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WITH

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BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

Two Goats

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Part I. Plant and Replenish

Commanded to Plant

In this week's *sedrah* we are introduced to the laws of *orlah* in Eretz Yisroel, וְכִי תָבֹאוּ אֶל הָאָרֶץ וְנִטְעַתֶּם, כָּל עֵץ מֵאֲכָל – *When you come to Eretz Yisroel and you shall plant all forms of fruit trees* (Vayikra 19:23). And it goes on there and tells us certain *dinim* of *orlah*; וְעֵרְלֹתֶם עֵרְלֹתוֹ אֶת פְּרִיּוֹ, how you must refrain for the first three years from eating the fruits of those newly planted trees.

But our Chachomim tell us that in these first four words, וְנִטְעַתֶּם כָּל עֵץ מֵאֲכָל, before we go any

further and learn any *halachos* of *orlah*, these words already have stated an important principle. “*And you will plant all types of fruit trees*” is understood by our Chachomim not only as a description of when these rules of *orlah* are going to apply but as a separate stand-alone commandment as well: “When you come to the land, וְנִטְעַתֶּם – there’s a mitzvah to plant all kinds of trees.”

Now that’s surprising because when the Bnei Yisroel first came into the land they found it very much cultivated already; Eretz Yisroel was never as fertile, as beautiful and well-planted, as those days. The Canaanim had trained themselves by generations of practice to become the very best agriculturists and Hakodosh Boruch Hu had allowed them to remain on the land for many years for the purpose of completing the task of making the land *k’gan Hashem*, a land of lush gardens and orchards.

Garden of Hashem

And so when the Bnei Yisroel crossed the Yarden they found a land that was filled with beautiful fruit trees – fig trees, date palms, pomegranate trees, grape vines; all good things they found. We have no concept how fruitful the land was; whatever we’ll say is not sufficient. And so if there was one land that *didn’t* need planting it was Eretz Yisroel.

But along comes the Torah – it means Hakodosh Boruch Hu – and it says that when you come to Eretz Yisrael and everywhere you see fruit trees,

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don't think that you're absolved from the duty of planting. After all, you're going to use up the trees. Trees don't live forever.

Now even if they didn't plant, there would remain plenty and plenty for their children; there was so much! But suppose the first generation came to Eretz Canaan and they said, "Ah! *K'gan Hashem!* This land is one big garden of trees!" and they would begin eating the fruits without bothering to replant new trees. The next generation would still have a good land but there would be less because some of the trees will get old and worn out. And the next generation would have still less; and in a few generations nothing will be left. And so Hakodosh Boruch Hu says, "When you come into the land, *וְנִטְעַתֶּם בְּלֵעָץ מֵאֲבָל*, you should make sure to plant all types of fruit trees."

Be A Planter

That's what the Medrash (Tanchuma 8:1) says on this *possuk*: *אָמַר לָהֶם הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְיִשְׂרָאֵל, אַף עַל כֵּן טוֹב נִשְׁבּוּ וְלֹא תֹאמְרוּ, לֹא תִּשְׁתַּמְצְאוּ אוֹתָהּ מִלְּאָה בְּלֵעָץ מֵאֲבָל* – *Hashem is telling the Am Yisroel, "Although you'll find the land full of all good things, לֹא תֹאמְרוּ, – you shouldn't say, נִשְׁבּוּ וְלֹא תִּשְׁתַּמְצְאוּ – We'll dwell in the land and it's not necessary for us to do any planting.*' No, don't say that. *אֲלֵא כַּשֵּׁם אֲחֵרִים לָכֶם* – *Just like others, the Canaanim, planted for you, כִּדְלִיּוֹ נִטְעִים לְבְנֵיכֶם* – *so you should plant for your children too.*

The Medrash brings a story to illustrate this. The Roman Emperor Hadrian once saw an old man planting a tree and he was laboring, sweating – it was very heavy work for him. So the Emperor said, "Old man, why are you laboring so hard to plant a fruit tree? Anyhow it won't bear fruit in time for you to eat it. You surely won't live to enjoy the fruits of this tree." He was an old man already.

So the old man replied, "My master, the king. When I came into this world I found fruit trees that were prepared for me. Just like I found trees in the world I came into, I want to plant for my descendants."

That's what the Medrash brings as an example to this commandment of *בְּלֵעָץ מֵאֲבָל*, of being a planter in this world. You came into a world that was prepared for you and you made good use of what you found here. And so when you leave this world and pass on to the next world, it should be no less than it was when you found it – you must see to it that the land remains beautiful with all the gardens and orchards that you found; you should leave it as perfect as you found it.

A Frightening Encounter

I'll give you an example – it's not our subject but it's a good example. Let's say Jews came to America and they found a garden here, a beautiful garden of freedom and opportunity and equality. You young people don't realize it but America was really a rarity among countries. When our forefathers came from Eastern Europe and from Russia it made them intoxicated with happiness.

I remember once I was in Slabodka and the head of the *kollel*, an elderly man, was telling of his visit to America. We were sitting at a table and he was telling us his story. He had come to New York and he was lost in the subway; he didn't know what to do – an old man who doesn't know any English, lost in a New York subway.

Suddenly a policeman approached him and began speaking to him. But he didn't understand a word. And he became frightened because a policeman in Europe meant something different than in America. The policeman motioned to him that he should stand still and he came back a few minutes later with a Jew who could speak Yiddish. And the Jew asked him in Yiddish, "What's the matter?" and he told him and this Jew translated into English for the policeman. And the policeman gave directions on how to get to the destination and the Jew translated it into Yiddish for him. And so when this Slabodka *talmid chochom* came back to Europe he was telling us about the glories of America. "A country where the policeman wants to help you! A policeman wanted to help me!"

The Ruined America

And so when you come to this country and you find equality and many even have become affluent, so what's your reaction? According to the principle of וְנִטְעַתֶּם we should know among all the things we must do is not to ruin America! We should leave it at least like we found it! Instead of becoming Jewish gays who are *bashmutzing* America with their wickedness; instead of becoming feminists and radicals and socialists and ruining everything, at least leave it alone!

Once upon a time in America, people believed in a Creator. In the public schools they taught about a Creator. Yes. They talked about “the hereafter.” Politicians in America used to speak about *Olam Habo*. And we of all people, we should have made sure to plant and plant and plant more of those ideals. At least to leave it like it was! Instead the atheists, with the Jews leading the way, are trampling down everything.

Look what they're doing to America! They're taking this beautiful land that Hakodosh Boruch Hu gave them, the happiness that they had here, and instead of planting they're uprooting it. They're trampling on America and ruining this garden. And they'll be held guilty for that. Besides for all of their other sins they'll be punished for this too – for transgressing this mitzvah of וְנִטְעַתֶּם. If you're not going to improve the country at least let it remain what it was when you came here.

Do Not Spoil It

There's a big principle involved here and in short the idea is as follows: Make sure the world is not worse because you came here! That's the principle that comes even before planting. Your first function is *don't spoil the world*. And that's why it was the first thing Hakodosh Boruch Hu told Adam Harishon as soon as He created him.

The Medrash Koheles (ch. 7) states as follows: בְּשַׁעַה שֶׁבָרָא הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא אֶת אָדָם הָרִאשׁוֹן – *When Hakodosh Boruch Hu created Adam HaRishon, נָטְלוֹ*

וְהִחְזִירוֹ עַל כָּל אֵילָנֵי גַן עֵדֶן – *He took him around to look at all the trees of Gan Eden. And these are the first words Hashem spoke to him: רְאֵה מַעֲשֵׂי – “Look at my works, הֵן בְּפִמָּה נְאִים וְנִשְׁבְּחִין הֵן – how beautiful they are. Look at these beautiful trees תֵּן דַּעְתְּךָ שְׁלֹא תִקְלַקֵּל – and make it your goal that you shouldn't spoil things; וְתִחַרֵּיב אֶת עוֹלָמִי – you shouldn't ruin My world.”*

That's number one. It's not enough, but the minimum is *don't spoil this beautiful world*. When you go out of this world when your time is up, the world shouldn't be worse because you were here.

The First Lesson

So therefore let's say you're a yeshivah man and now it's 1:30 time to learn *mussar* in the yeshivah. The *mashgiach* gives a knock on the table and everybody comes to the shelf and takes out *mussar sefarim*. At the end of the *mussar seder*, what is the first thing you're expected to do as a result of learning *mussar*? I remember once when I was in the Mesivta, after *mussar seder* one *talmid* came over to me and said, “What should be our first response to the *mussar* that we studied just now?”

He was thinking; he wanted to hear something special. I said, “It's simple. The first response should be to put back the *mussar sefer* on the shelf from which you took it.” That's the minimum response! You found it on the shelf, put it back on the shelf. It has to be just as neat as when you came in.

Any place you go; let's say you walked into a *beis hamedrash* or into your *beis haknesses* and you sit down to learn. You take a *sefer* off the shelf, another *sefer*, another *sefer*. Before you leave, the first thing you have to do is put it back. Don't leave the place in a less orderly fashion than it was when you found it. The *beis hamedrash* should be just as clean when you leave it as it was when you came in.

Clean Up After the Bums

The street too; you walk in the street, it was once a clean street. You can't litter in the street by dropping things there; even a little piece of paper, other things. If you have some paper to throw, don't

throw it on the floor. Throw it in the wastebasket on the corner. There's no wastebasket? Put it in your pocket or your bag. It was clean when you came so leave it clean when leave.

Even better, as you pass by and see a bum throw an empty beer can on the sidewalk, you can walk over and pick it up and put it in the wastebasket. I once saw something like that; a Jew with a beard and a black hat was walking down Kings Highway and before him a bum was walking and eating a banana, throwing the peels on the sidewalk. What does he care for the world? Let people slide to the hospital. What did this Jew do? He shoved it off the sidewalk into the sewer drain with his foot.

And so that's rule number one under the principle of **וְכִי תֵבֹאוּ אֶל הָאָרֶץ וַיְטַעְתֶּם כָּל עֵץ מֵאֲכָל** – When you come anyplace make sure that you're doing whatever has to be done in order to upkeep it. You found a clean *shul*, leave a clean *shul*. You found a clean street, leave a clean street. That's the obligation we're learning now: You found a good world, make sure to leave a good world.

Part II. Plant and Develop

Recycling and Planting

Now, the truth is that just for replenishing Hashem doesn't need you. You know, today everybody talks about recycling, but long before we thought about that, that was the original plan of Hashem anyhow. Everything is recycled according to the plan Hakodosh Boruch Hu made from the beginning.

This rainwater that's on the window pane here, was already used by hundreds of generations before us. It was urinated by people 100 times already. It ran down to the sea by the sewer, and in the sea it was purified with salt and chemicals. Then when the sun was shining on it, it was distilled and only pure water evaporated into the clouds. The rain comes down and waters the fields; the grass is

regrowing on its own every year. So Hakodosh Boruch Hu is recycling all the time, planting and keeping the world going.

And so Hakodosh Boruch Hu is on the job! And He's doing a fine good job! Your job is to *add* something to the world and make it somewhat better. Because our *possuk* is teaching us that not only shouldn't you ruin what was given to you, but you should be sure to plant and make things better. You have to plant so that when you pass out of this generation and go to the next world, you should leave over a land that's even more beautiful than it was when you came in. That was the command. **וַיְטַעְתֶּם** – you have to plant. That's the responsibility that a person has in this world. **וַיְטַעְתֶּם!** Keep planting as much as you can! It's a fundamental demand of the Torah.

Study The Art

Now, once we understand that this is a requirement of Hakodosh Boruch Hu not only in the land, in the planting of fruit trees, it has to be a principle in our lives that we have to be busy making this world a better place. And so, we have to put some thought into this obligation. What kind of planting can I do in this world in order to make it a better place? How can I uplift this world?

Of course one of the big achievements we have to learn in this world is we have to make other people's lives sweet. It's not our subject tonight but it's included in this obligation – we have to make people's lives happy in this world; it's one of the ways you can make this world a better place because of your being here.

Now, that's an art that you have to study. You must master how to treat people in order that you should plant happiness wherever you go. Instead of being a weed, a thorn, you have to be a flower in this world. You smile at others, encourage them, compliment them, and that way you become a beautiful flower; with color and fragrance.

The Smile Deficit

And so if your wife serves you at the table and you're eating with gusto and enjoying the meal that she prepared for you, how about a smile and some kind words? "Chana, it tastes very good." Why shouldn't you say that? She's waiting for it but nothing is coming. Instead you're just munching, destroying the food. At least "Thank you," you can say. You want to say, "You're an excellent cook" even better. "An excellent wife," you want to say? Ten times better! But something you must say.

And when you do it, you can be sure that you're filling the world with what's necessary. Smiles and sweet words are lacking in the world! You're making the world better, happier. And that's a valuable contribution, it's tremendous! You're making the world a better place!

Now, a person who recognizes this obligation of *tikun olam*, of improving the world, lives a different type of life because his eyes are wide open for these opportunities to plant good things in this world. He won't scorn even the smallest opportunity to encourage, to smile, to compliment, because that's his function while he's alive – וְנִטְעָתָם, as much as possible to keep planting and leave this world a better place.

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Now, although we don't disdain even the small opportunities, we shouldn't forget about one of the most valuable methods of planting in this world, and that is the great subject of *zechus horabim*. *Zechus horabim*! Conferring merit on the public! What could be better than planting Torah and *mitzvos*, planting Awareness of Hashem, *emunah* and *bitachon*, among the Am Yisroel?

Now there are very many ways of doing it. I won't go into details now – there are all forms of *zechus horabim* – but when a person has in mind the attitude that this is one of his functions of life, that person should know that he is fulfilling this obligation of לְעַץ מְאֻכָּל to its fullest.

Making Torah Available

Of course, the great men in our history did it on a tremendous scale. When they left the world, they left it a much better place than when they found it. Let's say, when Rav Ashi finished the Sidur Hashas – the Shas is a masterpiece! It's concise and it contains very many valuable principles in a few words. That's our Torah. פִּי הַשָּׁם הֵי יְיָ means Shas. And that was made by Rav Ashi. He is credited for organizing it, perfecting it. A tremendous achievement!

He didn't do it himself. He had a very great assemblage of *chachomim* who were dedicated to *zikui harabim*. In Bavel, the two great *mesivtas* had taken over the leadership from Eretz Yisroel and Bavel was now the home of the Torah. And Rav Ashi was the one who took all the teachings that were necessary in addition to all the *mussar* that was necessary with the *aggadeta* and he performed something so tremendous that we cannot measure how great is his merit. The *zechus horabim* of Rav Ashi has no equal as far as we can see.

But Rav Yosef Gaon about eighty years afterwards did something that made it even more valuable. He was the one who gave permission to write down the Shas. Rav Ashi organized and memorized the Shas – a tremendous job – but Rav Yosef Gaon came along about eighty years after Rav Ashi and he made a revolution when he gave the *heter* to write the Shas. It was forbidden to write Torah *sheba'al peh*, but when Rav Yosef Gaon saw that the world couldn't get along anymore he committed it to writing. He gave a *heter* and now the Shas was in writing. What a new world it was! Our Torah was made available to everybody.

Rashi and Rambam

Then Rashi Hakodosh came along – I'm skipping a lot – and Rashi made a *tikkun* that filled the world with light. The *peirush Rashi* is genius – brief and clear. Every word is well thought out, every line cunningly explained.

And Rashi guesses beforehand what problems you'll think about, the *kashes* you'll have, and he answers them *b'mesek l'shono*. Rashi is a masterpiece. There's nothing in the world since that time as enormous as the contribution of Rashi. When he left the world, he left over a *yerusha* that to this day we're all enjoying. What Rashi did is almost unequalled, there is almost no equal to his achievement in making the world a better place.

The list of *mezakei horabim* is almost endless. I wish I could stay here all night and speak to you about it; what the Rambam planted for the world. For the first time in our history the Torah was codified and arranged in chapters and numbered *halachos*; all in place where they belong. To this day, we all are enjoying the Rambam's accomplishment. When he left the world, he left the world much wealthier than when he found it.

Changing the World

Then the Shulchan Aruch came along and planted other trees. The Shaarei Teshuva, the Chovos Halevavos, the Mesillas Yesharim, the Vilna Gaon, the Baal Shem Tov, Sarah Schenirer; they all influenced many thousands of people over the generations.

Of course most of us, we're not competent to make such achievements; you can't be like Rashi. What the Chofetz Chaim did, we won't be able to do. An *adam gadol* once told me, he said, "From now until Moshiach, if anybody is careful with *loshon hora*, it's due to the Chofetz Chaim." Many people today are *nizhar*, are very careful in *shmiras haloshon* only because of him. He changed the world.

We won't be able to achieve that but these people give an example of our goal in this world – to plant as much as possible and make the world a better place when we leave it than when we found it.

You Can Do It

Don't think you can't do such things. Don't say, "What can I do already? I'm a simple Jew in Flatbush; I don't have influence, I don't have money." It's not true; many good people, simple people, have taken the words of the Chovos Halevavos to heart and become *mezakei horabim*. The Chovos Halevavos writes (Avodas Elokim 6): "No matter how perfect you are in all the forms of *shleimus*, in every kind of perfection, it is as nothing compared to the perfection that comes from causing the multitude to become virtuous".

We had a man in our *kehilla* who went and bought from 770 Eastern Parkway a stack of old copies of Talks and Tales – it's a Lubavitcher children's magazine – and he sent it out to Jewish homes, homes where the families have no connection to authentic Judaism. So every month a *frum* magazine was coming into people's homes because of him. For a family that knows nothing about Judaism, a little Jewish magazine is a boon! It comes into their mailbox a newspaper that's speaking about Torah ideals, about the Am Yisroel. It opens up their eyes.

Now, he was a plain man; not wealthy at all – sometimes when he didn't have enough money he would collect money from people here in the shul – but he made an impact. He was a simple man who worked for the city and yet he was one of the *mezakei horabim* in Flatbush.

Bribe the Janitor

Look at all these big apartment houses – there are so many ignorant Jews who live there. Even the Jewish Press will be to them like a fanatic newspaper. So send Talks and Tales to these apartment houses. I'm not saying only that magazine. Maybe there are better things today.

Why don't you adopt an apartment house? Adopt a big apartment house on Ocean Parkway and say "This house is mine – this is my project." Make it your project and send Torah literature to

them. If you can't afford it all at once, do it little by little. There's a lot of work to be done. Find out who lives there and get to work.

How do you find out? You can walk through the building writing down the names until the janitor throws you out. Give him \$10 and he'll let you stay for another hour. Or you can go into the real estate places and they have directories; house by house, apartment by apartment. I once did it to one apartment house; I had the names of everybody in the apartment house and I was able to accomplish for Hashem. That's what we're here for, to improve the world.

Expelled From Olam Habo

What happened? A surprise, a tragedy. In those great days Chizkiyah became deathly ill. He was on his deathbed. And the *navi* Yeshayah came to be *mevaker choileh*, to visit him.

And Chizkiyah said to the *navi*, "What's going to be my fate? What will happen to me?"

"You're going to die," said the *navi*. "You'll die in this world and then in the next world too – you will have no *chelek l'Olam Habo*."

"What do you mean?" Chizkiyah said. He was shocked. "Why?"

"Because you didn't marry and have children."

"Marry?! But I was too busy doing more important things" said Chizkiyah. "I was spending my entire life in being *mezakeh es horabim*. Look how many good things I accomplished for our people, for the world! I spread Torah over all Eretz Yisroel."

"No, no," the *navi* said. "That's no excuse. Nothing will help if you didn't get married and have children."

The First Step

Now, that's a remarkable story! It's not a *meshal*, an idea; it's a real story about a great person who was *mezakeh es horabim* and yet it wasn't sufficient. *Zikui horabim*? Very nice! Excellent! But what about planting children in this world?! That's the first step in being *mezakeh es horabim*; that's number one in making this world a better place.

Living on this earth means you are using up all the resources of the world; do you know how many loaves of bread you ate before you reached 180 pounds? If you would sit down and make a quick calculation, you'll see that you consumed a mountain of bread. Do you know how many mountains of vegetables you ate? How many hundreds of gallons of milk? A mountain of fish! A mountain of meat! Could be that you ate from this world a herd of cows already. Even water is a commodity. Tons of water

Part III. Planting Beautiful Jews

A Great Man

Now, the truth is that there's a planting that comes even before *zechus horabim* and it's just as important, maybe even more so. You remember the story of Chizkiyah HaMelech? Chizkiyah HaMelech was a very great *tzaddik* and he spread Torah in all of Eretz Yisroel. It says about him (Yeshayahu 10:27), *וְהִבֵּל עַל מִפְּנֵי שָׁמֶן* – and the Gemara explains that Chizkiyah distributed oil to all the *batei medrashim* for the lamps so that the nation should be able to study Torah at night.

Chizkiyah made sure that all across Eretz Yisroel the *batei medrashim* were illuminated at night and because of him everywhere people sat late at night and learned. And those years became famous in our history – they were unequalled in the study of Torah! There was no person *m'Dan v'ad Beer Sheva* that didn't know all the *hilchos tumah v'taharah*. They knew everything. And it was all due to the effort in *zikui horabim* of Chizkiyah. And so we understand on our own that Chizkiyah was a *tzaddik gamur*; our sages tell us that he was worthy even of being *Moshiach* (Sanhedrin 94a).

you drank. Ice cream too – maybe a ton of ice cream.

So it's your function to replenish the world in one way or the other. Hakodosh Boruch Hu says, "Look, you came into My world and you're using up so much materials. Just to come into this world and consume? How will you pay back what we expended on you, the investment we made in you? What will you leave over when you leave this world? Nothing but a mess of dead decaying flesh – that's all?"

Now, you cannot, let's say, bring more water into the world or more air into the world. You could bring more fruit trees into the world, more cotton plants and wool, yes, but there are other things besides that, more important things. And the most important is children. When parents raise a family, a Torah family, that's the best planting a Jew can do.

We Want Diversity

What are they doing? The parents are planting various kinds of trees and flowers in the world. The world can't have just one kind of tree or plant. Even all roses, it's not enough. All violets, that's not enough. You need various roses and violets and lilies, everything else – all kinds of plants. You need apples and oranges and bananas and dates and figs. You like to eat everything, don't you? The sweetness of apricots is not like the sweetness of an apple. And the sweetness of an apple is not like the sweetness of an orange. And grapes are different and pears are different.

And therefore, when parents have children, they're putting into the world people of different natures and each nature is a plant, a sapling, with its own sweetness. Why did Hakodosh Boruch Hu make all kinds of fruits? Because He wants the world to have all kinds of *hana'os*. בּוֹרֵא נִפְשׁוֹת רַבּוֹת וְחֶסְרוֹן – He gives everybody all kinds of pleasures. And every child is a different pleasure that you gave the world. It's a pleasure to have skinny serious Jews – it's very important to have them. Fat jolly Jews – it's a pleasure to have them. Business like Jews – it's a

pleasure to have them. Each one is a pleasure, no question about it.

When a mother and father look at their children and they see that they planted the world with various kinds of *peiros*, they should know that they're planting for the world. One son is full of energy, the second one less so; but he's quiet and thoughtful. One daughter is quiet and obedient. Another daughter is a little *freilach* and mischievous, a *lebideger*. Another daughter is stubborn. Even their voices are different! That's adding flavor to the world. We want Jews with mellow voices, with soprano voices, people with bass voices; all kinds of voices are necessary

More Than Seforim

And it's the husband and wife who are accomplishing that tremendous achievement for the world, the great *zikui horabim* of raising the next generation. It's true that the parents didn't make any famous *chiburim*. They didn't write books, they didn't say *drashos*. He didn't write a *peirush* on Shas, and she didn't write the *shaalos u'tshuvos*. But you should know that they published something more important than a *sefer*! *Tzaddikim*, *talmidei chachamim*, daughters who will have families of their own; they added so much to the world. What a tremendous achievement!

And so those people, the mothers who are having those children and raising them, the fathers who are laboring to pay tuition and support the family, together they're building the world. They're paying for all the things that they took out of this world. For the air you breathe, for the garments you wore out, the food you ate. It's a tremendous replacement! And don't think it's a small thing. It's a tremendous form of replacement!

And therefore don't drag your feet. Old *bachurim* don't wait any longer. Find a nice homely girl who likes to cook, who likes to be a home girl, and get married as soon as possible. Forget about romance. Forget about love and happiness. Just get married. And even if sometimes she'll have a bad

temper, it's worth suffering from her because she's going to produce children for you. That's a tremendous accomplishment! And even though all your life you'll suffer from her, it's worth it. You don't have to, by the way. If you're wise, you'll get along with her. You'll learn how to handle it. It's one of the greatest fulfillments of **וַיִּטְעֶנָם**, to build up this world by means of children. Every child is a world of good!

Planting Yourself

And that brings us to the grand finale, the most important child of all. The child that you have to worry about most is yourself. I repeat the same things all the time. When it tells us the history of Noach, it says **אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֵי נֹחַ** – *these are the generations that came out of Noach*, **נֹחַ אִישׁ צַדִּיק**, – *Noach was a tzadik*. So the word Noach is repeated; “These are the children of Noach; Noach.” So the Medrash says like this: **נֹחַ, אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֵי נֹחַ, נֹחַ** – *These were the children of Noach; Noach – the first and the best child was Noach himself*.

And therefore, when Noach was thinking of building the world with children after the Mabul he knew that his most important child was himself. Of all the good products he would produce for the world, the best product should be Noach. Of course you should have many children and from all your children you should have nachas; *but the biggest nachas should be from yourself*.

Now don't say, “Well, that's a different subject; improving yourself has nothing to do with improving the world. That's selfish! Right now we're talking about making the world a better place!”

So listen now to the words of the Mesillas Yesharim on this subject: He's talking there about an *adam hashaleim*, a person who is striving for perfection in the service of Hashem, and he says, **כִּי הִנֵּה עֲלוֹי גָדוֹל לְכָל הַבְּרִיּוֹת בְּלָם** – *it's a great elevation for all the creatures in the world and all the things in the world, when they serve a superior person*. Not it's an elevation for *himself* – it's an elevation, a *great elevation*, for the world and everything in the world.

Mysteries Revealed

Now that can be explained in various ways and in some ways it's mysterious but I want to explain it in a way that we should understand. To serve you, we need all the features of this world. You have to have the world revolving on its axis. You have to have the sun and the moon. You need rain. You need the atmosphere and summer and winter. You need bees and flowers. You need soil and grass and cows. The world is full of innumerable details, marvels of arrangements that cause this world to function and you need everything – otherwise you couldn't exist.

Not only the world but people too. Do you know how many people are employed in bringing food to your table? Farmers far away have been plowing their fields, and mills have been grinding the grain for you; the trains have been running and the trucks are carrying the produce to the markets for the purpose of supporting you with your sustenance. There are carpenters and painters and electricians and delivery men; you need the telephone operators in their headquarters. There are policemen and firemen. The entire world is busy servicing you.

And if you are making yourself a better person, the entire world becomes elevated because they are now in service of an *Adam Elyon*, which is the purpose of the world. All of the world is now functioning for you which means the entire world is functioning for its purpose, the service of Hashem.

Change The World

Now we have to get that in our heads because we're very far from that *musag* – that idea, that concept, is remote in our minds. When you become a little bit better, *ki iluy gadol hu labrios kulam*, it's a great elevation for all the creatures.

Whether you're a man or a woman or a boy and a girl, if you make yourself a righteous personality, if you're working on yourself and you're a little bit better today than you were yesterday, then you're improving the world; you're not only improving yourself – you're improving all of creation. And of all

forms of planting good things in this world, that's the best because you've elevated the world along with you.

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

Become a Planter

In our Parsha the *possuk* discusses the trees that would be planted by the Am Yisroel upon entering their land. Chazal learn from here that we must be planters in this world. We cannot be a weed or a thorn and leave the world worse than it was when we found it, we must plant good things in the world.

This week I will *bli neder* take these lessons to heart. I will be careful in my cleanliness, to leave every place as clean as I found it. I will plant smiles and happiness wherever I go, by smiling at people and complimenting them. I will also try to increase the service of Hashem by inspiring others (perhaps by purchasing subscriptions to Toras Avigdor or making a donation to bring Toras Avigdor to more Yidden all over the world).

As I interact with my wife and children, I will do it with the thought that raising a family is like planting a garden for Hashem in this world. The biggest and most fruitful garden I can possibly plant is in my own mind by increasing my own service of Hashem.

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

שאל אביך ויגדך זקניך ויאמרו לך

Q:

**Is there anything wrong with having a puppy?
Someone asked me and I didn't know what to say.**

A:

Is it right to raise a dog in your house? I'm not going to answer that question directly but in most cases it's done as a form of demonstrating a certain unity with the environment; with a certain gentile attitude of having a dog. Jews usually don't have dogs and people who like to walk with a dog in the street, or have a dog in the house, it's a sign that they're yielding to the environment.

Now, I'm not paskening any *halachos*, but it's a matter of *hashkofa* that we don't want to walk in the ways of the *goyim*. I once walked into a house to be *menachem avel*, and they knew my attitude so the dog was concealed. I heard a scratching behind the door! They were very much embarrassed! They knew I'm against it.

What business do you have having a dog in your house? It's not because it's a watchdog; no, it's not a watchdog at all. Some people have these little dogs – tiny fragile things – and the dogs themselves need protection. These little dogs, anyone can give it a good kick and kill it. And even if it's a bigger dog, in most cases what it really means is, "I'm a goy like all the goyim." That's what it really means in most cases. It's considered a form of yielding to the environment. That's why I say that in general I disapprove of it.

TAPE # 999

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