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PARSHAS BAMIDBAR

WITH

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT" L

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

THE SERENE MIND

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Part I. An Orderly Life

Camping Rules and Regulations

One of the remarkable arrangements in the Midbar was how **אִישׁ עַל דָּגְלוֹ** – every person lived by the banner of his family (*ibid.* 2:2). The nation was divided into four sections, and every family's tent was stationed deliberately according to its *shevet* and ancestral family. It was an organized system of living and traveling; there were four banners and each banner had three *shevatim* who were associated with that banner. Every *shevet* had its place.

Now, when you're listening to the *ba'al korei* in the shul, so some people think it's a bit excessive, all the details. These ones were stationed on this side, and these on a different side. Over here was this family, and over here a different family. You can get dizzy sometimes listening to *krias haTorah*.

But we'll see now that it's not excessive at all. Because the Generation of the Wilderness, you have to know, was the most successful of all generations in Awareness of Hashem; that's what the Medrash says (Vayikra Rabbah 9:1) – זֶה דּוֹר הַמְדַבֵּר שְׂבָלוֹ יָדְעָהּ. They were a generation of clarity of *daas*, a model generation, and therefore whatever is written about them is for the purpose of teaching us. And so if the *pessukim* are stressing this arrangement of a strict *sefer hachaim* – families living “each one by his place” – we have to know that it's an important part of what made them so great in *daas*, what made them the *Dor Deiah*.

A Disturbed Home

I'll explain that. You know, when things are *mesudar*, in order, there's a certain composure of the mind. When you come into your home and you find everything as it was, your mind functions as normally as it can. But when a man is not in his accustomed place, it's natural that he should be off balance to a certain extent; his composure of mind is disturbed.

You know how you feel when you come home from your office or from the yeshiva and you find that your wife is making a general house cleaning? The sofa is someplace else, and this is someplace else. You can't find your slippers. So it's a disturbance; for some people less, some more, but it's something. And it's not merely a quirk of character. It's because the mind of a person functions best when he's at equilibrium, and once he is off balance, then his reason doesn't function properly.

A Disturbed Mind

Some people become discomposed, unsettled, when they are in unfamiliar environments. They lose their heads a little. I know a man, a decent man, who doesn't travel much, and when he does, he uses his car. But because his car broke down, he traveled with the bus, and found himself among a busload of strange people. It was a very different situation than usual and he was a bit agitated. What happened? Someone made a remark, this decent Jew responded very rashly, and now there's trouble. Because he was knocked off balance by being among strangers and he lost his head.

And so you see that to a big extent your composure depends on outward circumstances. That's why it's so important to be orderly, because when things are not in place it's a disturbance of the mind. And even a slight disturbance – when it comes to the mind, the implement most needed for *avodas Hashem* – is not slight at all.

Avraham Avinu's Shul

That's why, by the way, the Gemara (Brachos 6b) says it is very important to *daven* always in the same place. כָּל הַקּוֹבֵעַ מְקוֹם לְתַפְלֹתוֹ אֵלָיו אֲבָרָהֶם בְּעִזְרוֹ - *If a*

man makes a set place where he davens, so the G-d of Avraham is going to help him. And we bring an example where Avraham got up to daven אָל הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר עָמַד שָׁם – at the place where he stood originally. He made sure to daven in the same place where he prayed yesterday and the day before yesterday.

Now, why does the Torah have to bother telling us this? Who cares where he prayed? He prayed; that's what counts. Oh no; the Torah goes out of its way to tell us, "in the place where he stood previously," in order to teach us that that's what you should do.

Shabbos Morning Adventures

Now, why is it so important to daven in the same place? Let's say sometimes you feel footloose Shabbos morning and so you put on your tallis under your overcoat and go out on an adventure. You'll go far away to the other side of Boro Park or Flatbush, to some synagogue you never visited before. Why not?

You must know that your davening is wasted; it's thrown out that morning. First of all, you are busy looking around. And when you're looking around you aren't davening; it's just the robot doing his thing. No, you can't be looking around.

This I learned from my rebbe, zichrono livracha, that when you are davening, just look within your daled amos. It's very important, by the way. Even if you heard only this one thing tonight, it was worth coming. When you are davening, don't look outside of your daled amos. Not only Shemoneh Esrei; when you're saying anything. Baruch She'omar, don't look around. Ashrei, don't look around. The whole tefillah, from beginning to end.

How can you talk to Hakadosh Baruch Hu when you are looking at people? I know one tzaddik in a shtiebel, he davens up front, facing the tzibbur. He davens every word loudly and slowly, but the whole thing is vitiated by the fact that he is looking into the eyes of people the whole time. He's a tzaddik but he's raw; he isn't trained. He didn't have good rebbeim. He wasn't taught that you can't daven looking into people's eyes.

New Place, New Thoughts

But that's not the only reason you shouldn't visit new places, new shuls, just so you won't be looking around. It's more fundamental than that. If it's a new place, if it's different than usual, then automatically you don't have composure of mind. It is hard enough to concentrate on the tefillos without any extra disturbances. But when you are in your old accustomed place, there is nothing around you that interests you, you've seen it already a hundred times, therefore you can concentrate on the subject at hand.

Instead of being discombobulated by thoughts, by new sensations, you can focus on the *tefillah*. First of all your *tefillah* will be successful. And secondly, because you have your mind on what you are saying, He'll listen to you. That is why Jews who know always try to *daven* in the same place.

A Career of Composure

But it's not only *davening*; that's only one detail of a Jew's career. A Jew's career is to serve Hashem. Suppose someone would ask us, what's most necessary for such a career? Well, to keep Torah, to study Torah, to know Torah. That's what we would say. That's the most necessary ingredient.

The Chovos Halevavos doesn't say that. He says that the most necessary ingredient is *peace of mind*. Isn't that a *chiddush* of the Chovos Halevavos? Actually it's not a *chiddush* at all. You know why? Because you serve Hashem with your mind. You don't serve Hashem only by doing acts! *Rachamana liba baei* – Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants your heart (Sanhedrin 106b); it means the mind. Of course, you must do things too, you have to say words, but that's not it. He wants your mind. He wants your thoughts and your feelings. That's what the service of Hashem is.

AI Robots in the Synagogue

If it was just words that Hashem wants, so who needs such machinations like *makom kavua*? If the point is just to *daven*, then Hakadosh Baruch Hu could have instructed every Jewish congregation to put together money and order a hundred steel robots from a factory, and put them in a synagogue. And they should have some talking machine, and every day at 6:30, all one hundred robots will turn on and start shaking and saying words.

And meanwhile, the people will be out happily doing whatever they want, and their consciences will be at peace because they know that the service of Hashem is being carried out in the very best way. All you need is once in a while a janitor should come in and oil them and check that none have broken down; all hundred are shaking in unison. It will be the perfect congregation. There would be no talking. Nobody would come late. Nobody would leave early. No skipping! Because it's all recorded; from *Mah Tovu*, the first page of the *siddur* until the end. And these hundred steel robots would be performing perfectly. You wouldn't need a *makom kavua*, nothing.

Flesh-and-Blood Robots

But we understand that that's meaningless. Because what Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants is flesh-and-blood people with minds. He wants your flesh-and-blood tongue, and your flesh-and-blood heart, and your flesh-and-blood brain. "Oh," Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, "that's more precious to Me

than a hundred tape recorders going full blast saying the whole thing from beginning to end.”

And so we see that the service of Hakadosh Baruch Hu is *entirely* dependent on the mind; the chief implement with which you serve Hashem is *daas* – the mental faculty that includes understanding, wisdom, and awareness.

Now, if the most important part of serving Hakadosh Baruch Hu is your mind, so we come now to a big problem. Because there’s nothing that the mind needs more than composure. The mind needs peace of mind, it needs calmness. Because as you’re standing Shemoneh Esrei – that’s a crucial moment: **דַּע לְפָנֶי מִי אַתָּה עוֹמֵד**! When you stand the Amidah, you have to know before Whom you’re standing! At least once you have to think, “Who am I speaking to right now?”

Wrestling in Shul

So you have to take this robot of flesh and blood that jumps up without thinking. You’re fast asleep, but as soon as the “robot” hears the *shatz* approaching “Tzur Yisroel,” he jumps up without thinking and he’s standing on the job already; because he’s a robot. And his knees bend, his head bends, like a robot.

So you take over for a second. “Whoa! Let me take over here,” and think, “What’s this all about?” But the robot is wrestling. The whole *davening* is a wrestling match. You’re attempting to take hold of the controls for a moment, but immediately there rushes to your head a thought: “Oh look, it’s late. I won’t have time for breakfast today. It’s Thursday and they’re going to say *V’hu Rachum* and read the Torah, too.” And so you’re deliberating, should you go home to make a quick breakfast or should you go straight to the subway. And by the time you’ve finished the debate, you see that you’re bending down already for *Modim*. “*Modim anachnu*”; the poor robot is following the signals.

You surrendered the controls to him and he took over again. So you start wrestling again. “No, this cannot be!” But before you have a chance even to consider the words you’re saying, you start thinking, “What did my wife say to me before I left? ‘No husband is as careless with his things as you are.’ Is that so? Should I let her get away with that?” And by the time you come back to yourself, it’s already *Aleinu*. *Krias haTorah* flew by as in a dream; you didn’t hear anything.

A Life Passed By

And that’s how our whole life passes by. Not just the *davening*; our whole life passes by and we are like sleepwalkers. We’re not aware of what’s taking

place. So it's primarily lack of peace of mind that robs a man of his ability to serve Hashem.

And that's why the most necessary requirement to keep a man's mind working smoothly is *menuchas hanefesh*. In order to serve Hashem, in order to be any kind of a Jew, the most necessary requirement is peace of mind. You must have calmness. You must have composure of mind. And according to how much you're lacking that, you'll be lacking in your true service of Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

Part II. A Tranquil Life

The Torch of Man

Now we're going to study a little from a *sefer* that's an authority on the subject. It's the *Cheshbon Hanefesh*, a *sefer* that advises how to work on one's character traits; and one of the qualities he discusses is *menuchas hanefesh*. He describes there how man is made up of two parts, an intellectual side and an animal side: "And as long as a man's mind is composed, his intellectual spirit remains quietly on its post and emanates a light onto his mind, just as a torch burns brightly on the top of a building. And that light spreads over the entire body."

This means that if he has *menuchas hanefesh*, his mind can function, and the animal being – meaning even his thoughts – will do the bidding of his reason. Because it's calmly composed, the intellect illuminates the body and advises it, and now he can exercise his free will.

But suppose the mind becomes confused, busy with side thoughts. He's worried about what his boss is going to tell him when he gets to the office, and other things, so now the intellectual part of him loses control over the animal part. The light of the intellect is not shining – and that's when there's trouble.

The Bumbling Bird

The *Cheshbon Hanefesh* gives a *meshal* (Sec. 68). He says that in South America there's a certain species of snake that preys on small birds. When the bird comes to rest on a branch, the snake sees it from afar and slithers over, underneath that tree. He can't get at the bird, he can't fly, but he has a ploy. He opens his mouth and adopts an attitude of fury; he looks up and shows off his fangs to the bird.

Now, this bird is chirping merrily on the branch, but as he's turning his head he happens to put his eyes on the snake. He looks down at the horrible

gaping mouth of the snake, the fangs, and falls into a panic. It stops singing and because it's seized with fear it loses its grip and falls down into the mouth that's waiting for it.

Now, if this bird had *menuchas hanefesh*, a little bit of composure, nothing would happen. He would look down at the snake and turn his back. Who cares? He would turn his back end and deliver a little bit of something into the snake's open mouth. That's all. But instead, because it loses its composure, it becomes the snake's lunch.

Guarding the Flame

And therefore, the *Cheshbon Hanefesh* says, it's very important to guard this torch, this light that's burning in the mind. צָרִיד לְהַתְגַּבֵּר מְאֹד – *He should strengthen himself very much*, אֶת הָאֵבֹקָה הַזֹּאת – *to guard that torch of menuchas hanefesh*, לְהַחֲזִיקָה בְּכַף – *to hold tight to it*, וּלְהִגַּן עָלֶיהָ תָּמִיד – *and to shield it from any winds that might extinguish it*.

It's a precious light that you must protect at all times, it should never flicker and never diminish in its brightness. Because that light of peace of mind, as it shines on the mind, is what protects a man from many evils and stands by him in his time of need.

Tents of Composure

Now, how does one guard it? So we see from the *Dor Deiah* that one of the first requirements is *seder*, orderliness. That's why they were stationed in orderly arrangements in the Midbar. The camp of Yisroel was a very big camp after all, tremendous in size; there were at least two million people there, probably much more. And there were no streets there. Someone might want to pick up his tent and put it someplace else. "I want to look over there and see what's doing. Maybe it's more interesting on that side."

Nothing doing! אִישׁ עַל דָּגְלוֹ – *Everybody stayed where they belonged*. For forty years, the Bnei Yisroel complied with this remarkably strict discipline of *seder* – they and their wives and their children lived "each one according to his flag" at all times. Although there were no fences to separate them, nobody left his or her appointed place to visit and see what was being done elsewhere.

And the tents themselves were set up so that even by chance you couldn't see what's doing by your neighbor. שְׂאֵן פִּתְחוֹ אֶהְלִיחֵם מִכְּנִיזֵן זֶה בְּנֵגֶד זֶה – *Of the hundreds of thousands of tents, not one had a doorway facing the doorway of another tent*.

Now, that's not easy, because the tents were on all sides. They were jammed together. But still they made sure of that. Why do you have to know

what's doing over there? You need more things floating around in your head to make that flame of *menuchas hanefesh* flicker?

Headlines in the Head

You know what the lesson is for us? It's a very good piece of advice. Why do you need to know what's doing on the other side of Brooklyn? Who cares? You need to be *mevalbel* your mind with news?

That's why you shouldn't read the newspapers. Why do you have to know what's doing there? It's very good advice you're hearing now because a big part of the crises in our lives, the distractions, are artificial. How do they sell newspapers? By manufacturing dramas and making sensations. If they had not printed them, they wouldn't have been sensations.

That's why they put them in big letters; they blow them up in order that people should buy the papers. The most unimportant things are headlines. I walk in the street, stop by the newsstand, and see big letters: The Knicks did this and that! Big red letters, like news of a nuclear war. So now the yeshiva boy looks at that for a second, and his mind is already busy with unimportant, stupid things. The Knicks lost a big colored man to another team. A tragedy!

And is the front page any more important? You could dispense with knowing how a mafia man, Gugliani, was shot down in a restaurant in Greenpoint. What does it matter?

When Yingelech Disturb You

And some papers have an axe to grind. They're interested in showing that there are disturbances in Boro Park. So they put big pictures on the front page; this robbery and that robbery. Well, hooligans are everywhere and always were. But if you play it up on the front page, you put a scare into people. And Jews become anxious.

What will you lose if you didn't know what happened over here or over there? You need to listen to some little *yingel* — that's what the writers are, little *yingelech* — tell you there's going to be *chas v'shalom* atomic bombardment, or a race war, or a holocaust in America? Some people would like to have that, you know, because they want you to go to Israel. You remember that fellow who claims to be the savior of the Jewish people? He wrote in the New York Times that there's going to be a holocaust *chas v'shalom* in America. That's the savior of the Jewish people.

So therefore, a person who doesn't read any newspapers at all is going to gain a great deal of peace of mind. The newspapers are constantly creating sensations to frighten and excite you so you'll buy the papers tomorrow — and then after tomorrow — to find out what happened. and you're continuing to help that newspaper make money at the cost of your nerves.

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The End Is Important



The Avod



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The Torah M

The Real World



Seeing Him



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You need to know the details like you need a hole in the head. And don't tell me stories, "But it's Eretz Yisroel..." Yes, you should be *nosei b'ol* and *daven* for them, absolutely. Of course, if there's something you can do, you should do it. But do you have to know all the details? It has no bearing whatsoever on our lives.

Imaginary Troubles

And similarly, don't listen to the radio. The radio is creating sensation; there's no question about that. And the TV is a thousand times worse. They make their bread and butter out of your anxiety. You'd live much longer, your blood pressure would be much more normal, and everyone would be happier, if you were not in contact with the troubles, or the imaginary troubles, of other people. We have our own problems here; we have to sit and learn Torah, we have to make a living, we have to raise our children to Torah and *yiras Shamayim*.

So don't read the newspaper and listen to the radio, and you'll gain a great deal of *menuchas hanefesh*. That's something we learn from the Dor Hamidbar. Did you ever think about that? Not only were they cut off from the entire world, but even among themselves they remained in their place. Because who needs it? Why should you upset your *menuchas hanefesh* with what's doing by your neighbor? The light of *menuchas hanefesh* is too important to allow it to flicker, to be disturbed with extraneous things.

Your Own Troubles

And even when things are happening in your own life, it's the same idea; don't look at it too much. If you feel that you're being disturbed because of something, whatever you do, don't talk about it. Because talking makes it more prominent. Sometimes it might pass quickly, but by speaking about it, you make it permanent. If you ignore it, even externally, then internally it will more easily pass away. By making an issue about it, you're already dampening that flame of *menuchas hanefesh*.

A man comes home and he opens his big mouth and tells his wife, "The fellow next to me in the office is irritating me something terrible. I don't know how I can get over it."

Now it's a problem. Because if your wife hears that you're anxious, you're nervous, you're agitated about something, then in most cases, she'll help you become *more* agitated. Sometimes there's a calm wife who's able to pour oil on the troubled waters. But usually, all you're doing is magnifying the problem by passing it on to your wife. And it comes back to you even more than before.

Spare Your Wife

And now she's suffering too. So first of all, spare her the ordeal. Secondly, you're not making it better by talking about it. When you walk out of your office, close the door and try to forget about it. It's enough you have to come back tomorrow and worry about it. When you walk out of the place, leave over your worries. You're not paid overtime, so don't worry overtime.

I knew a man, a great man, who never spoke about his worries. And he had sometimes good cause to worry; he had enemies and difficulties, but he kept quiet. And it was an interesting thing, all the worries disappeared. Every single one. Meanwhile, his family never dreamed there was a crisis going on, and that it went away. This man kept everything to himself, and not once did his wife and children know what was transpiring. Therefore, all his problems passed by without his family's participation. And even to himself, they became minimized.

Seek Elderly Advice

Now, sometimes you need advice, you need to talk. So don't seek advice from ordinary people. Ordinary people are going to steer you in the wrong direction. Find an elderly *talmid chacham*. Very important! An elderly *talmid chacham*, an old *chassidische rebbe*, an old *rosh yeshiva*. He should be old!

If you can get one of these people to listen to you, first of all, he sees *through* the problems. An *am ha'aretz* takes a problem at face value; he thinks there's a problem. The elderly *talmid chacham*, he already experienced many things. He looks through it and sees that there's no problem at all. And sometimes he can diagnose it immediately and you see that it's no problem. Whatever it is, don't seek advice from ordinary people who will make an even bigger *bilbul*; they'll only help extinguish your flame of *menuchas hanefesh*.

These *eitzos* – to be *mesudar*, to keep away from the news and from curiosities that will only disturb your *menuchas hanefesh*, not to talk, and not to play things up more than needed – are very important. Because to a certain extent, it's a first step in creating for yourself a mind that's composed and calm. And that's the mind you need to accomplish in this world, to be an *eved Hashem*.

Part III. A Life of Bitachon

Authentic Menucha

Now, you have to know that the Chovos Halevavos would be very displeased with this talk of mine tonight. Because I'm giving you little *eitzos*,

superficial ways and means of keeping a calm mind, and actually when he spoke about achieving *menuchas hanefesh* that's not what he meant at all.

When the Chovos Halevavos speaks about this great subject of serving Hashem with a calm mind he's talking about a person who achieves that because of *bitachon*. He wants us to say, ה' מֶלֶךְ תִּגַּל הָאָרֶץ – Hashem is in control and therefore the earth should rejoice (Tehillim 97:1). There is happiness, a composure, when you know that everything is under control. Nothing can throw you off balance when you understand that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is doing everything and whatever He does is only for good.

Thank G-d, A Little Worse

It's like somebody once asked Reb Yisroel Salanter – he was an old man and he was sick – so they asked him, “How are you feeling today?”

Reb Yisroel said, “Baruch Hashem, a little bit worse.”

It means that when you're confident that the One steering the wheel is Hakadosh Baruch Hu, so you're always confident, always calm, always happy. That's why Rav Itzele Peterburger said about Reb Yisroel that he never saw such a man who, no matter what was happening, was always happy; always composed and calm. And that's because he lived with *bitachon*, that everything is under control, that there's nothing to become disturbed about.

The Chofetz Chaim too, in his last days, things in Poland were going from bad to worse. So he said, “It's heading in the right direction.” That's what he said then. Hakadosh Baruch Hu is leading everything in the right direction.

A Jew's Obligation

That's the genuine article, the *bitachon* that means understanding that whatever happens really is good. Not only good, it is the best. And not only the best for the Next World, it is the best for *this* world. When you understand that properly – after you get through Shaar Habitachon, and you review it a hundred times and it gets into your bones – that's the best way to rise to those heights that the Chovos Halevavos intended us to go. And then we would *really* be successful in acquiring *menuchas hanefesh*. Because true love of Hakadosh Baruch Hu and true confidence in Him – when you're actually convinced that it's so that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is in full control all the time – when that gets into a person's bones so automatically whatever happens he responds with equilibrium of the mind.

That's the authentic *menuchas hanefesh*, the kind Hashem wants most from us. And it's expected to a great extent from every Jew. Every Jew, even the most plain man and woman, is expected to be a *baal bitachon*. Even if you're not fortunate enough to have learned the Chovos Halevavos's Shaar

Habitachon a hundred times, it's still a fundamental obligation of a Jew to be confident in Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

Shabbos: Yom Menucha

That's why we have Shabbos. Shabbos is intended to be a lesson of *bitachon* and *menuchas hanefesh*. **מְנוּחָה שְׁלֵמָה שְׂאֵתָהּ רוּצָה בָּהּ** – It's a perfect composure, a perfect rest, that You, Hashem, desire. Does it mean a day for getting into pajamas and climbing into bed? Is that the rest Hakadosh Baruch Hu desires? No. Shabbos is supposed to be the day of *daas*, the day when the mind works most clearly. At least once a week, we practice being divested of all our harassments, our diversions, our worries. At least on Shabbos we're able to think about the great issues of life, about serving Hakadosh Baruch Hu, and if we practice up once a week maybe you'll take it with you during the week too.

Unfortunately, if you don't know this, it's almost entirely a waste. In most cases on Shabbos you're still living with your weekday thoughts. What's doing in the newspapers? What's the story with Aunt Matilda and Cousin Jack? Are they still fighting? What's with my boss, what he said on Friday about working extra next week?

Shul Shenanigans

Even as you're standing in the synagogue, everybody worries you. "Who does he think he is, such a conceited fellow sitting all the way up front? And the *shatz*, who does he think he is, Yossele Rosenblatt? We have to get out and eat already."

And then you're worried, maybe the *gabbai* might call you for an *aliyah* and pump you for a donation. Or if it's a non-commercial synagogue where they don't take any money for *aliyos* so you're worried maybe he *won't* give you an *aliyah* this week; someone else will get *shlishi* instead of you.

And there are plenty of things to frustrate your composure. The children are being disorderly in the hallway or people are talking at the next table. There's always something, and all these things are enemies of *menuchas hanefesh*.

Eye Health

And so you have to know how to utilize the Shabbos for *bitachon*. The Gemara (Brachos 43b) says, **אֶדָם פְּסִיעָה גִּשָּׁה נוֹטְלָת אֶחָד מֵת"ק מִמָּאוֹר עֵינָיו שֶׁל אָדָם** – a hasty step, walking fast, takes one five-hundredth away from your eyesight. You know that? When you're nervous, you're anxious, you're worried, so your eyesight is impaired. It's a fact.

Now, if you walk fast for exercise, it's not going to impair your sight. But if you walk fast because you're afraid you'll miss the bus, you'll come late to

work, you'll miss a customer — if you walk fast with anxiety — it impairs the eyesight.

So the Gemara says, **מַאי תַּקְנִיתָהּ** – *what's the remedy?* **בְּקִדּוּשׁ הַיָּבֵי** – *You can restore it when they make kiddush Friday night.* Some learn it means when you make *havdalah*. But it's all the same as you'll soon see.

Now, when people dip their fingers in the *havdalah* wine and touch it to their eyes, they're making a mistake. That's only a symbol, and a symbol without content, a *mashal* without a *nimshal*, is meaningless. The true message is as follows: What's the way to restore our eyesight? **וַיְבָרֵךְ הַשָּׁמַיִם** **וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל צְבָאָם** – *Hakadosh Baruch Hu created this world. There's nothing here except His will. There's no matter; everything is nothing but His Word. And whatever transpires in this world, He is doing. Everything is under complete control and so there's no need to lose your composure.*

Don't worry about it. Hakadosh Baruch Hu will manage; He doesn't need any help from you. You do your part by going through the motions, but He's handling everything.

And that's what *kiddush* means. *Kiddush* means you review that idea and then you sit down and drink a little bit of wine. Because when you drink wine, it's easier for the message to get in; the wine washes the message down your throat.

A New Type of Kiddush

Isn't that a good idea to do next Friday night? When you make *kiddush*, so as you're sipping a little bit of the wine, think, **וַתְּנוּ שָׂכָר לְאוֹבֵד וַיִּנְן לְמַרְי נָפֶשׁ** – *You embittered, harassed, and worried people, it's Friday night now, so forget about all of those things. Sit back, relax and enjoy the Shabbos, and think, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu created the world and He's able to manage without me. Everything is under control." Drink a little bit of wine and let the *bitachon* go down your throat inside of you; maybe some of it will penetrate into your heart, into your *kilayos*, and let it remain there. Let it remain there all week long.*

And if we put effort into utilizing the Shabbos — not only by *kiddush*; it's a good idea to review these thoughts a few times on Shabbos — so it's like learning *Shaar Habitachon*. And the more you do it, the more tranquility you bring into your life and your home. You won't make a fuss about anything. What's there to be anxious and excited about if Hakadosh Baruch Hu has His hands on the steering wheel of life? He's the best, safest Driver there is.

Take It With You

But as I said before, that's not easy to obtain — that's why I gave you some artificial means to help train and soothe you on the journey to this great goal.

But you shouldn't rely on that. You have to work on it every Shabbos. Every Shabbos it goes in more and more and then you take it with you all week long.

And so on Sunday and Monday and Tuesday and all the days of the week you'll remind yourself as much as you can about the words you said at *kiddush*.

Let's say something comes up which disturbs your peace of mind. So now you're more prepared. You tell yourself, "Don't lose sight of your objectives in life!" That's a good *eitzah* when something comes up; now is a good time to take your fingers and say, "What do I want out of life?" And see, does this really affect your objectives?

Count to Two

"Number one, I want to succeed as an observant Jew in Torah and *mitzvos*. Is this going to have any effect on me? Number two, I wish that my children should grow up observant and they should become *talmidei chachomim* and *yirei Shamayim*. Does this have any effect on that?" You'll see that in most cases it has absolutely no bearing on it.

The fact that your neighbor is nasty to you? So what? Some people get into a dither just because of a neighbor.

I know a man who used to come here and he once visited me. I said, "What's the matter, Mr. So-and-So?"

His eyes were twitching. The man was a nervous wreck. I thought something terrible happened. Well, he tells me the story. He lives in Brighton, and next door, there was a woman, a Jewish woman, with two daughters, fourteen and nineteen, who are making trouble for him. Well, it's daughters so you'd think they're not boys so how terrible could it be already. But he says they had made it *Gehenom* for him. There was an easement between the two, and the girls were encroaching and disturbing him. And he was all *tzetumult*, so he scolded them. And then the mother came out in front of her daughters and there was a big fight. The police came, and they went to court. And this man was a nervous wreck.

Now, that man had a good home, a good family. He had a decent job and he was *frum*. Everything was in order. If he would make a list of his objectives and say, "What do I care what they do there? And even if they do cut up and make noise, what about it? Is that important enough for me to lose sight of my objectives?"

Shabbos at Work

So don't forget your purpose in life! That's an excellent way to go from Shabbos to Shabbos. Let's say you're at work. You have a tough customer or coworker on your nerves. So what? Remember what's important. You're there

not to be a Romeo, to be a Galahad. You're not there to be a hero. You're there to bring home a check every week, and that's all you want from that place.

Let's say there's somebody there who's bossy, or someone who's a nuisance. What do you care? You sit there and take it for eight hours a day. At the end of the week you get your check anyhow. A job? Jobs come and jobs go. And there's always welfare. So don't lose sight of your objective. You're not there just to sit in comfort. You're there just to collect your check. And if you'll keep sight of your objectives, then most of these things will dwindle and become nothing.

And **הָבָא לְטִהַר מְסִייעִים אוֹתוֹ** (Shabbos 104a). It's a great subject, this lesson of *menuchas hanefesh* and *bitachon*, and anybody who makes an attempt to travel in the right direction, Hakadosh Baruch Hu will help him. More and more you'll live with the awareness that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is doing everything and whatever He does is only for good. And then you'll be able to fulfill your function in this world. Your mind will burn brightly, like a great light that illuminates everything, and you'll be able to accomplish the purpose for which you were created!

Have a Wonderful Shabbos

Let's Get Practical

Developing Menuchas Hanefesh

In this week's parsha we see how Klal Yisroel camped in the Midbar in a precise order — each shevet in its place, each family by its banner. Living in an orderly way creates a settled mind. And a settled mind is essential for serving Hashem.

During the weekdays this week, I will *bli neder* make an effort to reduce my exposure to news outlets and other vehicles of *bilbul ha'daas*. And on Shabbos, as I drink the wine of *kiddush*, I will strive to allow all anxiety to fade away as I internalize the message that Hakadosh Baruch Hu has absolutely everything under control.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

S-12 – Bitachon I | **99** – Peace of Mind | **301** – The Serene Mind
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Shabbos Inspired

לע"נ שרה נטשה בת דבורה שהין · דינה ברכה בת שרה נטשה · דבורה מזל בת שרה נטשה

Completely Dedicated to Hashem

A *talmid chacham* is a Jew who lives with Hashem and reflects Hashem in all aspects of his life. For him, there is nothing other than Hashem and His Torah and mitzvos. A *talmid chacham* is not measured by the number of pages of Gemara he has memorized. Neither is he measured by the number of hours per day that he devotes to learning. A *talmid chacham* is measured by his dedication to Torah learning.

The stones of a person's house and the beams of a person's house testify about him, as it says (*Chavakuk 2:11*), "For a stone will cry out from the wall, and a beam will answer it." (*Ta'anis 11a*) *Chazal* are telling us that when a person arrives in the next world, the walls of his house will testify about him. Admittedly, his walls were there to see what he did even when no one else was, but it would seem to me that our children also are capable of testifying quite a bit about us! Sometimes, a small child innocently reveals something very significant that was said or done in the house.

I remember that when I was about ten years old, my friend said something I'll never forget. He told me that his little brother had come home from school after learning about how Hashem had spoken to the *Avos* and the *Nevi'im*, and he asked their mother, "Why doesn't Hashem speak to Daddy? He learns whenever he has time!" Their father worked in diamond polishing. He would go to work early in the morning and return late in the afternoon, but he learned at every opportunity. His little boy didn't understand why Hashem did not speak to Daddy, too. Then my friend said something unforgettable: "I hope my child will say that about me, too!"

This father represents what a *talmid chacham* is. Although he was a working man, he was totally dedicated to Torah learning. He learned whenever he could, whenever he had the opportunity. It's a matter of dedication. *Chazal* tell us a *talmid chacham* is like Shabbos. Shabbos means disconnecting ourselves from the material world in order to live in the presence of Hashem. This is the nature of a *talmid chacham* as well.

Shabbos is like the *Beis HaMikdash*, like a *cheder yichud* in which we are alone with Hashem. "And You did not give it, Hashem, our God, to the nations of the world. And You did not bequeath it, our King, to the worshippers of idols." (The Shabbos morning *Amidah*) A non-Jew may not enter our private area of *Shabbos Kodesh*. If he wants to fulfill other mitzvos, he may go right ahead. He is welcome to do all the mitzvos, but not Shabbos. When Shabbos arrives, it is the time of, "May He kiss me with the kisses of His mouth." (*Shir HaShirim 1:2*) On Shabbos, we're with Hashem alone. And so it is with a *talmid chacham*. If a person wants to devote his life to Hashem and be a *talmid chacham*, it is not so important exactly how many pages of Gemara he learns a day, or how brilliant he is. What matters is how dedicated he is, how "Shabbosdik" he is, how much privacy he has with Hashem!

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The Yedid Family

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

Is one mechuyav to believe that the Tanaim and Amoraim knew modern science and mathematics?


ANSWER


You're not mechuyav to believe that. If you had let's say a broken air conditioner and you called in Eliyahu Hanavi to fix it and he didn't know how to fix it, would it be a pegam in the greatness of the navi? It's ridiculous. So why should you expect that they should know all the technology of today?

What they knew is more important than all the wisdom today. They knew the fundamentals of the truth. They knew the ikrei haolam. They understood the world better than any scientist understands with all of his learning. Because the scientist understands just pratim; but the klalim they don't understand at all. They're all confused and they learn wrong pshat in the klalim.

And the kadmonim knew perfectly and clearly the whole mehalech of history and the ways of the world and even the ways of nature in general. But pratim, that's not important. And therefore the fact that there are technologists today who know to repair, let's say, an air conditioner does not make them superior in the least.

January 1, 1987

Life Questions? 

Cybersecurity Questions? 

keystone
CYBER PROTECTION