

THE CHOPP HOLDINGS EDITION
IN MEMORY OF MRS. CLARA CHOPP A"H AND MENUCHA MARKOWITZ A"H

TORAS AVIGDOR

AUTHENTIC TORAH THOUGHT FOR LIFE
RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"L

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PARSHAS BO

WITH

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT" L

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

GREATNESS AT THE DINNER TABLE

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Part I. An Innate Love

The Mysterious Mitzvah

Among the many *mitzvos* that make up the preparation and bringing of the *korban Pesach* that we read about in this week's *sedrah* is eating from the meat of the *korban*. וְאָכְלוּ אֶת הַבֶּשֶׂר בַּלַּיְלָה הַהוּא – And you should eat the meat on that night (Shemos 12:8).

That's a mitzvah incumbent on every Jew — we can't do it today, but when we finally have the opportunity, we'll sit down at the Seder and eat from the meat of the Pesach lamb and we'll attempt to gain all of the great ideals intended by this *korban*.

But it's interesting to note that not only does the Torah require us to eat from the meat, but there's also a certain way it has to be prepared: אַל תֹּאכְלוּ מִמֶּנּוּ כִּי חֲצִי-בִשְׂלוּ – Don't eat of it if it's half-broiled or cooked in

water; *וְכִי אִם צָלִי אֵשׁ* – it has to be broiled on the fire (ibid. 9). That's a Torah requirement: it's *assur* to eat it cooked – you have to broil it and make sure it's broiled sufficiently if you want to be *yotzei* the mitzvah.

Now, if you look in the Rishonim, they ask about that. It's a question that bothers them: What's so important about exactly how I prepare the meat for the *seudah*? *Davka* fire-broiled it has to be? And if I cook it in water, is that so bad? That's the question the Rishonim ask. It sounds like a mystery, maybe *sisrei Torah*.

Mystery Solved

And the answer they give – it's not as mysterious as we thought – is that *it tastes better that way*. A piece of lamb tastes better when it's fire-broiled than when it's prepared any other way. *נֶאֱ*, partially broiled meat, or *מִבְשָׁל בַּמַּיִם*, water-cooked meat, is lacking the full taste. And not only the taste; the smell adds to the pleasure. You know, when you pass by a *shishkebab* place – *shish* means a skewer, and *kebab* means grilled meat – and you smell roasting mutton from outside, there's a certain feeling that you wouldn't mind tasting it too.

And therefore, according to these Rishonim, the Torah tells us to roast the *korban* because it's more fun that way. The eating 'experience' is better when it's roasted, and that's a good enough reason for this mitzvah.

A Pesach Experience

Now, if it was up to us, if we were in charge of how to make the Pesach Seder – *baruch Hashem* we're not – we would say like this. An order for all Jews: Everyone should sit down at the table, and the lady of the house comes out of the kitchen – no, not the kitchen; she comes out of the *study* – and she's carrying a big tray piled high with *Chumashim*; big *Mikraos Gedolos*. And that's what she serves to everybody.

That would be a Pesach experience! What's Pesach for anyhow? To eat tasty roasted meat? To stimulate your gastric juices? No; the purpose of Pesach is to remember what Hakadosh Baruch Hu did for us, that He took us out of Mitzrayim. Pesach is for gratitude, to thank Hakadosh Baruch Hu for Yetzias Mitzrayim; to thank Him for passing over our homes in Mitzrayim *and to love Him more and more for that*. That's the point of Pesach! To love Hashem!

You never heard that before? So it's good you came here tonight. There are a lot of ideas and attitudes you have to gain on Pesach but *ahavas Hashem* is number one. If you go away from Pesach and you don't love Hashem more than you did on *erev* Pesach, so you didn't succeed yet

at making Pesach. You made Pesach and you fulfilled everything but you missed the point.

A Seder for the Mind

And so, had we been the ones who planned the Torah, we would have had an entirely different Seder. We would have abolished any form of physical pleasure because it's a contradiction to the purpose of Pesach. And so we should sit down for three hours and talk about Yetzias Mitzrayim. No food at all! If we get tired in the middle, if somebody weakens a little bit, so he can sneak into the kitchen for a quick snack, but then he'll come right back out to the table to continue the program.

There are *midrashim*, all kinds of interesting *midrashim* on each *makkah*. We should talk at length about the details and the lessons, the loyalty and *ahavas Hashem* we have to feel. At length, at length, all night! Thank Hashem! The more you talk about it, the more you love Hashem! Don't mix in anything except *ruchniyus*; only intelligence.

After all, it's the creation of a mind, the perfection of the *neshamah*, that we want from Pesach, and so how can we profane such a noble purpose by putting things into our mouths? You're mixing the food with the saliva and chewing it? Is that a way to serve Hashem? That's the *ma'aseh* of an animal! A human being has to think! His mind, that's all that matters! To eat tasty meat? Shishkebab?

We might say that the less pleasure we get, the more mitzvah it is. We should broil it until it's coal, until we can't eat it. And we sit down, we are *moser nefesh* – we chew the charcoal, *l'shem mitzvah*. But appetite? That's *gashmiyus*! That's what we would say.

Torah Psychology

And so Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, "Get out of here! Let me take over. I know how to handle you better. I know better how to succeed with you because I made you. And I know that the mind may be participating, but the body is not happy with it." And the body needs to participate too. And so here you have a piece of broiled lamb meat, and your mouth is watering at the prospect of digging in and eating. And it doesn't detract from the mitzvah. On the contrary, the chewing and enjoying is *the mitzvah*.

And so we're learning now an important aspect of the whole Torah system – to combine an intellectual ideal with the enjoyable physical act of eating. Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants the body should participate, and therefore that's one of the whole systems of the Torah everywhere, to join *avodas Hashem* with the enjoyment of Olam Hazeh. If you study the Torah, you'll see that everywhere, the same system is followed. It says וְאָכַלְתֶּם שֶׁם

וְשָׂמַחְתֶּם לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וְשָׂמַחְתֶּם (Devarim 12:7). Everywhere it says that, constantly, constantly.

I don't want to insult the Torah by saying the Torah is the greatest psychologist of all — it's bigger than a psychologist — but Hashem understands the human body and the mind best. And He says that it's not enough merely to get the mind to agree to all these great ideals. The body should also agree, and that's going to be the best way; to digest all the Torah ideals along with the food.

Reconsider Eating

Now, if that's the case, then it becomes our duty to reconsider the subject of eating; not only the *korban Pesach* — the entire subject of eating in general has to be reconsidered. And it requires a great deal of reconsideration because up until now, all of us *tzaddikim* knew that eating is a necessary evil. It takes up a lot of time in our lives, and we could take the time we spend on our meals and use it to learn — let's say Ketzos Hachoshen, Mishnah Berurah, or a little *mesichta* on the side. Think of all the accomplishments for Olam Haba we would achieve in our lives instead of eating.

And even if you're not such a big *tzaddik*, still you could do better things than to spend so much time at the trough filling your stomach. You could be doing business, making good money. You could go for a walk on the avenue. But eating? A few times every day? Who needs it?

But the fact is that Hakadosh Baruch Hu made it so that we have to spend a great deal of time on this pursuit. He could have made it that we don't need to refuel a few times a day. He could have made it that we eat one little white pill every morning and that's how we get our energy. But Hakadosh Baruch Hu in His Wisdom said “no”. He made eating into a big procedure in our lives. And therefore it becomes necessary to study the subject of eating, to understand how this physical function is actually a tool that is intended to be utilized for greatness — especially for the greatness of *ahavas Hashem*.

The Highest Accomplishment

Everyone knows about the mitzvah of loving Hashem; we say it every day וְאַהֲבַת אֵת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ. And if you take a look in a Rambam at the very end of Hilchos Teshuva, the Rambam says that the greatest of all achievements that a Jew can accomplish in his life is to learn how to love Hashem. To love Hashem truly, the Rambam says, is the highest of mankind's accomplishments.

Now I know that if you go in the shallow circles, let's say you go into some Modern Orthodox synagogues, so everybody loves Hashem. "Love Hashem? Certainly, certainly, certainly." In the *shtiebelach* too. They love Hashem, "of course".

They don't even believe in Him! To love Hashem, you have to first believe in Him! Let's be practical. Why should we kid each other? We're friends, so we can talk straight. Love what? Can you love a vacuum? Can you love air? Empty space? You have to *have* Hashem in order to love Him. Which means, you have to have *emunah*.

But not *emunah* like a man told me recently, "I have *emunah*. I believe." He has *emunah*. I'm sure this man will run into a fire for *kiddush Hashem*, but that doesn't mean he has fulfilled his obligation of acquiring *emunah*. Real *emunah* means that you believe you have somebody; *emunah chushis*. Let's say you have a cousin in the Bronx — you meet him sometimes at a family *simcha* — and so you believe it; that's *emunah*. You absolutely believe! You saw him. But if your *emunah* in Hakadosh Baruch Hu is *emunah sichlis*, only intelligence, and even that is hazy, there's no actuality about it, that's not *emunah*.

And to love Him?! Oh, that's already much further away; a much greater achievement that comes only after *emunah*.

Fanning the Flames

But it's an obligation, and so we have to get busy. And it's not impossible because everybody is born with a great store of love of Hashem, potential love of Hashem, in their heart. That's an important point to understand, that we have it within us. Because when Hashem breathed the soul into man, He gave man all the capacities for greatness of the spirit and the mind, including the highest rung of *ahavas Hashem*.

And so, how much is there? Much more than you can imagine. A great fire of *ahavas Hashem* is burning there. You know, inside the earth, a tremendous fire, a subterranean fire is burning. Sometimes you can see it when there's an eruption of a volcano. We're amazed at that — so much heat, so much flame, so much energy is hidden in the bowels of the earth! Same thing in every Jew; there's a volcano of *ahavas Hashem* under the surface waiting to erupt.

Only most people let it remain dormant. It sleeps all their lives inside of them. Only in the Next World, they see what could have been, what they could have brought forth. Ay, a *rachmanus*! A wasted opportunity. And therefore our job is to avert that tragedy and bring it forth while we're still in this world. מִיָּם עֲמֻקִּים עֲצָה בְּלֵב אִישׁ – Wisdom is in the mind of a man like deep waters, וְאִישׁ תְּבוּנוֹת יִדְלָהּ – and a man who uses understanding can

draw up as with buckets from a well. He can draw up this *ahavas Hashem* that's concealed in the depths of his personality.

Part II. Motivations for Love

How to Excavate

Now there are various ways of fueling that fire and drawing forth that love from the subconscious into your heart. The Chofetz Chaim, in his Mishna Berura (25:14), suggests a good idea. He writes there that when you say the words **וְאַהֲבָתָ אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ**, you should try to love Hashem. Isn't that a *poshute eitzah*?! While you're saying these words, love Him for one second. Don't just say the words and think, "When I'll be seventy years old, I'll have a white beard and I'll be an old *tzaddik*..." Start right now! An *eitzah pshutah*! Every day, while you're saying these words, love Hashem.

You don't feel it? Well, the more you do this, the more you'll feel it. Let's say you start tomorrow morning and you do it for fifty years; suppose you're a boy of eighteen now, so by the time you reach sixty-eight, so it could be you'll have some love in your heart for Hashem.

Motivation Required

It's not so easy however. Because what do you love Him for? You can't just say "*v'ahavta, v'ahavta*" and say you love, when actually you have nothing that you love Him for. It requires thinking; it requires some sort of motivation. And that's why the Chovos Halevavos says that he put his Shaar Ahavas Hashem, his chapter on loving Hashem, all the way at the end of his *sefer*. Because there are rungs on the ladder of loving Hashem that have to be climbed. Don't expect that one day you'll grow wings and just fly up.

And the first chapter, the first and most important motivation is Shaar Habechina. Because Shaar Habechina is a long chapter that trains the reader to study and appreciate all the benefits that we get in life from Hakadosh Baruch Hu; and the Chovos Halevavos says that one of the most important motivations for *ahavas Hashem* is *hakaras hatov*, gratitude to Hashem. Now, he's an expert in this subject and it pays therefore to listen to what he says.

Hands on Love

He starts from the benefits of having hands – **הַיָּדִים לְקַחַת וּלְתַת**. It's fun to have a hand. Oh yes. There's a man on the street, I see him frequently. He has an empty sleeve. *Baruch Hashem* your sleeves are full!

And out of your sleeve comes a jointed derrick with little derricks attached to it. You can bend it anyway you want. Ah! A pleasure! A *taanug*! A jointed derrick is very expensive, you know. A simple derrick is just one long beam; you lower it and you attach a bucket to it and then it rises up. But suppose it's a jointed derrick; sometimes it's even joined in two places – that's very expensive. It needs different controls because this part rises up and this part has to bend. And here right under your sleeves Hakadosh Baruch Hu gave you a jointed derrick that works perfectly.

Shake It! Twist It!

Shake it! It's fun. Bend it! Do you hear any noise, any creaking as the bones rub against each other? No. It's lubricated beautifully. It doesn't hurt even. That's a wonderful arrangement. So already you have something to love Hashem for. Try that once a day. Even if you gain a little bit of *ahavas Hashem* it's not a waste; it's a very great achievement. When we're talking about the highest mitzvah, even a little bit is tremendously big.

You have to understand what the Chovos Halevavos is saying here. He's telling us to utilize all the motivations that are possible to find, even the most 'mundane' things. Unfortunately, even good people are not aware that motivations are necessary – they imagine that they'll love Hashem for no reason, without even thinking. And so the Chovos Halevavos says no; you have to utilize the *matanos* that Hashem gives you as a catalyst to stir your mind to *ahavas Hashem*.

And I'll tell you something; in addition to the mitzvah, life will become more fun! Many of us are missing the fun of life. We don't really enjoy life. It's only when you appreciate what you're getting, and you're grateful to Hashem, that's when you have enjoyment from it. If a man learns to enjoy his hand, he'll have *simcha* all his life. If you came here just for that, it's not wasted. It's fun to have a hand. Life becomes happy when you study it in that way.

Loving Hashem One Step at a Time

So when you're walking outside with your shoes, that's also a good opportunity. Not in the morning when you mumble the *brachos*, *muh, muh, muh*. No; then you're not thinking too much. But while you're walking! Baruch Hashem every day He lends you a pair of shoes. He doesn't have to give it to you; He lends it to you. He made the leather for you. He made the wool lining for you. The cotton stitching He made for you. So as you're walking on the avenue, you're thinking, "How could I not love my Benefactor? He made everything grow so that I can walk comfortably."

Suppose you had no shoes, *chalilah*, and a man came along and said, “Here. Here’s a pair of shoes for the day.” You’d love him! No question you’d love him!

Now, I want to tell you something now — you’ll laugh, but I’ll say it anyhow. You should learn to love Hashem because of your shoelaces. Don’t laugh at that, don’t laugh at that. You don’t realize what it means to be without shoelaces. Let’s say, suppose you walk out into the street one bright morning, and as you are on your way to the subway, you discover that one shoelace is broken. As you walk in the streets, your shoes are flopping off your feet every second. So you have to walk very slowly because if you run across the street you will leave your shoe in the street. So you’re limping and you’re thinking, “If only I had a shoelace.”

Baruch Hashem, He gives you shoelaces every day. He makes the flax or the cotton for your laces. “Thank You Hashem. I love You for my shoelaces.”

Laugh and Love

Now, I understand that other people who never think about these things might ridicule this. They’ll laugh at it. But who cares? Let them laugh. They’ll laugh, and we’ll love.

Imagine a man is walking and is loving Hashem because he has shoes. Everyone else on the street, they’re gloomy, they’re thinking other thoughts, but he’s walking on air, he’s so happy, so filled with gratitude. A man like that, eventually will erupt with *ahavas Hashem*.

And so, when a man starts thinking about what he possesses, everything becomes a motivation to love Hashem. His eyes are a reason to love Hashem. Two color cameras! His feet are a motivation. A Rolls Royce! His heart is a motivation. A perfect pumping machine!

Now, what do we see from all these examples? We begin to understand that *ahavas Hashem* can’t be a detached emotion. It has to be connected with your everyday life. If it’s merely mouthing words, then it’s worth almost nothing. If someone is going to unleash the fire, the volcano of *ahavas Hashem* that he has within himself, he has to make use of this-worldly things, the ‘mundane’ *gashmiyus* things of this world.

The Way to the Heart...

And that brings us back to the subject of eating that we started with. Because that’s why Hakadosh Baruch Hu gave us in our everyday lives the function of eating. It’s because the Creator, He knows that food is the most persuasive method available.

The Gemara (Chullin 4b) tells that there was a king in the days of the bayis rishon who wanted to persuade another king to go with him into battle. Now to go to battle, nobody is in a hurry, and so he had a job of salesmanship to accomplish. And the Gemara explains how he did it. He made a banquet, and the friends were all sitting together and eating and drinking, and that's how he convinced him.

And on this, the Gemara says the following statement, a very important statement. It'll come in handy even to us many times: ...אֵין הַסֵּתֶה. אֶלֶּא בְּאֵכִילָה וּבִשְׁתִּיָּה – *There is no persuasion unless by eating or drinking.* If you want to persuade somebody, the most effective way is by means of eating and drinking.

That's the famous saying, "The way to a man's heart is through his stomach." And so you wives, if you want to ask your husband that he should buy you something that your heart is set on, don't do it before supper. It's a very serious error to jump the gun. Even worse is before breakfast — that's a flop. Because to persuade, you need eating and drinking. That's the way to persuade people.

Great Men and Food

And nobody should think that he's bigger than that, that eating doesn't affect him that way. Even the biggest tzaddik in the world, the way to his heart is by means of good food. I'll prove it to you. You remember when Yitzchak Avinu had to give a bracha to his son Eisav, so he said וְעֵשָׂה בְּאֵשֶׁר אֶהְבֵּתִי – *"Prepare for me a meat dish and make it tasty, like the way you know that I love, and I will eat it, like the way I love."* (Bereishis 27:4). Yitzchak, in order to give his son Eisav a better bracha, he wanted to first enjoy the venison that Eisav would roast for him.

Yitzchak was thinking, "My son will hunt for me a deer — venison tastes better than ordinary meat, you know — and he'll broil it for me and make it taste good, and I'm going to love him even more for that. My emotions will be entirely different after I eat from his catch and my bracha to him will be different too. It won't be a result only of thinking that he's my son, my future, my future generations, but it will have the added push of 'Look what he did for me! He went and brought me something that is tasty to eat *ka'asher ahavti*. And I love him more because of that."

Powering the Love

Now, some people, they read those pessukim and they become disillusioned. Yitzchak Avinu, our great father, wants tasty food in order

to bestir his mind? Isn't that remarkable? Yitzchak needed to enjoy the food?

The answer is yes. Because no matter how great your mental idealism is, when it's supported by physical motivations that brings along the body, the whole person, all of his emotions, and makes it more powerful, much more powerful.

Now, suppose the piece of meat that Yitzchok was eating now wasn't fully broiled. Let's say Eisav prepared it *na*, half broiled, and it was hard to eat. Or מְבֻשֵׁל בַּמֵּיִם, cooked in water, and not as tasty as fire-skewered. It's still good; Yitzchok would appreciate it, but it's better if it was roasted. "The more it's enjoyable to eat," Yitzchok said, "the more I'll feel gratitude and love."

Natural Love

It's not an insult to Yitzchok because that's human nature. Hashem put it in our nature. If you enjoy what you're eating, you'll bring along your mind in a much greater way – the good taste, your taste buds, will inspire your mind to greater heights.

And that's the reason for the mitzvah of the *korban Pesach*, אַל תֹּאכְלוּ מִקֹּרְבַּן פֶּסַח מְבֻשֵׁל בַּמֵּיִם – *Don't eat of it if it's half-broiled or cooked in water; מְבֻשֵׁל בַּמֵּיִם – it has to be broiled on the fire.* Because how much you enjoy the Pesach, that's how much you'll gain from the Pesach. How you eat, that's how you'll love Hashem more and more.

Part III. Eating for Love

The Eating Experience

Now, once we realize that one of our biggest jobs is to love Hashem with all our hearts, and that we need external catalysts to accomplish that best, so we'll understand how important it is to employ the function of eating to help us. The experience of eating is a very important part of our progress toward loving Hashem.

Now, don't misunderstand that word 'experience'. We're not talking about a restaurant experience. No; menus and music and waiters, that's not important at all. You can eat at home better than at restaurants. Not only do restaurants cost money, but there are dirty fingers in the kitchen. The food that you eat, they touch with their dirty fingers – he wipes his nose and touches it. That's the truth behind closed doors. Whatever he brings you on the plate, all kinds of germs are sticking to all of it. Who knows what kind of food you're getting? You pay more than money for

that experience of eating out. No, I don't like that *minhag* of eating out. You have plenty to eat in.

But whatever eating you choose, it's a glorious opportunity for making progress — not in gaining poundage; we're talking about gaining intellectual weight. And so it's a pity that most people never learned how to eat. It's one of the great tragedies of mankind because the experience of eating is a very important part of our progress in this world.

Start Young

Now I must tell you what the Gra writes in one of his *seforim*. He's talking there about *ahavas Hashem* and he says you shouldn't wait to teach the subject of *ahavas Hashem* to people who are great people. Don't wait until you have all the *madreigos* that are necessary. Start right away.

It means even little children. Even a little child can love Hashem.

"Is that possible?" you say. "Is it really possible to teach little children to love Hashem?"

Absolutely. Because children eat too. So how do you start it with a little child? He's sitting on his highchair and you're giving him something to eat, or you're giving him a candy, so you say, "This is from Hashem. Don't you love Hashem for it?"

Now, that's a *seichel'dig* approach. It's a very logical way to feed a child. "I'm only handing it to you, but Hashem is the One Who is really giving it to you."

So he'll say, "Yes, yes," and he'll take the candy. He wants the candy; he's not so interested right now in *ahavas Hashem*. But it goes in. Little by little it goes in.

Making Up for Lost Time

Now it could be your mother didn't tell you that when you were eating in the high chair. She didn't learn this Gra maybe. So now you have to make up for lost time. That's how we should talk to ourselves. When you sit down to breakfast, you should also say that to yourself. "I'm going to eat now and enjoy the food. And I'm going to utilize the enjoyment to love Hashem."

That's the purpose of food. Like we say always in *birkas hamazon* that He gives us food **בְּחֵן בְּחָסֶד וּבְרַחֲמִים**. He doesn't give us merely tasteless white pills to nourish us — He could have made white pills to eat with all kinds of vitamins inside that would keep you going. Even better, He could have put a battery inside of you to keep you going. Who needs food?

No; instead He gives us food בָּחֵן. It has a taste and a flavor, sometimes a color too. And as you chew it, your saliva flows and you enjoy it; the taste, ah! It's a pleasure to eat because Hashem feeds us בְּחֶסֶד וּבְרַחֲמִים. He feeds us — not with bland, tasteless foods. He makes it tasty with savor, with flavor, with color, with a pleasant smell! He gives you onions, and He gives you pepper and garlic and other things in order to make it stimulating to your palate.

Why does He do that? בְּעֵבוֹר שְׁמוֹ הַגָּדוֹל – *For the sake of His great Name.* He wants us to recognize Him and love Him, and by feeding us tasty and delicious foods, Hakadosh Baruch Hu is trying to persuade us. “Wake up,” He says, “and recognize what I am. I am אֵין וְיִמְכַרְנִים. I am the One giving you all these good times!” And why does He do that? He wants you to love Him! בְּעֵבוֹר שְׁמוֹ הַגָּדוֹל. That's the purpose.

Talking During the Meal

So here's a man sitting down to a meal and he decides that he's finally going to make use of his meals for what Hakadosh Baruch Hu intended. And so when his wife walks out for a moment so she can't hear him, he says, “I love You, Hashem.” You shouldn't say when she hears — it will sound funny to her. So when she walks back in, you're eating and eating, that's all. Of course, you should stop your chewing to tell her it's good food that she prepared. Swallow first and then you should tell her a compliment. “The food is delicious,” you say. “It's very good, the chicken.” You should say that.

But as soon as she walks out to the other room and she doesn't hear, you should say, “I love You, Hashem. My wife, she prepared the chicken, but You created it. And You created me with a tongue and with taste buds so that I should enjoy it.”

Taste Buds, Saliva, and Gastric Juices

Taste buds! A wonderful thing! On your tongue, you have maybe 5000 taste buds! To this day, they don't know exactly how the taste buds work. Years ago they were thinking of all kinds of schemes to explain it, that the taste buds have little hollows in them and the particles of the food fit inside in certain ways; they plug in the hollows. All kinds of wild suggestions. And even today, they can't explain exactly how taste works. But one thing we know is that it works. And Hakadosh Baruch Hu put them there so that you should enjoy eating. It's a pleasure.

And while your tongue encounters the taste sensation, the stomach juices are beginning to flow because the juices in the stomach down below respond to the feeling that the taste buds have. The taste buds

work together with the nervous system and they tell the stomach to get ready, to begin producing. And you need that juice. It's preparing to digest what's coming down soon.

The saliva too; the saliva begins to flow. But it's not one saliva; there are various components. One kind comes in the mouth to help you digest the food. The food has to be soft and the saliva softens the food. Another kind greases the esophagus, the interior of your throat. That's why you have a thicker kind of saliva too; so that the food will slide down more readily. But the third type of saliva is to make it more enjoyable! It's a remarkable thing that when you chew a piece of bread for a minute, it tastes sweeter than it was when you began, when you put it into your mouth. Because the starch of the bread is broken down by the ptyalin in the saliva and it turns it into sugars, and it becomes sweeter in your mouth.

And so, as soon as you put the food in your mouth, that's the beginning of a wonderful process. The whole body gets involved working in cooperation because that's how Hashem made it. It's such an important experience that everything, all parts of the body, go into action now to make it successful and enjoyable.

Back to the Seudah

And so, when you finish loving Hashem for the chicken, you start now with the browned potatoes. Ooh, browned potatoes! I love You, Hashem! And onions! Onions add so much! Ah! What would this world be without onions?! Onions and potatoes. What's better than that?! הודו ל'ה' כִּי טוֹב כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסִידוֹ. *Baruch Hashem* for onions! Onions make us happy! And so this *eved Hashem*, he's smacking his lips and enjoying the browned potatoes and the onions and the roasted chicken.

That's *avodas Hashem*! That's what the *korban Pesach* teaches us, that whenever you sit down at the table to eat, it's a glorious opportunity. You sit down with the intention, "*hineni muchan u'mezuman l'kayeim mitzvas ahavas Hashem* – I'm going to gain now more love of Hashem." That's how to do it! There are many ways of loving Hashem, but eating is one of the most fundamental means because it hits the spot.

Noshing for Love

But not only when you sit down at the table. You pick up an apple and you sink your teeth into that delicious 'bonbon' – it's created to be delicious; the sweet flesh and a little bit of sourness from the peel are a perfect combination – and it even has a red blush color. Hashem colors it and flavors it and also He gives it a slight fragrance.

And so it's as clear as day that there's plan and purpose there — and the purpose why the apple was made red and sweet is in order you should enjoy it more. But that's not the greatest benefit. The highest benefit from the apple is not the fact that it nourishes your body. The greatest benefit is how it nourishes your mind. It gives you a new mind if you eat it properly.

Drinking for Love

Drinking too, when you drink a glass of water — what a wonderful elixir of life that is, you couldn't buy anything more precious in the drug store than a glass of water. It is a chemical — hydrogen mixed with oxygen in the right proportions. Sometimes there are other beneficial materials in it. And it is the most important ingredient in the body. It is most of our body weight. It lubricates all our joints; it gives a sparkle in our eyes. It's our blood. It's our everything. All of our functions are made possible by water.

But it's fun too! When you're thirsty and you pour a cup of water down your throat it's a big pleasure. And therefore it's a good idea once in a while — if possible, more than that — to prepare beforehand. Not only a *bracha*; that of course, that's fundamental. But prepare to love Hashem. While you're drinking, as it's quenching your thirst, you imagine that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is pouring the cold water into your mouth — He is! — and you love Him for that.

Greatness at the Dinner Table

And that's what the Gemara means: גְּדוּלָּהּ לְגִימָה – *how great is the business of eating*, נִשְׁמָכְרֶבֶת אֶת הָרְחוֹקִים – *that it brings close people who are far away* (Sanhedrin 104a). Because if a person learns to eat with this thought in mind—I'm not saying you do it all the time; but to think about that a few times during a meal. Why not? And the more you do it you begin to feel it more and more. And as the days and the weeks and the years pass by, if people apply themselves, they will come to an actual palpable *ahavas Hashem*.

Of course if people are not interested then their lives will go by and they'll eat like the cat under the table is eating or like the dog in the yard is eating. There are people like that. But it's a sad life, a waste of opportunity. A big part of their lives are wasted because a person eats mountains of food during his life. I once made a calculation — you'll eat more than a hundred thousand pounds of food in your life!

And so there are pounds and pounds of opportunities for *ahavas Hashem*! A person can more readily come to *ahavas Hashem* through

eating than through any other way — only that he has to practice up on thinking. If you're willing to activate your mind during your meals you'll be utilizing your life properly and you'll continue to grow mentally because your body is in full agreement with the ideals you're trying to acquire and slowly but surely they permeate your personality.

Have a Wonderful Shabbos

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Let's Get Practical

Eating with Purpose

In this week's parsha, we learn from the *korban Pesach* that eating is meant to be a ladder for *avodas Hashem*. The Torah required the Pesach meat to be eaten in the most enjoyable way to teach us that physical pleasure, when guided properly, can help awaken gratitude and love for Hashem.

Once each day this week when I eat, I will *bli neder* pause briefly beforehand and remind myself that Hashem chose to give me food that is enjoyable. I will try to eat with awareness and calm, using the pleasure of the meal as a moment of gratitude and a small step toward *ahavas Hashem*.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

436 – Eating for Perfection | **716** – Greatness at the Dinner Table
675 – Learning to Love Hashem | **779** – Eating Matzah
851 – Eating in the Service of Hashem | **864** – Seven Objectives of Tefillah

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Shabbos Inspired

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Shopping for Emunah, Bitachon and Deveikus

During the week, Rav Pincus, rav of Ofakim, had little contact with matters of this world; he barely ate a regular meal. He didn't think about the pleasures of this world, and was totally uninvolved with material pursuits. On Friday, he acted differently. He departed from his normal practice and went to the grocery store to shop for Shabbos. But these were no ordinary purchases. His shopping was a matter of *shleimus*, of *avodas Hashem*, and was imbued with a special atmosphere.

There was a period when he would bring along two young *kollel* men, because he wished to strengthen them in the ways of living with true *emunah*. This entailed teaching them the ways of *kedushas Shabbos*, which is the foundation of *emunah*. He sought to give them proper appreciation of Shabbos and show them the great importance of preparing for it: shopping for Shabbos isn't a material pursuit; it's a lofty, spiritual *avodah*!

One of these men described what it was like to be the Rav's 'shopping *chavrusa*': "We would go with the Rav to the grocery store, and as soon as he entered he would whisper to us excitedly, 'Remember, now the store is all yours! Everything is free; you can take generously, because everything goes on Hashem's bill. *Chazal* said: "All a person's sustenance is allotted to him from Rosh Hashanah to Rosh Hashanah, except for expenses of Shabbos and Yom Tov. For if he spent more, he is given more." (*Beitzah 16a*)

"Now, if someone offered to let you shop in this store for free, wouldn't you jump at the opportunity to fill up a few shopping carts? In truth, you have a weekly opportunity to shop for Shabbos on HaKadosh Baruch Hu's bill."

"You can imagine how we shopped after such an introduction. We bought generously (observing the limitations stated in *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 242:1*). Together with the fish, delicacies, and sweets for the children, we acquired for ourselves a whole new world: life with *emunah*, life with *bitachon*, life in *deveikus* with Hashem. Under the influence of the Rav's pure-hearted affection, we acquired a deep, internal feeling that we are in Hashem's hands."

The Rav would take for himself the *zechus* of participating in the Shabbos preparations. He would try to carry home the things he'd bought at the grocery store himself. The residents of Ofakim would marvel at the sight of the community's rabbi walking down the street carrying cartons of soda, treats, and other foods.

The Rav's approach — that purchases made *lichvod Shabbos* don't cost anything because they go on Hashem's bill — wasn't limited to himself. He made a point of conveying to his children the feeling that *Chazal's* words are true on an actual, practical level. He occasionally let them go to the grocery store on Friday and buy whatever they wished. "They are now giving away treats for free at the store!" he would announce in his home. "You can all go and buy whatever treats you want, *lichvod Shabbos*. 'All of a person's sustenance is allotted to him except for expenses of Shabbos and Yom Tov.' Today it doesn't cost money!" The children rushed to the store and bought treats in honor of *Shabbos Kodesh*. Furthermore, on Shabbos the abundance in the home was completely out of proportion to the other days of the week.

The Torah states that a Jew may partake of great delights on Shabbos, all expenses paid by the King's treasury. Why not take advantage of this wonderful opportunity!

לרפואה שלימה מאיר חי בן שרה סורי

Adapted by R' Y. Levy from Nefesh Shimshon, Shabbos Kodesh, Rav Shimshon Pincus, Feldheim

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Q&A

WITH
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QUESTION

Is there a cure *al pi Torah* for excessive eating?

ANSWER

Now I'm not an expert in this subject but I'll give a little suggestion. First of all, a person should learn the *dinim* of *nedarim*. If you're not able to learn the Gemara, learn it in Shulchan Aruch or learn it at least in Kitzur Shulchan Aruch. Learn how severe a *neder* is. A *neder* is very severe. To make a vow is very severe. First learn that.

Then take out of your house all tempting things. No chocolate cake. No candy in your house. See that it doesn't come into your house. And the people of your family have to cooperate with you.

So the first thing is **להגדיל את היראה**, to increase the fear of Hashem by learning the severity of a *neder*, and the second is **להקטין את הנסיון**, to minimize the test by getting the *nosherei* out of the house.

And then, let's say, when you finish eating, make a *neder* that all food is *assur* to eat until the next meal. Now that's four hours, let's say. So for four hours you can keep a *neder*. Don't make a *neder* for ten days. No. For four hours you can make a *neder*.

At the end of the four hours, if you want to let go and eat a lot, it's not so terrible. But after supper, say the same thing again: "I won't eat anything until tomorrow's breakfast." And say it with a *neder*.

However, don't start this until you first make the *hakdamah* and learn the *chomer*, the severity, of *nedarim*. And it states **נָדָרִים סִיגִי לַפְּרִישׁוֹת** – *Nedarim* are a fence for abstinence (*Avos* 3:13). It helps people.

There was a man who told me he's going to a place where a certain woman was flirting with him and that day he had to be there. And he was very much disturbed. Very much disturbed. So I told him, "Swear right now that you won't talk to her for that day." And he swore. And the day passed by successfully. That's the purpose of *nedarim* and *shevuos*. Otherwise don't do it.

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