

תורת אביגדור
הגאון ר' אביגדור מיללער ז"ל

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

Sefer Devarim
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Rebbitzin Esther Jungreis

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פרשת ואתחנן

With Rav Avigdor Miller ztz"l

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נא לא לקרוא בעת התפלה וקריאת התורה

Part I. Your Little Castle

MOSHE RABEINU FIGHTS TO STAY ALIVE

When Hakodosh Boruch Hu informed Moshe of the sad news that, הֵן קָרְבוּ יָמֶיךָ לְמוֹת – *Behold your days are approaching to die*, we find that Moshe was devastated; he was very reluctant to leave this world. It says there, וְאֶתְחַנֵּן אֶל הַשֵּׁם בְּעֵת הַהוּא – “*I entreated Hashem at that time.*” He begged Hashem to be given more time; to live more years and to be able to enter into Eretz Yisroel with the nation. Moshe Rabeinu wasn’t happy with the prospect of leaving this world, he just didn’t want to die.

Now, some people are surprised by that. They think that when a righteous man hears the bad news, so he takes it philosophically, stoically. After all, he has all kinds of reasons to be calm. Everything is in the hands of Hakodosh Boruch Hu; everything is planned by Him for kindness. And so, if Hakodosh Boruch Hu is taking him from this world, it certainly is for his good. And the next world is a very good world; the righteous man believes implicitly that he’s moving from the world of doing into the world of reward and pleasure.

And yet, all these arguments didn't work with Moshe Rabbeinu. He put up the biggest protest ever made by a man standing on the threshold of death. He begged and he cajoled. It was days and days of prayer. It was a fierce and desperate *tefilah*; an intense prayer that is unequalled in our history. עַד שֶׁנִּדְעָעוּ שָׁמַיִם וְאָרֶץ וְסִדְרֵי בְּרֵאשִׁית - Moshe Rabeinu *davened* so hard that the world was shaking. What that means I can't explain, but we understand that it was a special *tefilah*.

DYING IS NOT SO BAD

Now we have to understand why that would be; the arguments of the righteous philosopher are good arguments after all! Moshe Rabeinu wasn't going to live forever anyhow. He was already a hundred and twenty years old and he had accomplished more than anyone else; he knew that Hashem's decision was just and that he had a good portion waiting for him in *Olam Haba*. He wasn't afraid of the Next World - on the contrary, he looked forward to it. So what was this big fight that he was putting up?

And the answer is this: For forty years the Am Yisroel were all clustered around Moshe Rabeinu and he had the opportunity to shape the new nation according to the will of Hashem. For forty years Moshe Rabeinu inculcated the people with all of the great ideals that he had heard from Hashem at Har Sinai. And he reveled in that opportunity; he utilized it and squeezed out whatever greatness he could from the people. Those forty years in the wilderness were his great opportunity to achieve; he was able to accomplish with the Am Yisroel more than anybody ever had before.

THE LAST CHANCE

And now he stood with the nation at the edge of Eretz Yisroel, on the brink of entering into the next stage of opportunity. He was standing before an opportunity that would never be repeated. He had the whole Am Yisrael in his palm; he had them in the very best place where they could be. And Moshe Rabeinu knew he could take them into the new land and settle them according to the righteous plan of the Torah. Up until now, they were in no-man's land, in the wilderness, and now they were going to become agriculturists - a settled people in their own

land. And Moshe Rabeinu would have taken them and he would have caused them to remain perfect forever.

You know our *chachomim* tell us that if Moshe Rabbeinu would have crossed the Jordan river, if he would have been the one to lead the *Am Yisroel* into *Eretz Yisroel*, then we would never have gone into *galus*. No *galus!* No *churban beis hamikdash!* No *tisha b'av!* What that means is that Moshe would have established the nation on such a strong footing and he would have made such a powerful and enduring settlement of our affairs that we would *never* have deteriorated.

And that's why he was reluctant to yield and he begged and begged for days on end. *בְּשֵׁק בָּשָׂה - He wrapped himself with sackcloth, וְנָתַף לִשְׂבָע - and he rolled in the dirt, וְהִתְפַּלֵּל בְּאוֹתוֹ פָּרַק חֲמֵשׁ וְחֵמֵשׁ מֵאוֹת וְחֲמֵשָׁה עָשָׂר פְּעֻמִּים - and he davened five hundred and fifteen different prayers (Devarim Rabbah 11:10): "The next world, the glories of the Afterlife, it's great" said Moshe Rabeinu to Hakodosh Boruch Hu. "But let it wait. Right now, I have an opportunity that I'll never get again."*

A KING SHAPES THE NATION

The maximum opportunity is when a man becomes a king. Anyone who is a king over the Jewish nation has a tremendous career ahead of him. In the great days of the Jewish kings, the king wielded enormous power and was able to guide the nation as he pleased. Moshe Rabeinu had the opportunity to form the character of our nation on the grandest possible scale. Never again did anyone have such complete control over our people. And now you understand why he begged to be a king, because to mold Hashem's people into *ovdei Hashem*, there's no greater opportunity for perfection than that.

Now, I didn't come here tonight to dash your hopes, but I must tell you that most of us here will probably never become kings, or even presidents. And yet all of us have that opportunity to forge lasting impressions that will create eternal perfection. That lesson of the *tefillos* of Moshe Rabeinu applies to us as well. We too, who are never going to mold nations and forge empires, can still achieve a *m'ein* of that perfection that Moshe Rabeinu achieved and begged for many days to continue to achieve.

A PARENT SHAPES HIS NATION

Where? Where can we achieve such perfection? The answer is that in your home you are the king. In one place you are the monarch just like Moshe Rabeinu was – you have all the power! Ladies, don't take umbrage at these words, because you're the queen of that great empire we call a home. Your home – that's your empire.

Pay attention to what I'm telling you now – the following is very important. The way you perform on that small scale in your little home in Flatbush will be considered as if you succeeded *m'Hodu v'ad Kush*, over a vast empire of many provinces. And the failure, *chas v'Shalom*, in the little place, between the four walls of your home, will be considered as if you were an emperor and you were a disaster to your people.

A HOUSE OF A THOUSAND CHILDREN

A bad emperor is a catastrophe – a reckless king can ruin a nation. But you don't have the opportunity to ruin an empire. All you have is four walls. But that little space – that's your empire. And how you succeed there, that's the measure of your success in life. I'll explain that.

In *Mesichta Gittin* (6b) it says: *הַמְטִיל אִימָה יִתְרָה בְּתוֹךְ בֵּיתוֹ* – “A person who instills excessive fear in his home; that means that his wife and his family are afraid of him, *בְּאֵילוּ הַפִּיל בְּמָה רַבּוֹת מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל*, *it's as if he killed many ten thousands of Jews.*” Just because he's a tyrant in his house, it's like he killed tens of thousands of Jews.

In your little home, if you're *zoicheh* it's crowded with ten people there, maybe more. But it's not much yet, it's surely not an empire. And yet, in the eyes of Hakodosh Boruch Hu what goes on in that home is so important, it's as if you have thousands and thousands of subjects. Hashem judges a mother and father as if they were a king and queen with tremendous power. And if you are successful in your little home or your big home, whatever it is, it's as if you were successful in running a big empire – it's as if you brought a whole nation into Eretz Yisroel and established them *l'tovah*.

Now I'm not saying that's the sole criteria. There are other areas besides the home. For a man there are surely opportunities outside the home; although the home is extremely important, he has some other areas too where he must make progress. But for both of them, the true measure of your success is in the home. What goes on in your tent, in between the four walls of your home, that's where your greatness will be achieved - that's your opportunity to mold a people the same way Moshe Rabeinu molded the *Am Yisroel*. The home is what counts!

HASHEM SENDS US BACK HOME

And that explains something in our *parsha* that seems quite queer at first. Everyone knows that at the great event of *Matan Torah*, at *Har Sinai*, the *Am Yisroel* became elevated to the greatest status they had ever experienced. And Hashem wanted that moment, that greatness, to remain forever. That's what He told Moshe Rabeinu: **מִי יִתֵּן וְהָיָה לְבַבְכֶם זֶה לְהֵם לִירְאָה אֶתִּי וְלִשְׁמֹר אֶת כָּל מִצְוֹתַי כָּל הַיָּמִים** - "Would it only be that this heart of theirs to fear me and to keep all My commandments should continue all of their days" (*Devarim* 5:26).

And so, of course the Holy Nation wanted to remain there at the foot of *Har Sinai*. They were desirous of tarrying at *Har Sinai* where they had seen the *Shechina* and been elevated to a status that had never been achieved by anyone.

And so what happens? What's the first thing they hear from Hakodosh Boruch Hu after this great experience, this great elevation of their minds? **שׁוּבוּ לְכֶם לְאֹהֲלֵיכֶם** - *Go and return to your tents* (*ibid.* 5:27).

"Tents?! Who wants tents?! We want to stay here at the foot of *Har Sinai*, close to You, Hashem. We should go back to the mundane grind of life after such an experience?! It's ridiculous," they thought. "And if we're going to go anywhere it'll be to the *beis medrash*. We'll take the Torah You just gave us and we'll get busy!"

MAKE YOUR TENTS GREAT AGAIN

But Hashem had other plans for His nation. "Go back to your tents," He said. "Because it's in your home, in your little

empire, where I want you to actualize My wish *that this heart of theirs to fear me and to keep all My commandments should continue all of their days*. It's in a home that is guided by the great experience at Sinai, where the perfection of the Am Yisroel occurs. When a family takes the Torah ideals gained on Har Sinai - "To fear Me and keep My commandments" - and builds a Torah home, that's the success of life. And that's why as soon as the *Ma'amad Har Sinai* came to a close, Hashem said, "*Shuvu lachem l'ohaleichem - Return to your tents.*"

And that's what they did - they returned to their tents and transformed them into sanctuaries. They lived so nobly, so generously, and with such idealism in those little tents, because each family understood that their success in this world was to make the best of their own little empire. They understood that the home is of utmost importance.

Part II. Life in the Castle

THE BIGGEST BAKERY IN BAVEL

And that's how the great people always lived. Did I tell you once the story of Rav Channa bar Chanila'i? He was a *talmid chochom* who lived in the days of Rav Huna. He was a well-to-do man who made his home into an empire of *chesed*. He had sixty hired bakers in his home making bread for the poor; all day long they stood at stoves in the house and baked bread for poor people. And at night when these sixty bakers went home, he had sixty other bakers come in for the nighttime shift. That's the kind of house it was.

The *gemara* (Brachos 58b) says that all day long he sat in his home and learned; and while he sat in his house learning Torah among the bakers, he kept his hand in his purse so that when somebody came in and needed help he wouldn't have to go looking for his purse; he didn't want to keep him waiting, embarrassed. So his hand was already there and he gave it to him immediately. He just took his hand out and gave. And at night he

would leave bags of grain outside the house for people who were too ashamed to come and beg.

BED AND BREAKFAST

The only question is where did he sleep? There couldn't have been a lot of space! Sixty bakers take up a lot of room after all. And they didn't bake without implements. There were stoves there too! It can't be too easy to sleep in a bakery. I still remember when I was a young boy I was once in a big bakery. On all sides machines were whirring, wheels were turning, ovens were baking. And in Rav Channa's house it was all packed in, together with him and his family.

The family carried out their lives between the bakery implements. He was learning and giving *tzedakah* to *aniyim*. And he and his wife brought up children in this busy empire. And that's how they lived. In the midst of such a hubbub, they made their home great.

A HOME BECOMES A MIKDASH

So you see that his home wasn't just walls and a roof - it became something remarkable, something tremendous. And Rav Channa and his wife planned it that way. You understand right away that Rav Channa didn't build that home himself. He needed his wife's cooperation, and all the *bnei bayis*, his children too. No question about it. And together they built a *beis hamikdash*. With such idealism they were able to erect a beautiful edifice - it was an idealism that is almost unequalled!

And they were happy to live that way because it was their ideal to build a home around Hakodosh Boruch Hu; a house whose central theme, the pivot upon which everything revolved, was the Creator of the world. And he and his wife were happy; his family was happy too because they considered it their function to build a house where Har Sinai came to life.

LIVING IN THE BEIS HAKNESSES

Now to us that seems to be a most uncomfortable kind of a house. It's one thing to fill the house with baking implements and ovens and sixty bakers - but to fill the house with Hakodosh Boruch Hu is something else altogether. Imagine you have to live

in a *beis haknesses*. Not an empty *shul* - a *shul* that's full of *mispallilim*. Everyone is praying and learning and they're taking the *sefer torah* in and out. And you're living your life in such an atmosphere! Imagine that.

But that's nothing compared to the *kedusha* of a house where you're living with Hakodosh Boruch Hu. The *kedusha* is so dense that it constantly impinges on your awareness - in everything you do you feel like you're standing in front of Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

Now that doesn't mean that everything in the house must be done with awareness of Hashem or else you don't do it. We are human beings and we try our best. But at least we should always try to *add* such an attitude into our home life as much as we can. We are marrying, we are moving into a home, we are raising children all in order *la'avod es Hashem*. And whatever we do in our home, even *gashmiyus sh'bigashmiyus*, even the joy, the physical fun in the home is intended to enhance the status of that home as a place of the service of Hashem.

And as the years pass by, the ideal grows upon you and it becomes a stronger and stronger part of your personality until finally, before you realize it, it occupies a very big part of your home. And your home is transformed from a house into the Torah home that Hashem desires from you.

A PLACE OF MITZVOS

Now when we talk about making our own tents, our own homes, into Torah homes, it's good to speak about some details, to suggest some of the ideals that are required to accomplish in this career. In order that it shouldn't remain just empty words we have to put in some descriptions of what is considered the ideals of Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

Of course first and foremost a Torah home is a place of *mitzvos*. We should teach our children - and that means we must teach ourselves first - that it's in the home where you can do mitzvos more easily. It's not merely that *sometimes* there are opportunities for *mitzvos*; no, *mitzvos* are *always* readily available in the house. There are thousands of mitzvos that can be gained in

a house that is being constructed on the foundation of *Ma'amad Har Sinai*.

DON'T DO MITZVOS - LOVE MITZVOS

You have to make your home a place where everyone loves *mitzvos*. In this home when we pass a *mezuzah* we don't merely look at the *mezuzah* - we love it! It's not enough to kiss the *mezuzah*; you have to love a *mezuzah*! Tell your family, "Don't we love *mezuzos* in our house?! We're *michabeiv es hamitzvos*, we love them! We love *tzitzis*, we love baking for Shabbos, we love going to shul.

You can start enumerating the *mitzvos* to yourself - so many *mitzvos*! All the *mitzvos* of Shabbos, all the *mitzvos* of *brachos*, of *netilas yadayim*, countless *mitzvos* are accomplished in the house. It's a place where you're able to say, **אשר קדשנו במצותי וצונו** all the time. Do you think when you're doing that? You have to train yourself and your family to think, "Right now, we're doing the *mitzvah* of washing the hands; Hashem commanded us to obey the *chachamim*." You're making the house *kadosh* by doing that.

THE HOLY HOME

That element should be introduced in the building of Jewish home as much as possible. "Our home is a *makom kadosh*," you tell your family. We must accustom ourselves to this thought: A Jewish house is a holy house. The same *Shechina* that came down on Har Sinai is in every Jewish home - it's not a *mashal*. Where else would Hakodosh Boruch Hu come if not in the place where constantly his word is obeyed? *Milchigeh* dishes, *fleishigeh* dishes, *pareve* dishes, everything is done *k'halacha*. Shabbos, *kashrus*, everything!

"It's Shabbos; don't touch the electric lights, don't touch the switch." All day Shabbos, *muktzah* is avoided. Everybody is observing hundreds and hundreds of details. *Davening*, *mitzvos*; all the time the Torah is being practiced in a Jewish home. A child wants to eat something, so he asks, "Am I still *fleishig*? Can I get ice cream yet?" "No, not yet." The child watches the clock. A little boy is watching the clock - there's nothing like that in the world. You won't find such holy children anywhere else!

FINANCES AND OLAM HABA

That's what we do in the home - we create *kedusha*. You have to teach a child not to fall in love with money - he should learn to give away money. So you'll say, "It's America! In America we love money - it's a money-making country. You're going to teach a child to give away money?" Yes. America or no America your home is not America. In your home you teach a child that if he gets money, some of it always goes to *tzedakah*. He should get into the habit of parting with some of his money for charity. You must talk about that in the home. And it's much more important than you think - it's not just *tzedakah*. You know what you're doing when you train your family to give away part of their money for *tzedakah*? You're training them to believe in *Olam Haba*.

In the house you have to talk about these things. You have to find ways and means of telling everyone, "You're not giving away your money. You're putting it away where it's safe. In our family we deposit money in the best bank, where they pay the biggest interest. That's the bank of the Next World." That's the truth - anybody who gives *tzedakah* is a believer in the next world. If you give a little bit, you believe a little bit. Your home becomes an *Olam Haba* home!

ENCOURAGE YOUR BIG BROTHER!

In addition, a Jewish home is a place of perfecting *bein adam l'chaveiro*. Utilize your brothers and your sisters! If you speak to them kindly, what an important *chesed* it is, מְעוֹרֵד עֲנִיִּים הַשֵּׁם - Hashem wants the people to be encouraged. Sometimes brothers and sisters hurt each other's feelings - *ona'as devorim*; they ridicule each other. It's a terrible misuse of opportunity.

Speak words of encouragement. You won't have them forever. Someday you'll scatter and each one will look back to the olden days when he had his brothers and sisters together and there were so many opportunities.

Everybody needs encouragement. And if you'll give them some words of encouragement every now and then, you should know that you gain a tremendous *mitzvah*. The encouraging of our fellow men is a neglected *mitzvah* and your family members, your parents and your brothers and sisters, are the best opportunity.

They're always available in the house. Therefore if we understand this great opportunity of encouraging each other, of saying kindly words and giving *chizuk*, the opportunities are endless.

A PLACE OF TORAH STUDY

Of course, the *mitzvah* of *limud Torah* is very important in the house. Of course, you should learn Torah anyplace but when you open a *sefer* at home you're making your house *kadosh*. The Chofetz Chaim considered this subject so important that he wrote a *sefer* on it called *Toras HaBayis* - it means the Torah that you study in the home.

Now at night, when boys come back from the *yeshiva*, don't accept the excuse that they learned all day long. Sit down for a few minutes. Accustom the boys in the house to that - train them to learn Torah at night. They'll open up the gemara, whatever it is - the younger children can open the *chumash* - and let them say aloud.

And surely the father of the home should show an example. When you open a *sefer* for a little while in the house you're doing a great benefit to that home. The house becomes *niskadesh* by the words of the Torah that you learn there.

TELL YOUR CHILDREN THE SECRET

Of course, you have to think these thoughts if you want them to make an impression on your mind. And you have to talk about them as well; you have to train your children to know that our house is becoming elevated by means of *mitzvos*. Tell them that the more they're able to behave and make each other happy, the more they can open a *sefer*, the more they can serve Hashem in the house, the more they're making the house holy. It's a different kind of a house when it's utilized for the purpose of serving Hashem. Don't think it's a small thing that you're doing for that house. It becomes elevated.

Every house where Jewish children are brought up and they become *ovdei Hashem*, that house is *kodesh kadoshim*. Not merely it has a certain amount of *kedusha*. It's more *kadosh* than many other things! Just like a *tefillin* bag is *kadosh* when you put *tefillin* inside of it, the Jewish house is even more *kadosh* because

you have Jews inside of it. They grew up there. They became *ovdei Hashem* in that house.

A JEWISH HOME IS NO BUS STOP

This has to be emphasized to children. "Children, when you come into the house, walk in with *derech erez*. Know this is a house where the *Shechina* is here." It's not a bus stop. It's not, *lehavdil*, like a library, *chas v'shalom*. A Jewish house is a place where Hakadosh Baruch Hu finds *nachas ruach*, where He sees His Torah is being obeyed implicitly. Everybody is loyal, *ne'emanim* in every detail.

And so the house is *kadosh*. It's something we have to say to ourselves and to our children - you should repeat it constantly. You can tell them, "Every time you do something good in this house, you're making the house even more *kadosh*. Every time you learn Torah in the house, every time you *daven*, every time you say *birkas hamazon*, any *bracha* you make in the house, the house is becoming more and more *kadosh*." Tell them that - they won't listen; they'll say, "Yes, yes," but it's going into their little heads.

Part III. Eternal Castle

THE JEWISH TABLE

Now, that brings up one more point that we'll discuss now. You know that the Jewish table is very holy. What makes it holy? A lot of things! You put kosher food on the table. You put a *siddur* on the table. You make *brachos* at the table. The Jewish nation sits around the table and they thank Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

In the old days when the father was saying *birkas hamazon*, he took out a big *siddur* in honor of the occasion. He kept an especially big *siddur*, like a Reb Yankev Emden *siddur* or some other big *siddur*. He knew it by memory of course, but *bentching birkas hamazon* was a ceremony. *Hineni muchan umezuman*, he washed his hands and took out his big *siddur* and he intoned the words and you could feel that this was a table where Hakodosh Boruch Hu was being served. No wonder that we consider it a holy table.

Of course, there are other ways a man can sanctify his table. If in addition to saying blessings around the table, he also puts his checkbook on his table and he writes out checks for *yeshivos* - checks are very *kadosh*. He's sanctifying that table, no question.

A HOLY ALTAR

There was one Jewish cobbler, an old Jewish shoemaker, who, when he was dying, he gave orders that they should break up the table where he used to work - he used to fix shoes by the table - and that they should make his coffin out of those boards. He wanted that table where all his life he worked honestly to go with him to the next world. Even his little work table was holy!

And therefore, a Jewish table is treated like a *mizbeyach*. That's how it used to be. I knew a man who had an old Jewish mother from Europe. A woman from the old Mir, a small town. Whenever any of her boys wanted to sit on the table, the mother drove them off - "You can't sit on a Jewish table; it's holy!" That's how he was brought up, he told me.

A Jewish table - it's *kodesh*! If a child is sitting on a table, he's driven off. He's profaning a holy thing. And that's how we should understand forever. If it's a table in the *Beis Hamikdash* then it's holy!

TABLE-TALK

Now, there's one opportunity that the Jewish table provides that is overlooked by many - and yet it's of utmost importance. And that's table talk. Whenever you're sitting at the table, even with your wife alone or your wife and children, you should know that here is an opportunity to be a propagandizer for the great truth of the Torah. Before you come to the table, take out a minute and think, "What am I going to do at the table? How can I utilize this opportunity?"

So let's say one day you decide, "I'm going to talk about the *roshei yeshivah*." You sit down at the table with your children. "Children, you know the *roshei yeshivah* are our leaders." The children are busy eating - they're hardly listening to you. Say it

anyhow. "They're our leaders." "They're the heads of our nation."
"They're the ones who are the teachers of our people."

Your home should be a home where children love the *roshei yeshivah*. And that means you're going to have to shape their minds; you have to speak about them whenever you can. "These are our great men; they're holy people. They're devoted to the study of the Torah. They're bringing up the youth of the nation in the ways of the Torah and we should appreciate them." Your table should be a place where you're always praising the *gedolim* and *roshei yeshivah*.

SINGING THEIR PRAISES

Now Rabeinu Yonah says in Sha'arei *Teshuva* (3:148), that when you take out time to praise righteous people, you should know that you're going to get *זכות גדולה עד לשמים* - it's such a merit that it goes all the way up to the sky. It's a great merit to praise *tzaddikim*. Not only *roshei yeshivah* - praise *frum* Jews. Praise all the Jews that are *frum*, all the houses that have big *mezuzos* on them, praise those houses. Praise them! Praise all the good things!

Praise *frum* institutions. Praise all the *yeshiva ketanahs*, all the *beis yankevs*, the *beis rochels*, all the *mesivtas*. Sing the praises of the *kollelim* - praise the *kollel* families. To teach a child to love *talmidei chachomim*! Ah, how that is neglected. And you can't just say it - you have to speak of *bnei Torah* with love in the home. Speak of all of them with love. Speak of the *Satmerer Rov* with love. Not with tolerance, with *love*. You're not a *Satmerer* so you just tolerate him? No, no, no. That's a *poison*. In a Torah home you speak about the *Satmerer Rov* with *affection*. You speak of the *Lubavitcher Rebbe* with *affection*.

WHOM WE ADMIRE

As much as you can you look for opportunities for that. And the child catches onto the idea. He catches on to the idea that in a Jewish home *talmidei chachomim* are admired. We love the *Bobover Rov*! We love Rav Yaakov Kaminetzky. We love Rav Moshe Feinstein! We love all the *gedolim*, all the *roshei yeshiva*. We

speak of them with love; with affection and admiration. We look up to the *rabbonim*, to the *chachamim*.

A Jewish home means a home where everyone is a *moikir rabanan*. Even if you're not wealthy, you're not a *gvir*, so the *roshei yeshiva* are not visiting you, that doesn't mean your home can't be a home of *moikir rabanan*. *Moikir* means that they are precious to you. And that should be the talk of the table.

MEAL PLANNING

Another day when you come to the table, make a plan, "Today I'm going to talk about the great subject of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*." And then speak about it briefly at the table. Another day, it should be *Mattan Torah*. Do what the Rambam says. He says, *גְּדִלְהוּ עַל כָּל גְּדוּלָה* – "Make it greater in your child's mind than anything else." More than anything else that you speak about to your children, speak about *Mattan Torah*.

But speak about it with *hispa'alus*, with excitement. Oh! What a day that was! A tremendous day that never happened in all of history! People heard the voice of Hashem! That great day you should never forget. The greatest day in history, where we all stood around Har Sinai and we heard the voice of Hashem. Once in history! Speak to your children about that!

Now all these things should be planned beforehand. Before you come to the table, plan your action; what you want to do, what you want to talk about today. When you go to the table, you have to have a plan: "Today, I'll speak about this." And tomorrow that. Table talk is extremely important and so you have to plan. Each time think beforehand, what subject will I propagandize about today at our table?

LIVE WITH INTENT

The children never know that it's planned, that it's intentional. They think that you happened to mention it. But really you're doing it beforehand with a scheme, with a plan.

Every time you go to the table, plan what you're going to speak about today. Whether it's a weekday supper, a weekday breakfast, anytime that you are sitting with your family together;

certainly on Shabbos. The Shabbos table especially - what will you talk about?

You shouldn't just chatter incidental talk; it shouldn't be words that come out by accident. No! Pick beforehand and guide the conversation in that direction. You're going to see a tremendous benefit. You're shaping the minds of your family and yourself forever and ever. Of course, they'll say some ordinary talk too, they're human beings. At least, however, you used it for a noble purpose too. Some great idea was introduced at the table this time. Next time, another great idea.

There's so many important ideas - so many Torah ideals and attitudes that should be spoken about in a home. And the more you do it, the more you infuse the home with *kedusha*. That's the type of house that Hashem intended when he told the Am Yisroel שׁוּבוּ לְכֶם לְאֹהֲלֵיכֶם - *Go back to your tents* with the lessons you gained at Har Sinai, with the excellence of mind you acquired there, and build your home on those ideals. And when you do that, you're not only building a home, you're building a home that is eternal.

THE SAGES AND THE OLD RUINS

Now where do we find the license to say that we can build houses that are forever and ever? It's a poetic idea that we like to hear, but do the *chachomim* say such a thing? So we'll go back to the home of Rav Channa bar Chanila'i, the remarkable home we spoke about earlier. The *gemara* there tells a story of two sages who were walking together on the road and they passed by the ruins of an old Jewish home. And when they came upon this pile of rubble on the side of the road one of the *chachomim* bent over and sighed in sadness, "Ach, this house is now in ruins." He was mourning for the *churban* of that wonderful house.

So his friend said to him, "Why are you sighing?" So he told him, "Do you know whose house that was? In that house lived Rav Channa bar Chanila'i. People lived there; people who had served Hashem in that home and now it's nothing but ruins. Such a house, a place where they lived with Hashem always in their minds now lays in ruins," said this *chochom*. "And I shouldn't sigh when I see this rubble?!"

Imagine if you can find the house where the Chafetz Chaim was born or a house where the Vilna Gaon was born, a house where Rabbi Akiva was born! That's a holy house! It's a house that deserves to be surrounded by a fence and protected forever and ever.

T'CHIYAS HAMEISIM FOR HOMES AS WELL

Now listen carefully to what the other *chochom* told him in order to console him: עֲתִיד הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְהַחְיֶיךָ לָנוּ - *Hashem will one day restore all of the domiciles of the Am Yisroel.* You hear that? "Someday Hashem will rebuild the Jewish houses again."

You have to understand that. Just like the Jewish body, when a person passes away, they put the body in the earth, so it looks like his body disappears after a while. No, it's forever and ever. And someday, וְנִאֲמַן אֲתָה לְהַחְיִית מֵתִים - we will arise once more and we will once again wear flesh upon our bones. So too the house someday will arise again. עֲתִיד הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְהַחְיֶיךָ - the Jewish houses will someday come back. A house that is *kadosh* won't disappear. *Kedusha* lasts forever!

The Torah that tells us that our tents are more enduring than the biggest buildings. The skyscrapers of the world are nothing at all, it's *hevel v'rik*. The time will come when they too will be brought down to the dust and nothing will remain of them. But your home will remain forever. It's not so easy to internalize that, but it's true and we have to work on that because it's *daas Torah*.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD WILL NEVER CHANGE

It's difficult for people to live with this concept, but we have to get into our heads that our homes are eternal. Even if you have to move someday; people move around, but your old dwelling will never disappear. And even if one day you come back to your old neighborhood and you'll see that all the homes have been razed to the ground - a bulldozer has come and destroyed all of them and now there's a big condominium standing there.

Or maybe your home is still standing but now there are other people living there - there's a Chinese family living there

now - don't be discouraged. Don't be disappointed! What you created there was an eternal achievement. The house will come with you into the World to Come with all the details of your existence. No bulldozer can destroy that achievement.

The ceiling, the floor, everything in your house, even the furniture, nothing goes lost. Because the spiritual picture of the house is formed and it continues to exist forever. And that is going to be taken with you in the World To Come. Because little by little that house was transformed into an eternal sanctuary.

Long after everyone who lived in that home has already passed into the next world, and even the walls and the beams of that house have worn out and rotted away, that house is not dead. It will live forever. Those houses will someday be reconstituted because they live on and on in the world to come.

BE AN HONEST PARENT

And therefore an honest parent should stop and ask himself: "What kind of home do we have? Am I accomplishing in my home what Moshe Rabeinu begged for many many days to have the opportunity to accomplish?"

The most rewarding life for a man and a woman, is to make use of that opportunity that Moshe begged for, and put the best that they have into that house. The walls of their house should witness only kindness, only politeness, good character, kindly words, *avodas Hashem*, joyous Shabbosim, *zemiros* on Shabbos, *diorei Torah*, helping each other, performing acts that Hashem commands us to do. All day long the *bnei bayis* are putting idealism into the walls of their home.

HAR SINAI IN YOUR HOME

Of course theory is always easier than practice. But we have to strive for the ideal, for the building of a home that Hashem intended when He told the Am Yisroel, "Return to your tents." The creation of a home founded on the principles of *Ma'amad Har Sinai* is a creation that is eternal.

And any Jewish home that is managed by a king and queen who understand their opportunity to mold an eternal home is going to be a successful home. And the children too as much as

possible should follow these principles. And when all participate in the task of upholding the Torah principles that go into creating a successful Jewish home, these people should know that not only are they going to be rewarded in the world to come, but they have created an eternal creation - a home that will live forever.

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Q&A

With
Rav Avigdor Miller Ztz"l



Q:

What do you say about sending a child to stay at a friend for Shabbos?

A:

I don't recommend letting children go away for Shabbos to somebody else's home, even if they are observant. I don't approve of it! It's a recent practice that families exchange children for Shabbos and it's not something I approve of.

First of all, your children won't obey them like they obey you. And when they play ball, like they play ball out here in the service road, it can be very dangerous. So, if it's your own son, you're able to scold him, and you'll watch him. But that person, a relative or a friend where the child is staying for Shabbos, he won't be able to scold him as much as you. And the child will run into the street; it's dangerous.

Secondly, you never know what your child picks up in other homes. You'll be amazed at what your child can pick up. Sometimes he can pick up a terrible thing that will ruin his life. I've heard such stories. What's doing in your home, you know. But what's doing in somebody else's home, you don't know! I don't approve of it. TAPE #598

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