

TORAS AVIGDOR

AUTHENTIC TORAH THOUGHT FOR LIFE

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"L

PARSHAS MATOS - MASEI

WITH

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"L

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

GAINING A GOOD NAME

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Part I. Impressing Hashem's People

Cleared of Hashem's Suspicion

In our *parsha*, there is the incident of the Bnei Gad and Bnei Reuven. Instead of entering the land of Canaan with the other tribes, they wanted to inherit the fertile land on the eastern side of the Yarden. Now, when they approached Moshe Rabbeinu with their request, he was very perturbed. "You're going to add now to the wrath of Hashem that was kindled against the *meraglim* who sinned against Hashem by restraining the heart of the people from entering the land" (Bamidbar 32:6-14). He criticized them for sinning against Hashem.

But later, when Moshe agreed to their proposal that they would go ahead as a vanguard before the rest of the nation and fight until the people inherit the land, he added something: "If you'll go out to battle together with the Jewish nation, then Hashem will be satisfied and He'll agree to your desire; וְהִיְתָם נְקִיִּים מִה' וּמִיִּשְׂרָאֵל - *and you'll be clean in Hashem's eyes and the eyes of Yisroel*" (*ibid.* 22).

Cleared of People's Suspicion

Now, to be clear before Hashem, that we understand. That's what we live for, to achieve Hashem's favor. But the question is, if they were clear in Hashem's eyes – if by going ahead of the nation in the battles for Eretz Canaan that would satisfy Hashem – so why should the opinion of the Bnei Yisroel be important to them? It's what Hashem wants, and that's all! Isn't that so?

And so we learn an important Torah principle – we have to find favor also with the nation. Hashem wants people to be happy with us. And we'll soon see how important of a subject this is, but we'll take it slow, one step at a time.

We know that in the Gemara, the subject of *maris ha'ayin* recurs constantly. The Gemara states in many places that certain things are permissible to do, and still you should not do them because of a principle called *maris ha'ayin*, for appearance's sake, in order to prevent a wrong impression. Anybody who learns knows about that – *maris ha'ayin*.

Now, on what is this based? After all, you're innocent and you're well meaning. You're not doing anything wrong. Just because people will have the

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wrong impression, you're forbidden to do so many things?

And the Gemara answers that it's based on our *possuk*: "You must be innocent not only from Hashem, but also innocent from Yisroel." From here, the Gemara (Yoma 38a, Pesachim 13a) learns the importance of *maris ha'ayin*, to do things in a way that it shouldn't look bad to other people. Let's say you want to go into a *treife* restaurant to use the public telephone. Don't do it. Somebody might see you going there and think you're going to eat.

The Onion in the Fish

Now, we understand one reason for that is because if you make people think that a certain thing is right to do, so you give them a finger and they'll take a hand – it means if you show an ignorant person a certain permissiveness in a certain *din*, he'll go beyond that and overstep the boundaries of the Torah too. Therefore we cannot show an ignorant person too much permissiveness.

That's a general Torah principle, that the nation together is concerned that the Torah should be upheld, and we take precautions – even extreme precautions – to that end. It's like the woman who once came to a rabbi and she said a misfortune happened in her kitchen. What happened? She was cooking fish and a raw onion fell in. It never happened before! A raw onion, unpeeled, should fall into the fish?! And so it's a sign that something is not kosher around here.

So the rabbi was listening to her. He said it's a good question. "It's a good *shailah* you asked. It's kosher, but see that it doesn't happen anymore."

When she walked out, the people who were there said, "Rabbi, what kind of joke is this? An onion in the fish? That's not a *shailah*."

So the rabbi said, "If I would tell her it's nothing at all, then next time, if a drop of milk falls into the meat soup, she would also think it's nothing. Therefore, she has to know every *shailah* is important, so that she should ask no matter what."

Protecting the Torah

We care so much about the Torah, about the will of Hashem being fulfilled, that we want everyone to keep everything. That's why we go out of our way to prevent mishaps; we do whatever possible to not be a stumbling block for others.

And that's the first reason for the principle of *maris ha'ayin*. Even when someone is not actually sinning, he doesn't want his example, his behavior, to beget any sins. And therefore, the conscientious Jew who wants to uphold the Torah among the nation is careful to avoid doing something that may seem wrong in the eyes of people; because if they see you do that, they'll say, "Well, if he can do that, we can do it too," and they'll do more than you do. That's the principle as it's understood in general.

But actually, there's more to it than that. It's not only because of the effect that your example might have on others by misleading them into sin. Even without that; *merely the effect on your name, how you're perceived*, that's enough to forbid *maris ha'ayin*. It's not enough that you *are* innocent and Hashem *knows* you're innocent; you have to *appear* innocent **בְּעֵינֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל**, *in the eyes of the Jewish people*. You have to be considerate of your reputation.

So let's say that man was going into a *treife* restaurant to use the public phone. And the only person who sees him is a *frum* Jew, a black hatter. Now, this *frum* Jew won't be more lax because of you – he's a very strict Jew, let's say, and he'll never walk into a *treif* restaurant; even if it was a *glatt* kosher McDonald's, the name already smells bad to him – so you don't have to worry about that. No matter! Just that he might suspect you, that he might have a complaint in his heart against you, that's already a problem. He's wrong! He's absolutely wrong! But still, **וְהֵייתֶם נְקִיִּים מִה'** – *You have to be innocent not only in the eyes of Hashem, וּמִיִּשְׂרָאֵל – but also in the eyes of Yisroel.*

Clean With Everyone

That's the great exhortation of Shlomo Hamelech that he says in the name of Hashem: **וְנִצָּא**

הן וישכל טוב – *Be sure to find favor and good judgment, in the eyes of Hashem and the eyes of men, too* (Mishlei 3:4). That's what Hashem wants from us – we should aspire to have a good reputation. And so if you succeed in the eyes of people, that's called succeeding with Hashem! כל שרוח הבריות נוחה הימנו – *If people are satisfied with you, then Hashem is satisfied with you* (Avos 3:10).

It takes work, this obligation. Everyone should like me? Everyone should think well of me? Yes. That's included in living successfully. לעולם תהא – *Always your mind should be in agreement with the opinion of your fellow man* (Kesuvos 17a).

Always?! That's quite an obligation. It means you have to watch your step with everyone. You can't say, "I'm only for Hashem, and who cares what people think?" You have to very much care what they think – because Hashem cares!

The Stand Your Ground Law

Of course, if you're a *frum* Jew and your neighbors are irreligious and you're going out to say *kiddush levanah* – you're standing outside looking at the moon and making a *bracha* – so you can't take into consideration what they think. They think you're crazy? Who cares?! It can't be helped. Sometimes you have to stand up for your principles no matter what people will say.

So what about being *me'ureves im habriyos*, in agreement with all of your fellow men? So the *Mesillas Yesharim* (5) answers that question. He says "with your fellow man" but not with a herd of cattle. It says עם הבריות, not *beheimos*. If you're going to say *kiddush levanah* when you're on the field, and the cattle are wagging their tails at you, you don't mind the cattle. And if some people are cattle, same thing. They're not the criteria.

Otherwise, we'd have to please all the *beheimos*, all the two-legged cats and dogs in Brooklyn College and on Kings Highway. No. We're not interested in

finding favor in the eyes of low characters; they're not the criteria for us. You're not going to dress in overalls or dungarees because they do. If you're a woman, you're not going to dress in just a pocketbook because the ladies on Kings Highway, the degenerates, think that's the sign of aristocracy.

Be All Right With the Right Ones

But with the right people, you should always make the right impression. And anyhow, most people on the street are decent people – there are decent boys and girls that go to college, too – and with them you have to make a hit. When it comes to very many ways of good behavior, of polite speech, even the degenerates will admire a demonstration of good character. This I can tell you. All these degenerates allow themselves the liberties of running wild not because they actually think it's good. And when they see someone who is behaving in a decent way, they respect him.

And it's very important! Being concerned about what the people are saying about you, what they think about you, that's called Torah living. It's a big part of living successfully: What do people think about me?

Now, you might think that it's an exaggeration, that it's not so important, so we'll learn together a *possuk* in Mishlei (11:26) and see how much it really matters. It's talking there about a farmer who has a big store of grain but he's saving it up because he knows that the price is going up. He's a profiteer and he knows that a drought is coming so if he'll wait a little longer he'll get rich. And so he's מנע בר – *he refuses to sell to the public and in the meantime people are hungry*.

So Mishlei says, "Don't do it! You know why? Because יקבהו לאום – *the people are going to curse you*." That's what he proposes as the reason why he shouldn't do it.

We The People

Now, the question is, why do you need the nation? Where is Hakadosh Baruch Hu? Why are

we threatening him with the nation's displeasure? This man is holding back the provisions that everybody needs for their sustenance just because of a selfish motive, so certainly Hashem Himself will curse him. So why does it mention here only that the nation will curse him?

And the answer is that we're learning a very big principle: How important it is that *people* should be satisfied with you! What Hakadosh Baruch Hu will do about it is entirely separate bookkeeping. Of course, there's an accounting what Hashem thinks about you, and what He intends for you, but there's a separate register where Hashem inscribes what *people* think about you. Because He cares about that! It's important to Him.

And so וְהִיְתָם נְקִיִּים מִה' וּמִיִּשְׂרָאֵל means that it's the obligation of every Jew to live in a way that fosters a favorable impression in other people's minds. Don't do anything that might cause a Yisroel to suspect you, to condemn you, to look down on you. "Included in being innocent in My eyes," Hashem says, "is being innocent in My people's eyes. I want you to be decent in the eyes of people, that people should think you're a good person." And if the eyes of Yisroel will look at you fondly and approvingly then Hakadosh Baruch Hu Himself will approve of you more.

Part II. Impressing With Clothing

Dressed to Impress

There's a Gemara in Bava Metzia (52a) that makes the following statement: עָשִׂיק לְגִבָּה – *A person should rather spend money to put clothes on his back,* וְשׂוֹי לְכַרְסָּה – *and buy cheaper food.* It means it's better to eat inexpensive food in order to save money to buy dignified clothing.

Now, you might think, "What's so important about clothing? You want to make a good impression on people?!"

The answer is yes. That's the will of Hashem, that you should not look like a vagabond. It's a

sickness today when people think it's a virtue to look wild, informal. They put on jeans. Many times, they even have artificial patches painted on, with splotches that were put there in the factory to make it look dirty. You must know that when a person dresses like a bum he becomes a bum; he loses his motivation to be decent.

I met someone on the street once; he stopped me to ask me a question. I was frightened at first; he looked like a bum. Then he told me he's a college professor, an Orthodox Jewish college professor. A professor?! A college professor – or anyone – who looks like he was thrown out of a Bowery Lodging House, *mamash* like a tramp, has no reason to be a decent personality.

I Do Need Your Beketche

On the other hand, when a man dresses in a dignified way, it has a positive impression on him. I always tell you when you see a policeman in a blue uniform, to some extent you feel that this man is on the side of the law. Now, why should that be? After all, we know that policemen are many times recruited from Bedford Stuyvesant, and you can be pretty confident that before they had a uniform they were on the other side of the law. Yesterday he used to walk out of the store without paying, his pockets bulging, and now he's wearing his police uniform and you trust him to arrest the other fellow with bulging pockets. It's remarkable!

I'm not saying he's going to withstand the temptation if somebody offers him big money, but ordinarily we feel confident that this former lawbreaker is now on our side. And a big reason is the uniform! He lives up to his clothing. That's the efficacy of a uniform, the impression that clothing makes on the one who wears it.

It doesn't mean you have to buy the most expensive garments. You don't go out dressed like a fop, a gentile dandy, squirting perfume over your body; that's out of the question. But you should be dressed in a dignified way. Your shoes must be shined always. So take a look right now and criticize

yourselves. It's not right. You shouldn't have dusty shoes. If you wear a black hat, it must be dusted. Otherwise switch to a gray one. These things make a very big difference; you actually become more dignified inside.

But that's not our subject now, the inside. What we're saying now is that it's not only because you'll become more dignified by means of dignified clothing; *it's the impression you make on others that's important.* A Jew is expected to look dignified in the eyes of others.

You must be a man whose clothing creates the impression of reliability, a man who conforms to law and order, a person you can trust, a solid citizen. Always think, "How will this redound to my honor? Will it give me a higher standing in the eyes of my peers?" The impression you make with your garments is important.

Spiritual Garments

Now, once we understand that we care about impressions, so there is a more fundamental way of impressing people; there's another, more important, set of garments that make an impression, even more than physical garments. And that's the garments of good *middos*.

I'll explain that. We have a soul, and after we finish our period of service in this world, the soul goes into the Next World; it lives on forever according to how you clothed it while you were still in this world. Whatever *seichel* – it means intelligence and ideals and attitudes – and whatever *middos* – those are your character attributes – that you put on in this world become an integral part of your being; they'll clothe your soul forever and ever.

Like it states about the "woman of valor" near the end of Mishlei. He speaks about *eishes chayil* and he praises her that עֵז וְהָדָר לְבוּשָׁהּ – *her garments are strong and beautiful*, and because of that וַתִּשְׂחַק לְיוֹם אַחֲרוֹן – *she laughs at the last day*. It means she's

not afraid when her time will come to leave this world.

Now, what kind of garments is she wearing? Something she picked up at Macy's? A dress that she trekked out to Manhattan to buy in order to impress her neighbors? Are those עֵז וְהָדָר, strong and long-lasting?

The Most Valuable Attire

No. All the garments that we purchase in this world are neither. They're surely not lasting because however long they last they won't last with you in the Next World. And whether they're beautiful or not today, tomorrow they're "old fashioned" anyhow. It's so ridiculous; what you paid good money for yesterday you're ashamed to walk out in the street wearing today because it's out of style. So no clothing in this world is really עֵז, strong, and הָדָר, beautiful.

So what are these durable and beautiful garments of this woman of valor? It's her *middos* and her *seichel*, her Torah mind. All the garments that come from our learning, our training, our listening, acquiring certain attitudes and *middos* like patience and keeping your mouth closed and not being vicious and trying to make people feel good. All kinds of qualities of character become garments for our *neshamah*.

And when a person leaves this world, an *eishes chayil* or an *ish chayil*, so even though you'll leave behind your family in sorrow – they're all weeping – as soon as you cross the border you begin to laugh; וַתִּשְׂחַק לְיוֹם אַחֲרוֹן because you're wearing those precious garments you acquired in this world!

Undergarments and Overgarments

There are two kinds of *middos* that clothe our soul. One is exterior, more superficial, like physical clothing, and one is intrinsic; it's actually part of your *neshamah*.

I'll explain that. If a person learns the right *seforim* and listens to the right teachers and trains himself, he becomes inwardly a good man. He

clothes his soul with various beautiful garments. He actually becomes a patient man. He becomes a kind and generous man. He becomes an understanding man, a humble man. And that person has succeeded greatly! A tremendous achievement! Even if in this world that man or woman, that boy or girl, is not recognized so much, in the Next World he'll be placed on a high pedestal.

But there is another success that's easier to achieve and it's also very valuable. And that's the success of making a good impression. It doesn't mean he is good, *but he has the good sense to act in a good way*. How important that is, to learn how to behave in the right way even though you're not good!

So this *tzaddik* says, "Oh no, not me. I want Hashem to love me, that's all. I want to find favor in the eyes of Hashem. I don't care about people."

So Hashem says, "You don't care about people? Then I don't care about you either." כָּל שְׂרוּחַ הַבְּרִיּוֹת נוֹחָה הֵימָנוּ – If people are satisfied with you, רִיחַ הַמְּקוֹם נוֹחָה הֵימָנוּ – then Hashem is satisfied with you (Avos 3:10).

Cunning Chicanery

You hear that? A tremendous statement! Hakadosh Baruch Hu is actually insisting that you have to exert yourself so that people should like you. And even though you're not likable, and even though Hashem Himself knows you're not likable, He wants people to like you anyhow. It's one of the marks of success in this world.

It means that your job is to be a cunning fellow; not to follow your nature. You have to be artificial all the time. You hear that word? Artificial! Not to be natural. A natural person sits in public and puts his fingernail into his ear and then inspects the results of his mining expedition. I was saying a *shiur* in the yeshiva and I saw a young man do that so I decided that being natural is not such a good thing.

Natural means you get down on your hands and feet and eat from a plate on the floor; why bother

to sit at a table? And you don't need a spoon either. You'll put your face into the plate and you'll lick it up. That's natural. A person has to be *unnatural*. He sits at a table with a spoon and eats in a way that doesn't make his face or his clothing soiled by the food. It's uncomfortable, maybe, but it pays to be unnatural.

Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, "I didn't make you to be natural. Leave that for the monkeys. I made you to be a man, and a man is always the one who fights back against his instincts and continues to maintain the proprieties, the *derech erez*, that cause people to think well of him. That's the whole achievement of a person."

Impress the World

That's what we have to aspire to, for that set of garments that the world puts upon us, that they *think* we are such and such. What we are *actually*, Hashem knows, but we have created in the eyes of the multitude a certain uniform that we're wearing that gives us credit in their eyes, and that's a very big achievement; it's the achievement of וְהִיטַתֶּם נְקִיִּים מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל.

Of course, even in the eyes of non-Jews it's worth getting a good name. I did that once. I was in a hospital for a little while, so I said to myself, "I'm going to utilize my stay here to make a hit with all the nurses."

I made it a project and I worked on it. As each nurse came in I complimented her and I thanked her. When I left I had a very good reputation. They spoke about it later to other people who came subsequently.

Impressing the Frummeh

And so our goal is to be good in the eyes of everyone. But the criteria that really confers upon your head a crown of glory is if the *frum* Torah community will say that this man is a fine person. And even though he knows that he wasn't worthy of that title, he endeavored all his life to create the impression that he was a worthy man. Who will

look into his heart? Only Hashem. But men were deceived by him.

He smiled at everyone. It could be he was grouchy inside but he put on the garment of a *sever panim yafos*. He acted with humility among others. Maybe inside he's a *baal gaavah*, I can't tell you. But he made a very good impression. They saw he came every morning to the *beis haknesses*. How much *kavanah* he had in his mind they didn't see. They saw that he didn't run out early; he waited until the end of the services. They saw he didn't quarrel with anybody in the *beis haknesses*.

He was always polite, always considerate. They saw that when he came early in the morning to the synagogue and it was dark he spoke quietly. People looked through the window and saw him speaking in a whisper. "Oh, that's a fine man. He doesn't want to wake us up."

They saw that when he passed by and saw a bum throw an empty beer can on the sidewalk, he walks over, picks it up and puts it in the wastebasket. "Oh," people say, "that's a fine man."

It could be you're doing it only to show off, just for ostentation, but Hakadosh Baruch Hu is happy that you're impressing people. He's happy that you're fulfilling the mitzvah of **וְהֵייתֶם נְקִיִּים מִדָּאֵל וּמִיִּשְׂרָאֵל**. "You're making a good impression on the Am Yisroel," Hashem says, "and if they're happy with you, then I'm happy with you."

Part III. Impressing One Jew at a Time

One Peanut at a Time

I'll explain this subject a little more, just to make it more practical for ourselves; we should walk out of here tonight with a plan. Because it's difficult when you hear a thing like this. "What does Rabbi Miller expect from me?" he says. "I should go out now into the world and suddenly become a paragon of behavior to everybody?" After all, **וְהֵייתֶם נְקִיִּים מִדָּאֵל וּמִיִּשְׂרָאֵל**, making a good impression on Yisroel, means that everyone in Crown Heights is praising

you. Everybody in the big *beis hamedrash* in Satmar in Williamsburg is praising you. Lakewood Yeshiva is praising you; and they're praising you in Meah Shearim, too. That's what "Yisroel" means after all; all of Yisroel.

No, it doesn't mean that. It's an excellent goal but that's not the subject here. Even though nobody is praising you except a few people in your neighborhood, that's already a success. If you made a good impression on one person in shul and also one person in the office, that's also good. After all, you don't start becoming a millionaire overnight. First you start making a few dollars here and a few dollars there. You see that sometimes; a man who started by selling peanuts on the corner, a little stand, and he made a few dollars here, a few dollars here, and today he's a millionaire. He sells peanuts all over the world.

Fooling Your Wife

So begin by gaining a reputation with one person. Let's say you're about to get married. So if you could deceive your bride into thinking you're a fine person it's a very big achievement. Try to deceive your wife. Never show her who you really are. Always be an actor. Try to make a good impression on her. In your heart you know you're a cad. "I know I'm a mean fellow but I'm going to make a bluff. I'll come home tonight and act nice to her. Maybe she'll see through me, but who cares." Always try to be your best. All your life you try to bluff her.

Let's say you're sometimes angry at your wife and you're not a kind-hearted fellow, so wait till she's out of earshot and mutter under your breath so she shouldn't hear. Say what you want to say and then come back again and continue to maintain the act. It's a very big achievement! All your life you have concealed your feelings from your wife.

The Best Miscommunication

Now, some people think it's not communication. It's not honest. "But we need open communication,"

they say. Open communication is an opening into Gehenom! Honesty is not always the best policy. Hakadosh Baruch Hu looks at the results, and the result of such honesty would be a flare-up. And therefore, keep quiet and your wife will think you're a nice fellow. So what if you're really not nice? Make a hit with your wife anyhow. Let her think you're a *tzaddik*. And a wife with her husband, same thing.

And even though you're married sixty years and you have an opinion of each other that was formed already, it's never too late. "From this day on, I'm going to try to make a hit with my husband. No matter what I think of him! I'm going to say 'please' when I want some money. I'll say 'thank you.' He has to give the money anyhow, but I'll say 'thank you.' When he sneezes, I'll say *tzu gezunt*. Whatever I can do to be polite to my husband I'll try to do it." And the same goes for him towards his wife. When she hands him the supper or the breakfast, he should say "thank you." Always.

Giving Up on Your Wife

Now, if that's too difficult because it's too long and grueling a test – you prefer to begin with something more simple – so choose, let's say, a distant brother-in-law who comes once in a while from Chicago. If he lives nearby, it's hard, but since he comes once in a while, it's easy to be on good terms. So make it a principle, "I'm going to make a hit with him."

It's easy to deceive him. You see him only once in a rare while, at a family wedding. Go over to him, "Jake, I haven't seen you for a long time. How are you doing? You're looking fine, Jake." And speak to him friendly words.

Now, don't waste his time too much. Don't be a bore. Don't talk too much. Say a few kind words and then get away from him. Leave him alone and all night be on your best behavior with him. And now you have won one fan, one admirer. He'll go back to Chicago with the idea, "He's a great fellow." He's going to speak about you in the very best of terms.

You've succeeded. At least one person thinks well of you.

Now, once you succeed with him, you might be ambitious to go ahead and succeed with your brothers-in-law who live in Brooklyn. A little more difficult, but why not? However, even if you don't, that one, just Jake alone, is a very great success.

A Little Advocate

Even if it's a child. Let's say your neighbor's little boy was just *bar mitzvah*. Walk over to the boy, press his hand warmly and give him a *bracha* he should become a *gadol b'Yisroel*. He's waiting for the check, but still if you tell him how handsome he looks in his new suit or how well you see he *davens*, those words are also important. And you know that you've done something valuable. That boy all his life will remember you favorably.

So you'll say, "A little boy? It's important he should think well of me?" Absolutely. At least you have one person who will speak up for you! I once spoke about that here. **אם יש עלי מלאך מליץ אהר מני אלה** – *If you have one angel who will speak up for you out of a thousand that are accusing you.* A thousand angels are accusing you but one *malach* speaks up to defend you, **להגיד לאדם ישרו** – *to speak of a man's righteousness* (Iyov 33:23-24).

A Little Boy Saves the Day

Imagine the Day of Judgment. All the people you know come to speak against you. On the big Yom Hadin in the Next World, Hakadosh Baruch Hu summons not only *malachim* with wings. People with whom you have dealt are summoned, whether they want to come or not. Your mother-in-law, your employees, your neighbors, they're all subpoenaed. They're dragged into the *Beis Din* and their mouths are opened up against their will and they're forced to say the truth, what they think of you.

It doesn't look so good.

Finally one little boy comes in and he pipes up: "Hold up! I have something to say. I like that man.

finding His favor is when you utilize all the people with whom you come in contact! Try to make a hit with everybody. Of course, don't do anything wrong in order to gain their approval – but do everything right.

And if you do it with a plan then, little by little, the number of those who speak up for you will increase, and the time will come when not only one *malach* will speak up to defend you, a thousand *malachim* will speak up in a great choir with one voice to Hashem, “This man is a good man!” And Hashem will say, *מְצָאֲתֵי כִפָּר* – “This man has been redeemed by the public approval that he gained in his lifetime.”

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Let's Get Practical

Don't Be Yourself

In this week's *parsha*, the Torah teaches us about the importance of maintaining a sterling reputation in the eyes of Hashem as well as in the eyes of man.

This week, *bli neder*, I will aim to be more mindful of my appearance, and I will go out of my way each day to find at least one person to enlist as a future advocate by being especially nice to that individual.

This week's booklet is based on tapes

71 – The Gift of Clothing | **425** – One Thousandth of a Defending Angel | **568** – Shemoneh Esrei XIV | **785** – Gaining a Good Name
879 – Gaining Approval

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Q&A WITH RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"l



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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 *רְאוּי לְהִיּוֹת מֵצִיר וְרוֹאֵג עַל חֲרִיבָן עַל הַמְקֻרָשׁ בֵּית הַמְקֻרָשׁ* – 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 *הוּא ה' הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים* 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 *הוּא ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ* הוא ה' האלוקים, *בְּכֹל הָאָרֶץ מְשַׁפְּטִין*, 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 *הַשְּׂכִינָה שׁוֹרָה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל*. 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