרִי זֶה חוֹטֵא וְגוֹעֲרִין בו** – anybody who talks unnecessary talk, he has to be scolded. Of course, if something is dangerous, you have to tell someone “Watch out!”, but otherwise don't talk. And if he does talk, then he's a sinner

and you have to scold him. Not only because he's interrupting and he's bothering others, but because he's ignoring the Shechina.

A Huge Sin

Such a sin is עוֹנוֹ מְנִשָּׂא גְדוֹל – It's sin that can never be forgiven (*ibid.*)! That's a terrible thing to say but that's how it is – to be *michalef sheim shomayim* in such a brazen way means your sin is too big to be forgiven.

That's why he has to be told off – all around that's how it should be; if somebody is talking everybody should start shouting “*Sha! Sha! Sha!*” And you have to say it over and over again – din it into the ears of the people. And nobody should say, “Don't be *melamed chova* on the Am Yisroel,” because the Shulchan Aruch says that, the Tur says that. So what you're telling me is “Don't teach Tur to the people”?! People must be told! You have to throw it in their teeth again and again, until finally some people will listen. Not because you like to yell, not because you're *frum*. It's because you have awareness of the Shechina that “Walks among you”.

And if this cancer has reached your *shul* and you cannot heal it, you leave. Unless you're a very important personality there nothing will happen; you're not going to change them. So find a better place, a place where they respect the presence of the Shechina. At least *yourself* you should rescue. Find a *beis knesses* where people walk in politely, they don't talk *divrei chol*, and they behave respectfully.

On Yawning

I'll tell you something even more. You might not agree with me but I don't have to agree with you either. Imagine a synagogue where a man comes in and he yawns aloud; he stretches, he raises up his arms and yawns. Now, is it an *aveirah* to yawn? I can't say that, but one thing is for sure – it's not respectful of the Shechina Who's there with you.

Now, don't tell me it's a yawn, it can't be helped. Yawning is not involuntary and I'll prove it to you. Because when you're standing in front of the mayor, although the mayor – especially the New York City mayor – is a zero *shebi'zeros*, you wouldn't yawn. No matter

what you wouldn't yawn because you have a little bit of respect for him. Or suppose you're standing with a beautiful young woman who's been introduced to you and it's a marriage prospect, you're not going to yawn. It would never enter your mind. And even if it would – you'd stifle it.

You know, I saw great people who understood that. I had a *rebbe* in Europe who I admired very much and I used to watch him – I kept my eyes on him. And I can tell you that he never yawned once! I looked at him for years and years and he never yawned once. Maybe he yawned when nobody was around, that I can't tell you, but he never yawned once in the *beis medrash*. He never scratched himself, never. I know why. His *rebbe* taught him that. His *rebbe* was the Alter of Slabodka and he was what you call an *ois gerechente mentch*. He lived with a *cheshbon* – he knew what it meant to live in the presence of Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

Yawning is almost always a sign of disregard, that you don't care at all. And not only are you not interested, but you're not even respectful enough to hide the fact that you're not interested. And so a person who is sitting in the *shul* or *beis medrash* and has an awareness of the Shechina that is *shoreh b'Yisroel*, that He is *mishalech b'kerev machanecha*, he'll never yawn.

Beautiful Tents

Now, we can't leave this subject of the *Shechina shoreh b'Yisroel* and the conduct it demands of us without speaking about the Shechina that is present in the Jewish home. Because as much as the Shechina is present in the *beis knesses* and the *beis medrash*, the Jewish home is also a place where the Shechina resides!

That's why when Bilaam saw the Jewish nation camped in the wilderness for the first time, he got so excited that he said, **מָה טָבוּ אֹהֲלֵיךָ יַעֲקֹב** – *How beautiful are your tents, Yaakov*. Now, some people say that **אֹהֲלֵיךָ** means the *batei midrash* and the *batei knesses* and that's a good *drash*, it's true, but the plain *pshat* is a Jewish home. **מָה טָבוּ אֹהֲלֵיךָ** – *How beautiful is the Jewish home!*

What was so beautiful that Bilaam saw? He saw expensive chandeliers? Fancy carpets and curtains? Oh no, Bilaam wasn't such a fool to be impressed by such hollow and worthless things. And anyhow the tents of Yaakov were poor little tents; they slept on bags on the ground and they didn't have much furniture in those tents.

Palaces of Decency

So what was so beautiful? Bilaam didn't see tents; he saw palaces! Palaces of *yosher* and *kedusha* and *tznius* and *sholom*. He saw orderliness and punctuality and discipline. He saw decency in those tents! *וַיֵּרָא אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל שֹׁכֵן לְשִׁבְטָיו* – *Bilaam saw Yisroel dwelling according to their families*; *וְשָׂאִין פְּתֻחֵיהֶן מִכְּנִיחַן זֶה כְּנִגְדַּי זֶה* – *The tents were pitched in such a way that never did one doorway of a tent face another doorway* (Bava Basra 60a). It was planned with the utmost precision so that if you opened up the flap of the doorway of your tent and your neighbor did so at the same time, you couldn't look into his tent and he couldn't look into yours.

You know why? So you shouldn't see your neighbor's wife. You hear such a thing, to be so circumspect and discreet? And it was difficult too because you were jammed together; there were at least 600,000 tents, probably many more and Bilaam didn't see a single case where this rule wasn't obeyed.

He saw that it was a nation that lived according to regulations down to the smallest details; a nation that not only had the Shechina in their homes but a nation whose conduct *brought* the Shechina into their homes. And so he said, *רְאוּיִים אֱלֹהֵי שְׁתֵּשֶׁרָה עֲלֵיהֶם שְׂכִינָה* – *Such a people who are so careful when it comes to chastity and perfection of behavior are worthy that the Shechina should rest on them.*

Modern Day Beis Hamikdash

A Jewish home is a Beis Hamikdash! You know, we're accustomed to it already so we don't appreciate what we have but if we would stop and think, we'd see that the Jewish home is the summit of civilization! Where do you find a house like a Jewish house? Nobody can even remotely equal the Jewish home. The world has to look up

to our homes for good character, for kindness, for chastity, for decency, for everything good.

And so, when you pass by a home and you see a big *mezuzah* on the door, you know inside is a Beis Hamikdash – the Shechina resides there. No matter how poor the home is – the walls are cracking, the window curtains are shabby and frayed and the furniture is on its last legs – but the fact that the Shechina is present transforms that little humble dwelling into the most beautiful palace. And even though the inhabitants inside don't realize it – they're humble people; they won't praise themselves – but we ourselves must learn to appreciate what's doing in that home. The Shechina is there!

Part III. Present in The Home

The Third Partner

That's why a *chasuna* is so important. It's the foundation of a Mikdash; the creation of a place for the Shechina to reside. That's why whenever a couple gets married, the Shechina comes down. Under the *chuppah*, the father and mother are there. The *mechutanim* are there too. But there's another guest. Hakodosh Boruch Hu Himself is there.

How do I have the boldness to say such a thing? It's a *gemara* (Sotah 17a). Our sages tell us that Hakodosh Boruch Hu says, אֵינֶשׁ וְאִשָּׁה שָׁלוּם בְּיַנְיָהֶם – when they come together, שְׂכִינָה בְּיַנְיָהֶם – the Shechina is there. And Rashi explains, the *yud* of the אֵינֶשׁ and the *hey* of the אִשָּׁה combine and that's *Yud – Kei*, that's the name of Hashem. The Shechina is there.

It's a glorious opportunity when a man speaks to a woman and he says *harei at mekudeshes li*. At that moment the Shechina descends and becomes the third partner in their marriage. When the *chosson* says *harei at mekudeshes li*, at that moment Hakodosh Boruch Hu chimes in and says, "I'm here too."

Someone is Between You

The poor *chosson*, his head is not there. At least if the *mesader kiddushin*, would do a *chessed* and whisper in his ear just before he takes out the ring and say, “Do you know what you’re going to do now? You’re bringing down the Shechina between you and your *kallah* now,” so at least the *chosson* can awake from his stupor and he’ll try at least to think what’s taking place. I once did that – I whispered into the ear of a *chosson* before he put the ring on, “Think that the Shechina is coming down now.”

And that remains forever. Not only at the *chasuna*. It remains forever! They told of a certain *chassidische rebbe* who used to think this way. When he looked at his wife, he imagined he saw the Shechina between him and his wife. He worked on it. He took it seriously because it’s true!

The Shechina is always in the home of a *frum* married couple, as long as they live together. It’s true, husbands and wives are different; by nature they’re entirely different, but the presence of Hashem overrides everything else. Who cares if your wife has certain interests and you have different interests? She likes to talk, you don’t like to talk? It makes no difference. Both together are united in the great ideal of building a Jewish tabernacle of *avodas Hashem*, a place where the Shechina resides, so who cares if there are puny little differences?! Everything is puny when it’s compared to that!

Dressed for The Shechina

That’s why if *chas v’shalom* she becomes wild and she runs away; she wants a *get* and she calls the police and drives him out of the house, she’s making a *churban Beis Hamikdosh*. The *gemara* (Gittin 90b) says that if, for some reason, they broke up their marriage, *chalilah*, מְזַבַּח מוֹרֵר עָלָיו דְּמַעוֹת – the *mizbeach* weeps for that. Why does it weep? Because the Shechina was sent away; the *Beis Hamikdash* has been destroyed and you weep for the *churban Beis Hamikdash*.

Now, all of this means we have to change our attitudes – it requires an entirely new attitude, an entirely new appreciation of the

Jewish home, which should create an entirely new way of behaving in the home.

You know, the Telzer Rav, *zichrono livrocho*, never took off his *kapote* in his house, even in the summertime. He was always dressed for the Shechina. There's another Rav, a certain Ungarishe Rav, who would never let his children lie down on the sofa in the daytime. He trained them, they're always in the presence of a *Melech*.

Be Ambitious

Now, I'm not going to say you have to go that far but *something* should be different in your attitude when you know that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is *mishalech b'kerev machanecha*, that He is actually there. I'm not saying it's easy – it takes work. It could be it's uncomfortable sometimes – the Shechina is crowding in on you. But that's how you build a successful home. You have to practice thinking about that and **הִבָּא לְטוֹהַר מְסִיעֵיךָ לָו**. You'll succeed eventually!

It should be an ambition of yours, “We wish to bring the Shechina into our house.” Look, nobody is a *malach*, nobody is completely successful; there are ups and downs, there are failures, sometimes there are minor tragedies, but always a husband and wife should keep before their eyes a mutual ideal, “We want this place to be the Beis Hamikdash. And if we live successfully, even partially successfully, by trying to bring a little *kedusha* into our lives by making our home a place that's *ra'ui*, that's fitting, for the Shechina, then we've lived on this earth for a purpose. We've succeeded.”

And that's why we have to remind ourselves always. Whenever you come into the house, when you're getting back from work, you should put your mind to it: “This place where I'm coming in now is *kadosh*.” As you walk through the frame of the door, there is a *mezuzah* there on the doorpost, it should remind you that the Shechina dwells on the Bnei Yisroel.

Anger and Atheism

And in order to appreciate that, as much as possible we have to behave in accordance with that recognition. If you want the Shechina to remain in a home there must be good manners there. If somebody

is always shouting or if somebody is mean, if they say impolite words in a home, so you can't expect the Shechina to remain there. That's a rule. It must be a place of respect. Otherwise Hakodosh Boruch Hu will not be present.

So let's say you're standing in the kitchen and your wife or your husband said something that irritates you. First thing to remember is that the Shechina is in the kitchen too. Oh, that's something different already! You're going to get angry with the Shechina in the room?! You can't do that! *אִינָהּ הַשְׁׁוֹבָה בְּנִגְדּוֹ* – A person gets angry, he shows he's not thinking about Shechina at all (Nedarim 22b). Think of the Shechina. You're getting angry? It means you're forgetting about Hashem. It's like atheism!

And therefore, thinking about the Shechina requires that we behave in a certain way. And that's very important for us – it's not merely that we avoid the sin of *ka'as*. It's much bigger than that! We avoid the very great *mum*, the blemish, of not perceiving the Presence of Hashem. That's our function in the home – to always behave in a way that's befitting the Presence of the Shechina.

Including The Kids

It has to be emphasized to children too. “Children, when you come into the house, come with *derech erez* into the house. Know this is a house where the Shechina is here. It's not a bus stop. It's not a library, *chas v'shalom*. Our house is a place where Hakodosh Boruch Hu finds *nachas ruach*, and He resides here with us.”

I always tell the story of a Jewish woman from Europe; when the children were little and they were romping and one wanted to sit on the table so she drove him off the table. “You can't sit on a Jewish table; a Jewish table is *kadosh*.” That's what she said: “It's holy, a Jewish table!” Of course they don't always listen but it goes into their heads. “On this table we eat kosher; we put *siddurim* on the table. We make *brachos* at the table and we say *divrei Torah*.” What else is *kedusha* if not a Jewish table? That's how it used to be and that's how we should understand forever.

Children should be made to understand what's doing in a Jewish home and therefore they can participate in making it more *kadosh*. You can tell them, "Every time you do something good in this house, you're making the house even more *kadosh*. Every time you open a *sefer*, every time you *daven*, every time you say *birchas hamazon*, any *bracha* you make in the house, the house is becoming more and more *kadosh*."

Now, in case your wife doesn't share with you these great ideals, she's not thinking these thoughts, so you do it yourself. Even though your wife doesn't talk about it, you speak about it. Many times, your wife is also influenced. Sometimes, she's the one who's speaking about it and the husband not so much. Let her continue to speak – the children will listen! He'll listen too! It'll influence everyone in the house when they hear that this is a home where the Shechina resides.

The In-House Outhouse

You cannot allow newspapers into the house. You want to read newspapers? Read them while they're on the newsstands; pass by and read them, that's enough. Don't bring a newspaper into your house. Today especially the newspapers are terrible – what they talk about, what they approve of. The New York Times or New York Post is like *tzoah*; it's going to smell up your house.

Now, I understand that some people are so accustomed to the bad smell that they think it's natural, but that won't help. When the soldier had to move his bowels, that was natural too, but the Torah says, "Go out of the camp, and cover it too!" A newspaper today is like a dung heap, a pile of manure.

And the magazines? Plenty of magazines are full of dirt. It could be that many years ago there might have been a magazine that catered to housewives; it was full of recipes and dressmaking and good advice for raising children but today it's terrible. These filthy magazines are polluting the Jewish homes. Don't tell me you just read it, it has no effect. It has an effect! It leaves over a bad smell! Library books too. In the public libraries, there is no end of dirty

books. Today, that's all they offer, even for children. You can't have a home where the Shechina resides that smells bad!

The Great Evil

However, there's something worse than that and that's television. There are not enough words to speak about this great evil that has inundated the homes. I don't like to step on people's toes but a house with a TV is not a Jewish house. It's impossible to have a Beis Hamkdash with a television in it. Imagine the *kohen gadol* went into the *kodesh kodoshim* with a little portable television in his hand. There would be no Shechina there!

That's why when people call me up for information about a *shidduch* and they ask me, "Is there a TV in that house?", what do I say? I say, "I don't give information about *shidduchim*." When there's no TV, I say, "No TV." Now you know the secret if you'll call me up. Oh, he's a nice boy, fine *middos*, he's learning, a *ba'al kishron*. Very good! But do they have television in the home? It's a very important question. *Shidduchim* are going to be rejected in the years to come because of televisions.

And that's because there are no two ways about it. Either you have a Mikdash or you have a television. It cannot be both. Anybody who has a big dish on his roof has a *keili* of *tzo'ah* over his house with special wires to bring excrement into his house. That man, you should know, is ruining his family; he's chasing away the Shechina from his home.

A Badge of Honor

What's the use of building a house, what's the use of supporting a wife, if it won't be a place for the Shechina?! That it should be just an Italian home or a Puerto Rican home, it's a tragedy. The biggest honor for a Jewish family is that they're residing with Hakodosh Boruch Hu and the more you put into it, the bigger and more beautiful badge of honor you're wearing. It's *Hashem mishalech b'kerev machanecha!*

And so just like the *yased al eizenecha*, the wooden spade hanging with the other weapons was a badge of honor – Rabeinu

Bechaya says that: **וּמִצִּיָּהּ זֶה הָיְתָה מַעֲלָה גְדוֹלָה וְכַבוֹד לְיִשְׂרָאֵל בְּהֵיטֵת הַשְּׂכִינָה** **מִתְנַלְקֶת בְּקֶרֶב מַחְנִיָּהֶם**, *it was a sign of greatness, a badge of honor that the Shechina walked with them* – so too every time you act differently in your home or the *beis knesses* or the *yeshiva* because you know the Shechina is there, you're also pinning on your lapel another badge of honor.

Because it means that the Shechina is not somewhere out in space. It's not someplace in the distant galaxy. The Shechina is by us! The Shechina is right here where Jews are living and where Jews are practicing the laws of Torah. And as much as we are aware of that greatness we possess the more successfully we'll live. And we'll continue to live that way, together with Hakodosh Boruch Hu, until finally He brings us back to Yerushalayim and rebuilds the *Beis Hamikdash* where we'll see His Presence on a much grander and more majestic scale.

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

Envisioning The Shechina

It is a Torah truth that the Shechina resides by the Am Yisroel. Our *avodah* is to constantly be aware of the Shechina and and as much as possible to live our lives in a way that expresses our regard for His presence.

Bli neder, this week I will practice the lesson from our *parsha* by spending one minute each day in my home or my *shul* thinking that the Shechina is right in front of me and behaving appropriately for such an experience.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

שאל אביך ויגדך זקניך ויאמרו לך

Q:

What is the pshat in the *ma'amar chazal* that tells us that we should be careful with poor children because they are the ones who will become *talmidei chachomim*?

A:

In Mesichta Nedarim (81a) it says: שלחו מתם – “They sent a message from Eretz Yisroel: הזהרו בבני עניים – Be careful with the children of the poor, כי מהם תצא תורה, – because from them Torah will come.” Torah comes from poor children. So the Ran asks: Why from poor children? Why is it that especially from the poor families will develop *talmidei chachomim*? And he says that it's because poor children have nothing else but Torah.

Do you hear that? A rich boy has a bike and maybe he has a radio too; an automobile and all kinds of expensive toys he might have. He has a lot of things to keep him busy. Boruch Hashem, when I was a boy, I never had a bike. I was such a poor boy that when I wanted to buy a little hammer – it cost twenty five cents in those days – I couldn't afford it! It took me a long time but finally I saved up twenty five cents and I bought the hammer. That was a big thing for me! We didn't have any toys.

Poor children have much less opportunities to waste their lives! Boruch Hashem! So הזהרו – be careful, בבני עניים, with the poor, כי מהם תצא תורה, because Torah will come from them. And the Ran says it's because they have nothing else to do except learn. That's the *pshat* there. So now you know that children who have so many good things, it's a very big problem.

TAPE # 812

This week's Q&A sponsored:

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