

PARSHAS SHOFTIM



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ARE YOU BEING MAMLICH HASHEM?

YOUR REAL GOAL IN YIDDISHKEIT

As we approach Chodesh Elul - and, by extension, Rosh Hashanah - let's explore an idea that is not only relevant to the Yom HaDin but also deeply applicable throughout the year. It's never too early to understand this important topic and apply it to our everyday lives. If somebody asks you, "What's this all about: being *frum*, wearing *tefillin*, wearing *tzitzis*, observing Shabbos, being involved with *talmud Torah*. What's the overall goal? Where does it end?" Many people would not know what to say. They are not sure. Imagine a guy has a business, and you would say to him, "What is the goal of your business?" and he tells you, "I'm not sure what it is."

The goal is as follows. We say it every day in *davening*, it's *והיה הי למלך על כל הארץ ביום ההוא יהיה הי אחד ושמו אחד*. Rashi says it: *שמע ישראל הי אלקינו*, right now Hashem is our Hashem. In the future, Hashem will be *echad*. The *sof davar*, the end is that Hashem should be recognized as the *מלך על כל הארץ*.

However, we need to analyze this. Generally, when somebody has a goal, whatever he does to reach that goal is just a preparation for it. For example, let's say I'm taking a trip from Detroit to Cleveland, the trip is only a preparation to get to the destination. But sometimes, the preparation that a person does is already the beginning of the action. So the question is like this: When we are being *frum* is it *pshat* that right now we're not involved in *מלך על כל הארץ*, but someday we will reach that goal and all our *frumkeit* is the trip to get to that ultimate point? Or is the *pshat* that right now, everything we do is being *mamlach Hashem*? Our *tzitzis* and our *tefillin*, and everything we do - we're in the process of making a Hashem *מלך על כל הארץ*?

So the answer to that question is that everything we do is the process of being *mamlach Hashem*. It says in the *mishnah* in *Avos* (6:11), quoting a *pasuk* from Isaiah (43:7), *כל הנקרא בשמי*, "everything that's called by My name," everything I created, Hashem said, *לכבודי בראתי*, "I created for My *kavod*." Many people have heard this *Chazal*, and they approach it with difficulty. They say, "Everything Hashem created is for His *kavod*?" Are we supposed to seek *kavod*? Some people give an answer that Hashem could seek *kavod*. We can't seek *kavod*. Who are we to seek *kavod*? We don't deserve any *kavod*. But Hashem He is *מלך גאות לבש*. He is entitled to it. He is the exception to the rule. Is that the *pshat*? What is the meaning of everything Hashem created, Hashem says, "It's for My *kavod*?"

THE POSSIBILITY TO BE MAMLICH HASHEM

So you first have to know what the meaning of *kavod* is. I'm going to share with you something from the Vilna Gaon. The Vilna Gaon writes in his *agados* in *Brachos* *זו מלכות*. Whenever you mention the word *kavod* of Hashem, we're talking about *malchus Hashem*. In the morning *davening* we say *טוב יצר כבוד לשמו*. What does that mean? *טוב יצר כבוד לשמו*.

If you look in *Siddur Ishei Yisrael* with the *peirush* Avnei Eliyahu, you'll see a wonderful explanation from the Vilna Gaon.¹ The Vilna Gaon's son, R' Avraham writes *שמעתי מאבי מורי*, as follows. *טוב יצר כבוד לשמו*, Hashem made the *kavod leshmo*. Hashem is in the business of *kavod*. But seemingly, he says, it makes no sense. Hashem is so far above and beyond this world, like the *passuk* says *הנה השמים ושמי השמים*, the heavens and the heavens above the heavens, all cannot support Hashem. Hashem is bigger and above any comprehension and *hasagah*. But Hashem did an amazing thing. You know what Hashem did? Hashem created *shamayim* and He created *shemei hashamayim*. For what purpose? For the purpose of the *shefalim*, of the lowly ones, the human being, in the *olam hatachton*, in the lower world. And Hashem created everything in the world to bestow His light and His blessing onto those *shefalim* below. For what reason? So that people could proclaim Hashem is the *melech* by giving Him *kavod*. So listen to what the Gaon says. *ואין לך טובה*, there is no greater *tovah* than this *tovah* that Hashem did. Hashem created the *metziyus* of *טוב יצר כבוד לשמו*; He gave us the ability to give Him *kavod*, and that is the greatest *tovah*! It's not to fulfill His need for honor, but it is to elevate man to a higher status of being able to interact with Hashem.

So from now on when you *daven shacharis* and you say *טוב יצר כבוד לשמו*, this is what you should be thinking: *Tov*, do you want to know what is the greatest *tovah* that Hashem created for me and you? That you and I are capable of giving *kavod leShmo*. We who are *pi'ach*, ashes. In our relationship to Hashem, we have even less significance than a speck of

¹ טוב יצר כבוד לשמו. שמעתי מאבא מארי הגאון זצלה"ה על דרך ישעי' (מג, ז) כל הנקרא בשמי ולכבודי בראתי וגו', האומנם שמים ושמי השמים לא יכללוהו הוא רוצה בכבוד השפלים שבעולם השפל, וכל עולמות העליונים משמשים ונותנים מאור ושפע לעולם התחתון בעבור יתנו כבוד לשמו, וזהו טוב שאין למעלה ממנו שיצר כבוד לשמו, עכ"ל.

dust on the floor has in relation to us. You should know that. Dust on the floor has more *chashivus* in proportion to me than I have to Hashem - because I'm nothing to Hashem. I'm a creation of Hashem, by Hashem. I'm a figment of Hashem's imagination. The piece of dust on the floor is a *briah*. I'm a *chashuve briah* but dust is also a *briah*. *Klapei* Hashem, I'm *gornisht*. אין עוד מלבדו. Zero. And yet Hakadosh Baruch Hu created a *matzav* in which I could give Him *kavod*, and He's *mashpia* on me *ohr* and He says, "I'm letting you give Me *kavod*." That's the greatest *chessed* that Hakadosh Baruch Hu created in the world. אין לך חסד גדולה מזאת. You don't understand what kind of *chessed* this is. *Tov*, the greatest *tovah*, יצר כבוד לשמו.

When the passuk says בראתיו לכבודי בשמי הנקרא בשמי, it means everything I created. Everything has My name on it. It's so that you could make Me a *melech*.

Now, I want to explain something. With a *melech* there's a rule that says, אין מלך בלא עם. There's no *melech* without an *am*, without a nation. But when it comes to Hakadosh Baruch Hu - *chas veshalom* to say such a thing, that a *melech* who has no people, who has no subjects, is not a king! A king is only a king relative to how many subjects he has, five subjects, ten subjects, twenty subjects. If somebody were to say that Hashem is not a *melech* without an *am*, that's *pashut kefirah*. אין מלך בלא עם. There is no bigger *apikorsus* than this, because that's like saying that Hakadosh Baruch Hu lacks something, or He's missing something. And *chas veshalom* to say Hashem is missing something. You can't say that. So what's the *pshat* then?

Hashem had a choice. He could either be the מושל על העולם, that means He rules because He is the boss. He made everything. He owns everything. He is everything. He is the boss. That would be the natural thing. He's the *moshel*. But no, Hashem created a *chessed nifla* and He said: "I want to give creatures an ability to be *mamlach* Me, so I'm going to create an institution in the world called *malchus*. I'm going to create an institution called 'make Me a king.' Let's play 'make me a king.' And I'm going to give you the *koach* to make Me a king. I'm going to even make it look to you that you can give Me *koach* and you can take away My *koach*, תנו עוז לאלקים, give strength to Hashem." We can weaken מעלה של ממליא through our behavior. It's just the system that Hashem created. It's a system called "*melech*."

TO BE MAMLICH HASHEM DESPITE THE HURDLES

Now, in order for me to give *kavod* to Hashem, you know what I have to be? I have to be a human with the ability to choose. You know why? Let's say I'm a *malach*. A *malach* can't make Hashem a *melech* because a *malach* has no free choice. The whole idea of making Hashem a *melech* means to say this. *Meluchah* by definition, says the Vilna Gaon, means you are choosing a leader for yourself by your will. If you don't have a *bechirah*, if you don't have a choice whether to choose or not to choose, you didn't choose. That's why a *malach* could never be *mamlach* Hakadosh Baruch Hu, because a *malach* has no *safek* about the existence of Hashem. Therefore, Hashem had to put us in the *matzav* of free will. In that *matzav* of *shiflus* Hashem created powerful *kochos hara*. The *koach* of *yetzer hara* - the whole *koach* of all kinds of distractions, all kinds of false philosophies, *shtusim vehevalim* that are rampant in the world today, from the beginning to the end; Hashem, not Hashem; yes *hishtadlus*, not *hishtadlus*; yes *teva*, *nisht teva* - Hashem created all of these choices only to enable us to be *mamlach* Him.

I spoke to a *rosh yeshivah* not long ago. He says he's involved in a *machlokes*. I told him, "You don't believe in the Ribono Shel Olam?" He tells me, "Of course I do. But I'm talking *al pi teva*." I asked him, "Excuse me? What's *al pi teva*? I'll make believe I didn't hear those words from you. That is *kefirah*." I said, "My ears do not like to hear such words. Take them back." I said, "People don't talk about Hakadosh Baruch Hu like you talk." I couldn't believe it. You are a *ben Torah*. You've been learning for seventy years, eighty years?! This is what you say? You say that you're talking *al pi teva*? *Al pi teva*?! That's like saying, "*Nisht oif Shabbos geredt*. Let's talk about this." There is nobody who could challenge anybody without Hashem.

The world is full of nonsense. And our job is to choose to be *mamlach* Hashem in spite of the nonsense. That's how Hashem becomes a *melech*. You know what we say in Rosh Hashanah *davening*? *Veyishmeu rechokim* and the *rechokim*, those people who are far away from Hashem, they will hear about Hashem, *veyavou*, and they're going to come. And what are they going to do? ויתנו לך כתר מלוכה. *Davka* the *rechokim*, people who are far away, people who had all their *shtusim* and *hevalim*. They were caught up. They were *meshubad* to the *malchus harishah*. The *yetzer hara* was their *rebbe*, their *rav*, their agent, their boss, their decider, and they made a decision to go over to the side of Hashem. אין לך המלכה גדולה מזאת, that's what *emese malchus* is. *Malchus* from a *rachok*, from a person who is distant from Hashem, is a much bigger *malchus* than from someone who is *karov*. The closer you are to Hashem, the less *malchus* there is. והיה הי למלך על כל הארץ. It means on the *aretz* of *rechokim*. That's the goal.

DON'T JUST BE A CAN COLLECTOR

All of our performance of *mitzvos* has to be measured by that barometer. That has to be the barometer. Are you being *mamlach* Hashem more than you were last year? If yes, then you're moving forward. If you're the kind of guy who says, "Ah, I have a lot more questions this year. I'm not so much this year, like I was last year." Then you're going backward. "No! But I'm still *frum*! I'm still *frum*." No you're not! You're going backwards! The idea is to be more *mamlach* Hashem. You've got to let go of part of your baggage that's pulling you away. You've got to minimize your *shtusim*.

One guy told me, "I grew up modern." I said, "Oh, that's sad. So you should stay modern?" I know people who grew up not well, but hopefully, they try to get better. When we grew up, it wasn't as sophisticated. Today, you can take a lot of struggling children and help them have better and more productive lives. Imagine a father says, "Well, when I grew up. There was nothing. All these things they have today weren't around, so I'm going to stick with this." He's a *meshugene* if he says this. If you can move forward, if you can make a kid a better citizen, of course you should do that. Yiddishkeit is not 'collecting cans.' I say, for many people, living Yiddishkeit is 'can collecting.' Have you ever seen these people in New York? They have these big bicycles, and they have these huge bags of cans of soda sticking out from the back, the sides, the front. In the middle, you see this guy sticking his head out. I always say, "That's a *frumme Yid*. That's a *frumme Yid*." My wife once said, "What? That's a *frumme Yid*? The guy is Indian." "But that's what some *frumme yidden* look like to me."

"I'll explain to you what I mean. It says in *Chazal* (Brachos 57a) that the lowest Jew, the worst Jew, is מלאים מצות כרימון, is full of *mitzvos* like a pomegranate." A pomegranate, they say, has six hundred and thirteen seeds. Do you know what that is? It's unbelievable! Here is a Jew that is the lowest. He's not a high Jew. Here is how he fulfills his *mitzvos*: *Tzitzis*, *tefillin*, *krias shema*, *birchas haTorah*, Torah, he makes a hundred *brachos* every day. He *davens shacharis*. He *davens minchah*. He *davens ma'ariv*. He does *netilas yadayim*. He has millions of *mitzvos*. But he's still the same person. Do you know why? He's that guy on the bicycle! He's got lots of cans! He is a can collector! There's no growth and there's no forward movement. There's no goal. He just wants to get his ten cents for his *mitzvos*. "I'm looking for my ten cents. I *davened ma'ariv*. I got my ten cents. Another ten cents, another can in the bag." That's all he does.

HASHEM IS THE SOLE CAUSE OF EVERYTHING

We don't want that. A *mentch* has to become better. We want the *mentch* to become a better *mentch*. If you're not *mamlich* Hashem, if your *da'as* is not developed, if you still have your *hashkafah* that Hashem isn't *zan u'mefarnes* you, if you still have your *hashkafah* that people get sick because of natural causes, if you still have your *hashkafah* that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is not *borei* the *olam*, if you still have your *hashkafah* that you have to take care of yourself, if you still have your *hashkafah* that you're earning your money, if you even use that word, 'I earn my living,' that's *mamash kefirah*. I'm telling you, *Rabbosai*, you don't realize it's really not a Yiddische *zach* to say, "I earned my money." I know we grew up like that. It's America. But really, you don't earn anything. Hashem sends you *parnassah*. You have to understand you can't say, "I earned my money." You stop yourself from going forward if you do. You have to realize you don't earn money. Hashem is *mefarnes* and *zan*. He decides to the nickel and to the penny how much we're going to have.

Then you come and say, "Oh, that guy, he's a smart guy. He's a sharp guy. He's well connected with networking." That's *kefirah*. That's *mamash kefirah*. He doesn't go forward, he doesn't grow, with these ideas.

I just saw this yesterday. A big *macher* in Eretz Yisrael once went to Rav Chatzkel Levenstein when he was a *bachur* in the Mir. He was a foreigner from a different country and there was another *bachur* in the Mirrer Yeshivah in Europe who was also from that foreign country. This other *bachur* had a problem with his lower intestines. He had weak intestines, and he had to have surgery. The sick *bachur* went to the doctor. The doctor said, "Emergency. It's life-threatening. Run to Vilna," the doctor said, "and get the surgery." So this *bachur* goes to the *mashgiach*, Rav Chatzkel Levenstein and tells him, "There's a *bachur* in the *yeshivah* in a *matzav* of *sakanas nefashos* because he has a sickness." It's called a *shlepe kishke* in Yiddish. He tells Rav Chatzkel Levenstein, "It's an emergency, and he has to go immediately. Can I accompany the *bachur*?" He said that Rav Chatzkel instantly, literally turned white, and he *started* going like this (hyperventilating). "Vus? Vus? Vus?" The *bachur* said, "In my foolishness, I thought when I told him the *bachur* was in danger, he cared for every *bachur* so much that he was *pashut* overwhelmed, but my thought was knocked out of me in one second." He said, "I never heard the *mashgiach* scream like he screamed then. He screamed with all his *kochos*, 'Vus zugt du?!' He said, 'What are you saying? *Es shtarb fun a shlepe kishke?! Mir shtarb nisht fun a shlepe kishke*, you don't die from a weak intestine!! You die from *cheit*! *Cheit* is *meimis*.'" The *gemara* (Brachos 33a) says: אין ערנד ממית אלא החטא ממית, the scorpion doesn't kill you, an *aveirah* is what kills you. There's nothing else but *cheit*. He said, "That message got into my *kishkes* for the rest of my life."

THINKING ABOUT HASHEM'S REASONS

I'll tell you, not long ago, there was a story. A fellow calls me up from Toronto. He can't talk to me. His wife is talking to me. He's in his upper thirties. His wife tells me, "We're traditional. We're not religious. We've been becoming a little bit more interested since we arrived in Toronto. My husband has a brain tumor, and already more than 60% to 70% of his brain is metastasized. The doctor says he has two months left, maybe if he's lucky, three months." I said, "Why are you calling me?" She said, "Somebody told me to call you." I said, "You understand I'm not a doctor and I'm not Hashem. But I do understand to some degree that nothing happens that is not from Hashem. Every single thing happens from Hashem. Could you understand that?" I said, "If Hashem did it, and Hashem is doing it, and Hashem is controlling it, and Hashem is making it grow at this rate, do you understand there's only one thing that should fill your head? Your thoughts should be one thought and one thought only: 'How do I get through to Hashem?'"

"Now, so long as a person thinks he has medical expertise himself or he thinks the doctor could help him, he is *boteach* in *nedivim*, he's *boteach* in *adam* but," I said, "you're at the point that trusting in people does not help you." I

said to the wife, “Does your husband understand that thought?” I explained this concept to him. Then she took the phone back. “Does he comprehend what I’m saying?” She said, “Yes.” I said, “If that’s the case, your only thought has to be: What does Hashem want from me? No more and no less.”

I said, “Let’s analyze this. Tell me why your husband can’t talk.” She said, “The tumor is growing and it’s pressing upon things. The *koach* of *dibur* is taken away from him.” I said, “I’m going to tell you where to start.” I said, “Like a doctor — no doctor guarantees anything, but this one thing I guarantee. Let’s say, a doctor says, ‘We’ll try this particular therapy,’ and it doesn’t work. You know what he does? He tells you to come back again and charges you double. He doesn’t give your money back.” I said, “Here, you don’t have to pay, and everything I tell you to do, you’re going to get *sechar*. It’s going to be a *revach*.”

I said, “We’re going to start with the following. You’re going to be *mekabel* to do all the *mitzvos* that are related to speech. That’s what we will start with. Not with your feet but speech. That means as follows. Your husband has to immediately — not yesterday, not tomorrow — immediately get somebody to come to the house to start teaching him how to *daven*, how to learn, about *lashon hara*.” I gave them a whole list. I said, “Write down everything.” I gave them a whole list of *mitzvos* to do. I said, “Start by undertaking that with a commitment.” I said, “Remember, you can’t do this like a regular person who is becoming *frum* who says, ‘I’ll go to class once a month. I’ll go to class once every six months. Once a year. I’ll go on Rosh Hashanah, on the High Holidays.’” I said, “No. This has to be taken really seriously.” I said, “I don’t know how easy it’s going to be. I understand that his condition is bad. I understand he has seizures. I understand he can’t talk. But his mind still works. Try it.”

I didn’t know what happened. I gave them this schedule. I called somebody in Toronto. I said, “Do me a favor. Look into this person and see if you can help him.” They didn’t even live in the *frum* community in Toronto. Then I didn’t hear from them again.

A few weeks ago, maybe four weeks ago, I got a call. Some lady called, and she called back literally five times in one day. My wife tells me, “There’s somebody trying to reach you. Her name is Orit.” I said, “It doesn’t ring a bell. I don’t remember who she is.” But then when she got on the phone, I remembered her. She said to me, “Yigal wants to talk to you.” He got on the phone, and I was jogging my memory. I was trying to remember who it was. He said, “I want to thank you first of all for giving me direction. Let me tell you what happened. I tried to get a *rebbe* to learn with. I got a *rebbe* immediately. It didn’t work out with the first *rebbe*. I got a second *rebbe*. It didn’t work out. Until the third one. I was ready to give up after the first one. I said, ‘Ah, this is not going to work.’ After the second one, my wife said, ‘Don’t give up. What do you have to lose?’ I got a third one. The third one worked out. He came to my house every day, and we learned.” He said, “I have to tell you that my tumor is 60% gone. And I’m not stopping.” I said, “You understand,” I explained, “that in the first place, it’s not like medicine. Medicine, you take, and when you get better, you throw the pills away, and you say *ברוך ה' שפטרני מעונשו של זה*. Yiddishkeit is not like that.” I said, “It’s a relationship with Hashem. You’ve got to stay with it and grow.” He said, “Okay.”

He said, “I’ll tell you why I’m calling.” I said, “Why are you calling me now?” He said, “I’m calling you because I still have some seizures. My speech, *baruch Hashem*, as you can see, I can talk to you, but I’m getting seizures.” I told the guy, “You’re getting seizures?” I said, “When a person gets a seizure, what happens to them? You know what happens to them? They lose their ability to do what they want. A seizure is like a temporary paralysis.” He said, “Definitely.” I said, “Hashem is not letting you do what you want to do.” I said, “Are you ready to be *mekabel* to do what Hashem wants?” He said, “What does that mean?” I said, “You know there are times Hashem wants you to rest and not move, and yet you say to Hashem, ‘Too bad.’ Now you want Hashem to let you move, but then it’s ‘too bad’ too.” I said, “You know there’s a thing called Shabbos.” I said, “A person has to rest on Shabbos. You must. There’s no ifs, and there’s no buts. You have to be *mekabel* to do this. And again, I can’t guarantee you that you will get better. The only thing I can guarantee you is if you keep Shabbos you’re going to get *sechar*.”

I haven’t heard from him yet, but *im yirtzeh Hashem*, I’ll hear good news!

MALCHUS OR SELF-FULFILLMENT?

A *mentsch* has to know that every one of us, every single episode in our lives, every single thing in our lives, must proclaim that Hashem is the *melech*. And you will ultimately do it, whether by your will or without your will. It says in the *passuk* *למענהו ה' כל פעל ה' למענהו*, every single thing that Hashem does is *lema'aneihu*, is for His *kavod* (Mishley 16:4). *Kavod* means *malchus*. Hashem is enabling me to be *mamlich* Him by whatever I have or do.

Let’s say a person doesn’t do it. In that case, the *passuk* (ibid) says, *וגם רשע ליום רע*, even a *rasha*, a person who lives his entire existence not doing anything to be *mamlich* Hashem - he was doing things for his own will, he lived to satisfy and serve himself - will end up being *mamlich* Hashem. There’s a frightening description of what a *rasha* is. I remember hearing this from a *rebbe* of mine a number of years ago, and I remember it shook me up. He said, “What do we imagine when we think of a *rasha*?” We see a guy who drives on Shabbos, a guy eating a big sandwich of *chazir* dripping with oil, a guy eating a cheeseburger. We think that is a *rasha*. A *rasha* is the following: A person who lives just for his own self-

fulfillment. He does every *mitzvah* in the book. It's not that he doesn't do *mitzvos*. He likes *mitzvos*. It's nice. He enjoys it. A little bit of culture. Maybe even *chessed*. He likes *chessed*. He likes the social thing of the *shul*. He likes shaking the *lulav*. He likes the *sukkah*. It's a little building activity. It breaks up the monotony of his life. His mother did it. His father did it. His family did it. He goes along with it. That's what he does. But his *ikar chiyus*, his *ikar tachlis* is to satisfy his body. I'm here to take care of myself. That's the *nefesh* of a *rasha*, Rabbeinu Yona says. When that guy dies, he's going to sink like lead.

WHAT DOES GIVING KAVOD TO HASHEM MEAN?

I remember thinking about that. I said, "Shrek, am I in trouble." Because when we start to think about it, we realize that we live for ourselves. That's what we live for. We live to do what we want. We're not aspiring to give *kavod* to Hashem. Giving *kavod* to Hashem means when I give up of myself for Hashem. That's *kavod*. There's my *ratzon*, I want to do this, but for the *kavod* of Hashem I'm not going to do it.

A *mentsch* has to understand this is the key to his success. His key to success is that he has to be *mamlich* Hashem. If your *tefillah* is the same as it was ten years ago, then *rachmana litzlan*. There has to be a different Shabbos, a different *tefillah*, a different Torah. You have to make Hashem the *melech al haolam*. That's what it means *על כל הארץ יהיה ה' למלך* ביום ההוא יהיה ה' אחד ושמו אחד.

I see this in my life and I'm sure if you looked into your life, you would see this constantly. Hashem follows you along. And whatever you don't do right is going to come back. You're going to have to resurrect. You're going to have to restore the *kavod* of Hashem from every act you did. And the ultimate place where it happens, it happens in Gehinom. That's what Rashi says. And over there, do you know that Korach is screaming until today? Korach had a little *machlokes* with Moshe. A little *machlokes*. He challenged Moshe and he challenged the Torah. How long did it take? How long was that *machlokes*? A couple of days. They were only in the desert for forty years. It wasn't a forty year *machlokes*. It was a few days' long *machlokes*. It started, it was over! Good bye. A hole opened up. You know what the *gemara* (Sanhedrin 110b) says? He's screaming from then on. You know what he's saying? *משה אמת ותורתו אמת* - the whole day. *משה אמת ותורתו אמת*, *nachamol* Rabosai, *משה אמת*, *a gantze tag*. Him and his people, they're screaming *משה אמת*. You know what he's doing? He's restoring the *kavod* that he took away from the Ribono Shel Olam. That's what he's doing. Korach becomes the *גם רשע ליום רע*. He's praising Hashem. He's being *mamlich* Hashem. He could have done it the other way.

A little mistake. Now, it doesn't mean if you make one mistake, it's all over and the hole is going to swallow you up in the ground like Korach and you'll be screaming Moshe Emes for so many years. But let's say a person made a mistake, a big mistake. People say, "Yes, it's costly. It's costly." And you think years later, "Naahh, what does Hashem care? Hashem cares about these things?" Yes, Hashem cares about everything.

HASHEM'S PRESENCE IN OUR LIVES

The passuk says: *כי ה' אלקיך מתהלך בקרב מחניך*, "Hashem walks in the midst of of your camp" (Devarim 23:15). Wherever there's a *frum machaneh*, wherever there's a *frum* camp, you should know Hakadosh Baruch Hu is with us.

And when you see Hakadosh Baruch Hu is hiding His face, when you see *הסתרת פניך הייתי נבהל*, "when You hid your face, I was terrified," (Tehillim 30:8), we get shocked, that's an aberration. The Seforno says, you know why that happens? Because a person brings *tumah* into his *machaneh*, and he's not *chas al kavod Hashem*. He doesn't care for *kavod Hashem*; the *kavod* of Hashem doesn't matter to him.²

WHY THERE IS NO PARNASSAH?

The Chafetz Chaim writes in a *moradige ma'amar* as follows: people come to me from all countries, and everybody is complaining there's no *parnasah*. The *chisaron* in *parnasah* is *noradig*. He says, how can it be? How can it be? Hashem is *עושה כבודו* כל יום ויום. That's against the nature of how Hashem made the world run. It's not natural law. Natural law is that everybody should have *parnasah*. Like the *gemara* says at the end of Kiddushin (82b), *אמר רב שמעון בן אלעזר*, I never saw a *tzvi* being a fig harvester. I never saw a lion being a porter, *schlepping* things. I never saw a fox running a store. And they all have *parnasah*. No college. No university. No high school. And they're supported.³

I remember when I learned this lesson in ninth grade, I decided I'm going to drop out. My intentions weren't good, for the right reasons. I was too lazy. I didn't like school. I decided I wanted to drop out. My mother said, "Oh no, you can't drop out. You're going to be a ninth-grade dropout?!" I said, "Why not?" I said, "What do I need this for? It's a waste of time." I went to my grandfather, Rav Avigdor Miller, and I asked him. He said, "It's the right thing to do in your life!" I said, "Really?!" I said, "My mother wouldn't like it." My mother is his daughter. He said, "She doesn't understand." I

² ולא יראה ברך ערות דבר. טומאה או סנוף או פסול בזרע כאמרם ז"ל (קדושין פ"י י"ח יחסין) שאין השכינה היתה שורה אלא על משפחות מיוחסות שבישראל ולכן אמרו שכל מי שהיה כתוב באסטרטיא של מלכי בית דוד היה מיוחס בלי ספק. מאחריך. כאשר תפנה אליו עורף ולא תחוש לכבודו באחד מאלה.
³ רבי שמעון בן אלעזר אומר: אם ראית מימך. תניא, רבי שמעון בן אלעזר אומר: מימי לא ראיתי צבי קייץ, וארי סבל, ושועל חנוני, והם מתפרנסים שלא בצער. והם לא נבראו אלא לשמשני, ואני נבראתי לשמש את קוני. מה אלו שלא נבראו אלא לשמשני מתפרנסים שלא בצער, ואני נבראתי לשמש את קוני – אינו דין שאתפרנסים שלא בצער? אלא שהרעותי את מעשי וקיפחתי את פרנסתי, שנאמר: "עונותיכם הטו".

said, “Zeide, you think so?” I said, “Zeide, I don’t want to do it for the right reasons.” He said, “I don’t care what reason you want to do it for. It’s the right thing! It’s a waste of time. All it does is contaminate your mind with nonsense, *shtusim*, *shekarim*, *kezavim*. It exposes you to everything anti-Hashem.” I was shocked! It was a gold mine to me.

So I went to the school and I said, “I need all my records for the last eight and a half years.” I took all the records and I threw them in the sewer on the way home from school. I said, “Ma, I just erased my past. I’m out of school!” And *baruch Hashem* I didn’t regret it. You know what my Zeide told me? I asked him, “Why did you say that?” You know what my Zeide told me? He advised me that way because in today’s world most people think, even *frumme Yidden* think, that if you don’t go to high school, you’ll have no *parnasah*. To them, it’s such a foreign thing that Hashem is running the world. Of course, they give you *dreys a hin* and a *her* and they *kler*, *azoy kler*, *aza kler*. But it’s not true.

Years later, I was offered a very big job in Eretz Yisrael, and I wasn’t so crazy about taking it. So I told the person who was offering the job, that I’ll only do it for a good sum of money. The person was shocked when I said that. I told him, “That’s the only way I can see myself doing it.” He said to me, “It’s more than I get paid, and I’m the boss of the *mosad*.” I said, “It’s your choice.” He called me back, and he said, “You know what? I want to hire you. I want to take you in.” I said, “You can afford that kind of money?” He said, “I’ll pay you in cash. I’ll pay you up to my salary on the books, and I’ll give you the rest in cash off the books. I don’t want anybody to know you’re getting paid that.” I went to a number of *anashim gedolim* to talk it over with them. I told them what they were going to pay me. They said, “You can’t trust the person. You’re getting paid off the books.” Finally, one *adam gadol*, world famous *adam gadol* asked me, “What did your Zeide say?” I said, “I didn’t talk to my Zeide yet. I’m trying to get other people’s opinions first, and then I’ll bring it to my Zeide.”

R’ AVIGDOR MILLER WEIGHS IN

After everything, I brought the question to my Zeide. My Zeide said, “Vus?” He said, “My ears can’t hear that *kefirah*.” He said, “You think that person is being *mefarnes* you?! You think that person is giving you any *parnasah*?! That person is like a caterpillar. Does a caterpillar give you *parnasah*? A caterpillar doesn’t give *parnasah*. Hakadosh Baruch Hu gives *parnasah*! And if Hashem wants to be *zan* and *mefarnes* you, He’ll be *mefarnes* you to the tune of any money. And if He doesn’t, I don’t care if fifteen guys obligate themselves.” He said, “To make a *cheshbon* of whether you can trust the guy? My ears don’t want to hear that.” That’s what a *mentsch* has to know.

The Chafetz Chaim said: “I was asked how come there is no *parnasah*?” You know what the Chafetz Chaim said? “I’ll tell you the reason. Because there’s no *tznius*.” In the *passuk* it says a *noradige zach*. Hashem is essentially our *shomer*. Hashem is *שומר עמו ישראל לעד Mamash*. So what happened? It says Hashem is *שומר עמו ישראל on one tenai*. ולא יראה בכך ערות דבר.

I’m going to tell you a story that happened just recently. A couple came to me. I’ve been guiding this man for years. He’s been struggling with *parnasah*. This guy is also depressed because he lost one job, another job. He doesn’t know how to deal with it well. He gets depressed. The guy finally came to me. I told the guy, “I *chapped* the problem. *Tznius*!” The guy looks at me and says, “What do you mean? You should know we’re *tznius*. My wife is very *tznius*. *Sheitel*, a very *frum* person.” I said, “It’s you!” I said, “It has to be. *Azay shtait* in the *gemara*.” I said, “You are giving Hashem a very bad name. Because I don’t understand, why is Hashem not being *mefarnes* you?” I said, “The Chafetz Chaim said it.” I said, “Are you careful about a specific area of purity?” All of a sudden, the guy turned white. He turns to his wife, “Could you step out of the room?” His wife said, “What’s that?” He said, “Could you please step out of the room? I have to talk to the rabbi privately.” He tells me, “I’ve got a problem with it.” I said, “That’s your problem with your *parnasah*. You have to be careful about *machshavos* of *znus*. It says it in the *passuk*.”

The Chafetz Chaim says, a *sibah* for problems with *parnasah* is the lack of *tznius*. He says, you want to know what happens? Let’s say a person’s wife doesn’t wear a *sheitel* or her sleeves are not covered. The guy makes a *brachah*. Now, it says in the Torah if you say Hashem’s name out of your mouth, בכל מקום שאזכיר את שמי, “anywhere you mention My name,” אבוא אליך וברכתך, “I’m going to come and *bentch* you” (Shemos 20:21). I’m going to give you a *brachah*, Hashem says. So you make *brachos*? You *daven*? Why doesn’t Hashem bless you? You know why? Because all your *tefillos*, you say in front of your wife. Your wife’s hair is not covered, or there’s some exposure on your wife’s body. Every *brachah* is a *brachah levatalah*. Not only does it not bring *tovos*, it brings the opposite.

You have to look in the *Chafetz Chaim*. I’m not saying this, he’s saying it. He has a *sefer* called *Geder Olam*. He writes about it *be’arichus*. There’s a *ma’amar* at the end of the *Chafetz Chaim al haTorah*. He writes about it there as well. I said, “That’s the secret of why the *parnasah* by Yidden has never been worse.” The greatest changes in Klal Yisrael came with *tznius*. And that’s why all of a sudden there was a shortage of *parnasah*. He writes this in 1923 and again in 1924, and again in a letter in 1925. There’s a *sefer* called *Me’ir Einei Yisrael*, and in the sixth *chelek*, the Chafetz Chaim has a long *ma’amar* about it. There’s a reason the problems with *parnasah* happen.

I tell people, if I see someone sitting on me, and punching me, and it’s my father, my first question is, “Why? What do you want from me? Just tell me what you want?” “I don’t want nothing.” I say, “Tell me what you want. There’s got to be a reason.” If Hashem is putting you in a *matzav*, what’s the reason? You know what they say? The economy is down. They start singing all the *apikorshese* songs, the old *goyishe* songs, all those tunes. The economy is down. This is up. This

is down. Oil is up. Food is up. *Shtusim vehavalim*. I've seen people live through all kinds of bad things. I've seen people who have *parnasah*. But you want to know something? There's a reason for it. You have to try to find the reason. If you believe in Hashem, if you're *mamlich* Hashem, why shouldn't Hashem take care of you? It doesn't make sense. It's crazy! Hashem shouldn't take care of His people? Why not? Hashem says: "Look, I'm a *shomer*"; but Hashem also says, there's a *tenai*. ולא יראה בך ערות דבר. Hashem should not see *ervah* in us.

A fellow came to the *yeshivah* to learn by me. A nice young fellow. The first thing he asks is, "Do you have wifi here?" I said, "Wifi?" I said, "There's no wifi here." I said, "Not only that, we don't allow computers." "You don't allow computers? Why not?" I said, "There's enough *tumah* in the world that's trying to permeate this building." I said, "Anybody who owns a computer is challenged." I told the guy, "Could you imagine putting the biggest *gadol hador* in a room with nothing else but ten thousand dirty magazines and locking the doors and telling him, 'Just say *Tehillim*.' I mean, you've got to look at something." I told the guy, "Do you have a *shemirah*?"

I had a *talmid*, a guy in Lakewood. I told him, "You can't get it on the internet without *shemirah*." I'm telling you, he was a very *frum* guy. He said, "I have to do it." So I told him to put on what's called SafeEyes. And what does that do? "Every time you go on a site, have them call me up. I'm your *shomer*. Put my telephone number. That way, you'll be sure you won't fall." It took him about a month to think about it, and then he said, "Okay. I'll do it." He calls me up, "It's in place." The next day, I get a phone call. "Hello, SafeEyes is calling notifying you that so and so - this fellow - just went on a site." I called the guy up and said, "What are you doing?" I said, "Are you cuckoo?" I said, "You know I'm getting the phone call." He said, "No, no. It's a mistake with the program." I said, "I'm not computer savvy, but I'm not crazy." I said, "What mistake? Did you press the wrong button on the wrong side by mistake? What happened? Your head fell on the thing and it went to a bad site? What happened?" I said, "Don't let it happen again." I can't tell you how many times I got called in the next week. Then I stopped getting calls. I meet the guy a couple of months later. I said, "What happened to that program." He says, "I got rid of it." It wasn't good. What good was that if he is not even trying to fight?

COMPUTERS: CHALLENGES TO KEVOD HASHEM

I told this *bachur*, "You want to come learn here?" I said, "If you're going to come learn here with a computer, that means you want to bring all your *shmutz*, your *tumah*, you're trying to bring *klalah* to this place. We're trying to have Hakadosh Baruch Hu's presence here so that Hashem is *shomer* us. You want to come here and drive Hashem out?" I said, "Do me a favor. Stay home. Stay where you are, where you come from." I said, "That's not what a *yeshivah* is for. A *yeshivah* is a place where we want Hashem's presence."

I had a guy come here with a *shtreimel*. I was *mamash* shocked. The guy came here, a *shtreimel*-wearing Jew. The real thing. Why did they come to me? Because I was from out of state. They were looking for somebody to talk to who was out of state. They came to talk to me. What's the problem? The wife wants to know if she should get divorced. Her husband, the *chassidische* looking man that didn't look anything remotely modern, was involved with somebody from Alabama. I said, "What?" The guy learned in Lakewood. The guy was in *kli kadosh*! The guy was a *rebbe*. The guy was an *adam chashuv*. His wife said, "Are you surprised, Rabbi Brog?" I said, "No." I said, "I'm surprised it's only with one person. I don't believe it's only one." I said, "How can there not be?" And that's what happened. היום אומר לו עשה כך ולמחר היום אומר לו עשה כך. It has to be! You're telling me you don't have a *yetzer hara*? Maybe you're a finer *mentsch*, so you don't do it every time, but I'm telling you, you have this *ta'avah* every single day. Every day I see it! It has to be like that, if you're sitting by that 'box' or in front of that screen.

"Oh, the *yetzer hara* doesn't bother me. I'm already past that," a guy tells me. "I'm past that." I said, "You know why you're past that? Because you're so deep in the mud. That's why you're past it. You don't realize it. You're drowning!" What do you mean you're past it? How can it be *shayach*? Today, a Yid that has a computer that doesn't have a *shomer* on it, I'm telling you, he is playing with his *chelek* in *olam haba* - you should know. I'm telling you a serious thing.

I want to tell you a story that happened in Eretz Yisrael which shocked me, and it will shock you too, I hope. That's when I got rid of my computer, after I saw that story, to tell you the truth. I had a friend who came here many years ago, a *talmid*. He told me, "Rebbi, if you had a computer you could be *mekarev* so many people. You could answer *shaylos*." He hooked me up and he set me up. Then I read that story. The story was that somebody died in Bnei Brak, and they buried him. The brother of the deceased then called the family to a *din Torah*. He said his plot is next to his brother's, and he doesn't want to be buried next to his brother. He said, "I didn't talk to my brother for ten years." He had no *shaychus* to him. "I want that my brother's family should put up a *mechitzah*." The *halachah* is if you bury a *rasha*, you don't put a *rasha* next to a *tzaddik*. So what do you do? You build a *mechitzah* and you make the *rasha*'s family pay to put up the *mechitzah*, so the *tzaddik* should not have to sleep next to the *rasha*. "Your brother is a *rasha*?" He said, "For ten years I haven't talked to him." They said, "Why?" He said, "I'll tell you why. We were both thinking of getting computers. We asked *shaylos*. We were told it's *asur*. I told my brother, 'If you get a computer, I'm never going to talk to you again.' And my brother got a computer." Was he a *frum* Yid? A very *frum* Yid. He died ten years later. You know what the *beis din paskened*? That his family has to pay for the *mechitzah*.

After that, I took the computer out the door. “Pooo!” I said, “Out!” “What are you doing?” I said, “Out the door! In the garbage!” My wife said, “Give it to somebody at least.” I said, “Out the door!” I said, “The *yetzer hara* got in here.” The guy tells me, “You can be *mekarev* people. This is how you do it.” *Mekarev* people, *meshugene*! I never checked mail. My son used to bother me when he came into the house, “Check the mail.” I said, “I never looked at mail. Mail is not important to me.” All of a sudden, I became a mail checker. I asked people, “Do you have the same problem?” They said, “Yeah, sure. I always check the mail.” I found that most people check a lot more than the mail. You understand? It starts with checking the mail. That’s what it starts with.

A person has to know, you have to have *rachmanus* on yourself. The Satan came in one fell swoop — and everybody’s *parnasah* is going down. They’re struggling. Why? What’s going on? This is what’s going on. כי ה' אלקיך מתהלך בקרב מחניך ולא יראה בך ערות דבר. Our job in life is to be *mamlich* Hashem. I understand this *yetzer hara*. It’s a powerful *yetzer hara*. The *yetzer hara* makes sure you don’t go anywhere without him. That’s the motto: Don’t go anywhere without me. You’re always connected. Wireless, this fi, that fi. It’s unbelievable.

A guy comes to me. A *frum* guy with *peyos*. He says, “*Rebbi*, you want to know how bad I am?” He says, “You want to know how bad I am? 32,000 files on my hard drive are *shmutz*.” 32,000! I said, “It’s no *chiddush* to me. You’re a *shoteh* that you saved it.” I said, “I’m sure plenty of people have the same thing, maybe more, but they don’t save it. That’s all.” How could you walk into the *shul* today?

When they’re going to come to the next world, it’s going to be awful. They’re not going to stand a chance. *Gornisht*. *Mamash*, it’s going to be zero. What will they say? “Hashem, I put on *tefillin*?” Hashem will say, “You drove Me away.” “You couldn’t have any *kavod* for Me,” Hashem will say. That’s what the Seforno says (*ibid*). You didn’t care about My *kavod* and you brought *tumah* into your camps. In your offices. In your libraries. In your *sifriah*. In the *beis medrash*! A guy in *yeshivah* over here. Some guy figured out how to wire the computer from the *yeshivah* to find *shmutz*. It’s unbelievable!

Rabosai, Elul is coming and it’s not too long before Rosh Hashanah either. On Rosh Hashanah we’re going to say, “*Hashem melech*.” We’re working to make *היה ה' למלך על כל הארץ*. Let us make sure that our contribution to making Hashem a *melech* is real, and we are not just going through the motions.

❁ IN SUMMARY ❁

Sometimes we have to stop and ask ourselves, what is our goal in all the *mitzvos* and *maasim tovim* that we do? That answer is that everything we do is for the purpose of being *mamlich* Hashem over the whole world. The fact that we can ‘give *kavod*’ to Hashem (so to speak, since Hashem is perfect, so we can’t exactly give Him *kavod*) by recognizing His *malchus* over us is a special creation that Hashem put in our lives which is a *tovah* for us. Hashem wants us to recognize Him in the world so that we can be *mamlich* Hashem more and more. He does not us to merely do our duty, like someone who finds something and collects it. We should be looking for and growing in how we are able to bring out the *malchus* of Hashem. Hashem, our Father, gives us episodes in our lives as opportunities to be *mamlich* Hashem from a different angle each time, by overcoming different hurdles at different stages in our lives. This week (*bli neder*) I will think of ways I can actively be *mamlich* Hashem in my life. Being *mekabel ol malchus Shamayim* in *krias Shema* is one way. In other ways, I will focus on how I can ‘give *kavod*’ to Hashem, whether is it in *shemiras ha’einayim*, or *shemiras halashon*, or guarding myself as I use a computer or other device.