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פרשת ויגש

WITH

R' AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"l

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

Seeing the Secrets of the World

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Part I. Seeing Your Children

Good Tidings

When Yaakov Avinu received the message from Mitzrayim that עֹד יֹסֵף חַי, that his son Yosef was still alive, he was overwhelmed with emotion – he went crazy with *simcha*. “My son is alive?! After all these years that I didn’t see him; all this time I thought he was dead, and now you tell me he’s alive!”

So what did Yaakov say when he heard the good news? Maybe he said, “Baruch Hashem. I thank You Hashem so much from the bottom of my heart.” Or maybe he sang to Hashem, “*Hodu laHashem ki tov!* I’m so happy, so grateful to You.” No, that’s not what happened – I’m sure he said that too, but he wasn’t satisfied with just that. The only thing that

the Torah tells us is that Yaakov said: אֶלְכָה וְאֶרְאֶנּוּ – I have to go and see him, בְּטָרָם אֲמוּת – while I'm still alive. "I want to see his face," said Yaakov.

Now maybe it doesn't bother you but I think it's a question. What's so important about going to see Yosef? Yaakov Avinu had important things to do in this world – he had *shleimus* to accomplish, *dveikus*, *ahavas Hashem*, *yiras Hashem*. Life is too short to waste on trips to see people! He had to go and see Yosef?! We love our children, we like to see our children, but does a *tzadik* who knows he's in this world for the purpose of achieving perfection, have to uproot his life to see his child?

Yaakov has to go down to Mitzrayim now?! He has to forsake Eretz Cana'an, the land where his forefathers lived, the land that was given to him, and go down to Mitzrayim, a land of *tumah*? It wasn't like today, you get on a train and you sit for a few hours and you're there! It was a long and difficult trip. He should have said, "I'm so happy he's alive! Ooh, wah! What good news! Baruch Hashem he's alive! I'll write a letter to him."

A Visitor in Vilna

The following story is a very queer story, but I have to tell it to you anyhow. The Gra had a sister whom he hadn't seen for many years and now she came to Vilna and she went to visit her brother: "Oh, my brother! It's been so long!" So the Gra greeted his sister warmly, he spoke a few words with her, and then he said, "Excuse me, I have to go back to my learning," and he went back to his *seforim*.

So she was somewhat discouraged. He saw a tear in her eye and he said to her, "My sister, don't be upset please. In the next world we'll have plenty of time to sit and talk." That's what the Vilna Gaon said. Now don't tell this story to other people; it's only for you to hear; others might not understand. But here in this place, we know that great people live for a purpose and that everything they do is measured and calculated.

Of course that's for the Gra; don't get any ideas – since you waste a lot of time anyhow, so your sister whom you haven't seen for ten years, you can spend a little time talking to her too. But for great people, for Yaakov Avinu, for the Vilna Gaon, for people of great *madreigah*, we don't expect them to travel to another country to see a relative.

And so we understand that it wasn't just a curiosity: "It's been so many years; I want to see how Yosef looks now." Yaakov Avinu was a man who was in full control of his thoughts and his emotions – and if he responded to this natural curiosity, if he answered the prompting of this natural desire to see his son, there must have been something to it. And he didn't merely respond to it – Yaakov made a big deal about it. "I must go down to see Yosef before I die," said Yaakov. And when he saw him, he said, "Ah! רָאָה פָּנֶיךָ לֹא פָלַלְתִּי – I never imagined I would see your face" (ibid. 48:11). Something like that needs an explanation.

Seeing Is Believing

And the answer is this; Yaakov Avinu understood the great power of seeing things in this world. He knew that the tremendous emotion of seeing his beloved son would awaken within him a very great reaction of excitement and gratitude to Hashem. Of course, he would be grateful to Hashem anyhow; but Yaakov wanted more than that. He was always searching for ways and means of becoming more aware of Hashem, and he knew that nothing could compare to the effect of actually seeing his son – the intense gratitude and love of Hashem that would pour from his soul would be unmatched!

You shouldn't disdain what you're hearing now. As you sit at your table on Shabbos and you're looking around at the faces of your children; maybe everybody is talking, eating, whatever it is, so you remember what we said here. You look at your child's face and you're thinking, "Ah! What a beautiful face! What a beautiful experience this is that Hashem is giving me! I love this child! And the next one too. "Such a sweet face – I love this child! Thank You Hashem for this gift!" You love every one of them tremendously and it should be translated into stimulating your love of Hakodosh Boruch Hu more and more.

There's a great happiness in seeing your children. Even if your child is not a *gadol ba'torah*, but he walks *b'derech ha'yashar*, he's a *shomer torah u'mitzvos*, it's a tremendous happiness to see his face. If Hashem gives you normal good *frum* children, you should be so happy; you should enjoy them. Enjoy them and thank Hashem every time you see them. You enjoy the child's face and while you're doing it you're thinking, "I'm not doing it merely because I want to have *nachas*; I'm doing it because I

want to love Hakodosh Boruch Hu Who gave me this tremendous experience to see my child's face.

More Than Olam Habo

Let me tell you about a tragedy. I once was a *sandek* at a *bris* and the little baby's father had died before he was born. I was weeping as I was sitting with the child on my knee. Everybody was saying, "Mazel tov, mazel tov!" but I was weeping because the father wasn't there anymore. And I had to turn away because I was weeping. I didn't want to weep tears on the child's face so I turned my face away.

If the father could have seen that child before he died, what would he have given?! To see his child, his only child. He never had another child. He died before that child was born. If he could have come back and take one look, just one look on his child's face, he'd give up a big piece of *Olam Habo*.

Now don't think it's curiosity. In order to see your child's face, you should feel it's worth everything in the world. You're so fortunate to have a child to look at. It's *ben bitni* – a child of your own body. Your child! You're so happy to see it!

Now, Yaakov understood this great opportunity for love of Hashem. Yaakov understood that there's an especial form of *avodah* in this world of using your eyes to be reminded of Hashem and he didn't want to miss that opportunity. Certainly, just hearing the news of Yosef brought him great joy and gratitude to Hashem, but he wanted to set his eyes on Yosef and feast on that sight: "Ah! The face of my beloved son!"

Seeing with Soul

And so the purpose of seeing is to make an effect on your *neshama*. Let me tell you something. When you see something, you create a picture and it is deposited in your mind. Which means; you'll be surprised, it means that you'll never lose that picture. You'll forget about it, but it's deposited way back in the files of your mind.

Every minute now, as you look around, look at the faces, you're taking pictures. And every face is in your mind forever. You can never get it out. Even though you forget about it, it's buried in your mind. I meet a man – I haven't seen him for fifty years. He looks vaguely familiar. I said,

“Where did I see you once?” I hadn’t seen him for fifty years! A true story – but I know I saw him once. Where was he the last fifty years?

The answer is, the picture is in the mind. I saw that face so the picture jumped to the front. Looked at the picture, compared him – yes. Ooh – wah! The picture is in your mind! It’s a fact. It’s a true scientific fact that every minute your eyes are taking pictures and the pictures are forever in your mind. That’s why you have to be careful what you’re looking at.

Windows of The Soul

Those stupid people who go to the movies and see garbage, stories that never happened and not such nice stories either, they’re taking pictures in their mind. They’re filling their mind with dirt, with *shmutz*. The Kuzari says that. The Kuzari says, what once went into your mind, even the foolishness that you saw in your youth, you’ll never get rid of it all the days of your life.

He’s talking about love songs, *shirei ahavah*. You hear a love song, you’ll never forget it, even though you’ll try your best, you say it’s *shtus*. It really is *shtus*, a man goes crazy, he’s singing about a woman. He sees the woman fifty years later, “I was once in love with that woman?” You ever had that experience? You loved a woman when she was a young girl. He sees the girl fifty years later. I was once in love with that woman?

So you’re crazy to sing love songs to a woman. What are you singing about? A face. A face doesn’t mean anything. Faces change. They change terribly. All faces change. You get old, you look like a monkey when you’re old. Everybody changes. It’s natural. And therefore, this foolish song that he sang in his youth remains in his mind forever, the Kuzari says. He’ll never get it out. He’ll never get rid of a picture in his mind.

And therefore he warns us, be careful what goes into your mind. Eyes are windows of the soul and have a tremendous influence on you. If you look with your eyes and see the right things, then your *neshama* becomes changed. And now, we begin to understand why Yaakov traveled to look at Yosef. Just to see Yosef with his eyes, it paid to make the trip. It’s a very important lesson that Yaakov is teaching us – the *avodah* of using our eyes to awaken our *neshama*. And if we understand it properly, it opens for us a new and extraordinary vista of *avodas Hashem*.

Part II. Seeing The World

Loyalty Is Not Enough

You know, many frum people are very loyal to Hakodosh Boruch Hu – extraordinarily loyal. They live lives filled with mitzvos and Torah, and they're raising families of *ovdei Hashem* – it's beautiful to see! They believe in Hashem so much that they'd even be willing to endure torture, to go into fire or to face the sword or the hangman for their belief in Hashem. It's an Am Kadosh – a holy nation. There's no nation like the Am Yisroel.

But I have to tell you something now that will surprise you. Hakodosh Boruch Hu says that it's not enough. Yes, it's loyalty, it's remarkable loyalty, and you'll be rewarded for that. Hashem will reward you for that to no end, no question. But all of us have an even more important function than that in this world; more important than loyalty. We're here to become Aware of Hashem, to feel Hashem. We're expected to take that knowledge we have, that Hashem is the Borei Yisborach Who created and manages the world, and to transform it into the feeling that it is actually so, something that we really know because we've seen and experienced it.

That's our job in this world – to find ways and means of taking this great truth of the existence of Hakodosh Boruch Hu and making it more real to us. And what Yaakov Avinu was teaching us – “I have to go and see him” – is that one of the most important ways of becoming constantly Aware of Hakodosh Boruch Hu is using our eyes in this world.

The World Is For Seeing

וְהָאֱלֹהִים עָשָׂה שְׂרָאוֹ מִלְפָּנָיו – Hashem made so that people should learn *yiras Hashem* (Koheles 3:14). What did He make? Everything! And why did He make it? So that we should become Aware of Him. *Yirah* means to be Aware of Hashem, and Shlomo Hamelech is telling us here that *yiras Hashem* is everywhere in this world – but it's on one condition: you have to use your eyes to see it!

It's a great sadness that people walk through this world with their eyes closed. Every natural object was created for the purpose of *yiras Hashem* – there's no other purpose of *shomayim vo'aretz* except to give

us that great gift of becoming Aware of Hashem. Not merely to gain our consent, that we should say, “Yes, we admit – Hashem made the world.” No; that you knew already from when you began learning *chumash*. “Bereishis bara Elokim” – you accepted it right away at the age of five or six years old and since then, you never thought about that subject. You’re a *maamin* now so you think you’re finished! But that’s a great pity because Bereishis bara Elokim is a subject you should be studying all your life.

If we desire to fulfill our purpose here, we need to open our eyes and the sights begin to crowd in on us. They are so numerous that there is no empty space in the world. *מָה רַבּוּ מַעֲשֵׂיךָ הַשֵּׁם כְּלָם בְּהַכְמָה עֲשִׂיתָ* – How many are Your works, Hashem and all of them You made with wisdom (Tehilim 104:24).

Emunah Peshutah

And the way to gain this awareness is by looking! When you take the time to look at things in the world, so little by little you gain an awareness of Hashem in addition to your *emunah peshutah*. *Emunah peshutah* is very good. It’s excellent if you have the *emunah peshutah* you were taught in your childhood – very good, very good! But it’s not good enough!

I once gave a *mashal* here. Suppose Moshe Rabeinu announced to the Am Yisroel, “Let us all come now to Har Sinai to see Hashem come down on the mountain and give us the Torah.” And here is one Jew who says, “I have *emunah peshutah*. I don’t have to go. You go and tell me and I’ll believe you. When you come back, tell me what happened and I’ll be *mekabel*.” Oh no! You’re missing an opportunity. You have to come and see it for yourself! *אַלֹו קַרְבְּנוּ לְפָנַי הַר סִינַי וְלֹא נָתַן לָנוּ אֶת הַתּוֹרָה רִיבּוּ*. Seeing is something altogether different! Just to be there and see with your own eyes gives you *emunah*.

So this frum Jew who has *emunah peshutah*, we say to him, “Nothing doing! You better go out into the world with open eyes and get a little more *emunah* than *peshutah*.” And the Chovos Halevavos teaches us in Sha’ar Habechinah that the best way to do this is by means of studying the *briyah*.

Seeing Creation

Now I know that most people will not do what I'm saying. It's a subject that's unfortunately ignored almost entirely by the *frum* world. You'll go back to the yeshivah and they'll say, "Well, it's not so important. It's old time *mussar*; it's out of style." Chovos Halevavos, Sha'ar Habechina, is out of style?!

You have to know that it's not only the Chovos Halevavos. It's a Rambam (Yesodei Hatorah 2:2), he writes: וְהִיאֵךְ הִיא הַדֶּרֶךְ לְאַהֲבָתוֹ וְיִרְאַתוֹ – *What is the way to arrive at awareness of Hashem and love of Hashem?* Oh, that's a big question, a very important question! So he says that when you look around at the world at the מַעֲשֵׂיו וּבְרוּאָיו הַנִּפְלְאִים הַגְּדוֹלִים, *at the great and wonderful objects that He made in this world*, and you are *misbonein* – *misbonein* means that you see it and you think about the wonderful things that you're seeing, then certainly there will come into you a great fear and love of Hashem. Those are the words of the Rambam; he says "certainly." If you follow this path in life absolutely it will bring results – the Rambam guarantees it.

"Everything in this world," says the Rambam, "has within it a חֲכָמָה קֶץ עִמָּקָה שְׁאִין לָהּ קֶץ – *a deep wisdom with no end to its profundity.*" Every natural object is full of the wisdom of Hashem with no end to it. And for what purpose? It's trying to show you something; it wants to make known to you the greatness of Hashem. And therefore once you start looking you'll think, "Who can design such a wonderful thing? Only the Infinite Designer, only Hakodosh Boruch Hu can do that." And you'll see Hashem wherever you open your eyes – that's what the Rambam tells us.

Now, the Rambam is not a *darshan*. We can rely on his words – he knows what he's talking about. Maybe you don't believe in Chovos Halevavos – maybe he's too *frum* for you – but the Rambam, surely him you can listen to. Everybody talks about the Rambam – in all yeshivos they learn Rambam. And so if the Rambam says that this is the way, so this is the way!

Sampling The World

Now, this subject is as vast as the universe; it's never ending. But it's our duty to take a few examples, at random, so that we should better understand what we're talking about. But we must know that by giving

the examples, we are actually belittling the subject. We must give some examples, but we must also know that the subject is so vast, that it's like someone saying, "Give me a sample of the universe," so you pick up a handful of ice from the street and say, "Here's a sample of the universe." It's a sample, but it gives a very poor idea of what this universe really is. But suppose nobody ever saw anything in this world, he never opened his eyes, so at least let him see a piece of ice – something he should see!

And so we'll give a few poor examples of our own; it's a drop in the bucket but at least it's something – and you'll learn a little bit about how to use your eyes. And once you learn to keep your eyes open in this world – open to all of the *chochmas Hashem* – you're already beginning your career of using your eyes to see Hashem in this world.

Learning from the Leaf

Let's say you're walking in the autumn and you're breathing the brisk fresh air of autumn as your feet are wading through the leaves – you're kicking the leaves on the sidewalk. Isn't that fun? So you think, "Didn't Rabbi Miller say that I shouldn't waste the opportunity?" So you look around at the beautiful colors of the leaves and you're thinking that every leaf that falls from the tree is a *nes*. Why did it fall? You think the leaf got tired and finally fell down? When a leaf falls from a tree, it's a *nes*. Abscission cells develop at the end of the stem where it's connected to the twig and these cells do a most purposeful performance of cutting off the leaf from the twig. When it falls, it's a marvel! A marvel of complicated precision! Someone must have designed that, don't you think? Someone with a capital S. And so, you're thinking of Hashem already! Instead of just walking along and thinking about the weather, and the news, you're doing something purposeful in this world, you're thinking about the Borei Yisborach!

But don't stop there! Once you begin seeing Hashem in this world, don't let go! Hang onto it with ferocity! Pick up that leaf and admire it with your eyes. A leaf is an amazing complicated piece of machinery. I say "machinery" – one leaf is a whole block of factories! It breathes in carbon dioxide and moisture from the air. Sunshine too! It takes in the sunlight; and then it takes all these things and it kneads them together, and it makes all the materials that the tree needs out of that.

A Symbol Of Hashem

Think about that while you're looking at the leaf. The leaf is making materials, and the leaf is sending the juicy materials through tiny little channels to the stem of the leaf and to the branch of the tree. It goes into the trunk and it becomes wood. It becomes roots too. It becomes leaves again and eventually it makes blossoms with nectar to attract the bees in order to pollinate the plants and then a fruit grows. That's the work of the leaf.

Don't stop now! Keep looking with your eyes. You see that the leaf is very thin; it's spread out to cover as much space as possible. If you take all the leaves of one tree, it will cover an entire city block! Imagine a breathing space in contact with air of a whole city block. One tree! And each leaf is doing tremendous work taking in materials from the air.

That's why some leaves have irregular circumferences. They're not round and smooth. Why irregular? Why is it in and out? Because the edge of the leaf has holes in it where it breathes in and out and when you have irregular shapes of the leaf, it means there's more opportunity for this function. Once you start studying one leaf you'll see with your own eyes Hashem in the world.

And when you do that, so by means of your eyes all of these ideas go into your head and you become a new person. When you look at the *ma'aseh yadav shel Hakodosh Boruch Hu*, with the intention of seeing Hakodosh Boruch Hu, so the more and more you look, the more excited about it you become. And you should keep on looking for the next fifty years. Yes, fifty years looking at the leaves! Don't get tired of it. You'll be surprised. Each time you look, you'll see more and more. And after a while, seeing a leaf becomes to you a symbol of Hashem's presence in this world – it transforms your *neshama* and you become a *yerei shomayim*, someone who lives with a constant awareness of Hashem.

Part III. Seeing Hashem

Passing the Bakery

And so we're learning now that this world is made to be seen. That's why you walk on the Avenue. What do you need stores for? For shopping?!

Who needs shopping?! Pay attention now to how to use the stores you pass on the street; let's say you pass by a bakery. You look in the window and you see loaves of bread. Don't just take a quick look and walk further. Stop and look. Say, "Isn't that wonderful? Where did bread come from? **הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ**. Say it with your mouth. It's a miracle – bread is a miracle! Nobody can make bread out of nothing. The chemists can't make bread. DuPont can't make bread. *Hamotzi* – He is the only One who can bring forth bread from the earth!

So you look in the window and you think these thoughts. Now, of course if you're an ordinary person so you're too much of a wise guy to do that. We're talking about people – men and women, boys and girls – who want to make something out of themselves. So you walk by a window and you stop to look.

Let's say you see some chocolate cake in the window – even better. Chocolate cake! Where did all that pleasure come from? It's a delicacy! Flavors and chocolate! It's all miracles. Nobody can make it! Only Hakodosh Boruch Hu! *Borei* – He is the one who creates, *minei mezonos*, all these cakes and cookies. And those are your thoughts as you look in the window at the chocolate cake.

Years ago I used to wait for a bus at a certain corner and there was an Italian bakery on that corner. And I would stand there looking in the window while I was waiting for the bus. I saw there twenty kinds of bread – all kinds of bread, different shapes and sizes. And I studied them. It was amazing! Of course, I couldn't eat their bread but it was remarkable to see what an appetizing thing bread is. What an amazing sight! I looked at the breads and I was *misbonein*. And I did it for a long time because I had to wait there on the corner every day for the bus. It was an education for me. If you pass by a window like that, you should utilize that.

Passing the Fruit Store

And now you keep on going, and down the block is a fruit store. Now, if you don't bother using your eyes, you won't see anything. It's big bins of fruits, that's all. But if you open your eyes you'll see that **אֱלֹהִים עָשָׂה** **שְׂרָאוּ מִלְפָּנָיו** – Hashem made it for a purpose! Aah, fruits! Red fruits, golden fruits, purple fruits, green fruits, yellow fruits. Take a look inside

the window and you'll see a cut watermelon with deep red flesh. Such beautiful colors – where did they come from? How did it happen?

Take your time, walk slowly by and look at an orange. See how beautiful it is! You might think it's wax or plastic fruit that you could hang in your *sukkah*. Such beautiful colors just couldn't be natural. The answer is, they're not natural. They're made by a manufacturer. The Manufacturer made it his business to put such a beautiful tint that made the fruit so delectable to the imagination. It's more fun eating an orange that is beautifully colored. Don't you know that? Suppose oranges are the color of potatoes. It wouldn't be much fun even though they tasted the same.

At this lecture, some years ago, a young man asked, "Can you prove there is a G-d?" I said, "Yes. I'll do it immediately." And I said, "Why is an orange so brightly colored on the outside of the skin, but on the underside of the skin, it has no color at all?" Now take this seriously. What you are hearing is a fundamental question. And there is no scientist in the world who can answer it. Why is it that the brightly colored fruits are colored only on the outside, but the underside of the skin has no color? Doesn't that demonstrate that the purpose of the color is to be seen?

The Orange Tree

Did you ever see an orange tree? The beautiful glowing oranges stand out among the green leaves, like beacons, like traffic lights and they say, "Come and take me!" So it means that there is an Intelligence, a Creator, Who is offering you an orange and He says, "My fellow, take an orange and enjoy it." And why is it that all those months that the orange was green, it refused to fall off the tree? It stubbornly held onto the tree. You could shake the tree, but the orange wouldn't fall off. And as soon as it becomes ripe and announces its ripeness by its color, it obligingly falls off by itself. Isn't that a miracle?

Stop for a minute and look at the orange peel. Not only is it a golden yellow on the outside; it's glossy too. And on the other side, on the bottom of the peel, it's not glossy or even colored. Why is it that? Is it an accident? Why shouldn't the underside be colored beautifully and have a plastic? And the top part should be white and spongy. How does that happen? You have to take a look at that orange peel and ask those questions.

The answer is that Hakodosh Boruch Hu wants you to see plan and purpose with your eyes. He wants you to pay attention to the orange peel. The peel has to protect the orange so the outside is covered with a very thin layer of organic plastic that makes it slippery. So even little chewing insects can't bite in. That's why rarely does any insect bite into an orange. The orange is covered with a plastic, an organic plastic.

Fruit Seeds

There are so many things that you could know if only you would look. So let us hold onto this and live with it until it sinks in! If you pass by a fruit stand you should stop – it pays to stop and look. Suppose you make it a principle that every time you pass a fruit stand, *bli neder*, you'll stop for one half minute – every fruit store for thirty seconds – and you'll admire the handiwork of Hashem. It's an amazing exhibition! Learn to be excited over the show that Hashem is putting on for you because it's put there just for that! מַלְקִים עֲשָׂה – Hashem made fruit stands for that purpose! When you see a brightly colored orange in the fruit stand, it's a lesson in *emunah*. One fruit is enough to teach you enough *yiras Hashem* to last you a lifetime!

And each one has seeds inside it. Last week I had a conversation with the fruit store man. I said to him, "How did the seeds get inside this fruit?" He looked at me like I fell off the moon. I said to him, "Did you ever find a fruit with a nickel inside?" So he tells me that it never happened. He's been selling fruit for thirty years on Kings Highway and he never found a nickel in a fruit. So I asked him, "If you find a nickel inside the apple would you think that a person put it in there?" He said, "Yes, I would know somebody put it in there." And you find a seed inside the apple – a seed is a thousand times more complicated than a nickel!

More Valuable Than Diamonds

The seed has in it a million bits of information on how to create a tree – and it has the machinery to do it as well! "If you'll plant me in the ground," says the seed, "I'm going to create an orange tree. From what? From air and water and sunshine! The orange tree will have roots. It will have a trunk. It will have branches. It will have leaves. It will have lots of orange blossoms and it will produce oranges with seeds inside just like myself."

And all these plans are in the little orange pit. So it's a good idea to have an orange pit in your pocket sometimes. Carry it around with you. I do it. I carry seeds with me. I take them out sometimes in the middle of the street and look at them. Ahh! Look at the miracle. It's more precious than any kind of diamond that you can find because no diamond is as valuable as the lesson that this world is made by a Great Designer.

Visiting the Art Gallery

Now, I'm telling you only some examples because you can't stay here all night, and I don't get paid for overtime anyhow. But there are plenty more good things you can see in the street. You walk in the street sometimes, don't you? It doesn't cost you any money; it doesn't take much time either and the opportunities are as endless as the universe.

These pictures are all around us and it's not the fault of Hakodosh Boruch Hu if people ignore them. If someone brought you into an art gallery – I'm not recommending any art galleries, especially nowadays – but suppose, let's say, someone brought you into an art gallery, but you took a handkerchief out of your pocket and blindfolded yourself. And now you're walking down the corridors, on both sides are expensive paintings, but you see nothing. It is nobody's fault but your own. Pull off the blindfold and you'll see everything.

This world is full of pictures! On all sides, we have these living pictures and each one of them is powerful enough to make a lasting impression on us, to make new men out of us. Trust me, it pays for all of you to consider such a career. You should take me seriously because once you get into this habit, you've embarked on a career for life, a tremendous career of using your eyes. And once you get started on this career, it's a ladder to greatness.

The Blessing of Eyes

Seeing is one of the great delights of life. It's a pleasure to be able to open your eyes and see what's going on around you. Take a peek into the eye doctor's office and you'll see people waiting there with bandages covering their eyes. All kinds of eye ailments. This one needs this operation, and the other fellow a different operation.

But the greatest blessing of having eyes is the opportunity to utilize them to see the *ma'asei yadav* of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. You can see His blue sky, His red apples, His colorful leaves and His orange seeds. You can see His snow and His rain as it comes down. Everything belongs to Him.

And it's all for one purpose: **בְּלוֹ אוֹמֵר כְּבוֹד** – The entire creation is giving honor to Hashem. And the more we recognize Him, that's our success in this world. When we come to the Next World we will be questioned, "What did you bring along with you? How much baggage did you bring from your stay in that world?" And therefore our purpose in this world is to fill our lives with as much baggage as possible – and the best baggage you can bring along with you to Olam Habo is a mind that thought constantly about Hashem.

And so we say to everyone, "Wake up and open your eyes! There's a career of greatness waiting for you – a career of seeing Hashem." And then, when you come to the Next World, you'll be able to boast about the great business you made in Olam Hazeih. For a little bit of effort you acquired greatness! You'll be surprised how many opportunities you can find during your lifetime to do this – the entire *briyah* testifies to Hashem. **יִרְדּוּ הַשָּׁם כָּל מַעֲשָׂיָה, כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתָהּ יֵאמְרוּ** – *All of Your works speak of the glory of your kingdom.* Everything is praising Hashem, only that in order to see it, we have to open our eyes.

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

Opening My Eyes

We learn from Yaakov Avinu the immense value of seeing things with our eyes. It's not enough to know about Hashem's Greatness and Goodness. We have to see it. This week I will *bli neder* stop for half a minute whenever I pass a fruit store and reflect on Hashem's Greatness and Goodness evident from His Creation.

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

שאל אביך ויגדך זקניך ויאמרו לך

Q:

When is it considered proper for a person to fast a *taanis yochid* [a personal fast day]?

A:

I can't tell you all the things, but sometimes a person did something wrong and in order to make him realize how wrong it was, he should feel obligated to fast a *taanis*. Now I personally would not say to fast a *taanis*. A man did a very big sin and called me up. He wanted me to tell him how to do *teshuva*. I told him he should learn Mesillas Yesharim ten times from cover to cover. He said, "Ten times?!" I said, "Yes, ten times. And don't be in a hurry, go slowly." That's what I told him. Ten times Mesillas Yesharim is better than fasting a *taanis yochid*.

But sometimes a person who sinned is not willing to learn Mesillas Yesharim. And he needs something as a *k'nas*, a fine, to make him feel that he lost something. A day when you're not eating should help you realize you lost something. You lost breakfast, you lost lunch, you lost something. And you're sorry you did this sin that caused you to lose those meals. The truth is that a sin causes a loss of much more than a meal. But at least a meal is a *mashal*, so that you should know what you lost by the sin. So a *taanis* for a *cheit*, *chalilah*, is worth doing. Although it's better, as I said, it's better to learn Mesillas Yesharim a number of times; that's the very best.

TAPE # E-220 (December 1999)

— This week's Q&A sponsor: —

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