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IN MEMORY OF CLARA CHOPP A"H

TORAS AVIGDOR

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RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"L

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CONTENTS:

Part I. Test of Excitement - 3

Part II. An Excited Nation - 7

Part III. Exciting Yourself - 11

Part I. Test of Excitement

Monkeys of Egypt

There's a *possuk* in this week's *sedrah* that we'll use as an introduction to our subject and we will soon see how it applies to us.

When Avraham and Sarah came down to Mitzrayim, as soon as they entered, at the border control place, the news spread. **וַיֵּרְאוּ אֹתָהּ שְׂרֵי פַרְעֹה** – *The officers of Pharaoh saw Sarah and right away they went to Pharaoh and they were mehallem her to him* (Bereishis 12:15).

Sarah Imeinu, after all, was one in the world, and her greatness shone through. **אָמַר רַבִּי אֲבָהוּ: כָּל הָעוֹלָם כְּמוֹ קוֹפִים בְּנֶגֶד שָׂרָה** – *Compared to the beauty of Sarah, all the Egyptian women were like monkeys* (Bereishis Rabbah 40:4). The Mitzrim however, weren't praising her greatness—they only saw the *chitzoniyus*, the face, and they were tremendously excited about that.

Now, there's no question that they admired Avraham too. This we know from ancient sources that the Egyptians admired his behavior, his wisdom. He was a *nesi Elokim*, the prince of Hashem, and they respected him tremendously. But it doesn't say that they were *mehallel* him. No, that *lashon* is not used about Avraham. They admired him, yes. They respected him, yes. But they weren't *mehallel* him.

Onomatopoeism in Hallel

Now, to understand what that means exactly we have to study what the word *hallel* means. Because some people, they translate it as 'praise'—they say, 'The officers praised her beauty to Pharaoh.' But actually it's not so. Because the word **הָלַל** specifically means something more than just 'praise'.

How do I know? Because the word **הוֹלֵל** means 'wild'. **אֶמְרָתִי לְהוֹלֵלִים אֵל** – *תְּהוּלוֹ* – I said to those who are wild, 'don't be wild'. (Tehillim 75:5). *Hollel* means wild. It comes from the word *ho*. **הוּ הוּ וְנָסוּ מֵאֶרֶץ צָפוֹן נָאֻם ה'** – "Ho! Ho! Flee from the land of the north," says Hashem (Zechariah 2:10). So *ho* means to make a noise. The word is what you call onomatopoeic—it's a word that expresses itself through the sound of the word itself. *Ho* is a word of excitement and *hallel* means to be wild with your enthusiasm. '*Hallel!*'—it's a word of shouting!

Excitement in Egypt

And that's the difference between *hallel* and all the other words of praise: **לְהוֹדוֹת, לְשִׁבְחָה, לְפָאֵר, לְרוֹמֵם, לְהַדִּיר, לְבָרֵךְ, לְעֲלֶה, וּלְקַלֵּם**. Each one means something else, and *hallel* specifically means to be excited, to be shouting in your excitement. And so the *possuk* in our *sedrah*—**וַיִּהְיוּ אֹתָהּ אֵל פִּרְעֹה**—actually means they were enthusiastic about her, and they came to Pharaoh and they spoke to him with excitement. They said *hallel* about her—and not half-*hallel*.

And so you understand already what was important in the Egyptian palace. As if Pharaoh, a king of a big country, has no other business to attend to than to hear that a pretty woman had arrived. And the *sarim* too. Who were they after all? *Sarim* doesn't mean sergeants. It means the ministers—the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State. And they came running to Pharaoh. Not only were they excited, but they knew their king would be excited too.

A Different Excitement

Now, let's contrast that with Avraham Avinu. Avraham knew that his wife was a pretty woman, absolutely. The Gemara (Megillah 15a) tells us that she was from the four most beautiful women who ever lived. But that's not what

excited him. You know what Avraham was excited about? 'וִיקְרָא בְשֵׁם ה' – He proclaimed the Name of Hashem (Bereishis 13:4). If you look in the Chumash you'll see that wherever he went, that's what was on his mind. It was the theme that he spoke about in public. Hashem! Again and again, the Torah tells us that's what he did. He couldn't contain himself; he spoke to people about Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

Now, how many of the listeners remained convinced for the rest of their lives, I can't tell you that. But one thing I could tell you is that Avraham did all that he could to preach to the world these great principles. Because that was Avraham's dearest wish; יִכְרֹז וְיִדְעוּ כָּל יוֹשְׁבֵי תְּבֵל – *the world should recognize the Borei*. Now a man is not going to do that unless he has some incentive. He wasn't being paid to give *drashos*. But he did it because he was excited about Hashem. That's the one thing that interested him.

Two Sides of the Same Coin

So here you have in one place, in Mitzrayim, a king and his ministers who are excited about one thing, and not so far away, in Eretz Canaan, is a man who is also excited—the same *hillul*—but about something else entirely. Here they were excited about the שִׁקְרָה הַחַדָּשׁ וְהַבֵּל הַיּוֹפִי and here about Hashem.

And what's the difference between them? Everything! That's what Mishlei (27:21) says, that this is the way to evaluate, to test a person. מִצָּרָף לְכֶסֶף – *Just like there is a pot to test silver*, וְכֹר לְזָהָב – *and a furnace to test gold*, לְפִי מִהְלָלוֹ – *there's a sure way to test a man*.

How did you test silver in the olden days? There is a pot called the *matzreif*, the testing pot, they put silver over the fire and it melts and then they take a ladle and they ladle off the dross, the impurities that rise to the surface. That's how you know how much is real silver, what its value is. And for gold they had a special furnace called the *kur*, where they melted the gold and it was tested with the same method. You'll find out how much is pure gold and how much is dross. And so there are ways for finding out how genuine the precious metals are.

But now the question arises: How can you find out what a *man* is? That's more important than silver, and him you can't throw into a furnace. So the *possuk* concludes, וְאִישׁ – *and a man*, לְפִי מִהְלָלוֹ – *according to his praise*. You can test him according to his praise.

How Others Praise Him

It means like this: 'If you want to know who a man is, listen to how he is praised by others.' Listen to *what* praises people are saying about him; also *how much* and with how much *excitement*. Do they say his praises or do they sing them? There's a big difference.

Now if you have daughters who are marriageable or someday they'll be marriageable, I'm giving you good advice now, so listen up. When you call up the *mashgiach* of the yeshiva and you inquire about this-and-this *bachur*—somebody told you his name—and the *mashgiach* tells you, “He’s a fine *bachur*, a nice boy,” then forget about it! He’s not the one.

You know, many people who have daughters don’t realize that. He calls up the *mashgiach* and he listens and then he hangs up.

So the wife says, “Nu, what did he say?”

“He says he’s a fine boy.”

“A fine boy. Let’s settle it.”

It’s a serious error. **לְפִי מְהֵלֵלּוֹ** – *If you want to know what a man is, how people are excited about him.* It’s not how they speak about him or even how they praise him—it’s the *hillul* that matters. If they’re excited about him very much, there’s probably something there.

So that’s one *pshat*. **מִצֶּרֶךְ לְכֶסֶף** – *How can you test silver? You put it in the melting pot.* **וְכֹר לְזָהָב** – *And you test gold by melting it in a furnace.* **וְאִישׁ** – *But how do you find out about a person?* **לְפִי מְהֵלֵלּוֹ** – *By the way people are excited about him.* If they’re excited just a little bit, you know there’s only a little bit. And if it’s very much, then there’s something there.

More Shidduch Advice

But there’s another explanation and both are true, it’s just as valid, just as true as the first. Rabbeinu Yonah in his Shaarei Teshuva says a second *pshat*: How can you test a man? **אִישׁ** – *A man you could know, לְפִי מְהֵלֵלּוֹ* – *according to what excites him.* Not what others say about him. According to what he’s enthusiastic about! Listen to what he’s talking about and see what he’s interested in. That will tell you who the man is.

Let’s say you’re a Beis Yaakov girl and somebody arranged that you have to go out with this boy and you want to know who he is.

Now, in the olden days, it was different. In the olden days, the grandmothers came together to make a *shidduch*. You didn’t have to talk to the boy at all. You could rely on the grandmothers; they knew what they were talking about. But today, it’s different; there’s a *minhag hamakom* today and so you have to make an evaluation. You want a *ben Torah*, a future *talmid chacham*, but how can you tell?

A Discerning Ear

So Mishlei says like this: if the boy is telling you all about his *rosh yeshiva* and how he enjoys the *shiurim* and how they’re learning an interesting *mesichta* and how he loves to learn; it could be he’s putting on a good show,

but at least he's putting on a good show. If he talks about his hopes to become a *talmid chacham*, so you can know him from the way he talks about it.

But let's say he talks about traveling. He's saying how he traveled in the car somewhere, how he went on this highway and that exit—he knows all the shortcuts—and he's excited about it, so you can *pasken* on him already who he is.

Or maybe he's talking about all kosher things to eat—there are a lot of good kosher things today you can get: kosher cornflakes and kosher ice cream and kosher desserts. You can get Paskez candies and Liebers chocolates too. *Bruchim yehiyu* — a blessing on the heads of all the good Jews who have made life so pleasant with kosher things to eat. Very good! But if this young man, your intended, is speaking about it and praising them, you should sit and listen. You have to listen very carefully because you're finding out now what he is.

The Man Tester

Because that's the ironclad rule: A man can be evaluated by what interests him. What you're excited about, sums you up. I told you once a little anecdote but about the *rebbe* who came to *shalosh seudos*. And he sang some songs and he spoke some *divrei Torah*.

So after it was over one man said, "What beautiful *Torah* he said."

Another one said, "What nice melodies he sang."

And the third one said, "The herring was very good."

So now you know; now you know what each man is. Each man has stamped himself by what he's interested in. This one is a *Torah* man. The second one, he's a *zemiro*s man. And the third, he's a herring man. Of course, a chance remark is sometimes not enough; you have to collect a number of such remarks, but that's the general rule. And it's the same for everyone. All of us sitting here have to know that it's what we're excited about, what makes our heart beat faster, that's who we are. That's the stamp of a person, *lefi m'halalo*. That's the advice of Shlomo HaMelech—listen to what excites him, and that's the way to know a man.

Part II. An Excited Nation

Emulating Our Models

Now, if we want to think about what's most important to be excited about, we have models to emulate. That's why we have a history; that's why

the Torah tells us again and again about Avraham Avinu that 'he called out in the Name of Hashem.' Because he's intended for us as a model. That's why we read about his life, what he did. His deeds became our Torah for that purpose.

That's what the Mesillas Yesharim says in his *sefer Derech Eretz HaChayim*. He says you should take time and say "מַה עָשָׂה אַבְרָהָם אֲבִינוֹ – What did Avraham do that Hashem loved him so much?" That's homework from a great man. Try to do it someday, for one minute, two minutes, think about what was important to Avraham. What was he excited about?

And therefore, the person I'm going to speak about now, you have to know that he surely fulfilled that. Dovid Hamelech said what every Jew is supposed to say: "מָה יֵצֵעַ מִעֲשֵׂי לְמַעֲשֵׂי אֲבוֹתַי – What can I do that will help me reach the great deeds of my forefathers?" (Tana D'vei Eliyahu 25:1). And so whatever we say now about Dovid Hamelech, we should keep in mind that he was walking in the ways of Avraham Avinu.

Excitement in Jerusalem

You know, Dovid Hamelech, when he conquered Yerushalayim from the Yevusi city and he built up the city, he made it into a special city, Yerushalayim Ir Hakodesh. Not Teddy Kollek's Yerushalayim. That's not Yerushalayim; a city where the mayor is most excited about developing the nightlife, the theatres, we're better off without it. Dovid, however, built a city to be proud of. And here's how he spoke about it when he was describing it.

גְּדוֹל ה' וּמְהוּלָּל מֶמָּד בְּעִיר אֱלֹהֵינוּ – "You know what's made great in our city?" he said. "גְּדוֹל ה' – In our city Hakadosh Baruch Hu is the only thing that's important. But not only He's great. He's מְהוּלָּל מֶמָּד! We're very much excited about Him here."

That's something to hear, no? You wouldn't hear that in the most pious kollel, in the best yeshiva. Yes, they praise Hakadosh Baruch Hu, there's no question. They say *brachos*. They speak to Him, maybe they speak about Him too. But imagine somebody would say, "In our yeshiva, Hakadosh Baruch Hu is *mehullal me'od*. We're very wild about Him." Heh heh, they'll kick you out. "Am ha'aretz!" they'll say. "That's *mehullal me'od* for you? Torah! Only Torah!"

Not a Little Excited

Sure, Torah! But Dovid HaMelech understood תְּכִלִּית תּוֹרָה תְּשׁוּבָה וּמַעֲשִׂים טובים. What's the purpose of Torah? To make you excited about the One Who gave the Torah. And therefore he said, "In our city, Hashem is מְהוּלָּל – He's the Only thing we get excited about. And not just excited. מְהוּלָּל מֶמָּד – Very excited!"

After all, you're enthusiastic in proportion to the importance of the subject. Let's say if you hear that you won \$10,000 in a lottery, you're enthusiastic. If you hear that it's \$100,000, you're more than enthusiastic. You're somewhat wild. Suppose you hit a million dollar jackpot? You'd go crazy. Some people faint. Some people, their hearts stop. There was a man in France who was told that his uncle, a rich man, died and left all his property to him. When he heard the news, he dropped dead. A true story.

So in Yerushalayim they were very excited about Hashem. Were they fainting in excitement? I can't tell; I wasn't there. I imagine some did. Could be. But whatever it was, they were excited about *avodas Hashem*, about His Torah and His mitzvos.

An Enthusiastic Nation

And that's why when Dovid said about them, "זֶה דּוֹר יְרוּשָׁלַיִם – *This is a generation that seeks Him*," he wasn't saying something that's a utopian expression. He was saying it about his own generation. We say the words, but Dovid was describing his people. "מִבְקֵשֵׁי פָנֶיךָ יִעֲקֹב כָּלֵה – *This a generation that's seeking Hashem*." It means that's what excited them—nobody seeks out what they're not excited about.

And so we have no idea of the enthusiasm that burned in the hearts of the Jewish people in his days. But not only then; that's how our nation lived always. Some more, some less, but the *Am Hashem* was excited about Hashem. It's not me saying so; this is what the *goyim* wrote about our forefathers. Gentiles saw it! One *goy* writes as follows—I'm quoting from him. He says, "The Jews were in love with their religion." Now when that *goy* said, "in love," he used the words advisedly. He had something in mind, a parallel from his world, and he used the parallel for the Jews for their religion.

I cannot tell you people—you wouldn't believe me—how hotly the love of Yiddishkeit, love of Torah, love of Hakadosh Baruch Hu burned in the hearts of our forefathers even not so long ago. When I was in Lithuania, a *kalte Litvak*—they were cold, but inside there was a fire—he said to me, "You came here too late. You came to Lithuania too late." He said it in Yiddish but I'm translating his words: "Had you come before World War I, you would have seen a Yiddishkeit! Judaism was like a fire. It was burning like a fire here." We have no idea how in the not-so-remote past our forbearers had no interest in life greater than Torah and *yiras Shamayim*.

The Enthusiastic Nations

Now, the *umos ha'olam*, they also go wild. But they go wild about nothing. America is a country of people excited about nothing. Especially today. I can't say in public the things they're excited about but you hear

what the music stores are blaring forth all day long. Look into music stores and you see inside they're jumping up and down to the tune of the music. A *meshugene* comes to hear the music and jumps up and down. What are you excited about?

It's a very great non-approval of the gentiles when you see newspaper headings. Headlines: This and this team gained this man as a player for them. Tremendous news! There's nothing more stupid than interest in sports. We don't care for sports at all. Yes, we believe in exercise, we believe in fresh air. And even for yourself to walk fast in the street, a half hour every day, very good. By all means! But sports in itself is a stupidity invented by the *umos ha'olam*. Whose business is it if people get together in a stadium with sticks and they hit balls covered with horse skin, and then they run? Why are you excited? There's nothing in it.

If you can become excited when a nobody is wielding a bat and gives a bang at the ball and the ball starts flying in the sky way out in the bleachers and everybody goes crazy and screaming with enthusiasm, and you're going to join in their enthusiasm over nothing, it's one of the biggest errors in life. I'll tell you, I think we should be proud of ourselves today. If there are so many suckers in the world who are excited about the World Series—the radio, the television, parades, stadiums. Ho ho! All about nothing—and we ignore it completely, we have to feel proud of ourselves. If in this generation we still remain sane and get excited only about the right things, then we are somebody today.

A Stingy Nation

That's what we have to do; we have to husband our excitement—we have to be stingy with enthusiasm and keep it only for important things. When we see the *sefer Torah*, we're excited about that. We stand up. Don't just stand lazily. No! We're enthusiastic about the *sefer Torah*. Oooh! *Zos HaTorah*, this is the same Torah that Hashem gave us at Har Sinai! Now that's something to be excited about!

You hear that someone is making a *siyum*? A *siyum* on a *mesichta*? Ooh ah! Ho, ho! That's something to go wild about! You see a man running. Where are you running? Oh, to a *siyum*? That puts the stamp on who you are, what you're excited about in life. Here's a man, a business man. But he jumps and runs off somewhere to study a piece of Gemara and he's excited about it. That's a successful man! That's an *ish* that we can judge *lefi m'halalo*.

Proud of Our People

Once a man told me that he met two people, business partners, from my synagogue. He had a certain big business deal that day to do with them.

They said to him, “Not today. We’re busy.”

So he said, “What happened? What happened?!”

“We’re finishing *Perek Hamafkid* today in the shul.”

He told me the story. “They said, ‘We’re finishing *Perek Hamafkid* today and that’s the only thing we’re interested in.’ He was angry with me. “Your people are more excited about a *perek* in Gemara than closing a big deal.”

And we say, yes, that’s our people. That’s the stamp on a person—what he’s interested in, what he’s excited about. And so, when a nobody, a bum, whacks the ball and makes a home run, we’ll be excited? No, it doesn’t make any impression on us. Excitement is only for one purpose. It’s reserved only for Hashem. Everything else, *לְשׁוֹחֵק אֶמְרָתִי מְהוּלָּל* – *useless laughter, that’s nothing but empty wildness* (Koheles 2:2). *M’hollal* means to be wild, to be wild about empty things. It’s nothing at all. It’s indignity to be wild about unimportant things.

The Flag of Am Yisroel

The *frum* Jew says *hallel* only about important things. And the most important thing, the one ideal that includes all good things, is Hashem. And therefore we have to be like Avraham our first father and ‘call out only in the Name of Hashem’. That’s the famous slogan, the life slogan of Dovid Hamelech: *Halelukah!* Because *hallel*, we know means to be wild, to be excited. So Dovid Hamelech says, “*Hallelu!* Yes, you have to shout in this world! Yes, you have to be excited! But what should you be excited about, that’s the question. And so he tells us, “*Hallelu* – Be enthusiastic, *Kah* – only about Him.”

Be wild on Simchas Torah. Be excited on Shavuot at *matan Torahseinu*. Be happy on *yomtov*. Succos, *zman simchaseinu*. Shout to Hashem! Be excited about Torah and *mitzvos*, about *chessed*, *gemilas chassodim*. Be excited about your Torah *shiur*, about *mussar*, about *tzaddikim*. Be excited about raising *frum* children! If you’re a child, be excited about being a *frum* child, a child of Hashem. But if a person becomes enthusiastic about his troubles or about his successes, if he invests his enthusiasm in anything else, it detracts from his excitement about Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

Part III. Exciting Yourself

Easier Done When Said

Now, like everything in *avodas Hashem*, all this is easier said than done. And especially when it comes to emotions, the emotion of excitement,

absolutely, that's true. But I'm going to tell you a secret now; that *it's easier done when said*. I'll repeat that because I want you to remember it: It's easier done when said. But we'll see now that if it's just "said", that's not enough. It matters *how* you say it.

And that brings us to a new *pshat* in the possuk, **אִישׁ לְפִי מְהֻלָּל**. Rabbeinu Yonah said that when you see what an **אִישׁ** is excited about, so *lefi m'halalo*, that's how you know what type of ish he is. That's already a sure judgement of who he is.

But included in this *peirush* is a third *peirush*. Rabbeinu Yonah doesn't say it, but it's implied and included: Not only he is what excites him but he *becomes* what excites him. **אִישׁ** – A person will become, **לְפִי מְהֻלָּל** – according to what he gets excited about. Not what he talks about—people can talk the talk—that's nothing yet. It's what he talks about with excitement, with emotion, with feeling and enthusiasm, that's what he'll be.

Changing Yourself

And so if a man is excited about his *rebbe* in the yeshiva, if he's excited about *tzaddikim*, he's excited about *gedolei Yisroel*, he's excited about certain subjects, certain *sugyas* in the Gemara, so **אִישׁ לְפִי מְהֻלָּל** – that person will become what he's excited about. If you're excited about *yiras Shamayim*, excited about *middos tovos*, about accomplishing in Torah, accomplishing in *avodas Hashem*, so eventually you're going to end up there. He'll become in the future all the things he's excited about now.

So people who are busy praising *tzaddikim*, they tell *sipurei tzaddikim* with excitement, they become *tzaddikim*. You hear that? When *chassidim* sit around the table and they're telling stories about *tzaddikim*, they're changing themselves.

A Chassidishe Maaseh

I usually don't repeat Chassidishe stories, but this one has a purpose. Well, I don't vouch for this story. But the *mussar haskel*, we can use. Rav Levi Yitzchok, *zichrono livracha*, saw from a distance a light. The light, someplace hovering over homes, over houses. So he followed that light. When he came there, he saw it was a poor little *shtiebel*, a poor little synagogue of Chassidim.

He went inside. It was after the prayers. They were sitting around the table. There were a few crumbs of cake left and a little bottle, a half-empty bottle, and they were telling stories of *tzaddikim*.

And he said, that's the light that hovered over this place.

Now—this part is not the story; it's my addition—why should the Shechina come to that place? *Sippurei tzaddikim*, what's so important?

And the answer is these people are changing themselves! If they're excited about *tzaddikim*, they're going to be *tzaddikim* too. And so, of course the Shechina comes! It's a place where people are speaking about *ovdei Hashem*!

And *kol sh'kein* people who are busy speaking about Hakadosh Baruch Hu. If people who are busy praising *tzaddikim* become *tzaddikim*, if that's the case, *צַדִּיק ה' בְּכָל יְרֵכָיו* – Hashem is a real *tzaddik*. And so people who are busy speaking about Hakadosh Baruch Hu—what He did for me and what He did for our nation, what He does in nature, what He says in His Torah—they're the ones who will be most successful in becoming *tzaddikim*.

Empty Thrills

Now, you have to be aware of course that it works both ways. If you're excited about empty things—you're excited about a restaurant, about *goyim*, about sports—so you're becoming an empty person. That's why I say, if you're excited about the Yanks and the Mets, quash it! Don't talk about it! Otherwise you're ruining yourself. Because that's what you'll become. Over time, little by little, you're transforming yourself into a baseball person. It's a very important point. *וְאַיֵשׁ – you become, לְפִי מַהֲלָלוֹ – according to what you're excited about.*

Other things too. If you'll talk with *hislahavus* about politics, politicians, so that's the person you'll become eventually. You hear that sometimes in a shul, even a very *frum* shul: "You heard what President Nixon did?!" And with *aza* excitement he says it! Oh no! Even though you're *frum*, you're a *lamdan* and a *tzaddik*, but when your mind is excited about wrong things—maybe it's not wrong, but it's unimportant—so you have to know that not only will you be judged according to your excitement but you'll become that too.

Talk To Yourself

And so, if a person wants to become something, he has to go out of his way to become excited about the right things. Anything that's pious, anything that's Torah, anything connected with *mitzvos*, a big fuss we have to make about it. And only that! All other things, quietly under the table. Nothing to talk about.

And therefore it takes training, but you can train yourself to be excited about Hashem if you learn it. The thoughts go after the *dibbur*, the words; and the more excited the *dibbur*, the more excited the thoughts.

That's why Dovid spoke to himself frequently. If you study Tehillim, the book of Psalms, you see a number of times that he is speaking to himself, encouraging himself. That's not done by modern people—they don't understand how valuable it is—but the great men always did that.

The Chofetz Chaim

The Chofetz Chaim was known to have spoken to himself. On the roof of the yeshiva, in Radin, there was a little garret where the Chofetz Chaim used to go and have discussions with himself and sometimes a brash youngster used to walk up and stand by the door and listen in. And he heard the Chofetz Chaim speaking to himself. “Yisroel Meir, who do you think you are?” Sometimes he would go like this: “Yisroel Meir,” he said, “Why aren’t you grateful for all the great things that the Almighty helped you achieve in your life?” Or, “Yisroel Meir, is this the way for a decent Jew to behave?”

And that’s what Dovid Hamelech did when he wanted to achieve in this program of **אִישׁ לְפִי מִהֲלָלוֹ**. He didn’t sit back and say, “It’s easier said than done.” No! He got busy saying. He said, **הֲלָלִי נַפְשִׁי** – “My soul, I’m speaking to you now. Don’t be apathetic. I want you to be excited. But what should you be excited about in this world? **אֵת ה'** – Only Hashem!”

So you’ll say, “That’s all?! We can’t be excited about anything else?”

And Dovid says, “Absolutely that’s all. *Hallelu-Kah!* Go wild only about Hashem!” There’s so much there! Be wild about His Torah! Mesichta Zevachim! Mesichta Menachos! Ho, ho! Mitzvos! Nature, the *niflaos ha’Borei!* Tzaddikim! Talmidei chachomim! The Am Yisroel! That’s all included.

Dovid’s Table Talk

You think it’s extreme? “I don’t care,” said Dovid. “I’m not ashamed. **אֲדַבֶּרָה בְּעִדּוּתֵיךְ נֹגֵד מְלָכִים וְלֹא אֲבוֹשׁ** – *Even in the presence of kings, I shall speak only in Your commandments*” (Tehillim 119:46).

Imagine a convention of kings; Dovid came together with kings and each one was speaking excitedly about his interests. This one had a tremendous stable of race horses. This one, his pet interest in life was his army. He loved to speak about his battalions, his generals, his soldiers. This one had a huge harem. Very exciting! They’re all excited about various unimportant things—even if they’re important, they’re not to be excited about—and Dovid was standing among them and he said, “If they’re praising their interests, I’ll talk about mine. And I’ll talk excitedly.”

And he started speaking about the *Toras Hashem*. “We have a law that G-d gave us, a wonderful law.” And he spoke with feeling. “It’s a law like a storehouse of diamonds! **הַנְּחֹמְדִים מִזָּהָב וּמִפָּזָרָב** – *It’s more glorious than gold, more than an abundance of fine gold*, **וְנוֹפֶת צוֹפִים** – *more glorious than the sweetest honey*” (ibid.). And he describes it at length with the greatest enthusiasm. “**אֲבוֹשׁ** – *I’m not ashamed. I’m proud that this is what I’m excited about.*”

Emulating Dovid

It's like the man who sits at the table at a *chasunah*, and he starts talking about the *sugya* he's studying. He's excited! "Listen to this beautiful *pshat*, what Rashi says!" Or he talks about Hashem. "*Boruch Hashem*, we're all well! We're all alive!" And he's excited. *Hodu LaShem* that nobody at this table is a cripple! Really we should say *hallel* for that."

Are they listening to you? Could be not. Did the other kings listen to Dovid? Did they care? It doesn't matter because Dovid's biggest concern was Dovid. And so, he made sure to be excited about what matters because **אִישׁ לְפִי מְהַלְלוֹ** – *the more a person is excited about the right things, the more perfection he acquires.*

Self-Encouragement

And so we have a way forward. It's easier done when said! A man has to encourage himself to be excited. If a man spends his life speaking about Hashem—people won't listen to you, so talk to yourself! As much as you can, talk about Hakadosh Baruch Hu and everything connected to Him with enthusiasm. It's going to change you. You'll become **לְפִי מְהַלְלוֹ** – *according to what you are praising.*

Try it out. When you're alone somewhere, or let's say you're under the L, the elevated train tracks, and the train is riding by overhead; nobody else could hear you, so if you want to be excited, be excited that Hakadosh Baruch Hu gave you good health. Say "*Baruch Atah Hashem I moved my bowels.*" Ah! A *simcha*! You moved your bowels.

You're happy because you have two good kidneys. Ay yah yay! You can dance and sing for that. Do a dance because you have a *pi hatabas* instead of having a hole in the side. Ah, *baruch Hashem*! You're so full of joy. You're a normal person. You have to be happy you're not in the insane asylum. Ho ho! *Baruch Atah chonen l'adam da'as*, that I'm sane! Very many people are wasting their lives in unhappiness because they're not sane. *Baruch Hashem, baruch Atah Hashem chonen hada'as*, you thank Hashem for sanity.

No Magic Tricks

Now, I have a lot more to say on the subject—I just started—but for tonight that's all. It's the great program of **אִישׁ לְפִי מְהַלְלוֹ** – A man is stamped forever by what he's excited about! And he should therefore use the emotion of excitement to *become* great, to be stamped forever with greatness.

Now, don't make any mistake about it. You just can't take it easy and think that it will come by itself. We're not talking about waving a magic wand and suddenly you're a *tzaddik*. You expect that just by hearing this lecture,

you're going to be transformed? It's only a guideline in life. You have to go out from here and practice it. And finally in the course of years and years, you'll discover it will reward you richly for all the effort that you invested in it. Every individual will rise to greatness according to and because of his or her excitement. Your perfection, your station in the Next World forever, is created *lefi m'halalo*, according to your excitement!

Have a Wonderful Shabbos

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Let's Get Practical

Becoming Excited By Speaking

“אִישׁ לְפִי מְהָלָלוֹ” – the more a person is excited about the right things, the more perfection he acquires. And so we have a way forward. It's easier done when said! A man has to encourage himself to be excited. As much as you can, talk about Hakadosh Baruch Hu and everything connected to Him with enthusiasm. It's going to change you. You'll become לְפִי מְהָלָלוֹ – *according to what you are praising.*”

This week, I will *bli neder* spend a minute each morning planning out what I will speak about today—to myself or others, that will awaken excitement within myself for Hashem and all matters connected to His service.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

R-37 – The Honor of Hashem | **845** – Praise the Righteous | **981** – What is Important | **E-43** – Be Excited Over Me | **E-214** – Admiring Our Models

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Grab Hold of Hashem and Don't Let Go!

There is an amazing thing that occurs only on Shabbos, not on the other holidays: We sing about the day itself. We sing, "*Shabbos, Shabbos ha-yom laShem*" or "*Yom zeh m'chubad mikol yomim*." On the other holidays we sing songs connected to the theme of the day, to its special event and message. But did we ever hear someone sing, "Pesach, Pesach" or "Shavuot, Shavuot"? Yet on Shabbos that is what we do. We sing about Shabbos herself, remembering her and delighting in her. We are saying, so to speak, **that everything else has ceased to exist. There is only Shabbos, only Hashem.**

Especially, on Shabbos itself, we should think about Shabbos all the time, remembering that "Shabbos" is a Name of Hashem. Anyone who does this will suddenly discover wondrous worlds. This is not because he has suddenly climbed to higher *madreigos*; rather, it is because he is meeting Hashem in His own home, so to speak.

Someone who brings Hashem into his life in this way will experience a world full of light. This world is not the dark, dreary place that people sometimes think it to be. Not when you have the wondrous *siyata di'Shemaya* that Shabbos bestows. Chazal recount how Yosef HaTzaddik would constantly pray and mention Hashem as he went about his mundane affairs. He was with Hashem all the time and, indeed, he received tremendous *siyata di'Shemaya*. It is most unfortunate to go through life without being with Hashem. For without Him, it is indeed a dark world.

People are concerned about the dangers that lie in wait, since history repeats itself. But there is something we can do - grab hold of Hashem, and don't let go! You'll see what a happy life you'll have.

"I found the One my soul loves; I took hold of Him, and I won't let go of Him." (Shir HaShirim 3:4) If you are holding onto Hashem, you have nothing to worry about. We all meet Hashem three times a day. Don't just go through the "routine" of davening - seize the opportunity and speak to Him! Shout and cry to Him! Then you'll see how far-reaching is His kindness.

The ultimate thing is to meet Hashem on Shabbos Kodesh, for then He is smiling and especially benevolent. He greets us with a kiss. On Shabbos, it doesn't matter who you are. Hashem treats everyone as if he were a great tzaddik. So when Shabbos arrives, let us grab hold of Hakadosh Baruch Hu with all our strength. How do we do this? All we have to do is believe that it is Shabbos and that Shabbos is a special day. It is Hashem's day! Just don't take your mind off Shabbos!

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QUESTION

Who should we vote for in the upcoming elections?

ANSWER

We should vote for the one who appears to us to be the most conservative.

Now, I can't tell you who that is. But there's no question that the conservatives of today are extremely more liberal than the liberals of thirty years ago. We have already advanced so far beyond the borders of liberalism that today we can afford to retreat many miles behind these boundaries and still remain in the forefront of liberalism. And therefore, today there's no such thing as too much conservatism. You have to vote for conservative candidates on every level – on national, state and city levels.

That's my opinion. By the way, nobody here has to agree with me – on anything. Only, I don't have to agree with you either.

July 1976

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