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ראש השנה

WITH

R' AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"l

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

The Thirsty Nation

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Part I. Joining the Thirsty

Confusing The Satan

On Rosh Hashana we blow the *shofar* again and again. And although we're hungry; we want to go home and eat already but we stand in *shul* listening to the *baal tokei'a* blowing the *shofar* much more than is required by the Torah. We have *tekios* before *mussaf*, a lot of them. And then more *tekios* during *mussaf*; and then again another set of *tekios* after *mussaf*.

What's that all about? Aren't we overdoing it? That's the Gemara's question (Rosh Hashana 16b): לְמָה תּוֹקְעִין וּמְרִיעִין בְּשָׁהֵן יוֹשְׁבֵי הַיַּם וְתוֹקְעִים וּמְרִיעִין - Why do they make *tekios* so many times? It seems so unnecessary! We fulfilled the *mitzvah* before *mussaf* already - you can't do a *mitzvah* twice!

Now listen to what the Gemara answers: כְּרִי לְעֵרֵבב הַשָּׁטָן – We do it in order to confuse the Satan. It's the Day of Judgment and there's a *malach Hashem* standing there ready to prosecute us. That's his job today and he has many claims against us – we're human beings after all, and human beings do things; and we're being judged now for those things. And the prosecutor comes to the courtroom with a lot of files, a lot of evidence. There's a lot he has written down about our past year. And that's not good; it's quite scary.

So what saves us? How do we come away from the *Yom Hadin* safely? So the *chachomim* tell us it's by blowing extra *tekios*! We confuse the Satan by blowing more than we have to.

### Poisonous Fruits

Now that needs to be explained because the Satan is not a foolish man. He's a *malach*, a very wise *malach* who's not easily confused. You're not going to trick him by repeating some *tekios*, you can be sure about that. And so it's a puzzle; what does it mean that we confuse the Satan with extra *shofar* blows?

So we'll preface the answer with a *possuk* in our *parsha*. Moshe Rabeinu, *al pi Hashem*, is warning the Am Yisroel to stay far away from sin and he says like this: פֶּן יֵשׁ בְּכֶם אִישׁ אִו אִשָּׁה אוּ מִשְׁפָּחָה אוּ שִׁבְט אֲשֶׁר לְכָבוֹ – Perhaps there is someone among you, a man, a woman, or a family or tribe, whose thoughts stray from Hashem our G-d (Netzavim 29:18).

It's talking about someone who has an inclination to follow after his own thoughts and because of that he's veering away from the ideals of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. He's a *ma'amin*; he believes in Hashem and he's a *shomer torah u'mitzvos* but there are certain attitudes that are simmering in his mind. שְׁלוֹם יִהְיֶה לִי כִּי בִשְׂרִירוֹת לִבִּי אֶלֶךְ – “I'm going to go the way my mind sees,” he says.

And in case you would think that it's not too serious, the Torah says, שָׂרֵשׁ פְּרָה רָאשׁ וְלַעֲנָה – it's a root producing gall and bitter fruit (*ibid.*) “מִפְּרָה וּמִרְבֵּה רָשָׁע בְּקֶרְבוֹ – He planted bitter seeds in his mind and now there are poisonous plants growing there” (Rashi, *ibid.*).

### The Satiated and The Thirsty

Now, what is the example that the Torah brings of a man who is planting poisonous ideas in his head? It's important information to know so that we can stay clear of the danger. So the *possuk* says like this: His

sin is that he's **סְפוֹת הַרְוָה אֶת הַצְּמָאָה**, he's joining together those who are satiated with those who are still thirsty.

Now these are very mysterious words; "He's joining the satiated with the thirsty." We can say them but we don't understand them. And yet we *must* understand them because whatever they mean, whatever that man is thinking, it's quite terrible because the Torah says: **לֹא יִאֲבֶה לּוֹ הַשֵּׁם סְלִיחָ לּוֹ כִּי אָז יִנְעֹשׂן אִף הַשֵּׁם, וְקִנְאָתוֹ בְּאִישׁ הַהוּא יִרְבְּצָה בּוֹ כָּל הָאֲלֹהִים הַכְּתוּבָה בְּסֵפֶר הַזֶּה וּמָחָה הַשֵּׁם אֶת שְׁמוֹ מִתַּחַת, וְהַשְׁמִיט הַשֵּׁם** – Hashem will be unwilling to forgive him, the wrath of Hashem will fume and His vengeance will inflame that man, and there will come upon him all the curses written in the Torah and Hashem will wipe away his name from beneath the sky (ibid. 19).

All the curses written in the Torah?! Fuming wrath and vengeance?! What did this person do already? We're expecting to hear something very big now, something terrible.

### **The Wicked Good Citizen**

And so the Gemara (Sanhedrin 76b) says like this: What did he do? He was walking, let's say, past a Chinese fruit store and he saw a fruit lying on the sidewalk. An apple fell off the bin and in another minute someone will pass by and kick it into the gutter. So this Jew bends over, picks up the apple and puts it back on the bin.

Ohh wha, that's a good citizen! Maybe he should get a special commendation from the mayor, a key to the city? Could be. But about him the Torah says: **לֹא יִאֲבֶה הַשֵּׁם סְלִיחָ לּוֹ** – Hashem will not want to forgive him for what he did. Not only that He won't forgive him; He won't desire to forgive him.

Hashem won't even *desire* to forgive him?! What did this man do wrong already? He did a good deed! He picked up the apple and put it back on the bin – that's all he did.

The answer to that puzzle is "he added those who are already satiated onto those who are still thirsty." It means like this: The Jewish nation is a nation that is thirsty for mitzvos; the other nations on the other hand are satiated. And by putting that apple back into the bin, by fulfilling the mitzvah of *hashovas aveidah* to a gentile, you're equating the "satiated nations" with the "thirsty" one.

### **Thirsty for Mitzvos**

Don't think *hashovas aveidah* is just something we do for the sake of the upkeep of society. Our sages are teaching us a secret here, a secret that applies to all of the mitzvos *bein adam lachaveiro*. When we

go out of our way to do a *mitzvah* – whether it’s returning a lost object or giving *tzedakah*, whatever it is – we do it because there’s a special *mitzvah* to honor the Jewish people; the nation whose desire for *avodas Hashem* is never quenched.

Now, that’s not the whole story of the *Am Yisroel*, but it’s one of the important differences between us and the nations of the world. *Am Yisroel* are *tzmei’im l’avodas yotzram*, they’re thirsty for *mitzvos*, while the gentiles are satiated; they’re not interested.

The Jew is busy all day long with *mitzvos*. *Poshute* Jews are keeping the Torah everywhere. A *frum* Jew gets up early in the morning to go to *shul* and then a few hours later he’s back in *shul* again. Old people, *bochurim* and little children are going to *shul*. Back and forth, back and forth. *Shachris*, *mincha*, *ma’ariv* – he *davens* and he learns a little bit too. He puts a nickel in the *pushka* whenever he gets a chance.

All week long the *Am Yisroel* is busy with *mitzvos* – nobody is looking to dodge any *mitzvos* – and then *Shabbos* comes. Everyone is preparing for *Shabbos*; women and young girls are standing over the stove for hours *l’kavod Shabbos* – a very great *mitzvah*! The Jewish stores are crowded; long lines filled with people paying big sums of money – and for what? For the *mitzvah* of *Shabbos*!

### **Thirsty for Alcohol**

Are *goyim* busy with *mitzvos* all day long?! They don’t even fathom the idea of such a thirst. The *goy* sees the Jew walking back and forth to *shul* a few times a day and he doesn’t understand what’s happening. “Where is this crazy Jew going back and forth, back and forth, all day long?”

He doesn’t understand! He goes to church once a month and the priest says, “All your sins are forgiven,” and finished. Don’t think that the Catholics or the Protestants, even the religious ones, are the same as you, only that the religion is different. Don’t make any mistake about that! There is a very wide chasm between you and them. Even if they do some things, they’re *zaht* – they’re overfed; they’re not thirsty for *mitzvos*.

I’ll tell you what they’re thirsty for. You walk in the streets early in the morning in a gentile neighborhood, a respectable upper class Catholic neighborhood, and lying stretched out on the ground is a good Catholic. He’s drunk and he’s been sleeping on the street all night. I walked in the Catholic neighborhoods forty years ago and I saw that

many times. Drunk all night, fast asleep in the gutter; and then he gets up in the morning, staggers home, and tells everybody, "Ooh wah! What a time I had last night!" He's proud of himself.

It wasn't even considered a *chisaron*. Many people admired him; they were jealous of him. It was an exploit! He would tell his friends about it: "Did I ever tell you about the time that I slept drunk in the gutter the whole night?!" A *goy* is satiated with drink; other things too. He wants *mitzvos* like he wants a hole in his shoe.

### **Working for Tuition**

Did you ever see a Jew lying drunk in the street at night?! Maybe today you could, but forty years ago you couldn't. Does a Jew go to the pub and drink after his day at the office?! He's busy with better things; he's learning with his children. He's wiped out from a long day in the office but he sits down to *chazer* over the Gemara with his boys.

And what's he doing in the office anyhow? He's there for *mitzvos*! It costs big money to raise a Jewish family today! People are spending tremendous sums to bring up their children *b'derech haTorah*! We're trying very hard to get vouchers; at least the I.R.S. should recognize what we're paying for tuition and give us a rebate on our income tax.

The Reform Jews are fighting against us – they don't want us to get deductions because once we have an opportunity to get rebates on our school expenses, then maybe more and more Jews will send their children to *yeshivos*. The Reform is afraid of that. But no matter what, rebate or no rebate, the *Am Yisroel* is paying the money anyhow; we're spending tremendous sums on *schar limud*. Only a thirsty nation would do such a thing!

### **No Comparison**

Even our little children are צמאים למצוות, they're thirsting for *mitzvos*. Go out in the streets in the morning. You see boys and girls everywhere waiting for the buses. The little boys with the *tzitzis* and *yarmulkes* and *payos* – all *mitzvos* – and the girls in skirts, *tznius* girls. They're going to the *Beis Yaakovs*, the *yeshivos*. And the little boys are in the *cheder* all day long sitting and learning *Eilu Metzios*, all kinds of *dinim*; when you have to return a lost article, how to return it. Little boys, not even *bar mitzvah* are learning the details of the *mitzvos*.

Does the Italian send his children to places where they learn the *mitzvah* of *hashavas aveidah*? No; he's sending his children to public school or to the gentile private schools where they're learning *kol davar*

ossur. What they study and practice in those schools, I don't want to even say the words in a *shul*. That's the thirst of a goy.

There's no comparison between the gentile and the Jew – no comparison at all! And if you compare them by how you act and how you think when you're passing the Chinese fruit store, then you're committing a very terrible sin. For a Yisroel, *achicha*, yes, you bend over and pick it up. אָבֵרֶת אֶחִיךָ – the lost object of your brother in *mitzvos* you're *muchuyav* to return. A nation that does *mitzvos*, so we do *mitzvos* for them – it's an honor they deserve! We're thirsty for *mitzvos* and we deserve tremendous honor because of that. But the gentiles? They don't want to do any *mitzvos*, so we don't go out of our way to honor them with our *mitzvos*.

## Part II. Appreciating the Thirsty

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### Follow The Government

Now I don't want you people to go away and make a calumny against me that I said you shouldn't return lost articles to gentiles. I never said such a thing. Suppose you find a lost article, a wallet. You open it up and you see the name James Walsh inside. James Walsh, not a Jew. And so you're considering, "Do I have to return it?"

Well, if the police ordinances require that any lost article must be returned, so a Jew is as loyal a citizen as anyone else – a good Jew is even more loyal to his country than a gentile citizen; so you obey the city ordinances and you take Mr. Walsh's wallet to the police station. That's well and good. If the government says you must, so you follow the government; דִּינָא דְּמִלְכּוּתָא דְּיִנְא – it's a law.

And even if it's not a law, if you tell me that you pick it up because you want to show that Jews are good people, *darkei shalom*, all right, maybe. Let's say there are *goyim* standing around, all right, pick up the apple and put it back in the bin. Be a nice fellow so that the *goyim* will say, "You see that; the Jews aren't so bad after all." Absolutely it's a *mitzvah* to raise the honor of the Jewish people in the eyes of the *goyim*.

But if you put it into the bin and you're thinking, "I'm doing the *mitzvah* of *hashovas aveidah*, this is what the Torah means." so you're doing something terrible.

### Passing By

What's so terrible? It's a wickedness to give to a non-Jew the recognition, the honor, that the Torah reserved only for the people of

Israel. And *לֹא יִאָבֵהּ ה' סְלִחָה לּוֹ* – Hashem will refuse to forgive him because he has committed a crime, a very great crime against the greatness of the *Am Yisroel*. *שָׂוֶה שָׂוֶה כְּבוֹדָךְ שֶׁל אֲמוּנוֹת הָעוֹלָם לְכְבוֹדָךְ שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל* – He made equal the satiated, the *ibergezetigt*, with those who are thirsty always for *mitzvos*.

And therefore, sometimes you just have to pass by. After all, there's no law that you have to bend over to pick up the apple. There's no such thing that when you pass by a fruit stand, you *must* pick up the apple and put it back, no. And therefore when no one is watching you'll just have to pass it by. Because as good as it is to raise the honor of the Jewish people in the eyes of the gentiles, it's even a bigger *mitzvah* to raise the honor of the Jewish people *in your own eyes!*

I myself make it a point to pass by! I wouldn't pick it up. I make it a point to keep on walking and I remind myself, "Only for a *Yisroel*, for a *tzamei lamitzvos*, there's a *mitzvah*."

Now, we're not disparaging anyone else. We're polite and kind to everyone. We follow all the laws of the land and we have nothing against anyone. Only that we're talking here about a matter of especial esteem for those who deserve to be honored. We're talking now about how we have to go above and beyond for a *poshute Jew* – because he's not *poshut* at all!

### **Knocked Out by Love**

And the *mitzvah* of *hashovas aveidah* is just one example of how we do that. It's one opportunity to demonstrate how greatly you value the importance of a *Yisroel*: for him you're *moichel* on your time, on your *kavod*, on the *tircha* and you bend over and pick up the apple. And you think, "I'm doing a *mitzvah d'oraysa* of returning a lost object to a brother—a brother *b'mitzvos*, a person from the nation that goes overboard for *mitzvos*."

And so we come back now to the puzzle that we began our talk with tonight. What does it mean that the Satan is confused when he sees that we're standing up again by *mussaf* and blowing *shofar*? How do the extra *tekios* protect the *Am Yisroel* on the Day of Judgement?

The answer is like this: It's not the *mitzvah* that saves us; it's the *chibah* of the *mitzvah*; it's the love of the *mitzvah* that "confuses" the *Satan*. *שָׂוֶה שָׂוֶה כְּבוֹדָךְ שֶׁל אֲמוּנוֹת הָעוֹלָם לְכְבוֹדָךְ שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל* – Because he sees that they love *mitzvos*; they love *mitzvos* very much.

## **Gaining His Respect**

That's the one thing that knocks the Satan out entirely. When he sees that we're standing up now to blow *shofar* again – “What's going on?! They blew already!” – then all of his claims become muted; they're made quiet. When he sees that the *Am Yisroel* just can't get enough of *mitzvos* – they did the *mitzvah* already but they're thirsty for more – that knocks him over. He still has claims against us, but he does it with a different *niggun*. He says it with respect now; the Satan has a newfound respect for us.

And therefore, even though the *Satan* will not yield his duty – he has to carry out his mission to be *melamed chov* on *Am Yisroel* – but when he sees that we're **הוֹרִיךְ וְתוֹקֵעַ**, that we're blowing *shofar* again, that causes him to be quiet. He gets confused. He knows exactly what he wanted to say, but all of a sudden his arguments fall apart. The foundation of his whole argument against us becomes confused because he sees he's dealing now with the nation that is hungry for *mitzvos*.

## **Emulating the Satan**

Now, I told you once before that one of the purposes of *malachim* is that they should be a model for us. That's why we say every day in *davening* about the angels praising Hashem. We talk about it at length; in the *bracha* of *Yotzer Hame'oros* and then in *Kedusha*. It's because we're supposed to study that and learn from them how to praise Hashem.

And since the Satan is a *malach Hashem* too – we have to know that he's a model for us too. Not only do we see that the *malach* is knocked out by this attitude of the *Am Yisroel*, but we see that it's an attitude that matters. If it's so big that this *malach* is confounded and all of his arguments against the *Am Yisroel* fall apart, then it's something we have to learn to appreciate.

## **Greatness Amid Suffering**

There's a tale, a story in the Gemara (*Shabbos* 33b) about Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. Rabbi Shimon was once sentenced to death by the Romans because he had criticized the Roman government. Now, when the Romans pronounced a death sentence on a person it wasn't like in New York; it was serious business. So when Rabbi Shimon heard about this he did the smartest thing; he ran away with his son and hid in a cave. For twelve years they sat in the cave hiding from the Romans.

Now, you have to know that it was during those twelve years that Rabbi Shimon and his son became exceedingly great. What went on in

that cave was tremendous. They didn't want to wear out their clothing, so they dug a hole in the ground and they sat in the sand up to their necks all day long and they learned Torah. When they had to *daven*, so they climbed out of the hole and put on their clothing and *davened*. Then they took off their clothing and went back in the hole again. That's how they spent twelve years.

It wasn't an easy life – their bodies were full of sores from the sand. They had a lot of other *tzaros* too. But they became very great in *shleimus*! Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and his son Rabbi Elazar b'Reb Shimon became very great men as a result. These twelve years elevated them immensely.

### **Destroying Civilization**

Finally at the end of twelve years a message was sent to them *m'shomayim*: "The danger is over; you can go out now." So they went back out to civilization and what did they see? They saw people, *poshute* Jews. They saw people who were farmers, people raising cattle, and they said, "What's this? Milking cows?! You're wasting your life with milking cows and planting fields?!" They didn't understand! That people should give their time for anything but perfection, *shleimus* of *avodas Hashem*?!

So wherever they looked they were dissatisfied with what they saw. And because of their *kedusha*, wherever they looked with their holy eyes, it was destroyed. They took a look, they disapproved of what they saw and *מִיָּד נִשְׁרַף*, it was destroyed. They destroyed this field, they destroyed that field. They couldn't tolerate what they were seeing.

So Hashem said, "You think I let you come out of your cave to destroy My world?! Is that how you look at My people?! Go back to the cave again! Go back and stay there!" And so, Rabbi Shimon and his son returned to living in the cave.

### **Appreciating Civilization**

After one more year in the cave they finally came out again. It was *erev Shabbos* and they saw an old man running. Now, old men don't run. For an old man it's hard sometimes just to bend over and tie his shoes, but here was an old man who was running. And in his hands he was carrying two branches of *hadassim*. So they said to him, "What are you running for?" He said, "I'm going home to bring flowers for Shabbos – *l'kovod Shabbos*." So Rabbi Shimon said, "So why do you need two?" He said, *אֶחָד בְּנֵגַד זָכוֹר וְאֶחָד בְּנֵגַד שָׁמוֹר*. "*L'kovod Shabbos*, one sprig for the word *zachor* and one for the word *shamor*."

When Rabbi Shimon saw that, *iz ehr arois fun di keilim*, he became so excited! “Oooh,” said Rabbi Shimon. “I change my mind now about the *poshute Jews*.” **הֲזֵי בְּמֵה חֲבִיבִין מִצְוֹת עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל** – “Look how cherished the *mitzvos* are to the Jewish people. The *poshute Jews* are *kodesh kadoshim*,” said Rabbi Shimon, “because they’re thirsty for *mitzvos*. An old man running *l’kovod Shabbos*!”

And so *nisyashev da’ato*, the mind of Rabbi Shimon was appeased. Now he was satisfied with the *Am Yisroel* – not only satisfied; he appreciated them, he respected them. And now he didn’t cause any more trouble when he looked. Because wherever he looked, he saw greatness; wherever he looked he saw a nation that thirsted for *mitzvos*. They’re milking cows, they’re planting crops, they’re in their homes; whatever they’re doing, they’re living lives of *mitzvos*!

### **One More Level**

What we see from this story is that Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, despite all of the *shleimus* that he achieved in that cave during those twelve years, nevertheless, he needed one more *madreigah* of perfection. And that was to recognize the *gadlus* of the *frum Jew*, even the *poshute frum Jew*.

Rabbi Shimon was already very great from his years in the cave but it wasn’t enough – he had to achieve one more thing, one more attitude of the mind. The apex, the crown of his *shleimus* – was to be impressed with the stature of the most simple Jew; to respect and admire the nation that is thirsty for *mitzvos*.

So we begin to see that even though you’re a *sholeim*; even though you’re *moiser nefesh* for *avodas Hashem* like Rabbi Shimon and his son. You’re succeeding in learning Torah – you’re even learning the deepest secrets of the Torah – nevertheless, there’s one more secret that you still have to learn. You must add to the list of your achievements, the very great perfection of recognizing the *gedulas Am Yisroel* – the nation that loves *mitzvos*. No matter how great you are in *avodas Hashem*, and how great you are in Torah knowledge, you must add this attitude of mind to your store of knowledge, the respect and honor for our fellow Yisroel.

## Part III. Honoring the Thirsty

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### Thirsting For Honor

On the Yomim Nora'im, in our *tefillos*, we say the following words: וּבְכֵן תֵּן כְּבוֹד הַשֵּׁם לְעַמּוֹד תְּהִלָּה לִירְאִיךָ – “Hashem, give honor to Your people; praise for those who fear You.” Again and again we repeat those words.

It means that we're praying to Hakodosh Boruch Hu that the time should come when He should reveal to the nations of the world that we are the ones deserving of honor. Right now they're busy doing the opposite. It's an old story – from the beginning of our history no people have been vilified and insulted and blackened as the Jew – and therefore we look forward to the time when the gentiles should give honor to Jews.

Now, it's not merely a selfish desire. We don't need their honor. We're not looking for that. But it's the honor of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. Those who honor Him deserve to be recognized. And who in the world honors Hakodosh Boruch Hu like we do? We are the *osei mitzvos*, the ones who are constantly fulfilling His commands, and therefore we're looking forward to the day when the world will finally recognize that because we are the ones that have remained thirsty for *mitzvos* and loyal to Him always, we are the ones deserving of honor. That's our fervent wish and we repeat it again and again in our *tefillos*. וּבְכֵן תֵּן כְּבוֹד לְעַמּוֹד תְּהִלָּה לִירְאִיךָ.

### Pursuing The Honor

Now the first thing Hakodosh Boruch Hu says when He hears that is, “What about you?! Are you honoring your fellow Jews?” Did you ever say to yourself, when you see a stranger, a Jew, in the street: “That man over there is an aristocrat who deserves all the honor in the world. Even if the king of England would be walking past me, that would be nothing compared to this Jew, the one who is *tzamei la'mitzvos*.”

If you're not thinking that way, then you're not thinking. And it's a requirement – otherwise you're not speaking to Hashem in truth. “Hashem should honor the *Am Yisroel*”?! You're just saying words; it's in the *machzor* so you have no choice; you can't skip it after all. But do you really care about their honor? Are you doing something about it?!

I'm talking *halacha l'maaseh* now, practical things; not just *d'varim b'alma*. Suppose you're sitting on a bus – it's a bus that runs through a certain neighborhood and it's packed with anti-Semites. A lot of

irreligious Jews too – many of them are also anti-Semites. And suddenly there comes up on the bus a Jew with a beard, a big conspicuous beard. He's standing there, one elderly Jew, standing all alone on a bus full of *goyim*. Everybody has seats; he happens to be the only one without a seat. And he's swaying with every lurch of the bus and nobody even bothers to offer him a seat; what do they care for an elderly Jew – let him stand, let him collapse, they don't care.

### **A Demonstration on The Bus**

But you remember now what you said on Rosh Hashana, “Hashem, give honor to your people.” And even though you're wiped out after a long day of work – could be you're older than him and maybe your beard is whiter, but no matter, you get up and you offer him your seat.

You're making a scene, a public demonstration of **תָּנַן כְּבוֹד לְעַמֶּיךָ**. You shake hands with him – with respect, with *kavod* – a big *shalom aleichem* you give him and you show that he's an honored man.

Now it could be he sells herring in the grocery store. He's not a great rabbi; maybe he's not even a little rabbi; but it makes no difference. He's a Jew; he's from the **יִרְאַיִךְ**, those who fear Hashem. He's from the **צִמְאִים לְמִצְוֹת**, the nation that thirsts for *mitzvos*. And that's why you go out of your way to honor him – that's enough of a reason. It doesn't matter to you, a herring salesman or a *rosh yeshiva*; he's a thirsty Jew and he deserves all the honor in the world!

You have to work on that until it gets into your bones! Some people live their entire lives and never gain this attitude and it's a tremendous loss because it's one of the *yesodos* of being a Jew. It's one of our functions in this world – it's a principle of the Torah to realize the greatness of the nation that appreciates *avodas Hashem*, absolutely.

### **Start Practicing**

Not only on the *nation* as a whole but *b'prat* on each Jew. It makes no difference if it's an old man, or a little girl or little boy; all the *frum* men and women, all the *frum* boys and girls, we should be giving them great honor.

It's something you have to practice; you won't believe it unless you think about it often. It takes training.

Imagine your wife's cousin is coming over to visit. Now, I'm not saying you have to waste time with him; sometimes you might waste time and it's *devarim beteilim*, it's a waste of a life. But here is an opportunity for you to become great, by learning to respect a *tzamei*

lamitzvos. While he's talking, maybe he's not saying anything important, so you're nodding your head and you're thinking, "This man is so holy. I admire him and respect him. There's nothing in the world more dignified, more honorable, than my wife's cousin."

You know, it's not easy to love every Yisroel; but to train yourself little by little to have a respect for him because he's serving Hashem that's much easier. He's a *tzamei la'mitzvos* and you have to deal with him like he's *kodesh kadashim*. It is completely impossible to think of being *mivazeh* him. Even though you are angry at him, you can't scorn, you can't speak impolitely to a Yisroel. It's of the utmost importance to be *mechabed* every Yisroel. Every Yisroel.

### **Holy Homes**

I'll give you another *eitzah*, something to practice. Let's say you pass by a home, a Jewish home. And one house over, there's another Jewish home. But in between there's a gentile home with an Italian flag outside – it's a neat home, with a neat garden. Very nice, very nice. But you should understand there's a *hefsek* in between the two Jewish homes. Here's *kedusha*, then there's nothing, then there's *kedusha* again. A Jewish home is without measure superior to the non-Jewish home.

You have to have the greatest *derech erez* for a *frum* Jewish home. Because who's living in those homes? It's not the overfed Italians living there – it's thirsty Jews! Jewish children! Jewish grandmothers! Jewish mothers and fathers! It's a nation that is beloved by Hashem because they love *mitzvos*! All day long you hear *brachos* in that house. There's a *tehillim* on the table. The girls are davening *shemonah esrei* in the corner. It's a house of *mitzvos*!

And if you don't appreciate that, then it's a danger because, **לֹא יֵאָכְל לֹא יִשְׁמַח**, Hashem won't want to forgive you if you equate the Jewish homes with those of the gentiles.

### **A New Year's Resolution**

And therefore there's no better time than now, as we're going into a new year, to make a commitment to yourself: "Hakodosh Boruch Hu, this year is going to be a year of raising the banner of the greatness of Your people. This year I'm going to respect and honor the *Am Yisroel* – all of them! I'm going to take the tremendous lesson of *Parshas Netzavim* and the *tefillos* of the *Yomim No'ra'im* and make it a principle all year round, to give honor to Your people."

And then you get busy doing it. Honor every Jew; at least in your mind you should look at a fellow Jew with great respect. It's not only a matter of picking up lost apples from the sidewalk; it's an attitude of the mind - it's a tremendous perfection of the mind to think this way.

Every *frum* mother deserves honor; the bigger the family, the bigger the honor. How greatly you respect a mother who raises a family of little *tzaddikim*, boys and girls who will someday be big *tzaddikim*! What a tremendous achievement! We honor such a mother.

We honor Jews who sit by the *gemara* in the *beis medrash*. We honor the young boys and girls who give away their days in the *yeshivos* and *Beis Yaakovs*. We honor the *poshute* Jew on the street - because he's not *poshut* at all! We make sure to honor all people who are proud to show they're *frum* Jews; they look like Jews and talk like Jews and are thirsty for *mitzvos* like Jews. We honor the thirsty nation to no end.

### The End Of Days

And by means of always honoring the *shomrei Torah u'mitzvos*, we fulfill our function in this world of not "joining the satiated to the thirsty," of not equating the Jews with the nations of the world; and then the time will come when what we worked on all these years, this attitude that we gained, will be revealed to the world.

The Gemara says (Avodah Zarah 3a) that in the days of Moshiach, those *goyim* that survived will bring up a claim against Hakodosh Boruch Hu. They'll say that they are just as thirsty for *mitzvos* as the Jewish nation is. "If we had received the Torah," they'll say, "we would also have fulfilled it the same way the *Am Yisroel* did." That's what the *goyim* will say. "Why are we considered so low? Why are *Am Yisroel* superior to us? You gave them a Torah! If you had given us a Torah, we also would have done the Torah."

So Hashem says, "You're claiming that you have an argument against Me so I'll give you one last chance. One last chance - I want you fulfill the mitzvah of *sukkah*." It states זאת תקייה ... חטאת כל הגוים (Zecharya 14:19). It's the last chance to show that they really would mean business if they had the Torah.

"Oh," the *goyim* hear that. "Our last chance - we'll show Hashem." And they all make *sukkos*. They're sitting in the *sukkah*. Why not? It's nice weather. It's not too hot outside. It's comfortable in the *sukkah* in that weather. They're sitting comfortably and they're eating, having a good time and they're patting themselves on the shoulder. "We could

also make a *mitzvah* of *sukkah*. We're also a thirsty nation; if only He would have chosen us!"

### **The Glory Revealed**

What does Hashem do? הַשֶּׁם מוֹצִיא הַחֶמֶד מִן־הַתִּיקָה – He makes the sun become very hot. The sun becomes very hot and in the *sukkah* it becomes very hot. What happens? The *goyim* get up and leave the *sukkah*. They say, "It's so uncomfortable here now. I had enough." And some of them even give a kick as they walk out." They're בוֹעֵט; they give a kick to the *sukkah* as they walk out.

"Oh," Hakodosh Boruch Hu says, "These people are not thirsty for My *mitzvos*. That's what I meant to show you. The *Am Yisroel* is the nation that is thirsty for *mitzvos*; that's how they lived for thousands of years and a hot sun means nothing to them. They're My chosen nation, the people that deserve the true *kavod* because they are thirsty for *mitzvos*. And just like they never equated the thirsty and the satiated, I'll never do it either."

And then we'll witness with our own eyes the fulfillment of הַתֵּן כְּבוֹד לְעַמֶּךָ – Hakodosh Boruch Hu, give honor to your nation; and the people that truly thirsted for Hashem and His *mitzvos* will forever bask in their well deserved glory.

### **Have A Wonderful Shabbos**

#### **LET'S GET PRACTICAL**

##### ***Appreciating Those Appreciated by Hashem***

This week I will *bli neder* work on differentiating between "the satiated" and "the thirsty" and on "giving honor to those who fear Him". Three times a day I will look at a fellow Jew and think "He/she is a beloved son/daughter of Hashem, and I appreciate him/her".

#### **This week's booklet is based on tapes:**

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# QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

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שאל אביך ויגדך זקניך ויאמרו לך

Q:

Every year, before Rosh Hashana comes along, I make *kabolas*, resolutions, about improving myself in various areas of my service of Hashem. But here I am a week before another Rosh Hashanah, the same *schlepper* I've always been.

A:

Let me tell you something. You're not the same. Don't think you're the same. You're getting worse! As time goes on **עבר אדם עבירה ושנה בה נעשית לו כהיתר** – *One who does a sin, and then repeats it again and again, it becomes permissible in his eyes* (Yoma 87a). So if you're not improving, you're getting worse.

When you make a *kabalah bli neder* you have to have something specific; at least one specific thing that you're going to work on changing. **תפסת מרובה לא תפסת** – If you try to grab too much at one time, you're going to grab nothing at all. It's all going to fall out of your hand. To say in general, "I'm going to be good this year," is better than nothing, but not much better.

You have to specify something clear cut. Say, "This year, no matter how mean my wife is to me, and how much she'll bother me and criticize me and nag me, I won't say anything impolite to her. I'll keep my mouth closed." That's already something specific, something you can grab on to. **תפסת מועט תפסת** – *It's something limited, it's something that you can grab onto.*

Let's say you made a *kabalah* to learn Torah. So don't say, "I'm going to start learning more seriously this year." It's too big, too vague. Do it like this: "*Bli neder*, I'm going to learn fifteen minutes every day no matter what." And then, do it. Learn every night, fifteen minutes; it's better than nothing. At home, fifteen minutes. No matter what! Take out a *sefer* and learn for fifteen minutes. You want to learn an hour, very good, I'm not stopping you. But every night, learn fifteen minutes. Or go to a *shiur* every night. That's even better. Every night no matter what. That's a *kabalah* that's a **דבר שיש בו ממש**; it's clear-cut, it's something you can sink your teeth into.

Now, even though sometimes there's so many more things that you should be doing that you're not doing, but at least there's one thing you are doing. And Hashem sees that you're headed in the right direction. And if you're headed in the right direction then **הבא ליטהר מסעיך** **אורו** – *If you're trying to get better, He'll help you go further and further* (Menachos 29b). But you have to at least do one thing! And then you'll get *seyayta dishmaya* to do more and more.

This week's Q&A sponsored:

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