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PARSHAS KORACH

WITH

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT" L

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

GARDEN OF POSITIVE THOUGHT

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Part I. The Garden

The Neglected Field

In Mishlei perek chaf daled, possuk lamed, Shlomo Hamelech tells us a short story: *על שדה איש עצל עברתי* – I once passed by the field of a lazy man, ועל נעל, *בָּרָם אָדָם חָסֵר לֵב* – and he had a vineyard there too, this person, and I could tell that this fellow was lacking in his mind. It says *leiv* in the possuk and in lashon kodesh the word *leiv* means mind.

“Now, how did I know that the owner was an *atzel*, lazy, and a *chasar leiv*, lacking the right kind of mind?” said Shlomo. *וְהִנֵּה עָלָה כְּלוֹ קַמְשָׁנִים* – Because behold, the entire field was overgrown with thistles, *וְכָסוּ פְּנֵי הָאָרֶץ חֲרָלִים* – and brambles covered the entire surface. And not only were thorns and weeds growing in the field but *וַיִּגְדַּר אֲבָנֵי נְהַרְסָה* – the wall of stones surrounding the field had already begun to crumble.

Now, somebody else would have passed by and would have noticed that the owner is a negligent man and that's all; but Shlomo Hamelech knew that nothing happens in this world by chance. Nothing is random, and if such a sight came to his attention, it meant that Hakadosh Baruch Hu was trying to teach him something. "It's *min haShamayim* that I took this route today," said Shlomo. "Hakadosh Baruch Hu caused me to come across such a case in order that I should learn important lessons from it."

Recipe for Disaster

Now, the first lesson, that the owner of this field is a lazy fellow, that's simple. Because, said Shlomo, *מַעַט יָנוּת* – a little sleeping when you're supposed to be at work, *מַעַט תְּנוּמוֹת* – a little bit of slumbering; it means you take off from work and take a nap now and then, *מַעַט חֲבַק יָרִים לְשָׁכָב* – putting your arms together and lying down for a rest, too much of that is a recipe for disaster.

It's like the man who has a sign on the shop door. There's a picture of a clock and it says "Will be back in 15 minutes." Now anybody who means business shouldn't have such a sign. If you already have it you should take it down and forget about it – destroy it. Sometimes the shoe store or the *mocher seforim*, the Hebrew book store, has such a sign. But you don't want to buy books every moment of the day and so just at the time when you have a few free minutes, let's say *bein hasedorim*, you come there and you find that sign, 'Will be back in 15 minutes.' So in the meantime you go back to the yeshiva and you sit down for a while. You come back twenty minutes later and the same sign is still waiting for you, 'Will be back in 15 minutes.'

The Unhappy Surprise

Now, nothing is wrong with taking a rest. But the man who is always seeking to evade his responsibilities, what is going to be the result of all his excuses that he is tired and he'll do it later? *וְכֵן מִתְהַלֵּךְ רִישָׁךְ* – *Your poverty will come like a mis'halech*. *Mis'halech* means a vagabond. You know, when you meet a vagabond on the road, it's not such a happy experience. You're afraid of him; he might do something to you. And he does; sometimes he jumps you.

And so, a man who doesn't attend to his business, he doesn't manage his affairs, he'll encounter unhappy surprises in life. "You'll encounter poverty," Shlomo said, "like you encounter a bum on the street." That's the first *peirush*; the *possuk* is telling you that if you have a field or a shoe store or even if you're a *rebbe* in the yeshiva, whatever it is you're doing, you have to be a hustler.

Cultivate Your Estate

But there's another explanation. Not that the first *pshat* is wrong but we're going to talk now about the other lesson – the more important lesson

that Shlomo Hamelech learned when he saw the field. Shlomo said as follows: Every person in this world is endowed with another field – you have up here in your mind an estate given to you by Hashem for a purpose; and the purpose is to cultivate it, to cultivate it with good ideals and good attitudes.

Now you have to know something right away. If you'll just wait, if you'll just let your mind remain, don't think it will lay dormant, an empty field waiting for you to begin planting. Oh no! It will produce the things that grow naturally. And naturally means you'll have thorns and weeds. Even on a city street if you leave things alone, if traffic would stop for ten years, the whole street would begin to change. The weeds and grass would begin to sprout and trees would drop seeds into the cracks and new trees would begin to grow. It would lift up the sidewalk. In fifty years, it would be a jungle.

Now I understand that today the jungle is admired. The environmentalists love the forests but you have to know that forests are good for snakes and bears, for chimpanzees. Sometimes you'll have a *meshugeneh*, like Jane Goodall, who goes out to live with chimpanzees; so maybe for such people. But despite all the propaganda, human beings must have cultivated land.

A Field of Orchards

Now, when we talk about planting good things in our mind, about uprooting weeds and planting beautiful saplings, you have to know that there are very many different kinds of orchards a person can have up here. When you have such real estate you don't just grow grapes and you're finished. You have to plant cherries too. And apples and pears. The mind of a Jew has many compartments, many orchards, and each one has to be tended to with the utmost care.

There's one orchard of *ahavas Hashem* and another of *yiras Hashem*. There's an orchard of Shas and an orchard of Chumash. There's *bechina* – that means to see Hashem in the world around you – and there's *emunah*. You have to tend to your orchard of *bitachon* and to a separate orchard of *chesed*. There's very much cultivating to do. That's why you'll have to listen to these tapes for many years – not only me; you can go to better places too – but wherever you go, there's a lot of planting to do.

Otherwise, weeds grow, giant hogweeds. And once your mind is filled with weeds, *uva mishalech*, a vagabond might come along and grab you unexpectedly. You'd be surprised – the wrong seeds that grow wild in your mind might someday confront you with a *nisayon*; suddenly a test will come up and you're vulnerable. Sometimes a person is ruined entirely in his *ruchmiyus* – his entire life is ruined because of the poisonous seeds that slowly grew in his head.

The Weeds Take Over

I know a story. There was a *bochur* in our yeshiva who came from a very good home, very *frum* people. His father was a *rebbe* who had a *shtiebel*. He was a good *bochur* in learning – he had an orchard of exquisite *peiros* when it came to learning Gemara – but he didn't have an interest in cultivating the other orchards. When it came to studying *yiras Shamayim* every day a half hour in yeshiva, he never bothered. He wasn't interested.

Well, when I left the yeshiva he also left and I lost track of him. Years later I hear he's out west someplace. Out west? He threw away his *yiddishkeit!* Ayy! From such a home! I left him a *bochur* from a *chassidishe* house. Now he's a psychologist and he is divested, he's *ois getun*. I was shocked! I knew him in the yeshiva. He was a good *bochur*.

What happened? He had never cultivated the garden of his mind! He wore a nice black velour hat but you can't rely on that – what matters most is what's under the hat. Unless you put something here in your garden and you cultivate it all the time you won't be ready for a *yom tzarah*, for the tests of life, and who knows what could happen?

Root Out The Weeds

Now, one of the most important – and overlooked – orchards that a Jew must plant in his mind is the function of how to look favorably at your fellow Jews. It's a *mitzvah* of the Torah: **בְּצֶדֶק תִּשְׁפֹּט עַמִּיתְךָ**. It means that it's your Torah duty to form righteous opinions about your fellow *frum* Jew (Shavuos 30a).

Now don't think it's something you can ignore because whether you like it or not, your mind is always forming opinions of others. It can't be helped; you're always making judgements. A cow, *l'havdil*, is able to go through life without thinking, without judging; but if you're an *adam* then you're a judge – as soon as you see somebody, you're already forming opinions.

And so you have to get busy tending this orchard of *b'tzedek tishpot amisecha* because if you don't labor in cultivating the seeds and plantings of *dan l'kaf zechus*, judging others favorably, then only weeds will grow there. All types of weeds; jealousy, anger, frustration, haughtiness and other things too.

Seeding The Weeds

And they grow and grow. Left undisturbed, weeds can grow as high as small trees. And so you'll have up here a jungle of weeds, which is a recipe for disaster, for going lost. That's what Mishlei warns us in a separate *posuk* connected with this subject. He's talking there about the subject of thoughts and he says, **הֲלוֹא יִתְעוּ הַרְשֵׁי רָע** – *Won't they go lost, those who plow wrong thoughts into the field of the mind?* (14:22). When people start thinking bad

about others, when they like to see faults in other people, their thoughts are like seeds which will grow into bigger thoughts until eventually they'll go lost entirely.

Let's say there's somebody who sits in the *beis hakenesses* and talks and talks *lashon hara* on everybody – this person is this and that person is that. His head is full of suspicion about others. The rabbi, especially. Everyone is wrong!

Same thing at home. He sits at home and talks with his wife *lashon hara* on everybody. This neighbor, the landlord, this friend. Visitors come and when they leave they talk *lashon hara* on the visitors. He's not even looking for faults; only that it's such a jungle of wickedness, of *ra ayin*, in his mind that this is what he sees.

So Hashem says, “הֲבֵא לְטִמָּא פִּוְתְּחִין לִּי” – If this is what you want, if this is the mind you want for yourself, I'll let you succeed. You'll succeed and your mind will become poisoned by the very worst kind of *רִאשׁ וְלַעֲנָה*, *poisonous gall and wormwood*. You'll become better and better at finding faults in other people until *yis'u*, until you'll go lost altogether. Great people, much greater than you, suffered that end. Doeg Ha'adomi went lost because of that. Achitophel went lost too. Yeravam ben Nevat also. Others too. It happened already many times in our history.

Part II. Korach's Garden

Korach: A Tragic Personality

And so we'll take one example, from this week's *parsha*. Everybody remembers what happened to Korach, how the earth opened its mouth and swallowed him and he went lost forever.

It's a tragic story and we'll take the time to study it in some detail because that's the reason the Torah took the trouble to write about it at length. It's expected to be a model for us in our daily lives so that we should see now how dangerous it is to have a mind that is not cultivated with the utmost care.

Korach: A Great Personality

Now don't misunderstand me; Korach was a great man. First of all, nobody who wasn't good was able to leave Mitzrayim. Remember in the *haggadah* of Pesach we say to the *rasha*, לֹא הָיָה נִגְאָל, *had he been there, he wouldn't have been redeemed*. It's a principle that those who weren't worthy did not leave Mitzrayim. And so if Korach left Mitzrayim you can be sure he deserved it. Korach went through what everybody else experienced. He passed through the *Yam Suf* with everyone else and as he walked he sang

Az Yashir. He was a Levite, so I imagine he had a beautiful voice and that he was singing as loud as anyone else.

But not only was Korach worthy of leaving Mitzrayim and experiencing all the *nissim* of the *midbar* but he stood at Har Sinai with the whole Klal Yisrael and accepted the Torah. וַיִּחַן שָׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל נֶגֶד הָהָר - *And the nation encamped in front of Har Sinai* (Shemos 19:2). It doesn't say, *vayachanu*, and they encamped. It says *vayichan*, *loshon yachid* – and *he* encamped – which means the whole nation spoke up *k'ish echad*. It means that Korach and his congregation also stood at the foot of Har Sinai and together with everyone else they shouted *naaseh v'nishma* with the greatest enthusiasm.

The Tragedy

So you can be certain that Korach was a good *frum* Jew. And so it's a big question – what happened? How could such a great personality fall so far?

The answer is that he allowed brambles to grow in his mind. It was a result of being a *choreish ra*. Korach was plowing wickedness; he began to think wrong about others. He planted in his mind seeds of being *dan lekaf chov* and those little seeds grew into big trees, trees of poisonous fruit.

You remember that glorious day of the *hakamas hamishkan*, when the Sanctuary was finally erected in this world and the Am Yisroel would now claim the exclusive glory of having Hashem reside among them? There were very few days – we could even say no day ever – in the history of the world when there was so much rejoicing.

And then suddenly a tragedy took place. וַתֵּצֵא אֵשׁ מִלִּפְנֵי הַשֵּׁם וַתֹּאכַל אוֹתָם - *A fire went forth from Hashem and it consumed Nadav and Avihu, the two sons of Aharon who had entered the Sanctuary to officiate as the newly appointed kohanim, וַיָּמָתוּ לִפְנֵי הַשֵּׁם, and they perished there before Hashem* (*ibid.* 10:2).

Making Sense of Tragedy

Now, the whole nation when they saw that tragedy, they were overwhelmed with shock and sadness. On the happiest day such an event should occur?! It was unimaginable! And Korach was there too along with everyone else; he was standing there, watching, and he was troubled too: "How could such a thing happen that the two sons of Aharon should die in the Mishkan by the Hand of Hashem?! Such nice young men, *tzaddikim*, should fall dead in the middle of such a great celebration?!"

Now Korach understood that Hashem doesn't do things for no reason – particularly a tragedy as great as this – and so he began to suspect Moshe Rabbeinu. Korach was thinking, "Maybe it's because they shouldn't have been there in the first place! It's what I thought all along – it's true they were great men but were they the only ones worthy of being chosen? Was it *yashrus* that

Moshe should appoint his brother and his brother's sons as the *kohanim*? Why should they be chosen instead of me and my sons? I'm also a Levi, after all."

One of The Best

Now Korach wouldn't have said that if he had been a nobody or an ordinary Levi. The truth is that Korach was one of the best Levi'im; he was a *lamdan* and a *tzaddik* and he had very good sons too, just like Aharon. לְמִנְצִיחַ וּבְנֵי קֹרַח מְזֻמָּוֶר – The children of Korach have beautiful *tefillos* in the sefer Tehillim. Hakadosh Baruch Hu put His spirit into them and they sang beautiful songs to Hashem; they were glorious prototypes of the Levi'im who sang *shirei kodesh* to Hashem. You see later (Bamidbar 26:11) that וּבְנֵי קֹרַח לֹא מָוֹתוּ – they didn't die in what happened to Korach, because they were *tzaddikim gemurim*. And their father was certainly somebody – a man is not *zocheh* to such children unless he himself has worked in his lifetime to acquire certain great attributes of character.

"So if I have such good sons," Korach had thought all along, "why weren't we chosen by Moshe?" And so already at the time that Aharon's children were appointed, a seed of suspicion began to grow in his mind; seeds of *dan lekaf chov* were planted in Korach's head and he began to suspect that maybe Aharon didn't have the right to be a *kohen*.

And now, when he witnessed what happened at the *chanukas hamishkan*, all of those brambles of suspicion that had taken root in his mind began to release their poisonous fruit. "Now you see that I was right. Hakadosh Baruch Hu showed His displeasure – they weren't really fit for it. It was Moshe Rabbeinu who gave the *kehuna* to his brother's family, not Hashem."

A Favor for Moshe

Now Korach knew just like we do, that Hakadosh Baruch Hu had said to Moshe, "Take your brother Aharon and *hakreiv*, bring him near." Korach knew that it was the Word of Hashem but he began to reason like this: This, I'm repeating what I heard from my *rebbe zichrono levrachah*.

Korach was thinking, "Moshe Rabbeinu did so many good things for Hakadosh Baruch Hu. He served Him so loyally, he organized the Bnei Yisrael, he took them out of Mitzrayim, he brought them together to Matan Torah – He lived completely for Hashem and Hakadosh Baruch Hu felt a certain indebtedness, a *hakaras hatov*, to Moshe Rabbeinu.

And so when Moshe Rabbeinu put in a good word for his brother, "Can you make my brother, Aharon, the *kohen gadol*, and his sons should be the *kohanim*?" Hakadosh Baruch Hu wouldn't refuse. רְצוֹן יְרָאִיו יַעֲשֶׂה – Hashem does the will of those who fear Him (Tehillim 145:19). Like we say, *tzaddik gozer*

v'Hakadosh Baruch Hu mekayem – when a tzaddik wills something so Hakadosh Baruch Hu fulfills his will. That's a principle, that independent of what Hakadosh Baruch Hu would have done anyhow, one of His considerations is to fulfill the will of the tzaddikim.

That's what Korach reasoned: “It's only because Hakadosh Baruch Hu yielded to Moshe's will. But who said that it was best for the Am Yisroel? Why didn't he put in a good word for me? Am I worse than his brother? Could be I'm even better for the job than his brother. If only Moshe Rabbeinu would have been perfect without any flaws in character, without any desire at all to domineer the people, if he would have been completely humble, then he wouldn't have desired such a situation. And therefore because of him, we suffered this great tragedy on what was supposed to be the happiest day in our history.”

Self Obliteration

Now the truth is that it wasn't so. Moshe Rabbeinu said, “What do you want of me? I didn't say anything to Hakadosh Baruch Hu. לָכֵן אַתָּה – You, Korach, וְכָל עֲרֻתְךָ – and all of your congregation, הַנִּצְעָדִים – that are gathered together, עַל הַשָּׁם – you're gathered against Hashem. Not against me. וְאַהֲרֹן מֶה – Not against me. הוּא כִּי תִלְיֵנוּ עָלָיו – What is Aharon that you should complain against him? (Bamidbar 16:11). אַהֲרֹן מֶה הוּא – Aharon doesn't have any desires. He didn't want anything in the world; he didn't even have the slightest inkling of being chosen. Mah hu! Mah means nothing at all. Nachnu mah, Moshe Rabbeinu said, “Who are we? We're nothing. Aharon and I are nothing at all. It's only Hashem.”

It's like in the Kelmer Talmud Torah, how the mussar shmuess was given. People were sitting there listening, and the old rosh yeshivah who was saying the shmuess sat in the back seat. He spoke from a place in the back so that you didn't see anybody. All you heard was the voice. He effaced himself entirely as if he didn't exist. A man is sitting in the back seat and he's talking. Everybody is sitting and looking to the front and listening. That's how our leaders used to be.

Now, it's true that Moshe had tremendous power, but he had the ability to submerge his personality so entirely that nothing of his own desire stood in the way. That's how great leaders are. They can nullify their personality. They erase all their desires in order there shouldn't be any mechitzos that intervene between Hashem and the people.

The Unhappy Ending

But Korach wouldn't listen to that. It was hard for him to believe such a thing because he had already plowed the seeds of evil for so long. Korach

wasn't a brute, a ruffian who could be misled so easily by partisan rivalry; he was a great man. Nobody could gain a following in such a noble place like the camp in the *midbar* – people who had listened daily to Moshe Rabeinu, people who had listened to Hakadosh Baruch Hu and received the Torah – unless he was worthy of such a following. And so he was worthy! But even so, that's what happens in the mind that isn't cultivated with the utmost care.

Korach had already plowed and sowed and tended to these shoots of *dan lekaf chov* and now they sprouted forth poisonous fruit: “What do you mean you're nothing? Do you mean to say you can erase from yourselves all the tendencies that human beings have? Don't you have at least a little bit of love for yourself? It's just because of you! You twisted it so that Hashem should choose your brother. You were able to finagle it out of Hashem, so to speak.”

And it was those seeds in Korach's mind that eventually led to his downfall. וַתִּפְתַּח הָאָרֶץ אֶת פִּיהָ – Because Korach opened his big mouth, the earth opened its big mouth and swallowed him into Gehenom forever. He was a good man, Korach; a very good man. But הֲלוֹא יִתְעוּ חֹרְשֵׁי רָע – Won't they go lost, those who plow wrong thoughts into the field of the mind? As good as you are, if you're too lazy to cultivate the orchard of good thoughts about others, then those seeds produce weeds and brambles and something bad is sure to happen.

Part III. Your Garden

Purpose of the Story

Now, it's important to understand that this incident wasn't put in the Torah just to fill space, to tell us a story of something that happened in the wilderness. The Torah took the trouble to describe the story of Korach at length לְאֹת לְבַנֵּי מִרְי, as a sign for people who like to make trouble (Bamidbar 17:25).

It says it openly: וְלֹא יִהְיֶה כְּקֹרַח וּבְעֵרָתוֹ – You shouldn't be like Korach and his congregation (*ibid.* 17:5). Some *poskim* even say it's a Torah law, you shouldn't follow in the ways of Korach. And included in that, you must say, is to be careful not to plant the same seeds that Korach planted; the seeds of being *dan lekaf chov* that inevitably lead to *machlokes*.

Now, it doesn't mean that if you're *dan lekaf chov*, you should expect that today or tomorrow the earth will open up its mouth and swallow you. That's not how Hashem works in this world, but Korach is a *mashal* for where you're headed. הֲלוֹא יִתְעוּ חֹרְשֵׁי רָע – Surely they will go lost, those who plow seeds of evil thoughts in their minds.

Every Jew is Electrifying

Of course, Korach got it over the head right away because he started up with the wrong person. He chose the very worst man to start up with! Had he been suspicious, let's say of some ordinary Jew in the wilderness, it wouldn't be a mitzvah but he wouldn't have ended up in the ground right away. Korach started up with Moshe Rabbeinu, however – that's like touching an electric wire of 100,000 volts.

But you can be sure that it's still a very great peril to suspect *any* Jew. Every *frum* Jew, even if he's not Moshe Rabbeinu, is beloved by Hakadosh Baruch Hu. Which Jew? The most foolish fellow. The fellow with all faults. He's ugly. He's rude. He's mean. He doesn't smile at you. He blocks your driveway. He won't give you a raise. Still, Hakadosh Baruch Hu loves him with an intense and fiery love.

So he's not a 100,000 volt live wire but he's tremendous, and therefore it's a very dangerous proposition to be suspicious of any *frum* Jew. I'm not talking now about the *reshaim*; I'm not talking about being *melamed zechus* on wicked people – that I'll leave to somebody else bigger than me. But the *frum* Jews, the *shomer mitzvos* – all of them – those are the ones Hashem loves; and therefore one of your big jobs in this world is to be an *oheiv tzedek*, to want to find the good in your fellow Jew and to always judge him favorably.

Pulling Weeds

And that means we have to get busy because it's impossible to do this if you don't work at it. It won't happen if you're a lazy man. על שְׂדֵה אִישׁ עֵצֶל עִבְרָתִי – *I passed by a lazy man's garden*, said Shlomo. He didn't pull out the weeds as soon as he saw them growing, and so, what grew in his mind? קָסוּ פָּנָיו חֲרָלִים? – Brambles are growing, all kinds of poisonous roots.

It means that unless you are always busy weeding out, then poison is growing. And so, as soon as the thought comes into your mind that you don't like that person, so you must do something about it. You can't be an *ish atzel!* Instead of letting that seed sprout, right away you have to try to uproot it. And therefore, whenever you have some grudge against somebody, if you wish to emulate Hashem, you must try to be like a lawyer and find every kind of excuse to justify him.

A Healthy Imagination

Even if you know that he did something wrong, you could say as follows: "It could be he didn't realize it was wrong." You can say, "He didn't know how serious it was. Maybe he's ignorant. Maybe he doesn't know how great the sin is." If he did something to bother you, so you have to get busy weeding – "Maybe his boss yelled at him today." "Could be he's worried about *parnassah*,

about his children.” You overlook whatever it is and you wipe it from your mind. Instead of being lazy and letting it grow poisonous roots, you exert your imagination to transform what seems to be an act of irresponsibility, an act of sin, and you interpret it in the very best way.

That’s an extremely important function among Jews. We have to be *misgaber* on this *yetzer hara* of trying to find faults in our neighbors and in our *mechutanim*, in our daughters-in-law and sons-in-law, and everyone else we come in contact with.

What is a Woman?

You can’t think of any excuse? Maybe you don’t know how to think. Among the requirements of being *dan l’kaf zechus* is, *עַד שְׁתַּגִּיעַ אֶת תְּרִין אֶת חֲבֵרָךְ עַד שְׁתַּגִּיעַ*, *לְמִקְוֵמוֹ* – *don’t judge the fellowman until you’re in his shoes* (Avos 2:4). Like a man once told me; if a child makes a mistake and breaks something, don’t get excited too much. Because if you were a child, you would also break things.

So let’s say your wife likes to talk. So you say, “Why does she talk so much? It gets on my nerves.” So wait until you’re a woman, then you’ll judge her. A woman is expected to talk; Hakadosh Baruch Hu made her that way. She couldn’t be a mother otherwise. And so instead of letting that complaint stew in your thoughts, pull out that weed right away. Because every person should be judged according to his condition. And you’ll never understand his condition.

Planting Flowers

Now, besides for pulling out the weeds, a person has to get busy planting flowers. Like we said before, just to leave it empty is impossible. Because new weeds will grow. And so you must begin planting fruit saplings and all good things. It takes work. Did you ever see a gardener planting his tomatoes? He gets on his knees, in the dirt, and he works at it.

It’s not always easy but if you work at it you’ll succeed. Instead of being *chorshei ra*, people who are plowing bad thoughts, the *possuk* continues, *וְאִמְתַּת הַחֹרְשֵׁי טוֹב* (Mishlei 12:20). It means that those who think good thoughts will be rewarded with even more good thoughts. Those who want to walk in the ways of Hashem – Hashem is always thinking good about us – and make an attempt to think the right thoughts about fellow Jews, they’ll succeed; *habo litaher misaayin lo* and it will become easier and easier.

Yagata, Matzasa

Remember, we’re not talking about *ma’asim* now – we’re talking about correcting the mental attitudes; about learning how to *think* good thoughts about your fellow man. It’s a big job and I’m far away from that myself. I’m

saying this not for you; I'm listening to it myself as I'm saying it. But let's listen and maybe a little bit of it will stick to us.

We should together listen to what my *rebbe* said. I had a *rebbe* once, a great *rebbe*, and he once told us that a person is not one thing – he's a bundle of things. I remember it like yesterday; I heard him say that sixty years ago. "A person is not one *middah*," he said, "he's a bundle of *middos*." So one thing might be not good, but something else is good in him. And therefore, if we'll look, we'll find. But if we're busy looking only for what's wrong, we'll find that too and we'll be failures.

Here's a man who is *roidef achar hakavod*, he loves *kavod*. He's a *ba'al ga'avah*, he thinks much of himself. You want to judge him? Weed out those thoughts and look for good things; he has good things, I guarantee it. And you should spend time on that, absolutely. I recommend even that you should buy yourself a notebook and keep notes; a person's name and a few good qualities about him. A few lines and then another name and his good qualities. And then another name and so on. And you should review that notebook often; make *chazara* on it.

Home Work

Now, this program, like I said before, is for everyone, for all of your fellow Jews. But it's especially for a spouse. Today we get reports that husbands and wives are fighting all the time. And in some parts of town people are going crazy – in certain modern neighborhoods it's divorces and divorces and divorces. A tragedy! What's going on here? The world is going crazy!

So a man said to me, "Well, after all, there's a *din* of *get* in the Torah, isn't there?" *Meshugeneh!* There's also *misah* in the Torah and funerals in the Torah. *Misah* is a tragedy and *gittin* are a tragedy.

Now when you speak to couples, right away you see that our subject is very important. I spoke today to a couple of women. They called me up to tell me their husbands are no good at all.

Everyone's Wrong

One of them said, "It's his fault. There's no other way out."

"What's the trouble?" I asked.

"He's so mean to me," she says, "He's inhuman."

Now, if I ask him, I'm sure he'll give me a report about his wife. She doesn't do her work. She looks for trouble. She's criticizing me, nagging, this and that.

Everybody thinks they're right! And they're all wrong because they are all sinning against this great quality which Hashem said you should try to gain, to judge your fellowman *l'kaf zechus*, to give him the benefit of the doubt.

Seek Righteousness

You're going to say, you can't find good in your wife? You can't find good in your husband? Come on! Come on! That's nothing but wickedness! It's not true at all!

A wife does many things for her husband and he should think about that and appreciate her to no end. And even if your wife said something that seems wrong to you, so what? Maybe it's because she doesn't feel well today. Maybe she didn't sleep well or some other trouble she has that's bothering her, that's why she's letting it out on you; but she doesn't really mean any harm – she forgets about it right away – so be *melamed zechus*.

Appreciate the Working Boy

The same with a husband. When a husband comes home from work and says something nasty, the wife should say to herself, “He worked very hard today. There was competition; maybe the supervisor was persecuting him. My husband didn't mean any harm.”

And then after she pulls out the weeds, she begins to plant. “Look, my husband is an *ish ne'eman*.” She reminds herself that he goes to work every day. Now, he'd like to sit home. He'd like to go the *beis hamedrash* and learn. He feels like he's wasting his life in the shop where he's working but he's doing it out of loyalty to his family.

There are so many loafers today in the world, unfortunately. Some people go to Atlantic City and loaf. Some people go to *shtiblach* and loaf. They don't learn a word. And your husband is a decent man. He's working, supporting his family, giving away his life. His life! Every week he comes home and he gives her money. So she thinks about that and appreciates her husband. That's how married people must live, and that's how all people should live. They should always try to give each other the benefit of the doubt and always attempt to explain that the other party meant well.

Korach: The Planting Lesson

So we come back now to one of the great lessons we learn from Korach. That great tragedy was the result of this error of Korach being *dan Moshe Rabbeinu l'kaf chovah*; to the side of guilt. Instead of giving him the benefit of the doubt, Korach let that seed of suspicion and distrust grow wild and you know what happened at the end – it was a tragedy of tragedies. וַתִּפְתַּח הָאֲרֶץ וַתִּאָכַל אֶת כּוֹרַח – *And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up Korach*. It was a

stunning blow for the whole Am Yisroel. “Korach?! If it can happen to such a man, it can happen to us too!”

And the entire nation got busy learning the great lesson that one of our functions in life now is to take this garden of our mind and to develop it to the best of our ability by planting seeds of being *dan es chaveiro l'kaf zechus*, of trying our utmost to judge your fellow man with a meritorious balance and to think well of him always. Because that's the purpose why you came to this world; in order to plant an orchard of delectable *peiros* and a garden of beautiful flowers in your mind.

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Let's Get Practical

Planting The Right Seeds in The Garden of Positive Thought

This week I will spend one minute every day thinking only positive thoughts about someone I am close to. I will try to think about several specific positive attributes, in order to view that person in a favorable way. If I'm married I will choose my spouse; otherwise I will choose a parent or a *rebbe*. I will devote this minute to think only positive thoughts about this person and push away any negative thoughts.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

463 – Downfall of a Great Man | **881** – Bileam's Message | **906** – Cultivating the Garden of The Mind | **960** – Military Service in Hashem's Army

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The Power of the Shabbos Table

Let us analyze the Shabbos Table. Torah sources describe special specifications for the Shabbos table, how it should be positioned and where it should be located, etc. This is because our Shabbos table resembles the Shulchan of the Beis HaMikdash.

And what do we do while sitting around the Shabbos table? It is a universal Jewish custom to sing *zemiros*. **These are not just nice songs; the singing is a special form of *avodas Hashem*.** It is like the singing of the *Levi'im* in the Beis HaMikdash.

It's customary to place roses (*shoshanim*) on the Shabbos table, perhaps for their pleasant fragrance. "Just as the rose is prepared for Shabbos and Yom Tov, so is Yisrael..." (Shir HaShirim Rabbah 2:6) Sometimes, I (Rav Pincus) buy a few roses for Shabbos. Once, I went to a store and saw some beautiful roses. When I asked the storekeeper to wrap some up for me, he asked me a very difficult question: "How many?" I was stumped. I know that a bridegroom buys twelve roses for the bride, but how many roses does one buy in honor of Shabbos, the day of Hashem? Should one buy twenty-four, or perhaps the entire store? In the end, I took three roses, because it's impossible to buy enough. No matter how many you buy, it will never fully honor Hashem and His *Shechinah*, so you need some kind of practical framework within which to work. I chose the number three, which corresponds to the three *Avos*. **The main thing is that you should know for Whom you're buying the roses!**

We also eat the *se'udah* at the Shabbos table. Someone who offered a *korban* in the Beis HaMikdash would receive a portion of the meat, depending on what type of *korban* it was. When a person ate in the Beis HaMikdash it wasn't an ordinary eating, he was eating "from the table of the Most High." The food belonged to Hashem, Who "invited" this Jew to partake at His table. So it is at the Shabbos table, we sit at Hashem's table and eat His food. In the *zemiros* of Shabbos we say, "Da hi seudasa d'Atika Kaddisha - This is the meal of the Holy Ancient One." It means that Hashem is inviting us to His table. **Hashem is the host and we are His guests!**

This coming Shabbos let's keep in mind: This is Hashem's *se'udah*, Hashem's house; it is His Shabbos Table!

Le'Hatzlachat
Chaim Ben
Shoshana

Le'iluy Nishmat
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QUESTION

In the summer it gets very hot sometimes, uncomfortably hot. How do we see the good in that?

ANSWER

At the beginning of the Chumash it says *וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וְהִנֵּה טוֹב מְאֹד* - *Elokim saw all that He made and behold it was very good.*

Now, in order to be an *eved Hashem*, we have to learn to think like Hashem and if He said that the world is very good we have to learn to look at the world and study everything and see it's very good.

It's hot? Wonderful! The apples are getting red on the trees. The pears are becoming sweet on the trees. If it wasn't hot, they wouldn't become sweet.

Here is a man who comes home and he has to go through the kitchen in order to go, let's say, to the bathroom. So he tells his wife, "What is this? It's so hot in this kitchen!" "I'm sorry dear," she says. "I'm going to turn the oven off." She turns it off. Now, a few minutes later when he comes out of the bathroom, he says, "Is supper ready? She says, "No. I'm sorry, but I had to turn the oven off."

And so in September all the ripe red apples will be out on the stands. How does an apple become red and juicy and sweet? It's only because Hakadosh Baruch Hu turns on the heat. The summer is the kitchen that ripens these delicious fruits that we're going to eat all winter. Hakadosh Baruch Hu is giving you free heat. It costs a lot of money to buy oil to produce that heat. We need that heat to bake the fruit on the trees. We need that heat to produce the wheat in the fields.

And therefore are we going to complain because of the good times that are waiting for us? Summer is the time when all the fun for the ensuing year is being prepared. But what are we doing? You're constantly grouching how hot it is. All summer long, complaining, hot, hot, hot, hot, hot.

No. Heat is *tov meod!* It's very good! Of course, even though a stove is very good, you don't jump inside of the stove. You don't have to stay outside in the sun undressed and burn yourself to a crisp in the sun, but as you're enjoying the shade and you look at the heat outside in the sun, understand it's a gift from Hashem. It came from 93 million miles away just for you so you should make sure to enjoy it! August 1991

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