

THE CHOPP HOLDINGS EDITION

# TORAS AVIGDOR

AUTHENTIC TORAH THOUGHT FOR LIFE

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"L

CHODESH TAMMUZ

Victor Braha

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# PARSHAS PINCHAS

WITH

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT" L

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

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## Part I. Hidden Heroes

### Hidden Tzaddikim

When it comes to the *Dor Hamidbar*, the Generation of the Wilderness, we imagine that we are familiar with the names of all of the great people of our nation who lived then. Moshe Rabbeinu, Aharon Hakohen, Miriam, Yehoshua, Kaleiv, the Nesi'im and so on. And the more one studies the Chumash, the more he becomes acquainted with—and connected to—these great people of our past.

But the truth is that as many names as we are familiar with, we understand right away that it's not a complete list; because we know that there are many names, names of great people, that were never recorded. After all, the *shivim zekeinim*, the seventy elders who led the

nation, we don't know their names. We know Eldad and Meidad, that's all. They happen to be part of a story being told so they're mentioned in passing. But the others are anonymous; the rest of the *shivim zekeinim* were great men; at that time they all became *nevi'im*—temporarily at least—and still we don't know their names.

And the truth is that besides for them, we know that there were many *tzaddikim*, many very great *talmidei chachamim*. After all, we're talking now about the greatest generation in our nation's history. They witnessed all of the miracles of Yetzias Mitzrayim. The Yam Suf split for them! Ah! If I could choose to go back in time and live in the past with the Am Yisroel, that's the generation I would choose. They stood at Har Sinai and heard the Voice of Hashem and lived for forty years in the Wilderness with the Mishkan and the *mann* and the *ananei kavod*.

### **A Glorious Kollel Life**

And what did they do for forty years in the Midbar? They sat all day long in the *kollel* and learned the Torah that Moshe taught them. They had the best *rosh kollel*! A *rebbe* who comes down from Har Sinai to teach you; he speaks to Hashem when he has questions. You can't ask for better than that. And so they sat in this *kollel* for forty years and they learned; and they were transformed because of that.

Not only the men—the entire family was transformed. Even today, a *kollel* home is a different home. When a girl marries a young man who sits in the *kollel* and learns, you have to know that home is not an ordinary home anymore. It's a *kollel* home; it's influenced by the spirit of Torah. And eventually, even when he'll take over the earning of the livelihood, the family will be established on a *kollel* basis. The children will already be established as *kollel* children and they have the attitude of *kollel* life. It's a beautiful beginning, a strong foundation.

But in the Midbar it was more than a beginning. It was forty years! You know what it means to be in the *kollel* for forty years?! It's remarkable! And it wasn't one family or two or even a thousand. It was a *kollel* nation! כָּל הָעֵדָה בָּלֵם קֳדָשִׁים — Everyone was holy (Bamidbar 16:3). You can believe Korach when he said that. And therefore don't mind what your *rebbe* told you in *cheder* about the Dor Hamidbar. כָּי כָּל הָעֵדָה בָּלֵם קֳדָשִׁים וּבְתוֹכָם הָשֵׁם — They were all *tzaddikim* and *talmidei chachamim*.

## Honorable Mention

And so you can be sure that there were thousands, hundreds of thousands, of people worthy of being mentioned in the Torah. Only that it would be impossible to name everyone — *hagbah* would be very heavy. You'd need to bring a crane into the shul every Monday and Thursday for such a massive scroll. And so, only the most conspicuous names are mentioned. But all the rest of the great men? No, their names are not recorded at all. Their identities, as great as they were, are hidden away.

But suddenly, in our *sedrah*, we're hit between the eyes with a very big surprise. Five little girls, the daughters of Tzelafchad, are named openly in the Torah: וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת בְּנֹתָיו מְחֻלָּה נֹחַה וְחֻגְלָה וּמִלְכָּה וְחִירְצָה, *These are the names of Tzelafchad's daughters: Machlah, Noah, and Choglah, and Milkah, and Sirtzah* (Bamidbar 27:1).

A remarkable thing! A few girls who had a certain question about the Torah laws of inheritance came to Moshe and their names are recorded in the Chumash! It wasn't even necessary to mention their names. It could have said, "The daughters of Tzelafchad came and they put their case before Moshe", and that would have been enough. But the Torah is not stingy with its words here; it spells out their names! And later (*ibid.* 36:11) the Torah repeats their names again!

## The Funded Amendment

You know what it means to have your name recorded forever in the *sefer Torah*? Suppose you have a *frum* Jewish millionaire, and he's a *tzaddik* too, and somebody would come to him today and say, "I'm coming to you as a messenger of all the *roshei yeshiva* and all of the *gedolei Yisroel*. They made me a *shaliach* to come to you and we're making an offer to you. If you'll give fifty million dollars for the cause of building *yeshivas*, we'll add your name to the Chumash. We're going to make an exception and we're going to add your name into the *sefer Torah* that's read by Jews all over the world – a permanent addition."

Immediately from all sides other people will offer more! "Fifty million dollars?! I'll give a hundred million dollars!" Absolutely. Some people would give their lives; they'd *mammesh* kill themselves to have their name in the Torah. It's worth it! To have your name in the Chumash?! Hashem's *sefer*?! It's a *kavod* that has no equal! And these five girls were *zocheh* to it; they merited to have their names mentioned openly in the

Torah. It's a remarkable thing that five young girls should deserve such an honor.

Now, exactly what these girls did to deserve such a thing, I cannot tell you. The truth is I'm not so interested right now in what exactly it was but there's no question they were *tzidkaniyos*. They were quite young, that's true, but they were brought up properly and they were righteous; they had *yiras Shomayim* and good *middos*, no question about it. And so they deserved the honor, absolutely.

### **The Unexpected Great Ones**

But we have to know that the Torah is demonstrating something very big here. Because so many great ones, so many *tzaddikim*, their names aren't recorded. Why should the Torah go out of its way to enumerate the names of these girls? There's something doing here.

And the answer is that Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants us to know that it's not like we think down here below that if we have a long beard, a black hat and a long *kapote*, that's the only one who's important. "Oh no!" Hashem says. "Black hats and long coats are very good. Very good. But don't forget that even a little boy or a little girl is also important in My eyes.

Moshe Rabbeinu, excellent! Aharon Hakohen, absolutely! But as much as the public *tzaddikim* are in My thoughts always, I've chosen to record the name of these five girls so that you should know who else is important in My history. If a little girl, a young woman, has good character and is devoted to Me, she can be just as important as Moshe and Aharon; just as important as Yehoshua and Kaleiv and Miriam."

### **Out of The Headlines**

Now, we can say those words but actually it's a surprise to us. A *frum* little girl is so important? We appreciate her, but — "No buts!" Hakadosh Baruch Hu says. "I'm showing you now that these girls are important to Me. And even though down below, when you talk about important people, you never think of young girls as being in the headlines, but I chose to yes put them in the headlines so that you know that with Me, I don't care what people think. I have My own yardstick of measuring character and greatness."



Now, that's an important rule in understanding the history of the Am Yisroel. Don't be fooled by the headlines! And I'm not talking about the New York Times. That you know on your own. If someone's name is in the headlines of the New York Times, we know right away that he's probably a nothing, a lowlife. But I'm talking about the Jewish newspapers, the good headlines, the Torah headlines. Even there, many times great people remain in the background. And very often it's the anonymous ones, the ones who stand in the background serving Hashem as best as they could, they're the ones who are written in the headlines of Hashem's eternal history book.

### **The King and the Maid**

Now, we'll take another example of this phenomenon just to better introduce the subject. You remember when Dovid Hamelech spoke in *tefillah* to Hakadosh Baruch Hu he said the following. He said **אָנֶה ה' כִּי אָנִי עֶבֶדְךָ אֲנִי עֶבֶדְךָ בֶן אֲמָתֶךָ** – “Please Hashem answer me, because I am your servant; I am your servant the son of your maidservant.” (Tehillim 116:16).

Now, we say that so frequently that it pays to know what Dovid was saying there. It seems like he's giving two reasons why his prayers should be accepted. First he says, “Because I am Your servant.” It means “I belong to You; everything that I have is for You and therefore hearken to my entreaty.”

And then it looks like he's adding a second consideration: “I am Your servant, the son of Your maidservant.” It means “I had a mother who served You too.” So it seems like he's saying “For the sake of me and also for the sake of my great mother, You should hearken to my prayers.”

But that's not *pshat*. Dovid is not invoking his mother's *zechus* – you see that he's invoking his own merit because in both cases he emphasizes *ani avdecha, I am Your servant*. That's the only consideration: “I am Your servant.”

So the question is why mention “My mother, Your maidservant”? Mentioning his mother is not necessary here at all.

### **Making of a Gadol**

And the answer is that Dovid was saying like this: “Do you know *why* I am Your servant? Because of Your maidservant who served You—that's my mother. She did a good job on me. She's the one who *made* me into Your servant.” And therefore when Dovid was entreating Hakadosh

Baruch Hu, he said, "Please answer me because I am Your servant. And I'm not just any servant of Hashem. I am an *eved Hashem* that was made with very much care by my mother."

Like when you're describing a tool, an exceptional tool. So you say "Look at this remarkable tool!" And then you repeat, "It's a remarkable tool that's been produced by this and this factory that puts out only the best." *Ani avdecha* – I'm your servant, *ben amasecha* – my mother was an expert and she trained me; and that's how I became Your servant."

Now, it doesn't mean that we can overlook his father. Dovid had a great father too. Yishai, the father of Dovid, was one of the very great Torah teachers. The Gemara tells us that Yishai, when he came to preach Torah he was followed by six hundred thousand disciples. And after his lecture they wanted to follow him home too. So Yishai was a very great man. And yet here we see that Dovid is mentioning his mother; *ani avdecha ben amasecha*.

### **Invisible Superheroes**

Now, Dovid's mother, most of us don't even know her name; she's hidden away in the background of our history. If not for Dovid mentioning her, we would have forgotten about how important her role was in creating the Am Yisroel. We would have not realized the greatness of this woman whose service of Hashem included creating a Dovid. She trained him to serve Hashem; she trained him in character, in outlook on life. She trained him to be great. Not only she gave birth to Dovid but she made him who he became.

It's a very important lesson we're learning here. By 'chance' – because of a few words that Dovid said – we get a glimpse behind the curtain and we hear a hint about someone who would have remained more or less anonymous, someone whose name wasn't recorded. And that's intended as a model for us; like the Bnos Tzelaftchad, the mother of Dovid is picked out of anonymity in order to serve as an example of what Hashem is really interested in. And it means that whether recorded or not, to Hakadosh Baruch Hu there are millions of *tzaddikim* and *tzidkanyos*—'plain' people—who are the true heroes of the nation.



## Part II. Happy Heroes

### Every Man a Mother

And this will bring us now to our subject, the subject of a Jewish mother. For a long time already I wanted to speak here about how to be a successful Jewish mother. And who better to learn from than the mother of Dovid, the one whom Dovid credits for his success?

Now, before we begin it's important to make one thing clear: you should not feel that this is a lecture only for women. Whatever will be said here, we're talking to everyone. What you're going to hear tonight is important for fathers too because to a very big extent every father has to be a mother too; he has to participate in raising the children as servants of Hashem.

And our talk is for children too because we all have to be our own mothers. Even if our mothers did a good job on us, we have to continue the work; we take the ideas and digest them again and again even when we're not in the home. But the best thing of all is when you still have a mother, when you're still young and plastic; that's the best time to be shaped with the right attitudes. And so we understand that whatever a child is going to become, the best results come when his mother walks in the footsteps of the mother of one of the greatest men in our history, Dovid Hamelech.

### Channeling Prophecy

We think that when the spirit of Hashem came upon Dovid he took out his harp and he started strumming the strings and the words came out by themselves. All those words of *ahavas Hashem* and of seeing the Glory of Hashem in nature that we find in Tehillim, we think they came pouring out on their own. No, it doesn't work that way. You must realize that a *navi* is first a man, a young man with noble ideas; and as his thoughts begin to develop, subsequently the inspiration, the prophecy, flows in according to the emotional and intellectual channels that he created.

Now, who created those channels? So you'll say it was Dovid himself. Yes, to a great extent that's true. What about Yishai, his father? Absolutely; him too. But we have to remember Dovid's testimony. וְיִשָּׁי

עָבַדְךָ בְּן אִמִּיךָ – *I was made into your servant because of my mother.* How did Dovid become Dovid? Because he was raised by his mother.

Now, Dovid's mother didn't have a yeshiva. She didn't have a shul. But she had a kitchen! And when little Dovid used to totter into the kitchen, she spoke to him and she inspired him. The kitchen! That was her yeshiva. She was the *rosh yeshiva* and Dovid was her star *talmid*.

### **Everything Brings Happiness**

What did Dovid's mother teach him? Well, we see the results on every page in the Tehillim. She taught him how to love Hakadosh Baruch Hu; she taught him to see the beauty and wisdom in Hashem's creations, to see the happiness and kindness in the world. Whenever she had a chance she was teaching what Hakadosh Baruch Hu Himself said וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וְהִנֵּה טוֹב מְאֹד – *Hashem saw everything that He made, that it is very good* (Bereishis 1:31). Dovid's mother listened to that possuk—she spoke to herself about it—and she taught it to Dovid.

And it must be taught! Otherwise, because of habit people will overlook everything. So Dovid's mother, when she woke him up in the morning, she didn't wake him up like an Irish mother or an Italian mother. She woke him up to see Hashem. "Dovid! look what Hashem gave us! A sun! We have light! And it'll keep us warm all day today!"

### **From Morning till Night**

And when she gave him to eat: "Dovid!l, isn't this world good? Don't these grapes taste good? Hashem did that for you! And the milk you're drinking? That's a miracle creation of Hashem! The goat eats grass and turns it into milk for you."

Also, "Look outside! Aren't these beautiful trees? Isn't it a beautiful white cloud that you see up there. That's going to bring us the water we need." All day long, as much as she could, she taught him to admire the trees and the grass and the wind and the bees. And then when the day was over and she was putting little Dovid to bed she pointed at the moon. "Isn't that a beautiful moon, Dovid?"

### **A Mother's Child Forever**

And what was the result? When he saw a moon for the next seventy years, he saw a beautiful moon. For seventy years Dovid's heart sang within him when the wind was blowing through the trees. His heart sang

with happiness when he saw the sunrise. And when he was in the fields shepherding his father's sheep he sang about the wool growing on the back of the sheep that would become clothing and the grass the goats were eating and turning into milk.

And so when Dovid's mother trained him how to look at the world and see the beauty in it, to admire the world that Hashem created, she was thereby creating channels of optimism and happiness in his mind. She was digging channels of *emunah* and *bitachon* and *dveikus* that filled Dovid's life and were later expressed in the Tehillim. That's why you have that beautiful song, *borchi nafshi es Hashem*. Of course it's *min haShamayim*—it's *ruach hakodesh*—but the channels were first dug when he was a little boy.

### **Tehillim Homework**

And so, a wise parent who wants to build a home digs channels in a child's mind and pours the foundation of the mind with happiness. A mother could instill happiness in the child when it rains: She says, "Look Chana'le! Look at the beautiful rain that's coming down. We'll have water to drink! And all of our food will be growing now. The peaches and grapes we'll eat in the summer are because of this rain. And you'll be able to take a bath on *erev Shabbos* because of the rain. Isn't rain fun?"

Now, Chana has no sense but she says, "Yes, it's fun." After all, her mother said so. And if her mother will be persistent then all of Chana's life, rain is going to be happy times.

### **Don't Ruin Rain**

And why not? What a blessing rain is! These raindrops eventually turn into food for us. Apples are mostly water. All of our food is from water. Even the meat we eat is from water. The rain becomes grass for animals to eat. And the animals take the grass and make it into meat and we'll eat the meat. So rain means that meat is coming down from the sky. Happy times!

But let's say the mother looks out of the window and says, "Oh Chana'le, I wanted to go out but it's raining. Rain spoiled all our fun today". So Chana'le, whenever she'll see a rain come down without even thinking, even if she forgot what her mother said, her instincts will hark back to that pattern that was first molded on her young plastic *neshamah*.

When a mother constantly repeats complaints against the weather in the morning—"It's going to be nasty today"—and then three times in the afternoon and three more times in the evening, so all day long the child hears preachings against Hashem and therefore all his life, this is the foundation for his thoughts. That becomes his *hashkafah*, his outlook on the world.

And therefore whenever there will be a rainy day in his life, even if he'll be seventy years old, it's going to be an unhappy day because we think with the thoughts that are at the bottom foundation of our careers. And there will be so many rainy days in life. Isn't it a pity for a child to be molded in the wrong way?

### **Creating Minds**

And therefore, teach your children the truth. You have to teach yourself the truth too but don't forget to repeat it in the house always. And first they'll hear it and they'll just listen mechanically, but don't think they're not hearing it. They're human beings and their minds are registering it. And someday, instead of being disappointed, they're going to be happy with rainy days and sunny days and windy days and cloudy days. Every day is *tov me'od*.

Imagine what you're doing to them! All their lives, they'll have a certain feeling of optimism when they see raindrops. You planted a seed in their mind and that seed will take root and produce a beautiful tree with fruits of happiness.

And the more you plant, the better. Teach children to be happy with a piece of bread. Eat the bread and enjoy it. Chew the bread and thank Hashem. Ah, ah! We thank You, Hashem! You made such a good world! It's so important to bring that happiness into the hearts of Jewish children.

### **Big Brother is Watching**

Wise parents should exert effort on training a child to love a glass of plain water from the tap. Even an older sibling can do that. I had an older brother, *alav hashalom*, and I always remember him for teaching me this lesson. When I was a little boy and I went to the refrigerator to take some soda water he stopped me. "Wait!" he said, "First drink a glass of clean water. Then you can get the dirty water." So I drank a glass of

water—I didn't want the soda afterwards. I always remember that lesson. I learned that a glass of water is the best thing.

I'm not even talking now about quenching your thirst. That's only the beginning. Tell your children that water is going to put a sparkle in their eyes! And water causes your blood to be liquid and have a consistency that it could flow freely to bring nourishment to all parts of the body. It's water that is the most important element in the blood.

Water is everything for us! *Baruch Hashem*, for a glass of water. When your child is looking, hold the cup of New York City tap water in your hand and say, "*L'chaim!* Ahh! This is the real *l'chaim!* It brings life!" And then make a loud *bracha*, **שְׁהַכַּל נְהִיָּה בְּרַבְּרוֹ**. It's the same *bracha* you make on whiskey, but water is better than whiskey.

### Precious Plumbing

And we have it in our homes! When I came to Slabodka, there was no water in the houses. Turning a faucet and having water coming out was unheard of; they had to take water from the well. And even today, in undeveloped countries they still don't have water going into the house. They have to go a block away and draw water from the well.

"And *kinderlach*," you say, "we have water, water comes into the houses." And it's fit to drink. In Slabodka, water from the well was undrinkable. They had to boil it to drink it. It was a *sakanah* to drink it otherwise. Today, you can drink water from the sink. What a blessing that is! Today, you walk into a bathroom, turn a faucet, and get all the water you want — hot and cold! You have to appreciate these things.

Today, every house has a toilet inside. **אִיזְהוּ עָשִׂיר? ... כֹּל שֵׁישׁ לֹא בֵּית** **הַכֶּסֶּא סְמוּךְ לְשׁוּלְחָנוֹ** (Shabbos 25b). In the olden days, if you didn't have a toilet nearby, you had to run a half block away to the public *ashpah*. Having it in your house? Even a king in ancient times didn't have a toilet like we have today. Did you ever stop to think about that? What a convenience it is! How fortunate we are to have a bathroom! We're all wealthy beyond people's wildest imaginations just a few decades ago.

And when you teach a child the happiness of a glass of water, of indoor plumbing, of a bathroom, a toilet, of rain and wind and sun and food, you're giving him a gift better than money! All his life, he's going to enjoy these experiences that others ignore. Even when he's an old man

and he'll take a cup full of water in his hand, he's going to think, "My mother taught me the happiness of enjoying life!"

### **The Joys of Siblings**

And therefore it's so important to start him out in life that he should look through rosy glasses at everything, to see everything in a happy light. Even his siblings. "Chaim'l, isn't it a good thing that you have a little sister?"

"No!" He gives her a little push. But you say it again and again. You find ways and means of convincing him so. "Everybody is jealous of you, that you have a friend in the house."

Now he didn't think so until now, but since his mother suggested that to him, he'll remember that. It's good to have a sister. It's good to have a brother. And the more you have, the more good it is.

But if you don't speak on the subject so he'll follow his nature and everybody in the house is a competitor with him and you know what happens to competitors. Nobody likes them. So he grows up thinking that every brother and sister is an added disability. But if you talk to him, you suggest to him and say, "Look, you have five brothers. Aren't you lucky? You have another five sisters! Aren't you lucky?" so it goes in.

### **Home Sweet Home**

Now, if a mother and a father won't tell these things to a child he'll never appreciate it. You'll have to wait until he comes to these lectures. But who says he'll come? And all that time in the interim was lost. Anyhow, it's not easy to undo all of that damage even in a hundred lectures. And so it's up to you—mothers and fathers—to begin at home.

Now, the few things I mentioned, that's only the beginning of the list of building the home. You know, if you ever watched a house being built, you see how they put in the supporting girders and the beams and then there are pipes and wires and walls; gradually it takes the shape of the house. You see that there are thousands of details that were needed in order to make the finished house. Same thing, there are thousands of details of happiness when it comes to building a home. And that's one of the great functions of wise parents; to make a happy home, a home where the simple gifts of Hashem are extolled and accentuated always.



## Part III. Home of Heroes

### Don't Worry!

Now a home like that, where Hashem is appreciated, needs a foundation of optimism to support it; you can't build a happy home on the foundation of worry and anxiety. And therefore included in the obligation of a mother and father is to make the home a place of confidence and optimism.

Of course if you can tie the confidence up to the attitude of *emunah* and *bitachon*, that's the best thing. If you can teach a child that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is in charge and everything will turn out right in the end because there's a Father in heaven; if you can always repeat and emphasize that whatever Hashem does is for the good and thereby bring an optimistic attitude into the house, that's the best approach. But whatever the approach is, it's certainly important that worry should never appear in the home because it's implanting germs that are going to multiply as life goes on.

### Childhood Trauma

Here's a home where the father and mother are worried; they're sitting together at the table, sitting and worrying. "We can't pay so much for the tuition." "We can't afford the rent here." And while they're talking the little child is sitting under the table. He's so little they think he understands nothing but actually he's listening and he's worried along with them. "What's going to happen?" It's the truth. The child is under the table or in the next room sitting there helplessly and the cold hand of anxiety grips his little heart.

And don't think that it passes by. It becomes a sickness which he will be unable to rid himself of all his life. Anxiety is not something caused by facts; it's an emotional state, an attitude. And if it's an anxious home, a worried home, then the worry will remain with that little boy even when he's a big boy of sixty years old. Even when he'll be prosperous one day, he'll be sitting in his office and without even thinking the anxiety will grip him and he'll suffer from it.

### We're A-OK

And therefore such talk—if it's needed—is only in privacy, *b'chadrei chadorim*. The father and the mother must appear before their children

like actors on a stage. You can never be natural. No matter how you feel you have to be to your children a hero. No matter what you come onto the stage with a smile.

You know, if you ever saw a politician you know that he never appears in public acting like he really feels. He's knocked out. He's been traveling all night to get here. He spoke just before someplace else. Now he's here and he has no energy. But he gets up on the stage and he's wreathed in smiles. He needs votes; what can he do?

A parent needs the votes of his children and therefore he should always appear confident. Always happy. Always as if he knows what to do. He's never desperate, never worried. Everything is under control. We are A-OK.

### **The Eternal Optimism**

Now, one of the most important ways of instilling optimism in the Jewish home is when you introduce into your children's minds the confidence that we are to be here forever. No other nation is guaranteed eternal existence. The *navi* says, **כִּי הָהָרִים יִמוּשׁוּ** – *the mountains will move away*, **וְהַגְּבָעוֹת תִּמְוֹטָה** – *and all the hills will disappear*, **וְחַסְדִּי מֵאֲתָד לֹא יִמוּשׁ** – *but My loving kindness with you will never change* (Yeshaya 54:10). Which means, Am Yisroel is going to continue as long as there'll be a world. We are the Am Olam – we'll be here forever.

Tremendous nations have already disappeared – it's a fact of history. People never dreamed that Rome would someday be driven off the map. All over the habitable world, the legions of Rome marched everywhere; even up to Scotland. All of Europe was under Roman rule. They built bridges, buildings and cities everywhere. Roman law was introduced everywhere; the language too. And then Rome went underground and it disappeared entirely. Rome is wiped off the map already. Of course, it's history, archeology, but it's no longer a nation that continues to exist.

And all the nations are the same. Once upon a time, who dreamed that Bavel would someday disappear. They would laugh at you in the days of Yirmiyah Hanavi if someone had told you that. Bavel?! Disappear?! It was a powerful nation! Great cities! Huge buildings! And today Bavel is nothing at all! If you want to know Bavel, you have to go underground with bulldozers and take it out from underneath.

Tell that to your children. Talk to them about these big empires that went lost. “But *kinderlach*,” you say to little Moishe’le and Chana’le, “we are promised to exist on this earth forever. As long as there will be earth, the Am Yisroel is going to exist. We will walk on the soil forever.”

### **Eternal Life**

Not only that, but we’ll continue when there’s no more world too. Remind them about that always. Don’t think they’ll pick it up by osmosis from the street; even in the yeshiva they don’t hear it. So tell them, “כִּלְיָ שְׂוֹרְאֵל יֵשׁ לָהֶם חֵלֶק לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא”. Din it into their ears! “Children! Don’t forget! Whatever is going to be, one thing is certain: All of us, the loyal Am Yisroel, will live on in the Next World! The *tzaddikim* are there right now; even those who passed away this year, they’re all alive right now in the place of great happiness. And they’ll be there forever and ever.”

When the Am Yisroel gets that into their blood, so no matter what happens, they remain confident and optimistic. Even when they were being put into gas chambers in Europe and being burned, the confidence didn’t waver. The ones who had mothers and fathers who raised them on Torah attitudes, didn’t lose hope. Because we’re forever and ever; we’ll continue to exist. Our children, our grandchildren, our relatives; the Am Yisroel will never disappear no matter what.

### **Children of Confidence**

Now this confidence must be implanted in all the Jewish children. You have to speak about it always and let them know that we are the ones that are going to endure forever. It should be a topic of conversation in the home, we should be reminding ourselves and our children about this promise of Hakadosh Baruch Hu. The world will always have Torah communities and in the end they will be the ones who will survive.

Once a child feels that his people is forever, it gives him a confidence, an optimism that can’t be shaken. You can’t feel down or depressed when you know that your cause, your ideals, and your family will exist forever and ever. Nobody can ever be discouraged because whatever happens, we’re living for a great purpose; we’re living for a purpose that will be forever.

### **Doorways of Confidence**

Now once a child is instilled with that confidence in the nation he belongs to, the Hashem he belongs to, so all of the things connected to

Hashem and His loyal people become more important. On that foundation you can teach a child to love *mitzvos*. When he passes a *mezuzah* you can teach him not merely to look at the *mezuzah* and to kiss it, but to love it. A *mezuzah* reminds you that you belong to the forever nation, the nation that Hashem is watching over.

Even when you go to the *beis haknesses* it becomes a place of pride and happiness. That's how it should be! There's a shul that has a big sign outside: **בָּאוּ שְׁעָרָיו בְּתוֹדָה הַצִּדְתִּיו בְּתִהְלָה** – Come into His gates with thanksgiving, into His courtyards with praise. So walk with your child hand in hand to the shul and tell him, “Aren't we happy that we're going now to the house of Hashem?” Tell him “Aren't we lucky we can go into a shul, this beautiful place, a place where Hashem is? Aren't we happy that we are the one nation of Hashem?” The child says yes, and you've laid down a foundation for the future. And if your father or mother didn't tell you that, so take yourself in hand and talk to yourself. Make yourself your own best child.

### Good Yom Tov!

That's also how parents should train their children in *simchas Yom Tov*. “You know what *Yom Tov* means? It means we were chosen!” **אָתָּה בְּחַרְתָּנוּ מִכָּל הָעַמִּים** That's the way to make *simchas Yom Tov*. Now, I know that some parents think *simchas Yom Tov* means taking out the children *chol hamoed* for a ride to go to the park. There's nothing wrong but that's plain *simcha*, not *simchas Yom Tov*.

Make a little *mesibah* for them. It's more important than two hours in the Bronx zoo or who knows where. Sit down and make a little *mesibah*; even a five minute *mesibah lekovod Yom Tov*, a little gathering. Wednesday afternoon, Thursday, Friday afternoon. Sit down and talk for a couple of minutes about *Yom Tov* and tell the children, “Let's sing a song about how Hashem chose us to be His people.” And you'll sing *Atah bechartanu* or something else. And then tell them, suggest it, “*Kinderlach*, aren't we having a great time?” They all chime in, “Yes. But can we go to the park now?” That's excellent. These few minutes have laid a foundation.

### Good Shabbos!

Teach them the *simcha* of Shabbos. One of the reasons Shabbos is fun is because it's the day we're celebrating that tremendous declaration of Hashem, **אֶתְּנוּ לָנוּ בֵּין יְיָ וּבֵין בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל** – Between Me and the Bnei Yisroel, אות הוּא

לְעֹלָם – it is a covenant forever. Shabbos is a sign, a covenant, that we will be with Him forever. Hashem said, ‘We are together forever. Like I am forever, you are going to be forever too.’

And therefore no other nation has received this gift. The gentiles are told, “Keep working even on Saturday. Because Shabbos is a special day between Me and My nation.” Of course, it’s good for their health too, to be busy always. But the reason why they’re forbidden from keeping Shabbos is because it’s a special *bris* between us and Hashem. That’s what you have to tell the children every Shabbos.

Of course, you can enhance the fun of Shabbos by buying *migdanos* and *ma'adanim*. You have candies and cakes and *nosherei* and ice cream in honor of the Shabbos. But it’s very important to emphasize to the children, to suggest to them that Shabbos is intrinsically fun because it means that we—‘we’ means the little children too—will be forever with Hashem. That’s the great happiness, the great optimism, that is the foundation of our homes.

### **The Other Chumash**

Now, when a mother and father build a home like that – nobody can build a perfect home, but when parents make this *avodah* a focus in their lives, so they have to know that as anonymous as they are, they’re being written down in the Torah. Just like the *Bnos Tzela* are written forever, so too will that mother and father be recorded forever.

So you’ll say, “*Bnos Tzela*?! What does this have to do with us? We are born too late to be included in the Chumash. No matter what we accomplish it can’t be jotted down.”

But we have to know that there is another Chumash, another Torah, that is being written as we speak. At the end of days another Torah will be read, a Torah that tells a tale of our entire history; and that’s the book that matters most because what’s written there is the only history that matters. It’s the history book of Hashem and if you’re written down there, you’re inscribed forever and ever.

And so there’s still time and there’s still opportunity—big opportunities—for all of us to be written up in this great Chumash. The opportunity to achieve this greatness is within the reach of everyone; anyone who is willing to make the effort. And when this great *sefer* will be read so all of a sudden Mrs. So and So’s name will pop up. Just like the

names of Bnos Tzelafchad were written, her name will also be inscribed. A mother in the kitchen and her husband in the kollel or in the factory will be there. Even a little girl or a little boy will be mentioned — an ‘anonymous’ Beis Yaakov girl or a yeshiva boy. When that great Torah is read and our names are mentioned—with all the details of what we did in this world to build up the Jewish home and to build ourselves too—that will be the greatest happiness we could ever imagine: The happiness of being written in Hashem’s book and being with Him forever and ever.

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## **Let's Get Practical**

### **Creating Foundations For Life**

Being a parent means you have the opportunity to be written in the eternal Torah by pouring a foundation and building a skyscraper from every child you have. This week I will *bli neder* focus for one minute a day on what I can do in my home to walk in the footsteps of the mother of Dovid Hamelech and dig channels of happiness, confidence and optimism in the minds of my children. And if I don't yet have a family I will spend a minute a day thinking about building up my own mind with these Torah attitudes.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

**91** – Bringing Up Children 1 | **133** – The Jewish Home

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### The Power of Oneg Shabbos

Whoever delights in Shabbos is granted a heritage without limits. (*Shabbos 118a*)

Whoever delights in Shabbos is granted the wishes of his heart. (*Shabbos 118b*)

*Oneg Shabbos* brings a person these great rewards.

We see that the mitzvah of *oneg Shabbos* is very great. How do we fulfill this mitzvah? Fortunately for us *Chazal* tell us how: How does one delight in Shabbos? Said R' Yehudah son of Shmuel bar Sheilas, in the name of Rav: with cooked beets, large fish, and garlic heads. (*Ibid*) This means that when Shabbos comes we eat delicacies, we serve delicious food: fish, meat, kugel, and other dishes. I (Rav Pincus) remember that on the Baba Sali's Shabbos table were thirty-six different salads. (Perhaps this number was the *gematria* of a certain Name of Hashem.)

Hashem commands each Jew, "You shall call Shabbos a delight." On Shabbos we are told to enjoy food, and, *baruch Hashem*, the women constantly work on making it as tasty as possible. Why do we have such a mitzvah? What do we gain spiritually by sitting down to enjoy a tasty meal? The answer is, eating and drinking together is no small thing. *Chazal* say, **"Serving food is a great matter, for it... draws close those who are distant."** (*Sanhedrin 103b*) Sharing a meal brings people closer. We see this from when Yitzchak gave the *berachos* to Yaakov and Esav. Yitzchak requested that food be brought to him: "Make me delicacies such as I love, and bring them to me, so I may eat, in order that my soul will bless you." (*Bereishis 27:4*)

On a simple level we may understand it as follows: food keeps body and soul together. In other words, it's a connector. If a person doesn't eat for twenty-four hours, he feels weak. His *neshamah* starts fluttering in his heart. If another day or two goes by without food, his *neshamah* already rises to his nose on its way out... but if he then eats, his *neshamah* goes back down to his heart and reconnects with his body.

Food may be understood as something that creates a connection. Therefore, when two people eat together, they begin to identify with one another. Eating connects a person to his body as well as to whoever is eating with him. The nature of food is to draw close and connect. That's why *Chazal* banned *pas akum*, the bread of non-Jews. For food and drink draws people close to one another.

On *Shabbos Kodesh* we dine with Hashem, so to speak. *Da hi seudasa d'Atika Kaddisha*. "Serving food is a great matter, for it draws close those who are distant"! It is as if we sit down to eat and drink together with Hashem, and this creates tremendous closeness with Him!

**This coming Shabbos let's remember that Hashem gave us the mitzvah of *oneg Shabbos* to help us draw close to Him!**

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## QUESTION

### How does one avoid getting cancer?

## ANSWER

Every day one should do what the Gemara recommends: לעולם יבקש אדם – *A person should always plead for mercy from Hashem that he shouldn't get sick* (Shabbos 32a). Which means that every day you should pray for good health.

Every single day of your life! Don't rely on Shemoneh Esrei – you don't even think what you're saying. It can be done outside of Shemoneh Esrei, or if you wish, you can add it when you finish Shemoneh Esrei, before you take three steps back. Beg Hakadosh Baruch Hu! Although you've prayed all your prayers by rote, by stereotype, like a record; but when you've finished, at least one little thing say with *kavanah*.

Now, I know you won't do it, but listen to me anyhow. Say, “רבונו של עולם, יהי רצון מלפניך שתשמור בריאותי ושלומי” – Please guard my health and my well-being.” שלומי means, “Guard me against automobile accidents and other accidents.” You have to pray always to be saved from sickness and accidents.

What do people expect, that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is going to protect them for nothing? The reason there are sicknesses and accidents in the world—far away from us— is to be a spur, to incite us to pray, to come close to Him. But if you don't pray, so what can He do? He might have to send an accident closer to home, *chalilah*, to make you aware.

So therefore, לעולם, always! לעולם יבקש אדם רחמים – *Every person, man and woman, boy and girl, should always seek mercy from Hashem, שלא יחלה* – not to be sick.

And that's one of the most important pieces of counsel you will ever hear.

July 1995

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