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L'ZECHER NISHMAS JOSEPH RAPHAEL 'JOJO' MARKOVITZ Z"L

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פרשת שמות

WITH

R' AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"l

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

In The Merit Of Righteous Women

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Part I. Holy Women

A Historic Event

In this week's *parsha* we encounter a unique event that happened only once in our history. Something that never happened before and never afterwards did a thing like this happen again. What was it? It was the time when the *Bnos Yisroel*, the women of our nation, made a stand against the *psak* of the *gedolei Yisroel*, asking them to reconsider their halachic decision.

Now, that's definitely rare. Jewish women should urge the *gedolim* to reconsider a *psak*? Generally Jewish women are entirely loyal to the *psak* of the *gedolim*; even in private *אִשָּׁה כְּשֶׁרָה עוֹשֶׂה רְצוֹן בַּעֲלָהּ*, a loyal Jewish woman obeys her own husband. No women in the world are as loyal as the Jewish women. And here all the *Bnos Yisroel* were united in a great effort to attempt to persuade the *gedolim* to rescind their *psak*. It's an unusual story.

Now, I don't want to keep you in suspense but it requires a short introduction. In Parshas Shemos the Torah is telling the story of the birth of Moshe Rabeinu and it begins with the marriage of his parents: וַיֵּלֶךְ אִישׁ מִבֵּית לֵוִי וַיִּקַּח אֶת בַּת לֵוִי – *And a man from the House of Levi went and he took as a wife the daughter of Levi* (Shemos 2:1).

A Unique Introduction

Now, if you're familiar with the *Chumash* you know that when the Torah wants to talk about some great person, it never introduces it by telling us that his father went and married a woman. Naturally, if this person is on the scene we understand that his father married somebody. And so, if the Torah merely wanted to introduce the personality of Moshe Rabeinu, it could have said that וַיֵּלְעָמְרוֹם נוֹלַד בֶּן – *and to Amrom was born a son*. That's enough; with that, the story could have begun. But to begin the story with the wedding of the parents – it seems entirely superfluous.

But it isn't of course. Nothing in the Torah is superfluous and if the Torah tells it so we understand that it was an event of the greatest weight; it was a very important incident when 'a man went from the House of Levi and he took the daughter of Levi'.

What happened? In those days, when the *Bnei Yisroel* were suffering terribly under the deadly *gezeiros* of Pharaoh, a decision was made that it was not right to bring children into the world anymore; it's not right to bring children into a world just to have them destroyed.

And it wasn't the decision of ordinary people; it was a decision of *gedolei Yisroel*. "When Amrom saw that Pharaoh was going to throw all the newborn boys into the Nile he said, 'Should we continue having children just so they should suffer the agonies of being drowned in the river?!' And so Amrom separated from his wife" (Sotah 12a).

The Great Men Decide

Now, Amrom was a leader of the generation and all the great men concurred with this weighty decision. And so, what happened? וַיִּזְרְעוּ אֶת נְשׂוֹתֵיהֶן – *The leaders of the shevatim followed in his footsteps and within a short period of time Jewish men all over Mitzrayim were separating from their wives* (*ibid.*).

Now, the leaders of our nation had their *cheshbonos*. They understood that Hakodosh Boruch Hu has promised to Avraham Avinu to make him into a *goy gadol* and therefore they knew it would be fulfilled one way or another; there will always be some *bnei Yisroel* around as seed from whom to plant a whole nation, a *goy gadol*. "But right now," they said, "we

have to employ the *middah* of *rachamim*. It is *pikuach nefesh*; it's too dangerous for people to be born right now."

Now, how did the women of Yisroel respond to that decision? With *hachnaah*? With bowed heads and humility? No! They didn't want to accept it! When Miriam saw that her father had separated permanently from her mother, Miriam became bold. Because she saw that others were following suit and she couldn't just sit back. She spoke to her father and urged him to take back his wife.

The Women Fight Back

Now, we know that Miriam did this with the inspiration of the *dvar* Hashem that spoke in her, but we have to know that it wasn't just one Miriam. Miriam was great but she wasn't the only one; she was only expressing the attitude of the *Bnos Yisroel* in that *dor*.

All over Mitzrayim the *Bnos Yisroel* were urging the *gedolim* to reconsider. And all over Mitzrayim it was being repeated **וַיֵּלֶךְ אִישׁ וַיִּקַּח אֶת בְּרַת** – *this one went and remarried his wife* and the other one went and remarried his former wife. All the men were taking back their wives. Of course Miriam was the most important, she is the one who was a *neviah*, but there were very important people then among the *Bnos Yisroel* and all of them participated in this concern about the new generation of *Bnei Yisroel*. And it was this concern, this attitude, that was the beginning, the foundation, of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*.

Look how the Torah begins *Sefer Shemos*. It's such an important *sefer*: *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, *Kriyas Yam Suf*, the *Mann*, *Matan Torah*, the *Mishkan*, so many important things. But the very first story is '*hameyaldos haIvriyos*', the Hebrew midwives. It seems interesting, valuable, but is that the very first thing to talk about?

The answer is that this story of the *meyaldos ivriyos* is told to us because that is the whole secret of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. And it is told at the beginning because it is of the most urgent importance in understanding *sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim*.

The Great Midwives

Pharaoh said, **הִבֵּה נְתַחֲכֶמָה לוֹ פִּן יִרְבֶּה** – *let's deal cunningly with them lest they increase*. It means Pharaoh was planning that they should not increase. And he gave the midwives orders that they should make sure his plan was fulfilled.

Now, the *meyaldos* after all were women; they weren't men. They weren't warriors or statesmen; they were midwives. And when a *melech*,

especially in ancient times, gives an order, so even statesmen are overwhelmed with *pachad*, even warriors tremble. And women especially so. In those days there was no such thing as disobeying the king.

But these women had different ideas. They were shaking in fear, but despite their terrible dread they refused to obey. Because there was something they feared even more. וְתִירָאן הַמִּלְדֹת אֶת הָאֱלֹהִים וְלֹא עָשׂוּ כְאֲשֶׁר יְדָבַר אֱלֹהֵיךָ מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם – The *melech* of Mitzrayim gave them orders and still the women despite everything had so much *yiras Elokim* that they disobeyed the command of a monarch!

And in what did they express their *yiras Elokim*? They saw to it that the *Bnos Yisroel* should succeed in bearing children. And they went all out in this endeavor. וַתִּרְאוּ אֶת הַיְלָדִים, they saw to it that the children should live!

Not Just The Midwives

Now, the story of the *meyaldos* is of the vastest importance because it wasn't merely these two women. We have to understand there is a principle in the Torah that יִלְמַד כְּתוּבִים מִן הַמְּפֹרָשׁ – we learn what is not explained from that which is explained. And so if we want to know about the women in Mitzrayim, what did they think, who they were, what their attitudes were, here we have one *prat*, a detail, that explains a great deal. We learn that the *Bnos Yisroel* in Mitzrayim were *moser nefesh*, were willing to risk their lives that the *Bnei Yisroel* should increase in numbers. That is what the story of the *meyaldos* is for.

And as much as we will dwell on this episode of these *meyaldos* who were summoned to the palace and were able to withstand the royal edict of a mighty king, it won't be enough. As much as we will be *maamik* into the *sakanah*, the real peril that they faced and nevertheless refused to do other than had been agreed among the *bnos Yisroel* that *kein yirbeh*, that they must increase, it won't be too much because from this incident, this episode, we learn about all the *Bnos Yisroel* in Mitzrayim, about their intentions.

And by no means was it easy for them. We have to know that Pharaoh when he made the decree that they shouldn't increase, he made all kinds of cunning schemes. He took the men far away in work camps; he isolated them and they had no contact with their wives. So what would happen to the best intentions? It's a fact; they are separated. Like it states in the Haggadah זוּ פְּרִישׁוֹת דְּרָדָּה אֶרְצָה, they were separated. And so what does it help that the women wanted to build the *Am Yisroel*?

But the women were determined and they became men. The women began to sneak through the forests, through lands that were forbidden for them to trespass. Each woman packed lunches; they took food for their husbands and they stole through the guards. You know what that means?

It is not told how many were destroyed. The Torah tells us only general things, the Gemara tells us general things. But the women risked their lives and they finally came to the camps. Not once; again and again they did that. And they called out their men folk outside the camps and they gave them food. The men were starving, they were famished and weak from the heavy work. And the wives encouraged them and they sat together with them. That is how they rebuilt the families of Am Yisroel.

Holy Mirrors

And what happened later? Later when they came to build the Mishkan, it says (Shemos 38:8) וַיַּעַשׂ אֶת הַכִּיּוֹר נְהוֹשֶׁת וְאֵת בְּנוֹ נְהוֹשֶׁת. When they made the *kiyor* - where the *kohanim* washed their hands to do the *avodah* - they made it and its pedestal out of copper.

Where did they get the copper? Well, they had plenty of copper that they took with them from Mitzrayim but the *possuk* tells us that they made it from the copper mirrors of the women אָשֶׁר צָבְאוּ פָתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד, *that gathered together near the Mishkan*. The women came in big throngs - many, many of them - and they said, "We want you to use our copper mirrors to make the washing *kiyor* and the pedestal."

So the Medrash Tanchuma tells us that Moshe Rabeinu when he saw this, he said, "Mirrors?! Mirrors are used to arouse passion." That's what mirrors are for, to beautify oneself. And so he told the women, "Please, you must go away. You're disgracing the great purposes of the Mishkan. You're going to contribute mirrors for this noble purpose?" Moshe was displeased.

So Hakodosh Boruch Hu said to Moshe Rabeinu, "Never mind! That's what I want, those mirrors. These are the mirrors that raised up the Am Yisroel."

And that is why although they had plenty of copper - they had plenty of other metals too, gold and silver - but וַיַּעַשׂ אֶת הַכִּיּוֹר נְהוֹשֶׁת וְאֵת בְּנוֹ נְהוֹשֶׁת - the *kiyor* was made from copper. Which copper? בְּמִרְאֵת - *with the mirrors*, הַצָּבְאוֹת - *of the women who came in crowds*. The women who created crowds. And that's how Hashem expressed His appreciation, His

gratitude, to the women of that generation who went all out to build the Am Yisroel.

Part II. Holy Mothers

Flattering The Sisterhood

Now you understand what the Gemara says, that בְּשֹׁכֵר נָשִׁים צְדָקָנִיּוֹת – it was due to the righteous women of that generation, נִגְאָלוּ נַאֲלָו – that our forefathers were redeemed from Mitzrayim (Sotah 11b).

You know, this *maamar* is frequently quoted – but it's almost never quoted in connection with its true meaning. A rabbi will sometimes make use of that *maamar* when he's speaking to his Ladies Auxiliary to encourage them to buy raffles or to give more money. Or maybe if the Sisterhood will give him a gift, a trip to Eretz Yisroel, so in the farewell address he'll make sure to quote these words.

But we have to study it *k'pshuto*, the way our Sages intended. It means that there was a separate spirit among the *Bnos Yisroel*, above and beyond the spirit of the men. There was a certain greatness among the *noshim tzidkoniyyos* because of which our ancestors were redeemed from Mitzrayim.

Gender Ideology

You know, there's no such thing today as a separate ideology for women. Today the whole Am Yisroel has a common tradition which comes through one channel: the *Torah shebiksav* and the *Torah shebaal peh*. That is where we derive all of our ideals. And therefore there is no such thing as men and women having different ideals; that couldn't be. It couldn't be now and it couldn't have been any time since *Mattan Torah*. But before *Mattan Torah* the case was different.

In those early days of our nation it was different. The women had a separate greatness of spirit, and it was because of this attitude of the women, that is why they succeeded in being *maamid* a big *dor*, a great generation. It was a growth that never again was repeated. It was a *bracha* in the population of the *Bnei Yisroel* and all this was due to the spirit of the *Bnos Yisroel* in Mitzrayim.

Now, we have to ask ourselves: this spirit that inflamed the hearts of the women in Mitzrayim, where did it come from? How was it that the women had such a strength, such an attitude of the mind that they were

capable of raising themselves up to such heights? Where did the women get this strength of spirit to overcome all of the obstacles that made it almost impossible?

Our Holy Mothers

So to understand this we will skip a little bit and go to the *sefer* of Rus. In the *Sefer Rus* (4:11) it tells that when Boaz took Rus as a wife, the women of Beis Lechem gave a *bracha* to them that Rus should be **כְּרוּחַל וְכִלְיָהּ** – *Like Rochel and Leah who built the House of Israel.*

Now we have to treasure these ancient words; every word is a diamond of tremendous historical value, of tremendous Torah value, because what the women were saying gives us a clue to their attitude. You have to remember that the story of Rus was not long after coming into Eretz Yisroel and the spirit of the women of Mitzrayim still lived among them. And so now we are getting an echo of that old tradition from Mitzrayim. And we're learning that it was actually an even older tradition from the days of Rochel and Leah!

Because we see now what Rochel and Leah were thinking about – they were building the house of Yisroel. And each one wanted to have a bigger share in building that house because they understood that the house of Yisroel, that's the resting place of Hakodosh Boruch Hu in His world. And anyone who has a bigger share in the house of Yisroel will have a bigger *chelek* in the great achievement of creating the place for His Shechinah to rest in this world.

Idealistic Intentions

That's why Rachel and Leah vied with each other, they competed with each other, who could build up the *Beis Yisroel* more. That was the most burning ambition in their hearts. There was nothing more important to them and they generated such an idealism that it went into the blood of their families. They planted the seeds of idealism, of fighting for greater numbers in the Am Yisroel. Rochel and Leah, they were the ones whose every fiber cried out for the fulfilment of this glorious purpose, to build the *Beis Yisroel*.

Of course Yaakov also had something to do with it – we already repeated here many times the words of the Rambam in his *Moreh Nevuchim*. He makes there a fundamental statement, a statement that has to be studied and should never be forgotten because it's a key to understanding this subject. He says that the whole *kavanah* of the Avos

was **לְהַעֲמִיר אִמָּה עוֹבְדַת הַשֵּׁם** – to raise up a nation that would serve Hashem. That's it; to raise up a nation of *ovdei Hashem*.

Now that is a big statement to make, to say the *whole* intent of the Avos was that. But we have to open our ears and listen to these words. Who is talking after all? The Rambam. The Rambam is not a *darshan*; the Rambam is a very particular and precise writer and now he is making a statement of the greatest weight, the greatest importance. That's what our Avos lived for – to create an Am Hashem.

The Mothering Instinct

Only, as much as the Avos understood this and preached this, the Imahos absorbed it into their bones even more. Why? Because it is the nature of a woman to desire children; she's born with that instinct. That's why you see little girls play with dolls. But in ordinary people that instinct is misdirected; a child is like a doll, like a colt *l'havdil* of a horse, or a calf *l'havdil* of a cow. It's another child to take care of. It's fun too sometimes. Children are cute – they have to be; Hakodosh Boruch Hu made it that way, otherwise you wouldn't want to change their diapers. But *sof kol sof*, it's instinct primarily.

But our Imahos took this instinct and they were able to utilize the teaching of the Avos, **לְהַעֲמִיר אִמָּה עוֹבְדַת אֶת הַשֵּׁם**, in a way that was magnified far beyond what the Avos themselves were able to feel. Because the Avos didn't have that natural instinct; a man doesn't possess it like a woman does.

And so these great women didn't try to be men; they didn't try to compete with men in their department of *avodas Hashem*. Of course they were great in many ways but they especially tried to become great as women; they were women par excellence. Rochel and Leah were dedicated with all their souls to having children to build up the Beis Yisroel. And this tradition they gave over to their daughters, that Hakodosh Boruch Hu more than anything else He wants the numbers of the Bnei Yisroel.

Numbers At Sinai

That's what Hashem wants. He wants numbers. That's why He didn't give the Torah to Avrohom Avinu. No matter how great he was, Hashem didn't give the Torah to Avrohom Avinu. The Torah wasn't given to Yitzchok or to Yaakov, because Hashem was waiting for numbers. Hakodosh Boruch Hu waited until we were already a numerous nation. He waited until they became a great nation because that's the dearest

wish, *kavyachol* of Hashem. He wants to see a *great number* of the *Bnei Yisroel*.

This lesson, you must know, was not lost on the generations that followed. When our forefathers were in Mitzrayim, the Jewish women in Mitzrayim had the tradition handed down from Rochel and Leah. They knew what it meant the tremendous privilege of having a child born. And that's why when Pharaoh made his *gezeirah* they said, "Are we going to separate from our husbands just because of Pharaoh's decree? If so we might as well die."

Like Rochel had said (Bereishis 30:1) הָבָה לִי בָנִים – *Give me children*, אִין וְאִם אֵין – *and if not*, מְתָה אָנֹכִי – *I want to die*. Now, we think we understand that; there are women who talk like that: "If I can't have children I don't want to live." You might hear that sometimes. It means, "If I can't have a little doll, a human doll to fulfill my motherly instincts, I don't want to live." But that's not what Rochel meant.

The Imahos were living to create a nation, to make the Am Hashem bigger and bigger. And the women in Mitzrayim lived with those words of Rochel. They lived only for that purpose and therefore all the *bnos Yisroel* arose in revolt against the *gedolei Yisroel* – we can't recommend such behavior because this was just a one-time event in history. But they were so dedicated to the goal of bringing the Shechinah down into this world that they stood up and said, "No! We can't accept that *psak*."

Protesting Pharaoh

And surely they revolted against Pharaoh. When he tried his best to prevent marriage of men and women of the *Bnei Yisroel*, he was no match for the flaming tradition of the Hebrew women who knew that their purpose in the world was bringing more and more *Bnei Yisroel* into the world on whom the Shechinah would rest.

And therefore, they began to increase and multiply with a tremendous enthusiasm. Everybody was busy with one thought. Pharaoh was busy with the thought פֶּן יִרְבּוּ – "Maybe they'll become too many!" and the *Bnos Yisroel* were busy with the thought (Rashi Shemos 1:12), כֵּן יִרְבּוּ – "Yes, we will become too many!" And the stronger one prevailed.

It wasn't easy. This tremendous *mitzvah* was achieved under the most difficult conditions. The daughters of Yisroel exerted themselves with *mesiras nefesh*; we don't know how many lost their lives in the process. We don't know how much suffering they had to endure.

Perilous Births

They didn't have any hospitals, they didn't have luxuries. The time when they had to give birth, they went and hid under the trees someplace, **תַּחַת הַתְּפוּחַ עוֹרְרוּתֵיךְ** – *under the apple tree*. It was a low tree so people couldn't see them. And they gave birth by themselves. A woman, to give birth by herself, that's a terrible *tzarah*. They had to cut the baby loose themselves and there was nobody to take care of the poor mother. And the baby had to be washed – I don't know how they did it. We read in the Medrash that *malachim* came and helped them but we have to realize that these mothers were *moiser nefesh* on a scale that's beyond our ability to even believe.

And it was all done under the terror of death. A sword was hanging over their heads. They had to hide the children from the Egyptians. They had to hide them in caves. Try to hide little children in caves; the children are crying and making noise. Maybe some children were discovered. Maybe some were killed.

But they did it. And they did it so many times that the *Bnei Yisroel* **וַיִּעֲצְמוּ**, *were fruitful*, **וַיִּשְׂרְצוּ**, *and they swarmed*, **וַיִּרְבּוּ**, *and they increased*. **בְּמֵאֹד מְאֹד** – *they became very numerous* (Shemos 1:7). Now every word here means *mesiras nefesh* under the fear of death. And it ends off, **וַתִּמְלֵא הָאָרֶץ** **אֹתָם** – *the land was filled with them*.

“And now,” Hakodosh Boruch Hu said, “You're a great nation. In the merit of the righteous women, I'll redeem you from Mitzrayim. Now is the time when I'm going to show Myself to you like I never showed before. I'll take you out of Mitzrayim and reveal Myself to you. Even **וַשְׁמִי הַשֵּׁם לֹא** **נִדְעָתִי לָהֶם** – “My name, Hashem, I never showed to the Avos like I'm going to show you now.” Only because of the great numbers that have now been produced by the daughters of Yisroel.

Part III. Holy Parents

Produced By Mothers

Now, I want to switch subjects before we conclude. It's actually not a new subject, but it's the other side of the same coin, of building a family. Because up till now we were talking about building the Am Yisroel. A tremendous opportunity! Increasing the number of Jewish boys and girls means that you're participating in the great achievement of bringing

Shechinah to this world. It's *kiddush Hashem*, it's a *mitzvah* that's unequaled. It's everything good! Building the Am Yisroel!

The world is grateful to you. You walk into a *shul*, a Beis Haknesses. A *minyán* full of *talmidei chachomim*, *frum* Jews – where did they come from? The mothers brought them up, אָפֶּר טַפְּהוּתִי וְרַבִּיתִי – *I brought him up inch by inch*, the mother says (Eichah 2:22).

I once went to be *menachem avel*. A little *rebbe* passed away. He was a *rebbe* of a little Beis Hamedrash who passed away. His widow was sitting there, a little woman, a tiny little woman, the widow, but I saw her sons – a whole row of big sons, big *chassidische* men, a whole row of them. I had *derech eretz* for her – a whole row of sons from that little woman. I was thinking, “What a big achievement she accomplished.” Impressive looking men! Each one could be a little *rebbe* on his own! That's an achievement! She lived for a purpose! No question about it! She built up the Beis Yisroel.

Produced By Yourself

But there's something more, something very important, and that is building yourself. To build the Am Yisroel? It's tremendous! But to build yourself, that's even more important.

I'll explain that. You remember when Rochel Imeinu saw that her sister was having children and she was still childless, so she made the decision to build a family in a secondary way, by means of a substitute. And so she suggested to her husband Yaakov that he should take her maidservant as a wife and beget children from her. And she said to Yaakov the following: וְתִלְדַּ עַל בְּרַכִּי וְאֶבְנָה גַם אֲנֹכִי מִמֶּנָּה – *I'll raise her children on my knees and I'll be built up through her*.

Now, we should make note of the fact that the word אֶבְנָה – “I will be built up” sounds like בְּנִים – “children.” And actually they're cognate words; they're related to each other: אֶבְנָה עַל יְדֵי בֵן; *I will be built up by means of a child.*

Now, I wouldn't be bold enough to try and tell you all the things that Rochel intended with those words but there's no question that everything we said here tonight was included in her words. Absolutely that she wanted to be built up by means of creating a nation, a nation of *ovdei Hashem*.

But she meant more than that. Because אֶבְנָה means “I want to build up myself, my personality.” Rochel understood that having children means that you're building two separate skyscrapers. One is what we spoke of till now, the building of the Am Yisroel and bringing more Shechinah into

the world. But Rochel Imeinu intended even more than that. “אֲבִנָּה – I want to be built up myself from it; I want to build up my personality, my character.” Because that’s one of the most valuable achievements of building a family – you become a different person altogether.

Becoming A New Person

Here’s a girl who is nothing but a girl. She didn’t learn *mussar seforim*. Could be she didn’t even learn *Chumash*. She has some traditions of the Jewish people; she’s certainly a *frum* Jewish girl, she’s a *maamin*, absolutely. In the Beis Yaakov or the Beis Rochel she learned many things. But you cannot say she is saturated with *yiras Shomayim* or saturated with the *middah* of kindness. The truth is that she’s probably selfish – she’s thinking only about herself; she’s still a little girl after all.

But when this girl gets married a great change begins to set in. She’s not living for herself anymore – she’s devoted to her husband now and she tries to make him happy. She asks him, “Chaim, does the soup taste good?” That’s an ambition for a good Jewish wife – she wants to make her husband happy.

And she becomes a new person because of that; she’s a *ba’alas chessed* now. When she puts a plate of food on the table she is doing a tremendous act as a *shaliach* of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. נָתַן לָהֶם לֶכֶּל בְּשׂוֹר – *Hashem gives food to all the living* but it’s the wife who is handing her husband the bowl of soup. She hands him the bread because that’s what Hashem wants her to do.

And that’s what she’s busy with; by being married she becomes a practitioner of *chedsed*. All day long, she’s *osek* in *gemilus chassadim*. Isn’t that a great kindness to cook for somebody? And to make it taste good too? And it’ll be eaten by her husband; it means that she’s feeding the Jewish people.

Besides, there are many other things that she does; she keeps a clean house, she washes the clothing. And so a married woman is *chedsed*; that’s what she is. By being married, she becomes a practitioner of *chedsed*. All day long, she’s *oisek* in *gemilas chassadim*. She’s building herself into a new person altogether, a more perfect servant of Hashem.

Becoming A Tremendous Tzaddik

But that’s only the beginning of her career because soon a child comes and an even greater transformation takes place in her personality. A woman who has a child, who has children, is building herself; her personality is improving – no question.

It's like learning a *mussar sefer* all day. You know what would happen to a person if he learned *mussar* every day, all day long. He'd be someone great, a great *tzaddik*. And imagine he wouldn't only learn it; he'd live it. He would become a *tzaddik yesod olam*, a tremendous *tzaddik*.

That's a mother! All day long, she's working on the *middah* of *chessed*. *Chessed* and *chessed* and more *chessed*. First she has to carry a baby around with her for a long time and then she nurses the baby; for years and years she takes care of the baby. A mother puts in hours of hard work for her children. Plenty of times, she loses many hours of sleep because her child is crying. Many times the child wanted something, she had to spend time playing with the child when she had work to do.

Everything is hectic. She's harried, with the worries of each child crowding out her own thoughts. All day long, she's busy. This child has a cold, this child fell down and cut his finger, he has to get the bus to go to the *yeshivah*. She's sits with the little boys and little girls practicing the *alef-beis*, the *kriah*. "Mommy, I need this. Give me this. Give me that." All the time. All the time.

You Come First!

And yet, when a child comes into the world, a mother lives for her child. All of her emotions are concentrated on the love for her child and it changes her personality. She becomes a different kind of a creature. She is devoted so much that she thinks nothing about herself anymore – all for her child. She's *kulo chessed*, *kulo chessed*, *kulo chessed!* הַתְּשִׁיבָה אֵשֶׁה עוֹלָה - *Can a woman forget her baby?* (Yeshaya 49:15). Never! Someone who is thinking unselfishly of someone else, all the time, by day and by night it is a tremendous *tikkun*, a perfection of character. So now, her life is transformed and she's built up. By a child, she is built up. She becomes different.

She is so devoted that she thinks nothing about herself anymore – everything is for her children. I was talking to a woman yesterday on the telephone. I said, "Who's more important – you or your children?" She said, "My children." I said, "No. You're more important – no question about it. *Chayecha kodmin* – even your child is not more important than you. You come first." But that's the greatness of a Jewish mother – she has to be told that she comes first.

And so Rochel wanted a child that would achieve this transformation in her nature. It would change her so that she would be an entirely different personality in this world and in the world to come. She wanted a child that would achieve this transformation in her nature. Of course,

she would have loved to build it from herself, but at least by means of an agent. “At least, I’ll make Bilhah my *shaliach*,” she said. Rochel wanted to build up her character one way or another – so she said, אֶבְנָה – “I’ll be built up from *her* child.”

Producing a Father

Now, everything we said applies to a great extent to a father too. A father also changes his character to a great extent because of his children. I won’t say as much as a mother but there’s no question that a father of children is a different fellow than he was when he was a *bochur* in the *yeshivah*.

A father also is constantly practicing the *middah* of *rachmanus* on his children and he’s transformed because of that. Maybe not as much as the mother, but absolutely, a father transforms his personality by means of being a father.

It’s a *halachah*, אֵין מוֹשִׁיבֵין בְּסִנְהֶדְרִין וְקָן – *An old man cannot sit in Sanhedrin*. Why is that? Because an old man lost the feelings of pity on children (Sanhedrin 36b). He’s *possul* to be a *dayan* because we’re worried that he won’t have *rachmonus badin*. But a father who is still in contact with children, he has a certain feeling of *rachmonus* that he developed because of his duties in the home. And so, the father also benefits.

Producing a Family

Parents are changed by means of building a family. That’s one of the roles of a Jewish parent. Not only are they building the world together but by means of their children they’re building themselves. All of the wrinkles of selfishness, all the wrinkles of their character are being ironed out. One day at a time, one brick at a time, they’re building. And after many years, the edifice they have built is unmatched in the world. Not only the edifice of a fine Jewish family – they themselves become towering personalities of perfection prepared to enter into the world to come.

And so every Jewish wedding is a repetition of וַיִּלְךָ אִישׁ מִבֵּית לְוִי וַיִּקַּח אֶת בַּת לְוִי. It’s of the greatest importance because of these two functions of building and therefore it’s so important to appreciate how great is the function of marriage.

Here’s a *chosson* and his *kallah*; they’re all confused. She’s thinking if her new *sheitel* is on straight. He’s worried about other things. He might make a mistake and not say the words right. They’re not thinking about idealism at all. They should be thinking about how great their function is. They’re starting now a long career of building. And they’re doing it for

Hashem. He's right there under the *chuppah* with them! How immense is the holiness of that moment! They're preparing to bring the Shechinah into this world, more and more children means more and more Shechinah, and at the same time they're preparing to perfect their personalities for the World to Come.

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

The Count Of Bnei Yisroel

We were redeemed from Mitzrayim in the merit of the *Bnos Yisroel* who understood that Hashem desires "the count of the *Bnei Yisroel*". Building up the Jewish Nation is the greatest merit, besides for the fact that it builds up the parents as well when they have children. This week, at least once per day, I will *bli neder* look at a Jewish family and marvel at the merit of the parents who have achieved so much in building the holy nation and bringing the Shechinah into the world and into themselves.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

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Continued from back cover

in Olam Habo, the way the *ziknei ha'ir* think of you, that's how you'll be judged in Olam Habo. That's important! But the fact that this person or that person rejects you is meaningless.

What do the *chachmei haTorah* think of you? You don't know? Find out from those who are closest to you, what they think. What does your *rav* think about you? Now, he may welcome you with a glad hand and make you feel that you're important, but the question is, what does he actually think of you? Try to find out! And if you ever hear a word of criticism from him, you should take it seriously. That's the rejection that means something.

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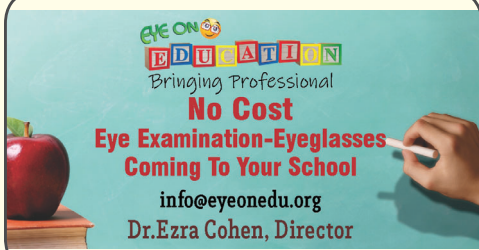
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שאל אביך ויגדך זקניך ויאמרו לך



What is the Torah perspective of how to deal with the problem of feeling rejected by others?



Now, rejection is a word that's taken from modern psychology. Of course people don't want to feel rejected, but the very first thing for us to learn is that there's only one criterion of right and wrong and that is the Toras Hashem. What people say is not important at all. It's only what Hakodosh Boruch Hu thinks of you that matters.

However we should take the *da'as habriyos*, the opinion of others, as an indication of something that might not be so good with us. If people have some reason to reject us, it could very well be that there's something in us that deserves to be repaired, remedied. And we should learn from that and we should try to find out what's wrong with us.

But suppose it's not wrong in us; suppose it's wrong with them – suppose they reject you because you're too *frum*; then you reject them – that's all. Why should you worry any longer? כבוד חכמים יתחלו – *Those who are chachomim, they deserve kavod* and the fact that fools won't honor you it's only because they don't know whom to honor.

The fools honor the entertainment artists, they honor the baseball players; so let them honor. They're fools. But you know what really deserves honor, so rejection from people like that is a word that means nothing.

Unless *chas v'shalom* the *ziknei ha'eidah* reject you. That you have to worry about! Does the rav of your shul reject you? Does the rebbe of your yeshiva reject you? That's a big problem. Oh yes!

Reb Yisroel Salanter said that the opinion of the *ziknei ha'eidah*, of the *ziknei ha'ir*, that's the *da'as Hashem*. If you want to know beforehand how you will be judged

Continued on page 17

This week's Q&A sponsored:

Mazel Tov to Yakir Markowitz & Family upon the birth of a baby boy.