

TORAS AVIGDOR

AUTHENTIC TORAH THOUGHT FOR LIFE

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PARSHAS DEVARIM

WITH

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BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

EXILE AND HAPPINESS

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Part I. Exiled to the Wilderness

A Puzzling Claim

We begin with a puzzling statement in this week's *sedrah* that describes the forty years the Bnei Yisroel spent in the Midbar. If we understand what the Torah is telling us here, it will be an important principle in our lives. Especially during this time of the year when we're thinking about our Exile, the days when we're mourning the various missteps we took that caused the Golus, we'll see how important it is for us.

Moshe Rabbeinu is speaking to the Am Yisroel at the end of their long journey in the Midbar – it's *שְׁכִינָה מְדַבֶּרֶת מִתּוֹךְ גְּרוֹנוֹ*; Hashem speaking through Moshe – and he says, *זֶה אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה* – *These forty years*, *ה' אִלֵּיכֶם עָמַד* – *Hashem was with you*, *לֹא חָסַרְתֶּם דָּבָר* – *and you didn't lack a thing* (Devarim 2:7).

Now, such words only make sense if you're reading quickly; you're in a hurry to finish reviewing the *parsha*. But if you stop for one minute to think, it's quite a remarkable statement: Forty years we didn't lack a thing? *לֹא חָסַרְתֶּם*?! How could it say such a thing? Just the opposite! I would have said that *chosarta*, lacking, was the overriding feature of their entire stay in the Midbar!

A Stirah in Pessukim

And who needs my opinion? Hakadosh Baruch Hu said it Himself. Later, Hashem says, *זָכַרְתָּ אֶת כָּל הַדֶּרֶךְ* – *You should remember the whole journey that I led you forty years in the wilderness* (8:2). Now, pay attention to the next words: *לָמַעַן עֲנִיָּה* – *In order to afflict you.*

So here it is, black on white, that we suffered, we lacked, in the Midbar. And therefore, it's a puzzle; what did Hakadosh Baruch Hu intend when He said, "You lacked nothing for forty years"?

Lacking Luxuries

So pay attention now to the answer. "You lacked nothing" means that you lacked nothing *that you needed*. What does it mean "in order to afflict you"? Does it mean to make you sad? No. It means you'll be afflicted by the lack of things *that you don't need*. "You should remember the forty years that I led you in the Wilderness," Hashem says, "in order to teach you to get along without unnecessary pleasures."

It means you'll get along without onions, without garlic, without fish. Onions and garlic are unnecessary pleasures if the *mann* is supplying all of your needs – the two tastes the *mann* has are enough for you. And that's all it was, two tastes. Everybody who

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learned a little Chumash knows that. The truth is everybody does not know that because everybody thinks that the *mann* had every taste that you desired; that's a statement in the Gemara but it's misunderstood entirely. In the Chumash it's written that the *mann* had two official tastes. If you ate it raw it was **כַּצְפִּיחַת בְּרֶבֶשׁ** which is usually explained like a wafer in honey (Shemos 16:31). And if you were **רָכּוּ בַמֹּדֶכָה**, if you pounded it with a mortar and prepared it in a pan so it tasted like **לֶשֶׁךְ הַשָּׁמֶן**, like the fatness of oil, something like a pancake (Bamidbar 11:8).

Pancakes for Eternity

Now, I'm sure they both tasted good. If Hakadosh Baruch Hu makes a wafer, you can bet all your money that the taste was of the very best in a wafer, the best type of honey. And the pancake, same thing; it certainly tasted like the best quality pancake, as if fried by the very best cooks. But that's all it was, honey wafers and oil pancakes.

Of course, we know what Chazal tell us, that they were able to feel various tastes in the *mann*, but don't be deceived by that. These tastes were very hard to achieve. You needed a lot of *emunah*! You had to sit down before the *seudah*, and say **הַנְּבִי מוֹכֵר וּמְזִמֵּן** to feel a taste of meat in this *mann*." You had to work on *mussar* before sitting down to the *mann*; and you had to work hard until it entered your mind. And then, after a long *mussar* seder — you sat in solitude for a little while and tried to elevate your mind to noble thoughts of *bitachon b'Hashem*, that He can make it taste like what you want — so now, when you sat down to eat with *emunah shleimah*, you arrived finally at the stage where you close your eyes and pop a piece of *mann* into your mouth and it tasted like a steak or whatever you wanted to eat.

But suppose somebody was too lazy to do that. Anytime that you sat down to eat, you couldn't begin eating right away; you had to think first. And if you ate carelessly — again pancakes. If you were dejected or downcast or tired and you weren't ready to subject yourself to preparations, so now you had for breakfast, lunch and supper, *tzapichis b'dvash*, *tzapichis b'dvash*, *tzapichis b'dvash*.

And even if you'll relieve the monotony by grinding it up and frying it and now it tastes like a delectable pancake, but how long can you eat pancakes? Suppose your bride after the wedding starts making pancakes. That's all she learned — and by the way, girls, it's an important thing you should know that one of the preparations for marriage includes the ability to cook and bake; it's very important, but we'll leave that for some other time. And so she makes pancakes for breakfast, lunch and supper, and the next day the same thing; you'd start reconsidering the whole business. I don't care how good it tastes; after a while it will start coming out through your ears. It will become downright nauseating.

Desiring Garlic

And so they didn't go hungry; they weren't lacking. Every day they ate what they needed, but they were hungry because they wanted extra things in addition to what was enough to support them. They wanted a little entertainment. They wanted some cake maybe, some meat, halva, ice cream maybe. By the way, they didn't want that. We want that but that much they didn't want. All they wanted was *knubbel*; some garlic, some onions.

Now, that's a pretty poor request, a quiet and humble demand, but even *that* was considered a superfluous thing. What do you need it for? You have nutritious food to eat? It has a good taste? It's not sawdust after all. So be happy with that. Not grin and bear it — be *happy* with that!

That's how it was with everything in the Midbar. It was one of the purposes of the forty years; they were limited, but they were expected to learn that it was **לֹא הָסְרָת דָּבָר** — *you didn't lack anything!* **לָחֶם לֹא אָכַלְתֶּם** — *You didn't eat bread*, but you had enough food to eat and live, it was nutritious and tasty, and that's enough. **יֵין וְשִׁכָּר לֹא שְׁתִּיתֶם** — *You didn't have the fun of some wine and strong drink*, but you had water and they were trained to be satisfied with that (Devarim 29:5). There was no pop soda or juice. A well of water, that's excellent! A person in the Sahara desert and he's looking for a little bit of water before he drops dead, so when he finds a little stand where

they're selling water, he'll give a thousand dollars! Happily! And he begins to appreciate the glass of water.

לֹא בָלוּ שְׁלֹמֹתֵיכֶם מֵעַלְיֶיכֶם – Your garments never wore out (ibid. 4). Not “you went to Gimbels to get a new suit every year.” No. Your clothing from forty years ago, you still wore today. And they learned that it was enough. “I have a clean shirt and pants, clean underwear” – whatever they wore in those days – “I don't need more than that.” They didn't have the luxury of new shoes. וְנִעְלָה לֹא בִלְתָּה מֵעַל רַגְלָהּ – The same old shoes for forty years. But they did the job; they didn't wear out and that was enough.

The University of Lo Chosarta Davar

And so every day in the Midbar was a training of the mind in understanding that *lo chosarta davar*, that we have everything. It's true, they lacked many pleasures and conveniences. They lived in simple tents and ate one type of food. They didn't go shopping. No ice-skating rinks or bowling alleys; no Broadway plays to go to. And so of course they “lacked”; but for forty years they were being taught that lack of comforts is a lack of nothing.

They were being trained not to hark after extraneous things. That was the plan of Hashem; they were going to live for forty years with all the food they needed, water to drink, a place to live, clothing and peace, and they would learn to be satisfied with that. Not only satisfied; because that's all they had, they learned to enjoy, even to delight in all the basic pleasures of the most simple existence. And that was Hashem's intention, to mold forever a nation that would live according to that ideal.

Now, I understand that this ideal is a very great disappointment to many people – even the good people who come here, we don't like to hear such things because we are very far beneath that generation. In America especially it's *apikorsus* to speak about limiting ourselves, being happy with the minimum. American stomachs are always full and that's not enough – they're looking for more thrills. And so this subject grates on our ears, but that's what the Torah wants us to know, that the Bnei Yisroel were trained for forty years how to live, how to be

the nation of Hashem: It means a people who are satisfied with the minimum, all the basic pleasures of life, and they say לֹא חָסְרָתָּ דָּבָר – we're not lacking anything.

Part II. Excess and Exile

A Land of Lo Chosarta Davar

That's why when the Bnei Yisroel came into Eretz Canaan, they were prepared for success. After all, they had learned in the Midbar to be satisfied with enough to eat. And Eretz Canaan was a land of אֶרֶץ נַחֲלֵי מַיִם עֵינַת וְתַהֲמַת יִצְאִים בְּבִקְעָה וּבְהָר אֶרֶץ חֹטָה וְשִׁעְרָהּ וּגְפֶן וְתַאֲנָה וְרִמּוֹן אֶרֶץ זֵית שָׁמֶן וְרִבְשׁ אֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר לֹא בְּמִסְכָּנָתָהּ תֹּאכַל בָּהּ לֶחֶם (Devarim 8:7-9). They had water to drink. They had wheat and barley, various foods. They had bread to eat. It was good times galore! What could be better? To live on your own land, in stone homes, with food and water and fruit as much as you need? It was like Gan Eden to them.

That's why the Torah says, “When you come into Eretz Yisroel and you're good, you follow the Torah, you know what you could look forward to? אִם שָׁמַעְתָּ – If you do everything that I have told you..., וְאָכַלְתָּ וּשְׂבַעְתָּ – you'll eat and be satiated” (ibid. 11:13-15). You hear that great promise? You'll have enough to eat.

That's all? You tell that to a Jew today, that as a reward for being *frum*, he'll have enough to eat, he looks at you like you fell off the moon. What about a car? What about vacations? I should be satisfied with water and a meal, with bread and figs, some pomegranates and oil? I should live happily ever after with some food?

But that's how our ancestors lived for many years. They lived successfully because they had been trained. They had gone through the university of *lo chosarta davar* and so they were ready to live happily in Eretz Yisroel – they didn't need more than that.

Habit of Unhappiness

Only, what happened? It's what happens so often. Habit blinds people; we become deadened to the pleasures of life. In the last generations, very many of

our forefathers had become so inured, so accustomed to ואכלת ושבעת that they no longer appreciated it sufficiently. What's to be happy with? It's just food. We want something a little more. We want some thrills.

That's what happens if you live on the land for a long time and you become too lazy to appreciate the good things. בי תוליד בנים ובני בנים – You'll have children and children's children, ונושנתם בארץ – and you'll grow old in the land, והשחתם – and you'll become corrupt (ibid. 4:25). You know what it means “corrupt”? Not like people think – *sinas chinam*; not *gilui arayos* and *shefichas domim*. That, by the way, is one of the big accomplishments of the yetzer hara; he has trapped people into believing that the generations in the times of the first Sanctuary were sinful and wicked people. Even *rabbonim* and *roshei yeshiva* have been so deceived that they follow that line that our forefathers worshipped idols and shed innocent blood and were *megaleh arayos*. You have to know how to study Jewish history. If you study only Bava Kamma and you don't study Tanach properly, you'll never know. It's like a man who never studied Zevachim – he'll never know Zevachim.

Actually, they were a pure and righteous generation. They were very *frum* and very good. And so what's והשחתם? “Corrupt” means *ungrateful*. Hashem says, “You forgot the training that I taught you once upon a time when you were wanderers in the Midbar. You forgot the lesson of לא תסרת דבר and now you're looking for more. No, no. That's not the people I brought into Eretz Canaan. That's not who this land is for.” And that's why we were sent into Golus.

The Sin of Excess

That's what Rabi Yochanan tells us in Mesichta Sotah (48a). He makes there the following statement: כל השותה בארבעה מיני ימר – If someone drinks wine to the accompaniment of four different kinds of musical instruments – it means he goes to places where they sit and drink wine while music is playing; they use an orchestra, a band, in order to amuse themselves, to enliven the atmosphere while drinking – so that

person, מביא חמש פורעניות לעולם – he brings various disasters upon himself and the world.

And he quotes from the Navi Yeshaya (5:11). The Navi is speaking there about the final generation of the Bayis Rishon: הוי משכמי בבקר שכר ירדפו – Woe to those who rise in the morning and they pursue strong drinks. It means at breakfast he's not satisfied with a piece of bread; he also takes a little bit of strong drink. מאהרי בנשף יין יליקם – Sometimes he'll sit late at night maybe with some friends and the wine sets them afire. ירדפו means “he pursues it”; he's *rodef* after *taanugim*. And what's the result of that sin? So the Navi continues, לכן גלה עמי – and therefore, because of that, My people will go into Exile.

So here you see, black on white, what was the cause of Golus. If that plague of pursuit of luxuries, superfluous pleasures, spreads among the people, שגורמין גלות לעולם – the nation will suffer Exile because of them.

So let's set the picture now. Here's a man, a *shomer mitzvos*; he goes early to the *beis haknesses* every day and puts on *tefillin* and *davens* with a *minyan*. Then he comes home and he washes his hands *k'din* and makes a *bracha* in order to eat. Excellent! So what if he's pouring a little *mashkeh* into himself and listening to music? So what if he smears his bread with various delicacies? It's all *glatt kosher*. Maybe it's not right to indulge in so many pleasures, to pursue unnecessary luxuries, but is that a reason to blame him, to say that because of that they go into Golus? You know what Golus means? For that they should be driven into Exile among the gentiles, suffering every kind of degradation?! Yeshaya, after all, was saying the *dvar Hashem* and it has to be sensible.

Exiled for Knowledge

And so the answer is the end of that *possuk*: מכלי לכן – it's because of a lack of *daas*, of knowledge. גלה עמי – You want to know what the big sin, what *aveirah* it is that caused the nation to go into Exile? It's *mibli daas*, because they lacked *daas*.

They didn't have *daas*?! Who's talking about *daas*? What's *pshat*? We're talking about *frum* Jews! Jews who keep the Torah! They learned Torah, too! They

were filled with Torah knowledge! So what does it mean “for lack of *daas*”?

And so we have to explain this term *daas* before we proceed and you'll make sure to keep it in mind during the entire lecture. *Daas* here does not refer to information in the sense that people understand, information and wisdom. No, that's *chochmah*; *chochmah* means information. *Daas* is something entirely different; *daas* means to *know* that information, to know it intimately! A Jew is expected not only to gather information, Torah attitudes and ideals, into his mind, but he also has to transform it into something concrete, something that he actually feels and lives.

Now, among the many areas of *daas* that a Jew has to acquire in this world — *daas* about Olam Haba, about Gehenom, about *techiyas hameisim*, *daas* about how much Hashem is *ohev Yisroel*, *daas* about all of the *nissim* that Hashem made for the Am Yisroel; a long list — the most important, the chief function of *deiah*, is to *know* the kindness of Hashem. *Yedias haseichel* is not enough. You have to have *yedias hachush*, a physical, sensory perception that Hashem is good, that He's **הַטּוֹב וְהַמְּטִיב**.

The Big Frum Function

It's a tragedy that very many people — *frum* people, good people — are not aware of the great urgency, the sublime necessity, of being aware with a *hargasha chushis* about the kindness of Hashem. That's our biggest function in this world and that's how the quality of *deiah* is most fully utilized. One of the great purposes of living is to feel the *chessed Hashem* in your life. **עוֹלָם חֶסֶד יִבְנֶה** (Tehillim 89:3)!

Now when a man sets out for the pursuit of good times, it demonstrates that he does not appreciate what Hashem is already doing for him. Yes, he might say that he does, he might even have *yedias haseichel*, but he doesn't actually *feel* the *chessed Hashem* in his life. That's a fundamental understanding of pleasure seekers; they are people who feel that life as they are living it is not good enough and therefore they set out to look for other things beyond what they possess. And so it demonstrates that these people don't yet have what we call *daas*.

The Empty Man

That's what Shlomo Hamelech tells us in Mishlei. It's a good idea to memorize the words he says because it's our entire subject in a nutshell: **אִישׁ מְחֻסֵּר** – A person who is lacking, **אֲהֵב שְׂמֵחָה** – he desires happiness (Mishlei 21:17). Four words; easy to memorize.

So the Gra learns *pshat* like this; he reads it from back to front. Why is this man a **שְׂמֵחָה**? Why is he running after *taanugim* and good times? Because he's an **אִישׁ מְחֻסֵּר** – a man who's lacking. He feels that he's missing out; he wants certain things that he doesn't have, and therefore **אֲהֵב שְׂמֵחָה** – he looks for good times.

If he was a man who enjoyed and appreciated what Hashem is giving him right now, so he has good times already. Why should he run after more *simcha*? I told you once, who goes out at night to the grocery to buy eggs? Someone who doesn't have eggs in the house. And so if a man is pursuing good times it's a sign he feels he has nothing right now. He's an empty man.

Empty of Daas

But what is he really lacking? What's he empty of? He's empty of *daas*! **אִישׁ מְחֻסֵּר** – A man whose mind is empty of true knowledge, **אֲהֵב שְׂמֵחָה** – so he looks for good times. And that's why you find all the empty-headed people are busy Saturday night going to Manhattan, sitting in restaurants and going to various places for amusement like theaters and movies. They're looking for something; they're demonstrating that they lack the true knowledge of understanding of what they already have.

But not only them. Even the poorer people, the masses, when they see the cars going back and forth on Ocean Parkway on Saturday night — the people on this side are traveling to the other side to seek happiness and the ones on the other side are coming this way to find it here — or when they pass by the cabarets and the night clubs, the restaurants, and they see people sitting inside listening to music, drinking or eating, so the poor passersby are thinking, “Ah! Look what these people are enjoying. We're missing the fun of the world.” And therefore, the rich

demonstrate that they have no *daas* because they are pursuing something that they don't need, and the poor learn not to have *daas* because they look up to the rich — they envy the life of pleasure that they think the rich possess and they learn to despise their own good fortune. And so together, the rich and the poor, the whole nation, is lacking in *daas*.

Part III. Grateful for Golus

The Healing Exile

Now, what is Hakadosh Baruch Hu going to do about this? And so we're going to learn now a secret about the *darchei Hashem*. When Hakadosh Baruch Hu visits punishment for certain things, it's not merely a punishment. We must understand the principle, **כָּל דְּעֵבִיד רַחֲמָנָא לְטָב עֵבִיד** – *whatever Hakadosh Baruch Hu does is for good* (Brachos 60b). That's why He's called *Rachmana*; He's the Merciful One who does everything for good. And so when the Navi tells us that we'll be sent into Golus because we're lacking in *daas*, it means that now we are going to be given a new opportunity to gain what we were lacking.

Mibli daas is a terrible sickness of the mind. It's like a tumor and it grows and metastasizes, *chas v'shalom*. And so in order to heal this illness a big operation is required — they're sentenced to Exile. Oh! In Exile they're able to think what was once and what is now. They're wandering on the roads now, exposed to the rains and the snows and the winds, and they're thinking, "How silly we were when we had protection, when we had a home, and we didn't appreciate it. Whether it was my own home or it was a rented home, whether it was a palace or a little hut, it was four walls and a roof. Ach! It was such a tremendous benefit, a benison, a benevolence, a gift from Hashem to be inside of a house, and I didn't realize."

Now, when it's gone they begin to realize. As they wander the roads and they lie down in filthy places and their garments are infested by parasites, they're thinking back to the days when they had clean clothing. They don't even have water to clean themselves. They can't bathe like they did when they

were in their home — "Oy vey! Why didn't I appreciate a bath when I had it!"

And so the wandering Jew, the exiled Jew, as he suffers from lack of food, lack of bread, from lack of water to drink, to wash his clothing, to wash his hands, all the elementary necessities that he once had but didn't *know* he had, now he looks back and he knows. "Oh," he says, "If only I would have recognized how much I had. Now I know."

Taken for Granted

It's like the man who didn't appreciate his wife while he had her. She wasn't a genius maybe; she wasn't too beautiful either, but she was a loyal wife. She was his helpmate, his friend. She was his confidant and his ally but he took her for granted. The time came and Hakadosh Baruch Hu took her away, and now he looks back and his heart pains him. If only he could hear her voice again. Once upon a time, the voice annoyed him, but now he walks through the empty house, "Oh Jenny! If I could hear your voice once more." Now that he lost what he had, he learns how good it once was.

And that was one of the great lessons of going into Golus. People who live a quiet happy existence and don't appreciate it, what does Hashem do? Sometimes He takes it away. He says, "Now you'll be in Golus and you'll look back to the good old days and you'll understand that once upon a time, I was making you happy. Only that you didn't appreciate it."

Now you gain *deiah*. You lost the things you had before, but you gained something even more valuable. Don't disdain that! It's a big accomplishment. You look back with longing and you say, "Oy, Ribono Shel Olam! **הָשִׁיבֵנוּ** – Bring us back to the good old days when we had all the basic necessities, all the good things of life. Restore us to our land and this time we'll do it right! We'll be happy with all of the tremendous gifts that we became too accustomed to. We promise, this time we'll do it right."

Al Hamichya in Golus

Do you know when you make that promise? Pay attention, because you say it very frequently. Whenever you eat cake or grapes or drink wine, you

make a long *brachah achronah*. You thank Hashem על ארץ חמדה טובה ורחבה – *for the delightful and good land*, שרצית והנחלת לאבותינו – *that You gave to our forefathers*, לאכל מפריה ולשבע מטובה – *to eat the fruits and to enjoy its goodness*.

You hear that? We were given Eretz Yisroel in order to eat the fruits and enjoy Hashem's goodness, *and to be satisfied with that*. And that's what we're asking for, to be restored to that opportunity. Of course we want that ויבנה ירושלים עיר הקודש – *He should bring us back and build Yerushalayim and the Beis Hamikdash* but we don't stop there. Listen to the clincher. Here is the punchline: ויברכך עליה – *And this time we're going to bless You*, בקדשה ובטהרה. It will be different this time. When we come back again we're going to eat those fruits and be happy. We promise, we're going to make it our business to live a life of appreciation of what You're doing for us. We won't fall into the habit of forgetting what You're giving us, and ויברכך עליה בקדשה ובטהרה – *we'll bless You with holiness and with purity*; it means without seeking all the extra luxuries.

Crazy Over Crackers

And so every day, whenever you make that *bracha*, it's an opportunity to make up for the lack of *deiah*. It means right now, I'm going to train myself. I'm eating right now one of the foods that you'll give back to us one day in Eretz Yisroel and I'm practicing to do it right. I'm so happy with just this, this cracker, this fig, that I don't need anything else. And so it's an opportunity to make up for the lack of *deiah* every time you make a *bracha achronah*. You're thinking, "I know why we're in Golus now and I'm rehearsing to live בקדשה ובטהרה – it means satisfied and happy with all the basic wherewithals of living – like You expect from us."

And that's the gift that Golus gave to the Am Yisroel. Ah, the good old days when we lived on our land in peace. We had homes; even if they weren't palaces, and maybe we didn't have the chandeliers or carpets that my neighbor had, but they were homes. We had all the food that we needed. We had everything we needed. And now we sit in Bavel, in North Africa, in Spain, in Russia, in America – wherever we are

sent to – and we look back at our mistake and we promise Hashem, "If You'll bring us back, this time we're going to know what to do. We're going to be happy and thankful for all of the simple pleasures of life that we ignored."

Rabi Yochanan's Talmud

That's what the Navi says is the reason for Golus and that's the *psak* of Rabi Yochanan, that this is the reason. Rabi Yochanan, you have to know, is very authoritative. He was the chief teacher of all the Sages in Eretz Yisroel. The entire Talmud Yerushalmi is either Rabi Yochanan personally or his disciples. And in the Talmud Bavli he's almost as prolific; he's found on every page.

But not only he's found; he outweighs even the greatest Torah leaders, even when he stands alone. Anybody who learns knows that. Suppose there's a difference of opinion between the great Sages of Bavel, Rav and Shmuel, so everybody knows we follow Rav in *issurim* and we follow Shmuel in money matters (Bechoros 49b). But let's say Rav u'Shmuel agree on something; they are saying something together, so it's surely authoritative. רב ושמואל דאמר is very authoritative! You can rely on that!

But not so fast. It's only until Rabi Yochanan opens his mouth! The rule is that when Rabi Yochanan speaks, his words outweigh even their combined words. The *halacha* is like Rabi Yochanan even against the great teachers Rav u'Shmuel (Rosh, Bava Kamma 5:11).

So now you know who Rabi Yochanan is. And therefore, when he speaks, we're all ears. If we want to know the reason for something that happened in history, something as big as the Churban, he's the man to listen to. And he says that it was the lack of appreciation for what they had. They didn't enjoy the gifts of וְאָכַלְתָּ וְשָׂבַעְתָּ, that they had enough to live and be happy and accomplish in the service of Hashem.

If you are going to drink wine by the instruments and seek out other unimportant luxuries, it means you're lacking gratitude to the One Who actually is giving you great happiness all the time. If you're constantly on the prowl for good times, so all the

opportunities for gaining more perfection, more *shleimus*, more Torah, more *yiras Shomayim*, are all dissipated by the hankering after superfluous pleasures. That's a sign of *mibli daas*, a nation that's missing true knowledge. And to heal this illness, they're sentenced to Exile where they'll have the opportunity to think about what was once and what is now.

Part IV. Exile in Europe

Gaining Daas in Bergen-Belsen

Now, this attitude we learned — that the man who pursues various superfluous things brings Golus to the world — we have to know that it's not merely a summary of ancient history. It's not merely telling a story of what happened in the days of Yeshaya Hanavi; it's a perspective of the history of the Jewish people in its entirety and also the history of the individual.

That's what it says in Mesichta Sanhedrin (92a) — it's talking there about this same *possuk* in Yeshaya that describes why the nation was sent into Golus and it says, *כָּל אִדָּם שֶׁאֵין בּוֹ דַּעַה* — any person that doesn't have *daas*, *לְסוּף גּוֹלָה* — will eventually go into Exile. It means he'll suffer something of the troubles of Golus, the various attendant *tzaros*. Something will happen to him to teach him *daas*, to heal him from the sickness of *mibli daas*.

When they were in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp and they didn't get bread — a little bit of potato starch mixed with sawdust, that's all they got. You could barely chew it. And if you chewed it, you got a stomachache, diarrhea. Sometimes, a little bit of real bread was smuggled into the camp and they guarded it like treasures. A piece of bread the size of a sugar cube was considered an expensive pleasure. They gave away anything they had — some people had things concealed, some jewelry concealed — for the little piece of bread.

Now they gained *daas*. They looked back, "Oh! What a great thing we once had! Bread!" They'd be deliriously happy to have a plain piece of bread — without music playing, even without any jelly or other things smeared on it. Forget about a bagel. Just a

piece of bread! Now they understand what a glorious thing it was. And so it's a very big gift they're getting now, a bigger gift than all the pleasures that they pursued, because we are in this world to get *daas*. And included in *daas* is how much joy there is in a piece of bread.

Appreciating the Basics

When they were being marched on the roads they had to stop and beg the camp guard, "Can I drink water from this bracken pit?" It's a muddied puddle with scum on the surface, but it's a privilege if he lets you stoop down and drink that dangerous poisoned scum liquid. And people are happy to get it! Believe me, those who were on the death march, if they could stop and drink even from the dirtiest water, they were very happy with water. Ah! Water! Now I know what water is.

Or the lack of understanding what it means to have a home. What a pleasure it is to sit in your own home, in your own neighborhood! Do you appreciate it? Let's say the Jews who were driven from their comfortable homes in Budapest. A poor fellow in Budapest, he looked at his neighbor's home; maybe if I had that chandelier or that living room then I'd be happy. But this little hole in the wall, it doesn't cut it.

But now they had to go into cattle cars. So, on the way to the death camps, you can be sure they looked back and realized how lucky they were in the good old days. Our homes! My little home, that run-down hole-in-the-wall with a leaking ceiling, how good it was! And so this poor fellow was driven out for the purpose of teaching him what he once had and he never appreciated. *לְכֵן גָּלָה עַמִּי מִבְּלִי דַעַת* — My people go into Exile because they lack *daas* and now it's being taught to them.

Even without a home! Just to have peace! The mere threat of death is enough to teach *daas*. "How good it was when we were allowed to live, when we weren't subjected to harassment, when our lives weren't in danger. How silly it was of us to seek superfluities, to seek luxuries, to travel to other places when we had a comfortable home. How blind we were to the happinesses of everyday life."

Appreciating Life

The happiness of life itself! Don't think that the Jew who was being led into the gas chambers didn't suddenly appreciate just the pleasure of being alive. Of course he did! "Oh! What was I thinking? Now I see how happy I was just to exist, just to continue living even without anything else."

And don't say it's not important, what's the use? Absolutely it's important! Even if they didn't escape the Holocaust, they went into the Next World with *deiah*. Their *neshamos* became more perfect because of that, and now, forever and ever, right now in Gan Eden those *neshamos* live on with that perfection acquired during those terrible days.

Now, I understand that very many people despise me for saying this. But that's because if you're an Olam Hazei person, you don't value the perfection of character, of the mind, that stays with you forever. That's why we need the Navi to come along and tell us the secret. With our flesh-and-blood eyes, we wouldn't know; we wouldn't understand. So the Navi had to come along, *al pi Hashem*, and tell us that לָכֵן גָּלָה עַמִּי מִבְּלִי דַעַת. That's how important this *daas* is.

Learning Daas the Easy Way

Now, when we study this lesson of history, what is it telling us? What does the Navi want us to learn? That it's better to learn the lesson while we still possess these things. That's why we're studying this *maamar*. Not just because it's that time of the year and so it's something to speak about. It's because the words of the Navi reverberate even today: לָכֵן גָּלָה עַמִּי – Do you know why My people went into Exile? מִבְּלִי דַעַת – Because they were sick with that great illness of lack of *daas*, of ingratitude. That's the fundamental criticism. And what's the *daas* we're expected to acquire? The understanding of how fortunate we are right now.

How many people stop to think how lucky they are that there is *shalom* today? There's no war in our land here. There's no invasion, no civil war. The benefit of peace cannot be described in words. You know, the American soldier who is crouching in a pit somewhere in a foreign country as the bullets are howling overhead and every minute he expects

shrapnel to tear him apart, he thinks back, "How fortunate I would be if I could be in America just in an ordinary junk lot. Forget about a home! An ordinary junk lot would be paradise for me."

But find me a person who appreciates peace! A *nechtigeh tug*! Nobody is even thinking about it. And that's because anybody who aspires to the ice cream on top of the cake doesn't understand how good the cake is. If he wants things beyond peace, if he seeks the superfluous pleasures, he goes out to places, he travels, he looks for vacation resorts, a person like that demonstrates a lack of appreciation of all the good times that he's already enjoying.

Healing Ancient Diseases

It's the age-old disease that the Chovos Halevavos enumerates a few times in his *sefer*. In the Shaar HaBechinah he asks a question: It's written טוֹב ה' לְכָל, Hashem is good to everybody – we say that in Ashrei every day – so why is it that so many are unhappy? Look around; it's a world of unhappy people! It's a contradiction; the *possuk* says that "Hashem is good to everybody," so where are the happy people that should fill the world on all sides?

And he says three answers, one of which is as follows: They are so busy looking for what's next that they don't have time to stop and think about what they already have. And whenever what's next is attained by them, when they actually get what's next, so immediately they're looking for what's next after that. עֵינֵי כְסִיל בְּקֶצֶה אָרֶץ – The eyes of the fool are on the end of the earth, and therefore, because his eyes are always on the horizon in the distance, he's looking further and further, so he'll never see what Hashem is giving him right here in front of him.

But, אֶת פְּנֵי מַבִּין חֲכָמָה – before the face of the understanding one, there is *chochmah* (Mishlei 17:24). The understanding man doesn't have to go far; it's right in front of his face. He opens his eyes and he sees there's so much for him to appreciate in his most "simple" life. There's so much kindness, so much profundity of benevolence, that it's demonstrated to him always that Hakadosh Baruch Hu actually is *tov lakol*. He's so happy, so satisfied, that he could sing all his days in happiness.

The Futile Quest

That's why a seeker of all forms of superfluous pleasures is demonstrating quite clearly that he is not grateful to Hashem for what Hashem is doing for him. If only he would open his eyes and see what's right here. But because his eyes are further away, waiting to see what's going to come after this, he'll never be happy.

And it's a sad thing to say, but we're talking to ourselves. Most of the American populace — and that includes very many *frum* Jews — are constantly demonstrating the lack of appreciation what Hashem is giving by the mere fact that they're spending or yearning to go and spend, envying those who do go even if they themselves can't afford to go. It's the great sickness of *mibli daas*. And it's not only a sickness — it's a big crime too. It's such a crime that גְּלוּה עַמִּי מִבְּלִי רַעַת. It causes the tragic results that we're suffering still today.

Part V. Created for Pleasure

Enjoy Life

Now, I don't want you to make any mistake in understanding this subject. If you attend these talks, you know that in this place we don't talk about denying oneself the happiness of Olam Hazeh. On the contrary, the attitude is that if a person denies himself the happiness of this world, he's עֲתִיד לִיתֵן אֶת הַדִּין – he'll be held accountable (Yerushalmi Kiddushin 4:12). He'll be criticized for that in the Next World! "Why didn't you enjoy the world I gave you?" Hashem says. "There are so many simple and inexpensive but profound pleasures, so many things that contribute to a man's wellbeing and happiness that you should have enjoyed. You could have appreciated them properly and been grateful to Me always."

And so here our motto is שְׂמַחוּ צְדִיקִים בָּהּ. That's our clarion call: All you righteous people, let's be happy in Hashem (Tehillim 97:12). רִנְנוּ צְדִיקִים בָּהּ – Sing, you tzaddikim, in Hashem (ibid. 33:1). That's the torah I learned in Slabodka when my rebbeim were teaching us Mesillas Yesharim. You know, at the beginning of the sefer, the Mesillas Yesharim says we have to

understand the purpose why Hashem created us in this world. And he says that, הָאָדָם לֹא נִבְרָא אֶלָּא לְהִתְעַנֵּג – man was created only for the purpose in order to gain pleasure from being with Hashem in the World to Come. This world is a hallway; the final purpose of Creation is to come to the *oneg* in the Next World.

A Chiddush From Slabodka

But listen now to what my great rebbe said. My great rebbe learned *pshat* like this. I remember it like it was yesterday; Motzei Shabbos in Slabodka, he was saying a *shmooze*. We used to learn *mussar* for an hour in the dark on Motzei Shabbos, and when the time was up, the Rosh Yeshiva said a *shmooze*. And this time he said like this: "Here's how you have to read Mesillas Yesharim," he said. "הָאָדָם לֹא נִבְרָא אֶלָּא לְהִתְעַנֵּג – Man was created only in order that he should have pleasure." Full stop!

It's a tremendous *chiddush* from an *adam gadol*. Hashem wants us to have *taanug* in this world! And the fact is, you see that on all sides. He gave us plenty of air to breathe, plenty of food to eat, plenty of water to drink. The machinery of the body is working all the time. It's a world of *taanug* and Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants us to enjoy this world to the fullest. And I don't care what they say in Boro Park against this. In Boro Park they hear this, they say, "That's a way for a *frum* Jew to talk?" But that's what the Mesillas Yesharim is saying. He was very *frum* and he says that Hashem created us to give us the fullest amount of pleasure.

And so Hashem wants happy Jews, absolutely. And that's why this study of גְּלוּה עַמִּי מִבְּלִי רַעַת is speaking to us, because He wants us to be happy, and a person who is devoted to looking for luxuries is demonstrating that he is not happy with what he has. He doesn't have the understanding to be a *sameiach b'chelko*, to appreciate the gifts that he's getting right now; and Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants to heal him.

Don't Be Satisfied Being Satisfied

And He wants that all of His people should live with that attitude always. But not merely that we're satisfied, that we're willing to get along with it. אֵיזוֹהוּ – Who is a wealthy man? הַשְׂמֵחַ בְּחֻלְקוֹ – Someone who is happy with his lot (Avos 4:1). Not that he says,

Part VI. Walk for Happiness

Vacuous Vacations

We'll start with the pleasure of walking. But first, a true story. Once upon a time, in one of my previous *kehillos* — I've been doing this a long time — there was a wealthy couple, and they went to the Catskills for the summertime. While they were there, they wanted a vacation from the Catskills, so they went to Switzerland to visit the Alps. A vacation from the vacation.

Not long afterwards, he became ill. For a couple of years, he was lying in bed sick. I visited him and he was telling me how difficult it was to be stuck in bed. The wife too became sick. The whole story was very sad.

Now, I'm not the person to judge anybody. I was very sorry. After all, they were loyal *shomrei mitzvos* and good people too. But we have to learn lessons! And we begin to understand what Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants from us in our lifetime! He wants us to appreciate what He gives us. Here, a couple is walking around in the Catskills. They have a hotel. They have nice grounds where they could walk; meadows, fields. In the distance, there are mountains. There's scenery. There's a lake. A pleasure!

A Shpatzir in Brooklyn

The truth is, even that is superfluous. Just to walk around in Brooklyn, it's a pleasure. These people lived in a good neighborhood in Brooklyn; even at nighttime you could walk in their neighborhood. You had to go someplace else to look for pleasures? What's there in the Alps?

The answer is they never appreciated walking on a Brooklyn street. They weren't happy that they were able to walk around the block in their neighborhood. Now he's lying in bed — he was sent into exile to his hospital bed — and he can't walk to the bathroom. Now he looks back and thinks, "Oh, the good old days when I could walk to the bathroom!" He can't do that now. He has to use a bedpan; it's very uncomfortable. If he could get up and walk to the bathroom, he'd be extremely happy. He understands that he doesn't

"I'm *satisfied*. Whatever I get, I'm satisfied. I don't care. It's good enough." No! We do care! We want you to be *happy* with your lot! Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants us to realize that we have so much that we're overloaded with happiness!

Of course, it doesn't come all at once. The riches that don't make you happy, that could sometimes happen overnight; but this wealth, the real wealth of happiness, takes time and practice. It requires some training, yes. But the fact is the more you spend time understanding what Hashem is doing for you, the more you'll begin appreciating how lucky you are. And in the course of time, you become a man full of joy, an actual *sameiach b'chelko*! You'll become a very happy person!

Now, I know this entire subject is far away from our thoughts because we're *mushpa*, we're influenced by our environment, by people who go through life without *daas*. And people with little heads will make your head also small; your head shrinks, and before you know it, it shrinks so much that you become empty-headed. You imagine you won't be happy unless you have this superfluous thing or that expensive thing.

But what can we do? In this place we try to expand our heads; we want to have minds that think according to the Torah and the truth of the Torah is, Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, "לֹא חִסְרְךָ דָּבָר" — *you're not lacking anything*."

And so we'll practice a little bit now. Just a few things that will help train us in the *daas* of satisfaction and happiness that we were sent into Golus to achieve. And the more we succeed in this program, the more we show Hakadosh Baruch Hu that we are ready finally for Him to fulfill His promise to us of *וְהָעֵלְנוּ לְתוֹכָהּ וְשִׂמְחָנוּ בְּבִנְיָנָה* — *You'll bring us up to Yerushalayim and make us joyful with its rebuilding*, *וְנֹאכַל מִפְרִיָּהּ וְנִשְׂבַּע מִטוֹבָהּ* — *and we'll eat its fruit and we'll be satisfied with its goodness*.

need the Alps. Just to walk to the bathroom is a pleasure.

But suppose in addition, he could take a walk around the block? Walk outside in the fresh air! To walk in the street, that would be *mamesh* Gan Eden! If you would tell him that every block he has to drop a quarter in a turnstile for the next block, he'd be happy to pay a quarter a block! A bargain! It's worth it!

And so we have to get that *daas* right now while we have it. Ooh ah! You enjoy it by thinking about, savoring the moments. You rich man! You're striding! Your thighs are swinging back and forth within the sockets, without any rubbing, without friction. Do you hear any sound as you rub your thigh back and forth? Nothing. It's lubricated inside by the socket. The thigh turns in the socket back and forth, and the knees back and forth, and the ankles back and forth, and they flex and relax. So many muscles are functioning as you're walking, flexing and relaxing, flexing and relaxing. A wonderful mechanism.

Gaining Daas in Boston

I cannot forget, fifty-one years ago, I was in Boston, walking in the street with a man. The man came from Maine and he was limping. I said, "What's the matter?" He said his thigh is beginning to fuse with his torso; the bones are growing together, and after a while he won't be able to move his foot at all. I never forgot that. It was a *matanah min haShamayim* of *daas* for me. For years and years already whenever I walk in the street and my thigh, *Baruch Hashem*, swings effortlessly back and forth, I think of that poor, unfortunate man. Ooh ah! It feels good. I'm a rich man.

But most people are dumbbells. They have no *daas*. You need to learn *daas* how to walk on the sidewalk in Brooklyn, an ordinary street. It's one of *taanugei Olam Hazeh*; only that you have to practice. You're striding down the street on these two wonderful machines, two legs, and you're enjoying life. You don't need any Rolls-Royce. You're jogging on two Rolls-Royces. A man who doesn't have any feet, even if he had ten Rolls-Royces, he'd be jealous of you. You have two expensive cars and you don't

have to bother with anything. You don't have to oil them. You don't have to put gasoline into them. You don't have to take care of them. Once in a while you have to wash them, that's all.

So learn how to enjoy your feet! All you rich people who are able to walk — I suppose everybody here is just in the same boat; you're all rich people — enjoy the big gift, that wonderful ability to walk. Who needs a sailboat? I'm sailing down the avenue, the breeze blowing in my face. Ah! But if you're empty because you never think about it, so you imagine that only if you walk in the shadow of the Alps, there it'll be happy.

It's Gan Eden to walk in the street. As you walk down the street, everything is working. Enjoy it! Savor it! Sing to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. It's so much fun! Good times!

The Happiness of Hands and Feet

Now, I know that there's a *tzaddik* over there that's saying, "Happy with *gashmiyus*? Pheh. You shouldn't be happy in this world." So we say, "You're in the wrong place, my friend." In this place we teach you: you have to be happy. In order to live successfully, to live a life of loving Hashem, you must be happy with your feet.

Now, while I'm at it I'm going to tell you something. You'll laugh at me, but I don't care. I laugh at you. I was walking in the street today. I saw a man with one empty sleeve. It was hanging there, empty.

"Ooh," I thought, "How good it is to have two hands. What a happiness it is to have two hands!" If he could have two hands, what would he do? He'd go wild with joy. He'd go crazy with *simcha*. We should go crazy with *simcha*! We have two hands!

Now don't tell this to people outside because they know that you're *kooky* if you say that. Two hands?! He's talking in that crazy place about hands!

It's true! I'm crazy about hands! And I have two of them! It's a very big happiness to have two hands. Now you have to practice that and you have to learn to enjoy two hands until it becomes *kavuah* in your *neshamah*. You're walking down the street and you're swinging your arms back and forth, back and forth.

“Oh, Ribono Shel Olam, I’m so glad that You gave me two hands, I just don’t know what to do!” Say it. If nobody’s listening, say it.

Part VII. Eat for Happiness

Fat, Poor Men

Now, let’s say you’re a good student. You practice up every day for a few months — you won’t, but let’s say you do — and you begin to feel it. My feet! My hands! Good times! *Taanugei Olam Hazeh!* You’ll become a very happy man or woman.

But that’s only the beginning, because you eat too. Not in restaurants with music; no, that’s nothing. We’re talking now about the happiness of a piece of bread. When Hashem gives you on your table a slice of bread, ah, ah, ah! A whole slice of bread! I remember reading how in the death camps of the Nazis some of the prisoners used to save little pieces of bread and they used it for money. A little piece of bread was used for money there. You could buy cigarettes with pieces of bread. But you have a whole slice, which means you’re a millionaire. It means life!

How great is the blessing of having a piece of bread! When I was in Europe, an old man told me that when he was a boy, he didn’t have bread all the time. When he asked his mother at the table for another piece of bread, she couldn’t give him a second piece of bread. She said, “I’m sorry, I can’t do it.” Another piece of bread she couldn’t give him. True story. That’s why in the ancient times only fat men were rich; all poor people were thin. Today, a poor man waddles, he can hardly walk he’s so loaded with *schmaltz*. It’s an American phenomenon — a fat, poor man.

And therefore you should practice enjoying that slice of bread. It’s a confection! And when a person learns to enjoy a piece of bread and he sinks his teeth into that slice of bread and the saliva is flowing and he starts chewing it, he is not interested right now in condiments; in mustard or in peanut butter or in something else — he doesn’t need anything. A piece of bread by itself is such a happiness.

Bread And Butter

Now, I don’t say there’s anything wrong with mustard and peanut butter – why not? But first, learn how to enjoy the bread. Put all you have into it and really enjoy that bread. Not gobble, gobble, gobble. Savor it! It’s a remarkable thing; after you chew a piece of bread for a minute, it’s sweeter than it was when you put it into your mouth because the starch of the bread is broken down by the *ptyalin* in the saliva and it turns it into sugars. Do you know what a lot of fun that is? I won’t go into too many details because you’ll suspect me of being a gourmet but there’s nothing better than a piece of bread.

And so if you use your mind and you start thinking what a tasty thing this bread is, you’ll find that it has a *geshmake* taste. It will taste better than seven-layer cake. If you use your mind, why not? The mind will detect all kinds of sensations for you. Hakadosh Baruch Hu will give you *siyata d’Shmaya*. You’ll enjoy your bread to no end.

So *tzaddikim* will say, “You’re enjoying Olam Hazeh?” *Tzaddikim* don’t like that. No; they’re not *tzaddikim*; they have no *seichel*. You *have* to enjoy Olam Hazeh. They don’t enjoy their chocolate cake, no. But we enjoy our piece of bread.

I don’t say you can’t eat some nosh, but first make sure you understand that piece of bread. Ooh ah, what a happiness it is! What a luxury it is! You never stop to think about that luxury.

Bagels and Lox-urries

Here’s a person who wouldn’t eat unless it’s a bagel with lox and cream cheese. An ordinary bagel is to him a disappointment. Some people will never eat just any bread. They want other things. They want lox. Cream cheese on the lox. They want chocolate-covered cakes. These people are sick people; sick *mibli daas*. The fact that there are stores that sell all kinds of delicacies and sweet meats, appetizing stores, all kinds of candies, all kinds of nuts, all kinds of frozen desserts, all kinds of pastries, demonstrates that the populace doesn’t understand how lucky they are with what they possess.

You should know, it's not the sin of looking for luxuries. What's wrong with luxuries? Okay, it's not good for your health. So it's probably not a big mitzvah. But the real fault of a luxury is he failed to thank Hashem for the fundamental gifts that He gave him! That the piece of bread is a real happiness! And the fact that there are so many things to smear on the bread demonstrates that bread is nothing in their eyes. It's a world sickness, a serious problem. To live one's entire life and to turn up one's nose to disdain the great gift of food; the miracle of food.

Now it's possible, if you spend some time thinking and you train yourself to be actually happy with bread — it actually makes you happy — then you might also want to smear on the bread something else, to make it more appetizing, it could be. Maybe it's so. But that's not what people are doing, no. People are busy pursuing superfluous things, they don't care for bread anymore. These people have demonstrated that the pleasures of life which other people are getting are not enough for them and they're not thanking Hakadosh Baruch Hu for what they had before: the plain bread, the plain glass of milk, the egg, the most simple fare.

And so at least we should get busy practicing the pleasure of eating a piece of bread. Ah, ah, ah, eating a piece of bread. As you sink your teeth into the bread and the saliva flows, it's a *taanug*! That's one of the greatest pleasures in the world. Enjoy your milk and your egg. Revel in it! Revel in the *chessed Hashem*!

Part VIII. Drink for Happiness

Drink and Be Merry

Now, what comes after bread? You're already *meshuge* with happiness; it's so much fun to eat a piece of bread, but let's keep going. Because **הָאָדָם לֹא נִבְרָא אֶלָּא לְהִתְעַנֵּג עַל ה'** – *we were created to enjoy all of Hashem's gifts and love Him more and more for them.*

So let's talk about drinking water. "Oh, Rabbi Miller," he says, "that's already too much. We should be happy with water?!"

So let me tell you something. When I came to Slabodka, if you wanted a drink, you couldn't drink

the water because the water from the well was always a *chashash*, a fear of typhus. So you had to cook the water. People gave up; they didn't drink. It was too much of a bother. In the yeshiva, there was no water to drink. All day long, not a drop of water to drink. There was a big barrel when you came in to wash your hands, but it was a *sakanah* to think of drinking that water. *Chas v'shalom*, you couldn't drink that water. They never washed out that barrel for the last fifty years. It's only for washing your hands. So all day long in the yeshiva, not a drop of water!

When you came home to your *stanze*, if you wanted a drink you had to ask the *baalebuste* to cook up some water for you. You couldn't drink water from the well. So sometimes they did it for you, if they could. When you had water, you were very happy!

And we? We are drinking the choicest water in the world. But *mibli daas*; it's a people without understanding. Suppose you're traveling in a desert and there's no water. Suddenly you see a little spring, a little well! Ay, ay, ay! It's such a *simcha*! It's *mayim mesukim*! It's so sweet. That water is better than anything in the world!

Who Needs Soda

That's how you should think when you take water from the sink, New York City tap water. A person who thinks doesn't need Pepsi Cola or orange juice anymore. Each time he drinks water he holds the glass in his hand and looks at it, "Ah! How beautiful it is! If I had to buy water in the drug store, I would pay a hundred dollars a little bottle!" You can't get along without it. Some years ago, Macy's was selling water for two dollars a bottle. Where does it come from? It came from the sink. So I was thinking, "It's a wonderful thing! It shows us what we're having! Two dollars a bottle! A bargain! It's worth a thousand dollars!" Water is such an essential thing; it's such a happiness when a person gets water.

And then practice on drinking water. Water is the best of all elixirs. There's no liquor, there's no drink, no beverage, as exquisite as water. Only you must be a connoisseur. And the way to start is not with expensive water that's piped in from a so-called spring. It's really taken from a cheap faucet in a

factory in France where there are roaches running around. And the water comes from the city supply, only it's bottled in France and has an expensive wax seal on top. No, forget about that. Drink Flatbush water. The best water is right here.

The joy of drinking a glass of water! What a pleasure it is as the life-giving substance goes down your throat! If you can teach children when they sit down at the table, instead of stretching their hand the first thing to the soda and to the juices and pouring out gallons of expensive things to drink, you can teach them how good water is. When I was a little boy, I wanted some juice. My older brother, *zol er zein gezunt*, said to me, "First drink a glass of water for your thirst. Then if you want juice, you'll get it." I tried it, and after the glass of water, I wasn't interested in juice anymore. Someone who learns how to enjoy water, that person is not interested in drinking soda or juice. Water is to him the happiest thing.

Wondrous Water

And it adds to the fun to know that it's a very good thing for your health in general. By the way, it's very good to drink water. Drink five or six or seven glasses every day. It'll help you live longer. As the water gets inside of you, it does a thousand and one jobs. Not only it becomes part of your blood, it becomes part of your muscles and your eyes. Your eyes sparkle because of water. All of your tissues use that water. Water becomes you, because you're 80% water.

Your blood flows through your veins because of water. Blood is a very thick kind of liquid and it can be sluggish; water helps make it thin. You also need water for your digestion. You want the food to become softened and move through the intestines and the water softens up the food inside of you. Otherwise you get constipation if you don't have enough water. It's a laxative.

Water helps everything in the body. You need water for all the functions of the body. It helps you develop the strength of the skin — skin becomes dried and brittle otherwise. Water also helps the flexibility of your muscles and your nerves. If you can drink six full glasses of water a day it will help you

keep well. No question about that. And it's a *simcha*. Ah! A *taanug* to drink that pure elixir of life. It goes into you, into your blood, into your eyes, into your bones. It becomes part of you.

And so we should train ourselves to appreciate water. We can learn how to be happy people just because of water. And you know when is a good time to start practicing? Right after the *taanis*. I always say, what's the first thing to do after Maariv Motzei Tisha B'Av? Take a cup of plain water and enjoy it! It goes down so smoothly. Ah! A cup of water! Water is so delicious, so refreshing. Start on Motzei Tisha B'Av and don't stop!

Part IX. Breathe for Happiness

The Best Cocktail

Now we'll start appreciating the air! Air! It's a special mixture, beautifully balanced — oxygen, some carbon dioxide, a tiny bit of hydrogen, and a big amount of nitrogen. If it was all oxygen, you'd become intoxicated. It's not healthy in such big amounts. So the nitrogen is an inert base. But if it was all nitrogen, then you couldn't live a minute. So it's 20% oxygen, 80% nitrogen. Ah! That's exactly a good proportion for you. And so when you breathe the air, it's like an exceptionally composed cocktail. Except that a cocktail is poison and this is a cocktail that makes you well.

So start practicing up on enjoying life by drinking the air. Fill your lungs. As the lungs expand, these bags get full of that precious material, oxygen, carbon dioxide, nitrogen and some more necessary gases. Ooh ah, is that good! You learn to understand that it's better than drinking a martini. You know, the fools like martinis. It's poison but because the New York Times talks about martinis, so the *meshugaim* think it's something.

Air, however, is the real cocktail, and Hakadosh Baruch Hu is the best Bartender. He knows how to mix the perfect proportion and it goes into your alveolus and all the hollows of your lung and it goes into your blood. Your blood becomes more red. Your whole body becomes invigorated because of that

oxygen. Every breath goes into your body and gives you new energy.

The Happiness of Breathing

That's why I always say, if you're down and out, you're feeling a little bit sad, morose, so open up the window in your apartment — don't jump out; open the window and take a deep breath. It transforms your whole attitude towards life. Ahh! Breathe deeply. Most people never fill their lungs, just the top. They're lazy. Breathe deeply so the bottom of your chest is bulging out. Ah! And the same is with thinking. Most people think shallowly. The bottom of the brain is never used. So think deeply! Then you'll start enjoying the happiness of this world.

Now, if my telling you so is not enough, you can do my famous experiment that everybody knows. It's a special procedure to understand the importance of air. You take a bucket of water and stick your head inside of it. Submerge your head for a short time and then pull your head out and take a breath of air. Then you realize it's the best thing in the world. While you were there, you weren't thinking of food, you weren't thinking of theaters, you weren't thinking of automobiles, you were thinking of only one thing: "A deep breath of air! I'll fill my lungs as soon as I pull my head out of this Gehenom."

And that's the way to practice all the time, even without a bucket of water. You're walking down the sidewalk and you take a deep breath. Savor it. Let it linger, that gentle sweet taste (the Rav took a slow, deep breath). Aahhh! Isn't it a wonderful thing to breathe. It's a *chiddush gadol* — I'm afraid that if you tell it even to *talmidei chachamim* it's a big *chiddush* — but that's the truth.

Binge Breathing

And if you practice this you'll get a certain pleasure out of breathing that you never imagined was possible. And don't worry about being a *baal taavah*. No *mussar sefer* ever criticized a man for having a *taavah* for air. Learn Shevet Mussar, learn Mesillas Yesharim, not once do they criticize you for that. So learn to become a *baal taavah* to enjoy air.

And if you want to go ahead and enjoy it even more, you can use this *eitzah*; you have to be artificial and say it with your mouth, "I'm going to be happy with the air right now." It's called autosuggestion. It helps. Say, "I'm going to sing to Hashem for the next breath. I won't merely enjoy the air. I'll sing in happiness!"

You'll sing with happiness because of air? "It's so silly," he thinks. "It doesn't cost any money; everybody has it. What is it that's so great about air?" Just the opposite! I'm going to tell you a secret. It'll make you a happy man just because air is always around.

Now, once a man gets into that mood of loving air, Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, "Oh! You love My air? You're trying to enjoy life? So I'm going to give you success. הָבָא לְפָנַי – You want to enjoy My gift of air, מְסִיעֵי עֵץ לֹ – so I'm going to help you. I'm going to help you succeed in enjoying air."

And you'll be very rewarded because of that. You'll become happy with something that's more available than anything else in the world! And you'll see that you don't need ice cream. You don't have to go to Manhattan on Motzei Shabbos for movies. Right here, wherever you are, breathe deeply and thank Hakadosh Baruch Hu for this cocktail!

Part X. Look for Happiness

A Sight to Behold

Now, I was walking in the street last week and I saw a woman say to her friend that she just finished recovering from an eye operation. For weeks and weeks, she had bandages on her eyes and now, finally, she can see again. A little blurry, but she can see.

I was thinking to myself, "Baruch Hashem, I never had an eye operation. *Halevai* further and further."

But then, I was criticizing myself, "Miller! How can it be that you're not jumping for joy because of your eyes." There's nothing like your own eyes! What a benefit! What a happiness! You're a rich man if you can see. You're a millionaire — a double millionaire if you have two eyes!

Focus On Your Blessings

Hashem gave you two beautiful cameras and they're taking moving, color pictures every second. Also they focus for close and for distance. Let's say when you're riding in the car, you can see your speedometer right in front of your eyes. Then you pick up your eyes and you can see an object a mile away. You can't do that with a camera — a camera can't focus so quickly from here to a big distance. Your eyes can do it, however. It's fun! Try it. Look across the street and then quickly look at your shoes. The eyes adjust right away!

Seeing is good times! Nothing is as beautiful, nothing is as interesting, as enthralling, as bewitching, as the ability to see. I'm not exaggerating at all. I'm looking at you and I see beautiful faces. I see color, interesting things. I see light. It's *mamesh* an *oneg*! I want to tell you a secret. Eating doesn't approach the joys of seeing. The best-tasting ice cream is not as much fun as having two cameras that are constantly taking color pictures. The happiness of color vision, of recognizing people, of seeing the difference between the sky and the clouds, of seeing the green of the leaves and seeing the changing of the color of the leaves in autumn, every form of enjoyment that comes through the eyes and streams into the brain, is a more solid happiness than eating.

Not only seeing the beloved ones among you — seeing your children's faces, seeing your wife, seeing everybody else. No, not only that! Just seeing *in general* is a happiness! Seeing is fun! It's a joy to see!

Don't Be Short-Sighted

So why aren't people happy with that? How can it be that we live all our lives and we don't experience the joy of seeing?

And the answer is if you ignore it, you're an *ish machsor*, you're lacking in *daas*; you don't even know what you have! And instead you become an *oheiv simcha* — you're running after other things, substitutes. Maybe I should look at a video, maybe then I'll be happy. I should look here and there. Maybe I should go to a museum and look at paintings.

Paintings are nothing at all. Let's be practical about it and stop bluffing ourselves. The whole business of painting is only the affectation of showing off the bluff of art. A man made some crazy dots and dashes and he smeared a brush over the canvas and now because it's hanging in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, so what?

Madness at the Met

So the people who aren't happy with seeing their children, the trees, the sky, so they take the subway to Manhattan to look for happiness in the Met.

"What is that?" he asks the curator of the museum.

"Oh, it's called Springtime in Afghanistan."

"Ooh, ahh." You're befuddled but you have to ooh and aah.

"Don't you see over there," he tells you, "that line sticking out. That's the tail of the tiger hiding in the brush."

It happened by accident. The painter by accident put his finger on the canvas.

What a waste! You're not any happier now!

You have to train yourself with *daas*; you have to walk on the street and act as if you were blind and now all of a sudden you got two good eyes. Ohhhh!! You would dance for that! You would be *meshuge* drunk with happiness! You'd shout! You'd have to run into the closest shul and say Hallel.

Baruch Pokeiach Ivrim

Here's a true story. A man was blind and an accident happened that he suddenly regained his eyesight. It's a true story. He became almost *meshuge* with happiness. To see! It shouldn't happen to you, but some people look back at the good old days when they were able to see. What a happiness it was to see! If they could see again, they would be delirious with joy!

It's a happiness we're so accustomed to, that we lose sight of the pleasure of seeing. Nothing like your own eyes! Oh ho! Eyes! What a benefit! What a happiness! You have to train yourself how to be happy. You're seeing and enjoying everything. Your

two cameras are taking color photographs constantly with your mind.

And every couple of seconds, you blink. As you blink, it's like washing your windshield, because the eyelid comes down and wipes your eye with a certain liquid; there's a lysosome that kills germs. So every couple of seconds you blink and you're giving your eye a windshield wiping. It doesn't cost any money, by the way. Your eyes are being protected from germs. What a pleasure!

Say the words, 'What a pleasure!' **הַמְחֻשָּׁבָה נִמְשָׁכֶת** **אַחַר הַדְּבֹר** (Chovos Halevavos, Cheshbon Hanefesh 3). You have to say to yourself the words, not think but say the words, "Hashem, I am so happy that I can see!" Have you ever said that with your words? And not once. You have to say it many times. Many times! Until finally you wake up and see how glorious is the joy of the ability to have sight! Aaayayayayay!

Part XI. Clothe for Happiness

Garbed in Gratitude

Now we'll speak about the happiness of clothing, and we'll begin with the most basic happiness. Suppose you didn't have clothes. I know a man who was kidnapped once and he was dropped off naked outside of New York. Gangsters did it. It was cold. It was embarrassing too. Wearing only his underwear, standing on a road somewhere.

Suppose somebody would come around just in the right minute and offer him a suit. What kind of suit? It doesn't matter. Not custom-made, not a special brand from Macy's or Ohrbach's, but it's something. It would be a lifesaver! That's what Hashem does every day. We have nothing. We have to imagine — it's true but we have to imagine it, too — that we're naked and every day Hashem gives us clothing. In the morning, instead of going out stark naked, you walk to your closet and take out clothing. A gift! That's how to appreciate your clothes.

But I'll tell you something interesting now. That's not the happiness of clothing yet. You can't just say that one thing in general, a blank check. First of all, there are all kinds of clothing, and so there are various

kinds of happiness. If you'll learn to be happy with your hat, that's one enjoyment. If you learn to be happy with your belt that's something else. If you'll learn to be happy with your shirt, your necktie, your underwear, your socks, so little by little you gain a real happiness.

After all, these things are important things. You can't get along without them. A necktie, alright, I'll forgo a necktie. But all other things you couldn't do without. Socks are a pleasure. Shoes without socks rub against your feet. They're uncomfortable. And you learn to be happy with socks. And if you would learn to enjoy them, you'd be learning to be happy in this world.

Be Specific

But that's not it yet. There's more happiness yet. My *rebbe* in Slabodka said it's not enough to be happy with your clothes. Because there are many components to clothing. Just to say a belt? A belt has a buckle. It has holes. One hole for before supper, one for after. That's quite a convenience! It's adjustable.

A shirt is not just a shirt. You have to be happy for buttons. Did you ever stop to think? Buttons are a great blessing. Once upon a time in the times of the Gemara, there were no buttons. Buttons are a recent invention. Find me a word in the Gemara for buttons. There's no such word. It's a recent invention. They had holes, yes, and here they put a stone or a chestnut. And they pushed it with the cloth through the hole and it was sticking out in the cloth on the other side. At nighttime when you undressed, you put the stone on the table. Sometimes it fell on the floor. In the morning it was dark and you had to go on hands and knees to look for the stone in order to close up your shirt.

But now it's right there! You have it sewed on! It can't fall down anymore! A beautiful invention. It slides right through the hole. It's a happiness! Only you have to think. *Baruch Hashem* for buttons!

Kabbalah From Slabodka

Even button *holes*. I'm serious! This I have a *kabbalah* from my *rebbe zichrono livracha*. I remember my *rebbe* in Slabodka was sitting in his house and he

Part XII. A Home for Happiness

The Sad Wanderer

Now, I have a distant relative, a woman, and something happened in her life and she became one of these women that travel around with no place to live. She lives under the railroad tracks.

You see these women sometimes walking in the streets. She's pushing a shopping wagon with all of her worldly belongings — she has nothing else. She has no place to sleep. She sits down on the park bench to sleep. She's afraid to lie down because she might be attacked by some crazy black wandering around. To lie down on a bench, a woman in New York City, is a *sakanah*, so she tries to sleep sitting up. It's a bitter *rachmanus*. She has no place to go!

I met this relative once sitting at the bus stop. I tried to speak to her. She started cursing me. I ran away from her. Such a sad tragedy to have no place to go.

Home Work

Once, she was a girl in a house; she lived in a home. She had other things, too, but she had a home, a place to go. Oh, it was such a happiness! And therefore, why shouldn't we enjoy the happiness of a home that Hakadosh Baruch Hu gives us right now? Whether you live in a rented basement, a furnished room, be happy that you have a place to lay down your head.

If you don't understand what a happiness it is, I recommend going out in the street and watching these poor people — they shouldn't notice you. It's such a pity to see. No place, no bed, no privacy. If they need a bathroom, where will they go? They're sitting in a little park; they can't use it as a bathroom. That much sense they usually have.

You — you can easily turn around and go home as soon as you finish watching. You have a bathroom, you have a bed, and you have a roof over your head. You can lock the door, you have privacy.

But if you don't know anything about it, if you're lacking in *daas* and you're deadened to the happiness of a home, so it's a *rachmanus* on you too. Because all

said to us, “*Ich ken nit machen dos* – I can't make a buttonhole.” The rim around the buttonhole, “I couldn't do that,” he said. You need a professional to make a rim around a buttonhole. If you didn't have a rim around the buttonhole, every day it would get bigger and bigger. Think about that! You ever think about that? A *nechtigeh tug*.

I'm so happy! *Baruch Hashem*, there's a rim around my buttonhole. I used this kapote for years and years already and the buttonhole is still the same size. It doesn't get bigger. It's reinforced all around with stitching. Wonder of wonders! Could you do that? You couldn't do it yourself.

And here on the front of your shirt it's double. You know why it's double? You have a strip of cloth on which the buttons and buttonholes are because there is more stress on that part of the shirt; therefore, you have a double thickness that guarantees a lifetime of use. Because if it wasn't double, the buttonhole would tear more easily.

Now people laugh at that. To be happy with my buttons, with buttonholes? Absolutely! During the day, a few times, feel your buttonhole. Ah! Ah! Ah! I'm so happy!

The Happiness of Sleeves and Pockets

Then look at the lining. Once upon a time, I remember there were no coated sleeves, no linings. When you stuck your hand in, your fingernails got caught in the lining; it used to tear the lining. But now, *Baruch Hashem*, it's a slippery lining. It's like grease and it slips in.

And pockets. An added convenience. Isn't it fun to have pockets? Just think if you didn't have any pockets in any of your garments, what would you do? There's no place to put anything unless you carry it. You would have to wear a handbag and anybody could snatch it from you if you walk in the street in certain neighborhoods. Pockets are a blessing! You ever stopped to be happy with pockets? So of course you're looking for fancier clothing, for new clothes and socks and belts — because you never learned to be happy!

of that happiness dissipates in the nothingness of your head. You have to think about it from time to time, all the time. “*Baruch Hashem*, how happy I am. I at least have a home.” It doesn’t have to be a palace. If they could have even one little room, they’d be wild with happiness.

And so it pays to work on it. Work on it every time you come home. One day you’re thinking about the happiness of being able to live in your private home. If you live in a dormitory in the yeshiva, it’s just as good. Whatever it is, practice every day this one element and say to Hashem, “I thank You Hashem I have a place to live. I even have a door that can be closed, offering me privacy from the *reshus harabbim*.”

The Happiness of Central Heating

And if you’re interested in adding to your happiness, all you have to do is add to your *daas*. Add details. As you sit in your luxurious home in the winter, your home is heated. When I was a boy, we heated our house by a coal stove. Only in the kitchen it was warm. I laid on the floor and read books in the corner near the coal stove. All the other rooms were cold in the house; we didn’t have any central heating. Today we have radiators, we’re wealthy. Did you ever stop to think about that? No, we take it for granted. A warm house. You have running water, you have a telephone, an electric refrigerator, running water — you have everything!

Even today, in most houses in the world, in undeveloped countries, they don’t have water in the house. You have to go a block away and draw water from the well. You know what a happiness it could be for you when you turn on a faucet and water comes out and the water is fit to drink. “Ooh, I’m drinking water from the sink!”

Every house has a toilet inside the house! אִיזְהוּ עֲשִׂיר - *Who is a wealthy man?* כָּל שֵׂישׁ לוֹ בֵּית הַבִּסְטָא סָמוּךְ לְשִׁלְחָנוֹ - *Anyone who has a bathroom near his table* (Shabbos 25b).

In the olden days, if you didn’t have a toilet nearby, let’s say within a half block of your house, you were in trouble. You had to run to the public *ashpah*. But to have it in your house? That’s like a king. Even a king

in the ancient times didn’t have a toilet like we have today.

Shivering in Slabodka

Did you ever stop to think about that? What a convenience it is? How happy we are? We have a bathroom in our house. When I was in Slabodka in the middle of the winter, and I needed to go to the bathroom, I would have to put on my big rubber boots and wade through the snow out in the dark yard, to the outhouse, half a block away from where I was sleeping. I had to put on an overcoat — inside the outhouse it was freezing. I was shivering.

But that’s all extras. It’s cherries on top of the ice cream, on top of the seven layers of cake. Because the home itself, the four walls and the roof, that’s enough happiness to keep you going forever. You have a bed to lie in and you have a roof over your head!

Part XIII. Live for Happiness

Mazel Tov

It’s late now, so one more, one more happiness and then we’ll finish. And it’s the most important one! What is it?

I’ll tell you a story. I told it many times.

In Lomza, the *mashgiach* once saw a sad-faced yeshiva *bochur*. So he went over to him and he took him by both lapels. “*Mazel tov*,” he said to him.

The *bochur* wanted to hear the good news. The *mashgiach* says, “*Mazel tov! Mazel tov! Mazel tov!*”

The *bochur* was looking at him — what’s the *mazel tov*? Finally, the *mashgiach* said, “*Mazel tov* — you’re alive!” The biggest *mazel tov*!

Life itself! You’re so full of happiness that you’re alive!

The Happiness of Being a Nobody

I know you’re thinking, “Okay, but I need money too. A million dollars in addition to that. To be famous also.”

No. Just to be a nobody. And you don’t have a nickel in your bank account. Just to be alive is so

sweet. Life is so sweet. Life is such a pleasure. Life is such a joy. Every minute you're sitting here, you're enjoying life. You can see. You can hear. You can taste things. Your heart is beating. Your blood is circulating. You're functioning. And that's a tremendous happiness.

Oh, *Baruch Hashem*, I'm alive! *Baruch Hashem*! What a pleasure to be alive! Without eating or sleeping or clothing. Just to exist is a tremendous happiness! You have two kidneys and they're working so well you don't even feel it. It's a lot of fun! Your lungs are working. It's a lot of fun. The relief of being healthy is a lot of fun. There's no happiness in *gashmiyus* like being alive!

We're so accustomed to that happiness, so blinded by it, that we don't see it. We overlook the great joy of being alive. Suppose a person knew *chalilah* he's going to die in a half hour and he's running around like a *meshugene*, what can he do to save his life. He'd be so happy! He'll do anything to remain alive. So if Hashem is giving it to you, one day after the other, why shouldn't you revel in it?

Gaining Daas From Nichum Aveilim

You know when I'm *menachem avel* — it shouldn't happen — when I walk out, what's the first thought? “*Baruch Hashem* I'm alive!” That's my first thought. Because now I appreciate what it means to be alive. It's a pleasure to be alive.

I remember a few years ago, a Jew in this neighborhood passed away and I went to be *menachem avel* the children. I came into the house and there was just one son sitting there. I was *menachem avel* and then I went out.

The next day I saw the dead man walk here on the street. The dead man was walking on the street! It was a case of mistaken identity. I went to the wrong house. Oh, you're alive! You're alive! You're so lucky to be alive!

Now, I know people will ignore all this. “What's alive? It's so great to be alive?” Such a silly world. They overlook all the happiness of life. Sometimes there are troubles, but we have to know that the joy is very, very much more than the trouble; like the

Rambam says, the *tov* of life is very, very much more than the not *tov*.

You Cruise, You Lose

Life is the most precious thing there is! Such a gift! If you learn how to enjoy life — enjoy life means you're not running around for Caribbean cruises, no! Enjoying life means, “Ah! *Baruch Hashem*, I'm alive!” — you'll be happy always!

But if you don't think about it, you'll remain an *ish machsor*. You know when you'll realize the truth? When a man is on his deathbed and he knows his minutes are counted and he takes a look out of the window and for the last time he sees the daylight, “Ah, what fun that was. I wish I could hang around another day.”

But you did hang around! If you woke up this morning you're one of the fortunate ones! Suppose you had a palace in Florida and a palace in Maine and a palace in France and a palace in Italy and you had your private yachts and your private airplanes, that doesn't add a thing to your life. As you're sitting right here, you're the happiest man there is. The world is crazy! They overlook the true happiness. The true happiness is being alive!

Now, don't tell people about this of course. בְּאָזְנֵי כְּסִיל אַל תְּדַבֵּר – *Don't talk in the ears of a fool*. If they never heard this, they're fools and כִּי יִבּוּזוּ לְשׂוֹכְלֵי מַלְיָה – *they'll laugh at you* (Mishlei 23:9). Or they'll look at you with a blank face, same thing. And you'll be discouraged in all of your happy idealism. There's no question that you'll have forfeited the whole program.

Unless you find somebody who is intelligent, who will appreciate it. Otherwise, don't say it. I'm taking my chances with you because I consider you wise people. But be very careful! And whatever you do, speak to yourself! You can't get a better audience than that.

Part XIV. Happy Forever

The Successful Jew

So you understand already what happens to a person when he trains himself according to this

principle of **לֹא חֶסֶדֶת דְּבָר**, the lesson that was learned for forty years in the Midbar; he becomes *malei simcha*. All the time, no matter what — he's walking down the avenue without even a nickel in his pocket — he's enjoying life! He's enjoying his feet and his hands. He's enjoying the good Brooklyn air. He's enjoying his knees and his elbows, how they bend so effortlessly. He's enjoying his eyes! Good times! You won't find a happier person in Brooklyn!

And that's the purpose. A *frum* Jew is a successful Jew only if he's happy. If you see a downcast Jew, you don't have to suspect him of being a *tzaddik*. No; a *tzaddik* enjoys the pleasures of this world! Not entertainment, no. Entertainment is not pleasure. Entertainment is *looking* for pleasure. Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants to give us real pleasure, not chasing after excitement and thrills.

I Can't Believe It's Not Happiness

People go out skiing and they jump off a mountain and break their leg; a real pleasure. And traveling in a car and smelling the fumes of the cars ahead of you, that's a pleasure? And what do you get out of seeing two people punching each other in a boxing ring? It's a happiness that one punches the other? It's just empty excitement; the *yetzer hara*, your nerves are excited. That's not pleasure. Jews had *simcha*, yes, not entertainment. The word entertainment has no equal in *lashon kodesh*. Today they call it *bidur*, a new modern word, but in the old language of Torah, there's no word for entertainment. Because Jews didn't ever think of entertainment. They're very happy without it.

Only that if a man is a *machzor* in *daas*, he never trained his mind to think, so he'll look for substitutes. It's like a man who's hungry so he chews on rubber bands; he might fool himself for a little bit but he'll remain hungry. He won't be happy.

But Hakadosh Baruch Hu wanted us to be happy in this world. How happy? As happy as possible. It's a big *chiddush* to most people but Hakadosh Baruch Hu is happy when people are happy. But you won't be happy if you become a *baal taavah*, if you're running after cake and candies and toys and vacations. No, no. The way to happiness is by eating your meals

three times a day; bread, water, some chicken and potatoes, whatever it is, and you enjoy it!

Gaining Daas at the Dinner Table

So let's say when you come home from work and your wife puts a piece of bread and a bowl of soup on the table.

You say, "That's all?"

She says, "I'm sorry, Chaim. I was shopping today. I had no time to make anything more."

Excellent! An opportunity for you to practice the great art of enjoying life. Because there is so much in life that even the poor man can enjoy; if he learns that art, he is going to be happy all his days! I'm not talking now about the Next World. To enjoy *this* life is an art. It's a science. And if a man applies his mind to it, he is never going to be unhappy, because there is so much in this world that's free, so much happiness that most people are entirely oblivious of.

Try it out when you walk out of here tonight. Ooh, it's fun to walk through the street with a pair of kidneys. You forgot about them, no? They're functioning so perfectly that you are entirely oblivious of them. You don't even know you have a heart, it's working so smoothly. You don't know you have lungs. And it's a pity that we live our lives without all this happiness. So when you walk outside tonight, start practicing up.

The Happiness of Blue Skies

Now I'll tell you one more thing. You're going to smile, and in your heart you might be derisive, but I'll tell it to you anyhow; I don't care what you think. Tomorrow morning, you'll be able to add on something more: The blue sky is free. The *seforim* are in raptures about that color; it's such a beautiful color and it's easy on the eyes and it fills you with *simcha*. Did you ever take an opportunity to enjoy it? It's only available almost every day of the year.

And so you have at your fingertips the prescription for happiness. But just listening to these words won't suffice. You have to become a connoisseur of the sky. You have to learn how to taste it. You know if you're not a connoisseur and somebody serves you let's say a piece of kosher caviar — if there is such a thing —

you're going to spit it out. You'll retch. It's only if you acquire a taste for certain things. Certain wines, liquors, if you give it to a youngster it tastes like poison to him. But the connoisseur rolls it on the top of his tongue; he learned how to enjoy every drop of it. And if you learn to enjoy the blue sky, you'll enjoy every drop of it, too. Hakadosh Baruch Hu made it a beautiful *techeiles* and it's capable of bringing happiness into your heart. Only we're too busy looking down at the small things of the world to appreciate the really great happiness that is available here.

So tomorrow morning you have another happiness ingredient, the sky. And also the sunshine. So it's the sunshine and the air and the wind and the blue sky. It's a cocktail. Mix it together and drink it in with both nostrils until you fill both windbags. Ahhhhh! You're walking and you're seeing and wearing clothing and breathing.

Now we're just starting the subject because the happiness of life – just regular life – is a subject that doesn't have an end. Only that if you're busy trying to pleasure yourself with luxuries, extras, so it'll never start because the real happiness of life is in the things you *don't* have to pursue.

Money Shmoney

Now, I know people are going to be ashamed even to repeat this at home, this “silly” talk, because *they* know what *real* happiness is. Rabbi Miller, he's saying nice things – but happiness means money! And money! And more money! Or maybe furniture and rugs and drapes and traveling – all the things that only encumber life and make it a nuisance. And all the true things of happiness are entirely ignored. It's the ones with *daas*, those are the ones who will be truly happy. **אִיזְרוּ עֶשֶׂיר** – Who is rich? **הַשִּׁמְחָה בְּחֶלְקוֹ** – If you're happy with what Hashem is giving you; He's giving you life. He gave you feet and air and eyes and bread and water and a roof over your head and clothing and kidneys and a heart. So you're rich!

But that doesn't mean that by saying it you have it. Just like you have to work, you have to hustle to become rich, you can't do it by being a part-time worker. You have to put in a lot of hours to become

rich. To acquire this wealth, too, you must put in a lot of labor! There should be academies for that. I would be willing but I wouldn't have any disciples. After the first lesson everybody would think he knows it all and he wouldn't come back a second time. You need a lifetime of training, but it's fun as you go and it's worth it. Because whatever efforts you put into the job of learning how to enjoy life, Hakadosh Baruch Hu is going to reward you for in this world with more and more happiness; in addition to all the happy reward He'll give you in the World to Come for enjoying His world the way He wanted. **הָאֱלֹהִים לֹא נִבְרָא אֶלָּא לְהִתְעַנֵּג עַל ה'**

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Let's Get Practical

Thou Shalt Be Happy

In this week's *parsha*, the Torah says that the Am Yisroel lacked nothing during their forty-year sojourn in the Midbar. Hakadosh Baruch Hu is teaching us that the key to happiness is not luxury and excess, but appreciation of the “simple” gifts we already have.

This week, *bli neder*, at least once a day, I will say explicitly – to myself, at least – how happy I am about a basic staple of my life, whether it be the functionality of my limbs and organs, my family, my easy access to indoor plumbing, and so on.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

341 – Pursuit of Luxury | **614** – The Sukkah | **673** – Shabbos XII Oneg Shabbos | **870** – Beloved Diversity of Israel | **994** – Our Benefactors | **E-21** – Mourning for Our Ancient Perfection | **E-154** – Pursuing the Substitutes

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QUESTION

What general outlook can we use in order to make full use of the Three Weeks?

ANSWER

The Shulchan Aruch says **רָאִי לְהִיּוֹת מֵצִר וְרוֹאֵג עַל חֲרָבָן** – *it's proper for people to be sad and worried about what we lost by the churban Beis Hamikdash* (Orach Chaim 1:3).

Now, in general, if we keep in mind the fact that we once had a place where we could come together and demonstrate — now I'm saying something on the lowest possible level, but even that level is important — that **הוא האלקים** and He's Elokei Yisroel, that He lives only by us, and we're sad because we lost that tremendous opportunity, that's already an achievement.

It's so fundamental, this principle that **הוא אלקינו** **הוא הארץ משפטיו**, that He's Hashem Elokeinu and His judgments are over all the world (Tehillim 105:7). It means His judgments throughout the entire world are in the role of Hashem, Elokei Yisroel. Whatever happens in the world happens only because of us. All the changes in the history of nations that have taken place and will take place are because of us. And the Beis Hamikdash demonstrated that.

That's what the Beis Hamikdash was — a demonstration that **השכינה שורה בישראל**. Not that He's Hashem, Elokei ha'olam, and we also worship Him. No, that's not Torah. He is Hashem, Elokei Yisroel. Like it states at least 165 times in Tanach and many more times, other expressions. He belongs to us and we belong to Him! Of course, He is the Creator of the world, but we are His chosen people. And the Beis Hamikdash demonstrated that to the world.

And when that went lost, the *kevod Shamayim*, the glory of Hashem, the demonstration of His ruling the world as Elokei Yisroel went lost. And therefore we should keep in mind as much as possible during the Three Weeks that this great demonstration has gone lost and that's what they call *golus haShechina*, the Shechina is in exile. And we yearn to have that open demonstration once again.

July 1979