

תורת אביגדור
הגאון ר' אביגדור מיללער זצ"ל

Rav Avigdor Miller on the Parsha
Adapted from his Tapes, Seforim and Writings of Talmidim

Sefer Vayikra
The
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Edition

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This week's booklet based on Tapes:

- #136 - Alone With Him | #210 - Alone In the World |
- #271 - Tenants in This World | #E-266 - Alone with Him

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בעזרה ש״ת

פרשת בהר

With Rav Avigdor Miller ztz"l

We Live in You

- Part I -

We're Tenants | 1

- Part II -

Tenants with Purpose | 7

- Part III -

Friends of the Landlord | 11

Part I. We're Tenants

EARTHQUAKE IN ERETZ YISROEL

Anyone who reads this week's *parsha* knows that in ancient times there was a great "earthquake" that shook the land of Eretz Yisroel every fifty years. Now, the land did not actually shake but on the tenth day of the year, soon after Yovel came in, a loud shofar blast was blown in Eretz Yisroel, and it was a sound that reverberated throughout the land causing great turmoil. It was a blast that was the catalyst for such great commotion, such movement and upheaval, that it was as if an earthquake had shaken the land.

What did the sound of the shofar mean? It was an announcement, a grand proclamation to all the residents of Eretz Yisroel that: **וְהָאָרֶץ לֹא תִמָּכַר לְעַמֶּתָת** - "The land shall not be sold forever" (Behar 25:23), and what that meant was that the fields and homes that had been purchased in the last forty-nine years were now returned to their previous owners. That's how it was in Eretz Yisroel in the times of the first Beis Hamikdash; whenever someone sold a property, it would revert back to the previous

owner when Yovel came around. And so, as the Yovel year began, many people who had purchased real estate during the last fifty years had to pack up all their worldly possessions and leave their homes. Many large families with many children were uprooted from their homes.

THE REAL ESTATE TUMULT

Fifty years! That's a long time! People had become accustomed to living on this property and they invested a lot of money and effort into beautifying their lands and their houses. And now, when that shofar sounded, it was a decree from the King that all the fields that had been purchased in the last fifty years were to be surrendered back to their original owners. And that meant that there was a great flow of people, a tremendous commotion, as people moved from one place to another. Many who had no land of their own for fifty years, people who had wandered like beggars because they had to sell off everything to pay debts, were now restored to their ancestral estates. And on the other hand there were those who had been living in style in big beautiful houses, on spacious grounds - but they had bought them - so now they moved out, back onto the street.

Of course, it wasn't a surprise; they knew it was coming, but as prepared as they could have been, we understand that it was a big disturbance for the nation. It had to be, because when real estate must change hands it's not a simple matter. You'll have to set records straight, and there are bound to be arguments to settle; this man says that the implements on the land - his plow or the livestock - belong to him, and the other one disputes that. There was a great deal of arranging to do and it wasn't simple. The whole land was in a hubbub. The roads were packed with families; mothers and fathers walking, wagons filled with children and belongings, some heading back home, others leaving their homes. Nobody felt settled; the nation was in an uproar.

IT'S ALL MINE!

Now, such a ceremony, such a national displacement - multitudes of people leaving their homes and traveling the roads - had to have an important purpose! And therefore we should pay

attention to what the Torah tells us about this great commotion of Yovel; why is everyone moving? So we take a look at the reason Hakodosh Boruch Hu gives: כִּי לִי הָאָרֶץ - "The land belongs to Me! You can't sell My land outright!" בְּיָגְרִים וְתוֹשָׁבִים אֲתֶם עִמָּדִי - "You are merely sojourners, settlers, who are living by Me." That means, "I am your host, and you are My guests."

And now we learn a reason for this great commotion. It was a message for the nation; all over the country, they were learning the lesson that the land has a landlord. And it's a lesson that had to be learned. Otherwise, it would be easy to forget. Here's a man who came in with Yehoshua bin Nun when they conquered the land and he had delighted in a beautiful fertile land that he found spread out before him. So he invested everything he had into it. All of his energies and all of his time, he put into the land, both he and his children. And so, after a while, they forget that this land once was not theirs and they therefore had to be reminded that somebody had given it to them.

And so, once in fifty years all the purchased properties returned to their previous owners to show that *nobody* has a right in the land. Everybody took notice. Even the people who had no minds, people who didn't think, they became aware. They saw movement, moving off land, moving into the land. "What's happening here?!" And that was the great drama of the Yovel that Hashem intended. In order to make everyone understand - not just understand, but in order that everyone should *feel in their bones* that they are only visitors on the land.

WILL AMERICA TURN SOCIALIST?

Now, it's not only the nation that practices and studies the *mitzvah* of Yovel, who are mere visitors in this world. The Germans and the Norwegians and the Eskimos are only visiting as well. The Pole who has been living in Poland way back as far as his history records is also a stranger. And the Hottentot climbing the trees in the same jungle where his forefathers have been running around for hundreds, maybe thousands of years, he's also only a visitor in this world. They're all visitors here and nothing is going

to change that; when the time comes they're also going to leave this world - the only question is where they're going to leave to.

But the gentile nations weren't privileged to have the *mitzvah*, the reminder of Yovel. If a *goy* buys or sells real estate in America or in England, so as long as the liberals don't have their way, as long as the government doesn't turn Socialist, so the gentiles could stay in their land forever. They don't have to be reminded that the land is not theirs, because they are the *mishpechos ha'adamah*, the families of the earth; that means - their function is *this world*. Their *purpose* here is *adamah* purposes - to farm the land, to put down roofs, to be firemen and everything else the world needs. But the *Am Yisroel* was given the special privilege of being taught by Hashem that they have a different purpose altogether. By means of the special institution of Yovel we're reminded that our stay here is only temporary and that what we're aiming for is something much higher than this world.

MR. P. NEEDS OXYGEN

Now, when you don't get special instruction, or if you don't listen to instruction, so you begin to think that *this* is your place. Like the man who moved in next door to me years ago; I remember him well because as we walked to shul on Shabbos morning, he would be outside in his garden clipping his bushes. So this man - he was quite elderly already when he moved in - he decided to put up a metal fence, an expensive wrought iron fence. And in the middle of the fence was a big metal circle - like a shield, an escutcheon - and he put his initial, a big P of cast iron in the middle. It was something that would last for the next two hundred years. And I was thinking, that initial is only good for *him*, for *his* name. But how long will he be there?

Well, it wasn't too long. One night, we heard outside somebody crying out. His son was running out of the house, running down the street, yelling "Oxygen!" He ran around the corner to the fire station and brought back a little oxygen tank, but it was too late; his father was finished already. And so the family eventually moved, and now somebody else bought the home. The colored man living there now has a big P on the gate in front of his

house! It's not his initial, but it's still there in heavy metal, an insert in the gate memorializing the man who thought he would be around forever.

A HUNDRED YEAR VISIT

Now, I never saw a Yovel in my life, but this message I did see. I saw it with my own eyes and I took it as a lesson from Hakodosh Boruch Hu that that's what happens when a person becomes attached to one place; he begins to feel that it's permanent, that this is security. People start thinking after a while, that they're here for the next thousand years. It's not an exaggeration; that's exactly what they think! Of course, if you tell him so, he'll ridicule you: "Don't be silly; I know that one day I will be gone." But in his heart of hearts, he still hopes, "Maybe I'll make it. Maybe I'll be around for a thousand years." Everybody is like that; they think they'll get out of it some way. "I'll hang around; not like the other fools who get finagled into leaving this world."

The gentile, or *chas v'chalila*, the Jew who doesn't learn the lesson of *Yovel*, so he puts his initial in wrought iron on his fence. But when you know, *when you really know* that you're only a visitor here you live differently.

Now, some people understand this lesson; they take the hint of Hakodosh Boruch Hu and live with the understanding that they are only visitors here. Like the Chofetz Chaim, *zichrono livracha*. I told you this story already, it's a story you all know already, but I'll say it again because it's the point of our talk tonight. Once a visitor came in to the Chofetz Chaim's house and he was waiting in what he thought was the anterior room, a waiting room. There was a table there made of a few boards of wood nailed together, and there were a few old benches there too, also just some lumber nailed together. So when the Chofetz Chaim finally came out to greet the visitor, the guest said, "Rebbe, you don't have to talk to me here; let's go inside." So the Chofetz Chaim said, "This is the inside." "But *rebbe*, where is the furniture?" So the Chofetz Chaim said to the visitor, "Where is *your* furniture?" "My furniture?! I'm from America; I can't take

my furniture with me. I'm just traveling through." So the Chofetz Chaim said, "So am I."

THE LANDLORD WANTS RENT TOO?!

On the other hand, I visited a poor man once. He was earning about ninety dollars a week in those days; it was about twenty years ago. I was sitting on the sofa in his house and he told me - maybe he was trying to impress me - he said, "This sofa cost me eight hundred dollars." Now today, it's nothing, but in those days when I heard eight hundred dollars, I nearly fell off the sofa. I was sitting on a sofa that cost this man almost ten weeks of his life. Now, I don't know if that sofa is still around like my neighbor's P; probably not. But the lesson is still there - it means that the lesson of Yovel hasn't been learned yet; it means that we don't yet understand that we're only visiting here.

Number one is to know that you're not a landlord here, you're a tenant. Because of habit, people tend to forget that there is a landlord. Let's say your landlord takes a trip to Eretz Yisroel and he stays away for five months and in the meantime he doesn't collect rent, so it becomes a habit. If he would come back and ask for rent so you feel like it's an imposition. In just five months you became accustomed to being the owner of this place. And we're here for much more than five months! Seventy, eighty years, is a long time and so we begin to think that this is our place, that this is where we'll be forever.

THE VISIT HAS A PURPOSE

And so, keeping in mind that we're visitors here becomes a very important function of how we live. It's not enough to say over a story of the Chofetz Chaim; you have to *think* about it - it's a very important subject and we should study it seriously. *Olam Haba*; that is our place! Here we don't really belong - we're just passing through, headed to a better place. And if you're a person like the Chofetz Chaim let's say, if you feel like a visitor in this world, so you have higher *hasagos* than iron fences and expensive sofas. You consider your success to be in more important things, in things of the spirit.

This is expressed in a *possuk* in Tehillim (119:19) when Dovid Hamelech said: גֵּר אֲנֹכִי בָאָרֶץ - "I am a stranger in this world, אַל תִּסְתֵּר מִמֶּנִּי מִצִּוְתֶיךָ - Don't hide from me Your commandments." What's the connection between the first part of the *possuk* and the second? I am a stranger in this world and therefore teach me Your will?! It's a non-sequitur.

And the answer is this: "If I had no other function in this world than just to be here like a forest or a mountain, if I was from the *mishpechos ha'adamah*, so my function would be fulfilled just by living here. I wouldn't ask You for anything. But that's not my function. *Geir anochi ba'aretz* - I realize that I am only a visitor here and I am headed for a different goal. And if that's the case, I have a lot to accomplish in this world where it's very easy to get lost in its 'permanence.' And that's why I'm asking You to give me success here.

Part II. Tenants with Purpose

THE BOOK OF MEDITATIONS

And now we come to the subject of what is this success that Dovid was aiming for? What should be the result of this knowledge that we're only visitors here? So for that we look into the *Chovos Halevavos*, and because his words are always gems we should pay attention to what he says. His *Sha'ar Cheshbon Hanefesh* is a section in which he talks about subjects which people ought to meditate on; certain mental exercises that we are expected to think about. And he suggests thirty different ideas - thirty forms of contemplation which he recommends for people who want to make progress. Of course there are many things concerning which we should think, and those who are capable can add to the list, but he gives us thirty ideas to fill our mind with.

Now, you can be a good Jew even if you don't strain your mind too much, but if you want to be something better, if you want to be successful in this world, it's necessary to contemplate certain ideas. There's no doubt that to be something in this world you must spend some time thinking. And therefore, the list of the

Chovos Halevavos is a boon for those people who want to make progress in this world.

At the end of his list, he comes to *hamashlim hashloshim*, his grand finale, what perhaps is the most important attitude upon which he urges us to spend time thinking. And we'll quote his words and try to understand them: *Hamashlim hashloshim hu cheshbon ha'adam im nafsho*, the thirtieth thing that a man should think with himself is, *b'tna'ei hageirus b'olam hazeh*, about his circumstances of being a sojourner, a visitor in this world. That means that everybody is expected to set aside time for thinking, for contemplating the fact that he is only passing through this world temporarily and that he doesn't really belong here. And therefore he should never feel completely settled and secure in life.

TAKING MONEY FROM THE CHINESE

Let's say a man went to China for business. He didn't go there to mingle with the Chinese, or even to visit the tourist sites there. He went for business; in order to make some money to bring back to where he *really* belongs. He's not interested in anything else - their language is alien to him, their customs are strange to him, their customs are queer in his eyes. He doesn't belong to them at all. And even though he might want to go see the Great Wall of China; he's curious after all, and it's easier to look at walls than to close business deals. But he knows that he came for one purpose - to take as much money and goods from China as he can. And while he's there that's his sole interest.

So he gets into the export business. He gets busy exporting as much as he could out of China. He doesn't want to leave anything there because he knows that sooner or later he'll be back home. And that's us! Our job in this world is to get into the export business. We're here to take out all that we can. Now, what to export, that's a lot to talk about, but good deeds surely are valuables that you can take along with you. Thinking about Hashem, that's definitely something you'll take with you. *Torah u'ma'asim tovim*, that's the cash you'll take along with you. Or

tzedakah that you gave. If you give away charity, it's in your pocket and you'll take it along with you forever.

ALL FOR THE BOSS

I once knew a Mr. Herman *zichrono l'vracha* from the Lower East Side. Now, Mr. Herman was one of the very few devoted frum Jews in the olden days of America. *B'leiv v'nefesh* he was devoted to Hakodosh Boruch Hu. And he told me once that when he saw that all his money was going lost, that his business was quickly failing - it was at the time of the Great Depression. So he right away took a thousand dollars - in those days a thousand dollars was a small fortune - and he gave it away to *tzedakah* on the spot. He said, "Why should I lose that too? Why should I lose my chance at exporting more goods into the Next World?" And so Mr. Herman was a smart businessman and he quickly exported another container out of China.

Now, what to do for *this world* while you're still here - I'm not going to tell you right now what you should or shouldn't do. Should you beautify your home? Should you try to make money? The businessman in China has to sleep somewhere! He can't sleep on the street. He has to eat as well and keep himself healthy if he wants to succeed. And if he'll be there for a few years so he'll have his family with him and he'll have to provide for them as well. And that costs money.

YOU'RE ENTITLED TO A GREEN THUMB

So if you buy a beautiful home and you have a big garden around it, OK, I'm not saying you can't invest into beautifying your place. Why not? If you like garden work, agriculture, if you have a green thumb, why not? If you can paint on your own, or you can hire people to beautify your home, why not? Maybe why yes? You'll have to think that through. But whatever you decide, there's a condition that you always must keep before your mind's eye: That we're only tenants. Even though you have a deed and it's registered in City Hall, and even though you're painting your house, and fixing your garden, you can't forget that you're only a tenant here.

It's *Hashem's* home and you're visiting for a little bit; you're a tenant. Certainly you should live a normal life; but it has to be the normal life of a visitor. You should keep in mind always this great principle, that you're like a man in a railway station. Let's say you're in Grand Central and you have a chance to do some business there. You can buy from one person and sell it to somebody else at the station. Why not? No reason why not. But you have to know that soon you'll be hearing a whistle and the conductor will shout, "All aboard." And you won't have a choice, you'll have to get aboard. And so if you'll keep that in mind, that the train is coming sooner or later, so there's no reason why you can't have a nice home as well. As long as you'll be able to hop on board with a big amount of paper money or banknotes that you'll be able to cash in when you get to your destination, so you've accomplished!

And so, in order to remind the *Am Yisroel* of their condition in this world it was necessary to have a *Yovel*. It was necessary to have this big commotion every fifty years as a national lesson. *Everybody* became aware. Even the people who had no minds, who didn't think, became aware. They saw the tumult, the roads jammed with people, families moving out of homes, into homes. What's happening here?! What's going on? "It's no secret," says Hashem. "I'm telling it to you as open as could be. כִּי גֵרִים וְתוֹשָׁבִים אַתֶּם עִמָּדִי - "The land is mine", כִּי לִי הָאָרֶץ - "You are only strangers and sojourners with me." The land doesn't belong to anyone, not to the one who bought it and not the original owner. It belongs to Somebody else; the real Landlord."

THE LANDLORD AT THE DOOR

Now, it's true that we don't have the *Yovel* nowadays. We don't have that privilege of being reminded with such an earth shaking event that turns the *Am Yisroel* upside down. But there are other ways that we remind ourselves. We put the name of our Landlord on every doorpost. Did you know that? וְכָתַבְתֶּם עַל מְזוּזוֹתַי (Devarim 11:20). That's one of the important reasons for the *mitzva* of *mezuzah*. Whenever you pass through a doorway, it

should remind you who owns the house (Rambam *Hil. Mezuzah* 6:13). Of course, you saved up for years, and finally you got the deed to the house. For years and years you paid and paid to the bank until finally they mailed to you the deed - you're free and clear. It's finally yours!

No, you're not free and clear! Because every time you pass the *mezuzah* you're reminded that you still have a Landlord who is the real Owner of the property. And so the *mezuzah* is a remarkable opportunity for learning the lessons of *Yovel*. If you take advantage of the *mezuzah*, even if it's only once a day, you can succeed at acquiring the realization that **בְּי לֵי הָאָרֶץ**, that the earth belongs to Hashem and that we're only passing through; just as our forefathers did in *Eretz Yisroel* when they still had the institution of *Yovel*.

Part III. Friends of the Landlord

ONE HUNDRED MEANINGS OF "ONE"

Now, the most important words inside your *mezuzah* are *Shema Yisroel Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad* - "Hashem is One." You know that these first words in *Shema* have a number of meanings. I know one *mechaber* who wrote a *sefer* with a hundred meanings and they're all valuable, all very important. But we won't try that much; right now we'll concentrate on the one *peirush* that we need to better understand our subject.

The *Chovos Halevavos (ibid.)*, tells us that the *possuk* describing the *Yovel*, **בְּי גְרִים וְתוֹשָׁבִים אִתְּם עַמְדִי** "You are sojourners with Me in this world," is actually teaching us a *peirush* in what it means that Hashem is One. Because actually, *Yovel* teaches us much more than that we are travelers who don't own our homes. **בְּי גְרִים וְתוֹשָׁבִים אִתְּם - עַמְדִי** - "You are sojourners *with Me!*" "With Me," means *only* with Me. *Hashem Echad* - as far as you're concerned there is nobody else in the world except you and Me.

And so, the *Yovel* is letting us know that as we live out the years of our lives in this temporary world, we do so as lonely

strangers, passing through this world. Nobody else exists in the world, except for Hashem. That's the idea contained in this important meaning of *Hashem Echad*, that He's the only One in our lives.

BUT I DON'T FEEL LONELY!

Now, that's not easy for a person to accept. He thinks that *b'soch ami anochi yosheves*, that he has relatives, a community, friends. He doesn't feel alone. Hashem? Yes, Hashem is also real, he'll admit that, he's a frum man after all. "But the people around me, that's *really* real," he thinks. And what that means is that he's missing out on the most important point of this entire drama of Yovel that Hashem is making. Yovel is telling you - that you are עִמָּדִי, together with Me, alone, all the days of your life.

I want you to listen to the following words of Dovid Hamelech. Dovid appealed to Hakodosh Boruch Hu: תְּעִיִּי כְּשֵׂה - אֶבְדָּ - "I am wandering like a lost sheep, Hashem, בְּקֹשׁ עֲבָדְךָ - "Search out Your servant" (Tehillim 119:176). That means, "Please find me Hashem because I'm lost; I'm all alone in this world." Now, you know that Dovid was a man of very great success and power and we're told that לִבּוֹ כְּלֵב הָאֲרִיָּה - "He had a heart like the heart of a lion." (Shmuel II 17:10). He was born with a nature of a lion, and fear was alien to him. He was energetic and brave, and that's besides for his *bitachon*, his trust in Hakodosh Boruch Hu. And yet, this great man revealed his soul when he appealed to Hakodosh Boruch Hu: "I am wandering like a lost and lonely sheep; please find me."

WHO IS THE RIGHT CANDIDATE?

Now, if anybody *wasn't* lost in this world it was Dovid Hamelech. Looking at him, you would say that he's the last person in the world to be a candidate for the role of the lost sheep. But what we see is that Dovid understood more than other people what is man's station in this world. He is enunciating here the great principle of our loneliness in Olam Hazeh - the great principle that there is nobody in the world except for you and Hashem.

And that's what Dovid said: הַבֵּיט יְמִין וּרְאֵה וְאֵין לִי מִבַּיֶר - "I look on my right hand and I see that there's nobody who knows me" (Tehillim 142:5). "Nobody who knows me"!? Dovid of all people?! He was always surrounded by friends; he always had loyal men with him. And yet, when he looked around he saw that he had no one. He felt he was a stranger to everyone. I look at my right hand side and I see that no one knows me! You think they know you? No, it's only a dream. That's the real truth, and that's what Dovid Hamelech was always telling himself. He would sit in the royal court, and look around at his many friends; his admirers, all the courtiers, and he would whisper to himself, "*Ein li makir*, there's nobody with me; there's nobody in this world except for You Hashem."

WALKING WITH HASHEM

Now, some people think that Dovid was just saying words - he was just being poetic, creating prose for his *sefer Tehillim*. But that's not who Dovid was at all; Dovid spoke words that came from the heart, words that would spring forth from his *neshamah* after many hours of walking in the fields with Hakodosh Boruch Hu. Dovid walked with Hashem making that *cheshbon ha'adam im nafsho* that we spoke about. He thought many hours *b'tna'ei hageirus b'olam hazeh*, about his condition of being a sojourner, a visitor, in this world. And he realized the truth that as far as a man is concerned there isn't anybody in this world except for Hashem.

There isn't a soul around and that's the real truth. It's only imagination. All the forms around you are just ships that pass in the night that have no permanent connection with you. And the truth is - don't say this over at home - but even your wife and your children are transitory figures. They're not really who *you* are. It so happens that Hakodosh Boruch Hu took some protoplasm made from some of His chemicals and He gave you a father and a mother; He gave you brothers and sisters; and friends and neighbors. But it's only protoplasm after all. It's only Hashem's imagination; it's only temporary. They came out of the earth, and they were put there for you to deal with them

according to the ways of the Torah. And that's how they'll deal with you as well, because you're also only the imagination of Hashem.

YOUR IMAGINARY ALLIES

Now that doesn't mean you shouldn't get married. It doesn't mean you shouldn't have friends. Oh no! You have to do everything that's expected of you while you're in this world. You can't ignore everyone else. You can't say, "My father and my mother are only transitory figures, so I'll ignore them." Nothing doing! Nothing doing! You have to discharge your obligations fully - only that you must not lose sight of your Best Friend in this world, Hakadosh Baruch Hu. You have a wife, and you have children, and friends, and neighbors, and teachers, but you can't be fooled by it all. It's a big danger, this world, because if you don't ever make this *cheshbon ha'adam im nafsho*, if you never make time to think about your condition of *geirus* in this world, so life creates the impression that you're surrounded with allies; fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, relatives, and friends.

When things are settled, when life settles into the humdrum, so a person feels secure - he has his home, his family, his job - and he's surrounded by people. And it's among people, when a person feels like he belongs, that's when it's so easy to forget about Hakadosh Boruch Hu. Like right now, it seems like we're together; we're sitting together in the same room; maybe some of you are sleeping but more or less, it seems like we're together. But it's not true; really we are all at sea like ships passing in the night. They pass for a moment and then they're gone. That's how people are in this world. It seems that you have friends but the friends disappear in the course of time. And of course you also disappear. And all you have left is Hakadosh Boruch Hu.

THE HOLY BACHELOR

So even if you're a loyal husband or a loyal wife, a loyal father or a loyal mother, and you have a house full of children, *kein ayin hara*, sometimes, when you find yourself alone, make sure to utilize the opportunity to exercise these thoughts. Let's say the babies are all asleep, and the other ones went out to the

yeshiva, and your husband is at work, and you're alone. Or better yet, if you're a bachelor. It's not better to be a bachelor, but if you are, make use of the opportunity.

You're alone. Revel in that opportunity. Just think of how you'd be deprived of the awareness of Hashem if you were surrounded right now by a large family. You would have to exchange your thoughts of Hashem for banter with the children, and for talking with your wife. The telephone is ringing all the time. And here you are alone, nobody bothers you, nobody even knows about you; you're sitting all alone in your little den, and you're alone with Hakodosh Boruch Hu. You and Hakodosh Boruch Hu are alone together. That's an opportunity! And when such opportunities come your way, you should grab them and utilize them.

ALL ALONE ON THE CROWDED SUBWAY

But we're saying here that you don't have to wait for that quiet moment; for when the special occasion presents itself. Because even when you're walking on the street, you're all alone with Hashem. Let's say you're on Broadway at the end of the day, and a wave, an ocean of humanity is pouring out of the office buildings. And sometimes it's so crowded you can't even walk, you're being carried along to the subway, with thousands of people. Just then, that's when you should think, "*Hashem Echad!* I'm alone with You in this world."

And when you get onto the train, no difference. You're hanging on to the strap at 5:30 in the subway - if you were lucky enough to get a strap to hang on to. And as you're hanging on the strap, first of all make sure that your wallet is secure - don't go off in dreams and forget practical things. And as you're holding on tightly like this, with one hand on the strap and one hand on your wallet, think that you're all alone here; it's just you and Hakodosh Boruch Hu. Close your eyes and feel that the place is empty. All around you is a storm of humanity with all their little interests, their little worries, their conversations, their little minds; and you're holding onto the strap all alone with your Best Friend.

It's an exercise - and it's well worth it. And it comes highly recommended by the *Chovos Halevavos*. He says that it's possible to be in solitude in the midst of a multitude. That's his expression, התבודדות בתוך המונים - "In the midst of a multitude you can be all alone." Because that's the real truth; even when you're in a crowd, you're hanging on a strap in the subway, you're all alone because everything else is only a dream - *kachalom ya'uf* - like a passing dream. And the more you think, the more you're exercising the flabby muscles of your soul. And therefore as frequently as possible try to remember that you and Hakodosh Boruch Hu are alone in the world.

MOSHE RABEINU'S COMPOSITION

Moshe Rabeinu said that, and he said it in words that everybody knows. Only that most people never stop to think about these words. תפלה למשה איש האלקים - It's a prayer composed by Moshe, one of the rare things left over from the days of old, a memento of Moshe's own composition that lets us peer into the mind of the *ish ha'elokim*, that great man of G-d. Moshe Rabbeinu, he said a lot of good things, but we don't have them. One remnant remains from the precious mouth of this great teacher, and it's a diamond. A prayer by Moshe; isn't that an opportunity?! We should study that! Moshe's own composition!

And here's what he said: השם מעון אתה היית לנו - "Hashem, You are our dwelling place" (Tehillim 90:1). It's a remarkable statement. It means, "Hashem, we don't have a place to live and so we live *in You*." You know when that was? Ideally it was in the wilderness. We had no place to be in the wilderness. We didn't have any land, no place to settle. Wherever we did settle, it was only temporary. We were surrounded by the Shechina, by the clouds of glory, and You were our dwelling place. We lived in You. And that was the training, the prototype for the rest of our history; because wherever we go we still live in You.

That's why the *Am Yisroel*, when they talk about Hashem, so they say *Hamakom*. *Hamakom yinacheim*, *Hamakom* this, *Hamakom* that. *Makom* means place and Hashem is *the* place. We live in Him. You think you live in a house; you think you live in a home with

your parents or your spouse and your children. No, you live in Hashem, that's all. He's your home.

THE ARABS TEACH US ABOUT YOVEL

We have to be aware of that. That's part of our job in this world, to remember that there's no place in this world; it's all imagination - there's only one true place. *Hamakom!* Hakodosh Boruch Hu is the place. Even the place where we are is only a dream, it's our imagination. We have no place but you!

That's why a Jew is always hounded in this world; the Jew walks on the street in Europe and the *goyim* cast slurs on him; they tell him, "Get out of our country you dirty Jew. Go to Israel!" And if he does, so the *Arabs* tell him to get out, the U.N. tells him to get out. And it's not for no reason - it's important instruction to let him know that he really has no place in this world. And the purpose of not having any place in this world is to discover that we do have a place. And that place is *Hamakom Baruch Hu* - Hakodosh Baruch Hu is called a place, because wherever we are, it's only Him whom we live with.

So what do we see? That the great ceremony of the Yovel was intended as a lesson for the *Am Yisroel*. It was a national demonstration of the most important truths - I say most important because it reveals to us the truth of our condition in this world. It's really one lesson, but we separated it into two for the sake of better understanding it. First of all, the *Yovel* demonstrated to us that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is the Landlord and that we are only tenants visiting in this world. And in order that we should keep this lesson in our minds at all times the Torah instituted this remarkable practice - a great shuffle up once every fifty years - so that it would make the deepest impression into our *neshamos*.

OUR OLD FRIEND

And the second lesson, the more subtle teaching, is that our Landlord is the *only* one we have in this world. We're strangers, we're all alone in this world and *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* is *our only Friend*. And He's the best Friend you could have. That's what it says: רַעַךְ וְרַע אֲבִיךָ אֵל תַּעֲזֹב - "Don't forsake your Friend and

the Friend of your father” (Mishlei 27:10). That’s אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ. That’s our old Friend. He is tried and trusted and He’s the only one we have.

And even though today we don’t have the *Yovel*; we don’t hear the shofar blast, and we don’t feel the earthquake that once woke the *Am Yisroel* from its slumber, from the lethargy of not thinking, but we study it and we gain as much as we possibly can from its teachings.

And the wise person always makes use of the deed to his home that adorns his doorposts. Every time we pass in and out of our homes we are reminded that our home is not really a home at all; it’s merely the place we’re visiting temporarily. It’s the place where we spend our fleeting lives preparing to enter our permanent home in the next world, where we will meet the *Hashem Echad* who was our one and only true Friend in this world.

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Weekly Dedications

לרפואה שלימה גאלדא בת מרים שרה הענא

Toras Avigdor Junior

Should I Share My Snack?

First Edition in
honor of the
Bar Mitzvah of
Sruli Hopstein

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In this week's parsha we read about Yovel, a mitzvah that came around every fifty years in Eretz Yisroel. If you bought a house in Eretz Yisroel, you couldn't keep it forever. When the fiftieth year came, you had to give it back and move out.

All of a sudden so many of the Am Yisroel were moving out of their houses to other neighborhoods. The roads were full of families moving from one place to another.

So what does Yovel teach us?

Pay attention to what the Torah tells us about this great commotion of Yovel: Why is everyone moving? כִּי לִי הָאָרֶץ – “The land belongs to Me!” “The whole world belongs to Me,” says Hashem.

That means, “I am your host, and you're only a visitor here.” And when you're visiting somewhere, then everything you use is not really yours! The host is nice and lets you use it, but you have to ask his permission.

That's why we're always making brachos – we're thanking Hashem for letting us use His things. Everything in the world is really

Hashem's, but He gives us permission to use His stuff.

And that's one reason we have a mezuzah on our door. Before we walk into the house, we kiss the mezuzah and we realize that even if Hashem lets us live in a house for many years, it's still His house. And everything in the house should go according to how He wants.

So next time your mother tells you to share your toy with your brother, or to let your sister ride your bike, think about the mitzvah of Yovel. Maybe you don't really want to share it – "It's mine!" you say. And so in our parsha Hashem says to you, "No, it's not yours, it's Mine."

So before you start fighting over nosh, remember that the nosh is not yours – it's Hashem's. And as often as you can, you should take a peek at the mezuzah and think: "This is really Your house, Hashem. It's really Your world, and everything in it belongs to You. And so as long as I'm here, I'm going to remember who the real Boss is."

Free!

תורת אביגדור
"שאל אביך ויגדך זקניך ויאמרו לך"



Q&A With Rav Avigdor Miller Ztz"l

Q:

How does one break the habit of losing one's temper?

A:

Now, that requires a little more knowledge of the circumstances. But this I can tell you. If you know that there are certain things that cause an outbreak; let's say, you know that arguments about money cause you to lose it, then you have to be careful, when it comes to such questions. You have to prepare yourself because forewarned is forearmed.

So let's say, your wife comes and says she wants more money for a certain expensive item, something you think is a waste. So as soon as you hear that, what do you do? You excuse yourself and go into the bathroom. And remain there for a while and say to yourself, "Cool it, cool it! No matter what, you cool it!" And then say - this you can't say inside the bathroom but when you get out, you say *Ma'aneh rach meishiv cheima* – "A soft answer turns away wrath" (Mishlei 15:1). So even if you'll say no to your wife, but it depends how you say the no; if you say no in a gentle way, so the response won't be so explosive.

TAPE # 467

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