

TORAS AVIGDOR

AUTHENTIC TORAH THOUGHT FOR LIFE

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT" L

PARSHAS TZAV

WITH

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT" L

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

EXCITED OVER ME

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Part I. Excited About Hashem

Earning Your Keep

In this week's *sedrah* we are introduced to the mitzvah of *terumas hadeshen*, the removal of some ash from the previous day's *korbanos* from the top of the *mizbeach*, clearing the way for the new day's *avodah*. **וְהָרִים אֶת הָרֶשֶׁן אֲשֶׁר תֹּאכַל הָאֵשׁ אֶת הָעֵלֶה עַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְשָׂמוּ אֶצְלֵי הַמִּזְבֵּחַ** – And the kohen should lift off the ash which the fire had consumed of the olah and he should place it down near the altar (Vayikra 6:3).

And because the *terumas hadeshen* was the first *avodah* in the morning, a special significance was lent to the mitzvah and there was therefore competition among the *kohanim* over who should have the privilege of doing this *avodah*.

Now, when it came to distributing the various services of the Beis Hamikdash, they didn't cast lots. Casting a lot means that from heaven they're giving you a certain *zechus*, a certain merit; but in the olden days they didn't want to be 'given' the merit as a free lunch. They wanted to earn it.

Racing in the Mikdash

And how did you earn it? With your legs. An official of the *kohanim* would give the signal to

begin the race and all the *kohanim* would begin running to see who would get there first. And the man whose heart was most in it would win. That's the theory at least, that the man whose heart is most earnest, his feet moved the fastest. In general, it's a pretty good indication; it shows that his heart is most interested. And so when the time came for *terumas hadeshen* they relied on the feet of the *kohanim* to decide: 'May the best man win!'

Imagine the picture now: It's still somewhat dark – the race took place before dawn – but the Beis Hamikdash is full of people already. The *kohanim* are not late-risers; they were up very early in the morning waiting. **כֹּהֲנִים זְרִיזִים הֵם** – *Kohanim are people of alacrity* (Shabbos 20a), and all of them wanted the *zechus*. And so they're standing there waiting for the signal.

But not just waiting. There's a nervous tension in the air because their hearts are burning with an agitated desire: 'At least once in my life I should seize this mitzvah! One day I'll be able to tell my grandchildren and great-grandchildren about it; that their *zeide* once was *zocheh* to the *terumas hadeshen* in the House of Hashem.'

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Dedicated on the 50th yartzzeit of my beloved father

R'Yitzchak ben R'Chaim z'l on Shushan Purim.

Loved and Dearly Missed by his son

Mark (Yerucham) Halpern, Toronto, Canada.

So imagine now this one *kohen*; he's the protagonist of our story. He came maybe from the other end of Eretz Yisroel. He had walked all night – could be he hadn't slept at all – and now it's the morning and he's standing there ready for the signal. But he's on edge; after all there were so many *kohanim* and so few *mitzvos* to go around.

Fighting to the Finish

The signal is given and there's a big rush forward; and he begins to run along with his fellow *kohanin*. His feet are weary from traveling to Yerushalayim but his heart is pumping – his heart is carrying his feet – and he's running with all of his *kochos*. And he knows that he'll surely get it. After all, he wants it more than all the others.

But now he sees a fellow *kohen* who, like him, is desirous of this *mitzvah* – maybe even more than himself – and he's catching up to him, trying to overtake him. They're running side by side and as they approach the *mizbeach*, the finish line, this upstart is suddenly picking up speed; he's going faster and he's forging ahead.

So our *kohen*, his heart became so full of bitterness – he came especially from the other end of Eretz Yisroel for this *mitzvah*. He had been up all night waiting and he's running now with all of his *koach*; but this dark horse who had maybe sauntered his way to the starting point at the last moment is pulling ahead now. Oh, the bitterness! There are no second-place trophies when it comes to the *terumas hadeshen*.

What happened? Our *kohen* lost control of himself; in his despair he went berserk. He was running with a knife – *kohanim* have knives that they need for the *avodah* – and he took that knife and in his bitter lunacy he plunged it into the heart of his 'challenger'. His heart!

And now this young *kohen* is rolling in his blood. He's laying on the floor bleeding out; he's dying in the *azarah* and the whole Mikdash is thunderstruck! A terrible day in the history of the Beis Hamikdash: a *kohen* stabbed by a fellow *kohen*.

New Procedures

Now, there's a lot more to this story, about what happened when this dying *kohen's* father came upon the scene. If you wish you can look inside in Mesichta Yuma (23a) and read more about it. But I want to move past that and tell you the changes that were made in the procedures of the *avodas Beis Hamikdash* as a result of that tragedy.

Such a thing never happened before! Not only it never happened but it was unimaginable! They couldn't let such a tragedy pass by, and so, at that time – there was another incident too; a *kohen* was pushed and he broke a leg – and so when the Sages noticed a pattern, they instituted a change in the protocols of distributing the *avodah*.

At that time they introduced the '*payas*'; from now on we'll give out the *avodas Beis Hamikdash* by means of casting lots. Yes, we'll lose out on the advantages of the original method, the method that provides for the most dedicated one to achieve, but what can we do? It's too much what happened today.

Lots of Lots

And so, everybody came together now for the *payas*. Instead of gathering together before dawn to race, they gathered for a *payas*, a lottery.

But that *payas* was only for the morning service. Afterwards, later in the morning, they gathered together again. From all corners of Har Habayis the *kohanim* gathered again. It was a big tumult, a commotion, and they came together and they made another *payas* for the next group of *avodos*.

And then later, a third time! They're all coming together again for another *payas*. A big clamor of excitement. It's time to gather again. And then a little later, a fourth time!

Now our Sages are efficiency-minded, and so the Gemara asks a *kashe*: What's this for? לָמָּהּ מְפַיְסִין וְחֹזְרִין וּמְפַיְסִין – What's the purpose of coming together once and twice and three and four times? (Yuma 24b). Why make a tumult so many times in one day? It seems superfluous. When they do that first *payas*

early in the morning, they can keep going and allocate all of the *avodos* of the day. So לָמָּהּ מְפִיִּסִין? וְחוֹזְרִין וּמְפִיִּסִין? Why gather all the *kohanim* together so many times? To make such a big fuss again and again? It seems superfluous.

Kosher Commotion

And the Gemara answers like this: בְּרִי לְהַרְגִישׁ אֵת הָעֲזָרָה – *in order to make a fuss in the Azarah*. It means we *want* a commotion; we want there to be a clamor, a noise. And Rashi explains, לְהַשְׁמִיעַ קוֹל לְמַלְאָךְ – *to make noise of a big crowd in the Beis Hamikdash again and again because that's an honor for the King when people show that they are excited over His service*.

They could have done it more efficiently, quietly. They could have arranged it beforehand and everybody would have gotten a little ticket and been given his assignment. And it would be quiet; no noise at all.

But that's no good. That you do, let's say, when you want a seat on the stock market, so they assign you a seat and you walk over quietly. Or at a wedding, they give you a ticket and you walk over to your seat. But when it comes to the service of Hakadosh Baruch Hu, the Chachomim wanted to teach us an important attitude. Noise means excitement, importance; and because Sages want us to know that excitement is for Hashem they arranged therefore this procedure. Again and again everyone should run together in a disorganized manner because it makes a tumult and everybody looks, "What are they running for? What's going on?"

"Oh, they're running for Hakadosh Baruch Hu. They're running because each one wants the mitzvah; each one wants the honor, the *zechus* of serving Hakadosh Baruch Hu!"

Noisy Traditions

Now where did they learn this from, that you have to make a noise? We're a nation of tradition after all. The Sages aren't going to establish a

procedure, a protocol, for the Beis Hamikdash willy-nilly. I told you once that we're a stubborn nation. It's a praise. We stick to our traditions and therefore whatever we do is not new. They had to learn it from someplace.

The answer is they learned it from big experts. Because Yeshayah and Yechezkel HaNavi, these two *nevi'im*, describe for us what they both saw in a *nevuah*, a prophecy, how the *malachim*, the angels, serve Hashem. There were over a hundred years between these two *nevi'im*, but both saw similar *nevuahs*; they witnessed in their vision how the Heavenly Hosts were saying *kedushah* and they described it for us in detail.

Now, the question is what was the purpose of revealing this vision? What business is it ours what angels do?

And the answer is, it's given to us as a model for our function in this world. וְקִדְשׁ אֶת שְׁמִי בְּעוֹלָם – *We sanctify Your Name*, בְּשֵׁם שְׁמַקְדִּישִׁים – *just like the angels do*. They're our models.

Rising and Shouting

And what do we see? How do they praise Hashem? מִתְנַשְּׂאִים – *They rise up*. But not like we rise. We rise on tiptoe when we say *kedushah* just to imitate the *malachim*; we rise maybe two inches. When the *malachim* rise, they rise like jets, like rockets! A million miles! We have no way of describing space for them.

And they don't say it coldly like we do. וְאֶשְׁמַע אֶזְרוֹל – *And I heard a loud and great voice* (Yechezkel 3:12). That's how the Navi describes the sound of *malachim*. When the time comes for them to declare their *shirah*, they get excited about it and they do it בְּרַעַשׁ גָּדוֹל, with loud noises! *Ra'ash* means a great noise. But not only *ra'ash*. רַעַשׁ גָּדוֹל – *A tremendously great noise!* With enthusiasm! The greatest enthusiasm that the world would ever see!

Shouting to Him

For what? What are they excited about? בְּרוּךְ ה' מִמְקוֹמוֹ. They're going *meshuge* about the

glory of Hashem. Not like we say it; when we say those words we're half asleep. We're not excited at all. I once saw a man yawn during *kedushah*. "Boruch kevod, yaaaaawwwwn, Hashem mim'komo."

But suppose after he finishes *davening*, he comes home and he sits down to breakfast. Did you ever see a man yawn at breakfast? You'll have to wait a long time before you see it. Because you don't yawn when you're busy with important things. So next time you think about yawning in *davenen*, think about it a second time. And even if inside you're asleep, at least outwardly don't show it.

That's what the *malachim* are teaching you, that excitement is for Hashem. They know that this is what noise is for.

And that, the Sages are teaching us, is the Torah *derech*, the Jewish way of living. Some people think they know the Jewish way. "The Jewish way means to eat gefilte fish or to speak *Ivrit* and hang out a blue and white flag." No, that's not it. Even speaking Yiddish is not yet the Jewish way. The Jewish way is to be excited about Hashem and anything connected to Him, to His service. Anything that's pious, anything that's Torah, we make a big fuss about it. That's our way.

Part II. Excited Only About Hashem

Not Also. Only.

Now there's an important corollary to this subject which has to be stated at the outset and that's as follows: It's not that the Jewish way is that we *also* get excited about Hashem. No, that's not it. We get excited *only* about Hashem. That's it. Nothing else.

All other things? Quietly, under the table. Nothing to talk about. You have to downplay everything else because if you make noise about other things, you're devaluing the excitement about Hashem. And conversely, the more you're quiet about everything else, the more your noise about

avodas Hashem means something. I'll take a little time to explain that.

The Mistaken Hesped

The Gemara (Berachos 16b) tells us that among the *talmid chachamim* there was a once a certain movement to make an event out of the passing of a *kosher eved Canaani*; not just to ignore the passing of a decent person but to give him a *hesped* just like any other Jew.

And so one time when an *eved Canaani* passed away some of the Sages came together and one of them got up and said: הוי – "Woe is to us, איש טוב – *that we lost a good person, a loyal man who worked hard for his parnassah.*" He said more than that; he gave a moving eulogy with all the accolades and praises befitting an important person.

Now, we admire that speaker. After all he was able to recognize even in a humble slave desirable qualities and he therefore accorded him the recognition that he deserved. It's a humility of character to see the good points of someone who others might consider of a lesser pedigree. We admire that.

And therefore we're surprised to read the conclusion of the Gemara. When the other Sages heard what had taken place they rebuked the speaker: "No, don't say that," they told him. "Because אם בן מה הנחת לְכַשְׁרִים – *if you'll say about him all those accolades then what remains for kosher Jews?*" If you're going to give such extreme encomium to this man, what will you leave over for the righteous people?"

The Big Rule For Life

Now pay attention. What's this question, 'What will you leave over?' If I'll honor a slave – even if I'll exaggerate a little – does it mean I can't honor righteous people? Why can't I be excited about both of them equally?

And the answer is, you can't. Because if you take these adjectives, this eulogy, and you apply it to

someone of a lower *madreigah*, a lower degree, then those who are better are robbed of that much recognition.

Now, that's an important principle not only in this detail; it's a *klal gadol* in everything in the world. There's no such thing in this world as being excited about everything. If you make noise about one thing – or too much noise – you're misappropriating excitement; and therefore we cannot be lavish, we cannot be extravagant in our praise of just anything.

It's considered an error – not only a big error in judgment but it's an insult to the things that are worth being excited about. **אִם בֵּן מָה הַנִּחַת לְכִשְׁרִים** – *What do you leave for the things that are important?* If we are excited about things that don't deserve honor, then we are robbing the important things of the world of the recognition which is owing to them.

The Not So Super Bowl

And when people therefore watch a football game and they get excited; they're all heated up about how the teams are fighting over the football. And now one of the players is running and he pushes another one into the ground and he makes a touchdown and they start shouting, 'Woohoo!'; that 'woohoo' is a sin.

I'm not talking about the sin of *bittul Torah* and other things, things that come along with the football game that are forbidden. I'm not talking about that now. Just the fact that you're excited, that you're making noise about something that's *lo klum*, something that's not important – 'Ooh ahh! What a goal! What a player! It's good they gave away that other player to get him!' – means that you're making less important the things that deserve your excitement.

When To Leap

Simchas Torah, that's the day for excitement! When they're putting the *sifrei Torah* into the *aron kodesh*, you're leaping and shouting in honor of the

Torah. Yes! As much as you have, you should put into it!

But if the week before you were leaping and shouting about a black man who can put a ball into a basket or a white man who can hit a baseball over a fence so you're robbing the Torah of what it deserves. And even if you weren't shouting but you were excited? Excited?! When you express enthusiasm for anything else except Hashem, it's a sin. A sin!

Now that's a *chiddush* to many people because a person thinks that when it comes to *regesh*, to emotions and noise and excitement, so it belongs to him: "It's my own business," he says. "I'm *shomer Torah u'mitzvos*; I keep Shabbos and I *daven* in the synagogue every day with a *minyán*. I send my children to the yeshivahs and Beis Yaakovs. And I learn Torah too. So what are you bothering me about excitement? I do everything!"

The answer is it's not everything. Because the *klal gadol* is **בְּבֵית אֱלֹקִים נְהַלֵּךְ בְּרָגָשׁ** – *Only in the areas of life that are connected to Hakadosh Baruch Hu do we go with excitement.* And therefore even the excitement of a Yisroel has to be measured out. He makes himself excited about what's important – it means the service of Hashem – and everything else is downplayed.

The Holy Holidays

Let's say if the gentiles have a certain festival and they're excited about it. Very good. Why shouldn't they be? It's for them after all.

But the Am Yisroel, we ignore it entirely. When Thanksgiving comes we shouldn't see a *remez* of that festival in the Jewish home. We turn our backs on it. Don't talk about it at all, forget about it; it doesn't exist. It's like a regular weekday. Nobody eats turkey. Everyone goes to work. All the yeshivas function exactly as if it was a regular weekday.

We have to be *b'raash* only about our holidays, our *yomim tovim*. Purim?! Yes! Make Purim a big day in your house. Some people show lip service to Purim; *shalach manos* and so on. No! Purim is the

day for excitement! Make it a great day! Purim is the day to summon all the relatives and spread out good foods. Make a lot of noise on Purim! Dance your heart out on Purim! You're excited that Haman is hanging; you're excited that one day all of our enemies will hang. Excellent! That's what excitement is for.

We have days! In the Torah calendar there's a plentitude of happy occasions. Pesach is a glorious occasion. Go all out for Pesach! Lag Ba'omer is a glorious occasion. Shavuot is exciting! And there are plenty of days like that. So why do you have to have special food on Thanksgiving or Mother's Day or whatever other American holidays?

The Frum Cousin

Don't give all your emotions to things that are not paramount in the world. A man who becomes very much excited over anything in this world, even the greatest success or good times, that person is showing weakness in understanding his purpose in this world – because there's only one thing in this world to be excited about: Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

And so if you invite your *frum* cousin from Boro Park to your home and you want to show him your stamp collection and he looks but he doesn't say anything – he's looking with a deadpan face – so you think, "He doesn't appreciate it. He doesn't have a taste in good things." No. Be *dan l'kaf zchus*. He learned this lesson: He doesn't get excited over things that don't matter. Don't think he's lacking in intellectual development; on the contrary, he's super-developed.

Bathroom Music

If you see someone like that, use him as your model. He's not excited about 'eating out'? Admire that. Some people, they make a ceremony about it. It's something exciting; *they go out to eat!* We don't say such things. Only fools go out to eat. Some of them wear special garments. They dress for dinner; full dress. And they go to special places where there's music too.

The Rambam says eating is a function like the other function. And the other function, would you do it to music? Do you put a music box in the bathroom?

So what's this business? It's a bodily function! You should be ashamed you have to eat. You're stoking the furnace; you're shoving coal and wood down the furnace. What is there to make a fuss about?

Of course you have to eat. You have to eat properly and chew your food; take your time, yes, but what's the ceremony about it? Taking time doesn't mean it's a big thing. The Gemara says כָּל הַמְרַבֵּה בְּבֵית הַכֶּסֶף מְאַרְיֵכֵן לֹא יִמְיוּ וְשִׁנוּתָיו; in the bathroom you should also take your time. Don't be in a hurry, the Gemara says. But no orchestra!

The Jewish Orchestra

The orchestra, the excitement, the noise, is meant for certain occasions, certain things, that deserve it. When it comes to serving Hakadosh Baruch Hu, then you have to put on the biggest show that you can; that's what deserves an orchestra. There should be a big noise about it. Make it the biggest thing you can.

That's why the pious Jew when he has to go to the synagogue for praying, he puts on his better coat. *Something* he does; he adjusts his tie at least. Because he understands that בְּבֵית אֱלֹקִים נִהְלָךְ בְּרָגֶשׁ – *It's in the house of Elokim that we go with excitement.* A stadium? Nothing. A museum? Nothing? A theater? Absolutely nothing.

People have it upside down. Watch someone when he walks into a movie. Ooooh! On tip-toe! With respect! He's afraid he might make the smallest sound and disturb the people in their "holy" pursuits. Oh, the movie is about to begin! His breast is filled with excitement!

Chas v'shalom! That's a corruption of character. When you walk into a movie – you shouldn't – but let's say you have to; you're a plumber and they called you to fix the pipe. So you have to feel like you're walking into an old-time livery stable.

You're too young, but when I was a boy they had livery stables on every block and they 'perfumed' the whole atmosphere with a wholesome smell. You had to hold your nose. And that's the same thing in movies. It's worse than a stable. It has the odor of ripe manure that has been lying around for a long time. You're holding your nose while you're fixing the pipe. Not because of the pipe – because of the theater.

Entering The Shul

But *lehavdil elef havdalos* when you enter a shul, then you have to enter with *yiras hakovod*, with a nervous excitement. So stop before you walk in and think a moment, "I'm about to enter the place of the Shechinah. Now is the time to feel a *regesh*, an excitement. This is what's important."

You have to steel yourself against temptations. Somebody might make a joke. You don't joke in the shul! You can't converse. You can't talk *devorim beteilim*. And you should make the right type of noise: *Amein yehei shmei rabah! Hodu la'Hashem ki tov! Kadosh kadosh kadosh! Boruch kevod Hashem mim'komo!*

You don't mean it? Say it anyhow. It takes training and you have to practice up on it. Walk in with respect, with awe, with excitement. That's how we train ourselves – we're reminding ourselves always that respect, awe and excitement is only for the *Beis Elokim*, for places connected to Hashem.

Part III. Getting Excited

Live Once, Live Right

Now, I'm happy you came in from the cold to listen to me tonight. It's a good thing when you hear things that rattle your nerves a little bit. Let it rattle. It's very good to know that it's only *בבית אלקים* that matters; that living as a Jew, living the Torah way, means that it's only about things connected to Hashem, to *avodas Hashem*, that we make a commotion. It's an important idea; more

than you imagine. Think it over when you leave here tonight and let it settle in.

But it's not enough to listen. You only live once! You have to live right! You have to take yourself by the hand and talk to yourself; you have to train yourself to think with this pattern of thought that only He is worth getting excited about.

Dovid Talks to Himself

You know who did that? Dovid spoke to himself frequently. If you study Tehillim, the book of Psalms, you see a number of times that he is speaking to himself. That's not done by modern people. But there are great men who did it.

The Chofetz Chaim was known to have spoken to himself. On the roof of the yeshivah in Radin there was a little garret where the Chofetz Chaim would sometimes hide and sometimes a brash youngster used to walk up and stand by the door and listen in. He heard the Chofetz Chaim speaking to himself: "Yisroel Meir, who do you think you are? Why aren't you grateful for all the great things that the Almighty helped you achieve in your life?" Or, "Yisroel Meir, is this the way for a decent Jew to behave?"

That's the way of people who want to make something from themselves, people who want to achieve in this world. It's a system of training oneself; not waiting for some outside influence to teach you. And Dovid did that always. Not only he did it but he recorded some of it for posterity. He left us a lot of his thoughts, his discussions, in his Tehillim.

When we find in Tehillim *בְּרַכֵּי נַפְשִׁי הַלְלֵי נַפְשִׁי*, *עוֹרָה כְּבוֹדִי*. Various *leshonos*, a number of times. *וְאֶבְרַכָּה שְׁמֶךָ* – *I will be wild over Your Name*, *וְאֶתְּנֶה לְךָ תְּהִלָּה וְשִׁבְחָה* – *I will give gratitude to Your Name*. Dovid is actually talking to himself; he's urging himself: "Dovid, don't be a nobody. Don't be slothful. Don't be indolent. Don't let life go by. Get out of the rut. Rise up and be what you're able to be."

Walking With Dovid

And if we'll follow in his footsteps, בְּשִׁירֵי יְיָ עֲבֹדָה, we're going to experience some of his emotions. Not all of them. This, I am sorry, I cannot promise you. But as much as you try to follow in his footsteps and recapture some of his feelings, that's how much you'll be a *ben Olam Haba* in a small percentage that Dovid Hamelech is a *ben Olam Haba*.

But we have to study his words for that. Just saying Tehillim superficially is not going to acquire for you the noble attitudes that Dovid acquired. Just to mutter, to mumble the words is a very small accomplishment. Tehillim is effective only when it's accompanied by a certain concentration of the mind. And so, it pays to concentrate and think and reflect on the noble ideals of Tehillim.

Every day a few times we say תְּהִלָּה לַיהוָה – A praise of Dovid (Tehillim 145); we call it *Ashrei*. It's a tragedy that *Ashrei* is so mistreated and neglected. If we had time, we would study all of the words together and we would see that *Ashrei* is a glorious experience. And the first thing we say is אֲרוֹמִימְךָ – I am going to exalt You! Ah! *Aromimcha!* That one word is enough! We could spend the whole evening on that! What does it mean *Aromimcha*?

Ram means what's high, what's big in this world. And Dovid said, "Ribono Shel Olam, before I begin my song I want You to know what this is all about. It's for one purpose. I'm going to make You great in this world. I'll make You important."

Dovid's One-Track Harp

But it's more than that. Not, 'I'll make You great too.' *Aromem* means 'I'll make what great? *Aromimcha!* Only You and nobody else!' That's what Dovid was saying: "As far as I'm concerned, it's only You; You are *It* with a capital *I* and there's nothing else. I am going to make You great and I'm not going to make anything else great in this world."

Dovid's harp was a one-track harp, a narrow-gauged harp. He couldn't play just anything on it. He couldn't play songs of war, of prowess, of heroes.

His harp wouldn't talk for such things. Dovid's strings, as he put his finger on the strings, they wouldn't utter sounds in praise of romance.

They wouldn't play sounds of prize fighting, bull fights and hunting. There was no noise about putting on a red suit with white stripes and getting on a horse with baying hounds and with bugles and chasing a poor little fox; and the gentlemen and ladies all participate in the hunt or in fields. No noise about going to places of amusement. "Nothing doing," said Dovid, "My harp is only for You. אֲרוֹמִימְךָ – I'm going to exalt only You."

Your One-Track Mind

And that's what we're supposed to think about when we say that word. We're trying to imitate that attitude, to stir up that emotion within us: אֲרוֹמִימְךָ – I'll be excited only about You! I'm not going to be excited about a sports team, about a Super Bowl football game or a World Series. Restaurants and travel? Literature? Movies? Actors? I'm not interested at all! And even if I am, I won't talk about it. I won't evince any excitement about it because 'Aromimcha!' I will exalt only You! As far as I'm concerned, you are *It* with a capital *I* and there's nothing else. I'm going to make You high, the highest of all things! Nothing in this world matters to me except You!

That's the theme of our lives, to make Hashem important in our lives. Of all the things that we're interested in, of all the things that we think about, of all the issues that are important to us, there is nothing but Hashem.

Excited About Sprinkles

Now, don't get any wrong ideas. When Dovid said, "I'm going to make you paramount in the world," it didn't mean that he retired to a cave with an iron door and he said goodbye to the world. By no means! Dovid was speaking to himself always because, like us, he lived in this world and he was training himself to this ideal as a person living in this world.

And so אַרוממקד doesn't mean you can't eat ice cream. When you sit down to dessert and your mother is preparing the ice cream you have a right to say, "Ma, please give me the pink kind." Or "Can I have colorful sprinkles?" And you won't be considered a guzzler, a *zolel v'sovei*. But only on condition that before you take anything, you remind yourself: "Aromimchaaa! I have a job here! To raise You up."

And then you make a big and enthusiastic *bracha*. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה - *I bend my knees in gratitude to You!* שֶׁהַבֵּל נִהְיָה בְּדַבְּרוֹ - *because this ice cream is a manifestation of Your Will. It's Your Word, Your Creation.*

Thank your mother too. Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants that too - He says כִּי בְּיָדְךָ אֵת אֲבִיךָ וְאֵת אִמְךָ - so be excited about that too. Thank your mother with a gusto!

Oh, now the ice cream is justified. You're not excited anymore about the ice cream - you're excited about the One Who gave you the ice cream! You're excited about whom He told you to honor. That's אַרוממקד - *I'm going to make You great in this world!* That's all there is in this world!

Making Judaism Great Again

Now, it could be that when we hear these words today so they seem extreme; they seem to be over the top. But that's because we've been spoiled. Our Torah attitudes have been watered down to such an extent that when we hear something that's so basic, so fundamental to Torah living, so we're surprised.

But actually that's how our forefathers always lived. I'm telling you what the *gentiles* said, what they wrote about our forefathers. One *goy* writes as follows and I'm quoting from him. He says, "The Jews were in love with their religion." Now when that *goy* said, 'in love' he used the words advisedly. He had something in mind because he had a parallel and he used the parallel for the Jews for their religion.

Hot Cold Litvaks

I cannot tell you people - you wouldn't believe me - how hotly the love of *yiddishkeit*, the love of Torah, the love of Hakadosh Baruch Hu burned in the hearts of our forefathers not so long ago.

When I was in Lithuania, a *kalteh Litvak*, a cold Lithuanian Jew, once said something to me. "You came to Lithuania too late," he said. I'm repeating his words exactly; only he said it in Yiddish. He said, "Had you come before World War I, you would have seen a *yiddishkeit* that was like a fire. It was burning like a fire here." We have no idea how in the not-so-remote past our forebearers had no interest in life other than Torah and *yiras Shamayim*.

And that's what Dovid was expressing with the word אַרוממקד. He wasn't saying something that's a utopian expression. He was describing a way of life; the way of Jewish living: "You are the only One Who is lifted up in our minds, in our excitement."

The Important Alef

Now, the question is who's going to do this? Dovid could have said, "Of course You're great, Hashem. You don't need my *haskamah*. You're רַם וְנִשְׂאָ without my two cents. You were great before I came into the world and You'll be great after I leave this world. You're great just because You are."

"No," said Dovid. "I'm not satisfied with that. The *alef* in אַרוממקד means 'I'. I'm going to do the job! AAAromimcha! I'm going to make You great. I'm going to train myself to be excited only about You."

AAAromimcha means "I'm not going to rely on anybody else to do the job. I'll do it myself. I'll compose a Tehillim. I'll sing to You. I'll sing about You. And my dream is that the entire Jewish nation is going to follow in my footsteps and be excited only about You."

And therefore, Dovid Hamelech when he said this word, אַרוממקד, he was speaking for the entire *mamleches kohanim v'goy kadosh*. He wanted us to say that word and be inspired like him.

Make Him Great

And therefore, our job is AAA! The *aleph*! I'm going to do it! I'm going to train myself, in my own little life, to be excited only about You; only about You and whatever's connected to You. And I'm not going to rely, let's say, on the Jews in Williamsburg or the people in *kollelim* in Yerushalayim. AAAA! I want to do it! AAAA means I!

I'm not delegating this great function to anyone. I'm not going to be inveigled anymore by what the world gets excited about. Travel? It's *lo klum*, it's zero. Art and music and sports and theater? A big fat zero. The best wines and the fancy cars and all the garbage that means nothing? From now on, it's nothing to me because *Aaaaromimcha!*

I'm going to do my best to raise the Name of Hakadosh Baruch Hu in my life, in my stay here in this world, by training myself that **בְּבֵית אֱלֹקִים נְהַלֵּךְ** **בְּרִנָּה** – that only in *avodas Hashem*, in all things connected to You, that's the only thing I'll express excitement about in this world!

Have a Wonderful Shabbos

Let's Get Practical

Excitement About Hashem

The mitzvah of *terumas hadeshen* was done in a manner to emphasize the excitement of the *kohanim* in serving Hashem, an especial commotion was made, because only *avodas Hashem* is worth getting excited over. This week, as I recite Ashrei thrice daily, I will *bli neder* stop for a moment at the word "Aromimcha" and think about the the final syllable – "I'm only excited over You", and it's first syllable – "It is 'I' who must raise You up Hashem!"

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

R-37 - The Honor of Hashem | **215** - In Dovid's Footsteps | **364** - We Say Kedusha | **845** - Praise the Righteous | **981** - What Is Important | **E-43** - Be Excited Over Me

Q&A WITH RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"L



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ש א ת א ב ג ד ה ו ז ח ט י כ ל מ נ ס ע פ צ ק ר ש ת

QUESTION

Rabbi, you said that when we leave this world we'll be taken to task for not studying the *Maaseh Merkavah*. How can a plain man achieve that?

ANSWER

The question is that it was mentioned here that a man will be brought to judgment and he'll be asked, "Did you study *Maaseh Merkavah*, the secret knowledge, the secret wisdom?" So the question is: How can an ordinary person be held responsible for that?

So the question I can ask is this: How can an ordinary person repair television sets? Some of these sets are very complicated mechanisms. But when a man applies himself, every man discovers that he has big capabilities in various fields.

I know that there are people here who have skills that would make me appear like a baby compared to them. So the question is: How do they learn it? The answer is: When you apply yourself, you learn it.

Every Jew is expected to apply himself also to the important task of mastering the principles of Torah. In accordance to his opportunities, that's how responsible he is. If a man had opportunities and he could have studied *Maaseh Merkavah*, he's held responsible for not doing that.

Now, if he was a *yasom*, he was an orphan, he had no teachers, he lived in wartime, he was buffeted by circumstances, then he's not held responsible for that. But responsibility has no end because the capabilities of human beings has no end.

TAPE # 22 (April 1973)