

# TORAS AVIGDOR

AUTHENTIC TORAH THOUGHT FOR LIFE

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PARSHAS KI SEITZEI

WITH

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BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

## SPREADING HAPPINESS

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## Part I. The Songster and the Mazik

### Bird Bias

In this week's *sedrah*, there's a mitzvah of *shiluach hakan*. Everyone knows that when you come to a nest and you find a mother bird and little birds or eggs, so you cannot take the mother bird together with the young. Even if you'd like to eat roasted pigeon – roasted pigeon is delectable to eat; it's a kosher bird, so why not? – but no, the Torah says, **שִׁלַּח תְּשַׁלַּח אֶת הָאִמָּה** – *You have to first send away the mother bird*, **וְאֶת הַבָּנִים תִּקַּח לָךְ** – *before you take the chicks or the eggs* (Devarim 22:7).

Now, whatever the reason is for this mitzvah we won't go into now, but the question is: why only for birds? Why not when you come to a nest, a lair, where there's a mother deer and little deer, let's say, you should have to spare the mother? Why is the bird the one lucky creature that was chosen for this benefit of saving the mother bird?

### The World's Songsters

So listen to what the Medrash (Devarim Rabbah 6:5) says about this subject. It's because the bird is busy all the time **בְּבִדּוֹ וּבִתְקוּנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם** – *with making*

*the world a happier place*. The bird deserves special treatment because it's *mesameyach es habriyos*, it sings and causes joy to the world.

Now, we have to pay attention to that Medrash because it's a very important statement. *Everything* in Medrash is important, but there's a very big lesson here. Suppose you walk out tomorrow morning and you see a bird standing on a branch and it's chirping. The sun is shining, the bird is singing, and it makes you think, "Maybe there is something to sing about, after all."

You know when people want to show there's a happy world, they show a bird singing. The bird is a symbol of happiness. The fact is that poets note it; other people who are wide awake note it. And that's because it's noteworthy: the chirping of the birds in the trees is a contribution to the happiness of life.

Now it may not be a major contribution – I cannot tell you how big it is because I have never been in a world without birds – but there's no question, when the spring starts coming in and again the birds are singing or chirping or whatever they're doing, it causes a certain joy in the hearts. Now, *why* the bird is singing, it could be that it's just a signal. Maybe the bird is saying, "Jake, bring the worms here," or something else, I can't tell you; but

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as far as we're concerned, the bird is singing and adding to our happiness.

So Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, “You’re **עוֹסֵק בְּכְבוֹדוֹ** and therefore I’m going to give you a special privilege. We need creatures like you, songsters that spread happiness, and so I’m going to confer on you this benefit more than all other animals. I’m going to command My nation to take especial care of you, to spare you and send you free so that you can continue your good work on My behalf.”

### Our Avian Mentors

Now, we should take this very seriously because it’s a model for what Hakadosh Baruch Hu expects of mankind, for a way in life. There are a lot of things to be done in life, but among them is a career of making others happy; that man is performing one of the most important achievements that he could do for himself.

And that’s one of the secrets of the mitzvah of *shiluach hakan*; it’s intended as a model lesson. If because a bird chirps in the trees, Hakadosh Baruch Hu designated the birds for the mitzvah of sending away the mother bird, then suppose a man who doesn’t do things by instinct — he follows his free will and his reason; he lives by *seichel* — and by means of his intellect he chooses to make people happy, then how much more does he deserve.

And so Hashem says, “If you’ll be a songster in the world, I’ll watch over you. Not only will you make more friends — people like birds because they’re the songsters, and people will like you too — but I’ll also go out of My way to reward you. I’ll have *rachmanus* on you and spare you from troubles the same way the mother bird songster is spared, because you’re doing My work in the world.”

### The Original Happiness Spreader

Now, that’s an important point and I want to stress it again before we continue. It’s not merely a matter of imitating the birds — it’s Hashem’s work that you’re doing; only that birds are a reminder, a

symbol, a lesson, a model. Actually, you’re emulating Hashem. **וְהִלַּכְתָּ בְּדֶרֶכָיו** – You’re walking in His Ways (Devarim 28:9) because Hashem, after all, He’s the One Who spreads happiness. That’s His entire creation. Like Dovid Hamelech said, “**כִּי אָמַרְתִּי** – I came to the conclusion, **עוֹלָם חֶסֶד יִבְנֶה** – the world was created for chessed, for kindness” (Tehillim 89:3). He studied the world and he was thinking, what are oranges for? They make people happy. What are cherries for? For happiness. What is rain for? Happiness. Everything is for the purpose of *cheded*.

Now, we didn’t have to wait until Tehillim to hear such a tremendous and fundamental statement that the world was created for kindness. It’s an open *possuk* in the Torah, right in the beginning: **וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹקִים אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וְהִנֵּה טוֹב מְאֹד** – Hashem saw all that He made and behold it was very good. “Good” means it causes happiness; that everything is for the purpose of causing joy to mankind.

### Details of Happiness

You want to be convinced? Just walk outside in the street and look at the soil in the gardens, on the sidewalk. It’s a remarkable creation covering the earth that is *kulo chessed*. In every tablespoon of soil you have more living things than you have people in Greater New York. Fungi and bacteria in the millions — all for the purpose of making things grow. And that’s a big happiness because when you sat down this evening at your table, if you had bread on the table, it’s a *simcha* to chew on that. Ah! It’s fun to eat! Come on, own up! Admit it, it’s fun! I’m not saying you should look for gourmet but a piece of bread is an immense happiness.

And everything is like that. Chickens are laying eggs every day. A remarkable animal, the chicken. And the purpose is for us to eat. Why do we have oceans? Pass by a fish store and you’ll see why there are oceans. The world lives off of fish. In the oceans there’s a harvest; every day, hundreds of thousands of pounds of fish are being taken out for people to eat. And so the world is busy eating, busy enjoying Hashem’s creation.

All of creation is supplying mankind happiness. It's a happiness to wear clothing, no? That's why cotton is always growing. Linen is growing. The sheep are constantly producing wool. The cow is producing leather for your shoes. Even the air is made for happiness. It's a cocktail, a special mixture of gases that invigorates you when you breathe it in. So the whole world is under a mantle of two hundred miles of *chessed*, two hundred miles of air!

### The Happiness Machine

In your own body, too, everything functions for your happiness. Your heart is pumping so that you should be happy. Your liver and your kidneys are for happiness. Your tongue, your taste buds, your teeth. Everything. Let's say you're sad, you're worried. So you go to sleep and the next day you wake up in the morning and you forgot all about your troubles. Hakadosh Baruch Hu causes us consolation during the night. While you sleep, all your worries go away, or many do. **הַרְפֵּא לְשִׁבּוּרֵי לֵב** – He heals the broken hearts, **וּמַחֲבִישׁ לְעֻצְבוֹתָם** – and He binds up their pains (Tehillim 147:3).

Hashem causes people to forget sad experiences. If somebody had a great tragedy, *chalilah*, as time passes by he forgets it. Why should he forget it? He should weep all of his days. No. Hakadosh Baruch Hu put a mechanism into a person. **בּוֹרֵא רְפוּאוֹת** – He creates in a person certain antigens that battle against the sadness and return him to his equilibrium, his happiness.

And so there's no end to things in life that Hashem gives to make people happy – more than anything else, of all the things we see as we look in the world, the one most conspicuous fact is that the Creator is interested in bestowing on mankind good times. And if that's the way of Hakadosh Baruch Hu in the universe then when it's stated in the Torah, **וְהָלַכְתָּ בְּדֶרֶכָיו**, that you should walk in His ways, so spreading happiness must be included in our way of living. The singing bird is a reminder, a lesson, but Hashem is our Model.

### The Sur Mei'ra Rung

And so we'll start from the bottom of the ladder. The ladder of *mesameyach es habriyos* has many rungs, but can you guess what the first rung is? The very first step is *not to do harm to anybody*.

Now, you might say, "Oh, that's superfluous." Like somebody told me, "What is there to know about not harming people?" He wants to hear about the successful career of how to spread happiness to mankind, how to climb higher and higher, and I'm bringing him down all the way and speaking about not being a *mazik*? Is that really necessary?

And the answer is yes. It takes a great deal of study, a good amount of being aware and being careful, in order to stand on that first rung and balance yourself properly. You have to learn Bava Kamma, a big Mesichta. You have to learn Bava Metzia, a big Mesichta. Bava Basra, an even bigger Mesichta. And all of that comes first because it's **סוּר מִרָע וַעֲשֵׂה טוֹב** – *turn away from evil first and then do good* (Tehillim 34:15).

### Sharing Germs

We're harming people constantly! Here, you come over to a man when you have a cold, you give him a *shalom aleichem*. You grasp his hand and you talk into his face and sometimes you cough into his face, too. As you're talking – cough, cough, cough, cough. I shy away from him, but he comes closer. Some people talk only into your nose. They bend their heads over to you to confer a gift of bacteria on you. That's a *mazik*! If you have a cold, then keep away from people.

So you'll say you don't believe in bacteria; you're too *frum* for that. It's not in the Gemara or the Chumash, he says, so why should he believe in bacteria? Of course, when he cuts his finger, he'll put on Mercurochrome right away, but for someone else he's not a believer in germs. And so the first rung means be careful with other people's well-being.

## The Two-Legged Gazlan

Also, included in this is other people's *property*. If you pick up a *sefer* and learn in it without permission from the owner, you're a *gazlan*. You have no right to take a *sefer* — in halacha it states you cannot borrow without his permission because as you move the pages they sometimes tear (Orach Chaim 14:4). A *tallis*, the *poskim* say, you can borrow on condition that you'll fold it up again (*ibid.*). Otherwise, you have no right to borrow it without his knowledge. And by the way, if he's a finicky man who doesn't like the idea of his *tallis* up against somebody else's neck, then you can't borrow it either (see Mishnah Berurah, *ibid.*).

Or like I saw someone learning in the yeshiva; he was sitting on somebody's chair — it's not his; he's borrowing it from the yeshiva — and instead of sitting on the four legs, so he'd like to have a little ride so he tilts it back and forth on two legs. It's not made for that. It's not a rocking chair. So he's loosening the glue in the joints; he's *mekatzer* the *yamim* of that chair. That's a serious matter! He's a *mazik*! He's reading in a *sefer* maybe about being *mesameyach es habriyos* and meanwhile he's not even on the first rung.

## The Holy Hold-Up Man

Now I'll add some more to that. Suppose a man is going to *selichos*. Once a man passed by my window. A big black hat and a cane with a silver head on it, with a *kapote*. He's a *talmid chacham*, a *moreh hora'ah*. And he was accompanied by two of his disciples; he was going to the *mikvah* before *selichos*. It was about 5:30 in the morning. He was talking at the top of his voice, however. He was talking *divrei Torah*, I'm sure, *divrei hisorerus* — but he's a *mazik*. He's a *gazlan*. Rav Yisrael said if you steal sleep, you're a *gazlan* who can never make restitution. You can't give back what you stole from that person.

But go try and tell it to him. He's so busy with the *asei tov* — "I'm going to *selichos*. I'm going to the *mikvah*. I'm talking *divrei Torah*" — he doesn't

realize he's a robber. You're a hold-up man! People are sleeping! Because you want to go to *selichos*, you can rob people of their sleep?! R' Yisrael Salanter said that.

Stealing people's time, too. If you're an employee, you can't waste the time of your employer. He paid you! There are certain conventions, maybe, certain things that by usage we understand you have a right to do. You can go to the bathroom, yes. But you can't sit in the bathroom and read the newspaper. These people are *gazlanim*. They're *mazikim*.

## A Sea of Information

And so, if you begin the study of the subject, you'll see it's almost endless. There's so much *sur mei'ra* to be careful with, and it's a subject as wide as the sea — the *Yam HaTalmud*.

The first rung — the subject of not causing injury to other people, not making unhappiness in the world, not causing dissension, not speaking *rechilus*, *lashon hara*, *ona'as devarim* — all these things are entire *Mesichtas* of wisdom. It means *sefarim* upon *sefarim* and practice upon practice. But we'll leave them out now because we want to go on to the second rung.

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## Part II. The Beneficial Songster

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### Beyond Lollipops

So let's imagine that we all graduated from the first rung and we're ready for the next step on the "spreading happiness" ladder. Now, maybe you can walk around giving out lollipops to people — I imagine that such a thing would make people happy; at least children and maybe the dentists, too — but that's not enough. There are much bigger things than that. And you'll be surprised how available, how easy, the next step is.

Number one is the expression of the face. הָיִי מְקַבֵּל אֶת כָּל הָאָדָם בְּסִכָּר פָּנִים יְפוּת — Greet every man with a pleasant cast of countenance (Avos 1:15). Not because it's a *mitzvah* and you want *mitzvos*; do it

because it makes them happy. And not only happy, it makes them healthy, too. The Gemara (Kesuvos 111b) says that if you flash your teeth at your fellow man it's like giving him an injection of vitamins. A healthy person is happy. You're a spreader of happiness now!

### **Guilty as Charged**

Now some people, I'm sorry to say, not only they're not fulfilling this but they're doing the opposite. It never happened to you that you pass by a man who knows you and he greets you and you nod with a glum face?

You have harmed him. You hurt his feelings. You added some unhappiness to the world.

Now, it could be you're not intending anything wrong; you're not *trying* to show disapproval of him as you pass by him. Maybe your stomach is bothering you or you're worried about where to get the next month's rent from. But still, he doesn't know what's on your mind. All he sees is that you pass him with a glum face. You're a *mazik*.

It means that when you walk into your house and your wife sees a glum face, you're harming her. When a wife serves supper to her husband with a grim face, she's harming him. That's still before the first rung. If at least you had a neutral face; but a glum face?

### **The Tzaddik Mazik**

Even if you're worried about your sins and you're full of *hirschurei teshuvah*, but if you're wearing a scowl because of that, then you're guilty. R' Yisroel Salanter said that. He was walking in the street and a man who was coming from *selichos* passed by him; a *yarei*, a *frum* Jew, and his face was still wet with tears. Rav Yisroel was a young man and he greeted this man, but the man didn't answer him. The man was so immersed in his thoughts of repentance for his sins — he was contrite and sad — that he ignored this young man who greeted him.

Many years later Rav Yisroel wrote in his *sefer*, "What am I to blame that you're a *frum* Jew? Do I

have to suffer because of your *frumkeit*? You're a *mazik*!" He didn't say that; I'm adding these words. He just said, "Is it my fault that you are *frum*?"

And so the number one requirement in our songster program is your face. Utilize it! You have to use your face properly in this world. A face is given to you, not that you should just paste it on your skull and then let it stay there. You have to manipulate that face for this program.

### **A Detail on the Face**

And now we come to something that's built into your face. It's your mouth. Words! How important it is to say good words, happy words, *mesameyach es habriyos* words! You know people have a way of saying nasty words constantly. Sometimes a husband or a wife can make life *Gehenom* with their words. A foreman who is saying mean words constantly to the people under him or an employer who says mean words. They're *mazikim*. *Ona'as devarim*, hurting people's feelings, is one of the very biggest sins!

But even if you're perfectly quiet and you don't say one mean word, that's only the bottom rung. Because to climb means that you want to be a songster. Now, it doesn't mean you have to set up shop on a corner and play a banjo, but you have to say words that make people happy.

Say, "Good morning" as you pass by. But say it so that he should hear you. After *davenen*, say to your fellow man, "Good morning! *Shalom aleichem*." (The Rav said it slowly and enunciated the syllables.) Don't say it as if you're sick, *chas v'shalom*, as if you're expiring. Say it with energy. Put something into it. Say it with a smile, too. הוֵי מְקַבֵּל אֶת כָּל הָאָדָם בְּשִׂמְחָה (Avos 3:12)! *Simcha* means you're happy to see him — even if you're not. You're doing a *mitzvah*, *mesameyach es habriyos*.

### **Complimentary Happiness**

Now, if you can say an encouraging word, a compliment, even better. When your wife gives you supper and you taste the soup, say, "The soup is

delicious” — even if it’s not, say it anyhow. Or whatever it is that she made, compliment it! And don’t be stingy! Be lavish! And the same is with everybody else. Always say encouraging words. Believe me, people are just waiting for it.

So you’ll say, “Well, they’re going to catch on that it’s not sincere.” Don’t worry. Everybody will believe it. When you say to your fellow man, “I’m happy to see you,” he believes it. And you have added to his well-being.

Now, some people are fortunate enough to support Torah institutions and make very many *frum* people happy. A tremendous thing! How great is the reward of the man whom Hakadosh Baruch Hu favors especially with a career of *mesameyach es habriyos*.

### Spreading the Wealth

You remember when Rebi was sitting in his yeshiva, surrounded by his sages and a rich man walked in. So Rebi said, “פָּנוּ מְקוֹם לְכֹן מֵאָה מְנָה – *Make a place for this rich man*” (Eiruvim 85b).

All the sages moved over. This man wasn’t a great *talmid chacham*, but they moved over and gave him a seat.

Then a man who was even wealthier came in and Rebi said, “Make a place for this wealthier man!” They gave him a better seat up front.

So the Gemara asks, “Why did Rebi honor wealthy people?” Now, we know why you honor wealthy people, but that wasn’t Rebi’s purpose, because Rebi was so wealthy himself that all the rest were like beggars compared to him. Rebi was a millionaire. So why did he honor wealthy people? He didn’t want anything from them.

And the Gemara says it’s because the wealthy person gives more *tzedakah*. He’s making people happy!

Now, maybe he can’t help it. He’s being bothered constantly so he gives more. And it could be that there’s a poor man who would like to give, but he doesn’t have the ability; it’s not his fault. Still, the

man who is given wealth from which he’s able to do more to make men happy, it’s a special privilege given to him *min haShamayim*. Not only the mitzvah of *tzedakah*; even more, it’s the *zechus* of being *mesameyach es habriyos*.

### Appreciating the Happiness Spreaders

And so we begin to understand how much a *frum ashir* has to be appreciated! He is making very many people happy with his money! So let’s say you’re a yeshiva man; you’re sitting in the *beis hamedrash* studying Torah and in walks one of the members of the Board of Directors. And he’s wearing flashy clothes, checkered pants and a sports jacket. I don’t know if he is, but we’ll imagine it’s so for our story.

Now, you’re wearing a black hat. You have a little beard. So in your heart, you look down at him maybe. He’s a supporter of the yeshiva and you understand that if the business manager of the yeshiva is ushering him in, he’s only flattering him in order to maintain the stream of donations to the yeshiva. But you — you are the yeshiva.

You’re making a big mistake. He’s superior to you. This member of the Board of Directors is superior to you! He’s been blessed *min haShamayim* with the opportunity to make so many people happy.

He’s supporting the yeshiva. What are you doing? You’re just supporting yourself. He’s supporting you. He’s paying your *rebbe*. He’s supporting the dining room that feeds you. He’s supporting the dormitory. It was bestowed upon him this privilege of being *mesameyach es habriyos*.

### The Backup Plans

Now, if you don’t have lots of money, there are still thousands of ways. Simple things, easy opportunities. Let’s say you send ten dollars every month to a *talmid chacham* in Meah Shearim. He lives perhaps in two rooms with a big family, and you send him ten dollars a month because you want to participate in his Torah lifestyle at least a little

bit. Now, for a poor family like that, it's a big happiness when that little check arrives. But if in addition to the check you put into the envelope a little slip of paper or on the margin of the check, "Shalom uvrachah! You are the heart of our nation!" So you've swelled that ten dollars into something that is tremendously greater. You brought a little more joy into their lives. The ten dollars? Excellent! That's happiness. The extra words? A double happiness!

And even with no money at all. The Gemara (Taanis 22a) tells a story that once Eliyahu appeared to a certain *chacham* in the marketplace. Now, it was a marketplace, not a yeshiva; it was a place of ordinary people and it was a remarkable thing that Eliyahu appeared to him *davka* there. We would expect Eliyahu to come to a holy place, a place of *tefillah* and Torah, maybe a house of *tzaddikim*. But in a marketplace? A place of *goyim*, *amei ha'aretz*, ordinary people?

It was out of the ordinary, and so this wise man utilized the opportunity. He said to Eliyahu, "Is there anybody in this marketplace who is a *ben Olam Haba*?"

Eliyahu said, "Yes," and he pointed to a man, a clown who was jumping up and down. "That clown is a *ben Olam Haba*."

So this *chacham* approached the clown and he started investigating and he discovered that the clown used to go and perform free of charge when he saw someone who was sad. He used to jump up and down to make him laugh, to make him happy.

### **The Clown's Secret**

Now, this clown wasn't a *rosh yeshiva*. He wasn't even someone who supports the yeshiva. He was a clown. But because he was devoted to the *middah* of *mesameyach es habriyos*, Hakadosh Baruch Hu sent Eliyahu Hanavi to this *chacham* in a place which was not especially fit for Eliyahu Hanavi to come, in order to teach him the great lesson that every Jew, no matter who, is obligated in this program.

Of course, if you're a *baal Torah* and you're a *baal chessed* too, you find ways and means of making people happy — so Torah with *chedes* together is unbeatable. Like it states in Bava Kamma (see 17a), if you have Torah and *gemilus chassadim* together, there's nothing that can compare to that. But here is a man who was doing only *chedes* alone and still the *navi* said to the *chacham*, "He's a *ben Olam Haba*." That's how important it is.

However, we'll have to add one more word — what we said before, that this clown, whatever he did was because he wanted to emulate Hashem. Otherwise, it wouldn't help. It was **וְהִלַּכְתָּ בְּדֶרֶכָיו**. "Hashem causes people happiness and He wants me also to emulate Him." That's the perfection of someone who makes other people happy.

### **Happiness Begins at Home**

Now, an important point. Many altruists are busy making everybody happy — except their own family. So, therefore, we say: charity begins at home. The very best place to start is at home. Sometimes it's easier outside, so you can start practicing outside, but have in mind that you're aiming to do it at home, too. And maybe after a while it will start creeping into your own house, too.

The home, that's the place you can add happiness. Make your wife and your children happy. Don't forget that. That's a career. It's your job to make a happy home. Sometimes it's not so easy; you have to plan it. Sometimes your wife is trying to make you unhappy, but you have to work against that current and realize that *your* happiness is not the goal; it's *her* happiness you have to aim at. And wives have to be interested in the husband's happiness. It should be your ideal to be *mesameyach es habriyos*.

A father especially; he has a lot of obligations in the home, a lot to contribute to the family, but he has to keep this in mind always that included in his obligations is that he has to spread happiness. Sometimes he even has to put in a sense of humor

into the house. You know, mothers are dealing with the children all day long, so they're worn out raw and therefore every little problem is magnified in her eyes. "Little Chaim'l, he doesn't eat." And it becomes such a major problem that all the problems of the world are dwarfed in comparison. And so the father has to make a joke out of it. Of course, he has to be careful to do it in such a way that she doesn't become the butt of the joke. But it has to be a joke — "It's not so serious; Chaim will one day be a big fat rabbi anyhow."

### Happy Skyscrapers

And therefore, remember always that your best opportunity is with your own family. Make your wife happy. Make your husband happy. Make your children happy. It doesn't mean to give them expensive things. Of course, you have to provide. Make sure you earn enough money! If you don't bring money home, there's unhappiness in the house. But also, besides the bread, you have to give them a little bit of fun, too, a little *nosh*. Give your wife a few trinkets; remember from time to time to bring home something. If you can't buy expensive jewelry, buy costume jewelry. Buy little things for the children to keep them happy. That's your job. **שָׂהֵם תְּלוּיִים בָּךְ** – *They depend on you* (Chullin 84b).

And always, always, always — kind words! That's the very best thing! Always, always kind words. Always "thank you" and "please." Always compliments. And little by little, you build up not just a home but a skyscraper of *mesameyach es habriyos*. And that kind of accomplishment has no *gevul*, no boundary, how great the reward is.

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## Part III. The Songster Spreads

### Happiness

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#### The Gift Table

Now we're going to study another way of making men happy — a general principle in the *halachos* of spreading happiness, of being a songster in this world.

Now, I don't know what the custom is today, but in the olden days when you attended a wedding there was a special table where they used to put the gifts. The *chosson* and *kallah* had a table that was being piled up with gifts, and they're standing there and thanking each one who brings gifts. This one brings a clock. "Thank you." This one brings a this. "Thank you." Whatever it is, all kinds of things are put on the table and the *chosson* and *kallah* are happy.

### The Inexpensive, Valuable Gift

Now, let's say someone happens to be impecunious — it means he doesn't have any money. So here's an impecunious fellow standing near the table. He also came to the *chasunah*, but he has nothing to give. But as each gift is deposited on the table, he points out to the *chosson* and *kallah* what a valuable gift this is.

He says, "This watch is not an ordinary watch. Did you read inside?" The *chosson* and *kallah* are too busy looking at the size of the gifts. So he takes out the little slip that's packed in with the watch and he reads it to them. Seventeen jewels. Pure gold, 14-karat gold. Unbreakable crystal. Waterproof. Anti-magnetic. Incabloc shock protection. It's a whole list of things that's packed in.

Now, when he gets through reading, the *chosson* and *kallah* have received a better gift. By giving them this knowledge, the man who stands at the table where all the gifts are piled up is giving more than anybody who has gone and spent money to buy these gifts. His contribution is very important because they would take that watch and stuff it away in the valise, and after the *chasunah* they go off somewhere and forget all about it. If they'll ever use the watch, they won't appreciate it. But because of this man who sang the praises of the gifts, so all their lives, as long as they have these things, they're going to be happy because of the information that this man supplied to them. And the more knowledge, the happier they'll be.

### The Treasure in the Cellar

Now, sometimes you might have a gift that you're not aware of at all. Let me use a *marshal* that I told years ago. Suppose you bought a house, let's say, outside of Boro Park. Today it's expanding into Bensonhurst. The house used to belong to Italians and you bought it.

Suppose you don't know who the previous owners were and you're living in the house for many years. One day you get a telephone call. An old quavering voice. You understand it's an old Italian that's talking on the telephone.

He says (*the Rav used the best old Italian accent he could muster up*), "You live in my house? I lived there fifty years ago. I want to tell you something. The doctors tell me that I don't have long to live. Any minute, I might croak. And so I want you to know that buried under the boards in the basement floor is a box full of jewelry and diamonds, golden coins. It's no good to me now so I'm letting you know. Better you get it than the government."

He hangs up.

You don't waste any time.

"Where are you going," your wife says, "with a saw and a hammer and chisel and crowbars?"

"An Italian just called me up."

"You're crazy," she's saying. "You'll break up the floor because of a telephone call?"

"Never mind."

And so you're rich now.

But actually you were rich for the last twenty years that you lived in that house. You always had that property. It was yours. He couldn't claim it. But what made you wealthy? The telephone call made you rich; it's the *knowledge* of what you possess.

### The Happy Ambassador

And therefore, we are all wealthy people, but it's buried under the cellar board of our minds — some people haven't the slightest idea what they possess. And now we begin to understand that giving people the knowledge, the awareness of all the good things

Hakadosh Baruch Hu is giving them, is a very important part of our program.

Of course, you have to believe it first. To tell others, you have to first appreciate the happiness yourself. It means to begin being happy with all the appurtenances of life. Be happy that you're well! Be happy that you're married! Be happy with your home. Be happy with all the functions of your body; your eyes and your feet and your hands. Life is full of joys — only that you have to think about it; you have to prime the pump of happiness.

### Complaining and Paining

Now, if you're a complainer, forget about it. You're just the opposite of what Hashem wants you to be. You're still below the first rung — you're a *mazik* still. Like Shlomo Hamelech says in Mishlei (18:8), *דְּבַר יָרֵד בְּמַתְלָהִים* – *the words of a complainer are like somebody who delivers blows*, *וְהֵם יֵרְדוּ חֲדָרֵי בֶטֶן* – *and these blows go down into the chambers of the belly*. It means they're not superficial blows. He says, "Oh, it's too hot, too humid." He complains against the cold. "It's too windy. It's nasty, this rain." This is no good and that's no good. That person is hitting people not only beneath the belt but *chadrei baten*, inside of the belt. He's hitting people in the gut by complaining.

The mitzvah of *shiluach hakan* teaches that instead of walking around and grouching, your function in the world is to let people know how good Hashem's world is. We should be songsters, always singing, chirping, about Hashem's beautiful world.

### Not a Fair-Weather Friend

Sing the praises of the seasons. The hot weather means that the apples are being baked on the tree right now, becoming red and sweet. You can't cook in a kitchen without heat. The cherries and plums and peaches are cooking on the trees, turning red and sweet. The crops are ripening now on the fields, making the wheat ready for all the cakes and breads and *challos*, all the good things are coming up all winter long. We are going to eat the results of that

heat. And so if Hakadosh Baruch Hu supplies us with free heat for all the needs that we have to prepare our food, it means heat is good times!

And the cold! Ah! As you're walking down the avenue enjoying the brisk Brooklyn air, let people know how good it is. Anyone who will listen. Your wife, your children, your *chaveirim*, your students, whoever you can sing to, spread the good word! We need cold weather too. **לְפָנֵי קָרְתּוֹ מִי יַעֲמֹד** – *Who can withstand His cold?* (Tehillim 147:17). The cold is for a purpose, to make people stop working in the fields; the fields have to rest and recuperate all the materials and energy they lost during the summer. If not for the cold, the earth would continue to produce all year round and would become exhausted of all its nourishment; it would become arid, a desert. And so it's a happiness when the winter comes and the earth can rest and recover all of its energies once more. The earth is getting ready to feed you again, to produce new crops, new fruits.

### Seasonal Songs

And so all the seasons deserve their own song. When you walk in the street now, say, "Isn't it a wonderful August day!" There's a song, a lyric, "Nothing is good like a day in September." There's a song like that. There's another song for October. Every month has something beautiful to sing about.

You have to learn how to taste each season – each season has its own savor. Teach people to look forward to the zest of winter. "Enjoy the zest of the wind! Enjoy the slap of the rain on your face!" Teach your children to look forward to the delicious quality of summer, to look forward to spring and to autumn. Learn to sing these songs; sing about how beautiful January is. How wonderful is February. We have to learn it and then spread the good word. How wonderful is this detail of life and that detail! How happy you should be for this and for that!

### Eternal Happiness

And of course, once you get into the habit of spreading happiness, you'll sing to your fellow Jews

about the real happiness. If a man explains to people how fortunate they are that they are Jews, that's the best happiness. We say every day! **אֲשֶׁרֵינוּ מְדָה טוֹב** – *How fortunate is our lot in life!*

Now, saying those words should result in a little more happiness every day, but the man is saying it without the slightest expression of *simcha* in him. That's the result of habit. And so you have to go out and explain to people what it means to be chosen as a Jew. You're a prince! You're *bnei Keil chai*! You're called "children of the Living G-d." You belong to the *Am Olam*, the eternal nation. Eternal means in both worlds! **כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשׁ לָהֶם חֵלֶק לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא** (Sanhedrin 90a)!

That's the greatest happiness of all. Let's say you would be invited – of course, you wouldn't go – to a gathering of literati somewhere on Park Avenue, a cocktail dinner being given, let's say, on the appearance of a certain new book that somebody wrote. The author is there; and they're all drinking *l'chaim* – not these words exactly, but they're drinking.

### Undercurrent of Sadness

They seem so gay and so happy. There's revelry and good spirits. But, you know, there's sadness there; because everybody knows it'll come to an end. Not only afterwards when they walk out at two o'clock in the morning on a dark street. They don't want to admit it but they feel at the bottom of their hearts that there'll be a day when they'll put him in the box and bury him in the ground. That's the end. That's the greatest sadness.

And once a man admitted it. One of them once admitted it. He said, "Despite everything, all of our happiness turns to ashes when we realize that all this ends in the grave." There can't be any happiness if you know that it'll come to an end. Even if a man will have a thousand years, the specter, the fear of that final conclusion of his life, to be put into the ground, embitters all of his joy. It robs him of happiness.

But we, **אֲשֶׁרֵינוּ מֵה טוֹב הַלָּקֵנוּ**! When we get together it's not an end; it's an intimation of the future. When you'll sit in your *sukkah* and you're rejoicing with your family and you're singing *yom tov* songs, **וְשִׂמְחָתָּ בְּחֻגֶּךָ**, you instinctively feel that this is only a preview of what's going to come.

### **Happily Ever After**

And so how important it is to tell our fellow Jew about Olam Haba! How important is it to implant that happiness in the minds of your children! You have to make them understand the great wealth of being a member of the Chosen People, how fortunate he is. Everything in this world is transformed when we know that it's going to extend into the world beyond and last forever.

Oh yes! If we want to engage in the practice of *mesameyach es habriyos*, the greatest form is to enlighten your fellow men how fortunate they are, not only what they possess in all the gifts of life, but what they possess in the gifts of Hakadosh Baruch Hu, the Torah and Olam Haba! When people hear all these things, if it's explained to them sufficiently, their eyes begin to glow with happiness. Their hearts begin to beat with joy. They are transformed into happy people. You are giving them a gift of *da'as* and it's more precious than a box of diamonds concealed under the basement floor.

### **The Segulah for Yom Hadin**

Now pay attention. It's so essential to include this system of *mesameyach es habriyos* in our life program, but especially right now; this time of the year, we should think about it and see what we can do to realize this system in our lives, at least partially. R' Yisroel Salanter *zichrono livracha* was talking about the *yemei hadin*, the Days of Judgment, and he offered some valuable counsel. He said, "If a person desires an element that will help him to be *zocheh badin*, it's important he should make himself be considered important by Hakadosh Baruch Hu." How so? So R' Yisroel said that he should be a man that **רַבִּים צָרִיכִים לוֹ**, *that the public needs him*. If you're a man whom the public needs, then you have a very

big merit and a *zechus hakiyum*. It's a good reason why you deserve to be around longer.

Now, you might think that it means a *rosh yeshiva* maybe. It's true. The public needs him. It's good to be a *rosh yeshiva* if you can be one. Maybe the *rav* of a shul — a good, *frum rav*. Yes, that's also something. But there are other ways of *rabim tzrichim lo*.

### **Rav Miller's Hashgacha**

Suppose you're a grocer. I am thinking of a certain grocer who's been under my supervision for years — not that I give a *hechsher* on him, but I've been noticing his ways for at least twenty years. He always has a smile on his face and always speaks pleasantly to people. That's a man that the *rabim tzrichim lo*. Not only for his groceries; they need him because he's a kindly, friendly man. Everybody needs a friendly man. They look forward to that.

If you get into the habit of giving words of encouragement, it's certainly *rabim tzrichim lo*. Plan out ways and means of telling people how fortunate they are to be alive! How fortunate they are to have lungs and free air and legs that take them wherever they want to go. That they can go to the bathroom *b'shalom* and they can sleep peacefully at night. There's so much happiness to tell people, it's literally never-ending.

### **The Public Benefactor**

And therefore, everybody can become a *rabim tzrichim lo* and thereby deserve that Hakadosh Baruch Hu should want to have him around for many years! Like the mother bird who is singing and chirping and giving everyone a happy attitude towards the world, so Hashem said, "I'm going to command My nation to take special care of you; to spare you and send you free so that you can continue your good work on My behalf." And He'll say the same thing about you. "You're making My people happy! That's My plan in the world! You're walking in My footsteps and helping Me! And therefore I'll take care of you. I'm going to reward you for that."

And so, anybody who sings in this world, anyone who is busy trying to make the world a happier place — he's going to be saved. Because the mother bird, she's spared merely for her instinct, but the man who chooses with his free will to make a career of *mesameyach es habriyos*, he surely deserves to be spared. And not only spared — he deserves a great many things because he's making Hashem's world a more happy place.

### Have a Wonderful Shabbos

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## Let's Get Practical

### Become a Gvir

In this week's *parsha*, the Torah tells us to spare the mother bird. She gets preferential treatment because she makes the world a better place by spreading good cheer.

This week, *bli neder*, I will embark on a new career as a philanthropist, enriching others by making them aware of the blessings they already have as well as the eternal blessing they will ultimately merit. In addition, each day, I will offer a unique compliment to every member of my household, thereby increasing their happiness and attaining for myself the greatest *segulah* for a good and sweet new year.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

**158** – Better Than Milk | **314** – A Useful World | **417** – Doing Kindness to Yourself | **569** – Spreading Happiness | **E-152** – The Wine of Hashem's Kindness

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**Q&A**

WITH  
**RAV AVIGDOR  
MILLER ZT"L**

שאלות ותשובות עם ראב"ד אביגדור מילר זצ"ל



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### QUESTION

**The Torah prohibits suicide. Why can't we control our day of death?**

### ANSWER

And the answer is the Torah teaches us that the body is only given to us on loan. The body is like a beautiful car, an expensive car, that's rented out to you. Now, let's say you're out on a jaunt with the car. You rented a car, you rented, let's say, a Cadillac, and now you're someplace in the country, and somebody says, "Let's go for a trip, climbing in the mountains."

So you say, "What should I do with the car?"

"Leave the car behind," he says.

"But it might be stolen, it might be vandalized."

"Oh, who cares?"

Who cares?! The car is not yours. It was only rented out to you; you are responsible to return it. It's wickedness if you're going to allow a car like that to go lost.

We are riding around in this life in a borrowed car. It's a beautiful car, very expensive. There's nothing like a human body! But it's not ours. And no matter how uncomfortable it is to maintain the car, it's our job to keep on watching it and preserving it until the time comes when the Owner Himself will come to reclaim His car.

And if anybody commits suicide, he is killing a human being who doesn't belong to him. He's a murderer! With one difference — he's worse than somebody who murders somebody else. If you murder somebody else, it's a great wickedness. But to murder *yourself* is a greater wickedness, because on yourself you should have more compassion.

But whatever it is, all these ideas are based on godlessness. When a person realizes that the Creator made a world and only the Creator gave us our bodies, then we realize that nobody but Hakadosh Baruch Hu has anything to say about what to do with the human body.

July 7, 1977