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PARSHAS CHAYEI SARAH

WITH

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT" L

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

THE BEST SURVIVE

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Part I. Separating from Avraham

A Heartbreaking Episode

One of the most heartbreaking episodes in Torah history is told to us in this week's *sedrah*. And to a very big extent, we don't even notice it—we don't pay any attention. And that is when Avraham Avinu, right before he was going to leave this world, banished six of his children from his home; וַיִּשְׁלָחֵם – He sent them..., קְדָמָה אֶל אֶרֶץ קְדִים – eastward to the land of the East (Bereishis 25:6).

Now, you have to understand that these were fine boys. After all they were the children of Avraham. וַיִּתֵּלַד לּוֹ אֶת זִמְרָן וְאֶת יָקֹשָׁן וְאֶת מִדָּן וְאֶת מִדְיָן וְאֶת יִשְׁבָּק וְשׁוּאֵחַ (ibid. 2). Children of Avraham Avinu! And so when we say these names we have to say them with *yiras hakavod*: Zimran ben

Avraham. Yakshan ben Avraham. Midan ben Avraham. Midyan ben Avraham. Yishbak ben Avraham. Shuach ben Avraham.

Names of Greatness

And because Avraham expected everything from them, he gave them names of greatness. Zimran means 'he'll sing praises to Hashem'; like **שִׁירוּ לֹא זִמְרוּ לוֹ**. Yakshan means, 'he should grow old—from the Aramaic, *kosh*—in the ways of Hashem.' Or 'the one who searches out for his own character blemishes', from the Hebrew **הִתְקַשְׁשׁוּ** (Tzefanya 2:1).

And Midan? 'He should be a fighter for Hashem, a defender of the *din* of Hashem.' And Midyan has a similar meaning: 'He'll judge according to the ways of Hashem.' Yishbak means 'he'll forsake all the wicked ways of the world, all the evil influences'; he'll go only in the way that his father taught him. And Shuach means he bends over before Hashem. **הִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לָהּ בְּהִרְתּוֹ קָנֵשׁ** – He'll bow down to Hashem always.

Such beautiful names! And I'm sure that to a very great extent they lived up to their names because they were influenced by Avraham's ways. You think Avraham wouldn't be *mechanech* his sons? He wouldn't train them with the most beautiful *middos tovos*?! And so they saw their father's ways and respected him; Avraham trained them to go out in the world and be like him.

The Banished Sons

And now, a tragedy. Avraham sent them all away. Yes, he gave them *matanos*; he made them wealthy. Avraham had plenty of money, and he sent them away with everything they needed. But still, to send them away? And he sent them not just out of the house; they were sent **אֶל אֶרֶץ קְדִמָּה** – far away to the east, so they shouldn't be nearby. I don't know if he ever saw them again. Such a thing is unheard of! To send away six sons! Our heart still aches when we read that—for each one of them our heart aches. Zimran! Ay yay yay! Yakshan! Ay yay yay! Midyan! Midan! Yishbak! Shuach! Gone; broken off from the holy family.

Now, we're not talking here about sending away a boy who is spoiled. Sometimes it happens, *chalilah*, in a home, there's an older child who is transgressing and you can't keep him in the house. A young child, you can still train him, but an older child, if you have some more children at home, sometimes you cannot tolerate an older child that is disobedient to the Torah. A rotten apple will spoil the entire barrel and so you'll have to send him away. But these weren't that—they were good boys! Only they weren't good enough.

You know how much it hurt Avraham? Suppose today you had to send away, *chalilah*, a good boy from your house. You'd be *ois mentch*! You'd faint! You'd run around crying like a madman, "My son! My son! Where's my son?"

Learning from History

Now, Avraham was entirely justified in what he did. When the Torah tells this story that he sent them far away, the Torah is praising him. The *possuk* is telling us that at the end of his life, he looked around at his family and saw that he still had work to do. He had to separate the good from the best. He had to do it because he wasn't looking to build just a holy family—he wanted the holiest, the best. That's what it means to be the *Am Hashem*. And because these boys—as good as they may have been—didn't match up to Yitzchok, they weren't allowed to remain. It was heartbreaking for Avraham but he had no choice—he saw from the history of the world, from how Hashem had guided history, that this is what had to be done.

What did Avraham see? In the Mishnah in Avos (5:2) it says that עֲשָׂרָה דְּוָרֵי מַאָּד עַד נֹחַ – *there were ten generations from Adam until Noah*, but Hakadosh Baruch Hu was dissatisfied with them. הָיוּ מְבַעֲסִין וְנֶאֱמַר עַל שֶׁהָיָא – *He saw that they weren't living up to His expectations and so He brought the Mabul to wipe out mankind; only Noah's family remained.*

Then, עֲשָׂרָה דְּוָרֵי מִנֵּחַ עַד אַבְרָהָם – *ten more generations elapsed*, הָיוּ כָּל הַדְּוָרֹת, – *and they also caused displeasure to Hashem*, מְבַעֲסִים וְנֶאֱמַר עַד שֶׁבָּא אַבְרָהָם אֲבִינוּ, – *until Avraham came upon the scene*, וְנִטַּל שְׂכָר כּוֹלָם, – *and he took the reward that was due to all.*

Sifting for a Diamond

And our *Chachomim* give a comparison to a man who was walking on the seashore and he dropped a diamond into the sand by accident and now he was trying to retrieve the diamond. So he brought a sieve and began sifting and sifting and sifting and sifting. Maybe this one? No. Maybe here? No. Until finally he found his diamond.

It means that Hakadosh Baruch Hu has a process of sifting mankind until he finds the right people. He sifts and rejects, He sifts and rejects, until finally He discovers that diamond that He wanted all along. Of course, by Hashem, there are no accidents; it was intended that way.

Now, Avraham studied that. Not like we read the Mishnah and we go on; not like I'm saying it superficially—Avraham studied the details of the world's history, and he understood from that the ways of Hashem.

In the Beginning...

Avraham saw that at the beginning Adam and Chava had two sons, Kayin and Hevel. And he knew that they had a high degree of excellence. Kayin and Hevel were perfect creatures; beautiful young men, intelligent and handsome. And they believed very much in Hashem. They were very good!

And yet, despite their apparent excellence, they were not good enough for Hashem. And so Kayin slew Hevel and then Kayin was rejected and the race of Kayin disappeared eventually in the *Mabul*. Who remained? Only

Sheis. A third son. And from Sheis came forth all of mankind that we have today.

And so from the beginning there was a sifting out. Kayin and Hevel were tried and found wanting—they weren't good enough. Hashem wanted something better, and He allowed them to go out of existence; nothing remained of them. And now it was from Sheis that Hashem would find that diamond, the nation that He wanted.

And so finally, at the time of the Mabul, mankind was everywhere. They had multiplied and spread all over the world because people lived nine hundred years, and they were able to have very many children in that length of time. And so the world was full of people everywhere. Finally! After all the sifting!

The Family of Noah

But it's not so. The Borei Yisborach, Hakadosh Baruch Hu, was looking for what He desired, and He couldn't find it. And so וַיִּשְׂאֹר אֶדְ נָח – Only one family was deemed worthy to survive, and the rest were all destroyed in a great Flood. One family sifted out.

But even from this one family, from Shem, Cham and Yefes, the process began again. Now these three families never became extinct. The family of Yefes spread over the earth. All the nations of Europe are descended from Yefes. Persia also. From Cham all the Hamitic nations were descended. Not only the Blacks; also all the Canaanim and the Plishtim. Many other nations belong to the Cham part of mankind. They didn't die out until this day. But they were rejected.

Hakadosh Baruch Hu rejected Cham and He rejected Yefes. Yes, it's true that יִפְתָּ אֱלֹהִים לְיִפְתָּ, that Yefes will have broad dominion over the world, but they would be just background scenery to the real story. Cham not so much, but they also survived. And still these two families survived only as background. It was only the third family that was chosen. וַיִּשְׁכֵּן בְּאֶהֱלֵי שֵׁם – *The Shechinah won't dwell anywhere except in the tents of Shem.* Shem was the one who was chosen. And why was he chosen? Because of his excellence.

The Chosen One

And yet the procedure of sifting still continued. Because Shem had many children, many descendants, and of all the descendants of Shem, only one found favor in the eyes of Hashem: אֲשֶׁר בָּחַרְתָּ בְּאַבְרָם – *You chose Avraham* (Nechemiah 9:7). Now they all could have been chosen had they made the necessary effort; but they failed. And therefore Avraham stepped to the forefront of history and it's Avraham now who will be the father of the chosen people.

From all the descendants of Shem הָיוּ מְכַעֲסִים וּבָאִים – *they displeased Hashem*, עַר שָׂבָא אַבְרָהָם – *Avraham was the sole instance of a member of that*

family who was satisfactory, וְנָטַל שְׂכָר כּוֹלָם – and he took the reward for all of them.

It means that whatever the world deserves, now rests on Avraham. He is the reason for the world being created. Retroactively, we see that he is the one for whom Hashem was waiting when He made the world.

Only The Best

Now this does not mean that those who fell by the wayside and were rejected were all very wicked; by no means. There were many good people among the nations who were not chosen because they weren't good enough. Hakadosh Baruch Hu is not satisfied with people who are fair, who are mediocre or even partly good. He is looking for the very best.

And therefore when Avraham came, He said, "That's the one! All the rest, I discard. All the nations now are nothing. They're only scenery for Avraham Avinu to act out his part in history. That's just a backdrop for the main characters in the history of the world, Avraham and his descendants."

Sifting For Perfection

And so we can understand a little bit of Avraham's thinking when he sent away his beautiful sons. Of course, we can't fathom such a great mind, but we understand that Avraham was following a policy that He saw in history, that Hashem chooses the best.

That's why when Sarah decided to send away Yishmael, Hashem told him שְׁמַע בְּקוֹלָהּ – listen to your wife, and Yishmael was sent away. Don't think Yishmael was bad; by our standards he was very good, but policy is policy.

That's also why Avraham decided that it's time for him and Lot to separate. Lot was a good man, a *talmid* of Avraham. And he had a good family too. Lot's wife didn't wear short sleeves. His daughters didn't go with their knees uncovered. Lot made a good *bracha* on everything. He was good material, Lot. But when Avraham saw that Lot was not conforming to Avraham's very lofty principles—not to let your sheep graze on other people's fields even if you have *teirutzim*—so he said, "I can't have him together with me." And he sent him away.

And that's why at the end of his life, he sent away six of his sons. Because he saw that Hakadosh Baruch Hu's procedure is to sift out mankind. He's looking for the diamond among the sands. That's why He rejected all the other nations until He came to Avraham. He was the one diamond that remained after sifting out all the rest. But even after Avraham himself was chosen there was still sifting to be done. And therefore before he died, he sent away Zimran and Yakshan and Midan and Midyan and Yishbak and Shuach. That was Avraham Avinu's final act of greatness, of perfecting what would be the future *Am Hashem*.

Part II. Separating From the Nation

Separating Eisav

Now, we have to understand that the process did not stop there. And when Yitzchak and Rivkah had two sons, you have to know that both had a good chance to be chosen—they both could have become great. Don't think Eisav was a *rasha* at birth. That's a mistake. Nobody is a *rasha* by birth. Despite all the *agados* that you read, whatever you read in the *mefarshim*, don't misunderstand them—they're only *nevuos*, prophecies of what could happen in the future, but he could have changed that prophecy. Oh yes, Eisav had free will to adjust them. He had free will to become a *tzaddik gamur*. He could have remained as part of the Am Yisroel.

But what happened? Because Eisav didn't live up to being the best, therefore he became a supercargo; it means he became an unnecessary burden, and so Hakadosh Baruch Hu shook him off, and Yaakov was left alone. Hakadosh Baruch Hu said, "If you're not willing to live up to My requirements, then it'll be just Yaakov."

And so Eisav took his wives and children and all his *tzon u'bakar*, and his horsemen and his army, and they all marched away and settled in Edom. It's like the Jew who picks up his family from Flatbush and settles somewhere far away from a good Jewish community and they go lost. And that's what Hakadosh Baruch Hu wanted. From now on we were rid of Eisav.

Left in Mitzrayim

And even when it came finally to Yaakov Avinu, it seems to us that בְּנֵי יַעֲקֹב בְּחִירָיו, *the sons of Yaakov are His chosen ones*. Reuven and Shimon and Levi and Yehudah, all of them, became the Am Yisroel and maybe they were finished now with the process. No, it wasn't finished. Because did they all leave Mitzrayim? Everybody knows that before they left Mitzrayim there was a plague of darkness that continued for a number of days. And something happened during that time. Some of the Bnei Yisroel perished at that time.

Perished?! Right before Yetzias Mitzrayim? Why?

Because they were not worthy of being redeemed. In the *Haggadah shel Pesach*, when the unworthy son asked a question and he showed that he wasn't so interested in being attached to the nation, so we said about him אֵלֹהִים לֹא הָיָה שָׁם – *had he been there in Mitzrayim he would not have been redeemed*. So we see that those who were not worthy, were not redeemed from Mitzrayim.

And it's remarkable how few did go out. Although two million of our nation went out of Mitzrayim, there were many more who did not go out. It's a remarkable thing. וְהַמּוֹשִׁים עָלָיו בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם. Only one-fifth left Mitzrayim. And one *medrash* says אֶחָד מִחֲמִישִׁים – *one out of every fifty*. It's hard

to believe. It could be it's just a *lashon*, an expression, *guzmaos*. But whatever it was, not everybody left Mitzrayim. They were rejected. Hakadosh Baruch Hu wanted to make sure He's getting only the best, so that when we come to Matan Torah only the very best should stand around Har Sinai and hear the Voice of Hashem.

Shevatim Go Lost

But at least all the Shevatim remained. We marched out twelve big beautiful tribes. And every *shevet* had its own characteristics and its own *middos* that were valuable in the eyes of Hashem. He didn't want us to be all the same. It's like a body. We can't all be feet or all be hands. And so Hakadosh Baruch Hu made separate *eivarim* and every *shevet* contributed something.

But a tragedy happened. Ten of the Shevatim began to weaken. It's a long story how it happened—one day we'll talk about it in detail—but it happened. **וַיְהוּדָה עַד דָּר עִם אֶל-ל** – *Yehudah, the house of Dovid, and Binyamin, still clung to Hashem.* They had the Beis Hamikdash and Yerushalayim; it was the land of the Torah and so they remained loyal to Hashem. But in the Eretz Aseres *Hashevatom* many wrong things had been done, and therefore it was decreed that eventually they'll be cut off.

A tragedy of tragedies! They were among the *mekablei haTorah*! They lived a long time together with us! They were *oleh regel* with us. Every year, three times a year, we all gathered together in Yerushalayim. *Chaveirim kol Yisroel*! But now they dropped off the body of the nation and most of them went lost. **וַאֲבָרְתָם בְּגוֹיִם** – *They went lost among the nations* (Vayikra 26:38).

It was a terrible operation to amputate so many limbs from the body of the Am Yisroel. Today we don't even think about it, but how could you live without Shimon? Could you live without a lung? How could you live without a Gad? Could you live without an ear? You need every *eiver*.

Shaking Off Limbs

But that was the fulfillment of Hashem's plan of shaking off. It's a remarkable thing. To shake off the brothers? If you shake off Eisav, OK, we have a certain prejudice against Eisav. We learned Rashi when we were little children; we know Eisav is no good. So if He shook him off, all right. We have a prejudice against Kayin too. We think he was no good. So if you shake him off, all right. But to shake off the brothers? Even Yosef's family went lost. Efraim and Menashe went lost! How could that be?!

The answer is as old as the beginning of time. It was a sifting; it was a salvation *min haShamayim* to get rid of them because they had proved that they were not worthy to continue. If a man goes to a doctor and the doctor sees that the appendix is swollen—"It might burst any minute," he says. "Hurry to the hospital!"—so you pay the surgeon a big fee to take out your appendix. It's a loss of the appendix, but your body is saved.

Shaking Off the Christians

I'll give another example. After the *churban* Beis Hamikdash about sixty odd years passed by and then came the great war of Beitar; the Jewish nation fought against the Roman Empire for years. It was the most arduous, the most difficult war that Rome ever faced, and finally when Rome won, they began the great slaughter. The land was littered with dead bodies that were not permitted to be buried for years.

But you have to know that at that time a tremendous benefit was bestowed upon us because we became rid now of a very infected limb: We got rid of the Christians. Up until then, all the Christians were Jews—the early Christians practiced the laws of the Torah. Oso *ha'ish* himself, we see from the New Testament, kept the Torah. He wasn't a *medakdek bemitzvos*, he wasn't a *tzaddik gamur*, but we know he sat down at the *seder* Pesach night and he said *hallel*. It says *befeirush* he said *hallel* Pesach night at the *seder*. They call it the Last Supper but if you read inside you see it was the *seder*. He kept almost everything, like all Jews did. And that was the biggest peril for us, to have such weaklings, such corrupters, in our midst who might corrupt us.

But they had no intention of renouncing their Judaism. They didn't want to separate from us. How could we shake them off? And then this miracle happened in the war of Beitar. Because now it didn't pay to be a Jew anymore. To be a Jew meant that your life was in great peril. And so what did the Christians do? They declared that they are not Jews. From then on they began to discard all the practices of Yahadus and began to behave like pagans.

That's when they broke off from us. We lost very many Jews then. Very many!

Shaking Off the Kara'im

And so we learn from this that Hakadosh Baruch Hu makes it His business that those who don't belong should get lost. You remember the Kara'im. In their homes on Shabbos they didn't permit any fire to exist—even if the fire was made before Shabbos. And some of them were *medakdek* in their *mitzvos*. Of course they did it absolutely incorrectly, but at that time they were powerful and they had important political figures. They had their own *chachamim* and the world was full of the noise made by the Kara'im. There was a real threat to the Am HaTorah.

But we see today that the Kara'im went lost. How they went lost, why they went lost, it has to be studied, but they went lost. It's a remarkable story. At the time it was unbelievable if you would say that they would go lost. They were more powerful than the Reformers are today. Even today if you say the Reform and the Conservative will go lost, many people will say: "How will they go lost? They're so powerful and so numerous." But we can understand they'll go lost because they don't have any children.

Soon, Rabbi Susan, in her short skirt, won't have any congregation to speak to. In the course of time, for lack of progeny to follow them up, they'll go lost. They don't have children, no families. They'll die out. But the Kara'im had families. It was impossible to picture a time when we would be rid of them. And it happened. It happened. It had to happen because only the best survive. Only the loyal, the best, will remain as the *Am Hashem*.

Remaining in this World

But not only to remain in this world. Of course, we want to continue in this world with the *Am Hashem* forever. I'd like to know that my children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren will forever be in this world keeping *mitzvos*! Because בְּרַא כְּרַעַא דְּאִבְהוֹ, it's like my foot is in this world.

It's a great *nachas ruach*, a happiness for me, as if I'm still alive in this world. Even if they don't say *yizkor*—my great-grandchildren won't say *yizkor* any more for me—but just the fact that they're *davening*! They're keeping the Torah! It's my nation and they're continuing. It's a happiness! A *nachas*! A very great joy to know they're continuing.

But more important is continuing in the Next World as part of the *Am Hashem*. The tragedy of tragedies when someone is sifted out, is to lose the World to Come forever and ever. What does it pay to live if you're not going to succeed in the great quest that all mankind secretly hopes for in the depths of their consciousness? We want to live forever.

For a Jew to lose his eternal share with the *Am Yisroel* together, there's no greater disaster in the world. Gehinom is nothing compared to the misfortune of being torn away from his people. The assimilationists who change their names and try to get lost among the gentiles are committing suicide in the very worst manner because the future belongs to us, in this world and in the Next World.

Part III. Remaining With the Nation

The Ominous Prophecy

And so we come now to ourselves, to the rest of our history, and we'll listen to the *navi*. Yirmiyah is speaking in the name of Hashem; he's stating the principle we're studying and he says as follows: וְלִקְחָתִי אֶתְכֶם אַחֵר מֵעִיר וּשְׁנַיִם – *I'm going to take you out of exile one from a town and two out of a whole family*, וְהִבֵּאתִי אֶתְכֶם צִיּוֹן – *and I will bring you back to Tzion* (3:14). One day we'll go back to Tzion, but not everyone. One out of a town! Two from a big family! You hear that? All the rest will go lost. Of course, if you live on the right block, in the right town, it could be that the whole town will be saved. Absolutely. But it's a terrible thing to hear, such a frightening prophecy.

Don't we know that in Budapest, in the decades before the World War, thousands of Jews were baptized every year. Entire families gone forever. In Germany, intermarriage was even more than marriages between Jews themselves. And Hakadosh Baruch Hu is watching and allowing the procedure to go on because He's waiting for the good ones to remain. "I'll take one diamond out of a city," Hashem says, "and two from a family. And only them, the ones that remained most loyal to Me, I'm going to bring to Tzion."

Now we have to listen prayerfully to these words because they are an ominous warning to many people today. Because in America, it's the same thing. There's no question we're in the middle of that process. As I always tell you, take an old telephone book from forty years ago and you'll see names, families, that are not in existence anymore. They got lost. All lost.

Bad Memories

I myself, I look back at the last seventy years of my life—I'm older than seventy but I look back on seventy years when I had some *seichel* already—and I remember names of families that went lost.

I remember a family in Williamsburg; before the *chassidim* came to Williamsburg, there was a family, a *shomer Shabbos* family. They had six sons. Six boys. Not one remained from that family! Not a single one!

When they were dying out already somebody pointed it out to me. "You know," he said, "no one is remaining from that family. Not even one grandson. Nothing remains."

Today is the worst period in our history—assimilation is consuming a larger number of Jews than ever before. There are cities full of lost Jews who will go down into the ground and be forgotten from the nation. Sometimes we are comforted with one who returns. An entire city of lost Jews and here is one *baal teshuvah* that comes back, **אֶחָד מֵעִיר**, one from a city.

One From a City

Like once a young man called me up from Grand Central Station. It was eleven o'clock at night and I picked up the phone.

"Is this Rabbi Miller?" he asked me. "The one who wrote *Rejoice O' Youth?*"

He tells me that he came from a city in the Midwest and he read my book and he decided he wanted to visit me.

"But it's eleven o'clock at night," I said. "And it'll take you another hour to get here." I go to sleep early, you know.

He said he has no place else to go.

What can I do? He read my book after all. So he came in.

Today he's a *frum* Jew. Not because of me. The Satmerers took him in and today he's a Torah Jew.

So you see it happens—his entire family, even his entire city, went lost and he was plucked out.

What is Hakadosh Baruch Hu doing? He's choosing the good ones and the other ones die out. Who will remain? The good ones will remain.

Pushing Our Descendants

And that's a very important point for us to consider. Because we want to remain the good ones. And not only we ourselves—we want to give a big enough push that our children should remain too. And our grandchildren and great-grandchildren too. And so we have to consider the matter in a very serious way, thinking about ourselves and our future generations.

Everyone desires to remain forever in the Klal Yisrael in both worlds, but the question is who will be the one? Who will be those families that remain attached? And the answer is, it's up to you. You know there were families among the *Aseres Hashevotim* who moved away from their neighbors; they moved to Eretz Yehuda and were saved. Make sure that you and your family are the ones! Make sure that you're the best!

It doesn't necessarily mean that the *peshutim*, the *hedyotim*, who just live with the minimum will go lost. No. They won't go lost. After all they are *shlomei emunei Yisroel*, they're *frum* Jews that fulfill the Torah. They won't go lost. But we want more than that—we want to give such a push that it'll be forever, that we and our descendants will be forever.

Be Like Avraham

Why were Avraham and his descendants chosen? **כִּי יִדְעָתִי** - *I am interested in him*, **לְמַעַן** - *in order*, **אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא אֶת בְּנָיו וְאֶת בֵּיתוֹ אַחֲרָיו** - *he is going to command his children and his household after him*, **וְשָׁמְרוּ דְרָדָה** - *that they should keep the way of Hashem* (Bereishis 18:19).

Avraham, with his great heart and great spirit, gave such a push that we're still running from that push. We're still running from that impetus. Because he exerted himself to see that his children will carry out his great tradition. He went to extremes. He did everything with far-sightedness, with the utmost stubbornness, because his whole soul depended on it; like a man does something to save his life. And Hashem said, "That's why I love this man. Because I know that he's going to carry it out."

So we're hearing now what makes Hakadosh Baruch Hu interested in a man. If you are going to hand over the great ideals of Hakadosh Baruch Hu to your children, that's the way to make Him interested in you—"interested" means you'll be forever in His mind.

Mesirus Nefesh of Parents

That's the father who is sitting now someplace and hammering into the head of his unwilling son *Hamafkid* or *Arba Avos Nezikin*. The boy comes

home from the *yeshivah* and he says “Pa, the Gemara is too hard. I feel like quitting the yeshiva.”

And his father takes out the Gemara—the father is tired after a day's work, but he feels that the most important thing in life is to give his boy the taste of Torah. The father would prefer to cut off his arm than to allow his son to leave the yeshivah. And so he takes the Gemara and starts struggling because he insists that's what's going to happen.

The mother too. She's taking care of a busy house, but at the forefront in her thoughts is that her children should be *frum* Torah Jews. She teaches her daughters *tzniyus*, how to dress like a Jew, how to talk like a Jew. She sits down with her little boy, reviewing the Chumash from the *cheder*. She's breaking her teeth with him but she does it anyway.

It means also you have to choose the best yeshivos, the best Beis Yaakovs. Some people are indiscriminate. They think, “A yeshiva is a yeshiva. I'll send my son there. A Beis Yaakov, that's all I need to know.” No. The fact that it's Orthodox is not enough. You have to find out. Not all are the same quality. You want the best!

And you have to beware because today there are institutions that are of inferior quality. Now I don't want to speak up and say the names because there may be some institutions that have patriots to defend them and I'll just make more enemies, but there are those too. And therefore, your child has only so many years that he can spend in a Torah institution being molded by Torah ideals, and so you have to look for the best.

The Best Homes

And you can't rely only on the yeshiva either. You have to make sure that you and your family are included in the chosen ones by making your home the best. If you have a television at home, go home tonight and put it out with the garbage. It's poison for even the best, the most convinced Jew. One look at what's going on leaves an impression, a stain, that will be on his *neshamah* forever. You just can't help looking at *reshaim* and being influenced.

Now, I know there are a lot of Jews who still poo poo it. “It's nothing,” they say. “It depends what it is. You can control it. You turn it off.” And these people are making out of their homes a receptacle with all the wickedness and filth of the gentile world poured into it.

And therefore the time has come for people to stop being so foolish and so stubborn. Television is worse than a *treife* kitchen. There's no question, it's much better to have a kitchen with *chazir* than television, because *chazir* goes into your stomach. Television goes into your *neshamah*. Of course you have to have a kosher house. Your kitchen must be kosher. Your bedroom must be kosher. Everything must be kosher. But the mind must surely be kosher.

And when the time will come, there will be a separation between those who had a kosher mind and those who didn't. How can you expect your family to remain forever with the Am Yisroel if you're ruining their minds? Even today there's a separation; people ask me today about *shidduchim*, so they say a nice boy, yeshivah boy, fine, *middos*, learning, *ba'al kishron*. But do they have television in the home? It's a question today, and it's a very important question. Was it a television home? *Shidduchim* are rejected because of that. But what if *chas v'shalom* you're rejected altogether? *Chas v'shalom*, *chas v'shalom*.

Advanced Greatness

I'll tell you more. If you'll advance to the stage of not owning a radio and newspapers, **תָּבוֹא עֲלֵיכֶם בְּרָכָה**. The radio, even if it's just the news, it's all adulterated with the opinions of the people writing the news scripts, and the people announcing the news. And most often these people are low people, degenerates; people, who if you saw them, you wouldn't think of talking with them. People whose minds are full of the sewage of the outside world.

Now, I'm not going to tell you not to listen to the news; I'm not going to tell you that as a *p'sak halacha*, but you should know that what goes into your ears will never come out again. That's all. And what goes into your eyes will never come out again. Once you let it into your head, it remains in your head forever and ever. It becomes part of you forever.

That's why if a young man marries a young woman today and he says, "Look; on one condition. No radio in our house," so she might be somewhat surprised because her parents always had a radio. They didn't have a television; that much she understands but a radio? The answer is you want to be from the very best!

Move Closer

So that's the way to save your family forever. And even if you live way out in Scarsdale and all your neighbors will laugh at you—"You heard? Barry is going crazy! He's throwing the TV out of his house"—who cares? You be that one family in Scarsdale! Or better yet move to Flatbush.

If you live in Flatbush, move to Williamsburg. Or make yourself closer to *tzaddikim*, *talmidei chachomim*, the frummost, most loyal Jews. Whatever you can do to be more loyal to Hashem, more loyal to the Am Hashem, that's what you should do.

Marry a girl whose father is a *talmid chacham*. **לְעוֹלָם יִמְכּוֹר אָדָם כֹּל מַה שֵּׁיֵשׁ – וַיִּשָּׂא בַת תַּלְמִיד חָכָם** – *A man should sell everything he owns, and buy himself a daughter of a talmid chacham*. You're a girl? Then sell everything you have and buy yourself a *talmid chacham*. Or have your father buy for you a *talmid chacham*. It's worth it. Whatever you do, make that your focus in life. **וְשִׂים** **חֶלְקֵנוּ עִמָּוָם**! We want to be together with the best ones!

And we must know that those who persist in their loyalty, they are the ones that Hashem had in mind at the beginning of our history. **אֲשֶׁר בָּחַרְתָּ** **בְּאַבְרָם** – You chose Avraham, **וּמֵצָאתָ אֶת לִבּוֹ נֹאמָר לְפָנֶיךָ** – because You found that his heart was loyal before You. Hashem is looking for the especially loyal ones that will remain with Him until the end. And then all together, we and our descendants, will be with Him forever in this world and forever in the Next World.

Have a Wonderful Shabbos

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Let's Get Practical

Be Among the Best

This week we learned that Hashem is constantly “sifting” the world, choosing only those who remain most loyal to Him. From Adam and Noach to Avraham and Yaakov, the pattern repeats: only the best, the most steadfast, endure as part of the eternal Am Hashem.

This week I will *bli neder* take a moment each day to ask myself: “Am I living like one of Hashem’s chosen ones?” I will look for one area—whether in speech, tznius, Torah learning, or the atmosphere of my home—where I can raise my standard just a little higher. By tightening my loyalty to Torah and distancing myself from influences that weaken it, I will be showing Hashem that I want to be counted among the best—among those who will remain forever with His nation.

This week’s booklet is based on tapes:

R-63 – The Stiffnecked Nation | **21** – Hashem Chooses the Best

822 – Hashem Sanitizes the World | **977** – The Best Survive

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ומרת בראנדל
בת ר' משה דוד ע"ה

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לזכות נתן יוסף
בן שהלה תמר חיה
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Shabbos Inspired

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

All Your Work Is Done!

It is written, "Six days shall you work and do all your labor." How can a person do all his work in six days?" asks the *Mechilta* in *parashas Yisro*. And it answers: "Cease from labor as if all your work were done." This *Chazal* implies that on Shabbos we should put all our mundane, weekday concerns out of our minds. We should feel as if everything were taken care of, and we have nothing to concern ourselves with other than living in Hashem's presence.

I (Rav Pincus) once saw this halachah observed in its full sense. A number of years ago, in the shul where I davened, there was a very wealthy man who supported many *yeshivos*. One Friday, a few minutes before candle-lighting, he heard news of a financial step the government had just taken that caused him a staggering loss. I kept my eye on him all Shabbos, and it was amazing — you couldn't tell anything had happened. He went home and made Kiddush, the next morning he davened just like usual, he looked the same and behaved just the same. After Ma'ariv of *motza'ei Shabbos*, he went home and made Havdalah — and then began to feel distressed.

This man was not a rabbi or a leading Torah scholar. He was a simple, ordinary Jew. But on *Shabbos Kodesh*, business simply did not exist. He fulfilled the halachah of "all your work is done." This halachah expresses the nature of Shabbos, which is like the *Beis HaMikdash*. The *Beis HaMikdash* is the special place where we live with Hashem, and Shabbos is the special time when we live with Hashem.

I was once asked by a non-observant Jew: "How can it be that phoning my mother on Friday night just to wish her a good Shabbos is forbidden? In what way does this desecrate the Sabbath?" I answered him: "There is a certain *masechta* in *Shas* that is called *Middos* — Measurements. It details all the measurements and all the areas in the *Beis HaMikdash*. It doesn't say anywhere in this *masechta* that there was a phone in the *Beis HaMikdash*. And I assume that even in the Third Temple, may it speedily be built, there won't be a phone."

Then I explained to him why the *Beis HaMikdash* has no phone. Imagine you're meeting with an important person, and in the middle of the conversation you see a friend walk by. Will you interrupt the conversation to call out, "Hey, Moishe, how are you doing? What's new?" That would be insulting to the important personage you are meeting with.

Now imagine you are standing in the *Beis HaMikdash* in the presence of HaKadosh Baruch Hu. Would you interrupt this sublime meeting with Hashem to talk about some other matter?

The following sheds light on what it means to live in Hashem's presence on Shabbos. "The Sages permitted greeting on Shabbos, only out of necessity." (*Yerushalmi, Shabbos* 15:3) As mentioned, our speech on Shabbos is limited — to the point that we are barely permitted to extend greetings to people we meet. What's so terrible about greeting a friend? The answer is that just as we wouldn't interrupt a meeting with an important person to say hello to a friend, so it is on Shabbos, when we are in the presence of Hashem! If *Chazal* hadn't permitted us to do so, we would not take our minds off Hashem even to greet others.

In Honor of
Sydney and Family
By Mr. Danny Srour

In Memory of
Sarah Natasha Bat Deborah Shain A"H
Dina Beracha Bat Sarah Natasha A"H
Deborah Mazal Bat Sarah Natasha A"H

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

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QUESTION

How do we account for the variety of Jewish religious groups?

ANSWER

And the answer is; in a garden, how do we account for the variety? There are red flowers and there are blue flowers and pink and white. And *baruch Hashem* the variety causes it to be more interesting and beautiful. We have to know that each group contributes its specific contributions to our people. Not everybody has all the *maalos*. And each one is essential to the wellbeing, and the happiness, and the beauty of our nation.

And therefore, when Beis Hillel and Beis Shammai had a *machlokes*, it wasn't a reason for weeping and moaning about variety. We have to know that Beis Hillel and Beis Shammai together upheld the Torah; each one served Hakadosh Baruch Hu in his way, and each one sharpened the other by their conflict. **בְּרִזְלֵי בְּרִזְלֵי יִחַד** – One piece of iron causes the other iron to sharpen (Mishlei 27:17).

And even the conflict between *chassidim* and *misnagdim*, for instance, had a very good effect. There was an old writer, the Zichron Yakov, and he said because the *misnagdim* so frequently and so much accused the *chassidim* of not learning, the *chassidim* began learning as much as the *misnagdim* did. And the *misnagdim* started learning other things, *mussar* and *yiras Shamayim*, in order to show that they had the same *avodas Hashem* like the *chassidim*.

And so after a while the *besamim* of one rubbed off on the other and the good qualities began to diffuse.

And that's Hakadosh Baruch Hu's system when He made the twelve *shevatim*; each *shevet* had its own qualities, very different from the other *shevatim*. But all together they contributed and they made it a perfect whole. February 1982

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