

תורת אביגדור
הגאון ר' אביגדור מיללער זצ"ל

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

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Rav Avigdor Miller ztz"l on

פרשת בא

The Guide to True Happiness

MOSHE RABEINU REPORTING THE WEATHER?!

When we read the *pesukim* that describe the departure of the *Am Yisroel* from *Mitzrayim* we note the interesting fact that the time of the year, the spring-like weather, plays a quite significant role in the story. As they gathered to leave *Mitzrayim*, Moshe Rabeinu spoke to the people זכור את היום הזה אשר יצאתם ממצרים... היום אתם יוצאים בחודש - האביב - "Remember always this day that you came out of Egypt... Today you are leaving *in the month of spring*" (Bo 13:4). Now, you know that in the Torah weather is a subject that is not discussed. This subject that becomes so important when you're standing on the street talking to someone - when you meet the elevator man or the grocery man, that's the first subject in America - but in the Torah it's not discussed. And yet, all of a sudden, Moshe Rabeinu comes along and points out to us that it was a spring day.

Now it's quite strange that Moshe Rabeinu should make a big deal about it. There were many things he could have told the *Am Yisroel* as they gathered together to begin their journey towards freedom. I myself could think of some very important *yesodos* that Moshe Rabeinu could have given over at this most opportune time. But to point out the weather conditions?! He wasn't a meteorologist.

And if it was cold and rainy, would it have made a difference?! They were going out to freedom! Ask the man who is released from prison after fifty years if he cares about the temperature on the day he left; he doesn't remember and he doesn't even care to remember! He's free at last!

PERFECT WEATHER FOR FREEDOM

And yet Moshe Rabeinu *did* say **היום אתם יוצאים בחודש האביב** - You're leaving today, and look outside; it's a beautiful spring day. And Rashi asks: "Didn't they know it was spring? **אלא כך אמר להם**, - **ראו חסד שגמלכם** - So what was Moshe Rabeinu telling them? "Pay attention to the kindness that Hashem is bestowing upon you, **שהוציא** - That He took you out in a month that is fitting for departure, **אתכם בחודש שהוא כשר לצאת** - It's not too hot, not too cold, and not raining" (Rashi 13:4). **הוא אומר מוציא אסירים** וכן - Hashem took out His prisoners when it was fitting, **בכושרות חודש** - **שהוא כשר לצאת** - during the month in which it is most fitting to depart" (Mechilta).

Now we should also take a peek into *Shir Hashirim*, at Shlomo Hamelech's description of Hashem speaking to His people on that great day of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. **קומי לך רעיתי יפתי ולכי לך** - "Arise, My love, My beautiful one, and go forth from Mitzrayim, **כי הנה הסתיו עבר** - Because now the winter has passed, and the rains are gone, and the traveling through the wilderness will be much more pleasant, **הנצנים נראו בארץ** - The days of spring are here when the trees begin to produce their flowers and those who travel, delight in their colors and fragrances, **עת הזמיר הגיע וקול התור נשמע בארצנו** - The time of birds singing and chirping has arrived, which adds the additional joy of sweet sounds for those who travel in the spring, **קומי לך רעיתי יפתי ולכי לך** - And so My beautiful beloved," says Hashem to the Am Yisroel, "*now is the time to arise and leave Mitzrayim*" (Shir Hashirim 2:11-13 *al pi Rashi*).

SCHEDULING FOR THE CHIRPING BIRDS

So we see that Hashem made a point of bringing out the *Am Yisroel* from *Mitzrayim davka* then, during the days of spring. And even more so, the Torah tells us that the entire scheduling of the year is dependent on the Yom Tov of Pesach falling out during the spring to commemorate this event: **שמור את חודש האביב...כי בחודש האביב** - "You must guard the month of spring...for it was in the month of springtime that Hashem your G-d

took you out of Egypt” (Devarim 16:1). And what does “Guard the month of spring” mean? Chazal tell us (Rosh Hashanah 21a) that the month of *Nissan* must always fall out in the spring, and that sometimes the *Sanhedrin* must even add a month to the calendar just to ensure that *Nissan* should not fall out when it's still winter. And all this, so that the *Yom Tov* of *Pesach* should fall out in the beautiful days of spring, because היום אתם יוצאים בחודש האביב, and we want to remember and to commemorate that we left *Mitzrayim* in the spring.

And that's a very big question. Because what difference does the spring make for a nation that is escaping two hundred and ten years of bondage? The month of *chodesh ha'aviv*, the ripening of the grain would certainly be a joyous time once they would enter Eretz Yisroel, but here, as they were departing from *Rameses*, they were far from the promised land and had no benefit at all from the ripening of the grain.

What difference is it to such a people, escaping slavery, loaded down with riches, that birds are chirping in the branches? So what that the flowers are blooming on a beautiful spring day? We're talking here about real happiness - the excitement of escaping to freedom and great wealth, and you're talking about chirping birds?!

This isn't *my* question by the way. I heard this said over in the name of the *Alter of Skabodka* when I was in Europe. And because the *Alter's* answer is a foundation for how we are supposed to live successfully in this world, so we'll spend some time understanding his words.

THE ALTER'S CHIDDUSH

The *Alter* said that the spring weather, with all of its varied pleasures was chosen purposefully by Hashem to enhance the occasion of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. Even in the mountain-heap joy of liberation, and even though they were loaded down with the wealth of *Mitzrayim*, they were expected to *not overlook the weather*, and not to overlook the budding trees and the chirping birds.

And why not? Because it was so important for the *Am Yisroel* to learn - right now, when they were leaving the bondage of *Mitzrayim* to become *avdei Hashem* - that the happiness of a true servant of Hashem won't come from the great events of life. The great jolts of good fortune, the ecstatic moments of great happiness - a new car, a new baby, even if it's *Yetzias Mitzrayim* - that won't make a

person truly happy. It's only the small gifts of life like a balmy spring day and a bird chirping in the trees that are the true happiness of life.

What we're learning from the words, "Today you are going out, in the month of *spring*," is that the joy of life is *not* the big things in life. Of course there is time for that too. It's a big *simcha* when you have a child. And it's even a bigger *simcha* when you marry that child off. You won the lottery? It's a *simcha*! You got the job you wanted? You finished a *mesichta*? These are all big *simchos* that are a good reason to rejoice. *But those aren't the things that will make you a happy person!* The happiness of transient events - even *Yetzias Mitzrayim* only happened once - always slip out of your hands sooner or later, and you're left with the day to day simple pleasures of life, like a spring day, that Hashem is *always* bestowing on you. And it's all of those small things that are supposed to make you a happy person.

ROSY GLASSES ARE NOTHING

Now you can't just tell a man, "Be happy; Learn to see the the good things in life." It's like saying nothing at all to him. This subject of happiness is a science, and like any important subject, its study takes effort on your part. If you'll say to someone, "Just put on optimistic spectacles, and look at the world through rosy eyeglasses," you're not helping him a bit.

There's work to be done besides for putting on the rosy colored spectacles. What work is that? Every form of happiness is an obligation upon you to appreciate and become even more of a happy person. A person becomes a happy person because of the small things in life. Now don't say that your experience contradicts this - because it's not true, you *don't* have the experience. You never tried it! It's necessary to dedicate your lives to the study of all the details of happinesses that you have in your life, in order to become the happy servant of Hashem that He expects.

HOW TO GET RICH

And so we'll begin our career of happiness by reading together the words of a *mishnah*; it's a *mishnah* that most of us say, but none of us fulfill. **השמה בחלקו - איזהו עשיר** - Who is a wealthy man? - Someone who is happy with what he has. Now, everybody *knows* that, everybody says it; but nobody *practices* it.

The *mishnah* is telling us here what Hakodosh Boruch Hu expects from us; that we *should* practice it and that we should fulfill

it. Hashem wants that *we should become wealthy*. Otherwise why did He tell us that. Why did He say איזהו עשיר? If it's not important, why tell us? Just as a fact, some more information to know? No; it's because that's what you're expected to become. Hashem wants that *you should become that ashir who is sameach b'chelko!*

BEING SATISFIED IS NOT ENOUGH

Now, it's important to point out that *samei'ach* doesn't mean that you're *satisfied* with what you have; it means that *you're happy*, that you're *full of joy*. Hashem wants you to *enjoy Olam Hazeh*, to be a person overflowing with happiness, and it's an art that you have to get busy learning. Before we begin, the first thing is that you must get out of your head any thoughts that *prishus* means to be unhappy. No; *prishus* means to be happy *without luxuries*, to be *happy* with all the multitude of pleasures of living life itself. And that's who Hashem says is the wealthy man.

So איזהו עשיר - Who is the rich man? השמח בחלקו - the one who trains himself little by little to be *happy* with all of the things that he already has, the things that are available to him all the time. And who is the poor person, the perpetually sad man? The man who is empty; he never learned anything about the happiness of life. All he learned was to want more and more; "gimmee" and "gimmee" and "gimmee" - he wants more and more. And therefore his whole life is nothing but a pursuit after what he doesn't have. And because of that, he fails to enjoy *chelko*, what his portion is right now.

All through life you're missing the fun of life. Because wherever you turn in life, wherever you look, you're going to encounter with your eyes on all sides, reasons to sing and dance with joy - if you know how to use *the details of life* to become happy. We just have to open our eyes and apply our minds, and be willing to put effort into finding the real happiness of life. If we do that, the happiness within us would well forth and life would become full of fun. It would be endless fun and happiness without the new car, and without the trip to the zoo or the amusement park. It would be all the details of life itself that make you a happy person.

STUDY A VARIETY OF SUBJECTS

Because the joy of life is not the big things; and it's not one small thing either. Because what does *chelko* mean? *Chelko* means your portion in life. And life is not one thing - life is a combination, a

sum total of tens of thousands of phenomena - and it's necessary to make *each* phenomenon a separate study so that whenever you encounter that phenomenon it will cause you happiness. If you study how two things make you happy, so now you'll have two things that cause you happiness. If you've studied fifty things, so fifty things will cause you happiness. The more subjects you study, the more phenomena you appreciate, the more happiness you will get out of life. Like Dovid Hamelech said: **כִּי שִׂמְחַתְנִי הַשֵּׁם בַּפְּעֻלֶיךָ בַּמַּעֲשֵׂה יְדִיךָ אֲרֹנָן** - "I sing at the deeds of Your hand" (Tehillim 92:5) And the only way to do that is to put your mind to what you have, and all these things add up to being a wealthy man. Hashem wants you to be wealthy; if you don't learn this, Hashem is disappointed in you.

I'll give you an example. If you study, let's say, the wind. Let's say a man would learn to enjoy the wind. Now, it may seem silly to you, but that's because you've never studied the subject of happiness correctly. Because really, wind is a subject that can make you endlessly grateful and happy. There's a lot of fun in a wind. But you have to study it.

LET'S STUDY WIND

Study the winds?! Now, go tell that to people outside, they'll laugh at you. But it's a *gemara*. The *gemara* tells in *Mesichta Gittin* (31b) that a *chochom* was once walking and he saw two sages who were sitting engaged in study. So he said to them, **בְּמַאי עֲסָקִיתוּ** - "What sugya are you learning now?" So they said, **בְּרוּחוֹת** - "We're talking about winds." Two sages of the *Talmud* are sitting talking about winds! That's what *we* should do too. Maybe we should sit down sometime and talk about winds.

Now, some people, even *talmidei chachomim*, didn't learn the correct *pshat* in this *gemara*. "Why would they talk about winds," some *mefarshim* thought. So they developed other interpretations of this *gemara*, what *ruchos* means. But that's not the *pshat*. The *gemara* is telling us that they sat down to discuss wind! Because the study of the wind is a study of **אִיזְהוּ עֲשִׂיר הַשְּׂמַח בַּחֲלָקוֹ**.

If the wind didn't blow we couldn't live. **אִי אֶפְשֵׁר לְעוֹלָם בְּלֹא רֹחוֹת** - "The world could not exist without winds" (Taanis 3b). Nothing would grow without the wind; you wouldn't have a piece of bread if not for wind. You didn't know that? Well, you should start knowing it right now. If not for the wind there would be no food,

because the winds keep the air moving so that the minute proportion of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, three parts in ten thousand, is made available to plants. Otherwise the plant would use up all the surrounding carbon dioxide and would die. So when it's windy, and you have to hold on to your hat, that should be a cause for happiness. That's your "watermelon" blowing by; your "bread" and your "meat". It's refreshing, invigorating and it's also the key to life itself.

A CONTRIBUTION TO YOUR CAREER

If the winds would be discussed and studied properly, so the next time there would be a zephyr, or a blow, or a hurricane, a breeze - whatever form it would come in - it's going to cause us happiness. Now I'm not saying that we'll go wild with happiness - it's only one phenomenon, one detail; but it will make you happy, no question about it. And winds are blowing all the time, and they don't cost much money either. So learn to enjoy it! It might take some time; it takes work. But after a while, after you begin studying the phenomena of wind, and appreciating it, so wind becomes a stimulus for happiness. So a person is walking in the street, and a slight breeze is tickling him - it's refreshing and it also arouses in his mind all those pleasurable thoughts; so that's one contribution to a career of happiness.

Now, a breeze is only one thing. But this world is a gift of many happinesses for us. The trees and the flowers, the clouds and the rain. The blue sky, the sun and the moon, the soil and the leaves. Our hands and our eyes, our feet and our shoes. And you have thousands and thousands of other things. Hashem is giving you plenty of air and plenty of water. You have clothing and food. You have garments. You have a roof over your head, a place to sleep. You have a home. A home?! You can lock the door and sleep at night. Not like the homeless people who have to sleep near the railroad tracks and other dangerous places. Life is a veritable wellspring of happiness.

But all this is just *devarim b'almah*, it's just words. You can't just be a happy person because of "everything." Everything is nothing. The path to true happiness is in the details. People have to teach themselves one thing at a time. Now wind is only one example of the happiness of this world. To learn the happiness of life you have to study all the details, moving from one subject to the other. One after the other, after another. And when you add together the sum

total of many small phenomena, then they add up to a true happiness in life.

BECOMING WEALTHIER AND WEALTHIER

If we would do this, we would actually learn together how to enjoy the phenomena of the world and become happy people all the time. And as life progresses we'd be adding new ideas into the treasure chest of our minds that cause us happiness. We're adding riches into our mind and at the same time we'd review the old ones more deeply. Every day you can become happier and happier with the simple details of life, and slowly, little by little, you add one more thing and one more thing, and you become an *ashir*, you become wealthy. And we'd find that from all sides we're bursting out with song. You'd walk down the Brooklyn street *meshugah* with happiness.

And once you achieve this wealth, so you'll never be unhappy again. You can't be unhappy if your life is filled with thousands of small happinesses all day long. Because no matter what happens you feel you still have air to breathe. Air all you want. And water to drink, all you want. You still have a roof over your head. You still have shoes to wear. You have sunshine and teeth. And that's only the beginning of the list.

And once you become a happy person you'll be able to withstand all the *nisyonos*, the trials of life. Life is not easy; there are always ups and downs. And if you don't achieve this wealth of *samei'ach b'chelko*, so no matter what you can purchase and no matter how many cars you have, you will be a fundamentally unhappy person, because you never learned what real happiness is. But once you achieve the wealth of *samei'ach b'chelko*, then no matter what, you're a happy person for the rest of your life.

THE MAIN PORTION IS ... LIFE!

And therefore, the first thing we must do is to clarify what it is that we're supposed to be happy about; what does *chelko* mean? Now, what is the first aspect of *chelko* that all of us sitting here now have? "Your portion," means first of all that *you're alive!* You never thought about that *pshat*, did you? You were thinking that it means that when you finally make five hundred thousand dollars, so then you'll be happy, you'll be *samei'ach b'chelko*, even though you don't have two million dollars yet. No, that's not what *chelko* means. If

you're still alive that's already your portion that you're expected to be full of joy about.

Because there is no happiness like being alive! The happiness of being alive is an intense experience, only that we're so accustomed to it that we ignore it. Let's say a person would enjoy the fact that he is alive. Oh yes! How lucky you are that you're alive. Don't say it's nothing. It's everything! A millionaire would give up all of his property to stay alive. You're alive!

And there are plenty of people you know, some of them even your age, who are not alive anymore. I myself look back, when I was a boy. Some of my *chaveirim* passed away early. There was a fourteen year old friend of mine - he passed away. A twenty year old friend of mine passed away when I was in the yeshiva.

WALKING ON CLOUDS!

You know what fun it is to be alive! And there's a simple way to discover it. Here's a man who's going to a specialist because his physician found something. And he's afraid he has something terrible. So the specialist gives him a complete series of tests; blood tests and scans and everything else, and then he has to go home for a few days and wait for an answer. For those few days the man can think of nothing else except for the phone call he's expecting from the doctor. What is anything worth if he won't be able to live?! And finally the doctor calls him into his office and sits him down and tells him, "I'm sorry to tell you there's *nothing* wrong with you!"

Now, when this man walks out of the doctor's office he's stepping on clouds. He's walking through Brooklyn and he's the happiest man in the whole city. Because now he's enjoying the sweetness of life. How sweet it is to be alive! The happiness of walking a Brooklyn street knowing that you're alive is unequalled in all the pleasures of the wealthy.

THE QUICK LANDING

Only that what happens? He walks on clouds from here to Avenue P (*two blocks away from the shul*) and then he's back on the ground again. He's walking on the sidewalk again because he forgets. And that's a tragedy because the happiness merely of being alive is a tremendous happiness that can keep you walking on clouds all day long.

If only people would bestir themselves and say, "Why should I let this treasure go lost?! Why should I wait until the day comes when I'm a hundred and nineteen years old, and I'm laying in a home for the aged, and I'm looking through the window at the people walking the streets outside. I see how beautiful life is, and I'm thinking, 'That was once me. I never realized how much fun being alive and walking the streets could be. And now I only have one or two days left.'" You know that when a man is lying in the hospital and he knows that his days are numbered, he says "If I could get on the street again. I could once more walk around, once more. What a happiness it would be!" He's jealous when he looks down from the hospital window and sees people walking in the street *and living*, and for him, soon it will be all over.

Of course if you have it every day after a while your mind becomes stultified. If you haven't studied it then you don't even appreciate it anymore. Like I told you earlier, it's a science; you need to create a program for happiness. It won't come merely because you came here to the lecture and listened to me. Because if you don't get busy making yourself happy, all this talk here is a waste.

YOU'RE AN OUTSIDER!

You have to learn how to be *samei'ach* in your *cheilek* of being alive. And so when you pass a funeral parlor - on Coney Island Avenue there are a number of funeral parlors - as you pass by one you say, "Boruch Hashem I'm on the outside!" I'm not joking; I'm very serious now. And when you pass the next one, "Boruch Hashem, I'm on the outside." There are three of them there. So by the third one also, "Boruch Hashem, I'm on the outside." Say it with your mouth again, and again and again. To be outside of the funeral parlor is a *simcha*. Inside it's a funeral home. A "home," you might think that it's comfortable, and there's music for the *meisim*, and they serve lunch for the *meisim*. He's in a box and that's all. And you're outside! "Boruch Hashem, I'm on the outside!"

Now, being alive is a happiness *ad ein sof*, no question about it. But you have to expand on that happiness, because there is much more than life itself. Because not only are you alive but you have functioning kidneys. I know a man who has no kidneys - it's already years and years that he's on the waiting list to get a kidney. Three times a week he has to go to the clinic for special treatments instead of a kidney. It takes hours and hours each time, and it's expensive.

But he's happy to be alive; he's happy to have a machine that keeps him alive. Because he knows that it's a *ta'anug* to be alive. And if he could just get one kidney, how happy he'd be. *He wishes he could be you!* He'd be delirious with joy!

THE TRANSPLANT MAN

And here's a man who finally was able to get a new kidney. He has one that he "borrowed" from his sister who was kind enough to give him one of her kidneys. So now he's a "transplant man." You think it's so simple? This man cannot take certain medicines because they might upset his anti-rejection system. He takes a regimen of medicines to suppress the immunosuppressive reaction in him that would reject the new kidney. After all, the kidney is not his - it's foreign matter inside his body. So the tendency of the body is to reject it. And so he's always taking medicines to suppress the rejection apparatus.

And there are some medicines that are sometimes vital to a person - maybe he gets an infection and he needs antibiotics - but now this man cannot take them because they would interfere with his anti-rejection medications. So this person may become subject to infections that he cannot combat because he can't take medicines. And so all his life he is living precariously with his one kidney.

THE CRAZY KIDNEY MAN

Now, how does this man look at the same world that you look at? If he sees somebody who is glum and downcast, you know what he thinks? He's thinking, "That man is crazy! He has something to be sad about?! He has his *own* kidney!" A kidney is a great happiness! A natural one that fits in exactly where it's supposed to be! It's suited to everything in his body. All the cells in his body have an especial peculiar individual makeup, and they accept his kidney. While the kidney that this poor fellow has, is being rejected by all the cells in his body. And he is constantly in fear that maybe someday *chas v'shalom* the cells in his body will win the fight - it's a tug of war after all. And when this man sees you on the street he doesn't understand how you cannot be ecstatic - not only do you have your own kidney, but you have two of them. You're not only a millionaire, you're a multi-millionaire!

Now I'll say it again because you have to get it into your heads. Hearing this is not going to make you happy - you have to get

to work. So when you go to the bathroom and your kidneys are working perfectly, your bladder is functioning to perfection, you were successful in your "mission." Are you thinking about it and becoming a happy person? You make an *asher yatzar*, but while you're making the *brachah* you're making motions to somebody in the house, "Wait, wait; I'll be done in a second." That's the way to make *asher yatzar*?! A man without kidneys; if he could make *asher yatzar*, what a happiness it would be!

HEALTHY BEGGAR OR SICK RICH MAN?

You have to bestir the happiness in your mind - at least when you're making the *brachah*. And actually, even that is not enough. All day long you should be thinking about your kidneys. Of course, all day long you can't do, but during the day when you're walking the street, take a minute to feel like your walking on clouds because you have functioning kidneys. And don't say it's impossible to live that way. It's possible. You have to just get busy doing it. It's hard work. You do it one day and then the next day you have to do it even more. You pass by a dialysis clinic, stop for a half minute - a half minute on the clock - and thank Hashem for the joy of having a kidney. And if you do it, if you become happy with your kidney, so now you're a millionaire. And if you're ecstatic because you have two kidneys, so you're a multi-millionaire.

So now you're a multi-millionaire. But that's only the beginning. I know a man who had to have an operation and he can no longer eliminate by means of his anus. He now has a bag attached to his side. You have to realize that this man walks the streets envying everyone who has a rectum in the right place. If he could restore that natural function, that his orifice should be where it's supposed to be, that man would give away all his earthly possessions. There's no question that he would prefer being a beggar with a rectum to be being a millionaire with a bag on his side.

THE SILLINESS OF MANKIND

And now we see how silly all of mankind is if they don't sing because of what they possess. And not only when you use that orifice, when you move your bowels, but all day. Frequently, as you walk down the street, you should bestir this happiness in your mind - how lucky you are; how convenient it is; how comfortable it is; how wealthy you are. It's a joy to have the function of natural elimination

and it's a cause for actual tangible pleasure and for singing. A man who has sense, Torah sense, actually *rejoices* in his ability to eliminate.

Now the more you learn how to be happy from all these things, so it grows on you, it becomes part of your personality. Little by little it grows upon your mind an attitude of optimism, and you become a happy personality. "I'm so happy to be alive, to be on this side of the cemetery gate." That's what you should think about when you walk for the street. "And not only am I alive, but I have kidneys!" Now, that's a wealth! "And not only kidneys, but I don't need a bag on my side! I'm normal!" It's a great happiness to be normal!

THE DELICIOUS COCKTAIL

So now we begin to see that it's important for us to dwell on details. You have to take one thing at a time; maybe one week you'll work let's say on enjoying air. Getting the pleasure of breathing. The truth is that when you walk outside tonight, you should take a deep breath. "Ahhh!" you should say." It's really a *ta'anug*." No cocktail that you could buy in the store compares to the cocktail of fresh air. People walk in the street today and they drink in the street to show off they're drinking. That's *meshugas*. What do you need it for?! Drink in the fresh air. It's free of charge and it's much healthier. Fill your lungs. It makes your blood become red immediately, the fresh air.

Get into the habit - one week learn to praise Hashem for air. This week whenever you can, think about the happiness of being able to breathe fresh air. After a while you're happy when you think about the air. Breathing is fun! I once told you about a simple experiment, didn't I? Dip your head in a bucket of water *three* times and take it out *twice*! Anyhow, then wait till you can't anymore, and finally you'll take it out this time and you'll take one deep breath - "Ahh, is that delicious!" The truth is that it's always delicious. Breathing is delicious!

So let's say you're walking to the *beis haknesses* and you tell yourself, "Isn't it a wonderful thing that there is air to breathe?!" Now at first it's a *chiddush gadol*. Air?! I'm afraid that even if you tell it to *talmidei chachomim* it's a big *chiddush*. You tell him, "Yes, air is vital. I'll prove to you that it's what you need more than anything else. You can get along without food for days and days. Without

water, for a shorter time, but you can get along without water too - for a few days maybe. But without air you can't get along."

"HALF HALLEL" IS NOT ENOUGH

It says in the Medrash on the possuk **כל הנשמה תהלל י-ה**, that **על כל נשימה ונשימה תהלל י-ה**, for every breath you have to say Hallel. And my *rebbe* said it means *gantz* Hallel. For every breath you owe Hashem *a full hallel*. Now, you don't have time for that - you're too busy breathing - but at least you have to know that *that's how delicious it is!*

When a person is a little bit dejected, discouraged, what a good idea it is to go to the window and breathe deeply. We don't realize. It's like a drink of very strong medicine. Air comes into your lungs and the oxygen unites with your blood and makes your blood more red. It's a fact. As you breathe, your blood becomes more invigorated with oxygen. The iron in your blood that makes it red, the hemoglobin, unites with the oxygen, and it carries the oxygen on its path through all the blood vessels everywhere in the body to invigorate all the cells. The whole body is different because you breathe. And therefore it's a good idea to practice breathing just for the feel of it, just to appreciate that great gift of air.

200 MILES OF CHESSED

The world is full of air. That's what it means **מלוא כל הארץ** **כבודו**. So a man will tell you, "*K'vodo?* That means the "glory of Hashem." Where does air come into it?" What do you think is "the glory of Hashem"? The glory of Hashem is His *chessed*. The *chessed* of Hashem fills the world. And what is one of the most prevalent kindnesses of Hashem? Air! Hakodosh Boruch Hu made two hundred miles of it. Two hundred miles up of air! Now the air is not one thing. It's a cocktail mixed exactly with the right ingredients to make it not only beneficial to us but it tastes good too. It's mixed with oxygen, about twenty percent. All the rest is mostly nitrogen and inert gas because you need something with which to carry the oxygen. If the air was all oxygen, you'd become drunk. If you would breathe oxygen alone, you would get dizzy, you'd become intoxicated. So you have to have the nitrogen to dilute the oxygen; and a little bit of carbon dioxide is essential because it's an incentive to your lungs to breathe more deeply. And then traces of a few other gases together and it makes together a combination of the perfect material that's suited for human beings.

You know what we are? We're like fish in the bottom of an ocean. Fish in the ocean. Fish don't like air. They want water. We're in an ocean, an ocean of air. The ocean is two hundred miles high. We're like fish living in this ocean of air, and we love it. That's our element. If we were to change places with a fish, we wouldn't be happy, just like a fish wouldn't be happy if he took our place. And therefore let's enjoy this ocean while we have it.

STRANGLER IN HIS SUMMER HOME

So practice up on this. On the way home, When you walk out of here onto Ocean Parkway - it's a beautiful street, a parkway with trees and bushes. Now after the rain they're exuding a fragrance, and the combined fragrance of different kinds of shrubs and trees, combined with the city odors - it's a pleasure those city odors - and they combine to give a certain cocktail that you don't drink; you draw it deep into your lungs and you can learn to enjoy it.

You think a summer home in Maine and a winter home in Florida is going to make you happy? No, that's nothing. What good would the home be if you were strangled without air, if you were suffocating for air. Breathing is a big simcha! Some people have difficulty breathing. You know that some people have difficulty breathing? (*The Rav took a deep breath*). Ahh! It's a pleasure to fill your lungs. *Mamish* a *taanug!* Don't laugh at breathing - it's a great happiness to breathe.

WEEK #2: WALKING IS A HAPPINESS

So you've begun to scratch the surface of the happiness of breathing. It was only a week of thinking after all, but you're a wealthy man already. Now suppose you would spend a week becoming happy that you can walk. So the next week change and start appreciating the fact that you can walk. Walking is a *simchah*. **המכין מצעדי גבר**, "How happy I am that I can walk." Look how many people sit in wheelchairs. Walking is fun. Your thigh swings forward in effortless motion and all of your joints are functioning to perfection. You don't hear any scraping as you bend your knee, do you? That's a *simcha!* You don't feel any chaffing? Ah, it's a pleasure to walk. And it's good exercise too. The entire body is moving. It's good for your heart. It's good for everything if you walk. And besides for that, walking shows you're in control of yourself. All your muscles cooperate to walk and you learn what it means **המכין מצעדי גבר**.

If you walk in the street and you see - like I saw yesterday - a girl who was hopping around on crutches. But the stump of her other leg didn't stick out. That's how much was cut off. Now that was an apparition, sent to me *min hashamayim*. Because how much would this girl give to regain her leg? No money in the world would be too much! And therefore, as you walk in the street you have to think about that *brachah* you mumbled in the morning, ברוך אתה השם אלוקינו מלך העולם המכין מצעדי גבר - I thank You Hashem for establishing the footsteps of a man. "I'm able to take footsteps on my own feet!" It's a happiness to be able to walk on your own two feet. You know how ecstatic a man is who has been confined to a wheelchair for a long time - he wasn't able to walk - and finally he regained that ability! He's overjoyed! So the second week, you'll work on the happiness of walking.

Now you're an even wealthier man. You own a few apartment houses already. You have your lungs that are breathing in the great elixir of life we call air, that's one apartment building that's yours. Another apartment building is the happiness of being able to walk. That's a very valuable piece of property! So you're already a pretty wealthy fellow. You can walk in the street now and your pockets are full of cash. If your pockets would be full of hundred dollar bills bulging on both sides, it's nothing compared to the person who spent two weeks working on the happiness of fresh air and on the ecstasy of walking. As I walk in the street balancing myself on two legs, and I'm breathing the air of Hakadosh Baruch Hu, I'm enjoying life!

BE QUEER AND BE HAPPY

So we're beginning to see now that in order to be a *samei'ach b'chelko* you have to be a queer kind of a fellow. You can't always share your feelings with other people; they'll laugh at you. באזני כסיל - אל תדבר - "Don't speak into the ears of a fool." He'll make light of these ideas and cool you off (Mishlei 23:9). "There's a fellow over there, down Ocean Parkway, who's happy that he has two kidneys! Ha!" Try to tell people that you're filled with joy, you're *mamish b'simcha* because breathing is fun, so they'll think you're wacky. But *they're the wacky ones* because they're missing all the happiness of this world.

I know what the people will say when you go out of here. You'll talk to people and they'll tell you other things. Don't be misled!

Here comes along a *frum tzaddik* and says to me, "You're teaching people to enjoy life?! The purpose of life is *ta'anugim*?! To be *rodef ta'anugim*, run after pleasures?!" He was upset at me. I looked at him and said, "Look, you have a wristwatch. I don't have a wristwatch. You *drive a car* when you come to the *yeshivah*. I *walk* to the *yeshivah*. Who is running after pleasure, you or I? You're running after it but you don't have it. I'm not looking for pleasures. They're coming to me. As I walk in the street with my "Rolls Royce" - my two shoes, that's my Rolls Royce - and I'm breathing the air of Hakadosh Baruch Hu, I'm enjoying life. I walk past the cemetery on Ocean Parkway, and I'm filled with happiness that I'm on this side of the gate." That kind of *kosher ta'anugim* is a *chiyuv*, it's a *mitzvah gedolah* to enjoy life that way.

ICE CREAM IN THE SUN

All this is serious talk. I know that if you go to a *kollel* and you'll tell them these things, they'll laugh at you. That's because they're silly - they don't begin knowing Torah. And don't tell me that enjoyment and happiness is not for *tzadikim*. Oh no, you big *tzadik*, you don't want to enjoy the sun and the wind. He's eating his chocolate cakes and ice cream, but to be happy with the sun, that's too much.

Happiness is not running after good times, not going *chalilah* to entertainment, and fun places. No; *chas v'shalom*, *chas v'shalom*, that's *meshugas*. People who are running after good times are never enjoying life - they're always running after good times and fun, but they never find it. Never. They're always busy running, pursuing, but they'll never find it - because they're looking in all the wrong places.

"G-D MADE" EARPHONES, SPEAKERS, AND CAMERAS

Who needs places of entertainment to be happy when you have all the happiness right here! Look at yourself, "I'm alive, *Boruch Hashem*." Look at your feet; "*Boruch Hashem*, two of them! And they're both the same size!" Look at your ears; "*Boruch Hashem*!" They're "earphones" hanging on the side of your head - and you don't have to buy them in the store. You have teeth; slicing teeth in the front and the grinders in the back. *Boruch Hashem*! You have a functioning tongue that's busy all day long in your mouth. You have a "speaker" in your mouth, vocal chords. *Boruch Hashem*. And eyes! "Cameras" in your head. *Boruch Hashem*! You can walk, *Boruch Hashem*! *המכין מצעדי גבר*. That's some trick you have there being able

to balance yourself as you walk. Boruch Hashem! And that's only the beginning.

You have to learn how to be happy with your clothing. It's not enough to say the *brachah* of *malbish arumim* in general and *patur* yourself. You have to study the details of your clothing in order to become a happy person. The pockets and the buttons, everything. Study it.

THE SHOES IN THE TREASURE CHEST

Study your shoes. Shoes are a happiness. Did you ever think about that? You know that in some countries people don't have shoes. Only one man wears shoes, that's the king of the tribe. And not every day. Once in a while he puts on shoes, when a visitor comes from outside, a tourist, so he wants to show he's a sport so he puts on shoes. Otherwise he doesn't put on shoes. Shoes are a big luxury. It's a very complicated achievement, a shoe. Look at the different kinds of leather. And rubber heels. And you need shoestrings. A shoe is a treasure.

So let's say a colonel from the American Air Force lands on that island, so the king takes his shoes out from his treasure chest, and he puts them on, and he marches with his short pants covering his naked body, with some feathers in his head to greet the colonel. And he shows him his shoes. He's so happy; he's "an aristocrat."

THE GREAT BLESSING OF SHOELACE TIPS

We should know that shoes are a happiness. It's not an exaggeration at all. It's no exaggeration; shoes are a happiness for us. Just because you live in a country where everyone can afford shoes, should that decrease the happiness in any way?!

That's why we're expected to say every day, *שעשה לי כל צרכי*. But we're lazy, we don't think. Often we're not even thinking about the *peirush hamilos*. I'm not talking now about the "formality" of making the *brachah* in shul. When you're walking down the street, take a minute every day to be happy with your shoes. Think about the details. "How lucky I am to have shoelaces that have plastic tips. If there wasn't a plastic tip, then I'd have a hard job fitting it into the hole. I'd have to spit on it, and twist it and try to push it through the hole. Boruch Hashem I have plastic on the tips of the laces."

THE DOCTORS ARE OVERCOME WITH EMOTION

Once you begin thinking this way, you can begin to be happy with all the functions of life. I mentioned the sense of sight before. I can't just gloss over it quickly. You're able to see! If you don't appreciate that, then take a look at the person walking in the street with a white cane tapping his way. What would he do if he could get eyes like you have today?! Even one eye!

It was recently reported in the papers that a woman who had a cataract for many years and her situation was considered hopeless. She was a married woman, with children, but she had no sight. And then it was decided to attempt an experimental operation on her. For a long time the bandages remained on her eyes. And finally the doctor came in and he took off the bandages - just for a moment they were taken off so as not to strain her eyes - but in that one moment she screamed in delirium. She could see! And the doctors were weeping. They were overcome with emotion.

Now isn't it a tragedy that we don't weep in happiness at this great gift of sight! *Boruch atah Hashem pokei'ach ivrim*, Who opens up the eyes of the blind every morning. Finally this lady saw her husband for the first time; she finally saw her children. And she said that she didn't want anything more out of life *except to be able to look!*

FREE LENS CLEANSING GERMICIDES

The happiness of sight, the happiness of seeing color! Seeing is life itself. The *gemara* says that *סומא השׁוֹב כמת* - in one sense a blind man is like a dead man. He's *not* dead - there are a lot of compensations in life - but in a certain way he's dead. Because the great happiness of having two "cameras" is a joy that a living person shouldn't be without. Even one camera! How lucky we are! And it's a color camera that focuses by itself; all day long it's working perfectly, focusing in, focusing out. Every time you blink you're washing off the lens with a film of germicide that cleanses. It's a perfectly functioning camera that has no equal among the best fabrications of Mankind.

That's how you're expected to think - that's *sameach b'chelko*. Not that you're satisfied with "merely" five hundred thousand dollars. When a man learns to enjoy the fact that he has two good eyes, he is more wealthy than the man who has two million dollars. So how can we be satisfied in the morning with a dry as dust

declaration, “*pokei’ach ivrim*”, which most times we don't even think about what we're saying? Isn't that a tragedy?

“I HAVE TWO ARMS!”

Now we have to keep on going. Look all around you; did you ever see a man with only one arm? Two weeks ago I saw a man without any arms. *Both arms were missing!* And I said to myself, “Look, you learn *Chovos Halevavos*, don't you? How can you pass him by?” So I took another look. I waited till he passed by - I didn't want to embarrass him - and I took another look to remind myself. And for at least a half a block I was walking on air, thinking how lucky I am to have two arms. Think *chas v'shalom* what it would be like if you didn't have two arms. What would you do? For a half a block I was ecstatic. But a half a block is not enough - it has to be all the time!

Not only do you have arms and legs, but your mind is normal. Oooh, what a *chessed* that is! So many people are very confused; mental illnesses, imbeciles, and depression. Depression is also a sickness, it's also like being an imbecile. And therefore, ברוך אתה השם חונן הרעת! How can you say *shemonah esrei* every day, and ignore that *bracha*. It's the first of the weekday *brachos*, and you're thanking Hashem that *you're sane!* Three times a day you say it; shouldn't you appreciate that great gift? *Chonein hadaas* - You bestowed sanity upon me.

THEY FROZE IN SLABODKA

Appreciate the roof over your head. Did you ever stop to appreciate the happiness of a warm house? Once upon a time when a Jew came into his house, “*Ah, a varme shtub,*” he said. “*Ah varme shtub!*” In the *beis hamedrash* he was freezing. I sat in Slabodka and we were freezing in the *yeshiva!* We were freezing! It was hard to heat the *yeshiva*. The stove was over there at the end, behind the wall, and you put in some wood there till it burned out. It was barely enough to heat that little room. If you would stand next to the stove you would feel some heat - otherwise it was cold. And so you would come home and it was a great happiness to be in a *varme shtub*. You should be filled with joy when you come into a warm house. And today you can enjoy that happiness in the *beis medrash* as well.

Warmth is a great happiness. You can ask that poor woman sitting outside on the bench on Ocean Parkway. She has no home. I see her pushing a shopping wagon with all her belongings in that

little wagon. She has no warm place to sleep. If somebody would let her rest in the vestibule of their home, it would be the greatest happiness for her. She'd be *meshugeh* with joy.

LYING ON THE KITCHEN FLOOR

Now that's a *chiddush* to most people. A warm house? Yes, a warm house is a happiness. It's not easy to have a house that's warm. When I was a boy we didn't have warm houses. It was only warm in the kitchen where the coal stove was. You had to put coal in the stove. When the coal burned out you had to take the ashes out of the stove. That was the only room where there was warmth. If I wanted to read, I laid down on the floor in the kitchen. I laid on the floor all day, all night, in the kitchen by the stove. All the rest of the house didn't have any warmth. We didn't have any radiators. No such thing. The house was cold. If you wanted to warm a house, you put a kerosene stove in the rooms. The kerosene stove had to have oil there and sometimes it didn't work. When you got up in the morning, the whole room was black, including your face too, it made everything black, the soot from the kerosene stove. This luxury of having a warm house is something the modern people have to realize.

Ahhh! What a pleasure it is to have a warm house. So when you walk in with your children in the wintertime from the *beis haknesses*, say "Chaim'll, isn't it good to have a warm house?" Rub your hands together. He looks at you like you fell off the moon. He doesn't understand you. "How silly adults are," he thinks. Never mind. That's the way to bring up children and eventually he'll thank you for that.

THE NEIS OF THE FAUCET

When I was in Slabodka nobody had running water in the house. You had to go a half block away to get water. And you couldn't drink it; it was dangerous to drink well water. You had to boil it up first. And here in your house you turn the faucet and water comes out, pure water fit to drink! What a wealth, what a happiness that is! And even hot water! Hot water coming out of a faucet! It's a luxury upon luxuries. Once upon a time hot water came only from springs, hot springs. If you didn't have hot springs you couldn't get any hot water unless you boiled it. Think about that every time you turn on the faucet, and you'll start becoming a *samei'ach b'chelko*.

You have to talk to yourself about your home. As you walk on the steps, you should whisper to yourself, "Isn't it good we have steps?" You know, I have steps upstairs, and many times I think about how in the olden days in the *gemara* they didn't have steps. They had a ladder, a *dargah*. Try climbing a ladder to go upstairs; it's not so simple. Now even a ladder is also a very good invention. Otherwise you would have to go with a rope, you'd have to lift yourself up. But even a ladder is not so safe. Steps are a luxury.

A HANDRAIL IS PIKUACH NEFESH

So here you have a man walking up steps and he's thanking Hashem for this luxury of steps, for the happiness of a staircase. But not only the steps, there's a railing too! You know the building code requires you to make a railing, so some *chachamim be'eineihem* try to avoid the building code and leave out the rail. They deceive the inspector. So what happens? Sometimes they're walking up the steps and they're a little busy and they fall down. You can break your neck *chalilah*. The railing is there; it's a happiness, *mamish pikuach nefesh*. What a blessing a handrail is! You ever stopped to think about that? Never even once did the handrail make you happy?!

"All this is silly," you'll say. For *meshuga'im* everything is silly. So let them be *meshugeh*, and you be happy! You walk up the steps and you're happy because of the handrail. And the older you get, the more you'll enjoy it. Imagine a man enjoying the handrail. His life is full of fun, full of happiness.

BECOMING A MILLIONAIRE TAKES WORK

You learn little by little. Of course it's a career. You have to put in work. You could put in five minutes a day practicing enjoying air, five minutes a day practicing enjoying your eyes. Five minutes a day next week practicing enjoying walking. Five minute a day practice enjoying clothing. Little by little you're gathering up in your bank account wealth and little by little you're becoming a happy man of many riches, many treasures.

But you have to do it, though. Just hearing me say it, is not enough. It takes work to be a fake millionaire, so to be the true millionaire of "*hasamei'ach bi'chelko*" surely takes time and hard work. Like I said before, it doesn't come by itself. You have to make up your mind that you're going to pursue this career of happiness and that you'll always be saying, "I thank You Hashem." Always, "I thank You

Hashem for giving me this breakfast. I thank you Hashem for being able to go to the bathroom." And don't rely on the *brachos* you make. You must say it with your mouth in your own language. Always. And then, המחשבה נמשכת אחר הדיבור - your mind will be transformed because of your speech and you will become a happy man. At first it won't work. You won't feel so happy. But you keep thinking and talking and these ideas will settle into your mind.

RAV MILLER'S GUARANTEE FOR HAPPINESS

That's what the *Mesillas Yesharim* says: החיצוניות מעוררת את הפנימיות - The outwardliness bestirs the inwardliness. It's not sincere - you're not so happy about breathing. But keep it up, and little by little you're priming your well, and from the depths of your *neschama* real happiness will come out. Little by little, you'll add more things. And all the things after a while start adding up you become the real millionaire. And after a while you'll have forty, fifty things. And that's nothing yet because there's so much more than that. But you'll be happy with forty things and you'll be a rich man. You'll be a rich man already. And if you're a young man yet - even a young man of sixty - you'll keep on this path, on this career, until you're in your nineties and you'll be a very wealthy person.

I guarantee you that if you do it, you will become happy with the so many wonderful things that you have always taken for granted. And you will become a servant of Hashem and a great man. Not only will you become a happy person but you will become a great person.

HASHEM TAUGHT US THE PATH TO HAPPINESS

So make sure to rejoice in all these things and life becomes so delicious. Life is so full of fun that *you're always at a party*. People at a party are really morose! Let's say *chalilah* you were at a New Year's party and you saw people reveling - singing and dancing and blowing whistles, jumping up and down. It's nothing; it's an empty happiness. They don't have *anything* on the man who is really enjoying life. They don't even begin to understand what you, the happy man or woman is all about. You're *always* rejoicing!

Now, there is a lot more to be studied on this subject - I have many more things listed here that I wanted to talk to you about, but I'm already way past time. But at least we began studying the subject. It's a science that must be studied and practiced, but at least we know

that there is such a thing as happiness the way Hakodosh Boruch Hu expects it, and it's available to all of us.

And don't ask me questions: "Why don't I see this from my *rebbe*, from this person or that *tzadik*?" Don't believe it; the *real tzadikim* know that *this is the path* to true happiness in life. Because it's the path - the way of happiness - that Hashem set down for us on the day we left *Mitzrayim*. And people who don't walk this path set down by Hakodosh Boruch Hu are falling short not of great *madreigos* - don't think they're falling short of high levels of virtue and perfection. No, they're falling short of the elementary requirements that Hashem taught us on that great day of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*: הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה יוֹצֵאִים בְּחֹדֶשׁ הָאֲבִיב - that it is the beauty of a spring day and the thousands of other ordinary details of our lives that are supposed to be the real source of our happiness. And therefore, they're falling short of living happy lives infused with the endless joy of all the simple pleasures of life symbolized by the lesson of הָאֲבִיב.

HAVE A WONDERFUL SHABBOS

Q:

What do you say to someone who has trouble getting to sleep on time?

A:

Briefly; the *seforim* say that a man has to be a *zariz*. *Zariz* means he has to have alacrity to serve Hashem. הוּי גִבּוֹר כְּאֵרֶץ - "Be strong as a lion, לַעֲשׂוֹת רְצוֹן אֲבִיךָ שְׂבַשְׂמִים, - to do the will of your father in heaven" (Avos 5:23). Sometimes it takes strength of a lion to do the will of Hashem. And the *seforim* say that among the things included in being strong like a lion is to force yourself to go to sleep on time. If you just dawdle around after bed time, so you'll get up in the morning without energy, and you'll waste the next day. Your *davening* will be without much energy and surely your learning. And so, you must force yourself to hit the hay on time. You have to be a *zariz*, and strong like a lion to get to sleep on time. That's the way to prepare for a next day of achievement.

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May we continue growing together, guided by the light of Rav Miller Z"L

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