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פרשת בלק

WITH

R' AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"L

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

He Is Looking

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Part I. He Reminds You

Bilaam's Confession

Everyone remembers the story of Bilaam saddling his donkey and eagerly setting out on a journey to Balak the King of Moav. He wanted to join forces with Balak and try to curse the Am Yisroel who were encamped at the Moavite border.

Now, the Torah tells us that as he was riding on his donkey down a narrow path, a *malach* stood in the middle of the road, right in front of the donkey, blocking the way. And so the donkey could not proceed.

Now Bilaam didn't see the *malach* and he didn't have time for games; he was on a mission for a king and he couldn't be delayed. And so he began to beat his animal.

Right away a *malach* appeared to Bilaam and said to him, "Why have you beaten your donkey?"

וַיֹּאמֶר בְּלָעָם הֵטְאתִי, Bilaam said, "I've sinned." He confessed his sin to the angel.

So people who learn it superficially think his sin was that he beat his donkey. What did the poor donkey do that you're beating it? But that's not it. If a donkey is obstinate, if it refuses to proceed, then it's natural that you have to do that; you can't reason with donkeys after all; you can't explain to him that his job is to be a beast of burden and to follow orders. So you have to beat him. There's no sin there.

The Prophet's Sin

So you have to listen carefully to the *viduy* of Bilaam. What was his confession? וַיֹּאמֶר בְּלָעָם הֵטְאתִי כִּי לֹא יָדַעְתִּי – "I sinned because I didn't know that you were standing in front of me." That's Bilaam's *viduy*. "I should have known that the reason my donkey stopped in its tracks is not because the animal suddenly became obstinate. I wasn't thinking; I should have remembered about Hakodosh Boruch Hu."

That's what the *malach* was criticizing. "Why did you beat your donkey? Why didn't it occur to you that maybe it's Hashem stopping you; that a *malach Hashem* is standing in the way?"

Now to us this seems far-fetched. "So the donkey stopped. He's obstinate today; so what? I should suspect it's a *malach* blocking the path?" We think it's happenstance and that's all. "It's unreasonable to think otherwise," we say.

But it wasn't unreasonable to Bilaam. Bilaam wasn't a nobody; he wasn't a materialist like we imagine him to be. He was a Navi Hashem, a man of understanding. And so he said *viduy*: הֵטְאתִי כִּי לֹא יָדַעְתִּי. "I should have had *da'as*. I should have known."

Because that's how Bilaam lived. He knew that he was expected to always be aware that wherever he is, he's walking with Hashem. And if he forgets Who is in charge of all the affairs of this world, so Bilaam knew that's a *cheit* you have to say *vidui* for.

Rabbinic Confessions

Now it wasn't just Bilaam. Our great men *certainly* lived like that; the great men of the Talmud lived that way. They constantly had Hakodosh Boruch Hu in mind. The Gemara (Bava Metzia 20b) tells a story about how once the Sages were sitting in the *beis hamedrash* and they were talking, discussing *divrei Torah*, when all of a sudden *paka arza d'bei rav* – one of the cedar beams burst. A beam running across the ceiling cracked!

And so, these sages didn't let the opportunity go lost; immediately each one said his reason why it happened. Of course, they understood that the material was weak. It's been standing too long anyhow; it's time for a new one. The other beams should be checked as well. "Safety first!" They understood that as well as we do, but they understood much more than us. And so as soon as they could, as soon as it was safe, each one said a reason; for what purpose did Hakodosh Boruch Hu make this happen just now?

And it was a subject for discussion. This one said, "It was because of what I did; this and this." And another one said because of what I did, a different *cheit*. Hakodosh Boruch Hu is bringing something to my attention. Or maybe something happened here in the *beis medrash* that was improper.

That's the way they lived because that's the truth. This world is not a world of accidents. Hakodosh Boruch Hu is in charge of every detail and the great men who thought constantly of Hashem immediately reacted to things that happened in their lives. The lesson did not go lost.

The Sage's Sin

Another story (Bava Basra 10a). One of the sages was once climbing up a ladder and *ishtamit karei*, his foot slipped and he almost fell. He caught himself at the last second.

Doesn't this happen to people? Is there a man who never slipped on steps and caught himself by the banister or regained his balance just in the nick of time to save himself from plunging down?

So maybe the pious ones among us express their gratitude. The best ones will say, "Ah! Boruch Hashem that He saved me."

But that's not enough! Listen to what this sage said. "Look," he said, "If I had slipped a second earlier I would have fallen down. You know what that would have been? That's *sekilah*!" If you learned Mesichta Sanhedrin you know that first step in *sekilah* is throwing a man down from a high place to execute him.

"So why did this occur to me?" he said. "Maybe I've been sentenced to *sekilah* and a semblance of that sentence was carried out; only that I was rescued at the last moment." *Hashta d'ichayav k'mechallel Shabbasos*, I was sentenced like a man who is *mechalel Shabbos*. A *mechalel Shabbos* is put to death by *sekilah*. *Uk'ovdei avodah zarah*, or maybe for being *oveid avodah zarah*. An idol worshiper is also *chayav sekilah*. What did I do to deserve this? Was I *mechalel Shabbos*? Did I worship an idol?

A Required Attitude

So they told him it was because he had neglected to give charity. They had noticed that he hadn't been giving enough *tzedakah* and the Sages say that not giving charity is like *oveid avodah zarah*. Being stingy when it comes to helping the needy is compared to idol worship. And if a person is negligent in giving money to a good place, sometimes Hashem might take action. At least He might warn you; next time you're climbing the steps you'll slip. That's how the Sages lived their lives; they understood that Hashem was reacting to their behavior.

Now, for a person to live that way takes a lot of work. It's an entirely new attitude that comes from being aware of Hashem, of remembering Hashem always. It's not just a *frumkeit*. It's an entirely new way of living.

The truth is it's Torah living; it's a requirement of the Torah, a clear-cut *possuk*. It says (Devarim 8:11) “הִשָּׁמֶר לְךָ, הַשִּׁמְרָן אֶת הָאֵלֹהִים, אֲלֵכֶיךָ, lest you forget Hashem Elokecha.”

Now can anyone say that a *possuk* is merely a *middas chassidus*, that it's a luxury for super pious people? It's as clear as could be that it's a duty for all Jews. It's a command upon us, upon every man and woman at all times, not to forget; “Beware lest you forget!”

Hashem Is Truly Everywhere

We're not talking now about believing in Hashem. Of course we all say “we believe in Hashem” and it's true. *Boruch Hashem*, the *kehal hama'aminim* today is growing. Anybody who has a black hat, anybody who covers his head with something, believes in Hashem. That's what the hat means.

A head covering is the glory of our people. *Oter Yisroel*, He crowns Yisrael, *besifarah*, with glory. What's that glory that's on your head? Whether it's black velvet or whether it's any other color or material, you're glorifying yourself with that attitude: “I am believer in Hashem Elokei Yisroel.” It's a tremendous achievement when you go into a store and buy a *yarmulke* or a black hat and you put it on.

But that's not the entire task. You have to put something underneath the *yarmulke*.

Where is this Hashem that you believe in?

“Oh, He's in the *siddur*. He's in the *chumash*.”

But is He in the streets with you? Is He in your home, in your bedroom?

So in order to be polite you'll say yes, but do you actually feel that way? Probably not. If you think about Him while you're *davening*, you're already something special. I told you this story once, but I'll say it again. One morning, in the *shtiebel* of the Rebbe from *Berditchiv*, the Rebbe sent his *gabbai* up to the *bimah* during *davening* to make an important announcement. In the middle of *davening* the *gabbai* gives a *klop* on the *bimah*: "The Rebbe wants everyone to know that there is a *Ribono Shel Olam!*" In the middle of *p'sukei d'zimrah!* A special announcement: "Remember Hashem!" And so if you think about Hashem during *davening*, that's already something.

What Are You Thinking?

But actually it's minuscule when it comes to our obligation to be aware of Hashem. Because to believe that Hashem is watching you *outside* the shul too, in the street and in the kitchen, that's the number one *hashkafa* for a believing Jew. Like it states in Tehillim (14:2), הַשֵּׁם מִשְׁמָיִם הֵשֵׁק יָרֵךְ – Hashem looks down from heaven, לִרְאוֹת – to see, הֲיֵשׁ מִשְׁכִּיל – is there a wise man below? הֲיֵשׁ אֶתְ אֱלֹקִים – Is there anyone seeking Me? Hashem is looking, "Who's thinking about Me?" He sees thousands and millions of people; almost nobody is thinking about Him. Even when they pray they're doing a duty, they're praying to Him. But what are they thinking? I'm afraid to know.

But that's a question we all have to consider. Do you think about Hashem? Is He a reality in your life? That's Hashem's question: "Are you thinking about Me?" How many times in the past week has a thought of Hashem entered your mind? Do you dream about Hashem? Why don't you dream about Him? The answer is because you don't think about Him. אֵין מֵרָאִין לוֹ לְאָדָם אֲלֵא מִהֲרֵהוּרֵי לְבוֹ, a man is shown in dreams the things he thinks about by day (Brachos 55b). You don't dream about Hashem at night because you don't think about Him by day.

And it's something that's expected of us. If it was expected of Bilaam, surely it's expected of us. Let's get that into our heads: We're obligated to think about Hashem as much as possible.

Isn't that a pity that it's so rarely spoken about when it's so important? It's a *lav*, *hishamer lecha*, and it's one of the things on which a man's whole *yiddishkeit*, his whole Judaism, stands. You have to gain that awareness that Hashem is standing right in front of you. It's a picture you have to gain in your mind.

A Fundamental Requirement

And that's why in the Chovos Halevavos's list of thirty things that a Jew must keep in his mind always (Shaar Cheshbon Hanefesh), the tenth on that list is that a man should consider how the Creator is looking at him always. He's looking at your externality; He sees you on the outside. And He's looking at your interiority; He sees you on the inside too.

Now, he lists it as the tenth but in order of importance it is perhaps the very first. Why it is not put at the beginning has a reason but right now we have to consider that this is probably the most important of all.

And so we must keep in mind that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is imminent, He is present; He is aware and He is looking. Of course you must have Torah too because if somebody is looking at you but you don't know what that person approves of or disapproves of, so it's not much. You must learn; you must know what is right and what is wrong, but nothing is going to help if we lack the fundamental attitude that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is looking.

And that's why the Chovos Halevavos is urging us to keep in mind at all times this principle. And he's urging, he's pressing the subject because it's not an attitude that's simple to acquire. Even once you understand the importance of what we're saying now, that's only the beginning because it takes work. The Mesillas Yesharim (ch. 19) says that it's not easy; "It's one of the most difficult things," he says. And if he says so, you can believe him. You have to train yourself until you gain the attitude that Hashem is there; you have to work to acquire that frame of mind.

Part II. Mitzvos Remind You

Recognize the Commander

Now, when we talk here I know that in general I'm speaking with *shomrei Torah u'mitzvos*. Most of us here, we keep the Torah; we try to keep everything. And so all of us know that one of the basic features of the life of a Jew is the practical *mitzvos*. That's how we live our lives, with *mitzvos*.

And yet sadly one of the outstanding purposes of doing *mitzvos* is being neglected and going lost. I want you to listen now to what a *mitzvah* is for. It's a *chiddush nifla* and it's important to listen well: Every *mitzvah* has among its functions, one of its chief functions, to remind us of the

Borei. If there's a *mitzvah* it means there's a *mitzaveh*; if there's a commandment it means there's Someone giving the command.

When you take the *lulav* and the *esrog* in your hand, the purpose is to demonstrate that there is a Borei. I'm not talking about the *bracha* on the *lulav*; the *lulav* itself! The *lulav* itself says there is a Borei. That's what the *esrog* says too. Otherwise why should there be an *esrog*? Why can't you go to the fruit store and buy a lemon? Why go to such an expense to buy a real one, a *bilti murkav* expensive one? It's all because there is a Borei who is looking to see if it's kosher. He's looking to see how you're fulfilling His command.

Davening Rehearsals

I'll tell you a little anecdote. Once, Rav Yosef Zundel, the *rebbe* of Reb Yisroel Salanter, was seen in the *beis hamedrash* before *davenen* making *naanunim* with his *lulav* and *esrog*. Not because he was fulfilling the *mitzvah* now. He was just making *naanunim*.

"Why are you doing the *naanunim* now?" someone asked.

"I want to prepare," Rav Yosef Zundel said. "I'm going to do it later and I want to prepare and make sure I do it correctly."

Now he was not a young man anymore; he had done it many times already. But he knew that a *mitzvah* means Hashem is watching you do it. And so Rav Yosef Zundel was rehearsing before the *davenen* to make sure that every *tenuah*, every motion, should be made correctly and with dignity in front of the King; Hashem should see him and be pleased. That's what a *mitzvah* means.

Shopping and Consuming

Why are people so busy running around buying expensive *matzah*? Because Hashem is looking. As you enter into a store and you see on the shelves *kosher l'pesach* this, *kosher l'pesach* that, *kosher l'pesach* everything – everything is a demonstration that the Borei is looking to see, "What are they going to eat?" He's looking to see. "What are the people selling? Are they selling only *kosher l'pesach* things?" So the storekeeper and the customers are always being reminded there is a Borei.

All year long wherever you go into the grocery store you're concerned about the *kashrus*. When a woman goes shopping of course she wants to buy only what is perfectly kosher. Very good! But there is an opportunity to go to the highest limits of that *mitzvah* and remind oneself that the purpose is to be aware of a Borei. You're looking at the shopping list, what to get, but you're thinking also, "Only here in the kosher store or the

kosher aisle is where I can buy because the Borei is watching.” *Kashrus* is for the purpose of demonstrating there is a Creator; that’s the reason we eat only certain foods.

And when you’re going to sit down and eat the food, so you can think about it then too. We’re reminded by means of what we eat, by means of this *mitzvah* of *kashrus*, that there is a Creator whose command we are about to fulfill.

Watched at The Chuppah

All around us the Jew is constantly being reminded; he is surrounded with witnesses whose purpose is to tell him that Hashem is looking. Why do you make a *bracha* when you get married? A *chosson* and *kallah* are standing under the *chuppah* and the room is full of guests and suddenly there are *brachos* to say. Why is that? Because you’re busy and you’re forgetting about Him. Every *bracha* is a reminder. *Borei pri hagafen* – that means there’s a Borei. *Asher bara* – there is a Creator around. The *brachos* all remind you that there is a Creator. The *chosson* and *kallah* are not getting married in a materialistic way; they’re marrying in front of Hashem. He’s looking down at everyone; at the guests too. Isn’t that a good thing to think about while you’re sitting at the *chuppah*?

The *mesader kiddushin* too; or somebody else who is honored with a *bracha*. “Rabbi so and so is *mechubad* with a *bracha*.” So he comes up and let’s say he’s thinking if his *niggun* will be a good *niggun*; if it will be impressive to the people. Or maybe he’s thinking if he’s getting a good enough *bracha*. Ok; but suppose he would also think, “I’m saying this *bracha* for the purpose of making an effect on me. I’m reminding myself that there is a Borei.” And the listeners too are thinking the same thing.

Watched at Home

Wouldn’t it be a good idea for the *chosson* and *kallah* when they are standing under the *chuppah* to think of their Creator, a Creator who is looking? So when they hear the *brachos* under the *chuppah* they are reminded not only that there is a Borei who created them and made such a wonderful arrangement that there is man and woman – miracle of miracles! – but they are reminded that they are under supervision. And the Supervisor is entering their new home together with them.

And after the *chuppah* they go into the *yichud* room and they are together for a while but they have to know they didn’t come in alone; it is not a perfect *yichud*. There is Someone with them. The Gemara (Sotah 17a) says, *אֵישׁ וְאִשָּׁה שֶׁכִּינָה בְּיַחַד* – there is a Third Party present.

So suppose the *chosson* and *kallah*, as soon as they come into that room and they close the door, suppose both of them are thinking at that moment: there is a third party present. He is watching. And from now on He is going to be present constantly like He was up till now. That's what the *brachos* under the *chuppah* are intended to convey.

Tzitzis and Tefillin

Now this should be done with all the *mitzvos*. Every *mitzvah* is reminding you of the Borei who is looking.

Why shouldn't *tefillin* be meaningful? Of course when you put them on; but even if you just see a pair of *tefillin*, a *tefillin* bag, you will always be reminded of what the *tefillin* is supposed to tell you. You're on the avenue on the way to the office and you see a boy running into the shul with his *tefillin*. You already *davened*; you put on your *tefillin* two hours ago. No matter! You see his *tefillin* bag and you remind yourself, "There's a Borei who commanded us to put on *tefillin*."

What does Hashem want from *tzitzis*? Let's say you're in a *beis hamedrash* where everyone is wearing *tzitzis* – and they're hanging out too – what is the purpose of that?

So you say, "Well, it's a *mitzvah* – the Torah commands it." But the Torah tells us a purpose! It's as clear as could be that the purpose of *tzitzis* is to remind you that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is looking. When it says "In order that you should remember the *mitzvos* of Hashem," it doesn't mean that the purpose of *tzitzis* is merely to remember the *mitzvos*; it is to remember that Hashem is looking to see if you do those *mitzvos*.

Like I once told an Italian. The city was digging in the street one time and the Italian foreman saw me walking down the street; he said, "What's this?" He was pointing to my *tzitzis*. So I said, "It's to remind us of Him." I pointed upward. "Ooh," he said. He understands. The Italian understood that, yes. *Halevai* we should understand it.

Watch Your Step

So now we have homework. When you see somebody's *tzitzis* – not only your own; if a wife sees her husband's or her son's *tzitzis*, same thing. The Gemara (Menachos 43a) says, **שְׂשִׁיטָה בְּרֵאִיהָ אֶצֶל אַחֵרִים**, that you can use other people's *tzitzis* too. So when you see a pair of *tzitzis* hanging down whether it is from your *tallis* or from somebody else's shirt, you have to think that the *tzitzis* are for a purpose. And purpose number one is to make you think of Hakodosh Boruch Hu – He is looking. That's what *tzitzis*

are saying, “Hakodosh Boruch Hu is looking outside and inside. Watch your step and watch your mind.”

Now isn't it worth coming here just to learn that? You can live your whole life without hearing it once!

Watch Your Doorway

However, the Torah didn't stop there. You have *mezuzos* too. Isn't it a remarkable thing that people can live their lives without realizing what the *mezuzah* is saying? The *mezuzah* is supposed to be on every doorway; and as you pass in and out the purpose is to remind you that Somebody is looking. Isn't it a waste of our lives when we go in and out of the door and forget about that?

You know what kind of effect that would have on us if we would do that?! Our lives would be revolutionized by the *tzitzis* and the *mezuzah*. If we would practice up and train ourselves with this program gradually it would enter our awareness that there is a Borei here. Eventually we'd become aware not only of the *mezuzah* but it would begin to penetrate, that there is a Borei. That's the way to use *tzitzis* and *mezuzah*; they bring us to *emunah*.

Practice Assiduously

And so isn't it a pity that life goes by with mechanical motions? Things that were intended to have a great effect on the person are done robotically and are not utilized for their intended purpose.

And surely if you are in a *frum* community so wherever you look, in the street and in the home, you have these reminders. And so, you must utilize them all the time. You should think, “Hakodosh Boruch Hu is observing and surveying. He is watching our exteriority and is also perusing with his view into our interiority; He is watching our thoughts.”

Now, this is not so revolutionary what I'm telling you now but still it is so unknown or so unnoticed that it amounts to a *chiddush gadol*. And we are not *yotzei* just by speaking a few words about it; you cannot talk enough about it. It's a very big subject and we should take the time to consider how great a function in our lives *mitzvos* can have on our future and apply ourselves *bli neder* to a career, little by little of getting a tangible feeling that Hashem is looking. We have to acquire it by practice; there's no other way.

Of course don't try and do everything at once when you leave here tonight. First take one of these *mitzvos* and practice it assiduously until finally it hits home that this is what the *mitzvah* is saying to you. And then

another and another. Every day you're training yourself by means of the mitzvos that Hashem is right here and He's looking and little by little you are transformed into a person who is standing in front of his Creator.

Part III. Reminding Yourself

Someone In The Old House

Now we are going on to another phase, another aspect of this *avodah*; we'll call it the practical aspect. And that is to train ourselves with our own contrivances to remind us of a Borei. Mitzvos are very good, they're a wonderful opportunity, but we're going to see now that there are many more opportunities for us to make use of even outside of the framework of mitzvos.

When I was in Slabodka I heard from the older Yeshiva men that there was a *mussar shtiebel* in Kovno, a special *mussar* house that survived from the days of Reb Yisroel Salanter. So I went there once to see it. I left the *seider* once and walked across the river and went to the *mussar* house.

Now they told me it was always locked but that there is loose brick where they keep the key hidden. They described to me where the brick is and they said that I should pull it out and that I would find a key there. So sure enough, I saw the loose brick, pulled it out and I found the key. I unlocked the door and walked in.

I was all by myself in the old *mussar* house and now I was sitting there. "What should I do?" I was thinking, "It's an opportunity to work on this idea that Hashem is looking at me." So I sat there for an hour. For a full hour I sat there by myself, thinking that Hashem is looking at me. It was in the old *mussar shtiebel* in Kovno. I'll never forget that experience.

Use the Eyes

Now, that's something all of us can do occasionally. The truth is it needs *constant* attention. It's so important that we must find time to work on achieving this awareness that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is looking.

If you can't do it all the time, at least from time to time you must imagine that the Eyes of Hakodosh Boruch Hu are gazing at you. "You are looking at me with Your eyes." The Torah gives us the permission to think like that. Like it says (Zechariah 4:10) עֵינֵי ה' הֵמָּה מְשׁוּטָטִים בְּכֹל הָאָרֶץ – the Eyes of Hashem look over all the world.

The "Eyes of Hashem" are said here for a certain purpose. Why mention the Eyes? In order that we should utilize that. We know He

doesn't have eyes; He has better than eyes; but it's to help us picture that He's looking at us and He's supervising, that He's looking at us. If we are thinking of a great figure in the sky that looks down upon the world and sees everything that transpires, that's a big help. Even though we know that it's actually not so because Hashem does not have any figure, it's a contrivance we are expected to use.

Like it states in Pirkei Avos (2:1) יָדַע מַה לְּמַעַלָּה מְמַדָּה – *Know what's above you, עֵין רוֹאָה – an eye that sees.* We have to work on that all our lives. When you're walking in the street, in the subway, in the place of business in the home, Hashem is looking at you.

Practice on The Bus

The Chovos Halevavos gives that *mashal*. He says a person should always think of the following *mashal*. Suppose somebody was watching you; he's observing your movements. Would you do something which would be distasteful or unpleasant in the eyes of that observer? Even if a little boy is looking at him, he tries to act up to make a good impression on that little boy. That's human nature.

I was once sitting on the subway – I'm telling you these stories because I used to work on this; if I had kept it up I could have become something – I was sitting on the subway and a little black girl was looking at me. When I saw she was looking, so I sat up straight. Now, it wasn't a very important audience but that's human nature, when someone – anyone – looks at you, you want to make an impression. And I grabbed the opportunity to add a thought, "Hashem is looking more than this little girl is looking."

It's very important to practice that. It's a good idea to try that while you're looking out of the window sometime; you're sitting in your kitchen or on a bus and you're looking out the window and you're thinking, "Hakodosh Boruch Hu is standing on the sidewalk looking at me." As you're walking down the street, think, "Hakodosh Boruch Hu is looking out of the window of one of the apartment houses at me." He surely is – not from one window, He's looking from all the windows at you. You have to train yourself to think that way.

You Can Be Great

Now, if a person knew that his Creator is looking at him, how much would he be embarrassed and be ashamed in His presence; how careful would he be not to do something that's in contradiction to His wishes! How much would he hurry to serve Him and to try to gain His favor and His love!

And so if you can practice this frequently, you'd be more successful. You imagine that Hashem is looking and accordingly you straighten up. You sit up a little straighter. After a minute you can relax again but at least that one minute you achieved something great. You'll be able to boast when you're an old man, "I remember many years ago, I heard this idea and I tried it once. For one full minute I was aware that Hashem was looking at me." If you'll try it again, it'll become even more valuable. Try it! Practice it from time to time. The more you do it, the greater you become. If a man lives that way then he's sure to be a success. You'll begin to behave as if He's looking at you. He is!

Awareness of Somebody

I recall great men I saw when I was younger who always behaved as if Hashem was looking at them. I watched every motion. My *rebbe*s never scratched; they never yawned. I studied them for years and years. They were dignified. They never grinned. They were always cheerful but they never made a silly grin. They lived with control of their *tenuos*; no grimaces, no unnecessary motions. I watched them carefully and I saw people who lived differently because they knew Hakodosh Boruch Hu staring at them.

Now, I saw it by great men but that's a feeling that every Jew is expected to acquire. That's why we practice it up every morning, first thing in the morning. Anyone who learned a little knows that among Jews the proper way when dressing or undressing is to remain covered. Even if one one is in a private room; the door is locked and the light is out; no one could see anything; nevertheless the scrupulous Jew dresses and undresses in such a manner that his body is never revealed (Shulchan Aruch O.C. 2).

Now that is surprising. The room is closed. The shades are down. It's dark. Nobody sees me. The answer is Somebody is looking; and because that Somebody is looking we attempt to cover ourselves up.

Empty Your Cheeks

Now the question is what does covering help? If Hakodosh Boruch Hu is looking, He can see through fabric. He can see through walls. So what will you accomplish by covering up?

The answer is it's an exercise. We behave as if He was a person, a spectator. And by covering ourselves up, we accomplish the feeling of awareness of His presence. *Hachitzoniyus meorerer es hapenimiyus* – when you do outward acts of recognition of His presence, it brings one to recognize His presence. That's how valuable an exercise this is. Little by little it enters our consciousness that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is looking.

Now before we conclude let's take a few more opportunities among thousands of others. Another valuable exercise is while you're eating. Suppose you'd be sitting, let's say, at a banquet and they're serving delicious food and you're hungry too. And so you fill your cheeks and you're chewing and suddenly the photographer begins approaching you to take pictures of the table. You say, "Wait. My cheeks are puffed up. Wait until I swallow."

Now suppose there's no photographer; instead a very important personality happens to come in at that moment and he's walking towards you to speak with you. You'll try quickly to empty out your cheeks. He shouldn't see you in such a silly position, with your cheeks puffed up.

Now Hakodosh Boruch Hu is looking at us all the time and so while you're eating isn't that a good time to practice? You're filling your stomach; you're in a good mood anyhow so it's a good time to exercise this idea. Now you don't have to worry about filling your cheeks; He's not going to criticize you for that; that's why He gave us cheeks, so they should be able to swell with the food. Cheeks are able to distend. They're made for that purpose. They're flexible, elastic. But while you're chewing, while your cheeks are puffed, practice this exercise – "He is looking!"

Record Your Conversations

Now, I want to add one more exercise. It's not as easy one but if you've already practiced the previous ones then you can try this one too. You know, when you talk to people, it's very difficult to remember Hashem. That's how it is. A person is so interesting – his face; his conversation – that even though he's not important, once you're speaking to him you forget about Hakodosh Boruch Hu right away.

So let's say once in a while you'd practice this idea even while you're speaking with someone. You think like this, "I'm going to practice remembering Hashem despite the person I'm going to talk to. I'm going to go over to this-and-this person and engage him in a short conversation. Too long, I can't do it. It's too much. I'll engage him in a short conversation and I'll make up my mind that while I'm talking, Hashem is looking at me and listening and the words are being recorded." Make it short, of course.

So pick out somebody and go over to him. He'll start talking and you'll answer. But keep this in mind; don't forget. You have to remind yourself every second. It's very difficult because the magic of a person's face, his personality enchants you and you lose yourself right away. Don't lose yourself! No! Hashem is looking at me! And do it for a minute or two.

You have accomplished a very big achievement! That's something to be proud of. You have lived for a purpose in life. And if you never practice this you have to know that you are missing out on one of the big purposes of why you were created.

Everything Becomes Important

Now when a person practices this more and more he begins to become conscious of Hashem all the time; he becomes aware that Elokim is looking at him. And that is of the utmost consequence. It's one of the major achievements of life – to be aware of an *ayin ro'eh*, an Eye that Looks. Because when a man lives under the surveillance of Hakodosh Boruch Hu's Eyes, then he's going to live a more perfect life, a more successful life.

When you're always standing before Hashem so everything becomes important; every moment of your life – the mundane and the less mundane – it's all important because you're standing with Hakodosh Boruch Hu. And so any man who trains himself, any woman who trains herself, anyone who adopts this as a career in life is bound to succeed because that's the true greatness of living in this world – the Awareness that you're standing in front of Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

Remember Hashem Always

Bilaam was criticized for forgetting that Hashem is the Cause of everything; he should have known that a delay is not caused by an obstinate donkey but by the Master of the World. This week I will *bli neder* focus on internalizing this lesson. Once each day when I pass by a Mezuzah I will remember its lesson; that Hashem is watching me. I will also spend an entire minute each day concentrating on the fact that Hashem is watching me and His Eyes are staring at me.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

שאל אביך ויגדך זקניך ויאמרו לך

Q:

How much time should a yeshiva man give away to help others come closer to Torah and to yiddishkeit?

A:

Now that's a question that I have been concerned with for at least forty years; and I never found an answer.

But tentatively we will say as follows. As long as you're interested in learning and you have an hour that you want to spend on learning, keep it for yourself. Learn that hour.

But keep in mind that there are hours that you *do* waste. Many people need some recreation. It's fun to be *mekarev rechokim* and there is plenty of wasted time.

I'll give an example. If you're a yeshiva man, and on Fridays after the seder you are one of those who sit in the beis hamedrash while they're sweeping up and you sit in the dust and you continue to learn – some people do that by the way; they learn until the last moment and then just before Shabbos they run home to take a bath – if that's you, then I say, don't budge. Keep on learning. But if you're going to waste time Friday afternoon then 'waste' it on kiruv rechokim and get Olam Haboh in your spare time. There's a lot of time wasted by everybody. Some people need a little rest from learning or a change so waste that time in the right way.

But the rule is – and it may sound selfish but I wouldn't budge from it – if you have an hour to learn, do so and don't give it away for any other purpose.

— This week's Q&A sponsored: —

Refuah Shleima for Daniel ben Shifra